

In the Interests of the Brethren

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I WAS buying a canary in a birdshop when he first spoke to me and suggested that I should take a less highly coloured bird. "Colour's all in the feeding," said he. "Unless you know how to feed 'em, it goes. You'll excuse me, but canaries are one of my hobbies."

He passed out before I could thank him. He was a middle-aged man with gray hair and a short dark beard, rather like a Sealyham terrier in silver spectacles. For some reason his face and his voice stayed in my mind so distinctly that, months later, when I jostled against him on a platform crowded with an Angling Club going to the Thames, I recognized, turned and nodded.

"I took your advice about the canary," I said.

"Did you? Good!" he replied heartily over the rod-case on his shoulder, and was parted from me by the crowd.

A YEAR ago I tumbled into a tobacconist's to have a badly stopped pipe cleaned out.

"Well! Well! And how did the canary do?" said the man behind the counter. We shook hands, and "What's your name?" we both asked together.

His name was Lewis Holroyd Burges, of "Burges and Son," as I might have seen above the door - but Son had been killed in Egypt. His beard was blacker and his hair whiter than it had been, and the eyes were sunk a little.

"Well! Well! To think," said he, "of one man in all these millions turning up in this curious way, when there's so many who don't turn up at all-eh?" (It was then he told me of Son Lewis's death and why the boy had been christened Lewis.) "There's not much left for middle-aged people just at present. Even one's hobbies-" he broke off for a breath. "We used to fish together. And the same with canaries! We used to breed 'em for colour-deep orange was our specialty. That's why I spoke to you, if you remember, but I've sold all my birds. Well! Well! And now we must locate your trouble."

He bent over my erring pipe and dealt with it skilfully as a surgeon. A soldier came in, said something in an undertone, received a reply, and went out.

"Many of my clients are soldiers nowadays, and a number of 'em belong to the Craft," said Mr. Burges. "It breaks my heart to give them the tobaccos they ask for. On the other hand, not one man in five thousand has a tobacco palate. Preference, yes. Palate, no. Here's your pipe. It

deserves better treatment than it's had. There's a procedure, a ritual, in all things. Any time you're passing by again, I assure you, you will be most welcome. I've one or two odds and ends that may interest you."

I left the shop with me rarest of all feelings on me - that sensation which is only youth's right - that I had made a friend. A little distance from the door I was accosted by a wounded man who asked for "Burgess." The place seemed to be known in the neighbourhood.

I found my way to it again, and often after that, but it was not till my third visit that I discovered Mr. Burgess held a half interest in Ackman and Permit's, the great cigar importers, which had come to him through an uncle whose children now lived almost in the Cromwell Road, and said that uncle had been on the Stock Exchange.

"I'm a shopkeeper by instinct," said Mr. Burgess. "I like the ritual of handling things. The shop has always done us well. I like to do well by the shop."

It had been established by his grandfather in 1827, but the fittings and appointments were at least half a century older. The brown and red tobacco and snuff jars, with Crowns, Garters, and names of forgotten mixtures in gold leaf, the polished "Oronoque" tobacco barrels on which favoured customers sat, the cherry-black mahogany counter, the delicately moulded shelves, the reeded cigar-cabinets, the German-silver mounted scales, and the Dutch brass roll and cake-cutter were things to covet.

"They aren't so bad," he admitted. "That large Bristol jar hasn't any duplicate to my knowledge. Those eight snuff-jars on the third shelf - they're Dollin's ware; he used to work for Wimble in Seventeen-Forty - they're absolutely unique. Is there any one in the trade now could tell you what Romano's Hollande' was? Or 'Scholten's,' or 'John's Lane'? Here's a snuff-mull of George the First's time; and here's a Louis Quinze - what am I talking of? Treize, Treize, of course - grater for making bran-snuff. They were regular tools of the shop in my grandfather's day. And who on earth to leave 'em to outside the British Museum now, I can't think!"

