

Education and the Eastern Star

By BERTHA BROCK

WITH a recurrence that is almost solar in its regularity, a friendly controversy springs up here and there as to the origin of the Eastern Star and the unit which should be given the honor of being the first organized Chapter. This is a most healthy augury, for such controversies manifest the vital interest which such a powerful organization of women has aroused among a constantly increasing membership. And these friendly controversies, by the way, have been highly prolific in the wealth of historical data with which they have enriched this wonderful Sisterhood.

Let these controversies abide, if they will, for they reveal the stability of the Order of the Eastern Star as a house built upon a rock, far above the intrigue of its foes, its mission in the world exalted, clear-cut and inspired by the highest ideals of life and humanity.

Whether the Eastern Star had its origin in the idealism of French or Swedish Masons during the eighteenth century, or whether it owes its existence to a committee of Massachusetts Masons, which met in May, 1793, is of little moment compared with the mountainous results the organization has achieved in the face of almost overwhelmingly obstacles and the plots of its enemies.

The Order of the Eastern Star is now the second largest fraternal

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organization in the world, second only to that of the Masonic body, of which it is the chief auxiliary. Its membership, embraced in over 8,000 Chapters, passed the 2,000,000 mark on January 1, 1926, and it is scoring an annual increase of 50,000.

With the advent of the Eastern Star, the high rate of illiteracy throughout the United States went tumbling, and is still tumbling, despite 7,000,000 illiterates still enumerated.

But the influence of the Eastern Star on the educational activities of the country has been no greater than its spirit and example in the maintenance of law and order everywhere. This is one of its prime purposes as a fraternal organization.

Margaret Irving Hamilton, LL.B., widely-known writer for Masonic publications, thus summarizes the Order of the Eastern Star: "Aside from its technical significance as a woman's organization, affiliated in a stellar sense with the great constellation of Masonry, the Order of the Eastern Star is, in its pure and simple essence, an association of women of the highest ethical and spiritual standards, whose mission, collectively and individually, is to help and inspire to high ideals all members of the human family."

Robert Morris, "the Grand Old Man of Masonry," launched the Eastern Star in America. No other man in Morris' time (1818-1888), had a more exalted conception of woman's sphere in the work of the world than Morris who put his ideas into effect in the 50's and saw the

culmination of his labors in the first convocation of a Supreme Grand Chapter in Indianapolis, Nov. 15, 1876.

Writing of the formative period of the Order of the Eastern Star, Margaret Irving Hamilton says: "The oldest Chapter known was organized as 'Miriam Family, No. 111,' on October 6, 1866, later emerging into the established chapter system on March 4, 1869. New York City, however, has the honor of the birth of the chapter system in 'Alpha Chapter, No. 1,' which was organized December 28, 1868. Masonic histories state that the Order of the Eastern Star was introduced into the Colonies in New York in 1778 by, it is supposed, French officers. In the system of 1774 (France) was an emblem of a five-pointed star, presumably copied from the Masonic emblem called the Blazing Star. There is also sufficient evidence to prove that the Order was known in Boston, Mass., early in the year 1793, as records show that 'certain parties, affiliated with Masonry, met and formulated a ritual for the Order.' It is recorded that LaFayette was interested in this Order."

Looking back over those dim trails of history, inseparably woven into the annals of this great Republic, members of the Order today must thrill with patriotic pride when they contemplate the names and the work of those who were affiliated with Masonry and gave to Robert Morris his inspiration to establish the Eastern Star.

Dr. E. P. Hansen, speaking before the Gunnison, Colo., Chapter, on the "Early History of the Eastern Star," August 13, 1925, discloses a mass of interesting historical data which throws a brilliant side-light

on the Americanization phase of the order. "Let me call your attention," says Dr. Hansen, "to the fact that the founders of this great nation were, in a very large part, members of the Masonic Fraternity. The Father of our Country was the first Grand Master; his military and political advisers, during the Revolutionary War, in whom he placed his greatest confidence and dependence, were likewise Masons. The signers of the Declaration of Independence, as well as the members of the Boston Tea party, were members of that Order. Likewise the outstanding individuals of that period, such as John Paul Jones, Paul Revere and Benjamin Franklin were Masons. Consequently, as the founders of our Country were Masons, and the wives and daughters were equally as patriotic and loyal, it is only to be expected that they, too, should wish some sort of corresponding organization."

Reviewing Masonic history in this country, with the light it throws upon the organization of the Eastern Star, Dr. Hansen goes on to say:

"About 1750, there existed lodges to which both Masons and their wives and daughters were admitted. These apparently existed in France and Sweden, and had no connection with the later movement in this country. Between 1800 and 1850, along the Atlantic coast there were several so-called side degrees to which female relatives of Masons were eligible. One of these was 'The Masons' Daughter,' which was based on a legend connecting Mary, sister of Lazarus, with Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. In this degree certain modes of recognition and a signet were used. Another was 'The Kindred Degree' which was based

on the biblical history of Ruth and her gleanings in the field of Boaz. These degrees were conferred on the wives and daughters of Blue Lodge Masons, while the following degrees were reserved for the female relatives of Royal Arch Masons: The first was 'The Good Samaritan' which presented that biblical character who bound up the stranger's wounds and walked, that the unfortunate man might ride. The second degree was 'The Heroine of Jeriche,' which dealt with the fall of that city, together with the faithfulness of Rahab. These degrees are now merely a matter of history, although the lessons they taught were doubtless as important and their effects as lasting as those taught today."

