

FREEMASONRY IN CUBA

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ASIDE from some internal dissensions and the attack of the Morgan hysteria from without, Freemasonry in the Northern countries has for more than two hundred years pursued a tranquil and expanding life. Favored by benign surroundings it has gone serenely onward, as a peaceful river flowing toward the great ocean of Masonic brotherhood.

In no English-speaking country have men been sent to prison merely for being Masons; in no Northern country have men been led to their death for professing the faith of Freemasonry. These things have been done in the Latin countries, and even within the memory of men still living.

Banned by Church and State in Latin countries it has resembled in its course a turbulent brook. Dashing against unyielding rocks of hate, harboring within itself dangerous shoals and insidious depths, it has disappeared at times from the sight of men, only to rise anew to the light of day and pursue again its troubled course.

In no small measure the temperament and training of our Latin brethren have added to their own unrest, as they departed from the simple democratic system taught to the world by the Masons of the British Isles. Trained in the school of a strong, centralized State and Church, with authority over all their acts and thoughts, they naturally endeavored to impress upon Freemasonry the same autocratic practices which they had learned and lived in their daily lives. Time and again they strove to take the control of the Craft from the whole body of Masons and to vest it in self-perpetuating Supreme Councils and Grand Orients.

Such endeavors delayed for decades the cordial recognition of Latin Freemasonry by English-speaking Grand Lodges. Fearful of recognizing Symbolic Freemasonry when linked up with Grand Orients and Supreme Councils our Grand Lodges set up standards of recognition which, from the Latin point of view, seemed to base Masonic regularity upon a system of government, rather than upon a system of Masonic philosophy.

So far apart did they drift that in his haste one American Grand Master declared, "Masonry that does not speak English is not Masonry."

Happily our Latin brethren have come to recognize more freely the underlying principles of democracy which govern Symbolic Freemasonry, and we on the other hand are now less inclined to bind all foreign-lan-

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guage Freemasonry in our own Procrustean bed. So it has become possible for us in the United States to examine Latin Freemasonry in a friendly manner and to view it as a development of the brotherhood, rather than as an attempt to destroy it or mold it to unworthy ends. We have acquired such an understanding of the struggles of our Latin brethren toward the right that our tendency no longer is to deny them life, but rather to help them to live.

Masonic light was carried to Cuba for the first time when England occupied that island in 1762. During the time of occupation by the British, Military Lodge No. 218 on the Irish Register was attached to the Forty-eighth regiment, also Irish. The working of this Lodge while in Cuba is fully established by the existence of a Master Mason certificate granted by it, May 3, 1763, and "Given under our hand and seal at our Lodge room in Havaunah."

The next Lodges in Cuba are traceable to France. The old Grand Lodge of France had founded several Lodges in Hayti in the XVIII century. So inspired were the members with the benefits of the Craft that when the Revolution of 1793 impelled many of the brethren to leave the island and migrate to Cuba, they took with them four Lodges, two (*Persévérance* and *Concorde*) to Santiago, and two (*Amitié* and *Bénéfrique Concorde*) to Havana.

Notwithstanding the pacific names these Lodges bore the invasion of Spain by the forces of Napoleon aroused a spirit of aggression against the French in Cuba, as it had in the Peninsula, and the French Masons again had recourse to migration. This time they went principally to New Orleans and Philadelphia, carrying with them the Lodges which had been working in Santiago.

The two Lodges in Havana remained, and while still working under warrants from the Grand Lodge of France they translated their names into Spanish—*Amistad* and *Benéfica Concordia*. The two Lodges met in different localities and their meeting places gave their names, *Amistad* and *Concordia*, to two of Havana's important residential streets, names which they retained until ten years ago when Cuba suffered an epidemic of changing street names.

The Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania had on December 17, 1804, warranted a Lodge in Cuba, *Le Temple des Vertus Teologales*, No. 103. The French Masons who had gone to the United States from Cuba evidently determined that Masonry in Cuba should not perish, for during the 14 years following the Napoleonic invasion of Spain in 1808 they had obtained from American Grand Lodges warrants for thirteen Lodges in

Cuba—seven from Pennsylvania, three from South Carolina, and three from Louisiana.

