

CHARACTERS:

Suggest that you use those who will best fill the character of each. Adah--gay, pretty young girl, Ruth--comely woman, Esther--woman with regal bearing, etc.

The costumes may be as elaborate or as simple as you wish or as the financial condition of your chapter warrants. Try to make them in keeping with the times in which the heroines lived and befitting their ages. Do suggest long flowing dresses for Electa and Esther. Adah could possibly wear a very full colorful skirt with a dainty sheer blouse and jewelry about neck. If need be, Martha and Ruth could drape material ( sheets or inexpensive tablecloths ) to make their costumes.

CAUTION TO THE CHARACTERS:

Suggest that characters try to change gracefully from one position to another, Too, be sure that the facial expressions fade softly from one expression to another--no abrupt changes. Try to fit postures and facial expressions to the words when read. Avoid being too dramatic, but try to portray the meaning of the words by the body action.

Feel free to improvize the actions in any way--just as long as you yourself feel free and easy so that you can sincerely portray the feelings that your heroines had.

Be graceful, unhurried, and gracious in your poses. Step down from dais or stage and retire to a chair or to the preparation room.

DIRECTIONS--STAGE:

This may be as elaborate or as simple as you desire. You may construct a stage with platform and curtains to be placed wherever wished in the Chapter room ( but be sure that it is placed so that all can see the characters. ) Or--you may use either dais ( East or West ) with or without curtains to be pulled to and fro. Suggest using a sheet or an inexpensive pastel tablecloth as the back drop in order to give an attractive, neutral background.

Place a spot light so that it will throw its spot upon each Star Point as she appears. Turn spot light off when character steps down off stage and turn spot light on again when curtains are pulled apart once more revealing the next Star Point.

If curtains are used they should be closed at the beginning--then pulled apart to reveal first Star Point. Close them again when the first Star Point steps out to enable the second point to assume position; open when it's time for second Star Point's appearance, etc.

#### READER:

Suggest you choose someone who reads beautifully and who can bring warmth and life to the words. Her voice, as she reads, should portray the emotions of the characters and give meaning to their gestures and facial expressions.

Suggest that reader be dressed in long flowing robe of white or pastel color and stand near stage so that she and the Star Points are able to adapt themselves, one to the other (possibly near organist). The pages of this ceremony should be pasted together on parchment like paper. Make one long sheet and roll it up like a scroll. Read from this--letting the part read hang to the floor.

A small spot light should be thrown upon the reader--illuminating the upper portion of her body. This should serve as the light whereby she can read the scroll. ( This is optional. )

#### CAUTION: ( DON'T RUSH THE WORDS. )

Tonight, we are going to roll back the curtain of the years and look into the dim and distant past.

It was in the first half of the eighteenth century that Dr. Robert Morris first conceived the idea of the Order of the Eastern Star.

During his life, Dr. Morris had received every degree known to the Masonic fraternity, approximately 153 degrees. His life had been full. A full vessel must overflow if more is poured into it. So when Dr. Morris was taken ill, he was much impressed by the loving care given him by his homefolk and the wives and relatives of his brother Masons. The good poured into his life now overflowed in definite form; he established an order that was to bind together, in love and friendship, those women related to members of the Masonic order. While looking for a symbol that would be appropriate, the star in the Master's carpet seemed to shine forth with new meaning. In its five points he visioned the loveliest of ladies.

From the Scriptures, five heroic characters were chosen and placed within the Star whose light has spread over all the earth; for today the Order of the Eastern Star bands together the largest number of women belonging to any one order.

Tonight the five Lovely Ladies of Long Ago will appear before us in statue form. You shall judge if they are worthy to hold their place of honor Rob Morris gave them. By their sacrifices 'Ye shall know them'.



ADAH: ( Adah, smiling, in a gay dancing mood, arms high, head up, feet in dancing position, is posed as the curtains are drawn apart. )

First there is Jephthah's daughter, who while dancing and laughing in the gladness of her youth, is suddenly faced with death. Her tender young dreams are shattered when she must save her father from being bowed in disgrace. Listen to the story as she perhaps would have told it to us.

( Statue begins to waken. Arms slowly drop to bosom. Turn front; head drops. )

"My father was a brave and powerful man but was constantly reminded of the bitter circumstances of his birth. He was the eldest son of Gilead, a man of noble standing. But my father's mother was a harlot. Brought up among legitimate children he was made to feel the stigma of his birth; later he was driven out by his brothers.

"My father fled and came to this strange land. In this place he has struggled to greatness. Yea, here he married my mother and here I was born. But ever has his heart been sore, for it meaneth much to all men of his race, to live in the bosom of one's family and to lie with one's forefather's brethren, they were sorely beaten. Then they and the elders of their tribe came to beg my father's help. They promised that he should be their leader henceforth, if he would successfully deliver them."

