

A QUESTION OF PRACTICE.

It is a general principle of Masonic law that an unaffiliated Mason can neither rejoin his former lodge nor any other, unless he is able to show a clear record, and that he had honorably closed his former affiliation. We say general, because it seems to be in the correct spirit of the fraternity; but there are exceptions, one of which recently came to our notice.

It will be remembered that our Statutes allow a lodge, by adopting a by-law to that effect, to provide a penalty for non-payment of dues, "which penalty *shall* be unaffiliation." Now, it happened that a member of a lodge in New York was disciplined in the way and manner "hereinbefore provided," and after a time removed permanently to another jurisdiction, where he affiliated. When the lodge at this end of the line heard of the fact, it made a vigorous attempt to apply our local laws, and demanded reparation. The jurisdiction at the other end calmly replied, "You have declared this brother unaffiliated, and when he removed his residence to another place your jurisdiction over him ceased. If he owes you anything, you have a right to collect it; but we, finding him worthy, have exercised our right by making him a member of our lodge."

This transaction illustrates in an eminent degree the fallacy of the general supposition that our laws apply in other places beyond the State of New York. Of course, a brother disciplined in a lodge in this State could not join any other in this jurisdiction until he had cleared the old score; but when he passed the border of our State lines, his admission or refusal must depend on other conditions than our local regulations, and it will be well for us when we come to understand that our laws have no general acceptance, the exceptions—which only prove the rule—being in States where laws similar to our own prevail.

It is, however, none the less a fact that much of our legislation and many of our regulations depend upon the supposed fact that the same rules prevail everywhere, and that in enacting any special regulation we are keeping within the lines everywhere regarded as setting the boundaries no one can pass with impunity.

It is not improper to say that in our judgment most of these complications have arisen from the modern tendency to overmuch legislation and to the prevailing opinion that the law and the ritual are exactly the same all over the world, which is not the fact by a considerable majority. The generation now coming upon the stage and which for some years is to control the destinies of Masonry in this country, will do well to examine these questions and prepare itself to hold as fast as possible to the old moorings, lest they imperceptibly get so far away from the ancient ideas that an old Mason coming back from beyond the "glimpses of the moon," would fail to recognize the home of his early love among the brethren.

The question here briefly considered has a lot of variants, among which may be mentioned that consent to receive the petition of a rejected candidate can only be given to another lodge by a unanimous vote. New York, fortunately, is on the right side of this question, because only requiring a majority, and this, we take it, that in the experience of the brethren it is generally, or at least in a majority of cases, found that the rejection is due to some personal reason apart from the governing principles of the fraternity, and that such feeling should not be allowed a wider range than is to be found in one lodge, or, in other words, that allowing one man to follow another with his vindictiveness around the world is neither just nor Masonic. Please consider.

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