

RABBI MOSES J. GRIES.



A Sketch of a Singularly Successful Young Man.

The subject of this sketch is so well known to the people of Cleveland that it is unnecessary to explain that the accompanying photograph presents Moses J. Gries, rabbi at the Jewish temple. During the five years that he has been in Cleveland he has been the means of doing good to a greater number of people than any other one man, perhaps, in a similar length of time. It has been said he is well known to Clevelanders, but he is not known well enough. Few persons have any idea of all that he has accomplished, and that, too, in a quiet, unobtrusive way, so that he has never been given, publicly, the credit he deserves.

He was born at Newark, N. J., Jan. 25, 1868, and became an orphan while yet an infant. He attended the public schools in his native city and entered the high school at the remarkably early age of eleven years. In less than a year later he left the school and went to New York for the purpose of entering the preparatory department of the Hebrew Union college. Here he met his first great disappointment. He was refused admittance to the college, there being an age limit of fourteen years placed upon all applicants. He did not return to Newark, but attended the high school in New York city until he was thirteen years of age. Then he again made an application to the Hebrew Union college, passed the examination and was certified in by the president notwithstanding he was still a year short of the limit. After the way was thus opened to him he decided to go to Cincinnati and attend the Hebrew Union college at that place. He did so and remained there eight years. He attended the college in the afternoons and the public high schools of the city in the mornings. In 1885 he graduated from Hughes' high school of Cincinnati and in 1889 from the University of Cincinnati. After having graduated he went to Chattanooga, where he had secured a position as minister. He remained there until 1892, when he came to Cleveland to accept the pulpit of the Huron temple, which was then located in an old frame building on Huron street.

Very soon after this young man had taken charge of the congregation a wonderful change took place in it. He instilled new life into the old members and by his eloquence and his liberal mindedness he brought in many new ones. He initiated the custom of changing pulpits with non-Jewish ministers, preaching in their churches and having them preach in his. Through his efforts funds were raised to construct the present magnificent temple building at the corner of Central and Willson avenues. When the dedicatory services were held there he had assembled on the platform a half dozen or more non-Jewish ministers, representing as many different creeds. They all spoke on the one subject, "Have We Not All One Father? Has Not One God Created Us All?" The New York Sun, in commenting on this affair, said: "It is the wonder of the nineteenth century."

He organized the Temple society, an organization devoted to higher education in literature, music, art and the like; he organized the Junior Temple society, which is also educational in its purposes; he organized the Cleveland Council of Jewish Women, the Educational league, was one of the founders of the Municipal association, is a member of the executive committee of the Bethel Associated Charities, is vice president of the Cleveland General hospital, a director of the Humane society, is affiliated with the national conference of charities and also with the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

When he became rabbi of the temple its congregation numbered 135. It is now 319. It must be remembered that the Jewish church only counts as members adult males who are heads of families. The sabbath school, with an enrollment of fifty and a small average attendance, has grown to 600, with an average attendance of 475. All the organizations of the temple are open to Jews and non-Jews. Another institution which will shortly be opened in the temple through the instrumentality of Mr. Gries is a public library.