

THE “JOHN STRACHAN MS.”

OF THE

“OLD CHARGES,”

A.D. 1700 *circa*.

INTRODUCTION BY
BROTHER G. W. BAIN.

TRANSCRIPT BY
BROTHER JOHN T. THORP.

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The "John Strachan MS." (G 17 (c)).

By Bro. G. W. BAIN, P.M., P.P.G.R., Durham.

WHEN perusing Bro. W. J. HUGHAN's "Old Charges" in 1895, I was much interested in his account (p. 159) of the MS., which had been discovered by Col. Mead at Mess. Bohn's of Brighton, and which, like a will-o'-the-wisp, quickly disappeared. The singular feature in the case was that a non-mason should have been sufficiently interested in the document to give a high price for it, and at the same time refuse permission for his name to be divulged.

The destiny of the MS. could however not long remain a mystery to Bro. HUGHAN, whose detective faculties, where "Old Charges" are concerned, are certainly unrivalled. He succeeded in discovering the purchaser, obtained the document on loan for a thorough examination, and briefly sketched its distinctive features in the *Freemason* of January, 1899.

Bro. HUGHAN, being unable to arrange terms with the owner for its purchase, gave me permission to make an attempt with the same object, when I was informed that America was to be the destination of the MS., at an upset price of \$500. Ultimately, however, I made an offer which was accepted, and I became the owner of the document.

Baptism had to follow its re-admission to the fraternal circle, for I felt that its cold seclusion in secular hands had in some degree alloyed its sanctity, so that, with consent, I did the MS. and myself the honour to name it the "John Strachan MS." I was only too delighted to have the opportunity of paying a fitting tribute to my friend and Brother, whose zeal and high attainments in Masonry seemed to me to call for some such distinction in the inner world of Masonic literature.

I much regret that my dear old correspondent, Brother Col. Mead, did not live to hear that the MS. he had discovered had been brought into the light of day, and taken its place in the ranks of Masonic title-deeds, as he would assuredly have been as delighted to be associated in its recognition, as I am in paying respect to his memory.

On mentioning to Bro. THORP that I had added this MS. to my Collection, he invited me to permit him to reproduce it in the Transactions of the Lodge of Research. To this I readily and cordially assented, and am glad that I can contribute in any way to the interest of my Brethren and Fellow-members of the Lodge, from whom I have always received the kindest recognition.

Bro. THORP, who has transcribed the document, will add the descriptive notes.

G.W.B.

The "John Strachan MS." is a parchment roll, consisting of two strips stitched together with cord. The total length is 4 feet 3 inches, but $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches at the end have been partially cut away, leaving only a very narrow margin. It is very possible that the missing portion contained a name or date, which renders its absence the more to be regretted. The width of the roll is $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and the writing extends from edge to edge. The document is in a very good state of preservation, every word being legible without much difficulty, and Bro. BAIN is to be congratulated upon its acquisition.

According to Bro. HUGHAN, it belongs to the "Sloane" family of the "Old Charges," resembling in some respects the "Alnwick" branch of that family; in fact its general character is indicated by the "Alnwick MS." already published, and its date is A.D. 1700 *circa*.

As usual with these documents, there are numerous errors and omissions, due probably to the faded or imperfect writing of the MS. from which it was originally copied, all of which are duly noted at the foot of each page.

Many thanks are due to Bro. BAIN for his kindness in allowing this MS. to be reproduced in the Transactions of the Lodge of Research.

J.T.T.

The Might of the ffather of heaven wth y^e Wisdome of his Glorious Son, through y^e Goodnesse of y^e Holy Ghost three psons¹ in one Godhead be with us att our begininge² & giue³ us grace Soe to govern in our Liueinge⁴ y^t we may Come to his blisse y^t never Shall haue⁶ endinge. Amen.

