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Jewish Literature and Other Essays

Gustav Karpeles



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The following essays were delivered during the last ten years, in the form of addresses, before the largest associations in the great cities of Germany. Each one is a dear and precious possession to me. As I once more pass them in review, reminiscences fill my mind of solemn occasions and impressive scenes, of excellent men and charming women. I feel as though I were sending the best beloved children of my fancy out into the world, and sadness seizes me when I realize that they no longer belong to me alone—that they have become the property of strangers. The living word falling upon the ear of the listener is one thing; quite another the word staring from the cold, printed page. Will my thoughts be accorded the same friendly welcome that greeted them when first they were uttered? I venture to hope that they may be kindly received; for these addresses were born of devoted love to Judaism. The consciousness that Israel is charged with a great historical mission, not yet accomplished, ushered them into existence. Truth and sincerity stood sponsor to every word. Is it presumptuous, then, to hope that they may find favor in the New World? Brethren of my faith live there as here; our ancient watchword, "Sh'ma Yisrael," resounds in their synagogues as in ours; the old blood-stained flag, with its sublime inscription, "The Lord is my banner!" floats over them; and Jewish hearts in America are loyal like ours, and sustained by steadfast faith in the Messianic time when our hopes and ideals, our aims and dreams, will be realized. There is but one Judaism the world over, by the Jordan and the Tagus as by the Vistula and the Mississippi. God bless and protect it, and lead it to the goal of its glorious future! To all Jewish hearts beyond the ocean, in free America, fraternal greetings! Berlin, Pesach 5652. 1892

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