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THE JEW IN ENGLISH POETRY AND DRAMA.

I.

THE aim of this paper is to present the salient features of the Jew as depicted in English poetry and drama¹. The presence of Jews in England can be traced back to an early period in its history. It is uncertain whether they accompanied Julius Caesar in his invasion of Britain in 55 B. C.; but they came over in considerable numbers during the Norman period, and subsequently—as in all other countries where they ever settled—played an important part in determining and regulating the economic condition of the kingdom. It is therefore not surprising to find that references to the Jew should abound throughout every section of English literature. Nor is it surprising that the greater number of these references should embody the popular conception entertained of the Jew in the dark and Middle Ages—a conception inspired by intense religious fanaticism and a singularly deep racial antipathy, to which was superadded a profound ignorance of his personality. Dwelling apart in a separate quarter of the town, belonging to another race, and professing a different creed, the Jews were only too likely, under such conditions, to become the objects of dark and fanciful suspicions. And in the domain of imaginative literature, especially, was it likely that these ideas should find concrete expression, and the figure of the Jew assume those grotesque and distorted forms with which

¹ Of the many previous essays on some sections of this subject the following may be specially mentioned: Sidney L. Lee, "Elizabethan England and the Jews" (Proc. New Shakespeare Society, 1888); D. Philipson, "The Jew in English Fiction"; I. Abrahams, "Jews and the Theatre" (*Jewish Chronicle*, Jubilee Supplement, 1891).

the superstitions of the age invested him. With few exceptions, it must be admitted, however, that the majority of these allusions, more particularly in early English literature, are of a casual and incidental character, and void of any set purpose or intention to present Jewish life and character with any pretence to verisimilitude.

In the few early specimens of English ballads, as in that solitary Scottish example, *The Jew's Daughter*, the feeling is anti-Jewish. The same must be said of the blood-curdling *Prioress's Tale*, embodied in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, where the terrible blood-accusation against the Jews finds a double reference. In the vision of *Piers Plowman* by William Langland, there is an allusion which can be fairly termed sympathetic. The poet prophesies a time when there shall be—

Such a pees amonge the people and a perfit trewthe,
That Jewes shall wene in here witte and waxen wonder glade,
That Moises or Messie be come into this erthe,
And have wonder in here hertis, that men beth so trewe.

He evidently felt that the abundant peace to which he looked forward could only be reached by allaying the feud between the Jew and the Gentile. Even when his Christianity leads him to desire the conversion of all who are outside his own religion, a friendly, almost universalist feeling betrays itself. They who were afterwards stigmatized in the *Book of Common Prayer* as "Jews, Turks, infidels, and heretics," were not so utterly outcast but that the poet could say "Cryste cleped us alle . . . Sarasenes, and scismatickes . . . and Jewes." Saracens and Jews especially, the one representing a branch and the other the root of Christianity. Both, because of their religious kinship, are to be taught and gently entreated. They had "a lippe of owre byleve." Langland also unites to a singular toleration a just and rare appreciation of Jewish charity. "Allas," he says, "that a Cristene creature shal be unkynde til an other. Sitthen Jewes that we juggle Judas felawes.

Ayther of hem helpeth other of that hym nedeth." In what way the poet arrived at this generous estimate of the Jew can only be matter for conjecture. His knowledge of Jews was probably obtained from travellers, a supposition in some measure borne out by his reference to Avignon, then a place of protection for Jews.

In Stephen Gosson's *School of Abuse*, published in 1579, there appears the title of a play "The Jew shewn at the Bull," of which, unfortunately, no copy is extant.

The production of the *Jew of Malta*, by Marlowe, marks a considerable advance, if not in any more favourable conception of the Jew, at least in the artistic treatment of him. Although it bears his name it is probable that only the two first acts are from Marlowe's pen. These are so finely conceived and executed that it is hard to believe that the melodramatic and farcical conclusion of this play should have been drawn by the same hand. It is in manifest disharmony with the original conception of the plot. Did sufficient historical materials exist, it would be extremely interesting to discover who were the prototypes of Barabbas and his daughter Abigail. Were they merely the creations of fancy or were they drawn from living types? For, although Jews were still legally forbidden to reside in England during Marlowe's lifetime, it is well known that many Jews—some even of note, such as Roderigo Lopez, Queen Elizabeth's physician—lived in that sovereign's reign.

