

THE SOLDIER AND FREEMASONRY

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The Military or Service Lodge is what is termed as a class Lodge - an expression quite common now in the Home Country, or Restrictive Lodges have, particularly during recent years, increased at a very rapid rate. In such Lodges there is some special qualifications for membership. In London, for instance, many of the professions and trades have their Lodges to which are admitted only those belonging to the particular profession or trade. Then the graduates of the various Universities, and persons who have attended the famous Public Schools also have their Lodges, as well as many Public Bodies, Corporations, etc., such as the Bank of England, Lloyd's Insurance, Corporation of the City of London; there are also the various Anglo-Colonial Lodges, etc., for the use of Brethren from overseas who are either permanently or temporarily domiciled in the Metropolis - there are, for instance, the Canadian Lodge, Lodge of the Southern Cross, Anglo-Argentine, The New Zealand Lodge, and others.

In the Service Lodge the qualification for membership is that a person must have served, or be serving, in some branch of Her Majesty's Sea, Land or Air Force. To Brethren generally and to the members of a Lodge built upon such a foundation in particular, it will, I believe be interesting to know what their predecessors in arms have done for Freemasonry in years gone by.

The Military Lodge may very well be said to be the pioneer of the Class Lodge movement, for it came into existence many years before any other kind was thought of. Military Lodges, both stationary and travelling, were at one time quite common to the armies of almost every civilised nation, but they obtained their greatest lustre in connection with the forces of the British Crown. In their general tendency they were supposed to strengthen the bonds of friendship and to diffuse amongst the Officers, Commissioned and Non-Commissioned, and the Rank and File, a spirit of charity and subordination. The first record of a Charter for a Military movable Lodge is in 1732, or only fifteen years after the foundation of the first Grand Lodge of England, when the Grand Lodge of Ireland issued a warrant to the 1st Foot, now the Royal Scots. In 1743, the Grand Lodge of Scotland erected a Military Lodge in the 55th Foot. The first English Military Lodge was established in 1755, attached to the 8th Foot. The Grand Lodge of the Ancients, or as it was sometimes called, the Atholl Grand Lodge, was particularly active in establishing such Lodges, and at the end of 1789 it had 49 Army Warrants under its control. At one time there were Lodges in every branch or division of the land service. Roundly speaking, the Infantry of the Line headed the list with a total of 220 Lodges, next came the British and Irish Militia with 68, the Cavalry with 46 and Royal Artillery with 28. The number of distinct Lodges attached at different periods to a particular regiment is very noteworthy. For instance, there were no fewer than seven in the 52nd Regiment, and five in the 28th Foot. When there were several Lodges existing in a regiment at the same time, they would generally coincide with the plurality of battalions, but not always so. Several battalions had two Lodges working simultaneously.

With Freemasonry so active amongst the various units of the British Army, it will not come as a surprise to learn that the soldier of from 100 to 200 years ago was largely instrumental in the spread of Freemasonry and in the dissemination of its principles throughout the various portions of the globe. One of the conditions attached to a Military Charter was that if such a Lodge was located in a town where no regular Lodges was established, it might admit any local residents. If, however, there was a regular Lodge, then the recruiting of the Military Lodge was restricted to those serving in the Army. British regiments with their Lodges went to many parts of the world - the West Indies, (Jamaica, Bermuda, etc.), to Canada and the New England Colonies, the latter now forming portion of the United States. They also went to India, South Africa, Australia and other places. In those days local Lodges were not numerous and the Military Lodges admitted many of the residents in those parts of the world who afterwards combined and erected permanent Lodges in their respective localities.

Time will only permit me to quote one instance, but it will be sufficient to show that Freemasonry in Australia originated from an Army Lodge, and also that the introduction of Masonry into New Zealand may be indirectly traced to the same source. In the year 1752, the Grand Lodge of Ireland issued a Charter for a Lodge to be attached to the 46th Regiment, now known as the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry. This Lodge was designated the Lodge of the Social and Military Virtues, No. 227. In 1812 or 1813 the 46th Regiment went to Australia and was stationed at what was then the convict settlement of Botany Bay, where Sydney now stands. At that same time there was no permanent Lodge in Australia, and the Military Lodge consequently proceeded to initiate a number of local residents. In 1816 the regiment was recalled and the local Freemasons decided that they would form a Lodge of their own in order to carry on the practice of the Craft which had been taught them by the Military Brethren. In 1820 the first permanent Lodge was formed in Australia, namely the Australian Social Mother Lodge - it was subsequently chartered by the Grand Lodge of Ireland as No. 260. That Lodge still continues to work, but it has changed its name and now appears on the roll of the

