

# ABOUT THREE ORIGINAL ORDERS OF KNIGHTS TEMPLARS.

BY BRO. JACOB NORTON.

We all know something about the first Order of Knights Templars which was organized by five Frenchmen in A.D. 1118. We know that they were brave soldiers, that they were strict Roman Catholics, that their object was to conquer the Holy Land, and to kill all the infidels. We know that when out on duty, they were covered from head to foot in steel armor, and that the said Order was abolished by Pope Clement V. in A. D. 1312.

We also know that not a shadow of evidence can be found that Masonic Knight Templarism was known or thought of before A.D. 1735. We know that Masonic Knights are not Roman Catholics, and that some of them are far removed from every kind of Christian orthodoxy. We know that when on duty they wear not steel armor, but are clothed in garments made by an ordinary tailor. We know that our Masonic Knights, when they turn out in procession, are decorated with belts, jewels, collars, cocked-hats and feathers, and that, although they carry swords, they are not soldiers at all; and we know that the chief aim of Masonic knighthood is to have a jolly good time in their Commanderies after they have performed their holy rites and mysteries.

Few, however, know that a Knights Templar Order was organized after the death of De Molay and before Masons dreamed of being associated with Templars. I have read somewhere that the first Masonic Knights Templars in France claimed cousinship with the older Order then existing in France. The Masonic Templars claimed their descent from a body of Knights Templars which was stationed in Scotland when the said Order was abolished in 1312; that in order to preserve their organization they got themselves Masonized by the Masons, and the Masons were at the same time Templarized by the Templars; that ever since then Masonic Knights Templars existed in Scotland, and from thence it was brought into France. But the older Order of Knights Templars treated the above story with contempt. I have, however, before me a history of the second Order of Knights Templars, which begins thus:

“ We read that several lords of the court of Louis XIV, including the Duke of Gramont, the Marquis of Biran, and Count Tellard, formed a secret society, whose object was pleasure. The society increased. Louis XIV having been made acquainted with its statutes banished the members of the Order, whose denomination was ‘ A Slight Resurrection of the Templars.’

In 1705 Philip Duke of Orleans collected the remaining members of the society that had renounced the first scope to cultivate politics. A Jesuit, Father Bonneni, a learned rogue, fabricated the famous list of suppositious Grand Masters of the Temple since De Molay, beginning with his immediate successor, Larminius. No imposture was ever sustained with greater sagacity ; the document offered all the characteristics of authenticity, and was calculated to deceive the most experienced palaeologist. Its object was to connect the new institution with the ancient Templars. To render the deception more perfect, the volume containing the false list was filled with minutes of deliberations at fictitious meetings under false dates. Two members were even sent to Lisbon to obtain, if possible, a document of legitimacy from the “ Knights of Christ,” an Order supposed to have been founded on the ruins of the Order of the Temple. But the deputies were unmasked and very badly received ; one had to take refuge in England ; the other was transported to Africa, where he died.

“ But, the society was not discouraged ; it grew, and was probably the same that concealed itself before the outbreak of the revolution under the vulgar name of the Society of the Bull’s Head, and whose members were dispersed in 1792. At that period the Duke of Cosse-Brissac was Grand Master. When, on his way to Versailles with the other prisoners, there to undergo their trials, he was massacred, and Ledne, his physician, obtained possession of the charter of Larmenius, and the MS. statutes of 1705. These documents suggested to him the idea of surviving the Order. Fabré Paleprat, a Freemason, was chosen Grand Master. Every effort was made to create belief in the genuineness of the Order. The brothers Fabré, Arnal and Lebloud hunted up relics. The shops of antiquaries supplied the sword, mitre and helmet of De Molay, and the faithful was shown his bones, withdrawn from the funeral pyre on which he had been burned. As in the Middle Ages, the society exacted that aspirants shall be of noble birth, such as were not were ennobled by the society. Fourteen honest citizens of

Troyes, on one occasion, received patents of nobility and convincing coat of arms.

“The society was at first Catholic, Apostolic, Roman, and rejected Protestants. Fabré suddenly gave it an opposite tendency. Having acquired the Greek MS. of the fifteenth century containing the Gospel of St. John, with readings somewhat differing from the received version preceded by a kind of introduction or commentary, called “Leviticon,” he determined, towards 1815, to apply its doctrines to the society governed by him, and thus to transform an association hitherto quite orthodox, into a schismatic sect. This Leviticon is nothing but the well known work, with the same title, by the Greek monk, Nicephorus. He having been initiated into the mysteries of the Sufites, who, to this day, in the bosom of Mohamedanism, preserve the dismal doctrines of the Ishmalites of the Lodge of Cairo, attempted to introduce into Christianity, and for that purpose wrote the Lexicon, which became the Bible of a small number of sectaries; but persecution put an end to them. This singular MS. was translated into French in 1822, and printed with modifications and interpolations by Palapret himself. This publication was the cause of a schism in the Order of the Temple. These Knights that adopted the doctrines made them the basis of a liturgy, which they rendered public in 1833 in a kind of a Johannite Church, but people only laughed at it.