His pipes - I wish this were a tale for virtuosos - his amazing pipes were kept in the parlour, and this gave me the privilege of making his wife's acquaintance. One morning, as I was looking covetously at a jaracanda-wood "cigarro" - not cigar - cabinet with silver lock-plates and drawer-knobs of Spanish work, a wounded Canadian came into the shop and disturbed our happy little committee.

"Say," he began loudly, "are you the right place?"

"Who sent you?" Mr. Burgess demanded.

"A man from Messines. But that ain't the point! I've got no certificates, nor papers-nothin', you understand. I left Lodge owin' 'em seventeen dollars back dues. But this man at Messities told me it wouldn't make any odds here."

"It doesn't," said Mr. Burges. "We meet tonight at 7 p.m."

The man's face fell a yard. "Hell!" said he. "But I'm in hospital - I can't get leave."

"And Tuesdays and Fridays at 3 p.m.," Mr. Burges added promptly. "You'll have to be proved, of course."

"Guess I can get by that, all right," was the cheery reply. "Toosday, then."

He limped off, beaming.

"Who might that be?" I asked.

"I don't know any more than you do - except he must be a Brother. London's full of Masons now. Well! Well! We must all do what we can these days. If you come to tea this evening, I'll take you on to Lodge afterward. It's a Lodge of Instruction."

"Delighted. Which is your Lodge?" I said, for up till then he had not given me its name.

"Faith and Works 5837' - the third Saturday of every month. Our Lodge of Instruction meets nominally every Thursday, but we sit oftener than that now because there are so many Visiting Brethren in town." Here another customer entered, and I went away much interested in the range of Brother Burgess hobbies.

At tea-time he was dressed as for Church, and with gold pince-nez in lieu of the silver spectacles. I blessed my stars that I had thought to change into decent clothes.

"Yes, we owe that much to the Craft," he assented. "All Ritual is fortifying. Ritual's a natural necessity for mankind. The more things are upset, the more they fly to it. I abhor slovenly Ritual anywhere. By the way, would you mind assisting at the examinations, if there are many Visiting Brothers tonight? You'll find some of 'em very rusty but - it's the Spirit, not the Letter, that giveth life. The question of Visiting Brethren is an important one. There are so many of them in London now, you see; and so few places where they can meet."

"You dear thing!" said Mrs. Burges, and handed him his locket and initialed apron-case.

"Our Lodge is only just round the corner," he went on. "You mustn't be too critical of our appurtenances. The place was a garage once."

As far as I could make out in the humiliating darkness, we wandered up a mews and into a courtyard. Mr. Burges piloted me, murmuring apologies for everything in advance.

"You mustn't expect-" he was still saying when we stumbled up a porch and entered a carefully decorated anteroom hung round with masonic prints. I noticed Peter Gilkes and Barton Wilson, fathers of "Emulation" working, in the place of honour; Kneller's Christopher Wren; Dunkerley,

with his own Fitz-George book-plate below and the bend sinister on the Royal Arms; Hogarth's caricature of Wilkes, also his disreputable "Night," and a beautifully framed set of Grand Masters, from Anthony Sayer down.

"Are these another of your hobbies?" I asked.

"Not this time," Mr. Burges smiled. "We have to thank Brother Lemming for them." He introduced me to the senior partner of Lemming and Orton, whose dirty little shop is hard to find, but whose words and cheques in the matter of prints are widely circulated.

"The frames are the best part of said Brother Lemming after my compliments. "There are some more in the Lodge Room. Come and look. We've got the big Desaguliers there that neatly went to Iowa."

I had never seen a Lodge Room better fitted. From mosaicked floor to appropriate ceiling, from curtain to pillar, implements to seats, seats to lights, and little carved music-loft at one end, every detail was perfect in particular kind and general design. I said what I thought many times over.

"I told you I was a Ritualist," said Mr. Burges. "Look at those carved corn-sheaves and grapes on the back of these Warden's chairs. That's the old tradition-before Masonic furnishers spoiled it. I picked up that pair in Stepney ten years ago-the same time I got the gavel." It was of old, yellowed ivory, cut all in one piece out of some tremendous tusk. "That came from the Cold Coast," he said. "It belonged to a Military Lodge there in 1794. You can see the inscription."

