

The Canadian Craftsman.

Port Hope, February 15, 1882.

Unaffiliation.

The question of unaffiliation is one of those that are constantly attracting the attention of the leaders of the Craft, and calling for earnest legislation from the Grand Easts of different Grand Bodies. Still recruits are daily added to the "Army of the Unaffiliated." Mild legislation and coercive legislation have alike failed to produce the slightest change in the position, and in some jurisdictions the losses per annum to the Fraternity are greater than the gains. This is really a very serious matter. What can be the cause of this great efflux from our ranks? Thousands are eager to gain admission to our portals, and the door is constantly being knocked at by neophytes, eager and anxious to participate in our mysteries. Our lodges, as a rule, are well supplied with material, and yet old members drop off—old faces gradually disappear. Why is this? Surely there must be some reason for this drain upon our resources that threatens us with such a vast amount of injury.

Some jurisdictions have even enacted coercive legislation in order to prevent unaffiliation. As well try, like Canute, to keep back the tidal waves of the ocean, Forced membership is an unquestionable evil. What interest can or will a brother take in the society, who longs to leave it? Is it worth while keeping members amongst us who have tired of our ceremonies, or, worse still, have actually taken a distaste to them? Such men should be allowed to go, and we

should be glad to be rid of them. They are a direct injury to us. Masonry is free. The neophyte enters of his own free will and accord, and the moment he desires to leave he should be equally permitted to depart of his own free will and accord. Still it is very grievous to think, as we initiate the candidate, all eager and anxious to become "a Mason," that in all probability in a few short years he will drop out from our ranks and become one of the unaffiliated.

We believe the principal reason of this constant offence is in a great measure our never-ceasing, continuous fever of "work." In many lodges it is "work, work, work," until the Mason is as wearied of it as the poor seamstress is of "stitch, stitch, stitch." Night after night, from year's end to year's end, it is "initiating," "passing," or "raising," and the intelligent brother begins to think that surely there is not much science or philosophy in an institution that goes over the same routine for generations, and never apparently has a thought beyond it.

If we desire to have our lodge rooms "crammed," and intelligence and intellectuality occupying seats of honor in the Craft, we must exert ourselves to render our Masonic gatherings more agreeable, more sociable, and more instructive. It is absolutely necessary that we should do this. If Freemasonry is a science, it must be progressive in its character. No science ever came to a stand-still. The fact is, fellows with retentive memories and glib tongues have made themselves masters of the situation, and by teaching ritual instead of exemplifying Masonry, have driven from