About the same period appeared the ballad of "Gernutus, a Jew," which is based on a story of a bond akin to that which forms the central incident in *The Merchant of Venice*.

Following Marlowe's death appeared a play, the authorship of which, although veiled under a cover of anonymity, may be ascribed to Robert Greene. In this play, entitled, *The First Part of the Tragicall raigne of Selimus, Emperour of the Turkes*, we meet with a Jewish character which bears a striking resemblance to, and was evidently suggested by the career of the unfortunate Lopez. Selimus, in plotting the death of his father Bajazet, utters the following words—

words which must have had a peculiarly pointed meaning for playgoers of that period:—

Bajazet hath with him a cunning Jew
 Professing physicke; and so skill'd therein,
 As if he had pow'r over life and death
 Withall a man so stout and resolute
 That he will venture anything for gold.
 The Jew with some intoxicated drinke
 Shall poyson Bajazet and that blind Lord;
 Then one of *Hydraes* heads is cleane cut off.

This proposal is assented to by Abraham, who not only gives the poisoned liquid to Bajazet and his lords, but drinks it himself. That Lopez is the prototype of the Jew in *Selimus* is made still more evident when we note that Abraham calls himself an old man, which was likewise the case with Lopez.

Following hard on this play, or perhaps contemporary with it, appeared that masterpiece of Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*. I do not propose to add to the already numerous criticisms which exist on this play, except to observe that popular interest in the Jew would seem to have been greatly aroused at that period. Whence Shakespeare drew his inspiration remains still a matter of dispute. It is now generally agreed that he owed nothing to foreign travel for his knowledge of the Jew. On the other hand, the alternative theory, hinted at by Mr. A. W. Ward¹, that Shylock is a pure creation of the mind is controverted by Mr. Sidney Lee². From a coincidence of dates in the respective lives of Lopez and the dramatist, it would appear highly probable that the latter enjoyed a personal acquaintance with the former, and that Lopez served, if not wholly, at least in part, for the portrait of "the Jew which Shakespeare drew."

Outside *The Merchant of Venice* but few references to Jews are to be found in Shakespeare's works. In *Macbeth*,

¹ *A History of English Dramatic Literature to the death of Queen Anne*, 1875.

² "The Original of Shylock," in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1880.

among the curious ingredients of the charm which the witches are brewing is the "liver of blaspheming Jew." In the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Launce addresses his fellow servant, "If thou wilt go with me to the alehouse, so, if not thou art an Hebrew, a Jew, and not worth the name of a Christian." A somewhat similar and tautological epithet, "an 'Ebrew Jew" is to be found in the first part of *Henry the Fourth*.

Douce alludes to a play acted at Cambridge in 1597, in which a Jew was the principal character. It is doubtful if the piece could have been one of those already described.

In *The Malcontent*, by John Marston (1604), the terms "Jew" and "poisoner" are used in a convertible sense.

Mendoza. Canst thou impoyson? Canst thou impoyson?

Malevole. Excellently—no Jew, pothecary or politian better.

In several parts of the same playwright's *Insatiate Countess*, Signior Rogero is repeatedly accused of being a Jew.

The references contained in the works of Ben Jonson are significant as foreshadowing that Puritan upheaval which, half a century later, was to dominate the entire nation. Bound up with this movement was a remarkable attraction to the study of both the literature and language of the Old Testament. The study of Hebrew even spread to the common people. In the *Magnetic Lady*, Gossip Polish says of Mistress Steele—

She was too learned to live long with us,

She could the Bible in the holy tongue

And read it without pricks¹; had all her Massoreths.

A similar idea is conveyed in the *Alchemist*, where Ananias the deacon scornfully intimates that he understands no heathen language, "All's heathen but the Hebrew."

This revival of interest in the ancient language and literature of the Jews naturally induced a milder attitude

¹ Points.

in regard to them, and the references that occur at this period are characterized by a far more friendly spirit. Jewish interest in Jonson's dramatic works centres undoubtedly in *Bartholomew Fair*, where the proclivities of the Puritan elder, Zeal-of-the-land-Busy, gained for him the cognomen of Rabbi.

