

Robert Wentworth Little: A Duplicitous Freemason, Wordsmith and Mystic, Part II

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Adversaries and Antagonism – Friend and Alliances

Whilst Little undoubtedly attracted a considerable level of antipathy and personal criticism from Freemasons such as Charles Matier, John Yarker, and Kenneth Mackenzie, he was even more adept at forming alliances with influential friends such as John Hervey, Francis Burdett, Frederick Binckes and Lord Kenlis (the future Earl of Bective), and inspired a loyal following from a number of enthusiastic Masons including amongst others: William Hubbard, Henry Levander, George Kenning and Sigismund Rosenthal.

Nearly one hundred and fifty years after the event it is perhaps difficult to understand why some of Little's activities, particularly in respect of the RCC, SIRIA, and Misraim, have not been the subject of greater scrutiny or criticism. The fact is that they were criticized very soon after they first occurred, but for whatever reason these criticisms were not pursued to a conclusion and indeed were carried out on a singular order by order basis rather than across all three orders. The criticism was such that some was aimed personally at Little (Matier); some against the individual Order (Misraim); and some based on vested interest (Ancient and Accepted Rite – Colquhoun).

Charles Fitzgerald Matier (1840–1914) was a senior and prominent Freemason who played a major role in the orders beyond the Craft, becoming Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons in 1891 in succession to Frederick Binckes.¹ He was a man who could not be described as either modest or self-effacing, one biographer going so far as to observe that ‘it is no duty of ours to parade our brother’s defects before our readers’;² what can be said is that he was not without ambition and certainly a controversial character.³

Matier’s sphere of Masonic influence initially centred on Manchester and Edinburgh, and ultimately London. He was one of the petitioners for a new Red Cross Conclave, St. Andrew’s No. 15, due to be inaugurated in Edinburgh on 8 April 1869. There is every reason to believe that the Consecrating Officer was to have been Little. Six of the original petitioners including Matier became founder members of the East of Scotland College of the English SRIA in 1873.⁴ With the exception of Matier the other petitioners⁵ did not subsequently become members of the RCC and thus played no further part in the future development of the RCC in Scotland. In view of the link between the RCC and SRIA which Little was still keen to foster, it appears that the main purpose in the formation of the new conclave was as a first step in the establishment of a SRIA college. The mystery that surrounds the Red Cross Conclave St. Andrews No. 15 is that it was originally due to be ‘formed’ in Edinburgh on 8 April 1869, but subsequently met in London for the first time on 21 August 1869. It is the key to explaining not only the relationship between Little and Matier, but also the genesis of the furore that led to the change of name from the Imperial, Ecclesiastical and Military Order of Knights of the Red Cross of Rome and Constantine to that of the Masonic and Military Order of Knights of the Red Cross of Rome and Constantine in May 1871.

There is some vagueness as to what actually took place in Edinburgh but equally some certainty as to what did not. Little was not in a position to inaugurate the conclave in Edinburgh, as on that day he was presiding at a meeting of the SRIA in London. Some form of ceremony did take place, under the auspices of an unnamed ‘English

¹ His major achievement was to bring together by 1896 the administration of the Mark, Knights Templar, Royal Ark Mariner, Allied Masonic Degrees, Royal and Select Masters, and the Red Cross of Constantine under the control of one Grand Secretary – himself!

² G.B. Abbot, *Masonic Portraits*, vol.2, 1879, 63-71

³ F. Smyth, ‘Charles Fitzgerald Matier’, *AQC* 106, 1993, 172-185

⁴ *The Rosicrucian*, 1873, 78 lists fifteen founding members of the new East Scotland College including Dr. T. Cairns, John Laurie, W.M. Bryce, Charles F. Matier, Francis L. Law, and Dr. G. Dickson who were six of the eleven original petitioners for the St. Andrew’s Conclave in 1871.

⁵ *The Rosicrucian*, No. V, July 1869, 64, lists the petitioners as Capt. J. J. Lundy, Capt. Ramsay, Dr. Cairns, Dr. McCown, John Laurie, W.M. Bryce, Chas. Fitzgerald Matier, Francis L. Law, T.H. Douglass, F.S.A., Dr. G. Dickson, Jas. Macduff. The first Officers were Capt. J. J. Lundy, Sovereign; Dr. Cairns, Eusebius; Capt. Ramsay, Senior General, Dr. Dixon, Junior General; W. M. Bryce, Herald; and F. L. Law, Recorder.

Inspector General, when a number of brethren were received into the order, and it was later reported that the original formation was suspended by Lord Kenlis – the Illustrious Chief of the order – ‘owing to unfortunate differences amongst themselves [the original petitioners]’.⁶

In August 1869 it was reported that the charter of the conclave had been transferred to London and a meeting held for the purposes of installing selected brethren as knights of the order and charter members of St Andrew’s Conclave No. 15, including leading members of the Mark degree – Frederick Binckes and Sigismund Rosenthal – and that the formal dedication of the conclave would take place on a future date. This seems to confirm that whatever may have taken place in Edinburgh was considered to be null and void. The opportunity was also taken to inform the readership that:

The documents recently discovered in the archives of the Grand Lodge of England as to the antiquity of the Red + Order, and which have been handed over to Lord Kenlis, bear such overwhelming evidence in favour of this chivalric degree, that the most sceptical are now convinced of its truth and importance.⁷

If only! Matier appears to have taken the events that took place in Edinburgh as a personal slight, and as will be established later took the opportunity to follow a course of action that would have had a major impact on Little and the other orders of Freemasonry.⁸

The RCC had been launched by Little in 1865 with the rather grandiose title of ‘The Imperial, Ecclesiastical and Military Order of the Knights of the Red Cross of Rome and Constantine.’ Little maintained that the order was a direct descendant of the religious order in Europe based on the Constantinian Order of St. George.⁹ This was publically challenged by Demetrius Rhodocanakis, ‘Prince or Grocer’,¹⁰ an interesting character in his own right. In May 1869 he maintained that he was in fact the hereditary head of the religious order and had no connection whatsoever with the Masonic order.¹¹ He went

⁶ *The Freemason*, 1 January 1870, 9

⁷ *The Freemason*, 21 August 1869, 91.

⁸ As reported in *The Freemason*, 1 January 1870, 9, the Conclave was finally and formally inaugurated on 23 January 1870 in the presence of a considerable number of senior members of the Order and when leading members from the other Orders, including the future Grand Registrar of the Craft, Frederick Philbrick, QC were received into the Conclave. The principle has been maintained to the present day. St. Andrew’s Conclave No. 15 is the personal Conclave of the Grand Sovereign of the Order with its membership restricted to those personally proposed by the Grand Sovereign.

⁹ ‘A Composite Sketch of the Early History of the Red Cross Order, principally from the Pen of Sir Knight Robert Wentworth Little, Grand Recorder’, originally published in the *Freemasons Magazine and Mirror*, 1866-1867

¹⁰ Demetrius Rhodocanakis was so very aptly described by the Rev. Thomas Ravenshaw in his letter of resignation from the Rosicrucian Society of England dated 18 December 1870, which is in the Archives of the SRIA, and was the source of much mischief making as far as the history of the SRIA and RCC is concerned, worth pursuing but beyond the scope of this paper.