Grand Lodge of New South Wales as the Lodge of Antiquity, No. 1. In 1841 or 1842 a number of Freemasons resident in the then infant city of Auckland decided that the time had arrived to form a Lodge in New Zealand. They wrote to Sydney to the Australian Social Lodge asking for the necessary Dispensation. Their request was granted, and in 1843 the Ara Lodge was erected in Auckland, and was subsequently chartered by the Grand Lodge of Ireland as No. 348. I think, therefore, that I am right in saying that a Military Lodge may very well be said to have been the grandparent of the Ara Lodge. The old Military Lodge (Social and Military Virtues) still exists. Some years after the regiment's stay in Australia, it went to Canada, and when subsequently ordered Home a considerable number of its personnel obtained their discharges in order to become Canadian settlers, and amongst that number was a good portion of the members of the Lodge - in fact, so many were remaining in Canada that it was decided to allow them to retain the Charter to permit of their continuing the work of the Lodge there. The Lodge still works at Montreal, and is known to-day as the Lodge of Antiquity, No. 1, on the roll of the Grand Lodge of Quebec. This old Military Lodge was one of the most famous and probably had a greater record than any other of the Military Lodges. Its Masonic Chest was twice captured by the enemy, but on its contents becoming known, it was on each occasion returned under a flag of truce and with all the honours of war.

The day of the movable or travelling Lodge has almost passed away. After a long period of usefulness it has nearly gone, for we find that there are on the roll of the United Grand Lodge of England only two Lodges in Military Corps not stationary, namely, in the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Scots, and the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Irish Fusiliers. There are eight such Lodges still under the Grand Lodge of Ireland, but none under the Grand Lodge of Scotland, although some years ago an application was made to the last named body for the Scots Greys, but the application was not successful.

Various reasons can be assigned for the passing of the movable Military Lodges. They generally flourished during times of trouble, and after a war came to an end the army was reduced from a war to a peace footing, and they lost a large proportion of their memberships. Again a regiment ordered abroad left a certain number of members behind, and sometimes sailed with insufficient to work the Lodge. Another not unimportant factor was the colonel commanding the regiment. His consent was necessary in connection with the original formation of the Lodge and it would seem that at the fiat of the commanding officer for the time being the permission could be revoked, and there are quite a number of instances where Lodges were closed in this way, and not a few cases where the closure was applied by even higher authority. Another important factor was the restriction which confined the recruiting of a Military Lodge to those of, or above, the rank of a corporal, thus excluding the rank and file. At one time all ranks were eligible, but when the Grand Lodges made this restriction, which, it is understood, was done at the insistence of the military authorities, who had arrived at the conclusion that it was detrimental to discipline to permit all ranks to meet upon the level in a Freemason's Lodge, it meant an enormous curtailment in the recruiting area. Many Lodges found it impossible to carry on and quickly surrendered their Charters, while others struggled for a longer or shorter period.

For a number of years past the Grand Lodge of England and Scotland have practically discontinued the issue of Charters for movable Lodges. This was no doubt done owing to two causes - the great increase in ordinary Lodges which resulted in their being established in practically every station where a regiment, etc., was likely to be located, consequently the necessity for a movable Lodge no longer existed; and again the difficulty in recruiting with the restriction above referred to rendering it inadvisable to further encourage the movable Lodges. In Ireland, however, the custom of issuing movable or ambulatory Charters is not yet extinct. A little over a year ago the Brethren of the 8th King's Royal Hussars petitioned the Grand Lodge of Ireland for a Travelling Warrant. While willing to grant the Charter, Grand Lodge recognised that it was up against a difficulty which seemed almost insurmountable, because the regiment was stationed in England and it was unlikely that it would ever again be quartered in Ireland. The Grand Master, however, approached the authorities in London on the matter, and not only did they at once give permission for the Grand Lodge of Ireland to meet on English soil, but also came forward saying in the most brotherly way that if there was any help they could give it had only to be asked for. Accordingly the Grand Lodge of Ireland held a meeting at Farnborough, England. It was presided over by the Grand Master Right Hon. the Earl of Donoughmore, K.P., and "The Leswarree Lodge, No. 646," with a Travelling Warrant in the 8th Hussars, was duly constituted. The opportunity of attending a meeting of the Grand Lodge of Ireland on English soil was eagerly availed of and deputations were present from the Grand Lodges of England and Scotland. The meeting was a most complete success from start to finish. The attendance included distinguished England and Scottish Brethren who came to support Ireland, which added greatly to the pleasure and harmony of the proceedings.

