

The Greatest Work

OLD TILER, what is the greatest work of Masonry?" The New Brother sat by the guardian of the door and pulled out his cigar case.

"Persuading new brethren that Old Tiler's need something to smoke!" returned the Old Tiler promptly.

The New Brother laughed as he handed over a cigar. "I hope you will smoke with me," he said, "But that wasn't just what I had in mind. Masonry has so many different jobs to do - I was wondering which is the greatest." "Suppose you tell me what you think these jobs are," suggested the Old Tiler. "I can answer more intelligently if I know what you have in mind."

"Masonry teaches and practices charity," began the New Brother. "I suppose the brotherly love and relief she teaches are among the greatest of her works. She teaches men to agree to disagree, and to avoid dissension while meeting on a common level. She teaches brotherly love, which makes society run more smoothly and makes us all happier. One of Masonry's works is education, since she admonishes us to learn and to study. But I don't know that I could say that any one of them is the most important."

"That is rather difficult," answered the Old Tiler. "Besides, you have left out a number of things. Masonry helps us to make friends-and surely in the struggle for happiness, friends add much to the joy and take away much from the burden."

"Masonry helps men to come closer to their Maker-she does not ape the church in teaching men how to worship God, but only that God is, and that one can commune with the Great Architect without sect or creed. She teaches sympathy and understanding. She teaches toleration of the other fellow's views. Democrat and Republican, saint and sinner, meet on the level in a lodge and forget their differences in their sameness, lose sight of the quarrels in their oneness. All this Masonry does for those who accept her gentle ministrations."

"But that doesn't tell me which is the greatest thing she does," objected the New Brother as the Old Tiler paused.

"I don't think there is a greatest thing, except for the individual," answered the Old Tiler. "The greatest thing Masonry may do for me may not be your greatest thing. To one man her brotherly love may be the greatest; to another, the friends; to a third, the charity. Doesn't it depend on the man?"

"You wouldn't say, then, that you think relief is Masonry's greatest accomplishment?" asked the New Brother.

"For those it relieves, yes; and it often is for those who have contributed to it. But suppose a man is engaged all day as a charity visitor or a doctor or a Red Cross official.

Relief by Masonry won't be anything new to him. He must look elsewhere for the greatest thing."

"Well, what is Masonry's greatest accomplishment for you, as an Old Tiler?"

"Opportunity for service!" answered the Old Tiler, promptly. "It gives me a chance to do things for my fellowman I wouldn't otherwise have. I am an old man. I am not very active, and I have always been poor. But in Masonry I can be active, even if not very spry. Not having much, means doesn't seem to count. Now let me ask you, what is Masonry's greatest accomplishment for you?"

The New Brother laughed. "I knew that was coming. It's sort of hazy when I try to put it into words. But it is clear in my mind. The greatest thing which I get out of Masonry, save one thing only, is my kinship with the past. My sense that I am part of a living chain which goes back into the years which are gone, for no one knows how many centuries. I do what George Washington did in a lodge. I see the same things Elias Ashmole saw. As I do, so did Bobby Burns. I am mentally akin with the Comacine builders and the Guild craftsmen of the Middle Ages."

"Back to Solomon and beyond," agreed the Old Tiler. "I understand."

"Perhaps you do, but I can't make it clear when I try to put it into words." The New Brother looked off into the distance, frowning. "I feel a mystic sense of strength and inspiration from this oneness with so many millions of brethren who have gone this way before me-it seems to me that I have an added strength for my daily life because I am a part of so great a chain. -

"All who love the Craft have that feeling," smiled the Old Tiler. "But you said there was one other benefit which Masonry conferred on you, and which you thought was the greatest of all. What is that?"

The New Brother looked at the Old Tiler, without smiling. "The privilege of talking to a man as wise as you," he answered.