

[Book Review by Charles P. Rosenberger, April 1964.]

THE NEW AGE

by Albert Pike

IN THE YEAR 1809, there were many births, all of which completed their life cycle many years ago. We can be certain that many of those lives became mere statistics. But of the grand total of births that year, we know from the records of time that relatively few performed service over and above the call of duty to their fellow man, their country and the world. Among those honoured few, whose names and achievements left their mark in the sands of time, is Albert Pike, the man whose memory we recall with deep reverence and whom we particularly honor today. His was a life that changed his birth from obscurity to fateful prominence, and made his death a tremendous loss to mankind. When his life cycle was completed, he had built a record of achievement which very few men ever have equalled.

Albert Pike echoed the words of Benjamin Franklin who said, "Dost thou love life? Then squander not time for that is the stuff of which life is made." It would seem that Albert Pike made the most of his time. He started his amazing career early in life, lived 81 years, worked right up to the end and is said never to have slept more than four or five hours each night. He had a remarkably strong and virile constitution, a tremendous capacity for brain work, and a prodigious memory. He possessed many talents, each of which he developed to a notably high degree.

In his many and varied experiences he encountered life's joys and sorrows, its successes and disappointments, its hardships and its comforts. He came face to face with the bitter and the sweet of human nature, its friendliness and its coldness and cruelty. He knew what it was to be hated and despised, and he also knew what it was to be admired, loved, revered, even idolized.

Albert Pike descended from an English family which possessed a background of determination to have that freedom which for a time had been denied them, but which, they were confident, their God meant for them to have. It was one of those families that left England and came to America for the express purpose of pursuing their ideals unhindered. Although poor, they were self-reliant. Albert was true to the family tradition. He believed that he was put on this earth, not just to exist, but to achieve. He looked upon life as an adventure, with victories to be won by those willing to try. Try he did. In him was the spirit of the pioneer and explorer, which underlies all our great efforts. He had that inherent desire to see what lies beyond the next hill-beyond the horizon. To him there seemed to be no final horizon.

Albert Pike may have been the inspiration for the man who said, "I do not choose to be a common man. It is my right to be uncommon - if I can. I want to take the calculated risk; to dream and to build, to fail and succeed. I will not trade beneficence nor my dignity for a handout. It is my heritage to stand erect, proud and unafraid; to think and act for myself."

He had many physical advantages, such as a huge frame, a kindly face, dignified appearance, and a soft and pleasing voice. He was a man of culture and good taste, affable and courteous, a ready conversationalist, good story-teller and just as much at home with erudite and sophisticated people as with those of the woods and plains. Being of a chivalrous nature and having a charming personality, he was an equal favourite with men and women. His intimate friends were aware that he was not a saint, but they knew, too, that he was an upright, honest and honourable citizen who was opposed to evil practices. To them, he was one of the most lovable men who ever lived.

He always had an ambition to learn, a desire for wisdom. These inherent qualities propelled him into becoming one of the world's great scholars. In early youth in Massachusetts, the State of his birth, he had acquired his schooling and much self-education and training as a teacher before answering the call of adventure which took him West. In the vast area of that wild and undeveloped country now comprising Oklahoma, and parts of New Mexico and Texas, Albert Pike spent some of the most gruelling and trying months of his life.

He traded, fought, and consorted with Indians, renegade whites, and mixed breeds-the type of human beings which might be expected to inhabit that early-day country-all of whom had to be physically rough and tough to even exist. On the prairies he suffered the pangs of hunger and thirst and was tortured by the merciless summer heat. There were days without shade and the only water available was stale and muddy. In the wooded areas was the entanglement of vines and briars and the dangers from snakes and wild animals.

Sickness, the lack of funds and provisions, the loss of sorely-needed horses, and their clothes almost useless, forced Pike and his party to abandon this expedition. He and his companions had decided to go to New Orleans. They chose a road leading in that direction, but as they followed it, it tapered down to a footpath and then disappeared altogether. From there, they headed in an easterly direction, eventually arriving at Ft. Smith. Thus did Louisiana lose a potentially great citizen and Arkansas obtained the man who was to become perhaps its most famous citizen.

It is well known that when Albert Pike arrived in Arkansas, he was penniless and had to fall back on his teaching ability to obtain "a dollar or two" necessary for existence.