THEIR FIRST GRAND LODGE

March 27, 1818, two of the Pennsylvania Lodges and one from South Carolina came together in a general assembly and proclaimed the erection of the Spanish Grand Lodge of York Rite Freemasons—*Gran Logia Española de Francmasones del Rito York*. This was the first body erected in Cuba that claimed sovereign status.

The conflicts between the "York" and Scottish Rites in Cuba began the same year. Col. Luís de Cluet D'Obernay, a Louisiana planter, arrived in Cuba and promptly founded an irregular Supreme Council, April 2, 1818. The Louisiana Lodges which had been warranted for Cuba immediately placed themselves under this Supreme Council, which in turn on the 7th April of the following year, came under control of the Grand Orient of France. There then began in Cuban Masonry a jig-saw puzzle craze for cutting apart and putting together again.

Discords and bitterness arising from this conflict of authority continued for many decades. To embroil matters even further the Grand Orient of France ceded its authority in Cuba to the National Grand Orient of Spain—*Gran Oriente Nacional de España*. The Cuban Freemasons did not relish the change in sovereignty, refused to accept it, and by declaration set up for themselves the Spanish-American Territorial Grand Orient for the Island of Cuba (*Gran Oriente Territorial Español Americano de la Isla de Cuba*)—whatever a "territorial Grand Orient" may be.

However, recognizing that in harmony there is peace the two rival bodies came together the following month, October 11, 1822, under the name of Spanish Grand Lodge of York Rite Freemasons in the Island of Cuba, the first Grand Master being Pedro Pablo O'Reilly.

MASONRY INTERDICTED

Then came troubles from the outside. A royal decree of August 1, 1828, forbade the practice of Freemasonry in the Island of Cuba, and by the following November Masonry entered into a sleep as of death. In the ten years from 1818 to 1828 the Spanish Grand Lodge of York Rite Freemasons had warranted 66 Lodges in Cuba, of which 30 were in the city of Havana. Many of the Lodges were erected in places which even now, more than a hundred years later, are unimportant villages.

The excuse for the ban against Masonry was an alleged association between the Masons of Cuba and a society organized in Mexico for the purpose of assisting Cuba to the independence from Spain which other

Spanish-American colonies had attained. It was known as the Society for the Promotion of Cuban Liberty—*Junta Promotora de la Libertad Cubana*. These friends of Cuba adopted as their symbol the black eagle of the Aztecs. As the eagle was a symbol used by the Supreme Council, *ipso facto* the Cuban Liberty Society of Mexico was necessarily Masonic in the eyes of the suspicious official who wished to crush Freemasonry. It was declared that the secret name of the body was "Grand Lodge of the Black Eagle," that the head of it was the personal physician to the King of England, and that the whole purpose of Freemasonry was to wrest Cuba from Spain and wean her from the Church. The habitual liars who wrote the official histories of Cuba for many years thereafter never receded from these extravagant declarations.

The Cuban Masons then began to meet misrepresentation with their only weapon, outward submission. The York Rite Grand Lodge of 1818 had no intention of surrendering, except nominally, and strove secretly to carry on. The timorous and less enthusiastic weakened. One by one the Lodges ceased to meet, so that by the end of 1858 there were but two Lodges which pretended to meet as Masonic bodies. Even they had changed their local habitations and their names. In their scanty records the members themselves adopted fictitious names, and met only now and then when it seemed safe to do so.

