

## KEEPERS OF THE DOOR

"Darn the luck! I am assigned on a petition again and I am going fishing tomorrow!"

The New Brother looked dolefully at his notification slip.

"Why not see the applicant the next day?" asked the Old Tiler.

"Because he is going out of town. I got to see him tomorrow or else. And I want to go fishing. This committee stuff makes me tired, anyway. Say, if I get the Master to change my name to yours, will you do it for me?"

"Why, of course," answered the Old Tiler. "I am always proud to be one of the Keepers of the Door."

"Now that," said the New Brother, "sounds both interesting and dangerous. It's interesting, because I don't understand it, and experience has taught me that when I come at you below the belt, as it were, I usually get kicked pronto and unexpectedly. Please explain the door which you like to keep, where the honor is, what me and my committee work have to do with it, and remember that I am a poor orphan child alone in the wild anteroom with a raging Old Tiler, and not to be too hard on me?"

The Old Tiler did not smile. "I would laugh," he confessed, "only it's Masonry you are jesting about and it's not a jest. Yes, I will tell you about the door. I wish I could speak the word in capital letter.

"Masonry is a structure of brotherly love, relief and truth, cemented with affection, erected on a square to God, and towering miles high above puny humanity, its foibles and its failings. Masonry is a structure of which we, its humble builders, are proud, because we know that we have built better than we knew. We have so built, partly because we have had help from so many men of so many past ages, and partly because we have had help we could neither see nor understand.

"Some look at our temple of Masonry and wonder. Some look, shrug shoulders and pass by. Some look at our temple of Masonry and see it not; others gaze on it and seek to enter.

"In this country there are nearly 16,000 doors to our temple of Masonry, through one of which a man must pass who would see it from the inside. There are so many doors in order that any man who desires, and who is fit, may find the door which is easy for him to enter. It is not true that it is 'hard to be as Mason.'"

"We only ask that an applicant be free-born, of age, a man, and of good character. He may be high or low, rich or poor, great or obscure, famous or unknown. If he is a good man we want him to see our temple from the inside as soon as he expresses a desire to do so.

"So we have 16,000 lodges -doors- to our temple of Masonry, that no man can say he came not in because he could not find a way.

"Certain things a man must do, inside our temple, and in a certain way he must live. If he lives the life, the temple is stronger. If he does not live the life, the temple is weakened.

"Hence, Keepers of the Door. Like any other symbol in Masonry, they are three; three brethren to keep each door safe, sacred and undefiled from the footsteps of evil men, self-seekers, the wicked, the blasphemous, the immoral. Those three who keep each door are not assigned to it for any length of time.

"Not theirs a service which may become onerous from time-taking and effort. The Master appoints three Keepers of the Door for every man who tries to enter. Today there is you and John and Jim. Tomorrow it will be George and Jack and Will. The next day another three will keep the door, if any man raps upon it.

"With due humility, but infinite pride, I am the Guardian of the Locked Door. As Tiler I suffer none to pass within who have not the right. But the open door no one man may guard; it takes three.

"You were appointed tonight as one of those three. Some one has rapped at the door and now it stands ajar. To you it has been said, 'Keep thou the door; keep thou the faith; keep thou this thy temple pure and undefiled.'

"You do not want to labor. You want to go fishing. You ask me if I will do your work for you and I answer you, gladly, if so the Master shall find me worthy of the honor."

"I shan't ask him," he answered low. "I am ashamed. I didn't understand. I am not, I know, worthy of the honor, but as well as I know how, I will keep the door.."

"I thought you might," smiled the Old Tiler. "After all, no one will catch all the fish; there will be some left for you some other time."

"Not if it interferes with being Keeper of the Door," answered the New Brother vigorously.