

THE HOURS OF MASONRY.

THE CRAFTSMAN - 1866

The Masons of the York Rite have only the terms "high twelve" and "low twelve" to designate particular Masonic times, that is noon and midnight; and in relation to the hours of labor and rest, they seem to have preserved but one tradition, namely, that Masons begin to work at six in the morning, are called to refreshment at high twelve; called on again at an hour past high twelve, and continue their labor until "low six" or evening.

But some of the Masons of the continent and of the continental rites have paid more attention to the system of Masonic horometrical, and have formed or invented a variety of terms and legends in relation to Masonic hours. Among these rites, that of Zinnendorf, established about the end of the last century in Germany, has some curious details. The following extract from the ritual is translated from Lenning's Encyclopedia of Freemasonry:-

Q- "How many hours are there in a Freemason's Lodge?"

A. - " Five."

Q.- " How are these hours called?"

A. - "Twelve, noon, high noon, midnight and high midnight."

Q.- " When is it twelve ?"

A.- " Before the Lodge is opened and when the Lodge is closed."

Q.- "When is it noon ?"

A.- "When the Master is about to open the Lodge."

Q.- " When is it high noon ?"

A.- " When the Lodge is duly opened."

Q.- "When is it midnight ?"

A.- "When the Master is about to close the Lodge."

Q.- "When is it high midnight ?"

A.- "When the Lodge is closed and the profane are allowed to approach."

Q.- "How many consecutive hours do Freemasons work in their Lodge?"

A.- "Three hours."

Q.- "What are these three hours?"

A.- "Noon., high noon and midnight."

Q.- "What are the hours when Freemasons do not work ?"

A.- "Twelve and high midnight"

There are other divisions into Masonic weeks and years, but what has been given above is enough to show the care with which Masonic symbolism is cultivated among these philosophical rites, for all these answers are of course allegorical and symbolical.- One more answer in this catechism of the Zinnendorf ritual may conclude this paragraph, as it is highly suggestive of a deep religious truth.

Q.- "How long is a Mason's day?"

A.- "From the beginning of the year to the end."

And so, indeed, it is. The work of a true Mason is never done, - his day of labor never ends, - and at all hours and in all seasons, his task still goes nobly on for the search, - the untiring search after knowledge must be ever employing him, from week to week, from month to month, and from year to year, until days, weeks, and months and years, shall all have passed away, and life ends with the search still.