

So Many Rascals!

WHY are there so many rascals in the Fraternity, and why don't we turn them out?" asked the New Brother.

"You remind me," answered the Old Tiler, "of the recalcitrant witness whom the prosecuting attorney could not get to answer his questions with a categorical 'yes' or 'no.' 'I can't answer them that way,' the witness protested. 'All questions can be answered that way!' stormed the prosecuting attorney. 'All right,' came back the witness, like a flash, 'you answer me this: Have you stopped beating your wife yet?' Of course the prosecuting attorney couldn't answer that 'yes' or 'no' without admitting that he did beat his wife. And I can't answer your question without admitting that there are so many rascals in the Fraternity, when I know there are not!"

"You know what I mean!" continued the New Brother. "There are a lot of fellows in Freemasonry who have no business there. How did they get there and why don't we turn them out?"

"But do we know it? I have been tiling this lodge for a great many years. I know every man in it, many of them personally. I can't call to mind a single rascal. Even when I think hard I can't remember a single Mason among them all I'd like to see put out, can you?"

"I sure can! I know half a dozen I'd like to see out of this lodge!" answered the New Brother.

"Without telling me their names, you might mention one or two and tell me what they have done to you," suggested the Old Tiler.

"I didn't say they had done anything to me," answered the New Brother. "One man I have in mind has no business in this organization. He swears horribly. He is tough and uncouth. He doesn't 'belong.' I'd like to see him out."

"You mean O'Rourke, the Irishman? Why, man alive, he's one of our prize exhibits! A protestant Irishman is pretty rare anyhow, and when you have a two-fisted fighting variety like Paddy you certainly are off on the wrong foot. Suppose he does swear? Have you no fault which is as bad? Uncouth? What has that got to do with it? Paddy is there with brotherhood; he'll fight for or nurse you, lend to you or borrow from you, work for you or with you, just because you both speak the same language. I can't imagine anyone wanting Paddy out of the lodge."

"I didn't know all that," the New Brother excused himself. "There is another man; maybe I can describe him so you won't know him. He is very close with his money and he doesn't want the lodge to spend money. I don't say he is crooked, although I have heard stories about his business deals which looked queer. No one ever got the best of him in a deal. Men like that ought not to be in the great fraternity we have, which is supposed to be all virtue and open-handed giving."

"You talk like a book that was scrambled when it was written," retorted the Old Tiler. "I know perfectly well the man you mean. That's Taylor. I won't defend Taylor's reputation, because it's not a nice one. Taylor's young wife died when he didn't have money enough to send her west and ever since he has worshipped money, because it could have given him the one thing he wanted. Taylor is not a rascal; he is as honest as you. But he is exceedingly shrewd and he doesn't make any deals which don't come out his way. As for his not wanting to spend lodge money, do you?"

"Of course I do."

"Well, there you are. He doesn't, you do. You do, he doesn't. Neither attitude is rascally; it's just difference of opinion. He thinks our money should be saved, you think it should be spent. He is a smarter man than I am, or you are. But none of those things make him a rascal. In fact, now I think of it, there is only one man in our lodge who might be put out with benefit to the lodge!"

"I thought you said there were none!"

"I have just recalled one. He's a nice enough fellow on the surface, too. Good looking and decent appearing. But he carries a concealed weapon, which is against the law."

"Why don't you prefer charges against him?" asked the New Brother.

"It's not that kind of a weapon," smiled the Old Tiler. "It's a verbal knife with which he stabs innocent people in the back. He hasn't very much sense and so he goes off halfcocked and shoots off his face before he knows what he is talking about. He sees evil where there is an appearance of evil instead of looking below the surface. He cannot see the leaves for the trees or the waves because there is so much water. And he hasn't yet learned several Masonic lessons, such as tolerance and brotherly love, even though he has been regularly initiated, passed, and raised. He was Masonically vaccinated, but the virus didn't take. I don't want to see the brother put out of the lodge, because there is good in him. I'd rather see him stay here and learn. But if you really feel that he ought not to be in our lodge I'll show you how to do something no man in all this lodge has ever done before."

"I'm afraid I don't quite understand . . . I'm afraid I do understand . . . I'm afraid . . ."

"Don't be afraid, boy. That spoils it all!" cried the Old Tiler. "If you think this brother of whom I speak ought not to be among us, prefer charges against yourself. That will make you a reputation and get rid of a narrow-minded and intolerant Mason. But if you think this brother can learn, I'm willing to forget I ever heard him speak of any of his brethren as rascals and . . ."

". . . and try to remember that even a fool can be cured, if he has an Old Tiler for a doctor!" the New Brother finished the sentence for him.