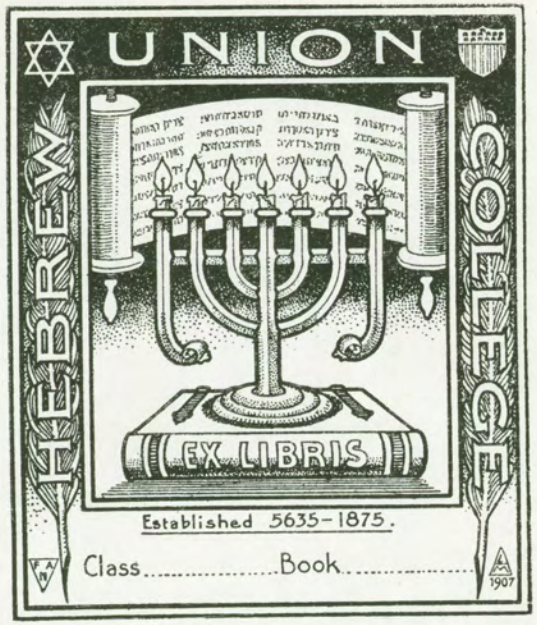

Dr. Doctor Gottheil
681 Madison Avenue
City

NEW YORK

THE JEWS OF NEW YORK,

By Hon. Charles P. Daly.

THE EDUCATION OF ORPHAN CHILDREN,

By Hon. Carl Schurz.

Reprinted from The American Hebrew.

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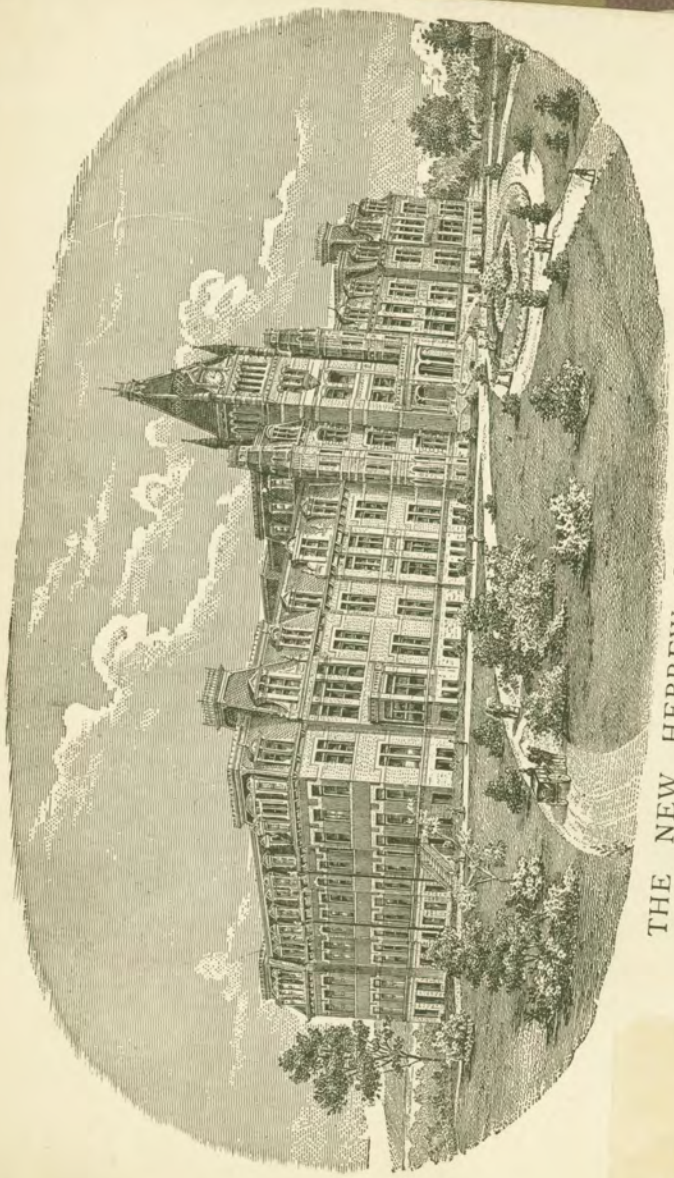

THE NEW HEBREW ORPHAN ASYLUM,
136th to 138th St., Bloomingdale Road to Tenth Ave., N. Y.
[From THE AMERICAN HEBREW, May 11th, 1883.]

