

VICTORIA LODGE OF EDUCATION AND RESRESEARCH.
650 Fisgard Street, Victoria, B.C. V8W 1R6
1989 - 2

CLANDESTINE MASONRY AND OTHER CLANDESTINE MASONRIES.

presented by

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PART 2

WOMEN IN MASONRY

One of the oldest Landmarks of our craft is that a Mason must be a man, free born and of lawful age. For centuries before our modern era the Lodges of Operative Masons accepted as apprentices only young men who were physically able to do the work required of them in the quarries and in the erection of walls and buildings. During the century of transition from operative to speculative Masonry, more attention was given to intellectual and moral attainments. Men of culture and refinement were accepted as members of the Lodges, became leaders in the so-called revival of Masonry in England early in the eighteenth century. There are stories and rumors to the effect that in certain cases women were made Masons. The most persistent of these reports, and one that does deserve some credence is the story of Elizabeth St. Leger who is said to have been made a Mason in an Irish Lodge about 1710 and who later became the 'wife of Richard Aidwoith.

It is true that Lodge meetings were often held in the homes of prominent members. It is claimed that such a meeting was held in the St. Leger family mansion at a time when the building was undergoing alterations and that Elizabeth concealed herself in a place where she observed the ceremonies of the Lodge and saw the degrees conferred. The Tiler apprehended her as she was leaving, and after consultation, the first and second degrees were conferred upon her at that time. The third degree had, of course, not as yet been introduced, but it may be said that could then be conferred in a Masonic Lodge.

During the latter part of the eighteenth century, the raising of Chevalier d' Eon resulted in a bitter controversy between the Ancients and Moderns in England and soon thereafter, he began to pose as a woman. The Ancients scoffed and accused the Moderns of making a woman a Mason, but the scoffing gradually decreased when at the time of his death, it was proved that the Chevalier was really a man.

On June 24, 1774, the Grand Orient of France formally approved of Lodges of Adoption in which ladies were admitted to ceremonies somewhat resembling Freemasonry. These Lodges soon became most brilliant assemblies, particularly in France. Their ritual included four degrees and a Table Lodge or banquet, and their activities seem to have been confined largely to social affairs

The ten decades between 1775 and 1875 saw tremendous changes in every phase of human relations. The American Declaration of Independence and the French Revolution aroused world-wide interest in the natural rights of man, while the spread of the factory system and the development of industry led to a readjustment of all economic, political and social concepts, including the status of women. Feminist leaders, both women and men, found ready response to their propaganda, and societies sprang up in all the Western countries to champion their cause.

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In France, the Society for the improvement of Womens Conditions was founded in

1876 by the distinguished French lady, Marie Derem, but attempts to have women admitted into French Masonic Lodges repeatedly met with failure. In 1882, however, Marie Derem was made a Mason in a regular Lodge at LePeck, near Paris, in spite of objection of its own Grand Lodge.² A bitter controversy ensued among French Lodges. The Lodge at LePeck was suspended and Marie Derem refrained for several years from taking any part in Masonic activities.

In 1893, a French Senator, Dr. Georges Martin, an ardent feminist,, together with Marie Derem and Alphonse Hubron, the Master of the Lodge which had made her a Mason, organized Human Rights Lodge Number 1. The new fraternity formed a Grand Lodge, and for several years conferred only the first three degrees. In 1901, it was thought desirable to adopt the series of 33 degrees of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, and a Supreme Council of Universal Joint Freemasonry was organized with its Symbolic degrees, Installed Masters and Mark Lodges, Royal Arch and Rose Croix Chapters and its highest body, the Areopagus.

The movement gained headway in France, Switzerland and other countries. Co-Masonic Lodges were established in England and South America in 1902, in India and the United States in 1903, in Holland in 1905 and in Italy in 1906. By 1936, the total number of Co-Masonic Lodges throughout the world was over 700.

Other organizations of women interested in Freemasonry have been formed from time to time. "The Honorable Fraternity of Ancient Freemasons" was formed in England in 1913 and is composed entirely of women. They claim that their work is the same as that of the United Grand Lodge of England and that they have a large spread of pictures of the officers of this Grand Lodge and of the regalia used in their work. Among other things, the accompanying article stated that the Grand Master, who is a woman of course, is elected to that position for life.

