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The Negro Mason in Equity

BY M. W. SAMUEL W. CLARK

BRO. A. S. WAIT, of New Hampshire, in 1881, in reviewing Illinois, utters the following sound doctrine in relation to exclusive jurisdiction:

"We have long been of the opinion that the relations of the various Grand Lodges was a system of Masonic comity, and not of positive law."

After discoursing further upon this subject to show the absurdity of the "doctrine," he says:

"We may as well go farther and say, what we think, that upon the regular formation of a Grand Lodge, all Lodges within the territory of its rightful jurisdiction ought to give in their adhesion to it, and the Grand Lodges from which they received their charters ought, from motives of fraternal comity to advise such a course. But we neither think that Lodges declining to join in the organization of the new Grand body become extinct by its formation, nor that by refusing to give in adhesion to it they become illegitimate or clandestine. The whole matter is one of comity, in which no Grand Lodge can

coerce another. And if any 'American doctrine' has obtained to the contrary of this, it ought speedily to be repudiated by American Masons, as well as by the fraternity elsewhere."

From the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia, 1880, we cull the following from the Grand Master's address as bearing upon this topic:

"Royal Standard Lodge, holding under the Grand Lodge of England, is with us a pattern Lodge in matters of ritual and discipline; working side by side with us, a healthy emulation is produced, and both parties are the better for it. By invitation I lately visited this Lodge, accompanied by the Grand Officers and a large body of Nova Scotia Masons, and the cordial feelings reciprocally expressed gave the strongest proof that the existence of an English Lodge in our midst was working no injury to the craft here."

Here we have another evidence of the unsoundness of all objections to concurrent jurisdiction.

Many more quotations could be given showing that there are many Masons in

to pause and gaze upon the matchless symmetry of our grand and noble institution, and contemplate in awe the grandeur and sublimity of its principles—to reject the truth? It is that slimy-coated and cold-blooded serpent of prejudice against the Negro. You see it in every walk of life, in the workshop and in the counting-house; in the feeble and tottering imbecile and in the little prattling child; where e'er you turn, the monster, with his ever-open, glassy eye, is staring at you. No place is secure from his intrusion; go to the halls of justice and you will find him there; and even within the sacred portals of God's tabernacles does he stealthily crawl, not even sparing the altar where the humble Christian kneels to take the consecrated emblems of our Lord and Savior. This is why we are denied; this is why we are rejected; this is why we are termed clandestine, illegal, and irregular. Do we speak at random? Are we giving play to the fancy? Would that we were, for then our fair institution would not have its escutcheon tarnished with falsehood and hypocrisy. But the recorded expressions of our traducers are before us, and we can not say nay when it is yea. That you may know we but speak the truth, we lay before you the utterances and acts of both individuals and organizations in reference to the Negro Mason.

In a letter written to Bro. John D. Caldwell, Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of Ohio (white), by Ill. Bro. Albert Pike, Sov. Grand Commander of the Supreme Council, A. A. S. R., Southern Jurisdiction, bearing date of September 13, 1875, he says:

“Our people only stave off the question by saying that Negro Masons here are clandestine. Prince Hall Lodge was as regular a Lodge as any Lodge created by competent authority. * * *

“I think there is no middle ground between rigid exclusion of Negroes or recognition and affiliation with the whole mass.

“I am not inclined to meddle in the matter. I took my obligations to white men, not to Negroes. When I have to accept Negroes as brothers or leave Masonry, I shall leave it.

“I am interested to keep the Ancient and Accepted Rite uncontaminated, in our country at least, by the leprosy of Negro association.”

We have from Brother (?) Pike, first, that we are as regular as any other class of Masons, and immediately thereafter, that between recognizing them as brothers or leaving Masonry, he will leave Masonry. Is this prejudice or not? And yet this same Mason (?) stands up in the presence of a great multitude in 1868, in St. Louis, and says:

“God pity the man who will not lay on the altar of Masonry every feeling of ambition, every feeling of ill-will in his heart toward a brother Mason. Freemasonry is one faith, one great religion, one great common altar, around which all men, of all tongues and all languages, can assemble. And Masonry will never be true to her mission till we all join hands, heart to heart and hand to hand, around the altar of Masonry, with a determination that Masonry shall become at some time worthy of her pretensions—no longer a pretender to that which is good; but that she shall be an apostle of peace, good will, charity, and toleration.”

What think you of a man professing to be a Mason uttering such sentiments