[Reprinted from THE AMERICAN HEBREW.]

The Jews of New York,

BY HON. CHARLES P. DALY.

The Education of Orphan Children,

BY HON. CARL SCHURZ.

Two addresses delivered at the Laying of the Corner Stone of the new Hebrew Orphan Asylum, New York, Wednesday, May 16th, 1883.

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The Jews of New York.

AS I delivered, ten years ago, an address in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the benevolent Institution by which this Orphan Asylum is to be erected, it was perhaps very natural that I should be asked to say something on the laying of its corner-stone; and although I might offer the excuse of impaired health, and at this period of excessive judicial occupation, I have complied with the request, because it affords an opportunity of saying something respecting the Jewish people, which ought to be said on this occasion; and which it is especially appropriate should be said by one who is not of their race.

In the address referred to, I gave an account of the first settlement of the Jews in North America, which was in this city, 230

years ago ; and as far as the limit of such a discourse would admit, a detailed account of their subsequent history here, for a period of nearly two centuries. What impresses me to-day is the contrast between the small community whose history I then related and the spectacle which the Jewish race now presents in this city. The first settlers, 27 in number, were exiles, banished from Bahia, in Brazil, upon the general expulsion of the Jews from that kingdom, who came to this city, as the nearest place of refuge, it being then, in 1654, under the tolerant government of Holland. Their increase here was very limited. After fifty years they comprised but 100 persons ; and for the long period of 170 years, they had but one synagogue. To-day there are, in this city, 31 synagogues, and its Jewish population is estimated at 80,000 The single synagogue was a small one, and was not even crowded, as I can personally attest, having frequently, as a child, on Saturdays, looked in at the congregation, attracted by the burning lamp, the rich ornaments of the interior, and the strange spectacle

of persons sitting at public worship with their hats on. It was in the older part of the city, in a street that is no longer in existence, which was one of the most secluded and quiet streets of the city. It had originally been the pathway to a mill, from which it took its name of Mill Street, and retaining the original configuration of the pathway, it was short, crooked, and so narrow that one might readily pass the little entrance to it, in Stone street, without perceiving it. The synagogue was as secluded as the street. It was shut out from observation of the passer-by, by a high wall in front, so as to give no indication of the building behind it. This peculiar seclusion was probably derived from Holland, or was exacted by the Dutch authorities, when the first settlers came, for though Holland was the most tolerant of all the countries in Europe, and the one to which the exiled Jews from other lands went for security, they were even there subjected to some restrictions. They were not allowed to intermarry with Christians, nor to enter into mechanical employments, nor engage in retail trade ; and

the toleration extended to them, in respect to their religion, was with this qualification, that their synagogues, in cities, should be so erected as to give no external indication of their being places of public worship. This was probably the explanation of the wall in front of the Mill Street edifice, which was probably continued when the synagogue was rebuilt in 1818.

Thirty-two years ago I visited what were then the two largest synagogues in Europe, the one in Leghorn and the one in Amsterdam, the first of which indicated the intolerance which still existed in Italy; and the other, how completely every vestige of it had disappeared in Holland. Though I was directed to the street, and the very block, in Leghorn, where the synagogue was situated, I walked up and down for some time without being able to find it, until having observed several persons, at intervals, enter a low gate-way, I followed, and going up a long passage-way, came at the end of it to a large building, entirely open on one side, and presenting the novel spectacle of a congregation

engaged alike in public worship, and in traffic; for while the chanting of the service was going on, groups, seated on the steps, were evidently transacting business, from the interchange of writings and the counting out of gold from heavily laden purses. In Amsterdam, on the contrary, there was no such seclusion, but the synagogue which on Saturdays was occupied by the Jews was on Sundays used by a Christian congregation, Louis Napoleon, when King of Holland, having removed all disabilities.

The Jewish population of the City of New York increased over a long period of years, as I have said, but slowly. Even in the time of my boyhood, it was relatively a small community.

