

The Grand East of Ulster

by

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Published in "The Freemason", 21st December, 1892, pages 11- 15

Having for several years past been actively engaged in collecting materials for a Historical Sketch of the Masonic Order in Ireland, my attention has frequently been directed to the extraordinary difficulty experienced in procuring evidence with reference to events of comparatively recent occurrence, and in no instance has this truth been more fully verified than in my enquiries concerning the history of the Grand Lodge of Ulster - a fact rendered the more remarkable when I state that I am myself resident in Ulster, and that my Ulster brethren have almost invariably accorded it willing and ready response *to* my oft-repeated applications for information on this and other points connected with the history of the Older.

The formation of this Grand Lodge, sometimes styled the Grand East of Ulster, was no less important an event than an actual revolt from the properly-constituted authority, "The Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Ireland," and *yet* Masonic writers seem to be practically ignorant of the fact that such a Grand Lodge ever existed, and amongst Ulster Freemasons of the present day one seldom meets with a brother who has ever heard of such an event. Bro. Gould, in his comprehensive "History of Freemasonry," does not, so far as I can ascertain, even once refer to the history of this body, and I think I am therefore, correct in arriving at the conclusion that this exceedingly painstaking and accurate writer must have been ignorant of its existence. Millikiu, writing in 1848, after referring to the termination of the conflict between the Minister brethren and the Grand Lodge of Ireland, alludes to it in the following words:- "Thus was Masonry placed on a lasting foundation in Ireland, with but a trilling intermission, occasioned by an attempt to erect a Grand Lodge in the North, under the name of *the* Grand Dust of Ulster. But, as error cannot remain long undetected, some of the leaders in this revolt saw, with contrition, the ill-tendency of their proceedings, submitted to the Grand Lodge, and were again received within the legitimate pale of Masonry."

With a view, therefore, to elicit further information on this most interesting and important subject, permit me to lay before your readers some of the facts which have come to my knowledge.

The office of Deputy Grand Secretary had, prior to his death in the month of January, 1801, been held by Bro, Thomas Corker, who for a considerable length of time before that event had been in a delicate state of health. To this office the then Grand Secretary, Bro. George Darcy Irvine, appointed Bro. Alexander Seton, Barrister-at-Law, who, immediately after his appointment, is stated to have proceeded to the house of his predecessor, and, having obtained admission to his office, carried off "a hackney coach full of books, documents, and other articles, the property of Grand Lodge, of which he failed to make a return to the Grand Lodge, and of which he was subsequently accused of having converted to his own use. In the month of May 1805, on his promotion to the office of Junior Grand Warden, Bro. G.D. Irvine resigned the Grand Secretaryship, and was succeeded in that office by Bro. John Leech, who continued Seton in the office of Deputy Grand Secretary. Up till the month of May, 1806, Bro. Seton continued in office, when, owing to the unsatisfactory manner in which his duties were performed, Seton was dismissed from office, and ultimately, on the 10th of February, 1808, Leech instituted a Chancery suit against Seton, before the Right Hon. Thomas Lord Baron Manners, Lord High Chancellor of Ireland, of which the following is a carefully-prepared abstract, the details of which have served to throw a vivid ray of light on the causes leading to this result:-

" On 10th February, 1808, John Leech, of the City of Dublin, Esq., Grand Secretary of the Friendly and Charitable Society known by the name of Freemasons, filed a Bill of Complaint or Petition in the High Court of Chancery in Ireland, and thereby, after setting out the nature and constitution of the Society, its Officers, Lodges, &c, averred, amongst other things, that Alexander Seton, Barrister-at-Law, the then Grand Secretary's Clerk, upon the death of the former Clerk in January, 1801, and immediately after being appointed to said office by the former Grand Secretary, possessed himself of the books, muniments, and papers of the said Society, and never returned or made an account thereof to Petitioner or his predecessor in office, George Darcy Irvine.

" That on Petitioners appointment as Grand Secretary, in May, 1805, he appointed said Alexander Seton as his Clerk or Deputy, and continued him in said situation until 8th May, 1801, when Petitioner dismissed him from said office.

" That, at the time of his dismissal, the said Alexander Seton had in his hands moneys, to the amount of: £300, or some other considerable sum, which he had received on account of Warrants issued and contributions paid, and had failed to pay over to

Petitioner as his principal, to be by Petitioner paid into the funds of the Society.

" That said Alexander Seton, having been appointed by Petitioner to said situation, the emoluments of which were considerable, should have evinced in its conduct both gratitude and obedience to Petitioner, and fidelity to the Grand Officers and Lodge; but, on the contrary, had wholly omitted to hold any communication with Petitioner or the officers of the Grand Lodge, and had entered into a confederacy against Petitioner, and Had endeavored to prevent his election as Grand Secretary.

" That said Alexander Seton had instigated and directed various turbulent, irregular, and disorderly proceedings amongst the members of the said Society, with a view to securing for himself an estate for life, as he termed it, in the perquisites and emoluments of his office.

" That, on Seton's dismissal, Petitioner demanded said books and muniments from him, but he peremptorily refused to deliver up same, and continued to act as Grand Secretary's Clerk, and to receive the fees of said office, contrary to the will, and in defiance of Petitioner, and in opposition to the Grand Lodge.

