

Joke

I NEVER saw much point in this joke about 'sitting up with the sick,'" began the New Brother to the Old Tiler, "but since I joined the lodge I do. I used to think it was a pretty idea; that a lodge member should sit up with a sick brother seemed real brotherhood. Now I find we don't so I see the joke."

"Do you, now! How keen is your sense of humor?" answered the Old Tiler. "Who told you we didn't sit with our sick friends?"

"Why, no one. But if we did, I'd have heard of it, wouldn't I?"

"Depends on the length of your ears. Yesterday I tried to buy a hat. The salesman showed me one and said it was twenty-five dollars. I asked him where the holes were. 'What holes?' he asked. I told him I meant the holes for the ears of the jackass who would pay twenty-five dollars for that hat. If your ears are long enough, maybe you can hear about our sitting up with our sick friends. But I presume you are hard of hearing?"

"In small towns a few decades ago, nurses were few. When a brother was sick we often sat with him, hand him water or medicine, doing what we could. In modern days there is less need for such help. But don't think we never do. Last month the Master called for volunteers to stay all night in a house where an old lady was dying. Our brother from that house was out of town. The old lady had a daughter and a nurse, but daughter was afraid to be alone. We had sixteen volunteers, and every night for a week two did their part. All they did was sit there and read, but who knows what comfort they were to that distracted daughter? The old lady finally died and in the day time. It looks as if what we did was wasted effort but the old lady *might* have died in the night. Our brethren were there to help if she did. The daughter knew her husband's brethren were within call so she slept secure in the protection Masonry threw about her.

"You say 'we don't sit up.' Don't confuse 'sitting up' with actually resting erect in a chair. No brother of Ellis or any other good lodge is reported sick but he receives a call from Master, Warden, chairman of the committee on the sick, or some brother. It makes no difference whether the brother is wealthy or poor, we see what we can do. Most members of the lodge are fairly prosperous citizens, able to look after themselves, but even so a sick member is human enough to value the interest the lodge takes. Knowing that his mighty brotherhood is anxious about him acts as a tonic. The sick man may be too ill to admit us to his bedside, but they tell him about it, and it heartens him.

"I was one visitor and a streetcar motorman was the other on duty last week. We visited an ill banker, president or director in half the companies in town. You never saw a man more pleased than Mr. Rich Man. He had us shown to his room and talked lodge and asked questions and wanted information about the fellows just as if he was a poor man like the rest of us. He happens to be a real Mason as well as a wealthy man. He wrote a letter to the Master and said our visit had done him more good than his doctor, and wouldn't he please send us or some other brethren again.

"I called on a sick brother too ill to see me. I saw his wife and his home and it was easy to see the brother needed help. He was too proud or his wife didn't know enough to ask for it. So I reported and we sent our own doctor and nurse and paid some bills and generally managed until the brother got well. He has paid back every cent, little by little, but he says he can never repay the kindness.

" 'Sitting up with a sick lodge member' may be a good alibi for the poker player; I don't know. I have read it in joke papers. But I never thought it funny, because I know how well Masonry does care for her sick, and how much it means to an ill man to have his brother take an interest in him. If you know any sick, tell us. If you hear of any, tell us. And if . . . say, did you ever visit a sick brother?"

"I never had the chance," defended the New Brother.

"You mean you never made the chance!" countered the Old Tiler. "Will you go to the sick committee and ask for duty, or will I report your name for that duty to the Master? Or do you want to go on thinking it's a joke?"

"I got an earful, didn't I" responded the New Brother. "You tell me to whom to go!"