

VICTORIA LODGE OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

QUATUOR CORONATI: THE LODGE AND THE LEGEND

by

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(The opinions expressed in this paper are those of the Author and do not necessarily reflect those of the

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Our subject being "Quatuor Coronati: The Lodge and the Legend" we will establish the connection with Freemasonry through reference to the Regius MS1 (about 1390), also known as the Helliwell MS and equally well-known as the Masonic Poem:-

Pray we now to God almyght,
And to Hys swete Moder Mary bryght,
That we nowe keepe these Artyculus here,
And these poynts well al-y-fere
As dede these holy Martyres Fowre,
That yn thys Craft were of grete honoure;
They were as gode Masonus as on erthe schul go
Gravers and ymage-makers they were also.

This would indicate that the English medieval masons held the Four Crowned Martyrs in regard as patrons. In 1481 the London Guild of Masons were directed by the Ordinatio Latomorum, preserved in the Guildhall archives, to "attend at Christ Church (Aldgate) on the Feast of the Quatuor Coronati to hear Mass, under a penalty of 12 pence." The Steinmetzen (German stone masons) refer to these saints in their Regulations of 1459; masons elsewhere in Europe were believed to have honoured the saints as well. The Regius Poem sets out fifteen articles and fifteen points. The articles have to do, in general, with the conduct of the Craft; the points deal more closely with the individual in his personal relationships, his morality.

THE LODGE

Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076 E.C. was warranted in November, 1884, and consecrated in January of 1886. The founders of the Lodge were nine in number and included names synonymous with Masonic research and enlightenment:- Major General Sir Charles Warren (the first Master), William Harry Rylands, Robert Freke Gould, Rev. Adolphus F. A. Woodford, George William Speth (Secretary), Sir Walter Besant (Treasurer), John Paul Rylands, Lt. Col. Sissons Cooper Pratt, and William James Hughan.

This membership was to be limited to 40 and in all the years since has never exceeded 25, founded as it was by men possessed of high scholastic qualifications and dedicated zeal. These qualities have been perpetuated in their successors² through the years by strictest joining requirements involving 22.

the presentation of papers, not necessarily on matters masonic, but meeting a high standard of literary excellence. Thus the Lodge indeed merits the appellation of "Authentic School" it has come to enjoy over the years, as a Masonic Literary and Archaeological Society meeting, true to tradition, within the walls of a tyled Lodge.

Primarily the Lodge was intended to provide a centre and bond of union for

Masonic students and from this concept naturally flowed the other aims and objects now set out in the Lodge brochure entitled "An Introduction to the Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076". of particular note would be the following:

1. The encouragement of masonic research and the submission of the results of that research to the members of the Lodge initially and the members of the Correspondence Circle subsequently through the Transactions.
2. The establishment of a first-class Library.
3. The development of a new style of Masonic research which shunned those baseless and imaginary studies that had bedevilled Craft historians for more than a century.

The headquarters of the Lodge is located at 27 Great Queen Street, very near Freemasons' Hall, in London, and from these modest quarters all the detail of a world-wide operation is carried on. R. W. Bro. J. W. Stubbs, in his Inaugural Address of 1969 entitled "Great Queen Street, Freemasons' Hall and Its Environs". AQC3 vol. 82, reports:

"It is built on a frontage of 22 feet and to a depth of a little over 60 feet, bounded on the north by number 32 Parker Street. It is the only old house left in Great Queen Street with what appears to be the original domestic front, all the rest having been converted to shop windows. A basement contains a hand-pump, now superseded as a source of water, but a useful reminder that "truth lives at the bottom of a well"; there can be little doubt that when the house was in private occupation this basement contained the kitchen and its adjuncts, and that the house had a distinctive porchway or entrance. The front door is surrounded by a semi-circular fanlight, the tracery of which has disappeared, but may be mentally reconstructed from the surviving one in number 28. On each of two floors there are two major rooms and a smaller one at the back; the front rooms have deep windows with a very attractive shallow upward curve at the top which greatly adds to the character of the house. The staircase in common with several others in the street is worthy of notice. Leading out of the back of the house and covering most of what must have been an exiguous garden is a kind of conservatory, now the headquarters of the Societas Resicruciana in Anglia."