" That Seton, in consequence of his misconduct, had been on the 2nd April, 1807, unanimously expelled by the Grand Lodge from the Grand Lodge, and from the Society.

" That, pursuant to the Rules and Regulations of the Society, the Deputy Grand Master called on Seton for said books, and commanded him to attend therewith, which he had refused to do, and paid no attention to said commands or application.

" That, pursuant to the said Rules, a regularly appointed Committee of the Grand Lodge called on Seton to deliver over the Books to Petitioner, but he refused to give them up, alleging there was money due to him on them, which the Committee offered to pay, but he still refused.

" That every amicable method that could be possibly resorted to was taken to induce Seton to give up the Books, and come to an account with Petitioner, but without effect.

" That Petitioner, although he had an absolute right to said Books and Muniments, was ready and willing, and thereby offered to pay *Seton any sum* which might appear on a fair account to be due him, but that the allegation of any sum being due him was a mere colorable pretence for keeping the Books, &c, and to avoid coming to an account: and Petitioner charged that Seton had received various sums on account of the various Charitable Funds of the Order, and of Petitioner, to the amount of £100 and upwards, for which he had not accounted, although bound to do so with Petitioner.

" That the principal Book withheld by Seton was the Register, in - which the Lodges in the Kingdom were ranged in numerical order, and in which, under their respective numbers, the names of all the Lodges in Ireland were entered; and for every person's name so entered a fee of 2s. 83d. was payable to the Grand Secretary, and was usually given to his Clerk as a perquisite ; and a further sum of 2s. 2d. by every such person on obtaining a certificate; which sums, with a further sum, therein after mentioned, constituted the principal emolument of the Grand Secretary, or his Clerk, when the former chose to give them to the latter; and which sums could only be correctly estimated by the possession of the Register, &c., withheld by Seton.

" That said Register being very old, the Deputy Grand Master had authorised and directed Seton to have said Books copied, which had been done, and such copies, contained in seven volumes, were then in the possession of Seton.

"That Seton had also in his possession a Book, or Books, containing the Transactions of the Grand Lodge up to 3rd May, 1800, and also a Book, or Books, containing the Transactions of the Committee of Charity and Inspection for the same period, and a great number of cancelled or dormant Warrants, copperplate Certificate, and the Seal of the Grand Lodge; that same canto to his hands merely as Clerk, and that Seton, having been dismissed, had no just right- to withhold same from Petitioner.

" That Seton, ever since being dismissed, had continued to Register members, and grant Certificates to all Freemasons applying for same, for each of which he received 4s. 10id.; and had re-issued cancelled or dormant Warrants, for each of which he was paid £7 13s. 5d., though such Warrants ought to be absolutely null and invalid.

"That, under said Regulations, each Lodge was to pay 10s, 10d., yearly as Grand Lodge dues, in aid of the Charitable Fund, such contributions to be paid by City Lodges half-yearly, and by country Lodges before 25th March in each year, under certain penalties therein set out; that Seton, before and after his dismissal, had received, and continued to receive, from all such Lodges as he could prevail on to pay him said sums of £7 12s. 5½d. and 10s. 10d., all of which he had converted to his own use, and refused to account for, which sums amounted to £1000 and upwards.

"That Seton had not only done all in his power to injure the Society by receiving the contributions and converting them to his own use, but had, by every means in his power, endeavoured to destroy such sources of Charitable contribution, and had, in the previous May, attempted to prevent the performance of a Masonic play at the Theatre Royal, Crow-street, in aid of 'The Charitable Fund for the Relief of Distressed Freemasons by sending a menacing letter to the

Deputy Grand Master, and by threatening to advertise that such play was advertised without the authority of the Grand Master; that he was warranted in doing so from his communication with the Grand Master, which was untrue; that, having failed in (his attempt to injure the Charitable Fund, he, on the night of the performance, under pretence of installing a Warrant, revived or issued by himself, assembled all the military Freemasons in Dublin, and prevented their attendance at the Play, thereby injuring the Charity.

" That the Female Masonic Orphan School had been much injured and almost annihilated, by the malpractices and machinations of Seton; that said School was entitled on the granting of any new Warrant to £1 2s. 9d., and 2s 8½d. on registering or granting Certificates to Freemasons admitted in country Lodges from 27th December, 1802, which sums, amounting to £300 and upwards, Seton had received and retained.

" That, without the interposition of the Court in compelling Seton to account and hand over said Books. &c., not only the School must fall to the ground, and, the eighteen Orphans sheltered therein must be thrown unprotected on the world, but the general Charitable Fund must be exhausted.

" That the Charitable Funds of Said Society were so much reduced by Seton's misconduct that the Grand Lodge was scarcely able to dispense as many pounds as it formally did hundreds.

" Petitioner prayed, for the reasons shown, that. Seton might, upon oath, make, true, bill, plain, perfect, and distinct answer to the matters and charges thereinbefore set forth, and to the several interrogations thereinafter set out.

" That Seton might be bound to account for all sums received by him for the Charitable purposes of said Society, and to hand over to Petitioner whatever sum he might appear, on such account, to have received of the Charitable Fund; to set forth a true account of all the Books, &c., then in his possession; and to give up same to Petitioner, or deposit them with the proper Officer of the Court.

