Cooke Manuscript with translation - ca 1390-1450
The Matthew Cooke Manuscript with translation
Transcribed and reformatted by Gary L. Heinmiller, OMHDS

Next to the Regius the oldest manuscript is that known as the Cooke. It was published by R. Spencer, London, 1861 and was edited by Mr. Matthew Cooke, hence his name. In the British Museum's catalogue it is listed as "Additional M.S. 23,198", and has been dated by Hughan at 1450 or thereabouts, an estimate in which most of the specialists have concurred. Dr. Begemann believed the document to have been "compiled and written in the southeastern portion of the western Midlands, say, in Gloucestershire or Oxfordshire, possibly also in southeast Worcestershire or southwest Warwickshire. The 'Book of Charges' which forms the second part of the document is certainly of the 14th century, the historical or first part, of quite the beginning of the 15th." (A.Q.C. IX, page 18) The Cooke MS. was most certainly in the hands of Mr. George Payne, when in his second term as Grand Master in 1720 he compiled the "General Regulations", and which Anderson included in his own version of the "Constitutions" published in 1723. Anderson himself evidently made use of lines 901-960 of the MS.

The Lodge Quatuor Coronati reprinted the Cooke in facsimile in Vol. II of its Antigrapha in 1890, and included therewith a Commentary by George William Speth which is, in my own amateur opinion, an even more brilliant piece of work than Gould's Commentary on the Regius. Some of Speth's conclusions are of permanent value. I paraphrase his findings in my own words:

The M.S. is a transcript of a yet older document and was written by a Mason. There were several versions of the Charges to a Mason in circulation at the time. The MS. is in two parts, the former of which is an attempt at a history of the Craft, the latter of which is a version of the Charges. Of this portion Speth writes that it is "far and away the earliest, best and purest version of the 'Old Charges' which we possess." The MS. mentions nine "articles", and these evidently were legal enforcements at the time; the nine "points" given were probably not legally binding but were morally so. "Congregations" of Masons were held here and there but no "General Assembly" (or "Grand Lodge"); Grand Masters existed in fact but not in name and presided at one meeting of a congregation only. "Many of our present usages may be traced in their original form to this manuscript."

Reprinted from an editorial by Bro. H.L. Haywood in the September 1923 edition of The Builder

Original

Thonkyd be god[fol. 4]
our glorious
fadar and [ojun]
der and former of heuen
and of erthe and of all
thyngis that in hym is
that he wole foche[s]jaue of
his glorious god hed for to
make [s]o mony thyngis of d
uers verta for mankyrd,[10]
flor he mader all thyngis for
to be abedient & [s]oget to man
flor all thyngis that ben come[s]
tible of hol[s]ome nature he
ordeyned hit for many[s] [s]usty[fol.4 b.]
naj[s]. And all to be hath yf
to man wittys and cony[n]g
of dyver[s] thyngys and craft
tys by the whiche we may
trauayle in this worlde to [20]
gete [wit] our lyuyg to make
dyvers thingys to goddis ple
[s]ans and also for our ejs[e] and
profytl. The whiche thingis
if I [s]cholde reher[s]je hem hit
wre to longe to telle and to
wryte. Wherfor I wolle leue,
but I [s]chall [s]chew you [s]ome
that is to [s]ey ho and in what[fol. 5]
wyse the [s]ciens of Gimetry[30]
fr[s] the game and who [wer]
the founders thereof and of
othur craftis mo as hit is no
tid in [the] bybill and in othur
[s]ories.
HOW and in what ma
ner [th]at this worthy
[ls]ciens of Gimetry be gan I
wole tell you as I sayde bi
fore. ye [s]chall undirstonde[40]
[that] [ther] ben vij] [libera]l [s]ciens
by the whiche vij] [all ] [s]ciens
and craftis in the world were[fol. 5 b.]
fy[r][s]te founde. and in especial

‘Translation’

