# NATHAN STRAUS

By DAVID DE SOLA POOL

SEVENTY years ago, a growing lad in Georgia was dreaming how wonderful it would be if he could save a human life. That lad, Nathan Straus, grew up to be a man to whom untold multitudes of men and women living today owe their lives. He was an immigrant boy who had been born in Otterberg, Rhenish Palatinate, on January 31, 1848. His great grandfather, Jacob Lazar Straus was a man of high ability, a leading member of the Sanhedrin convened by Napoleon in 1806. His grandfather, Jacob Straus, died young. In the political reaction after 1848, his father, Lazarus Straus, a landowner and dealer in grain, found his native Bavaria unsympathetic to his democratic views, and in 1852, like many another aggressive and independent spirit in the Germany of those days, he made his way westward to the freedom of America. After spending some time as an itinerant vendor of general merchandise on the plantations of Georgia, he settled in 1853 in that State, at Talbotton, as the keeper of a general store. A year later he was in a position to bring his family from Germany, and in September, he was joined by his wife, Sara (who was also his first cousin, the daughter of his father's youngest brother Salamon) and his children, Isidor, a lad of nine, Hermina, a year and a half younger, Nathan a boy of six, and Oscar, a baby of three and a half years.

A charming picture of those early days has been drawn by Oscar Straus in his volume of memoirs "Under Four Administrations." We catch glimpses of the boy, Nathan, attending the local Baptist Bible School for two years, but at the same time being trained in Judaism by his father, a Hebraist of parts and a lover of the traditions of Jewish life. In a little log cabin, and later, at the Collingsworth Institute, the young Nathan obtained his primary education. Then came the Civil War, and the older boys, Isidor

and Nathan, took a hand in the running of the store. Even in those early days the young Nathan showed his originality and business acumen. When, for example, the Civil War made it very difficult to obtain face powder, he took a lump of talcum and cut it into small balls which he sold in place of face powder. Similarly as a lad of fifteen, when hemp had become very scarce in the South on account of the war, he collected or bought up odd pieces of hemp rope and sold them at a handsome profit. The future owner of splendid speedy horses was foreshadowed in the lad who used that profit for the purchase of a pony.

During the Civil War, the Straus family moved to Columbus, Ga. The end of the war left the family ruined, its wealth in cotton burned, its savings swept away. Thirteen years after Lazarus Straus had laid the foundation of his American home, he found himself, at the age of fifty-six, again virtually at the bottom of the ladder. But, this time he had at his side his three rarely-gifted sons. Moving to New York in 1865, he first paid off his creditors every dollar that he owed them, and then established the firm of Lazarus Straus & Son, importers of pottery and glassware. The "& Son" meant Isidor, for Nathan was then only seventeen. But after completing a course in Packard's Business College, Nathan joined the firm next year, 1866, as a salesman. On March 17, 1874, he called on the firm of R. H. Macy with two porcelain plates under his arm. The clever salesman interested Mr. Macy so successfully that he arranged for the firm of Lazarus Straus & Son to rent the basement of the Macy store for a crockery department. In the same year, when Nathan was twenty-six, he and his brother Isidor became partners in the Macy firm, and in 1887, they were the sole owners of the business. The romance of the brilliant and phenomenal growth of this enterprise is due to a combination of the executive ability of Isidor and the originality and daring vision of Nathan Straus. On one occasion, when Isidor was worried because the firm needed more cash, Nathan solved the problem by originating the idea of the Depositors' Account, which brought into the business an abundance of ready cash. On another occasion, one of the saleswomen fainted. It was learned that she had been virtually starving herself in order to be able to look after an

invalid mother. The future prince of philanthropists is seen in the reply which Nathan Straus gave to the challenge of this situation. He did not content himself with giving financial aid to the girl's family, but he originated the system, which has since been widely adopted, of installing a lunchroom in the store, where the employees could get good meals at nominal cost. In the same way, he originated the provision of rest rooms and medical care for the employees of the store. The legal and diplomatic career of the youngest brother, Oscar took him here and there, but Nathan and Isidor Straus lived and worked in the closest association until the death of the latter. The loss of the thoughtful, gentle brother Isidor in the sinking of the "Titanic" in 1912 affected Nathan deeply. Shortly thereafter, he retired from the firm of Macy's, and in 1914 he retired from active concern with business, some years later severing his relations also with the firm of Abraham & Straus of Brooklyn, which the two brothers had entered in 1888 in exactly the same way as they had entered the firm of R. H. Macy & Co.