To the dual personality of Beaumont and Fletcher we are indebted for the Jewish character of Zabulon in *The Custom of the Country*. Zabulon in the play acts the part of servant to Hippolyta. In the second act he is met in Lisbon by Arnolde and Rutilio, both impoverished, and the latter having given expression to his belief that no help or courtesy can be expected from a Jew, Zabulon replies—

We are men,
And have, like you, compassion when we find
Fit subjects for our bounty.

A noble sentiment of Jewish charity, hardly less finely expressed than in Lessing's play of *The Jews*.

In the *Double Marriage*, the disguise of several characters is made up by a Jew, who, however, does not appear on the stage. We have it on the authority of the Duke that he is "a most excellent fellow." The boatswain likewise testifies that "this Jew might live a Gentile here." An instance of the interchangeability of "Jew" and "Usurer" is given in the concluding act of the *Scornful Lady*, where Morecraft, a usurer, is dubbed "converted Jew" because of his liberality.

A vivid picture of Hebrew and theological scholarship among the mechanics of England, recalling the memory of "mechanic Rabbies" in Talmudic times, is to be found in a *Mask* produced in 1620, by its joint authors Thomas Middleton and William Rowley and entitled *The World Tost at Tennis*.

I'll show you, sir,—
And they are men are daily to be seen.
There's Rabbi Job, a venerable silk weaver,
Jehu, a throwster dwelling i' the Spitalfields,

There's Rabbi Abimelech, a learnèd cobbler,
 Rabbi Lazarus, a supersticious tailor.
 These shall hold up their shuttles, needles, awls,
 Against the gravest Levite of the land,
 And give no ground neither.

A few casual references to Jews are to be met with in several other of Middleton's plays and masques, but they are of no particular interest. The Jew finds a place among a selection of typical nationalities in *Triumphs of Honour and Industry*, and in *The Widow* occurs another Jewish allusion.

Two of Webster's dramas, *Vittoria Corombona* and *The Devil's Law Case*, have likewise kindred allusions to Jews. In the former, Flamineo has the most unusual contention that there were not sufficient Jews. "There are not Jews enough," he exclaims, "priests enough, nor gentlemen enough."

In *The Devil's Law Case*, the scene of which is laid in Italy, we have the unique device of a Christian merchant, who, in order to secure greater safety and freedom for the carrying out of his nefarious design, adopts the garb of a Jew.

The works of Massinger, Shirley, Ford, Dekker, and Chapman contain but sparing and mostly trivial references. These are to be found in *The Maid of Honour*, *The City Madam*, *The Gentlemen of Venice*, and in *Fancies Chaste and Noble*. One of Dekker's characters speaks thus:—

To give those tears a relish, this I add,
 You're like the Jews scattered, in no place certain,
 Your days are tedious, your hours burdensome.

Thomas Randolph (1605-1635) speaks of "the learned Cabalists and all the Chaldees," a curious confusion of authorities.

There are two passages, at least, which are worthy of transcription from the works of Herrick, the celebrated lyrical poet. The first, contained in *Noble Numbers*, is entitled "An Observation."

The Jewes, when they built houses (I have read),
 One part thereof left still unfinished
 To make them, thereby, mindfull of their own
 Cities most sad and dire destruction.

The other will be recognized as a well-known citation from the *Ethics of the Fathers*—

The doctors in the Talmud say,
 That in this world one onely day
 In true repentance spent will be
 More worth than Heaven's eternitie.

In the *Hollander*, one of the little known plays of Henry Glapthorne (1635), the populousness of the Jews in the Netherlands is attested by the statement that all "Hollanders were Jewes," and in the same play mention is made of the fact that "Jewes at Rome weare party-coloured garments."

Milton, who represented in his own person the two forces of Hebraic and Hellenic culture, and whose lifetime synchronized with the zenith of the Puritan movement, embodied the genius of the Hebrew spirit which had then taken hold of the nation. The idea of renewing for mankind the glory of the ancient Jewish theocracy sank into many souls. In *Paradise Lost*, the ancient Hebrew spirit is to be looked at more in its general than in any separate features. Milton, as is well known, had a considerable knowledge of Hebrew, though the only part of the epic for which he is directly indebted to Rabbinical sources is the description of the fall of the angels ¹.