Thanked be God,
our glorious
father and found-
er and former of Heaven
and of earth and of all
things that in him is,
that he would vouchsafe, of
his glorious God-head, for to
make so many things of di
vers virtue for mankind;
for He made all things for
to be obedient and subject to man,
for all things that are comes
tible of wholesome nature he
ordained it for mans suste-
nance. And also he hath given
to man wits and cunning of
divers things, and crafts,
by the which we may
travel in this world to
get with our living to make
divers things to God's plea-
sure, and also for our ease and
profit. The which things
if I should rehearse them it
were too long to tell, and to
write. Wherefore I will leave (them),
but I shall shew you some,
that is to say how, and in what
wise, the science of Geometry
first began, and who were
the founders thereof, and of
other crafts more, as it is noted
in the Bible and in other
stories.
How and in what man-
er that this worthy
science of geometry began, I
will tell you, as I said be-
fore. Ye shall understand
that there be 7 liberal sciences,
by the which 7 all sciences
and crafts, in the world, were
first found, and in espesial

for he is causer of all, that is to say the science of geometry of all other that be, the which 7 sciences ben called thus. As for the first, that is called [the] fundament of science, his name is grammar, he teachteth a man rightfully to speak and to write truly. The second is rhetoric, and he teacheth a man to speak formably and fair. The third is dialecticus, and that science teacheth a man to discern the trouth, from the false, and commonly it is called art or sophistry. The fourth is called arithmetic, the which teacheth a man the craft of numbers, for to reckon and to make account of all things. The fifth is geometry, the which teacheth a man a tell all the metcon, and measures, and ponderacion of weights of all mans craft. The sixth is music, that teacheth a man the craft of song, in notes of voice and organ, and trumpet, and harp, and of all others pertaining to them. The seventh is astronomy, that teacheth man the course of the sun, and of the moon, and of other stars and planets of heaven. Our intent is principally to treat of [the] first foundation of the worthy science of geometry, and we were the foundes thereof, as I said before. There are 7 liberal sciences, that is to say, 7 sciences, or crafts, that are free in themselves, the which 7 live only by geometry. And geometry is as much to say as the measure of the earth. “Et sic dicitur a geo ge quin R ter a latin et metron quod est mensura. Una Geometria in mensura terra vel terrarum,” that is to say in English, that gemetria is, I said, of geo that is in gru, earth, and metron, that is to say measure, and thus is this name of Gemetria comounded and is said to be the measure of the earth. Marvel ye not that I said, that all sciences live all only, by the science of geometry, for there is none of them artificia. No handicraft is that wrought by mans hand but it is wrought by geometry, and a notable cause, for if a man work with his hands he worketh with some manner of tool, and there is none instrument of material things, in this world but it come[s] of the kind of earth, and to earth it will turn again, and there is none instrument, that is to say a tool to work with, but it hath some proportion, more or less. And proportion is measure,
the tool, or the instrument, is earth. And geometry is said [to be] the measure of [the] earth, Wherefore, I may say that men live all by geometry, for all men here in this world live by the labour of their hands. Many more probations I will tell you, why that geometry is the science that all reasonable men live by, but I leave it, at this time, for the long process of writing. And now I will proceed further on my matter. Ye shall understand that among all the crafts of the world, of man's craft, masonry hath the most notability and most part of this science, geometry, as it is noted and said in history, as in the Bible, and in the master of history. And in [the] Policronicon a chronicle printed, and in the histories that is named Bede. "De Imagine Mundi;" et Isodorus "Ethomolegiarum." Methodius, Episcopus et Martiris, and others, many more, said that masonry is principal of geometry, as me thinketh it may well be said, for it was the first that was founded, as it is noted in the Bible, in the first book of Genesis in the 4th chapter; and also all the doctors aforesaid accordeth thereto, and some of them saith it more openly, and plainly, right as it saith in the Bible, Genesis.

Adam's line lineal son, descending down the 7th age of Adam before Noah's flood, there was a man that was named Lamech the which had 2 wives, the one hight Adah, and another Zillah; by the first wife, that hight Adah, he begat 2 sons that one hight Jabal, and the other hight Jubal. The elder son, Jabal, he was the first man that ever found geometry and masonry, and he made houses, and [is] named in the Bible "Pater habitancium in tentoriis atque pastorum," that is to say, father of men dwelling in tents, that is, dwelling houses. And he was Cain's master mason, and governor of all his works, when he made the city of Enock, that was the first city; That was the first city that ever was made, and that made Cain, Adam's son, and gave to his own son Enoch, and gave the city the name of his son, and called it Enoch. And now it is called Ephraim, and there was
The science of Geometry, and masonry, first occupied, and contended, for a science and for a craft, and so we may say that it was [the] cause and foundation of all crafts, and sciences, and also this man, Jaball, was called "pater pastorum."

The master of stories saith, and Bede, De Imagi Mundi, [the] Policronicon, and other more say that he was the first that made depreciation of land, that every man might know his own ground, and labour thereon, as for his own. And also he departed flocks of sheep, that every man might know his own sheep, and so we may say that he was the first founder of that science. And his brother Juball, or Tubal, was [the] founder of music and song, as Pythagoras saith in [the] Policronicon and the same saith Isodore in his Ethemologies, in the 6th book, there he saith that he was the first founder of music, and song, and of organ and trumpet, and he found that science by the sound of ponderation of his brother's hammers, that was Tubal Cain.

