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A Dream of Queen Esther

by

Walter Ben Hare

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A Dream of Queen Esther

A Biblical Drama in Three Acts

BY

WALTER BEN HARE

AUTHOR OF MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED PLAYS

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BLANCHE NORTHRUP GEORGE
With All Good Wishes

NOTICE

A DREAM OF QUEEN ESTHER

For Three Men and Sixteen Women.

CHARACTERS REPRESENTED.

The King ..... *Ahasuerus of Persia*
Mordecai ..... *A Captive Jew at Shushan*
Hegai ..... *The King's Chamberlain*
Esther ..... *A Jewish Heroine*
Meesha Zabeel ..... *Her Servant, an Old Woman*
Hanana ..... *A Little Jewish Maid, Aged Eight*
Koosh ..... *A Little Ethiopian Slave Girl*
Kazma Shimeel ..... *A Persian Singer*
The Lady Ozoona ..... *A Beautiful Shushan Maid*
Jakosha ..... *A Languid Lily*
The Princess Zuecca ..... *A Proud Lady from Media*
Nine Jewish Children ..... *In Mordecai's Charge*
Eight Persian Rose Maids ..... *In Act II*

CHARACTERS IN THE DREAM.

The Witch of Endor ..... *I Samuel XXVIII*
Rebecca ..... *Genesis XXIV*
Miriam ..... *Exodus II*
Deborah ..... *Judges IV*
Adah ..... *Judges XI*
Martha ..... *John XI*
Ruth ..... *Ruth I*
Electa ..... *II John I*

NOTE: Several persons may assume two parts: Witch and Zuecca; Ruth and Kazma; Hanana and Koosh; Rebecca and Ozoona; Miriam and Jakosha. The three male characters may be played by women.

Time of Playing—*About Two Hours and Fifteen Minutes.*

THE STORY OF THE PLAY.

Mordecai is a noble captive Jew living in the Persian city of Shushan. He is loved by all and dwells with his slave Meesha Zabeel and his adopted daughter, Esther. Hegai comes to him and informs him that the King is about to choose a wife from among the maidens of the kingdom and that Esther has been selected to present herself for the contest. Mordecai thinks that if Esther be chosen Queen she may help her people, who are the captives of the King.

The King, in disguise, has saved the life of Esther and she cherishes a high regard for the unknown hero and therefore hesitates before presenting herself before the King, as she loves the man who saved her life, not knowing that it was the King himself. Mordecai tells her to enter the contest for the sake of her people and Esther hesitates between love and duty. She sleeps and has a vision! Eight heroines of biblical history appear to her and tender her their advice. The first act closes with several beautiful tableaux, a scarf drill.

The second act is in the palace of the King. The King tells his chamberlain, Hegai, that he saved the life of a little unknown maiden and that he hopes she will be one of the contestants. The King retires and several Maidens enter for the contest. Each thinks that she will be the chosen Queen to the comical delight of Koosh, a little Ethiopian handmaiden, who attends the contestants. One by one the maidens are rejected until Esther appears. The King recognizes her and she is chosen Queen to the delight of Koosh. A Flower Drill and Song occurs in this act and the act ends with a tableau: The Crowning of Esther.

The third act of the play takes place nine years after the second act. The King neglects his wife and through

the wicked influence of Haman, one of his princes, issues a decree that all the Jews in his kingdom are to be slaughtered. Mordecai visits Esther and in a great patriotic and dramatic scene appeals to her to save their people by going before the King and pleading for them. Meesha, the old nurse of Esther, loves her and warns her that if she appear before the King without his invitation it may mean her death. Mordecai pleads for his people, Meesha pleads for Esther to save herself. Esther decides to appeal to the King and "if I perish, I perish." She appears before the King, who receives her and promises to aid her people.

Among the characters introduced in the play are Rebecca, Deborah and the five points of the Eastern Star, Esther, Adah, Ruth, Martha and Electa.

SYNOPSIS OF THE PROGRAMS.

Act I—The housetop of Mordecai in the city of Shushan in Persia. Mordecai laments the fall of Jerusalem. A message from the King. Esther commanded to enter the contest for Queen of the realm. Mordecai ponders on the message. The little Jewish children sing and make merry on the housetop. Mordecai conducts their evening devotions. Esther appears and Mordecai delivers the King's message. Esther tells her nurse Meesha of her adventure outside the city gates. Esther dreams and eight heroines of Jewish history appear before her, Witch of Endor, Rebecca, Deborah, Miriam, Adah, Ruth, Martha and Electa. Scarf tableaux.

Act II—In the palace of the King. The King is weary of the maidens who have appeared before him and tells Hegai of the beautiful maid he rescued without the city gates. Kazma sings the Rose Song with drill by eight Rose Maidens. Several maidens air their charms to the

delight of Koosh, a funny little Ethiopian slave girl. Each is rejected by the King. Esther is chosen Queen.

Act III—Nine years later. The Queen is sad at the neglect of the King. Mordecai appears and tells the Queen that all the Jews are to be slain at the order of the King. He begs her to intercede for her people. Meesha explains that to do this without the King's invitation would be almost certain death. Esther accepts the sacrifice. "If I perish, I perish!" Esther appears before the King, who receives her, "The fairest among millions, altogether lovely." The King promises to save her people and the Feast of Purim is established.

THE MUSIC OF THE PLAY.

It is best to have an orchestra, if possible. A phonograph might answer the purpose. The instrumental music should consist of such pieces as the Peer Gynt suite by Grieg, the Ballet Egyptian by Luiginni or the Overture to Mignon by Ambroise Thomas.

The music of the songs called for in the Text may be found in "The Golden Book of Favorite Songs," 15 cents per copy, which can be supplied by the Publishers.

COSTUMES.

The King—A tall, virile man with a good speaking voice; choose one accustomed to speaking in public. He must have a dignified bearing and look every inch a King. The costume may sometimes be borrowed from Masonic bodies or other secret orders. The following costume is offered merely as a suggestion: Long white stockings, sandals. Long robe of cloth of gold reaching to the ankles. This may be made from a night-gown pattern of gunnysacking gilded with gold radiator polish. The robe is trimmed with a border of purple or scarlet fig-

ured calico to simulate embroidery. A girdle of curtain chains is around the waist and hangs down the front of the robe. A long trailing robe of velvet is worn with this costume, except at times indicated in the text of the play. This robe fastens around the neck and trails on the floor about three feet. This royal robe may be made of purple or red velveteen and lined with sateen of the same color. A border of white cotton about one foot wide extends down each side. A stiff collar about twelve inches high and lined with cotton may be attached to this robe, if desired. A crown made of gilt cardboard and red velvet and a scepter about two feet long complete the costume. Wear all the flashy jewelry possible, chains about neck, armlets, bracelets, rings, etc.

A dark, curly, rather long wig is worn and a mustache made from crepe hair the same color as the wig. Redden the lips with grease paint, darken the eyebrows and draw black lines under the eyes and on the upper lids. Rouge the cheek bones.

Mordecai—An aged man with a deep voice. Choose a man who can portray the strong emotional side of the character. This is a difficult part and should be played by an orator of pronounced ability. The costume should be a simple dark-colored robe reaching to the feet and a striped mantle attached to the left shoulder and draped over the robe. White stockings and sandals. A long black robe, the kind worn by Episcopalian choir men, and a striped couch-cover would answer for this costume. In the first scene of the third act he wears a long flowing robe of tattered gunnysacking with a rope girdle. In the last scene of the play he resumes his former costume.

A long gray or white wig is worn with a long gray or white beard. With gray grease paint draw wrinkles on the brow and around the eyes. In walking he uses a staff about four or five feet long.

Hegai—A man of forty. Quick and soldier-like in speech and action. White stockings and sandals. A long robe similar to the King's but made of dark-colored cloth in solid color. A large striped mantle draped around head and shoulders. This costume should be borrowed from some lodge if possible and should be as rich and striking as possible. Make-up similar to the King's, but he wears a short beard. If costumes can be obtained from Masonic bodies or Oddfellows he may change to a guard's uniform in the second and third acts, but this is not really necessary.

Esther—A beautiful maiden with distinct dramatic ability. The various emotions called for by this part will test the capability of any actress. A sharp line must be drawn between the girlish modesty of the first and second acts and the womanly emotion of the Queen in the third act. Remember that nine years elapse between the second and the third acts. For the first and second acts she wears her hair down in curls with no ornaments. White stockings and sandals. Long robe of white cotton crepe cut in Grecian style with elbow sleeves. White rope girdle. the robe trails slightly. Simplicity is the keynote of this costume. In the third act the hair is worn in two long braids on either side of the face and intertwined with pearls. A long trailing white lace dress spangled with silver. A white silver-spangled lace shawl may be attached to the shoulders and hang in straight folds down the front of the dress, or a spangled tunic may be worn. Crown made from white lace and gold cardboard. Armlets and bracelets. The royal robe which she wears at the end of the second act and in the last scene is made like the King's royal robe, but in light blue. Use a very light make-up.

Meesha Zabeel—A woman of sixty. Gray hair bound around her head. Sandals. Long flowing robe similar

to Esther's first act dress, but of brown. Striped mantle attached to left shoulder and draped over the robe. Brown cheesecloth (white stained with coffee) draped around head and shoulders. In the third act she wears the same robe, but a different mantle and shoulder drapery. The eyebrows should be painted gray with grease paint and wrinkles drawn on the forehead and around the eyes. This part should be played by a mature woman, if possible, with a deep resounding voice. The strong dramatic scene in the third act must be thoroughly rehearsed.

HANANA—A child, the younger the better. White stockings and sandals. Simple white robe reaching to the ankles, made from a night-gown pattern. Trim in bands of light blue cloth. Hair hanging. A simple costume with no ribbons or lace or other ornaments.

CHILDREN—Similar to Hanana.

KOOSH—A small person capable of playing a humorous part. A distinct capability for mockery and imitation is necessary for a successful delineation of this role. Red slippers, black stockings, orange sateen divided skirt reaching to ankles. Bright red sash. White baby waist. Orange sateen zouave jacket. Long black gloves. Much jewelry, curtain chains, armlets and bracelets of gold paper. Turban of orange and scarlet. Face, neck and ears blackened with burnt cork. Lips reddened with grease paint. A wig is not necessary as the drapery from the turban completely covers the head. In the third act she wears the same costume, but may add a spangled tunic or a striped mantle if desired. A pert, spoiled, little Ethiopian slave girl. A capable actress can make a big hit in this role.

ZUECCA—A tall girl of about 27. Regal bearing. Elaborate trailing costume, spangled tunic, feather fan, crown, flashy jewelry, etc.

Ozoona—A beautiful brunette. Costume of red sateen similar to the one worn by Koosh. Much jewelry. Black, spangled veil or tunic.

Jakosha—A tall blonde. Costume similar to Zuecca, but pale green or blue. May be trimmed with white fur. Ostrich fan. Very languid throughout the play. This role stands out strongly and always makes a good impression on the audience.

Kazma—A singer. Costume similar to that worn by Koosh, but light blue and white. Wreath of scarlet roses. Costume trimmed with roses.

Rose Maidens—Similar to Kazma, but not quite so elaborate.

Witch of Endor—Tall and commanding. Hair down in braids on either side of face. Dark blue costume similar to that worn by Esther in the first act. Dark blue scarf draped around head and shoulders.

Rebecca—Tall and dark. Orange colored costume and veil similar to that worn by the Witch of Endor.

Deborah—Commanding. Dark green costume similar to Rebecca's.

Miriam—A maiden with hair hanging. Pink costume similar to Deborah's.

