

government of the members, because by it useless and troublesome contentions for the precedency of propositions will be avoided.

In every Masonic body, therefore, the by-law should prescribe an "Order of Business," and in proportion as that order is rigorously observed will be the harmony and celerity with which the business of the Lodge will be despatched.

In Lodges whose by-laws have proscribed no settled order, the arrangement of business is left to the discretion of the presiding officer, who will not, however, be left entirely to his own judgment, since he must be governed to some extent by certain general rules, founded on the principles of parliamentary law, or on the suggestions of common sense. Thus the propriety of getting rid of the unfinished business before any new propositions are entertained will naturally suggest itself as a rule of expediency; for if new propositions were permitted to be entertained before old ones, which had been proposed at former communications, were disposed of by their adoption, or rejected, or some equivalent disposition of them, the business would so accumulate as to lead to confusion and embarrassment. It is, therefore, a settled rule of parliamentary law, that the consideration of unfinished business should take the precedence of that which is new. Again, there are certain propositions which, whenever they may arise, must be entertained to the suppression of other matters for the time, because they are questions of privilege. And, lastly, there are special orders, the time for the consideration of which must have been provided at the time when their specialty was determined. Governed by these general rules, where, as I have already observed, no special rules have been provided, and, exercising a wise judgment in the distribution of matters not coming under these heads, the presiding officer would find no difficulty in conducting the business of the meeting with ease to himself and with satisfaction to the members; but if, on the contrary, he shall permit propositions to be introduced at improper times, irrelevant questions to be presented, and a regular arrangement to be neglected, he will soon find himself involved in a labyrinth of perplexities, extrication from which he will find difficult, if not impossible; and, as this judicious management of business constitutes one of the most important functions of a Master of a Lodge as a presiding officer, so does its absence or neglect most strikingly develop his incapacity and unfitness for the position which he occupies.

Experience has shown that the following arrangement or order of business is the one most calculated to facilitate the consideration and disposition of the subjects that are usually brought before a Masonic body, and it is the one, therefore, that has been most generally adopted. After the Lodge has been opened, the process of which ceremony, as it is prescribed by the ritual, needs no explanation here, the first business is to read the minutes of the preceding Communication, and this is to be followed immediately by the question on their confirmation. This refers only, however, to Stated Communications, because as the law of Masonry prescribes that the proceedings of a Stated Communication cannot be altered or amended at a Special Communication, it is not necessary nor usual at the latter to read the minutes of a stated one that has preceded it. The minutes, therefore, except for information, are not read at Special Communications. The minutes, then, having been read and confirmed, the mode of doing which will constitute the subject of another chapter, the next thing will be the consideration of unfinished business. This will be presented by the Secretary, through the Master, to