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A REVIEW  
OF  
CRYPTIC MASONRY

IN THE  
UNITED STATES

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AN ADDRESS, DELIVERED BEFORE THE FIFTH MASS CONVENTION OF  
THE ROYAL AND SELECT MASTERS OF ILLINOIS,  
AT GALESBURG, SEPTEMBER 5, 1895,

BY  
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# A REVIEW OF CRYPTIC MASONRY

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BRETHREN : Among the many systems of Exalted Masonic Symbolism now practiced in the United States, none have received a more general recognition or hearty acceptance than the beautiful allegory known as the Rite of the Secret Vault. Yet, like the great mass of our traditions, degrees and ceremonial observances, its origin is unknown, and its early history, for the most part, consists merely of legends that are incapable of verification and, in some instances, unworthy of belief. Its fundamental principles may, indeed, be traced to the English Masonry of the revival, but there is no evidence that the degrees, as such, were ever known or practiced outside of our own country prior to the commencement of the present century, and the preponderating opinion of Masonic archæologists now is that they are the works of the early American ritualists. I have, in my former addresses before these conventions, endeavored to discuss, in a general and possibly not altogether satisfactory way, these phases of the subject, and to present to you my own views and conclusions with respect thereto ; yet, as fancy and fable have well nigh obscured the real facts, much must necessarily be left to conjecture, and it therefore follows that any conclusion, however carefully formed, must still be open to doubt and susceptible of impeachment. To-day, however, I stand on more certain ground, and in the remarks which follow, I shall endeavor to show, in brief epitome, the growth and development of the Cryptic Rite on the lines of fairly authenticated history.

Dismissing from our consideration the apocryphal story of the transmission of the degrees from Frederick the Great and their subsequent exploitation by the Inspectors General of the Rite of Perfection, it may be said that the history of Cryptic Masonry, as a coherent and connected system, commences with the year 1818, and that it owes its present existence to the zeal or cupidity, or both combined, of Jeremy L. Cross. It has been clearly established that Cross received the degree of Select Mason from Philip P. Eckle, at Baltimore, in May, 1817, and thereupon actively entered into the work of its dissemination ; that early in 1818 he, in some manner, became " possessed " of the degree of Royal Master Mason, which, prior to that time, had been mainly controlled by Thomas Lownds and his associates, and that

he then conceived the project of uniting the two and forming a new system, to which he gave the name of Royal and Select Masters. The exact time when this was consummated has never been definitely ascertained, but Bro. Josiah H. Drummond, who has carefully ran down the early Cross charters, fixes the event at some period between May and August of the year 1818. It does not seem, however, that the plan was fully perfected until the year following. From this period, then, may be dated the commencement of the Cryptic Rite and its existence as an organized branch of Freemasonry.

But in order to obtain a more intelligent conception of the development and progress of the Cryptic degrees during the years which have intervened since Cross first gave them publicity, it will be necessary to indulge in a brief retrospect of the high degrees, generally, during the same period, and to institute a few comparisons between the United States and other countries where they are practiced.

The original purport of all "high degrees" was superior knowledge; the possession of some part of the mysterious arcana unknown by or denied to the great mass of the initiated. As a necessary corollary, membership was limited in point of numbers, and the exclusive character thus imparted, formed one of the earliest and strongest incentives for their acquisition. This was the general condition of high-grade Masonry in the United States at the time Cross entered upon his Cryptic mission, and which so continued for many years, and this, practically, is its special characteristic in England and Continental Europe at the present time. It was not expected that the multitude would either desire or appreciate the more profound philosophy of the high degrees, nor was it intended that they should participate in the ultimate secrets, and in all countries, except our own, this policy has never been departed from. During those early years many initiates failed even to attain the Master's degree, while the number who were admitted to the mysteries of the Royal Arch were few indeed. In the chivalric orders the same rule prevailed. The Knights Templar was then, as now, the popular branch of these orders, but as they appealed at that time only to the intellectual and religious element of the Craft, their numbers were ever of the most limited character. If we may judge from the published transactions of the first thirty years of the present century, I think I make no misstatement when I say that in point of numbers and influence the Cryptic Rite equaled, if, indeed, it did not exceed, that of the Order of the Temple, and this was its comparative standing when, in 1828, the blight of Morganism fell upon the Masonic world. From 1830 to 1840 the high degrees, generally, were in a dormant condition. From 1840 to 1850 there was a period of convalescence, but it was not until 1860 that full recovery was effected. About this time the A. A. S. R. commenced to relax its theretofore exclusive character, by the creation of working bodies; two years later the Grand Encampment gave impetus to Templarism by discarding the ancient badge of a Mason — the apron, — which, prior to that time, had always been worn, and adopting a showy uniform and the mimicry of military usages. The

