

time to time been given, they would find, in most cases, what they wish to know.

"I do not think it respectful to the District Deputy Grand Masters to apply to the Grand Master for advice over the heads of these brethren, and I have discountenanced that practice as much as possible.

"Several applications have been made to me during the past year for rulings on the subject of the physical qualifications of candidates. The ancient charges prefixed to the book of constitution, lay down the rule that no Master should take an apprentice unless he is a perfect youth, having no maim or defect in his body that may render him incapable of learning the art or serving his Master's lord, and of being made a brother and then a fellow craft in due time. This rule was adopted from the rules laid down by operative Masons for admission to the Craft, and does not require physical perfection in the candidate, which indeed could rarely be found, and could be established only by careful medical examination. I have in dealing with these cases, adopted the rule laid down by M. W. Bro. Henderson, in 1880, which he states in these words:—

"I hold that, unless a candidate be in a condition to receive, perform and communicate all parts of the ceremonies and duties of the Order, he is not eligible for the degree. He must be capable of making himself known in the dark as well as in the light.' The capacity referred to is natural capacity, without artificial assistance. This rule, it seems to me, is sufficiently liberal, and is in harmony with the ancient charges.

"I am not at all in favor of the strict construction of the rule respecting physical qualifications adopted by some of our American brethren. Any rule should be construed with reference to the circumstances under which it was established, and the objects for which it was intended, and its construction must also, I submit, be subject to modification from time to time to meet altered

circumstances. Even in the courts of law this principle is constantly recognized and acted upon. The qualifications required in a Mason at the present day, under our existing system, are essentially different from those required in the by-gone time. They are mental rather than bodily qualifications, and I, therefore, think the rule we have adopted commends itself to reason and common sense.

"The clause of the constitution which requires that the by-laws of lodges shall be approved by the Grand Master, has imposed on me the duty of examining with care a large number of by-laws, which were sent to me from time to time. While anxious to interfere as little as possible with the right of self-government, granted to private lodges, it was yet my duty to see that their by-laws did not clash with the provisions of the constitution. I was obliged to return many for amendment because this rule had not been properly observed. On the other hand, many of the by-laws sent me are mere re-enactments of the provisions of the constitution, having no force nor effect whatever as by-laws. It has been explained to me, in justification of this practice, that it is convenient to embody in the by-laws all the ordinary rules affecting discipline and the conduct of members in the lodge. That object could be attained, however, by inserting in the book of by-laws an abstract of such of these rules as appear in the constitution, and I would recommend the adoption of this suggestion in the framing of future by-laws. Some of the by-laws sent to me affecting the conduct of members in the lodge appear to me to be quite unnecessary and occasionally inquisitorial. The test of sobriety in the lodge by inspection of a brother's countenance, suggested by some by-laws, is not always to be depended upon, and is certainly likely to lead to disputes. Many sinners against temperance carry no signs of their depravity in their faces, while, on the other hand, many temperate are unjustly accused by their