An incident in his early business career led to a perfect life-long romance. In 1877 he went to Europe on a business trip, and, in Mannheim, he made a call on a friend of his father's. Between him and the daughter of the house, Lina Gutherz, there was love at first sight, and with that characteristic impetuousness which sometimes amounted to second sight, Nathan Straus laid such ardent siege to the lady's heart that the next day they were engaged. In April they were married, and, for fifty-three years Lina Gutherz Straus, a saintly woman of rare culture of mind, tenderness of heart, and nobility and purity of spirit, worked with him in his benefactions and public service, adored by him and loved by all who were privileged to know her.

While Nathan Straus was becoming a merchant prince, other sides of his richly endowed personality were also maturing. He was quick to grasp a public cause, and he had an instinct for dramatizing a situation so as to focus public attention upon it. But he was always too frankly and forcibly outspoken in his opinion of men and causes to qualify him for the type of public service his brother Oscar gave. Yet the great popularity of his warmhearted, generous nature, and his ardent desire to do the greatest good in the

most direct way carried him to some extent into public life. From 1889 to 1893 he was Park Commissioner of New York City, and in 1893 a member of the New York Forest Preserve Board. In the following year he received the honor of being the nominee of the Democratic Party for Mayor of the city, a nomination which he declined. He knew he had neither the patience to deal with the infinite detail of that office, nor the suave political indirection it imposed. But in 1898, when working for the adoption of compulsory pasteurization of milk, he accepted the office of president of the Board of Health of the City. One other occasion on which he let himself be drawn into public life was in 1917, when, charges having been made that improper conditions existed on the U. S. Hospital Ship "Solace," Josephus Daniels, Secretary of the Navy, appointed him as one of an impartial committee of three to investigate the charges.

Although Nathan Straus did not seek public office, it was impossible to keep him out of the public eye. There was a dash, an originality and a picturesqueness about his personality that could not be obscured and that inevitably made him both a widely known and a popular figure.

One of his interests which helped keep him in the forefront of popularity was his love of animals. He would not sit down to eat at his country home unless the birds in the garden had been fed. Of all animals, those he loved best were fast horses. He was fond of telling how, as a young man, not being able to afford a trotting horse for himself alone, he bought one in partnership with a friend. Each would drive the horse on alternate days. When he married, he felt he could not afford to keep both a wife and his half of the horse, and he sold his share in the horse to his partner. But he felt the sacrifice of his pet so keenly that he could not sleep that night, and, early the next morning, he bought back his share of the animal.

In those days, Seventh Avenue was the far from satisfactory speedway of the city, and it was in a large measure due to the initiative and renown of Nathan Straus as a driver of fast trotting horses that the Speedway was built along the Harlem River. When Robert Bonner, Commodore Vanderbilt, John D. Rockefeller, E. H. Harriman, H. B. Claflin, and other notables were daily to be seen driving

their fleet handsome horses, Nathan Straus was the recognized king of the Speedway. While men like Bonner were spending fortunes to own fast trotting horses, with an almost uncanny instinct, Nathan Straus purchased for nominal amounts historic horses such as Denver 2:14¼, never beaten in a race, and the undisputed champion of the speedway for five years, or Majolica 2:17, or Cobwebs, the favorite of all of the trotting horses which he drove, the unbeaten record holder of the Speedway with the mile in 2 minutes 12 seconds. Oldtime sportsmen declared that it was the superb horsemanship of the man who drove him and who could make the spirited animal respond instantly to the sound of his master's voice which made Cobwebs the fastest and most perfect harness horse ever seen on the Speedway of New York.

His interest in sport was not limited to swift horses, although they were his first love. Himself of spare and athletic build and ready to fight when need be, he was an ardent advocate of all clean and manly sports. His was the enthusiasm of a college student when in 1926, though rapidly approaching his eighties, he gave the kick-off at the first New York game played by the Champion Hakoah Soccer Team of Vienna. He took a lasting and warm personal interest in the achievements of Benny Leonard, the world champion lightweight pugilist. In his later years, after he had sold his yacht, he could be seen daily on the golf links. It was his delight to give financial and personal encouragement to the sports meets arranged by such organizations as Young Judaea, for he was an enthusiastic advocate of robust, upstanding physical development especially for Jews, warped by long harsh centuries of urbanization and intellectualization.