"After much thought my father said he would try." ( Attitude of prayer with clasped hands. )

"But before he left for battle he closeted himself and talked alone with God. Devoutly he prayed and vowed to give a burnt offering of whatever came from his house when he returned. ( Happy face with arms outstretched. ) And lo, when my father marched home victorious, I ran with joy to meet him."

"Immediately he was overcome with grief nor could I find a way to comfort him. At length he told me his vow. ( Hands upon brow-terror ) My heart stood still. With his own hands he must take my life and while my blood ran hot upon his palms he must offer me upon the altar."

"For days I wrestled with the fearful thought. 'Oh, God,' I cried, 'I need Thy strength, I face not only death, but death without a name. My thoughts have ever been upon the day when I should be a bride. Now the only bridal raiment I shall ever wear will be a bloody shroud. ( Head bowed--hand across brow ) Woe, Woe, is me! I cannot face such woe!'"

"Yet if I fail, my father will be shamed again before his brethren and before the Lord. That must not be. ( Head up--shake head negatively and determindly. ) 'No, no, that must not be. I will away to the mountain top until I have the strength to face this trial unflinchingly. ( Raise arm to one of triumph. ) Yea, I will even strengthen my father's arm to strike, for he must keep his vow.'"



( Adah steps down from pedestal, out of the light into the darkness. )

And after months of prayer, Jephthah's daughter found courage equal to the sacrifice. With steady feet she descended from the mountains and wended her way to the altar. Now after many centuries her spirit lives and sheds its influence in this, our Order.

RUTH: ( Statue is discovered kneeling on one knee as though gleaning. )

The second vision of loveliness that we call to life is Ruth, an unselfish, Moabitish maiden. If we could listen to her as she converses with her beloved and aged mother-in-law, we might hear a tale like this:

( Stand, looking sadly, look up as though at Mother beside you. )

"It is well, my mother, that I did not leave thee in the land of Moab. When we were both left widowed, thou because thine husband Elimelech had died and I because thy son, my beloved, passed beyond the vale, we found comfort in each other, for the peril of want beset us hard."

"When thou didst decide to leave the land of Moab and return to thine own people, thou didst bid me go to mine own kin, where shelter and full plenty would be mine."

"But when it came to parting, I could not see thee go. ( Turn left, both arms out in pleading. ) If ever you had need of a daughter, surely it was now upon this lonesome road."

"And so I argued all the reasons of love that should hold us twain together. When thou didst bid me leave thee, I knew thou turnest against me for my good. I could not then refrain but I cried aloud with all my heart."

( Clasp hands in front and try, if you wish, to make gestures to fit the thought here. )

" 'Entreat me not to leave thee or return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.' "

( Drop hands, turn front. Remain smiling. )

"At last thy heart didst soften. Together we came into this land of thy youth."

"Then I went to glean in the field of Boaz, who was kin unto thy husband, Elimelech. He bent with kindness above me and placed me among his handmaidens in the field. Moreover, he did charge his young men that they should not touch me but let me glean so that thou and I mightest have plenty."

( Brush back hair as though tired. )

"Yet some days, the sun beat hard, and I grew weary in the heat. Then Boaz gave me bread and sup with his own reapers. And at the set of sun was not your heart made glad with all that I had gleaned and brought to thee? So we continued in our happiness until the end of the harvest."

"And now our fate looked not so fair, for where can a maiden glean when the lean time of the year is come. Stark want would soon be ours again."

"But lo, Boaz had noted well that I had strayed not from his fields nor followed after the young men who went to reap in other places. ( Clasp hands, step back, look up, then fling arms wide open. ) And so our joy was full when Boaz did buy Elimelech's land from thee, and more than all, didst look with favor on me, thy daughter-in-law. Yea, happy was the day when he did make me his wife indeed, his own forevermore. Now I am blest among women."

( Ruth starts down the steps that lead into the darkness. )

Happy was the day when Ruth followed where love led her. Her devotion to Naomi is probably the most beautiful example we have of a woman's love for another woman. The unselfish care and love bestowed upon one who was dear has won for Ruth an honored place in our emblematic star.

ESTHER: ( Statue is discovered looking straight ahead, holding a sceptre. )

The next lady worthy of our attention is a beautiful queen in the Persian Empire. Born in humble, Jewish surroundings, she absorbed the wise and kindly teachings of her foster father, Mordecai. Let us listen to her words as she talks to him.

( Statue turns head, smiling, lifts her hand to breast, turns looking right. )

"I know that I am dearer than all else on earth to thee, Mordecai, for didst thou not take me when my father and mother were no more? Didst thou not carry me with thee when driven from our land? Yea, thou hast taught me, loved me, laughed with me. Thou didst even think me fair enough to be sent unto the king when he did ask for all the loveliest maidens to be brought so that he might choose a queen."

