

Miscellaneous.

ALOON-KEEPING AND GAMING.

Late in the year two questions were submitted to the Grand Lodge of Mississippi, which were referred to the Committee on Law and Jurisprudence. The questions were:—

"Is saloon-keeping, or selling intoxicating liquors as a beverage, a Masonic offence?"

"Is such gaming as is permitted by our civil law, unmasonic?"

The committee's answer to the first question was an extended one, and began by referring to former decisions, in 1870 and 1886, which were answered in the negative. This part of their report reads thus:—

"The importance of the question induced us to re-examine the grounds of these decisions, and our investigation thereof has led us to the conclusion that they are wholly unsustained by either the laws or the principles of Masonry.

"The reason given by the Law Committee for the decision of 1870 is, that retailing 'is sanctioned' by the civil laws of the land,' therefore is Masonic. A more bald *non-sequitur* was never drawn from a premise. The logic of that decision would compel Masonry to permit whatever the laws of the state permit. If that be so, it is not unmasonic to speak evil of the good name of a brother, to be a universal street-gossip and false to truth, to disregard marital vows and deny even the existence of God himself, for these things are permitted by the law of the State.

"The vice of the decision is the failure to distinguish between what the State commands and what it permits.

"When the State commands, a Mason must obey as a good citizen, but to use every license of the State law is to destroy forever 'the body of Masonry.'

"The further vice of the decision is its failure to distinguish between the domain of State craft and that of Masonry. The former is one of public policy merely, and aims generally so far as it relates to crime, to prevent injuries to the public, and incidentally to protect individuals from each other. Masonry goes further and enters the domain of morals, and aims to protect a man against himself, and charges him with positive duties

to his neighbor, and to walk uprightly before God."

Having disposed of this branch of the question the committee then proceeded to view the subject from a moral aspect, their deliverance reading as follows:—

"First of all a Mason must believe in God ere he sees the inside of a Lodge. The 'Bible is to be the rule and guide of his faith.' We must wear an emblem of innocence. He is at once taught that 'Freemasonry is an institution founded upon the purest principles of morality and virtue.' Also, that it is 'not only the most ancient but the most moral science known to man.' Mackey speaks of the fifteen articles in the installation ceremony of a Master of a Lodge as the 'Masonic confession of faith.' The very first article is: 'Do you promise to be a good man and true, and strictly to obey the moral law?' To this he must assent, with the other fourteen, and at the end it is said: 'These are the regulations of Free and Accepted Masons.' But the same great author, in his standard work, under the head, Moral Qualifications, says: 'All the old Constitutions, from those of York, in 926, to the charges approved in 1722, refer in pointed terms to the moral qualifications which should distinguish a Mason.' The charges of 1822 commence with the emphatic declaration that 'a Mason is obliged by his tenure to obey the moral law.' Moral law, as used by him, and as used in this report, is not limited to the decalogue, but only by that broader sense which is expressed by the Golden Rule, or the rule of good and evil, right and wrong, revealed by the Creator and inscribed on man's conscience. But if there were a doubt, sec. 56 R. R. settles it. It defines 'Masonic offences,' of which Lodges are to take cognizance, to be 'all offences against Masonry, good morals and society. We assume, then, that it is established, aside from those decisions of 1870 and 1886, that an offence against morals is an offence against Masonry.

"The only remaining proposition is: That saloon-keeping is an offence against good morals. This we assert. But this may be regarded as a question of fact, to some extent, and therefore as needing some proof—some showing at least, as to what a saloon is. We assume that burden, and will proceed to the proof.

The proof furnished is quotations from eminent brethren, statesmen, jurists, clergymen, etc., showing the immorality