

THE JEWISH ALMSHOUSES.

The foundation-stone of the almshouses to be erected in connexion with the Melbourne Jewish Philanthropic Society was laid yesterday afternoon on the site granted by Government, on the east side of the St. Kilda road, near the point where the road was formerly crossed by the loop-line of the St. Kilda and Brighton Railway. The ground has already been fenced in, and the buildings comprised in the present contract have been partially erected. The complete design embraces 14 separate cottages, built in quadrangular form, with a handsome synagogue, having every appurtenance of a place of worship. Each cottage will contain a parlour 14ft. x 12ft., a bedroom 15ft. x 12ft., and a kitchen 14ft. x 9ft., and will accommodate either a family or two adult inmates of the same sex. Under the present contract, which has been taken by Messrs. Davie and Judd for about £1,200, three cottages will be erected, and others will be added from time to time as the funds of the society will allow. The buildings are being constructed of brick, somewhat in the Venetian style, and when finished the structure will have an elegant and handsome appearance. The plans were furnished by Mr. G. R. Johnson. The proceedings of yesterday commenced with a religious service at half-past 2 o'clock, in the synagogue, Bourke-street, at which the Rev. A. F. Ornstien officiated. Those who intended to take part in the subsequent ceremonial proceeded in various ways to the ground, and by 4 o'clock there was a large assemblage on the spot, including many of the leading members of the Jewish community. The president, members of the committee, and others who had to take a prominent part in the ceremony, occupied a temporary platform erected near the stone.

A prayer having been offered by the Rev. M. Rintel,

Mr. M. CASHMORE came forward on behalf of the committee to present to Mr. L. M. Myers, president of the society, a silver trowel with which to lay the stone. In doing so he referred to the early efforts made by himself and some friends in 1841, when the first Jewish charity, called the Poor Society, was formed in Port Phillip. Some years afterwards the idea was conceived of founding a society upon a more extended scale, and a public meeting was held, out of which the Jewish Philanthropic Society might be said to have arisen. It was gratifying, therefore, to him and his friends to know that they had not cast their bread upon the water in vain, but that it had returned after many days. Having urged the members of the community to which he belonged to assist to their utmost this laudable undertaking, remembering what had been written, that "the poor shall not cease out of the land," and that they were to "shut not their hand to the poor," he said he had great pleasure in presenting to Mr. Myers the trowel, which had been subscribed for by the committee as a slight token of their appreciation of the skill and talent with which he had conducted the affairs of the society. The trowel was inscribed as follows:—"Presented by the committee of the Philanthropic Society to the president, L. M. Myers, Esq., on the occasion of his laying the foundation-stone of the Jewish Almshouses, St. Kilda, September 1st, 1870."

Mr. L. M. MYERS, president of the society, on receiving the trowel, said it afforded him

on receiving the trowel, said it afforded him an infinite amount of pleasure to have the honour conferred upon him of laying the foundation-stone of the Melbourne Jewish Almshouses; but before proceeding to do so he would give them some account of the origin and progress of this society. As far back as 1842 several Jewish young men of Melbourne established a society called the Jewish Poor Society, the subscription being 3d. per week, and the object was to relieve any case of distress among their co-religionists that was brought under their notice. This society continued its operations for some time, but the first official record he found of the Melbourne Jewish Philanthropic Society was in the year 1848, when Mr. Asher Hart (now in England) convened, by circular, a general meeting of the Jews of Melbourne at the Rainbow Hotel, Swanston-street, on November 19, 1848, for the purpose of forming the Jewish Philanthropic Society, its object being, as in the former society, to relieve members of the Jewish faith in cases of sickness, disability, or misfortune, and to afford medical advice and medicine to those who required it. This society was duly formed on the day mentioned. He should be wanting in his duty if he did not upon this occasion acknowledge the great services rendered by Mr. Asher Hart, the founder of this society, who, during his long residence in Victoria, was indefatigable in his exertions in promoting the welfare of our institutions; and although now residing in England, he still took a lively interest in them, and when he received the intelligence of that day's proceedings it would afford him a great amount of gratification to know that an institution of which he was the founder had been the means of conferring such benefits on his co-religionists in time of need. He would not weary them by giving a detailed account of the society's income and expenditure, but he might inform them that during last year they expended in charity between £600 and £700, and from the numerous applications that were constantly being made for relief, he was of opinion that this amount would in future be insufficient to meet the demands made on the institution. In reviewing the proceedings of this society, he felt convinced it would be a source of pride and gratification to the subscribers to see the good results that had accrued from the assistance it had afforded, and there were now many residents in our midst, who, had it not been for the timely aid afforded them by the society, would have languished in distress and poverty, and instead of being enabled to obtain a livelihood for themselves and families, would of necessity have become permanent burdens upon the public. He might perhaps be pardoned for here remarking that, although the Jewish members of the community spend so large an amount of money in relieving the distress of their co-religionists, they were not unmindful of the great claims their poorer brethren of other denominations had on their charity and sympathy, for he could truly assert that there was hardly a charitable institution in this colony where Jewish names might not be found as contributors, and in many cases, to which it was not necessary to make special allusion, Jews were found taking an active interest in the management and well-being of the charitable institutions of this colony. (Applause). Having for some years past accumulated a sum of money to be devoted for building purposes, at the last general meeting 500 guineas was voted from that fund for the purpose of commencing operations for the building of