Exactly when Nathan Straus began his outstanding career as a philanthropist he could not recall. Probably his first large gift was that of a building which he presented to the Trudeau Tuberculosis Sanitarium at Saranac in the Adirondacks. But he leapt into the heart of the public during the winter of 1892–3. With a vision which saw the need long before others realized it, and with his characteristic directness of action which translated his vision into simple reality while others were still discussing symptoms

and methods of treatment, he built up a system of emergency relief by establishing a chain of depots for the distribution of food and coal to any of New York's poor who would apply and pay 5 cents for it. This cutting of red tape was criticized by the advocates of a more discriminating and investigating relief. Nathan Straus answered "Supposing I am victimized to some extent. By making those mistakes I am not likely to miss any of the deserving cases that come to my station. And do not the organized charities make mistakes too with all their investigating? When a poor woman comes down to take away coal in a baby carriage, she is investigated enough for me." During that winter he distributed no less than 1,500,000 buckets of coal, and incidentally pointed the way to a development of public service by obtaining the use of city piers for his coal depots.

The next winter, 1893–4, was again a panic winter of depression and unemployment. Then again, at his own expense, he opened and maintained four lodging houses which gave bed and breakfast for five cents to 64,409 cases of New York City's unemployed, hungry and homeless. Those who had not even the five cents were given a chance to earn it by work done around the lodging house. During that winter he issued over 2,000,000 five cent tickets entitling the bearer to coal, or bread, or groceries, or lodging and breakfast. On this occasion, and it was the only one when he accepted aid from others in his work, he received a contribution of $50,000 from J. Pierpont Morgan towards carrying on these works of mercy. In the hard winter of 1914–15, which followed the outbreak of the World War, he served in his milk stations in New York, 1,135,731 one cent meals, consisting of coffee or milk, and roll and butter or a cheese sandwich.

It would be vain to attempt even to list his philanthropies. They include such varied undertakings as the donation of an ice plant for the soldiers suffering in Santiago, Cuba, in 1898 during the Spanish-American War, aid in building a Roman Catholic Church in Lakewood, N. J., the gift of food, clothing and medical supplies for the victims of the Messina earthquake in 1909, a cottage presented to the Jewish Consumptive Sanitarium in Duarte, Cal. (1916), the gift to the Government in 1918 of the use of land in Lake-

wood, N. J. for the erection of Red Cross and of army hospital buildings, a model dairy presented to the National Farm School in Doylestown, Pa., and free distribution of pasteurized milk to soldiers and sailors in 1918.

There were other benefactions which demanded no money, but only imagination and heart. It was originally the idea of Nathan Straus that waterside piers should be used as recreation centers for the crowded city. Though his suggestion was rejected by the Dock Department, he kept hammering away until the city finally adopted it, and opened recreation centers on its piers. But when money was called for, he always managed to find it. He frequently said, "The opportunity to make money will always be here, this opportunity to do good will be gone forever if I let it pass. I can wait to make more money. I cannot wait to give."

It has been said that Nathan Straus came to his most enduring piece of world philanthrophy through the accident of hearing a cow cough. But when he was asked in later years where he got the idea of pasteurizing milk, he pointed to his head and said "here," and to his heart and said "here." What set him on the path of his undertakings was never so much an incident as it was intuition, and it was this intuitive vision which carried his campaign for pure milk to world-wide triumph.

The incident of the cow that coughed is characteristic of the directness of methods and the unswerving eagerness with which he followed out his intuitions. A cow on his farm sickened and died. Questioning why the beautiful looking animal should have died prematurely notwithstanding the superb care it had always received, he ordered an autopsy to be made. This revealed tubercular destruction of lung tissue as the cause of the animal's death. Nathan Straus believed that the milk of a tubercular cow might transmit the disease to human beings, unless the milk were treated in some way that would kill the germs of the disease. In 1892, after taking counsel with some physicians, he launched his campaign for the pasteurization of milk as the best means of bringing within the reach of everyone, especially the children of the poor, milk which would be free of disease germs and which would have unim-

paired palatibility, digestibility and nutritive qualities. At his own cost, he established in New York City a laboratory for furnishing milk that had been properly modified and pasteurized for infant feeding. In 1894, the laboratory was enlarged, and the six distributing stations he had then established gave out, at nominal cost, over 2500 bottles a day.

In 1897, when he was Health Commissioner of the City, he erected a pasteurization plant on Randall's Island. He knew the dreadful fact that at that time many of the city's waifs died. Without any other change in the dietary of the institution except that from raw to pasteurized milk, the death rate among the children on Randall's Island fell from 41.81 per hundred for the years 1895–7 to an average of 21.75 for the next seven years. In 1891, before Nathan Straus began his work, out of every thousand babies born in New York City, more than 241,—almost one out of every four—would die before they reached their first birthday. During four years, of 20,111 babies who had the benefit of pasteurized milk from his stations only six died. In Mamaroneck, where Mr. and Mrs. Straus had their summer home, a model health center with a milk pasteurization plant reduced the death rate among children under five years of age from 85 per thousand to the phenomenally low figure of 17 a thousand.

