

## The Dirty Trick

OLD TILER, what would you do about Jones?" "Give him what he needs, of course."

The New Brother sat down beside the Old Tiler in the anteroom. "Of course, he's a Mason, and all that, but -- but I don't like him. He did me a dirty, trick once. I don't mean I want to get even with him, but I don't think he's a good enough Mason to get relief from this lodge."

"Is he under charges? Suspended? Expelled?" asked the Old Tiler.

"No-o-o-o, but . . . "

"But nothing!" The Old Tiler was emphatic. "A man is innocent until proved guilty. If he is good enough for the lodge to accept his dues when he is prosperous, he is good enough for us to relieve when he is in hard luck."

"But it was a filthy trick he played on me . . . "

"When I was a very little boy," interrupted the Old Tiler, "some fifteen years after the war between the States, my parents moved to a small town in the north. They brought with them a lot of Confederate money. Confederate notes were of no value after the war. My parents gave me some to play with. I thought it was real money, and no Midas had anything on me when I looked at my ten dollar bill!

"I trotted down to the country store and bought the biggest, most red and whitish stick of peppermint candy which ever delighted any small child's heart. The storekeeper wrapped it up for me, unsmiling. I handed him my ten dollar bill. He looked at it a moment, and then took from my hand the candy. He told me the money was no good and I couldn't have the candy.

"It was the greatest financial lesson I ever had. I didn't understand; I was terribly disappointed.

"Only when I grew up did I come to know that I had met a peculiarly mean specimen of he-thing -- a man who would hurt a baby for the sake of one cent. I grew up feeling rather contemptuous of that storekeeper. He was within his rights, but I didn't have much of an opinion of him.

"In later years I met him, a much older man. He was glad to see me. We chatted a while, and then he recalled my youth. So I told him I hadn't liked him for many years, and why. 'You tell me what you think of a chap who would take a stick of candy from a child for the sake of a penny.'

"He flushed. 'I was just mean,' he said. 'Will you forgive me?' Of course I did, and thought no more about it. But I still didn't like him.

"Several years later his wife appealed to me for aid. He was down and out. He had been so sharp a business man that people didn't like him, any more than I did. And he had failed. They were destitute."

"What did you do?" inquired the New Brother, as the Old Tiler paused.

"All I could, of course," answered the Old Tiler. "He was a brother of the Mystic Tie."

The New Brother sat silent for a minute.

"Something tells me I have been properly spanked!" he said at last. "Of course I have no right to consider a personal matter in connection with a brotherly appeal to the lodge for relief. I shall vote for it. And I'll see if I can't do something personally. I still don't like him and I never will, but -- "

"But you have come to a Masonic viewpoint! -- interrupted the Old Tiler. "That's one of the hardest lessons to learn -- that there are two viewpoints. A man is a man, a neighbor, a friend or an enemy. But he is also a brother. When he appeals to us for that brotherly aid and assistance we have all sworn to render, we have to remember only the brotherhood and not the man. I have never liked the man who took my stick of candy. The incident gave me in opinion of his character which I found unpleasant. But I couldn't vote against him in my lodge because of it, and I couldn't deny him the relief the lodge should have given him, because of it. Jones may have done you an unbrotherly trick -- but that's no reason for you not to act like a brother to him."

"It is not, and I am going to, but I wish Masons wouldn't do dirty tricks!"

"So do I. But if all men were perfect, there would be no need of Masonry!" grinned the Old Tiler.