

Masonic Talk

I'M SEEKING a little light," said the New Brother, sitting down by the Old Tiler and reaching for his cigar case.

"I think I have a match -- " the Old Tiler felt in his pocket.

"I get you!" grinned the New Brother, "But that's not the light I am looking for. I want light on a Masonic subject.

"I don't pretend to be the only Masonic illuminant," answered the Old Tiler, "but if I have what you want, be sure I'll let it shine."

"Every now and then," began the New Brother, "I hear Masonic talk in public places. At a poker game in a club where I was recently, I heard one man say, 'Them you have passed, but me I shall not pass!' Lots of men say they will do this or that on the square or on the level. I run across 'and govern yourself accordingly' in print every now and then. Are such public quotations from Masonic work against good Masonic practice?"

"It seems to me your question isn't very complete," answered the Old Tiler.

"Why not?"

"It takes no account of motives. If you hear a man say that the stream rose and his house and his children were in danger, but a tree fell across the rushing waters, so that is His mercy God damned the stream, you have heard testimony to His glory. And if you hear some man couple the name of Deity with the word which begins with D, you listen to profanity. Same sounds in each case; difference is, the motive, the meaning.

"If I declare that I will do what I say I will do 'on the square,' any one understands that I mean I will act honestly. If any hearer knows the expression is Masonic, surely the fraternity has not been injured. But if I say to a stranger, or within a stranger's hearing, 'these are certain Masonic words, and we use them in the degrees,' and then repeat various phrases, I skirt dangerously close to breaking my obligation, and, by the very fact that I seem to be careless with Masonic business, I am doing it harm!"

"That's very plain," said the New Brother. "Suppose some man wants to learn if I am a Mason? Suppose I meet a man with a Masonic pin and want to examine him Masonically? What about that?"

"You shouldn't want to do things which can't be done!" laughed the Old Tiler. "You might, indeed, put the stranger through an examination as to what Masonry he knew, but it wouldn't be Masonic. You have no right to constitute yourself an examining committee. That is a Master's prerogative."

"Suppose he wants to talk Masonic Secrets with me?"

"No Mason wants to talk Masonic secrets with any man he doesn't know to be a Mason! The man who wants to talk secrets, without having sat in lodge with you, or being vouched for to you, is either a very new or a very poor Mason or no Mason at all!"

"But surely one can talk Masonry with strangers; if they wear the pin and have a card they, are probably Masons, and -- "

"Talk, all the Masonry, you want! But make sure it is the Masonic talk you could utter in the presence of your wife. Your true Mason won't want you to talk any other kind in public. Not long ago I was on a train, and behind me two men, neither of them Masons, arguing about Masonry. The things they knew which were not so were wonderful! But I never opened my mouth. And the conductor, whom I have known for years as a Mason, heard them, and all he did was wink at me. We knew the truth; they didn't. What was the use of stirring up an argument?"

"What about giving some sign or word in a mixed company, so I can let the other fellows know I am a Mason?" asked the New Brother.

"Oh!" cried the Old Tiler. "You've been reading novels! You have an idea that when you go to a card party you should wiggle your ears or something so the other Masons will know you are one, too! Nothing, to that! Masonic recognitions are not for pleasure, but for need and use. You have been taught how to let others know, if you need to. You know how to recognize a Mason when he lets you know. But these are not for social gatherings, and the man who lards his speech with Masonic expressions is merely showing off."

"I asked for light; we could substitute you for one of the Lesser Lights," said the New Brother.

"If you mean that for a joke," the Old Tiler answered slowly, "I shall think my words were wasted."

"I didn't," protested the New Brother. "I was only trying to say, perhaps clumsily, that I thought you'd make a good Master!"

"Then I shall think only of the motive, thank you for the compliment, and forget the way you put it!" smiled the Old Tiler.