was voted from that fund for the purpose of commencing operations for the building of almshouses. A deputation was then appointed to wait upon the hon. the Treasurer to request that a sum of money might be placed on the Estimates for building purposes, and the sum of £500 was granted, and ultimately paid. He had to tender his thanks to the Government on behalf of the institution for the generous and liberal manner in which they responded to the application. In the month of June, 1869, the Rev. A. F. Ornstein preached a sermon in aid of the fund, and a collection was made, which amounted to about £340, a portion of which was kindly contributed by their Christian brethren. This amount, with the £500 voted by Government and the 500 guineas taken from the accumulated building fund, made a total of about £1,365. The expense incurred in fencing-in the ground, &c., was about £200, and the contract price for building these three houses was £1,179, so that it would be perceived that all the money to the credit of the society will be expended. Funds would therefore be required for furnishing the houses and for the maintenance of the inmates. The three houses they were now erecting would each have a parlour, bedroom, and kitchen, water laid on, well drained and ventilated, with a handsome verandah in front, the works being under the able supervision of the honorary architect (Mr. Johnson), whom he took this opportunity publicly to thank for his very great attention, and also for his kindness and liberality in giving his professional services gratuitously. He might also mention that Messrs. Mark Moss and Joseph Aarons had promised to erect, conjointly, another cottage similar to those being built, and in accordance with the plans. The thanks of the subscribers were due to Dr. Wilkie for his gratuitous services and unremitting attention to the poor as hon. physician to the institution for many years past; and it was a matter of regret to him that that gentleman refused to receive from the community a substantial recognition of their appreciation of his valuable services. Messrs. Chambers and Clutton had presented the institution with a marble tablet, which the committee accepted; and he had much pleasure in thanking those gentlemen for their kindness and liberality. He thought it was highly creditable to the Government of this colony in having granted so many healthy and valuable sites of land for the erection of the various charitable institutions that they were surrounded by, where those who are afflicted with "all the ills that flesh is heir to" could receive that care and attention which the necessities of their cases required. While upon this subject, he trusted he might be pardoned for expressing a wish that the Royal commission now sitting for the purpose of inquiring into the manage-

ment of our charitable institutions might be the means of introducing a more effective system for the relief of the poor and the management of our institutions, as from experience he knew how liable these institutions were to imposition; and he was decidedly of opinion that we should never be able adequately to support our charities unless a more comprehensive system was introduced than the present. And however hurtful it might be to the feelings of many to adopt the system now in vogue in the old country—viz., "a poor law"—yet he was afraid the exigencies of the times would ultimately demand its introduction into this colony, as it must be patent to all

would ultimately demand its introduction into this colony, as it must be patent to all who have had any experience in the workings of charitable institutions that the burden of supporting them fell mainly upon the few, while many who had amassed large fortunes in the colony did not subscribe in proportion to their means; and, what was still further to be deplored, many did not contribute at all. He, however, sincerely hoped that the subscribers to the Jewish Philanthropic Society would be liberal in their contributions. In conclusion, he had to thank Mr. Cashmore for the high encomiums he had passed upon him for doing that which he conceived only to be his duty. To the committee he had also to tender his thanks for their very handsome present of this silver trowel, and they might rest assured he should ever keep it in remembrance of this auspicious day. He hoped that the good work just begun would prosper, and when happily completed, he believed it would stand as a lasting memento of the philanthropy evinced by the Jewish community of this city. (Applause.)

The stone was then lowered into its place, a bottle containing a parchment scroll, copies of the society's last report, and of the Melbourne daily papers, various coins of the realm, &c., having first been placed in the cavity. The scroll, which was read by the Rev. A. F. Ornstein, in Hebrew, and by the hon. secretary, Mr. E. P. Levy, in English, contained the following record:—"In commemoration of laying the foundation-stone of the Jewish Almshouses on Thursday, 1st September, 5630 (1870) in the thirty-fourth year of the reign of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, His Excellency Viscount Canterbury being Governor of the colony. Lewis M. Myers, president; Rev. A. F. Ornstein, treasurer; Emanuel P. Levy, honorary secretary; committee, Rev. Moses Rintel, Aaron Waxman, David Benjamin, A. A. Cohen, J. Cantor, Ephraim L. Zox, S. de Beer, M. J. Cohen, P. Philipson, Lionel Marks; trustees, Hon. Edward Cohen, M.L.A., J.P., Benjamin Benjamin, Mark Moss, B. Benjamin, president of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation, Louis Gerschell, president of the East Melbourne Hebrew Congregation."

Mr. MYERS, after pouring wine, oil, and corn upon the stone, in accordance with the Jewish custom, pronounced it to be well and justly laid, amidst the cheers of those present.

Another prayer having been offered by the Rev. A. F. ORNSTEIN,

The Hon. E. COHEN addressed the meeting, saying that it afforded him great pleasure to be able to take part in these proceedings. Charity was one of the foundations of all revealed religion, and he believed that they were now celebrating an event, the influence of which would last as long as the country lasted. He wished long and continued success to the Jewish Philanthropic Society of Melbourne.

Mr. MARK MOSS and Mr. ANGEL ELLIS also addressed the meeting, expressing their gratification at the progress which was being made in carrying out the objects of the society.

Mr. B. BENJAMIN, in a few complimentary remarks, proposed a vote of thanks to Mr. Johnson for the services he had rendered as honorary architect, the motion being seconded by Mr. L. GERSCHELL, and carried by acclamation.

Mr. JOHNSON briefly replied, and the proceedings were brought to a close by the singing of the National Anthem. Madame

ceedings were brought to a close by the singing of the National Anthem, Madame Simonsen leading the air, and the whole assemblage joining in it.