

THE MONTEFIORE HOME.

BY HON. CARL SCHÜRZ.

Ladies and gentlemen! I am especially proud of being permitted to assist in the dedication of this monument of benevolence for two reasons. One of them I find in the object to which the splendid building which now shelters us, is to be devoted; the other in the fact that the name it bears does homage to one of the noblest men of this century, if not of all time.

The renown of Sir Moses Montefiore was different from that of most men of celebrity. It was not that of a poet, or an artist, or a man of science, or a philosopher, or a statesman, or a ruler. He was a plain broker and banker—a business man. He acquired wealth honestly in the money market. He was a simple citizen, by no means born to high social standing and distinction. And he was a Jew—a Jew at a time when to be a Jew meant, in many countries, to bear a load of prejudice and of political and social disqualification such as we now little know of. Nor did he, being a Jew, try to appear before the world as something else. He held to the laws and customs of his faith with the severest fidelity. He was strictly orthodox in his belief and in his religious practices. He wished the world to know him as a Jew. But his was that religion which not only believes and professes, but which *does*. His character and conduct as a man would have adorned any faith and illustrated the best teachings of any religion. He was honored by ministers, kings, emperors, pashas and sultans, commanding their esteem, not by the power of his money, but by the charm of his goodness. Wherever the people of his race were in need and distress, he was ready to help, not merely pouring out money from his abundance, but going out himself to see, and examine, and counsel, and console, and aid,—not once, but time and again, from England to Morocco, to Constantinople, to Syria, to Jerusalem, defying fatigue, and the pirate, and the plague. Nor was his benevolence circumscribed by his religion. Whether Christian, Pagan or Jew, all who were in need found his purse ever open, his comforting sympathy, the fertile wisdom of his mind, his great good sense, his powerful influence ever active and helpful in their behalf. The very enemies of his faith shared his magnanimous bounty. When the Christians of Spain who had cruelly persecuted the Jews, were in their turn attacked by the Druses of the Lebanon, it was he who with unhesitating and anxious generosity came to their rescue. He lived to be more than a hundred years old, and when he died, the glory of countless benefactions shone like a halo on his head and the loving veneration of mankind surrounded his pillow. Well might he be called the prince of Israel, a Christian example to Christians, and a shining ornament to human nature.

At the time when Sir Moses Montefiore's one hundredth birthday was approaching, in all parts of the earth thoughtful men of the Jewish faith met together to counsel among themselves how they might most worthily celebrate that memorable event. So they did here. And it may well be said that it was the true spirit of Sir Moses Montefiore himself, that inspired and

guided the deliberations of our Hebrew fellow citizens of New York. Not one of them seriously thought of honoring the venerable patriarch by erecting a statue in bronze or marble to him, thus to exalt merely the person and, perhaps, with him the race. They were of one mind in thinking that the *friend of man* could be worthily honored only by doing some signal good to suffering humanity in his spirit. And thus they set on foot an enterprise of charity and benevolence, which could not have been more beautifully fitting the name it bears—The Montefiore Home.

The poor human creature that in illness and distress, without means and without friends, helpless and forlorn, is cast upon the world, under all circumstances appeals to the pity of every feeling heart. But great as that misery may be, it is not the greatest, as long as it is lit up by the ray of hope. The prospect of a better day that may be, helps one wonderfully to bear the ills of the bad day that is. The sufferer stretched out on the most miserable cot and racked with the keenest pain is not half way down to the bottom of wretchedness, if he can look forward to the hour, however dim and distant, which will send him forth again with renewed strength and health, to resume the race of life, however arduous, and the enjoyments of existence, however small.

But when the lamp of hope flickers toward extinction, when the sufferer begins to see before him nothing but more and more suffering and wretchedness with no end but death, and when, with all this, poverty and want and helplessness for all the remaining days stare him in the face, then human misery reaches a dark depth indeed.

