

THE CROCKER TESTIMONIAL.

ON the 6th of May the citizens of Sacramento, Cal., tendered to Mrs. Margaret E. Crocker a magnificent floral testimonial and tribute of their love and gratitude such as no citizen of the United States ever before received at the hands of friends and neighbors. It was a spontaneous and unanimous expression of their veneration for one whose life of benevolence and charity in their midst had won her the esteem and devotion of every one within the city limits. A brief review of her life and deeds will best explain the cause of this great popular uprising.

Mrs. Margaret E. Crocker (*née* Rhodes) was born in Stark County, Ohio, February 25, 1824, the youngest of a family of twelve. Ohio was then the frontier, and she grew to womanhood amid all the trials and privations of a pioneer life. It is well to pass briefly over the early period of her life, for it is of the later years and her many acts of benevolence of which we would speak. On the 8th of July, 1852, she was married to the Hon. Edward Bryant Crocker, in the city of New York, the ceremony being performed by the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher. She immediately departed with her husband for California, going by way of the Isthmus, reaching San Francisco on the 1st of the following September. Mr. Crocker at once began the practice of his profession (the law) in Sacramento, which city still honors his memory and, as this tribute shows, reveres his noble-hearted consort. Judge Crocker was a man of great mental vigor and capacity. For a time he sat upon the Supreme bench of California, and left behind him a record of work accomplished which has never been equalled by his successors. He was one of the five business men of Sacramento who took hold of the Central Pacific Railroad in its infancy, gave to it their great abilities, their unflagging zeal and every dollar of their earnings through years of pioneer struggles and privations. Their success is a matter of history. They became wealthy—some of them beyond their vaguest dreams when the enterprise was inaugurated.

Judge Crocker had not in his soul the elements which go to make the "railroad king," as that term is offensively understood. He was a gentleman of noble impulses and benevolent disposition—one who could never forget the struggles of his early life nor ignore the trials through which he saw others passing. His hand was always extended to aid the deserving, and public and private charities found in him a liberal patron. This spirit of benevolence was possessed by his life companion in a still higher degree, and when Judge Crocker died full of honors in 1875 she continued the work, performing more deeds of charity than had both of them done before. So many and so great have been her benefactions that thousands feel a personal gratitude for what has been done for them. Ostentation she never displays and publicity she avoids. Her good deeds have never been heralded abroad, until on this occasion, when her friends took the matter into their own hands and rendered her this spontaneous tribute of honor. So quietly and reservedly has she performed her good works that no

one pretends to be able to recount them, yet thousands who have benefited by her largeness can testify each to his own experience, while thousands more have been aided who knew not the hand of the donor. This her neighbors know, and for this they honor her.

Leaving these acts to be recorded in the great book of good deeds, unseen by the eyes of the world, a brief mention of her more extensive, and consequently more public, gifts will be interesting. The more prominent of these are: Gift of a valuable half block to the city for school purposes; a tract of land donated to the city for a cemetery, and another to the Pioneer Association for the same purpose; liberal donations to all public enterprises; endowment of an Old Ladies' Home; and, finally, the gift to the city of the celebrated Crocker Art Gallery and its valuable contents, worth half a million dollars. The home for old ladies was built by her in 1883, at a total expense for grounds, building, furniture, etc., of \$38,000, and endowed with \$62,000 of bonds, making a total donation of \$100,000. She turned the entire institution over to the management of a board of five trustees, who are zealous in rendering it the equal of the founder's ideal, in whose honor they named it "Marguerite Home." The Bell Conservatory, though not a gift to the public, serves to still further illustrate this lady's kindly character. It was founded in 1880, and covers five and a half acres. Mrs. Crocker is a passionate lover of flowers, and has gathered her tribute from the whole floral world. The conservatory, with its beautiful walks and drives, is open to the public at all times. Appreciating the fact that choice flowers are beyond the means of the poor, the owner permits the sale of flowers at a merely nominal price, thus enabling the poorer people to procure those emblems of love and purity on many occasions when they would otherwise have to forego them. To do this was the ruling motive of this benevolent lady when the conservatory was founded.

With the presentation of the art gallery the cup, which she had been steadily filling for years, ran completely over, and the people could not resist giving voice to the feeling of love, gratitude and respect which had been growing for years. During their frequent travels in Europe and America Mr. and Mrs. Crocker purchased many works of art, numbering 701 in all, most of them by artists of wide reputation. There are paintings by Murillo, Vandyke, Haki, Kaulbach, Hubner, Van Oer, Tintoretto and others of note, also many well-executed copies of the old masters. To contain these a large brick, stone and iron building was erected at a cost of \$200,000, with its interior designed for a combined art gallery, museum and library. The gallery has always been open to the public on frequent stated days, a small admission being generally charged, the proceeds of which were donated to the Orphans' Home. In November, 1884, a few business men and journalists of Sacramento inaugurated a movement for the establishment in that city of a public museum, art gallery, school of art and science, and a collection of the products of California. The result was the incorporation of the California Mu-