

Odd

OF ALL the odd things in Masonry," began the New Brother to the Old Tiler in the anteroom, "the oddest is why some men want to be Masons.

"Meaning what?" asked the Old Tiler.

"Well, Masonry is serious," explained the New Mason. "Why should it appeal to men who are not serious?"

"But in Masonry is good fellowship, and fun, and mutual help and a good time . . . lots of people go to church for

the associations they get, rather than any desire to take part in the service. Some come to a Masonic lodge for what they get, and watch the degrees as a necessary penalty.

"Some men find in the lodge the satisfaction of an instinct. A good brother of this lodge is a motorman on a street car, a silent job. He has been street railroading all his life, and never has had a chance to talk much. In the lodge he found his feet, and discovered that he could stand on them and use his mouth at the same time. He became a fine ritualist, and has been Master. He is now a certified instructor. Masonry provided him with an opportunity to use gifts which nature gave him, but which his job denies him.

"Another Mason I know finds the greatest joy in his lodge as the charity committee chairman. His business in life is being a turnkey in a jail! He lives his waking hours standing guard over criminals, in the lodge he comes into contact with the softer side of life. He is an excellent man on the committee. He knows when folks are in distress and when they are shamming, He is charitably minded and Masonry gives him an opportunity to indulge that side of his nature.

"One brother gets great joy in the fun he makes during business meetings. He is a wit, and his remarks usually cause a gale of laughter. He is in undertaker, and can't wear a smile from the time he gets up until he comes to lodge!

"Some men find the lodge an outlet for their gregariousness, which shyness prevents them from expressing elsewhere. Meeting on the level they are not embarrassed. No one in lodge cares if you have a lot of money or none. So the little fellow who never made much of a commercial success enjoys being just as good, in his own eyes and that of the brethren in the lodge, as anyone. It's a provider of self respect.

"But none of these are the real reason why so many men cannot get along without Masonry."

The Old Tiler paused to light a cigar.

"What's that?" inquired the New Brother.

"It's a compound, not a simplicity," returned the Old Tiler. "Take ten parts reverence for what is old, add twenty parts of love of one's kind and common humanity, stir into it the religious complex which is fifty percent of any man's underlying motives, though a lot of them don't know it, and sprinkle with twenty parts of the habit of doing what the other fellow likes to do. Scientists call it the herd instinct - and you have about my conception of why the average man loves Masonry."

"That's not too exalted an ideal, is it?" objected the New Brother.

"Few men have exalted ideals!" countered the Old Tiler. "I didn't say that was the best reason, I said it was the reason of the average man. I know three Chaplains of lodges who say it rests them to come to a place where preachers of the Word of God can worship Him without dogma or creed. I have been a Mason for more years than you have lived. I haven't been a Tiler all that time. But I have never seen an irreverent action in a lodge, or known a man who felt irreverent about his lodge symbols and ceremonies.

"It is a comfort that so many Freemasons find in lodge spiritual help, a touch of religion, a feeling of reality to their relations with Deity. Few of them say it. A large number do not consciously think it. For every man who says religion and Masonry mean the same thing to him a hundred feel the religious appeal of the lodge and don't know to what they respond."

"I don't know that it's so odd as I thought it was," mused the New Brother.

"The oddest part of it," suggested the Old Tiler, evenly, "is that you should think there was anything odd about the appeal of Freemasonry to anyone!"

"You are right!" assured the New Brother. "But I'm all even now!"