

Anglo-Norman Charges 1356

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There seems no reason to doubt that No. 1 is the original Saxon Charge, but as there was a constant influx of French Masons from the time of the conquest, a pure French Charge must at one time have existed, and which has clearly been added to the older English documents.

The 1356 document is extracted from Gould's History of Freemasonry. It is of equal value with any that we have, and illustrates the old MSS. in an interesting way. In the first place the Laws are decreed by the very authorities which the Charges themselves appeal to, and "six or four ancient men of the trade" are required to testify on a Master taking on work. It settles the dispute between the Mason-hewers and the Light masons or setters, and places them both under sworn Elders or Ancients of the trade. It admits that there was no Court, and orders one to be sworn, which thus became the London Company of Masons, uniting Masons and Freemasons, of which the former had 4 representatives and the latter 2, but became now a United Company.

The text of the "Cooke" preface, as far as the same is complete, has been used for this document, the remainder being taken from the "Watson MS.," which is a document complete in itself, but with many errors of the copyist. The author speaks of "old books of Charges," existing before his time, and he has possibly mistaken "Martellus" for "Secundus," inasmuch as Charles Martel was not King but Regent, and only "came to his {538} kingdom" in his children, Charlemagne being his grandson, who had a grandson Charles II.

The Anglo-Norman Constitutions II

Regulations for the Trade of Masons, 30 Edward III., A.D. 1356

At a Congregation of Mayor and Aldermen holden on the Monday next before the purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary (2 Feby.) in the thirtieth year of the reign of King Edward III, etc., there being present Simon Fraunceys the Mayor, John Lovekyn, and other Aldermen, the Sheriffs, and John Little, Symon de Benyngtone, and William de Holbeche, commoners, certain Articles were ordained touching the trade of Masons, in these words: --

1. Whereas Simon Fraunceys, Mayor of the City of London, has been given to understand that divers dissensions and disputes have been moved in the said City, between the Masons who are "hewers" on the one hand, and the light-Masons and "setters" on the other; because that their trade has not been regulated in due manner by the government of Folks of their trade in such form as other trades are. Therefore the said Mayor, for maintaining the peace of our Lord the King, and for allaying such manner of dissensions and disputes, and for nurturing love among all manner of folks, in honour of the said City, and for the profit of the common people, by assent and counsel of the Aldermen and Sheriffs, caused all the good folks of the said trade to be summoned before him, to have from them good and due information how their trade might be best ordered and ruled, for the profit of the common people.

2. Whereupon the good folks of the said trade chose from among themselves twelve of the most skilful men of their trade, to inform the Mayor, Aldermen, and Sheriffs, as to the acts and articles touching their said trade; -- that is to say Walter de Sallynge, Richard de Sallynge, Thomas de Bredone, John de Tyringtone, Thomas de Gloucestre, and Henry de Yevelee, on behalf of the "Mason Hewers;" Richard Joye, Simon de Bartone, John de Estoune, John Wylot, Thomas Hardegray, and Richard de Cornewaylle on behalf of the "light-Masons and Setters;" which folks were sworn before the aforesaid Mayor, Aldermen, and Sheriffs, in manner as follows: --

3. In the first place that every man of the trade may work at any work touching the trade, if he be perfectly skilled and knowing in the same.

4. Also, that good folks of the said trade shall be chosen and sworn every time that need shall be, to Oversee that no one of the trade takes work to complete, if he does not well and perfectly know how to perform such work, on pain of losing, to the use of the commonality, the first time that he shall by the persons so sworn be convicted thereof, one mark; and the second time two marks; and the third time he shall forswear his trade for ever.

5. Also, that no one shall take work in gross, if he be not in ability in a proper manner to complete such work; and he who wishes to undertake such work in gross, shall come to the good men, of whom he has taken such work to do and complete, and {543} shall bring with him "Six" or "Four" Ancient men of his trade, sworn thereunto, if they are prepared to testify unto the good men of whom he has taken such work to do, that he is skilful and of ability to do such work, and that if he shall fail to complete such work in due manner, or not to be of ability to do the same, they themselves who so testify that he is skilful and of ability to finish the work are bound to complete the same work, well and properly, at their own charges, in such manner as he undertook; in case the employer who owns the work shall

have fully paid the workman. And if the employer shall then owe him anything let him pay it to the persons who have so undertaken for him to complete such work.

6. Also, that no one shall set an apprentice or journeyman to work, except in the presence of his Master, before he has been perfectly instructed in his calling; and he who shall do the contrary, and by the person so sworn be convicted thereof, let him pay the first time to the commonality half a mark, and the second time one mark, and the third time 20 shillings; and so let him pay 20 shillings every time that he shall be convicted thereof.

7. Also, that no man of the said trade shall take an Apprentice for a less time than seven years, according to the usage of the City; and he who shall do the contrary thereof, shall be punished in the same manner.

8. Also; that the said Masters so chosen, shall see that all those who work by the day shall take for their hire according as they are skilled and may deserve for their work, and not outrageously.

9. Also, that if any one of the said trade will not be ruled or directed in due manner by the persons of his trade sworn thereto, such sworn persons are to make known his name unto the Mayor, and the Mayor by assent of the aldermen and sheriffs shall cause him to be chastised by imprisonment, and other punishment, so that rebels may take example by him, to be ruled by the good folks of their trade.

10. Also, that no one of the said trade shall take the Apprentice of another to the prejudice or damage of his Master, until his term shall have fully expired, on pain of paying, to the use of the commonality, half a mark each time that he shall be convicted thereof.