

made notwithstanding, and when the Venerable or W. Master threatened to close the lodge if order was not restored, the anti-Boulangists became still more violent, and the Master hastily declared the lodge closed, and fled. Still more disgraceful violence ensued, and possibly a battle "royal" might have followed among the brethren of this democratic-republican lodge, but some inspired individual turned off the gas, and the scene, perforce, came to an end. It is needless to say that the circumstances, as we have described them, have nothing whatever to do with Masonry, or Masonry as we understand and practise it, and as it is understood and practised by the bulk of the Fraternity. Such a scene would have been impossible in any lodge in the British Empire or the United States, where the necessity of keeping the Craft clear of political or religious controversy is recognized and observed; nor do we imagine it would be possible in countries like Sweden and Norway, Denmark, or wherever the genuine principles of Freemasonry are understood. Indeed, one of the chief objects which the founders of the modern or speculative system of Freemasonry had in view when they set up the English Grand Lodge of 1717, was to provide a neutral ground on which people of every religious and political creed might meet and enjoy each other's society, and by so doing learn to appreciate and respect each other; and to enable this to be done, it was determined that nothing in the shape of political or religious controversy should be allowed within the precincts of the tyled lodge. At the time our Grand Lodge was founded, the necessity for some such provision as this was apparent, if men of opposite political parties were to be brought to meet at all. There was great bitterness of feeling, approaching almost to the verge of hatred, between the partisans of the rival dynasties of Hanover and Stuart. Only two years before the famous meeting of the Four Old Lodges, which led to the installation of Anthony Sayer as Grand Master of England, the rebel-

lion known as that of the Old Pretender had been violently suppressed by the armed forces of George I., but the Stuarts had still many partisans left, and the spirit which prevailed between them and the supporters of the King was not likely to have been made less rancorous by the blood that had been shed on the battle-field and on the scaffold. Yet even in those days our lodges were kept free and unpolluted by personal animosity and political partisanship. So it was in 1745-6, when the second Jacobite rebellion broke out and was suppressed with similar violence and bloodshed, and so it has been since, both here and among all English-speaking peoples—no matter how extreme the political and religious rivalries of the day have been, the Masons' lodge has always remained secure from their violence. In France and elsewhere, however, it has been otherwise, and the recent occurrence in a French lodge is the more to be regretted, because, since 1877, a gulf impassable has been placed between the Grand Orient and our Grand Lodge, in consequence of the act of the former in eliminating from its Book of Constitutions the article requiring all Freemasons to avow their faith in the existence of a Supreme Being and the doctrines of a future state. It is to be regretted on the further ground that this introduction at a lodge meeting of the Boulangist and anti-Boulangist political rancour will strengthen the hands of the enemies of Freemasonry all the world over, who are never weary of vilifying Masons and their principles as being diametrically opposed to the maintenance of religious, political, and social order. They will assert, and with this experience of what passes in a French lodge we cannot deny they will have some grounds for asserting, that a meeting of Masons is merely a political meeting in disguise, and that it is the first duty of all governments to suppress with a strong hand the body or bodies which may at any time be influenced to set themselves in opposition to their authority. If the Grand Orient of France is actuated by true wisdom,