Adah—Similar to Miriam only in light blue.

Ruth—Similar to Adah only in yellow robe and veil.

Martha—Similar to Witch, but in light green.

Electa—Similar to Martha, but in bright red.

THE SCENERY.

The play has been successfully produced in many churches and schools without special scenery, only a front curtain and several oriental curtains at the rear. If the play is presented in a theater or hall where scenery is

available, an exterior setting should be used for the first act and a palace set for the second and third acts.

The following description may offer suggestions to churches or societies with limited scenic facilities. It was actually carried out in a church with very little cost.

"For the first act we borrowed a back scene representing a landscape and hung this at the rear of the platform. This was borrowed from a dry goods house and had been used in window decoration. We represented the housetop by a coping about three feet high running across the back of the stage, and down the sides from the rear to the front. This coping was about two feet from the rear and side scenes. The coping was made of brown paper tacked on oblong frames and painted with white paint to represent the mortar between the brown stones. For the side scenes we used dark green curtains and for the back scene the landscape mentioned above. For lighting we had footlights made and two large engine headlights that threw strong light on the stage from the sides. To subdue this light at times we held sheets of colored tissue paper in front of the glare with good effect.

"For the second and third acts we simply covered the back and side scenes with oriental draperies. We made a dais for our throne by making a wooden frame eight feet high for a background with an oblong top extending from the back and held in place by braces. The throne was a square box with three steps leading thereto. The dais and throne were covered with coffee sacking gilded with radiator varnish. Two high-backed chairs borrowed from the chancel of an Episcopal church were placed upon the throne. The coffee sacking was trimmed with bands of royal purple muslin."

PROPERTIES.

Couch.
Taboret.
Zither on taboret.
Seven-branched candlestick. (May often be borrowed from an Episcopal Church.)
Oriental rugs and draperies.
Bright cushions.
Two large earthen water jars.
Several large palms. In Act I set these behind the side parapet and in Acts II and III set them around the throne.
Lighted candle for Meesha.
Long wand for Witch.
Veils for the Dream Heroines, of white tulle, five feet long.
Throne.
Eight garlands of roses, made of rope five feet long twined with natural vines and red paper roses.
Crowns for King, Esther and Zuecca.
Fur rugs for Acts II and III.
Scroll for Mordecai.
Scepter for King.

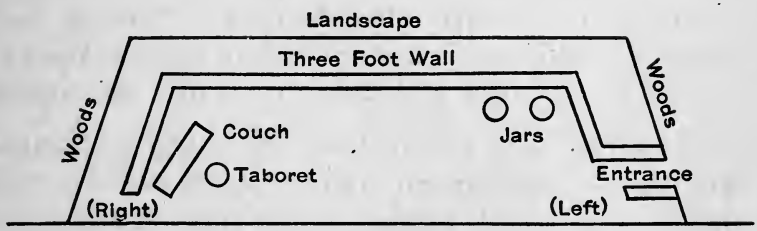
PRONUNCIATIONS.

Ahasuerus—A-haz-u-e′-rus
Deborah—Deb′-ô-ra
Electa—E-lek′-ta
Esther—Es′-ter
Hanana—Ha-nän′-a
Hegai—Hay′-gi
Jakosha—Ja-kosh′-a
Kazma Shimeel—Kaz′-ma Shim-eel′.
Koosh—Koosh

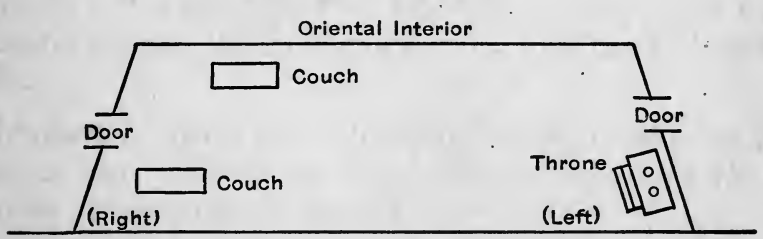
Meesha Zabeel—Mesh′-a Za-bel′ (long "e")
Mordecai—Môr′-de-ki
Ozoona—O-zoon′-a
Rebecca—Re-bek′-a
Shushan—Shoo′-shan
Zuecca—Zoo-ek′-ka

SCENE PLOT.

Act I.



Acts II and III.



STAGE DIRECTIONS.

R. means right of stage; *C.*, center; *R. C.*, right center; *L.*, left; *1 E.*, first entrance; *U. E.*, upper entrance; *R. 3 E.*, right entrance up stage, etc.; up stage, away from footlights; down stage, near footlights. The actor is supposed to be facing the audience.

A DREAM OF QUEEN ESTHER

The First Act.

Scene 1: *The house-top of* Mordecai, *overlooking the city of Shushan. Entrance at left front. For description of scenery see page 10. Couch at right near front covered with oriental drapery. Small taboret or table near couch. A seven-branched candlestick on this table. Several oriental rugs and bright cushions on the floor. Two large earthen water jars at left rear.*

Lights: *Lights in auditorium out entirely. Lights shining on the stage should be subdued, down one-half. Strong yellow light from behind the scenes shines from rear left to give the effect of the setting sun.*

Music: *A soft, plaintive, oriental air is played before the curtain rises and continues until* Mordecai *begins to speak.*

Discovered, Mordecai *standing alone on the stage at center, a little to the rear and looking off toward the left, his arms raised, palms inward.*

Mordecai—

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, mine ancient city,
Fallen art thou, the proud, the beautiful!
(*Drops arms.*)
The heathen have come into thine inheritance,
They have defiled thy holy temples,
Battered thy gates, torn down thy palaces.
Fallen art thou, Jerusalem, fallen,
Jerusalem, the refuge and pride of my fathers.
(*Faces front.*)

Here alone on my house-top in the city of Shushan
I stand, Mordecai, the Jew, with heart bowed down,
The leader of a people carried captive,
Carried captive into the country of Babylon.
By the rivers of Shushan here I weep,
My harp is hung upon the willow tree,
Its strings of gladness now are mute.

How shall it sing the Lord's song in a strange land?
They have carried us away captive,
Captive into the city of Shushan—
And now they bid us lift up our heads and sing,
Our masters bid us sing, saying,
"Sing unto us, sing us the songs of Zion!"

How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?
Jerusalem, Jerusalem, if I forget thee
(*Facing to left.*)
Let my right hand forget her cunning,
And my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth.

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills
From whence cometh my help—
My help will come from the Lord,
The Lord who made Heaven and earth.
(*Faces to front.*)

The waters hath overwhelmed us,
The streams hath gone over our souls,
But my trust is in the Lord! (*Triumphantly.*)
I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills
From whence cometh my help.

MEESHA ZABEEL *enters at left, stands left front and bows to* MORDECAI.

MEESHA—
Mordecai, master!

MORDECAI—
Speak, Meesha Zabeel.

MEESHA—
Hegai, the keeper of the women,
The royal chamberlain of the mighty King,
Awaits below. He'd speak with thee.

MORDECAI—
Bid him ascend.

MEESHA *bows and exits at left.* MORDECAI *comes to front, a little left of the center. Enter* HEGAI *from left.*

HEGAI (*bowing*)—
Hail, Mordecai! Hail, venerable father!

MORDECAI—
Peace be unto you and yours.

HEGAI—
A royal commandment hath gone forth,
Signed by the King and sealèd with his ring,
A law among the Persians and the Medes—
That she who once was Queen of all our land,
Vashti, the proud, is banished from the court.

And 'tis commanded by the King that I,
Even I, Hegai, keeper of the women,
Shall gather all the maidens of the kingdom,
From India even unto Ethiopia,
To come before his royal presence here.

And she who findeth favor in his sight
Shall be the Queen and share th' imperial throne.
A maiden dwelleth here with thee, I'm told,
A sweet and gracious maid whose lovely face
Lights like a star thy humble dwelling.

MORDECAI—

'Tis true, there is a maid, my kinsman's child,
An orphan she, a gentle modest flower
That ne'er was meant to bloom in kingly halls.

HEGAI—

The King commandeth that she do appear,
It is his will and naught can alter it.

MORDECAI—

Thy servant hears, thy servant will obey. (*Bows.*)

HEGAI—

Then on the morrow bid this maiden come
Attended, if you will, by that old nurse
Who gave me entrance unto the royal house.
Who knows but this sweet child will some day reign
Upon the Persian throne? So, fare thee well.

MORDECAI— (*Bows.*)

I'll lead thee down unto the street below.

HEGAI— (*Exits left.*)

I'll follow thee, most noble Mordecai.

(*Exits left.*)

There is a pause and then HANANA *peers in at left entrance. Soft music, "Follow Me, Full of Glee."* HANANA *enters, looks around, then beckons to other children. The three largest* CHILDREN *enter from left.*

HANANA—

There's no one here; the master's gone away.
Climb up the stairs, upon the roof we'll play.

Enter six little CHILDREN *from left. The* CHILDREN *form two rows at center, five in front and five behind, facing the audience. They march forward and backward, singing:*

FOLLOW ME, FULL OF GLEE.

Children go, to and fro,
In a merry pretty row;

Footsteps light, faces bright,
'Tis a happy, happy sight.
Swiftly turning round and round, (*All turn round.*)
Do not look upon the ground,
Follow me, full of glee, (*Join hands, form circle.*)
Singing merrily.
(*Tripping.*)
Singing merrily, merrily, merrily,
Singing merrily, merrily, merrily,
Follow me, full of glee,
Singing merrily.

(*They repeat the chorus and during this they line up in couples, one couple at left front, one at right front, one (the smallest) at center front. The four larger* CHILDREN *are slightly in the rear, one couple being right of center between the two front couples but to rear, the other couple left of center to rear.*)

Birds are free, so are we,
And we live as happily; (*Face partners.*)
Work to do, study, too,
(*Shake index fingers at partners.*)
Learning daily something new.
Then we laugh and dance and sing,
(*Balance to partners.*)
Gay as birds or anything.
Follow me, full of glee,
(*Join hands, form circle.*)
Singing merrily.

(*Chorus as before. For third stanza form as in the game London Bridge, two* CHILDREN *forming an arch, the others marching under as they sing:*)

Work is done, play's begun,
Now we have our laugh and fun.
Happy days, pretty plays,
And no naughty, naughty ways.

Holding fast each other's hand,
We're a cheerful, happy band;
Follow me, full of glee,
(*All join hands as before.*)
Singing merrily.
(*Chorus as before.*)

Enter MEESHA ZABEEL *from left.*

MEESHA—
What's this I see? A band of children here?

HANANA—
We came up here to wait for Esther dear.

MEESHA—
Dear little orphan babes, be of good cheer,
My master loves you, you need have no fear.

CHILDREN *huddled in group at rear left.* MEESHA *standing near them. Enter* MORDECAI *from left. He crosses stage, deep in thought and sits on couch at right.*

MEESHA (*comes to center, facing* MORDECAI)—
The little orphan children of thy race
Are here to greet thee, Mordecai, my lord.

MORDECAI—
Then bring them hither, with their childish prayers,
Mayhap I'll find a solace from my cares.

MEESHA—
Come, little ones, and greet our Mordecai.

CHILDREN—
Hail, Mordecai, the leader of our people.
(*They stand before him.*)

MORDECAI—
Right welcome all, dear children of my race,
(*Sadly.*)
Dear captive children who have never known
That power and joy that once belonged to us.
Captives and slaves are ye in Babylon,
And ye have never seen the holy city—

The city of my tears, Jerusalem.
But ye must not forget your heritage,
Some day perchance you'll lead our people home.
Again rehearse your patriotic vow.