Council, which, in the general awakening, had measurably kept pace with other organizations, then commenced to suffer by comparison, yet at all times its numbers have been fairly in proportion to the number of Master Masons in the country, and gauged by the standards which prevail elsewhere, and to which I have just alluded, its growth, though not large, has yet been eminently satisfactory and in keeping with its traditions and declared exclusive character.

In this review I shall treat this subject by topics, rather than attempt to follow a general chronological sequence, and as an introduction to the events of later periods, shall first say a few words with respect to

#### EARLY EXPLOITATION.

Before and during the experimental stages of constitutional organization the "superior grades" were handled mainly by itinerant lecturers and degree peddlers, as an article of merchandise, for the benefit of the ambitious and the credulous. Men purchased what was offered with little or no inquiry as to the seller's title or right to convey, while manufactured pedigrees and forged deeds were generally sufficient to satisfy those who perchance might demand an inspection of the muniments. Therefore, like most of the other "high degrees" practiced in the United States those of the Cryptic Curriculum will not bear severe critical investigation in tracing the derivation of the authority by which they are conferred. While there are legitimate and recognized sources from which they flow, yet the channels of transmission, in many cases, are either unknown or unconnected with the original fountain. The records of a number of jurisdictions show that in many instances Councils were established on no other authority than such as they assumed for themselves or the equally doubtful powers of some self-constituted "deputy" or "agent," while the degrees, in numberless instances, were "conferred" individually by simple oral communication and without any pretense of authority or semblance of right other than that which accompanies mere possession.

The authentic remains of the early history of Cryptic Masonry in many jurisdictions furnishes abundant examples of the foregoing remarks, and the beginnings of the Rite in Massachusetts affords, perhaps, as good an illustration as can be cited. It would seem that as early as 1817 several Royal Arch Masons residing at Boston, who, in some way not now known, had obtained the degree of Royal Master, after a mutual consultation determined, of their own motion, to establish a Council. They accordingly met and organized by the election of officers, selection of a name and adoption of by-laws, and from that time on continued to confer the degree of Royal Master on such persons as were found to be qualified and desirous of receiving it. The Council increased rapidly in numbers and popularity; individuals from other parts of the State came to Boston and received the degree, and, on returning home assisted in organizing Councils in their respective localities. Thus the degree was diffused, and as late as 1826 only

two Councils in the State are known to have had charters; each Council resting solely on its own authority and acting in an independent capacity. The same conditions will be found to have prevailed in many other States. But time, the great healer, has long since cured these congenital infirmities, while the twin forces of attraction and cohesion have welded into a compact and homogeneous mass, the contending and oftentimes incongruous elements which composed the early and widely separated Councils of the country.

Aside from a few unauthenticated instances of communication by certain of the "Inspectors General," the primary dissemination of the degrees, in organized bodies, and under constitutional authority, must be conceded to Wilmans and Eckle at Baltimore, and Lownds at New York, the former controlling the Select, the latter the Royal degree. The Baltimore body, if indeed it can be called a body, never seems to have developed into a permanent organization, but rested rather in the caprice of the "chiefs" who controlled, or assumed to control, the degree of Select Mason. By these men temporary councils were organized whenever it was deemed expedient and the degree was conferred upon persons of their own selection. During the entire period of its exploitation by Wilmans, Eckle and Niles, commencing at about 1795 and ending with the assumption of jurisdiction by the Grand Chapter of Maryland in 1824, it does not seem that any body, bearing any similitude to those then or subsequently established to control or confer the other degrees of Masonry, was ever organized. There was indeed a vague and ill-defined something known as the Grand Council over which Eckle was supposed to preside as "Grand Puissant," but this body never materialized sufficiently to afford a good view, and from all that we can now learn it would seem that Eckle, as Grand Puissant, held and conferred the degree in a sort of proprietary right.

