

When Templar Swords Clash

by Sir Knight James A. Marples, VII° , 32°

The following is a presentation Sir Knight Marples made before a group of Masonic scholars in Nebraska.

When people see an Honor Guard composed of Knights Templar wearing their plumed chapeaux and uniforms, along with the beautiful swords, which they thrust upward and outward to form a peak or arch, the public sees the brightest and best use of those ceremonial swords. It is regarded as a high honor to walk under an "Arch of Steel." That protective canopy serves as a reminder of the protection, distinction, and eloquence that Templars have possessed from the days of the Crusades to the present time. And Templar drills when done with precision illustrate the unity of joint efforts put forth in a common cause. Perhaps, that is why the Templars of old were so good at putting forth precision efforts of feeding the hungry, caring for the widow, educating the orphan, relieving the distressed and homeless, and burying the dead.

And modern Templary, being at an upper level of York Rite Masonry, has been accustomed to operating with a chain-of-command with regard to its governance, so this story of Templars clashing may seem out of character.

The Scottish Rite was originally smaller than the York Rite. Its membership was (and still is) composed of men, some of whom are Knights Templar in the York Rite, including myself. Of course, both Rites have numbers of men who have not yet affiliated with "the other Rite."

On most occasions, Knights Templar literally carried their swords with admirable ability measured by Justice, supported by tactfulness, and restrained by mercy, but it was a combination of misunderstanding and some petty jealousy which caused a rift in 1866-1867 between Sir Knight George Frank Gauley and Sir Knight Albert Pike, and that is the subject of this study.

Sir Knights Pike and Gauley merely had a clash of ideas and thoughts, but figuratively speaking - as if it were a clash of figurative swords-it cut and slashed fierce wounds along two vital arteries in the Masonic body as a whole. The wounds developed a scar and seemingly healed, but I maintain that we can accomplish more healing TODAY if we will go back in time and see the evolution of this catfight.

George Frank Gauley of St. Louis, Missouri, was an energetic Mason. He had been active in nearly all the York Rite bodies of his area, and in 1866-1868 he was serving as the top officer in Templar Masonry in Missouri. He held the fine office of R.E. Grand Commander of the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of Missouri.

Albert Pike was then living in Memphis, Tennessee. He was born and raised in Massachusetts and had attended Harvard University. He had explored the American Southwest, had served in the Confederacy as a general, and had lived in a multitude of domiciles ranging from Little Rock, Arkansas, to New Orleans, Louisiana, to Memphis, Tennessee, to Charleston, South Carolina, and lastly to Washington, DC. He had joined the Masonic Lodge and Royal Arch Chapter in Arkansas. He was Knighted a Templar in Washington, DC, and soon after received the 4th to 32nd degrees in the Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry in Charleston, South Carolina, at the hands of another Templar, Sir Knight Albert G. Mackey, who was a 33° in the A.A.S.R. Then, Pike hurried back to Arkansas, where he was the first Eminent Commander of Hugh de Payens Commandery No. 1 at Little Rock; he also assisted at the formation of the Grand Council of Cryptic Masons of Arkansas.

By 1866 Gouley was "Grand Commander" of a State York Rite body. By 1866 Albert Pike was "Sovereign Grand Commander" of a national Scottish Rite body, having attained that office January 2, 1859, after less than six years of Scottish Rite membership. Essentially, it was (at first) a ego battle between two men who pretended to act "grand," but each attempted to diminish the greatness of the other man's office. That aspect should never creep into Masonic dialogue, but unfortunately, it did back then.

As mentioned earlier, Gouley was Grand Commander of the State Templar body, which was "alive and well." It had ample manpower, and it had visible prosperity.

Pike, on the other hand, was Sovereign Grand Commander of a national Scottish Rite Supreme Council, which had a lofty name but had less manpower, along with a bankrupt treasury just prior to the US Civil War. Pike had sent out letters and traveled around the country, along with his Supreme Council officers, to "promote" the Scottish Rite as another branch whereby Master Masons could join to gain more philosophical insight into our Fraternity.

Gouley was approached by one of Pike's deputies, who conferred the 4th to the 30th degrees on Gouley. Not only was he unimpressed, Gouley was offended that (in his belief) the A.A.S.R. had revealed in his initiation some "secret words and signs" which in reality already witnessed in his earlier initiation and subsequent activity in the Royal Arch, and the Red Cross and Templar degrees/Orders of the York Rite.

