

Ireland - interdependent relation of the degrees

He also copies from an address to the Grand Chapter of Rose Croix or Prince Masons of Ireland, by Rt. Hon. Gerald Fitzgibbon, a name familiar in Canada, to show the interdependent relation of the degrees:

"Rose Croix Masonry in Ireland existed as an independent and self-governing institution 124 years ago, 45 years before the Supreme Council, 33°, was created. It has been continuously working and prospering ever since. Whence it came is uncertain. Some thought that it came to us from Bristol, which is said to hold the earliest English record of the Rose Croix."

He goes on to say that one of the Chapters was proved to possess an antiquity several years earlier than any extant English record. The object of the excerpt, however, lies in the following:

"As no one Chapter can have more than 33 members, and no member can be admitted (unless by special dispensation) under the age of thirty-three years, or until he has been a Master Mason for seven years, and as we admit no one who has not received all the degrees of the Mark, the Royal Arch, and the Temple, we may justly claim to regard the Rose Croix degree as a real distinction, to be conferred with scrupulous care."

This sample of conservatism in Masonry, as practised by our brethren of the Green Isle, will no doubt be an eye-opener for some who affect to despise their leisurely methods.

Their care and exclusiveness goes even further, for a Royal Arch Mason may not solicit the degrees of the Temple, nor one of the latter those of the Rose Croix. The mere asking for them shuts the applicant out for good. From another source we copy Dr Crawley's explanation of the method which he directs to the enquirer, Companion Cunningham. The Order of the Temple follows the Royal Arch in the sequence of the Irish degrees, the candidates being at least two years registered R. A. Masons. Dr Crawley says:

"A striking peculiarity in our method is that the candidate himself does not make any application to a preceptory (Commandery). Such an application on his part would be taken as insolent, and would bar the way to his election.

"The candidate is proposed without his knowledge, one black-ball excludes, and if rejected it is held a point of honour to conceal the fact that the candidate has been proposed. He goes to his grave without knowing that his name has ever been before a preceptory.

"When the ballot is favorable the name is sent forward for consideration by Great Priory (Grand Commandery), and is balloted for in due course. If again favourable, then, and not till then, is any intimation given to the candidate.

"The Rose Croix (18 degrees, A. A. Rite) is recruited exclusively from Knights Templars, or as it is briefly styled, the H.K.T. That is, High Knights Templars, the original style of the Order when it is first met with in Ireland, more than a hundred and thirty years ago.

"The Rose Croix (18 degrees) came to Ireland a few years later, and admitted none but H.K.T. to the Rose Croix degree. The condition has been exacted from all candidates from that day to this, so that the Order of the Temple is a condition precedent of the candidate for our Rose Croix Prince Masons.

"Here again a single black-ball excludes; here again the candidate elected is chosen from above, without his knowledge; here again his (personal) application would be considered a bar; here again the candidate elected by the subordinate Chapter is submitted to ballot in the parliament or congress of the body, viz.: 'The Grand Chapter of Prince Masons (Rose Croix) of Ireland.'

"Nor is it to be omitted that the candidate must be at least seven years a registered subscribing Master Mason. Now, if you have persevered so far in this dull summary, you will understand how it comes about that there are barely four hundred Rose Croix Prince Masons in Ireland, and how it is that the eighteenth degree of the A. and A. Rite, worked after the Irish manner, is one of the dearest and most highly prized distinctions it is possible that an Irish Freemason can possess."

Sources:

Proceedings of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Canada at the annual convocation, 1908 report on Foreign Correspondence - OHIO