

The Disliked Petitioner

"I AM MUCH disturbed!" announced the New Brother to the Old Tiler.

"Tell me about it. I have oil for troubled waters. If your water on the brain is disturbed, maybe I can soothe it!"

"I doubt it! I heard the name of Bedford Jones-Smith read out in lodge tonight as a petitioner. I don't want Bedford here!"

"That's nothing to be disturbed about," answered the Old Tiler. "You have a vote, haven't you? If you don't want to wait until he comes up for ballot, go tell the committee what's the matter with him. " The Old Tiler leaned back in his chair as if the question was settled.

"There isn't anything the matter with him!" cried the New Brother. "If I could explain to the committee that Bedford was a rascal, or beat his wife or stole money, or had been in jail or something, it wouldn't be a problem. But so far as I know Bedford Jones-Smith is correct to the point of perfection. He is a thoroughly respectable man. I dislike him extremely. He rubs me the wrong way. I despise his unctuous manner; he shakes hands like a fish. I think he wears corsets, and he is the most perfect lady I know, but there isn't a thing against him legally, mentally, morally! The committee will find him 100 per cent Simon pure, and this lodge will receive the original nincompoop, the pluperfect essence of idiocy, and the superheterodyne of jackasses, as a member!"

"Anything to stop you voting against him?" asked the Old Tiler. "It's your privilege to cast your little black cube in secrecy against any man you don't like."

"That's where the problem comes in! I know I can do it. I know that I don't have to let Bedford Jones-Smith into my Masonic home if I don't want him, any more than I have to let him into my everyday life. It's just because I *can* keep him out that I am troubled. If I do, I'll feel that I did a mean act. Yet I don't want that double-distilled ass in this lodge!"

"Suppose you dig a little deeper" suggested the Old Tiler. "Just *why* don't you want him?"

"Because I don't like him!"

"And just why don't you like him?"

"Because he stands for everything, that I despise; he never plays games, he never works, he never does anything except wear fashionable clothes, go to parties, and is an irreproachable escort for dumb Doras. He's not a man, he's a wearer of trousers!"

"Sounds harmless" said the Old Tiler. "He can't pink tea here, can he? He certainly can't bring any dumb Doras to this lodge. We don't need any games played here, and we have so many men in lodge who never work at it that one more won't hurt

"But it will make me uncomfortable to have him around. "

"Then keep him out!"

"Oh, you exasperate me! I come for help, and you laugh at me. What shall I do?"

"Really want to know?" asked the Old Tiler, the smile fading from his face.

"I really do!"

"Then I'll tell you. Snap out of your conceited, selfish attitude. Get rid of the idea that your comfort, your feelings, your happiness are so important. Get hold of the thought that Masonry is so much bigger than you and Mr. Jones-Smith rolled up into one that together you are not a fly speck on its map, and separately you can't be seen! Try to imagine yourself a part of a great institution which works wonders with men and forget that you are so important!

"By your own showing, nothing is the matter with this gentleman except that you don't like his ways and manner. Doubtless he doesn't like yours. To him you are probably a rough-neck, a golf-playing, poker-playing, automobile-driving, hard-working, laboring man. He might not want to join the lodge if he knew you were in it! He has different standards. That they are not yours, or mine, doesn't make him poor material for Masonry. The fact that he wants to be a Mason shows he has admirable qualities. That he is moral, and respectable, shows he has manhood. That his manners don't please you is no reason for keeping him out. To keep a man who wants them from the blessings of Masonry because of personal dislike is a crime against those teachings of toleration which Masonry offers you. Let him in. Try to help him. Try to show him there is something else in life beyond fripperies and foolishness. Maybe you can make a regular Mason out of him. But don't vote for him unless you are really prepared to take his hand and call him brother.

"Better let your conscience hurt you for being a snob than to have it hurt for being false to your obligation of brotherhood. Better realize you are a selfish and opinionated person than that you are a bad Mason, a forsworn member of the fraternity, a traitor to its principles, a . . . "

"For the love o' Mike, let up on me! I'll vote for the simp -- for the man, I mean -- and try my best. Old Tiler, Masonry has such a lot to do to make *me* a regular man, I'm afraid I'll never learn!"

"You are getting there, son," observed the Old Tiler, smiling with satisfaction. "Not every young Mason will admit he is an idiot even when it's proved!"