

THE INSPIRATION OF THE LABYRINTH

As the narrator reads the story of the Labyrinth, the Conductress and Associate Conductress should wind the Labyrinth in the accustomed manner so as to arrive at the proper place as the words are said concerning the various heroines.

Chairman, Educational committee
Grand Chapter of Colorado, OES

(Reprinted: August 20, 1969)

When the Order of the Eastern Star was new, the candidates were led by the proper officer directly from station to station around the pentagon formed by the STAR POINTS. The Pioneers of the Order, however, were seeking ways to make it more beautiful and impressive, and during the year that Sister Nettie Ransford, Past Most Worthy Grand Matron, was Grand Conductress, she demonstrated on the floor of the General Grand Chapter a new labyrinth march, which was adopted by that body, and used for that time on.

The members of General Grand Chapter felt that this new march was truly inspired. With the assistance of the Conductress and the Associate Conductress, I will explain the reasons for this belief.

From its inception, the Order of the Eastern Star has had an impelling religious appeal. It has even been said that fraternal organizations such as ours, were what the Saviour had in mind when He commanded His Disciples to go to the ends of the Earth and teach the Gospel of Brotherly Love.

After a candidate has taken the obligation, has made the pledges and promises required of each member, she is taken to ADAH, where she hears the pathetic story of Jephtha's daughter from the Book of Judges. In this story a young girl, and only child, becomes a sacrifice in order that a promise of her father might be kept. Perhaps this promise was a rash one, but it was made in good faith, and he had no thought that the one to come forth from the door of his house would be his only child. But such was the regard for a vow, that ADAH freely sacrificed her life rather than have her father break his sacred word to God. She became a living symbol of sacrifice, and her willingness to do this made her the example of fidelity in the teachings of our Order.

From ADAH, as the march continues, the candidate is led around the point of MARTHA, the fourth point of our star. The lesson of MARTHA primarily that of the resurrection of the body, also brings out the beautiful teaching of the willingness of Christ to sacrifice himself for others, thus pointing out the similarity of the lessons of these two heroines of our Order, ADAH and MARTHA.

After passing around MARTHA, the candidate is led to RUTH at the second point of our Star. Here, she is told one of the most beautiful love stories of all literature. It parallels the stories of Damin and Pythias, and David and Jonothan. It is one of the few stories of affection between the members of the same sex. RUTH, the widow of Naomi's son, was a native of Moab. Moab was a nation of idol worshipers, and RUTH came from a family rich in lands and cattle. But such was her love for Naomi, and Naomi's God, that she left her home and her assurances of plenty to follow her mother-in-law to a strange land, and the chance of poverty and loneliness. So it is, that in the teachings of Our Order, RUTH has come to be the embodiment of Constancy.

As the candidate is led on, in her quest of enlightenment, she is led around the fifth point of ELECTA. This heroine teaches of love, and her lesson only emphasizes that of RUTH.

Now the Conductress leads the candidate to ESTHER, noble Queen, who risked the loss of station and life itself to save her own people; the Persians, who had captured the Jewish people and who held them in low regard, would have been called them the despised race. In fact, even the King had no knowledge of her ancestry. But when she learned that the edict had gone out that on a chosen day, the Jewish people would all be destroyed she knew that she must do what she most dreaded. She must go to the King, confess her nationality, and plead for mercy.

Relying on a promise he had made to her, she entered the presence of the King, unbidden. The guards were stricken with terror, but ESTHER bravely went on and pleaded the cause of her people. The King, upon hearing the story, relented, and saved the chosen people. ESTHER has become the symbol of Faithfulness to all members of the Eastern Star.

During the march from ESTHER to MARTHA, the candidate is led around ADAH, stressing again the similarity of these two - their willingness to sacrifice themselves for others.

Next, we come to the point of MARTHA. It was to her that the Saviour made the statement that brings hope to all Christendom - the words that give hope to all of us in the dark hours of our lives - the words that will live forever in our thoughts. "I am the resurrection and the life, and he that believeth in Me though he were dead, yet shall he live, and he that believeth in Me, shall never die."

How wonderful to have been the one to hear this message to her, and through her, to the entire world. She was the one who did the work of the household, the one who seemed at times to have no thought except for the mundane things of life; and yet, when Christ sought to comfort her, he gave her this eternal word of life - the words that are the very foundation of our Christian faith.

From MARTHA, the candidate is led around RUTH, and there comes to our minds the fact that RUTH, who so nobly cared for Naomi, became the ancestress of the Christ, the One who spoke the wonderful words to MARTHA, many, many years later. How beautifully are the stories of our heroines woven together - and how symbolic the march that takes us to them, one by one.

Last of all, we come to ELECTA. The lesson of ELECTA is love, as expressed in Charity and Kindness to all those who need of it. She was the exemplification of the command of the Master when he said, "I give unto you a new Commandment, that ye love one another, even I have loved you." So, in this lesson, we hear the lesson that is

really taught in all the stories of our heroines - that of love, Love for God, Love for man, and Love for all living creatures.

From ELECTA, we then go around ESTHER'S station, and it comes to our mind that in the lessons of these two points, we have learned that two great truths, Love and Purity, the attributes that are the crowning glory of womanhood.

And so we have completed the labyrinth march; we have joined the points that have much in common. We have seen the relation between the story of ADAH and MARTHA; of RUTH with that of ELECTA; the story of ESTHER has been compared with that of ADAH; the message of MARTHA with that of RUTH; and that of ELECTA with the story of ESTHER; and in every instance there was some characteristic that bound it up with the other. Through it all, as the march progressed, we passed by the open Holy Bible on the Altar, as an indication that absolute reliance upon the Scriptures is essential to our faith and well-being.

Finally, the new member is led out of the labyrinth around the outside of the Points, in the only circular movement in the initiatory march; thus emphasizing the relationship of all the heroines of our Order, to teach others, and to the Holy Bible.

When we consider all the lessons taught by our Points, we can but believe that the march was truly inspired in the way it proceeded from one Point to and around another. Surely it was not chance that led those in the earlier days of our Order to arrange the march in this highly symbolic, as well as beautiful, manner.

####