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A LETTER FROM A FREEMASON

TO GENERAL H.R.H. ALBERT EDWARD,

PRINCE OF WALES,

*Duke of Saxony, Cornwall, and Rothesay ; Earl of Dublin, Colonel
10th Hussars, Colonel-in-Chief of the Rifle Brigade, Cap-
tain-General and Colonel of the Hon. Artillery
Company, K.G., G.C.S.I., K.T., G.C.B.,
K.P., etc., etc., etc.*

TO BR.: H.R.H. THE PRINCE OF WALES.

DEAR BR.:—I do not ask you to pardon this, to the profane, perhaps an apparently too familiar style of address, although I do pray pardon if I have unintentionally omitted many of your numerous titles in the formal superscription to this letter. I have never written before to a Prince, and may lack good manners in thus inditing; but to my brother Masons I have often written, and know they love best a plain, fraternal greeting, if the purpose of the epistle be honest.

You have voluntarily on your part, and unsought on my side, commenced by accepting me as a brother, and you have cemented this fraternity by specially swearing to protect me on appeal in my hour of danger; and though history teaches me that sworn promises are less well kept than steadfast, manly pledges, and that Princes' oaths are specially rotten reeds to lean upon; yet in the warmth of newly created brother, I am inclined to believe you brother—for we are brethren, you and I—not brothers perhaps as we should be of the same common humanity—for in this land I know that Princes are no fair mates for those who are pauper born; but we are brothers by your own choice, members of the same fraternity by your own joining; men self-associated in the same grand Masonic brotherhood, and it is for that reason I write you this letter. You, though now a Past Grand Master, are but recently a free and accepted Master

Mason, and probably yet know but little of the grand traditions of the mighty organisation whose temple doors have opened to your appeal. My knowledge of the mystic branch gained amongst the Republicans of all nations is of some years' older date. You are now, as a Freemason, excommunicate by the Pope—so am I. It is fair to hope that the curse of the Church of Rome may have a purifying and chastening effect on your future life, at least as efficacious as the blessing of the Church of England has had on your past career. You have entered into that illustrious fraternity which has numbered in its ranks Swedenborg, Voltaire, and Garibaldi. These are the three who personify grand Idealism and Poetic Madness; Wit and Genius, and true Humanity; manly Energy, sterling Honesty, and hearty Republicanism. My sponsor was Simon Bernard—yours, I hear, was the King of 'Sweden.

In writing, dear brother, I do not address you as a Prince of Wales, for some of our Princes of Wales have been drunken, riotous spendthrifts, covered in debt, and deep in dishonour; but you, dear brother, instead of being such an one, figure more reputably as the erudite member of a Royal Geographical Society, or as a steady fellow of the Worshipful Company of Fishmongers. Happily there is no fear that in your case a second Doctor Doran may have to pen the narrative of a delicate investigation. If Junius were alive to-day, his pen would not dare to repeat its fierce attack on another Prince of Wales. Junius charged George, Prince of Wales, with quitting the arms of his wife for the endearments of a wanton, with toying away the night in debauchery, and with mocking the sorrows of the people with an ostentatious prodigality. But your pure career, your sober and virtuous life, would win laudations even from Junius's ghost. You are an English gentleman, as well as Prince of Wales; a good and kind husband in spite of being Prince of Wales; with you woman's honour is safe from attack, and sure of protection. The draggled and vice-stained plumes on your predecessors' escutcheons have been well cleaned and straightened by modern journalism, and the Prince of Wales' feathers are no longer (like the Bourbon fleur de lis) the heraldic ornament of a race of princes *sans foi, sans mœurs*. Fit were you as profane to make the journeys to the Altar, for fame writes you as sober and chaste,

as high-minded and generous, as kind-hearted and truthful. These are the qualities, oh Albert Edward, which hid your disability as Prince, when you knelt bare-kneed in our audience chamber. The brethren who opened your eyes to the light, overlooked your title as Prince of Wales in favour of your already famous manhood. Your career is a pleasant contrast to that of George Prince of Wales. Yet because you are as different from the princes whose bodies are dust, while their memories still remain to the historian as visible monuments of shame, I write to you, not as English Prince, but as brother Master Mason. Nor do I address you in your right as one of Saxony's princes, for amongst my memories of other men's readings, I have thoughts of some in Saxony's electoral roll, who were lustful, lecherous, and vile; who were vicious sots and extravagant wasters of their peoples' earnings, who have lured for their seraglios each fresh face that came within their reach: while you, though Duke of Saxony, have joined a brotherhood whose main intent is the promotion of the highest morality. I do not indeed regard your title of Duke at all in writing you, for when we find a Duke of Newcastle's property in the hands of Sheriffs' Officers, his title a jest for bankruptcy messengers, and the Duke of Hamilton's name an European byword, it is pleasant to be able to think that the Duke of Cornwall and Rothesay is not as these Dukes are; that this Duke is not a runner after painted donzels; that he has not written cuckold on the forehead of a dozen husbands, that he is not deep in debt, has not, like these Dukes, scattered gold in filthy gutters, while deaf to the honest claims of justice. We know, brother, that you would never have voluntarily enrolled yourself in the world's grandest organisation, if you had been as these. It would have been perjury if you had done so—perjury which, though imperially honoured at the Tuileries, would be scouted with contempt by a Lancashire workman.