Lownds, on the other hand, subjected his degree of Royal Master Mason to constitutional authority by the organization, in 1810, of a permanent body for its control and diffusion, and this body, which has successfully withstood all the mutations of time and the vicissitudes of fate, is still in existence as Columbian Council No. 1 of New York.

From these two bodies, mediately or immediately, is derived the Cryptic system instituted by Cross in 1818, and promulgated by him and his "deputies," as well as appropriated and imitated by others who came after him.

For a number of years Cross was very active in establishing Councils and conferring degrees. The common report says that he found the business very lucrative and as none of his charter fees ever found their way to his reputed principal, the "Grand Council of the Select" at Baltimore, there is much reason to believe that these rumors were not altogether unfounded. Finding the growing demand beyond his power to supply without aid, he deputized one Cushman to assist him in the work and a number of Councils were organized by his lieutenant. Rival peddlers afterwards appeared upon the scene, the most active of whom was John

Barker, who worked as an "agent" of the "Supreme Council of the United States," and by virtue of the "high power" in him vested by the "Grand Constitution of the Thirty-third degree," sold Cross' lectures and organized Councils. The combined efforts of these organizers, together with others of lesser note, soon had the effect of producing a very thorough and wide-spread diffusion. Cryptic Masonry became popular; it was cheap and at the same time "way up" and had nothing interfered to stop its onward march we may reasonably assume that it would in time have developed the full beauty of its still latent symbolism and have become one of the great Masonic expositors of the world. But being an exotic, it was acutely sensitive to every depressing influence and when, by 1830, the fires of fanaticism had been fanned to their fiercest heat nearly every Council in the country had ceased its labors and passed into a condition of dormancy. For a period of ten years, or from 1830 to 1840, the Cryptic page is almost a blank. Then came a slow awaking, but in many localities dormancy had passed into death, and so complete was the extinction that even the memory of Councils and Grand Councils was lost until in after years the student, groping amid the debris of long forgotten days, discovered and brought to light the old records and other evidences of former life. From 1840 to 1850 may be termed the period of the revival, and from this latter date until the present time the Rite has made substantial progress, but with periods of depression that can be better explained in connection with other topics embraced in this review.

#### CAPITULAR JURISDICTION.

While the degree of Royal Master seems to have been originally conferred on Master Masons, that of Select Master has always been considered as an extension or explanation of the Royal Arch degree, and its earliest known exploitation was as an adjunct of a Chapter or under Royal Arch auspices. This was its distinctive character while it remained under the control of the Companions who first gave it publicity at Baltimore, and the only authority for its dissemination ever received by Cross, contemplated the retention of this idea, and although it was soon abandoned by him, its effect was visible for many years, and is still urged in those jurisdictions where Capitular domination continues to be exercised.

In the year 1824 it was formally incorporated as a part of its system by the Grand Chapter of Maryland, and thenceforward, until very recent years, continued to be worked in its regular scale of Capitular degrees. About this time numerous self-constituted "agents" and emissaries were driving an active and lucrative business in the sale of the degrees, which induced the Maryland Companions to appeal to the General Grand Chapter. The matter came up at the session held in 1829, when a resolution was adopted recommending the councils to place themselves under the authority of State Grand Chapters, and granting authority to the Grand Chapters to make such arrangements as might be found necessary for conferring the



Cryptic degrees in the Royal Arch Chapters of their obedience. While the General Grand Chapter thus formally recognized the degrees of Royal and Select Master as legitimate parts of the Capitular system, it did little or nothing in the way of carrying out the resolution of 1829, and in 1844, upon the revival of Cryptic interest, the matter again came before it, when, after reaffirming the resolution of 1829, a rule was entered, that the conferring of the Cryptic degrees should be subsequent to that of the Royal Arch. In 1850 a committee was appointed to inquire into the expediency of forming a General Grand Council for the United States, but the committee reported that the measure was inexpedient, and the matter was dropped. In 1853 the Cryptic question was again presented, but by this time Councils and Grand Councils had very generally assumed jurisdiction and labor, and the question was definitely settled by the adoption of a resolution declaring that the General Grand Chapter and the governing bodies of Royal Arch Masons affiliated with and holding jurisdiction under it, had no rightful authority or control over the Royal and Select degrees, and thereafter would entertain no question growing out of the government or working of the same. Thus matters remained until the Session of 1877, when petitions were received from several Grand Chapters, asking permission to take cognizance and jurisdiction of the Cryptic degrees, and permit the conferring of same by their constituent Chapters. The matter was referred to a committee, who reported adversely to the prayer of the petitioners, but the General Grand Chapter was "on the fence" that year, and consideration of the report was postponed until the next ensuing triennial session. In the meantime, the Grand Chapters pursued their own course, and when the General Grand Body re-convened in 1880, nine of its constituents had practically absorbed the Councils in their respective jurisdictions.

