

THE SUBLIME DEGREE OF MASTER MASON

Similarities exist in all the degrees of Ancient Craft Masonry. Each has an entry, a reception, a circumambulation, an obligation, a bringing to light. Each discovers certain symbols to the initiate and, in demonstration and in lecture, gives him the key by which he may unlock the door behind which he will find their meaning.

In its Second Section the Sublime Degree departs utterly from the familiar. Instead of being concerned with moral principles and exhortations, as is the first degree, or with architecture and learning, as is the second, it answers the cry of Job, "If a man die, shall he live again?"

The degree delves into the deepest recesses of a man's nature. While it leads the initiate into the Sanctum Sanctorum of the Temple, it probes into the Holy of Holies of his heart.

As a whole the degree is symbolical of that old age by the wisdom of which "we may enjoy the happy reflection consequent on a well-spent life, and die in the hope of a glorious immortality."

But it is much more than that. It is at once the universal and yearning question of man throughout all ages and its answer. It teaches no creed, no dogma, no religion; only that there *is* a hope of Immortality; there *is* a Great Architect by whose mercy we may live again; leaving to each brother his choice of interpretations by which he may read the Great Beyond.

It teaches of the power - and the powerlessness - of evil. For those who are happy in a belief in the resurrection of the physical

body, the Sublime Degree has comfort. For those whose hope is in the raising only of that spiritual body of which Paul taught, the degree assures of all the longing heart can wish.

When the lesson of the greatest hope and the dearest wish of all mankind is made manifest, the Sublime Degree turns to *this* life and *this* brotherhood, and in the symbolism of the Lion, the exposition of the Five Points of Fellowship, the means by which a Mason may claim all that a man may from his brother, and the Word, ties together the Hiramic Legend and daily living in a manner which no thoughtful man may see and hear without a thrill; a way at once awe-inspiring and heartening, terrible but beautiful, sternly uncompromising yet strangely comforting.

It is because the degree is all this - and more, much more, which cannot be put into words - that it means so much to those of whom it becomes a part. The ceremony is not of the earth, earthy, but of that land of the inner life, that home of the spirit where each man thinks the secret thoughts he tells never - never.

Pull the flower to pieces; remain the petals, a perfume, but no rose. Play the symphony, isolated note by note; sound is heard, but no music. Every word Milton wrote is in the dictionary but great poems may not there be found.

So of any written account of this degree; we may write of its symbols, analyze its legend, tell of its meaning, but we pronounce but words without a rhyme, make a flower of wax, a song muted. The best we may do is to point out a path up the high mountain of spiritual experience which is the Sublime Degree, that he who climbs may see it with a new view - and clearer eyes.