The California Grand Lodge Coinminee on Clandestine Masonry reported in 1936 the existence of a school known as "Women's Order of Esoteric Masonry" which was incorporated in 1915 by Dr. Harriet L. Henderson for the purpose of studying the work done in Masonic Lodges but making no attempt to organize Lodges.

The Co-Masonic movement has been particularly active in countries where most of the population belong to the Roman Catholic Church. From France it spread to Italy and Spain. In America, Co-Masonry was well received in the Latin American Republics, especially in Mexico, where we are informed some of the Grand Lodges work closely with Co-Masonic Lodges. In some cases they even allow intervisitation and the use of their Temples.

California, too, has had its share of Co-Masonic activity which was highlighted by the arrival of a man named Louis Gwazu, a member of a Lodge under the jurisdiction of the Grand Orient of France and the President of the American Federation of Human Rights, with its headquarters in Larkspur Colorado, who went up and down the State visiting our regular Lodges and inducing men and their wives to join this Co-Masonic Group.

The May, 1927, issue of the American Co-Mason contains a four-page summary of Gwazu's visit to Southern California. Among other things we read: "The recent visit of the President of the American Federation of Human Rights, Louis Gwazu, to Los Angeles, has given new inspiration to the Co-Masonic Lodges of Southern California, and during his stay of a month, he was met on every side with unmistakable evidence of increased interest and activity in the Order." "on Sunday afternoon, February 20th, the Regional Convention was held in the Lodge room of Hollywood Co-Masonic Lodge at 5402 Hollywood Boulevard. There was a very large attendance, every seat in the Lodge room was occupied, while all available

space was taken up by additional chairs which were brought in for the occasion." Mr. Gwazu gave an inspired talk and Very Illustrious Brother Besant also addressed the convention.

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Mention is made of Chapters of the Co-Masonic Order at Long Beach, Ojai, Berkeley and San Francisco.

Our Grand Lodge officers were annoyed by Gwazu's activities, and the present Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of Colorado in a recent letter commenting on this incident said: "A protest from some of the officers of the Grand Lodge of California to Colorado for allowing this clandestine organization to operate in their jurisdiction brought the rather tart statement, as I now see it in looking at our files, to the effect that if they, California, would stop allowing this man to proselyte, we might be able to do something about stopping the spread of the organization throughout the rest of the country".

In 1934, the Grand Lodge Coinminee on Clandestine Masonry reported an American Federation of Human Rights Co-Masonic Lodge meeting at Hollywood Boulevard and Serrano moving to a small room in the premises of an independent Catholic Church in Hollywood

A recent Co-Masonic bulletin from their headquarters in Colorado reports their Grand Master visiting Lodges in San Diego, Santa Barbara and Ojai and also reports the formation of a new Royal Arch Chapter in Seattle in 1958.

The Druid Hall in San Francisco, just around the corner from the Masonic Temple at 25 Van Ness Boulevard is the meeting place of a number of Masonic organizations and also lists on its bulletin board the American Federation of Human Rights.

In their books on Co-Masonic symbolism and ceremonies, the authors claim that their ritual is much the same as ours and that they have a distinct advantage over us in research work because of their belief in reincarnation and their reliance on clairvoyant methods. In "The Hidden Life in Freemasonry", C. W. Leadheater justifies the existence of Co-Masonry by citing the Buddhist and Theosophist theory of reincarnation. Masonry, he says, is in the soul, and not in the body, and if a man who is a Mason dies and returns in his next reincarnation as a woman, this is no reason for denying her admission into Freemasonry.

"At the back of each pillar, so that they were not seen at all from the front, were three small doors, one above the other, so that part of the pillar may be thought of as divided into safes, in which archives, books of the law and other documents were kept.

Superimposed upon the network is a rather curious decoration of chains, hanging in festoons, and there are seven rows of these festoons one below the other. Each loop of chain consists of seven links, and in each case the central link of the chain is much the largest and heaviest, and the links diminish in size and weight as they rise towards the end of the loop.

