

AMERICAN FREEMASON REPRINT

A Rare Masonic Poem

(Entitled "*Entertainment for a Winter's Evening*;" written by Joseph Green,
and Published at Boston in 1744.)

With Some Remarks on Origin of the Scarlet Apron
By ROBERT I. CLEGG.



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Storm Lake, Iowa.

MORE LEAVES FROM A FREEMASON'S NOTE-BOOK: BY R. I. CLEGG



THE references I have already made in these columns to the old verses by Green of Boston, Mass., (1)* are far from sufficient to satisfy my sense of what is due the readers of THE AMERICAN FREEMASON, though I could not at the time do more. Space requirements must of necessity be respected, and therefore

I have no further apology to offer for my previous brevity. But now I will append the quaint poem in full. Certainly it throws considerable light upon Freemasonry in the Colonial days of America. It is entitled "Entertainment for a Winter's Evening: Being a Full and True Account of a Very Strange and Wonderful Sight Seen in Boston on the Twenty-seventh of December at Noon-day. The Truth of Which can be Attested by a Great Number of People who Actually Saw the Same with Their Own Eyes. By Me, the Hon'ble B. B. Esq." (2)

This satirical publication was born of the press in New England and bears the imprint "Boston, Printed and Sold by G. Rogers, next to the Prison in Queen Street." The poem has an introduction addressed "To the Reader." It is as follows;

Courteous and Loving Reader.

I thought it necessary to acquaint thee with three things, which thou wilt, perhaps, be inquisitive about. First, Why thou hast not had the following entertainment sooner. Secondly. Why it now appears abroad without sheltering itself under the name of some powerful patron. And, Thirdly, Why I have given myself the title I have assumed in the front of it.

As for the first article; thou must know, that my great distance from the Press, near one hundred miles at this difficult season of the year, made it impossible for me to convey it there sooner. As to the second, I had fully determined to select a number of suitable patrons, but was prevented by finding all of them engaged already, not so much as one being left, under whose wings this poor sheet might retire for protection. Thirdly, the title I have taken to myself, sounds, I confess somewhat oddly. Nor indeed should I have ventured upon it, had I not been warranted by a Famous Society in an Example which they have lately set me. For though this Society is, perhaps, the only one in the world that ever gave itself those pompous epithets, yet it is allowed to be the standard of Antiquity and Honour. Of Antiquity—as it can boast an Era many years higher than that of the world. Of Honour—as it is invested with that distinguishing Badge, which is, at this day, the glory of the greatest Potentates on earth. And if so, I see no reason why Thou and I should not submit to it as a standard of propriety too.

I am, Loving Reader, with the Greatest Humility, thine,

The Hon'ble B. B. Esq.

* Numerals in the text refer to notes placed at end of the article.

The full text of this quaint and interesting poem is as follows:

ENTERTAINMENT FOR A WINTER'S EVENING.

Oh Muse, renowned for story-telling
Fair Clio, leave thy airy dwelling.
Now while the streams like marble stand
Held fast by winter's icy hand;
Now, while the hills are clothed in snow;
Now while the keen north west winds blow
From the bleak fields and chilling air
Unto the warmer hearth repair;
Where friends in cheerful circle meet,
In social conversation sit.

Come, Goddess, and our ears regale
With a diverting Christmas tale.
Oh come, and in thy verse declare
Who were the men, and what they were,
And what their names, and what their fame
And what the cause for which they came
To house of God from house of ale,
And how the parson told his tale;
How they returned, in manner odd,
To house of ale from house of God.

Free Masons, so the story goes,
Have two saints for their patrons chose,
And both Saint Johns, one the Baptist,
The other the Evangelist.
The Baptist had the Lodge which stood
Whilom by Jordan's ancient flood.
But for what secret cause the other
Has been adopted for a brother,
They cannot, and I will not say,
Nec scire fas est omnia.

The Masons by procession
Having already honored one,
(Thou, to perpetuate their glory,
Clio, did'st then relate the story.)
To show the world they mean fair play,
And that each saint should have his day,
Now ordered store of belly-timber
'Gainst twenty-seventh of December.
For that's the day of Saint John's feast
Fixst by the holy Roman priest,
They then in mode religious chose

Their brother of the roll and rose ³
The sermon to commence:
He from the sacred eminence
Must first explain and then apply
The duties of Free Masonry.

