

'Colored Masons in this country; not because they are black or brown in color; not because they do not belong to the Caucasian race; but because they are clandestine Masons—made in clandestine lodges, working without legal warrants—and emanating from a symbolic lodge in Boston, established within the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, in defiance of that Grand Lodge—and which irregular and clandestine symbolic lodge assumed, in antagonism to all settled principles of Masonic law—the prerogatives of a Grand Lodge, and issued charters for other lodges.

From this self-created Grand Lodge have emanated all the "so-called Colored Lodges" in this country. It was clandestine—they are clandestine, and, of course, the Masons made in them, however much their ritual may resemble our own—are clandestine. It is for this reason, and for this alone, that they are refused recognition.

But Grand Master Battin's opinions are but those of a man without other force than that which their soundness and his reputation should give them. And, in fact, the committee seem to have paid no attention to them. He recommended that inquiry should be made into the legality of the two bodies—the white and the colored Grand Lodges—this recommendation the committee pass over, and declare that they do not propose to make any such inquiry. He recommends that the illegal body should be healed. The committee think healing is unnecessary, as both organizations have identically the same Masonry. He recommends that the two Grand Lodges shall be united. The committee propose to perpetually dis sever them, and to continue the two as independent Grand Lodges.

There is not a single recommendation in this part of the address of the Grand Master that we can, as Masons, approve. Perhaps it may be a little satisfactory that the committee appear to have approved the address as little as we have.

But let us advert to the report, and we shall examine it briefly, paragraph by paragraph. We say again, that this review is made in friendly spirit, without intention to give offence. But Masonry is too dear to us to be sacrificed to sentiment. The committee begin by saying:

"We do not propose, nor do we deem it necessary at this time, to enter into the history of the origin of so-called Colored Freemasonry in this country. That subject has been fully discussed in nearly all the Grand Lodges and Masonic periodicals of this country for more than twenty-five years past."

With all due deference, this is the very thing the committee were expected to do, and which they should have done. They should have given in accurate detail "the history of the origin of so-called Colored Freemasonry in this country." Had they done so, it is probable that they might have dispensed with the rest of their report.

They say next:

"Your committee deem it sufficient to say that *they* are satisfied *beyond all question* that Colored Freemasonry had a legitimate beginning in this country, as much so as any other Freemasonry; in fact, it came from the *same source*."

Now this is simply a *petitio principii* or "begging of the question." It is the assumption, as a fact, of the very thing that is required to be proved. It is a fallacy to which no man resorts in an argument unless he knows that his cause is weak.

We meet the assertion with its converse. We say that *Colored Freemasonry never had a legitimate beginning in this country*. The fountain from which it sprung was impure, and the stream continues necessarily to retain the impurity. This is the issue that we make.

The history of the origin of "Colored Masonry" is a very brief and simple one, and unlike the committee, we propose to enter into it.

In 1784 the Grand Lodge of England granted a charter to Prince Hall and other colored men for holding a lodge in Boston. As there was already a Grand Lodge in Massachusetts, it is evident that the granting of the charter was illegal, and that, according to the recognized principles of American Masonic law, the said charter was null and void. But let that pass. There are still more important irregularities. The "African Lodge No. 429," as it was called, was never recognized by the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts. After some time it ceased its connection with the Grand Lodge of England, and about the beginning of the present century, its registration was stricken from the rolls of that Grand Lodge, by which act its Masonic life was as effectually destroyed as would be a man's life by the cutting off of his head.

In the course of events Prince Hall and his compeers died, and the lodge which had been for some years acting without any Masonic authority, fell into abeyance, or, in Masonic parlance, became dormant or more properly extinct.

Some years afterwards it was revived, but by whom or under what authority never has been shown by those who revived it. Notice of the revival was given to the Grand Lodge of England, but no reply or recognition followed. It received, of course, no recognition from the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts.

Under these unfavorable conditions the members came to the conclusion, as they