MORE GRAND BODIES

The Government of Spain looked with suspicion on the United States, as our Grand Lodges had founded so many of the detested Masonic Lodges in Cuba. As a gesture of friendship the two Lodges which had at least some form of existence endeavored to attach themselves to the Reformed Evening Star Grand Orient (*Gran Oriente Hespérico Reformado*) of Spain. However, this body really existed only on paper, and nothing came of it. Eyes were then turned to South Carolina, where they had earlier found friendship and encouragement; but the Grand Lodge did not choose to adopt into its family Lodges already existing on foreign soil. They advised that enough members withdraw from both of the two Cuban Lodges to petition for a warrant for a new Lodge, and that the three Lodges then form their own Grand Lodge. This advice was adopted. On November 17, 1859, the South Carolina Grand Lodge warranted St. Andrew Lodge No. 93, erected at Santiago. The three Lodges then met in general assembly December 5, 1859, and founded at Santiago the Grand Lodge Colón, or Columbus.

The same month Andrés Cassard arrived from New York, where he

had founded La Fraternidad No. 387, a Spanish-speaking Lodge still active on the roster of the Grand Lodge of the State of New York.

Cassard carried authority from the Supreme Council of the Southern Jurisdiction of the United States to open a Supreme Council in Cuba. However, he did not land, as he learned that in his absence he had been convicted of high crimes and had been sentenced to death—merely because of his Masonic activities apparently, for it has never been shown that Cassard had ever entered into political conspiracies. The Supreme Council was opened in a state-room of the steamer and adopted the name Colón, the same designation as the Grand Lodge formed the preceding month.

So secretly had the Masons worked in founding the Grand Lodge Colón at Santiago that a year later even the Masons themselves in Havana had not learned of it. In 1860 several members of La Fraternidad No. 387 of New York and Amor Fraternal No. 4 of Louisiana, desiring to form a new Lodge, applied to the Grand Lodge of Louisiana for a warrant. It was only then that they learned of the formation of the Grand Lodge Colón the preceding year; so they applied to the Cuban body. A warrant was issued August 8, 1862, to Amor Fraternal, the dean of the Cuban Lodges today.

MORE ENTANGLEMENTS

Their puzzle was becoming more intricate. In 1857 Vicente Lescadio Castro, son of one of Cuba's eminent physicians, opened at Matanzas an irregular Supreme Council under the wing of the irregular Foulhouze Supreme Council of Louisiana, and began to warrant symbolic Lodges. Meanwhile his father, Dr. Vicente Antonio de Castro, arrived at Santiago with authority from the Supreme Council at Charleston to investigate the acts of the Supreme Council founded by Cassard. He put his exequatur in his pocket and formed a new combined Supreme Council and Grand Orient for Cuba and the Antilles. He also commenced to warrant Symbolic Lodges.

All acts of Dr. Castro were at once repudiated by the Supreme Council at Charleston. However, Castro kept on, and in May or June, 1868, hoping to overcome the objection to the founding of Symbolic Lodges by a Grand Orient, he formed his own Grand Lodge, The Symbolic Grand Lodge (*La Gran Logia Simbólica*), with no distinctive title beyond the word "The," suggesting that he may have had visions of extending his jurisdiction over the entire world.

His Grand Lodge soon became weary of his dictatorial conduct and formed charges against him. October 10, 1868, a trial commission assem-

bled in stormy session to hear the charges. The turmoil ended when practically everybody walked out.

TEN YEARS OF WAR

The same day there began at Yara a ten-year uprising against Spanish rule. Confusion reigned throughout the whole island. Many Masons felt that the time had come to set aside their differences and unite for the good of all. Masons from all kinds of Lodges, warranted irregularly or set up by their own fiat, applied *en masse* to the Grand Lodge Colón for Masonic protection. Dr. Castro died, his self-constituted Supreme Council and Grand Orient followed him to the grave, and there remained of them only the recollection that, although irregular, they had enrolled under their banners men from some of the most respected families of Cuba. The Grand Lodge Colón now found itself free from the thorns of foreign rivals, but still suffering from unrest within its fold. Peace was not yet.

Differences of purpose between the Grand Lodge Colón and the Supreme Council Colón began to tear the Masons apart, principally from the desire of members of the Supreme Council to set up the Grand Orient system, in which the Grand Lodge would be merely one section.