¹¹ *Freemasons Magazine and Mirror*, 1 May 1869, 352

further and accused Little, quite correctly, after the latter published the first Statutes of the RCC in 1868, of the RCC copying the regalia of his Constantinian Order.¹² Matier, Yarker, and Rhodocanakis were all based in Manchester and as stated previously Matier continued with his Scottish connections. There is little doubt that Matier was aware of the claim made by Rhodocanakis and saw an opportunity to get his own back at Little for the slight in Edinburgh. The process started with the initiation, passing and raising of Rhodocanakis in Edinburgh St Andrews Lodge No. 48,¹³ all on the same night of 18 October 1869. Matier was present as a guest and he delivered the charge in the third degree. The next evening Rhodocanakis was exalted in the Royal Arch and advanced in the Mark with Matier again present, St. Andrews Chapter No. 83, Edinburgh.¹⁴ The next day on 20 October 1869 Rhodocanakis was installed as a Knight Templar, Priory of the Lothians, together with Matier.¹⁵ There is little doubt that Matier had become the Masonic mentor to Rhodocanakis who on 28 April 1870 was admitted into the 33° in the Supreme Council A&A of Scotland.¹⁶ The controversy regarding the origin of the Red Cross took up a considerable amount of column inches in both *The Freemason* and *Freemasons' Magazine and Mirror*. By and large Little made use of the columns in the former, of which he was at the time the editor, to support his case and his opponents made use of the latter. No fewer than twenty-four references both for and against Little in the period January 1869 to October 1870, the correspondent *Lupus* being particularly prominent as also were Matier, Rhodocanakis and Yarker. The pressure mounted to such an extent that Little had to take some other form of action; he appears to have struck some form of deal with Matier in the first instance since Matier was received into the SRIA at an extraordinary meeting of the Order held on 28 February 1871, with only Little, Hughs and Woodman, the Secretary General, present, and at which he was given the authority to form the Northern Counties College in Manchester, immediately being appointed its Chief Adept and promoted to the ninth degree.¹⁷ Yarker was involved in the college in Manchester right from its inception in March 1871, becoming Secretary, while Rhodocanakis became a member of the college as a Zelator in 1877, subsequently becoming Supreme Magus of Greece.¹⁸ Matier also became a founding member of Palatine Conclave No. 50 in Lancashire on 29 July 1871 and was appointed as an Inspector General (Unattached) in 1874. Thus it would appear an understanding

¹² *HHH The Prince Demetrius Rhodocanakis, The Imperial Constantinian Order of St George a review of modern impostures and a sketch of its true history* (London: Longman, 1870).

¹³ *The Freemason*, 30 October 1869, 200

¹⁴ *The Freemason*, 6 November 1869, 205.

¹⁵ *Freemasons Magazine and Mirror*, 13 November 1869, 397.

¹⁶ *The Freemason*, 21 May 1870, 9

¹⁷ *The Rosicrucian*, No. XII, April 1871, 152

¹⁸ T. M. Greensill, *History of the SRIA (Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia)*, Privately Published by the SRIA, 1987,

had been reached between Little, Matier, and Yarker, and criticism in the Masonic press from that quarter ceased. However the issues concerning Rhodocanakis could not be ended that easily and no doubt under considerable pressure from Bective, the Grand Sovereign of the RCC, perhaps prompted to avoid any further embarrassment following his election as the MP for Westmorland in the February of that year, Little was left with no alternative but to perform a spectacular *volte face* in May 1871. He was forced to back down completely and deny any connection with the Rhodocanakis order,¹⁹ as well as amending the title of the RCC to that of ‘The Masonic and Military Order of the Knights of Rome and of the Red Cross of Constantine’. Little did not accept the change with any grace; no annual meeting of the order was held in 1871, and no publicity was given to the change in title which is dealt with quite simply on the page in the *Annual Calendar* in 1873 dealing with ‘Errata and Addenda’, as ‘Alteration of the Title’ in the same way as later on the same page it states ‘substitute “the Earl of Bective” for “Lord Kenlis”’, the latter change becoming necessary following the death of Bective’s grandfather in December 1870.²⁰

Although matters relating directly to the RCC seem to have abated early in the spring of 1871, further storms were brewing for Little with which to contend but which ultimately were to his advantage. Little’s successful career in provincial Craft Masonry during the period 1870–78 was mirrored at national level with his appointment in 1872 as the Secretary of the Royal Masonic Institution for Girls. The appointment came about as a result of a stroke of good fortune, following what can best be described as a furore in Grand Lodge ostensibly about his involvement in the other orders of Freemasonry in general and with Misraim in particular, while being employed as a clerk in the Grand Secretary’s Office at UGLE.

The seriousness with which the establishment viewed the implied threat of the development of orders, such as the RCC, SRIA, and the Order of Misraim, combined with the vested self-interest of those concerned, is amply demonstrated in the Minutes of successive meetings of Grand Lodge held between June 1871 and September 1872, and which occupied many columns of print in the Masonic press.

As early as 15 December 1868 the Supreme Council of the Ancient and Accepted Rite (A&A) received the report of a committee that suggested that it would be desirable to enter into a Treaty of Union with the Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons of England (GLMMM). Following the initial meeting between the representatives of Mark Grand Lodge and Supreme Council in 1869 there followed considerable negotia-

¹⁹ The Letter of apology to Rhodocanakis denying any connection with his Order was originally signed by both Bective and Little, and was re-printed in full in *The Freemasons’ Chronicle*, 23 October 1875, 7.

²⁰ *Calendar and Annual Report of The Masonic and Military Order of the Knights of Rome and of the Red Cross of Constantine*, 1872, 34

tions behind the scenes for some eighteen months that eventually resulted in a treaty of alliance being adopted by the Grand Conclave of the Knights Templar (KT) on 12 May 1871; agreed by the Supreme Council on 10 May 1871; and approved by GLMMM on 6 June 1871.

The main purpose of the Convention, as the treaty of alliance was formally termed, was the mutual recognition of each of the three parties' sovereignty over their respective orders. A separate but similar treaty was also agreed between the Mark Grand Lodge and the Red Cross of Constantine. The reasons for the need of two different treaties in essence relate to the difficulties and differences between the A&A on the one hand and the RCC on the other, arising to some extent over possible misunderstanding. By way of example, in the early days of the RCC reference was made in the ritual to 'rite of perfection', and heads of 'provinces' as Inspectors General – both terms first used by the A&A. The use of the expression 'rite of perfection' was soon dropped by the RCC, which also adopted the rank of Intendant General in place of Inspector General.

It was the day after the treaty was formally approved by the GLMMM that at the Quarterly Communication of UGLE on Wednesday 7 June 1871 Sir Patrick Colquhoun asked at the June Communication of Grand Lodge

Whether Grand Lodge countenance the Rite of Misraim of 90° the Rite of Memphis and the Order of Rome and Constantine? And if not, whether it be consistent with the position of a subaltern in the Grand Secretary's Office that he take a lead in these unrecognized degrees?²¹

In September Matthew Cooke weighed in with an allegation that the clerks in the office of the Grand Secretary were, during working hours, involved '... with such bodies as the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite; the Rites of Misraim and Memphis; the spurious Orders of Rome and Constantine; the schismatic body styling itself the Grand Mark Lodge of England...'²²

The whole issue became a major source of embarrassment to Grand Lodge in general and not least to John Hervey, the Grand Secretary, but also to his staff which included Little, about whom the main accusations had been made, Henry Buss, Alfred Pendlebury, and William Dodd, all of whom were employed in the Grand Secretary's office and were active in the orders detailed in the resolution. Hervey himself was an enthusiastic supporter of orders beyond the Craft.

Needless to say strong feelings were expressed by both sides of the argument, not least by John Havers, who some fourteen years later was still putting forward the view that '... he could not forget that the first words for constitution are pure and ancient

²¹ Minutes Quarterly Communications UGLE, 6 June 1871

²² Minutes Quarterly Communications UGLE, 7 September 1871

masonry consists of three degrees and no more. These words “no more” seemed to him to exclude all others...’²³ [where is this quote from? It is not 14 years later from previous reference]

The matter eventually ran out of steam out when, having investigated the matter, the Board of General Purposes determined that the allegations made by Cooke had been largely unfounded.²⁴

It will be recalled that the issue was initially raised by Sir Patrick Colquhoun and Mathew Cooke who by no coincidence were respectively the Grand Chancellor, and Grand Organist of the Order of Knights Templar.²⁵ Colquhoun had been one of the team of three negotiating the treaty, previously referred to, on behalf of the KT and in addition both Colquhoun 32° and Cooke 30° were active members of the A&A Rite; indeed Colquhoun, a practicing barrister, acted as a legal adviser to the Supreme Council of the A&A.²⁶ Reference has previously been made regarding the attitude and very strong action taken behind the scene by the Supreme Council in respect of the Rite of Misraim.

While the membership of the Rite of Misraim at best totalled no more than seventy, the Red Cross of Constantine, in which the so called ‘subaltern’ Wentworth Little was the leading light, had by 1871 over fifty conclaves, which had increased to seventy-five by the following year! Given the competition within Christian Freemasonry that the RCC was giving both the KT, with a little over 120 units, and the A&A, which had by 1871 created only some thirty-three chapters, it was little wonder that Colquhoun and Cooke were worried enough to raise the question in Grand Lodge.

