

The Canadian Craftsman.

Port Hope, June 15, 1879.

Annual Dues.

The yearly increasing number of brethren who are suspended for "non-payment of dues," is drawing general attention to the subject, and in the desire to lessen the number of these, some are advocating the abolition of the custom which requires payment of annual dues. With them, we certainly do not agree. We are not in favor of fixing the annual dues at a high figure, but we think that the interests of the Craft require payment of dues, and the abandonment of the practice would be most prejudicial, and would often lead to great inconvenience. Dispense with the payment of annual dues, and where are the funds necessary to meet current expenditures to be obtained. No matter how economically the affairs of a Lodge may be managed, there are expenses which must be met, such as rent, light, tyler, stationery, printing, &c. Increase the initiation fee, argue some, and then there will be sufficient provision for other necessary items of expenditure. We are not, however, in favor of a large initiation fee—the lowest amount fixed by the Grand Lodge of Canada, \$20, is high enough—because it tends to prevent many worthy men who would be creditable Masons, from joining the Order. And, moreover, it may so happen that the fees received for initiations would not be sufficient to meet the current expenses, for it is no uncommon thing, in country Lodges especially, for a year to pass without more than one initiation, and sometimes not even one. And then, if the ordinary expenditure of the Lodge is dependent entirely upon initiation fees, from what source is the charitable fund to be drawn? We think that the initiation fees should be devoted to this object, while the annual dues should be applied to current

expenditure, and this need not be large. Some Lodges, we are aware, are maintained on a very extravagant scale—a handsome hall, gorgeous furniture, costly banquets, &c.,—and if the members of the Lodge are wealthy, they have a right, we suppose, to indulge their luxuriant tastes, but the poor man is virtually excluded from such Lodge, and this we contend is not Masonry. But where economy rules, the dues need not be more than \$3 or \$4 per annum. Every man in offering himself a candidate to participate with us in the mysterious secrets of Masonry, should ascertain, not only the amount of his initiation fee, but also the amount of his annual dues, and the brethren recommending him should see that he is made thoroughly acquainted with the amount of these. When this is done it is surely no injustice, nor is it hard, if, failing to pay these dues, for the payment of which he has solemnly pledged himself, he is suspended until the dues be paid. It is very seldom, we think, that non-payment of dues arises from *inability* to pay them, but rather from want of a sense of honor. Such persons have gained admittance into our Order through the carelessness of those who should have more carefully examined into their moral character: and those who, having joined the fraternity and become members of a Lodge, refuse or neglect to pay their dues, are dishonest, and unworthy of the name of men who "prize honor and virtue," &c. When a brother, by misfortune, has become poor or embarrassed, and unable to pay his dues, he has only to make it known to his Lodge to have them remitted, or the time for payment extended; nor need he allow any false pride to prevent his making known his altered situation; he is among brethren who received him into Freemasonry "poor and penniless," and his poverty, if honorable, should make him an object of great regard to his brethren—for honest poverty is nothing to be ashamed of.