(MORDECAI *rises, all face to left with arms upraised.*)

ALL—

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, if I forget thee,
Let my right hand forget her cunning,
And my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth.

MORDECAI—

And now the hymn, the evening cradle song.

(CHILDREN *face front, cross hands on breast, drop heads and sing:*)

SOFTLY NOW THE LIGHT OF DAY.

Softly now the light of day
Fades upon my sight away;
Free from care, from labor free,
Lord, I would commune with Thee.

Soon for me the light of day
Shall forever pass away;
Then from sin and sorrow free,
Take me, Lord, to dwell with thee.

(*During the singing of this hymn the yellow light shining from left is darkened by holding tissue paper in front of it.* MEESHA *exits left and returns with lighted candle. She lights the candles on the table. Then the yellow light shines again, but with a blue glow, made by holding blue paper in front of it from behind the scenes. At the end of the hymn the children face* MORDECAI, *who stands facing them in front of the couch.*)

MORDECAI—

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

CHILDREN—

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.

MORDECAI—

He leadeth me beside the still waters.

CHILDREN—

He restoreth my soul.

MORDECAI—

He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

CHILDREN—

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

MORDECAI—

I will fear no evil for thou art with me.
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.

CHILDREN—

Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

MORDECAI—

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
All the days of my life.

ALL—

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

(*During the above exercise* HANANA *has gone to rear, sat down and leaned over the wall, looking down in the street.*)

HANANA—

Oh, see, she comes! I see her down the road,
Esther, our loved one. She is coming home.

(CHILDREN *all go to rear and look down over the wall.*)

CHILDREN—

Esther! Esther! Come here, here on the house-top.

HANANA—

She sees us. She's hurrying along,
I'll be the first to greet her. (*Goes to left front.*)

CHILDREN—

No, I! Esther, Esther! (*They join* HANANA.)

MEESHA—

See, Mordecai, see how the children love her.

MORDECAI—

And it is right, Esther's beloved by all,
Modest and sweet, as fragrant as the roses in her hair.

Enter ESTHER *from left. The* CHILDREN *throng around her.*

ESTHER—

Hanana here? And Ruth and Jacob, too?
And all the other blossoms of my heart!

(*She kisses the smallest child, the others group around her as she approaches* MORDECAI, *who meets her at center.*)

MORDECAI—

Here comes the Spring, flower-decked, on tripping feet,
With love and laughter sweet, to melt anew
The ice and snow that settle on my heart.
Joy to the house hath come again, for now
Your feet hath crossed the threshold, and the sun
Of youth and love turns eventide to day.

ESTHER—

God set his face towards thee, my protector,
This day and all days. (*Kisses his hand.*)

MORDECAI—

And towards thee, my Esther.

MEESHA—

Esther, beloved! (*Comes to* ESTHER's *left hand.*)

ESTHER—

Thy blessing, Meesha.

MEESHA—

I clasp thee to my heart. Unto the throne of God
(*Embraces her.*)
I raise my hand and cry His blessing on thy head.

ESTHER—

Ye have wrapped me about with the mantle of your love.

HANANA—

And now, dear Esther, sit ye down a while
And we will gather at thy knee while you
(*Lead* ESTHER *to couch.*)
Shall sing our father's songs, or tell a tale.

ESTHER—

What shall it be? Of Nahum and the bears?
Or of the beggar maid of Babylon
Who won the prince's love? Speak now,
Will ye have tales of love or wars or daring?

HANANA—

Of love, sweet Esther—of the beggar maid.

MORDECAI—

Alas, dear children, see the setting sun
E'en now is sinking 'neath the Shushan gates.
The hour grows late, no time is left for tales.

ESTHER—

To all a sweet good-night. On the morrow come
And then perchance we'll spend the day in games.
And ye shall ride my horse without the wall
E'en to the river's edge, a picnic there,
We'll sing and dance, play ball and roll the hoop,
And I shall be a little child again.
Farewell, sweet babes.

CHILDREN—

Dear Esther, fare thee well.

(*Cross to left of stage.*)

MEESHA—

Come, children, watch the stairs, the way is steep.

(*Exits left, followed by the children, saying, "Farewell, Esther!"*)

ESTHER—

Dear Mordecai, I do not like thy look,
Thine eyes are troubled and methinks thy brow
Portends a heavy heart. Nay, do not speak,
(*Leads him to couch.*)
But rest thee here and I'll sit at thy feet
And hold thy hand and smile and try to comfort thee.

MORDECAI—

The Lord preserve thee, Esther, from all evil,
The Lord preserve thy going out, thy coming in,
From this time forth forever more.

ESTHER—

Speak to me, sir, and if you'll deign
To counsel with me, tell your woes,
And I mayhap may lighten them. 'Tis true
I'm but a child, but no where in the world
Can you find one who loves you more. My all
I'd gladly give for thee, the kindly heart
Who had compassion on the orphaned child
And gave me home, more than a father's love.
Some day, perchance, I may repay the debt.

MORDECAI—

Speak not to me of debts and their repaying,
E'en as the myrtle vine twines round the tree
So hast thou twined thyself around my heart.
Esther, thou art a flower, a timid, perfumed May-bud,
Culled in the shady nook we call our home—

Suppose some day a knight comes riding by
And spies the fragrant flower. Nay, do not start,
For it is nature's call, youth turns to youth,
And soon the day must come when you will leave me.

ESTHER—

That day will never come, dear Mordecai.
This is my home, like Ruth of old I'll say
Thy people shall be my people and thy God my God.

MORDECAI—

Like Ruth of old your heart will seek another.

ESTHER—

Nay, I am but a child, this happy home
Is all I know, here let me live and die.

MORDECAI—

The child's become a woman. On the morn
You go with Meesha to the palace gates.

ESTHER—

The palace? Nay, I do not understand.

MORDECAI—

Know then that Hegai, servant of the King,
Was here today and left this word with me:
That Vashti, once the Queen, is put away,
And in her place the King will choose another.
He's ordered that the fairest maids appear
Tomorrow at the royal palaces.
And from the throng the King himself will choose
The maiden he desires to make his Queen.

ESTHER—

I could not be a Queen, I'm far too young,
I'd rather stay here with the babes at play.

MORDECAI—

Nay, child, I gave my word that you'd appear.
From thy dim nook perchance you will be raised
To that fierce light that beats upon a throne.

ESTHER—

Nay, nay, I will not go. I'll run away and hide.

MORDECAI—

The Living God will keep thee in His hand,
Look up, my child, and put my trust in Him.

ESTHER—

But I'm afraid, afraid, dear Mordecai,
Of kings and palaces and heathen men.

MORDECAI—

A woman of our race should know no fear,
Bethink thee of the war-like Deborah.
She judged her people 'neath the spreading palm,
And even led her warriors in the fray.
Suppose when they had named her judge she'd said,
Nay, nay, I cannot lead thee, I'm afraid.

And there's another, Miriam, the brave,
Sister of Moses, when the sea gave way
At God's command, did she hold back and say,
Alas, I can't go on! I'm afraid!
No, with a smile and song she went her way,
Trusting in God, to glorious victory.

And fair Rebecca, waiting at the well,
She did not hesitate at duty's call,
But left her father, brother, kinsmen all
To wed a man whom she had never seen.

ESTHER—

Dear Mordecai, your counsel I'll obey,
My trust is in the Lord. If 'tis thy will
That I should seek the royal palaces,
Thy will be done, tomorrow I shall go.

MORDECAI—

There spake my child. Wilt go below?

(*Crosses to left.*)

ESTHER—

Nay, leave me here a while. Tonight I'll be
A child and watch the little twinkling stars,
Peep from the clouds and mock the lady moon.
Tomorrow I'll fulfill my destiny.

MORDECAI—

Tarry not long, the evening air is damp.
We'll wait below. (*Exit left.*)

ESTHER—

Farewell, farewell, to all my childhood days,
This is the end, and now I fain would weep.
(*Rises, crosses to couch.*)
But pride must stifle tears, Miriam the brave,
Deborah, Rebecca, they would never weep—
I'll be brave as they. A throne, a crown, (*Muses.*)
A Persian Queen? Esther, a Persian Queen?
Oh, it's absurd amid a million maids
Surely the choice would never fall on me.
And yet (*pauses*)—and yet—Esther, the Persian Queen! (*Muses.*)

Enter MEESHA *from L. She comes to* ESTHER, *softly.*

MEESHA—

Esther, my jewel!

ESTHER—

Meesha Zabeel, you startled me.
(MEESHA *sits on cushion near couch.*)

MEESHA—

You dreamed perchance of things that are to come,
A maiden's day dream all of life and love.
Tomorrow you will go before the King,
And all the other maids from far and near
Will bow before my Esther's loveliness.

ESTHER—

Nay, I would rather tarry here at home.
I'm all affrighted at the thought of leaving.

The noise and bustle of the court, the splendor,
Music and dancing, shawms and psalteries,
The soldiers marching 'neath the palace walls,
The men, wine-heated, glare with wolf-like eyes,
The women dream in languid indolence,
The King himself, mayhap a wicked man—
I am afraid! I'd rather tarry here.

MEESHA—
But think, beloved, you may reign a Queen!

ESTHER—
I'd rather wed some simple Jewish youth,
Noble and strong, with glances like the sun.

MEESHA—
You frighten me, for in your words I read
A hidden danger. Is there such a youth?

ESTHER—
Dear Meesha, let me have my dream to-night,
And on the morrow I'll accompany thee;
For Mordecai hath made my duty plain
And I will do his bidding, though my heart
Break with a secret sorrow. Hark to me
While I unfold a little secret tale.
Two months ago I wandered in the forest
Without the city gates, I sought the river
But I lost my way, on every side the woods
Shut out the beaten path and I was sore afraid.
A storm was coming on, the sky grew black,
And distant thunder rumbled from the hills,
Methought I heard a sound, a lion's roar,
From out a near-by cave, I turned to flee—
A deadly lion stood there in my path.
Crouching he was with bloody mouth a-gape.
I could not scream, I could not move, but gazed
As a poor bird beneath a serpent's eye.

MEESHA—

A lion? Oh, I should have died from fright.

ESTHER—

The beast crept toward me with its eyes a-gleam,
I closed my eyes and breathed a prayer to God;
And then I heard a shout, a mighty cry,
The lion turned enraged at this new sound,
Turned to his death, a pointed spear was thrown
And tore his frightful neck. A man appeared
And fought and killed the mighty king of beasts.

MEESHA—

A man?

ESTHER—

And such a man! Stalwart and brave
He stood a living tower of strength.
With kind and courteous mien he gave me drink
And led me forth, e'en to the city's gates.

MEESHA—

What was his name, my own?

ESTHER—

I never knew,
For I was sore ashamed and at the gate
I hid me by the well till he was gone,
And trembling sought the refuge of my home.
I've never seen him since.

MEESHA—

Then it is well. Belike he was a slave.

ESTHER—

Oh, never! A lord perhaps, a mighty hunter,
A courtier of the King, never a slave.

MEESHA—

And was he old or young?

ESTHER—

Nay, that I know not. At least not very old,
Nor yet so very young, just the right age.

MEESHA—

Banish him from thy thoughts. In Shushan here
Are many men and warriors. 'Twas a pretty tale,
But as for him, you'll never see him more.

ESTHER—

Nay, Meesha, who can tell? Now every night
I pray to God to guide his feet aright.

MEESHA—

Think not of these things, but let your thoughts
Soar like an eagle to the imperial throne.

ESTHER—

I'll do my kinsman's bidding, but I know
Among a million maids I'm sure the King
Will never glance at me.

