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THE UNITED GRAND LODGE OF ENGLAND by V.W.Bro R. H. D. Hewitt, P.G.I.W.

On June 27 the United Grand Lodge of England celebrated the 250th anniversary of its foundation by installing H.R.H. the Duke of Kent at a glittering ceremony in the Albert Hall, London, attended by Grand Masters, Provincial Grand Masters and District Grand Masters from all parts of the English-speaking world. The ceremony was performed by the retiring Grand Master, the Earl of Scarborough. The Duke of Kent is the tenth Grand Master since the formation of the United Grand Lodge in 1813. His father, H.R.H. George, Duke of Kent, was Grand Master from 1939-1942, when he was killed in an air crash. Three Dukes of Kent have been Grand Master. The first was Edward, the last Grand Master of the Antient Grand Lodge and who subsequently nominated his brother the Duke of Sussex as the first Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge.

The Grand Lodge of England was formed in 1717 when four lodges met and decided to establish a ruling body. Up to then the various operative and operative-speculative lodges were masters of their own destiny and were subject to a number of irregular pressures. One of these was the trouble with clandestinism whereby Masons were 'made' for a fee at a tavern or if they provided dinner for their sponsors. Whether there had been an earlier ruling body is uncertain because of the lack of evidence, but there was a tradition of an annual assembly of Masons and particularly of a great gathering at York in Anglo-Saxon times. There is evidence of masonic activity during the 11th century. Elias Ashmole, the antiquarian, describes a meeting he attended in 1682 some 3:5 years after he had been admitted in which he recalled the presence of several gentlemen. A skit on the "Company of Accepted 'Masons'" was published in 1676 and there were references to Freemasons in "The Tatler" of 1709 and 1710. A History of Staffordshire published in 1686 refers to "admitting men into the Society of Free-Masons" and that "King Athelstan's youngest son Edwyn loved masonry and obtained a Charter from his father for the Masons. The only trouble with this account appears to be that King Athelstan did not have any sons. The historian's work here is that of separating fact from fantasy, and it was not until 1717 that we come upon fact. It is evident that several lodges met and formed a Grand Lodge, but no minutes were kept. It is known, however, that Mr Anthony Sayer, Gentleman, was the first Grand Master; he was succeeded by George Payne in 1718 and by Dr John Theophilus Desaguliers in 1719. It is recorded that he "reviv'd the old regular and peculiar Toasts of Healths of the Free Masons- which suggests that there was an earlier tradition. During his rule it was agreed that the Grand Master should henceforward appoint his Wardens and a Deputy Grand Master.

ROYAL GRAND MASTERS

Dr Desaguliers was a member of the Royal Society and a very learned man. In one of his books published in 1734 he forecast the splitting of the atom. He was succeeded by the first of the 'royal' Grand Masters in John, Duke of Montague, and from that point the office has invariably been had by one of noble or royal blood. The dominating figure, however, was Dr James Anderson of whom not a great deal is known save that he was the second son of James Anderson, "Glassier and -Meassen" who was a member of the Aberdeen Lodge in 1670. Dr Anderson was a licensed minister of the Church of Scotland in 1702 but removed to London in 1709. He attended Grand Lodge in 1721 and was entrusted with the rewriting of the "Old Gothic Constitutions" and these were published in 1723. It was a fanciful account of the origin of Freemasonry in which many notable figures of history, including Adam, Noah, Moses and many English monarchs were claimed as Freemasons, although Sir Christopher Wren is not referred to as a Grand Master. The most important extract, however, was in the "Charges of a Freemason" which stated "tis now thought more expedient only to oblige them (freemasons) to that religion to which all men agree, leaving their particular opinions to themselves." Up to then Freemasonry was definitely Christian but this introduced the "de-Christianising" of the Craft which led to great controversy. But it enabled Jews to become members.