"If it's a fair question-" I began, how much---

"It stood us," said Brother Lemming, his thumbs in his waistcoat pockets, "an appreciable sum of money when we built it in 1906, even with what Brother Anstruther-he was our contractor - cheated himself out of. By the way, that block there is pure Carrara, he tells me. I don't understand marbles myself. Since the war I expect we've put in - oh, quite another little sum. Now we'll go to the examination-room and take on the Brethren."

He led me back, not to the anteroom, but a convenient chamber flanked with what looked like confessional-boxes (I found out later that was what they had been when first picked up for a song near Oswestry). A few men in uniform were waiting at the far end. "That's only the head of the procession. The rest are in the anteroom," said an officer of the Lodge.

Brother Burges assigned me my discreet box, saying: "Don't be surprised. They come all shapes."

"Shaped' was not a bad description, for my first penitent was all head-bandages-escaped from an Officers' Hospital, Pentonville way. He asked me in profane Scots how I expected a man with only six teeth and half a lower lip to speak to any purpose, and we compromised on signs. The next - a New Zealander from Taranaki - reversed the process, for he was one-armed, and that in a sling. I mistrusted an enormous Sergeant-Major of Heavy Artillery, who struck me as much too glib, so I sent him on to Brother Lemming in the next box, who discovered he was a Past District

Grand Officer. My last man nearly broke me down altogether. Everything seemed to have gone from him.

"I don't blame yer," he gulped at last. "I wouldn't pass my own self on my answers, but I give yer my word that so far as I've had any religion, it's been all the religion I've had. For God's sake, let me sit in Lodge again, Brother."

When the examinations were ended, a Lodge Officer came round with our aprons - no tinsel or silver-gilt confections, but heavily-corded silk with tassels and - where a man could prove he was entitled to them - levels, of decent plate. Some one in front of me tightened the belt on a stiffly silent person in civil clothes with discharge badge. "Strewth! This is comfort again," I heard him say. The companion nodded. The man went on suddenly: "Here! What're you doing? Leave off! You promised not to! Chuck it!" and dabbed at his companion's streaming eyes.

"Let him leak," said an Australian signaler. "Can't you see how happy the beggar is?"

It appeared that the silent Brother was a "shell-shocker" whom Brother Lemming had passed, on the guarantee of his friend and - what moved Lemming more - the threat that, were he refused, he would have fits from pure disappointment. So the "shocker" wept happily and silently among Brethren evidently accustomed to these displays.

We fell in, two by two, according to tradition, fifty of us at least, and we played into Lodge by the harmonium, which I discovered was in reality an organ of repute. It took time to settle us down, for ten or twelve were cripples and had to be helped into long and easy-chairs. I sat between a one-footed R.A.M.C. Corporal and a Captain of Territorials, who, he told me, had "had a brawl" with a bomb, which had bent him in two directions. "But that's first-class Bach the organist is giving us now," he said delightedly. "I'd like to know him. I used to be a piano-thumper of sorts."

"I'll introduce you after Lodge," said one of the regular Brethren behind us - a fat, torpedo-bearded man, who turned out to be the local Doctor. "After all, there's nobody to touch Bach, is there?" Those two plunged at once into musical talk, which to outsiders is as fascinating as trigonometry.

"Now a Lodge of Instruction is mainly a parade-ground for Ritual. It cannot initiate or confer degrees, but is limited to rehearsals and lectures. Worshipful Brother Burges, resplendent in Solomon's Chair (I found out later where that, too, had been picked up), briefly told the Visiting Brethren how welcome they were and always would be, and asked them to vote what ceremony should be rendered for their instruction.

When the decision was announced he wanted to know whether any Visiting Brothers would take the duties of any Lodge Officers. They protested bashfully that they were too rusty. "The very reason why," said Brother Burges, while the organ Bached softly. My musical Captain sighed and wriggled in his chair.

"One moment, Worshipful Sir." The fat Doctor rose. "We have here a musician for whom place

and opportunity are needed. Only," he went on colloquially, "those organ-loft steps are a bit steep."