At length in scarlet apron drest, ⁴
Forth rushed the morning of the fest,
And now the bells in steeple play,
Hark, ding, dong, bell, they chime away,
Until, with solemn toll and steady,
The great bell tolls—the parson's ready.

Masons at church! Strange auditory!
And yet we have as strange a story,
For saints, as history attests,
Have preached to fishes, birds and beasts,
Yea stones so hard: tho' strange, 'tis true,
Have sometimes been their hearers too, ⁵
So good Saint Francis, man of grace,
Himself preached to the braying race,
And further, as the story passes,
Addressed them thus—"My brother asses."
Just so old British Wereburga
As ecclesiastic writers say,
Harangued the geese, both far and wide;
Just so the geese were edified.

The crowds attending gaze around,
And awful silence reigns profound,
Till from the seat which he'd sat an — on
Uprose and thus began the parson.
Right Worshipful, at your command
Obedient I in Rostra stand;
It proper is and fit to show
Unto the crowds that gape below,
And wonder much, and well they may,
What on this occasion I can say,
Why in the church are met together,
Especially so in such cold weather,
Such folk as never did appear
So overfond of being there.
Know then, my friends, without more
pother,

That these are Masons, I'm a Brother,
 Masons, said I?—Yes Masons Free,
 Their deeds and title both agree.
 While other sects fall out and fight
 About a trifling mode or rite,
 We firm on Love cemented stand,
 'Tis Love unites us heart and hand,
 Love to a party not confined,
 A Love embracing all mankind,
 Both Catholick and Protestant,
 The Scots and eke New England saint,
 Antonio's ⁶ followers, and those
 Who've Crispin ⁷ for their patron chose,
 And they ⁸ who to their idol goose
 Oft sacrifice the blood of louse.

Oh Pine Salubrious! From thy veins
 Distils the cure of human pains.
 Hail Sacred Tree! To thee I owe
 This freedom from a world of woe.
 My heart though grateful, weak my strain,
 To show thy worth I strive in vain.
 Could Thracian Orpheus but impart
 His tuneful lyre and matchless art,
 And would propitious fates decree
 Old Nestor's length of days to me,
 That lyre, that art, that length of days
 I'd spend in sounding forth thy praise.
 Still thou shalt never want my blessing;—
 But to return from this digressing.

Those who with razor bright and keen,
 And careful hand, each morn are seen
 Devoting to Saint Nicholas ⁹
 The manly honors of the face.
 Him too who works, Ah! cruel deed,
 The fatal, tough Muscovian weed!
 And twists the suffocating string
 In which devoted wretches swing,
 (And, Oh may gracious Heaven defend
 The brethren from dishonest end.)
 Here cauldron's smoke with juice of Pine,
 An offering to Saint Catherine. ¹⁰

Rhode-Island's differing, motly tribes,
 Far more than Alec. Ross describes,
 And light that's new and light's that's old,

We in our friendly arms enfold,
 Free, generous and unconfined
 To outward shape or inward mind.
 The high and low and great and small.
 F.....s P.....ns short and A.....n tall,
 F . n . n as bulky as a house,
 And W.....d smaller than a louse,
 The grave and merry, dull and witty;
 The fair and brown, deformed and pretty,
 We all agree, both wet and dry,
 From drunken L.... to sober I,
 And Hugh But hark, methinks I
 hear

One assuredly whisper in my ear:

"Pray, parson, don't affirm but prove;
 Do they all meet and part in love?
 Quarrels oft-times don't they delight in,
 And now and then a little fighting?
 Did there not (for the Secret's out)
 In the last Lodge arise a rout?
 M..... with a fist of brass,
 Laid T.....'s nose level with his face.
 And scarcely had he let his hand go
 When he received from T..... a d—d
 blow.