Bro. George William Speth was Secretary from 1884 until his death in 1901 and to his genius we are indebted for the early initiation of the Correspondence Circle in 1887. To him goes, as well, credit for the account of the Legend later in this paper. The privileges of membership of the Correspondence Circle, broadly six in number, are:-

1. To attend the Quatuor Coronati Lodge meetings, held six times a year, and to participate in the discussions that follow the lectures. Overseas brethren are cordially welcomed.
2. To receive the "Educational' Lodge Summons. Pages 3 and 4 are devoted to Masonic Notes and Queries that are of wide popular interest.
3. To receive, without further charge, the annual volume of the Lodge Transactions.

It is a book of over 300 pages, containing the six main Lectures of the year (with all the discussions that follow) and four or more "ready-made" simple lectures for use in Lodges or Lodges of Instruction.

4. To buy any of the publications of the Lodge, available only to members. The "Early French Exposures" edited by W. Bro. Harry Carr is the latest in this list.

5. To submit to the Secretary, any questions on Masonic history, customs, ritual, etc., to which authoritative replies are furnished wherever possible.

6. To participate in valuable and constructive masonic work as Associate Members of the greatest Lodge of its kind in the world.

The Correspondence Circle has a membership of the order of 12,000 including some 2,500 masonic organizations such as Grand Lodges, private Lodges, Chapters, Study Circles, etc. All master masons in good standing under Grand Lodges in amity with the United Grand Lodge of England are eligible. The joining fee is two pounds and the annual subscription a like amount; a bound volume of the Transactions will cost an additional pound. The membership should be regarded as an associate one offering as it does all the privileges except those of voting and holding office. The membership in British Columbia at this time is 125 including the M.W. the Grand Lodge of British Columbia and 15 private Lodges (one of them being the Victoria Lodge of Education and Research).

You will all be familiar with the excellence of the Transactions with their commendable balance of Lectures, Other Papers and Essays composing Part One, the Reviews of Masonic publications, and the Supplement, the Miscellanea Latomorum with particular reference to the Queries. The St. Johns Card (list of new members), in earlier years a separate is sent, latterly bound into the volume, is a pleasing reminder of the world-wide influence of the Correspondence Circle.

The right to submit questions direct to the Secretary, W. Bro. Harry Carr, an altogether remarkable masonic student is a very real privilege in itself. From personal experience, it may be stated that the replies always present the best available information, most generously detailed, with every evidence of thoughtful consideration.

To quote from page 343 of "The Freemasons' Guide and Compendium", by W. Bro. Bernard E. Jones, himself a Past Master of Quatuor Coronati Lodge (1961):-

"The work of the Quatuor Coronati Lodge demands and deserves strong financial support.

It can be sure of this only by the continued growth of the Correspondence Circle, and for that reason every Master Mason to whom the pages of this book make appeal should become a member of it.

"It is fair and proper to say that, following the issue of Gould's famous History in the 1880's--at that time the greatest publishing event in the history of speculative masonry, and one that started a new fashion in masonic research--the work of the Quatuor Coronati Lodge has brought about throughout universal freemasonry a new understanding of masonic history, actual and traditional, and has led to the founding of lodges and associations of masonic research in every country where freemasonry flourishes."

