

THE THIRD DEGREE

I am convinced from my experience in conferring degrees that few men get from the third Degree of Masonry anything more than a lesson in fidelity. I have in mind a brief talk on this subject, pointing out the great truth of immortality therein taught, and wish you would give me your suggestions. - R.L.H.

Frankly, this letter amazes us. We had never supposed it possible for any man to receive the degree of Master Mason and miss the main point of its teaching. Oddly enough we have had two other letters of late confirming the observation of Brother Hickman, and increasing our amazement. And yet, when we come to think of it, the candidate cannot be altogether to blame. Having witnessed this Degree in several Jurisdictions, we do not recall that the historical or explanatory lecture even mentions the sublime truth set forth. It simply reminds the candidate that Masonry cherishes the glorious hope of a blessed immortality - that is all. But in the Degree itself immortality is not a vague hope to be cherished here and realized hereafter. Far from it. It is a present reality into which the candidate is symbolically initiated; a fact to be realized in experience here and now. Manifestly, if man is immortal at all, he is immortal now. Immortality does not concern the future alone, or chiefly, but the life that now is, where it is needed to give amplitude and liberty and victorious confidence amid the vicissitudes of time. How many Masons grasp this truth in the Master Degree ? Once a man has grasped it, his whole outlook upon life is altered, and he feels not simply the obligation, but the privilege, of living these fleeting days in a manner befitting an immortal spirit. If our ritual does not convey this truth, it behooves us to see that it does, first by laying hold of the truth ourselves the better to make it vivid to others, and second by so shaping our ceremony, or at least by so explaining it, as to make the truth unmistakable.