

unknown to the Freemasons of those States. Are the lodges of those States less important in the estimation of the Fraternity of the United States than the lodges which, under the constitutional provision to do so, collect dues, or failing to do so, suspend and expel their members? I think not. I have never heard that they were so considered. Do the brethren in other States receive more benefit from their lodge connection than do the brethren of Connecticut and Rhode Island? I think not. I have never heard that they did. Do they dwell more in peace and harmony, and which conditions constitute the cement of all Masonic lodges. On the contrary, where lodges know least about these conditions, the business of collecting or failure to collect dues is the primary cause. So true is this, that it can without fear of contradiction be asserted that money has been the cause of more disaffection and discord among the brethren of those States whose Grand Lodges compel them to pay dues, than all other causes combined. And to-day the general refusal to recognize stranger brethren in those States, unless they can show they are Freemasons by the possession of a diploma from their lodge, has its root, occasion, and cause in the fear that such stranger brethren may require to be assisted in manner as known to Freemasons.

Go to Connecticut or Rhode Island, and on your approach to the portals of a Lodge, provided you can make yourself known as a Freemason, no man will ask you where you were made, or if you ever saw such a document as a Master Mason's diploma. But, under the thin plea of fear of

imposition by "book Masous," it is as difficult now-a-days for a stranger brother to visit a Masonic Lodge in Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, Michigan, or Ohio, especially in the principal cities of these States, as it would be to obtain access to the inner sanctuary of a private family; while, in the first three of those cities that noble charity, because secretly administered to brethren or their dependents, that has given to Freemasons all their respectable distinction of character everywhere as a society before the law has, by the constant drain for years of money to build their costly "temples"—of no value to the brethren not residents of those cities—been thoroughly dried up, and in its stead are left heaps of taxed stones which have cost millions of dollars exacted from the Lodges throughout these States, and encumbered with debts that will forever counteract any constitutional change, having for its object that which is herein proposed.

All that any Masonic Lodge, as such, properly wants of money, or should want of it, is to pay its current expenses. These can be great or little, according to the tastes of its members. Whether they are great or little does not affect its standing as a Masonic lodge. Unless it finds much work to do, a lodge need not meet oftener than twelve times a year, that is once a month. This is the well-established rule. In cities where Masonic temples, so called, or halls, are erected, the expenses of a lodge meeting at the present day need not exceed \$5, and in country towns and villages it can be less. Masonry is regarded gener-