Gouley was so outraged that he wrote a demanding letter to Albert Pike, dated August 6, 1867, in which Gouley stipulated the following: "Now, my Dear Sir and Brother, what I want to arrive at is this that the A. & A.S. Rite receive none into the Lodge of Perfection except R.A.M., and none into the (Rose Croix Chapter), and Council (of Kadosh) except KT. The latter point I must insist on..."

Pike wrote back from Memphis, Tennessee, a letter of denial in which he brushed aside those accusations; yet he opened himself up for compromises that were never

discussed, and never attained. Pike did comment that Gouley's letter was a "very great surprise" but he (Pike) went on to deny any knowledge of borrowing or revealing ritualistic work gained from another Rite. Pike said in his letter: "I am sure that I have been quite unconscious of so grave an offense, although I am a Templar and have held Office of Grand High Priest of the Grand Chapter of Arkansas."

Pike wrote that "Legends, words and signs cannot, in the nature of things, be the exclusive property of any Rite or degree." In his 5th reason to Gouley, Pike said: "We cannot exclude Master Masons who are Hebrew from the Scottish Rite, by requiring all candidates to have the Templar degrees, if we were otherwise willing to do so." Pike noted several Hebrew members of the Supreme Council, 33°, who were faithful to their ancient Hebrew religion.

As an aside, I know about one extraordinary case, which occurred about this same time. In 1866 a distinguished man who carried a gold-headed cane was Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of A.F. & A.M. of Kansas. He was M.W. Brother Jacob Saqui, and he was Jewish. Interestingly, he joined all the York Rite bodies in Atchison, Kansas. Sir Knight Saqui was even an officer in the Knights Templar Commandery!

I have read The History of Kansas Masonry by M.W. Brother Ben Graybill, P.G.M., along with other printed documents relating to the life of Jacob Saqui. From everything I have seen, Jacob Saqui, although he was Jewish, felt that he could support and aid the Christian religion as an ally. He was one of the most caring, attentive, and dedicated Templars that Kansas has ever seen. He was a credit to Judaism and a credit to Christianity. Sir Knight Jacob Saqui was a bright Light in the Masonic community. Sadly, he died quite young on June 14, 1867, at age 46. Had he lived, he might have been able to use his own example to "cool off" the hot-heads, Pike and Gouley. Saqui might have been able to demonstrate how a compromise could have been effected on Masonic prerequisites for the benefit of all.

Pike, oddly, made an offbeat remark to Gouley that there could (or should) just as easily be some sort of inverse or mutual prerequisite for York Rite membership, suggested by hypothetical Scottish Rite concerns. It was an interesting concept, but in the war-of-words, it was never ever carried out.

In any case, Pike countered by saying that most of the prominent Masons were members of both York Rite and Scottish Rite. He cited names such as Albert G. Mackey, Benjamin B. French, and himself (Pike), and he mentioned his own credentials in both Rites.

However, the ruckus developed in the fighting over members who may choose one Rite to join for whatever reason - friends, finances, etc. Gouley's approach was the single ladder of prerequisites: candidates would climb the degrees rung-by-rung, degree-by-degree, and step-by-step. Pike was content with two ladders branching

off from the Master Mason degree. Although he was a York Rite Mason first, Pike was biased by the national office he held and his wanting his little Scottish Rite to grow fast.

I will digress to note that the country of Ireland organizes its Masonic degrees in a highly structured manner. It is a simple, yet straightforward, pyramid. At the base is Ancient Craft Masonry. This is the basic foundation of it all, with approximately 36,500 Craft Masons in Ireland today. Master Masons are encouraged to join Royal Arch Masonry with some 12,900 members. Next, a man must be a Royal Arch Mason for at least four years before becoming a Knight Templar and a further two years as a Knight Templar before being elected to receive the Rose Croix. The Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite degrees in Ireland are limited to 111 Brethren. A man must, at the least, hold the office of Warden before advancing higher. The majority are Past Most Wise Masters of some years' seniority. There is a maximum of 35 members of the 28°, 30 members of the 30°, 16 members of the 32°, and only 9 members holding the 33° (all of whom are Active Members of the Supreme Council, 33°, for Ireland).

