

It is therefore a principle of parliamentary law, that after the affirmative vote has been taken, and before the negative has been put, it is in order for any member to speak, if he has not spoken before. This rule is founded on the principle, that every debatable question may be discussed up to the moment of its being fully put. Although we have never known any member of a masonic Lodge to avail himself of this privilege, yet we see no reason why it should not be accorded if demanded. Again, no member, who was not present when the question was begun to be put, can be allowed to vote or take part in the proceedings; nor any division be called for after the presiding officer has announced the result, if any new matter has intervened. A division must only be called for immediately after the announcement of the vote, and before the introduction of new business.

Such are the rules which govern a masonic body in putting the question upon any matter which has been sufficiently debated, and by which the opinion of the majority of the members has been obtained. The next stage of the proceedings is the announcement of that opinion, as thus obtained, by the presiding officer. The form in which this announcement is to be made will constitute the subject of the next chapter.

#### CHAPTER X.

##### THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE DECISION, AND HOW IT SHALL BE MADE.

The question having been thus put and decided by a majority of votes—for except in special cases, where the concurrence of two thirds or three fourths of the voters present is required for the adoption of a proposition, the voice of the majority always rules—the next stage is the announcement of the result. This is to be done by the presiding officer, and must be effected after a certain form. It might seem indifferent what form should be adopted, so long as the assembly is put in possession of the knowledge, that a decision has been arrived at, and what that decision is. But it is scarcely necessary to dilate on the expediency of forms in all matters of business, or to quote the authority of Lord Onslow for their excellence as checks upon irregularity or arbitrary authority. The form adopted in all deliberative assemblies is very nearly the same; and that which has been found expedient in other societies may very well be pursued in masonic Lodges.

The presiding officer, having himself counted the uplifted hands on either side; or, in case of doubt or of a division, had them counted by the Senior Deacon, and the count communicated to him by that officer, should then announce the result in the following words: "The ayes have it—the resolution is adopted;" or "The nays have it—the resolution is lost."

If the announcement is made upon his own counting, now is the time for any member who is not satisfied with the correctness of the count to call for a division, which can never be refused if made at this time. The Master then puts the vote a second time, and the Senior Deacon, having first counted the hands lifted in the affirmative, reports the number, and then counting those in the negative reports them also: upon which the presiding officer makes the announcement in the formula already described, and from this announcement, upon a division, there is no appeal. The subject is then closed, and can only be re-opened in certain cases by a motion for reconsideration, the rules for making which will be hereafter discussed.