

A GREAT FRATERNITY.

A Brief Sketch of the Order of Knights of Pythias—A Fraternity that Fraternises.

So often has been repeated the fascinating story of the inception and progress of the Order of Knights of Pythias that every lay member thereof should be thoroughly familiar therewith; but as there are thousands of old members who have not yet acquainted themselves with the details of the story, and new members to whom the opportunity has been denied. The True Knight publishes the following brief historical sketch of the great fraternity:

Washington Lodge, No. 1, while it has gone out of existence, has passed into history as the Mother of the Order, and it is to be regretted that, with a name so redolent of National as well as Pythian association, its Charter has not been revived. While it existed only in name, yet an alleged Grand Lodge of District of Columbia was organised on April 8th, 1864, with Joseph T. K. Plant as Grand Chancellor, and A. Van Der Veer, as Grand Scribe, the object evidently being to clothe these brethren with such official trappings as might have enabled them, with some semblance of authority, to enter upon the labors of propagating the organisation and gaining a foothold not only in other parts of the District of Columbia, but also in the adjacent States. Their first effort seems to have quickly resulted in success, and, as one writer has said, they "providentially succeeded," on the 12th of April, 1864, in forming Franklin Lodge, No. 2, located at the Navy Yard.

Regarding this organisation, it has been said: "The history of this Lodge needs no comment. It is the history of the Order, which it saved from destruction after her sister lodges around her had ceased to exist. From its very organisation the membership took a lively interest in its welfare, and determined that it should become the 'Excelsior' Lodge of the Order. For nearly eight months it struggled along, the only Lodge of the Order in the country, its little membership meeting with rebuffs and sarcasms."

Almost immediately following this, on the 19th of May, 1864, Columbia Lodge, No. 3, located at Temperance Hall, was organised, and on June 2nd, at the same place, the Grand Lodge also instituted Potomac Lodge, No. 4.

On February 1st, 1865, through the efforts of Brother John H. King, Alexandria Lodge, No. 1, of Virginia, was organised at the city of that name, and Brother King was appointed Deputy Grand Chancellor of Virginia. This Lodge, however, was but short-lived, and in the following July it ceased to exist.

The financial condition of the lodges in the District of Columbia had, at this time, reached a deplorable state, and in April, 1865, Potomac and Columbia lodges succumbed to the inevitable, and ceased meeting, and Washington, No. 1, for months at a time, was unable to secure sufficient attendance to justify opening the Lodge.

Owing, therefore, to the terrible straits to which they had been brought, but two lodges, Washington and Franklin, answered to the roll, when, in June, 1865, the Grand Lodge was called to order.

At that session the following Grand Officers were elected and installed:

Clarence M. Barton (No. 2) Grand Chancellor; Joseph H. Lawrence (No. 2) Vice-Grand Chancellor; Edward Dunn (No. 2), Grand Marshal; William Whitney (No. 1), Grand Scribe; Dr. J. B. Keasbey (No. 1), Grand Banker; John W. Cross (No. 2), Grand Herald; A. Van Der Veer (No. 1), Grand Prelate; R. V. Henry (No. 1), Grand Inner Guardian; J. Titcomb, (No. 1), Grand Outer Guardian.

On the 13th of June, 1865, this so-called Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia, the "Poo Bah" of Pythian affairs, who drew their inspiration from themselves, and whose jurisdiction was as broad as their assumption was phenomenal, passed off the scenes, and the Order settled back to the original condition, Franklin, No. 2, having, in the month following, received into membership all of the brethren in good standing in No. 1, at the time of its dissolution. Previous to its surrender, Washington Lodge had, in a similar manner, absorbed some of the members of Potomac, No. 4. By the transfer of the effects of Washington Lodge, its regalia and work, on the 28th of September, 1865, the final act in the drama was enacted—its debt for rent was liquidated, and the curtain rung down on the first Lodge of Knights of Pythias. Careful investigation of the history of this Lodge fully sustains the position that almost from its inception it existed but in name: de facto Franklin Lodge was No. 1, and it is to be regretted that a consolidation had not been consummated before too late, by the terms of which the name might have been handed down and the fires of the Mother Lodge continue still to burn; but in this, as in life, it was the survival of the fittest, and, while the loss is to be regretted, yet, the full meed of praise is justly due to the Lodge, which, through good report and bad report, through dangers and difficulties, in days of darkness, with foes within as well as without, never faltered in the line of duty, but with a steadfast faith in the future and in possibilities, still held the fort, and unfurled on its battlements the banner of Friendship, Charity and Benevolence: they nailed it to the mast, and both mast and banner and nails are still there. All glory to Franklin Lodge, No. 2: it was a long and patient vigil, but after the darkened days followed the clear sunshine, the ordeal was passed, the time of refreshing came, and to-day she can look out from the old home and see on every hillside and valley those fires which were lighted at her altar, count her children by the hundreds of thousands, see her banners wave from ocean to ocean, and from the farthest north to the waters of the Gulf.

The year 1866 opened with but little to encourage the hearts of the Spartan band which, amid the vicissitudes which they had to sur-

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