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BY E. P. WALTON, JR. | FRIDAY, MARCH 9, 1855. | VOL. XLIX, NO. 15.....WHOLE NO. 2525.

Secret Political Societies.

SPEECH

OF THE

HON. D. C. LITTLEJOHN,

OF OSWEGO,

RELATIVE TO THE OATHS AND RITUALS OF THE

KNOW-NOTHINGS.

IN N. Y. ASSEMBLY—Feb. 5, 1855.

I propose, sir, to state my connection with the Know Nothing order, and to give my views of its character and tendency—an order unnamed American. I shall do so from a sense of duty; and in doing so, I shall hold back nothing—"nothing extenuate, nor set down aught in malice." If I could open my heart to the gaze of the world, in vindication of the purity of my motives, I would not hesitate to do so.

Sir, one year ago I was a member on the floor of this House. I then became acquainted, as I now have, with men whom I learned to love. One evening in the month of March, a few men gathered around me, and, without scarcely a word of preliminary, asked me if I would accompany them to hear a lecture. I consented to do so. They were my friends. I could suspect them of no design. They escorted me to a certain room in this city, which I entered. These gentlemen, and the officers of the association to which I was presented, assured me that I was to be asked to do no act, to take no obligation, which would, in the least degree, interfere with "my duties to myself, my family, my country or to my God." Upon such a broad platform I was willing to stand. The promise to be exacted was read. I took that promise, not an oath. In stating this, do I commit perjury? If so, let my enemies make the most of it. But, sir, whatever my course may seem to be in the eyes of men, in the eyes of Heaven I feel in my conscience I am justified. I believe, sir, in an hereafter. And, sir, with a full sense of my responsibility to a higher power, and with a consciousness of what I say here now, I desire but to repeat, if what I have said shall appear, in the eyes of my foes, as involving perjury, let them make the most of it.

But, sir, no honest unprejudiced man will charge me or my associates with the violation of even an honorable obligation, much less an oath. This one evening was the extent of my connection with the order; I never returned again, there or elsewhere.

I am, sir, opposed now, as I still ever be opposed, to the order known as Know Nothings. But I must not be mistaken in this connection. I approved of some of the principles of that order, as professed when the order was originally instituted. But I detest the base uses to which it has been reduced, and abhor the principles to which it has been prostituted, by those in whose hands it has become a huge and corrupt political engine.

But I propose to enter upon a brief review of what I believe to be the present principles, purposes and tendencies of the Know Nothing order. And here I will state, what I omitted in the proper place, that when I left the room, into which I had been beguiled to hear a lecture, I never returned again. I was satisfied with what I had learned. I was satisfied with what I had learned. I was convinced that it was or would soon become no place for an honest man. But I looked up in my bosom the names of those who accompanied me and whom I saw there; and at the day of my death those names will not be revealed. Thus far I deem myself honorably bound; no father.

For the facts which I shall state I am indebted not to that one brief visit (for what I then learned has long been public,) but to information derived from gentlemen of character, gentlemen formerly high in authority in the order, and upon whose statements I can implicitly rely. Further, I have in my possession the books containing the oaths and obligations, as used up to a recent date. These now in use are still more infamous and exacting. I refer to those of the second degree, to which the mass of members do not belong.

Heretofore, in our elections, foreigners have exerted an undue influence. Leading men in both parties have too much sought to influence the foreign vote. I have looked abroad to see which party was most at fault; and I reached my conclusion by results—the success seemed to whichever party that vote was given. That was the best test; and by its application, I found that this vote was most generally unitedly arrayed against the Whig party; and particularly was this the case in the last presidential election. The entire foreign vote was cast against Gen. Scott; although Mr. Seward (who is charged with excessive friendship for and influence over those who cast that vote) very anxiously desired his election. If he had had the influence he is accused of possessing over this vote, do you suppose that it would have been cast against his favorite candidate? No, sir.

