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E L E C T A (from the Latin - Chosen Lady)

When cares press heavy on the heart,  
And gloom is all around,  
Where shall we fix the heavy eye  
In all this mortal bound?  
What emblem has the mourner here?  
What love to warm, what light to cheer?

Thine, true Electa, thine which tells  
Of His distress and thine!  
The cross, upon whose rugged limbs  
Ye both did bleed and pine!  
The cross, by heavenly wisdom given  
To raise our thoughts from earth to heaven.

Dying, as Jesus died, upon the tree--  
Was ever worthier sacrifice than hers?  
Sacred the cross, the nail, the thorn; for He  
Who suffered has redeemed them from the curse;  
Just as she passed to blest eternity  
She prayed forgiveness for her murderers. - Robert Morris

The scene of the story of this Lady Bountiful is laid in Asia Minor in the first century A.D. Masonic tradition informs us that she was reared in affluence and as a pagan was converted to the Christian faith under the ministry of St. John the Evangelist. ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ St. John in his last years was Bishop of Ephesus and traveled among the 7 churches of Asia Minor.

Two Christian virtues demanded by those crude and cruel times were charity and hospitality - both carried over from the Jewish faith into Gentile Christian life and conduct. The lot of the Gentile freeman might be even worse than that of a slave, who at least was assured of food and shelter. The spirit of human kindness, quickened by the spirit of Christ, found a new outlet in giving in the name of Christ "unto the least of these". Corollary to this, the spread of the new faith into the Gentile world called for frequent travel and long journeys to and fro by Christian emissaries - evangelists, teachers, messengers and the like. Such public inns as were to be found were unsafe and unsuitable, and the homes of Christian believers were therefore to be opened to them. This pious obligation rested especially upon those whose means afforded.

In the exercise of these 2 cardinal virtues the newly-converted Electa soon discovered the passion of her life. The poor and distressed found relief and the wayfarer rest and refreshment. St. John again and again was a welcome and honored guest in her



spacious home and addressed his Second Epistle to "the elect lady and her children." Thus for 14 years Electa gave herself to the service of the poor and of the Christian sojourner.

As long as the Christian faith remained under the eking of Judaism, it was for the most part unmolested by the Roman authorities. But as it spread to the Gentile world and began to take on a color and personality of its own, Rome was disposed to deal with it as a new and very troublesome sect. To complicate matters still further, the cult of Emperor worship, which had been spreading more or less fitfully for 2 decades, was now proclaimed throughout the Empire. The Christian faith came under the ban; all who professed faith in the Christian God and Him alone would be compelled to recant or suffer death.

When the edict was proclaimed in that part of Asia Minor, Electa's mansion was marked for pillage. She was visited by a band of soldiers, whose chief proposed the test of casting a cross upon the ground and trampling it under her feet. Taking the cross from his hand she clasped it to her bosom and raised her eyes heavenward in mute appeal for courage to endure whatever might be her lot. For this act of impiety she was cast with the other members of her family into a dungeon.

At the end of 12 months the Roman judge, who is said to have shared her hospitality on a former occasion, appeared before her and offered one final opportunity to recant. Again she refused, whereupon she was dragged forth and scourged, then taken with husband and children to the brow of a hill to be crucified. With fiendish cruelty her torturers reserved her to the last, that she might be forced to witness the death of her loved ones. Thus died Electa, who had devoted her life to the comfort and welfare of others. But loss of wealth, of family, of liberty, yea, and of life itself, is less merely of the things that are seen and are temporal, while the things that are not seen are eternal. And "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."