It was unique for one Grand Lodge to meet on the territory of another with its consent.

The career of Freemasonry in connection with the 8th Hussars is of extreme interest. The regiment previously held a warrant from the Grand Lodge of Ireland for a Lodge which was active for some thirty or forty years. About 1819 they transferred to the Grand Lodge of England, but after four or five years nothing was heard about it; the Brethren had now come back to the Grand Lodge of Ireland. The Lodge takes its name from a battle at Leswarree in India. The 8th

Hussars was the only regiment which had the honour of inscribing this name upon their colours, a fact which gave great pride to Irishmen.

But although the movable Military Lodge is passing away, it has been well replaced by permanent or stationary Lodges. They have increased enormously and are to be found at all Military headquarters or depots of any importance, as well as in connection with many Territorial Units. For instance, the Honourable Artillery Company of London has two Lodges, and the London Scottish Rifles and various other territorial units have their Lodges. At Aldershot, an important Military centre, there are some eight or ten Lodges, while Chatham, another centre, also has its Lodges.

In connection with the Great War it may be interesting to mention that the Grand Orient of the Netherlands issued Charters for two Lodges., viz., The Gastvrijheid and Willem van Oranje, the membership of which consisted of British Servicemen who were interned in Holland. After the termination of the war, and the release of the internees, these two Lodges were removed to London, and Charters were issued to them by the Grand Lodge of England, as numbers 3970 and 3976 respectively.

During the time that the American forces formed part of the Army of Occupation on the Rhine, a Masonic Club was formed on the 7th January, 1919. The first meeting took place in the office of the Assistant Provost Marshal of the 3rd Army in Coblenz. Rhode Islanders were foremost in the movement, and the club carried out good work. It rented premises which it made attractive and comfortable, and provided newspapers and magazines, and also established a library. All sick members in hospitals were visited as often as the rules would permit and supplied with delicacies. The club held weekly meetings at which the average attendance was 500. When the club closed about the middle of July, it had an enrolment of over 3200 members from the States and, in addition the following Masonic jurisdictions: Alaska, Hawaii, Cuba, Panama, District of Columbia, Canada, Mexico, Philippines, Scotland and Ireland - all were connected with the American Army. From this club sprang the "Overseas Lodge, No. 1, U.D.," which was chartered by the Grand Lodge of Rhode Island and the Province Plantations, with its headquarters at the Coblenz bridgehead. This Lodge was active in Germany for three months and held 15 regular and 65 special meetings, initiating over 500 candidates of all ranks, from major-generals to privates. The Temple in which the Lodge met in Coblenz belonged to a German Masonic Lodge which was organised by German officers who were fighting Napoleon in Russia over a hundred years ago. These officers had followed the French from Russia to the Rhine, and it was while they were waiting in Coblenz for orders to advance that they organised their Lodge. Never did they dream that some day conquering soldiers from the then insignificant country of America would be sitting in their high places. Of the 500-odd initiates in the Lodge many had been decorated for valour and several had made names for themselves. Chief amongst them were Major-General A. Lejeune, in command of the 2nd Division; Major-General McGlauchlin, at one time Chief of Artillery for the American Expeditionary Force and Commander of the 1st Division; and Brigadier-General Parker, who had been with the 1st Division since the day of its formation. Upon the withdrawal of the American Army of Occupation, the Lodge removed its headquarters to America and has its permanent home in Providence, Rhode Island, where it is registered as No. 40, although its members (soldiers and war-workers) hail from every State except Vermont and Delaware. It is intended that it shall be perpetuated as an Army and Navy Lodge, only such persons being eligible as served in the World War abroad or at home. This will include soldiers, sailors and welfare workers, and the right of eligibility will also go to the descendants of these veterans. Furthermore, members of the Army and Navy may qualify as candidates.

It is not necessary to refer to the Masonic activities of our New Zealand soldiers while on active service, as Brethren are aware of what took place under the auspices of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force Masonic Association both in Europe and Palestine. Upon the return of the troops to their homelands, Lodges on service lines were organised, not only in New Zealand but throughout the Australian States as well as in other countries.