"How much," said Brother Burges, with the solemnity of an initiation, "does our Brother weigh?"

"Very little over eight stone," said the Brother. "'Weighed this momin', sir."

The Past District Grand Officer, who was also Battery Sergeant-Major, waddled across, lifted the slight weight in his arms and bore it to the loft, where, the regular organist pumping, it played joyously as a soul caught up to Heaven by surprise.

When the visitors had been coaxed to supply the necessary officers, a ceremony was rehearsed. Brother Burges forbade the regular members to prompt. The visitors had to work entirely by themselves, but, on the Battery Sergeant-Major taking a hand, he was ruled out as of too exalted rank. They floundered badly after that support was withdrawn.

The one-footed R.A.M.C. on my right chuckled.

"D'you like it?" said the Doctor to him.

"Do I? It's Heaven to me, sittin' in Lodge again. It's all comin' back now, watching their mistakes. I haven't much religion, but all I had I learned in Lodge." Recognizing me, he flushed a little as one does when one says a thing twice over in another's hearing. "Yes, 'veiled in all'gory and illustrated by symbols' - the Fatherhood of God, an' the Brotherhood of Man, an' what more in Hell do you want? ... Look at 'em!" He broke off, giggling. "See! See! They've tied the whole thing into knots. I could ha' done better myself - my one foot in France. Yes, I should think they ought to do it over again!"

The new organist covered the little confusion that had arisen with what sounded like the wings of angels.

WHEN the amateurs, rather red and hot, had finished, they demanded an exhibition-working of their bungled ceremony by Regular Brethren of the Lodge. Then I realized for the first time what word-and-gesture-perfect Ritual can be brought to mean. We all applauded, the one-footed Corporal most of all. It was a revelation.

"We are rather proud of our working, and this is an audience worth playing up to," the Doctor said.

Next the Master delivered a little lecture on the meanings of some pictured symbols and diagrams. His theme was a well-worn one, but his deep holding voice made it fresh.

"Marvelbus how these old copybook headings persist," the Doctor said.

"That's all right!" the one-footed man spoke cautiously out of the side of his mouth like a boy in

form. "But they're the kind of copybook headin's we shall find burnin' round our bunk in Hell. Believe me-ee! I've broke enough of 'em to know Now, h'sh!" He leaned forward, drinking it all in.

Presently Brother Burges touched on a point which had given rise to some diversity of Ritual. He asked for information. "Well, in Jamaica, Worshipful Sir," a Visiting Brother began, and explained how they worked that detail in his parts. Another and another joined in from different quarters of the Lodge (and the world), and when they were warmed the Doctor sidled softly round the walls and, over our shoulders, passed us cigarettes.

"A shocking innovation," he said as he returned to the captain-musician's vacant seat on my left. "But men can't really talk without tobacco, and we're only a Lodge of Instruction."

"An' I've learned more in one evenin' here than ten years.' The one-footed man turned round for an instant from a dark sour-looking Yeoman in spurs who was laying down the law on Dutch Ritual. The blue haze and the talk increased, while the organ from the loft blessed us all.

"But this is delightful," said I to the Doctor. "How did it all happen?"

"Brother Burges started it. He used to talk to the men who dropped into his shop when the war began. He told us sleepy old chaps in Lodge that what men wanted more than anything else was Lodges where they could sit-just sit and be happy like we are now. He was right, too. He generally is. We're learning things in the War. A man's lodge means move to him than people imagine. As our friend on your right said just now, very often Masonry's the only practical creed we've ever listened to since we were children. Platitudes or no platitudes, it squares with what everybody knows ought to be done." He sighed. "And if this war hasn't brought home the Brotherhood of Man to us all, I'm a-a Hun!"

"How did you get your visitors?" I went on.

"Oh I told a few fellows in hospital near here, at Burges's suggestion, that we had a Lodge of Instruction and they'd be welcome. And they came, And they told their friends. And they came! That was two years ago - and now we've Lodge of Instruction two nights a week, and a matinee nearly every Tuesday and Friday for the men who can't get evening-leave. Yes, it's all very curious. I'd no notion what the Craft meant - and means - till this war."