One can speculate as to why the furore was generated and why it lasted so long. There was a faction within the Craft that would not accept the legitimacy of any of the orders beyond the Craft, and above all there was a certain degree of envy and a competitive concern in some quarters at the popularity of the orders founded by Little. There may well have been some hostility towards Hervey for his support of the other orders,²⁷ with Little being used as a proxy, and of course there may well have been some personal animosity levelled at Little himself.

It is interesting and perhaps worth further exploration as to the support given to Little by Hervey. On at least three occasions he gave very public support to Little and his

²³ Minutes Quarterly Communications UGLE, 6 December 1871

²⁴ Minutes Quarterly Communications UGLE, 4 September 1872

²⁵ W. Tinkler, *Alphabetical list of Great Officers 1846 to 1888* (London: Great Priory of the United Religious, Military and Masonic Orders of the Temple and of St. John of Jerusalem, Palestine, Rhodes and Malta of England and Wales and its Provinces Overseas, 1888)

²⁶ J. Mandleberg, *Ancient and Accepted*, Supreme Council 33° London, 1995, 83

²⁷ John Hervey’s membership of other Masonic Orders includes: Mark – PGSD 1856, PGW 1890; KT - 2ndG-StB 1871, A&A 30°N 1871, 32°N 1879; RCC Grand High Chancellor 1871; honorary member SRIA 1873, RSM 1871, ROS 1872.

cause by: 1. Making a statement regarding the discovery of the ‘Zetland Papers’ – 1870; 2. Acting as Secretary to the testimonial fund set up for Little’s benefit – 1871; 3. Giving a testimonial in respect of his appointment as Secretary to the RMIG – 1872. It would seem that by doing so Hervey had more to lose than to gain. By the same token Little seemed to manage to gain the loyal support of a small band of followers in almost equal measure to those who were antagonistic towards him. In the former camp one could list, in addition to John Hervey, James Hughan, the Earl of Bective, Col. Francis Burdett and Frederick Binckes, and in the latter such names as Matier, Yarker, and Mackenzie.

Little’s Testimonial

The Rite of Misraim was inaugurated on 28 December 1870.²⁸ In January 1871, a testimonial was launched in Little’s favour.²⁹ The composition of the testimonial committee was announced in the April 1871, the chairman being Col. Francis Burdett, and the treasurer none other than the Grand Secretary of UGLE, John Hervey.³⁰ The committee consisted of thirty members, all bar two of whom can be shown to be members of the RCC,³¹ and eighteen members of the newly-formed Rite of Misraim.³² It is not insignificant that all this high profile activity directly involving Little took place in the period leading up to the furore in Craft Grand Lodge, first raised in June 1871. The testimonial fund was not closed until the following February, and its organization was itself not without incident, running in parallel with the events unfolding in Craft Grand Lodge. Letters in the Masonic press denied that the primary reason for establishing the testimonial was because of Little’s involvement in the RCC rather than to the cause of Freemasonry in general.³³ There were accusations of undue pressure being put on individuals to contribute to the fund.³⁴ The total amount raised was sufficient for Little to receive from the subscribers the sum of £300 and a ‘magnificent clock . . . in token of their high admiration of his personal qualities, and in recognition of his ability and zeal in promoting the interest of Freemasonry in all its branches.’³⁵ This was well in excess of Little’s salary at FMH of £200 per annum.³⁶

²⁸ *The Freemason*, 31 December 1870, 1

²⁹ *The Freemason*, 21 January 1871, 43

³⁰ *The Freemason*, 29 April 1871, 1

³¹ *Imperial, Ecclesiastical and Military Order of the Red Cross of Constantine - List of Officers and Conclaves, 1868, 1870, 1871, 1872 and 1873*. The only two members for whom no evidence of membership of the RCC has been found are Magnus Ohren and Charles Gosden.

³² *The Freemason*, 7 January 1871, 10

³³ *The Freemason*, 11 February 1871, 90

³⁴ *The Freemason*, 8 July 1871, 40

³⁵ *The Freemason*, 2 March 1872, 143

³⁶ Minutes UGLE, 6 March 1872

Royal Masonic Institution for Girls

Little had become an embarrassment to both Hervey and the Craft establishment. However, in November 1872 the retirement was announced, due to his ill-health, of Edward H. Patten, who had been the Secretary of the Royal Masonic Institution for Girls (RMIG) since 1861. A diabetic, he had suffered a paralytic seizure earlier in the year, and because of his severe illness was deemed unable to continue in office. He was well treated by the RMIG. In view of his long and valued service his salary was paid in full until Christmas after which he received a pension of £200 a year until his death in 1882.

The appointment of Secretary of each of the three Masonic charities is by election. Little and his supporters lost no time in announcing his candidature for the vacant post. Questions had first been raised about Patten's health at the RMIG General Committee on Thursday 3 October 1872,³⁷ and there is no doubt that Little and his supporters had been given early notice of the possibility of a vacancy. His name came forward at that meeting and was formally declared at the meeting of the committee held on 31 October 1872. Little's candidature was announced in *The Freemason* on 2 November 1872,³⁸ together with details of a committee, under the chairmanship of Bro. J. C. Parkinson, and consisting of some twenty members, that had been formed just the previous day to secure his election. The meeting of the House Committee, as reported in the Masonic press, was not without incident when it came to agreeing the salary – £300 per annum, with the services of a clerk – and the criteria expected of the successful candidate, which many perceived, not unreasonably, to favour Little. If there was any doubt that the election of Little was being orchestrated behind the scenes then confirmation came in the form of an effusive testimonial from the Grand Secretary of UGLE, John Hervey, which was published in *The Freemason* on 23 November 1872.³⁹ It was no surprise to anyone when the result of the election was announced to find that Little had easily secured the post, his three opponents managing fifteen votes between them compared with his 317 votes.⁴⁰ However, controversial leader articles in *The Freemason* the week before⁴¹ and

³⁷ *The Freemason*, 5 October, 5

³⁸ *The Freemason*, 2 November, 6

³⁹ *The Freemason*, 23 November 1872, 735 – ‘November 12, 1872. I have been asked to express my opinion of the qualifications of Bro. Robert Wentworth Little, I beg to say that, during the period I have held the appointment of Grand Secretary, I have found his conduct such as to merit my warm approval. I have the utmost confidence in saying that, to abilities of a very high order, he unites the indispensable attributes of accuracy, attention, and trustworthiness, and I believe him to be well fitted for carrying out the duties of any office, however confidential, to which he may aspire. (Signed) John Hervey, G.S.’

⁴⁰ *The Freemason*, 30 November, 756.

⁴¹ *The Freemason*, 23 November, 736.

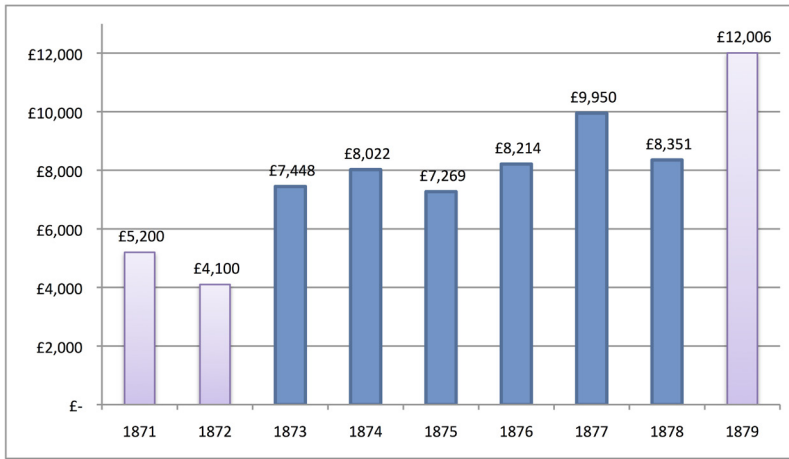


Fig. 1. RMIG Festival Results 1871–79.

after⁴² the election amply demonstrated that Little's election, whilst acknowledged to have been well organized, was far from being universally welcomed.

