

THE ONLY WOMAN FREEMASON.

Why and How the Daughter of Arthur St. Leger was Initiated in the First two Degrees.

Chicago Chronicle.

Much nonsense has been printed from time to time relative to women who were reported to have been received into the Masonic Order—a few with a knowledge of their sex, but most by means of subterfuge. There are, however, authentic reports of the initiation of but one member of the sex. She was Mrs. Aldmorth, the youngest child and only daughter of Arthur St. Leger, created first Viscount Doneraile, Ireland, June 23, 1793, and Elizabeth, daughter and heiress of John Hayes, of Winchelsea.

She was born about 1713, and was married to Richard Aldworth, of Newmarket, County Cork, who was the son of Sir Richard Aldworth, provost marshal of Munster.

The lodge in which she was initiated was No. 44 of Ireland. The warrant of lodge 44, was issued in 1735. It was a highly respectable lodge, including all the elite of the country around Doneraile, and its meetings were held often under the presidency of Lord Doneraile at his residence.

It happened that on such occasion the lodge was held in a room separated from another by stud and brickwork. The subject of this sketch, being probably giddy and thoughtless, determined to gratify her curiosity. With a pair of scissors she removed a portion of a brick from the wall and placed herself so as to command a full view of everything which occurred in the next room.

In this position she witnessed the first two degrees of Masonry, which was the extent of the proceedings of the lodge that night. From what she heard when the members of the lodge were about to separate for the first time she felt tremblingly alive to the awkwardness and danger of her situation, and began to consider how she could retire without observation.

She became nervous and agitated, and stumbled against and overthrew a chair.

The crash was loud and the tiller of the lodge, who was in the lobby, gave the alarm, burst open the door, and, with a light in one hand and a drawn sword in the other, appeared to the now terrified young woman. He was immediately joined by the members of the lodge present. They for the most part were furious at the transaction. She was placed under guard of the tyler and a member in the room in which she had been found. The members reassembled and deliberated for two hours as to what was to be done.

At length it was resolved to give the young woman the option of submitting to the Masonic ordeal to the extent she had witnessed it, and if she refused the members were again to consult. Miss St. Leger, exhausted and terrified, yielded, and was accordingly initiated. The other inmates of the house were in perfect ignorance of the transaction.

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