Historically-speaking, Gouley had reference material support paralleling this format from none other than Pike's old friend, Albert G. Mackey. Mackey had clearly stated that the Knights Rose Croix were a special or select group of Knights Templar who were actively engaged in protecting pilgrims venturing to the Holy Land.

Furthermore, Mackey also said that the Chapters of Rose Croix and Councils of Kadosh were conferred by Templar Encampments (Commanderies and Preceptories) since "time immemorial." That sounds incredibly like a pre requisite! And it sounds eerily like the system currently practiced in Ireland!

Pike was trying hard to build up the respect and esteem for his fledgling Scottish Rite. He sought a grassroots appeal (yet mostly cultivated in urban or cosmopolitan area), and admittedly, he wanted a fast acceleration of growth.

Gouley was wearing a different hat (rather, a different chapeau: that of the Grand Commander of Templars in Missouri). He didn't appreciate Pike's "invasion" by Scottish Rite Deputies aimed at propagating the A.A.S.R. within Missouri to any and all interested Masons. Gouley viewed it (perhaps with a mix of paranoia and pessimism) as a sign that Templar membership would decline if Scottish Rite membership became too easy to obtain and grew too rapidly. To a degree, Gouley's prediction proved largely accurate a century later.

The aspect that hurt Gouley's feelings the most was that Pike refused to listen to him in his role as presiding officer of Missouri's Grand Commandery. Pike chose to rule with a domineering hand and hovered over Gouley from his chair as Sovereign Grand Commander-addressing Gouley as a wayward, Knight Kadosh 30° Mason. That slap of indignation ignited Gouley's temper. He claimed Pike made a "threat" to hold his (Gouley's) sword hilt by the grip of a Kadosh.

Gouley made good on a separate retaliatory threat of his own. He proposed (and his Grand Commandery of Missouri adopted) a resolution denouncing this action and declaring the supremacy of the Missouri Grand Commandery of Knights Templar, acting in tandem with Craft and Royal Arch leaders, as maintaining the sanctity of fraternal relations with an unbroken chain of legitimate Masonic Unity in the state of Missouri.

The Resolution read, in part:

"Resolved, that in vindication of the prerogatives of this Grand Body as the knight templar supreme authority over the Orders of Masonic Knighthood in this jurisdiction, it is hereby ordered that no Knight Templar holding allegiance to the Grand Commandery of Missouri can be present in any of the bodies of the so-called Ancient and Accepted Scotch Rite and witness or assist in the conferring of any of their degrees upon any one who has not already received the Orders of Knighthood in a regularly constituted Commandery of Knights Templar."

The resolution painted the Scottish Rite as a newcomer, an outsider, with a not-so subtle hint of its being irregular.

Pike fanned the flames in a retaliatory response of his own, indicating his official opinion that the American Knights Templar weren't recognized by world Supreme Councils of the Scottish Rite.

Gouley responded that foreign opinion shouldn't tarnish the high opinion held by American Masons toward their Grand Encampment of Knights Templar in America in general. ...and the Grand Commandery, Knights Templar of Missouri, in particular.

Gouley was seen as a hornet buzzing around Pike's head. Gouley had no method by which to punish Pike (aside from verbal tirades and statewide missives to Missouri Masons).

Pike, on the other hand, had an "Ace" up his sleeve. Pike used his national office of Sovereign Grand Commander and being a "Active 33°" to bring Scottish Rite charges against George Frank Gouley, 30°, for insubordination and for violating his Oath as a Knight Kadosh.

At the beginning of the Trial, Pike presided, but then retired and Mackey took to the Chair. Evidence was presented and arguments were heard. Gouley was eventually found guilty, and his Scottish Rite membership was suspended.

On the bright side, time often heals most wounds. Gouley mellowed a little, which was good enough to satisfy Pike. Pike later authorized a few "wording" changes and minor policy changes to Scottish Rite ritual. This must have been good enough to partially appease Gouley, even though it didn't address his core concern in any meaningful way.

Soon afterward, Gouley petitioned to be reinstated in the Scottish Rite, and in a magnanimous gesture Albert Pike recommended to the other members of the Supreme Council that this request be granted. And it was granted.

Sadly, that moment of happiness was short-lived, as Gouley died in a hotel fire quite soon afterward.

In my view, this whole episode is an embarrassing part of Masonic history, but I think we can learn many lessons from it and take advantage of possibilities that exist NOW which didn't exist then.

