

1861.—May 20.—First meeting of the Grand Orient. President—Doumet, Dep. G. M. The first business was necessarily of a routine character, to verify the powers of the deputies. Ronsello proposed that this should be undertaken by a Committee of Scrutineers nominated *ad hoc* by the assembly, as in the olden days, and not by the Grand Master's Council, as had been arbitrarily carried out since 1852. After debate Ronselle carried the day; each of the nine Boards (or Chambers') of the Grand Orient named one member to form a Committee of nine Scrutineers. Only one belonged to the party of the Grand Master. From that moment the majority escaped from the control of Rexès.

May 21.—The Committee of Scrutineers, and the Boards met, and the Scrutineers commenced the examination of the mandates. Dissatisfaction became soon openly expressed, and in his excitement Hovins, the member of the Grand Master's party, so far forgot himself as to exclaim, "Your methods will produce excitement, and *the police will be called upon to interfere.*" The Boards began to review past decrees, and rejected almost all the propositions of the Grand Master. They decided that it would be wise to at once elect the new Grand Master, and were about to resolve themselves into a plenary *séance*, when a decree of that very morning was presented to them, suspending the sittings of the full Orient till the 24th, but permitting the Boards to continue sitting. A committee to interview the G. M. and procure the repeal of this decree was about to be elected, when Doumet expressed his intention of taking that duty upon himself the first thing in the morning, it being then five o'clock and too late. The meeting broke up, to resume at eight o'clock—at which hour the committee rooms being occupied by private Lodges, all nine Boards met in the large hall in separate groups to continue their work. Whilst thus engaged, Rexès strolled into the room, struck his hand on the table to procure silence, and said, "Sirs, I come to tell you that you are not legally assembled, the hour is unsuitable, you must retire." On being remonstrated with, he exclaimed, "If you persist I must call in the police," and withdrew. Steps were taken that one man only, should protest for all, if the police interfered, and the work was continued. Meanwhile a squad of police entered the building under the orders of Rexès. Masons leaving their private Lodges met these in the corridor, and ordered them to leave. Rexès ordered the police to clear the building. The Masons present, answered by warning the police that they were the proprietors of the building, both as shareholders and rent-payers, and that Rexès was their salaried servant. Rexès exclaimed, "Sirs, you are ruining Freemasonry." "Sir," they replied, "you disgrace it." In the end the police retired. The committees, who had meanwhile remained undisturbed, not being able to meet as a Grand Orient, had in each Board separately elected Prince Napoleon, and drawn up a minute to that effect, after which they left to meet the next day at nine o'clock.

May 22.—Doumet and the Council called upon the G. M., who, after persuasion, consented that they might announce to the assembly the repeal of the decree. The Council returned to the hall, and was about to summon the Boards to meet as a Grand Orient, when Rexès appeared and announced that the Council had misunderstood the Prince. The indignant members sent to request Murat's presence; but meanwhile Doumet was called away to the Ministry of the Interior, and as he did not reappear the Boards were not summoned. These meanwhile obtained 98 signatures to the minute of election out of a possible 152, and left in order to return at eight o'clock to resume their departmental work. On arriving at that hour they found the building closed, not only to themselves, but to

¹ Cf. *ante*, pp. 422, 430.