"It was because I carried thy dear smile within my heart that the king did notice me."

"He gave me seven maidens and preferred me and my maidens to the best place in the house of women. And for all this thoughtfulness, I did so try to make him happy. The king, they say, did make his choice as each maiden made her second visit."

( Turn front and lift left hand lightly, palm up. )



"When my turn came, the time did fly as swiftly as a leaf before the wind. We did forget to talk of weighty matters, the affairs of government, the ambitions of a king or queen. Instead, I laughed and danced, and he smiled and was joyful."

"And then one day he chose me for his queen, yea, queen of all the Persian Empire. My joy was full until thou, dear foster father, didst send me word that I should not make known that I was of the captive race. Enemies in the court were plotting desperate things against our people."

( Raise left hand to head as though sorrow-worry. )

"The king was sorely tried by plots and counter-plots. He was so harassed that he did set a sentence of death on any who might enter his presence unbidden."

"And, lo, among these plots was one to slaughter all the Jews, old and young--yea, even little children."

( Lower hand and look straight ahead. )

"Now there was naught that I could do, save face that sentence of death in order to reach the king. With fear in every fiber of my being, I did set forth. The guards before the door of the council chamber were as though turned to stone with fright. How well I knew that these same guards might spill my blood upon the threshold. ( Straighten up very tall, head held high, look straight ahead. ) But rightful purpose banished fear from my sick soul; my trembling limbs grew strong. With head flung high, I prayerfully advanced."

"The king, who rose in anger, scarce knew who stood before him until he looked into my eyes. ( Turn right hand with palm front and low. ) When he beheld me standing there, a silence filled the hall."

" 'What would'st thou, Queen Esther?' he did ask in awe."

"Then my courage gave me words to tell the awful truth about the plot and of my birth. My words cut deep and bowed the king in sorrow. Still he did send his soldiers forth to save my people."

( Slowly relax and slump forward just a bit. )

"Then followed many days when he came not to me. Five hundred of his men had fallen in battle. The king did stay away to grieve."

"I had been given a pardon for my trespasses, overthrown my enemies, gained a throne and crown, yea, been given the life of a great nation--yet it did leave me empty. It was all meaningless as day without the sun, as eyes without sight; I had life without life's greatest blessing, LOVE."

( Look up, step back, extend hand as though in welcome. )

"Then suddenly the king appeared before me and did say 'Oh Esther, my beloved Queen, didst thou not know that love transcends all creed and race. In spite of all my hurt, my heart will not be stilled.' "

( Smile ) "And then I cried, 'Thou lovest me still, as I love thee. Now doth my joy reach even to the sky.' "

( Esther steps down from pedestal into darkness. )

And so the name of Esther is immortalized. She will be remembered because she was true to her high station as well as to the humblest of her people. In the splendid galaxy of Hebrew women, no name stands more prominently or shines with a richer luster.

MARTHA: ( Statue appears kneeling, head bowed in sorrow on knees. )

From the Scriptures we learn that Jesus had a friend named Martha. She has been chosen as the fourth lady of our Star. She lived in a little place called Bethany; on the outskirts of Jerusalem. It is written that 'Jesus loved Martha, her sister, and Lazarus, their brother.' If Martha were to relate what happened when bereavement came to their humble dwelling, we might hear her speak like this:

( Statue slowly sits upright, folds both arms upon breast, lets head fall forward. )

"I know that Jesus would fain have avoided coming to Jerusalem, for they stoned him when he tarried here before. The chief priests and the Pharisees were plotting to take him prisoner. Jesus knew they were planning his downfall and that the road to Jerusalem was the way to the cross. Yet when he heard that we were bowed in grief, he did not fail to come."

( Let arms drop, then rise, outstretching both arms. )

"When I did hear that He was on his way, I ran out to meet him. So torn with grief was I, that I fell prostrate at his feet and cried aloud; 'Oh, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.' "

( Drop arms and look forward sadly. )

"When Jesus saw my sorrow he was so moved that he did weep; even so, he did divine that I had faith in all his works and knew that He was truly the Son of God."

"When he asked if I believed all this, I quickly answered him: ( Straighten up--nod slowly with assurance ) 'Yea, Lord I do believe. I know that even now, whatsoever thou will ask of God, God will give it thee.' "

"We went at once unto the tomb; then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, 'Father, I thank thee that Thou hast heard me.' "



"And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come forth.' "

"And he that was dead came forth bound hand and foot with grave clothes."

( Step back, put hand on face and the other out as though in surprise, then delight. )

"He came forth alive, and we returned joyfully and gratefully to our dwelling."

( Fling both arms out wide and smile happily, thankfully. )

"My happiness was so great that I did make a feast for Jesus, and I, myself, did serve him. Oh, blessed am I to have been loved by such a friend."

