

The Hallowed Old

OLD TILER, let's start a campaign to buy new jewels and furniture."

"I have heard that before," answered the Old Tiler to the New Brother. "What's the matter with our jewels and our furniture?"

"So old-fashioned!" returned the New Brother, disgustedly. "I visited Corinth Lodge last night, in their beautiful new temple. All new paint, new mahogany furniture, new leather, bright and shining new jewels and all. It rather made me ashamed of our outfit."

"But Corinth is a new lodge," protested the Old Tiler.

"And this is an old one," retorted the New Brother. "Why should we let the new lodge beat us?"

"We don't. We have them beaten seven ways," returned the Old Tiler, puzzled. "Our old jewels are beautiful in themselves, and are hallowed with age and memories. "

"Don't you believe in lodges making progress and getting new things? Can't we outgrow our temple?" asked the New Brother.

"We can. I doubt if we have. But a new temple is one thing, and new fittings quite another. The only beauty in modern fittings is their newness. There is no musk of age about them; no feeling of these having watched Masonic sights which have been worth seeing. We may have a new temple someday but when we give up our hundred-year-old Master's chair and the crude jewels our officers have worn for more than a hundred and twenty years I want to see it from the Great Beyond."

"Well - I never thought of it that way.

"You are not the only one," retorted the Old Tiler. "Let me tell you a little story. In 1789, I think it was, a lodge in Trenton, N. J. - Trenton No. 5 - built a temple. It is two stories high. Below is one big room, probably a refreshment room. Above is a lodge room. Atop that, an attic. Built of stone it was, and built to last.

"Trenton Lodge grew much too big for the little lodge room. In 1867 the old building became a school. Later it was used for commercial purposes. The brethren of Trenton Lodge, in those days, were too close to their old home to know what they were doing to it. They let it go.

"Years passed, and sentiment grew. Trenton began to make parks and change its streets. The old Masonic building was to be torn down to make room for a street. By now sentiment was all to the fore. So the Grand Lodge picked up the old building, lock, stock and barrel, and moved it to land it owned, and laid another cornerstone with impressive ceremonies in 1915. Now the old building is a house of Masonic and patriotic relics,

carefully and lovingly restored. Much of the old furniture was recovered. The East, a niche in the wall, had been boarded up to make a square room. That sacrilege was removed. The ceiling had been papered; when it was depapered, they found a sculptured sun, with radiating rays, directly above the Altar and seven stars, and moon. They have been lovingly restored.

"Lafayette and Washington trod the boards in that floor. The old building was made when memories of Washington crossing the Delaware were fresh. The old jewels of the lodge are carefully preserved. If you were a member of Trenton Lodge No. 5, would you want to see all this thrown away for a new outfit?"

"Well, er - no. But does Trenton Lodge meet there?"

"No. They meet in a new temple immediately adjacent to the present site of the old building. Trenton Lodge has a vast pride in this ancient possession; it is a Mecca for the visiting Mason. Perhaps our old lodge will become such someday.

"I am in old man, and I love old things. I try to be progressive; I am accustomed to electric lights and steam-heat. But I could never be reconciled to diamond-set jewels for Master and Wardens. The Bible on the Altar our first Master gave us four generations ago is hallowed to me. I believe in progress, in comfortable meeting places and settings worthy of Masonry. But let us not discard the old merely because it is old. Let us cherish the hallowed old; when great history, patriotism, sacrifices, accomplishments are woven into the old, then should we cherish them.

"Such a lodge is this lodge. To wear the jewel a hundred Masters have worn is an infinitely prouder joy than to wear for the first time the newest and most elaborate jewel. To take an obligation on a Bible on which thousands have been obligated is holier, though not more binding, than to do so on a new Book.

"Let us have a new temple when we must; let us even have new carpets and new lights. But let us keep our old and time-worn jewels; let us stick to our old Bible; let us keep our memories and those objects around which memories cling, for of such stuff are the dreams of men. When a man thus dreams, his Freemasonry touches the heart because it comes from the heart."

"You ought to have been - why, Old Tiler, you are a poet!" cried the New Brother.

"Humph!" snorted the Old Tiler. But he fingered his old sword, not displeased.