

PARLIAMENTARY LAW, AS APPLIED TO THE GOVERNMENT OF MASONIC BODIES.

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CHAPTER IX.

OF THE VOTE, AND HOW IT SHALL BE TAKEN.

All the members who desire to express their opinion on the subject-matter which is presented in the motion having spoken, and the mover of the resolution, if he wishes to avail himself of his privilege, having replied to the arguments which have been advanced against the measure, the next thing to be done is to obtain the voice of the Lodge on the subject-matter presented in the motion, and a formal expression of its opinion, whether favorable or otherwise. This is technically called "Putting the question," and, like all parliamentary proceedings, is conducted with certain forms, from which it is not safe to depart. As a general rule in parliamentary bodies, the question is put in this form: "So many as are in favor of the motion will say *aye*;" and then, "So many as are of a contrary opinion will say *no*." But in Masonry it is a well-established rule—although often neglected—to take the opinion of the Lodge, not by the vocal utterance of *aye* or *no*, but a *show of hands*. In the "General Regulations of the Free and Accepted Masons, revised, approved of, and ordered to be published by the Grand Lodge [of England] January 28th, 1767," a part of article XIII is in the following words:

"The opinions or votes of the members are always to be signified by each holding up *one of his hands*: which uplifted hands the Grand Wardens are to count, unless the number of hands be so unequal as to render the counting useless. Nor should any other kind of division be ever admitted on such occasions." This rule is still in force in the Grand Lodge of England, without other change than that of making it the duty of the "Grand Wardens or Grand Deacons" to count the votes.—This mode of putting the question involves the necessity of a change of phraseology on the part of the presiding officer. The usual formula in this country is as follows: "So many as are in favor of the resolution will signify the same by raising the right hand;" and then, "So many as are of a contrary opinion will make the same sign." In some Lodges we have heard this phraseology: "So many as are in favor of the resolution will signify the same by the usual sign of the Order." But as raising the right hand is not what we technically understand as a *sign of the Order*, the expression is evidently incorrect, and we therefore prefer the formula first given.

If the number of hands raised on each branch of the question are so unequal, that there is no difficulty in deciding which number is the greater, the Master next proceeds to announce the result; which, however, will be the subject of the succeeding chapter.

But if the presiding officer has any doubt as to which side has the preponderance of hands, he may for his own satisfaction require the vote to be again taken; or if, after making this announcement, any member is dissatisfied, he may call for a *division*.

This division of the Lodge is not to be confounded with a division of the question, which is hereafter to be considered. In the House of Commons a division is made by one party going forth and the other remaining in the House; whence it becomes important which are to go