His tenure of the post, until his untimely death in 1878, was remarkably uneventful. **Figure 1** shows that he had reasonable success in raising funds through the festival system.⁴³ There is nothing to suggest that he was anything other than competent in his administrative duties. Little was responsible in re-drafting the bylaws of the institution in 1873, albeit that the exercise was led by his opposite number Frederick Binckes, the Secretary of the Royal Masonic Institution for Boys.⁴⁴ He appears to have been well thought of by his employers and very sympathetically treated during the latter years of his term in office, when his serious illness began to take its toll. Little was encouraged to work from home as far as possible,⁴⁵ and following his death in April 1878 his widow continued to receive his salary until Michaelmas (29 September) of that year.⁴⁶

One thing that Little did crave was recognition; his 'Masonic Portrait – The Mystic', published in 1876,⁴⁷ commences with a verse:

Great honours are great burdens, but on whom

⁴² *The Freemason*, 30 November, 752

⁴³ G.B. Abbott, *History of the Royal Masonic Institution for Girls: from its origin, 1788, to its centenary* (London, George Kenning, 1888), 120.

⁴⁴ Minutes of the House Committee, RMIG, 15 February 1873; Minutes Special General Court, RMIG, 6 March 1873

⁴⁵ Minutes House Committee, RMIG, 31 January 1878

⁴⁶ Minutes of the General Committee, RMIG, 25 April 1878

⁴⁷ *Freemasons Chronicle*, 4 March 1876, 1-2

That are cast with envy, he doth bear two loads,
His cares must still be double to his joys,
In any dignity; where if he err,
He finds no pardon, and, for doing well,
A most small praise, and that wrung out by force.

and concludes: ‘... Yet, although he has proved himself worthy of all the honours that Masonry has to bestow, he has not yet obtained those of Grand Lodge. He has still to make his way to the dais, and perhaps he will find this task more difficult of achievement than any of the labours he has hitherto engaged... if our brother really aspires to the last distinction which the Fraternity has to bestow, we can merely counsel him to take courage, and to exercise patience. His time may yet come.’

Regrettably his untimely death in 1878 meant that he never did receive that ultimate recognition.

Little’s Involvement with the Craft and Other Masonic Orders

In addition to the major part played by Little in the establishment of the RCC, SRIA and Misraim Little was also involved at a senior level in a number of other orders, not least the Craft, but also including the Mark, Royal and Select Masters, and Royal Ark Mariner.

The Craft and Middlesex

Little played a considerable part in the formation of the new Craft Province of Middlesex, not constituted until 1870. The United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE) defined London Freemasonry in 1815 as being limited to those lodges meeting within a ten-mile radius of Freemasons’ Hall,⁴⁸ and there is little doubt that the ten-mile rule affected the development of Freemasonry in Middlesex. A significant factor that aggravated the situation was that, unlike Surrey, where the Provincial Grand Lodge was inaugurated in 1837, in Middlesex there was a distinct lack of urban development, until the expansion of the rail and underground system in the 1840s markedly changed the situation. The coming of the railways enabled those working in central London to commute and have their main residence in Middlesex. The ease of transport made possible the establishment of the so-called ‘summer lodges’ in places such as Hampton Court,⁴⁹ Twickenham,⁵⁰ and Staines.⁵¹ There was also a significant number of Masons whose main residence was in London, but who also had a house in Middlesex and took the opportunity to join local lodges. There were undoubtedly tensions. Strawberry Hill Lodge No. 946 was formed

⁴⁸ Subsequently amended to five miles in 1971.

⁴⁹ Carnarvon Lodge No. 708 founded by members of Westminster and Keystone No. 10 in 1857.

⁵⁰ Crescent Lodge No. 788 founded by members of Enoch Lodge No. 11 in 1859.

⁵¹ Bard of Avon Lodge No. 778 moved from Warwickshire in 1872.

only after it was agreed that its by-laws stipulate that the lodge should meet in the winter months so as to avoid any conflict by drawing members from Crescent Lodge, a 'summer lodge' also meeting in Twickenham. In 1868 Royal Union Lodge No. 382, meeting in Uxbridge, initially refused to sponsor the formation of Gooch Lodge No. 1238 that was to meet Southall some twenty-five miles away on similar grounds. The members of the Royal Union Lodge, at the time the oldest in the province, were far from keen in supporting the formation of a province. Two previous attempts to petition for the formation of the province in 1861 and 1863 had faltered.⁵² Although the lodge ultimately supported the proposal, it was with a certain degree of antipathy. This resulted in members of the lodge not receiving what they would have considered as appropriate reward in the first tranche of provincial ranks. This led to further dissent and resulted in those members who had been in favour of the establishment of a province to break away and become founders of Unity Lodge No. 1637. Needless to say, for the first few years relations between the two lodges remained somewhat strained. There was however by late 1868 sufficient momentum for the establishment of a Provincial Grand Lodge, and a sub-committee composed of representatives of the eight 'Middlesex' lodges was formed to petition the Grand Master. Agreement from each of the eight lodges was secured, no mean feat since a majority of members in each lodge had to agree and sign a petition leading to a formal petition on behalf of all eight lodges being submitted to the Grand Master in January 1869. The petition was comprehensive, running to over 2,500 words,⁵³ and contained details, such as comparisons of other provinces, that would only have been available to someone who had ready access to information held in the office of the Grand Secretary. Little had become a founder, and the first Secretary, of Villiers Lodge No. 1194 in 1867, and there is no doubt that had had a substantial influence and input. Unusually, at least in England as opposed to Scotland, a second petition followed on the news of the success of the former, recommending to the Grand Master the appointment of Colonel Francis Burdett as the first Provincial Grand Master, the prayer of which was granted.

On the morning of Saturday 22 January 1870 at the Clarence Hotel in Teddington⁵⁴ the consecration took place of Burdett Lodge No. 1293. The Director of Ceremonies for the consecration was Robert Wentworth Little and the first Master Colonel Francis Burdett. Some commentators have suggested that the reason was to qualify Burdett for the office of Provincial Grand Master.⁵⁵ The *Book of Constitutions* of the time

⁵² A. Beaver, *Middlesex Matters – A history of 125 years of Middlesex Freemasonry 1870-1995*, (London: Provincial Grand Lodge of Middlesex, 1995), 30.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 32-36. Beaver provides a very helpful transcription of the original manuscript, held in the Library and Museum of Freemasonry, GBR 1991 LA 1/2/132.

⁵⁴ Conveniently located next to the train station with a direct connection to London.

⁵⁵ Beaver, 37

makes no such stipulation in respect of the Provincial Grand Master. It is likely that it was the requirement that the Deputy Provincial Grand Master and other Provincial Grand Officers should be Past Masters, subscribing members of a lodge within the province and be resident within the province. The last requirement was a difficulty from the inception of the province up to the turn of the century, requiring regular requests for dispensations from Grand Lodge for as many as twelve provincial officers each year,⁵⁶ including Little himself who was appointed as the first Provincial Grand Secretary.

Little proved to be a conscientious and effective provincial Secretary. He would have been responsible for drafting the first set of provincial by-laws that included a clause that the Provincial Grand Secretary should have his expenses met for undertaking such duties as visiting other Provincial Grand Lodges.⁵⁷ It was no great surprise given the close relationship between the Craft and the Royal Arch that the establishment of the Provincial Grand Chapter of Middlesex followed shortly after in 1872 with Little being appointed as the first Scribe Ezra (Secretary). His ritual abilities have never been doubted, and of the eleven lodges consecrated in Middlesex between 1870 and 1875 Little acted as Consecrating Officer on no less than eleven occasions,⁵⁸ even though Francis Burdett was present at several of them in his capacity as Provincial Grand Master. The situation was echoed in the Royal Arch with Little consecrating four of the six chapters formed between 1873 and 1877.⁵⁹

Little was rewarded for his not inconsiderable efforts on behalf of the province by his appointment as Provincial Senior Grand Warden, and Second Grand Principal in the Craft and Royal Arch respectively in 1875. Serving again as Provincial Grand Secretary and Provincial Scribe Ezra for the year 1876, he was appointed as Deputy Provincial Grand Master in 1877, the year before his death in 1878.