Soothly as the Bible saith in the chapter, that is to say, the 4th of Genesis, that he saith Lamech begot upon his other wife, that hight Zillah, a son and a daughter, the names of them were called Tubal Cain, that was the son, and his daughter was called Naamah, and as the Policronicon saith, that some men say that she was Noah's wife: whether it be so, or no, we affirm it not. Ye shall understand that this son Tubal Cain was [the] founder of smiths' craft, and of other crafts of metal, that is to say, of iron, of brass, of gold, and of silver, as some doctors say, and his sister Naamah was finder of weavers-craft, for before that time was no cloth woven, but they did spin yarn and knit it, and made them such clothing as they could, but as the woman Naamah found the craft of weaving, and therefore it was called women's craft, and of these 3 brethren, aforesaid, had knowledge that God would take vengeance for sin, either by fire, or water, and they had greater care how they might do to save the sciences that they found, and they took their counsel together and, by all their wits,
By water that the other stone would not burn, and that stone is called marble, and that the other stone will not sink in water and that stone is named latres, and so they devised to write all the sciences that they had found in these 2 stones, so if that God would take vengeance, by fire, that the marble should not burn. And if God sent vengeance, by water, that the other should not drown, and so they prayed their elder brother Jabal that he would make 2 pillars of these 2 stones, that is to say of marble and of latres, and that he would write in the 2 pillars all the science[s], and crafts, that all they had found, and so he did and therefore, we may say that he was most cunning in science, for he first began and performed the before Noah's flood. Kindly knowing of that vengeance, that God would send, whether it should be by fire, or by water, the brethren had it not by a manner of a prophecy, they wist that God would send one there-of, and therefore they wrote their science[s] in the 2 pillars of stone, and some men say that they wrote in the stones all the 7 science[s], but as they [had] in their mind[s] that a vengeance should come. And so it was that God sent vengeance so that there came such a flood that all the world was drowned, and all men were dead therein, save 8 persons, And that was Noah, and his wife, and his three sons, and their wives, of which 3 sons all the world came of, and their names were named in this manner, Shem, Ham, and Japhet. And this flood was called Noah's flood, for he, and his children, were saved therein. And after this flood many years, as the chronicler telleth, these 2 pillars were found, and as the Polycronicon saith, that a great clerk that [was] called Pythag/oras found that one, and Hermes, the philosopher, found that other, and they taught forth the sciences that they found therein written. Every chronicler, and history, and many other clerks, and the Bible in principal, witnesses of the making of the tower of Babel, and it is written in the Bible, Genesis Chapter x., how that Ham, Noah's son begot Nimrod, and he waxed a mighty man upon the earth, and he waxed a strong
man like a giant, and he was a great king. And the beginning of his kingdom was [that of the] true kingdom of Babylon, and Arach, and Achad, and Calan, and the land of Sennare. And this same Nimrod began the tower of Babylon . . . and he taught to his workmen the craft of measures, and he had with him many masons, more than 40 thousand. And he loved and cherished them well. And it is written in [the] Policronicon, and in the master of stories, and in other stories more, and this in part witnesseth [the] Bible, in the same x. chapter [of Genesis,] where he saith that Asur, that was nigh [of] kin to Nimrod, [and] went out of the land of Senare and he built the city [of] Nineveh, and Plateas, and other more, this he saith “de tra illa et de Sennare egressus est Asur, et edificavit Nineven et Plateas civitatum et Cale et Jesu quoque, inter Nineven et hoec est Civitas magna.”

Reason would that we should tell openly how, and in what manner, that the charges of mason-craft was first founded and who gave first the name of it of masonry. And ye shall know well that it is told and written in [the] Policronicon and in Methodius episcopus and Martyrus that Asure, that was a worthy lord of Sennare, sent to Nimrod the king, to send him masons and workmen of craft that might help him to make his city that he was in will to make. And Nimrod sent him 30 [380] hundred of masons. And when they should go and [he should] send them forth he called them before him and said to them—“Ye must go to my cousin Asur, to help him to build a city; but look [to it] that ye be well governed, and I shall give you a charge profitable for you and me. When ye come to that lord [390] loke [that] ye be trewe to hym lyke as ye wolde be to me, and truly do your labour and craft, and take reason- able your mede [ther]for as ye may desierue and al[s]o [that] ye love to gedyr as ye were bre[th]eryn and holde to gedyr truly. & he [that] hath most c[on]yn[g] teche hit to hys felaw and[400] louke ye goureyn and koon ye ayen[st] yowr lord and a monge yowr selfe. [that] I may haue worchyppe and thanke for me [s]endyng and techyng you the crafte. and [they re]ceyuyd the charge of hym [that] was here [Fol. 18 b.] mai[ls]iter and here torde, and wente forthe to a[s]ure &
built the city of Ninevah, in the country of Nineveh, in the country of Plateas, and other cities more that men call Cale and Jesen, that is a great city between Cale and Nineveh.