It wasn't long until he was in the newspaper business and soon became owner and editor of a paper in Little Rock. Although this was another field in which he displayed unusual ability, as a collector of his accounts he had little success. A goodly number of his customers could not or would not pay, and Albert Pike could not or would not make them. This was not the lucrative field for which he was looking and in a few years he sold out.

In the meantime, however, he had started the self-study of law. He thought he saw, in this new country, a wide-open field for good attorneys. An amusing story demonstrates the point. In a backwoods section, court was about to open to try three murderers and a horsethief when the judge noticed that one of the jurors was missing and since the courthouse was in a remote spot, no one was available to fill the vacancy. The defense attorney made a suggestion, and the judge and prosecuting attorney, wanting to move on without delay to the next stop in the circuit, agreed. They put one of the murderers in the jury and first tried the horsethief. He was acquitted. They then put the horsethief in the jury and tried and acquitted the murderer. By this kind of contrivance, all four were acquitted.

Albert Pike's decision in choosing the legal profession was a good one. He made rapid progress and in a few short years became one of the best lawyers of his day in the entire Southwest. This fact is attested to by the large practice he built up; by his having been licensed to practice before the Arkansas and the United States Supreme Courts; by successfully representing several Indian tribes in their claims against the Government and for several references and compositions highly important to the legal fraternity, which he authored. In the practice of this profession it is believed that he amassed several fortunes, and at times showed evidence of considerable wealth for that day and time. The home he built in Little Rock was a costly structure and a show-place of that city.

His legal career extended over many years, practising in Arkansas, Louisiana, Tennessee and our Nation's Capital and was interrupted only by his participation in the Mexican War in the 1840's and the War Between the States in the '60's.

Undoubtedly, Albert Pike could have been one of America's outstanding statesmen had he heeded the call to enter politics. He was well informed on public affairs and being an orator with exceptional eloquence, he had the ability to influence votes. But in him there was no desire to hold public office. His contention was that to win success in politics, the masses must be swayed and to do that, one must profess whatever doctrine suits the times. This, of course, was in contradistinction to his belief that the science of government is the science of benefitting the people and that every political contest should be a contest of principles and not merely for the benefit of parties or individual contestants. He shrugged off the suggestion that he enter politics, "where he could make a reputation for himself," and followed the advice he gave to others: "Be faithful to your country, and prefer its dignity and honor to any degree of popularity and honor for yourself."

Anyone who seeks a place in the sun can expect to get burned. He who climbs a little higher than the crowd will be the target for knockers. The higher he rises, the more and louder the knocking. Like all forceful men, Albert Pike aroused jealousies and made enemies.

Some of the cruellest criticism of all was due to his participation in the Battle of Pea Ridge in the War Between the States. In the South he was not only unjustly accused of cowardice and betrayal of the South because of his northern birth, but actually blamed for the loss of that battle. In the North he was called a recreant Yankee and stories were published which claimed that just before the battle, he had purposely aroused the savage instincts of the Indians under his command by giving them whiskey which accounted for atrocities not condoned by civilized warfare. Although all these charges were subsequently disproven, such fantastic untruths can only, by the medium of time, be completely erased.

Albert Pike's position on the question of secession is a matter of record. He used his influence to try to prevent withdrawal from the Union, but when that step became inevitable, he was compelled to take a stand. He had become a part of the Southland and his adopted State of Arkansas. Their problems had become his problems, their destiny his destiny. He could flee and leave everything, be murdered, or join his neighbors. He chose the latter. Although Albert Pike sincerely believed that there could be secession and peaceful existence, when war did come he offered his services to the Southern cause.

From the experience gained in his early days in Indian Country; his continued association with members of various tribes in representing them as their attorney; being with them on hunting expeditions regularly throughout the intervening years, and having learned to speak with some of the chiefs in their own language, he felt that he was qualified to negotiate treaties with a view to keeping the Indians neutral. He was appointed commissioner with the rank of brigadier general. Treaties were made and the Indians organized under the promise that they would be used only within their own borders. Orders from higher up to use them outside their own territory led to General Pike's resignation prior to the end of the war.

