REPORT

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON NEGRO LODGES,

TO THE

Grand Lodge of North Carolina,

5865.

RALEIGH, N. C.:

WM. B. SMITH & CO.—KEY-STONE OFFICE.

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BROTHER SECRETARY:—

At the late Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina the following report was submitted and unanimously adopted, and I was charged with the duty of transmitting six copies of the said Report to each Subordinate Lodge in this State.

You will lay this Report before your Lodge at its next regular meeting for the information and guidance of its members.

Fraternally yours,

W. T. BAIN, G. S.

REPORT.

THE Most Worshipful Grand Master called the attention of the Grand Lodge to the following article from the *Anglo African*, published in New York, to-wit:

"Past Most Worshipful Paul Drayton, of the National Grand Lodge, is about to resume his labors in the South, under the authority of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of the State of New York. He will leave this city in a few days, to dedicate and constitute 'Union Lodge, in the city of Charleston, S. C., and a King Solomon Lodge in Newbern, N. C., and is also vested with full power to organise Lodges throughout the Southern portion of this country."

And attention was called also to the following article in the Newbern, N. C., *Daily Times*, to-wit:

"There is, in this city, an organization

called King Solomon's Lodge No. 1, A. F. M., composed entirely and exclusively of negroes. It was established here some weeks ago. If it was done for the purpose of deriding Masonry the joke falls harmless; but if, as the paragraph above given indicates, (the extract from the *Anglo African*,) there is a determination to confer upon the negroes of the South the rights and benefits of this ancient and honorable order, we look upon it as a gross insult, which the Grand Lodge of the State of North Carolina should strongly protest against."

And thereupon the undersigned were appointed a committee to investigate and report upon the subject. And the undersigned, having had the matter under consideration, submit the following report:

The committee have been unable to learn anything more of the facts than appear in the extracts above. If those facts be true, the Grand Lodge of N. Y. has sent an agent into the Southern States, "with full power

to organise Lodges throughout the Southern portion of the country."

Now upon the supposition that such Lodges are to be composed of members worthy and well qualified, the inquiry would still be, "what right has the Grand Lodge of N. Y. to organise Lodges within the jurisdiction of other Grand Lodges?" The committee are of opinion that there is no such right. And, if insisted upon, this Grand Lodge would consider as clandestine all Lodges thus established.

The committee, anxious to find something which would relieve our brethren of N. Y. from what seems to be a breach of that courtesy which so much distinguishes Masonic intercourse, have hope, that it may turn out to be true, that there are still remaining in different portions of the South, N. Y. troops, and that the purpose is simply to organise military Lodges, among such troops. If such be the purpose the

committee concede its propriety. And, so far from complaining would feel gratified that our brethren who are absent from their homes and local Lodges, should have the advantage which Masons so much desire, of organised communications.

But the committee are constrained to say, with much concern, that the impression made upon them by a careful consideration of the aforesaid articles is, that the purpose is not to organise military Lodges, but to "organise Lodges throughout the Southern portion of the country" generally, and especially *negro Lodges*. And this gives to the subject the gravest character.

The committee do not, in the abstract, question the propriety of making Masons of negroes. Our ancient landmarks are that he that be made a Mason, must be able in all degrees; that is, free born, worthy, and well qualified. It is not necessary that the candidate should be a white man. We

teach that in every clime, and among every people, masonry has existed. And to every human being our benevolence extends. But propriety, conformity to government, and, reasonably, to religion, and to manners and customs, have distinguished our Order.—Our communications are often breast to breast, mouth to ear. Fellowship, in the sense of the most perfect equality, intimate relationship, and close communion, is the chief characteristic of our intercourse.—We have our reasons for excluding females, minors, old age, religious libertines, the maimed and disabled, the ignorant, the immoral, and the profane. So important is this principle of perfect fellowship, that, although a Lodge were composed of a thousand members, one single member may exclude a condidate with whom he cannot have this perfect fellowship.

If Masonry exist in Africa, and white men were, for any cause, excluded from

the intimate relations which we have described, it would be unwise to thrust white men upon the fraternity in Africa. It would be very proper to inaugurate measures to remove the prejudice, but, without such removal, to set it at defiance, could have no other effect than to destroy Masonry. So, here in the South, while there is no prejudice against the negro as such, yet, there is such prejudice against assuming the intimate relations of masons, that, to admit them to our Order, would be, inevitably, to destroy it. Many reasons might be urged why it is so; but it is sufficient to know that the fact exists. And, while the fact exists, the introduction of negroes into our Lodges would obliterate Masonry from the South.