Of the attitude of State Grand Chapters but little can be said based upon official action. In Virginia, at an early day (1841), a mistake of fact induced a dissolution of the Grand Council and a surrender of the degrees to the Chapter which has ever since retained them. Michigan, at its organization, assumed control over the degrees as of right. Maryland always maintained that position, but in most of the states they were tolerated simply when conferred under the auspices of the Chapter. After the decisive action of the General Grand Chapter in 1853, the State Bodies generally disclaimed jurisdiction, and from that time until the "merger," the Cryptic degrees were recognized as an independent and totally distinct branch of the American Masonic System.

#### DISPUTED POINTS.

Whatever may have been the original form of Cryptic degrees it is certain that they were not preserved as they came from the hands of their founders, and in their dissemination by the self appointed chiefs who controlled them they soon assumed a bewildering variety of phases in the method of organization, order of arrangement and ritualistic expression.

As time wore on these features became more pronounced. In some jurisdictions the scale was increased by adding the Super-Excellent degree; in some it was expressly rejected, and in others it was unknown. There was no uniformity in the order of conferring the two recognized degrees. In some States, the Select was the first of the series, in others the last, and while the general principles which give distinctive character to the rite were probably the same in all jurisdictions, yet in many there was a commingling of legend and incident. The salient features of one degree were often transferred to the other and that which to us would seem to be inseparably connected with the Select was not infrequently to be found in the Royal degree and *vice versa*. In the names, titles and number of the officers, there was also a great diversity while in the smaller details the same conditions prevailed in a still more aggravated form. Added to all this was the unsettled and vexed question of the right of Capitalar domination which ever since the organization of the first councils had continued to assert itself. Out of these facts grew these assemblies which are popularly known as

#### NATIONAL CONVENTIONS.

It was generally conceded that the condition of affairs as just related, called for some action calculated to secure substantial uniformity in the number, arrangement and ritual of the degrees as well as in the organization of the bodies, both grand and constituent, and as early as 1848 Comp. A. G. Mackey proposed that a convention be held to make an amicable settlement of the disputed questions involved in the conflict of jurisdiction between Councils and Chapters and to determine upon a uniform method of conferring the degrees. An attempt was made to have this convention held at Boston in 1850 during the convocation of the General Grand Chapter, but it does not appear that sufficient interest in the subject could be created at that time to insure an attendance and no call was issued. With this exception, however, no one seemed prepared with a remedy, and so matters remained until 1867. At this time measures were initiated looking toward a solution of the difficulty by a suggestion that at the triennial session of the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar to be held in the City of St. Louis the following year the Grand Councils should insure the attendance of some of their best workmen for mutual consultation and interchange of ideas.

The project was favorably received and the Grand Council of Maine formally crystalized the suggestion by making it a resolution addressed to the other Grand Councils of the country. It is further worthy of note in this connection that the resolution, in express and unmistakable terms, disclaimed "any intention or desire of forming or seeking to form, a General Grand Council of the United States," yet this was the germ from whence the present General Grand Council was evolved. But nothing practical came of this resolution as the proposed convention did not mate-