MEESHA—

You're fairer than a rose. Fairest among millions
Altogether lovely. If we but lived in Israel once again
In ages past we could consult the witch.

ESTHER—

The witch? (*In tones of awe*).

MEESHA—

The witch of Endor. Mighty Saul,
The first of our great kings, consulted her,
And from the deep she called familiar spirits
That told him of the things that were to be.

ESTHER—

I know the tale, but now I am a-weary,
Here will I rest, dear Meesha, on this couch,
And you shall play for me upon the harp.
This night I bid farewell to all my girlhood,
Tomorrow I'm a woman. Play and let me dream!

(MEESHA *plays upon a zither. Soft oriental music heard.* ESTHER *and* MEESHA *sleep. The Curtains are drawn.*)

CURTAIN.

SCENE 2: *The music continues. The curtains rise showing* ESTHER *and* MEESHA *sound asleep.* THE WITCH OF ENDOR *stands at rear center behind the wall. She stands on a concealed box on a level with the top of the wall.*

WITCH—

Esther, Esther, Esther awaken!

ESTHER—

What was that? Methought I heard a call.

(*Arises.*)

WITCH—

You spoke of me, sweet child, and I appear.
I'm here to do thy bidding.

(*Comes to center of stage.*)

ESTHER—

Who are you?

WITCH—

I'm the Witch of Endor.

ESTHER—

The witch? Am I awake or do I dream?

WITCH—

You dream, dear Esther. In your dream you'll see
The heroines of Jewish history.
To-night you're on the threshold of your fate,
Make well your choice, tomorrow is too late.
Hark to these women, mark their every tone,
They'll counsel thee and guide thee, but alone
You must fulfill your destiny. Hearken then
To Isaac's wife, mother of mighty men—
Rebecca at the Well, I bid thee see
And she will tell of strange things yet to be.

The soft music continues. ESTHER *stands by couch at right front, lost in wonder.* MEESHA *sleeps.* THE WITCH *makes mysterious passes with her wand and crosses to left*

front. REBECCA *enters from rear right and stands on box back of the wall at rear center.*

REBECCA—

Esther, dear maiden, hearken unto me,
And learn my lesson, that of constancy.
I filled my pitcher at the well one day,
A man was there, he said, Give me, I pray
Water to drink! I heard and did obey.

It was a sign, my destiny was there.
I followed him and came to Canaan where
My bridegroom waited, Isaac, Abraham's son—
Thus was the founding of thy race begun.
Be constant, Esther, constant as the sun.

(REBECCA *takes her place beside* THE WITCH, *a little to the rear, while* THE WITCH *speaks the next lines.*)

WITCH—

Have faith in God, the type of Faith draws near,
Miriam, sister of Moses, appear, appear!

MIRIAM *enters from rear right. She stands on box.*

MIRIAM—

Hark to the voice of Faith that conquers all—
Faith in the Lord who ruleth great and small.
I was a little maid in Egypt wild,
In bulrushes I hid a baby child—
We trusted in the Lord, the baby smiled.

The years passed by, we sought to leave the land,
The Egyptians fast pursued our little band,
The Red Sea parted at the Lord's command,
And we were saved by faith.

(MIRIAM *takes her place to the rear of* REBECCA *while* THE WITCH *speaks.*)

WITCH—

Constancy and faith are virtues, mark them well—
A woman once in Ephraim did dwell,
A prophetess and judge she ruled the land,
The type of patriotism! Deborah, stand!

DEBORAH *appears on box at rear center.*

DEBORAH—

Dear daughter of an ancient kingly race,
Thou art a Jew, in pride lift up thy face.
Cast off thy fears, accept thy destiny
And save thy people from the woe to be.

(DEBORAH *takes her place at right, behind the couch.*)

WITCH—

And now behold four maidens from afar,
There in thy dream behold the Eastern Star!
Fair Jephtha's daughter will obedience teach,

Enter ADAH *from rear left.*

WITCH—

Martha, the worker, will of industry preach.

Enter MARTHA *from rear right.* ADAH *and* MARTHA *appear on box.*

ADAH—

My father made a vow unto the Lord
If victory was his, then of his own accord
He'd sacrifice the first that did him meet,
'Twas I, the daughter, perished at his feet.
Learn then obedience.

MARTHA—

I was the willing worker in the home,
A housekeeper, and never cared to roam,
But did my simple duties every way—
I did my best, 'tis all that I can say.
The Master praised my industry one day.

(*They stand beside* DEBORAH.)

WITCH—

Sweet Ruth looks smiling from the golden fields
And sings the joy the garnered harvest yields.
Electa, a ministering angel thou,
Comforting the sick, cooling the fevered brow!

RUTH *and* ELECTA *enter and stand on box.*

RUTH—

All the angels at God's throne,
Blowing trumps of molten gold,
Sing a song of love, of love—
Love will last though worlds grow old.
Hide thy dreams within a well
Known to no one else but thee,
Wall them in with chrysoprase,
Onyx and chalcedony.
Mortal, mortal, heed me well,
In deeds of love excel, excel!

ELECTA—

If thou wouldst live a happy, cheerful life
This is the keynote, charity to all,
The pleasant smile, the loving heart, the hand
Ready to aid the poor! Feed ye the hungry,
Clothe the ragged, assist the widow and the fatherless.
The ministry of woman serving all
May be as noiseless as the morning light,
But like the light diffuseth cheer and blessing.

(*The music continues as before.* ESTHER *comes to center,* RUTH *and* ELECTA *on each side of her.* ELECTA *hands* ESTHER *a white veil.*)

ESTHER—

Electa and Ruth, Adah and Martha,
Rebecca, Miriam, Deborah, and ye,
O Witch of Endor, from my heart of hearts

I thank ye for your counsel, and I'll heed
The loving words that ye have tendered me.

WITCH—

Electa from the north, Ruth from the south,
Adah and Martha from the east and west—
Ye need a fifth point for your mystic star.

MARTHA— (*At left front.*)

Martha, the sister, speaks of industry.

ADAH— (*At right front.*)

Adah, the daughter, of obedience.

ELECTA— (*At left front.*)

Electa, the mother, type of charity!

RUTH— (*At* ESTHER'S *right.*)

And Ruth, the widow, sings of love.

ESTHER— (*At* ESTHER'S *left.*)

Esther, the bride, can only dare to hope.

MIRIAM— (*At center.*)

Miriam bids you put your trust in God.

REBECCA— (*At* ADAH'S *left.*)

Rebecca at the well speaks constancy.

DEBORAH— (*At rear left.*)

Deborah says, Never forsake your people!

ALL (*bowing*)— (*At rear right.*)

Then hail to Esther, Queen that is to be,
We hail the bride who waits love's mystery!

(*To soft music the nine ladies form in three groups of three each.* WITCH, ADAH *and* RERECCA *at left front.* MARTHA, ELECTA *and* DEBORAH *at right front.* RUTH, ESTHER *and* MIRIAM *in center a little to the rear of the other groups.*)

TABLEAU I—

WITCH *kneels on left knee, veil held across body by both hands, left hand down, right up. She looks at* ADAH.

REBECCA *kneels on right knee, right hand down, left up, looking at* ADAH.

ADAH *takes one step backward, veil held with both hands over head. She bends backward as far as possible.*

The other groups form the same picture.

TABLEAU II—

WITCH *and* REBECCA *rise, step back a step.* ADAH *advances one step and kneels, her veil over her shoulders, arms crossed on breast, head down.* WITCH *and* REBECCA *extend their veils toward* ADAH, *forming a V. Other groups the same.*

TABLEAU III—

All form circle around ESTHER, *veils held in both hands over heads,* ESTHER *remains kneeling. The others move in rhythmic step forward and back toward* ESTHER *three times. Then form a semi-circle back of the kneeling* ESTHER.

TABLEAU IV—

ESTHER *rises, arms crossed on breast, veil over shoulders, looking upward. The others all kneel with arms crossed on breasts, looking down, their veils over their shoulders.* MEESHA *still sleeps.*

SLOW CURTAIN.

A DREAM OF QUEEN ESTHER

The Second Act.

Scene 1: *In the palace of the* King. *On the left, in front, the* King's *throne is raised upon a platform to which three steps ascend. The* King *is seated on the throne.* Hegai *stands at center, facing throne. Loud, oriental music is heard. Lights on full.*

King—

Go bid the court musician stop that music,
And I would rest a while, keep out the maids.

Hegai—

Your orders I obey.
(*Backs out bowing, exits right.*)

King—

The beauteous maidens of my mighty realm
Are as the desert sands, they weary me!
Their painted lips and leering eyes are full
Of languid beauty as the lotus bud.
Lily and lotus, red pomegranate, purple passion flower,
I'm satiated with their gaudy blooms,
And fain would see a modest timid wild-flower,
Radiant and white, pure as Mount Carmel snow.
Hegai, attend!

Enter Hegai *from right. He bows to the* King.

Hegai—

Live forever, King Ahasuerus—

King—

Some four score maids have passed that door today,
The beauties of my kingdom, some were fair,
And others passing strange to look upon.
There's one smart damsel blacker than a coal,

Methought at first it was our playful Koosh
Bedecked in gold and jewels in passing jest.

HEGAI—

The black maid Koosh is playing by the lake.

KING—

In sooth she is as fair as some I saw.
One maiden from the court of Babylon
Was thin, ah *very* thin, and seven feet tall,
And by her side waddled a sweet young thing
Dressed in a tent, she weighed two hundred pounds;
From India and Egypt have they come,
And some were wondrous fair. It pleaseth me
To read each face, here I saw Greed and Cunning,
There Indolence, Stupidity or Folly,
Anon came Pride, Self-love and Avarice,
Followed by Vanity or by grim Ambition.
In all the throng I missed the face I sought.

HEGAI—

Ah, you seek a maid?

KING—

Hegai, friend,
You've said the word, I seek a maid.
Some days ago I hunted in the forest
Without the city walls. I was alone
For it was rumored that a band of lions
Had wandered from the mountains. I found their trail
And followed it for many a weary mile,
A storm was coming on, the wood was dark,
When suddenly I heard a lion roar—
I shouted in my fury, for I saw
A crouching beast about to make a spring
Upon a tender maid. My spear I threw
And slew the lion there before his cave.

The maiden was the fairest, dearest maid
That e'er the eyes of mortal looked upon.
Her face was lily pale, her hair unbound
Flowed as the night flies o'er the desert sands.

HEGAI—

You learned her name?

KING—

Nay, that I never knew,
She'd lost her way, I led her to the gates
And lost her in the crowd. 'Twas for this maid
That I did issue my decree today.
I bade you search the city, nay, the kingdom,
For all the fairest maidens in my realm,
Thinking that she, the very queen of beauty,
Would surely be found out. All day I've watched
The maidens pass before me—the dark-eyed queens
From India's coral shores, blondes from the North-
land,
The wistful, brown-eyed maids from Caspian's sea,
The tawny-haired enchantresses from Nineveh,
Sinuous and sparkling, as a serpent's brood,
These have I seen and yet I wait in vain
For one sweet Shushan maid with violet eyes.

HEGAI—

My lord and king, a group of Shushan maids
Await without to cheer thy hours with song.

KING—

Let them come in! (HEGAI *backs out at right.*)
Mayhap she'll be among them.
The little timid maid I rescued from the lion.

Enter from right eight Persian Dancing Girls, bearing garlands of red roses. They form a semi-circle, moving to soft music. Then enter KAZMA SHIMEEL, *who comes to center and sings: "The Message of the Red, Red Rose."*

The Message of the Red, Red Rose.

Walter Ben Hare. Henry Bethuel Vincent.