The custom of lauding Jews of the past at the expense of those of the present is illustrated by Abraham Cowley (1618-1667). In his *Discourse on Oliver Cromwell*, he shows himself hostile to the legal re-settlement of the Jews. But this feeling does not appear to exist outside politics. Of Jewish piety he seems to have a just appreciation.

With more than Jewish reverence as yet
 Do I the sacred name conceal ².

¹ *Yalkut*, Ruteni 3, sub tit. Sammael.

² Her name.

In that short poem *The Prophet*, he writes :—

Teach me to love ! go teach thyself more wit,
I chief professor am of it.
Teach craft to Scots and thrift to Jews.

The following, from Butler's *Hudibras*, will be easily recognizable as a reference to Kol Nidrei—

The Rabbins write, when any Jew
Did make to God or man a vow,
Which afterward he found untoward
And stubborn to be kept or too hard,
Any three other Jews o' the nation
Might free him from the obligation ;
And have not two Saints power to use
A greater privilege than three Jews ?

It should be noted that Butler, like so many others even in recent times, laboured under the erroneous impression that a vow to God or *man* can be annulled. As a matter of fact, this form of absolution concerns only religious vows made to God alone.

Dryden, like Milton, drew a great deal of his inspiration from the Bible. In his most famous satire he utilized his knowledge of the Jewish state, as it was constituted in the time of the Second Temple, to mirror the political condition of his own country. In *Absalom and Achitophel* we have the English people and Parliament, as well as the Bishop of London, speaking to us with the respective voices of the Jews, the Sanhedrin, and the Sagan of Jerusalem. Dryden's knowledge on this subject seems to have been deeper and more accurate than that displayed by most of his contemporaries. The Jew is alluded to in *The Hind and the Panther*, and there are some passages of interest in his plays of *Tyrannic Love* and *Love Triumphant*. Berenice, in the former, when replying to the advice tendered her by the Captain of the Praetorian bands to attack the enemy at once so as to ensure victory, supports her refusal by a reference to the well-known episode of *Judas Maccabeus*:—

I would, like Jews upon their Sabbath, fall,
And rather than strike first, not strike at all. (Act iii, sc. 1.)

In the fifth act of *Love Triumphant* occurs a passage suggestive of the position of Marranos in those days. Sancho refers to turning "Jew again, like my father of Hebrew memory."

The Mall, which has been ascribed to Dryden, though upon slender grounds, also contains an allusion to the prevailing custom of intermarriage among Jews—

Lovechange. But prithee was there never a donna in all Spain worthy your kindness, but you must come back to England and, like a Jew, be forced to wed in your tribe, ha!

Two dramas of Crowne possess some antiquarian Jewish interest—*The Destruction of Jerusalem* and *Caligula*, in the latter of which we meet with the figure of the philosopher Philo, who appears as the ambassador for his Alexandrian co-religionists.

Further references, nearly all of an inconsequential character, are to be found in Wilson's *Belphegor*, where the words "Mazal Tob" are introduced, and in the works of John Lacy, Otway, Vanbrugh, Falkland, Congreve, Farquhar, and Southerne, which author brings to a close the English dramatists of the seventeenth century.

II.

The opening years of the eighteenth century, while brimful of political interest, show no signs of that literary exploitation of the Jew which was so abundant in the previous century. Swift and Fielding hardly mention the Jew, and this is also the case with Chatterton and Oliver Goldsmith. In *Love à la Mode*, a farce written by Macklin, a Jew is introduced into the play, but no specific Jewish interest attaches to his part. Sheridan was the first to attempt to portray characteristic Jewish traits in his dramas, and although they are in some instances grotesquely overdrawn, it is something that their author managed to invest them with his own saving humour. *The Duenna*, which contains Isaac Mendoza among its

dramatis personae, merits some attention on account of the circumstances of its production. Leoni, the celebrated singer and teacher of Braham, acted the part of Don Carlos, and as he was a strict conforming Jew, the piece was never played on a Friday night. *The Duenna* is full of sparkling dialogue. When, in the course of the plot, Louisa's lover objects that Mendoza is a Portuguese, the argument is thus continued :—

Jerome. No such thing, boy ; he has forsworn his country.