The Mark – St Mark's Lodge No. 1

The London Bon Accord Mark Lodge was established under the auspices of Bon Accord Chapter of Aberdeen and the Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons of Eng-

⁵⁶ The cost of a dispensation was 2 guineas (£180 itm) for a Deputy Provincial Grand Master and Provincial Wardens, and 1 guinea for other Provincial Officers. The original applications and correspondence for various years between 1870 and 1904 are held in the Library and Museum of Freemasonry Ref: GBR 1991 LA 1/2/132 A20979

⁵⁷ Op. Cit. A. Beaver, Bylaw IV, 45

⁵⁸ May 1870, Acacia Lodge No. 1309; 11 April 1870, Harrow Lodge No. 1310; 16 July 1870, Lebanon Lodge No. 1326; 8 March 1873, Campbell Lodge No. 1415; 1 July 1873, Era Lodge No. 1423; 18 February 1874, Thames Valley Lodge No. 1460; 30 May 1874, Felix Lodge No. 1494; 5 November 1874, Sir Francis Burdett Lodge No. 1503; 15 October 1874, Hemming Lodge No. 1512; 26 June 1875, Abercorn Lodge No. 1549; 6 November 1875, Elliot Lodge No. 1567.

⁵⁹ 11 November 73, Royal Chapter No. 778; 26 June 74, Bard of Avon Chapter No. 2381; 16 April 75, Burdett Chapter No. 2163; 4 October 77, Jersey Chapter No. 1237.

land and Wales (GLMMM) was established on 23 June 1856. The detailed circumstances surrounding the establishment of both Bon Accord Mark Lodge and the GLMMM are well documented and beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say the move did not meet with the approval of the Supreme Grand Chapter of Scotland (SGCS) which adopted an antagonistic stance against both Bon Accord and the newly formed GLMMM, with which it was not finally reconciled until 1879. A direct consequence of this opposition was the Scottish Supreme Grand Chapter chartering Mark lodges of its own in England, a practice it continued until as late as 1875. St Mark's Lodge No. 1 was constituted in such circumstances by the SGSC in London on 12 July 1856 as No. 1 in the Scottish Constitution. Initially it flourished, bringing in some 71 candidates between 1856 and 1857, when it appears to have become moribund. Little was either asked or offered to orchestrate a takeover of St Marks Lodge No. 1. In 1867 he became a joining member, was installed as the first Master and petitioned for the lodge to transfer to the GLMMM. In that same year twenty new members, including William Beach and Frederick Binckes, Grand Master and Grand Secretary respectively, joined St Mark's; of the eighteen others fifteen were members of the RCC whose entire membership at that time stood at forty-five. The lodge previously numbered No. 1 in Scotland became No. 24 in the English Constitution, but Little, who was appointed Secretary of the lodge in 1868, successfully petitioned for the lodge to be re-numbered again as No. 1 in the English Constitution in 1869. His endeavours on behalf of the Mark degree did not go unnoticed by Binckes, and in 1874 Little received the senior first appointment of Grand Master Overseer in Mark Grand Lodge.

Royal Ark Mariner

Little's involvement in this degree occurs as early as 30 April 1870, when a notice appeared in *The Freemason*, under the heading 'Ark Mariners', inviting all Mark Masters 'desirous of receiving this old degree . . . to attend at the George Hotel, Aldermanbury at 6 o'clock on Monday the 2nd May'. The subsequent report that also appeared in *The Freemason* makes no mention of the fact that the meeting took place during a 'call-off' of a Meeting of St Mark's Lodge No.1 when 'A Royal Ark Lodge was then formally opened, under the authority of Most Worshipful Brother Robert Wentworth Little in the Chair as Past Noah, by virtue of a Warrant granted to members of the Red Cross Order by M.W. Bro Robert Gill in 1796, and numbered 1 on the roll of the Royal Ark Fraternity – the said Warrant being attached to the Warrant of the St. Mark's Lodge No. 1 of Mark Masters, by Bro. Little Past Master.'⁶⁰ Almost needless to say there is no documentary evidence to substantiate Little's claim regarding the warrant of 1796 and likewise the warrant of 1793

⁶⁰ Minutes of St. Mark's Lodge of Mark Masters No. 1, 2 May 1870, Folio 68

under which John Dorrington was acting, having claimed to have succeeded as Grand Master of the Order, or Grand Commander Noah, as he preferred to be termed, in 1816, under a warrant dated 1793. It also begs the issue as to why a warrant dated 1796 should take precedence over one supposedly dated 1793.⁶¹

At the meeting of Mark Grand Lodge on 31 May 1870 there had been some lengthy discussion arising from the report of the Mark General Board regarding the possible resuscitation of the so called 'Old Chain' degrees of 'Ark', 'Link', and 'Wrestle' and the introduction of the Most Excellent Masters degree. Two reasons were given for their incorporation within the Mark: the first as expressed by Binckes, as Grand Secretary: '. . . that for some time brethren had been anxious that of these degrees the 'Ark' in particular should be worked more generally . . .'; and the second articulated by Portal, Grand Master, that: '. . . it had come to his knowledge that it was likely that the Ark degree would be worked in a Separate jurisdiction, and he thought it exceedingly unadvisable that supreme Jurisdictions should be multiplied . . .' As a consequence a committee was established, which included Little as a representative of Mark Grand Lodge, to investigate further.⁶² It is a measure of the regard that Little was held by both Portal and Binckes that he was invited to participate actively in the work of the committee. The fact that Little was also invited to participate in the formation of the Royal and Select Masters the following year is an indication that he was seen as a safe pair of hands by the Mark hierarchy.

Portal and the other members of the Board did not lose much time in becoming Royal Ark Mariners. On 14 June 1870, as reported in *The Freemason*,⁶³ Portal and Beach together with a number of other senior members of Mark Grand Lodge were elevated at what is described as a combined meeting presided over by Edwards of the most Antient [*sic*] and Honourable Fraternity of Royal Ark Mariners held at Masons' Hall, Masons' avenue, E.C. . . . by the authority of the Grand Master of Mark Masons (Portal) and the Grand Commander of Royal Ark Mariners (Edwards).

The event generated considerable correspondence in the Masonic press. The official line from Mark Grand Lodge was that a meeting of Old Kent Lodge of Mark Master Masons had taken place that had had the power to carry out the degree of Royal Ark Mariner under its Time Immemorial status. While Mark Grand Lodge was grateful for

⁶¹ Having been dormant for a considerable number of years, on 13 May, the Grand Lodge of Royal Ark Mariners, met again for the second time within eleven days, this time at Dorrington's home in Bow Road. At that meeting Morton Edwards was invested as Deputy Grand Noah and Grand Scribe of the Order by Dorrington. It should borne in mind that by this stage Dorrington was extremely elderly, and Edwards is attending only his second meeting as a Royal Ark Mariner. By July that year Edwards has assumed the role of Grand Commander or Grand Commander Noah.

⁶² Minutes, GLMMM, 31 May 1870

⁶³ *The Freemason*, 18 June 1870, 286-287

the assistance rendered by the members of the GLRAM in elevating the members of Mark Grand Lodge, it was understood that it was on a 'without prejudice' basis insofar as the ultimate control of the Ark Mariner Degree was concerned.⁶⁴ The duplicity that went on behind the scenes as far as both parties are concerned beggars belief.

Matters were brought to a head when at the meeting of Mark Grand Lodge in June 1871 the Mark unilaterally took the Royal Ark Mariner under its protection.⁶⁵ Given the diametrically opposing views of Edwards and Portal, who saw the control of the RAM in such very different terms, it is all the more surprising that an agreement or 'Articles of Union' was agreed by the representatives of the two sides in July 1871 with Little as one of the three signatories for Mark Grand Lodge.⁶⁶

Two days later Binckes, the Grand Secretary of the Mark, reneged on the agreement, giving rise to speculation that it was never the intention for the Mark to come to an accommodation with Edwards and the GLRAM, whereby GLRAM continued as an entity albeit under the Grand Master of the Mark for the time being.