Now Good Brethren & fellows, our purpose is to tell you, how & in what manner this Craft of Masonry was begun & afterwards how itt was founded by worthy Empero^{rs}⁷ Princes & many other worshipfull men, & alsoe to them y^t haue been here wee will declare them ———

The Charge y^t belongs to every true Mason to keep, for in good faith if ye doe good, take heed thereto, itt tis⁸ well worthy to be kept for A worthy Craft & Curious Science. ffor there be Seaven Liberall Sciences of y^e w^{ch} itt is one, they be these followinge. The first is **Grammar** w^{ch} teacheth A man to Speak truely, & write truely. The Second is **Rhetorick** y^t teacheth A man to Speak fine & in Subtill terms. The third is **Logick** y^t teacheth A man to discerne truth from falshood. The ffowerth⁹ is **Arithmeticke** y^t teacheth to number & reckon all manner of numbers. The ffifth is **Geometry** itt teacheth to mett¹⁰ & measure y^e Earth & other things of w^{ch} Science is **Masonry**. The Sixth is **Musick** y^t teacheth y^e Craft of Song, Organs & Harp. y^e Seaventh is **Astronomy** y^t teacheth to know y^e Course of y^e Sun, & Moon, & other ornam^{ts} of y^e Heavens. y^e¹¹ 7th Liberall Science¹² y^e w^{ch} be all one Science y^t is to Say Geometry thus may A man pve¹³ y^t all Sciences of y^e world be found out by Geometry for itt teacheth you to know y^e mett, & measure of Ponderation, & weights of all kinds of y^e Earth & their is noe man y^t worketh by any Craft but he worketh by Some Measure nor noe man y^t thus buys or Sells, but by measure or weight, & all this is by Geometry, And Craftmen¹⁴ & merchants find noe other of y^e 7 : Sciences, and espetically Plowmen & tillers of y^e Ground & all manner of grain, both Corn, & wines, Seeds, Plants, & Setts¹⁵ of other fruites for Grammar nor Astronomy nor any of all these can find to A man mett & measure wthout Geometry wherefore I thinke y^t A worthy Science y^t findeth out all others & how y^t worthy Science first began I shall tell you ———

1. "persons." 2. "beginning." 3. "give." 4. "Living" 5. "that." 6. "have."
7. "Emperors." 8. Error for "is." 9. "Fourth." 10. "mete." 11. "ye 7th." error for
"these be ye 7." 12. Should be "Sciences." 13. "prove." 14. Should be "Craftsmen."
15. Should be "Setters."

Before Noahs flood there was A man Call'd Lamech as tis written in y^e 4th Chap. of Gen: & this **Lamech** had 2: wifes y^e name of y^e one was **Adah** & y^e other **Billah**, by y^e 1st wife Adah he begat 2: Sons, y^e one was Call'd Jabal, & y^e other Jubal, & by y^e other he had A sone & A daughter, & these 4: Children found out y^e beginings of all Crafts in y^e world. This Jabal was y^e Elder Sone, and he found y^e first Craft of Geometry he parted fflocks of Sheep & Lambs in y^e field & first wrought House of wood & Stone, as is noted in y^e Chap: aboues^d, and his Brother Jubal found **Musick** of Song, Organs, & Harp, and y^e 3^d Brother found out Smiths Craft to worke in Gold, Silver, Brasse, Iron, & Steel, and y^e Sister Naamah found out y^e Art of weauinge,¹⁶ These Children did know God would take vengeance for Sin, either by fire or water wherefore they writt y^e Sciences w^{ch} they found out, in 2: Pillers of Stone, y^t they might be found out after y^e flood. The one Stone was Called marble, y^t Can't burne wth fire y^e other was Call'd Laturus¹⁷ y^t Can't drown in y^e water. Our Intent is to tell you truely & in what manner these Stones were found y^t y^e Craftsmen writt in Greek. **Hermerius** y^t was Son to Chus, and Chus Son to Sem,¹⁸ w^{ch} was Son to Noah this Same Hermerius was afterward Call'd Hermes y^e ffather of Wisdome & found out y^e 2: Pillars of Stone y^e Science writt theiron, & taught theirforth & att y^e making of y^e Tower of **Babylon** there was y^e Craft¹⁹ **Masonry** first found & made much of. And y^e King of Babylon, y^t was Call'd Hembroth²⁰ was A Mason & loued²¹ y^e Craft as t'is reported by y^e Master of y^e Stories²². And when y^e Citty **Nineveh**, & other Cittyes of y^e East Asia Should be made **Hembrough King of Babylon** Sent thither 60: Masons att y^e desire of y^e King of Nineveh, his Cousin & when they went forth he gaue em A Charge on this manner, y^t they Should Serue²³ y^e Lord for his paym^t, Soe y^t he might haue worshipe for Sendinge em to him. Another Chardge he Gaue em, and this was y^e first time y^t A Mason had any Charge of his Craft. **Moreover** when Abraham & Sarah his wife went into Egypt there he taught y^e 7: Liberall Sciences to y^e Egyptians, and he had A worthy Scholer Call'd Euclid & learn'd right well, & was Master of all y^e 7: Liberall Sciences to y^e Egiphtians. And in his dayes itt Soe fell out y^t y^e Lords & Estates of y^t Realm had Soe many Sons y^t they had begott of their wifes & Some by other Ladyes of y^t Realm, for that Land is a whole²⁴ Land & A Replenisht²⁵ generation, & they had no liueinge Competent for their Children wherefore they made Great Sorrow, & y^e King of y^t Land Assembled A great Councill att A Parliam^t to know how he might find out to maintaine their Children & they Cou'd find noe good way. And he Caused A Crye to be made through the Realm if their were A man y^t Could Informe him,