Louisa. He is a Jew.

Jerome. Another mistake ; he has been a Christian these six weeks.

Ferdinand. Ay, he left his old religion for an estate, and has not had time to get a new one.

Louisa. But stands like a dead wall between Church and Synagogue, or like the blank leaves between the Old and New Testament.

The Jewish element in the *School for Scandal* is represented by Moses, a character in no way removed from the usual disagreeable type.

Of the many comedies by John O'Keefe, two—*The Little Hunchback* and *The Young Quaker*—contain Jewish parts. In the former we are introduced to Zebede and his nephew Absalom, whose marriage has converted him into as good a Christian as he had formerly been a Jew. The second comedy furnishes the unusual spectacle of a Jew, Shadrach Boaz, making love to a pretty American Quakeress, but without any better result than that afforded by Dinah's appreciative though equivocal remark, "This seemeth a righteous man though a Jew."

The attraction of the gaberdine as a means of stage disguise seems to have been too strong to be resisted by the author of *Hercules, King of Clubs*¹, while in an operatic drama, *The Forest Oracle*², we meet probably with the first example in an English play of a personage purporting to be a Polish Jew, Aaron, who is described as "a very good sort of man as times go, but quite attentive to the main chance." This list of dramatists of the eighteenth century

¹ F. F. Cooper.

² M. Campbell, a little known writer.

fitly ends with Richard Cumberland, whom Goldsmith called "the mender of hearts." Although he cannot be classed among the great English dramatists, his efforts to raise the public appreciation of the Jewish people—even if these efforts had been less successful than they really were—merited much more than a posthumous gratitude. In spite of many defects in his two plays, *The Jew* and *The Jew of Mogadore*, they come with an agreeable freshness after most of the previously enumerated works. This is due to the transparent honesty and good feeling with which the author has delineated his Jews. Nadab, in *The Jew of Mogadore*, and Sheva, in *The Jew*, use their wealth for the needy and the unfortunate. They do good by stealth, and reveal themselves as philanthropists inspired by as high a sense of honour as their benefactions are administered in a spirit of true humanity. Cumberland, in his memoirs, while deploring the haste with which *The Jew* was written, notes with pleasure the immediate and emphatic success of his play.

In 1800, Thomas Dibdin produced his farce *The Jew and the Doctor*. It was written at the request of Mr. Dowton of Drury Lane Theatre, who, as Dibdin informs us, wished to have a play with a Jewish character quite as benevolent but more farcical than Mr. Cumberland's Sheva. The author succeeded admirably in his task. Abednego, the compassionate Jew who adopts a foundling, is, however, not so obviously sentimental as Sheva. Dibdin also introduced a Jew, Ephraim, into his *School for Prejudice*. But in 1802 the production of his opera, *Family Quarrels*, which contained some humorous sallies at the expense of Jews, aroused the unwonted opposition of the Jewish patrons of the theatre. Dibdin very cleverly defended himself in much the same fashion as was afterwards done by Mr. G. R. Sims, who declined to alter the part of Harry Ascalon in *London Day by Day*, as he had similarly made amusing capital out of lawyers and other people. It is somewhat difficult to hold the balances evenly between

Gentile humour and Jewish sensitiveness, but I venture to assert that no Jew need feel aggrieved at the wit of a man who could put in the following fashion Abednego's final words to Doctor Specific—

I'll tell you how to pay me. If ever you see a helpless creature in need of assistance . . . and if the object should even not be a Christian, remember that humanity knows no difference of opinion ; and that you can never make your own religion look so well as when you show mercy to the religion of others.

In Lemau Rede's drama, *The Skeleton Witness*, we meet with a complete reversal of the customary relations between the Jewish merchant and the Christian client, for it is the Jew, Simon Levi, who is duped and nearly ruined by the villain of the piece.

Both George Colman (the younger) and Theodore Hook availed themselves of a Jewish disguise for their Gentile swindling characters in *Love laughs at Locksmiths* and in *The Invisible Girl*, part of the humour consisting of the attempts made by Captain Beldare and Captain Allcrack respectively to pass for conventional Jews.