Royal and Select Masters (RSM)

Robert Wentworth Little also played an active part in the establishment of the RSM in England, no doubt because of the relationship with Frederick Binckes, the Grand Secretary of Mark Grand Lodge. In February 1871 Mark Grand Lodge made overtures to the Grand Council of Royal and Select Masters in New York with a view to introducing the order into England. On 21 July of that year under authority from the Grand Council of New York a number of English Royal Arch Masons were inducted into the order, and four RSM Councils were formed. A further meeting was held on 21 August 1871 when at a regular Assembly of Mark Council No. 4 Jackson Chase, the representative from New York acting as Thrice Illustrious Master (TIM), and Frederick Binckes as Recorder, Robert Wentworth Little and three other candidates were admitted. Following this Little was installed as TIM of Constantine Council No. 2.⁶⁷

The original Minute Book of the Royal and Select Masters does not record any meeting of the order taking place between 1871 and 1873. However it would appear that at a meeting on 11 September 1871 of St Mark's Lodge No. 24, of which Little was Secretary at the time, a regular Mark meeting was 'called off' and a meeting of RSM Constantine Council was opened by Little as TIM, with the Revd William Benjamin Church as Deputy Master (DM) and Henry Massey – a member of Southwark Mark Lodge – as

⁶⁴ *The Freemason*, 25 June 1870, 308

⁶⁵ Minutes, GLMMM, 8 June 1871

⁶⁶ *The Freemason*, 12 August 1871, 10-11; The GLMMM were represented by Frederick Binckes, James Stevens and Robert Wentworth-Little.

⁶⁷ Minutes, Grand Council of Royal and Select Masters of England, 1873, Archives GLMMM

Principal Conductor of the Work (PCW). At the RSM meeting Henry Levander was obligated and installed as PCW. In addition ten companions were inducted in all four degrees of the order, six of whom were members of the RCC.⁶⁸ The presumption has to be that as no meeting of Constantine had taken place on 21 August other than the installation of Little, the opportunity was taken to regularize matters by obligating and installing Levander as PCW and bringing in a number new members.

The matter of the establishment of a Grand Council in England was not resolved until 1873, when initially on 2 June Frederick Binckes, acting under the authority of the Grand Council of New York,⁶⁹ constituted and dedicated the Grand Masters Council No. 1 and Macdonald Council No. 3 and then installed the respective TIMs.

A further meeting was held on 25 July 1873, when Binckes constituted and dedicated Constantine Council No. 2 and installed Robert Wentworth Little as TIM, with Henry Levander and the Revd William Benjamin Church as DM and PCW respectively. Binckes then having temporarily vacated the chair, Little returned the favour by installing Binckes as TIM of Mark Council No. 4. Finally on 29 July 1873, when, with Little present in his capacity as Master of Constantine Council No. 2, matters were satisfactorily concluded, the Grand Council of Royal, Select and Super Excellent Masters of England and Wales and the Colonies and Dependencies of the British Crown was duly and legally formed and constituted, with the Revd George Portal installed as Grand Master and Frederick Binckes appointed as Grand Recorder.⁷⁰

The first four councils had a somewhat chequered history. Until 1877 all four councils tended to work as one under the banner of Grand Master's Council No. 1. After that date Grand Master's continued to meet regularly, but Constantine No. 2 became dormant after the death of Robert Wentworth Little in 1878 and was revived in 1886. Macdonald No. 3 also fell dormant until 1893, when it was consecrated again by Matier, whose name it adopted. Similarly Mark Council No. 4, having become dormant, was resuscitated under the auspices of the Earl of Euston, then Deputy Grand Master, in July 1888. It still bears his name and membership is restricted to the personal invitation of the Grand Master for the time being.

The Ancient and Archaeological Order of Druids (AAOD)

Little's desire to search for hidden mysteries and the 'recovery of ancient wisdom' within a closed circle of intimates encouraged him to establish The Ancient and Archaeologi-

⁶⁸ Minutes, St. Mark's Lodge No 1, 11 September 1871, Folio 86-87; the members of the RCC on that evening were Cubbit, Hubbard, Yeoman, Finney, Boyd and Parker; the other candidates were Davison, Bayliss and Gilbert.

⁶⁹ Minutes, Grand Council of Royal and Select Masters of the State of New York, 6 February 1872, p9

⁷⁰ Minutes, Grand Council of Royal and Select Masters of England, 1873, Archives GLMMM

cal Order of Druids, aimed at studying the connections between Freemasonry and the Druidic tradition.⁷¹ No records survive to provide an explanation for establishing this new order, Little's final constitution of a new body at the fringes of Masonry. Recollections by Little about the history of the order stated that it was formed on 13 July 1874 at 17 Great James Street, Bedford Row, London, premises which also hosted SRIA meetings, for 'the purpose of preserving amongst Masons archaeologically inclined not only the ritual of Modern Druidism, but such data as might from time to time be brought to light respecting the rites, customs, ceremonies and system generally of the ancient Druids.'⁷²

The founders included Little, W. Hyde Pullen and Thomas Massa, with early members named as H. C. Levander, J. G. Marsh, W. R. Woodman, T. W. White, H. A. Dubois, the Revd P. M. Holden, J. Lewis Thomas, W. Smale and Alfred Smith. At a general meeting held on 31 July Colonel Francis Burdett, George Kenning, C. F. Hogard, J. C. Parkinson, Thomas Cubitt, E. S. Norris, C. Horsley and K. R. H. Mackenzie were involved. Little's friends H. G. Buss and E. H. Thiellay were admitted members and six lodges formed with Grand Lodge officers installed.⁷³ Perhaps Little aimed to establish a Masonic body to rival the influence of the Ancient Order of Druids, a benefit and friendly society founded in London in 1781, which had over 55,000 members meeting in 955 lodges by 1871.⁷⁴ Alternatively he sought to flatter the Prince of Wales, elected Grand Master in December 1874, by referring to an ancient British culture.

Little demonstrated an interest in Druidic initiation traditions in a series of articles published in *The Rosicrucian* in the late 1860s, entitled Ancient and Modern Mysteries, concerning the history of various world religions.⁷⁵ Excerpts were reproduced for general Masonic consumption in the magazine *The Freemason* produced by his fellow SRIA member, George Kenning.⁷⁶ They reveal how tropes associated with the eighteenth and nineteenth century Druidic revival, promulgated by William Augustus Russel and Godfrey Higgins, influenced Little. In another article concerning the Druidic

⁷¹ R. Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe: the history of the Druids in Britain*, Yale University Press, 2009, p.342

⁷² *The Rosicrucian and Masonic Record*, Vol 1 No. 2 New Series, 1 April 1876, The Ancient and Archaeological Order of Druids, History Part I, pp.82-87 & No. 3 New Series 1 July 1876, The Ancient and Archaeological Order of Druids, History Part II, pp.107-115

⁷³ See *The Rosicrucian and Masonic Record* above.

⁷⁴ R. Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe*, 318.

⁷⁵ G. Higgins, *The Celtic Druids*, 1829 and *Anacalypsis*, a work on the history of religions, published posthumously in 1836; W. A. Russel, *A New and Authentic History of England from the Most Remote Period of Genuine Historical Evidence to the Present Important Crisis containing an Interesting Chronicle of the Monarchs*, 1779; R. W. Little, 'Ancient and Modern Mysteries', *The Rosicrucian*, No. I, July 1868, 15 and No. V, October 1869, 66-7.