Such irrefutable figures made of him a tireless campaigner for compulsory pasteurization of milk. Deep sorrow in his life gave the sense of consecration to his devotion to this cause. The death of a little daughter, a babe of two years, on board ship during a European trip might have been prevented, both Mr. and Mrs. Straus thought, had good milk been available for her. Some years later he went on a tour of inspection of his milk stations with his son Jerome, a youth about to enter Cornell University. A few days later, the lad developed pneumonia. As he lay on his sick bed he said to his father "Father, you should sell your horses so that you can go on with your milk stations." That night, the boy died, and Nathan Straus carried with him to the day of his death the sacred charge of those words.

He kept opening additional milk depots, until there were eighteen, covering every district in Manhattan, all of them

maintained entirely at his personal cost. He used to say, with a twinkling smile, that he had milk on the brain. Entrenched against him were public ignorance and indifference, professional prejudice, and commercial greed. But even when the attack on him was maliciously personal, he would say "Abuse won't kill, but raw milk will," and the incredulity, derision and bitter opposition which he encountered only strengthened his purpose to force on the medical profession and public health officers a general application of the discoveries of Pasteur. Once when he tried to introduce pasteurization of milk into a city of Germany he met opposition and the rejection of his plan. Tears of disappointment welled up into the eyes of Mrs. Straus. "Never mind, my dear" he said "don't cry. Now we have something to fight for." Ever a good fighter, he met every attack with an offensive by opening up some new milk depot or some new pasteurizing plant, until in 1920 he had 297 milk stations distributed in 36 cities. The opposition of dairymen, milk distributors, a number of politicians and some physicians persisted. Once his opponents caused him to be arrested and haled before the Court of Special Sessions, on the charge of having watered milk,—a charge based on the fact that at some of his stations the milk had been modified for infant feeding.

The battle continued for years, but the facts, the majority of the medical profession led by Dr. Jacobi, and a constantly growing public opinion, were with him. He was tireless in propaganda, reading papers on the prevention of infant mortality before State Legislatures, at medical, social and other conferences and congresses in the United States and various countries of Europe, and contributing forceful letters to the press, and to mayors and municipal health officers. In 1909, Public Health Service of the United States Treasury Department issued an elaborate volume on milk, in which were recorded such facts as that pasteurized milk was first made available for infants in general in New York City in 1893 when Nathan Straus dispensed 34,400 bottles of milk from one depot, and that in 1906, seventeen milk stations served 3,142,252 bottles and 1,078,405 glasses of pasteurized milk. The Treasury Department's report recorded further that the general death rate of children

under five had been halved largely as a result of the pasteurization of milk, the average death rate in the months of June, July, and August having fallen from 136.4 per thousand to 62.7 per thousand. Such bodies as the American Medical Association, in 1911, and the International Health Commission of the Rockefeller Foundation, in 1917, added their testimony, and finally, in 1914, after an epidemic of milk-borne typhoid fever, the year before, had taught its disastrous lesson, New York City officially introduced the compulsory pasteurization of all milk, other than that produced and handled under exceptional conditions.

In 1920, when the battle was over, Mr. Straus presented his pasteurizing laboratory to the city. But in the meanwhile he had been carrying far and wide his campaign against what is called "The White Peril" of raw milk. He gave pasteurizing installations to various cities both in the United States and abroad. In Europe, he began his work by establishing a pasteurization plant at Heidelberg in 1907, and thereafter he carried it on in Sandhausen, Karlsruhe, Eberswalde, and elsewhere. In recognition of his brilliant service to childhood, and of the untold thousands of little ones who owed their lives to his insight, single-minded tenacity of purpose, and single-handed generosity, President Taft, in 1911, appointed him to the Berlin International congress for the protection of infants, as the sole delegate from the United States. The next year, he was a delegate to the Tuberculosis Congress in Rome. The first international Child Welfare Congress held under the auspices of the League of Nations in August, 1925, put on record its praise of his pioneer life-saving work. Ever more widely in countries and communities the world over, has the pasteurization of milk been made obligatory, and from all over the world wherever pasteurized milk was introduced there came to Nathan Straus the unvarying story of reduced infant mortality, and the moving joy and precious reward of the blessings of grateful mothers. Wherever pasteurization of milk is conscientiously carried out, the death rate from milk-borne germs of typhoid fever, streptococcus sore throat, scarlet fever, diphtheria and diarrhoeal diseases has been cut to nothing. Layman though he was, and without any pretense to medical knowledge, Nathan Straus lives in the

annals of medicine as one of the pioneers in public health, and as the man who saved untold thousands, and eventually millions of little children, from premature death. What he began with his private means, is every day being more generally adopted as a public obligation.

