

A BROTHER'S BAD EXPERIENCE.

He Is Unalterably Opposed to Conviction on Circumstantial Evidence.

The "Lodge Secret" has the following in its correspondence column:

To the Editor.—

Sir: Have been thinking that I would "drop you a line" from this portion of the Pythian vineyard since your visit, together with our Grand Chancellor and other distinguished guests on the occasion of our recent street fair, Pythian banquet and entertainment. We can assure you and all other knights who honored us with their presence on that memorable evening that their visit was most highly appreciated by every local knight, and we trust we will have you with us on many similar occasions.

In regard to the little effusion I quoted at the banquet, and of which you requested me to send you a copy, it all grew out of a rather peculiar experience of one of our most prominent knights, who now occupies the exalted position of Vice Chancellor of R. E. Lee Lodge, No. 51, of this city. He is also a good Red Man, a bright Mason, and enthusiastic Odd Fellow, and could be counted upon to be present on any and all occasions to shoulder his part of the duties and responsibilities of the different lodges. I refer to our distinguished Brother, J. D. McPhail, who, on one gloomy, stormy night, the rain falling in torrents, remarked to his good wife that he would be compelled to visit the Masonic Lodge, and the time was up. This good lady suggested that there certainly would not be a quorum on such a night as this, and tried hard to dissuade him from going, but in vain. He donned his rain-coat, overshoes and umbrella, and went forth to battle with the elements.

There was present on that occasion another good brother who was not so fortunate as to have a raincoat, and his good wife diked him out in her gossamer. During the session of the Lodge the dark clouds cleared away and the bright stars shone forth in all their resplendent beauty.

When the Lodge closed, Brother McPhail, in passing through the ante-room, through mistake, took the lady's gossamer, and the other brother took his rain-coat. When Brother Mack reached home he hung the gossamer on the hat rack in the hall, thinking it was his rain-coat. The next morning he arose early, as was his custom, and went forth to his daily business, feeling at peace with the whole world, more especially his better half. But, oh! gentle reader, think of the difference on the return home at noon when he met his better half, who addressed him thusly:

"Mr. Mack, where were you last evening?"

"At the Lodge."

"Were there any ladies there?"

"No. Why, my darling, do you ask such questions?"

"Did you see any ladies after the Lodge was over?"

"No—no."

"Then where did you get this gossamer?"

"I know nothing whatever about it—there is some terrible mistake—I cannot understand."

"I cannot understand, either," responded the good wife. "but I must understand—at once!"

The dear brother left his once happy home with a heavy heart, and as he again meandered to his place of business he soliloquised thusly:

"Man's life is full of sorrows and temptations. He comes into this world without his consent and goes out against his will. The rule of coartriteness is an important feature of the trip. When he is little the grown girls kiss him, when he is grown the little girls kiss him. If he raises a large family he is a hot mustard, if he raises a small cheque he is a thief, a fraud and is shunned like a Chinaman with the seven years' itch. If he does an act of charity it is for policy; if he does not contribute to charity he is a stingy old miser who lives for himself. If he is poor he is a bad manager; if he is rich he is dishonest. If he is in politics it is for pie; if he is out of politics you cannot tell where to place him, and he is no good to his country. If he dies young there was a bright and glorious future before him; if he lives to old age he has mistook his calling and outlived his usefulness. He is introduced into this world by a doctor, and to the next by the same process, and the little niche he has filled in this life is closed, and the world which once knew him knows him no more forever. Verily, verily, the road is rocky, but I must travel it."

In the course of time the rain-coat and gossamer episode was cleared up to the mutual satisfaction of all concerned, and the white-winged messenger of peace and happiness again hovered over our brother's home.

Soon, however, our unfortunate brother was summoned as a juror in an important criminal case, was duly qualified and ordered by the Court to take his seat in the box. All being ready to open the case, the solicitor outlined in his statement to the jury the evidence he would introduce, stating that while it was purely circumstantial, yet it was so strong that he felt satisfied the jury would be authorised to make a verdict of "guilty" without even leaving their seats.

At this juncture our beloved brother arose and addressed the Court: "May it please Your Honor: I cannot serve on this jury. I will not under any circumstance vote to convict any man on circumstantial evidence, no matter how strong." The Court replied that under such a statement he would be compelled to excuse him, but he was afraid it was just a subterfuge of Brother Mack to get out of serving on the jury, and he must insist on his explaining to the Court why he was so prejudiced that he could not under any circumstance vote to convict on circumstantial evidence. The brother very reluctantly told the Court the sad, sad story of the rain-coat and gossamer, and was promptly excused.

With the best wishes for the success of your most excellent paper, I remain,

Yours fraternally,

JOHN H. HENDERSON.

Columbus, Ga., December 13th, 1899.