We should proceed to the second part, the Legend, and will take up where we left off in the Introduction, with the Regius MS. This Poem is the oldest version of the Old Charges and was presented to the British Museum by King George II in 1757. Mr. J. O. Halliwell (not a

mason, incidentally) edited and published "The Early History of Freemasonry in England" in 1840 and the relationship was recognized through the Legend of the Quatuor Coronati contained in the MS. Bro. W. J. Chetwode Crawley said in his lecture on the Legend of the SS Quatuor Coronati (AQO vol. 82) that:-

"the publication of the Medieval Poem on the Constitutions of Freemasonry marks the beginning

of the study of the real history of Freemasonry in the British Isles. Down to that date, the magical names of Cabiri and Chaldeans, of Eptians and Eleusinians, of Druids and Dionysiacs, 24.

of Johannites and Pythagoreans of what and of whom you please, had been indiscriminately paraded as the direct progenitors of English Freemasons. The fabric of the English Craft stood obscured, for friend and foe alike, by a haze of assumption and assertion that served only to alienate the learned, to beguile the half-learned, and to set the unlearned agape."

In the same Lecture, Bro. Crawley makes reference to another source to emphasize his own strong opinion:-

"The notes on the early History of Masonry that accompany the Masonic Poem contain

more real information about the Craft in the Middle Ages than all the stock Masonic Histories published up to that date."

That portion of the Masonic Poem having to do with the Four Crowned Ones is included in Bro. R. W. Speth's account in which he is particularly concerned with the resolution of the confusion of the Five Sculptors with the Four Soldiers, the particulars of the former group being generally ascribed to the latter. This accepted version of the Legend is reproduced, in toto, from the 1895 edition of the By-Laws, Regulations and Legend, etc. through the kind permission of Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076.

THE LEGEND (Bro. G. W. Speth's account; June 1895)

We are often asked, "Who were the Four Crowned Martyrs, and why has the Lodge adopted their name as its title?" QUATUOR CORONATI is the name of a festival which, held by order of the Roman Church on the 8th of November, celebrates the memory of nine martyrs, a group of five and a group of four. When the Emperor Diocletion went to Pannonia(4) to visit the marble quarries, he found there at work with others, four stone-masons of extraordinary skill. Their names were Claudius, Nicostratus, Symphorianus and Castorius. They were secretly Christians, and with them was associated an artisan, Simplicius, who in the course of the story is converted by the four and accompanies them on a visit to Bishop Quillillus in prison, to be baptised. These five are the "quinque sculptores" or the five sculptors of the legend. But the designation must not be taken too exclusively in its present restricted sense. The Crafts were not then so rigidly subdivided as in later times, and the account distinctly calls them "mirificos in arte quadrataria" i.e. wonderful in the art of stone-squaring; in other words, masons. The Emperor was delighted with their skill, and at various times gave instructions for them to hew pillars, capitals, and other objects, and a statue of Aesculapius. Each time they produced the work ordered, which found a high commendation, but neglected to carve the desired statue, or idol, as they deemed it. This would possibly have escaped the Emperors notice, had not the "philosophers" (possibly 'overseers' , or perhaps 'architects' , is intended by this term), inspired by jealousy of the favour

shown to the five sculptors, drawn his attention to the omission. They also accused the five of being Christians, and excelling through the force of magic. This latter charge left the Emperor unaffected; he declared that such good workmen were not to be put to shame but honoured; but he renewed his orders, which the five subsequently refused firmly to carry out. The Emperor caused them to be gently reasoned with to no purpose, and finally, incensed, not so much at their religious scruples as at the disobedience to his commands, he desired the tribune Lampadius to examine and coerce them. Lampadius lost patience, and incited thereto by the philosophers, ultimately ordered them to be cast into prison. This was done, but "in that same hour Lampadius was seized by an evil spirit, and tearing himself, expired sitting in his judgment seat". Diocletian Augustus was so enraged at this, that he ordered the five to be enclosed while living in leaden coffins and cast into the river. "Bishop Quirillus hearing of it in his prison, was deeply grieved and passed to the Lord, all of whom suffered on the sixth day of the Ides of November" (8th of November). Diocletian went thence to Syrme. "After 42 days Nichodemus, a Christian, raised the coffins with the bodies of the saints and placed them in his own house."

