

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT.

PRESUMPTIVE GRAND LODGES.

THAT pretended Grand Lodges have existed in the past, is an admitted fact; but there was some excuse for them upwards of a century ago, when the fraternity had just awakened from the lethargy into which Masonry had been thrown prior to the revival of 1717. It was neither through a desire for supremacy, nor by design that the Masons of the latter period sought to form themselves into independent Grand Bodies. In England there was at first what was known as the "Grand Lodge of all England," while at the same time there existed a body assuming powers not given them by any regular organization, yet acting independently of the regular Grand Body. Less than fifty years after the formation of this body, another sprang up, which claimed to be the only true body, and its members were known as the "ancients." The "Grand Lodge of all England" was dissolved thirty years later, and for seventy years the "ancients" held undisputed sway. Before this time, however, Grand Lodges had been formed in Ireland and Scotland, presumably because it was difficult to discover what legitimate body existed in England. Those Grand Lodges exist to-day, having exclusive jurisdiction over their respective countries. If the "Grand Lodge of all England" exercised authority over Ireland and Scotland, it is evident that no attempt was made to enforce it; hence there could be no cause for objecting to the formation of Grand Lodges then. In 1813 a definite arrangement was effected, whereby all the different bodies agreed to unite, and the result was the formation of the "United Grand Lodge of England," the present governing body there, the Grand Lodges of Ireland and Scotland not being interfered with, as they could not reasonably be.

It is hardly necessary to concede that, when the circumstances are considered, but little wrong could have been done by the formation of the respective Grand Bodies existing between 1717 and 1813. Not only was time required to consolidate the Masonic fraternity, then so few in numbers, but concessions had to be made in order to foster the growth of the institution; and we can now see the wisdom of the course pursued by the restorers of our ancient order. How different it is with presumptive, not to say clandestine, Grand Bodies on this side of the Atlantic. A few misguided brethren in this jurisdiction, as the reader is fully aware, have set up an institution of their own. Under the pretence—for it was nothing more—of having been unfairly dealt with, the recusant few who have constituted themselves "free and independent," established themselves into a Grand Body, but happily they find that, as in the words of an eminent jurist, it is rebellion in any part of the British Empire to resist its supreme legislative authority, so it is rank treason to Masonry to set up an independent body within the jurisdiction of the controlling Grand Body; and as a consequence the existence of the surreptitious organization is universally ignored. We care not to speak harshly of those who have already been sufficiently punished for their temerity, and whose expulsion from the order has caused so much regret for the folly and madness of the course they have taken.

We have an interesting article, and a letter, from Bro. Rob. Morris, which we are compelled to hold over until next month.