⁷⁶ *The Freemason*, Volume II, 30 October 1869, 1.

origin of standing stones in Penrith churchyard Little referred to lectures on the Celtic mysteries by Dr George Oliver.⁷⁷

The first reference to Little's new order occurred in *The Rosicrucian and Masonic Record* for January 1875 with a quotation from Lord Lytton's poem *King Arthur* and lines from Russel's *History of England*.⁷⁸ Writing to F. G. Irwin that year, Kenneth R. H. Mackenzie stated: 'Druids. Don't have anything to do with Druids. It is only Little in another form and what information he has, he obtained from me. I paid some fees to the precious order and have never heard anything more of it.'⁷⁹ Two years later Kenneth R. H. Mackenzie stated that this order was

A quasi-Masonic body, reconstituted by Bro R Wentworth Little in October, 1874. It can hardly be said to be fairly launched as yet, no meetings having been held. Funds have, however, been collected for the purpose of fully investigating the Masonic claims of the Druids. Master Masons alone are admissible to this body, which, it is to be hoped, will show signs of vitality at some time not far distant.⁸⁰

Mackenzie, exhibiting a fit of pique, doubted the veracity of the order and informed Irwin that 'I don't think Little ever invented any ritual for the Druids – & what was done he got from notes made by me. I have heard nothing of any meeting. I know I paid a subscription and I was told the money was spent on a feed but I had none of it.'⁸¹

In 1886 the order changed its name to the Ancient Masonic Order of Druids. At that date about two-thirds of the non-Masonic members were expelled, some of whom formed a new society as the Ancient Archaeological Order of Druids (AAOD). They attempted to revive the old order but it ceased to meet, probably around 1900. The Ancient Order of Druids in America formed on 22 June 1912 is descended from the Ancient and Archaeological Order of Druids (AAOD). It is believed that the Ancient Masonic Order of Druids continues to meet in the early twenty-first century.⁸²

⁷⁷ *The Freemason*, Volume II, 20 March 1869, 4; G. Oliver, *The history of initiation in twelve lectures: a detailed account of the rites and ceremonies, doctrine and discipline, of all the secret and mysterious institutions of the ancient world*, 1829, 2nd Course, 'The Celtic Mysteries.'

⁷⁸ *The Rosicrucian and Masonic Record*, January 1875, 18–19.

⁷⁹ Letter K R H Mackenzie to F G Irwin, 3 May 1875, Mackenzie Irwin Correspondence, Library and Museum of Freemasonry, London

⁸⁰ *The Royal Masonic Cyclopaedia*, edited by K. R. H. Mackenzie, 1877, 165.

⁸¹ Letter K R H Mackenzie to F G Irwin, 28 February 1877, Mackenzie Irwin Correspondence, Library and Museum of Freemasonry, London

⁸² https://aoda.org/AODA_History.html *Historical notes on the Ancient Order of Druids in America* by Betty Jean McCloud Reeves, D.D., Past Grand Archdruid and John Michael Greer, Grand Archdruid.

Literary Pretensions

Little had literary pretensions. He submitted prose and verse contributions to Masonic periodicals and is best remembered as the lyricist of the Red Cross of Constantine song. As James Gannon stated in his vignette on Little, whom he described as ‘The Mystic’, ‘Our brother may emphatically be styled a literary Mason.’⁸³ An obituary commented that Little ‘had the pen of a learned as well as of a fluent writer.’⁸⁴ It is likely that his literary interests, fostered by a Protestant Irish education, encouraged Little to form the London Literary Union in c.1868, which met at the Freemasons’ Tavern. It had been founded for members of the Craft interested in the cause of literature or the press. At its annual meeting on 12 June 1869 Little delivered a paper ‘Literature in relation to fame’ as President.⁸⁵

Committee members included Dr William Robert Woodman, later a co-founder of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, Angelo John Lewis, a barrister of Erskine Chambers, 36 Lincoln’s Inn Fields, who wrote about magic under the pseudonym Professor Louis Hoffman, Dr Charles H. Rogers Harrison, MRCS, Honorary Secretary of the British Medical Association, and William Carpenter, author of theological and political works.⁸⁶ Masonic authors granted honorary fellowships of the London Literary Union included W. J. Hughan of Truro, F. G. Irwin of Bristol and John Yarker junior of Manchester. Honorary fellows included overseas Masonic luminaries, whom Little wished to cultivate, including the American printer and author Robert Macoy and his Kentucky friend, Rob Morris, co-founders of the Order of the Eastern Star.

The title of this social organization was changed to the Masonic Literary Union from 28 October 1870, and it was associated later with the activities of the SRIA. In addition Little was the co-editor with William Robert Woodman of the SRIA’s quarterly periodical, published as *The Rosicrucian* from 1868 to 1872, as *The Rosicrucian and Red Cross* from 1873 to 1874, and as *The Rosicrucian and Masonic Record* from 1875 to 1879. He continued to act in this capacity almost until his death, with increasing bouts of illness from 1877 delaying publication on several occasions.

While acting as co-editor of *The Rosicrucian* Little also served as editor for *The Freemason*, a new Masonic periodical published by his friend George Kenning, from its first edition on 13 March 1869 until 1873. Little contributed a series of articles based on the faiths of ancient civilizations that appeared in *The Rosicrucian* and was then re-published in Kenning’s *The Freemason* from October 1869 to June 1870. Little included

⁸³ *Masonic Portraits: a series of sketches of distinguished Brethren* by J[ames] G[annon], 1876, pp. 100-105 (Lib ref: BE 67 GAN)

⁸⁴ *The Freemason’s Chronicle*, 20 April 1878, 262.

⁸⁵ Reprinted in *The Rosicrucian and Masonic Record*, Vol 1 No. 8, New Series, 1 October 1877, 315-6.

⁸⁶ *The Freemason*, 26 June 1869, 2-3.

details about Islamic groups with esoteric beliefs in this series based on Thomas Keightley's *Secret Societies of the Middle Ages*, published in 1837.⁸⁷

A popular speaker, Little delivered orations when officiating at various consecrations.⁸⁸ Little contributed obituaries in both prose and verse to publications, such as *in memoriam* pieces for his friend, the author William Carpenter, who died on 2 April 1874, and verses commemorating Lord Lytton, who died on 18 January 1873, and the Earl of Shrewsbury and Talbot, who served as the Provincial Grand Master of Staffordshire and Great Prior of the Temple, who died on 11 May 1877.⁸⁹

In addition Little contributed poems to the Masonic press on various themes relating to Freemasonry, such as 'The pyramids at sunrise'; 'The Cross of Constantine'; 'Stanzas, for music'; 'Ode to the spirit of Freemasonry'; 'Silence and darkness'; 'The Masonic banner, inscribed to Commander Charles Scott RN JP' and 'Love and faith.'⁹⁰ He is best known for writing the lyrics to the Red Cross song 'Let's rally round the Standard', also referred to as 'The Red Cross Knight.'⁹¹ Set to music by Henry Parker, a lodge pianist, Provincial Grand Organist of Middlesex, Grand Organist of the Mark Grand Lodge and the Red Cross of Constantine, the song was published in c.1868 by George Kenning. Advertisements in *The Freemason*, which aimed to increase sales, mentioned 'the stirring verses of this song . . . linked to most appropriate music by this rising composer. We recommend our Red Cross and Templar friends to obtain the song, as both Orders claim an interest in the grand old flag of the Crusaders, to which it alludes.'⁹²

Personal Life

Little's will, proven at the Principal Probate Registry on 2 November 1878, lists his full name as Robert Cottrell Wellington Waterloo Little, otherwise Robert Wentworth Little. His father was Cottrell, Cottral or Cottroll Little, who was born in St Paul's parish, Dublin on 23 April 1792. Cottrell Little, who enlisted in 1805, was a colour sergeant in the 44th Regiment of Foot and served with distinction at Badajoz during the Peninsular War, at Waterloo, and in the East Indies. He was an out-pensioner at the Royal Hos-

⁸⁷ *A History of Conversion to Islam in the United States*, vol I, P. D. Bowen, 2015, Chapter 4, pp.134-135

⁸⁸ *The Rosicrucian*, vol I, 4-6 and *The Rosicrucian*, vol. IV, 47-50 (reprinted from *The Freemason*).

⁸⁹ Obituary of William Carpenter, *The Rosicrucian*, vol II, 103; 'In Memoriam, Lord Lytton died 18 January 1873', *The Rosicrucian*, Vol II, No. 1, 19; 'In Memoriam, The Earl of Shrewsbury and Talbot PGM Staffordshire, Great Prior of the Temple, died 11 May 1877', *The Rosicrucian and Masonic Record*, Vol 1 No. 7, New Series, 1 July 1877, 273.

⁹⁰ 'The pyramids at sunrise', *The Rosicrucian*, vol. I, 11; 'The Cross of Constantine', *The Rosicrucian*, vol. II, 23; 'Stanzas, for music', *The Rosicrucian*, vol XI, 129; 'Ode to the spirit of Freemasonry', *The Rosicrucian*, vol XIV, 180; 'Silence and darkness', *The Rosicrucian*, vol II, No. 4, 62; 'The Masonic banner, inscribed to Commander Charles Scott RN JP', *The Rosicrucian and Masonic Record*, Vol 1 No. 5, New Series, 1 January 1877, 209; 'Love and faith', *The Rosicrucian and Masonic Record*, Vol 1 No. 8, New Series, 1 October 1877, 314.