And in this manner the craft of masonry was first preferred and charged it for a science.

Elders that were before us, of masons, had these charges written to them as we have now in our charges of the story of Euclid, as we have seen them written in Latin and in French both; but how that Euclid came to [the knowledge of] geometry reason would we should tell you as it is noted in the Bible and in other stories. In the twelfth chapter of Genesis he telleth how that Abraham came to the Land of Canaan, and our Lord appeared to him and said, I shall give this land to thy seed; but there fell a great hunger in that land, and Abraham took Sarah, his wife, with him and went into Egypt in pilgrimage, [and] while the hunger endured he would abide there. And Abraham, as the chronicle saith, he was a wise man and a great clerk, and couthe all the 7 sciences and taught the Egyptians the science of geometry. And this worthy clerk, Euclid, was his clerk and learned of him. And he gave the first name of geometry, all be that it was occupied before it had no name of geometry. But it is said of Isodour, Ethemologiarum, in the 5th booke Ethemologiarum, capitolo primo, saith that Euclid was one of the first founders of geometry, and he gave it [that] name, for in his time that was a wat[e]r in [there] ter in that land of Egypt, that is called [the] Nile, and it flowed so far into the land that men might not dwell therein. Then this worthy clerk, Euclid, taught them to make great walls and ditches to holde out the water; and he, by geometry, measured the land, and departed it in divers parts, and made every man close his own part with walls and ditches, and then it became a plenteous country of all manner of fruit and of young people, of men and women, that there was so much people of young fruit that they could not well live. And the lords of the country drew them [selves] together and made a council[480] how they might help her children that had no livelihood,
competent and able, for to find themselves and their children for thy had so many. And among them all in council was this worthy clerk Euclid, and when he saw that all they could not bring about this matter he said to them—"Will ye take your sons in governance, and I shall teach them such science that they shall live thereby gentlemanly, under condition that ye will be sworn to me to perform the governance that I shall set you to and them both." And the king of the land and all the lords, by one assent, granted thereto. Reason would that every man would grant to that thing that were profitable to himself, and they took their sons to Euclid to govern them at his own will, and he taught to them the craft, masonry, and gave it the name of geometry, because of the parting of the ground that he had taught to the people, in the time of the making of the walls and ditches aforesaid, to close out the water, and Isodore saith, in his Ethemologies, that Euclid calleth the craft geometry; and there was this worthy clerk gave it name, and taught it the lords' sons of the land that he had in his teaching. And he gave them a charge that they should call here each other fellow, and no otherwise, because that they were all of one craft, and of one gentle birth born, and lords' sons. And also he that were most of cunning should be governor of the work, and should be called master, and other charges more that are written in the book of charges. And so they wrought with lords of the land, and made cities and towns, castles and temples, and lords' palaces. What time that the children of Israel dwelt in Egypt they learned the craft of masonry. And afterward, when they were driven out of Egypt, they came into the land of behest and is now called Jerusalem, and it was occupied and charges there hel. And the making of Solomon's temple that king David began. (King David loved well masons, and he gave them right nigh as they be now.) And at the making of the temple in Solomon's time as it.
is said in the Bible, in the 3rd book of Regum in tercio
Regum capitolo quinto, that Solomon had 4 score
thousand masons at his work. And the king’s
son, of Tyre, was his master mason. And in other chroni-
cles it is said, and in old books of masonry, that
Solomon confirmed the charges that David, his father, had
given to masons. And Solo-
mon himself taught them
there manners [with] but little [their ?]
difference from the manners
that now are used. And from
thence this worthy science
was brought into France
and into many other regions
Sometime there was
a worthy king in
France that was called Car-
rolus secundus, that is to say,
Charles the Second, and this
Charles was elected king
of France, by the grace of
God and by lineage also. And
some men say that he was
elected by fortune, the which
is false, as by the [the] chronicle he
was of the king’s blood
royal. And this same King,
Charles, was a mason
before that he was king, and
after that he was king, he
loved masons and cherished them,
and gave them charges and
manners at his device, of the which
some are yet used in France;
and he ordained that they
should have an assembly once
in the year, and come and
speak together, and for to be
ruled by masters and fellows
of all things amiss.
And soon after that came
Saint Adhabell into England,
and converted Saint Alban
to Christianity. And Saint
Alban loved well masons,
and he gave them first their
charges and manners first
in England. And he or-
dained convenient [times] to pay
for the travail. And after
that was a worthy king
in England that was called
Athelstan, and his young-
est son loved well the
science of geometry, and
he wist well that hand-craft
had the practice of the science of
geometry so well as masons, wherefore he
drew him to council and learn-
ed [the] practice of that science
to his speculative, for of specu-
lative he was a master,
and he loved well mason-
ry and masons. And
he became a mason him-
self, and he gave them charges
and names as it is now used in England, and in other countries. And he ordained that they should have reasonable pay and purchased a free patent of the king that they should make an assembly when they saw a reasonable time and come together to their councillors of which charges, manners, and assembly, as it is written and taught in the book of our charges, wherefore I leave it at this time.

