

resolution as above quoted were made general, and that a gag should be placed on all the records of Masonic gatherings. In my humble opinion Freemasonry has attained its present true reputation, of being a respectable order-loving and benevolent institution, mainly, in the first instance, through the instrumentality of the Masonic press, and afterwards by the judicious efforts of brethren attached to respectable journals in the provinces, who have discreetly opened their columns to matters of interest to the sections of the craft in their respective districts. I know that some fossilized brethren stand aghast at even the mention of their lodge doings finding its way into a newspaper, but the same foolish conservatism existed at one time among Boards of Guardians and other public bodies, who had hitherto transacted their business in solemn conclave. Such obsolete ideas were, however, demolished by the voice of public opinion, and representatives of the press are now almost invariably admitted at meetings of such institutions.

It may be argued that Freemasonry is not a public institution, and in a sense this is true. But it is positively absurd to imagine that the proceedings of so representative a body should be kept a sealed book. If so, what becomes of the interchange of that opinion amongst lodges at home and abroad, and in various parts of our own country, which has been of such benefit to the craft, and which has gone so far to cement and adorn the Order with that spirit of cosmopolitan brotherly love which we now find in its ranks? The only thing which, in my view, is required is, that proper care should be exercised by those who undertake the duty of furnishing Masonic reports to the press. And if, as is too frequently the case, a member of the lodge makes the journal with which he is associated the medium of saying spiteful or personal things of a brother Mason, it is a proceeding which should at once draw

down upon him such a salutary rebuke that a repetition of the offence is seldom possible.

It is notorious that in many country towns there is considerable friction between those who belong to the craft and those who do not, and the smaller the place the more bitter the feud becomes. There is an idea that Masons ruin trade, and that the brethren use their connection with the Order to "favor" each other in business. But it is equally certain that the very men who raise such an outcry against this "trading on Masonry," simply because a rival tradesman might display the Masonic emblems on his shop front or in his trade card, are the very ones who would force their way into the charmed circle if their presence could be tolerated, or if they could do it "on the cheap."

There are very few "gentlemen of the press," I imagine, who, when they join a lodge, do so actuated by "mercenary or other unworthy motives," and when they publish the proceedings of their own lodges they do so in a spirit of loyalty and brotherly love, and would scorn to say anything in their columns which would detract from the interest and welfare of the body into which they have been admitted. Public opinion and "freedom of discussion," which you recently spoke about, are the best means of keeping alive the present enviable prestige of Freemasonry, whereas coercion as to silence would only revive the calumnies which have for so many years rested upon one of the best and most lofty and beneficent of human institutions.

I remain, Dear Sir and Bro.,

Yours fraternally,

A COUNTRY EDITOR.

[We fully endorse the opinion expressed by our correspondent, and may have occasion to refer more fully to the matter at some future time. Meanwhile, we shall be pleased to receive the views of others who may have given the subject serious consideration.—Ed. F. C.]