From man's beginning, man has been the enemy of man. Were this not so, there would be no need for Masonry and the principles it teaches. Man's passion to hate, to envy, to covet, to gain something for himself at the expense of others seems to have no bounds nor end. National heroes, including the beloved Father of our Country, are now disparaged by some and even ridiculed by others in stories invented or distorted to suit their particular purposes. Albert Pike has been a target for this kind of

passion and to this time stories will occasionally crop out in the works of some freelance writers who are more interested in fancy and personal benefit than in facts.

But God also created in man the passion to love, to be charitable, to weigh the good against the bad, and so long as mankind will defend and exemplify the spirit of love, the spirit of George Washington will live, as will the spirit of Albert Pike.

The Civil War marked a turning point in the life of Albert Pike. For several years following its close, he was restless. He could not practice law until he had been pardoned for his activities with the Confederacy. Although he loved people and loved to be with them, contrary to his nature he went in seclusion and devoted more of his time to his Masonic duties and to his books, which were all he had left since the rest of his property had been confiscated or destroyed. Later, he took up residence in Washington and while performing his duties as Grand Commander he again entered into the practice of law and still found time to give to his poetry and other writings.

His love for Masonry had grown deeper and deeper and in 1879, feeling that there was much work still undone, he closed his brilliant career in law and devoted the remaining years of his life to research and study for the benefit of the Scottish Rite. At the time of his retirement from the practice of law, he had been a Mason 30 years, having joined the Order when he was 41. The fact that by the time he was 50 he became Sovereign Grand Commander of this Supreme Council is part of our proud history and an outstanding tribute to the man.

Albert Pike joined the Order when many men were still hesitant to do so. Masonry was just emerging from the "anti" movement brought about by misconceptions which were seized upon and given wide circulation by its enemies in an attempt to discredit and destroy Freemasonry in America and thus remove it as an obstacle in advancing their un-American designs. Brother Pike immediately recognized the spirit of brotherhood and the extensiveness of the symbolism that characterizes the Craft. He knew that the status of man was not as it should be or could be. He knew also that reforms come slowly, by degrees, and that Masonry had the opportunity to perform a great mission and that through strengthening and enlarging the Order, the world at large could be spiritually, morally, and ethically benefitted.

Our rituals, as revised by him, and his *Morals and Dogma* contain some of the most profound thinking and philosophy ever to come from the mind of man. Throughout those writings, he points out the analogy of the principles of freedom with the principles of Freemasonry and emphasizes the ideals of service to our fellows, our country, and to mankind. His concern was that man is inclined to allow his own pleasures and indolence to militate against these ideals. By precept and example he endeavoured to instill in the heart of every Mason the desire to contribute something to life that will outlive his days on earth, something which will be of benefit to mankind.

Not only Masonry, but all Protestantism is deeply indebted to Albert Pike for his classic and comprehensive reply to the encyclical *Humanum Genus* of Pope Leo XIII. That reply is one of the most outstanding documents of all time and it is wise and essential that this Supreme Council should continue to make it available to its members. It incontrovertibly refutes the distortions of fact as stated by Pope Leo and which the Vatican to this day has not seen fit to rescind or amend. No better argument on any subject was ever written and the non-Catholic world as well as Masonry has acclaimed it for its clarity and its comprehensive rebuttal of untruths.

Although *Humanum Genus* was supposedly a condemnation of Freemasonry, it was in fact an invective against all men and communities of men who dared to interpret God's laws according to

their own ideas of thought and conscience or who dared to differ with the assumed infallibility of the Vatican or any principles or doctrine contrary to its own. Albert Pike in his answer again made it clear that Freemasonry is not an enemy of the Catholic religion, and that the claim that Freemasonry will not accept Catholics is untrue.

Although Albert Pike was a master in many lines of endeavour, his brethren recognize him as the world's most renowned Scottish Rite Mason and will be forever grateful for his work in behalf of Freemasonry and the Scottish Rite. Truly, he built his temple in the hearts of men-a temple that man and the elements cannot destroy.

I am sure that Past Sovereign Grand Commander Albert Pike would be glad to know that his efforts were not in vain; that his rituals are still very definitely in use and most highly regarded, and that his writings are preserved for the future generations of man. I believe he would be proud of this Supreme Council and its illustrious leadership as it exists today, and that, inspired by him, our cause, which is the cause of human progress, shall progress with greater vigour.