

Burdens

I AM inclined to think that Masons do too much for each other," announced the New Brother.

"Who has been doing too much for you?" asked the Old Tiler.

" Why, no one, that I know of."

"Well, who have you been doing too much for?"

"Well, er--I wouldn't say I had been doing too much. But we all do too much. It gets to be a burden sometimes. "

"What do you mean, burden?" countered the Old Tiler.

"A burden is something heavy which you carry, isn't it?" asked the New Brother.

"You think what we do for our brethren is a burden?"

"Sometimes it seems that way. Too many calls on our time. Too many calls on our sympathy. Too many calls on our charity. Yes, I think it's a burden."

"Last week I walked to work" answered the Old Tiler. "I don't usually because my rheumatism says walking is too hard a job. My legs," his eyes twinkled, "are a burden to me! But that day it was so bright that the old legs forgot to growl, so I walked. I saw a little lad of about ten looking after a small child of about two, who toppled on his nose and yelled. Ten years old picked up the squalling baby and soothed him, then put him across his shoulder and staggered up the sidewalk with him.

"I asked him, 'Sonny, isn't that child too heavy for you?' 'Heavy?' he answered me, 'Heavy? Why, sir, he's my brother.'

"Little brother would have been too heavy for me -- maybe because of my old legs and perhaps because he wasn't my brother! The facts are that one weighed 60 pounds and the other 30 pounds. The stagger and the straining arms were facts. The cheek flushed with effort was a fact. But two years old was brother to ten, and that made him 'not too heavy.'

"A burden is, after all, what we think it. You would look desperately at the task of carrying a 200-pound sack on your back. But if it were 200 pounds of gold, and it was to be yours after a mile, you wouldn't find it 'too heavy.'

"Years ago a brother of this lodge went to Alaska in the gold rush days. He and his partner had to tramp five miles through a blinding snowstorm and heavy drifts to get food to a starving camp. On the way this brother played out, or thought he did. He told his

partner he was all in and they'd better abandon the load and try to get back before they died.

"Oh, no," said the partner. "I'll pull it!" Which he proceeded to do. Whereupon the man who was 'all in' became so ashamed and angry at himself that he stepped back into the sled harness and pulled, too, and together they got the load to camp. It was 'too heavy' only while he thought it was.

"Masonry my son, is a state of mind. You can't put it on the scales or measure it with a scoop. Because it has no material existence it cannot carry a child of two, or a sack of flour. Its burdens are burdens of the heart.

"Minds and hearts have unlimited strength, if we but know how to call it up. The tired business man who can barely get up the steps at night and falls in bed as soon as dinner is over, forgets the physical weariness if his child is sick. He sits up all night nor thinks it a burden.

"I rather like you, my son; you say what you think and while you very seldom do think, you think you think. But I cannot agree that Masonry does too much for her brethren or that anything Masonry or a Lodge or an individual brother may do in the name of Masonry is a burden."

"Not all brethren are real Masons, any more than all that looks the part is real gold. Lots of men wear the pin and know the words and give the signs who are but shadow Masons; they are all show on the outside and as full of meat as a balloon. To these, doubtless, there are Masonic burdens. But to the real Mason, any weight which must be carried is not heavy because 'it's my brother!'"

"I will not be called a Masonic balloon!" objected the New Brother. "As I cannot quarrel with what you have said I will fill that balloon with a new attitude of mind. I will never think a Masonic duty is a burden again."

"It is your Masonic duty, my son," smiled the Old Tiler, "to give me a cigar if you have it."

"And here is a match and I'll light it for you, too!" agreed the New Brother.