Eleven months later, according the MS (thus one year and twelve days after the martyrdom), Diocletian entered Rome and immediately ordered a temple to be made to Aesculapius in the
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baths of Trajan, and an image of the god to be carved and set up therein. When this had been done (implying a lapse of several months at least), he ordered that all the soldiery should present themselves before the image and offer incense; more especially the city militia. Among these were four "cornicularii" who declined so to do, being Christians, and their refusal having been brought to the notice of the Emperor, he ordered them to be scourged to death with lead-weighted thongs. Their bodies were cast to the dogs, and lay in the streets for five days. Then the blessed Sebastian, with the holy bishop Melchiades gave them interment by night three miles from the city. "This had happened at the same time, namely, on the 6th day of the Ides of November, but two years later." The names of the Four were unknown (and remained so for centuries) but Melchiades jmordered that under the names of the former Five, their anniversary should be observed. Thus far the legend.

Accordingly, one festival was set apart for the Five Sculptors, named as above, and the Four (unnamed) Cornicularii. The festival did not, however, immediately become generally known, as now, under the title of the "Quatuor Coronati"; we have seen that even so late as the Arundel MS. in the 12th century it is called "The passion of the holy martyrs Claudius, Nicostratus, Simphorianus, Castorius, and Simplicius." The earliest use of the designation now so familiar to us has been traced to the Sacramentary of Gelasius (492-496). In Bede's Martyrology it is called "8 November. In Rome, of the Four Holy Crowned Martyrs (and) Claudius, Nicostratus, Symphorianus, Castorius, Simplicius" ,---thus, of the Four (unnamed) and of the Five (by name), showing that the names of the Four were still unknown, although their title of Four Crowned Ones had been partially adopted since the time of Celasius. The Sacramentary of Gregory the Great (590-604) is similar. The real names, stated to be Severus, Severianus, Carporphorus, and Victorinus, were not revealed until the 9th century, "by the Grace of God", as it is affirmed and there is reason to suspect that these names are simply adopted from other groups of martyrs, whose memory had diminished with the lapse of time and change of fashion. The Ambrosian Breviary states that the Four were "own brothers" an alleged fact of which all the other authorities seem to have been unaware.

In A.D. 605 the title "Quatuor Coronati", as designating the conjoined groups of five and four martyrs, had evidently become usual, because in that year Pope Honorius I caused a church to be erected in their honour on the Caelian Hill in Rome out of the ruins of a former temple to Liana. The church still stands, and is one of those from which a cardinal's title is derived; at York, in 1521, there was a Laurence Cardinal Quatuor Coronatorum. In 848 Pope Leo IV translated thereto the remains of numerous martyrs, among them those of the Nine of the legend; but how the bodies of the Five killed in Pannonia came to Rome, history telleth not. They were interred in an oratory beneath the altar of the church. The Quatuor Coronati were placed in two sarcophagi on either side, in two others the remains of the Quinque Sculptores, and a very large sarcophagus, containing the relics of many others, was placed behind them. An inscription in the church still records the fact.

It is somewhat curious that there are strong grounds for believing in the substantial truth of the legend. If we test the Paris and Arundel MSS (which have not been copied from each other, but rather from a much earlier common original) by the ascertained dates of history, we find them corroborated in a manner very unusual with monkish legends. The dates of the two martyrdoms have sometimes been fixed at AD 296 and 298, in order to agree with the alleged date of the death of St. Sebastian, who is represented as giving the martyrs burial. But Erbes (*Zeitschrift fuer Kirchengeschichte*, v, 471) has proved that the tradition of the death of this saint is of very doubtful authority, and quite untrustworthy as to dates.

In three of the oldest versions of the legend we are considering, the name of the original chronicler is given as Porphyrius; in the Paris MS he is called a "censualis a gleba actuarius", and in another "philosophus censualis", and the Italian antiquary Rossi has therefor concluded that he was officially engaged in Pannonia on the acreage census ordered by Diocletian and carried out under Galerius. The contemporary writer Lactantius speaks of it as "agri glebatim metiebantur". Porphyrius therefore assumes an authentic guise, can be almost historically identified, and was possibly an eye-witness at the martyrdom of the Five, if not of the Four.

