

THE ALUMNÆ NEWS

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PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT'S LETTER

"Dear Mr. Bishop:

"I feel that my dear mother would be very happy in the realization of plans whereby the old home in East Sixty-fifth Street, with all of its memories of joy and sorrow, is now to become Interfaith House, dedicated to mutual understanding and good will among students matriculating in Hunter College.

"It is to me of happy significance that this place of sacred memories is to become the first college center established for the high purpose of mutual understanding among Protestant, Jewish, and Catholic students. I hope this movement for toleration will grow and prosper until there is a similar establishment in every institution of higher learning in the land, the spirit of which shall be unity in essentials, liberty in non-essentials, and in all things charity.

"In that spirit we should all treasure in our hearts and souls the admonition of the grand Old Testament prophet, 'What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.'

"Very sincerely yours,

"FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT."

SARA DELANO ROOSEVELT MEMORIAL HOUSE

The Dedication Exercises in the College Assembly Hall on Monday, November 22nd, marked the culmination of an enterprise which had for months enlisted the ardent endeavors of a devoted band—the acquisition and furnishing of the two Roosevelt Houses, the President's and his mother's, at 47 and 49 East 65th Street, henceforth to be known jointly as Sara Delano Roosevelt Memorial House.

The note of inter-faith for which the House is to stand was carried out in the choice of the divines of different creeds who participated in the ceremonies. The Rt. Rev. William A. Scully pronounced the Invocation, Dr. Herman M. Rosenthal read from the Scriptures, and Dr. Samuel G. Trexler delivered the Benediction.

Since the House is to be used for the noble purpose of fostering inter-race as well as inter-faith understanding, it was fitting that one of the high lights of the program was the superb singing of spirituals by a Negro, Mr. Aubrey Pankey, fittingly introduced by President Shuster as a brilliant young artist. The effortless ease with which even Mr. Pankey's softest notes filled the huge Assembly Hall with a volume of combined strength and sweetness, and at the same time the attitude of modesty, of dignity, of dedication that characterized his renderings, furnished an unforgettable experience, and evoked an outburst of applause after a moment of rapt silence that was perhaps an even deeper tribute.

On the lighter side there was a hint of inter-politics too, provided by President Shuster's jesting remark in presenting the first speaker of the afternoon that it was proper that first place in the dedication of Roosevelt House went to an eminent Republican. This was Mr. Charles H. Tuttle, member of the

Board of Higher Education, and president of the association that had made Roosevelt House possible.

Mr. Tuttle in his talk recalled as a notable event the incorporation on March 20th of a group of lay persons—Catholics, Jews, and Protestants—to serve the educational, spiritual, and social needs of the students and to foster religious ideals. He declared that "the heart of culture is the culture of the heart", and that the test of men is whether they make for unity or for disunity. He also recalled the recent World's Fair as the first time in human history that Catholics, Jews, and Protestants united in erecting a temple to the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, and expressed the view that brotherhood cannot be achieved without religion.

President Shuster then gave further details as to the inclusive scope of those managing the affairs of the House: the three religious groups through their respective councils, and also representatives of several different bodies—faculty, students, Board of Higher Education, and alumnae. After this he proceeded to the actual Dedication, asking by whom this could more fittingly be done than by her whose home the House had been—the First Lady of the Land.

Mrs. Roosevelt brought a message from the President, a letter written from the White House on November 4th to Richard E. Bishop, Vice-President of the A. C. Horn Company, Long Island City, Queens, in which he expressed his own joy and the happiness that his mother would have felt that "this place of sacred memories" is to become Interfaith House for the students of Hunter College, "the first college center established for the high purpose of mutual understanding among Protestant, Jewish, and Catholic students". The First Lady then in her own person re-

called that her husband's mother had traveled widely, and thus had come to know how other people lived and had learned the good in all people; and with specific reference to the two houses, she, too, referred to the "many memories" associated with them, and ended up that no houses could furnish a better background for the use that they are going to have, for always in both houses there was an effort to look upon all human beings with respect, and to have a true understanding of the points of view of all human beings.

Miss Anne Roselle of the Metropolitan Opera then shared her lovely voice with the audience in a rendering of the Aria from Aida, poignantly voicing the grief of a stricken exile from her native land suffering the persecutions of a haughty conquering race. This was followed in contrastingly joyous vein by the charming "I Love Life".