The first minutes of Grand Lodge were prepared by William Cowper, the House of Lords Clerk, and they record in 1723 the election of the Earl of Dalkeith to follow the Duke of Wharton. At this time the re-organisation of the Masons was attracting the notice of other persons and especially piratical printers and publishers who were cashing in on the mystery and privacy of the organisation. There came a series of "exposures" which created alarm in official Craft circles and some panic

measures which resulted in the methods of proving being changed. So far it is believed that the ceremonial work consisted of two degrees - Apprentices and Fellows, but Dr Anderson introduced the Scottish terms of "Entered Apprentice" and "Fellow-craft." Following on such publications as "Masonry Dissected" "Three Great Knocks" and the like, the Grand Lodge changed the words in the two degrees and offended a number of brethren. The exposures actually did little harm and were mainly used by brethren as rituals - the profane were bored by them and the dissenters did not feel that any changes were required, but the controversy within the Craft over the matter was one of the reasons why the Grand Lodge soon found itself faced with rival Grand Lodges-a situation which was to persist for nearly a hundred years.

RIVAL GRAND LODGES

The Grand Lodge of England was mainly concerned with lodges in London; its writ did not run far into the provinces. Many lodges resented its arrival and its claim to control. In 1725 some lodges in the north of England formed what they called "The Grand Lodge of All England." It had a chequered career, became dormant in 1740. revived in 1761 and faded completely in 1792.

Another Grand Lodge appeared at York and was an extension of the powers claimed by an old Lodge of York, but the most serious rival to the Grand Lodge of London was a body calling itself "The Grand Lodge of England According to the Old Institutions," formed at the Turk's Head Tavern, Soho, London, on July 27, 1751, with a total enrolment of nine lodges. It made slow progress, however, and was not a fully functioning Grand Lodge until 1753 when Turner was chosen Grand Master and who then chose his Grand Wardens. But it was the Grand Secretary of the new body who became the real force. He was a remarkable man named Lawrence Dermott, born in Ireland in 1720 and a member of an Irish Lodge. He came to England in 1748 as a journeyman painter but afterward became a wine merchant. He filled the duties of Grand Secretary until 1771, published model by-laws for lodges and in 1756 compiled a book of constitutions to which he gave the curious name of Ahiman Rezon (or Help to a Brother) in 1756.

To Dermott must be given the credit for successful erection of the new Grand Lodge and because he taunted the older body of having made innovations and claimed that his Grand Lodge was adhering to the ancient institutions the former was nicknamed "The Moderns" and the latter "The Antients."

Another Grand Lodge was formed in 1779, calling itself "The Grand Lodge of England South of the River Trent" but it lasted only ten years and was never a serious rival. From that time on, however, the rivalry between the Moderns and the Antients became a serious hindrance to the universality of the Freemasons and was a source of embarrassment to the Grand Lodges of Ireland (1729) and Scotland (1736), both of whom offered their services as mediators between the jealousies of the two main English bodies. So great did the hostility become that visiting between them was suspended, and when a Mason of one persuasion sought to join a lodge of the other he had to be "re-made"-go through his ceremonies a second time. By the time the 18th century was drawing to a close many Masons were heartily sick of the position and were closely examining proposals for an amalgamation but it was really the British Royal Family that played the significant part in the ultimate union. The Duke of Cumberland, younger son of King George III, was elected Grand Master of the Moderns in 1782. Five years later the Prince of Wales and his brother Prince William (afterwards William IV) were initiated. All the sons of George III with the exception of the Duke of Cambridge became Freemasons. The Royal Family's connection with both Grand Lodges stood the Craft in good stead, while the rivalry between them also had its useful sides. When the Moderns established the Royal Cumberland Free Masons' School in 1788 (later changed to Royal Masonic Institution for Girls) the Antients responded with the Royal Masonic Institution for Boys. Both are being carried on today. The Moderns and Antients established lodges in ships of war and in regiments and by means of these "military" warrants Freemasonry spread to the colonies and to the United States. One of the fundamental differences between the Grand Lodges lay in the position of the Royal Arch. The Moderns did not acknowledge the Royal Arch as a part of ancient Masonry but the Antients did. By this time, too, the two simple ceremonies had grown to three, although some doubt is felt as to when the Third Degree became incorporated in the Masonic system. Both Grand Lodges were working it when the Antients was formed in 1751 but there were differences in the exemplification. One of the complaints of the Antients against the Moderns was the dropping of the installed Master ceremony. We who know how deeply Masons can feel about these matters can well understand how difficult it would be to reconcile two opposing views. The