During the Colonial period many were drawn off to Newport, Philadelphia, or to some of the Southern cities, and this loss was not supplied, for until about half a century ago there was comparatively little Jewish emigration to this city from Europe. This is the more remarkable, for in many countries in Europe the Jews were then much op-

pressed, or at least, subjected to restrictions to which they never have been subjected in this city. I do not find even, that what was imposed upon them in Holland, was ever practically insisted upon here. On the contrary, some of the first settlers were freely admitted to the burgher-right.

After the Colony had passed into the hands of the English, the question was raised, in 1728, whether they could vote for members of Assembly, a Colonial Legislature having then been granted; and it was decided that they could not; but this was because the Assembly had to recognize that the laws of England were operative here, and by those laws Jews were not entitled to vote for members of Parliament. This appears, however, to have been the only restriction, even if this was subsequently adhered to, for Kalm, an intelligent Swedish traveler, who visited this city in 1748, and saw much of the Jews, and has given an interesting account of them, says that they then enjoyed "all the privileges common to the other inhabitants of the town or of the province." This was the more notable as the Colony of New York, under the English, was far from being a tolerant one. Roman Catholic priests were forbidden by a Colonial law to come within the province, under pain of perpetual imprisonment; and in 1741 an innocent man was hanged in this city chiefly upon the assumption, which he denied, that he was a Catholic priest. No such intolerance was shown to the Jews, who enjoyed, from the beginning, more privileges here than were accorded to them in Europe; and this being the case, it is, as I have said, remarkable that for so long a period so little accession was made to their numbers by emigration from Europe. The effect of this was that they became and were, within my own recollection, very conservative, and somewhat aristocratic, having been, as a race, so long residents in this city.

They were chiefly of Portugese extraction, a small portion only being of English birth or descent; and, as a body, they were greatly respected, alike for their probity, their industry, their public spirit, refinement and their quiet domestic virtues. But whilst

sharing fully with the rest of their fellow-citizens in the obligations and duties that constitute citizenship, they were still a people apart. In the English Colonial Records, documents and papers, they are frequently referred to as "of the Jewish Nation," a term not created by their fellow-citizens to distinguish them, but one of their own selection, and employed by them in communications, whether official or otherwise, where they referred to themselves as a body.

There was nothing in the laws at any time to isolate them, nor in the disposition of their Christian fellow-citizens, for not only, as I have said, were they highly respected, but so far from there being any distinction either upon social or religious grounds, the Rev'd Gershom Seixas, for fifty years the Rabbi, or rather Reader of the Synagogue in Mill Street, was for twenty-eight years of that time, and to within a year of his death, one of the Trustees of Columbia College, which was practically an Episcopalian institution, and one recognized, at the time, as representing in its professors and trustees the social culture of the city.

The distinction made was one of their own. They wished to be known as the name of their synagogue indicated, as the remnant of a lost nationality. They recognized Jehovah as the God of Israel, and themselves as the people of Israel, a distinction they were sedulous to keep up; for regarding it both as a religious and a family tie, they intermarried only amongst themselves; or if there were exceptional instances, they must have been of very rare occurrence. Those who believe that with the removal of all disabilities, the Jewish people will gradually conform to the rest of the community until every trace which now distinguishes them disappears, will find little to support them in this example, where it may be said that for two centuries all the conditions existed without any such indication. Emerson, in one of those passages in which he frequently expressed a great deal in a very small space, says that with the Jewish people, "race is a controlling influence." For more than two milleniums, under every climate, they have preserved the same character and the same employments." He does

not say in what this permanent character consists, and I will therefore take the liberty to refer to some of its features; such as the purity of the marriage tie, the strength of the family relation, the respect for parents, the love for offspring, and the great influence of women in all the affairs of domestic life. Another characteristic is that although they have been more widely distributed over the globe than any other race, no people have more fully imbibed the nationality of the countries in which they have settled. To quote again from Emerson, the English, he says, "are scattered over the whole face of the earth, and are homesick everywhere." This has never been the case with the Jews. They have always, unless prevented by obstructive laws, assimilated themselves to the institutions of the countries in which they have dwelt. A French Jew is essentially a Frenchman, a German Jew is a German, an English Jew, both in his personal appearance, in his feelings and in his prejudices, is always an Englishman; and there are none more devoted to the republican government of the

United States, or more proud of it than its Jewish citizens.

