

# DOWERS FOR ORPHAN GIRLS

## UNIQUE IDEA OF A NEW-YORK PHILANTHROPIST.

### Worthy Girls Who Marry Worthy Men Will Receive Substantial Aid— Creed Will Have No Influence —First, Four Marriages Set for Feb. 22.

The completion of the organization of the Greater New-York German Orphan Dowry Society will mark the establishment of a unique charity based on novel lines.

The purpose of this society is to protect poor German orphan girls from the vices and temptations to which so many of them are exposed in a great city, and further to present each of them who proves worthy with a sum of money as a dowry upon her marriage to a man who also has been found honest and trustworthy. The founder is Lazarus Morgenthau, a wealthy citizen of New-York, who, though unostentatious, is known to many beneficiaries as a great philanthropist.

The society of which the motto is "Charity, Tolerance, Generosity," in making these gifts of dowry is not to be restricted to inmates or former inmates of orphan asylums, but any parentless girl filling the requirements as to character will be eligible, without regard to creed. Already the by-laws and regulations of the society have been compiled by the founder, and they will be made public as soon as they have been submitted to and passed upon by the selected members of the Board of Directors. These by-laws have been drawn after careful study, and are based on Mr. Morgenthau's experience of thirty years or more. Any suggestions will be appreciated by him. The names of the members of the Board of Directors will also be made public as soon as they have duly taken office.

#### To Arrange Four Weddings.

It is the purpose of the founder that the initiation of the society shall be celebrated on Washington's Birthday, Feb. 22, 1897, with the public marriage at some suitable places of four orphans, one Protestant, one Catholic, one Freemason's daughter, and one Jewess, each of whom shall receive \$100 in gold immediately after the ceremony. Thereafter the marriages will take place at the rate, for the present, of sixteen a year, four at a time, on Washington's Birthday, and also on the anniversaries of birthdays of the late Mrs. Oswald Ottendorfer, Jesse Seligman, and Ernst Possart. Mr. Possart is the Director of the Royal Court Theatre, in Munich, and by his rendition of "Nathan der Weise" he suggested to Mr. Morgenthau in part the idea of the society. He afterward urged Mr. Morgenthau to carry out the idea.

A society with similar aims, but more limited scope, was founded by Mr. Morgenthau Feb. 18, 1874, the date of the marriage of his daughter Ida to William J. Ehrich. This first society, however, was for the benefit of Hebrew orphan girls only. The enthusiasm which it aroused manifested itself principally, according to Mr. Morgenthau, in fine oratory at the meetings of the Directors, and, encountering numerous difficulties and having to bear the responsibilities alone, he was compelled reluctantly to abandon the scheme. During its existence of twenty months, however, it presented ten orphan girls with gifts of money at their marriage.

The new society will have a Directory Board of 200 members, of whom 100 will be Christians and 100 Hebrews. The marriage in each case will be public, and a civil ceremony on one of the four days named. Any kind of a religious ceremony desired by the principals may be gone through with, either before or after the public wedding, but on the same day.

#### May Pick Their Husbands.

The society in no case will exercise any authority in the choice of the husband, further than to require that he be worthy. The bride will do her own choosing.

From assurances already received from men of means, Mr. Morgenthau believes that the number per year of endowed orphan brides may soon be increased, as may also the amount of endowment, and he considers that in a few years the society will possess a fund of at least a million dollars. The following institutions have already been notified of the movement and requested to select suitable applicants for the society's care: St. Joseph's Orphan Asylum, New-York; German Protestant Orphan Asylum, Mount Vernon; Hebrew Benevolent and Orphan Asylum Society, New-York; Hebrew Sheltering Guardian Society, New-York; German Catholic Orphan Asylum, Brooklyn; Hebrew Orphan Asylum Society, Brooklyn.

Personally, Mr. Morgenthau is an interesting man. He is eighty-one years of age, having been born at Kleinwallstadt, Bavaria, in 1815. He is hearty and robust, and of striking appearance. He is filled with an enthusiasm for this idea. He feels that its purpose will appeal to people of all creeds and to humanity at large, and that, as it grows, its great power for good will make itself felt to those even who now regard it as somewhat visionary. He is as well known in his native country as a philanthropist as he is here, and his gifts to churches and charitable institutions in that country have been without regard to the creed of the recipient. One of his peculiarities is his intense dislike of having his portrait published, or even of giving away his photograph. To a reporter for THE NEW-YORK TIMES, who interviewed him yesterday, he said:

"I am not in business. I have no pictures to sell, no patent soap to boom, neither have I poisoned my family nor squandered a large fortune. Why, then, should I have my picture in the papers?"

Mr. Morgenthau has a number of children, all of whom are wealthy and are interested in this society.