I do not write to you as Earl of Dublin, for Ireland's English-given earls have been as plagues to her vitals and curses to her peoples. For 700 years, like locusts, they have devoured the verdure of her fields, and harassed the tillers of her soil. From the Earl of Chepstow to the Earl of Dublin, is the mere journeying from iron gauntlet to greedy glove—take and hold; and Irish peasantry, in deep

despair, unable to struggle, have learned to hate the Earls with whom English rule has blessed them. Nor even is this letter sent to you as Knight of the Garter, for when I read "*Honi soit qui mal y pense*," I shrink from calculating the amount of evil that might fall upon some people in the world who occupy their thoughts with princes who are Gartered Knights. Nor do I pen this to you as Colonel either of Cavalry, Infantry, or Artillery, for I can but wonder at and admire the glorious military feats which, though your modesty has hidden them, have nevertheless entitled you to command your seniors, one at least with a Waterloo medal on his breast. Our history tells us of a warrior "Black Prince," who killed many foes ; it can also in the future write of you as a gallant soldier before whom pheasant, plover, and pigeon could make no stand.

I write to you as a fellow Master Mason, as to one on an equality with myself, so long as you are true to your Masonic pledge, less than myself whenever you forget it. I address this epistle to you as fellow-member of a body which teaches that man is higher than king ; that humanity is beyond church and creed ; that true thought is nobler than blind faith, and that virile, earnest effort is better far than dead or submissive serfdom.

The Grand Lodge of England has just conferred upon you a dignity you have done nothing to earn ; but you saw light in Sweden, and that initiation should have revealed to you that the highest honour will be won by manly effort, not squeezed from slavish, fawning sycophancy. Freemasonry is democracy, are you a Democrat ? Freemasonry is Freethought, are you a Freethinker ? Freemasonry is work for human deliverance, are you a worker ? I know you may tell me in England of wine-bibbing, song-singing, meat-eating, and white kid glove-wearing fashionables who say "Shibboleth," make "royal salutes," and call this Freemasonry ; but these are mere badge-wearers, who lift their legs awkwardly over the coffin in which truth lies buried, and who never either know the grand secret, or even work for its discovery. Come with me to-day, and I will show you, even in this country, lodges where the brethren work day and night to break through conventional fetters, where they toil hourly to break down imperial and princely shams, where as a prince they would scorn you, and where as

a man they would give you a brother's grip, and die with you or for you in the fight for human redemption and deliverance. Go to Joseph Mazzini, and he will tell you of lodges where, for fifty years, Poles and Italians have kept the sparks of liberty alive whilst Russian and Austrian tyranny was striving to trample and crush them out. Go into France, and the imperial tottering Lie—which has stood too long in the shadow of the first Desolator's bloody reputation—will, if it can (now it is near its grave), forget its daily life-practice, and speak truth by way of change—tell you that the Masonic Lodges of France have been the only temples in which for twenty years it has been possible to preach the gospel of civil and religious liberty. Read Br.: Adolph Cremieux's recent declaration : “ La Maçonnerie n'est pas la religion, n'est pas la foi, elle ne cherche pas dans le Maçon, le croyant, mais l'homme.” Get Odo Russell to ask Mastai Ferrati, or some old woman, to inquire of Monseigneur l'Eveque d'Orleans, and each will tell you that in the lodges are the greatest enemies of the falling churches, the bravest preachers of heretic thought, and the most earnest inculcators of Republican earnestness. Or instead of going, with some noble German glutton, to a paltry casino, read, if only once or twice, a page of Europe's history for forty years before '93, and then Germany's and Sweden's Master Masons, speaking from their graves, shall tell you how their teachings helped to pulverise crowns and coronets, and build up living citizens out of theretofore dead slaves.

You have joined yourself to the Freemasons at a right moment, for true Freemasonry is about to be more powerful than Royalty. In Spain, at this moment, they have a government without a king; nay, more, in that land disgraced by many an *auto da fé*, there is hope of the growth of a people not in the hands of priests. The Revolution which trampled on the Crown, has raised the brain, and heresy has been spoken boldly in the legislative chamber. Freemasonry has in Iberia a grand mission, an arduous task. The Revolution has exiled the weak and wicked Queen. Freemasonry, to prevent the return of such royalty, has to strive for the development of a strong and useful people. In Italy, where the Honorary G.: M.: is our brother, Joseph Garibaldi, to-day they dream of a Government without a monarch. Turin, Florence, Naples, Rome, forgetting

