

# INVIOABLE

"Jones didn't get through, I knew he wouldn't," said the New Brother, sitting down in the anteroom.

The Old Tiler hitched his sword to be more comfortable. "Some of you young Masons sure do know a lot."

"I knew he wouldn't get through because I know two brethren who were going to blackball him," defended the New Brother.

"I have heard that before, too. Don't tell me who your friends were. Perhaps they try, once in a while, to be good Masons. But they don't succeed very well."

"What do you mean? They are splendid fellows, both of them. They know this fellow Jones ought not to be made a member and so they kept him out. One of them is..."

"Wait a minute son, wait a minute. The secrecy of the ballot is one of the great guardians of the Masonic fraternity. Every brother has a right to vote as his conscience tells him he should. None has the right to tell others either how he will vote or how he has voted. Whoever does so tears down the fraternity to some extent. If every Mason told how he would or had balloted there would be no secret ballot. If the ballot is controlled by outside influence, Masonry is no longer under the guidance of the hearts of its members.

"If I know you will vote against my candidate, I argue with you. I plead with you. I remind you of the favor I did you. I work upon your feelings and perhaps, for my sake, you let into the lodge a man I like but whom you believe unfit for membership. If I don't know how you will vote, I cannot argue with you, and your vote is dictated, as it should be, entirely by your conscience."

"But..."

"Never mind the 'but' just yet. After my candidate gets in because of your affection for me, in spite of your knowledge of his unfitness, then what? Isn't the lodge weaker than it was? Even if you are mistaken and a good man thus gets in, isn't your telling that he isn't a good man a weakening influence? Are you not apt to value it a little less because you weakened it? The harm, once done, may persist for years- and all because you opened your mouth and let out a few words of your intentions before you balloted."

"Suppose I want advice as to how to ballot? How can I ask your advice without telling you why I want it?"

"You can't. But there is a remedy provided for such cases. Masonry demands that every application be investigated by a committee a month prior to the ballot. You have ample time to go to the committee. If you know anything against a petitioner it is your duty to tell the committee. If you heard something against the applicant, tell the committee. Let

the committee find the facts. If what you heard is an idle rumor, the committee will learn it. If there is a foundation to the gossip, they will learn that, too. Then you can be guided by what the committee reports."

"Isn't that to say that all balloting should be done by the committee?"

"Not at all!" answered the Old Tiler. "The committee decides for you as to the foundation of the rumor or the malice behind the gossip. If you know anything which in your mind justifies a blackball your course and your conscience are clear. You asked me what you should do when you needed advice."

"But committees are often perfunctory."

"That's your fault!" was the sharp answer.

"My fault? How do you make that out?"

"If you think a committee has made a perfunctory investigation, tell the Master you want a new committee appointed. If you think a committee isn't doing its duty, ask its members what they have done. If they won't tell you, notify the Master that you wish more time. He won't refuse it; he knows such a request means a blackball if it is refused. No Master wants any good man kept out, or any unfit man in. Finally, get yourself on a few committees- the Master will be happy to have your request for such work. Then by example show the other committees what a real committee can do."

"I see!" said the New Brother. "I wonder why all this isn't told to us when we first come into lodge?"

"Humph! 'All this.' Boy, there are thousands of books written about Masonry. Do you expect someone to teach you the contents of them all? The shoe is on the other foot."

"How do you mean, other foot?"

"When you first came into this lodge, why didn't you ask?" responded the Old Tiler, as he rose to answer raps on the door.