One word must be added to complete the story of this outstanding achievement of his life. In all the vast labor and unwearying struggle of propaganda, as well as in the organization of the infinite detail of the establishment and maintenance of the Straus laboratories and milk stations in the United States and abroad, Mrs. Straus worked day and night at his side. It was she who, in 1917, compiled the volume "Diseases in Milk—The Remedy Pasteurization." Her extraordinary patience and marvelous care for detail assured the carrying through of those quick intuitive decisions of her husband that were as brilliant and illuminating as a flash of lightning.

Another pioneering undertaking in public health that grew out of his passionate interest in combatting tuberculosis by cleansing the milk supply, was his institution in 1909, of a tuberculosis preventorium for children. He had come to the conclusion that the inception of many cases of tuberculosis in adults was to be looked for in a childhood spent in contact with a case of the disease. He reasoned that these children could be saved from becoming victims of the disease if they were taken from such homes and cared for in a health ful environment. In this way, he evolved the idea of preventorium rather than a remedial sanitarium for children, thereby not only coining a new word for the English language, but also giving practical validity to what had theretofore been only a theoretically recognized idea. He housed his preventorium at first in "The Little White House," a cottage in Lakewood, N. J. which he had often placed at the disposal of President Cleveland, and later at Farmingdale, N. J., on a piece of land presented by Arthur Brisbane. This pioneer preventorium has become the model for similar institutions in many lands.

As the years went on, philanthropy in the broadest sense of the term became the ruling passion of Nathan Straus. He regarded his wealth, never near as great as popularly

estimated, as a trusteeship, not an ownership. He did not count his benefactions. In fact, he could never tell how much he had spent on them, though he knew he was deliberately and materially reducing his fortune. His motto was "Give while you live." He would ask "Why should people profit more by your death than by your life?" In later years, he loved to castigate those rich men who, he believed, were not giving to public causes in accordance with their means. In season and out of season, in private homes, at public gatherings or by letter, he would give strong and sometimes drastic expression to his doctrine of the blessedness of giving during one's life time. Stringent and stinging as sometimes were his words, he was able to express himself in this way because everyone knew that, in proportion to his means, he was giving more than were others. He would try to make more contracted hearts understand the rejuvenating joy and life-giving happiness which he derived from seeing in his lifetime the fruits of his philanthropy. On his seventy-fifth birthday he declared, "I feel ten years younger than I did ten years ago, because I have given so much of my money to those who needed it worse than I did, and I intend giving it away until I die."

The colossal suffering caused by the World War inspired him to heights of generosity which matched his magnificent campaign for pure milk. The experiences of life, so far from bringing any hardening to his nature, made his heart increasingly more tender and responsive to human suffering. The tears would come to his eyes as he would hear or read of the woes of the men in uniform, or the tragedy of the non-combatants, and in response to appeals for their relief he gave lavishly of his means and of himself. His was the gift with the giver, and munificent as were his financial contributions, his gift of himself was of even higher value. It was he who suggested the slogan for one of the campaigns for relief of sufferers from the war "Give until it hurts," but he later revised this to "Give until it feels good." His winged words of personal appeal, ringing out from a heart exquisitely attuned to every emotion of pity and love, moved men from coast to coast. He was always the first to give, and his princely donations set a high standard and a contagious example. In 1917, he opened the Jewish War Relief Fund

with a gift of $100,000, the largest single contribution of its kind, given by an individual, up to that time. In 1916, he sold his luxurious steam yacht to obtain funds which were used for the aid of war orphans in Palestine. He tried to sell his beautiful home on West 72nd Street, setting up a large notice over the front door announcing that the proceeds of the sale would be devoted to the relief of sufferers from the War. Not succeeding in finding a ready purchaser, he set a fair price on the house and sold securities to realize that amount for War Relief, though he had to take a loss in a depressed market. Besides giving lavishly to alleviate some of the hideous sufferings of the War, septugenarian though he was, he wrote hundreds of personal letters, traveled to various centers, and attended innumerable meetings. The close of the War left him an ardent lover of peace, and thereafter the cause of world peace found an enthusiastic advocate in him who had always embraced humanity in one brotherhood, transcending creed or nationality. Never did he give a truer revelation of this side of his character than when he penned the beautiful words "In the Titanic tragedy all creeds were united in the brotherhood of death. If one could only hope for a brotherhood of life! Why wait for death to teach us the lesson of human fraternity?"