Good men for this cause and this manner masonry took its first beginning. It befel sometime that great lords had not so great possessions that they might not advance their free begotten children, for they had so many, therefore they took counsel how they might their children advance and ordain them honestly to live. And they sent after wise masters of the worthy science of geometry that they, through their wisdom, should ordain them some honest living.

Then one of them, that had the name which was called Englet, that was most subtle and wise founder, ordained an art and called it Masonry, and so with his art, honestly, he taught the children of great lords, by the prayer of the fathers and the free will of their children, the which when they [were] taught with high care, by a certain time, they were not all alike able for to take of the [a]foresaid art wherefore the [a]foresaid master, Englet, ordained [that] they [who] were passing of cunning should be passing honored, and ded to call the cunninger master for to inform the less of cunning masters, of the which were called masters, of nobility of wit and cunning of that art. Nevertheless they commanded that they that were less of wit should not be called servant, nor subject, but fellow, for nobility of their gentle blood. In this manner was the [a]foresaid art begun in the land of Egypt, by the [a]foresaid master Englet, and so it went from land to land, and from kingdom to kingdom. After that, many years, in the time of King Athelstan, which was some time king of England, by his councillors, and other greater lords of the land, by common assent, for great default found among masons, they ordained a certain rule.
amongst them: one time of the year, or in 3 years as need were to the king and great lords of the land, and all the comonalty, from province to province, and from country to country, congregations should be made, by masters, of all masters, masons, and fellows in the [a]foresaid art, and so, at such congregations, they that be made masters should be examined, of the articles after written, and be ransacked whether they be able and cunning to the pro-
fit of the lords [having] them to serve and to the honour of the [a]foresaid art. And, moreover, they should receive their charge that they should well and truly dis-
pend the goods of their lords, as well the lowest as the highest, for they be their lords, for the time, of whom they take their pay for their service and for their travail. The first Article is this,--That every master of this art should be wise and true to the lord that he serveth, dispensing his goods truly as he would his own
were dispensed, and not give more pay to no mason than he wot he may deserve, after the death of corn and victual in the country, no favour withstanding, for every man to be rewarded after his travail. The second Article is this,--That every master of this art should be warned, before, to come to his congregation, that they come duly, but if they may be excused by some manner [of] cause. But, nevertheless, if they be found rebellious at such con-
gregations, or faulty in any manner [of] harm of their lords, and reproof of this art, they should not be excused in no manner [with]out taking peril of death, and though they be in peril of death, they shall warn the master that is principal of the gathering of his decease. The [third] Article is this,--That no master take no [a]prentice for [a] less term than 7 year[a] at the least, because such as be within [a] less term may not, profitably, come to his art nor able to serve, truly, his lord [and] to take as a mason should take. The 4th Article is this,-- That no master, for no profit, take no [a]prentice, for to be learned, that is born of bond blood, for, because of his lord, to whom he is bond, will take him as he well may, from his art and lead him, with him, out of his lodge, or out of his place [that] he wot, to serve truly his lord to take as a mason [a]chulde take. The 3[iii] article is [this] [that] no ma[ster] for no [pro]fyte take no prentis for to be lernyd that is bore of bonde blode fore bi cau[s]e of his lordo to whom he is bonde wold tak[e] hym as he well may fro[770] his art & rede hym [with] hym out of his logge or out of his place [that] he wortyeth in for his felaus [per]auen[ter] wold help
hym and deyte for hym, and
thereof man[s]laughter my[g]t
ry[s]e hit is forbede. And also
for a nother cau[s]e of his art
hit toke begynynyng of grete
lords' children freely begot[yn]n[780]