This is a characteristic they have shown in every country they have been in since their dispersion.

It applies also to the countries where they have been much oppressed;—countries which, notwithstanding the weight of their disabilities they have generally been reluctant to leave. They have been greatly oppressed in Russia, and yet there was in Russia, in 1876, 2,612,179 Jews, or not far from one-half of the entire Jewish population of the globe. None loved Spain and Portugal more than the Jews, who were banished from both, and none, in proportion to their numbers, had contributed more to the development of the wealth and prosperity of these countries. They were especially unwilling to leave Spain, a country that had been most attractive to them; where, as a people, they had risen to great distinction, and where, as a race, they had long dwelt. Sir Moses Montefiore, who has now attained the great age of 99, stated publicly, during the agitation re-

specting the boy Mortara, that he had in his possession evidence to show that his (Sir Moses') ancestors had settled in Spain two hundred years before the Christian era, a lineage probably extending farther back than that of any nobleman in Europe.

The decline of Spain dates from the expulsion of the Moors and the Jews. Leira, in Portugal, where the Jews formerly lived in great numbers and where the fourth printing press in Europe was set up by them, ended its prosperity with their departure; and Nuremberg, the great trading city of the Middle Ages, brought about its decline by their expulsion. In fact, the lesson taught by their banishment, was pithily expressed in the maxim of Frederic the Great, that to oppress the Jews never brought prosperity to any country.

There is another prominent feature in the character of the Jewish people, to which I shall refer, as especially appropriate on the present occasion, that is their humanity; and if humanity is one of the highest things to which civilization may attain, they have pos-

sessed it in a greater degree than any other distinctive people.

They have always been remarkable for the absence among them of crimes of violence. This is attested by the judicial records of every country in which they have lived. They have also always been a most charitable people, and their charity has not been confined to their own race, but has been freely extended to others. This has been a characteristic amidst all the changes and mutations in their history; in their adversity as well as in their prosperity.

I am perhaps better acquainted with their history in this city for a period of 230 years, than many of their own denomination, and I have never come across a single instance in which an aged or impoverished Hebrew has been supported, in this city, by the public authorities. When the first Jews came here, Governor Stuyvesant required, as a condition, that they should support their own poor; and they have fulfilled that condition from that day to this. The only instance that I have met with of a Jew being aided by our public institutions, was in the case of a stran-

ger who, being sick, was taken to the City Hospital; and that instance gave rise to the founding, in 1822, of the Benevolent Society by which this structure is now to be erected.

The superficial observer may think that they are charitable because they have suffered so much themselves. They have been so persecuted; so frequently in the past despoiled of their property and driven to want by their oppressors, that he may think that they are charitable through the lesson taught by their own experience. But he would be wrong in this conclusion, for this has been a characteristic of the Jewish race as far as we know anything of their history; and they have the oldest recorded history of any people.

There is the well known passage in the 19th chapter of Leviticus, that no field was to be harvested, nor the fruit of a tree to be gathered without leaving some portion for the poor. There was the tithe levied for the poor every 3d and 6th year of a cycle of 7 years, amounting to 9 per cent., and on the 7th year, when there was to be neither *sowing* nor

reaping, whatever came spontaneously from the earth and the fruit of every tree was free alike to the rich and the poor.

From a very early period there was an organization in the Jewish communities for the relief of the poor. They appointed well-known men for the collection and distribution of charitable gifts, and this was extended to the non-Israelitish poor.

What, however, is chiefly remarkable is the delicacy with which the poor were relieved. It was enjoined that alms were not to be given in public, that the poor might not be exposed to the shame of publicly receiving it. There was also the silent room in the Temple, where the charitable bestowed their gifts unseen, and where reduced persons of good families might go and have their wants relieved in secret. In fact, the leading idea that runs through all the rabbinical writings is, that charity must not be ostentatious. So that the charitable disposition of the Jews is not a result of their own sufferings, in many lands, but of their religion and their laws, when they were a united people

for what is here stated is what is found in the Mishna and the Talmud.