Andante con moto espressione.

mf *rit.*

1. The red rose blooms in sum-mer-time; It breathes a per-fumed sigh and
2. The red rose dan - ces all the day, The south-wind pipes a mel - o-

pp *marcato.*

tells..... Of love to you, your sweet-heart's true; It
dy,..... The love - birds sing, the blue - bells ring, A

f dim. molto. *pp*

whis-pers, too, of wed-ding bells; In June, in love's own
ma - ting tune of Ar - ca - dy. The ro - ses dance a

month, it comes; The gen - tle South - wind soft - ly blows, The
dream - y waltz; "He's coming, dear, ... the wide world knows. He

cres.

sun-beams kiss the garden fair,.... And love is born, so sings the rose.....
thinks of you by night, by day,.... He'll claim his own," so sings the rose.....

p

cres.

CHORUS.

Ah, then he'll not for - get, dear, Ah, then he'll not for - get,.....

p

Gold bees are humming, Summer is com-ing; Ah, then he'll not for-get,

rit.

Ah, then you'll not re-gret, dear, Ah, then you'll not re-gret,.....

a tempo.

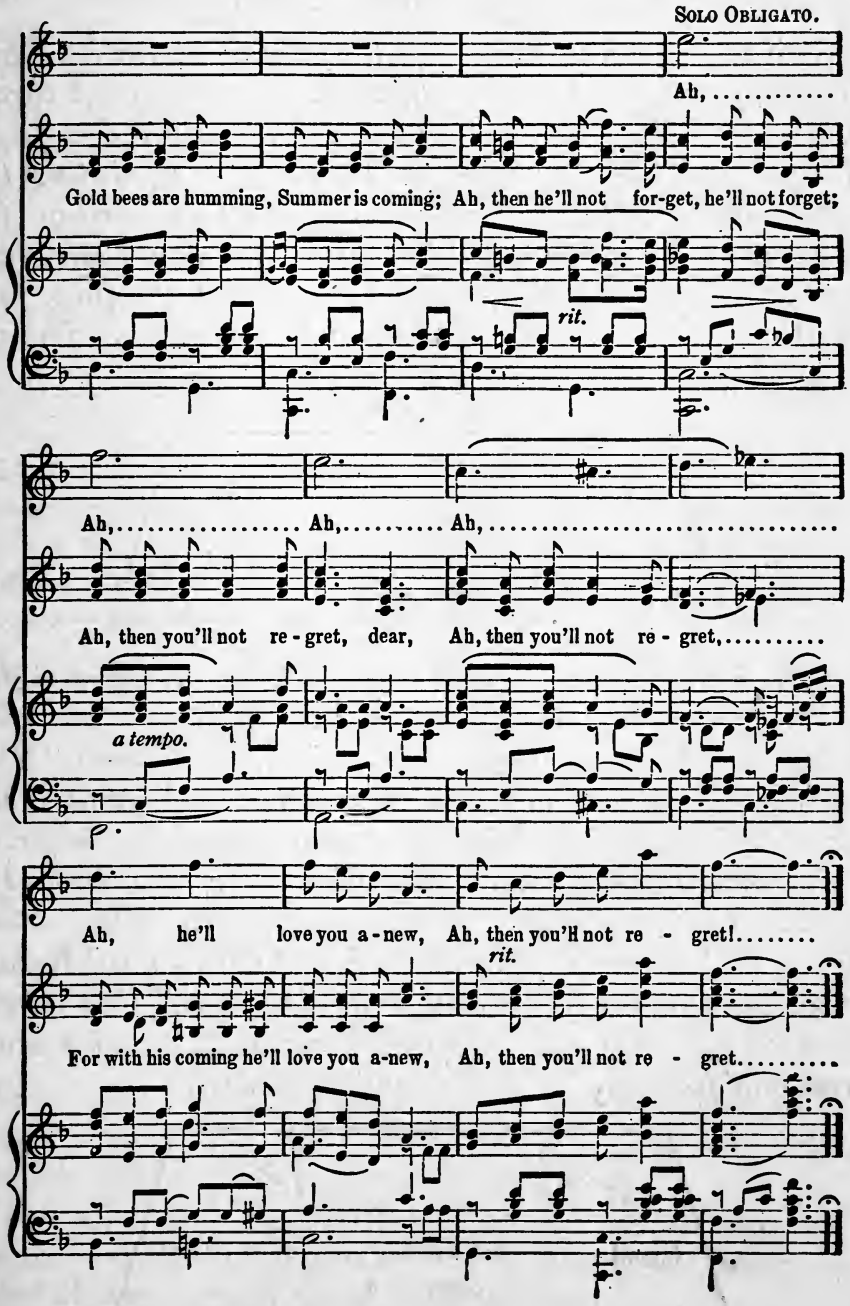
For with his coming he'll love you a-new; Ah, then you'll not re - gret!.....

rit. *a tempo.*

CHORUS OF WOMEN.

Ah, then he'll not for - get, dear, Ah, then he'll not for - get!.....

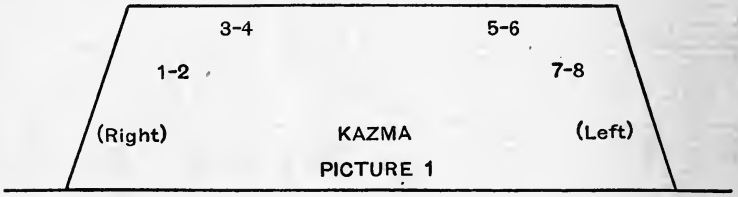
p


Solo Obligato.
Ah, ...
Gold bees are humming, Summer is coming; Ah, then he'll not for-get, he'll not forget;
rit.
Ah, ... Ah, ... Ah, ...
Ah, then you'll not re - gret, dear, Ah, then you'll not re - gret, ...
a tempo.
Ah, he'll love you a - new, Ah, then you'll not re - gret! .....
rit.
For with his coming he'll love you a-new, Ah, then you'll not re - gret.....

DIRECTIONS FOR THE DRILL.

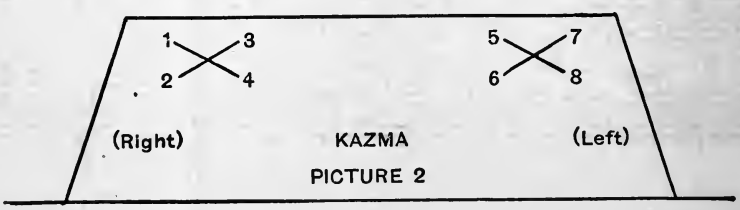
STEP: *A modification of the waltz hesitation, but slower, somewhat like a stately walk. In first count throw weight on right foot and put left foot daintily in front of right foot now touching the floor. While pointing toe sway body slightly toward left. Hold this position for two counts. Thus in a waltz measure you count one, two, three, four, five, six; on one and four point the foot, first right and then left. This simple step proves very effective.*

As soon as the song starts all assume Picture I.



PICTURE 1

1, 3, 5 *and* 7 *hold garlands in left hand, others in right. On the first two lines of the song the partners face each other, not directly but quarter-face toward audience. Rest full weight on foot away from audience and point other toe at the same time raise the garlands until an inverted V is formed, the flowers drooping downward from the angle. Look towards garlands and smile. This action on the first two lines of song. Hold tableau until* KAZMA *sings "In June, in love's own month it comes," then slowly form Picture II, using step as before;* 1, 2, 3 *and* 4 *cross arms and form an X,* 5, 6, 7 *and* 8 *likewise.*



PICTURE 2

All have left hands joined and hold garlands in right hands. Garlands held high. As KAZMA *sings the last four lines the X's revolve with step.*

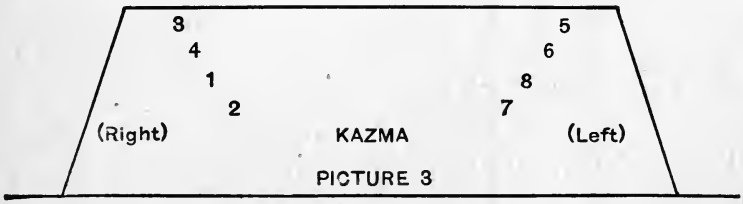
For Chorus resume Picture I. Clasp hands with partners and advance and retreat to partner. Then form same picture but closer to KAZMA *and all repeat the Chorus.*

At the beginning of second verse all form Picture I, but as soon as KAZMA *begins to sing, 2 and 7 turn their backs to the audience and face 1 and 8, 2 and 7 being nearer front of the stage. With garlands over shoulders 1 and 2 join right hands with arms extended and revolve, as do 7 and 8.*

At the same time 3, 4, 5 and 6, at the beginning of the second verse, meet in a line at the rear facing front. With hands held high and touching, they move in a line forward and back, while the other two couples revolve. This action on the first four lines of the second verse.

On the last four lines of the second verse, 1, 2, 3 and 4 form a circle at right rear and 5, 6, 7 and 8 do the same at left. These circles revolve.

Just before KAZMA *begins the chorus to the second verse all form Picture III.*



PICTURE 3

Picture III forms a perfect inverted V with girls holding garlands with both arms extended over heads. Hold this picture while KAZMA *sings the chorus.*

Then all repeat chorus, KAZMA *standing at center, the others grouped closely around her, holding their garlands so that* KAZMA *appears in a frame of roses.*

At the end of the song all kneel on right knees, arms and faces toward the throne.

KAZMA—

Hail, King of Kings, King of the East and West,
Thy servants thee salute!

KING—

Thy song hath pleased me.
But arise, I'm dizzy with your adulation.

Enter HEGAI *from right, bowing to the* KING.

HEGAI—

What is your will, O King?

KING—

Take them away,
And give them presents in the outer court.

(HEGAI, KAZMA *and* MAIDENS *bow, then retire at right, backing out with right arms upraised toward the throne.*)

KING—

She hath not come, my heart is sad within me,
Her mouth was music, sunshine was her hair—
Her eyes were violet pools of deep, deep blue
Reflected from the purple of the skies!
Hegai, attend!

Enter HEGAI *from right.*

HEGAI—

My lord's command?

KING—

The maidens all have passed?

HEGAI—

Not so, O King, I've kept the best till last.

KING—

The best, sayest thou? Then surely she is there.
Let them come in—

(*A loud wailing cry is heard off stage at left, followed by sobbing.*)

KING—

What noise is that? Go, silence it!

(*Exit* HEGAI *at right.*)

It sounded like the wailing of a child.

Enter HEGAI *from right.*

HEGAI—

'Twas Koosh the Ethiopian slave who cried,

KING—

The Ethiopian child? Her father was my slave,
He saved my life, drank of a poisoned cup
And died before mine eyes, that I might live.
Who dares affront the little, playful maid?

HEGAI—

Princess Zuecca of the royal strain
Of Media, exasperated at some childish prank
Struck Koosh and made her weep.

KING—

I know the haughty princess by repute,
Her father is my friend and royal cousin,
He seeks to make her queen! Send Koosh before me,
I'd speak with her.

HEGAI—

At once, O King! (*Exit right.*)

Enter KOOSH *from right.*

KOOSH—

I heard you say come in, and here I am.

(*She kneels on both knees, facing the throne, bends over placing palms of hands flat on ground and bows forehead on them.*)

KING—

Thou'rt welcome, little Koosh, for thy good father's sake.

KOOSH—

Hail, King of Kings, Hail, King of the East,
King of the West, King of the Sun and Moon and Stars,
Thy servant and thy slave, Koosh here salutes thee.

KING—

Arise and state thy woes.

