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Masonic Veteran Associations,

BY

WILLIAM JAMES HUGHAN,

Of Torquay, England.

LONDON.

1897.

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GENERAL JOHN CORSON SMITH.

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Masonic Veteran Associations.



UNTIL recently there was not a Masonic Veteran Association in England, though several of these excellent Institutions have been formed and widely patronised in the United States of America, during the last 25 years. The first of the kind was organised in the State of Connecticut on June 17th, 1871, the originator being Bro. Robert C. Naramore, now of Sing Sing, New York, and the "King Hiram," No. 12, of Birmingham, Conn., was the Lodge under whose auspices the premier meeting was held. This memorable gathering was attended by a number of aged brethren, the combined ages of the oldest seven being 583 years, so that it was a most fitting commencement of one of the most remarkable Masonic Societies of this century; American in origin, but destined also to be popular on this side of the "big pond," as its peculiar merits and advantages became better known.

The founder, when Master of "King Hiram" Lodge, was present in an official capacity at the funeral of a lamented brother, and read the solemn burial service in the presence of some veteran Freemasons who had asked to be allowed to attend, though not in a Lodge for 30 years. Bro. Naramore seems to have thought as much about the living as the dead, and determined that long and honourable service to the Craft should be recognised whilst the Veterans are with us, as well as when "they have joined the majority;" so it was then and there that the "Connecticut Veteran Association was born."

"Twenty-five standing as Master Masons" is still required for eligibility to membership in this the parent Society.

The second Association was started in New York by Bro. Daniel Sickles (a well-known and esteemed Craftsman), the date stated of the first meeting being January 25th, 1872. It seems likely that to this brother is due the organisation of the Association on the present lines, as the idea of the original promoter evidently did not go beyond a special meeting of the Lodge.

In the by-laws of the New York Society, the aims of the "Fraternal" is thus ably set forth:—

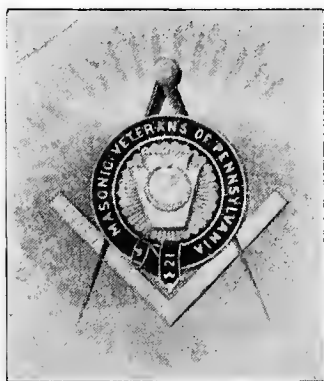
"To perpetuate existing friendship; to form new ones; to keep alive and fructify the zeal of

brethren ; to place before the younger Craftsmen an example of long continued devotion to the cause and of a zeal not to be affected by the changes and vicissitudes of times and seasons ; to assist in developing and preserving the history of the fraternity ; to pay the last tribute of respect to the departed members of the Association, and to preserve in its archives a memorial of their lives and services."

Other Associations have been formed in the same State, the total membership in the State of New York probably reaching 1600, half that number belonging to their venerable parent.

Ohio has the credit of forming the third Association on October 15th, 1872, and for a time required 24 years of Masonic life as a qualification for membership, but of late has reduced the age to 21 years, as with most Societies. Its first proceedings, issued in 1891, contain an interesting account of the meetings from 1872, with portraits. My honorary membership—much valued—dates from 23rd October, 1895.

The fourth embraces a most extensive jurisdiction, including 12 States and Territories, together with Mexico, British Columbia, and the Hawaiian Islands, entitled the Pacific Coast. "It is a living force, and its badge is a passport to all things Masonic in that part of the Union." Its active members number 315, and its honorary roll is still larger, "including the names of distinguished Masons throughout the world." The start was made on 27th December, 1878, but perfected and completed 8th January, 1879.



An Association was launched on May 24th, 1879, for Central New York (Syracuse), and one for the District of Columbia, August 24th, 1879. The latter I have long been familiar with

through my beloved and lamented friend, General Albert Pike, who was the first President, and continued in that honourable capacity to his regretted decease. The first volume of its Transactions, 1879 to 1887, is very valuable because of the many addresses delivered by the President, and the second published was entirely devoted to his addresses in 1888, 1889, and 1890.

