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[For the CANADIAN CRAFTSMAN.]

## A FAULT IN THE CONSTITUTION OF CRAFT MASONRY IN AMERICA IMPARTIALLY CONSIDERED.

BY BRO. J. FLETCHER BRENNAN.\*

The fact that of late years, in nearly every State, the grand lodge reports show a serious diminution of members, caused by suspension for non-payment of dues, may properly be assigned as my reason for this consideration of that which I have ever regarded as a serious fault in the constitution of American Freemasonry.

Within the first fifty years of its history, suspension or expulsion for

\* From 1849 to 1852, a member and officer of the Lodge of Antiquity, No. 113, of Louisville, Ky.; in 1856 recipient of the degrees, in the Southern jurisdiction, of the Ancient and Accepted Rite, to that of S. P. R. S., inclusive; after 1857, until its discontinuance in 1870, editor of the *American Freemason*, in Louisville, Ky., New York City, and finally in Cincinnati, O.; translator, compiler, and publisher, in 1866, of the "General History of Freemasonry," and, in 1871, of the "Register of all the Grand and Operative Lodges of North America," etc.; and, since 1861, honorary member of lodges in the United States and Canada, having, in 1872, written "Historical Sketch of Freemasonry in British America," and published same, as a portion of the "General History of Freemasonry," in 1875, in which work it now appears.

non-payment of dues was totally unknown to Craft Masonry, because the exaction of dues, as such, by law, was not recognized by the Fraternity before the organization of State grand lodges; while even at the present time this exaction is, as it always has been, unknown in two of those grand lodge jurisdictions. Except the fees for degrees, carefully husbanded to meet the necessary expenses of room-rent or lodge expenses for light and rent, no money was required by the lodges within the period mentioned. To provide refreshments, or help a needy worthy brother, a collection was taken up, and the temporary want provided for in the meeting before which the case was presented; and this manner continued until after the close of the Revolutionary war, or about the beginning of the present century.

It is to the organization of State grand lodges, the present constitution of the working lodges is due.