

ON SECRETS

"Someone should speak to Brother Filmore," said the New Brother, thoughtfully, sitting beside the Old Tiler.

"People do speak to him- I speak to him myself," countered the Old Tiler.

"I mean speak to him seriously."

"I speak to him seriously. I asked him tonight how his wife was," answered the Old Tiler.

"Oh, you know what I mean! I mean admonish him."

"About what?"

"About his carelessness of Masonic secrets. He runs the lantern and leaves the slides out where any profane can see them. He takes them home sometimes and his children can get them and..."

"I appoint you a committee of one to see that his children are all properly murdered. No child should look at a Masonic slide and live."

"Now you are kidding me."

"Boy, you are kidding yourself. The only secret about a Masonic lantern slide thousands of Masons have tried to find, but none ever have. It is not to be revealed by looking at them."

"I don't understand..."

"No secrets of Freemasonry are to be learned from a Masonic lantern slide. They are sold to any one who has the price. If there was anything secret about a lantern slide, making it would be against Masonic obligations."

"But you said there was a secret..."

"Sure, but not a Masonic secret. Generations of Masons have tried to learn who designed them that they might slay him with ceremony and an axe. The harm done leaving Masonic lantern slides where the profane may see them will come from the poor opinion the profane gets from the Masonic slide conception of charity and brotherly love and truth and relief. Some slides representing Time counting the ringlets in the hair of the virgin give anyone with the slightest idea of art the notion that Masons are all cubists! We are trianglists or rightanglists, maybe, but not cubists! Those illustrations of brotherly love in which one fat man lays a ham-like arm lovingly about the bull-like neck of a misshapen Roman gladiator would scare any child who saw it into such a fear of the

fraternity he would probably weep ever time Dad went to lodge... but as far as giving away any Masonic secrets is concerned- piffle!"

"You haven't the same reverence for the sacredness of Masonic ideas as I have."

"Whoa! Boy, you have things upside down. My reverence for real Masonic secrets is second to none. Your reverence is inclusive; mine only for what is real. You wouldn't go home and tell your wife that a lodgeroom has a chair in the east, where the Master sits, that there is an Altar in the center of the lodge, or that candidates take an obligation, would you?"

"Certainly not!"

"I would! The scrubwomen see the lodgeroom. If they can be permitted to view its sacred outlines, I see no reason why my wife shouldn't. In lodge entertainments we don't move the Altar and women have entertained us after the lodge was closed, more than once. Any catalogue of Masonic paraphernalia advertises hoodwinks, and ours are regularly sent to the laundry, anyhow!"

"The real secrets of Freemasonry mean something for you and me, which is not for the uninitiated. But they are not upon lantern slides, in the size of the room, the height of the ceiling or even the place where a Worshipful Master hangs his hat! Circumspection in speaking of the things of the lodge, as opposed to the spirit of a lodge, is necessary only that no false idea be given the outsider. If it were possible to photograph men receiving the first degree, the profane might laugh, unappreciative of the symbolism they saw. But do you really think the value of Masonic secrets would be decreased by such an exhibition?"

"A number of men have written exposes of Masonry. Half true, half manufactured, no one is interested in them. In second-hand bookstores you can pick them up for a few cents. They are in every Masonic library. If what they contained really harmed the fraternity, would the librarians not destroy them?"

"The secrets of Freemasonry are carried in your heart; they are not what you see with your eyes or touch with your fingers. There is nothing secret about an organ, or the music books the choir uses, or the gavel the Master holds in his hand, nor yet the books in which the Secretary records who has paid his dues. The shape and form and furniture of a lodge is not a secret, nor the time of meetings nor the name of the Chaplain! The lantern slide conceals no secret worth knowing, nor does the chart to which the lecturer points nor even the carpet laid down the second degree. These are all but a means of putting a picture in your mind and it is the meaning of that picture which must be sacredly kept, not the means which put it there."

"Then you don't think someone ought to speak to Brother Filmore seriously!"

"No, but there was a brother in this lodge who had to be spoken to seriously. I did it.."

"Why, who was it?" asked the New Brother anxiously.

"You!" said the Old Tiler.