The presence here of Mr. Emanuel B. Hart, recalls as an illustration the conduct of his father, Bernard Hart, during the yellow fever in this city in 1798, the severest pestilence that has ever prevailed here—who nobly, whilst others fled, remained, and abandoning everything else, devoted the whole of his time, by night and by day, during the continuance of the pestilence, to the care of the sick and the dying.

The remaining characteristic referred to by Emerson, is that the Jews have always followed the same employments. This is generally true, but not invariably so. In Posen, for instance, where of the whole population, there are 60.000 Jews to 20,000 Christians—the Jews discharge all kinds of employments. They are mechanics, bricklayers, laborers, agriculturists, servants, and, under like conditions in any other part of the world, the result would probably be the same. It is to be borne in mind also that for centuries, in many countries they were shut out from the common em-

ployments; they were not allowed to acquire land, and were consequently not agriculturists, and were driven to the only means of subsistence that was open to them. Still, it must be conceded that they have not, as a people, inclined to those pursuits that call for the exercise of the physical powers, but to those which demand the exercise of the intellectual. They have not generally been producers of wealth like the tillers of the soil, the miner, the mechanie, or the manuturer, but fructifiers of it in the pursuits connected with the exchange of commodities; from the intinerant dealer to the opulant merchant and the financier of a community, of a nation, or of the world.

They have also distinguished themselves as scholars in many departments of learning; as philosophers, and as musical composers.

That they have shown such aptitude and speclal capacity for all kinds of intellectual pursuits, is in itself a very great compliment to them. It has been the source of their power, of their prosperity and also of their misfortunes. I say of their misfortunes, for in many

of the countries from which they were expelled they have been more hated as competitive and successful rivals, in trading and commercial pursuits, in professional employments, and in the competition among the learned than they ever were for their religion. It was easy at all times, in the past, to stir up against them the fanaticism of the ignorant and unreasoning; and they have been heavy sufferers from such outbreaks. But their general expulsion from countries where, as in Spain, they had arrived at great eminence as merchants and as professional men, and attained large wealth by their enterprise, acuteness, assiduity and general intellectual capacity, was, in my opinion, mainly brought about by the causes I have suggested.

Their religion was always the ostensible reason for their persecution and banishment; but the other was generally the real one.

The application for their expulsion from Spain, came chiefly from the merchants, the physicians, the lawyers and the universities. They were preëminent there in the professions of law and medicine, as well as in every

field of commercial activity; and the resentment of the indolent and haughty Spaniard was aroused by finding himself outstripped in every field where they were the intellectual competitors. Both the church and the nobility there, so far as I have been able to learn, were less unfavorable to them than their professional and commercial rivals.

I do not mean to say that they were themselves wholly without fault. They were very much given to the ostentatious display that frequently accompanies the sudden acquisition of wealth. The hostility and dislike which this excited, is said to have been the main reason for their expulsion from Brazil; and it may possibly have had something to do with the recent manifestation in Germany, where the habits of life of the people are simple, and luxury and display are offensive. But it is easy to see that the intellectual ability they have shown in Germany in commerce, in the press, and indeed in every field of intellectual activity, has had a great deal to do with it.

But I am extending my remarks very much further than I intended when I began. Other gentlemen are to be heard, and I will conclude with the expression of the belief that the prosperity which has always attended the Jewish people in this city, will continue, and that, with increasing population and additional claims upon their benevolence, other structures like this will hereafter arise, as monuments, in this city, of Jewish prosperity, Jewish intelligence and Jewish humanity.

The Education of Orphan Children.

THE Hebrew Benevolent and Orphan Asylum Society has evident reason to congratulate itself upon the good it has already done and upon its ability to do still more, to which this solemn occasion bears eloquent testimony. And the city of New York has equal reason to be proud of the citizens who built up this noble enterprise from small beginnings—not through the munificence of a few rich men, giving from their overflowing abundance, but through the lavish charity and public spirit of many who, while still obliged to be busy for the satisfaction of their own needs, are ever mindful of the greater needs of others. And how energetic that charity is appears from the singular fact that before arrangements could be perfected to lay the corner-stone of this grand structure, its walls are already run up high enough to receive the roof.

