

CIRCULAR.

United Orders of the Temple and Hospital,

NATIONAL GREAT PRIORY OF CANADA.

OFFICE OF THE GREAT PRIOR,

LAPRAIRIE, PROVINCE OF QUEBEC, 2ND APRIL 1877.

To The Great Officers, and Officers, The Grand Council,
and The Eminent Preceptors of the several Preceptor-
ies under The Great Priory of Canada.

VERY EMINENT AND EMINENT FRATRES:—

The printed proceedings of the special "Convent General" held in London on the 30th of December last, and received in Canada at a late date, containing a series of resolutions, as unwise as they are detrimental to the best interests of the Templar Order in the British Empire, and to the prosperity of the Great Priory of Canada whose interests and wishes appear to have been altogether lost sight of, requiring, in my opinion, immediate action on the part of the Templars of Canada; and as time did not admit of calling a meeting of the Great Priory, or having recourse to consulting with the Council; I did not hesitate in at once forwarding a protest to H. R. J. The Grand Master against the legality of the proceedings, with the hope, that as the Great Priory of Ireland had also entered a protest, H. R. Highness would not give the weight of his authority to their confirmation. The unvarying confidence placed in me by the Templars of the Dominion leaving no doubt in my mind that this prompt action on my part in their behalf, in a case of so great emergency, will have their acquiescence and approval. A copy of the protest is herewith subjoined, and I also consider it advisable to offer the following remarks for general information.

The discussions which took place at "Convent General" clearly show that a certain portion of the Sir Knights in some of the English provinces, not a majority of the Order, but a detour from their position to act together, are embarked in a retrograde course, with but little regard to the history of the Order to which they belong, and are bent upon undoing all that the Commissioners of the United Orders had laboured to effect, and had effected so well. It must be borne in mind that the Statutes of "Convent General" were originally framed under the sanction of the two independent Grand Priorities of England and Ireland, Canada afterwards joining the league, subject to them. It is clear by the 3rd section of the Anglo-Hibernian Convention, that any constitutional alteration should be passed in the several Great Priorities before being submitted to "Convent General."

"Convent General" being a confederation of Great Priorities, it is not competent for one nationality, like England, that happens to possess, from exceptional causes, a chance majority in any particular meeting of "Convent General," to have the power to alter the most fundamental rules of the Confederation, and bind the other nationalities without their consent.

The action of the promoters of this schism is tantamount to acknowledging that they look upon themselves as an imitative Order merely, based on a system that has neither history nor antiquity to recommend it. The prefix of the word "Masonic," on which they lay so much stress, is incorrect, and was abandoned because it was not true, and, if true, superfluous. The Society is based on Free Masonry so far that none are admitted but such as are "Masons," and the prefix is not found in the English Charter of the Duke of Kent of the 10th April, 1807, but was an illegal introduction, without any authority, when the High Grades passed to another jurisdiction in 1848.

The present title and nomenclature of the Order was the correction of ignorant errors, fully and clearly borne out by historical evidence that cannot be controverted, and which shews that the proper designation of the officer presiding over the Orders of the Templars for each nation is that of "Grand or Great Prior." The organization of the early Order in England as respects control of the members and management of estates was threefold, viz:—1st. The "Chief or Grand Prior" in London; 2nd. "Sub-Priors," who managed the great estates of the Order when Priorial Houses had been erected; and, 3rd. "Preceptors," who were at the head of establishments for the supervision of smaller estates and farms. These smaller administrations were called "Preceptories," and for this reason: the Commissions, or Mandates, directed by the "Master of the Temple" to the officer at the head of these establishments, were called "Precepts," from the commencement of them, "*Præcipimus*," "we enjoin or direct;" and the Knights to whom they were addressed, were styled "*Præceptores Templi*," or "Preceptors of the Temple;" and the districts administered by them "*Præceptorium*," or "Preceptories." Here is historical evidence that the proper designation of the lowest organized bodies of Knights Templar was Preceptories, and their chief officer Preceptor.

The term, "Commandery," and the title, "Commander," were never used by the Templars, although, singularly enough, the order of St. John of Jerusalem (or Malta,) used both "Commander" or "Preceptor" indifferently for the same officer; no doubt their first title for heads of houses was, "Commander," but after coming into possession of large portions of the Templar property, after the outward suppression of the Templar Order, they adopted, in a measure the Templar name, and called their chief of houses, sometimes, "Preceptor," at other times, "Commander." Although there is thus some reason for the Malta Order using the term, "Preceptor" or "Preceptory," there is none, whatever, for one Templar order using the term, "Commander" or "Commandery."

As to the term, "Encampment," of course any one knows what an encampment, properly, is. An army in the field may, and often does, form an encampment; but why a military monastic body, such as the Knights Templar were, dwelling in fixed places of abode, should ever have termed their residences or places of meeting, "Encampments," passes comprehension. In fact, they never did. The use of the term is altogether at variance with history, logic, or common sense; but was, no doubt, adopted, when the Order was first attached to Free Masonry, by some modern unworldly aspirant for Chivalry who looked upon the name as appropriate for a military body. Besides the Knights were never made in the field but consecrated in Chapter of the Preceptory, or their Chapel. That is, the Chapter met in a Chapel.