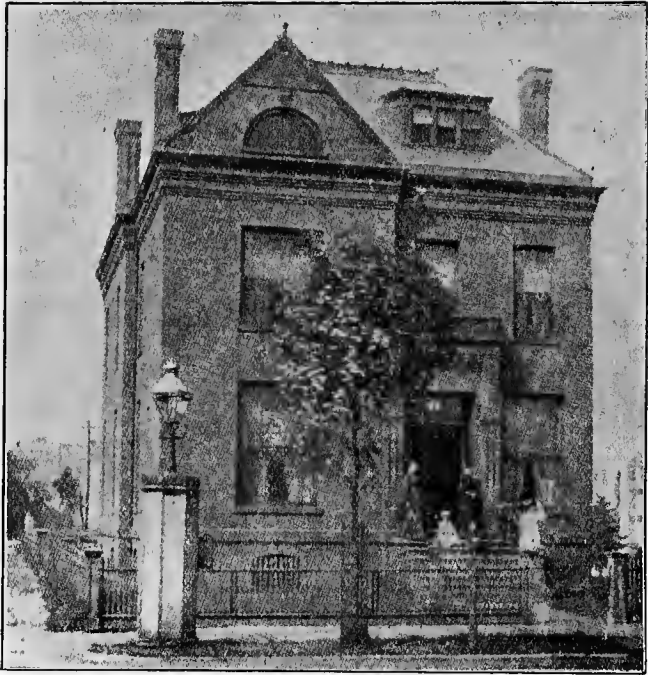
The Veterans of Pennsylvania associated at Philadelphia June 3rd, 1881, and is the 7th on Dr. Metcalf's interesting list, from which I quote the dates of origin, being the only one of the kind known to me. The miniature badge is very appropriate, and I hope is as much prized by all the members, as it is by the writer, who was admitted on September 30th, 1884.

Many of its lists of members, published annually, have been of quite an artistic character, and its influence has been most beneficial in and beyond this truly Masonic State. There is also an Organisation for Western Penn'a Veterans, founded at Pittsburg, November 30th, 1885.

One of the best known, and certainly the most popular of all, is the "Masonic Veteran Association of Illinois," established January 13th, 1886, at Chicago, M.W. Bro. Dewitt C. Cregier being the first Venerable Chief, and my dear friend, General John Corson Smith, P.G.M., the first Assistant Chief. The second annual reunion was held at the Mansion of the then Venerable Chief (General J. C. Smith), 65, Sibley-street, Chicago, the circular being adopted from the form of Summons issued by the extinct "Grand Lodge of all England" held at York (England), and has since been continued, only in many varieties of antique-looking paper and styles.

The place of meeting was facetiously described on the invitation circulars as "SMITH'S INN." Not a few of the guests, from time to time, when they arrived to meet hundreds of members and ladies assembled, were surprised to find it was Bro. Smith's own Happy Home they were privileged to visit, and that their Hostess was his beloved wife, whose hospitality, grace, and dignity brighten the memories of her life long subjects.

The printed Transactions of this Association make quite a little library, and are of considerable interest and value, owing to the Venerable Chief having been such a traveller, and able to so graphically describe so many of the sights he has witnessed, as well as enumerate the grand functions he has attended in most of the countries of the world, the troop of friends he has made also coming in for their share of fraternal attention.



"SMITH'S INN."

There are now ten parts published, commencing with the first issued in 1887, of only 12 pages to the last for 1896, those from the 7th Report being bulky volumes and most lavishly illustrated. There was no Report for 1889 published.

