

## COLORED MASONRY.

### An Effort to Reconcile the Conflicting Grand Lodges.

#### Convention of Representatives from Each of the Bodies.

#### A Committee Appointed to Draw up a Plan of Union.

A National Convention of Colored Masons began its sessions in the hall of John Jones Lodge, No. 7, at No. 325 South Clark street, yesterday morning. The object of the gathering is, as stated in the call, "to effect a complete union of and to harmonize, if possible, the entire craft." It seems that there is discord among the brethren, and has been since 1847, and thus far all efforts to eradicate it have proved unavailing. The cause of the trouble is a question of power; that is, whether the Grand Master of a State should be supreme in his own jurisdiction, or should obey the dictum of a national body. In 1847 there were very few colored Masons in the United States, and, no union of interest existing among them, a convention was held in June of that year, in Boston, for the purpose of binding them together. Out of this assembly grew what is known as the "National Grand Lodge." Some of the Grand Lodges dissented from this action, and refused to acknowledge fealty to such an "ex. rescence," claiming that it was "irregular" and not warranted by the laws of Masonry. The dissenters were ruled out by the National Grand Lodge and denominated "clandestine." They, however, continued to work and to keep up their Grand Lodges, calling those who adhered to the national body "clandestine" and "irregular." Both branches of the Order ran along with this feeling toward each other until two years ago, when the more intelligent in both factions, realizing that the antagonism was doing the fraternity no good, were instrumental in gathering the representative men in a Convention in Boston, with a view of reconciling differences and uniting the two sections. The result, however, was not satisfactory; the points at issue could not be adjusted; and hence the present gathering in this city. Having received "more light" since 1875, it is now hoped that a reconciliation will be effected, and the obstacles in the way of progress be removed. There are in the country thirty-six Grand Lodges, twenty-nine of which are "independent," and seven are in the "compact." In Delaware, Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, Michigan, and Pennsylvania there are one of each. The "Sovereign" Grand Lodges have a constituency of about 20,000, and the compact Grand Lodges of 8,000. Among the delegates present are S. G. W., E. R. Overall, Kansas; G. M., Alex. Clark, Missouri; G. M., B. F. Rogers, Illinois; G. M., H. D. Vena, Michigan; G. M., J. H. Johnson, Arkansas; G. M., John Parsons, Louisiana; P. G. M., W. T. Boyd, Ohio; G. S., J. H. Banks, Rhode Island; G. M., S. S. Ashe, Alabama; P. G. M., D. G. Ladd, Kansas; G. M., Dupee, Kentucky; P. D. G. M., John G. Jones, Illinois.

THE CONVENTION WAS CALLED to order at 10 o'clock by John G. Jones, P. D. G. M. of Illinois.

On motion, G. M. Alexander Clark, of Missouri, was elected temporary Chairman and H. M. Hancock, P. G. S. of Illinois, temporary Secretary.

The following were appointed a Committee on Credentials: E. R. Overall, Kansas; William Nesbitt, Pennsylvania; T. J. Martin, Michigan; G. W. Dupee, Kentucky; and W. T. Boyd, Ohio.

During their absence some discussion took place as to whether the body should sit openly or as a lodge. The point, however, was not settled, being left open for further consideration.

The temporary Chairman was then called on for an address, and, in response, said he had but one object in view, and that was to secure unity among the colored Masons of the country. Ignorance alone kept them apart. For half a century the whites were divided on Masonry, but they had since risen above antagonism, and now there was but one lodge in every State. Growing intelligence and culture brought that about. He asked, in the name of his race, that they bring about harmony among themselves. He adverted to the history of the craft in England, claiming that African Masonry was more legitimate than white Masonry. They had nothing to fear, he said, from an external enemy; the danger was internal; and he appealed to the delegates to accomplish their object in coming to Chicago.

Joseph H. Banks, of Rhode Island, followed in a few remarks favoring unity, and asking all to labor therefor.