President Shuster then gave a brief outline of the history of the Roosevelt Houses. Modestly minimizing the part that he himself had played as the originator of the idea of acquiring them, he stressed the help that had come from many quarters—from Dr. A. L. Sachar of the Hillel Foundation, who had welcomed President Shuster's suggestion of an inter-faith movement; from Mr. A. C. Horn, who had served as Treasurer of the citizens' committee that raised \$50,000 to buy the houses; from Monsignor William A. Scully, who endorsed the plan; from the Protestant members of the faculty who, in the absence of any official student organization such as the other two religious groups could call on for aid, themselves shouldered the burden of raising funds; from Mr. Frederic Coudert, who helped with needed legislation; and from the Associate Alumnae as represented above all by their remarkable committee, most indefatigable in history, consisting of Mrs. Theodore Simis, Mrs. Robert Draddy, and Dr. Ruth Lewinson, as well as by Mrs. James Picker, whose generosity provided the equipment for the magnificent drawing-room. The President also gave a picture of other outstanding features of the House—the two libraries, one furnished by President Roosevelt and containing his mother's portrait, the other furnished by Mr. John S. Burke and containing a portrait of President Roosevelt; the two big rooms given over respectively to the College's largest associations, the Pan-Hellenic and the Athletic Association; the common rooms available for everybody; the three floors in the President's house belonging each to a religious group; and the corresponding floors in the President's mother's house given over to House Plan and to the Social Secretary.

The President concluded with the glad tidings that, after the expenditure of over \$100,000, the House was being dedicated free of debt. However, more funds are still needed, for such items as elevators and a portrait of Mr. Horn.

He then introduced the next speaker, Mr. Henry Monsky, President of B'nai B'rith.

The latter, with a brief reference to the present struggle to preserve our way of life, welcomed the current manifestation of faith in a to-morrow of good will as typified by the dedication of this House where Catholics, Protestants, and Jews will function together as good neighbors under a common roof. While stressing the fact that religious training cannot and should not have a part in tax-supported institutions, he expressed his belief in its importance as providing ethical instruction for the well-trained intellect to counteract "the pagan philosophy that now prevails"; and he looked forward to Interfaith House as a place where each religion would preserve its uniqueness, but coöperation and association would bring mutual respect and understanding for all. He closed with an anecdote from the Talmud describing the reciprocal love of two brothers which had hallowed the spot chosen as the site for Solomon's Temple.

Inter-racial amity was stressed by the next speaker, Mr. William Agar, Acting President of Freedom House, who referred to the works of scientists, notably the late Franz Boas, in proving that no race as such is more or less educable than any other, and reminded his audience of several other salutary truths: that the white race (more properly the pink race!) is but a minority that has assumed ascendancy; that the "white man's burden" has become to our colored brothers the burden of the white man; that we must work for the understanding and coöperation of different races as of different religions; that peace will not be kept unless each nation keeps its own house in order, which for our own country means a change in our treatment of Negroes—ghettoes in the North and Jim Crowism in the South—and a check to the anti-Semitism growing in some places. He concluded with a tribute to Roosevelt House as a great force toward the racial and religious understanding without which our Declaration of Independence loses its being.

The next speaker was Mayor Fiorello H. La Guardia, who in pursuance of Mr. Agar's theme hailed as typically New York and typically Rooseveltian the whole-hearted applause that had just been given to a colored singer, and declared that as a rule we all "get along very nicely", despite an occasional lapse which must not discourage us, for "we have made real progress in New York in inter-faith and inter-racial understanding". After a tribute to the independence of the President's mother in the face of parochial-minded criticism, he added that "our great President is at this very moment engaged in seeking a practical solution with a realistic approach to a century-old problem", and he expressed his own personal optimism "because people are naturally good". He ended as he had begun with a tribute to a guest-musician, this time turning to Miss Roselle to say that she had expressed in song what people are trying to do—voicing the cry of those longing for the homeland, and then

changing the key to fit the mood that comes with accomplishment of good efforts in "I Love Life".

The stirring concluding message was from Dr. Frank Kingdon, Chairman of the International Rescue and Relief Committee, who urged that differences provide real opportunity, and that the proper approach to one who is different is not the patronage that may underlie the notion of "tolerance" but the eager desire to learn and to grow, "What have you got that I haven't got?" Mere agreement—the casual "yes, yes, sure" attitude—leads to stagnation; argument—the give and take of "no, I think you're wrong"—forces one to think and try to "match what the other fellow thinks". This is what results from the educational discipline of living together. We must, then, move into other people's differences and incorporate other people within ourselves—even as was done in that American home within a structure that has now become ours, where no question was raised as to whether one was white or black, Jew or Protestant or Catholic.

The singing of "Fame" by the red-gowned choir was followed by the recessional of hooded faculty and distinguished guests; and the audience left with President Shuster's final words of dedication ringing in their ears, another adjuration to break down barriers, and, whatever one's political creed, to think of Roosevelt House as "the home of a great President, and commander-in-chief under whom our heroes are giving their last full measure of devotion".

E. ADELAIDE HAHN.