KOOSH—

My woes, O King, are many as the ocean—
First I am small and young and black and no one loves me.
I tarried in the palace of the women,
Watching the peacocks strut before the glass,
They'd look a while, first this way and then that,
(*Imitates.*)
They'd practice how to smile, purr like a cat,
Then shrug their shoulders so, and raise their arms,
Walk back and forward, seemed almost afraid
To put their feet upon the floor only their toes,
Pointed like this! And thus they walked and purred and smiled.
And each one thinks that you will make her queen.
Princess Zuecca she's the worst of all—
She saw me laughing at her and she cried in fury,
"Thou base-born slave, fetch me a cooling drink!"

KING—

And thou?

KOOSH—

Oh, I—I hurried forth to do her bidding,
But as I passed the golden goblet to her,
I was bewildered by her spotted beauty,
And spilled the water down her golden robe.
(*Roguishly.*)

KING—

Oh, that was wrong, 'twas very, very wrong.

KOOSH—

Full well I know it, mighty King, for she
Turned like a sandstorm, struck me in the face
And pushed me from her. On the floor I fell
(*Childishly.*)
And cut my arm upon the golden throne.
I saw the blood and straight began to scream,
And then another maiden standing by,
A sweet, shy maiden in a modest gown,
Came to my side, knelt, bound up the wound,
With words of comfort. Wherefore, mighty King,
If you would harken to your faithful Zoosh,
You'll seek no further, but make that maid your Queen.

KING—

Were her eyes violets, golden beams her hair?

KOOSH—

No, King, her eyes were eyes, her hair was hair,
But she's the gentlest, kindest maid
I've ever seen from here to Babylon.

KING—

Methinks it is the same, the little maid
I rescued from the lion. Hegai, attend!

Enter HEGAI *from right.*

HEGAI—

Your wish, O King?

KING—

I have a scheme to try,
And if it is successful I shall know
Which maid without is worthy to be Queen.
(*Arises, removes crown.*)
Have these maids seen you?

HEGAI—

Not so, my King, I have no time for maidens.

KING—

'Tis well, then, 'twill help me choose a Queen.
Come, Hegai, into my inner court and there
I will acquaint you with a cunning plan.
Koosh, bide you here; whate'er you see
Betray us not, neither by word nor sign.
Bid all the maidens now assemble here.

(KING *and* HEGAI *cross to L.* HEGAI *raises the curtain and* KING *exits left, followed by* HEGAI. KOOSH *goes to door at right.*)

KOOSH—

Come in, come in! The King bids all assemble.

Enter from right the LADY OZOONA, *she comes down to center facing audience.*

OZOONA—

I am the first, bid all the others wait,
Give me my audience and they will wait in vain.

Enter from right JAKOSHA *and* KAZMA SHIMEEL.

JAKOSHA—

The palace of the King, it is so beautiful
That I am faint for joy. (*Very affectedly.*)
Maiden, attend me. I'm used to having slaves,
A score of soldiers and a score of maids
Always accompany me when I leave my house.

KOOSH—

The King commands you all to tarry here
Until he doth appear.

JAKOSHA—

Then fan me, girl, the heat is stifling.
(KOOSH *fans her.*)

OZOONA—

Remember, I'm the first, the Lady Ozoona
Will not give place to others. Stand aside!
(*To* JAKOSHA, *who has moved nearer the throne.*)

JAKOSHA—

Speakest thou to me? Then take a gentler tone,
The roughness of thy voice will make me faint.

KAZMA—

I thought the King was here. When he appears
I'll sing and charm his ears with Persian themes.
(*At left.*)

Enter the PRINCESS ZUECCA, *she comes regally down center.*

ZUECCA—

Give way, give way, Princess Zuecca comes.
The King hath sent for me and I am here
At his command, my lover and my husband.

OZOONA—

Nay, gentle princess, he's not made his choice,
And when he does mayhap 'twill fall on me.

JAKOSHA—

Or me, for I am very beautiful.
A Babylonian poet sang my wond'rous beauty,
Fair as parrot in the setting sun.

ZUECCA—

I've seen a parrot drabbled by the rain,
So stand aside, for I'm of royal blood.

KAZMA—

And I have never heard a parrot sing,
The King, you know, is passing fond of music.

JAKOSHA—

Such words, such rude remarks, I'm feeling faint!
(*Goes to rear.*)

OZOONA—

Where is that other maid, the one who stood
With some old slave and never spoke a word.

ZUECCA—

Belike she's smiling at herself in the mirror.
Such clothes and such an air! Who let her in?

OZOONA—

No doubt she had a summons, but I'm surprised
That such a maid would dare to show her face.

Enter from right ESTHER *and* MEESHA ZABEEL. *They stand timidly at right.*

JAKOSHA—

Behold she cometh, silent as before,
The splendor of the company frightens her.

ZUECCA—

Maiden, dost think that thou wilt make a Queen?
(*To* ESTHER.)

ESTHER—

Nay, that I do not know. Mordecai, my kinsman,
Bade me appear, and shall I not obey him?

OZOONA—

Your clothes and bearing speak your lowly birth—
I have braided my hair with threads of gold,
Red gold in my ebony tresses.

KAZMA—

I have crowned my curls with fire-red roses,
Heavy with perfume, alluring to the senses.

JAKOSHA—

I have hung great gems about my throat,
Onyx and beryl from the mines of Ophir.

ZUECCA—

And I am crowned with gems and beaten gold,
A regal crown such as becomes my rank.
(*With scorn.*)
Thinkest thou to stand uncrowned before the King?
Where are thy robes of state, where is thy crown?

(ESTHER *looks sadly down,* MEESHA *comes down between* ESTHER *and the other ladies, faces* ZUECCA *and speaks regally.*)

MEESHA—
She needs no earthly crown to show her royalty,
She is God's servant, the daughter of a King!

OTHERS—
A King?

MEESHA—
Her virtues are her crown—
They shine with brilliancy surpassing pearl or ruby.
Your crowns some day will crumble into dust,
The crown of her good deeds will never tarnish.

Enter the KING *from right, without the royal robe and crown.*

KING (*comes down center*)—
The King anon will sit upon the throne,
The maidens will retire and one by one
He orders each to appear before him.

JAKOSHA—
Tell me, gentle sir, the King's desires.
Doth he like tall maids, swaying like lilies?

ZUECCA— (*Close to* KING.)
Not so, he wants a regal wife,
Of royal blood and lineage over all. (*Close to* KING.)

OZOONA—
Men's hearts are ruled by beauty, therefore I
Will sway his heart, for men have died for me.

KAZMA—
If he but listens to my song of love
All other things forgot, he'll think of me.

KING—
I pray you step aside, wait there a while.

ZUECCA— (*Points to right.*)
We will await the pleasure of the King,
But when I come—remember, I'm a princess.
(*Exits right.*)

JAKOSHA—

Alas, more waiting! I am growing faint,
Summon my slaves! What ho, my slaves, without!

OZOONA— (*Exits right.*)

I will await with pleasure, for I am sure
That when he sees me, he'll no further seek.

KAZMA— (*Exits right.*)

I'll tune my harp without and wait his bidding.
(*Exits right.*)

ESTHER *approaches the* KING, *bowing.*

ESTHER—

Farewell, kind sir.

(*She looks at him for the first time.* MEESHA *and* KOOSH *at rear.*)

KING—

Maiden, we've met before.

ESTHER—

'Tis he! Now Heaven give me strength
For I must still the longing in my heart
And do my kinsman's bidding.

KING—

No word for me? Have you forgot the time,
Our meeting in the forest?

ESTHER—

Nay, gentle sir, accept my heartfelt thanks.

KING—

Only thy thanks?

ESTHER—

My thanks and gratitude, deep in my heart
Thy bravery and kindness stay forever.

KING—

I hoped some day to see thee once again,
To wander with thee by the river's edge,
To whisper in thine ear a mystic tale—

ESTHER—

No more, kind sir, I dare not listen further
Until I've seen the King, my heart must be a stone.

KING—

Thou thinkest then but on the royal honor?

ESTHER—

I think upon the kind old man who brought me up,
My more-than-father, he hath ordered me
To appear before the King, my life is his,
In spite of all the world, I must obey. Farewell!
(*Exits right.*)

MEESHA *bows and exits at right.* HEGAI *enters from left wearing the royal robe and crown.*

HEGAI—

Is it your pleasure, King of Kings, that I
Ascend the throne?

KING—

Even so. (HEGAI *ascends the throne and sits.*)
Now let the trumpets sound,
And when I give the sign that maiden is the Queen!

Trumpets sound. Soft music is heard. KAZMA *enters from right, kneels in front of the throne. All this action very slow.* HEGAI *extends scepter,* KAZMA *kisses it, sighs, bows head, rises and backs out at right.*

KOOSH—

Kazma Shimeel, the nightingale of Persia,
Farewell, sweet bird, you'll sing in other gardens.

(*The speeches of* KOOSH *should be delivered in a pert, mocking manner with exaggerated gestures, grimaces and bows.*)

Enter OZOONA *from right, she advances slowly and kneels before the throne.* HEGAI *slowly extends scepter, she kisses it and rises.*

OZOONA—

I thank the stars above for this,
That there are other men in Persia
That worship even now at beauty's shrine.

KOOSH— (*Backs out at right.*)

The Lady Ozoona loves but one thing in the world.

KING—

And what is that, O Koosh?

KOOSH—

The Lady Ozoona!

Enter JAKOSHA *from right. She speaks to* KOOSH.

JAKOSHA—

Support me, slave, I never felt so faint.

(KOOSH *tosses her head and turns aside,* JAKOSHA *kneels before the throne.* HEGAI *extends the scepter. She kisses it and rises.*)

JAKOSHA—

My lord, I'm like a gentle swaying lily,
I'm overpowered with all thy kingly beauty.
Here must I stay; I fear I cannot move.

HEGAI—

Assist her, Koosh! (*She does so.*)

JAKOSHA—

Alas, great King, open thine ears to my grief,
Here let me stay and cheer thee with my tears.

HEGAI— (*Weeps.*)

Take her away.

(KOOSH *leads her out at right, then immediately returns and imitates the action of* JAKOSHA *weeping before* HEGAI.)

KOOSH—

Alas, great King, I am a golden sunflower,
(*Weeps loudly.*)
Here let me stay and cheer you with my tears.

And if you will, I'll weep the whole day long,
Perhaps you'd like a living fountain here?
(*Imitates.*)
Support me, slave, I never felt so faint!
(*Retires to rear.*)

Trumpets sound. The music continues. Enter ZUECCA *from right. She kneels at the throne.*

ZUECCA—
My lord and King, Princess Zuecca, I,
Your kinsman and your subject, of the royal blood.
My wealth is plenteous as the desert sands,
My charms as many as the ocean waves.
If you do choose me Queen I'll help you rise
Until you are the conqueror of the world.

KING—
The King will choose for love and love alone.

ZUECCA—
Be silent, slave, I did address the throne.

HEGAI—
Princess Zuecca, he hath answered for me.

(*Extends scepter slowly. She gazes at it angrily, starts and then controls herself with a mighty effort. She rises and gazes scornfully at* HEGAI.)

ZUECCA—
I am dismissed? That is your final word?

HEGAI—
Proud lady—

ZUECCA—
Nay, say no more, it is enough, I am dismissed.
(*Exits right.*)

KOOSH—
She frightened me with lightning in her glance,
She's like a summer whirlwind, cloudy and dark,
Then suddenly the fire bursts forth and thunder's heard.

If I were King and she the only maid
That lived upon the earth, I'd die a bachelor.

KING—

How many more are waiting there without?