Proceeding with the early history of the Order and bringing the initiatory ritual up to the present day, Dr. Hansen says:

"The Officers of the Subordinate Chapters are the customary ones found in similar Orders, but the initiatory work is largely exemplified by the five heroines, namely Adah, Ruth, Esther, Martha and Electa. The first point, Adah, teaches fidelity to our personal convictions even unto death; Ruth, obedience to the demands of honor and justice; Esther, fidelity to our tried and true friends; Martha, a trustful faith and hope of immortal life, without which neither your life or mine would be worth the living, and Electa teaches us to be true to our convictions and unafraid of the persecutions of those who might differ with us."

Here we have a succinct definition of the lines along which the Order has proceeded and will proceed in its great work of humanity,

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social, moral and spiritual uplift in all of life's activities. And what a power it exerts along these lines, silently, but tremendously!

Writing of the work of Dr. Robert Morris in launching the Eastern Star, Ila Leonard Willson, Grand Secretary of South Carolina, notes that "the Grand Old Man of Masonry" evolved the Order to teach three things: First, the Bible truth, for Freemasonry is founded on the Bible; second, the precepts of Masonry, for it was intended to be a branch of Freemasonry; and, third, the means of adoptive recognition.

Alonzo J. Burton, another "Grand Old Man of Masonry," who has passed his eighty-second birthday, with a record of more than sixty years of active service in the great Masonic fraternity, and who is now Historian Emeritus of the New York Grand Chapter, Order of the Eastern Star, has recently written an article for The Eastern Star World, in which he reviews the rise of the organization, and comments as follows:

"Concerning degrees, there were five degrees in the 1793 ritual, what we would call lessons in the five points.

Degree first (Initiatory degree) is Jephthah's Daughter. Color, blue; emblem, the sword; regalia, the apron; virtue, obedience; class, Mason's daughters.

Degree second (Passing degree) is Ruth. Color, orange; emblem, the sheaf of wheat; regalia, the glove; virtue, attachment; class, Mason's widows.

Degree third (Raising degree) is Esther. Color, white; emblem, the Golden Crown; regalia, the band; virtue, purity; class, Mason's wives.

Degree fourth (Exalting degree) is Martha. Color, green; emblem, the open Sepulcher; regalia, the brooch; virtue, faith; class, Mason's sisters.

Degree fifth (Perfection degree) is Electa. Color, red; emblem, the grasped hands; regalia, the collar; virtue, truth; class, Mason's wives' sisters.

Historian Burton goes on to say: "Rob Morris, in 1847, had the degree of Heroine of Jericho conferred upon him, and thus acquired his first appetite for the system of Adoptive Masonry. He (Morris) states that in 1850, he wrought out his idea of what was needed in this department, and called it the Eastern Star."

For seventy-five years this organization has been waxing great and strong, until it radiates its beneficent influence to every quarter of the globe and its potentialities for good are limitless. During the past year, two subordinate Chapters have been organized each secular day. What will be the report of the Secretary of the General Grand Chapter at the triennial conclave, which meets in Denver, during the month of December, 1928? We can only surmise, but, if the record for growth in membership continues in the future as in the past five years, the membership of the Eastern Star will surpass, in numbers, any other fraternal organization in the world, save that of the Masonic fraternity.

In an address, recently delivered before the New York Grand Chapter, the Rev. Newell Dwight Hillis, one of America's most eminent clergymen, said:

"A man in my position this morning might well count himself happy by virtue of the fact that the members of this organization stand for

the highest degree of patriotism. We have today in this great Republic of ours one hundred and fifteen millions of people. We have an income this year of sixty billions of property—three-fifths of the total capacity of all Great Britain and Ireland; and we have a total accumulated property today of two hundred and seventy billions of dollars; and we have above all else, certain free institutions that are increasingly influential throughout the uttermost corners of the world. . . We cannot forget the fact this morning, as members of this organization, that only one hundred and twenty-four years ago, William Pitt, the greatest Prime Minister then living in the world, said: 'The Constitution of the United States is the greatest political document ever struck off by the unaided genius of man,' and Edmund Burke went on to say it will ultimately be not only the model and the wonder, but the admiration and finally the example of all the nations of the earth. That was only prophecy then. Today it is absolutely history. And every woman that belongs to the Order of the Eastern Star has sworn fidelity to her Flag, to the Constitution of the United States, and has one ideal in front of her as a member of this noble Order: to see to it that in a very short time the Constitution of the United States and the principles of the Republic are universal in their influence, until all forms of autocracy have passed absolutely away, and self-government has taken possession.'