Now, parson, when a nose is broken,
 Pray, is it friendly sign or token?"
 'Tis true—but trifling is the objection.
 Oft from themselves the best men vary
 Humanum enim est errare.
 But what I've said I'll say again,
 And what I say I will maintain,
 'Tis Love, pure Love cements the whole,
 Love—of the Bottle and the Bowl.

But 'tis nigh time to let you go
 Where you had rather be, I know;
 And by proceeding I delay
 The weightier business of the day;
 For it solid sense affords,
 Whilst nonsense lurks in many words.
 Doubting does oft arise from thinking,
 But truth is only found in drinking.—
 Thus having said, the reverend vicar
 Dismissed them to their food and liquor.
 From church to Stones ¹¹ they go to eat;

In order walking through the street,
But no Right Worshipful was there,
Pallas forbade him to appear,
For, foreseeing that the job
Would from all parts collect a mob,
He wisely caught a cold and stayed
At home, at least, if not in bed.
So when the Greeks 'gainst the Trojans
went,

Achilles tarry'd in his tent;
Ashamed he hides himself, nor draws
A conquering sword in harlot's cause.
See B....k before the aproned throng
Marches with sword and book along;
The stately ram with courage bold,
So stalks before the fleecy fold,
And so the gander, on the brink
Of river, leads his geese to drink,
And so the geese descend, from gab'ling
On the dry land, in stream to dab'ling.

Three with their white sticks next are seen,
One on each side and one between;
Plump L.....s¹² marches on the right,
Round as a hoop, as bottle tight,
With face full orb'd and rosy too;
So ruddy Cynthia oft we view,
When she, from tippling eastern streams,
First throws about her evening beams,
'Tis he the brethren all admire,
Him for their Steward they require.
'Tis he they view with wondering eyes,
'Tis he their utmost art defies,
For though with nicest skill they work all,
None of 'em e'er could square his circle.

Next B....r with M....l paces,
Though brothers, how unlike their faces!
So limners better representing
By artful contrast, what they paint.
Who's he comes next?—'Tis P....e by
name,
P....e,¹³ by his nose well known to fame,
These, when the generous choose recruits,
Around the brighter radiance shoots.
So, on some promontory's height
For Neptune's sons the signal light

Shines fair, and fed by unctuous stream,
Sends off to sea a livelier beam.

But see the crowds, with what amaze,
That on the 'pothecary gaze!
'Tis he, when belly suffers twitch,
Caused by too retentive breech,
Adjusts with finger nice and thumb,
The ivory tube to patient's bum.
A.....¹⁴ high rising o'er the rest
With tall head and ample chest;
So towering stands the tree of Jove
And proud o'erlooks the neighboring
grove.

Where's honest L.....ke,¹⁵ that cook from
London,
For without L.....ke the Lodge is undone
'Twas he who oft dispelled their sadness,
And filled the brothers' hearts with glad-
ness,

For them his ample bowls o'erflowed,
His table groaned beneath its load,
Far them he stretched his utmost art,
Their honors grateful they impart,
L.....ke in return is made a brother
As good and true as any other,
And still, tho' broke with age and wine,
Preserves the token and the sign.

But still I see a numerous train;
Shall they, alas, unsung remain?
Sage H.....l of public soul,
And laughing F.....k,¹⁶ friend to the
bowl,

Meek R..... half smothered in the crowd,
And R..... who sings at church so loud,
Tall de la R..... of Gallic city,
Short B..... who trips along so pretty,
B.....d so truss, with gut well fed,
He to the hungry deals out bread.
And twenty more crowd on my fancy,
All brothers—and that's all you can say.

Whene'er, for aiding nature frail,
Poor bawd must follow the cart's-tail,
As through fair London's streets she goes,
The mob, like fame, by moving grows,

They shouldering close, press, stink and shove,	E'er I had finished half my tale,
Scarcely can the procession move.	E'er I had told their names and nation,
Just such a street-collected throng	Their virtues, arts and occupation,
Guarded the brotherhood along;	Or in fit strains had half made known
Just such a noise, just such a roar,	What words were spoke, what deeds were done,
Heard from behind and from before.	Clio, 'tis thou alone canst show 'em,
Till lodged at Stones nor from pursued,	For thou'rt a Goddess and must know 'em
The mob with three huzzas conclude.	But now suppress thy further rhyme,
And now, withdrawn from public view,	And tell the rest another time.
What did the brethren say and do?	Once more, perhaps, the aproned train
Had I the force of Stentor's lungs,	Hereafter may invite thy strain;
A voice of brass, a hundred tongues,	Then Clio, with descending wing,
My tongues and voice and lungs would fail	Shall downward fly again and sing.

