

Masonry's "Failure"

WHY does Masonry fail so much?" puzzled the New Brother, dropping into a chair beside the Old Tiler in the anteroom.

"I didn't know it did," commented the Old Tiler. "But then, I'm an old man and my eyes are not very good. Maybe I don't see clearly any more. Tell me about it."

"Oh, you see well enough! You just don't want to admit that the order to the service of which you have devoted so much time and thought is just a failure!"

"Is that so!" The Old Tiler seemed surprised. "You interest me! But pity my foibles and tell me your side of it!"

"Masonry fails because it doesn't interest men sufficiently to make them practice what they preach. I was at Jones' house tonight. Went to bring him to lodge in the car. After we had left he said: 'Of course you know I'm not really going to lodge! Got a lien on! Nice fat 111' poker game. Want to sit in?' I told him I didn't. But I took him to his 'nice fat 111' game!' Now, there is a man who tells his family lie is going to lodge, and then plays poker. I say Masonry has failed with him. It hasn't even taught him to tell the truth!"

"Remember Roberts? He was arrested last week for forgery. He has been a member for several years. Yet Masonry couldn't teach him to be honest. There was Williamson, who tried to kill his doctor; and Burton, who has been defending an ugly divorce suit . . . they are lodge members, but Masonry didn't teach them to be what they ought to be. And say . . . did you hear about Lawson? Well . . . " the New Brother lowered his voice. "It's being whispered about that . . ." He leaned over to talk in the Old Tiler's ear. "Now, that isn't Masonry . . . it's a violation of all his obligations. So I say Masonry has failed with him. What do you say?"

"Yes, Masonry failed to make an impression on these men to suit you, even as Masonry has failed to make an impression on you to suit me!" snapped the Old Tiler. "That last remark you made was unadulterated scandal! Does Masonry teach you to talk scandal? But never mind that! Let me dig a few weeds out of the scrubby, ill-tended, and unwatered garden you miscall your mind and see if we can't get it ready to grow one straight thought!"

"I know Jones. He is a member of the city club, the country club, Dr. Parkin's church, and a luncheon club. Neither church nor luncheon club teach deception or foster lies. Both instruct in morality, one by precept, the other by practice. By what right do you blame Masonry for Jones' failure to tell the truth, any more than the church or the luncheon club? Is Jones' mother to blame because she didn't teach her boy never to tell a lie? How about his Sunday School teacher and his wife? Are they to blame? If not, why is Masonry to blame?"

"Roberts has been accused of forgery. I don't know whether he is guilty or not. Williamson seems to have had

some real justification for feeling enmity toward his doctor, although nothing justifies murder, of course. Burton may be sinner or sinned against . . . I don't know. As for Lawson, it will take more than your whispers of scandal to make me believe ill of a brother until I know something.

"But let us suppose Roberts a forger, Williamson a murderer, Burton a Don Juan. All of these men grew up, went to school, got out in the world, joined clubs, societies, orders, became Masons, members of a church . . . Why pick on Masonry as the failure when these men go wrong? Is it just? If the church of God can't keep a man straight how can Masonry be expected to?

"It is rankly unjust to blame Christ for the failures of those who profess to follow Him. Was it Christ's fault that Peter denied Him and Judas betrayed Him? Was it the fault of the religion they professed? Or was it the fault of the man, the character, the up-bringing, the times?

"Men fail, and fall, and rise and try again . . . or fall and stay in the mud. To those who rise Masonry has a helping hand to extend. To those who fail and stay fallen, she has charity. Not hers the fault that humanity is frail. She holds the torch; if they close their eyes to its radiance and refuse to see the narrow path that torch illumines, will you blame the torch?

"Masonry does not fail men. Men fail Masonry. Masonry has the teachings, the thought, the ennobling influence, the example to set, the vision to show those who have eyes to see. If they close their hearts to the ennobling influence, will not profit by the example and shut their eyes to the vision, is that the fault of Masonry?

"You, my brother, have just talked scandal without proof; a whispered slander against the good name of a Mason. Has Masonry failed with you that it has not taught you tolerance, brotherly love, reticence, charity of thought? Or is the failure in you as it may be within these men you mention?"

The Old Tiler waited. The New Brother hung his head. At last he spoke.

"I am most properly rebuked. How shall I make amends?"

"A great teacher said to you and all like you and to me and all like me: 'Go, and sin no more!' " answered the Old Tiler reverently.