GRAND MASTER SHOT

The turmoil and hatreds of the war then going on drew attention again to the Masonic Lodges. Charged since 1828 with disloyalty, to the suspicious official mind the enlisting of many Cuban Masons in the war against Spain gave color to the accusation. It was clear to the British government that Washington and his brother Masons made war on England as subjects of the Crown, and not as Masons. The Spaniard, however, held that the Cubans made war on Spain because they were Freemasons. Therefore, Freemasonry must be destroyed.

At a council held at Santiago the Masons generally were condemned as traitors and arrests followed shortly. Among those taken was Andrés Puente, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge Colón. Without a hearing he and some fifteen of his Masonic brethren were taken to a plantation near Cobre on February 15, 1870, and were shot down for no other crime than that of being Masons.

MEMORIAL SERVICE RAIDED

The fate of the martyred Grand Master incensed the Cuban Masons beyond description, and careless of their own personal safety the members of St. Andrew Lodge of Havana invited all Masons to join them in

a memorial service on March 5 following. Giving to this service an importance far beyond its true intent, the meeting place was raided by the military and 52 of those present were taken to prison.

Judge Joaquín Fabre, a Spaniard, ruled that in holding such a service they had done no wrong; but the Captain-General set aside the judgment of the court, ordered a court-martial and sent Judge Fabre back to Spain. Cuban Masons abroad induced the Grand Orient of France to protest to the Spanish authorities. By official order from Spain the court-martial, on October 10, 1870, freed the Masons from prison. The Captain-General, however, took occasion to warn them forcibly that although they were absolved of wrongdoing in attending a memorial service, he would remember they were still Freemasons.

The memorial meeting of March 5 had been held in a building at Obrapia 68. The government stripped it of all its furniture and fittings. No one knows the fate of the records of the Lodges. It is assumed they were sent to Spain, as they were never again seen in Cuba.

For the greater glory of Ferdinand and Isabella the Spanish government archives concealed for more than four centuries the true year of the discovery of America by Columbus; so who can say but in the centuries to come some Masonic historian may discover and bring to light the records of these early Cuban Lodges?

Strange as it may seem, at this time the Grand Master, Dr. Fernández Mora, was a native of Spain and Surgeon-General of the Spanish army. He was deported on 24 hours' notice.

PROVINCIAL MOTHER LODGES

After the shock of the arrest of 52 Masons on March 5, 1870, the Masons of Havana became convinced that they must work under cover, and yet felt that something must be done locally to keep in touch with each other. On May 26 of the same year they formed a Provincial Mother Lodge—*Madre Logia Provincial*. It lasted four years.

In 1874 León Dediót, a member of *Silencio Lodge*, had begun the covert publication of a Masonic periodical under the title *Silencio—Silence*. His print shop was raided, the equipment dismantled and he was sent to jail. But he was a French subject, so instead of being shot he escaped with the light sentence of deportation.

Then, May 23, 1875, a second Provincial Mother Lodge was formed.

ANOTHER GRAND LODGE

An able organizer in the person of Aurelio Almeida now became active in the Provincial Mother Lodge at Havana. The Grand Lodge Colón at

Santiago was far from Havana, the greater center of population. Insufficient means of communication, general ignorance of the true purposes of Masonry, the fear of further acts of prohibition or violence against the Masons, all kept the fraternity in chaos. Almeida began to urge the removal of the Grand Lodge from Santiago to Havana, and to demand the absolute separation of the Grand Lodge Colón from the Supreme Council Colón. He published several Masonic pamphlets, translated into Spanish Mackey's Jurisprudence, and through correspondence made himself known to prominent Masons abroad.

With 35 constituent Lodges the Grand Lodge Colón was strong at home; yet it had made little effort to gain recognition abroad. Almeida decided upon a surprise *coup d'état*. In 1876 he visited the United States, consulted with Past Grand Masters John W. Simons of New York and Richard Vaux of Pennsylvania, and cabled instructions to his trusted followers in the Provincial Mother Lodge.

