

I now invite Grand Chapter to confirm the dispensations enumerated by regular warrants.

CONSTITUTIONS.

There have been a few cases of constitutional reference on which I have had to rule, and which a public charge of this character is a fitting medium to make use of for their general dissemination.

In the first place, I feel I shall be doing a service to the Order, as well as saving much future trouble, correspondence, and possible disappointment, by calling special attention to the specific regulation as to the qualifications for the office of First and Second Principals laid down in the constitution on "Subordinate Chapters, article 6," as follows.

"No Companion shall be eligible for the First Principal's Chair, unless he be an Installed Master or Past Master of a regular Lodge, nor until he has served in the Second Principal's Chair for twelve months, nor to the Second until he has served in the Third Principal's Chair for twelve months, unless by special dispensation from the Grand First Principal."

The dispensing power or authority herein vested in the Grand First Principal to allow a deviation from the express letter of the constitution as above laid down, I feel bound, as I know my predecessors have done, to regard, in view of the solemnity attending the induction into office of the G. Z., as one to be only exercised in extreme cases, and on good and sufficient cause being shewn of an absolute and indispensable necessity. During the past year applications were received from the large proportion of nearly one-fourth of the chapters on our roll for dispensations for the installation of first or second principals not thus constitutionally eligible, and for the most part by simple request, almost as if it were matter of course, without any cause assigned, or cause, if it can be so called, of the most general character. I am happy to add that I believe in all these numerous cases the applicants were satisfied that in the rigid requirement of good and sufficient cause, I felt bound to insist upon before granting, and in the absence of which I had to refuse the application, I was laying down a wholesome rule with regard to a prerogative, which should be neither lightly evoked nor lightly granted, and more especially, and on this I particularly desire to dwell, in the case of propositions to dispense with the requirement that the first principal should be an installed master or past master of a craft lodge, a wise regulation I deem almost insurmountable, and to dispense with which involves the anomaly of placing a companion in a position to "perfect a degree" he is not able to confer.

The second matter of constitutional reference relates to the article on "Honorary members," as follows:—

"I. Chapters may elect any companion an honorary member by an open vote of the Chapter. Due notice must be given at one Convocation, and the name be inserted in the summons for the next regular Convocation. The chapter must include all honorary members, in its returns to the Grand Chapter, and pay similar dues for them as for ordinary members.

"II. Honorary membership does not confer the right of voting, except it is so declared at the time of election, and then it can be conferred only on those who were ordinary members when so elected.

"III. Should such honorary members, as at the time of their election were ordinary members, accept office in the Chapter, their honorary membership ceases. Honorary members, who were not ordinary members, cannot hold office in the Chapter."

The case in question applied to two companions who have not only presided with distinction in private chapters, but have filled the second highest chair, that of G. H., in Grand Chapter, and who, on the second meeting of Montreal Chapter, No. 43, (one of these distinguished Companions having organized the chapter and installed the officers, in the preceding month, as Grand Superintendent of the District) were proposed as honorary members, and on the third meeting unanimously elected as such, with full privileges of ordinary members. At the close of the year it was desired to elect one of these companions to fill the chair of first principal, and it was referred to me to rule on their eligibility, and, if ineligible, the steps they should take to become eligible. As to the first point there could be no question, as honorary members, who had never been ordinary members, they were ineligible, and the resolution investing them with the full privileges of ordinary members, was *ultra vires* and inoperative. And as to the second, the only apparent way of getting rid of their ineligibility, would be the resignation of their honorary membership and re-entry into the chapter as ordinary members, by proposal, ballot, and the regular formalities connected therewith. I name this case, not that there is any masonic ruling of consequence in connection therewith, but rather by way of suggestion as to the somewhat