

25 October.

The Grand Lodge for the Province of Herefordshire held a meeting at Ledbury, on Monday, for the important business of investing the officers for the ensuing year, and other matters. Grand Lodge was opened about two o'clock in the lodge room of the Eastnor (Ledbury) Lodge. The Right Worshipful the Grand Master of the Province, the Rev. J. Bowles, D.D., LL.D., presided, and was supported and assisted by a large number of present and past provincial officers, brethren, and visitors. The lodge having been opened in due form, the ordinary business was transacted, and the Right Worshipful Prov. Grand Master installed to office, and invested the following brethren as Provincial officers for the year ensuing:—Deputy Provincial Grand Master, Br. Chandos Wren Hoskyns; Prov. Grand Senior Warden, Br. Peyton; Prov. Grand Junior Warden, Br. H. B. Luckes; Prov. Grand Chaplains, Revds. Br. Morish and Br. Jukes; Prov. Grand Registrar, Br. G. H. Piper; Prov. Grand Treasurer, Br. H. C. Beddoe; Prov. Grand Secretary, Br. J. Gardiner; Prov. Grand Senior Deacon, Br. Moore; Prov. Grand Junior Deacon, not appointed; Prov. Grand Director of Ceremonies, Br. J. W. Lacey; Prov. Grand Superintendent of Works, Br. Wormington; Prov. Grand Pursuivant, Br. H. Eldred; Prov. Grand Stewards—of Palladian (Hereford) Lodge, Brs. H. C. Jelley and E. Fowles; Royal Edward (Leominster) Lodge, Brs. J. Butcher and J. Bradford. Grand Lodge was then closed according to ancient and immemorial custom, and the brethren adjourned.

At the banquet, which was laid in the ball room, the Provincial Grand Master presided, and was supported by a considerable number of his officers and brethren.

On the removal of the cloth, a glee party sang *Non nobis Domine*, and the P.G.M. proposed the usual masonic toasts. In submitting the name of the Prince of Wales, the P.G.M. expressed a hope that he would follow the example of his illustrious grandfather by becoming a brother. [Applause.]

The toast of the Provincial Grand Master was proposed by Prov. Grand Senior Warden Peyton, in the absence of the Deputy Prov. Grand Master. They were all glad to see him there in full vigour, and to call up recollections of the many occasions on which they had been charmed by his eloquence and instructed by his experience. They were happy to see him still amongst them as P.G.M., notwithstanding the fearful anathema which was intended to shake Masonry to its foundation. On the present occasion, and after what had recently taken place, they welcomed him as one more dear to them than ever, one towards whom the good feeling always held by them had been strengthened and increased. He begged leave to propose the health, long life, and happiness of the Grand Master of the Province of Herefordshire, Brother the Rev. Dr. Bowles. The toast was most enthusiastically received.

The Provincial Grand Master, in responding, said he thanked the brethren very heartily for the kind manner in which they had received the toast that had been with so much good feeling proposed by his honourable friend and brother, the Senior Grand Warden. Believe him, he always felt it a great privilege to meet them in grand lodge and at the social board, and that privilege was strongly enhanced by the cheering conviction that he could at all times depend upon them for that support and for that encouragement and co-operation, without which his humble efforts to promote Masonry in that province would be unavailing. [Applause.] Their kindness well nigh carried him back with a freshness of feeling to his spring time, and caused him to forget for a while how near he was to that dark valley through whose shade all good Masons hoped to pass to the full effulgence of the Creator. He had no intention, especially in so small a company as was then present, of making a long speech—he thought all were more pleasantly engaged in social conversation with each other—[“No, no”]—but he thought he ought not to sit down without saying a word or two upon the excommunication which had been fulminated against them by the Pope of Rome. In the allocution, it was called, or the formal address delivered to a secret consistory or assembly of prelates and cardinals—and he should tell them that the Freemasons in France, Belgium, Italy, Spain, and Portugal alone amount to upwards of two millions—his Holiness consigned them all to perdition. He said they “are a wicked association of men, full of snares and frauds; that their pretended charity was a delusion; that they were “the enemies of the Church and of God, and dangerous to the security of kingdoms.” The Pope further said that if they did not give up their “wicked assemblies” they must expect to be carried straight into the abyss of eternal ruin; that their acts were heinous and criminal, and their errors monstrous; that he “will strike and lacerate, with a sentence of excommunication, as with a sword, a sect breathing crime, and attacking civil and sacred life.” He says that nothing can exhibit their intense iniquity in a stronger manner than that they have survived former excommunications, and still show themselves everywhere with impunity, and with a most audacious front. [Laughter.] He ends by bestowing upon them most emphatically his Apostolic curse! [Laughter.] Was it not pitiable, in this nineteenth century, to behold that Rip Van Winkle of the Vatican, standing on the verge of the grave, groping about in the darkness of past ages to find obsolete weapons with which to arrest freedom of thought and speech, to destroy the right of man and mind, and to place an iron chain upon Italy? [Applause.] Was it not pitiable to see a feeble old man, unconscious of the dark omens which were gathering around him, clutching with trembling fingers at Papal thunderbolts, in the vain attempt to make men religious and virtuous by paralysing their minds through terror, and depriving them of that freedom which is essential to the intellectual, moral, and religious progress of human nature? [Applause.] For himself he was shocked at the dishonour which that allocution attempted to cast upon God and upon virtue, by its debasing conception of the moral and the divine, by its cruel description of the ties of human and Christian brotherhood, by its virulent attack upon an ancient and widespread community which flourished when Popes were not, which shall continue to flourish in undecaying vigour when they are no more—[loud applause]—and which contained within itself the testimony of being an institution consecrated to humanity, which endeavoured to realise the character of brethren, and to give full effect to that sublime invocation which taught them to address the Maker of them all, as “Our Father.” [Applause.] They said that that allocution showed that the spirit of intolerance and persecution was the same in all ages. It had, indeed, been compelled to forego the branding iron, the faggot, and the stake, but it still proved itself to exist by its attempts to impose upon them the traditions and inventions of man for the everlasting truth of God. [Applause.] In pleasing contrast to the allocution of the Pope, let him call their attention to a speech delivered the other day in one of the principal lodges in France, by Abd-el-Kader. He said: “In the persons here present I thank Freemasonry in every country. I consider Freemasonry as the first institution in the world. In my opinion every man who does not profess Freemasonry is an incomplete man. I hope that one day the principles of Freemasonry will prevail throughout the whole world, and from that day forward all the nations will be at peace.” [Applause.] That opinion proved that the Mussulman, Abd-el-Kader, was far more imbued with a spirit of Christianity than the Pope of Rome. [Hear, hear.] Before sitting down he begged leave to propose the health of Brother Peyton, the Prov. Grand Senior Warden. [Applause.]

Brother Peyton responded, proposing the health of the the D.P.G.M., Brother C. W. Hoskyns, whose absence on the Continent they would all regret, as it was occasioned by the illness of some of his family.

Among the other toasts given during the evening were “The Masters and Wardens of the various Lodges in the Province;” “The Master of the Eastnor Lodge, Brother Piper;” “The Visiting Brethren, coupled with the name of P. M. Smith, Worcester (280) Lodge;” “The Ladies, coupled with the name of Mrs. Bowles,” &c., &c. Several glees, songs, &c., were sung during the evening, by Brothers Burrill (Palladian Lodge), and Brooks and Pollard (Semper Fidelis Lodge), accompanied by Brother Broad (Semper Fidelis Lodge).