

The Jewish Problem

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The Century Magazine

Volume 25, Issue 4, February 1883

Reviewing the history of the Jewish people, their fearful sufferings, their astonishing achievements, and the hatred directed at them even in her own age of emancipation and enlightenment, the American Jewish poet (1849-1887) advances her firmly held and passionately embraced solution to the “Jewish problem”: “*They must establish an independent nationality.*”

THE JEWISH PROBLEM.*

THE Jewish problem is as old as history, and assumes in each age a new form. The life or death of millions of human beings hangs upon its solution; its agitation revives the fiercest passions for good and for evil that inflame the human breast. From the era when the monotheistic, Semitic slaves of the Pharaohs made themselves hated and feared by their polytheistic masters, till to-day when the monstrous giants Labor and Capital are arming for a supreme conflict, the Jewish question has been inextricably bound up with the deepest and gravest questions that convulse society. Religious intolerance and race-antipathy are giving place to an equally bitter and dangerous social enmity. This scattered band of Israelites, always in the minority, always in the attitude of *protestants* against the dominant creed, against society as it is, seem fated to excite the antagonism of their fellow-countrymen. Intellectually endowed, as M. de Lavelaye has remarked, with "a high ideality and a keen sense of reality" they may be said broadly to represent Liberalism and Revolution in Germany and Russia, Conservatism and Capital in England and America. Liberty they must and will have, but when this is once obtained, their energy is transferred to the aim of fortifying and preserving it.

Before attempting to reach a conclusive estimate of their actual character and situation, it is necessary to review briefly their history, since the Scriptural age, where ordinary readers are content to close it. It is a mistake to suppose that the first dispersion of the Jews dates from the destruction of Jerusalem. Several centuries before the birth of Jesus, finding their little Fatherland too narrow for them, they planted colonies abroad, which spread the fame of Jewish culture and energy over all the civilized world of the day. These Jews were no usurers and chafferers. Every conceivable trade and occupation flourished among them. Of these, the lowest and most despised were those of the camel and ass-drivers, the scavenger, the sailor, the shepherd, and the petty shop-keeper. Usury and the taking of interest were strictly prohibited. Agriculture, cattle-raising, and commerce formed their chief occupations in the valley

of the Euphrates. Nearda and Nisibis, which were natural strongholds, were the principal seats of the eastern settlement. On the opposite side of the river, Palmyra, on the caravan road, had a large Jewish population. The name of the Jewish Queen Zenobia is familiar to all. With the extension of the Parthian Empire, the Jews spread their colonies as far as India. Alexander the Great, in his Asiatic campaigns, became acquainted with them and was favorably disposed toward them. Many of them served in his armies and shared the dangers, fatigues, and glories of his mighty wars. In all the States founded by him he granted them, equally with the Greeks and Macedonians, the rights of citizenship, religious freedom, and exemption from taxes during the Sabbatical year. Under the later Macedonian kings they enjoyed the same privileges, and Egypt became a second Judea. They inhabited two out of the five quarters of Alexandria, and outside of Egypt they dwelt in the Libyan Valley as far as the boundaries of Ethiopia. The Macedonian princes regarded them as the most trustworthy and honorable subjects, whose intelligence and industry made them indispensable to the welfare of the State, and whose courage and endurance rendered them highly desirable as soldiers. In Antioch, the third city of the Roman Empire, they possessed a magnificent synagogue, and received a State pension for the maintenance of their worship. Ptolemy I. (Soter) intrusted them with the most important fortification on the Nile delta; Ptolemy II. (Philadelphus) had the Penta-teuch translated into Greek; Ptolemy VI. (Philometer) confided the administration of his kingdom and the command of his armies to two Jews; Ptolemy Lagi sent a number of them to Cyrene to consolidate his forces among the Cyrenaic towns. Thus they played an important rôle in the history of the Ptolemies, partly as soldiers, partly as statesmen, partly, also, as the most efficient general agency in maintaining civil order and the strength of the nation. It is unnecessary to follow them over Asia Minor, into all the cities of European Greece, and of the Roman Empire, where they had communities and synagogues. We see them as agriculturists,

* For my brief review of the history of the Jews from the third century before the Christian Era to their emancipation during the French Revolution, I beg to acknowledge my indebtedness to a pamphlet written by a German Christian, entitled "A Vindication of the Jews" by Dr. C. L. Beck, published in Leipzig, 1881, from which I have freely quoted. E. L.

merchants, and soldiers, showing no trace of the tendency to sordid occupations which is said to be innate in their character and essential to their social institutions.