petty dissensions and local differences, no longer misled by royally-tinselled vice, are striving and hoping for the time when an Italian Republic, with a Roman Senate, may once more claim the right to be in the vanguard of civilising peoples. Read, Brother, how at the recent Masonic Banquet at Florence, Frederic Campanella was greeted with *vivas* for the union "di tutti i Galantuomini" for the salvation of Italy. In England, even at this hour, we are—if the organs of blood and culture speak truly—very near forgetting the use of a Queen. The least learned in politics amongst our peoples now know that kings and queens here are only the costly gilded figureheads of the ship of State, its helm being in the hands of the nominees of our territorial aristocracy. Some begin to wonder whether the State might not be better served by sign less gaudy, and more in accordance with the material of which the bulk of the vessel is built. Others grumble downright that a sort of base Dutch metal should be imported in large quantities, as if we had no good British oak out of which to carve a king without disfiguring German silver or Dutch leaf. In France, men are working, with prospect of near success, to overthrow the fear-stricken, *soi-disant* nephew of the great Emperor; and in Europe, the Republic of United Germany is not so far away but that the grandchildren of living Prussian and Austrian subjects may read with wonderment of the value that foolish Englishmen set upon petty German princes. *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*, form the Masonic trinity in unity. Do you believe in this trinity? Which will you be, prince or man? You give me the right to ask, for, cradled a prince, you have to-day (in the time which ought to be your manhood) sought admission to the ranks of men. In Freemasonry there are no princes; the only nobles in its true peerage muster-rolls must be noble men—men noble in thought, noble in effort, noble in endurance—men whose peerage is not of a parchment patent, but foot-trodden on the world's weary-to-climb life's ladder. In our Masonry there are no kings save in the kingship of manhood, "*Tous les hommes sont rois.*" Kings with pens for sceptres, king poets who make burning verse, and grand music to give life to the half-dead nation. Kings of prose, who pen history as impeachment of the few cruelly strong in the past, and who pen it that the many may learn neither to be cowardly nor weak in the grand struggle of the future.

You are a prince, but dare you be a man : for the sake of the Danish flower, whose bloom should gladden your life ; for the sake of the toiling millions who are loyal from habit, and who will revolt reluctantly, but for peace will pay taxes readily ; for the sake of the halo that history will show round your head in its pages ? If you dare, let us see it. Go to Ireland—not to Punchestown races, at a cost to the people of more than two thousand pounds—but secretly amongst its poor, and learn their deep griefs. Walk in London, not in parade at its horse shows, where snobs bow and stumble, but in plain dress and unattended ; in its Spitalfields, Bethnal Green, Isle of Dogs, and Seven Dials ; go where the unemployed commence to cry in vain for bread, where hunger begins to leave its dead in the open streets, and try to find out why so many starve. Don corduroy and fustian, and ramble through the ploughed fields of Norfolk, Suffolk, Northamptonshire, Wiltshire, and other counties, where thirteen shillings per week are high wages, out of which the earner has to feed and clothe man, wife, and family, and pay rent.

Brother, before you die you will hear cries for a Republic in England, cries that will require the brains of a grand man to answer, cries which are gathering now, cries from the overtaxed, who pay, without thought and without inquiry, many more pounds in unearned pensions, for yourself and brother princes, than they will by-and-bye pay shillings, unless indeed you all work miracles, and make yourselves worth your money to the nation. Yet even this you might do ; you might—you and your fellow princes in Europe—if you would disband your standing armies, get rid of the tinselled drones and gaudy court caterpillars, the State Church leeches, and hereditary cormorant tax-eaters, and then there would be a renewed lease of power for you, and higher happiness for the people. But whatever you determine to do, do quickly, or it will be too late. The *Vive la République* now heard from some lips in Paris, Lyons, Marseilles, Bordeaux, will soon be the voice of France, and there is an electric force in the echo of that cry—a force which evokes the lightning-like flash of popular indignation with such directness against princes who mock peoples, against kings who rule for themselves, and against peers who govern for their own class, that as in a moment the oak

which has stood for centuries, is stripped of its brown bark, and left bleached and blasted to wither, so is royalty stripped of its tinselled gilding and left naked and defenceless to the cold scorn of a justly indignant nation. As a Freemason you are bound to promote peace, but peace makes the strength of peoples, and discovers the weakness of princes. As a Freemason you are bound to succour the oppressed of the world, but then it will be against your fellow-princes. As a Freemason you are bound to aid in educating the ignorant, but if you do this you teach them that the sole authority kings can wield they derive from the people ; that a nation may elect a chief magistrate to administer its laws, but cannot give away their liberties to a master who shall have the right to bequeath his authority over their children to his child. As a Freemason you are bound to encourage the development of Freethought, but Freethought is at war with the Church, and between Church and Crown there has ever been most unholy alliance against peoples. You were a prince by birth, it was your misfortune. You have enrolled yourself a Freemason by choice, it shall either be your virtue or your crime—your virtue if you are true to its manly dutifulness ; your crime if you dream that your blood royalty is of richer quality than the poorest drop in the veins of

A FREE AND ACCEPTED MASON.

PRICE ONE PENNY.