

## HE FOUND OUT

"Old Tiler I can save you some trouble!" announced the New Brother.

The Old Tiler leaned his sword up against the wall and motioned the New Brother to a seat. "I am never adverse to anyone saving me trouble!"

"A petition was read in lodge tonight," continued the New Brother. "Man by the name of Ned Brinkley. I have known old Brinkley for years. I heard your name on his committee. I can tell you anything you want to know."

"Nice of you!" repeated the Old Tiler. "Why does Mr. Brinkley want to be a Mason?"

"Oh, I don't know... same reason we all do, I guess."

"You speak of him as 'Old Brinkley.' How old is he?"

"Must be all of 65, or maybe 68. Carpenter by trade, he is; worked for me off and on for years. The wife never wants a shelf put up or a hinge mended or a fence painted or the gutter spout fixed that we don't call on old Brinkley. He's a fine old chap, very religious too. I rather wondered at the Master putting you on his petition."

"Why?" asked the Old Tiler.

"I know your reputation as a committeeman!" smiled the New Brother. "You dig to the bottom. They don't waste you on people everyone knows about. Brinkley is a dead open-and-shut proposition. Everyone in town knows him, I guess. I don't see why they put an old ferret like you on his trail. But I can tell you anything you want to know about him."

"Except why he wants to be a Mason!" answered the Old Tiler, dryly.

"Well, that isn't important in this case. He is a very religious man, and I suppose wants the religious part of lodge work."

"You suppose! Suppositions are not good enough for me. How does friend Brinkley know there is anything religious about a lodge or Masonry? Why does a very religious man find his church insufficient to supply his religion? Why does he wait until he is 65 years old to want to be a Mason? Those are questions I want answered. You know Brinkley as a workman, an obliging tinkerer with shelves and gutter spouts. But apparently you know nothing else about him except that he is religious. Suppose you tell me how you know that much."

"How do I know he is religious? Why, he goes to church every Sunday and he talks a great deal about it... I don't know!"

"I'll say you don't know! You don't really know anything about Brinkley, do you? Your attitude is too sadly common for the good of Masonry. You are familiar with Brinkley's name and his appearance and his looks; he has worked for you as an odd job man for years. Because he never stole your silver or beat your dog you think he is a good man. Because he talks religion and goes to church you term him religious. He is a part... a small part, but yet a part... of your life, and therefore he is all right for your lodge! Oh, conceited man! As if you couldn't be fooled and taken in and hornswoggled and deceived like anyone else!

"I happen to know considerable about Brinkley. I heard he was going to petition this lodge and I made it my business to find out. Listen, and see how much damage you might have done if I had been less well informed and had taken your estimate of Brinkley for truth!

"Brinkley owes a lot of money. His credit is exhausted. There is nothing bad about the man; he is a well-meaning but shiftless person, who has never either the ambition or the ability to rise above sporadic day wages and occasional jobs. He is weak, so he borrows right and left and runs accounts which he seldom pays, not that he isn't honest, but that he is careless.

"A few years ago he got into difficulties, and seeing no other way out, attempted to become a Catholic. But the good fathers of the church turned him inside out in no time and found out that he had been, at various times, a member of at least four other churches, all for the work he could get and the charity he could receive from their organizations. He has been a member of the Odd Fellows, the Pythians, the Red Men and a few others, in all of which organizations he has been dropped for N.P.D.

"At 65 or more years of age he suddenly conceives a great regard for the Masonic fraternity and wants to join our lodge. Why, I don't know, but I strongly suspect! And my suspicions are well founded in evidence that Mr. Brinkley wants to become a Mason for what he can get out of Masonry in a material way that I shall register a loud, round, and emphatic negative on my report, and I very much suspect that both other committeemen will do the same thing!"

"Oh, well, of course!" answered the New Brother. "I didn't know!"

"Of course you didn't! And because you only guessed and hoped and believed and had no real knowledge, you would have done this lodge a great injury if all the committeemen had depended solely on your report!"

"But I know now... and I won't do it anymore!" pleaded the New Brother.

The Old Tiler grunted.