

TO WAIT HOW LONG?

"Old Tiler," began the New Brother, "do you think I ought to be a Chapter Mason and a Commandery Mason and a Scottish Rite Mason right away?"

"That's a rather large question," objected the Old Tiler. "Why do you ask?"

"I am constantly asked to join these bodies," answered the New Brother. "It seems to me I ought to wait until I know more about Masonry before I go farther."

"I agree with you," answered the Old Tiler, heartily.

"You just said it was too large a question to answer right off," cried the New Brother.

"That was before you told me how you felt," countered the Old Tiler. "No man should go farther in Masonry as long as he feels he should wait. But if you had said that your interest was flagging, and that you wanted to go ahead and explore, to refind the thrill of the third degree, I would probably have told you I agreed with you heartily."

"Seems to me," answered the New Brother, "that the Grand Lodge might profitably make a rule that no Master Mason could apply for the degrees in any other Masonic body until they have been Master Masons for six months or a year."

"You are not the only, or the first Mason, to think that," answered the Old Tiler. "But that is a very large question indeed, and much can be said on both sides."

"Won't you tell me both sides?" asked the New Brother.

"I'll try," answered the Old Tiler. "The Grand Lodge side of it is simple enough; it is obvious that if there were only the three degrees of Ancient Craft Masonry a man could not divide his attention, his money, and his time with them and any other Masonic bodies. But we have Capitular degrees and Commandery degrees and Cryptic degrees; and Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite degrees, and the Shrine; while the Shrine is not a Masonic body, yet it is a goal for many Masons, so it enters into the problem. Those who propose that Grand Lodge forbid newly made Master Masons applying for the degrees in Chapter or Rite until after a lapse of a year, have in mind that if a man has only his lodge to go to, he will learn some Masonry, get the habit, and so, when he does take the other degrees, he will not forget his Alma Mater."

"Those who think the Grand Lodge should not make such a regulation, often believe that it should be made by the other bodies. Such Masons think that Capitular Masonry and Scottish Rite Masonry would be stronger and better if they refused any candidates who had not at least a year's experience in the Symbolic lodge. A college demands certain scholastic standards of its freshmen. Many demand a high school diploma, or its equivalent. A college has a right to say on what terms it will accept students. But the high school never says 'you mustn't apply to the college without a high school diploma.' The

high school doesn't attempt to tell the college what it must or must not do, or who it can and cannot have as freshmen. It but prepares those willing to study to enter to the college. It is the college which won't take the unprepared.

"Many Masons will feel that the so-called 'higher' degrees are a sort of college course to Masonry, and that the bodies which confer those degrees should demand at least a year's experience in Blue Lodge Masonry, but can see no reason why the Grand Lodge should keep their doors for them.

"No well-informed Mason sees the lodge as a primary school and the other Rites as colleges. No well-informed Mason but regards Ancient Craft Masonry as the source of all Masonry, to be honored above all others. A real comparison perhaps could be made with a country and citizenship. Citizenship in this nation is a very high estate. Yet some citizens know more statecraft than others and become leaders in the legislature, the cabinet, the law, the diplomatic service. They could do none of these things without being citizens. The United States demands a certain period- I think it is five years- which a 'candidate' for citizenship must wait, before he receives his 'third degree,' his final papers. Until he gets them, he cannot be a citizen or enjoy the rights of citizenship, or go higher in the State, or be an officer. That is like the lodge demand of a month between degrees, and a proficiency in the work before the next degree is conferred.

"The United States doesn't say to a newly-made citizen 'now that you are a citizen, you must wait a year or two before you exercise your citizenship.' Our Grand Lodge does not say to a Blue Lodge Mason 'you must wait a year before you try to be an officer or before you apply for any other degrees.' Yet there are those who would have Grand Lodge do just that.

"There are two sides, my brother. Personally, I would think that a period of waiting would be an excellent thing. I would like to see the Grand Chapters and the Supreme Council decide that a Master Mason must be such for six months or a year before he could apply, just as they now demand six months' or a years' residence in a place before they will admit jurisdiction. But I think a Grand Lodge is less than wise if it attempts to regulate the so-called 'high bodies' in their standards."

"I thought Grand Lodge could do anything," put in the New Brother.

"So it can, very nearly," smiled the Old Tiler. "I did not say I thought a Grand Lodge would be going beyond its rights in making such a regulation. I said I thought it would be unwise. The Grand Lodge has complete control of a man's Masonry and his Masonic conduct. Its right to regulate is undoubted; its wisdom in doing so may be open to discussion."

"Well, I'm going to wait a while; but not a year," responded the New Brother.

"Which will be just right, for you," smiled the Old Tiler.