"Nor I till this evening," I replied.

"Yet it's quite natural if you think. Here's London - all England - packed with the Craft from all over the world, and nowhere for them to go. Why, our weekly visiting attendance for the last four months averaged just under a hundred and forty. Divide by four - call it thirty-five Visiting Brethren a time. Our record's seventy-one, but we have packed in as many as eighty-four at banquets. You can see for yourself what a potty little hole we are!"

"Banquets, too!" I cried. "It must cost like all sin. May the Visiting Brethren-"

The Doctor laughed. "No, a Visiting Brother may not."

"But when a man has had an evening like this he wants to-"

"That's what they all say. That makes our difficulty. They do exactly what you were going to suggest, and they're offended if we don't take it."

"Don't you?" I asked.

"My dear man - what does it come to? They can't all stay to banquet. Say one hundred suppers a week - fifteen quid - sixty a month - seven hundred and twenty a year. How much are Lemming and Orton worth? And Ellis and McKnight - that long thin man over yonder - the provision dealers? How much d'you suppose could Burges write a cheque for and not feel? 'Tisn't as if he had to save for any one now. And the same with Anstruther. I assure you we have no scruple in calling on the Visiting Brethren when we want anything. We couldn't do the work otherwise. Have you noticed how the Lodge is kept- brasswork, jewels, furniture and so on?"

"I have indeed," I said. "It's like a ship. You could eat your dinner off the floor."

"Well, come here on a by-day and you'll often find half a dozen Brethren, with eight legs between 'em, polishing and ronuking and sweeping everything they can get at. I cured a shell-shocker this spring by giving him our jewels to look after. He pretty well polished the numbers off them, but - it kept him from fighting the Huns in his sleep. And when we need Masters to take our duties - two matinees a week is rather a tax - we've the choice of P.M.'s from all over the world. The Dominions are much keener on Ritual than an average English Lodge. Besides that- Oh, we're going to adjourn. Listen to the greetings. They'll be interesting."

THE crack of the great gavel brought us to our feet, after some surging and plunging among the cripples. Then the Battery Sergeant-Major, in a trained voice, delivered hearty and fraternal greetings to "Faith and Works" from his tropical District and Lodge. The others followed, without order, in every tone between a grunt and a squeak. I heard "Hauraki," "Inyan-ga-Umbezi," "Aloha," "Southern Lights" (from somewhere Puntas Arenas way), "Lodge of Rough Ashlars" (and that Newfoundland Brother looked it), two or three "Stars" of something or other, half a dozen cardinal virtues, variously arranged, hailing from Klondyke to Kalgoorlie, one Military Lodge on one of the fronts, thrown in with a severe Scots burr by my friend of the head-bandages, and the rest as mixed as the Empire itself. Just at the end there was a little stir. The silent Brother had begun to make noises; his companion tried to soothe him.

"Let him be! Let him be!" the Doctor called professionally. The man jerked and mouthed, and at last mumbled something unintelligible even to his friend, but a small, dark P.M. pushed forward importantly.

"It is all right," he said. "He wants to say," he spat out some yard-long Welsh name, adding, "That means Pembroke Docks, Worshipful Sir. We haf good Masons in Wales, too." The silent man nodded approval.

"Yes," said the Doctor, quite unmoved. "It happens that way sometimes. Hespere panta fereis, isn't it? The Star brings 'em all home. I must get a note of that fellow's case after Lodge. I know you don't care for music," he went on, "but I'm afraid you'll have to put up with a little more. It's a paraphrase from Micah. Our organist arranged it. We sing it antiphonally, as a sort of dismissal."

Even I could appreciate what followed. The singing seemed confined to half a dozen trained voices answering each other till the last line, when the full Lodge came in. I give it as I heard it:

"We have showed thee, O Man,  
What is good.  
What doth the Lord require of us?  
Or Consciences' self desire of us?  
But to do justly  
And to love mercy  
And to walk humbly with our God  
As every Mason should."

