

I shall not pay to your knowledge and intelligence the bad compliment of attempting, as has sometimes been done, to point out, in the dim records of a remote antiquity traces of the actual establishment of our Order as such. But while I candidly acknowledge its comparatively modern organization as a distinct association for benevolent purposes, and rapidly sketch its progress from feeble infancy to vigorous and flourishing maturity, I shall not fail to assert, and I trust I shall be able to vindicate, for the principles on which it rests, and the model on which it is formed, a title to antiquity of the most venerable kind, and sanctions of the highest order.

The earliest authentic records of the actual establishment of Odd-Fellowship in Great Britain, to which I have had access, reach no farther back than the early part of the last century.

There is one circumstance which it may not be amiss to state in connection with this admission. It is said that the honor of first proposing a fund for the relief of distressed Free Masons is due to the Duke of Buccleugh, who, in 1723, succeeded the Duke of Wharton, as Grand Master of the British portion of that ancient and venerable Order. Whether or not there exists between these two circumstances the relation of cause and effect, and if so in which direction it operated I will not even attempt to conjecture, but at least it will be conceded that each is due to, and typical of, the same advanced era in the history of human progress and civilization.

The credit, however, of organizing this valuable Institution, for the legitimate purposes of mutual assistance and relief, belongs entirely to members of the industrious classes in Great Britain—men whose noble reliance on Providence, and their own exertions was tempered with a prudent forethought—who had learned to struggle bravely with adversity, and scorned to accept of alms, but could not help reflecting anxiously on the destitute condition to which their wives and children might be reduced, whenever it pleased God to stretch them on the bed of sickness, or lay them in their appointed home—men, withal, to whom the artificial distinctions of society had not assigned a place so high or so low as to expose them to the danger of forgetting that all mankind are members of one great family.—Such were the Fathers of Odd-Fellowship—such are still its most attached and valuable adherents—but not to such alone is it valuable—it has qualities which recommend it to the rich as well as to the poor.

By what title the original Order was known it is out of my power to inform you. I find that on the formation, early in the Reign of George the Third, of a new Union, the residuary body considered itself entitled to assume the appellation of "Loyal Ancient Independent Odd Fellows." Many other branches have since grown out of the Parent stock, such as the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows, Sheffield Unity; Ancient Order of Odd Fellows, Bolton Unity; Imperial Order of Odd Fellows, Nottingham Unity; United Order of Odd Fellows, Leeds Unity; Imperial Order of Odd Fellows, Paddock Unity; Independent Reformed Order of Odd Fellows; and last, though not least, the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Manchester Unity. The establishment of this last Order on an improved footing, in 1809, constituted an era in the history of Odd Fellowship. It rapidly sprung into public favor, and now numbers no less than 400,000 members in its different lodges in Great Britain alone. By it has Odd Fellowship been transplanted into this Western Hemisphere. Its Father and Founder is an Englishman by birth:—he is known and revered in every part of the United States, and soon, I hope, will be known and revered throughout the whole length and breadth of America, by the name and title of Past Grand Sire Thomas Wildey.

This philanthropic individual emigrated to Baltimore about thirty years ago; and taking an enlightened sur-

vvey of the peculiar composition of society in his adopted country, he judged, and judged rightly, that it presented "ample scope and verge enough" for the exercise of the salutary influences of the Institution whose principles he had been taught to cherish in his native land. For some years he longed in vain for a Lodge of Odd Fellows, to relieve the distress which he saw around him—at last, in 1818, he found four Brothers, in Baltimore, willing to join him in the enterprise. He lost no time in repairing to England, and in the spring of the following year, he returned with a Warrant from the Duke of York Lodge, Preston, for a Lodge, to be hailed as "No. 1, Washington Lodge, the Grand Lodge of Maryland and of the United States of America," with power to grant Warrants for the formation of Lodges throughout the Union. Many Lodges were founded in pursuance of this authority. Charters were also obtained from other Orders in England. Jealousies arose among them, and the character of the Institution began to suffer in consequence; but the Founder of American Odd Fellowship was not discouraged or deterred from prosecuting his philanthropic designs—he travelled from State to State, visiting the different Lodges, reconciling their differences, and labouring successfully to bring them all into harmony with the Manchester Branch of the Order.

The Order grew and prospered—but soon a new difficulty assailed it—the virtue of Temperance began to be more strongly insisted upon, and the conviviality, which to a certain degree mingled with the observances of Odd Fellowship, became a reproach to the Brethren. It was soon removed, however, by the adoption of a regulation forbidding the use of any refreshment but water in a Lodge-Room, or any apartment attached to it. The credit of having taken the lead in this wholesome reform is due to Washington and Franklin Lodges, in the City of Baltimore, the members of which came to a joint resolution on the subject, in 1824.

Two years after this, Grand Sire Wildey was again deputed to England on the business of the order—he visited many lodges under the jurisdiction of the Manchester Unity, and was warmly greeted in all of them. When about leaving Manchester he was privately asked by a high officer of the order if a gold medal would be acceptable as a mark of respect from his English Brethren. His characteristic reply, was that if it was their wish to present him with a token of their esteem, he would prefer to any thing else, a Charter for the Grand Lodge of the United States, confirming the one granted by the Duke of York Lodge, Preston. To this suggestion they instantly promised compliance, and on his return from London he was presented with a Charter, splendidly executed on parchment—the delivery of which was accompanied by a highly complimentary address.

In 1829, we find the same indefatigable and disinterested philanthropist, on the occasion of his second installation, for the term of four years, into the highest office in the power of his brethren to bestow, congratulating them on the rapid spread of their principles during the past ten years, as proved by the existence of 40 Lodges, containing in all 5,000 members.

The following summary will show the rapid increase of the American Order from 1840 to 1845, inclusive:—

Yrs.	Initiations.	Revenue.	Con.Mem.	Relief.	Lodges
1840	3,343	\$59,298 79	11,166	\$8,944 50	155
1841	6,822	115,878 11	17,854	18,551 70	199
1842	7,836	163,719 71	24,160	43,435 83	265
1843	8,749	191,635 22	30,043	66,863 17	352
1844	13,192	283,132 50	40,238	72,113 71	457
1845	22,862	449,194 24	61,630	124,769 27	677

In many of these Lodges business is transacted in French, and in many others the German language is used exclusively.

It was in 1843, that Prince of Wales Lodge No. 1,