" That he might be restrained by injunction from, registering Freemasons, or granting Certificates, or using the Grand Seal, and from issuing, reviving, or restoring warrants to hold Lodges; that all proper and necessary accounts might be directed; that Seton should, before answering, inspect the letters, &c., in Petitioner's possession, endorse his name thereon, and say if same, or any of them, were written or signed by him, or if the originals of such as were copies were received by him.

" That Petitioner might have such farther relief as the nature of the case would admit, and to Justice and Equity should belong.

" And Petitioner prayed that the subpoenas, therein mentioned, directed to Seton, should be issued; and that a Writ of Injunction, directed to Seton *and his confederates*, should be granted, restraining him *and them* from reviving or restoring any Warrant to hold Lodges, and from demanding money on account thereof, or on account of the Charitable Funds of the Society.

"(Signed) by Daniel O'Connell, as
Junior Counsel for Plaintiff.
Abraham G. Hill, Solicitor for Plaintiff."

On 3rd March, 1809, defendant filed his answer, which was on 15th July, 1809, expunged for prolixity and impertinence, pursuant to order of 13th July, 1809.

On 18th November, 1809, the case was heard, and by all order or conditional decree of that date, it was ordered that Plaintiff's bill and all the matters and things therein contained should be taken as confessed against Seton; that it should be referred to one of the Masters to take an account of the moneys received by him for the Charitable purposes of said Society, and on account of the Plaintiff as Grand Secretary, and that he should hand overall such moneys to the Plaintiff; that Seton should account, on oath, for all books, &c., in his possession, or of any person for him, which came to his possession, since being appointed Clerk; that Seton should lodge all such books, &c., in the Bank of Ireland; that he should be restrained from registering any persons as Freemasons, and from giving certificates thereof; and from making or reviving any warrants; and that Plaintiff" might make up and enroll a decree, with costs, against Seton, unless good cause he shown in the then next Hilary Term; but that before Seton should he permitted to show cause, he should purge his contempt and pay Plaintiff his costs out of pocket.

" On 15th December, 1810, Seton filed his first further Answer.

" By an Order of 5th February, 1810, it was ordered that it be referred to William Henn, one of the Masters of said Court; to inspect the Plaintiff's Bill, the Defendant's further Answer and the exceptions thereto; and to certify whether said Answer was short and insufficient in the points excepted to, or not, And, by a Certificate dated 10th February, 1810, said Master certified that Defendant's further Answer was short and insufficient in all the points excepted to by Plaintiff.

" On 12th February, 1810, Defendant filed his second further Answer.

" By Certificate, dated 14th June, 1810, the said Master certified, pursuant, to Order of 6th June, 1810, that Defendant's second further

Answer was short and insufficient in all the points excepted to by the Plaintiff.

" On 19th July, 1810, Defendant tiled his third further Answer.

By Certificate, dated 12th December, 1810, the said Master certified, pursuant to Order of 23rd November, 1810, that Defendants third further Answer was short and insufficient in the 11th and 5th exceptions taken thereto, and full and sufficient in the 6th exception taken thereto.

"On 24th December, 1810, Defendant filed his fourth further Answer.

" By an Order, dated 11th March, 1813, it was ordered that said Conditional Order should be renewed to the then next Easter Term.

" By an Order, dated 8th May, 1813, it was ordered that Service of said Decree, order to renew, and subpoena to show cause, on Thomas Spanner, Defendant's six Cleric should bo deemed good service thereof on the Defendant.

"The said Thomas Spanner having been so served, and no cause having been shown, it was, by order dated 13th May, 1813, ordered that said Cause should be set down in the list of Causes to be heard, upon such Conditional Decree or Order, to have service made absolute against the Defendant.

"The said Cause was heard on 31st May, 1813, by the Right Hon. the Master of the Rolls; and, by an Order or Decree of that date, after reciting the said Conditional Decree, and the Orders of 9th March, 1813, 8th May, 1813, and 13th May, 1813, it was ordered, adjudged, and decreed by the Master of the Rolls that the said Conditional Decree be, and the same was thereby made absolute against the Defendant; and that it be referred to Edward Westby, Esq., one of the Masters of the Court, to take an account of the moneys received by the Defendant for the Charitable purposes of said Society, and on account of the Plaintiff as Grand Secretary of said Society; and that Defendant hand over such sums of money to the Plaintiff; and that Defendant account before the said Master, on oath, for all Books, Papers, and Muniments of the said Society, in his possession, or in trust of any person for him, or which came to his power, possession, or custody, since he was appointed Clerk to the Grand Secretary: and that he deposit same in the Bank of Ireland to the credit of the Cause; and that Defendant be restrained from registering any persons as Freemasons, and from giving Certificates thereof; and from making any use of the Grand Lodge Seal; and from restoring or reviving any Warrants to hold Lodges - with power to said Master to examine witnesses - and that, upon the return of the Report, such further Order would be made as would be fit.

(Signed by) Daniel O'Connell,

(Presumably as Junior Counsel
for Plaintiff) on 24th July, 1813."

I entered minutely into the circumstances attending the appointment of Bro. Alexander Seton as Deputy Grand Secretary, his subsequent dismissal from office, and the various stages of the protracted legal proceedings instituted against him by Bro. John Leech, Grand Secretary.