It is most praiseworthy to relieve the wants and sufferings of the infirm and to cheer the declining days of the aged. But a far more important and fruitful charity is that which devotes itself to the task of taking helpless youth by the hand to lead it upon the path of duty, virtue and usefulness. In performing this noble task with devotion and wisdom, you render an inestimable service not only to those immediately benefitted by your generous care, but to society in the largest sense. This charity confers a blessing not only upon the present but upon coming generations.

We who have been so fortunate as to grow up under the blessed shadow of the parental home are certainly all agreed that it is the early care and guidance of mother and father, the influence of family life which furnishes the best and strongest foundation of the moral and intellectual growth of every human being. It is true that this care and guidance and influence is not always in all respects what it ought to be. But, except in the worst cases it gives to the child at least the consciousness that it belongs somewhere; that it has the assurance of a foothold in life. And it is the saddest feature of the orphan child's lot that just this it finds itself deprived.

The poor orphan is cast upon the world a stranger, as it were; a waif, different from others in the most sympathetic and thus the most important of human relations; dependent upon pity instead of love. In the earliest stage of childhood, the orphan may not be aware of this. But when, with the keen intuition of the youthful mind, he opens his eyes to the realities of his situation, the consciousness of this privation, of this difference, of this dependence will be apt to grow upon him, and then to cast a shadow over his spirits; to give him morbid impressions as to his relations to the rest of mankind, to darken his hopes, to weaken his self-reliance,and to impede the development of his individual energies.

It is, therefore, the peculiar problem of the education of orphans not only to teach them the necessaries of knowledge and to discipline them into compliance with the ordinary duties of life, but to avert the effects of their situation I have spoken of; or to express it in one single word, to unorphanize them. It must supply as much as can be those family sympathies and influences of which the orphan has been deprived. It must guard against the growing up in the orphan's mind of the feeling that he is a being apart, less favored

than others in the moral order of the universe: it must, therefore, not seclude him from the outside world more than is absolutely necessary.

In this respect, it is easy to see, the bringing up of orphans gathered together in a great institution is subject to peculiar difficulties, and these difficulties increase as the number of pupils in the institution grow larger. The reason of this is plain: the individual child will then be liable to be looked at, and to be treated and to feel himself less and less as a distinct individual, and to become more and more a mere part of a large aggregation in which the individual, with its peculiar wants and desires and capabilities, disappears. It may be said that this is also the case with all other large institutions in which great numbers of children not orphans are educated and live together. But there is, after all, this very essential difference:—

Ordinary children who have their fathers and mothers and homes may indeed, in the large institutions in which they are educated, to a certain degree be merged in the multitude; but they have still their fathers and mothers and family homes to fall back upon; they have their foothold outside upon which they do not cease to stand and

upon which their individuality will assert and develop itself. The orphan child, on the other hand, if secluded in an institution, has to find there everything with which to nourish his moral and intellectual nature. He has no home, no foothold, no inspiration outside that may supply the deficiencies. If his individuality is stifled in his narrow circle, it is stifled everywhere.

Among those who have with benevolent and thoughtful interest inquired into this subject, the question has been discussed whether the best way to bring up poor orphans is not to distribute them among carefully selected, suitable families, by whom they are to be kept and treated like their own children, and sent to the public schools for their primary instruction, the boys afterwards to be apprenticed to a trade and the girls properly introduced to some practical occupation for an independent livelihood, the foster parents to be properly compensated, and the necessary supervision to be exercised by societies organized for that purpose. This system is reported to have worked well where it has been tried, especially in the many cases in which relations of affectionate sympathy grew up between the orphan children and the foster parents to whom they have been confided.

It is, however, readily admitted that such a practice, as a general system, is not always feasible, especially not in a country like this, with its constantly changing social conditions. Orphan Asylums are therefore a necessity. But it is equally certain that the Orphan Asylum can adopt and cultivate some of the most important features of the system just mentioned, and thus in a great measure obviate the difficulties to which great institutions of this kind are liable. And how this can be done you yourselves have already shown in one respect by a striking example.

