

slightly increased, but suspensions for non payment of dues have increased *over twenty per cent.* and the deaths about *nine per cent.* We repeat our suggestion of last year, with emphasis born of the statistics, that our chapters should exercise the greatest care in dealing with those in arrears and make sure that they do not err on the side of severity. The increase of suspensions in times of financial depression conclusively proves that decrease of income cuts a large figure in the question of arrears of dues.

"May the craft be endowed with such wisdom that no brother shall be deprived of his Masonic rights on account of his poverty, permanent or temporary!"

HISTORY OF THE UNION OF THE GRAND ROYAL ARCH CHAPTER OF SCOTLAND.

BY STACKER WILLIAMS.

The happy consummation of a union between the "*Supreme Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Scotland*" and the "*Early Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Scotland*," two antagonistic authorities over the Royal Arch degree in Scotland prompts us to devote a portion of our space to this and other degrees associated with it in that country, and to notice the circumstances which led to the organization of the aforesaid bodies and an account of their final union.

There are many novelties connected with the history of the Royal Arch degree prior to the assumption of its control by Grand Chapters, which were organized for this express purpose. There was anything but regularity or uniformity in management and work. Sometimes alone and sometimes followed or preceded by the degree of Knight Templar, it was carried along and worked within the bosom of the Lodge. In fact, for a long time this was the case with almost everything which was claimed to be a Masonic degree. The general custom was, after the ordinary work or business of the

Lodge, for brethren in possession of the degree to be conferred to remain, when a sort of body within a body would be formed and the degree conferred. Sometimes it would be the Royal Arch degree alone, and sometimes the Knight Templar degree as well. This custom prevailed to such an extent as to alarm the Grand Lodge of Scotland; and among other reasons to comply with the "Secret Societies Act" of Parliament, passed in 1799, she soon after the passage of the act resolved "to *prohibit and discharge* all Lodges having charters from the Grand Lodge from holding any other meetings than those of the *three great orders of Masonry, of APPRENTICE, FELLOW-CRAFT, and MASTER MASON*, being the Ancient Order of St. John." To put a stop to the practice which had become so deep rooted required strenuous efforts on the part of the Grand Lodge; and to secure obedience on the part of Lodges to the order of the Grand Lodge to discontinue conferring of the Royal Arch and Templar degrees, it was deemed necessary for the Grand Lodge, in October, 1800, to issue a circular "prohibiting and discharging its daughters to hold any meetings above the degree of Master Mason." Four years later the form of an oath was furnished to the Lodges by the Grand Secretary, with orders to require "*visiting strangers*" to subscribe to it in the presence of two or more office-bearers, who were also required to "*subscribe amongst with him as witnesses.*"

More or less confusion continued until the organization of Chapters and Encampments for the control of these degrees.

On the authority of M.: E.: M. McB. Thomson, of Ayr, Scotland, the last presiding officer of the late Early Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Scotland, we give the statement that *soon after 1800*, charters were granted by the Early Grand Encampment of High Knights Templar of IRELAND, under which the Arch, as well as *all other high grades*, were wrought until 1812,