ialize and the "best workmen," if present at St. Louis, probably found more congenial employment in other avenues of labor. The project was kept alive, however, and four years later, through the joint efforts of the Grand Councils of Maine and Massachusetts a convention was held at the City of New York at which fourteen Grand jurisdictions were represented, Illinois among the number. The business of this convention was devoted mainly to a revision of nomenclature and the arrangement and order of the degrees. The results were highly gratifying to all concerned, but owing to differences of opinion in reference to some of the matters presented, to settle which would require more time than the convention could command, it was deemed advisable to remit same to a committee upon which members of Grand Councils not represented should also be appointed. This necessarily involved an adjourned session and so the convention took a recess for one year. The convention met, pursuant to adjournment, at the same place in June, 1873, Illinois being again represented. But little of a practical nature was accomplished at this meeting, other than to confirm the actions of the year previous, and after the appointment of a committee to memorialize the Grand Encampment on the subject of "prerequisite," the convention again adjourned to meet in New Orleans the next year. It is also worthy of note in this connection that at this meeting a resolution was adopted reciting "That in the judgment of this convention it is expedient and proper to form a General Grand Council of the United States," and in view of our present relations with the body now bearing that name, possibly the knowledge of the fact that the mover of this resolution was the delegate from Illinois may not be without interest to you. On November 31, 1874, the convention again assembled at New Orleans but the only question of moment which was presented was the propriety of the immediate organization of a General Grand Body. A committee was appointed to prepare a provisional constitution, which was to be submitted to the Grand Councils for approval, but notwithstanding the committee seem to have reported back such an instrument no action was taken upon it. Pending the report it was resolved that the "present officers" be continued and when the constitution should have been ratified by two-thirds of the Grand Councils they should call a meeting for the organization of the new body. The convention then adjourned to meet at Buffalo three years later. The convention did meet, as per adjournment, August 20, 1877, but the session was devoid of interest. Nothing seems to have been done with respect to the main questions presented to the New Orleans meeting three years previous and the provisional constitution was not even alluded to. After passing the usual resolution to again memorialize the Grand Encampment, the convention adjourned without day but subject to the call of the President.

There can be no doubt but that, had it not been for a subsequent remarkable convulsion of the Cryptic world, the premonitory symptoms of which were then visible, this would have been the last session of the Convention, and the project of a General Grand Council would never have ad-

vanced to any higher stage of development than it assumed at the New Orleans meeting. The practical work of the Convention was fully accomplished at its sessions in New York, in 1872-3. These assemblies seem to have been of the highest importance, and were productive of incalculable benefit. In them was done all that was originally contemplated, and to the men who promoted and conducted them the Craft are under a lasting debt of gratitude. Particularly is this true of Bro. Josiah H. Drummond, of Maine, whose genius inspired and whose will directed the effective deliberations of the Convention. But all that followed was barren. With no well defined policy, the Convention extended, or attempted to extend, its own existence by adjournments. Its "delegates" were not usually the same at its different sessions, and few, if any, who attended were accredited as such. It succeeded in dragging its slow length over a period of ten years, and finally, by an act, the full legality of which is not without question, culminated in the formation of a General Supervisory Body of doubtful utility and powers. To understand the motives which actuated the founders of the General Grand Council, as well as the incentives to such action, it will be necessary to hastily review the works which were transpiring in the Crypt during the period covered by the Convention's sessions, and particularly of the movement now known in Cryptic history as

#### THE MISSISSIPPI PLAN.

Through a variety of causes, real and fanciful, Cryptic Masonry, for a number of years succeeding the close of the civil war, was in that condition generally described as "languishing." Having no showy uniforms or military gewgaws to attract the heedless, its growth, as compared with the Chivalric Orders, was slow; the aspirants for enrollment as imitation soldiers passed it by with scorn, and those who had entered it simply through a desire to possess "high degrees" began to forsake it for its more brilliant rival, then rapidly rising to the flood-tide of its popularity. It had nothing to offer but "Masonry," and that is what a vast multitude of "Masons" have very little use for. Those who remained mistook this process of purification for dissolution, and because they erroneously supposed that our success lay in numerical accessions and our prosperity in treasury balances, they became despondent, and out of their blind despair evolved the Mississippi Plan. This consisted simply of a surrender of the degrees to the Royal Arch Chapter, and while the project had often been discussed and, indeed, practically effected in Virginia under a mistake of fact, yet, as Mississippi was the first to adopt it as a measure of expediency, it has generally been alluded to as a line of policy peculiar to that jurisdiction. By the terms of the surrender, each Royal Arch Chapter was thereafter authorized to open "within its bosom" and under its charter, as a Chapter of Royal Arch Masons, a Council of Royal and Select Masters, and all who thereafter obtained the Royal Arch were to receive the Cryptic Degrees, if they so desired, without further fee. It was contended by the promoters of

the plan that this course was essential to the preservation of the degrees in their jurisdiction, and while other motives have been charged, reflecting to some extent upon the integrity of the men who consummated the deal,\* I am satisfied that it was made with honesty of heart and sincerity of purpose.

