

EXAMINING COMMITTEE

"I have just had a great shock!" announced the New Brother, sitting down weakly beside the Old Tiler.

"What is wrong?" asked the bearer of the sword.

"I have been away for a few weeks," responded the New Brother, "I visited in every lodge where I could. I took delight in the very thorough way into which I have had my ritualistic work drilled into me. I wasn't stumped by a single question. And believe me, I had some examinations! Most of them lasted an hour, at least. But I knew my work, so I got in without any trouble.

"That was nice," answered the Old Tiler, "though it seems a long time to me."

"What's a long time? Never mind! It was nice, yes; but it was awful to get on an examination committee with Brother Filson here and have him get through in less than five minutes! He only asked three or four questions, and for all I know to the contrary, there is an imposter sitting in our lodge right now!"

"Upon my word!" exclaimed the Old Tiler. "Is that so! We'll have that perhaps-imposter out of there as quick as a wink..." He started for the door.

"Here, wait a minute! Don't go off half-cocked that way!" protested the New Brother. "I don't suppose he is **really** an imposter. But I don't know that he knows his work. How could I, after hearing Filson ask him just four or five questions?"

"Oh, well!" responded the Old Tiler, seating himself again, "that's different. But I thought better of you! I have watched you go into the lodge and through the degrees and I thought you were going to be a regular Mason. And here you are neglecting your duty, forswearing yourself, betraying your brethren, being false to your trust!"

"Why, what do you mean? I have betrayed no trust!" cried the New Brother angrily.

"Oh, yes; you have," responded the Old Tiler, sturdily. "The Master trusted you; your brethren trusted you. They believed when they sent you out with Brother Filson that when you came back and stood sponsor for the brother you had examined you meant what you allowed Filson to say at the Altar-that the brother was a Master Mason. Now you tell me you are **not** satisfied; that for all you know he may be an imposter! You don't know he knows his work! It was your business to know. That's what you were on the committee for. Masonry demands two on a committee. Both must be satisfied. You were not satisfied, yet you let the brother go in; and if that isn't betraying a trust, what is it?"

"Well-I-er-Oh, come, Old Tiler, you know I didn't want to butt in on Filson, and if he thought it was all right -and I'm so new in lodge and all -Oh, come now!"

"Worse and worse!" cried the Old Tiler. "You were not satisfied, yet rather than 'butt in' on Filson, you were willing to let Masonry and this lodge, which raised you, take a chance on an imposter. I shall certainly report you to the lodge. I shall certainly see that you learn what is what in Masonry, I shall..."

"Oh, you wouldn't do that!" cried the New Brother. "I didn't mean any harm. I was just trying to be Masonicly courteous to a brother and -you wouldn't do that, would you?"

"Certainly not!" answered the Old Tiler, eyes twinkling. "I wouldn't think of it."

"Then what did you say it for?" demanded the New Brother.

"To scare you into the realization that you don't know what you are talking about!" responded the Old Tiler. "All I said was true, if you were **really** not satisfied. But you **were** satisfied. You know perfectly well that brother is a Mason. But you wanted Filson to put on dignity and conduct a heavy examination and humiliate the brother to show how big and grand you and he were. Oh, I know! I was young myself-once. You say they took an hour to examine you. Brethren don't take an hour to find out if visitors are Masons, unless they have doubts. You were too cocksure, too full of pride, too eager. So they doubted you, and made sure. Filson is an old hand. He has been a Mason for years. And he knows what questions to ask. One doesn't have to ask you if you know that twice two is four and twice four is eight, if ones asks you what twice eight is and you say sixteen. The lengthy, involved, elaborate, difficult examination is only given to him who is more ritualistic than Mason, unless there is a real doubt of the applicant.

"Old Masons know that the visitor who seeks to enter compliments the lodge. The lodge is host, he is a guest. Hospitality demands all the courtesy possible. Masonry demands knowledge. The middle course is to find out as briefly and as quickly yet as surely as possible. It is not necessary to put a man through the whole ritual to know whether he is a Mason. Filson knows it. Evidently the visiting brother knew his work and his answers were satisfactory.

"But remember, my brother, **you** must be satisfied on a committee, or be faithless to your trust. Be satisfied as quickly and as gracefully as possible, or be false to the standards of hospitality and courtesy which are taught in Masonry. Understand?"

"I-I think so. My head is rather going around. About all I am sure of is I have rather made a fool of myself," said the New Mason.

"Never mind!" comforted the Old Tiler with a grin. "Give yourself time. It's rarely fatal. A few years and you'll get some sense!"