It is to the most helpless and hopeless that the society of the Montefiore Home reaches out its hand, saying to them: "Whatever you may have to suffer, you shall not despair. Your ailments may have been thought past remedy, but we shall see. Many diseases were thought incurable yesterday, which advanced science does not deem hopeless to-day. Whatever advanced science offers, the benefit of it you shall have. Whatever advanced skill and human kindness can do for you, that shall be done. And if the worst should come that neither skill nor kindness can avert, here is a home for you, a home you can depend on; a home, if not without suffering, yet without want and care; a home of sympathy and comfort for all of your remaining days. Be of good cheer therefore and despair not."

The Montefiore Home has now been in existence for several years and we know how it has made good its promise. I have read the reports rendered by the officers and the medical staff of the society and I have found passages in them which, by the charity—I might say the tenderness of feeling they breathe are, to me at least, profoundly touching. Here this, for instance, from last year's report of the Executive Committee:

"Unlike a hospital, whose beneficiaries are constantly coming and going, and who remain hardly long enough to leave an impression upon its officers which is not merged in the next and probably more distressing case, the inmates of the 'Montefiore Home' come to stay for an indefinite period, and we become so well acquainted with them, and they with us, that we are soon familiar with their peculiarities and little weaknesses of temperament; and knowing just how to humor them, a bond of sympathy is established which tends in no small degree to

make a happy household, wherein is found a substitute for the loss of a dear home, which, however humble, is clung to with that warmth of affection so eminently characteristic of the Jew. Joys and sorrows and pains and pleasures become the common property of all in their new home, and each in his own way generously helps to bear the heavy load of suffering all have to carry."

And this from the report of the medical staff:

"The patients were also encouraged to spend much time in the open air, during the winter as well as during the summer. While they could get the warming and life-giving rays of the sun, and inhale the pure, crisp, air, cold was not considered a bar to their being outside. Of course care was taken that the clothing should be sufficiently warm and abundant. Patients too weak to walk were carried down to the piazza, and made as comfortable as they are in their beds. They invariably expressed their satisfaction with this treatment, and derived much enjoyment from their sun baths. During the spring, summer and fall, such patients as could bear the fatigue without detriment (including patients affected with other diseases than phthisis) were given carriage rides in Central and Riverside Parks, whenever the weather permitted. An employee of the 'Home' always accompanied the patients on these excursions. Phthisical patients were, of course, prevented from making any undue exertion, and were diligently guarded against mental excitement and exposure to wet and cold. The object sought was that their mode of life should be regular and methodical free from all care and anxiety."

But not to those who could find accommodation in the "Home" itself was the care of the society confined; for there is an "out-door department," which last year supported seventy-three persons, and "some of the consumptives," so the report runs,—"who bear a proportion of fully sixty per cent. to the other diseases from which our patients suffer, have been sent to elevated geographical regions in order to test the desirability of climatic influence upon certain stages and conditions of that fell disease, and with the hope that, if valued lives are not positively saved, they may be at least prolonged without acute suffering for many years."

Still more. I read that "the warm hearts, the magnetic enthusiasm, and the untiring devotion of a newly-organized 'Ladies Auxiliary of the Montefiore Home' have developed new possibilities of assistance that must prove of incalculable value." I read of the "Home Flower" Mission giving cheerful entertainments to the patients, which have proved such a rich fund of amusement to them, not only for the time being, but as subjects for discussion and comment long afterwards." Well may the report add that "the self-imposed duty of the 'mission' of presenting flowers with their own hands to these unfortunates—awakening the purest emotions and engendering the warmest sympathies—how grateful this is to them, and how much they appreciate their loving, delicate attention, none know better than themselves; for the very flowers that bend and meet in weening others, grows more sweet to the touch." Every feeling soul will join the Executive Committee in saying to these ladies that "we have no word of thanks adequate to our appreciation of such kindly endeavors."

Such is the object the Montefiore Home

society seeks to accomplish, such the means it employs, and such the spirit which animates its work. This is not a mere perfunctory treating of cases; not a mere putting medicines into patients' mouths according to prescription; not the charity which merely writes cheques and then is done with it. This is the true goodness of the human heart which seeks out the unfortunate, and follows them, and thinks, and ponders, and exhausts the resources of the imagination to discover how it may best alleviate their sufferings and cheer their dark hours.

