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pleased with
EDUCATION OF ORPHAN CHILDREN

An Address by Carl Schurz.
An account of the laying of the corner stone of the new building of the Hebrew Benevolent and Orphan Asylum Society was published in the EVENING POST yesterday. A number of interesting addresses were delivered, among them an extremely able and eloquent summary by Chief Justice Charles P. Daly of the history of the Hebrews in America and of their charitable work. Judge Daly was followed by Mr. Carl Schurz, who spoke as follows:

"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 have 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 benefited 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 somebody to whom it can look with natural affection, and with the certainty of natural affection in return; that there is a sustaining home power behind him upon which it can fall back; that it has the assurance of a foothold in life. And it is the saddest feature of the orphan child's lot that of 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 set 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 necessities 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 it, or to express it in one single word, to un-orphanize 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 unattained, less favored than others in the moral order of the universe; it must, therefore, not exclude 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 insti-

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tution is subject to peculiar difficulties, and these difficulties increase as the number of pupils in the institution grows 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 afterward 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 abundantly 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 work of your charity well prepared and equipped into the world to meet its struggles and to find every opportunity.

"If you pardon me still another suggestion: un-orphanize your orphans still more, one thing seems especially desirable: that there 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 be-

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tween 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 already 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 less 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, 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."