16. "weaving." 17. This word varies much in different MSS. It is scarcely given alike in two. 18. "Shem." 19. "of" omitted. 20. "Hembroth" probably refers to "Nimrod." 21. "loved." 22. "Master of ye Stories" means "Master of Historie." 23. "Serve." 24. For "whole" many MSS. have "hot." 25. Many MSS. have "plenteous" instead of "Replenisht."

y^t he Should Come unto him and he Should be well rewarded for his travel, & Should himselfe well please. Now after this Crie was made, caime this worthy Clerke Euclid & Said to y^e Kinge, & to all his Great Lords, if you will I will take your Children to teach, & govern Honestly, as Gentlemen Should be taught under Condition y^t you will Grant me A Comission, y^t I may haue Power to Rule them Honestly as y^e Science ought to be Rul'd, Soe y^e Kinge wth the Councill Granted him Anor, & Sealed him y^e Comission, & y^e worthy Docto^r tooke to him y^e Lords Sons, & taught em y^e Science of **Geometr^y** in practice to worke in Stone, & all manner of worthy works, y^t belonge to buildinge of Castles, & all manner of Courts, Temples, wth all other buildings, And he gaue em²⁶ this manner, first y^t they Should be true to King & L^d they Serued, & y^t they Should loue well together, & be true one to another, & y^t they Should Call one another ffellow, & not Serv^t nor knaue, nor any other ffowle²⁷ name, & y^t they Should truely Serue for there paym^t to their L^d w^{ch} they Serue, & y^t they Should ordaine y^e wisest of em to be m^r²⁸ of y^e L^{ds} worke, not for loue, great liueings or Ritches to Sett any y^t hath litle Cuninge to be m^r of y^e L^{ds} worke whereby y^e Lord Should be ill Serued & they asshamed, And y^t they Should Call y^e **Governor** of y^e worke while they wrought wth him Master of y^e worke, & many other Charges w^{ch} were too long to tell, And to all y^e Charges he made em Sweare y^e Great Oath then²⁹ men used & ordained to men³⁰ reasonable paym^t y^t they might liue by itt Honestly & alsoe y^t they might Come & Assemble 'emselues³¹ together y^t they might keepe Councell in their Crafts how they might worke y^e best to please their Lord for his pfit³² & y^e worshipec of him & thus was y^e Craft of Geometry grounded then.³³ And they Should Correct 'emselues if they had Trespased & y^t worthy Master gaue itt y^e name **Geometr^y** & itt is Called **Masonr^y** in this Land Since³⁴; long after y^e Children of Israel were Come into y^e Land of the East,³⁵ itt is now Called y^e Country of **Jerusalem**.

