

HAND-PICKED

"I have been thinking," announced the New Brother to the Old Tiler.

"Interesting, if true," murmured the Old Tiler, crossing his legs and leaning his sword against the wall. "Sometimes people think they are thinking when they only think they think."

"Huh?" said the New Brother.

"I said, in other words, give me a cigar," answered the Old Tiler. "If you are thinking, or even if you only think you think and are about to tell me about it, I should have some nicotine as support."

"I have been thinking," went on the New Brother, holding out his cigar case, "that the Masonic fraternity writes one of its unwritten laws upside down. I understand it is un-Masonic for me to ask the best man I know to become a Mason. But if a man against whom I know nothing, except that he is only a fair, average sort of chap, wants to come into my lodge, it is equally against Masonic principles to blackball him, just because he isn't the best educated man in the world!"

"All that you say is true," responded the Old Tiler. "But I think you have only been thinking you thought."

"Ah, but I am not through!" countered the New Brother. "All that being so we stultify ourselves by that unwritten law. If it was the law that no man might apply for Masonry, and that only those who are asked could join, and we were careful whom we asked, what a wonderful personnel we could have!"

"Who, for instance, would you ask?" responded the Old Tiler.

"I know a lot of fellows I would ask!" was the immediate answer. "Dr. Bell, the famous eye man, and Jordan, the English professor, and Dr. Goodspeed, the eminent divine, and Tomlinson, the philanthropist; and that explorer fellow who did such wonderful missionary work...can't think of his name...and...and...oh, a whole lot of wonderful men! Think of the benefit to us all by having men like that in the fraternity."

"It would be wonderful, wouldn't it?" answered the Old Tiler.

"Of course it would! Well, why don't we?"

"Oh, that's simple enough. It wouldn't be Masonic."

"But why?"

"My son," answered the Old Tiler, "can you educate a man calling himself educated? Can you make a brick into gold by calling it gold? Can you make a silk purse out of a sow's ear by naming it a silk purse?"

"Of course not," was the ready answer. "But we...we Masons make things Masonic or not Masonic by the way we look at them."

"Oh, no, we don't!" cried the Old Tiler. "I have just been leading you on to see what you would say. Now I'll tell you what you want to know. We can't make a thing Masonic by calling it so because the principles of Masonry are fixed and unalterable. We agreed they were unalterable when we became Masons. Therefore, we can't alter them. While it would do you and me good if these fine men conceived a regard for the fraternity and became members, it would do us no good to make them Masons on our initiative. Then would then be above the fraternity, not humble members, glad of the blessings of the order. If we picked the men at our own pleasure we might get a higher type of personnel, but they wouldn't be Masons. They would be hand-picked men. We would deny its blessings to the men who need Masonry to shower them upon men who need them least.

"There is no man who cannot be ennobled by Masonic influence. No matter how good a man is, his faith and his morality and his righteousness may be strengthened by Masonic influence. But good men need Masonry much less than others not so good. I do not mean that Masonry should take in bad men, but men like you and me, the average man, the banker, doctor, lawyer, merchant, clerk, laborer, the everyday fellow, needs Masonry in his heart and in his life much more than the eminent men who devote their lives to humanity. Masonry is for all who want her blessings and can show that they deserve them. To restrict it to just a few, and those few picked by men with selfish interests at heart, instead of the interests of their candidates, would be un-Masonic, unnatural, and the death knell of the fraternity.

"There are plenty of clubs, associations, organizations, which hand-pick their members. They are useful, good to know and belong to. But they do no such work as do Masons. As well say no man may join the church of God or hear His ministers preach His word, save those who are invited and say, 'Let us have no candidates except those we choose.'

"After men apply for the degrees, then, indeed we can choose. But our choice should be dictated by the man's character, not his wealth or education or services. If he is a good man, able to afford the fees and dues, unlikely to become a charge on the lodge, and seeking Masonry, we want him. To give the blessings of Masonry only to those who need them least, would be un-Masonic."

"I guess you were right," answered the New Brother.

"Were right? I *am* right!" answered the Old Tiler.

"I mean, I guess you were right when you said I only thought I thought!" smiled the New Brother.