

Masonic bodies the bylaws provide for a second ballot in cases where one black ball appears in the first. But, if there should be no such by-law, it is competent for the presiding officer to exercise his discretion in the premises, and direct a second ballot if he thinks it expedient.— [This paragraph is more particularly applicable to jurisdictions in which one black ball rejects.—Ed.]

But although it is in the prerogative of the Master or presiding officer, under the circumstances described, to order a reconsideration, yet this prerogative is accompanied with certain restrictions, which it may be well to notice.

In the first place, the Master cannot order a reconsideration on any other night than that on which the original ballot was taken. After the Lodge is closed, the decision of the ballot is final, and there is no human authority that can reverse it. The reason of this rule is evident. If it were otherwise, an unworthy Master might on any subsequent evening avail himself of the absence of those who had voted black balls to order a reconsideration, and thus succeed in introducing an unfit and rejected candidate into the Lodge, contrary to the wishes of a portion of its members.

Neither can he order a reconsideration on the same night, if any of the brethren who voted have retired. All who expressed their opinion on the first ballot must be present to express it on the second. The reasons for this restriction are as evident as for the former, and are of the same character.

It may be asked whether the Grand Master cannot, by his dispensation, permit a reconsideration. I answer emphatically, No. The Grand Master possesses no such prerogative. There is no law in the whole jurisprudence of the Institution clearer than this: that neither the Grand Lodge nor the Grand Master can interfere with the decision of the ballot-box. In the sixth of the thirty-nine "General Regulations" adopted in 1721, and which are now recognized as a part of the common law of Masonry, it is said, that in the election of candidates "the members are to signify their consent or dissent in their own prudent way, either virtually or in form, but with unanimity;" and the regulation goes on to say: "Nor is this inherent privilege subject to a dispensation, because the members of a Lodge are the best judges of it; and if a fractious member should be imposed upon them, it might spoil their harmony or injure their freedom, or even break and disperse the Lodge, which ought to be avoided by all good and true brethren."

This settles the question. A dispensation to reconsider a ballot would be an interference with the right of the members "to give their consent in their own prudent way;" it would be an infringement of an "inherent privilege," and neither the Grand Lodge nor the Grand Master can issue a dispensation for such a purpose. Every Lodge must be left to manage its own elections of candidates in its own prudent way.

From what has been said we may deduce the four following principles, as sitting forth, in a summary way, the doctrine of Masonic parliamentary law in reference to motions for a reconsideration of the ballot:

1. It is never in order for a member to move for the reconsideration of a ballot on the petition of a candidate, nor for a presiding officer to entertain such a motion.
2. The Master or presiding officer alone can, for reasons satisfactory to himself, order such a reconsideration.