

## Intemperance

There is, at the present time, a strong tendency in many parts of the country, not only to deny admission to persons engaged in the manufacture and sale of ardent spirits, but to exclude from membership those already admitted who persist in following this particular vocation. This tendency is not confined to the Lodge, but has manifested itself in the Chapter as well, and, in some jurisdictions, has been given a practical effect.

That such legislation is a wide departure from the early policy of the Craft requires no demonstration. Not a century has elapsed since the public house was the common meeting place of Lodges and other Masonic bodies, and a reference to the proceedings of the English bodies shows that, in many instances, the tavern still continues to shelter them. But the new movement, whatever may be thought of its propriety, seems to be gathering strength in all sections of the country, and, from present indications, it is not hazardous to predict that at no distant day the exclusion of 'rum-sellers' will be the rule and not the exception. From the producer to the consumer is not a wide step, and if we may legislate against the one, why not the other?

As a rule, the advocates of the exclusive legislation base their arguments largely upon the postulate that 'Temperance' is not only a cardinal virtue but an underlying principle of Freemasonry. Temperance, however, with most of these brethren, does not mean moderation, or a restriction upon the indulgence of the appetite, but total abstinence. Unfortunately the numerous brood of 'temperance' exhorters, reformers, lecturers, professionally dries, et id genus omne (*and all the sorts*), have succeeded in obtaining a popular currency for this false meaning of the word, and not a few good people fondly imagine that they are temperate, both with respect to appetite and passions, when in fact they are quite the reverse. Total abstinence is not and never was a Masonic teaching, while moderate indulgence — in other words, temperance — is and always has been enjoined upon the Craft whether at work or refreshment.

As a general proposition, the supporters of the new movement for exclusion condemn both the traffic and the use of intoxicants, and, as I have said, if we may legislate against the producer and distributor, why may we not also against the consumer? If we may exclude the liquor dealer, without regard to personal qualities, why may we not also the liquor drinker? If the sale of liquor shall be made a Masonic offense should we not, to be consistent, make the drinking of liquor a like offense? If the stuff is inherently vicious why resort to half-way measures and while we condemn the one class condone the sins of the other.

All of these questions must occur to one who calmly and dispassionately reviews the situation. When we have once started upon our work of reformation, where is it to end? We will pass over the brothel keepers and other unsavory occupations but how about the respectable (?) men who exact unconscionable interest for the use of money? Who manipulate the markets and create monopolies in the necessities of life? Who crush out small competitors? "Who devour widow's houses, and for a pretense make long prayers?" Do we, by placing the seal of disapproval on one business thereby say all others are approved? If not, then why resort to class legislation at all?

### Sources:

Proceedings of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Canada at the annual convocation, 1904, report on Foreign Correspondence - ILLINOIS.