

## A MASONIC SPEECH

"Old Tiler, I am in a jam!" The New Brother smiled, so the Old Tiler did not feel too worried. "If you don't help me out, I will be up against it."

"What's the trouble now?" The Old Tiler put down his sword to take the cigar the New Brother held out. "Must be something very bad or you wouldn't start me off with so good a cigar."

"I have to make a Masonic address."

"That has been done, and the addresser- yes, even the addressees- lived to tell the tale," countered the Old Tiler.

"I don't want just to get by. I want to make 'em remember it. I want to talk about something they haven't heard before. I've listened to many Masonic speeches, and most of them bored me to tears."

"There are rules for making a good address," mused the Old Tiler. "The three great rules are, have something to say- say it- sit down. Sometimes they are stated 'stand up, speak up, shut up.' Terminal facilities of adequate proportions are needed by railroads and Masonic speakers."

"That's just it!" cried the new Brother. "I want to know what to say and how to say it."

"Meaning you want me to make your speech for you, or to you, before you make it in there?"

"Well, er, no. Not exactly. But can't you, er, suggest something?"

"I could, but I won't. I'll suggest a method of handling your subject, however. Most Masonic speeches suffer from lack of preparation, and of clear thinking about what the speaker wants to say.

"I can't prepare you. I can't make you think clearly. But I can tell you the essence of appeal. It is drama. If you want your hearers to hang on your words, dramatize your subject. If you talk about the Rough and Perfect Ashlars, bring your workman before your hearer; let them hear the strokes of the mallet on the chisel, let them feel the chips of stone as they fall to the ground. If you talk of the plumb line, make them see the Lord on His wall, watch the Children of Israel gather around, wondering at his putting a plumb 'in the midst' of them, that He would not pass by them any more. When you tell of brotherhood, don't have it an abstraction, a theory, a hope; make it concrete. Tell some stories about it. Show one brother helping another; if you don't know any stories, make them up. But bring the living thought, alive, into the lodge room; men are nothing but children grown up. We all like stories.

"A most entertaining speaker made a talk on Masonic charity. One by one he brought vividly before the lodge a child in a Masonic home, an old blind Mason who was helped to be self-supporting by a lodge, an old mother of a Master Mason who kept her home, thinking it was supported by what her son had left her; he hadn't left a cent. The lodge pretended he had, and paid it during her life time. He made us see these people; we lived and grew up with the child; we shut our eyes to see how the blind man felt; from a window we saw the world go by, happy that our sons had kept us from want, as his simple words brought these things before us.

"The speaker spoke quietly, restrained, calmly. He didn't make the eagle scream; there was almost no applause during his address. But he made us visualize the sweetness of Masonic charity, as distinct from the cool impersonality of mere giving. He made us proud that we belonged to an organization which worked. He dramatized charity, and made us see its living human aspects, not its economic importance, or its religious duty angle.

"That's the answer of 'how shall I make any Masonic speech interesting,' my brother. Make it simple. Make it human. Make it dramatic. There is drama in all the Fraternity; any symbol, any tenet, any part of Masonry has a dramatic angle.

"I do not mean melodramatic. I don't tell you to put battle, murder, sudden death, in your speech. Melodrama is action without character; drama is action with character. A railroad accident is melodrama. The mother who saves for a vacation and gives her son the money to buy a set of golf clubs is dramatic.

"Find the character behind the symbols; get the human side of the Craft into its teachings; tell them in terms of people and action, of the things they know only as theories, and your audience won't walk out on you. Talk without ideas, and you'll speak to empty benches."

"I think," began the New Mason, "I think-

"That's all that's necessary," smiled the Old Tiler.

"I think you'd better make this speech for me,"

"You think in melodrama," laughed the Old Tiler. "It's your trouble, not mine."