

TO THE NEWLY RAISED MASTER MASON

TRUE ANTIENT FREEMASONRY consists of three degrees, and three degrees only. As all three degrees have been conferred upon you, thus making you a Master Mason, you are now entitled to an explanation concerning the peculiar nature of these ceremonies. Reference to the Ritual of the three degrees, plus the accumulation of educational material provided by Grand Lodge and your own Lodge will enable you to appreciate the connection of our whole system, and the interdependence of its several parts. But it must be remembered that the information which has been, and is now being given to you of necessity barely scratches the surface, and cannot constitute any more than a single stone in the foundation of your future Masonic knowledge.

In retrospect, you were admitted to Freemasonry in the Entered Apprentice Degree in a state of helpless indigence, to inculcate a useful lesson of natural equality and mutual dependence; then in the Fellowcraft Degree, you were urged to cultivate "with the most diligent care and attention" those wondrous faculties with which God has endowed the being created after His own image; finally, in this Degree, you symbolically passed through the valley of the shadow of death to a purified resurrection. Thus each degree, while supplementing and complementing the others, had its own general theme. These may be stated here respectively as Moral, Intellectual, and Spiritual.

From the beginning to the final act, the Temple of Solomon loomed large in the drama as you were conducted successively from your first entrance between the Two Great Pillars at the Porch or Entrance up the winding stairs to the Middle Chamber, and finally even into the Sanctum Sanctorum itself, in a state of darkness which served only to express that gloom which the eye of human reason cannot penetrate unless assisted by the Light which is from above. While in that cloud of darkness you were made to represent the central figure in a tragedy wherein certain mysterious secrets were said to be lost, and a noble individual died in order that Virtue might live.

That magnanimous being was Hiram Abiff, "a widow's son of the tribe of Naphtali". That tribe's territory bordered that of Tyre, and his father had been a man of that country. In the Second Book of Chronicles, Chapter 2, he is described thus ". . . skillful to work in gold and in silver, in brass, in iron, in stone, and in timber, in purple, in blue, and in fine linen and in crimson; also to grave any manner of graving, and to find out any device which is put to him . . ." In other words, a Prince of Builders, able to design and to draft, make or create, anything and everything which goes into or onto even the noblest of structures, whether for practical or ornamental purposes. By his description as recorded above he is eminently fitted to be the Operative ideal of all Speculative Master Masons.

Of course, the Hiram Legend as used by us is purely allegorical; we are not necessarily dealing either with a tangible building or with literal history. The Temple of Solomon symbolically represents your own character; the Three Great Pillars: Wisdom, Strength and Beauty, embody your personal ideal for a philosophy of life; Hiram Abiff is not dead, but lives on as your immortal soul. The "genuine secrets" were lost to us through the inability of fallible human beings to resist temptation, as related in the Volume of the Sacred Law in the account of the Garden of Eden. For us, their substitutes are the Grand Principles upon which Freemasonry is founded, namely Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth, principles which you are charged to inculcate, that

they may be always maintained and ever renewed, to the glory of the Most High and the benefit of mankind.

To sum up, Freemasonry is a way of life, and to inculcate this has been the main purpose of your progress through the three degrees. If you and I are the better for our association with the Craft, then the ceremonies through which we have passed will not have been conducted in vain. If, through these rituals, we have been inspired to renew our dedication to the lofty ideals represented by the Order, and to practice both in private and in public life the duties we have been taught in Freemasonry, then the high purpose of the Institution will have been fulfilled, and as a result the World will to that extent have become a better habitation for mankind. To achieve these things is the fundamental aim of Freemasonry.

It is hoped that your recent experiences will have helped to kindle within you a curiosity concerning the Craft, together with the determination to discover even more about it, its' history, its' meaning and its' purpose, so that eventually you may become known and accepted, not only as a Master Mason, but as a Master among Masons.

The Worshipful Master, Officers and Members of your Lodge bid you welcome to full status in the Fraternity. May you find in Freemasonry that which you came to seek, and may the genuine tenets of the Craft ever prove to be a source of refreshment and inspiration to you.

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