

all the masons of England, probably from 926 to 1567, but such jurisdiction was not considered, by those masons, as *exclusive*. It was not thus acknowledged by them; for in that same year 1567—without reference to the York "Assembly" at all—the masons of the Southern part of England placed themselves *independently* under a new Grand Master, and there was, for a long period of years, two Grand Masters of that kingdom.

In the early part of the 18th century, masonry generally in England had fallen into disuetude. In the year 1715 four London Lodges assembled upon their own motion, and by their own voluntary action constituted themselves a "*Grand Lodge, pro tempore*." At the annual assembly and feast, on Saint John the Baptist's Jay, 1717, these same Lodges, thus, by self-action constituted into a Grand Lodge, for the first time adopted a regulation to restrain the old unlimited manner of masonic meetings, and to establish Lodges in certain places, which should be legally authorized to act by a warrant from the Grand Master, with the consent and approbation of the Grand Lodge, and that, without such warrant, no lodge should thereafter be deemed regular or constitutional.

Here, then, we have four lodges, arranged upon the *old* system, congregating themselves together to inaugurate and establish a *new* one. The whole history of things at York was unheeded by them; no consent is asked from that quarter, nor is even the *then Grand Master of the Masons of England* consulted, who was living in that same city of London, and who did not pay the debt of nature until the year 1723.

From this action sprang the Grand Lodge of England, which has come down to our times. Ireland followed first, and Scotland succeeded her. I do not refer to any masonic organizations of this kind upon the continent of Europe, because with them we have no common policy, no long connexion, and especially because, upon this continent, we have never looked to that quarter for masonic precedent.

The beginning of Grand Lodges, as we understand these institutions in our own day, was established at the London meetings of the four Lodges of 1715 and 1717. Ireland followed the path made by them. Scotland followed in a manner, though not *identical*, quite as *independent*, and the Grand Lodges, on this side of the Atlantic, have found no occasion for widening and enlarging the precedent of 1715—17.

I do not mean, for a moment, to doubt the *wisdom* of the action of 1715—17, or the *right* of the four London Lodges to do precisely what they *did* do. I intend to claim, however, that *other* masonic action, equally legitimate, equally worthy, and equally important, is as *equally* to be recognized, at this hour, as it had the sanction of one hundred and forty

years to strengthen the foundation of its *right*. I am not aware that any intelligent mason desires to disturb a system of action which has been sanctioned by long acquiescence and which has resulted in the harmony and happiness of the order. I yield to the power of a precedent, however established, which settles a wise course of future action, but I can never agree to see a *mere* precedent tortured into working the highest practical injustice.

The Grand Lodge of Ireland dates from 1730. It was formed in "imitation of the Grand Lodge of England," and chose for its first Grand Master a brother who had been, the previous year, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of England. The Constitution and usages of the Grand Lodge of England were adopted by it.

The Grand Lodge of Scotland was formed in 1736. Masonry had then existed in that country for centuries; but not until November the 30th—Saint Andrew's day—of that year, did the Lodges of that country assemble to organize as a common body, and choose their own Grand Master. Previously the Grand Mastership of masons for Scotland had been hereditary in the family of Roslin. William Saint Clair of Roslin, having intimated to his masonic brethren his wish to resign his hereditary Grand Mastership, assembled his brethren of the Lodges in and about Edinburgh, and wished them to determine upon a plan for the *election* of a Grand Master. Thirty-four Lodges appeared or were represented by their proxies, and, at this meeting, the office of Grand Master in Scotland became, for the first time, *elective*. This Grand Lodge had the assent of the *Grand Master of Masons of Scotland* for its formation, differing, in this particular, from the Grand Lodge of England.

The entire history of the formation of these three Grand Lodges is overwhelming—I had almost said omnipotent,—to prove, that they were all *voluntary* masonic associations, growing naturally out of the necessities of the order, and assuming, as associations, the power of proper organization as an *inherent right*. It was never claimed—and it never can be truthfully claimed—that any *ancient constitution* conferred the right which was exercised. Old constitutions and charges may be studied for that in vain. The right to form such bodies was *assumed*, and the *extent of jurisdiction* was also *assumed*, and engrafted upon it, as well as the form and manner of masonic government.

Neither of the three Grand Lodges thus formed, went so far as to assume *exclusive* masonic jurisdiction out of England, Ireland, and Scotland. The only *exclusive* power assumed was to their own respective territories. When those were passed at home they exercised a common power. Whenever any one of them might grant a warrant of con-

stitution, or locate a Provincial Grand Master *abroad*, either of the others might do the same. The Grand Lodges of England and Scotland so understood the subject, and both of them created Provincial Grand Masters in the colony of Massachusetts antecedent to the revolution. The subsequent history of the Masonic bodies established by these Provincial Grand Masters, is full of interest, as bearing upon the question under consideration, and I shall have cause to refer to it in the course of my examination of this subject.

One at least of the Provincial Grand Masters, appointed by the Grand Lodge of England, did not understand that the American revolution severed the *Masonic* connexion between the parent power and the newly created States upon this northern continent. In 1791 the R. W. John Johnson, then the English Provincial Grand Master of Lower Canada, granted a warrant of constitution to his Excellency Thomas Chatterton, then Governor of the State of Vermont, and his associates, for the establishment of a Lodge at Vergennes, by the name of Dorchester Lodge. This Lodge was duly constituted under that warrant, and worked under it until October, 1794, when, in connexion with the other Lodges in the State, which had charters from the Grand Lodges of Massachusetts and New York, it aided in forming the present Grand Lodge of Vermont, and forcibly severing its connexion with Canada, has ever since hailed under the new jurisdiction. The Provincial Grand Master of Canada never complained of this action, or denied the right of Dorchester Lodge of its own motion, to make the severance and aid in establishing a new and independent jurisdiction.

It was assumed by all the State Masonic institutions of this country, which existed before the revolutionary war, that the dissolution of the *political*, necessarily involved a dissolution of the *Masonic*, tie, and they acted accordingly. This, in my judgment, was a farther stretch in the line of masonic *independence* than any thing which has happened since. I am not aware that a Masonic pen was ever raised to sustain this assumption as resting on authority precedent or principle:—and yet three out of four of the Grand Lodges of the United States, who shrink instinctively from the word *independence* when the stern north-wind bears it to us from Canada, found no difficulty either in using the word, or carrying out the full force of its meaning practically in their own cases.

Ever since the American Revolution the Masonic practice in the United States has been,—that when three or more warranted Lodges are established in any State or Territory where no Grand Lodge exists, they possess the *inherent right* to meet together and form one themselves, and it is not and never was considered necessary to ask the