Prince of Wales had been elected Grand Master Mason of Scotland and later (1790) became Grand Master of the Moderns, relinquishing this post on becoming, Regent. He installed his brother the Duke of Sussex. In the meantime the venerable Duke of Atholl who had been Grand Master of the Antients retired after a reign he had shared with his father since 1771, and the Duke of Kent became Grand Master. With two royal brothers Grand Masters of the two Grand Lodges the way was cleared for union and this was effected in 1813. Articles of union were drawn up between the two Grand Masters and three distinguished brethren from each Grand Lodge and these were ratified, confirmed and sealed by the two Grand Lodges sitting at a joint meeting. A draw was made for the first two positions, Lodge No.1 winning the ballot for the Antients. Thereafter each lodge in turn took a number. At the time there were 1,085 Modern lodges and 521 Antients.

IMPRESSIVE CEREMONY

The actual union was consummated with great solemnity, The two Grand Lodges assembled on St. John's Day, December 27th 1813, at Freemasons' Hall, London, and each opened their Grand Lodges in adjoining rooms. They then passed to the Assembly Hall in procession, the two Grand Masters at the rear. After solemn prayer the brethren were addressed and asked to ratify the articles of union. On this being approved, the deeds were signed by the two Grand Masters and the six commissioners and sealed. All Grand Officers then divested themselves of their insignia and the chairs were taken by Past Grand Officers. The Duke of Kent signified his intention of withdrawing from active office and nominated his brother the Duke of Sussex. On his receiving the assent of the brethren he was placed upon the throne by the Duke of Kent and obligated. The officers of the United Grand Lodge were then announced, invested, installed and proclaimed.

But the work of union was not finished. To establish unity in working a Lodge of Reconciliation had been formed and in May 1916 the three ceremonies were rehearsed before the Grand Lodge and approved and confirmed in May. (The Installed Master ceremony was to be delayed for a number of years.) No ritual was authorised to be printed and certain lodges of instruction were formed to act as a check against deviation. Of these the Emulation Lodge of Improvement was the most notable successor. Today there are over 7,000 lodges under the United Grand Lodge of England. 1,700 are situated in London, 5,000 in the Provinces and over 700 overseas. In addition to the institutions for boys and girls there is the Royal Masonic Institution which caters for elderly Freemasons, the Royal Masonic Hospital and the Masonic Boys' Welfare Fund (for assistance to worthy boys in education).

Since the Union in 1813 there have been nine Grand Masters, comprising four Royal Dukes, one Duke, one Marquis and three Earls. The longest reign was that of the Duke of Connaught (38 years) who succeeded his brother the Prince of Wales when the latter became Edward VII. Edward became Grand Master in 1875; he was initiated when on a visit to Sweden in 1861 by the King of Sweden who is hereditary Grand Master of the Swedish Rite. Edward's eldest son, Duke of Clarence, was initiated in 1883, but he died in 1892. The other son, later George V, was not a Freemason, but three of his sons were distinguished members of the Craft. The eldest, the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VIII and Duke of Windsor) was a Past Grand Master, his brother Albert (King George VI) was Grand Master Mason of Scotland in 1936. A recent royal accession to the Craft was the Duke of Edinburgh who was initiated in the Navy Lodge No. 2612 in 1952. The present Grand Master, the Duke of Kent, who was installed on June 27 this year, on the 250th anniversary of the founding of the Grand Lodge of England. was initiated in the Royal Alpha Lodge No. 16 in 1964. His father, the former Duke of Kent, was Grand Master in 1939 until his death in an air crash in 1942.