The Provincial Mother Lodge was declared dissolved and 13 Lodges united in proclaiming, August 1, 1876, the founding of the Grand Lodge of the Island of Cuba. So well did they work that before the end of the year Delaware and Pennsylvania had recognized the new body as the legitimate Grand Lodge of Cuba. Their status was established.

The Grand Lodge Colón now did what it had so many times refused to do—declared its independence of the Supreme Council. It was too late, however; an independent symbolic Grand Lodge had been founded and recognized abroad.

The Havana body commenced a plan of colonization in the Grand Lodge Colón at Santiago. It consisted in having Masons in the West obtain warrants for new Lodges, and in this manner gain enough representatives in the older body to vote the repeal of Article I of the Constitutions in which Santiago was named as the Grand East. A young man, José Fernández Pellón y Castellanos, headed the delegation to show the Grand Lodge Colón the advantages of moving to Havana. It took them but a month, from May 4 to June 11, 1877, to carry the amendment changing the Grand East to Havana and convince the majority that with the Supreme Council remaining in Santiago that city had glory enough.

MASONS RAIDED AGAIN

The military had not forgotten that there were Masons among them. When the Grand Lodge Colón met for the first time in Havana the meeting was raided at noon and 180 representatives to Grand Lodge were arrested. They were admonished that there had been no change in the

law respecting secret meetings, and were then set free. The Grand Lodge met again four days later and continued its labors!

The defeated brethren in Santiago were not submissive. They repudiated the amendment to the constitutions and carried on under the same name, Grand Lodge Colón. There were, therefore, two Grand Lodges with their Grand East in Havana, and the disaffected body in Santiago.

Naturally there was rivalry between the two bodies in Havana. This did not last long, however, for the Grand Lodge Colón made two blunders which brought it to a sudden end. First, an attempt by the Grand Master to compel certain Masons to take a specific oath of allegiance to the revised Constitutions led to the withdrawal of ten of their Lodges and their union with the body which had been erected in Santiago. Second, as there were two bodies claiming to be the Grand Lodge Colón the Supreme Council was obliged to determine which lodges it would recognize as prerequisite to the degrees conferred under its authority. The Havana Grand Lodge Colón acted abruptly and discourteously, so the Supreme Council promptly determined that for their purpose the Santiago Grand Lodge Colón was the legitimate body.

This gave vigor to the dissenting Grand Lodge, a body that otherwise would have had but a feeble existence.

GRAND LODGES UNITE

Negotiations for uniting the two bodies in Havana had been going on for some time. They finally came together January 25, 1880, under the name of United Grand Lodge of Colón and Island of Cuba. Of the 46 Lodges forming this Grand Lodge 28 were from the Grand Lodge Colón, Havana, and 18 from the Island of Cuba Grand Lodge. Antonio Govín, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge Colón, became Grand Master of the United body, while Aurelio Almeida, creator of the Grand Lodge Island of Cuba, became Grand Secretary.

September 4, 1881, the independent body in Santiago surrendered, and their 25 Lodges were enrolled under the United Grand Lodge.

MASONS ERECT MONUMENT

When Grand Secretary Almeida died in 1885 the Masons obtained permission to erect in the cemetery a monument to his memory, with the proviso that no Masonic emblem be engraved on it. Accustomed for three-quarters of a century to circumvent the oppressive regulations of Church and State the Cuban Masons contrived to mark the monument in such a manner that Masons might discover a Masonic emblem on it. It bears simply an enlarged fac-simile of the signature of Aurelio Almeida,

placed on the outline of a visiting card with the upper left-hand corner carefully turned down to form an equilateral triangle.

FREEDOM AT LAST

The future seemed brighter for Cuban Masonry, but another and the last uprising against Spanish rule began February 24, 1895. Within five weeks the Captain-General ordered all Masonic Lodges closed. They were carefully watched, and when Weyler became Captain-General the Masons found it wise to suspend completely. At the Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of New York held in 1898 the sum of \$5,000.00 was voted for the relief of suffering Masons in Cuba. This money could not be transferred until the war was over and the blockade was lifted. Then the Cuban Grand Lodge organized a Relief Committee for its distribution.