FINIS.

The following notes refer to the numerals scattered through the text. In their preparation I have freely availed myself of the material given in Sam Briggs' reprint and comments on the almanacs of Nathaniel Ames, with appendix of miscellaneous verses.

1. Joseph Green, born in Boston, Mass., 1506, graduated at Harvard University 1726, became a merchant, espoused the Royalist cause, was exiled, and died in England 1780. He had a great reputation as a wit. The following epitaph was written by a friend for his tombstone long before his death:

Siste, Viator! Here lies one
Whose life was whim, whose soul was pun;
And if you go too near his hearse,
He'll joke you both in prose and verse.

See also Tyler's "History of American Literature," Vol. II, pp. 48-49.

2. This is but the thinly-veiled nom-de-plume of Green.

3. Briggs says this refers to Charles Brockwell, assistant rector of King's Chapel, Boston. He was inducted in 1747 and died in 1755.

4. I see but two probable explanations of this peculiar reference. Briggs does not comment upon it, but to me it is most interesting. Is it but a poetical reference to the break of day, a reference to Phœbus, "whose rosy fingers ope the gates of morn?" Green was apt with such ideas. Somehow my instinct does not approve so fanciful an attempt to clear up the mention of scarlet aprons. The mere poetical allusion does not fully clear up the mention of scarlet, nor Green's familiarity with it in a Masonic connection.

The second thought is of course the more obvious one of the Royal Arch. Did these brethren wear the insignia of the R. A. whilst meeting as a Craft Lodge? Such a thing is now common among English Lodges, and this Boston Lodge was then a constituent of the Grand Lodge at London. Certainly if there was any likelihood of this Lodge being of Scottish origin we could expect it to have chosen a distin-

guishing color, and that color might have been scarlet. But the weight of history is to the effect that this was an English Lodge. Green does not give dates, and we can but surmise when this procession moved through the streets of Boston. It seems not unlikely that this was before we find any mention elsewhere of the Royal Arch, and as that degree was long ago worked under the authority of Craft Lodges, it may be that here we have a very early reference to the Royal Arch. However, note the dates given later in these notes of the participants in this church visitation.

5. An old legend frequently mentioned in allusion to superior oratory.
6. Patron saint of sailors.
7. Patron saint of shoemakers.
8. Presumably refers to tailors.
9. Patron saint of barbers.
10. Patron saint of rope-makers.
- 11 Of Stone's Tavern I have spoken in a previous article. It was evidently a favored resort by the fraternity.
12. Briggs gives this brother as Lewis Twiner.
13. The same authority says this brother is Pue.
14. Dr. Ashton, apothecary at Boston about 1738, died 1776, aged 74.
15. Luke Vardy, kept the "Royal Exchange" Tavern at Boston in 1733.
16. Francis Johannot, a distiller and prominent member of the Sons of Liberty, died 1775.

Once more adverting to the matter of dates, I have consulted Onderdonk's "History of American Verse," and find that (see pages 41-42) the book by Green, Mathew Byles and John Adams, entitled "Poems by Several Hands," appeared in 1744. Adams died in 1740. Onderdonk also says, on page 168, that "Byles and Green, among the last of the Puritan poets, left us some tiresome parodies and satires greatly admired in their day." Now Green published some of his effusions previously and separately, so that an earlier date of appearance than 1744 is possible. On the other hand, I have not examined a copy of the above compilation of his verses, and can not positively aver that the "Entertainment" is contained therein. It is quite likely that such is nevertheless the case, as Briggs' other excerpts are taken from the issue of 1744. When opportunity affords I shall do my best to gain the further evidence to definitely determine this question of dates. Meantime I welcome information upon it, and of this 1744 or earlier reference to the scarlet apron we identify with the Royal Arch.