This sense of human brotherhood strengthened his loyalty to the Jewish people, the people of sorrows among the nations of the world. Moreover the Jewish strain in Nathan Straus was vigorous and proud. The strong Jewish traditionalsim of his father's home, as well as his wife's tenderly emotional Judaism, were potent religious influences in his life. Though brought up in a community where, except for his own family, there were no Jews, he was a synagogue Jew by choice, becoming affiliated with Reform Judaism on moving to New York. Yet, in his later years he felt that Reform Judaism of those days had abolished more than was healthy for the survival of Judaism. Addressing a convention of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America a few years before his death, he roundly declared that Orthodox Jews had the right stand, because in Reform circles the younger generation had gone too far from Jewish traditions.

He was sensitive and quick to defend the honor of the

Jewish name. When some members of the Straus family, desiring to go to Lakewood for a period of convalescence, were refused admission to one of the hotels because they were Jews, the characteristically vigorous reply of Nathan Straus was to get potential control of the situation by purchasing land in the immediate vicinity of several of the leading hotels, and building the Lakewood Hotel with no other policy than to throw it open to all, whether Jew or Gentile. President and Mrs. Cleveland, his warm friends, showed their appreciation of his stand and their disapproval of prejudice by becoming guests at the hotel. Its construction and management proved to be a costly undertaking in which Mr. Straus in the end lost a large sum of money. But he always said that he would have been willing to spend or lose much more if necessary, in defense of Jewish honor. His generous contribution towards building a Catholic Church at Lakewood was another expression of his detestation of the religious prejudice suffered at that time in Lakewood by Catholics as well as by Jews.

He had many a tilt with James Gordon Bennett because of anti-Semitic tendencies shown by that distinguished editor. In later years when the campaign against Jews sponsored by Henry Ford was at its height, Nathan Straus issued a public challenge to Mr. Ford to submit the egregious Protocols of the Elders of Zion to any impartial jury, and he, Nathan Straus, would undertake to refute them. The nation-wide publicity given to this challenge by the best loved and most trusted Jew of the land, together with the Sapiro and Bernstein trials, focused public attention upon the issue, and it is believed, helped materially to bring about Mr. Ford's full and frank recantation. Whenever Nathan Straus rose to fight prejudice against the Jew, he did so because, as he said, "The Jews have a work to do in the world not merely in fighting for toleration of their own race, but in defending the cause of religious freedom throughout the world."

When Ignace Paderewski denied that there had been pogroms against the Jews of Poland during the time that he was prime minister, Nathan Straus entered the lists against him as Chairman of the Committee for the Defense of the Jews in Poland, and challenged his statement by citations of excesses which had undeniably occurred. He expressed his

fighting Jewish spirit through his interest in movements and organizations for the defense of Jewish rights, associating himself actively with the first American Jewish Congress of which he was elected Chairman in 1916, and also with the present organization of which he was Chairman in 1920, President in 1922, and Honorary President in 1918 and 1925.

He was as emphatic in his appreciation of accomplishment by Jews as he was sensitive to slights put upon the good name of the Jew. The thrill of Jewish pride which he felt when he read of the extraordinary exploit of Abraham Krotoshinsky, the World War hero of the Lost Battalion, moved him to settle Krotoshinsky as a farmer on the soil of Palestine.

In his devotion to the cause of Palestine, the Jewish soul of Nathan Straus came to its fullest, most vigorous and most organic expression. The place which his campaign for pasteurized milk had taken in his life at the turn of the nineteenth century was filled in the last two decades of his life by Zionism. It was in 1904 while on a Mediterranean tour that Mr. and Mrs. Straus first visited Palestine. Even then, prewar Paletine with all its discomforts and discouragement for the tourist, made so deep an impression on them that they changed their plan of proceeding to Damascus in order to stay longer in the Holy City. It was not until 1912, when they visited Palestine a second time together with Dr. J. L. Magnes, that the full magic of the ancient Jewish homeland entered into and possessed their souls. It was then that Mr. Straus attempted to raise the economic standards of *Haluka*-ridden Jewry by establishing a domestic science school for girls, and a factory for making buttons and souvenirs out of mother of pearl. Instinctively sensing the importance of the land problem, he bought land outside of Bethlehem opposite the Tomb of Rachel, and another piece of land which is now the center of Talpioth, a Jewish suburb of Jerusalem, which he planned originally to be the site of the Hebrew University or of the home which he hoped to build for himself in the Holy City. To cope with the pitiful problem of poverty, he opened a soup kitchen in the Old City. This began by dispensing 300 free meals to the destitute. Now, twenty years later, the two Straus soup kitchens, one in the Old City and one outside the Walls, filling in some measure the functions of old age and widows' pensions and insurance for the

disabled and unemployed, are giving an average of nearly 3,000 free meals daily. So deeply did this imperatively needed philanthropy appeal to Mr. Straus that a decade before his death he established a foundation to insure the continuance of these kitchens so long as poverty should exist in Jerusalem.