as hit is, [i]seyd bi for. The
v. article is thys [that] no ma[s]ter
yet more to his prentis in
tyme of his prentis;[h]ode for
no [pro]phite to be take than he[Fol 32.]
note well he may di[s]erue
of [the] lorde [that] he [s]eruith [nor] not
[s]o moche [that] [the] lorde of [the] place
[that] he is taught ll[ne] may
haue |
chyn. The vii. article is
this [that] no ma[s]ter for no coue
ty[s]e ne[r] [pro]phite take no p[r]en
is to teche [that] is un[per]fyte [that]
is to [s]ey havyng any ma[y]m
for [the] whiche he may not
trewely worche as hym
ought for to do. The vii.[i].
article is this [that] np ma[s]ter bi[Fol. 32 b.]
y founde wittyngly or help[800]
or [pro]cur[e] to be manyte[ner] &
[s]uis[tey]ner any comyn ny[g]lwai
ker to robbe bi the whiche
ma[ner] of ny[g]waken[gl]
thei may not fullfyll [ther] day[s]
werke and trauell thorow
[the]con[dic]ion he[r] felauus my[g]t
be made wrowthe. The vii[i].
article is this [that] yf hit befall
[that] any ma[s]ion [that] be [it be][pro]fyte and[810]
con[nyng come for to [s]ece
werke and fynde any vn[per]fit
and vn[kun]ynng worchyn[g][Fol. 33.]
[the] ma[s]ter of [the] place [s]ichall re
ceyue [the] [per]frite and do a way [the]
vn[pro]phite to [the] [pro]ffite of his lord
The ix. article is this [th]at
no ma[s]ter[s] ichall supplant
a nother for hit is [s]eyd in [the]
art of ma[s]yon [that] no man[820]
[s]chole make ende [s]o well
of werke bigne [bi] a no
ther to [the] [pro]ffite of his lorde
as he bigan hit for to end
hit bi his maters or to wh[om]e
he [s]cheweth his maters.
This counsell ys made bi dy[Fol. 33 b.]
uers lords & ma[s]ters of
dyvers [pro]vynces and diu[er]s
con[gagacions of ma[s]yon[830]
and hit is to wyte [that] who [that]
covetyth for to come to the
[s]tate of [that] for[s]eyd art hit be
hoveth hym fyrst [pr]incypally
to god and holy chyrche &
all halowis and his mas[ter]
and his felowis as his a[v]m[e
brotheryn. The seconde poyn[t]
he mo[s]t fulfylle his days
werke truly [that] he takyth for[840]
his pay. The iiii. [poyn]t he can[Fol. 34.]
hele the counsell of his felo[ws]
in logge and in chambere
and e[uer]y place [ther] as ma[s]ion[s
beth. The iiii. poyn[t] [that] he be
do [di[s]eyver of [the] for[s]eyd art
ne do no [pre]judice ne [s]uis[tey]ne
him and debate for him, and
thereof manslaughter might
[a]rise, it is forbid[den.] And also
for another cause of his art,
it took beginning of great
lords' children, freely begotten,
as it is said before. The
6th Article is this, [th]at no master
give more to his [ap]prentice in
time of his [ap]prenticeshood,
for no profit to be take[n], than he
note[s] well he may deserve
of the lord that he serveth, nor not
so much that the lord, of the place
that he is taught [[ne] may
have some profit of his teach-
ing. The 6th Article is
this [th]at no master for no coveteous-
ness, nor profit, take no [ap]pre-
tice to teach that is imperfect, that
is to say, having any maim
for the which he may not
truly work as he
ought for to do. The 7th
Article is this, [th]at no master be
found wittyngly, or help
or procure, to be [a] maintainer and
sustainer [of] any common night wal-
kro to rob, by the which
manner of night-walking
they may not fullfyll their day's
work and travall, [and] through
the condition their fellows might
be made wroth. The 8th
Article is this, [th]at if it befall
any mason that be perfect, and
cunning, come for to seek
work and find an imperfect
and uncutting working,
the master of the place shall re-
ceive the perfect, and do away the
imperfect, to the profit of his lord.
The 9th Article is this, [th]at
no master shall supplant
another for it is said, in the
art of masonry, that no man
should make end so well
of work begun by ano-
ther, to the profit of his lord,
as he [that] began it, for to end
it by his maters, or to whom
he sheweth his maters.
This council is made by di-
vers lords and masters of
divers provinces and divers
congregations of masonry
and it is, to wit, that who [that]
covethyth for to come to the
[s]tate of [the] [a]foresaid art it be-
hoveth them first, principally,
to God and holy church, and
all-halowis, and his master
and his fellows as his own
brethren. The second Point,--
He must fullfyll his day's
work truly that he taketh for
his pay. The 3rd [Point].--That he can
hele the counsell of his felo[ws]
in lodge, and in chamber,
and in every place there as Masons
be. The 4th Point,--That he be
no deceiver of the [a]foresaid art,
or do no prejudice, nor sustain