We know that Masonry is not only close in fellowship, but it is perfect in morals, and intricate in science. And, we know, that the negroes of the South are wholly

incompetent to embrace it. They are ignorant, uneducated, immoral, untruthful, and, intellectually, they are more impotent than minority or dotage;—both of which we exclude. It would be rare if any locality could furnish the requisite number of sufficient capacity to open a Lodge. Therefore, to have Lodges exclusively of negroes, would be dangerous to the high character of our Order. And, to associate them in Lodges with our white brethren, would be impossible.

It is only as masons that we have considered this subject, and we hope that it is only as masons that our New York brethren will consider it. While masons conform themselves to governments, and, reasonably, to manners and customs, yet they swerve not from the great object of universal good. They are not at all influenced by partizan strife, or sectional jealousies. Yet, we fear that our Northern

brethren are in gross error, as to their Masonic mission to the South. Why should the mission be to the *South?* Why not to the negroes of the North? We fear that they are unconsciously imbued with the spirit of fanaticism;—that they have unwholesome dreams that they are better than we. And we do allow ourselves to rest the conviction, that we are more devoted to the best interests of the negroes of the South, than they can possibly be. They were born in our families; we have nursed them in sickness; labored with them in the field and in the shop. We have rejoiced with them when we had much, and suffered with them when we had little; we have protected them because they were weak, and advised them because they were ignorant. We have made them better than Africans, and nearly equal to our Northern brethren—themselves being judges—and, but for fanaticism, doubtless many of them

would have been worthy of masonic privileges. Our earnest desire now is, still further to improve their condition. We would educate them, improve their habits and manners, and make them industrious and provident. But, under some strange hallucination, our Northern brethren suppose that we are enemies of the negro, and that they are his friends. And they spare no pains to make that impression upon the negro, and thereby destroy his confidence in us. When and how did their friendship manifest itself? Was it when they caught them in Africa? Was it when they sold them to us as slaves, instead of liberating them in the North? Was it when they refused to allow them emigration to the new and fertile lands, and wholesome climate of our boundless territory? Is it when they exclude the few that remain at the North from every decent and profitable employment, to live in the filth and eat the garbage

of the city sewers? For be it known that of the few they have in the State of New York 13,000 are in the city of New York, and how many upon Broadway? And be it further known that, in A. D., 1800, there were 40,700 negroes, (of whom 30,000 were slaves,) in the State of New York, and in A. D., 1820, there were but 39,200? What became of the 1500? And why was there no increase? In the same time their white population increased from 500,000 to 1,300,000, in round numbers. Why did not the blacks increase also three for one? Why were there not 100,000 more, instead of 1500 less, of the black population? How many of them were made masons? How many died of scorn and neglect? How many were driven off by oppression? How many sold into slavery? In A. D., 1800, there were 140,000 negroes in North Carolina, of whom 7,000 were free. In A. D., 1820, there were 220,000 negroes, of whom

14,000 were free. How favorable the contrast for North Carolina. And now they are all free. And, if their condition is better than when in Africa or New York, it is because we made them so. Our Northern friends did not. They so oppressed them that there was no increase! With us they increase as we increase. They sold them into slavery, we emerge them into liberty. They treated them worse than brutes; we have made them not quite fit for masons. Why will not our Northern brethren let them alone? For what new mischief would they smirk and smile around them? Are not the bayonet and the dollar and the trinket potent enough to enable them to effect their new cotton enterprises with the negro? Must they prostitute the sacred rites and tenets of Masonry to sickly fanaticism; or to the illegitimate thrift of the capitalist on the one hand, or of the degradation of the negro on the other? Is there no hole

or corner of the earth where the African can be free from their persecutions, by capture when wild, and by deception and oppression when tame? If they would *catch* them again let them use the lasso in the jungles of Africa, rather than the masonic cable tow in NorthCarolina.

Would our Northern brethren go into the wilds of Africa and make masons of savages? Why not? Because they are not worthy and well qualified. If they are better qualified here than in Africa, it is because we have made them so. Our New York brethren did not. If they are not yet equal to the requirements of our Order, may not we be entrusted with their further development? May it not be left to us to determine when they are sufficiently developed? Do we not know them better, and love them better? And is not our benevolence towards them, which has been purified by the unrestrained associations of

childhood, and by the sorrows and joys of life, greater than the pinched up, stingy, stilty, blatant philanthropy of presumptuous meddlers.

The committee recommend the adoption of the following resolutions:

Resolved, 1. That the Most Worshipful Grand Master be requested to correspond with the Most Worshipful Grand Master of New York in regard to the reported organization of negro Lodges in North Carolina, and earnestly to remonstrate against the same.

Resolved, 2. That this Grand Lodge will, and the fraternity in North Carolina are instructed to regard all such Lodges as clandestine, and the members thereof as spurious.

Respectfully submitted.

E. G. READE,
H. H. SMITH,
DANIEL COLEMAN, } Com.

December 5, 1865.