

Eyes Lifted High

I'M SO tired of hearing about brotherhood!" complained the New Brother. "I'm sold on it, but I am weary of hearing it preached!"

"I make my bow to you!" answered the Old Tiler. "All my life I have wanted to meet the perfect brother!"

"Why, Old Tiler!" cried the New Brother joyfully, "I never expected to hear that from you! Are you, too, tired of the preaching of brotherhood?"

"Oh, no!" responded the Old Tiler. "I meant that if you are if you are weary of hearing of brotherhood, you know all about it. The human mind tires of what it has already beheld. We long to hear the new and the unknown, to see the strange and the unusual. We tire of that which is well known. You weary of brotherhood, because you know all about it. The man who knows all about brotherhood is, obviously, the perfect brother. So I make my bow!"

"I thought there was a trick in it somewhere!" grinned the New Brother, somewhat shamefacedly. "Of course I don't know all about it. What I am trying to say is that I weary of being preached at, rather than weary of the preaching."

"That is something else!" smiled the Old Tiler. "We all resent being preached at. And I know what ails you – that good brother from the far jurisdiction who spent half an hour talking platitudes. But you should look behind what he says to the motive before you let him weary you. A little boy I know sat down beside me recently and read me a chapter out of his school history. I knew the history and I knew the boy. I wasn't especially interested in either. But the boy was grateful for some small favor I had done him and because his history was a new story to him, he thought it would please me. I was bored by the history, but pleased with the child's effort to entertain me.

"Brother Small Talk in his dry and uninteresting remarks means to do right. He is an honest and earnest Mason. He is following Oxenham's lovely lines as well as he can, and . . ."

"Who is Oxenham?" interrupted the New Brother.

"Oh, don't you know? A poet. Listen . . ." the Old Tiler stopped for a moment, and then, very softly, quoted:

"But once I pass this way. And then . . . and then . . . the Silent Door swings on its hinges; opens . . . closes . . . and no more I pass this way. So, while I may, with all my might I will essay sweet comfort and delight to all I meet upon the pilgrim way. For no man travels twice the Great Highway, that winds through darkness up to light, through night, to day."

"That's beautiful!" cried the New Brother.

"Indeed it is!" agreed the Old Tiler. "It is the very Skekinah of brotherhood; the glow of beauty which surrounds that which is holy. Brother Small Talk knows he will pass this way but once, and so, while he may, he essays sweet comfort and delight to all the brethren he meets upon the pilgrim way of Masonry. His idea of 'sweet comfort and delight' is to spread the doctrine of the brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God."

"But," objected the New Brother. "It doesn't spread it to bore people with platitudes. I've heard what he said a thousand times."

"Ah, but now you are criticizing God!" answered the Old Tiler. "Look for the motive. God didn't give him much of a mind or provide him with many ideas. But Brother Small Talk does the best he can. His heart is right and his Masonry is good, and he tries to spread his 'sweet comfort and delight' as he goes along. To him his thoughts are beautiful. They touch his heart. And so, with a pleasant voice and a smooth flow of words, he gives them to his brethren, not knowing that they hear nothing that isn't better said in the ritual. Do you know Abou Ben Adhem?"

"No," answered the New Brother. "Member of this lodge?"

The Old Tiler smiled. "Not exactly," he answered. "He never lived; and yet he will live forever." The Old Tiler quoted softly; "Abou Ben Adhem, may his tribe increase, awoke one night from a deep dream of peace, and saw, within the moonlight in his room, making it rich and like a lily in bloom, an Angel, writing in a book of gold. Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold, so to the Presence in the room he said 'What writest thou?' The Vision raised its head and with a look made of all sweet accord, answered. 'The names of those who love the Lord.' 'And is mine one?' asked Abou. 'Nay, not so,' replied the Angel. Abou spoke more low, but cheerily still, and said. 'I pray thee, then, write me as one who loves his fellowmen.' The Angel wrote and vanished. The next night it came again with a great wakening light and showed the names whom love of God had blessed; and lo, Ben Adhem's name led all the rest."

"That is very beautiful, too," said the New Brother, softly.

"Aye, that is beautiful," answered the Old Tiler. "Brother Small Talk, with his platitudes and his love of his fellowmen is beautiful, too. Look within, my boy, to the Motive. Do not 'Judge men by what they do, but by what they try. We all fail; if the Great Architect judged by accomplishment, what a pitiful state would we be in! But if He judges us by what we try, if He regards not our stumbling feet, but our eyes fixed on the star, then will Brother Small Talk meet kindly friends and a great welcome when he approaches the Tiler's door of the Grand Lodge above, for his eyes are lifted high!"

"I will never be tired of any man's sincere talk again!" assured the New Brother. "And, Old Tiler, write me that about the pilgrim way, and Abou, too, will you, please?"

The Old Tiler grunted as he reached for his pencil.