

**What the Masonic Press may and Should be.**

In this our third article on the subject we wish to write as briefly as we well may, fearing that we may otherwise exhaust the patience of our readers. That a Masonic press is advisable and important, valuable and needful, to-day, we venture to think; that it may also be a great age to Freemasonry we also hold, but then it must avoid some of the errors and quicksands which have abounded in its previous course. One great defect as regards the Masonic Press has been its personality. It is lamentable to think what scurrility has sometimes found its way into Masonic columns. As the representatives of a brotherhood professing fraternal love as its keynote, it would be amusing, were it not so saddening, to observe this inconsistency of humanity. Some of the most personal, and we will add, vulgar, productions we ever read have emanated from a Masonic penman, writing, moreover, "ad fratres." Strange inconsistency, but so it is. Now in saying this do not let any suppose that we underrate the importance of the real "hitch of the matter," the actual difficulties of the case. It is no doubt sometimes hard to restrain a strongish word or epithet, when we have proof before our eyes of the ignorance of the sciolist or the audacity of the charlatan. It is not so easy always to keep within due bounds, the eager disputant, or the keen controversialist, who finds his motives impugned, his word travestied, and his opinions derided by one whom he considers in the nature of things incompetent to pass an opinion on the merits of the case. Many people rush into the pages of a Masonic or profane newspaper whose views are hazy and whose language is most insulting, and hardly a week passes but we see how true it still is that "fools enter in where angels fear to tread." And hence a little latitude must always exist for honest indignation, and critical severity, for the laudible exposure of the imposter and impertinent, for the ardent language and glowing fervour of the injured, the assailed, or the defamed. But having said this, we feel that we have made all needful allowances for the exigencies of passing controversies and excitable writers, and we are bound, it appears to us, to set our face against all press personalities. The imputative of evil motives, the covert insinuation, the open falsehood, the violence of some "feeble forcible," and the mistaken vehemence of some amateur libeller are all things "bene notanda," and "bene evitanda" in Masonic journalism. Freemasonry will rise much higher in the opinion of the outside world, when Masonic papers put on one of that embittering tone which too often mars and degrades their pages, when Masonic controversies are conducted in a spirit of fairness and toleration, and when all of attempted bullying, or browbeating, or absurd assumption, or unreasonable dogmatism, shall have passed away from Masonic pamphleteers, and Masonic disputants, never to return. The judgement of the world, based on the evidence of the Masonic press, is too often unfavourable to Freemasonry on the ground that its practice does not square with its profession—that it says one thing and does the very contrary; and that while it openly asserts as its leading principles, the teaching of a charitable, elevated, tolerant, benevolent brotherhood, Freemasons show themselves to be very often in the press the most intolerant, the most uncharitable, the most vulgar, and the most abusive of mankind. These are hardish words, but they are true, and

above all, they are needed, whether popular or unpopular, acceptable or unacceptable. And another point for the Masonic press to avoid is ritual publication. We have fallen into "evil courses" in this respect, and must retrace our steps. We have been publishing far too much about the "arcana" and "aporreta" of our Order, and must hold our hands, there is plenty of ground for Masonic writers to travel over and for Masonic publications to dwell upon, without loading our pages with ritual and ceremonial. Masonic archaeology has plenty of hope for the student and the teacher, and except for the sake of illustration, ceremonial ought not to be dwelt upon by Masonic writers. We have latterly excluded ritual discussions from the *Freemason*, and we shall continue to do so. There is quite sufficient in the current news of the day, in the abstract principles of Freemasonry, in the onward progress of Masonic affairs at home and abroad, and, above all, in the interesting study of the annals and antiquities of our great Order, to occupy the leisure of the Masonic correspondent, to lend force to the exhortation of the Masonic teacher, to enliven the contribution of the Masonic critic, and to claim the close attention of the Masonic editor. Guided by the principles we have laid down of abstention and caution, we have no doubt ourselves but that the Masonic press has a useful and beneficial, a great and goodly future before it. In all that it seeks to proclaim and to enforce, didactically or hortatory before the Craft, its utterances ought always to be marked by distinct adherence to principle, and an elevated tone to all things, through evil report or good report, popular or unpopular, it should never truckle to expediency, but should always display before all men that noble banner of blue, on which glitter in letters of gold the talismanic words, Honour, Justice, Loyalty, Charity, Brotherly Love, Toleration, Truth.—*London Freemason.*

**I. O. O. F.**

**Conclusions from Facts.**

BY P. G. M. AT LEE.

The Grand Secretary, in his report, last year, informed the G. L. U. S., that "the Revenue, from all sources, will not meet the current expenses of 1876," and recommends the sale of a small amount of United States Bonds. The expenditures of the year, ending August 31st, 1875, amounted to \$43,586.98, being \$4,149.10 in excess of regular income. The Grand Secretary says on the same subject, that "the per diem and mileage expenses of the session will materially exceed the cash balance standing to the credit of the Grand Lodge at the making up of this Report; and although the revenue of the coming year may be sufficient to cancel the balance and cover the annual expenses, it is quite certain that such revenue, even if sufficient for the purposes indicated, cannot be available in time to meet the great expenses incurred, in the first part of the year, for printing the Revised Journal, etc.," wherefore, the Grand Treasurer seconded the recommendation by the Grand Secretary, of turning into cash such an amount of invested bonds as may be required, which was so ordered by the Grand Lodge.

As this application for leave to sell the invested bonds will probably become a standing paragraph in the Annual Reports of the Grand Secretary and Treasurer, the \$22,000 of Five Twenty Bonds, now on hand must before many years, be all sold, and the expenses of the Grand Lodge limited to the current revenue.

When that time comes, can the Grand Lodge, as at present organized, keep its expenditures within such limit? Certainly not. As such a crisis is inevitable, would it not be prudent, meanwhile, to discuss the subject, and to take the necessary precautions?

There are but two alternatives offered to the Grand Lodge: Additional taxation, and retrenchment. The first would not, I think, be favorably considered by the Order; and recourse must, of course, be had to the reduction of the outlay to the income. This will involve a reorganization of the G. L. U. S. That Body is too large. It consisted, at the session of 1875, of one hundred and fifty-three members, viz.: officers, 10; P. G. Sires, 6, (with a possibility of 12), and 137 representatives.

Consolidation of the State Grand Lodges and Grand encampments would reduce the number of representatives to seventy-nine, and if the Constitution were adhered to, and the P. G. Sires required to pay their own expenses of attendance, the entire assembly, including the ten officers, would not exceed eighty-nine. This would save more than one-third of the annual expenses.

Biennial sessions would effectually preclude all hazard of excess. The contrast between the expense of annual session of 153, and the expense of a biennial session of 89, will convince any one who would make an estimate. Such a Legislature might remain in session two or three weeks, with honor to itself and benefit to the Order. It would have time to give due consideration to every subject, and its decisions would not be precipitated by "previous questions," nor "points of order." Parliamentary strategy is practiced for the protection of political or partisan interests, but it ought not to be tolerated in a tribunal for purely benevolent purposes. There is no argument in force, and victories won by such means provoke resentment and retaliation. They are certainly out of place in a Council of Brethren. A Grand Lodge fewer in number and more seldom in session, would not suffer them to be introduced.—*Odd Fellows' Companion.*



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