King David began y^e Temple of Jerusalem w^{ch} is wth them Called **Templum Domini** & this Same Kinge David loued masons well & Cherished them & gaue em good paym^t & he gaue 'em y^e Charges & manners as he had them out of **Egipt** giuen by **Euclid**³⁶ other Charges y^t you Shall heare afterwards & after y^e death of King David **Solomon** y^t was Sone to King David pformed out y^e Temple w^{ch} his ffather had begun & after Masons of diuers Lands were gathered together, Soe y^t he had 4 : Score Thousand workmen of Stone & they were named Masons & he had 3 : thousand of 'em y^t were ordained Masters & Governors of y^e work. And their was A King of another

26. "a Charge after" probably omitted. 27. "foul." 28. "master." 29. Probable error for "that." 30. Probable error for "them." 31. "themselves." 32. "profit." 33. Probable error for "there." 34. In many MSS. the clause ends here, instead of after "Jerusalem." 35. "the East" is often given as "behest." 36. "and" probably omitted.

Region whom men Called **Hiram** & he loued well Kinge Solomon and gaue him Timber for his worke, And he had A Son y^t was named **Amon**³⁷ & A Master of **Geometry** and he was Chiefe Master of all his **Masons** & Master of all his Graven & Carued worke & of all other manner of masonry y^t belonged to y^e Temple And all this is in y^e Bible this Same Solomon Confirmd both Charge & manners y^t his ffather had giuen to **Masons** And thus was y^t worthy Craft³⁸ Masonry Confirmd in y^e Country of Jerusalem & many other Kingdomes Glorious Crafts-men walkinge about into diuers Kingdomes Some because of learninge more Craft, & Some to teach their Craft, And Soe itt befell y^t there was A Curious Mason named Nantus Grecus³⁹ y^t had been att y^e makinge of **Solomons** Temple and Caime into ffance and he taught y^e Craft of Masonry of⁴⁰ y^e Men of ffance Soe their was one of y^e Royall Lyne of ffance **Charles Martill**⁴¹ & he was A man w^{ch} loued well y^e Craft & drew to him this Nantus Grecus aboues⁴² & learned of him y^e Craft & tooke upon him y^e Charges & afterwards by y^e Grace of God was Elected King of ffance & when he was in his Stall he tooke to him many Masons There y^t were none, & Sett em att worke & gaue 'em both Charges & manners & good pay w^{ch} he had Learned of other **Masons** & Confirmed a Charter from yeare to yeare to hold their Assembly & Cherished 'em much, thus Caime itt into ffance, England all this while Stood void of any Charge of Masonry till y^e time of St. Albin⁴³ & in his time y^e Kinge of England y^t was A Pagan & he walled A Town y^t was Called **St. Albins**⁴⁴ & Soe St. Albin was A worthy Kn^t Cheife Steward to y^e Kinge & had y^e Governm^t of y^e Realm & alsoe of makinge y^e Town Wall & he loued **Masons** well & Cherished y^m⁴⁵ & made their paym^t Right good Standinge as y^e Realm requires for he gaue 'em every week⁴⁶——

Before y^t time through all y^e Land A Mason had but A penny A day & meate, till y^e time y^t St. Albin amended itt & gaue 'em A Charter of y^e Kinge & Councill, & gaue itt to y^e Assembly & thereatt he was himselfe & made **Masons** & gaue 'em Charges as y^e Shall heare afterwards——

Right Soone after y^e death of St. Albin there Caime A Great Warr Into **England** through diuers Nations Soe y^t y^e good Rule of **Masonry** was destroyed, untill y^e time of King **Athleston**⁴⁷ y^t was A worthy Kinge of England & he brought y^e Land into good rest & peace & builded many good works of Abbeys Castles & many other

37. This name is given differently in other MSS. 38. "of" omitted. 39. This name varies much in different MSS. 40. Error for "to." 41. "Charles Martel." 42. "Abovesaid." 43. "St. Alban." 44. "St. Albans." 45. "them." 46. The weekly wages varies in different MSS.; its omission here is probably due to the scribe being unable to decipher it. 47. "Athelstan."