While you gathered your orphans in your Asylum building, and housed and nourished and took care of them there, you sent them for their regular elementary instruction to the public schools, where they mingle with the other children of the people, and are taught like them, and play with and like them, and feel like them. In the public school they are by the same right as any other child. There they are upon an equal footing with the rest of mankind. There they are not charity children. And then, in the Asylum, you give them in addition industrial training, to enable them to gain an independent living when they enter into the competition of the world. Thus

your asylum does not supersede, but it merely supplements the public school.

This is a wise and most excellent system, and I venture to express the hope that the establishment of this larger institution will not endanger its continuance and development. It is true, the public school facilities in this immediate neighborhood are not as abundant as in the densely populated parts of the city, and the large number of children you expect to gather here may not be easily accommodated in the schools now existing. But even if you have to scatter your orphan children among many of them, and send them some distance for their common schooling, the moral advantage gained by making the poor orphans breathe the free air and consciously enjoy the rights they have equal and in common with the rest of the world, will far outweigh all apparent inconvenience. And in this magnificent structure you can establish facilities for industrial instruction and training in increasing variety, which will supplement the public school more completely and effectively than ever before, and thus send the wards of your charity well prepared and equipped into the world to meet its struggles and to improve its opportunities.

Will you pardon me still another suggestion? To unorphanize your orphans still more, one thing seems especially desirable: that thing is a bond of living individual sympathy between the orphan in the asylum and some human being outside of it, which in some measure may supply the affectionate and confidential relations between parent and child. In this respect the relation between teacher and pupil, be it ever so sympathetic, is not sufficient, for there is only one teacher to a great many pupils, and the sympathy of the teacher is, therefore, necessarily too much divided and dispersed.

But here are many families, hundreds of generous and warm-hearted men and women, who have by their magnanimous contributions shown how sincerely their hearts are in this noble work, and who are always ready to do still more. No appeal to them has ever failed to call forth a response. Now, each one of the lady patrons of this institution might constitute herself the individual patroness of some one child, to be selected by her among the many in the asylum; or, in order to avoid a perhaps not unnatural but unwholesome partiality for the prettiest and brightest, to be assigned to her by lot or otherwise—and, surely, patronizing,

the least attractive would be the most humane and meritorious work of charity. And if she then would devote to that one child her special interest, visit it sometimes, permit it to speak and to write to her, invite its little confidences, advise and encourage it, win and requite its affection, making it feel that somebody outside cares for it especially, that somebody will be proud of its good conduct, and that it can go to somebody with its cares and troubles and wishes and hopes—would not new rays of sunshine lighten up that orphan's existence? Would not that child presently cease to feel itself a stranger in the world and would it not be animated with new and hopeful ambitions? I have no doubt such relations exist already, and probably many of them. But when they become the general rule you will find in them a source of beneficence and satisfaction greater than can be purchased with any mere outlay of money, be it ever so lavish.

There is one general principle which I am confident, as practical men and women, you will always instinctively keep in mind. It is that, as an able writer on this subject expressed it, "the further the life of these young people differs from that of the work-a-day world, the more difficult

will they find it to accommodate themselves to its demands when they go forth into it to earn their living;" and, I may add, on the other hand, the more the arrangement of the subjects and methods of instruction, as well as the discipline of daily life in an institution like this, puts the orphans upon the same level and gives them the same opportunities and inspires them with the same feelings as other children, the better equipped and the more courageous and self-reliant will it send them forth to meet the competition with the rest of mankind.

But this is a large subject upon which much more might be said could I permit myself to go into detail. I can now only express the confident hope that this grand structure which you are dedicating to the noblest and most useful of charities will forever remain consecrated to high purposes; that it will be to the orphan children who are to inhabit it, an abode of happiness and useful preparation to which they will look back all through their lives with affection and gratitude; that to those whose generosity built it up, it will ever be an object of love and a source of satisfaction; and that the community which it adorns will always proudly point it out as one of the finest monuments of that to which this republic owes the best part of its greatness—the generous and enlightened public spirit of its good citizens.

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