In the year 70, Jerusalem, the soul of their national life, was destroyed by Pompey. From this period dates the singular, the unique phenomenon of a landless, denationalized people, dispersed over every country of the globe, and yet bound together by a purely spiritual tie—an idea—in the most enduring, subtly woven, and indissoluble union that the world has ever seen. Thenceforth their patriotism, as well as their religion, consisted in guarding intact against the corruptions of the outside world the sublime idea of the unity of God, and the just and lofty ordinances of the Mosaic code. "Our Messiah," says Johann Jacoby, "is Truth, which is undermining, with ever-increasing force, ancient prejudices and mediæval statutes, and which sooner or later will emancipate us."

The last efforts of the Jews to regain their national seat was made between the years 132-135, when Bar-Kochba preached a war against the Romans, and the people rose in insurrection, only to be vanquished and to lose forever their independence. Jerusalem was a ruin, Palestine a waste, and the fate of the Jews was sealed. But they did not go forth at first among strange nations, who merely tolerated them, and from whom they had to beg or else resort to the meanest employment for subsistence. They were received as brothers by the communities of their co-religionists, honorably established in all civilized lands. The Romans gave them the rights of citizenship, admitted them to the army, permitted them to intermarry with Roman families, and appointed them to any high official position requiring shrewd insight, a clear mind, and a strong will.*

During the first century of Christianity the Jews lived on the friendliest terms with the Christians, their religious systems having sprung from a common root, while the only difference of opinion between them concerned the question of the Messiahship. It was left for a later age, when the facts of the case were less clear in the world's memory, to hold the Jews guilty of the crucifixion. The Romans designated them as the "better sort of Christians." Modern historians (Christian no less than Jewish) agree that the wide diffusion of Judaism was one of the chief elements in the rapid propagation of Christianity. The

Christians of the first century after Jesus were already divided into two sects, viz: Jewish Christians, and Pagan or Hellenistic Christians. The former were scarcely to be distinguished from the Jews proper. They regarded Jesus as a great and holy man, descended in a perfectly natural manner from King David; and they strictly observed the Jewish law, on the authority of Jesus himself, who said, "I am not come to destroy (the law) but to fulfill." Their motto was the verse, "Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven;" hence they derived the name of Ebionites (poor). They were to be found in Jerusalem, Galilee, Capernaum, and other parts of Syria, especially in Antioch, where the name of Christian was first adopted. They founded colonies, the greatest of which was that of Rome.

The Pagan Christians were the followers of Paul and his disciples, Timothy and Titus, and they dwelt chiefly in the seven cities of Asia Minor: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea, as well as in Greece, Macedonia and Thessaly. They regarded Jesus as the veritable Son of God, and worshiped him accordingly, they rejected the Jewish law, the observance of the Sabbath, and holy days, etc. The gradual crystallization of the huge organism of the church, and the curious blending of Judaism and Paganism in its rites and ceremonies, originated among the Hellenistic Christians. Thus, the Jewish ceremonies of baptism and the evening-meal or communion supper were retained, and to these was attached a mystic significance thoroughly in accord with the Greek temper of mind. Between the Jews and the Ebionites subsisted perfect cordiality and free intercourse; between the Jews and the Pauline Christians, on the other hand, existed from the beginning mutual repulsion and contempt. In proportion as the Ebionite Christians inclined more and more decidedly to the tenets of the Hellenistic Christians, they naturally widened the distance between themselves and the Jews, until all semblance of unity was lost.*

In the year 339 A. C., the Emperor Constantius passed a law prohibiting the possession by Jews of Christian slaves, emancipating any slave who had embraced Judaism, and confiscating the entire property of the Jew who had had his slaves circumcised. As society was then constituted, the flourishing communities

* Strabo, the historian, says: "The Jews have penetrated into all the towns, and it is not easy to find a spot on the earth which has not received this race, and is not under its domination."