KOOSH—

Only one more, great King, but such a one!
The rarest, sweetest maid in all the world.
I saved the best till last.

KING—

Hegai, come down, we'll play the jest no longer.
Give me my crown, I'll be the King again.
(*Sits on throne.*)
Now bid the trumpets sound, a Queen approaches,
The fairest among millions, altogether lovely!

Trumpets sound and the music continues. ESTHER *enters from right, eyes cast down. She kneels before the throne.*

KING (*rises and comes to her, lifts her up*)—

Arise my own, look in mine eyes and see
The man who saved you from the lion. I am King.

ESTHER (*surprised*)—

The King, my lord, the King! (*kneels*).

KING—

The King of all the land, your King, my Queen,
Call out the heralds, sound the harps and timbrels,
Let all rejoice for I have found my Queen!

The music swells louder. KOOSH *exits at right and returns with a royal robe which she clasps over the kneeling* ESTHER. *Singing heard without. All the second act characters and the children of Act I appear, marching in couples, singing:*

HALLELUJAH CHORUS.

Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!
For the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!

The kingdom of this world is become
The kingdom of our Lord, and of His Word,
And of His Word; and he shall reign forever.
King of Kings and Lord of Lords,
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!

(*Use concealed sopranos, altos, tenors, and bassos for this chorus. Near the end a child enters with a crown on a silken cushion.* ESTHER *kneels throughout the song. On the last line the* KING *places the crown on her head.*)

CURTAIN.

NOTE: *If the Hallelujah Chorus is too difficult it may be omitted and the final tableau given to the accompaniment of soft music by an orchestra or organ.*

A DREAM OF QUEEN ESTHER

The Third Act.

Scene 1: *The same as the Second Act, but nine years later. Couches at left and at rear. Throne at right. Oriental cushions around stage.* Ozoona *reclines on couch at rear.* Zuecca *is seated on couch at left.* Kazma *sits on cushion on floor, her back leaning against the rear couch.* Koosh *is seated on the steps of the throne.* Jakosha *lies on a fur rug at left. Soft music takes up the curtain. A song is introduced by* Kazma. *"The Winter Lullaby" by DeKoven is recommended.*

Zuecca—

I have been walking in the hanging gardens—
Before the rise of the sun, listening to the birds,
The nightingales in their cages, singing in their prison,
Singing their songs of love and joy and life.
Zuecca's heart gives back no echoing song,
But like the birds I'm caged and long for freedom.
Princess Zuecca of the royal blood is here,
Within the palace of the King, a bondwoman.
My thoughts fly back, riding on envious wings,
Back to that fatal day nine years ago—
The day he chose her Queen.

Ozoona—

Nine years ago? It seems but yesterday
When we were summoned here before the King.
High hopes filled many a maiden's heart that day—
For each one longed to wear the imperial crown.

JAKOSHA—

Ay, all but me. I'd faint from sheer exhaustion
Were I the Queen. There's too much work to do,
I'm far too delicate.

KOOSH—

Ay, delicate indeed. Methinks a gentle puff of wind
Would turn you over like a thistledown.
And yet, in spite of all, your appetite is good.

JAKOSHA—

If I could have my way, here would I dwell,
Amid the perfumed lily beds of Shushan,
Watching the colored waters of the fountains,
Fanned by my slaves, attended by my maids,
In dreamy indolence I would forget the world,
And live to please myself, O rapturous day!

KOOSH—

I'd rather peddle water in the streets,
Or toil beside the oxen in the field.

OZOONA—

Where is her gracious majesty, the Queen?

ZUECCA—

Mooning, belike, without her husband's gates;
He will not let her in and like a babe
She stands all day and gazes at his walls.

KAZMA—

Princess Zuecca, malice drives thy tongue.
Our gracious Queen still holds her husband's love.

ZUECCA—

Indeed? Thou thinkest so? Pray let me think,
When was the time she last appeared before him?
Yesterday? A week ago? Two weeks? A month?
For thirty days she hath not seen his face.

KOOSH—

Nor you, nor I, nor any other woman,
The King is busy with affairs of state.
He spends his days and nights with mighty Haman.

ZUECCA—

Be silent, slave, or speak of things you know.
'Tis true my brother Haman is his friend
And sits at his right hand, they plan great things.

OZOONA—

If I were Queen he'd not usurp my place!

ZUECCA—

They plot the downfall of the Jewish race.

KAZMA—

The Jewish captives will be slain, I hear.

ZUECCA—

The edict hath gone forth signed by the King.
My brother Haman hath the thing in hand.

JAKOSHA—

What have they done to merit such a fate?

ZUECCA—

Haughty and proud they will not bend the knee
To him the King delights to honor, my brother Haman.
Therefore they must perish, women and men,
The old, the young, even the babe in arms!

JAKOSHA—

O speak not on such things! It makes me shudder,
Mine is a tender heart, so do not wound me
With tales of slaughter. Rather let us gossip.

OZOONA—

A Jew once labored in my father's vineyard,
A stalwart youth with eyes that burned like flame.
A pity if they slaughter him, he'd make a husband.
And there are many maids unwed in Shushan.

ZUECCA—

My brother Haman says the Jews are sorcerers,
And even sought to kill our noble King.

Enter HEGAI *from right. The* LADIES *arise.*

HEGAI—

Make way, make way, room for our gracious Queen!

(*The maidens group at left facing the right in a straight line.*)

HEGAI—

Make way for Esther, our noble Queen is here!

Enter ESTHER *from right. The maidens bow low. She returns their salutation and takes her place on the throne.*

JAKOSHA—

Hail, Queen Esther, our beloved mistress!

ESTHER—

Maidens, you may withdraw, I'd be alone.

OZOONA—

Thy wish is our command, we'll wait your orders
Beside the purple fountain in the grove.

(*Maidens raise their right hands and bow, then back out at left.*)

HEGAI—

My Queen is sad, can Hegai help thee? (*Kneels.*)

ESTHER—

Nay, gentle Hegai, leave me to my sorrow.

(HEGAI *rises, bows and exits at right.*)

ESTHER—

I pace my terraced heights, my hanging gardens,
Watching the gliding of the river Eulous
Amid the flat and fertile plains below.
From India to Egypt all is my husband's,
The waters of the Nile, the sacred Ganges,
E'en where Euphrates' waves wash Babylon's walls,

Fed by the streams that flow down from this city—
And I am Queen of all this mighty realm,
Yet sad of heart am I. There in the gardens
(*Comes to front.*)
On green banks through the still and dreamy hours
The yellow sunlight slumbers all day long,
Steeping in golden mist the drowsy flowers,
Hushing in sweet content the wildbird's song,
And I, the Queen, stand mute before his walls,
Anhungered and athirst to see his face,
To hear him say, "Esther, beloved wife!"

One night I stole without the city gates,
(*Goes to left.*)
E'en to the desert's edge to calm my heart.
Stars dropped from heaven to see my bitter grief,
The moon was hid behind a pitying cloud,
The frowning rocks said, "Esther, 'tis the end!"
The sands replied, "O Queen, he loves thee not!"
For thirty days I have not seen his face,
For thirty nights I have not heard his voice,
But what are days and nights when love is dead?
The thirty days hath dragged like thirty years.

(ESTHER *returns to the throne and sinks upon the seat.*)

MEESHA *enters from right and kneels at foot of the throne.*

ESTHER—

Speak, Meesha!

MEESHA—

God's peace rest upon us!

ESTHER—

And upon our household. What are your tidings?

MEESHA—

I come from Mordecai.

ESTHER (*starts*)—

From Mordecai? How fares my noble kinsman?
Is it well with him? You do not speak! Meesha!
Your face is full of agony, you cannot meet my eye,
O woe is me, my Mordecai is dead!

MEESHA—

Not dead, beloved Queen, but sore oppressed,
Bowed down by sorrow, with ashes on his head
And girt in sackcloth, he is at your gates.

ESTHER—

Go bid him enter. I will see him here.

(MEESHA *bows and exits at right.*)

Some icy fear seems clutching at my heart.
The King's neglect, the mocking of my maidens,
And Mordecai in sackcloth and in ashes!
What can it mean? Methinks I read my doom,
But I will lift mine eyes unto the Lord,
I trust the Living God, He'll be my guide.

Enter MORDECAI *from right slowly and with head bowed down. He crosses to rear center, does not look at* ESTHER, *but raises his arms and eyes on high.*

MORDECAI—

Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry
Come unto Thee; hide not Thy face from me;
My heart is smitten, withered like the grass,
I have eaten ashes like bread, O Lord,
And mingled my drink with weeping!
Look down from the heights of Thy sanctuary,
Deliver us, O Lord, from evil men—
My soul cleaveth unto the dust, my heart
Melteth for heaviness. Woe is me!

ESTHER *has watched him with terror during this speech, she comes timidly down from the throne and approaches him.* MEESHA *enters from right and stands at rear.*

ESTHER—

Mordecai, speak to me, my heart
Will break in twain at your strange words.

MORDECAI (*slowly looks at her*)—

Esther, art thou a daughter of Judea?

ESTHER—

Thou knowest it, my lord!

MORDECAI—

Dost love thy people?

ESTHER—

Love is too weak a word, I'd die for them.
Tell me thy grief, why do you look so wild,
What anguished hand put ashes on thy brow?
A strange foreboding sweepeth over me,
What mean thy words of woe? O speak, I pray!

MORDECAI—

An edict hath gone forth signed by the King,
It is a warrant for my death and thine
And all the Jewish race within this land.
The aged sire, the matron and the maid,
Young men and old, the tiny toddling babe,
All, all must perish at the King's command.
(*He hands scroll to* ESTHER, *who reads.*)

ESTHER—

Unto the King's lieutenants and the governors
Of every province, and to every people
After their language: In the name of the King,
And sealed with the King's ring, all the Jews
Both young and old, little children and women,
Shall be destroyed, killed and caused to perish
In one day, even the thirteenth day of Adar,
Their land and property shall be your prey.
This is the King's command, signed with his seal.

MEESHA—

Monstrous!

ESTHER—

Some traitor's hand is here, I see it all—
It is the work of Haman. (*At center.*)

MEESHA—

And doth his hatred then extend so far
That innocent and guilty all alike
Must feel his deadly vengeance? (*At right.*)

MORDECAI—

Haman, that wicked prince, eyes with contempt
All other mortals, and with haughty step
He treads the earth as if he were the King,
While envy, like a vulture, tears his heart.
(*At left.*)
Through him the cruel mandate hath gone forth
Signed by the King. Two million of our people
Are to be slaughtered, Israel's race
To be exterminated. O woe is me!

ESTHER— (*Sinks to knees sobbing.*)

My crown doth clog mine head when thine's of ashes.

MEESHA— (*Removes it.*)

Your life is safe, my Queen, for none suspect
That you're a Jewess.

ESTHER—

Mordecai, arise, my heart is breaking
At thy great grief. Arise, trust in our God!

MORDECAI (*arises, assisted by* ESTHER)—

I will arise and I will trust in Him,
My trust is in the Lord, even if I
And all my people meet a fearful fate.

ESTHER—

O God, our hope and trust in ages past,
(*Speaks wildly.*)
Our guiding Hand in times that are to come,
Raise us an instrument of salvation

To save our people from the oppressor's heel!
Send a deliverer, God, to save us from destruction.

MORDECAI—

The Lord hath answered, I have heard His voice,
The way is clear, deliverance is nigh.

ESTHER—

Deliverance?