In a paper, read by me a few years ago before the Provincial Grand Lodge of Down, I endeavoured to establish the fact that, in old times, the higher Masonic Degrees were habitually conferred in Ireland under no other authority than that of a Craft Warrant, and that the fourth decade of the present century was well advanced before they were finally placed under the control of a properly constituted central authority. I find, however, that, so early as the year 1805, efforts were made to effect an improvement in this respect. What may have been the exact scheme proposed I am not at present aware; but that the "Extraordinary Dues demanded for defraying the Expenses of these new and complex Systems" were, in certain quarters, strenuously opposed there can be no doubt; for, on the 20th of January of that year, I find that, at a meeting of sixty-two Lodges held in Belfast, the following Resolutions were unanimously adopted, and ordered to be transmitted to the Grand Lodge of Ireland:-

" 1st. That it appears to us that the Innovations lately proposed to be placed on the higher Masonic Orders, are unnecessary, inasmuch as these Orders have hitherto enjoyed uninterrupted Tranquility without any ostensible Head or controlling Power.

" 2nd. That we pledge ourselves to one another, and to all K.T.'s and Royal Arch Masons in the Kingdom, that we never will acknowledge such Innovations, considering them of so dangerous a nature, as may, if persisted in, dissolve that good understanding which has hitherto subsisted between the Rt. Worshipful the G.L and Country Lodges.

" 3rd. That we think it a Duty incumbent on us, earnestly to recommend to the Right Worshipful the G.L. that, instead of new, chimerical, and complex systems of finance, they will be pleased to restore the Original Regulations which have formerly produced general satisfaction.

I also find the same meeting complaining of "Dissensions and Contests about Places of Power and Emolument" in the Grand Lodge, and of the unsatisfactory financial working thereof, all of which, in the opinion of the meeting in question, demanded the serious consideration and attention of its rulers, with a view to their discontinuance and improvement.

At a meeting of thirty-two Lodges held in the following month at Dromore, the Freemasons of Down "highly approved" of the Belfast resolutions, and expressed their determination to "abide by them" - a resolution also adopted by twenty-five Lodges meeting at Ballymoney, Co. Antrim, in the following April. Further resolutions adopted at those meetings clearly establish the fact that the treatment extended by the Grand Lodge of Ireland to Gorges Darcy Irvine, late Grand Secretary, and to his Deputy, Alexander Seton, met the disapproval and incurred the resentment of the Northern Brethren; nor can I avoid arriving at the conclusion that these feelings were to a large extent fomented, if not absolutely instigated, by these two Brethren themselves. Be that as it may, there can be no doubt of the fact - that a strong feeling of dissatisfaction as to the action and management of the Grand Lodge of Ireland existed in the North of Ireland at this particular time, and that the Grand Master himself had been warned that "the Masonic Constitution in Ireland was endangered" thereby.

On the 6th May, 1806, Bro. Seton was dismissed from the office of Deputy Grand Secretary by Bro. Leech, who had succeeded Bro. G. D. Irvine as Grand Secretary. The actual schism appears, however, to have taken place at a meeting of the Grand Lodge, held on the 5th of the following month, to which we find the following reference:- "For some time past, a riotous and turbulent Faction has existed amongst the Fraternity in Ireland, but which more particularly manifested itself on the 5th of June, 1806, when a Number of Persons, at that Time unknown to the Grand Lodge, though claiming to be Freemasons from the North of that Kingdom, did assemble and obtrude themselves into the Grand Lodge, and there attempted, by force of Numbers alone, to pass certain resolutions subversive of the true Principles and Usages of Masonry, and the said Persons, after the Grand Lodge had been duly closed by the Deputy Grand Master and Grand Wardens, at a late Hour, and after the Grand Officers and most of the Representatives of the Dublin Lodges had retired, did affect to re-open the Grand Lodge, to rescind several of its solemn and deliberate Acts, to remove from their Situations two of the most respectable and zealous Officers of the Grand Lodge, and to substitute other Persons in their Places, contrary to the established Laws and Usages of the Craft: and it appears that Alexander Seton, late Deputy Grand Secretary, appears to have been at the Head of, and acting, aiding, and assisting in said illegal Faction. "A strange continuation, of the deliberate manner in which this raid was planned, is furnished by the old Minute Book of Lodge No. 386 Lettermoney, Co. Fermanagh, which now lies before me. Bro. G. D. Irvine was W.M. of this Lodge 1798-1801, and in the year 1806 I find the following entry :- "By cash paid part of the subscription money collected from the different Lodges in the County Fermanagh to defray the Expenses of the Delegates that went to Dublin, 16s. 3d."

The two Brethren here referred to, as having been "removed from their situations" were Bro. John Boardman, Grand Treasurer, and John Leech, Grand Secretary. On the 2nd of April, 1807, the Grand Lodge of Ireland expelled Bro. Seton from the Grand Lodge and from the Masonry in general, and cautioned the Order against receiving any Certificates signed by him, as his authority to issue such Certificates had ceased on the date of his dismissal by Bro. Leech.

