

## THE FORGOTTEN WORD

"Never have I been so glad to get to lodge as tonight!" began the New Brother to the Old tiler in the anteroom.

"Some one here owe you some money or something?" asked the Old Tiler.

"No indeed! But lying awake last night, thinking about Masonry, I tried to recall the word of a Master Mason... and I couldn't! It was a lost word for me, sure enough! I couldn't sleep all night, trying to remember. I couldn't remember today and it bothered me a lot! So I was glad to come to lodge tonight and get instructed!"

"I shouldn't have worried over that," answered the Old Tiler. "Our memories play strange tricks. You didn't need it, did you?"

"No, but a Mason ought not to forget it. It's the most important thing in Masonry. If we don't have it we cannot visit and work as a Master- and everything!"

"So we are told," answered the old Tiler. "Yet don't you mistake the meaning? The syllables you are taught to pronounce are not important."

"Why, Old Tiler! How can you say that?"

"Because it is true," answered the Old Tiler. "Is it important what particular piece of cloth is put in an apron? Is it important what particular piece of iron is used to make a pillar, or what particular copy of a million Bibles is on the Altar, or what particular piece of wood is used in the gavel? Isn't it important that we wear an apron and know why, that we have a pillar to teach a lesson, that we revere the Great Light in Masonry, that we have a gavel for our control? Then are the syllables of the word important, or is the spirit, the meaning, the symbolism important?"

"Masons must know the word, the modes of recognition, the signs and tokens. But all these may slip from memory and still a brother have Freemasonry in his heart. They are audible symbols of spiritual knowledge.

"We are taught that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God. Do you read into that statement some particular word? Or is the Word here used in the Old Jewish sense of the truth, the light of knowledge for which man may strive?"

"Masonry's search for the lost word is for far more than a syllable, my brother. The substitute word is more than an exclamation. It is an inward knowledge of oneness with the Great Architect, for which all men of all ages have searched. Not all search in vain; many find their Word. Even the substitute word could only be given under certain circumstances; doubtless those earnest seekers who found the real word could never assemble the circumstances under which it, too, might be given to humanity.

"But we continue to search. Slowly but surely man has come up from barbarianism. The world improves with age. Except in war men are less cruel now than centuries ago; men know more than they did centuries ago. We are all brutes underneath, but to be underneath connotes something above. In our long struggle after the lost word we have put something above the brute. On that we climb, and are by so much nearer the Word we seek.

"It is this which is important. Let not your heart be troubled if that strangest part of all God's works, the human mind, plays a prank on you. Better men than you and I have forgotten their own names. Now and then one forgets the name of Deity. But in the end we remember, in some far place where angels see that our memories work! All you needed was conversation with any brother who had sat in lodge with you. If you desire, nothing prevents you from giving and receiving it as Masons are taught to do.

"Your only cause for worry is that you fail to keep always before you that Masonry in men's hearts searches for a word which no man has yet put into words. The tender lesson of the Master Mason degree has been a solace to millions. The Word, substitute though it is, has meant much more than the scholar translates. It is this which you must never forget, even when your memory temporarily takes from you the recollection of the letters and their pronunciation."

"You should be a travelling lecturer!" cried the New Brother.

"You mean that as a compliment, but I'd rather sit still and tile."

"But you can't get anywhere!" cried the New Brother.

"Neither can a sign post by the road," smiled the Old Tiler. "Yet it points the way."