Porphyrius states, as we have seen, that the first martyrdom occurred on the 8th November, and that 42 days and 11 months, or one year and 12 days afterwards, Diocletian returned to Rome. The contemporary chronicle of Eusebius names the 20th November, 303, as the date of Diocletian's entry. Counting one year and 12 days backwards, we arrive exactly at the date of our legend, viz., the 8th November, a remarkable accordance which it would have been difficult or impossible for a medieval monk to arrive at, and which almost proves that the account must originally have been written by one who himself lived in those times. The martyrdom of the sculptors would therefore be in A.D. 302. Allowing nearly a year after the Emperor's entry for the completion of the temple in Rome, the date of the second martyrdom would be A.D. 304.

We have seen that in the first case the religion of the sculptors was not the primary offense which entailed their death; they were cast into prison for disobeying Caesar's orders, and killed in an excess of rage at the death of Lampadius. This agrees with history. Hunziger, by comparing Lactantius and Eusebius, has fixed the earliest persecution under Diocletian as beginning in February or March, 303, so that in November, 302, Christianity would not in itself be a crime against the state. He further defines the height of the persecution as commencing about May, 304. The Four Cornicularii were martyred, as shown already, simply because they were Christians, which at that date, November 304, constituted a criminal offense. In May, 304, according to

Eusebius, an imperial decree covering the whole empire, ordained that incense and libations were to be offered to the gods, and it was provided that in Rome the Christians should everywhere be forced to do so, or suffer death. This is exactly the state of affairs represented in the legend of the Cornicularii. Further it will be remembered Quirillus dies of grief on the 8th November, 302. The exact date of his death has not been recorded in history, but the Chronicle of Eusebius informs us that his successor entered on his work in A.D. 302, which again supports the legend.

There are however two discrepancies to be noted. In 304, Melchiades was not yet a bishop, he served as such from 311 to 314; but if we assume, as is most natural, that Porphyrius did not write his account until some few years after the event, when Melchiades was already bishop, then we should expect to see him so called. The other point is that Diocletian was not in Rome in November, 304, but his orders would be obeyed in his absence, and his co-emperor Galerius Maximus was there. So that when our chronicler, Porphyrius, represents him as giving the orders for the execution of the Four, this only proves a slight slip of the memory, and is just the sort of mistake which we might expect to find, and cannot invalidate the remarkable accordance with ascertained history of the other data of the legend. Thus the legend as a whole comes triumphantly out of the historical test, and is probably a fairly accurate statement of facts, a little embellished by additions of a miraculous nature as was only to be expected.

The question still remains, "Why were the four soldiers called coronati?" Everyone who has laid down his life for his faith is supposed by the Church to have earned the crown of martyrdom. Why ascribe it so especially to these four? It has often been suggested that the word is a mere ignorant corruption of "cornicularii" To a certain extent this is correct, but it does not quite explain all the facts. Here, however, Dr. Begemann steps in and cites the 10th book and the 44th chapter of Livy as proving that there were two personal distinctions or decorations in the Roman army "armillis aureisque coronis", and "corniculus armillisque argenteis" There were thus two classes of decorated soldiers, "coronati" the higher and a lesser called "corniculari", both distinctions being probably badges worn on the headpiece. That the soldier martyrs should have received brevet promotion after in the minds and speech of the faithful seems only natural, especially as the word so happily referred also to the crown of martyrdom.

In later times the fact has been overlooked that the Coronati were soldiers and not Masons; they have been lauded as exemplary Masons, a description which would justly apply to their companions the sculptors, but not to them. This scarcely needs explanation; all were commemorated on the same day, the two groups became confused, the soldiers gave their title of "Coronati" to the joint festival, but the occupation of the sculptors was applied equally to all nine.

