

Shooting the Masonic Gun

GOING so soon?" asked the Old Tiler, as the New Brother reached for his hat and coat.

"I have a most important Masonic mission to perform," answered the New Brother, importantly.

"That's interesting," answered the Old Tiler. "I like to see new brethren so interested they are trusted with important Masonic missions. Care to tell me about it?"

"It can wait a few minutes," answered the New Brother. "It's a family matter. The young son of one of the members of our sister lodge came to me today to explain that his father wasn't doing right. He doesn't give the mother any money and the children need shoes, and this mistaken brother is spending his money on horse racing -- when he ought to be spending it on his family. The boy knew me and knew his father belonged to the fraternity. So he asked me to use the influence of Masonry to make him behave. That's what I am going to do."

"You grow more interesting every minute." The Old Tiler hitched his chair against the wall and leaned back. "Tell me what you are going to do in the performance of this important Masonic mission."

"I am going to explain to Brother Smith that his conduct is unbecoming that of a Mason, and get him to reform."

"And if he refuses?"

"I shall then threaten him with proceedings against him."

"Such as?" inquired the Old Tiler.

"Why, one prefers charges, doesn't one? The lodge tries him and inflicts what punishment is necessary. In this case the punishment would be to Support his family!"

"And while you are thus engaging in conduct unbecoming a Mason, explaining to him how unbecoming his conduct is, who will come and explain your unbecoming conduct to you?"

"My unbecoming conduct! Why, I am going to do nothing unbecoming a Mason!"

"Oh, yes, you are!" answered the Old Tiler, emphatically. "In fact, you are trying to do several un-Masonic things all at once. Even with the best of intentions, for which I give you credit, you can't succeed in getting any results but being shown the door, and, maybe, having charges preferred against you!"

"Why, you amaze me!" countered the New Brother. "I thought that one of the things Masonry was for was to make men act as they should!"

" You thought wrong!" answered the Old Tiler. "Masonry exists to *teach* men to act as they should, *persuade* them to do right, *encourage* them to be honest and upright, and thoughtful and kindly. But Masonry *makes* man do as he should. Masonry does not attempt to usurp the law's work. A man who will not support his family can be reached through the law. Masonry can reach him only through his heart. Charges can be preferred against him in his lodge, but with small prospects of results unless the law has first found him guilty. Masons try Masons for un-Masonic conduct. If the un-Masonic conduct is a legal matter, the law usually must first have taken its course. It is not for us to judge the legal aspects of his conduct, only the Masonic angles. And if he can say, 'I have done nothing; I am free before the law; my record is clear;' on what will you convict him?"

"Again, my friend, if this mission of yours is to be performed at all, it must be accomplished by the lodge, not the individual. If the brother were a member of this lodge, and son or wife complained to the Master about a brother's conduct, the Master could appoint a committee to investigate and report to the lodge. But for you, an individual, to go butting into the family affairs of a man not even a brother of your own lodge, would be to subject you to insult. Personally, I think lie would be justified in adding to his insults a swift kick which would land you in the middle of the pavement. He could well say he had kicked you in defense of his family!"

"The way to reach this brother, supposing he is doing the wrong thing, is through Masons he knows and respects. Let the son or wife go to the Master of his own lodge and say that the man is neglecting them. Let the Master of that lodge reason with him. Perhaps he needs help. The lodge will give it. Perhaps he is slipping for want of a friendly hand and sympathetic understanding. His own brethren will give it. It is not for you, any more than it is for them, to judge this man on one complaint until an investigation has shown what is the fact.

"You have no moral, legal, or fraternal right to 'whisper good counsel in his ear' until you know it is needed. By arrogating to yourself the powers of a Master and appointing yourself a committee of one to investigate, try, convict, admonish, and threaten with punishment a brother Master Mason, however good your intentions, you show yourself guilty of un-Masonic conduct and a decidedly un-Masonic ignorance. Where are you going now?"

"Back into lodge!" The New Brother hung up his hat. "To see if I can learn something about this Masonic gun before I attempt to fire it!"