

Correspondence.

We do not hold ourselves responsible for the opinions of our Correspondents.

PHYSICAL QUALIFICATIONS OF CANDIDATES.

To the Editor of THE CANADIAN CRAFTSMAN.

I am rejoiced to see and read your article entitled "*Stand by the Ancient Landmarks.*" It may be, and doubtless is, an unpopular view just now in America generally, as respects our Masonic legislators, but never mind, your view, and our view, as to the subject will yet prevail. I am really astonished that so much valuable time is wasted by so many intelligent and zealous Grand Masters in the United States, especially in discussing the physical qualifications of candidates. To come to the point, how many of them are "*perfectly sound?*" You speak of one having ruled, that if a man had a cataract in the eye he could not be admitted." Well, that is the most absurd decision I have yet met with, but if men are to be wholly physically sound, as candidates for initiation, then, of course, he was right and we are wrong. I have many times had a few words to say against such an absurd interpretation of what are called the "*Ancient Landmarks,*" and I think now of adding slightly to the discussion, by supporting your opinion that "*The whole thing is a farce, and an arrant humbug, and a remnant of the dark ages.*" Let us enquire how it originated and what possible justification can be urged for the "*physical qualification*" legislation of American Grand Lodges. The only authority for these physical tests is to be found in the "*Charges of a Freemason,*" which precede the "*General Regulations*" of the Book of Constitution, of 1723, and subsequent editions. I make bold to say that they were never intended to apply practically to the modern Craft, but are simply presented in each Book of Constitution of the Grand Lodge of England from 1723 to 1884,

as extracts from "*The ancient records of Lodges beyond sea, and of those in England, Scotland, and Ireland, for the use of the Lodges in London.*" To be read at the making of new brethren, or when the Master shall order it." Notwithstanding all the numerous alterations in our laws they remain practically the same in 1884 as in 1723, and there is not a Grand Lodge under the sun, that could adopt them as their Rules and Regulations at the present time. Some apply to the present, as of old, because, mainly, to do with the conduct of brethren; but others refer us more to the Craft now, than they did in 1723, having only to do with the brotherhood in ancient times, when Masonry was a monopoly, and chiefly, if not exclusively operative. These "*Charges*" are an abridgement, with additions and alterations by Dr. Anderson in 1723, of the "*Old Charges,*" of which we have now about fifty copies, ranging from the fourteenth down to the last century. A number of these I had printed in my "*Old Charges of British Freemasons,*" in 1872. Take one of the oldest as a sample of the others, viz: The York MS., of A. D. 1600: "*Such apprentice, sufficiently able of body and sound of limbs, and also of good birth, free born, noes alian, &c.*" Now, it would be unfair to take out this rule from the context and ignore the others, such as: 1. "*True to ye Holy Church,*" (probably Roman Catholic then.) 2. "*True allegiance to ye King of England.*" 3. "*Noe Mason shall be a common player att cards or dice,*" &c., &c., &c. I want to know why the physical qualification regulation should be retained, and the others passed out. But, say some, we have to do with the extracts of 1723. Now let us see what they say:—"No Master should take an Apprentice, unless he has sufficient employment for him, and unless he be a *perfect youth*, having no maim or defect in his body that may render him incapable of learning the art, of serving his