Since I wrote the foregoing article I have consulted Drake's "History of Boston," and find, (see page 629) that the date of the Ma-

sonic procession satirized by Green is given as December 27, 1749. Drake also submits several names of the participants, which I have copied from his work for the benefit of those readers who will care to compare them with the initials given in the text of Green's poems. These names are Buck, James Perkins, Johnson, Wethred, Captain Benjamin Hallowell, Rea, ("probably Mr. John Rea, who kept in Butler's Row in 1748. He was a ship chandler."), Rowe, ("John Rowe was a merchant, an importer, kept on Belcher's Wharf in 1944. He lived on Essex street in 1760.") The notes in parentheses are by Drake. He also says that Price, "the Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master of New England," having resigned in 1736, was succeeded by Robert Tomlinson, and that the latter was followed by Thomas Oxnard in 1774. Tomlinson is therefore, in all probability, the "Right Worshipful" alluded to in the poem by Green.

It will probably be of general interest to note that Drake mentions the institution of the "Royal Arch Lodge" in Boston on August 28, 1769. It was afterwards called the "St. Andrews Chapter." (Drake's "History," page 772.) Of course it is commonly conceded by the standard histories of Freemasonry—see Brother Drummond's essay on the Royal Arch, in American edition of Brother Gould's famous work—that the R. A. degree was conferred in this country before that period under the authority of a Craft charter, or at any rate in Lodges usually working "Symbolic" degrees, (see also frontispiece to Hugan's "English Rite," new edition.) but evidently not prohibited by law or custom from practicing more advanced ceremonies. Hence it is nothing unreasonable to connect the "scarlet apron" with Royal Arch Masonry in Boston during 1739—an earlier date than I have elsewhere seen specifically claimed for it in America.

A letter of inquiry wherein I sought to establish the dates of consequence by copies of the title pages of Green's pamphlets, was very kindly answered by Horace G. Wadlin, librarian of the magnificent Public Library at Boston, Mass.:

The Library has the following copies of:

Green, Joseph. Entertainment for a Winter's Evening; being a full and true account of a very strange and wonderful sight seen in Boston on the twenty-seventh of December [1749] at noonday. The truth of which can be attested by a great number of people, who actually saw the same with their own eyes. By Me, the Hon'ble B. B. esq. Boston, pr. and sold by G. Rogers [1750], pp. 15, 8vo.

Same. Seen in Boston on the twenty-seventh of December, 1749. Second edition. Corrected. With an advertisement by the author. Boston; pr. and sold by G. Rogers, 1750: 15 pp. 8vo.

Same. . . . By Me; the Hon. B. B., Esq. (alias Jos. Green, Esq.) Boston: printed 1750, reprinted 1795, 12 pp. 8vo.

Mr. Wadlin also notes for me that the "Memorial History of Boston" refers to this occurrence in the following terms:

In 1749, December 27, on the Feast of St. John, occurred what was perhaps the first Masonic procession in Boston streets. It occasioned this satire in verse, which draws the pictures of the prominent Masons of the day.