The effect of the action of Mississippi was immediately discernable in the other states and a spirited contest ensued. In many localities the preponderating sentiment favored its adoption, and this led to what is now known as

#### THE MERGER.

It is difficult, at this time, for those who have entered the S. V. since the abandonment of the "Mississippi plan" to fully comprehend the motives which induced its adoption and even of those of us who were present and participated in the work can find but little justification or excuse for the extraordinary course which was then pursued. I speak now only for Illinois. Whatever conditions may have prevailed elsewhere I do not know and possibly in other jurisdictions the "merger" may have been more defensible than with us. But however this may be the action of Mississippi seemed to be infectious and was speedily followed in Arkansas, Iowa, Kentucky, Nebraska, North Carolina, South Carolina, Wisconsin and our own jurisdiction, while measures looking ultimately to the same end were inaugurated in California and Missouri.

Scarcely any two of the merging jurisdictions adopted in all respects the same procedure, although the ultimate object to be attained was everywhere the same, but, as a general similitude pervaded all of the methods employed, a recital of the plan pursued in Illinois, will, perhaps, furnish a fair idea of the salient features of the movement as it existed in other States.

The year 1877 had witnessed a marked depression in Masonic circles which had been felt perhaps more severely in the Council than elsewhere. Added to this was the further fact that a national delegation, including representatives from Illinois, which attempted to present the question of prerequisite to the Grand Encampment at its session at Cleveland in that year had been repulsed with freezing "courtesy." Thereupon the leaders became discouraged; Mississippi's act had just been accomplished; the plan seemed feasible and with little or no time for serious consideration measures were introduced at the annual assembly looking toward a formal session to the Grand Chapter of the constitutional right to confer the degrees. In pursuance of this line of policy overtures were made to and received by the Grand Chapter which resulted in the appointment of a joint commission by both bodies to mature and report a detailed plan for the

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\* See Protest of Grand Council of New York to General Grand Chapter, 1880.

consummation of such union. The committee met, deliberated and finally reported the result of the conference and the report, which was formally adopted by both bodies, became, in effect, the concordat which affected the transfer of legal authority over the degrees. It provided that each Royal Arch Chapter should open a council of Royal and Select Masters and confer the degrees subsequent to the Royal Arch; that the officers of the Chapter should hold corresponding rank in the Council and that all Royal Arch Masons at the date of ratification should be entitled to receive the degrees without fee. It also provided, on the part of the Grand Chapter, that the officers of all Chapters should qualify themselves in the work without delay and that the Grand High Priest, as the custodian of the ritual should, as soon as practicable, take the necessary steps to carry out the foregoing plan.

The practical effect of the treaty was that of a dispensation from the Grand Council to the constituents of the Grand Chapter to open councils of Royal and Select Masters and confer the degrees, and while our course in this respect has been severely criticised in some quarters, its legality cannot be seriously questioned. It will be observed that the Grand Council never dissolved, nor did it surrender any of its powers in other particulars. It met regularly every year in annual assembly; elected its own officers, all of whom were members of some one of its constituent councils, and retained the same authority over its said constituents as before the "merger." The Councils in the meantime remained as they were; no charters were surrendered, and no degrees were conferred; no dues were collected and no Grand Council taxes were paid. And so matters continued for five years, during which period the advocates of the "Mississippi plan" had ample opportunity to study its theory and observe its practice. The results were not satisfactory, and in 1882 a return was had to the old methods.

Without questioning the motives of those who advised or aided the consummation of the Mississippi plan, it may nevertheless be said that its influence was pernicious. Its logical effect was the disintegration of the Cryptic system and the reduction of the liturgies of the Council to the position of mere "side degrees" of the Chapter. In this jurisdiction they certainly assumed that position. In many Chapters they were never conferred; in others only at infrequent intervals. In some of the "merging" jurisdictions I am informed they were almost lost sight of, and had the movement attained such force as to carry all of the States it is fair to presume that, like all other side degrees, they would in time have fallen into complete disuse and finally have been lost. But fortunately the project met with vigorous opposition in many states which had a reassuring effect upon some of the weaker jurisdictions, while to still further stem the tide a new factor was evolved known as the

