

latter was doubtless tacitly acknowledged by England as an independent Masonic power, but never formally so. No correspondence passed between the two, no exchange of representatives were ever made. But French Masons who were formerly received and welcomed in all English Lodges, can now only be admitted on certifying that they were made in a Lodge acknowledging the G.A.O.T.U., and that they themselves held such a belief to be a pre-requisite to Freemasonry. With this mournful episode, let us close the history of the French Grand Orient. Indeed, in our eyes, French Freemasonry no longer exists. What remains is spurious, irregular, and illegitimate. I must nevertheless present a short account of a movement which began in 1879, and would have merited our approbation had it only reverted to that most ancient landmark of the Craft, the expression of a belief in the Deity.

As was the case in 1848 it was from the bosom of the autocratic Scots Rite that the cry arose for the autonomy of the Craft; it was the A. and A.S.R. Masons, who, feeling most the yoke, made one more effort to free themselves from the irresponsible rule of the high degrees.

On January 3, 1879, papers were read in the Lodge, *La Justice*, No. 133, A. and A.S.R., and subsequently printed, calling for a judicious rearrangement of the Constitutions. On March 15 following, the first Section of the *Grande Loge Centrale* (corresponding to a Grand Lodge of Master Masons) met. A Bro. Ballue of the Lodge *Justice* dropped a proposal of amendment into the box. On April 15, five members of the first Section, viz., the Vice-President Doumain-Cornille, the Senior Warden Dennis, the Orator Mesureur, the Secretary Dubois, and Ballue, W.M. of Justice, issued a circular embodying these proposals, and calling upon Masters of Lodges for support. A few extracts from this circular will define the grievances of the Lodges, and explain the wished-for reforms. "Scottish Freemasonry in France is passing through a crisis, crushed by the dogmatic authority which rules it. . . . Without control over the finances of the Rite, our Lodges find their existence seriously menaced by the many taxes and dues which weigh upon them. All manly effort is blamed, all work inspired by the spirit of liberty censured, all initiative is rendered sterile by excessive regulations which condemn all to a fatal stagnation. . . . We ask then to be free . . . etc." The chief points of the proposal to the first Section were:—(1.) the President of the first Section to be elected by members of the Masters' Lodges; (2.) the first Section to *itself* arrange the dates of its meetings and the agenda paper, instead of this being done by the Supreme Council; (3.) the Supreme Council to confine itself to governing the high degrees, but the Lodges to govern themselves, through their deputies assembled in the first Section. In a word, it was sought to establish a procedure, like that obtaining in England with regard to the Craft and the Royal Arch.

It will be readily understood that strife at once arose. The Lodge *La Justice* and the first Section were both accused of irregularity in issuing circulars without the previous consent of the Supreme Council. Their accusers, however, committed precisely the same offence, and were not reprimanded by the Supreme Council, whereas at a meeting of the first Section on May 20, 1879 (the officers having been all replaced by others), a decree from the Supreme Council was read, suspending for two years the five subscribers to the circular, closing the Lodge *Justice*, and forbidding the first Section to entertain the proposal of said Lodge. Hereupon ensued a scene of disorder, the President quitted the chair, the gas was turned off, and the meeting broke up.