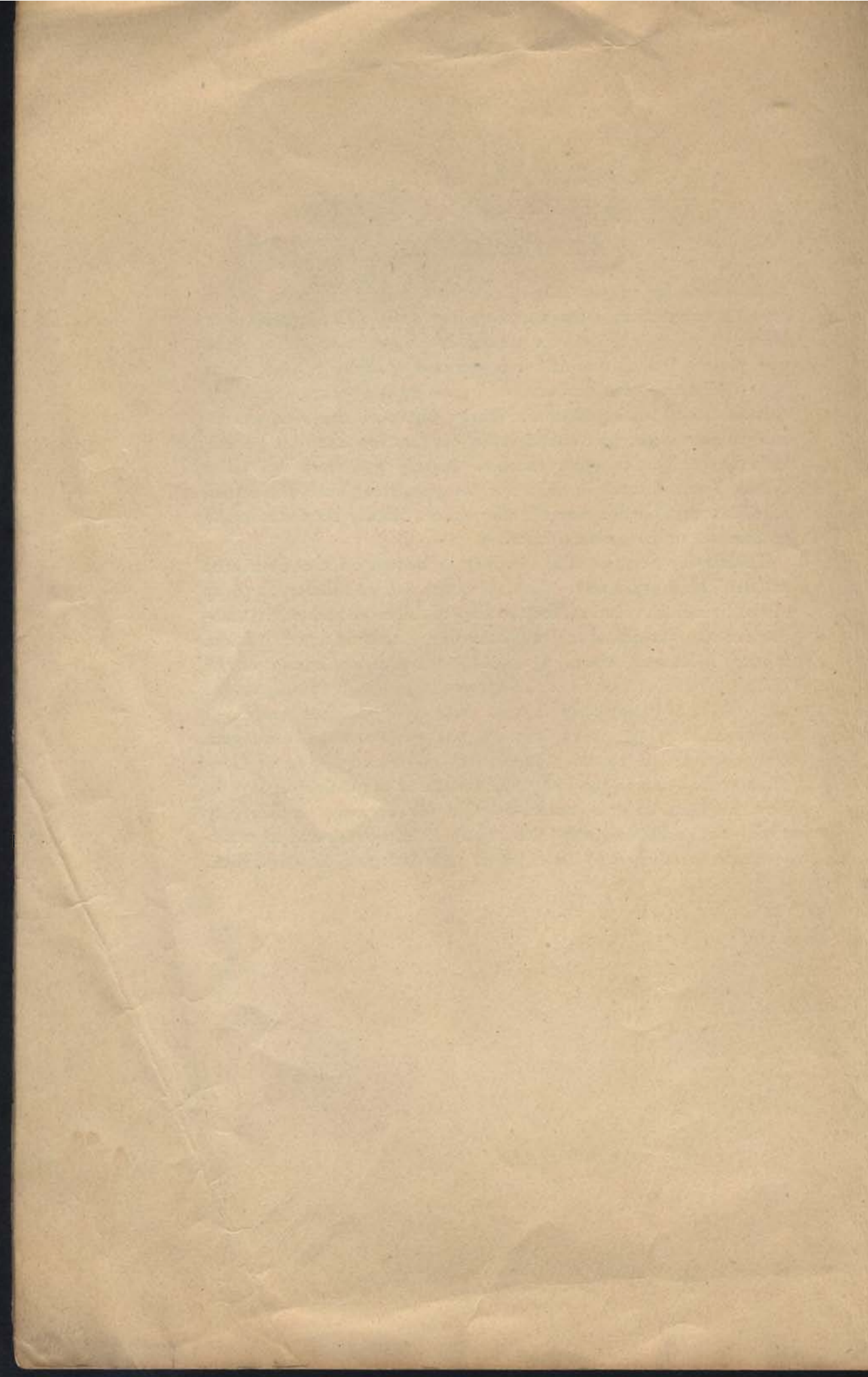


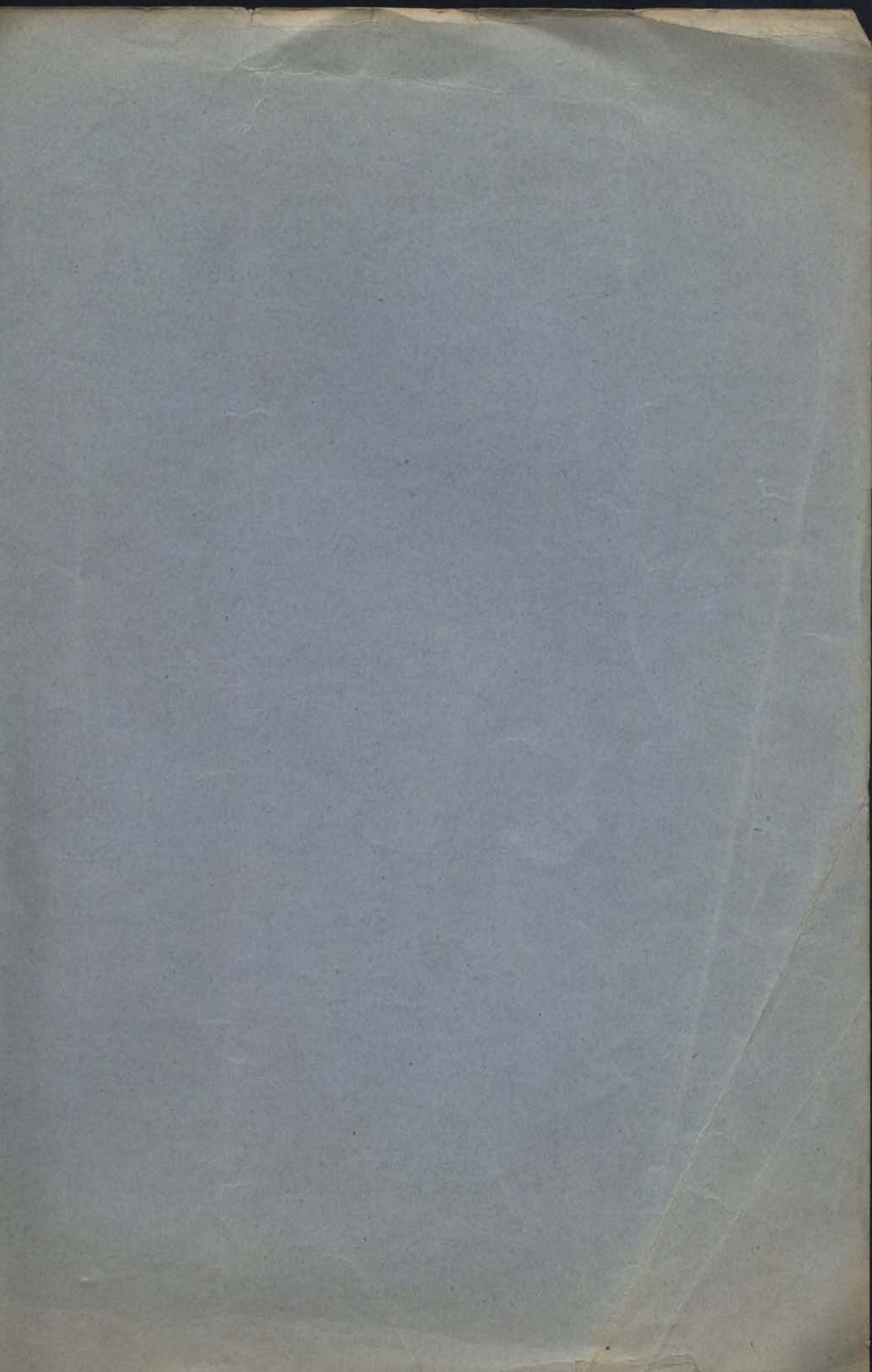
FROM A FREEMASON'S NOTE-BOOK

ADDITIONAL NOTE

Another angle of the "scarlet" apron is, matter of course, in its possible connection, even at that early date, with Scottish Rite Masonry. Far-fetched as the assumption might be to connect the two, yet it is well to remind the reader that while no positive claim is here made, there is nevertheless a growing conviction that early Scottish Rite Masonry does not receive the credit due it as a probable pioneer in the production of degrees that too often are unhesitatingly ascribed to other sources. Nearly a century ago Giles Fonda Yates entered a claim for the pioneering work of Scottish Rite Masonry, but his assertions have been usually been ascribed to enthusiasm rather than evidence.

To this day Scottish Rite Masonry is known on the Continent as "Red" Masonry, and to "Red" Masonry are we indebted, by way of the French Revolution, for the Cap of Liberty, and other associations of that era of militant Masonry remolding a great nation. Planted here, and tended by soldierly care, Freemasonry of the United States carries on it the impress of militant training on the battle-fields of Europe; and in that century of frequent warfare it is not unlikely that then, as now, the apron and the sword were close companions, touching hands with the Scottish Rite of Continental Europe and the less elaborate rite of pre-Colonial days in New England. Here, indeed, is room for research. Is there any close relation between the "scarlet" apron in Boston and its trans-Atlantic counterpart of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite?





The American Free- mason

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