

## Pep

"IT'S A wonderful idea! I'm strong for it, strong!" cried the New Brother to the Old Tiler in the anteroom.

"Tell me about it!" begged the Old Tiler. "Wonderful ideas are rare!"

"A lot of us think the old lodge needs pepping up. We go along in the same old way, never doing much of anything different, just making Masons and having little lodgeroom talks and all. So we thought - Smitty and Bunny and Wilmot and a few others and I – that we'd start something. We plan to hire a boat and take the lodge down the river and have a special dispensation to hold a third degree and feed out on the water. We'll hire a band, all Masons, of course, and probably have an entertainment afterwards; maybe we can get some high divers and hold a swimming race, too."

"It is a wonderful idea," commented the Old Tiler, "but you don't carry it far enough."

"I thought maybe you could add to it," said the New Brother, enthusiastically. "What would you suggest?"

"I think a small boat in the river is undignified. Why not hire an ocean liner? Why not go halfway to Europe, and instead of having diving and swimming matches, get a couple of whales and have a real whale of a time? Or you might be able to get Uncle Sam to lend you a couple of submarines.

"I wouldn't hire just a Masonic band. Get three or eleven bands, and have a competition to see which can blow the loudest. Hold all three of the degrees at once; the first in the hold, the second on deck and the third up in the crow's nest. That would be different and exhilarating. Don't be a piker! If you are going to innovate, innovate *right*!"

"Why, you are laughing at me! Don't you think it's a good idea to put pep in the lodge? Didn't the Shriners hold an initiation in a cave, and another in the locks at the canal, and didn't our ancient brethren hold their lodges on hills and in valleys and . . ."

"The Shrine did, and does, and will again, more power to it. The Shrine is a modern organization, with no need to uphold ancient traditions. The Shrine is a fun-loving organization, the playground for Masonry and Masons; it thrives on the new, the different, the novel, the startling, I love the Shrine, and everything it does. I love a good comedy, too, but I don't like to see a minister pulling funny stuff in the pulpit. And what is fine for the Shrine is poor for the lodge.

"If our ancient brethren held their meetings on hills and in valleys, it was because they had no buildings. Had we no temples we would do the same. But our ancient brethren didn't go out under the stars to be 'peppy,' nor should we."

"Somewhere or other in Shakespeare (I think it's Henry IV) are the lines, 'Fickle changelings and poor discontents, which gape and rub elbow at the news of hurly-burly innovations.' There are 'poor discontents' who are dissatisfied unless they are amused, but they are not devoted lodge members.

"I can't say much for your idea. Trying to put 'pep' into Masonic degrees is like painting a statue or putting perfume on a flower, or having red fire and a brass band at a funeral.

"Masonry is sacred and beautiful. It is beautiful with age that has mellowed and softened it, and given it the tints and colors of the glory of service. Could you improve the Grand Canyon with better colors than nature gave it? How can you improve a lodge meeting with a boat, a brass band and a diving contest? When you go on your knees to your Creator, do you play the phonograph, dance a jig and tell a funny story to put 'pep' in the performance?

"Masonry is much more than lodge meetings. It is selflessness, brotherhood, charity, toleration, veneration; it is the sweet and quiet influence which makes a brother more than a mere lodge member; it is an expression of the divine will to make men better. You cannot aid it with a boat trip or a brass band, my son; you cannot help it by innovations. You must take it or leave it as it is; that which has endured for centuries needs no such artificial stimulation."

"But don't you believe in entertainment or excursions or play?" asked the New Brother,

"Of course! Hire a boat, get a band, hold a diving contest, make merry, by all means. Have a lodge picnic, blowout, whatever you will, and I'll help you. But don't spoil it by trying to make it into a lodge meeting, and don't spoil a good meeting by trying to make it a picnic.

"We are taught to have refreshment. But we are not taught to mix labor and refreshment. It is first of the ancient laws that it is beyond the power of any Mason to change ancient laws. Find me any authority in the ancient laws for holding a third degree in a boat with a brass band and a diving contest and I'll help you. Otherwise, I'll try to keep the old lodge just as she is and save your pep for the excursion you want to give and don't know it!"

"Something tells me this proposition will not be popular if I bring it up in lodge, unless I make it plain it's an excursion and not an attempt to put 'pep' in the degrees," answered the New Brother.

"Something tells you right, son," answered the Old Tiler.