

ing funds on a tontine scheme, which, as the Grand Master says (1768), "would not only give a sanction to our assemblies, but be a prelude to an incorporation should be at the opinion of the society to obtain a charter for that purpose." At the Grand Lodge held at the London Taverns April 24th, 1774, Lord Petre being M. W. G. M., the Grand Secretary, James Heseltine. reported from the Committee for building the hall, that the committee had contracted for the purchase of a plot of ground and premises consisting of two large commodious dwelling-houses and an extensive garden situate in Great Queen-street, Lincoln's-inn-fields, late in the possession of Philip Carteret Webb, Esq., deceased. That the premises had been surveyed and found to be in good conition, and that the real value thereof appeared to be £3,205, at the least; that £3,180 was the sum contracted to be paid for the premises; that as the front house would be at present useless to the Society and upon a moderate calculation might produce £90 per annum it would defray the interest on the mortgage, £1050, already lent upon the premises; that the back house would furnish commodious committee rooms, offices, kitchens, &c., without much alteration; and that the garden was sufficiently large to contain a complete hall for the use of the Society, the expense of which it was imagined would not exceed £3,000. The first stone of the new hall was laid on May 1st, 1775, by Lord Petre, Grand Master, the brethren assembling at Freemasons' Coffee House, Great Queen-street, and adjourning to the feast at Leathersellers' Hall, Great St. Helen's. A year afterwards, May 23rd, 1776, the Hall was dedicated in solemn form to Masonry, virtue, universal charity, and benevolence. The tontine under a deed of trust continued to pay annuities to the survivors until the last of them died on August 26th, 1862, who was the daughter of Admiral Sir Peter Parker, himself a Past Grand Warden. By a curious coincidence the announcement of this lady's death was made at the same meeting of Grand Lodge, December 3rd, 1862, at which the Building Committee for the new construction was appointed. Freemasons' Tavern continued to be the home of London Freemasons, as well as a known place of assembly and resort for public meetings, dinners, and dances, The very name associated Freemasons, with tavern orgies, and for a long time this had been a reproach and opprobrium to the progress of Masonry, which in the latter years of the Mastership of the Duke of Sussex and as soon as the rule of the Earl of Zetland commenced, had taken great onward and advancing strides. On December 1st, 1858, the Board of General Purposes, by the month of its President, Bro. John Havers, proposed to Grand Lodge to erect suitable buildings and to separate Freemasons' Hall from the Tavern. Of the late large block of buildings belonging to the Society in Great Queen-street, the only portions reserved exclusively for Masonic purposes were the Temple, the Grand Master's room, the Grand Secretary's offices, and the Grand Tyler's apartments. This being the largest Grand Lodge in the world, is the only Grand Lodge whose Temple was used as a tavern. At that Grand Lodge Bro. James Havers moved, "That is is desirable that the freehold property now belonging to the Society, or such part thereof as may be necessary, shall be devoted exclusively to Masonic purposes." This motion was carried; but, as on a subsequent occasion was well observed by Bro. Havers, no great or worthy object has ever been carried out without opposition—without having been considered, discussed, condemned, nay, forgotten almost,