There are many cases on record of the humanitarian influence played by Freemasonry during times of war in former years, but time will not permit me to do more than quote two of them. Bro. Atkins of Illinois, relates that during the American Civil War of the sixties, on one occasion when the enemy was being severely pressed, he saw a white apron nailed to a cabin door. Riding up, he asked the woman whom he found there its significance and was told that her husband was fighting in the Confederate Cavalry. When he was last home he had told her that there were many Freemasons in the Federal forces, and that if she or her home were threatened with danger she was to place the apron on the door and tell the soldiers that her husband was a Freemason, when he felt sure that she would not be molested. Needless to say, neither the woman nor the home were interfered with. Another instance was recalled quite recently in one of the American Masonic publications. On one occasion the Confederate forces after a severe fight drove the Federals out of a village in, I think, the State of Virginia. The soldiers on entering found that all the inhabitants had gone and that the place was deserted, and they, following the usual course, proceeded from building to building looking for articles of value. There was one building, however, standing at a street corner which defied their efforts, a plain wooden structure, unpainted and weather-stained and with shuttered windows. They were in the act of forcing the door when a general with his staff rode along the main street. He saw what they were about to do and he also perceived what had escaped most eyes, a symbol above the doorway, a symbol almost obliterated by age and weather, but which he

recognised as the Square and Compasses. He ordered the men to desist and gave instructions to have a guard posted over the building, and until the troops vacated the village a week later that guard was maintained and the building was not interfered with. The incident was recalled recently in consequence of the visit to the Lodge of the Grand Master of the State who, to mark the occasion, was presented with a Jewel of no intrinsic but great sentimental value, a jewel made of iron from nails drawn from the walls of the building which Confederate troops had protected on that particular occasion during the Civil War.

It would ill befit me to close these remarks without making some reference to famous men - sailors and soldiers who have been members of the Craft - men who have made history and who have assisted to build up the nation and make the British Empire the mighty power it is to-day. From the very earliest times Freemasonry has appealed to the soldier and sailor, and we find many records of their active association with the Craft. Amongst many names I can only mention a few:- Admiral Lord Nelson, of Trafalgar; the great Duke of Wellington; Sir Ralph Abercrombie, of Abourkir Bay fame; Sir John Moore, whose death was commemorated in a famous poem which appeared in our school books; General Wolfe, the hero of Quebec; Sir Charles Napier, the conqueror of Scinde; Lord Chelmsford, who commanded at the battle of Ulundi in the Zulu War; Lord Wolsley, a former Commander-in-Chief; Lord Kichener of Khartoum; Lord Roberts, of Kandahar; and coming down to recent times, Earl Jelicoe, Earl Haig, and General Sir Charles Fergusson. In other countries we find the same to be the case. The United States had General Washington, while in Italy there was the famous patriot, Garibaldi, who was the for a number of years Grand Master of the Craft there.

When we realise that men such as these, Empire Builders in every sense of the word, were able to devote some of their times to Freemasonry, it must bring home to us the fact that there is something in the Craft which many fail to grasp - something which can only be reached by further instruction and research. These great Freemasons whose names I have mentioned were all men who had embodied in their very nature that virtue which may be said to form one of the great points in the instruction of the newly-initiated candidate, namely obedience. It is impressed upon the soldier in the name of discipline during his military training, and it is forcibly impressed upon the candidate in the final charge in the First Degree -obedience to the laws of God, the moral and social laws, loyalty and obedience to the Sovereign and to his native land; obedience to the laws of citizenship, and to the Constitution and Laws of Freemasonry.

Brethren, can we conceive of a happier combination that we have in a Service Lodge, the bringing together of the traditions of Freemasonry and those of the Navy and Army of the British Empire. I need not remind you that on the 25th April, 1915, the troops from our overseas Dominions set a high standard which they never afterwards departed from. They began a series of adventures for the Kingdom of God, the magnitude of which we sometimes fail to realise. The soldiers, Brethren, bring to their interpretation of Freemasonry those characteristics of the Service to which they belong or formerly belonged. They were taught as soldiers that it was a good policy to give their enemy no room for manoeuvre, to keep him confined in his own ground. Now there are certain enemies to the peace and progress of the world which Freemasonry deals with, and our soldier Brethren will apply their military training in their dealings with them - meet them on their own ground, beat them down ere they raise themselves to destroy us.

In conclusion, Brethren, let us ever strive to maintain all constituted authority, by the wisdom of our triple inheritance, and with the aid of the strength of clean hands, and the beauty of a pure heart.

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