The immediate outcome of this contention appears to have been the establishment of a second Grand Lodge in Dublin, composed of Seton's adherents, of which Bro. Gorges Darcy Irvine was Grand Secretary and Seton himself Deputy Grand Secretary. Seton and his party, for a time at least, appear to have retained possession of the premises in which the Grand Lodge was accustomed to meet, and, by observing the same stated time for its meetings, forced the Grand Lodge to meet temporarily in William Street. Possessed of the books and property of Grand Lodge, retained by Seton after his dismissal, and emboldened by the maxim that "possession is nine points of the law" the assurance of the party in revolt knew no bounds. They issued a circular to "all the regular lodges in Ireland," a copy of which is now before me, in which - ill virtue of their time and place of meeting, and of their possession of the Books, Documents, Certificate-plates, and Seal of the Grand Lodge—they arrogated to themselves the title of "THE Grand Lodge of Ireland," and referred to the Certificates and Seal of the actual Grand Lodge as counterfeit and forged: and they reminded the members of the Order that "Brother A. Seton is alone qualified" to receive annual dues. They further announce, evidently as a solace to their Northern Brethren, "that all transactions which respect Red or Black Masonry have been expunged from the books of the Grand Lodge"; and they "order a General Convocation of the representatives of the Order, to be held on Thursday, the 12th day of November, 1807, at the Grand Lodge-Room, Taylor's Hall, Back Lane." Whether this Convocation was ever held I am at a loss to know; but, on the 7th of April, 1808, we find the Grand Lodge proper in occupation of its old premises; and, actuated by motives of conciliation, the Grand Master himself, the Earl of Donoughmore - seeing that "all the muniments of the Order had been produced and delivered over to his Lordship's custody, as the head of the Order" - moved a resolution restoring Bro. Seton to Masonic standing. In this act of leniency he was seconded by Bro. John Williams, "who avowed himself the mover of Bro. Seton's expulsion," and the same was adopted without a dissenting voice. So far, however, from securing Seton's allegiance to Grand Lodge, we find that Brother engaged in litigation with Bro. W. F. Graham, his successor in the office of Deputy Grand Secretary. An action against Graham for defamation of character and libel, damages being held at £2000, was brought by Seton at the Assizes for the County of Tyrone, held at Omagh, before the Right Hon. Judge Daly, The libels

complained of were the publication of Bro. Seton's expulsion from the Order, and the caution given to its members against receiving his Certificates. The result was a verdict the Defendant, with 6d. costs, thereby securing to Grand Lodge the right of publishing the expulsion of its members. From this decision Seton appealed to the Court of Common Pleas in Dublin, when Lord Norbury, Judge Fox, and Mr. Justice Fletcher confirmed the decision of the Court below. The reasons which influenced Seton in the selection of Tyrone, as the venue for his action, will immediately appear.

Finding that their cause was not supported as they had anticipated, but nevertheless determined in their opposition to constituted authority, we next find the revolting party shifting their quarters from Dublin to Dungannon, in the County Tyrone, where, for the first time, we find them assuming the less pretentious title of Grand Lodge of Ulster. From this centre we find the following circular issued, the contents of which are of such importance that I feel bound to give them " in extenso: "-

" Pursuant to a requisition, signed William Irvine, Grand Master of Ulster, by whom a meeting was called for the purpose of vindicating the rights, and for establishing the future meetings of this Grand Lodge, at such times and places as should be then and there agreed on, and for the regulation of such other Masonic business as should be deemed necessary for the preservation of the ancient and general principles of Masonry in Ireland. A meeting was held at Dungannon, on Monday, the 6th June, 1808, at which 311 Lodges were represented, when

" Bro. William Richardson, Esq., in the absence of the Grand Master of Ulster, was unanimously called to the chair; Bro. William Bateman, Esq., Senior Grand Warden; Bro. John Taylor, Esq., Junior Grand Warden ; Bro. Alexander Saunderson, Esq., Secretary.

" It was unanimously Resolved - 'That a Committee, consisting of a Chairman and two Representatives from each County, be formed, to report their opinion on the best mode of accomplishing the object of this meeting.

" The Committee having made its report the following Resolutions were severally agreed to:-

" 'That a Grand Lodge be forthwith formed in the Province of Ulster, and that the said Grand Lodge will not be governed by the Grand Lodge held in Dublin; the conduct of the said Grand Lodge having been entirely repugnant to the opinion of the brethren of this province.'

'That if the Grand Lodge in Dublin shall, at any fixture period, make such concessions to us, with respect to the election of officers and those other points on which we hold a different opinion, as shall be

reasonable and satisfactory, the door of reconciliation shall be opened, and we will be happy again to meet our Brethren of Dublin.

' That a fund be forthwith formed for the relief of indigent Brethren and the support of an Orphan School in this Province, and that the fund so formed shall be expended on these purposes by a Committee of thirty members, appointed by the country Lodges, which Committee shall meet once in each month.

' That, for the formation of such fund, all dues and arrears of dues, &c., shall be paid on or before the 6th day of July next, into the hands of the Treasurer to be this day appointed.

' That the different Lodges of Ireland, not present at this meeting, be, and are hereby requested to accede to these our resolutions, and to assist us in the accomplishment of the above objects.

' That we will not hold Masonic communication with any Lodge in the Province of Ulster which shall not accede to these our resolutions.