Equal to the nobleness of the object have been the pecuniary offerings brought to attain it. Only a few years ago a few benevolent men and women conceived this plan, and now the society counts upon its roll 14 life members, 359 patrons and 1896 members, and the money they have collected together in contributions, fairs and legacies sums up nigh a quarter of a million dollars, not counting the abundance of gifts in clothing, food, delicacies and other useful and pleasant things, which constantly flow in. The society began with a house scarcely large enough to shelter 30 patients, and now they have erected this magnificent building which promises to accommodate 150 with ease and comfort.

Honor to the men and women who have accomplished this, and who are bound to accomplish still more. They do honor to the community which calls them its own; for any community, whatever its pretensions, will be honored by citizens who take so high a view of their duties to humanity.

And who are these citizens? They are Jews. This is not the only monument the Jews of New York have planted to their benevolence and public spirit. There are others, some even far excelling this in costliness and grandeur. But none—none of their own, and none instituted by any other class of citizens excels it—nay, perhaps more equals it in beauty of sentiment and devotion. And for whom is this done? Hear the noble words of the President of the Society as they are found in last year's report: "As Israelites, we are compelled, both by circumstances and inclination, to provide for the needy of our own faith; but this must not induce us to exclude a human being, because of his religious belief, from the benefit of an institution charged with the improvement of bodily ailment." Thus it is done for the brotherhood of men. This is the true spirit, worthy of him whose name this edifice bears. It is the spirit, too, which, more than any other, has created the brightest, the most stainless glories of our great American Republic—the spirit which, without any governmental action, out of the spontaneous initiative of the patriotic citizen, through private munificence, through individual solicitude for the welfare of all, has covered this land all over with educational institutions and enterprises of benevolence. In our school days we read of the Roman matron Correlia who, when other noble ladies exhibited to her their stores of pearls and precious stones, called in her children and, pointing at them, said: "These are my jewels." So when the old world shows to us the magnificence of its baronial halls and royal castles, the American Republic may point to her colleges and hospitals and asylums, founded by the patriotic generosity of simple citizens, and say: "These are my palaces."

And to entitle the American people to this proud distinction, the Jews have done as much

as any other class of citizens,—nay, I may repeat in this presence what I have frequently said in the presence of others—the Jews have, in proportion to their numbers, done far more. I repeat this with all the greater willingness, as I have recently had occasion to observe the motive springs, the character and the aims of the so-called "Anti-semitic movement"—a movement whose dark spirit of fanaticism and persecution insults the humane enlightenment of the nineteenth century; whose appeals are addressed to the stupidest prejudice and the blindest passion, whose injustice affronts every sense of fairness and decency; and whose cowardice—for cowardice is an essential element in the attempt to suppress the competing energies of a mere handful of people—whose cowardice, I say, should provoke the contempt of every self-respecting man.

In the face of this movement, which for years has stirred some European countries and thrown its shadow even across the ocean upon our shores, it is most grateful to the human heart to hear the President of the Montefiore Home say, that, while this roof is to shelter the neediest of Israel, no human being because of his religious belief shall be excluded from its protection. He might take the clamorous anti-semitic by the hand, show him the hospitals, orphan homes, charity schools, founded and sustained by Jewish money, Jewish labor, Jewish public spirit, benevolence and devotion, and say to him: "If you have any sick, any aged, any children who cannot find help elsewhere, here we shall have room for them, and they are welcome." What has the anti-semitic to answer? No, no, that "movement" cannot survive. It must perish in shame. It will be consigned to an ignominious grave by the generous impulses of human nature and the civilization of this age. And what will remain will be the beneficent influence and the sweet memory of such good actions as yours and the brotherhood of mankind.

May the Montefiore Home continue to be worthy of the name it bears, a blessing to the sufferer and an honor to those who founded and who support it, as they will surely continue to deserve that honor in the future as they have in the past.

