

On a Lodge Budget

IT IS an outrage! That committee should be indicted for defaming the fair fame of Masonry!" The NewBrother was indignant.

"Sounds terrible to me," agreed the Old Tiler, sympathetically. "What committee and what did it do?"

"That committee on the budget. They brought in a report which is to lie over a month before discussion, and I am just seething with indignation!"

"Seethe out loud. Maybe I can seethe, too, and then there will be two of us!" suggested the Old Tiler without a smile.

"Oh, You'll seethe all right!" assured the New Brother. "The committee averaged our income from past years to find what we can expect this year. Then they laid aside a fund of \$1,000, subtracted the fixed charges from what is left, and apportioned the remainder among our other activities."

"Isn't that all right?" asked the Old Tiler.

"You don't understand! This committee has dared to say that we should spend only so much for entertainment, only so much for relief and charity, only so much for education!"

"I must be stupid or something," puzzled the Old Tiler. "That sounds reasonable to me!"

"Reasonable to decide beforehand that we can't spend more than a certain amount for charity? For entertainment? For education? Masonry is built on the thought of relief! Now can we function if we must circumscribe our charities?"

"Softly, softly!" countered the Old Tiler. "You forget that Masonry is founded not only on relief but also on brotherly love and truth. If we spend all our resources on relief, where do we get the money to spend on truth and on cementing the ties of brotherly love?"

"Fine words!" derided the New Brother. "But this report says that only such and such a percentage of our receipts can be spent in charity . . ."

"Wait a minute!" the Old Tiler spoke sharply. "Either you didn't listen or you couldn't understand the report. Evidently you don't know that the Master did me the honor to make me a member of that budget committee, so I know all about it. The budget committee says nothing about confining charity to the amount stated. It said that the average expended for charity during the past five years was so-and-so much, so that we could reasonably look forward to spending a similar amount in the coming year. The figure was given to allow a basis of comparison and a decision as to how much could be spent for other purposes.

"Running a lodge without a budget is like running an automobile without gasoline. By the budget we determine how and where and when we are to function. Without a budget we overplay our hand, spend too much in entertainment, not enough in relief. Without a budget we may rob our future brethren by encroaching upon our capital assets. A budget is an adviser constantly saying, 'Go slow!' Not all worthy projects are within our means."

"You still don't explain what we can do when our charity calls exceed the average of the past five years." The New Brother spoke less excitedly.

"We will meet them, of course," snapped the Old Tiler. "No Masonic Lodge refuses a call for charity when it has the means. But if the calls for charity are twice as big as expected, then we cut down on entertainment. If we have no budget line to which to hew, we spend as much for entertainment as before, and so come out at the end of the year a loser."

"But this budget cuts down on so much. We must use less or cheaper printed matter, and only a certain sum for ladies' night instead of . . .

"Instead of giving a committee of three authority to loot the lodge treasury of all that's in it to provide free entertainment for wives and sweethearts! You said it! No man loves his wife more than I love mine, yet I am content to have the lodge entertain her once a year with a sandwich and a cup of coffee, and undertake her entertainment on more elaborate lines myself. Don't forget, my brother, that our primary purpose is neither charity nor entertainment, and that when we make either or both the principal parts of our Masonic activities, we work against the best interests of the fraternity.

"Masonry is a cultivation of love between man and man; it is education, as between heart and heart. It stands for patriotism, for freedom of thought and conscience, for a simple devoutness, for reverence, as well as for fun and frolic. Our ancient brethren found 'refreshment' necessary, but only when the 'work' was done. The 'pay as you please' system of too many lodges always skimps something, and it's usually the work, not the refreshment. So I'm for the budget, and for it strong!"

"So am I!" agreed the New Brother, in a very small voice.