' That the town of Dungannon is a fit and proper place to hold the meetings of the Grand Lodge.

' That said Grant] Lodge shall hold Quarterly Communications, the first to be on the first Wednesday in July next.

' The under-mentioned persons were unanimously elected Grand Officers for this present year, viz:- Bro. Colonel William Irvine, Grand Master; Bro. the Hon. John B. O'Neill, Senior Grand Warden ; Bro. the Right Hon. Archibald Earl Gosford, Junior Grand Warden; Bro. Gorges D'Arcy-Irvine, Esq., Grand Secretary; Bro. William Brownlow, Esq., Grand Treasurer.

' That the thanks of this Grand Lodge be presented to our worthy and revered Brother Colonel William Irvine, for his promptitude in calling this meeting.

' That the warmest thanks of this Grand Lodge be, and are hereby presented to, our much esteemed Brother, Gorges D'Arcy Irvine, Esq., for his uniform, persevering, and spirited conduct, in defending the rights of the Order.

' That the warmest thanks of this Grand Lodge be, and are hereby presented to, Brother Alexander Seton, Esq., for his uniform, persevering, and spirited conduct, in defending the rights of the Order, and we strongly recommend him to the Grand Secretary to be continued in the office of Deputy Grand Secretary.

" That we entirely approve, and hereby return, our thanks to thorg brethren who attended the Grand Lodge in Dublin, on the 5th of May last, for their very proper and spirited conduct in refusing to acknowledge as Treasurer an individual who had previously been disqualified to hold any situation in the Order.

'That the proceedings of this Grand Lodge be published, and circulated to all the lodges in Ireland, and that Bro, William Canning, of Dungannon, be appointed Printer to this Grand Lodge.

" Bro. Richardson having left the chair, and Bro. the Reverend Francis Burrows been called thereto, it was unanimously resolved:-

' That the thanks of this Grand Lodge be presented to Bro. Richardson, for his proper conduct in the chair.'

"Signed by order,

"A. Sanderson, Secretary."

The next reference to the transactions of the lodge with which I am acquainted is dated 6th December, 1800, when, in pursuance of the summons of the R.W. and Rt. Hon. the Earl of Belmore, Grand Master, a meeting was held in Dungannon, the Rt. Hon. A. Thomas Lord Blayney, Senior Grand Warden, being in the chair, when the Grand Officers were installed, Bro. Seton, Deputy Grand Secretary, submitted a statement of accounts, and a vote of thanks was passed to him "for his proper and spirited conduct, evinced on al occasions, in support of the interests of this Grand Lodge, and of the true principles of Free Masonry.

On the 27th of December, 1809, we find a circular issued by Bro. G. D. Irvine, in his capacity as Grand Secretary, in which he "congratulates the brethren on the growing prosperity of their establishment," and then proceeds to accuse the Grand Lodge of Ireland with having expended in litigation a sum of "£500, vested in Government Debentures, which sum had been collected from the Brethren, for Charitable Purposes" This is followed, in the course of a few days, by a similar circular from his Deputy, Bro. Seton, composed chiefly of a recriminatory attack on those opposed to him.

A Quarterly Communication of the Lodge was held in March, 1810, presided over by Bro. William Richardson, an eminent Mason, who for many years had occupied the distinguished position of President of the "County Tyrone Masonic Committee." The chief business recorded is the adoption of a number of resolutions antagonistic to the Grand Lodge of Ireland, in which that body is satirically referred to as "A Right Worshipful Grand Lodge held in Dublin;" a brother was expelled from the Order; and a Warrant was cancelled, with the consequent exclusion of its members.

Four weeks subsequently Bro. Seton addresses another of his diatribes to the members of the Order, amply abounding in self-laudation and lavish abuse of his opponents.

The circular containing the transactions of the next Stated Communication, held at Dungannon on the 6th of June, 1810, gives us

a list of the Grand Officers at that time, viz.:- Somerset, Earl of Belmore, Grand Master; Sir G. F. Hill, Senior Warden; Lord Blayney, Junior Warden; G. D. Irvine, Secretary; William Brownlow, Treasurer; Alex. Seton, Deputy Grand Secretary; Robert Mitchell, Tyler; Henry McLaughlin, Pursuivant. Reference is made to a statement, emanating from the Grand Lodge of Ireland, to the effect that the Grand East of Ulster "would not be acknowledged in any part of the world;" but we have it here asserted that "the Warrants and Certificates issued under the authority of the Grand Lodge of Ulster are received with all Masonic honours by the brethren of England, Scotland, and America." The further transactions of this meeting testify to the bitter feeling existing between the members of the Order in Dublin and those who acknowledged the supremacy of the Grand East of Ulster. A list is given of brethren excluded from the Order for periods ranging from twenty-one years to twelve months; and then follows a lengthy communication from Seton, in which, referring to the Grand Lodge of Cork as doing "all the acts within the power of a Grand Lodge," he claims for *the* Grand East of Ulster a similar privilege. The remainder of his letter is a coarse and ribald exhibition of personal feeling against the members of the Grand Lodge of Ireland, in which he charges the Grand Master with having squandered the Charitable Funds of the Order in idle litigation; with having "formulated dissensions, for the sole purpose of subjecting the Order of Free Masonry in Ireland, in all its branches, to his absolute control, to be converted into a tool of family aggrandizement;" and with having, "at the end of twenty-one years, forced the Order to the verge of pecuniary and Masonic ruin." At the same time he endeavours to justify his own conduct in the legal contest in which he was engaged with the authorities in Dublin.