⁹¹ 'A Red Cross Song', *The Rosicrucian*, Vol. IV, 52.

⁹² *The Freemason*, August 1874

pital, Chelsea, from 24 September 1826, residing at Strabane, Ireland. Various Masonic writers or obituaries provide 10 August 1838 as a date of birth for Robert Little.⁹³

According to sketchy information provided by Little to friends, later incorporated in eulogies and obituaries, he would have us believe that he was educated to enter the Church of Ireland by tutors the Revd Benjamin Gibson and D. P. Sullivan.⁹⁴ It is alleged that he attended Mountjoy Academy in Dublin, a near contemporary of Colonel Shadwell H. Clerke, who was Grand Secretary from 1880 to 1891.⁹⁵ It is stated that after school Little served as a civil service clerk in the emigration office, Dublin.

The militia stores provided the base for the Royal Elthorne Light Infantry Militia or 5th Middlesex Light Infantry Militia, raised in 1853. As the militia was stationed in Ireland from 1857 to 1859, there is a possibility that after the death of her husband, and requiring employment, Jane brought her son to Uxbridge. While stationed in Uxbridge Little met Eliza, the daughter of Catherine Ann and Thomas Burton, a librarian at the public rooms of the Uxbridge and Hillingdon Literary and Mechanics' Institute. A marriage between Robert Wentworth Little and Eliza Burton took place by special licence at St Andrew's Church, Thornhill Square, Barnsbury, Islington, on 25 July 1863.⁹⁶ Her mother, Catherine Thompson, is not listed as a witness, perhaps indicating an estrangement. The Burtons were members of a Congregational church in Uxbridge that may have caused difficulties for Eliza marrying Little, who was staunch Church of Ireland. Eliza is stated as living at Pembroke Terrace, Caledonian Road, and Little at Winchester Street, Clerkenwell. It is not known where the couple lived after their marriage and no offspring appear to have resulted. Additional research may establish where the couple were living, before Little provided 7 St Martin's Road, Stockwell, as an address on joining Whittington Lodge in March 1867.

⁹³ [James] G[annon], *Masonic Portraits: a series of sketches of distinguished Brethren*, 1876; Harold V B Voorhis, *The Order of the Red Cross of Constantine*, 1963.

⁹⁴ The Rev Benjamin or Barton Gibson MA: Gannon states Benjamin but Voorhis, Barton and a tutor, Mr D P Sullivan. Rev Benjamin Gibson (1821 – 1907), educated at Trinity College Dublin, graduated 1845, obtained Divinity Test 1847 and MA in 1856. After serving as a deacon in Tuam, he was curate at St John's Church, Dublin 1847 – 1850 and St Mary's Church, Dublin 1850 – 1865. He was a chaplain at the Rotunda Hospital 1861 – 1880; Smithfield Convict Depot 1867; curate at St Thomas' Dublin, 1869 and chaplain at the Mageough Home 1880 – 1907. He was the son of Solomon Gibson, a saddler; he married Elizabeth Anna (died 30 April 1891), the daughter of Henry Fisher, MD of the Royal Infirmary, Phoenix Park, Dublin. Children were Henry Fisher and Sidney Anna Gibson. He was a member of Duke of York Lodge, No. 25, Dublin, initiated on 17 February 1866. Gibson served as Grand Chaplain of the G L of Ireland between 1887 and 19 Feb 1907. See obituary published in Annual Report of the Grand Lodge of Ireland for 1907.

⁹⁵ May have attended Mountjoy School and Trinity College, Dublin. According to Little, Colonel Shadwell H Clerke, later Grand Secretary, was two years his senior. From Bandon, Co Cork, Clerke attended the same school but left to join the army aged 16. After school, Little served as a civil service clerk in the Emigration Office, Dublin.

⁹⁶ Ancestry.com. London, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754-1921 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010. London Metropolitan Archives, Saint Andrew, Barnsbury, Register of marriages, P83/AND1, Item 007.

Little provided this address for Masonic purposes until August 1867 when he stated his address as 7 Gilbert Road, Kennington. By the 1871 census, Robert had returned to 7 St Martin's Road, living with his wife and his widowed mother in law, Catherine Thompson, noted as 'annuitant house, property, dividends etc'.⁹⁷ As a widow with means it is possible that Catherine owned several properties, renting a property to her daughter and son-in-law. Catherine died in 1886. Eliza, who outlived her husband by many years but did not remarry, continued to live at 14 St Martin's Road, Stockwell, with a servant and died in her 80th year at Lambeth Infirmary on 19 August 1918. She died without making a will and her estate went to the Crown.

Several writers from the mid-1870s noted Little's declining health. He continued to take an active role in Freemasonry, serving as the Consecrating Officer for new lodges and chapters up to October 1877. By the following spring he was unable to fulfil all his Masonic duties, and tuberculosis claimed him on 12 April 1878. He was buried at mid-day in a plot at Camberwell Old Cemetery, Forest Hill Road, Peckham; the mourners in a private carriage included his friends William Dodd, Alfred Albert Pendlebury, Dr William Robert Woodman, Bro. Allen and Francis Robert Whitcombe Hedges. Alfred Albert Pendlebury and William Dodd were the executors of his will and the latter acted as Secretary for the Wentworth Little Memorial Fund launched on 5 July 1878.

The memorial fund aimed to raise funds for a memorial stone and an annuity for his widow. Despite the committee making widespread appeals, donations did not reflect Little's popularity and dedication to the Masonic cause. In the event it raised a total of £251 18s 6d. After deducting £37 9s for a memorial stone, the fund was split between an annuity for Mrs Little and £100 sent to the Royal Masonic Institution for Girls for investing to create a Wentworth Little Memorial Prize of three Guineas.

Epilogue

It would be true to say that Robert Wentworth Little was a complex character of great personal ability who at a relatively young age and against the odds created three Masonic orders, two of which are still flourishing today. He was an able administrator and, at least until his latter years, a talented ritualist and wordsmith, at ease with both organizing and undertaking ceremonial procedure. His achievements are all the more when one considers that he began his working life as a clerk and ended it as the Secretary of one of the Masonic charities.

Although multi-talented he was also an enigma and did not help himself or his various causes by so often acting in a duplicitous and unilateral manner. The extent of his deceit is such that today it is almost impossible to take at face value anything that he said

⁹⁷ Census Returns of England and Wales, 1871. Kew, Surrey, England: The National Archives of the UK (TNA): Public Record Office (PRO), 1871, Class: RG10; Piece: 677; Folio: 169; Page: 32; GSU roll: 823330

or did. It is sad to relate that the passage of time has shown that that these actions were not only counter productive but wholly unnecessary.

Little's desire to maintain personal control of all administrative functions and a lack of willingness to delegate meant that as his involvement increased, especially with ceremonial matters, and as his health deteriorated, he was unable to deal satisfactorily with the day to day affairs of his various organizations. It is not insignificant that both the RCC and SRIA suffered in terms of maintaining membership levels and took some time to recover their former rates of development in the years immediately prior to and following his death.

Little was able to take advantage of the fact that there was a void to be filled with Freemasons looking to expand their interest in orders beyond the Craft and particularly those with a Christian basis. Both the RCC and the SRIA succeeded because they struck the right Masonic chord. He was particularly able when it came to the art of networking, which he used to great effect in securing at one level the support of senior Freemasons to take up leading roles, and at another the services of enthusiastic brethren willing to undertake the work within individual units. His contribution and assistance was appreciated and actively sought by senior figures in the other orders of Freemasonry.

Little engendered incredible loyalty in a small number of influential followers who stood by him, but by the same token he generated a considerable level of antipathy in his adversaries. To his credit, he managed to keep going; his achievements were accomplished without the wholehearted support of the Masonic establishment whose recognition he actively sought, and he must have been disappointed never to have gained Grand Rank in the Craft.

Whilst it is difficult to accept or agree with his methodology one must acknowledge the debt owed to him in being the progenitor of two very significant and important world-wide orders of Freemasonry: The Red Cross of Constantine and the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia. As such they represent his lasting legacy.

