

work on Masonic Jurisprudence, that I cannot do better than to repeat here what I have there said.

From the fact that the by-laws of a lodge must be submitted to the Grand Lodge for its approval and confirmation arises the doctrine, that a subordinate Lodge cannot even by unanimous consent suspend a by-law. As there is no error more commonly committed than this by unthinking Masons, who suppose that in a Lodge, as in any other society, a by-law may be suspended by unanimous consent, it will not be amiss to consider the question with some degree of care and attention.

An ordinary society makes its own rules and regulations, independent of any other body, subject to no revision, and requiring no approbation outside of itself. Its own members are the sole and supreme judges of what it may or may not enact for its own government. Consequently as the members themselves have enacted the rule, the members themselves may unanimously agree to suspend, to amend, or to abolish it.

But a Masonic Lodge presents a different organization. It is not self created or independent. It derives its power, and indeed its very existence, from a higher body, called a Grand Lodge, which constitutes the supreme tribunal to adjudicate for it. A Masonic Lodge has no power to make by-laws, without the consent of the Grand Lodge in whose jurisdiction it is situated. The by-laws of a subordinate Lodge may be said only to be proposed by the Lodge, as they are not operative until they have been submitted to the Grand Lodge and approved by that body. Nor can any subsequent alteration of any of them take place unless it passes through the same ordeal of revision and approbation by the Grand Lodge.

Hence it is evident that the control of the by-laws, rules, and regulations of the Lodge is taken entirely out of its hands. A certain law has been agreed on, we will say, by the members. It is submitted to the Grand Lodge and approved. From that moment it becomes a law for the government of that Lodge, and cannot be repealed without the consent of the Grand Lodge. So far these statements will be admitted to be correct. But if a Lodge cannot alter, annul, or repeal such law, without the consent of the Grand Lodge, it must necessarily follow that it cannot suspend it, which is, for all practical purposes, a repeal for a temporary period.

I will suppose, by way of example, that it is proposed to suspend the by-law which requires that at the annual election all the officers shall be elected by *ballot*, so as to enable the Lodge on a particular occasion to vote *viva voce*. Now, this law must, of course, have been originally submitted to the Grand Lodge, and approved by that Body. Such approbation made it the enactment of the Grand Lodge. It had thus declared that in that particular Lodge all elections for officers should be determined by ballot. The regulation became imperative on the Lodge. If it determined, even by unanimous consent, to suspend the rule, and on a certain occasion to proceed to the election of a particular officer by acclamation or *viva voce*, then the Lodge was abrogating for the time a law that the Grand Lodge had declared was binding on it, and establishing in its place a new one, which had not received the approbation of the supreme tribunal. Such a rule would therefore, for want of this confirmation, be inoperative. It would, in fact, be no rule at all—or worse, it would be a rule enacted in opposition to the will of the Grand Lodge. This principle applies, of course, to every other by-law, whether trivial or important, local or general, in its character. The