



DAUGHTERS OF Carrying On The



Jean C.W. Smith

Grand Daughter Ruler

*Like the star that shines afar
Without haste and without rest,
Let each woman wheel with steady sway
Round the task that rules the day
And do her best.*

THESE few lines of verse dramatically portray the role of a group of Black women who, despite "hardships and abuses" when they were almost ashamed to call themselves members of the Order of Elks, persevered and have become one of the most significant forces in the community-building history of Black Elkdom.

The idea for an organization of Black women Elks was conceived by Emma V. Kelley who is revered as the Founder and Supreme Mother of the Daughters of the Improved Benevolent Protective Order of Elks of the World.

A Legacy of "Togetherness"

TO understand the wonder of the growth of the Daughters of Elks, one must understand intimately the Founder. She was deeply spiritual and her dream of a vast organization of Black women sprang from a compassionate heart which saw suffering people in her community. The wellsprings of her life were ripped apart by the neglect and poverty of body and spirit of her people, especially women.

The setting of the time of her turmoil is important for us to see and understand the tensions which tugged at the heartstrings of this tremendous personality. Blacks were only a few decades removed from enslavement. Many were friendless,

without adequate shelter or sufficient food. Many others were ill, bowed down with despair and because of their years of exploitation without expectation or education, they faced a bleak future without hope.

Emma Kelley—like her counterparts in Elkdom today—yearned to help these people she saw as her own. Not content to merely deplore the situation, like Dorcas in the Bible, she set out to remedy it. Also, because she believed in the power of "togetherness", her first step was to seek other people to help her. She was no proud individualist seeking a name for herself as a "do-gooder" or social worker. She knew that group effort was more effective than individual effort. Thus began the dream which, today, is a monumental legacy to womanhood, to our race and to humanity.

Mother Kelley dreamed of an organization in which Black women would be welcome because it would belong to them and they would share in its building and in its benefits. She was enraptured by this dream; it was of such depth and spiritual beauty that it likewise captured thousands of other women.

In describing the origin of the Daughters, Emma Kelley said:

...We well know that it was never intended for men to be alone, so the auxiliary to this Order was established.... It was on a bright summer evening on June 13th [1902], a small number of ladies had decided they wanted to be an auxiliary to the brother Elks, and in spite of some of the brothers not wanting such a department we were determined and thirteen of us were organized in the [lodge] hall at that time at the corner of Smith and Queen Streets in a Temple of Daughters of Elks by

"Pulling