( Statue starts to walk out of light. )

And so the wonderful faith of Martha entitles her to a place in our Star. Because she merited the words, 'And Jesus loved Martha,' she finds an honored place among us.

ELECTA: ( Statue is discovered, with back to audience, holding high a cross. )

The last lady to claim our admiration is Electa. It was in the very troublesome period when Christians were being put to death that the fifth lady of our Star lived and left us the record of her marvelous life. Had we been with her in those days of stress, we might have heard her speak so:

( Statue slowly lets hands drop and turns to front. Put hands on breast over cross. )

"My friend, St. John the Evangelist, often took me with him to the River Jordan or to the Sea of Galilee, when he did preach and teach. Sometimes I beheld wondrous things, for people drowned their old beliefs, their prejudices, and their superstitions as they sank beneath the water."

( Smile gently and benevolently. )

"The new truths that John taught about the Christ sank deep within my soul; I learned many lessons, most of all to grow tolerant--allowing every man his own belief."

"At times, John went with me to help the poor and lowly. It was a joy to relieve the sore distressed; but there were those who believed not as I believed. Nor had they learned the generousness of spirit that lets all live, and so they came to take my life."

( Lower cross slightly before you and look straight as though surveying a crowd. )



"And lo, when they appeared before me, demanding that I forsake the truth and trample upon all that I held dear, I saw among the crowd, faces that I knew--even to whom I had ministered tenderly."

"How could they turn against me? Yet there they were, mingling with the mob who shouted me down because I was a Christian."

( Straighten up--Head up--smile softly and lovingly. )

"And yet I censured not; they knew no better. Rather did I offer a prayer of thankfulness that I had learned to love all men. Firm in my faith, I leave a blessing on mankind."

( Statue steps down from dais, and walks into darkness. )

Because Electa had found the pearl of greatest price, Universal Love, she takes her place among the everlasting.

And now these Lovely Ladies of Long Ago will live during the year 1980, through the lives of the splendid women whom we have chosen to represent them.

#### CLOSING

You may do just as you desire to make the following material adaptable for your chapter; however, we are including several suggestions which we hope will be helpful.

#### SUGGESTION I.

The reader may continue reading as before; and at mention of name, each heroine again appears on stage in a characteristic pose while a spot is thrown briefly upon her.

#### SUGGESTION II.

The reader simply continues reading until time of closing of the Bible when soft lights are turned; then she sits.

#### CLOSING

And now the hour has come when back into the dim and distant past, we call these Lovely Ladies of Long Ago.

Jephthah's daughter, you who loved your father more than life, we thank you for the noble example of courage, that enables one to die to save another. For your death, Jephthah kept his vow with the Lord.

Ruth, beloved daughter of the soil, we remember the loving care you gave to one who was aged and alone. What dignity you gave to toil!

Your name means beauty and care. From it, we have coined the word "ruthless" to express all that is the opposite of your beautiful and devoted spirit. Labor for Love has won for you a precious place with us today.

Esther, queen of a great empire, your name Esther means "star".

What in all nature is so full of permanent steady beauty as a star beaming forth from the deep and everlasting blue? Often it silvers the edges of dark forbidding storm clouds or lights up the black masses of the night. It guides the doubtful traveler on his way and points out the true course for the billow tossed mariner. All this and more you were to your distressed people.

Martha, friend of our Great Teacher, your name "Martha" means Ruler of the House and Overseer of the Service.

How graciously you showed your gratitude to Jesus by administrating to him yourself. Humble, faithful service has won for you the love and admiration of all members of our Order.

Electa, mature in growth and broad in understanding, return to dwell among your immortal sisters of the past. But as you go, leave with us your unshakable faith in a Christian belief and your love for all humanity.

Your name "Electa" means Mother of Mankind. Each time we say it, we shall remember that the greatest of all things is LOVE OF OUR FELLOWMEN.

And now we bid farewell to all these Lovely Ladies of Long Ago. ~~Reverently~~ we pause for benediction.

( CLOSING OF THE BIBLE. )

By candle light we've dreamed tonight,  
Our thoughts ran far and near,  
From out the past we've brought, held fast,  
A vision wondrous clear.

As candle gleams with flickering beams  
Brought dreams of long ago,  
We've seen again the vision plain  
That Robert Morris saw.

He lit a light that far off night,  
That never has gone out,  
For near and far the Eastern Star  
Now shines the world about.



And in the glow, we'll see and know  
The riches scattered here;  
Rare diamonds, rubies, emeralds, jade,  
In members will appear.

And when each year with memories dear,  
Joins years now past and gone,  
And lights go out like those about  
This room have died anon.

There still will shine one light divine,  
'Twill never fade away;  
'Tis fed by love from God above  
It will keep bright alway.

It came from out eternity,  
Its glory shines afar,  
'Twill guide us right with brilliant light;  
Our blessed Eastern Star.

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The End