Then we were played and sung out to the quaint tune of the "Entered Apprentices' Song." I noticed that the regular Brethren of the Lodge did not begin to take off their regalia till the lines:

"Great Kings, Dukes and Lords  
Have laid down their swords."

They moved into the anteroom, now set for the banquet, on the verse:

"Antiquity's pride  
We have on our side,  
Which maketh men just in their station."

The Brother (a big-boned clergyman) that I found myself next to at table told me the custom was "a fond thing vainly invented" on the strength of some old legend. He laid down that Masonry should be regarded as an "intellectual abstraction." An Officer of Engineers disagreed with him, and told us how in Flanders, a year before, some ten or twelve Brethren held Lodge in what was left of a Church. Save for the Emblems of Mortality and plenty of rough ashlar, there was no furniture.

"I warrant yu weren't a bit the worse for that," said the clergyman. "The idea should be enough without trappings."

"But it wasn't," said the other. "We took a lot of trouble to make our regalia out of camouflage-stuff that we'd pinched, and we manufactured our jewels from old metal. I've got the set now. It kept us happy for weeks."

"Ye were aabsolutely irregular an' unauthorised. Whaur was your warrant?" said the Brother

from the Military Lodge. "Grand Lodge ought to take steps against---"

"If Grand Lodge had any sense," a private three places up our table broke in, "it 'ud warrant travelling Lodges at the front and attach first-class lecturers to 'em."

"Wad ye conferr degrees promiscuously?" said the scandalised Scot.

"Every time a man asked, of course. You'd have half the Army in."

The speaker played with the idea for a little while, and proved that on the lowest scale of fees Grand Lodge would get huge revenues.

"I believe," said the Engineer Officer thoughtfully, "I could design a complete travelling Lodge outfit under forty pounds weight."

"Ye're wrong. I'll prove it. We've tried ourselves," said the Military Lodge man; and they went at it together across the table, each with his own note-book.

The "banquet" was simplicity itself. Many of us ate in haste so as to get back to barracks or hospitals, but now and again a Brother came in from the outer darkness to fill a chair and empty a plate. These were Brethren who had been there before and needed no examination.

One man lurched in - helmet, Flanders mud, accoutrements and all - fresh from the leave-train.

"Got two hours to wait for my train," he explained. "I remembered your night, though. My God, this is good!"

"What is your train and from which station?" said the clergyman, precisely. "Very well. What will you have to eat?"

"Anything. Everything. I've thrown up a month's feed off Folkestone."

He stoked himself for ten minutes without a word. Then, without a word, his face fell forward. The clergyman had him by one already limp arm and steered him to a couch, where he dropped and snored. No one took the trouble to turn round.

"Is that usual too?" I asked.

"Why not?" said the clergyman. "I'm on duty tonight to wake them for their trains. They do not respect the cloth on those occasions." He turned his broad back on me and continued his discussion with a Brother from Aberdeen by way of Mitylene where, in the intervals of mine-sweeping, he had evolved a complete theory of the Revelations of St. John the Divine in the Island of Patmos.

I fell into the hands of a Sergeant-Instructor of Machine Guns - by profession a designer of ladies'

dresses. He told me that Englishwomen as a class "lose on their corsets what they make on their clothes," and that "Satan himself can't save a woman who wears thirty-shilling corsets, under a thirty-guinea costume." Here, to my grief, he was buttonholed by an earnest Lieutenant of his own branch, and became a Sergeant again all in one click.

I DRIFTED back and forth, studying the prints on the walls I and the Masonic collections in the cases, while I listened to the inconceivable talk all round me. Little by little the company thinned, till at last there were only a dozen or so of us left. We gathered at the end of a table by the fire, the night-bird from Flanders trumpeting lustily into the hollow of his helmet, which someone had tipped over his face.

"And how did it go with you?" said the Doctor.

"It was like a new world," I answered.

"That's what it is really." Brother Burges returned the gold pince-nez to their case and reshipped his silver spectacles. "Or that's what it might be made with a little trouble. When I think of the possibilities of the Craft at this juncture I wonder--" He stared into the fire.

