

Foolish Spending

WHY do Masons spend their money so foolishly?" asked the New Brother.

"A fool and his money are soon parted," answered the Old Tiler.

"Do you think Masons are fools?"

"Certainly not. I was just agreeing that if Masons spend money foolishly they are foolish. What variety of foolish spending is teasing you?"

"Oh, a lot! We spend five dollars to send a funeral wreath to every brother's funeral, and three dollars for flowers every time one is sick, and four dollars for fruit when one goes to a hospital. We decorate the lodge room when we have an entertainment. We spend money for food for men who are well fed at home. We hire entertainers for a blowout! My idea would be to put all that money in an educational fund or a charity fund or . . ."

"By any chance," interrupted the Old Tiler, "are you delivering a lecture? I want to talk, too!"

"I want you to talk. Tell me that I am right and that we do spend our money foolishly!"

"I can't do that," answered the Old Tiler. "But perhaps I can show you something on our side. You object to five dollar funeral wreaths to deceased brethren, and would rather see the money put in charity. Do you think we send the wreath to the dead man? With it we offer consolation to the family! We show that his brethren care that he has died and that the world may see that we hold our deceased brother in honor. If we are careless when grief comes to the loved ones of those we love, the world will hold it against us, and our influence be lessened.

"We send flowers to the sick and fruit to the hospital, that the ill brother may have the cheering comfort of knowing that in his hour of need his brethren forget him not. Is it, then, more charitable to feed a hungry body than a hungry heart? Have you ever been ill in it hospital? Did no one remember you with a card, a flower, a basket of fruit? If you were unremembered, you passed a sad hour in the thought that no one cared. If friends brought their friendship to you when you needed it you were helped to recover. If we do not cheer a worthy brother, for what does our brotherhood stand?

"Of course we decorate a lodge room for an entertainment! In your home are there but bare walls, without pictures, carpets or furniture? Do you give to the poor all you make over a bare subsistence? Do the poor spend only for food? In a poor man's home you will find a flower, a book, a picture. Beauty is as much a need as bread. Cows chew cuds contentedly, but man must chew the cud of life with a spiritual as well as a physical outlook. The lodge room is our home. We decorate it for entertainment that all may remember their Masonic home as beautiful with pleasures taken together.

"Refreshment, whether sandwiches and coffee or a vocal or instrumental solo, refreshes mind and body. The solo we hear alone gives us not half the pleasure which comes from listening in company. The few cents per capita we spend for refreshment is no more wasted than were the twenty cents you paid for your cigar or the fifteen cents for your shoe shine!

"Suppose the world spent only for food, clothes and charity? The poor would become rich; ambition, thrift, independence and manhood would become extinct. If there were no music, painting, love of flowers, beautiful buildings in the world, where would our hearts reach when they seek something they know is just beyond? We do not see God in the ham sandwich as in the beautiful notes of music. I'll agree He is everywhere, but if we find Him easiest through our appreciation of the lovely, rather than the mundane things of life.

"Would you cease printing Bibles that more hungry people be fed? You argue that money not spent for charity is ill spent, but charity is but a part of Masonry. Masonry teaches men to help themselves, to think-, to aid their fellows, not only by gifts, but by encouragement, cheer, help, aid, the kindly word. When we express them in the flower, the basket of fruit, the song or refreshment, we spend our money wisely.

"Truly the fool and his money are soon parted, but the fool parts with his for foolishness. We part with ours for value received, to carry Masonic cheer to the hearts of our brethren."

"You are right, as you always are," agreed the New Brother. "By the way, you are chairman of the committee on hospitals, are you not? Stick that in your pocket and make the next bunch of flowers or basket of fruit twice as big."

That with which the New Brother soothed his conscience crinkled as it was folded.