But, sir, in what I have said I do not wish to be understood as desiring to interfere with the emigration to this country. Let the oppressed and down trodden come among us. They will be welcome. Homes, happiness and protection await them. But I would not have them rule us, or so combine their power as to work mischief upon our institutions. In this many sympathize with the originators of the American movement. They thought it right—to resolve to vote for no man for high office not native born. If this, the original purpose of the order, had been adhered to, not 130,000, but half a million of freemen would, to-day, have been enrolled in the ranks of the so called American party. But the organization fell into dishonest hands. Unprincipled men became its masters, and diverted it from its purpose to meet combination by combination, and to render it for the interest of all political parties to give position and prominence to native, rather than to foreign born aspirants. This is what it was designed to be in its purity; that is, not a political party, but a combination of men of all parties, to compel political parties to make proper nominations. But what has it become? Is it an institution to which a free and honorable man should or can belong—to which a christian or patriot can belong? Not, sir, when he comes to understand its designs and the character of the man into whose hands it has fallen. The great mass of those who are in it are honest. They went into it to aid in the accomplishment of a good purpose, or were inveigled into it by political tricksters and managers. But they cannot remain in it. To do so, readers them parties to the base purposes to which the order is being employed.

In July last a state constitution was adopted. The grand lodge was combined with some other organization, and it is now called the grand council. What are its present objects? I find it has an officer called the grand president. The name of that officer is known; and here there must have been a violation of the oath, otherwise the name of this grand president of the grand council of the State of New York would still have remained a secret. He exercises a power, today, equal to the power exercised by any monarch in Europe. And yet we know not of it; nor can those who have not examined into the secret and intricate machinery of this order. What is his power? Of what does it consist? How can it be exercised? I will tell you, sir. This grand president was and is empowered to appoint, upon his own motion, and without the knowledge, permission, sanction or counsel of any other man, one deputy for each county.—Now, with such a power, what would a designing, ambitious man do? He would select as such deputy a person who would act as his second self. And if selected with the same sagacity—with a view to the combination of zeal and unscrupulousness—in other counties as in my own, he has chosen men who will do his bidding in every county in the state. And what then follows?—These deputies are armed with power to create lodges, to any number, in every town, city, village and hamlet in the several counties. How is this done? He, the deputy, selects nine men as the number necessary to constitute a lodge or council, and administers to those nine men the necessary oaths. The grand president selects a picked man, the creature of himself, for deputy; and he again selects nine other men to constitute a council—to become *his* tools, as he is the tool of the grand president!

But this is not all the machinery of this grand inquisitorial, calling itself by the sacred name of American! This is not all. What else? These nine men—the chosen instruments of this deputy, and, through him, of the grand president—select three of themselves, who shall, *for three years*, be delegates to meet in the grand council in the city of New York, the grand president presiding, to make nominations and to propose oaths which are to bind the members of the organization, body and soul—will or no will—to do the bidding and implicitly obey the behests of the grand council, which is composed of the creatures of the nine men, who are the creatures of the deputy, who is the creature and second self of the grand president of the grand council of the State of N. York! Was ever scheme so iniquitous conceived to enslave any people? And what freeman, what *American* can, with his eyes open to the monstrous iniquity, continue to be thus trepanned?

Sir, I state facts. I know the truth of what I assert. But if I did not, the flushed countenances and angry glare which I see all around me, would be a demonstration of its truth. But, sir, I have not done with this impious organization.

Suppose, Mr. Speaker, there are two hundred councils in the state. And suppose, sir, that these six hundred men—three from each council, the creatures of the deputies, who are the creatures of the grand president, Mr. Barker (for such is the name of this dignitary)—are sent to New York to meet in grand council. James W. Barker is chairman of that council, and he has before him these six hundred creatures of the deputies who hold their office at his will. Think you, sir, that these men would be likely to be made up of refractory material? Would it be a very difficult matter for him to secure the designation of such men as he could control at will, and do with as he pleased? And what are the duties of these six hundred men? Not to make nominations merely, but bye laws and oaths also, to be subscribed by every man in the organization, whether he got there from his own free will, or to hear a lecture—oath, not to bind men in the future, but *ex post facto* oaths—oaths reaching backward to the past! These are among the duties of this grand council, thus constituted!