“The Lodges in this degree are called Encampments, and the officers take their names from those that managed the original institution of the Knights Templars. The penal signs are the chin and beard sign and the saw sign. The grand sign is indicative of the death of Christ on the cross. There is a word, a grip, and password, which vary. The Knight, who is always addressed as Sir Knight, wears the knightly costume, not omitting the sword. The candidate for initiation is ‘gotten up’ as a pilgrim, with sandals, mantle, staff, cross, scrip and wallet, belt or cord surrounds his waist, and in some Encampments a burden on his back, which is made to fall off at the sight of the cross. On his approach an alarm is sounded with a trumpet, and after a deal of pseudo-military parley he is admitted, and a saw is applied to his head by the second captain, whilst all the Sir Knights are under arms. The candidate being prompted by the master of the ceremonies, declares that he is a weary pilgrim, prepared to devote his life to the service of the poor and sick, and to protect the holy sepulchre. After perambulating

the Encampment seven times he repeats the oath, having first put away the pilgrim's staff and cross, and taken up the sword. In his oath he swears to defend the sepulchre of our Lord Jesus Christ, to kill all the Jews, Turks, infidels, heathens, and other opposers of the Gospel. 'If ever I wilfully violate this my solemn compact,' he continues, 'as a brother Knight Templar, may my skull be sawed assunder with a rough saw, my brains taken out and put in a charger, to be consumed by a scorching sun, and my skull in another charger in commemoration of St. John of Jerusalem, that first faithful soldier and martyr of our Lord and Saviour. Furthermore, may the soul which once inhabited his skull appear against me in the day of judgment. So help me God.'"\*

After the Knight Templar took his oath, the book goes on to say :—

"A lighted taper is afterwards put into his hand, and he circumulates the Encampment five times," "in solemn meditation," and then kneeling down is dubbed a Knight by the Grand Commander, who says : "I hereby install you a Masonic Knight Hospitaller of St. John of Jerusalem, Palestine, Rhodes, and Malta, and also a Knights Templar." The Grand Commander next clothes him with the mantle, and invests him with the apron, sash and jewels, and presents him with sword and shield. He then teaches him the so-called Mediterranean password and sign. The motto of the Knights Templar is *signo vinces*. In some Encampments the following is the concluding part of the ceremony : One of the equerries, dressed as a cook, with a white nightcap and apron and large kitchen knife, suddenly rushes in, and kneeling on one knee before the new Sir Knight, says : "I admonish you to be just, honorable and faithful to the Order, for I, the cook, will hack your spurs from off your heels with my kitchen knife." He then retires.

The above I copied from (Vol. 1) a work called "The Secret Societies of All Ages," by Charles William Heckethorn, printed in

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\* On reading as far as the end of the "oath," I supposed that the ceremony described belonged to the second original Order of Knights Templars. But the finishing part shows that it was a Masonic Knight Templar ceremony. The American Masonic Knight Templar, however, will now see the difference between the original French ceremony of Masonic Knights Templars and the American ceremony, as manufactured by Thomas Smith Webb in the latter part of the last century,

London, by Richard Bentley & Son, in 1875. The author furnished no foot-notes to indicate his authorities, but his history of Freemasonry is preceded by a list of books, fifty of which are French and German, the remainder are English. One of the latter is entirely new to me ; it is called "Masonry the Same All Over the World." Boston, 1830. Now, if *Boston* means our dear *Hub*, then C. W. Moore was probably its author. But, strange to say, that among that list of books I could not find the names of Findel, Steinbrenner, Lyon, Hughan, Folger, nor any of the modern school of Masonic critics ; hence, the author's knowledge of Masonic history is far from being O. K. How much truth there is in the above narrative I cannot say. There is, however, no doubt than an Order of Knights Templars existed in France who claimed to be in possession of a list of all the Knights Templar Grand Masters from the time of De Molay, long before Masonry was introduced into France ; and, furthermore, it is certain that the organizers of the first Order of Knights Templars were Frenchmen ; that the organizers of the second Order of Knights Templars were also Frenchmen, and the organizers of the Order of Masonic Knights Templars were also Frenchmen, and that Scotch Masons never heard of Masonic Knight Templarism before it was imported from France into Scotland in the second half of the last century.

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#### ONE, OR THREE DEGREES?

The following letters are illustrative of the views of eminent Craftsmen in regard to the evolutions that have occurred in Masonry. All history goes to prove that changes have occurred in the details of the Ritual and ceremonies, yet the principles of the Masonic Craft are the same to-day as ever. The foundation being a belief in the G.A.O.T.U., and love to our fellow-man, the "Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man."

The letter of Bro. HUGHAN is from the original, which is before us, kindly sent by Bro. NORTON :

WINTHROP, July 28th, 1894.

MY DEAR BRO. WRIGHTSON :—

You will see by the enclosed letter that Bro. Hughan is of the same opinion about the pre-1717 Masons having had but *one degree*,

as I am, but as the article or paper which he sent me has not yet reached me, if, therefore, you find in any recent English paper Bro. Hughan's article referred to, you will very much oblige me by printing it.

It seems strange to me, that though I have never written to Bro. Hughan about the subject in his letter; in fact, I have not written to him since my article against Gould's *new theory* was printed in the *Freemason's Chronicle* in November 4th, that Hughan should, so many months after the above date, come out in a paper with his opinion upon the question at issue.

I sent a letter yesterday to Bro. Hughan requesting him to send me another copy of his paper, in which letter I mentioned my *new find*, viz: that C. W. Moore was the inventor of the so-called tradition about John the Evangelist's Grand Mastership when upwards of ninety, and that Dr. Oliver invented the catechism in 1847 or 1848.

Yours as ever,

JACOB NORTON.

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DUNSCORE, TORQUAY, ENGLAND,

14—7—94.

DEAR BRO. NORTON:—

As you will see by the paper I send you, re 30, (my latest) my views remain unchanged as to degrees, pre-18th century. To my mind there is no real evidence to justify the belief that *other* than a simple ceremony, the reading of the "Old Charges," and the communication of certain "word and signs" were known prior to 1717. I am hard at it, as usual, and pleased to note the signs of your activity. As one of old says, "May the God of Jacob have you in *His keeping*."

All good wishes, from yours,

W. J. HUGHAN.

I am now preparing 2d edition of my "Old Charges."