In my opinion, there was blame enough on all sides. Gouley had his faults, but Pike had a few more, which were magnified and amplified during the controversy. However, I have always believed that assigning levels of fault doesn't accomplish much gain. Furthermore, it is unbecoming to be a fault-finder. Even worse is finding fault with deceased individuals who cannot defend themselves. However, I would like to analyze areas in which "constructive progress" might be obtained in this age...

Pike hinted that a legal "treaty" was far superior to Gouley's unilateral demands. His openly saying that some type of mutual accord was desirable revealed that Pike realized in the back of his mind that Gouley might be speaking a grain of truth.

But it is quite obvious that Pike's pride wouldn't allow him to negotiate with Gouley. He even went so far as to say: "Pardon me also for suggesting that if any treaty or compromise allowed be entered into, or any preliminary negotiations to that end entered upon, it would not be with the Grand Commander of a State Grand Body that I should discuss the terms, but with only the Grand Master of Templars of the United States who is himself a 33rd."

I admire Albert Pike, and I think he was absolutely right that any "treaty" should have come at the national level. He had no business in direct negotiations with Gouley. But Pike's pouting comment was exactly the remedy which was needed: Negotiation between the national leaders of QQH Rites.

Pike was often criticized for bold, controversial thoughts, which border on lunacy. Pike was so passionate about getting in the "last word" that he would tread on the edge at the risk of falling off the cliff. Sometimes, Pike's words caused him to fall from public grace, but I think his detractors are often mistaken about what he truly inwardly "meant" as opposed to what he outwardly "wrote."

In an issue of the journal "Masonic Monthly" from the year 1866, a Masonic writer had stern words about Pike, who was still living, and I think that such a contemporary evaluation or critique of Pike is much more valuable than modern-day writers who only add flashy conjecture based upon 20/20 hindsight.

The writer in 1866 said: "It is undeniable that Bro. Albert Pike is a man of fine talent and varied learning." But he went on to criticize Pike for adding too much

unsubstantiated Egyptian lore into the Scottish Rite rituals and for sometimes airing a trial-balloon that a Scottish Rite Supreme Council could claim rights over the first three degrees of Symbolic Masonry. The writer felt that Pike's interpretation was essentially fostering a notion that the "higher degrees would have crushed out the meaning of the Blue Degrees." The writer went further by saying: "A strange mixture of truth and error, of nonsense and sound sense is this Brother Albert Pike."

That writer wrote his assessment of Pike totally independently of Gouley, yet it supports the opinion that Sir Knight Albert Pike overstepped into some areas with too much aggression. It would seem that Sir Knight Gauley had a good point that all

Scottish Rite candidates should witness the York Rite degrees first AND that there should be Unity among the bodies without jurisdictional interference crossing enumerated lines of authority. The mistake has been the dividing of power (and prestige) between a split-trunk of the Masonic tree: one branch bent with the fruit of the York Rite branch, the other branch bent with the fruit of the Scottish Rite branch. Pike was envious that not enough candidates would pick fruit from his then-little branch (the Scottish Rite). Gouley was fearful that the additional choice would discourage picking the fruit from his then-large branch (the York Rite). In my estimation, WE ARE ALL OF THE SAME TREE, and we owe allegiance to the primary root: the Grand Lodge. No healthy tree grows with one half being of full maturity, while the other half remains stunted. The whole tree grows upward and outward in a uniform manner (unless barriers or circumstances intervene). I believe that healthy branches of the Scottish Rite and the York Rite form this healthy "canopy of protection" for all who seek more Light in Masonry.

In the immediate years following the Pike-Gouley spat, there were many Masons nationwide with similar concerns. The original Shriners in 1872, who formed the Mystic Shrine of North America for the purpose of being a unifying ally of both Rites, had a prerequisite that a candidate first hold membership in the York Rite or Scottish Rite (with the implicit blessing that a man join both Rites). Dr. Walter M. Fleming wrote the original Shrine ritual when he had only received the first three degrees of Ancient Craft Masonry. In his book, *Parade to Glory*, Fred Van Deventer noted that "there can be little doubt that private and informal agreements on the prerequisites for Shrine membership were made among men who sat at the table for thirteen in Fowler's Restaurant" on the second floor of Knickerbocker Cottage, located at 426 Sixth Avenue in New York City. The other Masons in this luncheon club were all Knights Templar Masons in the York Rite and 32° members in the Scottish Rite. Those men waited patiently for Fleming's advancement in Brooklyn's Aurora Grata Consistory and Columbian Commandery before the official founding of Mecca Shrine Center, which took place September 26, 1872. In the same book is Walter Fleming's own account of how he was responsible for many Knights Templar becoming Scottish Rite Masons (and vice versa) with the "two separate series of rites or orders ultimately becoming almost a united family."