The two designations of "Constable" and "Marshal" are very properly given to the two chief military officers of a preceptory, and are much more appropriate than those of first and second Captains, which have no chivalric signification, whatever. These latter titles are, in fact, modern and had no recognized existence as military titles at the Crusades. The "Constable" was anciently, particularly in France, *ex officio*, the Commander-in-Chief, under the Sovereign, of all the military power of the State. The "Marshal" was a military officer next in rank to the "Constable."

"Sub-Marshal" was very properly substituted for that of "Esquire." The latter word, being in both French and English an adjective, cannot stand alone with any propriety. It is now, however, used so to designate a person who is skilled in some particular branch of Mechanics or Arts, but, that it was a Knightly or Military title is simply absurd.

"Equerry," strictly speaking, is a person who has the care of horses, &c., inasmuch as the officer designated by this title, stands as a sentinel without the entrance to the Preceptory, the term "guard" has been much more properly substituted.

I have thus explained the meaning of the titles sought to be abrogated, and the prompt steps taken, in the interest of our Great Priory, to uphold the Constitution of Council General, as we received and accepted it.

Yours, Very Eminent and Eminent Freres,

Faithfully and fraternally yours,

V. D. + S. A.

W. J. B. MACLEOD MOORE, G. C. T.,
Great Prior of Canada.

The Circular to be read in Open Proceries, and copies, if required, furnished to all members of the Order.

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United Orders of the Temple and Hospital,

NATIONAL GREAT PRIORY OF CANADA.

Protest.

TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCE OF WALES, K. G., &c., &c., THE MOST EMINENT AND SUPREME GRAND MASTER OF THE UNITED RELIGIOUS AND MILITARY ORDERS OF THE TEMPLE AND OF ST. JOHN OF JERUSALEM, PALESTINE, RHODES, AND MALTA.

May it please your Royal Highness:—

The National Great Priory of Canada, erected under Patent in compliance with the Memorial of the Templars of the Dominion of Canada, desire, with knightly homage and deep loyalty, to present their firm and unmodified Protest against the action of Convent General at its Special Meeting on the 8th of December last, in certain matters which must be deemed of vital importance in relation to the Constitution of the British Order of the Temple, and they found their Protest on the following grounds:—

1st. That in their Memorial, seeking to be erected into a National Great Priory, it was stated with all fidelity, that the confederation of the Templar Bodies of the Empire under one Governing Body, the "Convent General," had been wished with the highest interest by the Templars of the Dominion of Canada, who, accepting the then existing Constitution of "Convent General" as determining the title, nomenclature, and all other fundamental requirements of the Order, sought for, and were accorded a national enrolment in the confederation.

2nd. That the then existing Constitution of the "Convent General," which they so accepted on joining the confederation, was one framed with due and mature deliberation on historical and rational grounds, and was not accepted by the Templars of Canada without like consideration, [and even the surrender, in some respects, of preconceived views and attachments], and they unhesitatingly pronounce any proposition to tamper with the same, without like full consideration and deliberation on the part of each and every of the Great Priors forming the Confederation, to be illegal and contrary to every rule affecting the legislation of Confederate Bodies.

3rd. That their Patent of erection into a National Great Priory not only binds them to uphold such existing constitution of "Convent General," but gives them national rights co-equal with those of the other Nation Prories, and, foremost among them, the right of a voice in any change in the fundamental laws of the said existing Constitution.

4th. That acting on such existing Constitution they have framed, adopted, and promulgated their National Statutes, based on the rules and enactments, and adopting the title and nomenclature therein contained, and they are not prepared, nor are they legally required to accept, but, on the contrary, they are bound entirely to repudiate changes respecting which they have had no opportunity of expressing an opinion, and which are directly opposed to, and entirely subversive of the said existing Constitution of "Convent General" under which they were enrolled in the Confederation.

5th. That whilst thus recording their Protest against such change, asserting their undoubted rights as a National Great Priory, and viewing the proposed changes as illegal, unconstitutional, and in no wise binding on them, they further record their deliberate opinion that such tampering with the Constitution is calculated to shake confidence, create doubt, and be followed by consequences most disastrous to the advancement, the unity, and the best interests of the Order.

THE NATIONAL GREAT PRIORY OF CANADA therefore, with the very highest respect, place this, their Protest, in the hands of their ROYAL AND MOST EMINENT AND SUPREME GRAND MASTER.

THUS DONE in the name of the National Great Priory of Canada, at Laprairie in the Province of Quebec, Dominion of Canada, this 19th day of March, 1877.

† W. J. B. MACLEOD MOORE, G. C. T.

Great Prior of Canada,