Dr. Hillis struck the keynote of progress and enlightenment throughout the world in that memorable address, for from far off Australia and South Africa come reports of the marked influence of the Eastern Star on the morale of womanhood. Continuing, Dr. Hillis said:

"As members of this wonderful Order you are, in the second place, solemnly pledged by virtue of your vow to see to it that every boy and girl, man and woman in the United States is a scholar and an intelligent person. Your fathers founded the free school. . . You swear fidelity to that institution, the public school of the United States. That belongs to all the people. And you pledge yourself to do one thing: to make that common school have so high a grade of teacher and so splendid a social position that no private school or denominational school can live under its eaves, because in this great Republic you cannot govern the land by ignorant men. . . No republic can be safe, permanently safe, that permits an illiterate folk; and, whenever, therefore, there arises in the land a schism in regard to the public school and men and women arise to say, 'We shall weaken it on this side and weaken



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it on the other,' and finally you have seven millions who cannot read or write and confess to it, then you have the basis, the reason, the philosophy and the necessity for your Order to swear fidelity to the school that shall diffuse wisdom and knowledge. For wealth is not in stone, it is not in steel, it is not in sticks of wood, it is not in great shocks of grain. Wealth is in the amount of intelligence you put into the raw material. . . . Last of all, the members of the Order of the Eastern Star are dedicated to another thing: to defend the Constitution; and in an era of great peril and strife to see to it that the great ideals of our civilization are preserved and handed forward to our children's children."

Dr. Hillis certainly outlines the salient work of the Order as educational in its scope and world-wide in its field of activity. The Eastern Star has never shirked in its duty along these lines. Its spirit of co-operation, humanity, loyalty and Service is being constantly fanned by the noble women who comprise its membership.

"Uphold the security of the American family," Dr. Hillis warns in his address. The American family, he declares, is the first of American institutions, "and the obligation of the father and mother is to bring to bear every form of wisdom and knowledge upon the intellect, the conscience and the character of their sons and daughters; to make twice as fast the turn of intellect; for you have sworn four solemn vows: to stand for the American family as the beginning of our institutions, for the American free school as the means of diffusing wisdom and knowl-

edge, for a free vote in order that we may diffuse justice in connection with our political institutions, and finally for sound morals to uphold the laws of God and the United States."

During the World War, and more actively since its close, insidious propaganda has been at work to engulf the institutions of the nation in chaos and ruin. And the Eastern Star has been an ever-present sentinel, its growing membership, individually and collectively, presenting a solid front to an enemy as insidious as it is sleepless.

The history of the Eastern Star reveals the outstanding fact that the Order is as essentially patriotic as it is fraternal and co-operative in the scope of its activities and that it has dedicated itself to educational work of the highest character and among all classes of the people. That work will continue.

In this connection, let us quote from the May, 1925, number of The Eastern Star World as to that for which the organization stands:

"Masonry today and in all ages has stood alone among the unique institutions of men, the pattern and parent of all fraternal organizations. The Order of the Eastern Star holds a similar relation to similar Orders. She need fear no competition, for competitor she has none. Others may seek to change to suit the whims of time and place, but this Order, built on all that is elemental in character, emphasizing those virtues that lie at the root of all thinking, and from which spring all rectitude of conduct, may rest assured that so long as she honestly, faithfully and prayerfully seeks to realize the sublime virtues in the

lives of her followers, that she has a place among the institutions of mankind in which none may supplant her."

The Grand Chapter of the State of Colorado enumerated 21,972 members of the Order of the Eastern Star on July 31, 1925. This was an increase of 1,054 in twelve months and indicates the healthy growth of the organization in a State where progress is the watchword. No other commonwealth in the United States has a higher level of intelligence among its women and nowhere are the women more determined to maintain a fine standard of citizenship than in Colorado.

Denver will prove her worthiness as a hostess to the great conclave of women in 1928 and a ringing welcome goes forth to every section of the country from the metropolis of the Rocky Mountain West.

It is certain that the triennial convention will give more than casual notice to the subject of education and that a survey of educational and economic conditions throughout the United States will be undertaken in the near future under the direction of the General Grand Chapter.

A few years ago the tocsin for an intensive educational campaign in America was sounded by several patriotic organizations not affiliated in a stellar sense, with Masonry, but whose membership numbered thousands and thousands of Masons. One of the direct results of this campaign was the enactment by Congress of the immigration law which set up a barrier against the hordes of illiterate aliens, especially from southern Europe, by placing immigration to this country on the percentage, or quota, basis. And the women of the United States took an important part in the agitation that effected this result.

That agitation will continue, both within and without fraternal circles until all undesirables shall have been weeded out. The Order of the Eastern Star has a wide field for educational endeavor in every section of America and it will embrace the opportunity to maintain its high standard of Service.