

but few in number, and they represented a feeble constituency, yet they took upon themselves the responsibility of forming a new organisation, to which they gave the name of "The General Grand Encampment of Knights Templar and the Appendant Orders for the United States." This was the birth of the organisation now known as the Grand Encampment of the United States. It was begun in weakness, and was the work of a few earnest, bold souls, who believed that a more effective organisation was necessary to the welfare of Templar Masonry, and especially to prevent the possible confusion and conflict liable to arise from several grand bodies attempting to exercise jurisdiction over the same territory.

The first Triennial of the Grand Encampment, held in New York, 1819, was attended by lawful representatives from only two grand bodies, albeit, there were visiting Knights from several localities where the order had become known. For forty years the General Grand Encampment continued to live and act under the constitution that was formulated at New York in 1816. Within that period but few amendments were made in the governing law. During the first decade after the formation of the national body there was a steady increase in the membership and influence of the Order, but when the anti-Masonic storm swept over the land it suffered a serious retrogression. The General Grand Encampment, however, maintained its organisation, exercised a wholesome supervision over its subordinates, held its Triennial meetings and waited for the revival to come. The Triennial Conclave held at Hartford, Conn., in 1856, may be regarded as the turning point in the fortunes of Masonic Templarism. Eminent Masons and Templars brought their best thoughts to bear upon the work of revising the constitution, adapting and directing the Order as to bring it to a larger measure of blessing and accomplishment.

From that time forward, progress and prosperity have marked the way of the Templar Institution. The Order has a present membership of some 110,000. There are forty Grand Commanderies which acknowledge the authority of the Grand Encampment of the United States; and these Grand Commanderies include 950 subordinates. Besides these there are some thirty other local Commanderies which hold a relation of direct allegiance to the Grand Encampment. The progress of the Order since the formation of the National Body in 1816, when there were but eight or ten Templar organisations in the land, with a total membership not exceeding 500, is, indeed, wonderful to consider. The growth and prosperity of the Templar Order are attested not only in a numerical increase of membership, but in augmented resources and a broader sweep of opportunity and usefulness for the institution.

If a specific statement of the purposes and mission of the modern Order of Templars is requested, attention may be directed to the printed proceedings of Templar bodies; to the requirements which are known to be laid upon all who seek admission to the Order, and to the expression of the letter and spirit of Masonic Templarism, as its character and aims are set forth by those who may rightly claim to be expositors of the system. By such testimony it will appear that the Templar Order is pledged to charity and good works in the things of related life; that it seeks to bring generous and large-minded Brethren into the fellowship of a noble and magnanimous Order, to be therein reminded of their common vows and pledged faith in one Divine Lord; to look upon the same well understood signs of Christian truth and redemption, no less than to cultivate the courtesies and enjoy the festivities which brighten and sweeten this world of ours, and augment the zest of human living.

Masonic Templarism represents