Now, sir, no such monstrous scheme was in the minds of those who originated the order. It was simply designed as an instrument with which to counteract the combination of the foreign vote—of men, American neither in feeling, birth nor conduct. But to accomplish that purpose, it was not deemed necessary to constitute it an independent political organization. It allowed men to cherish their own political predilections or faith—to adhere to, while seeking to purify, their several parties. One person as a Whig, could vote for a Whig—an American Whig; and another, as a Democrat, could vote still with his party for American Democrats.

But, sir, now is this the simple purpose of the order? That it is not, there is abundant proof. I have before me the Daily Times of December 4, 1854; and what I am about to read, no man will deny, either its genuineness or truth. It was copied from a document to which was affixed the seal of the grand council. It is as follows:

THE KNOW NOTHINGS.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE GRAND COUNCIL OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK.

[OFFICIAL REPORT.]

OFFICE OF THE G. C., No. 199 Varick street, Grand Council, so called, assembled in pursuance of the resolve of its last session, Nov. 14, 15 and 16, 1854.

By Mason, of Council 21:

Resolved, That no delegate be admitted January Council unless the Grand Council shall have represented the acts of the G. and Council, and that such delegate now will and aye to the Grand Ticket be expelled.

Motion to reconsider lost.

Pending the final passage of the three resolutions it was decided that each member should answer his name and Number of Council, and that for those so voted at the late election, viz: Jno. Brooks of Council No. 21, Jas. Wood of No. 12, and Geo. Law of No. 22, refusing to answer, were requested to have their resignations ready to be accepted.

Resolved, That any delegate who shall refuse to answer, or who shall propose oath from his fellow delegates, or who voted or said his influence for any other than the American ticket, headed DANIEL ULLMAN, be expelled.

Here, sir, we see, first, that no delegate was to be admitted unless he would swear that he had voted, at the then late election, the ticket of the order. Yes, sir, before a man should be permitted to take his seat in this council of conspirators, even though he were the son of a revolutionary sire, he must swear that he had voted the ticket headed by the name of DANIEL ULLMANN!—must swear that he had slavishly surrendered the dearest birthright of an American citizen, and marched to the ballot box with the shackles of the order around him! Shame, shame upon such a desecration of the name *American!*

And, secondly, sir, any delegate who could not purge himself, by oath, of the crime of having exercised the right of an American citizen, should be "EXPELLED" from the council! Sir, since this Union was formed, has there been known an organization so despotic? Nay, sir, is there among all the monarchies of Europe one so despotic? Descendents of men who fought in the revolution were cast out from this council because they dared to exercise, according to their best judgment, the right of an American freeman. Was ever before anything heard of equal to this in infamy, to require a free man to take an oath before JAMES W. BARKER and his servile creatures that he has *not* done what the constitution says he may do—deposited a ballot freely and fearlessly—or be cast out as evil from the fellowship of these conspirators and traitors?

Sir, man after man has been expelled from this "American" order because he voted for the present chief magistrate of this state.—Why should this be? Who is Gov. CLARK, that such an indication of preference for him should subject an American to such an indignity? Is there anything base or criminal in casting a vote for such a man?—Does the having cast such a vote debase a man in the eyes of the people? Is Gov. Clark not an honest man—a firm, unflinching and consistent representative of the principles of the Whig party, and a man whose sympathies are on the side of freedom and humanity? What crime was there in voting for such a man? Yet, for having done so, men have been expelled from this "American" order. American! Such an organization, thus corrupt and despotic, has nothing, either in its character or its present objects—deserving of the name of American. No, sir; and I stop here to make a prediction, that in twenty-five months there will not be one hundred, of the one hundred and thirty thousand who are now said to be enrolled on its books, who will even confess that he belonged to such an organization—so villainous, corrupt and infamous in its schemes. I believe so, sir, because I believe that, of these 130,000, very few comparatively are now cognizant of its corrupt and infamous purposes, or of the villainous designs of the men who control it. It is managed by schemers and demagogues. Who are they? Who are at its head? Who are its executive committee? Not a man—I will not go so far as that—scarcely a man who is not equally destitute of reputation and character; aye, sir, men whose names are enrolled upon the calendars of crime in the city of New York—men steeped in crimes of the deepest and blackest dye; and I state this on authority, though I do not deem it proper at present to name the men. I repeat, sir, the men who pull the wires of this infamous political machine—who make deputies and councils and by-laws and oaths at pleasure, are some of them criminals, known to be criminals from the record and from well authenticated report. When those facts are known to the 130,000 who are moving at the nod of these base men, think you they will longer submit their wills, their consciences, their free rights, to their keeping? No, sir, no; the spirit of true Americanism will spurn such control.

