

Fragments From Masonic History

The husband of Empress Maria Theresa of Austria, the Duke of Lorraine, was a Mason. On March 7, 1743, the Empress ordered the Masonic Lodge in Vienna closed and 18 of its members imprisoned. The Duke narrowly escaped capture. Notwithstanding her order and the hostility of military authorities, Masonic meetings were being held privately. It was reported that Empress Maria Theresa herself disguised as a man, together with one of her ladies in waiting similarly attired, through a clever ruse, succeeded in entering a lodge meeting. The purpose was to find out if women were attending these meetings, probably suspecting that they served as illicit rendezvous for men and women. Being satisfied that her doubt was baseless, the Empress became lenient to Masonry.

Garcia Moreno, the Dictator of Peru, applied for membership in Freemasonry in 1860, but being rejected, he joined hands with the Jesuits to crush all Masonic lodges in the country. Although he was killed in 1875, another year had to elapse before the grip of priesthood was removed.

By way of supplement to the article "Women Masons of Record" in our July 1962 issue, we reproduce this interesting paragraph from Mackay's History of Freemasonry (quoting Theo S. Paivin):

"During the reign of Napoleon, the First Emperor, a woman was made a Freemason, he being Grand Master at the time. She was a colonel and a very brave and distinguished officer in his army; served with distinction for many years, and her sex was not discovered until she was severely wounded when, upon her recovery, the Freemasons prompted by a spirit of gallantry, conferred upon her the three symbolic degrees.

Within the past decade the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Hungary, a symbolic Grand Lodge... himself conferred the degrees of Freemasonry upon his wife."

On July 10, 1751, Charles III being influenced by the Bull of Benedict IV, prohibited Freemasonry, but so soon changed his views that in the following year he entrusted his son's education to a Freemason and a priest whom he appointed his own confessor.

In 1738 the Bull of Clement XII was issued and the edict was confirmed on January 14, 1739 by another decree forbidding Freemasonry in the Papal States under penalty of death and loss of property. But even the severe measures failed to end all meetings of Freemasons. A lodge was set at work in 1787 at Rome but on December 27, 1789 it was surprised by the Inquisition. Although the brethren escaped, the property and records were seized.

John Coustos, a son of a Swiss surgeon, joined the Fraternity in England and then emigrated to Portugal. Here, with two French brethren, Moulton and Brasle, he founded a lodge on March 14, 1743. Arrested by Inquisition agents, Coustos was ordered to renounce his faith as a Protestant and to reveal the secrets of Freemasonry. For three months he was tortured, nine times stretched upon the rack, scourged with whips, branded, and otherwise abused, then sentenced to four years of servitude at the galleys. His two companions being Roman Catholics, were subjected to five years of exile, but both were tortured and Brasle died from injuries. Coustos was claimed as a British subject and thus was set at liberty with Moulton and proceeded to London.

Masonry had its ups and downs in Portugal. After the Jesuits were exiled from the country in 1761 the Craft was revived but soon the Inquisition went to work against the Masons who were forced to go underground. Lodges were held on ships at anchor and in the upper halls of houses while dances and entertainments went on below to mislead agents of the Inquisition. When Dom Pedro, eldest son of King Joseph II, was in power eight lodges in Lisbon elected a Grand Master for Portugal, but the revolution of 1824 resulted in a proclamation promising death and destruction to the Freemasons and led to the scattering of the brethren.

In Belgium, Emperor Charles VI issued an edict against Masons in 1730 because of the rapid multipli-

cation of Masonic lodges. King Leopold I was initiated at Berne, Switzerland, September 1813. He was friendly although not active and the Craft prospered in the country.

The undesirable effect produced by lodges mixing in politics and religious controversies was well illustrated in Brazil. The Grand Orient in this country was split twice by differences of opinion first in 1863 and again in 1873 when one side, the Lavradios, arrayed itself with a political party supporting the Roman Catholic Church; while the other, the Benedictinos, opposed priest-craft and Papalism. In 1873, however, 38 lodges of the Lavradios joined the Benedictinos. The Bishop of Pernambuco, at the bidding of the Jesuits, tried to enforce the Papal Bull against Freemasonry, but he was mobbed in his palace and the military had to be called to protect him. For this interference the Government went after him and he was sentenced to four years in prison. The reaction against this on the part of the Bishops in six other cities was in the form of "vicious curses in priestly fashion" resulting in turning public opinion against Masons who comprised the greater part of the whole inhabitants of Brazil. As a consequence of this, the two factions laid aside their rivalry and united early in 1883 into the Grand Orient of Brazil.

A case of duplicity happened in Russia: The Grand Master in 1820 was named Kuschelery. He wrote a letter to the Emperor saying that the

Craft was a possible means of danger to the Government and suggested modifying it or abolishing it altogether. Result: an Imperial edict in 1822 to close every lodge, forbidding any of them to re-open.

Another instance of duplicity happened in Spain where one Father Joseph Torrubia, through some trickery, was able to get himself initiated in order to better betray the Craft. He got from Ferdinand VI on July 2, 1751 an order reviving a former decree that Freemasons could be sentenced to death without trial. But not withstanding his Masonry in Spain thrived in secret and on October 1809 a Grand Orient of Spain was founded in the very dungeons of the Inquisition in Madrid. It was the Grand Master Riego who led a popular movement which on July 1826 compelled the king to re-establish the constitution and expel the Jesuits. But foreign troops came to the assistance of the king, and Grand Master Riego was shot. In the ensuing era of repression a new edict was issued ordering the Masons to yield their records and renounce the Craft or be hanged without trial in 24 hours upon discovery. Seven members in Granada were hanged on September 9, 1825, and in 1829 one Lieutenant-Colonel named Galvez was hanged for being a Mason. It seems that Spain had many alternating periods of repression and tolerance of Masonry.

In the early 18th century in France, each lodge was owned by its Master

as his property and he governed it according to his will and pleasure.

King Louis XV of France, when informed that the Freemasons were about to elect a Grand Master, declared that if the choice fell on a Frenchman who would consent to serve, he would send him to Bastille, the dreaded prison house, without trial. Duke d'Antin, a zealous Freemason, was chosen (June 1738) and accepted the Grand Mastership thereby daring the King, but the latter did not carry out his threat. As a matter of fact, the Duke, by being active in Masonry, was defying the King's orders forbidding courtiers to join the Order.

Notwithstanding the fact that the bull against Freemasonry of Pope Clement (whose real name was Lorenzo Corsini, elected Pope in 1730), had the effect of intensifying police attacks against the Order, the latter could not be suppressed in France. On the contrary, its membership grew although the Order suffered relentless persecutions by the Church, the Court and the Police.

The Grand Mastership of Freemasonry in France was held successively by three members of the nobility. The Duke d'Antrin was succeeded by the Count of Clermont who belonged to the royal family of Orleans. He was succeeded by his nephew, the Duke of Chartres who was later known as Duke of Orleans and who was the father of Louise Philippe. The latter became the popular King of France.