Byron was the first of a long line of illustrious poets whose song broke upon the earlier years of the nineteenth century. His Hebrew melodies, written at the request of a friend, are instinct with elevated sentiment, pathos, and majesty, and helped in no small degree to surround the name of the Jew with something of its ancient historic character. Scott, and Burns, too, in some measure possessed something of this appreciative reverence for the story and tragedy of Israel, and there can be little doubt that these authors counteracted to a considerable extent the effect produced on the minds of the populace by the low comedy impersonations of the Jew with which the dramatists were wont to invest him. Scott, besides his poetical references, likewise embodied in his *Ivanhoe* an ideal conception of Jewish female character, which will live as long as the English language will endure. Shelley's indebtedness to Jewish sources for his lyrical inspiration is confined to

the introduction of Ahasuerus, the legendary Wandering Jew, into his *Queen Mab*.

Coleridge's intimacy with Hyman Hurwitz naturally and strongly influenced the former's literary treatment of the Jew. He translated the two poetic dirges, *Israel's Lament* and *The Tears of a Grateful People*, which Hurwitz originally composed in Hebrew. In *The Friend*, Coleridge versified three Talmudical tales, one of them being the well-known story of Rabbi Meir and the death of his two sons. [There is a Jew, Ezril, in *The Second Brother*, that incomplete and somewhat shadowy play by T. L. Beddoes, but there is nothing distinctive to call for special comment.]

Wordsworth's collected works yield a small return, if bulk alone be considered, of anything objectively Jewish. His *Song for the Wandering Jew*, in which the legend becomes so to speak de-Christianized, and spiritualized into a longing for the unfathomable and the unattainable, together with his modern transcript of *The Prioress's Tale*, belong in point of time to the dawn of the present century. One of the finest and most touching of Wordsworth's poems was due to an incident which occurred to him in 1828, when travelling with his daughter and Coleridge along the banks of the Rhine. They met in one of the neighbouring valleys a poor Jewess with her three children. It was a fast day with these—the particular one is not mentioned—and Wordsworth and his companions offered to share their own meal with the humble strangers. They declined it, however, and the simple incident inspired Wordsworth to write *A Jewish Family*. In a prefatory note he writes—"Though exceedingly poor and in rags, they were not less beautiful than I have endeavoured to make them appear." The following are the two last stanzas of this beautiful poem:—

Two lovely sisters still and sweet
 As flowers, stand side by side;
 Their soul-subduing looks might cheat
 The Christian of his pride;

Such beauty hath the Eternal poured
 Upon them not forlorn,
 Though of a lineage once abhorred,
 Nor yet redeemed from scorn.

Mysterious safeguard, that, in spite
 Of poverty and wrong,
 Doth here preserve a living light,
 From Hebrew fountains sprung;
 That gives this ragged group to cast
 Around the dell a gleam
 Of Palestine, of glory past,
 And proud Jerusalem!

The works of Sheridan Knowles and Douglas Jerrold, following upon the above-named authors, deal, in so far as they concern the Jew, with his intrinsic qualities and depend little upon mere *ad captandum* stage effectiveness. This is especially so in the *Maid of Mariendorpt*, by Knowles, in which the ethical motive is distinctly predominant over and above its purely artistic setting. The incidents of Jerrold's comedy, *The Prisoner of War* (produced in 1842), are supposed to take place at Verdun during the time of Napoleon's consulate. In this play we have a Jew, Boaz, who lends money to the English prisoners. He is quaintly but not unkindly characterized, and evokes our ready sympathy by the equanimity with which he bears losses occasioned by debtors escaping or being shot. Jerrold takes still higher ground in his dramatic sketch *The Painter of Ghent*, which contains two Jewish characters, the venerable Ichabod and the youthful Isaac.

In Sir Henry Taylor's play, *A Sicilian Summer*, the Jewish dramatic character reverts to the older and more obnoxious type. In labelling his brigands as Jews he has travelled beyond the confines of actual knowledge and experience.