I omitted, in the proper place, another and important link in this complicated chain forged to manacle the free limbs of free men. The nine men, who are selected by the deputy to constitute a council, or any five of them (even though the council may have 500 members) have the right to blackball whoever is proposed, if he is not the sort of man they desire to have in the council!—They have a right to reject any applicant.—Is this democracy—five men ruling in a council of 50 or 500? But it was necessary. Why? Because, if this power was not conferred upon the creatures of the creature of the grand president, JAMES W. BARKER might lose the control of the councils, and so, ultimately, of the order! BARKER appoints the deputy—the deputy selects the nine to form a council—these nine select three of their own number to act as delegates for three years to the grand council—and any five of the nine can reject any honest man who may apply for admission, and who they believe might be dangerous to the accomplishment of their dishonest designs.—The scheme is perfect. Nor can its machinery be changed but by the will of the grand president! The 130,000 members of the order have no voice in the election of their delegates. It has been said by some members of the order—you see, sir, there have been a great many members of the order regardless of their oaths—it has been said, I say, that the councils can instruct their delegates, and thus counteract any evil design which may be cherished by the grand president. This is plausible, but it is not truthful. The constitution or by laws give the delegates the right to appeal to the grand council. So that, if the instructions do not chime with the purposes of the grand council or the grand president, as his creatures constitute the tribunal to which the appeal is made, the councils instructing these delegates will be overruled. It is a most perfect scheme of villainy and corruption. But these things are not known to the mass of the order. They were not known by me until within thirty days; and I here, in my place on the floor of this House, vouch for the correctness of everything I have stated.

But, sir, let us go one step farther, and so come one step nearer to matters immediately before us. At the December meeting of the grand council, the following resolutions were adopted:

Resolved, That this Grand Council recommend that each Assembly District in this state send to Albany one person, to use his influence to secure the election of a member of a sound Know Nothing Democratic Republican United States Senator, and that the delegates go to Albany as early as the 1st of January next (or not with standing to chosen by the Legislature) and that the Officers, one from each Assembly District, and the officers of this Grand Council are their influence to prevent Whig and Democratic caucuses from voting in the city.

Resolved, That no person shall be admitted to the Grand Council unless Councils in arrears to the Grand Council.

Resolved, That a Committee be appointed whose duty it shall be to draft a Test Pledge to be exacted of Know Nothing Councils.

The following is the report of the Committee so appointed:

Your committee, to whom was referred the subject of the pledging test of certain Councils, consisting of officers and members, as also the pledged members of such Councils, do respectfully report in compliance with the act passed the Grand Council at the last semi-monthly meeting at the annual session of said Grand Body (Nov. Oct. 3, 1854,) to be reported by this Order at the 19th succeeding session, and which was made the order then assembled, by their vote or otherwise, to devise ways and means for the immediate dissolution of such Councils, officers and members, being fully responsibly to report the following:

Resolved, That the present representatives to this Grand Council be, and they are hereby instructed to inquire into the standing of the Deputies in every county as are adjoining counties and districts, at the October session, and report the requirements of this Grand Council in the recent nominations of this Grand Body for State officers, by an examination of their votes at the late election, and if any such delegate shall be found to have violated the pledge, and shall not be able to give satisfactory reasons, and shall not be able to give satisfactory reasons, and shall not be able to give satisfactory reasons