A number of Jews in Bucharest, Roumania, have lately founded a society called "Shachar," with the laudable purpose of establishing a school for adults; of aiding poor scholars to continue their studies; of assisting youths without resources to learn a trade, and lastly of founding a journal, which will worthily defend the cause and the rights of the Jews.

General Gourko has issued instructions to the heads of the Synagogues and Chevras in Warsaw that the Russian language must henceforth be employed in lieu of Polish for those portions of the service in which the vernacular has hitherto been used. According to the law regulating the public worship in non-Christian denominations, authority is given to make use of the language spoken by the majority. In Warsaw this is naturally, Polish.

It is proposed to establish in Holland a Central Asylum for Jewish Lunatics, and for those who only temporarily suffer from nervous derangements. The Lunatic Asylum in Amsterdam is chiefly used by the poor; paying patients are obliged to be sent abroad. The new institution is intended to remedy the defect. The Provisional Committee includes Mr. A. C. Wertheim, the Amsterdam banker and member of the First Chamber of Parliament, as President; Prof. Dr. Rosenstein, of Leyden; and Mr. D. Polak Daniels, of the Hague.

MONTEFIORE HOME FOR CHRONIC INVALIDS.

ITS DEDICATION.

A bright, clear, crisp day favored the managers of the Montefiore Home on Tuesday when the dedication of the building took place and the beautiful edifice was formally turned over by the building committee to the managers of the Home. As announced in THE AMERICAN HEBREW last week, the patients occupied their new quarters and were happy as persons in the best physical condition could be.

The corridors, parlors and synagogue were all lined with tropical plants, and presented a beautiful sight as the guests wandered about, inspecting the rooms and appointments.

Shortly after two o'clock the brass band organized by the inmates of the Hebrew Orphan Asylum took possession of the second landing and rendered a couple of selections with good effect. The pretty synagogue and the dining room which adjoins it—the windows between having been removed—were then thrown open, but not more than a fraction of the guests could be seated.

The large numbers who could not find even standing room within hearing distance, passed the time pleasantly in chatting and in inspecting the building from cellar to sun-galler and garret.

The exercises opened with a hymn, "Charity," by the choirs of children of the Hebrew Orphan Asylum, after which, Rev. Henry S. Jacobs gave the opening prayer. He said:

OPENING PRAYER OF REV. HENRY S. JACOBS.

Almighty God! Father of the Universe! Thy providence is manifest to all creation, Thy abundant care over all the works of Thy hands. Thy love vouchsafed to all who turn their eyes unto Thee for help, satisfieth every human need, and abundantly fulfilleth the desires of all living. Accept these our offerings of thanksgiving rendered unto Thee from the depths of our hearts, even as we acknowledge how vain would be the endeavor to syllable Thy praise according to the extent of Thy benefactions. We can but bow reverently before Thee, acknowledging that Thou art good, and that Thy mercy endureth forever.

With hearts overflowing with gratitude we meet together to dedicate this house, unto Thy name.

It is indeed a Temple wherein Thou wilt be worshipped by means of their deeds of love, benevolence and charity, which Thou hast taught us, as Thy divine attributes. Here suffering humanity will find rest and peace. Here the broad lessons of true religion which recognizes all as Thy children, and open wide the door of mercy to all who seek its helpfulness. Here will be illustrated that grand teaching of Thy inspired Word: "Have we not all one Father, hath not one God created us?" And then will we render ourselves worthy of that mission which was conferred on Abraham and his posterity, that through us all the families of the earth should be blessed.

It is in this spirit of unselfish love that we emulate the pious life of him whose name we cherish as we inscribe it over these portals. The name of Montefiore shall ever remain as the symbol of that active benevolence which he ever exercised towards all men without distinction of race, sect or condition. May the memory of his noble deeds remain with us as a proud monument to be cherished in the heart of every Israelite, and become an incentive to deeds of mercy for the bettering of the condition of the oppressed, the needy and the afflicted. We thank Thee, Father, for the lesson of so rich a life. May it guide us ever as a beacon to seek after the welfare of Israel and humanity. O! God of our fathers, we beseech Thee to bless this Home. Guard it from evil and from dangers; surround its unfortunate inmates with Thy