On the day that the Spanish flag was lowered a committee from Grand Lodge waited on the American commanding officer, General Brooks, who informed them that they might reopen their Lodges without fear of molestation.

Gen. Leonard Wood became Governor-General, with Col. Hugh L. Scott as his Chief of Staff. Colonel Scott expressed a desire to become a Mason, and he was elected to receive the degrees in the Lodge named Cuba. On the night of the initiation General Wood had left the Province and Colonel Scott was acting Governor-General. For a century the Cuban Masons had been living in constant fear of oppression by their Governors-General for the sole crime of professing Freemasonry. An old Cuban Mason who was present at the initiation of Colonel Scott told me that when they came to realize that they were actually initiating into Freemasonry their own Governor-General there was scarcely a dry eye in the lodge-room.

We have put together the jig-saw puzzle of Cuban Masonry. Although some of the minor pieces have been lost, enough remain to give a fair picture of the hardships they so bravely endured. Since the conclusion of the War of Independence the Grand Lodge of Cuba has trodden the path of peace and harmony, and with creditable accomplishment.

In their jurisprudence will be found the greatest differences between Cuban Freemasonry and ours. In his first paper before the Lodge Bro. Richardson Wright pointed out that Masonry is influenced by its environment. The civil law of Cuba had for its basis the Roman law, as modified by the Spanish courts, and their Masonic law at times reflects the philosophy of a jurisprudence older than our own.

In all countries where it is established Freemasonry has built up a

jurisprudence quite apart from the civil law; yet the Masonic law of a country is necessarily influenced by the civil law under which the Masons live. So Cuban Masonic law often differs from ours. Some of their decisions and practices may at times seem strange to us, yet let us not forget that because of their different education and habits perhaps their laws are better fitted to their own requirements than the laws of another people, schooled in other traditions.

Masonic justice is attained among them. That is all that can be asked of any Masonic law.

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MASONRY IN THE WAR OF 1812

WILLIAM M. STUART

ON THE afternoon of August 9, 1812, a column of six hundred United States troops, of which the Fourth Infantry formed the nucleus, entered an oak grove near the Indian village of Maguaga, fourteen miles below Detroit.

The detachment was under the leadership of Lieutenant-Colonel James Miller, with Major John Whistler second in command. Captain Snelling of the Fourth led the advance. This party had just passed from the grove into a cleared field surrounded with giant trees and thick bushes, when a sudden explosion of musketry, accompanied by shrill Indian yells, burst on the sultry air. Numbers of the Americans fell. It was a surprise, an ambushade.

Colonel Miller galloped up, followed by the main body of his troops on the run, waved his sword and ordered a charge. He was obeyed. The Fourth Infantry fired, presented bayonets and shoved through the smoke of its own discharge straight into the flaming bushes. A cannon showered grapeshot among the trees. Yankee cheers rose above the war-whoops of the Indians and the hoarse cries of the British.

The contest, though severe, was brief. Major Muir, who commanded the 260 British regulars and Canadian militia, fled with his men. Chief Tecumseh and his warriors fought more stubbornly, but they too were swept into rout, leaving forty of their dead behind.

This victory of Maguaga cost the Americans 75 casualties, among them being Lieutenant John Whistler, one of the two sons of Major Whistler who had participated in the fight.

Major John Whistler had been the founder of Chicago, when in 1803 he built Fort Dearborn on that site. In 1795, while located at Fort Washington, near Cincinnati, Ohio, he had been the first candidate to receive the degrees of Masonry in Nova Cæsarea Lodge No. 10 (now N. C. Harmony No. 2), being raised to the degree of Master Mason on May 5th of that year.¹

Lieutenant-Colonel James Miller also was a Mason. He had been raised in Benevolent Lodge No. 7, of Milford, New Hampshire, in 1808.² In December, 1814, he became an honorary member of St. John's Lodge of Boston.³ Destined to a bright fame at the Battle of Lundy's Lane, he later spent an active and useful life: Brigadier General, Governor of