It was during the 1912 visit, that he laid the foundation of that work for public health in Palestine with which his name is preeminently and lastingly associated there, by founding a Health Department to cope in some measure with the malaria, trachoma and other ills of insanitation which scourged the pitifully neglected Holy Land. In the meanwhile, the Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America had been founded by Henrietta Szold. But its growth not being rapid enough to suit Nathan Straus, bringing back to America as he did his vivid impression of the deplorable health conditions in Palestine, he assumed the expense of one of the two nurses through whom Hadassah began its work, and in January, 1913, less than a year after their previous visit, he and Mrs. Straus sailed again for Palestine, taking with them Hadassah's two nurses, settling them in Jerusalem, and thereby beginning Hadassah's pioneer work in the Land of Israel. At that time also, Nathan Straus established a Pasteur Institute in Palestine, which, together with his Health Department, played an important part in controlling epidemics during the War.

When the problem of a Jewish Palestine became one of immediacy through the British conquest of the Holy Land, Zionism became and remained the dominant interest in the life of both Nathan and Lina Straus. It would be hopeless to attempt to list the superlatively munificent gifts with which he led and responded to every appeal to Palestine, beginning with his supplying half of the cargo of $100,000 worth of provisions sent from America to Palestine in 1915, on the U. S. collier *Vulcan*. It was a significant, though for them but a minor incident when Mrs. Straus gave to Hadassah all the jewels which a lifetime of love had showered on her. It was the crowning of a lifelong interest, when Nathan Straus founded and equipped Hadassah's Child Health Welfare Stations. The fruit of a fourth visit to Palestine, in 1923–1924, was the establishment of the monu-

mental Nathan and Lina Straus Health Center in Jerusalem, and later a similar Health Center in Tel Aviv. On these two magnificent institutions, Mr. Straus expended $325,000. In 1927, when almost an octogenarian, he sailed again for Palestine, and, in the laying of the cornerstone of his Jerusalem Health Center, saw the pledge of his dream's realization.

The inscription which he caused to be set up at the entrance to the Health Centers, declaring in English, Arabic and Hebrew that they are for the benefit of all inhabitants of the land, Christian, Moslem and Jew, was characteristic of all his humanitarian work in Palestine as well as elsewhere. When, in July 1927, an earthquake shook Palestine, while others, fascinated with fear, were still reading the news, he took the swift and finely-inspired action of cabling $25,000 to Jerusalem, stipulating that it was to used for all the sufferers from the disaster without distinction of race, creed or nationality. Though in 1922 he had given $1,000 to a Moslem orphanage in Jerusalem, and the next year again $1,000 for the poor Arabs of Jaffa, and on other occasions substantial sums for aiding the Arab poor, he declared that nothing he had ever done before gave him quite the same joy as came to him from receiving the enthusiastic praise and expressions of appreciation from the Arabs of Palestine, almost the sole beneficiaries of his gift for the sufferers from the earthquake.

For the last fifteen years of their lives both Mr. and Mrs. Straus lived ardently for Palestine. Nathan Straus spoke the simple truth when he said "Others may be better able than I to talk about Zionism, but none can feel it more deeply than I." A naive story illustrates how the love of Zion dominated Nathan Straus, occupying his thoughts night and day, and giving color to his whole life. A guest who had been living in Palestine for some time arrived at the Straus home one evening. His first question, with characteristic directness was "How is Palestine?" To such a comprehensive question, especially when asked by an elderly man whose heart bled for every story of trouble, there could be no discussion of difficulties, but only one answer, and that almost casual answer was given: "Palestine is splendid." The next morning, Straus opened the conversation by saying

to his guest, "You do not know what you did for me by telling me yesterday evening that things are fine in Palestine. For months I have not slept as well as I did last night." Zionism was so intense a passion in his life that when, in 1923, Israel Zangwill made his famous speech in Carnegie Hall trenchantly criticizing the policy of the Zionist movement, Mr. Straus could not restrain himself from publicly denouncing him, and Zangwill, who until then had been a guest in the Straus home, found it necessary to find other quarters. In the last two decades of his life Nathan Straus gave nearly two-thirds of his whole fortune to Palestine. His known gifts to Zion total more than $2,000,000.

