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THE GENERAL REGULATIONS,

HOW THEY ORIGINATED.

"In the year 1712, a person of the name of Simeon Townsend published a pamphlet, which he entitled, 'Observations and Inquiries relating to the brotherhood of the Freemasons;' and a few others had been issued on the decline of the Order, as if triumphing in its fall. About this time, Dr. Desaguliers, a Fellow of the Royal Society and Professor of Philosophy, was gradually rising into eminence. In the course of his scientific researches, the above works fell into his hands. He did not find them very complimentary to the Fraternity, but they excited his curiosity, and he was made a Mason in the old Lodge at the Goose and Gridiron in St. Paul's Churchyard, and subsequently removed by him to the Queen's Arms Tavern in the same locality, where the Grand Lodges were afterwards very frequently held. The peculiar principles of the Craft struck him as being eminently calculated to contribute to the benefit of the community at large, if they could be re-directed into the channel from which they had been diverted by the retirement of Sir Christopher Wren. Dr. Desaguliers paid a visit to this veteran Freemason for the purpose of consulting him on the subject. The conversation of the Past Grand Master excited his enthusiasm, for he expatiated with great animation on the beauties of the Order and the unhappy prostration which had befallen it. From this moment the doctor determined to make some efforts to revive Freemasonry, and restore it to its primitive importance.

You may perhaps be inclined to inquire how I became acquainted with these facts, as I was then quietly reposing in the drawer of a cabinet along with Sir Christopher's collection of curiosities. The truth is, that the venerable old gentleman had taken a liking to Dr. Desaguliers, and presented me to him with the rest of his Masonic regalia. From henceforth I was privy of all the doctor's plans; and as he soon rose to the chair of his Lodge, I had the advantage of hearing almost every conversation he had with his Masonic friends on the subject nearest to his heart, which generally occurred in the Lodge, with your humble servant at his breast suspended from a white ribbon. Every plan was carefully arranged, and the details subjected to the most critical supervision before it was carried into execution; and by this judicious process, his schemes were generally successful. Thus, having been in active operation from a period anterior to the revival of Masonry, I have witnessed many scenes which it may be both amusing and instructive to record, as the good may prove an example worthy of imitation, and the evil, should there be any, may act as a beacon to warn the unwary Brother to avoid the

quicksands of error which will impede his progress to Masonic perfection.

Bro. Desaguliers having intimated his intention of renovating the Order, soon found himself supported by a party of active and zealous brothers, whose names merit preservation. They were Sayer, Payne, Lamball, Elliot, Gofton, Cordwell, De Noyer, Vraden, King, Morrice, Calvert, Ware, Lumley and Madden. These included the Masters and Wardens of the four existing Lodges at the Goose and Gridiron, the Crown, the Appletree, and the Rummer and Grapes; and they succeeded in forming themselves into a Grand Lodge, and resumed the quarterly Communications, which had been discontinued for many years; and having thus replanted the tree, it soon extended its stately branches to every quarter of the Globe.

There was no code of laws in existence at the period to regulate the internal economy of the Lodges except a few brief By-laws of their own, which, in fact, were little more than a dead letter, for the Brethren acted pretty much as their own judgment dictated. Any number of Masons, not less than ten, that is to say, the Master, two Wardens and seven Fellow Crafts, with the consent of the magistrate, were empowered to meet, and perform all the rites and ceremonies of Masonry, with no other authority than the privilege which was inherent in themselves, and had ever remained unquestioned. They assembled at their option, and opened their Lodges on the highest of hills or in the lowest of valleys, in commemoration of the same custom adopted by the early Christians, who held their private assemblies in similar places during the ten great persecutions which threatened to exterminate them from the face of the earth.

But as this privilege led to many irregularities, and was likely to afford a pretext for unconstitutional practices, it was resolved that every Lodge to be hereafter convened, except the four old Lodges at this time existing, should be legally authorized to act by a warrant from the Grand Master for the time being, granted to certain individuals on petition, with the consent and approbation of the Grand Lodge in Communication; and that without such warrant no Lodge should be hereafter deemed regular or constitutional. And a few years later Bro. Desaguliers proposed in Grand Lodge that a code of laws should be drawn up for the better government of the Craft.

Accordingly, at the annual assembly on St. John's day, 1721, he produced thirty-eight regulations, which passed without a dissentient voice in the most numerous Grand Lodge which had yet been seen, conditionally, that every annual Grand Lodge shall have an inherent power and authority to make new regulations, or to alter these for the real benefit