

considerable sum annually to keep it up; they acknowledge that they have no claim upon outside aid, but that as to expenses they are confined to themselves, and to those who may subsequently join them; they all did join and they all claim to meet upon the principle of equality; they all have an equal claim upon their Lodge property; they are in that respect what is termed in law "joint tenants"; each member has the same rights and privileges as the other members in visiting the Lodge,—hearing and seeing what is carried on therein, and thus getting value out of it; the mental food is served out to all alike, and so long as a member continues to perform his duties which he voluntarily assumed and pledged himself to perform, so long is he entitled to those rights and privileges. Therefore, upon that sound principle established in Freemasonry, that "*there is no right without a parallel duty,*" it follows as a logical conclusion that every member of a Lodge should pay an equal share of its expenses. For this purpose, and upon that principle, the By-laws of a Lodge provide that every member shall pay a certain sum monthly, and this is termed "*monthly dues.*" They vary in different Lodges according to the requirements of the same. This mode of raising the funds required for the expenses of the Lodge, both ordinary and extraordinary, has been considered the simplest and fairest, and has, therefore, been almost universally adopted.

But while there can be no doubt that no Lodge can be started nor continued without considerable expenses, and that the same must be borne and paid by its members in some way or another, there are certainly differences of opinion as to the necessary amount of such expenses. Lodges in this respect are something like individuals, one person considers a certain article an unnecessary luxury, while another person considers the same as one of the necessities of life; the majority of Lodges as well as the majority

of individuals, at the present time, and in this age of comfort, luxury, refinement and extravagance, expend a pound where our forefathers got along with a shilling. To attempt to abolish the present system of expenditure will prove as thankless and as fruitless a task as to attempt to persuade the ladies to give up following the fashions; we may restrict, we cannot abolish them.

It is no doubt true that we have too many Lodges, that a large number of Lodges are not living but merely existing; that probably one-half the number might be closed, and if they were closed and their members were to join the remaining Lodges, these would be in a healthier condition; but this plan is not practicable, it cannot be carried out, and it is therefore useless to discuss the same at length; moreover, even if it were carried out, it would not do away with Lodge expenses altogether; the most it could do, it might reduce the same to a small extent, the balance would still have to be raised by its members, either by an occasional assessment or by fixed monthly dues.

To denounce the principle of exacting Lodge dues for the purposes stated would be erroneous and illegal. There may be an individual brother who cannot pay the same, but that fact is no justification for denouncing the principle.

Lodges have it in their power to remit dues, and in a case where a Brother cannot pay the same, it is the duty of the Lodge to exercise that power; if the Lodge does not, if on the contrary it suspends such a Brother for non-payment of dues, a Brother who from want and need cannot pay, that Lodge is guilty of gross unmaasonic conduct, for it violates one of the fundamental principles of our fraternity, namely, *Charity*.

Having now established the facts: 1. That no Lodge can be started nor conducted without expenses. 2. That these expenses must be borne and paid by its members. 3. That each