Quite radically, Sir Knight Walter M. Fleming was chosen to serve as Eminent Commander of his Commandery, and nearly as rapidly, he became Illustrious Brother Walter M. Fleming, 33°, in that same momentous month as the founding of Mecca Shrine Center (September 1872). The other co-founder of the Mystic Shrine of North America was Sir Knight William J. "Billy" Florence, who was a member of Pittsburgh Commandery of Knights Templar in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Billy Florence was a 32°, but he received the 33° shortly before his death in 1891. For those two Brothers, Companions, Sir Knights, and Nobles, "Masonic Unity" was not a vague notion but a firm belief, which they put into practice.

What can be done today to ensure more Unity between the Rites? Perhaps, nothing can be done to revive a "lost opportunity" thrown aside in the 1860s.

The Shrine has taken a step backward by removing the Rites from its prerequisite list. I believe the Shrine made a grave mistake in doing that. PREREQUISITES are what gave the Mystic Shrine its allure, since the public regarded all Shriners as "high degree Masons" and hence, worthy of admiration.

Nevertheless, It seems to me that Masons of both Rites TODAY can cement the bonds of ancient history and display modern Brotherly love by outwardly noting the HARMONY of both Rites.

We cannot change the past, and from my observations, it seems unlikely that the Rites in America will adopt the Irish, single pyramid, degree progression chart. Our Rites in the USA are too entrenched with the dual-ladder approach, and that is all well and good. It is pleasing that a man can join whichever Rite he wishes according to his time, talents, interests, energy, and finances.

The voluntary system now in place in America may work best for our Brethren here. Both Rites have been openly in view, but human nature being what it is, quite often a Master Mason will say he will join Rite "A" or Rite "B" (or both) and then never get around to it.

Human laziness and the mortal tendency toward procrastination is just as big a threat to membership statistics in the Rites as deaths or suspensions for nonpayment of dues. It is time for us to plug that gaping hole. No one discusses the membership drain caused by "opportunities lost." We have lost many prospective members before they even came to our door, due to misconceptions, ignorance, or even faulty information. By simple cooperation, the Rites could build the moral equivalent of a cement dam or reservoir to build PILLARS OF SUPPORT that are tangible and clear, to strengthen and encourage advancement in both Rites, which in turn strengthens Ancient Craft Masonry.

Mandatory prerequisites may be unwieldy here, but some sort of mutual "treaty" between the Rites in the USA, showing the preferred plan of men having witnessed both Rites, would be a show of support for the method in place in Ireland,

and it would be a ratification/validation of the unity among the original Shriners with their four dation-fortifying original prerequisites.

Let us use our Templar and Kadosh swords to literally and figuratively form another "Arch of Steel," which will protect future candidates and members by giving them a canopy of harmony in a unified fashion; offering a clear historical framework showing that the Rites both bear worthwhile fruit which nourishes the hearts and minds of Master Masons (past and present).

An official treaty of friendship can't go back in time to replace opportunities lost, but it could provide a measure of stability by giving an "Official Endorsement" that both Rites contribute mightily to the elevation of a man's individual Masonic education while also adding to the health and beauty of the overall Masonic family. An Official Treaty would counteract back-alley rumors among non-Masons or anti-Masons. It could never be sullied by men with fragile egos and biased attitudes. Lastly, it would give new Masons some incentive to "shoot-for." As members of our Fraternity, we need more men who will "aim to attain" certain levels in Masonry. From the perspective of the Rites, we need not only more men eager to climb the whole mountain but more who choose to utilize both pathways to the top.

Will we enact treaties to that effect? I certainly hope so.

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Postal Letter correspondence from the Grand Secretary General of the Supreme Council, 33°, for Ireland, Matthew W. Walker, 33°, to James Marples, dated 04 January 2006

Postal Letter correspondence from the Grand Secretary General of the Supreme Council, 33°, for Ireland, Matthew W. Walker, 33°, to James Maples, dated 22 February 2006

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