#### GENERAL GRAND COUNCIL.

As I have stated, when the Convention which met at Buffalo, in 1877, concluded its apparently purposeless session, it adjourned to meet at the

call of the chairman. Very soon thereafter the Grand Council of Mississippi surrendered its degrees and dissolved its organization. Other states rapidly followed the precedent established by Mississippi, while still others held the project under serious consideration. This was the condition of affairs at the beginning of the year 1880, when the Grand Council of Minnesota formally requested the chairman, Bro. J. H. Drummond, to call a meeting of the Convention. In response thereto, a call was issued for a meeting to be held at Detroit, August 23, 1880, for the purpose of consultation and advisory action, and pursuant to such call, a meeting was held, in which eighteen Grand Councils are said to have been represented. A protest against any usurpation of Cryptic prerogatives by the General Grand Chapter or any of its constituents was adopted, and all persons receiving their degrees under such auspices were declared to be clandestine. The advisability of forming a General Grand Council was then affirmed; a constitution was adopted and provisional officers elected, all to be subject to the approval of and ratification by the Grand Councils of the country, "or of a majority of them." The Convention then adjourned, subject to the call of the Provisional Grand Master. On March 1, 1881, a proclamation was issued by the Provisional Grand Master (Bro. Drummond), reciting a ratification of the constitution by nine Grand Councils, and declaring the new organization regularly formed and duly existing "as the governing body of the Rite in the United States." Since then it has continued to assert a mild, and, I am free to say, innocuous existence. It meets regularly every three years and elects officers. It also publishes its proceedings, which consist mainly of the record of such elections. While it accomplishes but little in the way of tangible results, I am unable to find that it is productive of any very serious harm, and were it not that it assumes to be "the governing body of the Rite in the United States," I should not be inclined to find any fault with either its organization or methods.

But, while the General Grand Council now exercises no higher functions than to furnish a few more high-sounding, but empty, titles, I nevertheless believe that its organization was productive of a most salutary and beneficial effect upon the entire Cryptic system of the country. It brought together the leading spirits of the nation, who were struggling against disintegration, unifying their efforts and directing their energies, and to no small extent it served to stem the tide of dissolution which then threatened to engulf the Rite. That the General Grand Council "saved the Rite," as has been repeatedly stated by its adherents and supporters, I most emphatically deny, but do believe, and here cheerfully testify to my belief, that the movement worked incalculable good at the time. I further believe that the Cryptic world is under a lasting debt of gratitude to the men who directed and controlled the movement, and particularly to Josiah H. Drummond, of Maine; Geo. W. Cooley, of Minnesota; George J. Pinckard, of Louisiana, and Geo. M. Osgoodby, of New York. Their efforts have certainly been conducive of lasting benefit to the Rite, and history will do full justice to their memory.

Like a slow awakening from unpleasant dreams the merging jurisdictions gradually began to realize the mistake they had committed. The very agencies which had been relied upon to preserve and perpetuate the degrees were fast causing their destruction; the work of the Chapters was repudiated by the non-merging states, while the fact of continued existence of Councils and Grand Councils was an evidence that the Rite still possessed vitality and strength. Then came the period of

#### THE RESUMPTION.

By the year 1880 a majority of the Grand Councils and Grand Chapters who had formerly thought that the separation of the two systems was not only unnecessary but operated as well to the detriment of both, had begun to revise their opinions. The dangers resulting from the multiplication of Grand bodies was found to be far less of an evil than was first supposed, while the fiction of the preservation of the degrees by capatular supervision had been abundantly demonstrated. Thenceforward there was a growing disposition on the part of both Chapters and Councils to terminate the arrangement. In our own State this was easily effected, as the Grand Council had never abandoned its organization nor had any of its constituents surrendered their charters. A simple agreement to dissolve the compact by the Grand Chapter and Council and the issuance of an edict by the Grand Council to its constituents were the only steps necessary. In other jurisdictions more serious conditions prevailed and the work of rehabilitation was accomplished, in some instances, in a manner not wholly above criticism. During the years 1880-83 most of the "merging" jurisdictions resumed control of the degrees, and with the single exception of Iowa, all have now returned to the old ways.

From the year 1880 until the present time there has been a steady, constant and visible improvement and the tendency is still onward and upward. Indifference and apathy have given way to interest and zeal; a more intelligent appreciation of the character and scope of the degrees is apparent, while the degrees themselves, after years of uncertainty and doubt, have at length secured a long denied recognition as integral parts of the American Masonic system.