The next stated communication of the Lodge was held at Dungannon on the 5th of September, 1810, Bro. G. D. Irvine, Grand Secretary, in the chair, at which an address was adopted for presentation "to his Grace the Duke of Richmond, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland," as a brother; "expressing the unshaken loyalty of the brethren of Ulster, and their implicit confidence in his Grace's Government." A copy of the address, with his Grace's reply, is given, as is also a copy of a resolution thanking Bro. G. D. Irvine "for his zeal and unremitting attention to the interests of Masonry, and the support of the Independence of this R.W.G. Lodge." The same circular gives a short account of a stated communication, held, presumably at Dungannon, on the 5th of December, 1810, the principal business of which was the suspension of two lodges for improper conduct, and the adoption of a resolution thanking "our worthy Bro. John Maginn, Esq., P.G. Sec. of Munster, for his attachment to the interests, and his zeal in promoting, as far as in him lay, the general advantage of Free Masonry." Then follows another abusive letter from Seton - the length of whose epistles must have been a source of considerable

satisfaction to Bro. William Canning, "Printer to the Grand Lodge" - and the document concludes with an account of "A meeting of the Masters of fifty-two Lodges, convened on the 20th day of August, 1810, at Glenavy, Co. Antrim, for the purpose of taking into consideration the line of conduct most advantageous and honourable to adopt in the present melancholy and extraordinary situation to which Masonry in Ireland is reduced." Thirteen resolutions were adopted at this meeting, one of which I quote in full: "9th. That the principles on which the Grand Lodge of Ulster has been established appear to this meeting to be the genuine, ancient, and unchangeable basis on which Masonry was originally founded; and we conceive it the imperious duty of every Mason in this province to attend, support, obey, and hail the same as the true and legitimate Grand Lodge, fully competent to protect and hand down the Craft, in its original purity, to the latest posterity." In these resolutions reference is made to a meeting of The Belfast District Committee, held on the 4th of June, 1810, clearly indicating that that body was composed of Brethren determined to support the authority of the Grand East of Ulster in opposition to the Grand Lodge of Ireland." Another resolution points to the fact that " some few credulous and misguided Lodges " had already submitted to the authority of the Grand Lodge of Ireland. It is also announced that the next meeting of the Grand Lodge would be held on the 5th of March, 1811, but where that meeting was held, or whether it was ever held at all, I am not aware. When we find, however, that we have no record of this meeting, and that revolutionary tactics were being carried on with renewed vigour on fresh ground, we are the less surprised to learn that the leaders deemed it advisable to shift the headquarters of the revolt from Dungannon. In accordance with this determination we find that a meeting of the Grand East of Ulster was held in the town of Belfast on the 18th of September, 1811, in connection with which the following list of Grand Officers is given:- James Craig, Esq., M.P., Grand Master; John Shaw, Esq., Deputy Grand Master; the Bt. Hon. A. T. Blayney, Senior Grand Warden; Sir G. Hill, Bart., Junior Grand Warden ; George D'Arcy Irvine, Grand Secretary; the Rev. Francis Burrows, Grand Chaplain; A. Seton, Esq., Deputy Grand Secretary; and William Brownlow, Esq., M.P., Treasurer. The chief business transacted at Ibis meeting was the formation of a "Master's Lodge," similar in composition and function to the present "Board of General Purposes," the result of whose deliberations was to be reported to the Grand Lodge at each Quarterly Communication. It is also announced by "Wm. Berriman, Secretary to the Master's Lodge, "that "the next meeting of the Grand Lodge of Ulster will be held at the Donegall Arms, Belfast, on Wednesday, the 4th day of December, 1811, at High Meridian." Appended to the yearly abstract published by the Grand Lodge of Ireland for the year 1811, we find that body adopting a conciliatory spirit in relation to the revolting party, and

we read a statement to the effect that "in numberless instances this forbearance has succeeded," but that even mercy having its limits, they were "firmly resolved to SUSPEND or CANCEL all lodges, and expel all Masons persisting in rebellions defiance to its LEGITIMATE and UNQUESTIONABLE AUTHORITY." They also caution the members of the Order against recognising the PRETENDED warrants and spurious certificates issued by the party in revolt, reminding them that none are genuine excepting those signed by their own properly authorised officers. Appended to the abstract in question we find two letters, one from Lord Blayney, and the other from Sir G. F. Hill, Bart., repudiating in the strongest possible terms their countenance of the Grand East of Ulster, the former stating that in attending its meetings he had been misled by the misrepresentation "that the lodge assembled in Dungannon was by permission of the Grand Lodge, and under their direction and control, for the accommodation of the Province of Ulster," and the latter assuring Grand Lodge that he had never authorised the use of his name, nor had he attended a Masonic lodge since the year 1798. In the same paper we find that Somerset, Earl of Belmore, was Junior Grand Warden of the Grand Lodge of Ireland for the year 1811. Thus, at one full swoop, we find a G.M., a S.G.W., and a J.G.W. of the Grand East of Ulster, repudiating their connection with the revolt!

