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MS-4787: Abba Hillel Silver Papers, 1902-1989.

Series V: Writings, 1909-1963, undated.

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Montefiore Hospital, (Chicago?), 1924.

GIVEN AT THE MONTEFIORE HOSPITAL CAMPAIGN DINNER

-October 23, 1924.-

In the Place de la Republique in Paris there is a great clock in the tower of the Hotel de Ville. On Nov. 11, 1918, as the hands were pointing to a quarter of 11 o'clock, an old woman who sold newspapers in the Kiosk across the square, sat warming her chillblained hands over a little charcoal burner, and watched with tense drawn face and strained eyes, the hands of the clock as they approached the hour.

Turning to a group of women standing by, she said, "Look! Mesdames, watch with me the hands of the clock. In fifteen minutes they will stop killing men."

War kills men, but Pestilence and Famine; those other grim Horsemen of the Apocalypse, who to the beat of muffled drums ride through the smoke and fire destroying life and happiness, kill more than war kills!

Did you ever stop to think what it is that stands between you and these same grim Horsemen to lessen their harvest--- On the lines of communication, after the battles are over, what is it that salvages the wounded, what brings back to life the children of the famine stricken lands and what is it that makes your line of defense to battle death for you every hour of the waking day and while you sleep at night? It is medical science and the hospital.

Jacob Reis said, that "In the struggle for existence, there were always some who by reason of poverty, ignorance or disease would fall by the wayside." We believe that if we could wipe out the second of these-----ignorance-----the first might disappear, and that if with a wave of a magician's wand we could wipe out the first two, both poverty and ignorance, we would have conquered the third.

But magic wands "Alas" belong to fairy days, and our old world has grown too wise and too selfish even to see the fairies that dance in the moonbeams and sit beside the hearth at twilight in the homes where love is.

And so we have disease, and we must reckon with it, and battle with it, and conquer it when we can. So it seems that the greatest good we can give to the world's need is-----knowledge, and after that,----health; and if we can bring them to those whom we wish best for, all other things shall be added unto them.

These fundamental truths were only vaguely sensed by early civilization, and the story of hospitals crept too slowly through the pages of history. In early Jewish times we find Beth Holem, Shelters for the sick, and in later scriptures Beth Saida. Greece and Rome had hospices. From the 13th century on we find them associated in France and Germany and Italy with the monestaries and the Convents of the Sisterhoods. In 1296 a group of porters who waited for their Masters in the Piazza Duomo in Florence, founded the Miseracordia, and financed it by fines paid for uttering blasphemies. So it seems that the greater part of the funds for this first public health movement came from the ones who cursed the loudest and the longest. Vincent de Paul

founded Medical Social Service in Paris, and so hospitals came marching down the line of progress into modern life.

The advancement of surgery demanded the advancement of hospitals. It was medical science that forced the hospitals to keep pace with the work they had begun. The great surgeons said to the pathologists and architects, economic experts, nurses and dietitians, and a hundred others----you must consecrate yourselves to the hospital as we have done, if we are to save life and lessen the sum of human misery. Louis Pasteur and Koch, Lister and Wasserman connected the hospital with the chemical laboratory to study disease under the microscope. Herr Pastor and Frau Fleider and our beloved Lady of the Land, Florence Nightingale brought nursing schools into the picture.

Europe contributed much in scientific effort, but its hospitals remained charitable institutions, boarding houses for the sick poor, maintained by the state; or merely laboratories whose success was measured by the number of autopsies each day for schools of medicine. Even today it is considered a disgrace in Europe for people of any means or social position to go to a general hospital for treatment.

It remained for this beloved young country of ours to develop the hospital for everybody, rich and poor and middleman alike, and to prove that it was the finest kind of constructive charity to give care to the sick of the average family---for what they could afford to pay; for the development and the scientific practice of medicine; and the school for the nurses who would go out into the world with trained hands and heads to bring comfort to the suffering, to safeguard the newborn, and with tender touch to close the eyes of the dead.

It remained for this country to say that hospital building and administration was a special business in itself, and needed efficiency of detail much more than a steel mill or a hotel or a department store; because human bodies were the materials handled, and the cost accounting and balance sheet showed for either life or death in the end result of the business year.

So you see, if you want to keep up with the procession, and make good in this hospital you are going to build, you've got a big job on your hands. You've got to put together a piece of machinery that is as good in its mass production as an up-to-date manufacturing plant, as sane in its economics as a good bank, an educational institution equal in its standards to a university, as fine in its room and food service as a good hotel, and then and greatest of all, you've got to put into this machinery----- a heart and a soul.

When someone says to you, "Why should we give to this hospital?-----say to them----"lstly"----for pride's sake. The general public doesn't stop to consider reasons or excuses for failure. Other groups of this city have been justified when they pointed their fingers at us and said, "This is 1924----- Look around you, take off the bandage from your eyes! Can't you see how other hospitals have progressed while you have lagged behind? Have you done your share! You, the chosen people who boast that you give more than your tithe of the 10th of your riches, and boast that you take care of your own! Why do you stand by idly while we bear your share of the burden!"-----and again say to them----give because your sick poor need your giving and they should be cared for by their own people and not by strangers-----and again----give because the average family of

your community need and want a hospital where they may bring their sick and maimed and childbearing-----give because there are Jewish medical men in this city who have grown old waiting for the opportunity that the right kind of a hospital could give them.

If those from whom you beg still say "No" and ask, "What do we get in return for what we give you?"---Tell them this:-"When the cry of pain comes, and the fear of birth or death descends upon your house like a thief in the night, we will send to you men whom we have trained, men with God-given skill in their hands to heal you. We will send to you women we have trained to bring order and peace and comfort into your house, or we shall take your suffering one and bear him into our house of healing. This all shall we do and do it well, if you will give."

People give for various reasons; sometimes to gain social prestige or business reputation. They give in competition with others who give, or to salve their conscience or to gain hope of heaven, but remember that the real psychology of the giving that counts is sentimental. We give best in memory of the dead that we have loved, or in thankfulness for the joy and happiness that comes to us. We give best and most for the sake of those who need what we can give.

Give to your givers this vision. In this new and wonderful house of healing we will show you the porches where the dear old "Bawbes" sit nodding in the sunshine, their dread of hospitals gone, for here is friendly speech in their own tongue and their own kind of food.

In this wonderful house of healing you will see happy children in a playroom whose walls are painted with fairy ships. In the roof garden will rest weary men and women beginning to see the world anew after coming up from the depths of suffering. From the baskets in the nursery tiny new fists will beat the air, and wondering eyes open on the unknown world about them. Here the crooked shall be made straight, the lame to walk, and sometimes even, please God, the blind shall be made to see.

While this drive is on, the very sound waves should carry this message through the smoke filled misty air to the Jewish community of Pittsburgh.

Listen! It is we, the old and the helpless, the sick and the suffering and the newborn who cry out to you. Open wide then the doors of your heart that we may look in, and see there the love for your fellow men; open wide too the strings of your purse----that we may live.