It is understood that all this varied ornamentation was not arranged in basso-relief, as would be expected in a casting; on the contrary it stood out boldly from the face of the pillar".

Mr. Leadheater also states that when he was made a Mason, he found nothing new, for he remembered going through a similar ceremony in similar surroundings about

6000 years ago in Egypt.

1. W. R. Riddell, 'The Woman in Freemasonry' in the Masonic Sun, Toronto, January 1929, Pages 218 to 227.

2. La Grande Loge Symbolique Ecossaise de France was probably not recognized as regular outside of France. Several Lodges under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Council of France dissatisfied with their condition, revolted from its authority and organized this new Grand Lodge with the support of the Grand Orient of France.

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PART 3

OTHER CLANDESTINE MASONRIES

By Bro. Robert Moore,

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(The opinions expressed in the following paper are those of the Author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Victoria Lodge of Education and Research.)

This classification could cover a 'multitude of sins', so we shall try to enumerate a few of the more interesting cases.

We can start close at home where we have an excellent example of a clandestine Lodge becoming regular in Los Angeles. Our own Vallee de France Lodge was originally chartered by some obscure body in Louisiana and in 1892 another charter was issued to it by the Grande Loge /Symbolique Ecossaise/ of France. Under the American Rule it was a clandestine Lodge and the Grand Lodge of California forbade inter-visitation between its members and ours. In 1895 it surrendered its French charter and in 1897 it received its charter from our Grand Lodge and became a regular California Lodge.

There were trying times in the Masonic history of the Hawaiian Islands in 1850s. Peace was restored at the 1860 communication of our Grand Lodge when Lodge le Progres de l'Oceanie was made regular after having been declared clandestine in 1856. For interesting reading, it is recommended that you read this story in One Hundred Years of Freemasonry in California.

Probably the outstanding charlatan to appear on the American Masonic scene was Matthew McBlain Thomson. According to his own story, he was made a Mason in 1874 in Scotland, being a member of three lodges there. This would show him to be an enthusiastic Mason. He apparently did not lose this enthusiasm when he came to this country for he affiliated with a Lodge in Idaho and served as an Officer several times, finally becoming Grand Orator of the Grand Lodge in 1901.

About 1906, Thomson saw great possibilities for personal gain in our Fraternity. He claimed that he had all there was or ever was in Masonry and branded all the regular Masonic bodies as irregular.

To substantiate this claim of irregularity, he maintained that Grand Lodges must be formed from above and not from below. For example, California Grand Lodge was formed by three Lodges banding together, which would be formation from below. He maintained that only another Grand Lodge could form a Grand Lodge, This would be

from above. As the Grand Lodges in the thirteen were formed from Lodges, this automatically made them irregular in his eyes. As other Grand Lodges in the United States were not only formed from Lodges chartered by these co-called irregular Lodges but were formed from below, he could find no regularity in our Grand Lodges.

His claim for regularity in the work of the first three degrees came through the Supreme Council of Louisiana which he traced back to Kilwinning Lodge #0 of Scotland by dubious channels. What he did not disclose was that during the time his organization was flourishing, this Supreme Council of Louisiana was a Creole or Negro Grand Lodge. His claim for regularity in the higher numbered degrees was through the Scotland Grand Council of Rites, also an apparent brain child of his own, for he helped to organize it in Scotland in 1880 and which, at the time of his trial in 1922, still had less than 50 members. The only apparent business of this Scotland Grand Council of Rites was the printing of diplomas for the Thomson organization. They apparently had a flourishing business for this same Grand Council of Rites controlled the 90 degrees of the Supreme Council of the Rite of Mizraim, for sale by Thomson; the 96 degrees of the Egyptian Masonic Rite of Memphis, also for sale by Thomson; and the Oriental Order of Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, also for sale by Thomson. In addition, it controlled other miscellaneous bodies, including the Royal Order of Scotland and the Adoptive Order of the Eastern Star, but did little with this latter