buildings & he loued Masons well & he had A Sone named Edwinge⁴⁸ & he loued Masons much more this⁴⁹ his ffather did for he was full of Practice of **Geometry** theirfore he drew him to Comon⁵⁰ **Masons** & to y^e Craft, he was a **Mason** himselfe & he gott of his ffather A Chart^r & a Comission to hold every yeare an Assembly whereever he would within y^e Realm & Correct within 'emselues trespasses y^t were done wthin y^e Craft & held an Assembly att **Yorke** & there he made **Masons** & gaue 'em Charge & taught 'em y^e manner of **Masonry** & Comanded y^t this Rule Should be holden hereafter & then he tooke y^e Chart^r & Comission to keepe & made ordinances &⁵¹ itt Should be obserued from King to King when this Assembly Should be Gathered together y^t all **Masons** both old & younge y^t had any knowledge or understandinge of y^e Charges y^t were made within this Land, or any other Land y^t they Should Shew 'em forth, & their were Some found in ffrench Some in Greeke Some in English & Some in other Languages & y^e Intent was found and Comanded y^t itt Should be Read & told when any **Mason** Should be made & to giue his Charge from that day untill this time **Masons** haue been kept in order as well⁵² men Governe itt _____

And Furthermore as Divers Assemblies haue added Certain Charges more & more by y^e Advise of Masters & ffellows their Shall one of y^e Ancientest of 'em hold A Booke y^t he or they may lay his or their hand or hands upon y^e Booke & these Pcepts⁵³ ffollowinge ought to be Read to every man y^t is A Mason & take good heed & make well his Charge if you find yo^r Selues Guilty of any of these you may amend you againe, & espetially ye y^t are to be Charged (for tis A Great Perill for A man to Sweare & that on A Booke _____ The first Charge is y^t you Shall be A true man to God & to y^e Holy Church & y^t you use noe **Heresie** nor errour to your understandinge or by y^e teachinge of Indiscreet⁵⁴ men, alsoe you Shall be true men to y^e Kinge without **Treason** or falshood & y^t y^e Shall know noe treason but ye mind⁵⁵ itt if you may or else warr^t⁵⁶ itt the King or y^e Councill their of, Alsoe y^t you Shall be true men one to another, y^t is to Say every Master or ffellow of y^e Craft of Masonry y^t be Masons allow'd & y^e doe to 'em as ye would they Should doe unto you alsoe y^t every **Mason** keep true Councill of **Lodge** and **Chamber** & all other Councils y^t ought to be kept, by way of **Masonry** Alsoe y^t noe man be Theife in Company nor otherwise as far forth as he may know, Alsoe ye Shall be true to y^e Lord & **Master** you Serue & truely too See his profit & Advantage Alsoe y^t you Shall Call **Masons** yo^r ffellows & **Brefhren** & by noe other foule name, Alsoe y^t you Shall not take

48. It is quite impossible to determine to whom this refers. 49. Error for "than."
50. "Common." 51. Error for "that." 52. "as" omitted. 53. "Precepts." 54. Many MSS. have "discreet." 55. Error for "mend." 56. Error for "warn."

yo^r ffellows wife to villany nor desirre ungodly his Daughter, or his Serv^t to his or yo^r villany, Alsoe you Shall pay truely for yo^r Table, & yo^r Meat & Drink where you Shall goe to Board & y^t you doe noe villany in y^t House whereby y^e **Craft** Should be Slandered ———— These be y^e Charges in generall w^{ch} every **Mason** Should hold both Master & fellows ————

