

The Loyal Toast– ‘*To the Queen and the Craft*’

*And to his liege lord the king,
Be true to him over all things.*

The oldest Masonic document in existence, the Regius Manuscript or Halliwell Manuscript, which is dated c.1390 and now deposited in the British Museum, contains these lines in the Fourteenth Point.

The Old Charges of the fifteenth century called on Masons to be true to God, true liegemen to the King, and true to the Craft. The Charges of a Freemason printed in the Constitution of our Grand Lodge (Part VI – 2006) contain this statement: “*kings and princes in every age have been disposed to encourage the Craftsmen on account of their peaceableness and loyalty.*” Thus, loyalty to the Sovereign has ever been and still is an essential principle of Freemasonry.

The custom of toasting at Masonic banquets is a tradition of long standing, an inherited ritual observed in the early 1700’s and probably before. [i] First place is always given to The Loyal Toast – ‘*To the Queen and the Craft.*’ The significance of the united toast is that loyalty to the Sovereign is an essential principle of Freemasonry. It has been suggested that: “*The custom of toasts at our festive meetings is so old as to have become a social landmark – it should not be lightly abandoned or tampered with to any serious extent. ... We should retain the combined form by all means, and we should do so whether the reigning Monarch is or is not a Freemason.*” [ii]

Many members of the Royal Family in Great Britain have been active Freemasons and several Royal Dukes have served as the Grand Master. Frederick Lewis, Prince of Wales, eldest son of George II, became a Mason in 1737. HRH The Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII (Grand Master 1875-1901), King Edward VIII, who after the Abdication became the Duke of Windsor was an active Freemason (initiated 1919), and on his accession in 1936, he was appointed Past Grand Master. His brother King George VI was initiated as Prince Albert in 1919 and was installed as Grand Master Mason of Scotland in 1936 and appointed Past Grand Master of the UGLE on his accession in 1937. On several occasions he testified to the beneficial influence of Freemasonry in his life. The present Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of England (from 1967) is HRH the Duke of Kent, Prince (initiated 1963). HRH Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, was initiated in 1952.

When King George VI died in the early hours of February 5, 1952, he was succeeded by his daughter, who was subsequently crowned Queen Elizabeth II on June 2, 1953. The question arose, should the Loyal Toast couple a lady with the Craft? Bro. Harry Carr provided a definitive answer: “*When this toast is given, the Lodge is not bestowing Masonic honours on a lady, but displaying its proper and loyal duty to the Crown.*” [iii] During her long reign (1937-1901), Queen Victoria was designated ‘Patroness’ or ‘Protectoress’ of the Masonic Order. Her father, the Duke of Kent and her son, Prince Edward, both served as Grand Masters.

Some of our most cherished ritual in the General Charge recited at Installation owes its origin to a toast to the Queen and the Craft given at a Ladies Night held at the Town Hall in Galt (now Cambridge) by V.W. Bro. Otto Klotz when he was Worshipful Master of Alma Lodge No. 72 on the Feast of St. John the Evangelist, December 27, 1864. After a laudatory reference to Queen Victoria as “*that Sovereign who unquestionably is the noblest, the best of all the monarchs that*

ever held the sceptre of Great Britain; loved and revered by all her millions of subjects,” he addressed his remarks to the ladies: “In respect to the Craft which according to Masonic custom is coupled with the Queen, it may nor be inopportune to give a few explanations regarding the so-called secret and mysterious Brotherhood, the Freemasons, especially so since the Brethren are this evening honoured with the presence of so many ladies, whose amiable company they do not often enjoy in this manner. To the ladies, therefore, I shall endeavour to explain what Freemasonry is – and in what the real secrets of the Craft consist.” Among the “few explanations” that followed, the fourth and fifth paragraphs of the General Charge relating to “A Freemason’s Lodge ...” and “The object of meeting in the Lodge ...” were included. [iv]

Here’s a health unto Her Majesty Elizabeth II was crowned ‘Queen of Canada’ and is Canada’s official head of state through which the entire authority of the government is set and in whose name laws are enacted. The Grand Master’s Address to the 127th Annual Communication of Grand Lodge in 1982 given by M.W. Bro. Howard O. Polk, made reference to “*an information release under date of January 6, 1911, reciting the significance of the time-honoured Toast in which it established that the Toast is an ancient usage and custom of ancient Freemasonry*” and reminded the Brethren that, “*Her Majesty the Queen is still the Queen of Canada*” and concluded, “*It is, therefore, incumbent upon us to be very cautious not to take any steps, however trivial they may appear, which might give semblance to the idea that the indissoluble connection of the Queen and the Craft is not subsisting as it was in the days of our forefathers. Therefore, the Toast should be continued, unaltered and undisturbed.*” [v]

In our Grand Jurisdiction, protocol directs that the Loyal Toast is followed immediately by the singing of the Royal Anthem – God Save the Queen. [vi] ‘*God Save the Queen*’ was officially designated as the Royal Anthem by the Canadian Parliament in 1967, Canada’s centennial year. Bro. Harry Carr reminds us that, “*It is not necessary to make a speech extolling the royal virtues, and any such embroidery is considered to be improper.*” [vii] A similar direction was issued by the Lord Chamberlain’s Office in London and reprinted by Quattor Coronati Lodge No. 2076: “*It is incorrect to indulge in elaborate phrasing.*” [viii]

The question arises when ladies and guests are present at banquets and receptions, should non-Masons participate in the Loyal Toast? Common courtesy demands that when any toast is proposed, **all present**, except the person or persons whose health is being drunk, should stand, raise the glass in salutation and drink in honour of the person or persons designated in the toast. The ladies present also recognize our Sovereign Lady as the Queen of Canada, and they honour the Craft by their presence. Therefore, the Chairman, Master of Ceremonies, or the Brother proposing the Loyal Toast should simply say: “*Please rise, the Queen and the Craft*” without further words or actions added. It is customary that water is used for this toast. It is improper and incorrect to clink glasses.

*Happy and glorious,
Long to reign over us,
GOD SAVE THE QUEEN*

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for The Curriculum Group

The Committee on Masonic Education

31 January 2007 To commemorate the 55th anniversary of the Queen’s accession to the throne

[i] Jones, Bernard E. **Freemasons' Guide and Compendium.** London: George G. Harrap & Company Limited, revised edition 1956. p. 479.

[ii] Campbell-Everden, William Preston. **Freemasonry and Its Etiquette.** New York: Gramercy Books, Random House Value Publishing, Inc., 2001. pp. 348-353.

[iii] Carr, Harry. **The Freemason At Work.** Lewis Masonic, 7th revised edition, 1992. p. 143.

[iv] We acknowledge with gratitude the assistance of M.W. Bro. C. Edwin Drew, Past Grand Master and Custodian of the Work, in supplying the full text of the Toast given by V.W. Bro. Otto Klotz (1817-1892) Hon. PGM (1885).

[v] Proceedings 1982, pp. 32 & 32.

[vi] The Masonic Manual. revised edition p. 55.

[vii] Carr, Harry. **The Freemason At Work.** Lewis Masonic, 7th revised edition, 1992. p. 171.