The annual gathering in "Smith's Inn" is one of the Masonic events of the year. "Brothers and Dames from the four quarters of the globe, from almost every nation, and nearly every State of our own God-given country, have congregated here and mingled as one happy family, knowing no nation and no creed," as General Smith stated in his address at the 11th Assembly. There are hundreds of members, and many honorary members, distinguished as Craftsmen in their own Grand Lodges, who are proud to be thus connected with such a very pleasant Masonic Organisation. The roll of the latter begins with H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, M.W. Grand Master of England, who not only accepted the compliment of honorary membership in 1893, but subsequently sent his portrait to the General (having the autograph of H.R.H.), and also a most happily-expressed letter of thanks.

The Roll of honorary membership for 1896 lacks several names unfortunately, through the regretted illness of the beloved Chief, and his inability to look after the proofs, but these will be duly inserted in the Register for 1897, and I hope soon to have a complete list for publication in the *Freemason*. I had the honour of being elected October 23rd, 1889.

One special feature of these handsome Reports is the number of letters printed from active and honorary members, unable to participate in the meetings, from all parts and in various languages, so that the volumes are of considerable importance in many ways.



I must not stay to mention the other Associations that have been formed of late years, save to note the one for Brooklyn, also to mention that New York Veterans celebrated their "silver anniversary," January 25th, 1877; the invitation which came to me having to be declined until the bridge is made across the "tiny stream." Their badge is both artistic and appropriate. (Page 7).

Another Masonic Veteran Association must be mentioned, viz., that for Minnesota, organised June 23rd, 1892, over which Dr. George Reuben Metcalf has presided from then to now.



The published proceedings of this body are of general interest, and contain many important addresses, not the least being the one delivered by the esteemed President at the Session of 1894, with a full and accurate account of all the Associations formed to date, which I have found most useful in the preparation of this paper, in fact, could not have written it without my friend's aid. Dr. Metcalf may well be entitled the historian of the movement, and is in close touch with all the Associations wherever located. The 5th Annual Report exhibits a list of 224 active and 26 honorary members, and mentions most kindly "the organisation of a

Veteran Association at Newcastle-on-Tyne, as an institution of purely an American origin gaining a foothold on English soil." The badge is distinctly Masonic and most suggestive.

There is also a "National Association" of the Veterans of America for all the Societies at work in the several States, but whether such an institution is needed remains to be seen, each Grand Lodge being well able to look after its own organisations.

The formation of the National "Masonic Veterans Association" for this country, is an accomplished fact; the first Annual General Meeting having been held at Newcastle-on-Tyne, 21st March, 1896. The Society, however, had a prior existence as a local Institution. The Grand Committee includes several of us who are members of similar Associations in the United States, such as Bros. R. S. Brown (Edinburgh), Dr. W. J. Chetwode Crawley (Dublin), Dr. George Dickson (Edinburgh), Wm. James Hughan (Torquay), George Kenning (London), Edward Letchworth (London), D. Murray Lyon (Edinburgh), Charles F. Matier (London), Captain N. G. Philips (London), Henry Sadler (London), Fr. J. Schnitger (Newcastle-on-Tyne, the acting Secretary), George W. Speth (Bromley), S. Stacker Williams (Newark, Ohio, U.S.A.), and Thomas B. Whytehead (York).

The qualifications for members are 21 years, as a Master Mason, and an Installed Master of a regular Lodge. Associates may be elected who have the first, but lack the second of these qualifications, but in either case only brethren will be accepted "of standing, and who have shown their permanent interest in the Craft." The head-quarters for the time are at the Central Masonic Hall, Newcastle-on-Tyne. Venerable brethren are being appointed to act as Secretaries in their provinces, and the Society bids fair to be successful as it becomes more widely known and understood, as one of the most useful and happy organisations of this century. The Members' and Associates jewels, it will be seen by the accompanying illustrations, are of



choice designs. The life subscription is one guinea, and special certificates are issued on vellum or imitation parchment as

desired. The international character of these Institutions cannot fail to be of advantage, and aid in promoting the feeling of Brotherhood between members of all Nationalities.

W. J. HUGHAN.



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