Rehearse I will other Charges Singuler for Masters & ffellows, y^t noe Master Shall take upon him any Lords work, or other work but y^t he know himsef Cuninge⁵⁷ to p forme⁵⁸ y^e Same Soe Shall y^e work or Craft haue noe dishonour but y^t y^e Lord may be well & truely Serued. Alsoe y^t masters take noe work but att A Reasonable Rate & y^t he take itt soe reasonably, y^t y^e Lord may be well & truely Serued wth his owne Goods, & y^e Master to liue Honestly & pay his ffellows truely y^e pay as y^e manner of y^e Craft doth require, Alsoe y^t noe Master or ffellow Supplant others of their work (vizt) if ⁵⁹ haue work or Stand M^r of y^e Lords work ye Shall not put him out if he be able of Cuninge to end y^e work, Alsoe y^t noe Master or ffellow take to Apprentice to be allowed his Apprentice but for Seaven yeares & y^t an Apprentice be able of his Birth & Line⁶⁰ as he ought to be alsoe y^t noe Master or ffellow take allowance to be made Master w^{thout} y^e Assent or Consent of his ffellows, & att y^e least ffiue or Six, & he y^t is to be made or Shall be made **Mason** over all⁶¹ (vizt) if he be ffreeborne & of good kindred noe Boudman, & y^t he haue his Right Limbs, as A man ought to haue, Alsoe y^t noe Master putt any Lords work to task⁶² y^t wont to go A⁶³ Journey⁶⁴, Alsoe y^t every **Mason** Shall giue noe pay to his ffellow or ffellows but as he or they may deserue Soe Shall he not be deceaued⁶⁵ by false workmen Alsoe y^t noe ffellow Shall Slander one another falsly behinde his Back to make him loose his good name or his worldly goods, Alsoe y^t y^e ffellows wthin y^e Lodge or without Shall not doe or misanswer one another neither ungodly nor unreuerently without Just Cause, Alsoe y^t noe **Mason** play att Hazard or any other unlawfull gaine wherby they may be Slandered, Alsoe y^t noe **Mason** be A **Ribbald** in Letchery to make y^e Craft to be Slandered, & y^t noe ffellow goe in y^e night time where there is A Lodge of ffellows without A ffellow be wth him to bear him witnesse y^t he was in A needfull place & Honest alsoe Alsoe y^t every **Mason** & ffellow Come to y^e Assembly if itt be within ffiifty⁶⁶ Miles about him if he haue any knowledge or reasonable understandinge or warninge theirof, Alsoe he that hath trespassed ag^t⁶⁷ y^e Craft their he Shall abide & Stand y^e word of y^e Master & ffellows and to make him or them accord if they may and

57. "Cunning"—capable. 58. "perform." 59. "he" omitted. 60. Error for "limbs." 61. "over all" should probably read "be able over all degrees." 62. "task" means "task or piece-work." 63. Error for "to." 64. "Journey" means "journey-work" or "day-work." 65. "deceived." 66. The distance varies in different MSS., in some it is as low as five miles. 67. "against."

if they may not accord then to goe⁶⁸ the Co^mon Lay⁶⁹ alsoe, Alsoe y^t noe **Mason** make Mold or Square or Rule for any Rough Layer,⁷⁰ Alsoe y^t noe Mason Sett any Rough Layer wthin A Lodge or without to hew Mold Stones wth any Mold of his owne makeinge Alsoe y^t every Mason Shall receive & Cherish Strange ffellows when they Come y^e Country over & sett them on work as y^e manner is, (vizt) if they Mold Stones in any place he Shall be Stt⁷¹ att least A fortnight att work & giue him his hire, If their be Stones, & if their be noe Stones for him in y^t place to work on ye Shall refresh him wth **Moneys** to bringe him to y^e next Lodge & alsoe you & every **Mason** Shall Serue truely & y^o workers truely work and end y^e worke, be itt Task or Journey, if you may haue your pay as you ought to haue These Charges y^t we haue Reckoned⁷² and all other belonginge to **Masonry** you Shall keep

————— Soe help you God & Holy Doome —————
 ————— & by this Book to yo^r —————
 ————— Power —————

[Transcribed by me from the original manuscript, Leicester, February, 1900.

JOHN T. THORP, P.M.]

68. "to" omitted. 69. Error for "Law." 70. A "Rough Layer" was probably an "unskilled craftsman." 71. "Set." 72. Error for "Rehearsed."