MORDECAI—

It is the voice of God,
(*Turns slowly and looks at* ESTHER.)
Just now you said that you would give your life
To save your people. Now hath come the time,
The appointed time, when you must act for us.
I've often pondered on the will of God
That made you Queen, now all is clear to me.
You were appointed to your high estate
To save your people. Nations may rise and fall,
And Queens may come and go, they'll be forgotten,
But God hath raised my Esther to the throne
To save the chosen people. Now and henceforth
The name of Esther will resound throughout the ages,
Not as a Queen, nor as a simple Jewish maid,
But as the saviour of the Jewish race.
The Lord hath spoken, you can save the Jews.

ESTHER—

I, Mordecai?

MORDECAI—

Even you.

ESTHER—

The edict hath gone forth, I cannot change it,
The law of the Medes and Persians is unalterable.
What can I do, I'm but a woman?

MORDECAI—

Art thou a bruisèd reed, put on thy strength,
Art thou a smoking taper, the little spark
Will glow into a flame, will kindle into fire
And send its radiance far. Go in and tell the King
That you yourself are of the hated race,
That if they perish, you must perish, too.

ESTHER—

I dare not go before the presence of the King
Without a summons, that is certain death.
For thirty days I have not seen his face,
The ardor of the King hath cooled and he
Prefers the company of the wicked Haman.

MEESHA—

'Tis true, if she appears before the King
Unsought, it means a sudden, speedy death.
It is a law honored by Medes and Persians!
And since she's lost her favor with the King
How can she hope to save a hated people?

MORDECAI—

Esther, I love thee better than my life,
You are the apple of mine eye, the staff of mine old age.
Full well I know the dangers of thy task—
But you must brave his anger, risk disgrace,
Even face death, to save the Jewish race.

ESTHER—

But I am young, my lord, and life is sweet.

MEESHA—

Then do not hearken to his voice of doom,
He says he loves thee yet he bids thee go
Before the King to almost certain death.
No, no, beloved mistress, hark to me

(*Kneels to* ESTHER.)

Retire within thy palace, bid him go,
The Lord will save His people without you.
I'm pleading for thy safety, Esther, for thy life,
Bid him begone and save thy life!

MORDECAI—

Peace, woman, peace!
The bloody edict hath gone forth, the ring
Hath passed from the King's hand. Must we perish
A captive, scattered and a feeble people,
Without a leader, no power of resistance?
The land is terrified, desolation stalks
Among the Jews, slaughter is imminent.
Death letters have been written, but hear my words,
The chosen people of the Lord, His race
Shall never perish from the earth. Thy hand
Shall save thy people, hesitate no more.

MEESHA—

Nay, do not heed him! Peace, Mordecai!

MORDECAI—

For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace,
And for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest.
Esther, I wait thy word!

ESTHER—

If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
Let my right hand forget my cunning,
If I do not remember thee,
Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth.
God hath established me upon the throne,
Mine hour hath come, I'll go before the King.

MEESHA—

No, no, dear Esther, it is certain death!

ESTHER—

My people, Meesha, are as my heart's blood,
Dearer than life, ay, than a thousand lives.
Go, Mordecai, gather all the Jews

That are in Shushan, fast ye for me,
Neither eat nor drink three days, by night or day,
Then will I go before my Lord, the King.

MEESHA—

Esther, you'll perish.

ESTHER—

Then will I go before my lord, the King,
And if I perish, I perish!

TABLEAU.

MORDECAI *stands with hands crossed on breast looking down,* ESTHER *in center with head and eyes looking upward,* MEESHA *kneeling near her at right, sobbing with her face in her hands.*

CURTAIN.

SCENE 2: *The same as before but four days later. The* KING *is seated on the throne.* HEGAI *stands before him.*

KING—

My heart is heavy, Hegai, with cares of state,
I fain would rest, are all my guards without?

HEGAI—

Even so, O King!

KING—

Rumors hath reached my ears that Haman's false,
Fired by ambition he aspiring seeks
To adorn his brow with mine own diadem,
Indeed, to gain a point he'll condescend
To mask the native rancor of his heart
And smooth his venomed tongue with flattery.
His fall is imminent. Stand thou without!

(HEGAI *bows and exits at right.*)

KING—

I see it all. The slaughter of the Jews
Is sought by him to fill my land with woe.

But I am powerless now, my word is given,
The edict hath gone forth sealed with my ring.
But I will watch him close and all his craft
And cunning shall avail him naught; if he's a traitor
He dies a traitor's death.

(HEGAI *rushes in from right and kneels before the throne.*)

HEGAI—

Someone approaches in the outer chamber.

(*The* KING *rises in wrath.*)

KING—

Who dares approach my royal presence?

Enter ESTHER *from right, slowly, and followed closely by* MEESHA ZABEEL.

KING—

Who so rash as to court a speedy death?
What ho, my guards! (*He recognizes her.*)
What, Esther, is it thou? (*Sternly.*)
Why are you here, I did not summon thee!

ESTHER (*staggers back into* MEESHA'S *arms*)—

Alas, it is the end. Meesha, support me!

KING—

She faints! My cruel words have killed her,
Esther, my Queen, fairest among millions,
Speak to me!

ESTHER—

O mighty King, forgive me!

KING—

I welcome you! See, I extend the scepter.

(*The* KING *sits on the throne and extends his scepter.* ESTHER *kneels at the throne and kisses the scepter.* MEESHA *stands at the rear and* HEGAI *at rear left.*)

ESTHER—

O royal sire, I faint with gratitude.

KING—

Then rise, my Esther, rise, this lowly posture
Suits not with charms like thine, they should command,
And every heart exult in thy behests. Rise, Esther!

ESTHER—

Not till you grant my boon.

KING—

Speak and 'tis thine, Esther, what wilt thou?
Wide though our kingdom, let thy eager wish
Search for some gift worthy of the Queen
And by the glorious Bel, our worshipped god,
Thou shalt not have denial, e'en my crown,
Or half mine empire! I, the King, have spoken!

ESTHER—

This only I beseech of thee—my life!

KING—

Thy life?

ESTHER—

The lives of all my helpless race that you
By word and ring have ordered for destruction.

KING—

I do not understand.

ESTHER—

I am a Jew!

KING—

A Jew?

ESTHER—

Even so, my lord, I am a Jew! (*With pride.*)

KING—

You sprung from that vile race? O woe is me!

ESTHER (*rises*)— (*Sinks on throne.*)

This Jewish race, O King, that you deem vile,
Can boast a record, mightiest e'er known,
Extending back to Father Abraham's days—

While other nations were but half barbaric,
Dwelling in caves, like wild men of the north,
E'en then our favored race was far advanced
In knowledge, wealth and skill, in all that makes
A nation good and great, her laws superior,
And her leaders, men of good deeds and valor.

When other peoples bowed the knee to gods
Of stone and brass, the people of Judea
Worshipped the Living God, He was their guide.
He builded them the city of Jerusalem
From all the corners of the earth men came to gaze
Upon this mighty Jewish race to learn
The secret of their greatness—'twas their trust in God.
But they, alas, forgot their heritage,
They offered incense to the heathen gods,
And for this grievous sin they were delivered
Into the conqueror's hand, their land destroyed!
O King, I bend my knee for those poor bondmen
(*Kneels.*)
They've served their masters with fidelity,
Obeyed thy laws and been thy loyal subjects.

KING—
Haman hath said they would assassinate their King.

ESTHER—
The wicked Haman spoke with lying lips.

KING—
My doubts are justified. Esther, sit beside me,
In royal court, I'll do thy people justice.
Hegai, there's a gibbet near the city gates.

HEGAI—
A lofty gibbet, sire, 'twas made by Haman
For Mordecai the Jew to hang thereon.

KING—

Summon my guards and send them straight to Haman,
Take him and hang him on that gibbet,
Thus will I make amends. Hasten away,
Thus perish all the traitors to the King.

(HEGAI *bows and exits at left.*)

KING (*to* MEESHA)—

Go summon Mordecai, I would speak with him.

(*Exit* MEESHA *at left.*)

ESTHER *and the* KING *sit upon the throne. Music is heard from a concealed orchestra, some soft oriental selection in march time. Enter the* ROSE MAIDS *from the left, walking in couples, the first couple enters, advances to the throne, bows and retires to rear, while they are bowing the second couple are entering, etc.*

The ROSE MAIDS *line up at rear of stage facing the audience. Then enter* KAZMA *and* OZOONA *from left, they bow and then retire to rear left. While they are bowing* JAKOSHA *and* ZUECCA *are entering, they retire to rear right.* KOOSH *enters alone, bows very low and sits on the steps of the throne.*

Then the CHILDREN *enter in couples, bow and retire to rear. They enter from right. The* KING *and* ESTHER *nod graciously at their court as each couple bows.*

Finally HEGAI *enters from left.*

HEGAI—

Make way, make way for Mordecai,
The man whom the King delighteth to honor.

All the characters bow as MORDECAI *and* MEESHA *enter from left, approach the throne and bow.*

KING—

Mordecai, my friend, preserver of my life,

Henceforth I make thee my chief counsellor
In all my cares of state. On thee I do bestow
All Haman's wealth and all of Haman's power.
(*Rises.*)
And from henceforth I break the heavy bonds
That sore oppressed my faithful Jewish people.
And from this day I honor equally
The Jew and Gentile. Go rebuild thy temple
People thy wasted cities, you are free.

MORDECAI—
This day shall sound in ages yet to come.

KING—
Then celebrate it now and evermore
With joy and music, 'tis the Feast of Purim,
Always honor it for on this day
The Jewish race was saved from dire destruction,
Saved by a maiden, fairest among millions,
Altogether lovely, Esther our gracious Queen!

(*All unite in singing*)—

SOUND THE LOUD TIMBREL.

Sound the loud timbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea,
Jehovah has triumphed, his people are free;
Sing for the pride of the tyrant is broken,
His chariots, his horsemen, all splendid and brave;
How vain was their boasting, the Lord hath but spoken,
And chariots and horsemen are sunk in the wave.

CURTAIN.

An Early Bird

BY

WALTER BEN HARE

COMEDY, in 3 acts; 7 males, 7 females. Time, 2½ hours. **Scenes:** Private office of a railroad president; room in a cheap boarding house at Flagg Corners. Act I.—A bird in the tree. Act II.—A bird in the bush. Act III.—A bird in the hand.

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

Cyrus B. Kilbuck....President of the P. D. Q. Railroad
Tony Kilbuck.....His Son, Just Out of College
Mr. Barnaby Bird.....The Boss of Flagg County
Mr. Mulberry.....Chief Attorney for the Road
Bruce Ferguson.....A Clerk in the General Offices
Artie.....An Office Boy
Mr. Perry Allen.....A Young Gentleman Farmer
Jessamine Lee.....The Girl
Mrs. Van Dyne.....An Agent for the P. D. Q. Railroad
Imogene McCarty.....A Stenographer
Mrs. Beavers.....From Flagg Corners
Rosa Bella Beavers.....The Belle of Flagg Corners
Mrs. Perry Allen.....Jassamine's Chum
Dilly.....Mrs. Beavers' Hired Girl

"You see that door? On the outside it says Pull, but on my side it says Push! Get the idea? I had no pull to make my way, only push! And it has made me a millionaire. Understand? Push!" Thus Kilbuck tells his son, Tony, who has been expelled from college. With unlimited nerve and a light heart, Tony starts out to carve his way to fame and fortune and to win the girl he loves. On the rough journey he meets one Barnaby Bird who figures strongly in the play but he outwits him, puts a big deal over on his father, wins the girl he loves and all's well. Comedy features are introduced by a coquettish stenographer, a fresh office boy, a country belle and her mother, a landlady of a Flagg Corners hotel and last but by no means least, Dilly, the hired girl. **Price, 35 Cents.**

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