"I wonder, too," said the Sergeant-Major slowly, "but - on the whole - I'm inclined to agree with you. We could do much with Masonry."

"As an aid - as an aid - not as a substitute for Religion," the clergyman snapped.

"Oh, Lord! Can't we give Religion a rest for a bit," the Doctor muttered. "It hasn't done so - I beg your pardon all round."

The clergyman was bristling. "Kamerad!" the wise Sergeant-Major went on, both hands up. "Certainly not as a substitute for a creed, but as an average plan of life. What I've seen at the front makes me sure of it."

Brother Burges came out of his muse. "There ought to be dozen - twenty - other Lodges in London every night; conferring degrees too, as well as instruction, Why shouldn't the young men join? They practice what we're always preaching. Well! Well! We must all do what we can. What's the use of old Masons if they can't give a little help along their own lines?"

"Exactly," said the Sergeant-Major, turning on the Doctor. "And what's the darn use of a Brother if he isn't allowed to help?"

"Have it your own way then," said the Doctor testily. He had evidently been approached before. He took something the Sergeant-Major handed to him and pocketed it with a nod. "I was wrong," he said to me, "when I boasted of our independence. They get round us sometimes. This," he slapped his pocket, "will give a banquet on Tuesday. We don't usually feed at matinees. It will be a surprise. By the way, try another sandwich. The ham are best." He pushed me a plate.

"They are," I said. "I've only had five or six. I've been looking for them."

"Glad you like them," said Brother Lemming. "Fed him myself, cured him myself - at my little place in Berkshire. His name was Charlemagne. By the way, Doc, am I to keep another one for next month?"

"Of course," said the Doctor, with his mouth full. "A little fatter than this chap, please. And don't forget your promise about the pickled nasturtiums. They're appreciated." Brother Lemming nodded above the pipe he had lit as we began a second supper. Suddenly the clergyman, after a glance at the clock, scooped up half a dozen sandwiches from under my nose, put them into an oiled-paper bag, and advanced cautiously towards the sleeper on the couch.

"They wake rough sometimes," said the Doctor. "Nerves, y'know." The clergyman tiptoed directly behind the man's head, and at arm's length rapped on the dome of the helmet. The man woke in one vivid streak, as the clergyman stepped back, and grabbed for a rifle that was not there.

"You've barely half an hour to catch your train." The clergyman passed him the sandwiches. "Come along."

"You're uncommonly kind and I'm very grateful," said the man, wriggling into his stiff straps. He followed his guide into the darkness after saluting.

"Who's that?" said Lemming.

"Can't say," the Doctor returned indifferently. "He's been here before. He's evidently a P.M. of sorts."

"Well! Well!" said Brother Burges, whose eyelids were drooping. "We must all do what we can. Isn't it almost time to lock up?"

"I wonder," said I, as we helped each other into our coats, "what would happen if Grand Lodge knew about all this."

"About what?" Lemming turned on me quickly.

"A Lodge of Instruction open three nights and two afternoons a week - and running a lodging-house as well. It's all very nice, but it doesn't strike me somehow as regulation."

"The point hasn't been raised yet," said Lemming. "We'll settle it after the war. Meantime we shall go on."

"There ought to be scores of them," Brother Burges repeated as we went out of the door. "All London's full of the Craft, and no places for them to meet in. Think of the possibilities of it! Think what could have been done by Masonry through Masonry for all the world. I hope I'm not

ensorious, but it sometimes crosses my mind that Grand Lodge may have thrown away its chance in the war almost as much as the Church has."

"Lucky for you Brother Tamworth is taking that chap to King's Cross," said Brother Lemming, "or he'd be down your throat. What really troubles Tamworth is our legal position under Masonic Law. I think he'll inform on us one of these days. Well, good night all." The Doctor and Lemming turned off together.

"Yes," said Brother Burges, slipping his arm into mine. "Almost as much as the Church has. But perhaps I'm too much of a Ritualist."

I said nothing. I was speculating how soon I could steal a march on Brother Tamworth and inform against "Faith and Works No. 5837 E. C."