no articles, against the art, nor against none of the art, but he shall sustain it in all honour, inasmuch as he may. The 5th Point,—When he shall take his pay, that he take it meekly, as the time is ordained by the master to be done, and that he fulfill the acceptations of travail, and of rest, ordained and set by the master. The 6th Point,—If any discord shall be between him and his fellows he shall obey him meekly, and be still at the bidding of his master, or of the warden of his master, in his master’s absence, to the holy-day following, and that he accord then at the disposition of his fellows, anon upon the work-day for letting of their work and profit of his lord. The 7th Point,—That he covet not the wife, not the daughter, of his masters, neither of his fellows, but if it be in marriage, nor hold concubines, for discord that might fall amongst them. The 8th Point,—If it befal him for to be warden under his master, that he be true mean between his master and his fellows, and that he be busy in the absence of his master to the honour of his master and profit of the lord that he serveth. The 9th Point,—If he be wiser, and subtler than his fellow working with him in his lodge, or any other place, and he perceive it that he should leave the stone that he worketh upon, for default of cunning, and can teach him and amend the stone, he shall inform him and help him, that the more love may increase among them, and that the work of the lord be not lost. When the master and the fellows be forewarned [and] are come to such congregations, if need be, the Sheriff of the Country, or the Mayor of the City, or Alderman of the Town, in which the congregations is holden, shall be fellow, and [as] sociate, to the master of the congregation, in help of him, against rebels and [for the] up-bearing the right of the realm. At the first beginning new men, that never were charged before, be charged in this manner,—That [they] should never be thieves, nor thieves’ maintainers, and that [they] should truly fulfil their day’s work, and travail, for their pay that they shall take of their lord, and [a] true account
yeue to here felaus in th[yn]
gys [that] be to be a countyd of
hem and to here and hem
loue as hem |s|elfe and they
|s|hall be trow to the kyenge
of englond and to the reme
and that they kepe with [all |ther|
my|g|t|] and all the articles
a for |s|ay|d. Af[ter] that hit s|chall[930]
be enqueryd if any ma[s]|ter| or
felaw that is y warnyd haue
y broke any article be for|s|ayd
the whiche if they haue done
hit schall be de termyned [ther].
Therefore hit is to wyte if
any ma[s]|ter| or felawe that is
warnyd bfore to come to
[s|uch c|on|gregac|on|ns and be
rebell and woff not come [Fol. 37 b.]
els haue tre|s|pa|s||s|ed a yen|s|t
any article befor|s|ayd if hit
may be |pro|y|d he s|chall for|-;
|s|were his ma[j]|or|ni and s|chal
no more ve|s|e hi craft. The
which he if he |pre|s|ume for to do
|the| Sc|her|ef|e of [the] countr[e] [in] [the] which
he may be founde worchyn[ge]
he |s|chall pr[i]|s|on him |m| & take all
his godsy [in] to [the] kynges hand[950]
tyll his |g|r[a]ce be [g]ra[n]tyd him |m| & y |s|che
wed for [this] cau|s|e [e |pr|ic|icipally w|her
|th|ese c|on|gregac|on|ns ben y ordeyned
that as well the lowist as[Fol 38.]
as the hie|s|t |s|chald be well
and trewely y |s|eruyd in
his art bfore|s|ayd throw
owt all the kyngdom of
Englond. Amen |s|o mote
hit be[960]
give to their fellows, in things
that be to be accounted of
them, and to hear, and them
love as themselves. And they
shall be true to the King
of England, and to the realm,
that they keep, with all their
might, and all the Articles
afresaid. After that it shall
be enquired if any master, or
fellow, that is warned, have
broke[n] any Article afresaid,
the which, if they have done,
it shall be determined there.
Therefore, it is to wit, if
any master, or fellow, that is
warned before to come to
such congregations and be
rebell[ious], and will not come, or
else have trespassed against
any Article afresaid, if it
may be proved, he shall for-
swear his Masonry and shall
no more use his craft; the
which, if he presume for to do,
the Sheriff of the Country, in which
he may be found working,
he shall [im]prison him and take all
his goods into the King's hand
till his grace be granted him and shew-
ed. For this cause, principally, where
these congregations ordained
that as well the lowest, as
the highest, should be well
and truly served in
his art, before said, through-
out all the kingdom of
England. Amen. So
Mote it be.

