

LODGE UNDER DISPENSATION.

A LODGE working under a dispensation is merely a temporary body, originated for a special purpose, and is therefore possessed of very circumscribed powers. The dispensation or authority under which it acts, expressly specifies that they may "admit, enter, and pass and raise Freemasons;" no other powers were conferred either by words or implication in the old forms, and indeed the dispensation sometimes stated that the congregation is to be "with the sole intent and view that the brethren so congregated, admitted, entered and made, when they become a sufficient number, may be duly warranted and constituted for being and holding a regular lodge."

A lodge under dispensation is simply the creature of the Grand Master. To him it is indebted for its existence, and on his will depends the duration of that existence. He may at any time revoke the dispensation, and the dissolution of the lodge would be the instant result. In fact, the custom of forming lodges by dispensation seems to have grown out of an ancient privilege possessed by Grand Masters, a reference to which will clearly show what is the true character of these lodges. One of the old regulations is in these words: "The Right Worshipful Grand Master has full power and authority to make, or cause to be made, in his worship's presence, free and accepted Masons at sight, and such making is good." We know of no subsequent regulation than this, stated by Dermott, by which this privilege has been abolished. Grand Masters, however, have not for many years exercised it. The practice would be inconvenient to them, and the responsibility of thus admitting members of the fraternity too great to be voluntarily assumed. Grand Masters, therefore, instead of holding temporary lodges themselves, as was the case some years ago, when M. W. Robert D. Holmes was Grand Master of Masons in New York, and making Masons "at sight," having resolved to depute the privilege to other brethren, and hence arose the custom of creating lodges by dispensation. The Master and Wardens of such a lodge are nothing more nor less than the special proxies of the Grand Master, exercising in that character his privilege, under the old regulations, of making Masons "at sight." Hence a lodge working under dispensation can scarcely, with strict technical propriety, be called a lodge; it is, more properly speaking, a congregation of Masons, acting as the proxy of the Grand Master, and as such, exercising his inherent right of making Masons at sight.

With these views of the origin and character of lodges under dispensation, we will be better prepared to understand the nature and extent of the powers which they possess.

A lodge under dispensation, formerly, could make no by-laws. It was governed during its temporary existence by the general constitutions of the Grand Lodge in whose jurisdiction it was situated. In fact, as the by-laws of a lodge are not operative until confirmed by the Grand Lodge, and as a lodge working under dispensation ceased to exist as such as soon as the Grand Lodge meets, it is evident that it would be absurd to frame a code of by-laws which would have no efficacy for want of proper confirmation, and which when the time and opportunity had arrived, would be needless, as the society for which they were framed would then have no legal existence, a new body, the warranted lodge, having taken its place.

A lodge under dispensation cannot elect officers. The Master and Wardens are nominated by the brethren, and if this nomination is approved, they are appointed by the Grand Master. In giving them permission to meet and make Masons, he, according to the olden forms, gave them no power to do anything else. A dispensation is itself a setting aside of the law, and an exception to a general principle. It must, therefore, be construed literally. What is not granted in express terms, is not granted at all. And, therefore, as nothing is said of the election, none can be held. The master may, however, and always does, for convenience, appoint a competent brother to keep a record of the proceedings; but this is a temporary appointment, at the pleasure of the master, whose deputy or assistant he is; for the office is not legally recognized nor mentioned in the dispensation. In like manner he may depute a trusty brother to take charge of the funds, and must, of course, from time to time appoint the Deacons and Tyler for the necessary working of the lodge.

As there can be no election, neither can there be an installation, which, of course, always presumes a previous election for a definite period. Besides, the installation of officers is a part of the ceremony of constitution, and therefore not even the master and Wardens of a lodge under dispensation are entitled to be thus solemnly inducted into office.

A lodge under dispensation, could not, under the old regulation, elect members. The Master and Wardens who are named in the dispensation are, in point of fact, the only persons recognized as constituting the lodge. To them is granted the privilege, as proxies of the Grand Master, of making Masons; and for this purpose they are authorized to congregate a sufficient number of brethren to assist them in the cere-