Of far higher poetic rank, as well as truer and more broad-minded in his treatment of the Jew, is Robert Browning. All his writings were based on a sympathetic

and intellectual study of the Jewish race. I do not know of anything which expresses so intensely and with such concentrated language the semi-tragi-comedy enacted at Rome every year on Holy Cross Day, as does the poem bearing this name. The scorn, the contempt, the bitterness, and the mockery of the Jews, driven like sheep and compelled to listen to the annual sermon preached with the view of converting them, is portrayed with a rare and wonderful power. The conclusion, too, with its reconciliation over the bond of suffering could never have been conceived by any one with merely a passive interest in Judaism. To *Rabbi Ben Ezra* as a subjective poem, one would naturally turn for the purpose of discovering in what measure Browning appreciated the inner workings of the Jewish spirit. The colouring here does not depend on past persecutions or on the contrast between Jew and Gentile. The persistence and frequency with which these latter have been exemplified in real life has somehow led to their undue adoption as the material of poetry and fiction. But, after all, the portrayal or suggestion of oppression only shows one phase of existence, and that not the most important, being in essence transitory. Our lasting desire is not simply or chiefly to know the feelings of down-trodden human beings, although our sympathies are widened by such knowledge; it is rather to penetrate to the inner motives of man when he is completely man. And so it is not the outer or chance characteristics appertaining to Jews which give an insight to their moral and religious nature; this insight can only be obtained through what is permanent and therefore spiritual.

Rabbi Ben Ezra may in a manner be called a poetical portrait of that dominant Jewish habit of viewing things which is neither ascetic nor epicurean, but which accepts both pleasure and pain as having distinct but rightful uses. That effort after, and consequent sense of progress towards perfection, of which Browning is ever fond of discoursing, has much in common with the unconquerable optimism

that lies at the root of the Messianic idea in its widest range:—

Grow old along with me!
 The best is yet to be,
 The last of life, for which the first was made;
 Our times are in His hand,
 Who saith "A whole I planned,
 Youth shows but half; trust God, see all nor be afraid."

There are other pieces like *Filippo Baldinucci on the Privilege of Burial*, *Jochanan Hakkadosh*, *Ben Karshook's Wisdom*, &c., which give abundant evidence of Browning's wide knowledge of, and sympathetic insight into Jewish character.

Of more profound and popular interest, in Jews and Judaism, were George Eliot's studies in that direction. *Daniel Deronda*, although the chief of her works informed with a Jewish meaning, had yet a precursor in her poem, *The Spanish Gypsy*. Sephardo, albeit a mere subsidiary figure in the story, is drawn with graphic clearness and distinction. He is rather a type than an individual, and we can hardly avoid viewing him with light borrowed from *Daniel Deronda*. Had the latter never been written, Jews should have been more than satisfied with the Jewish portrayal in *The Spanish Gypsy*. The perspective, if I may use the expression, has been altered for readers since the publication of the novel. George Eliot claims, however, this paramount distinction, that the light of her genius was the first to illuminate the darkness which had enveiled the higher ideals of the Jewish race, and which were preserved in all their integrity through that long night of persecution which had been their lot.

There are a few poems by Archbishop Trench which, both in spirit and form, are excellent contributions to the storehouse of Anglo-Jewish literature. He wrote, among other pieces, *The Righteous of the World*, and two apologies, one of which, *The Lost Jewels*, is the same story which

Coleridge translated into prose. In the first mentioned of these poems, we are told of the belief of the Rabbis:—

As many as with true
And faithful heart fulfilled and loved the good they knew,
The Righteous of the world shall once delivered be
From darkness and brought in God's countenance to see.

Trench also wrote a legendary poem, *Alexander at the Gates of Paradise*, the idea of which is taken from the Talmud.

From the same source the Rev. S. Baring Gould derived the material for a metrical tale, *The Gift of the King*. A slight Jewish element is introduced in Sir Arthur Helps' tragedy, *Oulita*, the scene of which is laid in Russia.