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It was but natural that the founders of the new Lodge, intended as it was to foster Masonic archaeology, should have cast around them for a title carrying old-world associations with it. In more than one document connected with the art of Masonry, the Four Crowned Ones appear as patron saints of the Masons, and although their renown had much decreased in later times until it was well nigh forgotten, that would only be an additional reason for rescuing their names and memory from oblivion, It cannot indeed be shown that any Mason-guild in England categorically recognized the Four Crowned Martyrs as their patron saints, whereas on the Continent not only Masons, but many other trades using the hammer, square and chisel, such as carpenters, were undeniably dedicated to

them; but at least they were very early known in this country, as the existence of a church of the Quatuor Coronati in Canterbury A.D. 619 (vide Bede) testifies, and the earliest mention of them in a Craft document is to be found in this country also. In the British Museum is a poem of the 14th century, first published by Halliwell, and therefore, often spoken of as the Halliwell Poem, but equally often as the Masonic Poem, and lately as the Regius MS. After re-counting the origin and progress of the craft of Masonry, the versifier, who was evidently a cleric, proceeds thus:-

Pray we now to God Almighty,
And to His Mother, Mary bright,
That we may keep these articles here
And these points well altogether,
As did those holy martyrs four
That were in this craft of great honour,
They were as good Masons as on earth shall go,
Gravers and image makers they were also,
For they were workmen of the best,
The emperor had them in great liking;
He invoked them an image to make,
That might be worshipped for his sake;
Such idols he had in his day
To turn the people from Christ's law,
But they were steadfast in Christ's religion
And to their Craft, without denial;
They lived well God and all his doctrines,
And were in his service evermore.
True men they were in that day,
And lived well in God's law;
They resolved no idols for to make,
For no good that they might take;
To believe on that idol for their god,
They would not do so, though he were mad,
For they would not foresake their true faith,
And believe in his false religion.
The Emperor caused to take them at once
And put them in a deep prison.
The sorer he punished them in that place
The more joy was to them of Christ's grace.
Then when he saw no other way,
To death he caused them to go.
Who so will of their life more know,
By the book he may it learn,
In the legends of the saints,
The names of the four crowned ones.
Their feast will be, without denial,
After All Hallows, the eighth day.
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Here we have a perfect example of the confusion of persons already alluded to. The Five Sculptors are never once mentioned, but the whole particulars of their trials and end are ascribed to the Four Coronati.

In the Ordinances of the Strasburg Fraternity of Stone-masons, 1459, we find the following invocation: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and of the Holy Mother Mary, and also of her blessed servants, the Holy Four Crowned Ones, etc." It will be observed that here again the profession of these four soldiers has been forgotten, and that they have assumed

the trade of the five sculptors, who are not mentioned at all. The picture given herewith, which has been adopted by our Lodge for its stationery, errs in the same way. Only the four are shown and these bear the insignia of working Masons.

Practically therefore, the four are really nine, their festival being the 8th November, which is the date of their respective martyrdoms, although two years separated the events. That is why we hold our own annual festival in this Lodge on the 8th November, and it is this reason which induced the projectors of this Lodge to so manage that the number of the original founders should also be nine, This was intentional; but on the evening of our inauguration as a duly warranted Lodge, a further discovery was made, namely, that the nine founders consisted, quite accidentally, of Four soldiers and of Five brethren who had not adopted the military profession.

1. MS - Manuscript (hand-written document)
2. Most but not all of the present members live in England. Seven are drawn from Switzerland, Ireland, Canada, Scotland, U. S. A., South Africa. The Canadian member is A.J.B. Milborne, PDDGM (Montreal).
3. Ars Quatuor Coronatorum, the Transactions of Quatuor Coronati Lodge
4. During the first century A.D. the Pannonian Danube was strongly fortified as the military frontier of the Empire; a permanent garrisons of legionary and auxiliary troops were stationed at camps, to which cultivable land was assigned for the provision of supplies
5. A modernized version is substituted here for ease of understanding.

See Pap1973 b .WPS for papers 1973 Nos. 5 and 6