It can be readily imagined what pain was his when the dispute broke out about the Wailing Wall. In a public letter he appealed to the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem to end the strife. The bloody outbreak by the Arabs in August 1929, which was the culmination of their agitation, almost broke his heart. It robbed both Mr. and Mrs. Straus of the joy of life. That cowardly blow against the peaceful Jews of the Holy Land broke the spirit and hastened the death of Lina Gutherz Straus. For many weeks after the murderous Arab riots, Mr. and Mrs. Straus entered into mourning, refusing themselves to all but their dearest friends. But to the end of his days, Nathan Straus retained his conviction that the cause of Zionism would triumph. When, on account of growing weakness, he could no longer attend Zionist conferences and meetings, he would, from his retirement issue clarion words of sturdy hope and encouragement.

Ever since the nineties when his vivid personality and the heart which he put into his public benefactions singled him out as one of America's greatest philanthropists, he had been a popular and beloved figure among all classes. But when the fervor of Zion took possession of his soul, he became the darling of the Jewish masses. Forgotten were all the asperities that had been stirred up during his long battle for pure milk. Forgiven were his forcible criticism of those who differed from him. As President Taft expressed it "Dear old Nathan Straus is a great Jew and the greatest Christian of us all." He was everywhere accepted as the Grand Old Man of American Jewry. The last twenty years of his life were a continuous personal triumph. In the year 1923, on the

occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the creation of greater New York, Nathan Straus was chosen by popular vote as the citizen who had, during that quarter of a century, done the most for public welfare in the empire city. His seventieth, seventy-fifth and especially his eightieth birthdays were the signal for popular celebration led by the press of the whole country, and hundreds of letters of admiration and congratulations poured in on him from leaders in every sphere of life, from the Old World as well as the New. In the early summer of 1930, the National Institute of Social Sciences awarded him a gold medal in recognition of his "distinguished and widespread social service rendered in behalf of humanity." His every appearance at a public gathering was the signal for an outburst of applause and cheering, and his rugged, forceful, direct and racily unconventional words of courageous hope, or challenge stirred his audiences to enthusiasm, far greater than that which polished orators could evoke. But the death on May 4, 1930, of his life's companion, the sweet and rare-souled Lina Gutherz Straus, left him a lonely and a broken man. They had always agreed that the one who survived would carry on the work to which they had unitedly devoted themselves with such perfect understanding and complementary gifts of character. But brave as was his spirit, without her by his side, he could no longer capture the joy and the thrill of their life's work, and on January 11, 1931, shortly before his eighty-third birthday, he passed gently into that sleep of peace for which his tired frame and bereaved soul were longing. And all that he held in his cold, dead hand was what he had given away.

The death of the Grand Old Man of American Jewry called forth tributes from high and low, from far and near. At his funeral two days later, thousands of men and women, most of them from the humbler walks of life, gathered to pay tribute to the one whose heart had always beat with all humanity, and to express the love that they bore for one who had not been a remote philanthropist but who had ever been as one of themselves. Some 3,500 men and women crowded into Temple Emanu-El, and perhaps twice as many more stood outside and around the Temple in a solemn silence to pay their tribute of reverent respect to the best-loved leader

of the Jewish people and one of the great benefactors of mankind.

Few words are needed to complete the picture, for the life story of Nathan Straus here limned was consistent throughout with his personality. The distinctiveness and originality of his character, that made it possible to force him into any mold and that differentiated him from any type or class, may be traced to his extraordinary combination of both mental and emotional gifts. He achieved the impossible in responding equally and at the same time to the keen, sound judgments of his vigorous mind, and to the undisciplined spontaneity and impulsiveness of his great and tender heart. One may list a combination of his fine qualities, as in the pregnant words with which Adolph S. Ochs described him:— "A model husband; indulgent father; an inspiring example of filial love; an upright and sagacious businessman; a civic leader in progressive and far-seeing enterprises; a man of exalted spirituality, and firm convictions of righteousness in public and private affairs; a world-famed philanthropist with a heart overflowing with human sympathy and understanding, and, withal, a patriot of the highest order." Add to this succinct characterization that he was an harmonious combination of opposites, a practical visionary, a fighting philanthropist, a belligerent pacifist, a lover of all men, yet capable of strong dislikes, an idealist, yet a hearty lover of the good things of life, a democrat in every fibre of his being, yet one of God's noblemen. Though he, foreign born, was a passionate lover and servant of America, he was no less devotedly a lover and servant of Palestine. Though his was a humanity which transcended creed and race, he was a deeply feeling, loyal Jew, who loved and who led his Jewish people by the inspiration of that unique personality which was Nathan Straus.