The strange pathos and poetry which hangs over Jewish burial-places has called forth poems by men of such widely differing sympathies and character as Longfellow and J. A. Symonds. Any comparison between them must be incomplete because, while that on *The Jewish Cemetery at Newport* extends to fifteen four-line stanzas, *The Jews' Cemetery, Lido of Venice*, is constructed within the limits of a sonnet. Longfellow's poem is the foremost of those in which he evidences his sympathetic feeling towards historical Judaism. It was followed, after an interval of five years, by *Sandalphon* (1857), and that again after a further and similar interval, by the "Legend of Rabbi Ben Levi," the first narrative of the Spanish Jew in *Tales of a Wayside Inn*. Besides *Rabbi Ben Levi*, there is a story of the Inquisition, entitled *Torquemada*, and three others told by the Spanish Jew, *Kambalu*, *Azrael*, and *Scanderbeg*.

Of other American writers may be mentioned Oliver Wendell Holmes—whose poem, *At the Pantomime*, is a singularly beautiful story of a spiritual revulsion in the heart of an Anti-Semite—and Lowell and Whittier. Both these poets had inherited the spirit and traditions of their Puritan ancestors, and the Hebraic culture which inspired and dominated their lives is largely present in their anti-slavery poems, written during the War of Emancipation. Like so many others we have noticed, the idea of Lowell's

striking poem, *What Rabbi Jehosha said*, is taken from post-Biblical Jewish sources. The poem is based on the legend that certain angels were created at intervals for the sole purpose of praising God, and after fulfilling their object they ceased to exist. Lowell sees in this a lesson of encouragement to those humbler souls who are debarred from entering the strong-winged hierarchy of Heaven. They, too, will have their reward, and find acceptance for their less celestial hymns of praise—

And God would listen 'mid the throng
For my one breath of perfect song,
That, in its simple human way,
Said all the Host of Heaven could say.

In *The Two Rabbis*, Whittier has delved deep into Jewish soil. It may be noticed that Whittier here—like Milton in *Paradise Lost*, and Wordsworth in his *Ode to Duty*¹—has utilized the poetical idea of the Bath Kol. The poem tells how Rabbi Nathan, after having lived righteously for fifty years, succumbed at last to a temptation which had beset him. He looked upon himself as no longer worthy to teach in the place which had known him so long and so honourably. So vacating his seat among the elders, he departed in sackcloth and ashes from out the congregation. Consumed with repentance, he spread before him his copy of the Scriptures, and as it opened, his eye fell upon the verse in the Book of Proverbs, "A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." He bethought him of one whom he had once known, Rabbi ben Isaac, and determined to set out upon a journey to Ecbatana, in order to tell him of his degradation. But ere he had finished his self-imposed pilgrimage, he met his friend by the roadside, and far from looking down upon him for his transgression Ben Isaac, too, confessed that in thought, though not in deed, he had likewise sinned. They prayed one for the other, and found that in so doing

¹ "Stern daughter of the Voice of God."

each had made his own atonement. The poem concludes with these noble lines—

Long after, when his headstone gathered moss,
Traced on the Targum-marge of Onkelos
In Rabbi Nathan's hand these words were read ;
Hope not the cure of Sin till Self is dead,
Forget it in Love's service, and the debt
Thou canst not pay the Angels shall forget.
Heaven's gate is shut to him who comes alone,
Save thou a Soul, and it shall save thine own.

Brief mention can only here be made of later writers. Matthew Arnold, wrote an elegiac poem on Heine's grave. Swinburne has a characteristic sonnet *On the Russian Persecution of the Jews* (1882), and Robert Buchanan has a poetical version of *The Wandering Jew*, in which he conjures up as witnesses to the Unity of God the dead millions of the Hebrew people.

From this sketch, Anglo-Jewish writers have been purposely omitted in order to eliminate the refractive tendency induced by their intimate relationship with the subject.

In concluding this paper, one cannot but be sensible of the absolute preponderance of distinct Jewish suggestion in the drama when compared with that contained in ordinary poetry. And if we consider the minor theatrical pieces produced in this country during the last twenty years, it will be seen that the stage Jew is as much in request as ever.

Within the past six centuries, the vicissitudes of Jewish life have been great, and fraught with consequences which can only be estimated by means of a wide and impartial study of history. It would be idle to hope that a mere survey of one branch of literature should ever be raised to a level of comparison with such a study ; but the facts herein noted may have accomplished a minor service in presenting, with some show of connexion, the gradual development—though with frequent and notable retrogressions—of a kindlier and therefore truer spirit by which the Jew is viewed, through the medium of English poetry and drama.

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