The Committee on Credentials then reported, and the list showed that there were seventy entitled to seats, all of whom were admitted—fourteen Grand Lodges being represented.

A Committee on Permanent Organization, one from each Grand Lodge, was next appointed.

Mr. Boyd offered a resolution designating the body as the "General Assembly of Free and Accepted Masons."

Mr. Nesbitt moved to strike out "General Assembly" and insert "National Convention." A General Assembly, he said, was a closer corporation than a National Convention. If the proceedings were conducted in convention they could go home without the danger of incurring displeasure if they did anything which was not approved, but if they acted in Assembly they would be open to censure.

Mr. Boyd said he would unite with colored Masons upon anything that was the groundwork of Masonry. The difficulty with them was that they were eternally doing something wrong. It was regular to call a General Assembly of Masons, but irregular to call a Convention.

THE ONLY REGULAR MASONIC CONVENTION was when a Grand Lodge was organized. It was better to do a wrong thing in order than a right thing out of order.

Mr. Martin remarked that when people met in a church it was a convention. The gathering of Masons might be a convention and an Assembly, but "for God's sake," said he, "lay the question on the table." He deprecated quarreling over little things. If this thing went on they would be disrupted as before.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to. After a recess of an hour and a half,

The Committee on Permanent Organization reported as follows:

*President*—Moses Dickson, Missouri.

*Vice Presidents*—William Nesbitt, Pennsylvania; S. G. W., Alabama.

*Secretaries*—H. M. Hancock, Illinois; E. R. Overall, Nebraska.

*Treasurer*—John Parsons, Louisiana.

The report was concurred in.

In taking the chair, Mr. Dickson made a brief address, saying that there should be no dissension in the ranks, and hoping that at the close of the session they would present a solid front. Lack of harmony retarded their recognition as members of the fraternal band by not only the Lodges of America, but of the world. It also hindered their progress. Hence he asked the delegates to lay aside all feeling and prejudice, and to work to accomplish the all-important objective of the craft.

P. M., B. F. Rogers, of Illinois, then welcomed the brethren to the State, and, on behalf of the Grand Lodge, extended to them the freedom of the city.

G. M., Vena, of Michigan, responded for the body.

A committee on rules was appointed.

Mr. Dupee moved that a Committee of Nine be selected by the Chair on resolutions.

Mr. Overall offered the following as an amendment:

Whereas, There exists a widespread disaffection to the Masonic family of the United States as to the propriety or legality of the National Grand Lodge of North America; also, as to the question of independent state Grand Lodges under the form of government; therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That a Committee of One from each Grand Lodge represented be appointed by the Chair, whose duty it shall be to draft a plan or regulations for the perfect union of the above named Masons, and report the same to this Convention at its earliest convenience.

The amendment was accepted.

Mr. Martin was opposed to passing the motion until it was known how many votes a Grand Lodge was to have. All should have the same number. Otherwise the Illinois brethren, having a large representation, could outvote all the other delegates put together.

Mr. Ladd moved as an amendment to the amendment that the Committee consist of five,

four to be appointed by the Chair, they to select the other one.

This was laid on the table, and the amendment concurred in.

The following were named to constitute the Committee: S. S. Ashe, Alabama; J. H. Thompson, Arkansas; R. Bognell, Georgia; W. L. Derrow, Illinois; J. F. Thomas, Kentucky; E. R. Overall, H. C. Bruce, Kansas; John Parsons, Louisiana; W. A. Brent, Missouri; J. W. Stanley, Ohio; William Nesbitt, Pennsylvania; J. H. Banks, Rhode Island; H. D. Vena, H. S. Snodgrass, Michigan.

THE COMMITTEE ON RULES reported in favor of allowing each Grand Lodge ten votes.

This was referred back, with several amendments.

Two sessions will be held daily—from 9:30 to 12, and from 2 to 5 o'clock.

The Convention then adjourned until this morning.