The next item of intelligence is dated 2nd December, 1812, when at a meeting of "The Grand Lodge of Ulster," held in Belfast, "James Craig, Esq., on the Throne," it was resolved to establish a 'Masonic Orphan Asylum' in Belfast, and a Committee was appointed to draw up a code of rules for its management.

A communication of the Grand Lodge was advertised to be held at the Donegall Arms, Belfast, on the 3rd of August, 1813, at which the collectors of the fund for the erection of the Masonic Orphan Asylum were requested to report progress.

A similar meeting was summoned for the same place on the 3rd of June following, and it was announced that "The Most Noble the Marquis of Donegall had given a grant of a lot of ground for the erection of the Masonic Orphan Asylum," plans for the building of which had been prepared, and estimates for the building were invited.

I have been unable to discover any record of the lodge subsequent to this date, and I am inclined to the belief that the legal decision of the Court, pronounced in July, 1813, finally terminated its existence.

But by far the most interesting relic of this revolt, with which I am yet acquainted, is a "List of Lodges on the Roll of the Grand East of Ireland, from 27th December, 1800, up till 6th December, 1809," with a copy of which I have been furnished by a highly esteemed brother - himself an ardent Masonic archaeologist. The list in question

comprises 157 lodges, a careful analysis of which is extremely interesting and important, as tending to exhibit, the astute generalship of our worthy Bro. Seton in collecting and marshalling his revolutionary forces. In a "List of Lodges Erased from the Books of the Grand Lodge of Ireland, ordered to be printed on the 5th of November, 1801," and signed ".A. Seton, D.G. Sea," we find reference made to no less than 169 lodges, the warrants of which were thereby cancelled. In the "List of Lodges on the Roll of the Grand East of Ulster," we find no less than 43 lodges mentioned in the "List of Erased Lodges " Nine of these cancelled warrants, having been either in Bro. Seton's own possession prior to his dismissal from the office of D.G. Sec; or his previous knowledge having enabled him readily to lay his hands upon them, were at once utilised for the purposes of the Revolt, whilst the remaining 34 were revived by the Grand East of Ulster. Eight other warrants were revived, which must have been cancelled at some other time, as they do not appear in the List of 1801, and fees were paid for such revivals, to the amount of £175 3s. 6d.; 14 now Warrants were issued, the fees for which amounted to £63 14s.; 90 Lodges, whose Warrants were in full force at the time, are given in the list, and may, therefore, be termed *disaffected*; whilst in two instances only, viz., in the case of Lodges 242 and 439, have I been unable *to* satisfy myself as to the nature of their connection with the movement. A farther analysis of the list of *disaffected* Lodges, shows 81 Lodges for the Ulster Counties, viz., Antrim 21, Down 18, Tyrone 17, Fermanagh 8, Armagh 7, Londonderry 4, Monaghan 3, Cavan 2, Donegal 1. And 9 Lodges for the remainder of Ireland, viz., Clare 2, Wexford 2, Longford 2, Tipperary 1, Galway 1, and Louth 1. Thus clearly establishing *the* fact that the revolt had its origin, and was almost entirely supported by Ulster Masons, the number of malcontents elsewhere being both few and far between.

Three different seals appear to have been in use at different times, copies of which are now reproduced. The first' seal is attached to a document emanating from Taylor's Hall, Back Lane, Dublin, dated 6th August, 1807; the second to a Dungannon document of the year 1809; and the third to a Belfast document of 1811,

The causes of this revolt appear to be of a twofold nature - the ostensible causes being abuses on the part of the Grand Lodge of Ireland in the selection of its officers, threatened interference on the part of that body in the working of the Higher Masonic Orders, and a system of finance both faulty and extravagant. But, whether the treatment extended to them was justifiable or not, to our mind the real cause is to be found in a determined feeling of resentful opposition to the properly constituted authorities of the order on the part of Bros. Irvine and Seton; who, in consequence of Bros. Irvine's undoubted popularity in the North, when they found it impossible to carry on the war in the enemy's camp, transferred the scene of their

operations to Ulster. That I am right in this conclusion will, I think, lie readily ceded on a candid and impartial consideration of the foregoing facts. The determination which characterised the commencement of hostilities in Dublin; the removal to the North ; the extraordinary apathy of the brethren in the South, East, and, West, on whom real grievances, had they existed, must have pressed with equal severity; the repudiation by three individuals, of exalted position and unblemished character, both in the Order, and in Society; and the fact that, out of the entire field, Irvine and Seton alone, are to be found in the race from start to finish; to my mind clearly establish the fact that motives of resentment on the part of these two brethren incited them to a course of action, their persistence in which might have been of more protracted duration, but for the intervention of the legal decision pronounced against them by the Master of the Rolls.

Permit me to add that these are all the facts with which I am Acquainted in tin's connection; that I trust their narration may tend to elicit further information on this most important and interesting event in the history of Irish freemasonry; and that I am most deeply grateful to the Editor of the Freemason for having so graciously opened his columns to my too protracted observations,

Francis C. Crossle, Newry, 18th November, 1892