Quatuor Coronatorum Antigrapha

These texts are transcribed from: The History and Articles of Masonry; (Now first published from a MS. in the British Museum.), Dedicated, by permission, to, The W. Bro. John Havers, Esq., P.S.G.D., President of the Board of General Purposes, by the Editor, Matthew Cooke. London: Bro. Richard Spencer, 26 Great Queen Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields, W.C., and of the editor, 78, George Street, Euston Road, N.W., 1861. Printed by Bro. J.H. Gaball, at the office of "The Freemasons' Magazine," Salisbury Street, Strand, W.C. [163 pages plus 10 page Preface and a list of subscribers.]

he facsimile and sketch are the work of Mr. F. Compton Price, accompanying G.W. Speth's corrected version, as printed in Quatuor Coronatorum Antigrapha Vol. II, 1890. Additional notes: In both Speth's and Cooke's published editions line 899 has been numbered 900, so there are in fact only 959 lines in the poem. Either this was an error, or both copyist chose to count the appended line at the bottom of Fol. 35 b. as a full line. If this was the case, it was inconsistent with the numbering of earlier appended lines. The original handlettered manuscript made use of a number of abbreviations and characters not found in current usage. These are highlighted in the text above with line brackets. Cooke had custom letters cut for his edition, some of which have been reproduced at http://freemasonry.bc.ca/Writings/cookeyear.html. Additional notes:

The following description of the original MS. may be interesting to many readers:--

It is written on vellum, in a good state of preservation, and is protected by its original binding of two oak covers, at a former period secured by a clasp, the ends of which only remain. Its height is 4 3/8 inches, by 3 3/8 inches in width. On the first folio, which is fastened down to the inside of the wood cover, are three portions of writing by modern hands. The first has been considerably obliterated, but the word "war" is still visible. The second, quite legible, is "William K." The third, in the neat hand of Sir Frederick Madden, Knt., Keeper of the MSS. in the British Museum, shows how it came into the library of that institution by a memorandum stating it was "Purchased by Mrs. Caroline Baker, 14th Oct., 1859."

On fol. 2 is written, in a large bold hand, "Jno. Fenn, 1786," and engrossed across the leaf is "Printing in Germany, 1548. In England, 1471, Robert Crowe, MDCCLXXXI." There is also the British Museum press mark, "199g," in pencil. The verso fol. 2 is stamped with an impression of the Museum book mark.

On fol. 3 is the number of the MS., viz, 23,198, inscribed by the Museum officer whose duty it is to number the books. There is also, in the same bold hand as that of Jno. Fenn's name on fol. 2, "The Seven Sciences. Geometry. A History of Masonry. Its Articles, Points, &c." The verso of fol. 3 is blank, and the MS. itself commences on fol. 4. The book extends over 34 folios, i.e., 68 pages, and concludes on fol. 38, six lines down.
Fol. 39 again bears the Museum stamp, after which a leaf of the vellum has been cut out, or the side of a smaller leaf left, so that the binding threads should retain a firm hold. It has also been written upon, but the words are obliterated by rubbing; yet there are still sufficient marks left to enable any one to distinguish the name "William K." in a diamond-shaped border.

Fol. 39b. has some traces of writing, but they are wholly illegible, and the same holds good with regard to fol. 40, which latter is fastened down to the wooden cover at the end. The History and Articles of Freemasonry are not put forward as entirely new to Freemasons. Various versions of them are to be found in our public libraries, and, during the last hundred and fifty years, in print. The Editor's friend, J. O. Halliwell, Esq., printed a Poem on Masonry, which has the same common features, and sets forth much of the same history; but until the present book appeared, there was no prose work of such undoubted antiquity, known to be in existence, on the subject. It is this special circumstance that called forth the present publication, and that the same might go out to the world as near as possible to the original, has been one of the chief reasons for introducing it in its existing form.

Excerpted from the preface to the original 1861 edition.