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group. The Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of Scotland appeared at the Thomson Trial and testified that these various organizations were clandestine and Thomson, himself, had been expelled from Masonry in Scotland. Thomson's members gave the Grand Lodge of Utah a lot of trouble when they built their temple just a block away from his Grand Lodge building in Salt Lake City. To this day, widows of these fraudulent members come for relief to the Grand :Lodge with fancy patents and diplomas

His method of "doing business" was to hire organizers who would go into a town and put ads in the newspapers announcing that they were looking for men interested in receiving the degrees of Masonry. The "customers were then shown an assortment of charters, diplomas, and suddry certificates, and were sold the first three degrees for a usual price of \$35.00, of which \$20.00 went to the organizer and \$15.00 to the American Masonic Federation, Thomson's organization. They were sold additional degrees, according to their financial ability, which might include the complete available stock of 219 degrees.

Thomson's organization spread over most of the United States before Court action put an end to it in 1922 for using the mails to defraud. This is an important point for fraud seems to be the only basis upon which such organizations can be eliminated.

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The Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania has been compelled several time against clandestine groups, usually formed by persons who had been rejected. The most recent occasion was in 1944. The defendants in this case were a spurious group operating under charter from the Grand Orient of Spain, Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, dated 1893. These fellows sold the 32 degrees for \$350, with the entire ceremony taking place in an office in less than an hour. One witness testified that he, a Roman Catholic, was made a Mason in order to obtain a government contract that could be given only to a mason.

The success of this trial undoubtedly was due to the careful preparation the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania and the Supreme Council 33°Northern Masonic

Jurisdiction of the Scottish Rite The Sovereign Grand Commander, Melvin Johnson, a Past Grand Master of Massachusetts, testified as to the history, traditions, laws and landmarks of Freemasonry in America. He delineated the growth and extent of the written and unwritten law which constitute Masonic jurisprudence His convincing interpretation held the Court, the visiting Judges, and members of the bar, and even the defendants themselves, spellbound. Even the attorneys for the defense were at to cross-examine him. The attorney for the plaintiffs remarked, "Although it took a whole day do it, Dr. Johnson has sealed the fate of fakers and charlatans in Freemasonry for many years to come".

We occasionally hear about Chinese Masonic Lodges in California, but it is generally understood that these "Lodges" are not Masonic in character but rather clubs of some sort, including the whole family and even small children as members. It is interesting to note that there are Chinese Brethren in some of our Lodges in California. Brother Fong Q. Jing was Master of Confidence Lodge #203 of Castroville in 1946 and 1947. He was the first native Chinese ever to serve as Master of a Masonic Lodge in California..

Mexican and Filipino Lodges have been very active at times, as reported by our Grand Lodge committee on Clandestine Masonry. This committee had records of two Mexican and three Filipino Grand Lodges having up to 20 constituent Lodges each. It is especially interesting to note that his committee reported in 1939 the formation of Academia Masonica in Los Angeles, which was a research Lodge for Mexican and Filipino Masons.

Our own Grand Lodge has taken great strides in meeting the need for Masonic intercourse by fostering Lodges whose membership consists pricipally of members of these groups. These Lodges are Maya No. 793 and Tila Pass No 797, both in Los Angeles.

The recently formed Grand Lodge of Japan had difficulty in gaining recognition. For a short time, the Japanese Lodges were irregular as far as we were concerned. There was some confusion in the manner
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of their withdrawal from the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of the Philippines. During the negotiations leading to the organization of the Grand Lodge of Japan, other Grand Lodges withheld recognition until the Grand Lodge of the Philippines expressed its approval.

Freemasonry has had a long and interesting history It has been exposed, attacked, imitated and copied. Those who would dictate the lives and control the minds of men see in Masonry their bitterest enemy. Those who seek truth and freedom hold it in high esteem. That other groups should try to imitate its forms and ceremonies is, in fact, an evidence of its continuing impact upon society. Exposures have never revealed our inner secrets. When tyrants and dictators have had their day, Freemasonry will still survive. Let us not be harsh and critical of clandestine bodies. Some of them, of course, may hold us up to ridicule, but most of them are doing their best to live up to the high ideals which we, ourselves, can never quite attain.