* For a succinct account of the schism in the Jewish Church, which resulted in the establishment of Christianity, see Graetz's "History of the Jews," vol. iv., chap. 5. He calls the Epistle to the Hebrews the "farewell" letter of Jewish Christianity to the Mother Community.

of the Jews could only be maintained with the help of slave labor, and thus their material interests were radically injured. The second blow was aimed at their dignity, their manly pride. In many a war they had fought for Rome; now, however, the army was no longer Roman but Christian. In the year 418 they were excluded from military service. Moreover, the Christian state shut them out from official posts, which they had honorably filled in Pagan Rome. These few measures summarily reduced their position from one of equality to one of marked inferiority. From this time dates a certain coolness in the mutual relations between Jews and Christians, to be followed by a breach which the growing power of the priests did its utmost to widen, and then, by the frightful tragedy of centuries, of which the main cause was the fanaticism of ignorant and brutal men, elevated to the rank of princes of the church. The unscrupulous priests represented Christ, the Son of God and man, as the victim of Jewish crime, and inflamed the hearts of believers with burning hatred. The storm began in Byzantium, under the Emperors Zeno Isauricus, Justinian I., Heraclius and Leo Isauricus. The Jews were slaughtered and burned, and the mob rapaciously plundered them. Fearful restrictions and persecutions ensued under the immediately succeeding emperors, and no law, no imperial promise held good in favor of the Jews. The church wanted money, money, money; more than all taxes, tithes, and begging could supply. But she was obliged to spare her own devotees, and so the infidel Jew became a convenient and helpless victim of pillage. "That this," says Schleiden, "was the only motive and aim of Jewish persecution is proved by council decrees, statutes, and events themselves." "The breath of the clergy was never wanting," says Dean Milman, "to fan the embers of persecution." "The Jews are the slaves of the Church," was the axiom formulated by Thomas Aquinas. Peter the Venerable, Abbot of Clugny, in a letter to the King of France, denouncing the Jews, begged to condemn them mercifully not to a general massacre, but in pure charity only to general pillage.

In vain did a few right-thinking princes, a few reasonable Popes come forward to protect the unhappy race; the priesthood proved stronger than prince or pontiff. Not only were the Jews held accountable for the crucifixion, but the priests goaded on the people with the wildest fables. They affirmed that the Jews bought or stole Christian children in order to kill them for Passover. Frederick II. tried to shield them against this monstrous charge; the Republic of Venice, in a

State document, represented it as a baseless lie, and several Popes did the same. Nevertheless in many places the horrible superstition exists to-day.

They were forbidden to own real estate; their marriages were illegal without the blessing of a Christian priest; in certain countries they were not permitted to have more than one child; no Christian could be indicted for a crime against a Jew; the right of emigration was denied them; they were literally chained to the soil, and became thralls of the proprietors. Add to all this, periodic riots, massacres, and expulsions. They were, moreover treated as property, bought and sold like objects of merchandise by subjects and sovereigns.*

"The Jew was only treated as a source of revenue; and, till almost his life-blood was drawn, it would be difficult to satisfy the inevitable demands of a needy and rapacious master. He was granted away, he was named in a marriage settlement, he was bequeathed; in fact, he was pawned, he was sold, he was stolen." ("Milman," Vol. III., p. 172.)

The Jew was usually forced to wear a badge or a peculiar costume, and, in some places, branded on the chin in order to make him a more conspicuous mark for Christian contempt and hatred. He was imprisoned in Ghettos, where he forgot the use of his mother-tongue and exchanged it for a Hebrew jargon which serves as a theme of amusement to the Jew-haters of to-day and as a convincing proof that German Jews are no Germans. After being robbed of his lands, he was excluded from all trades and all manual occupation. One alone remained open to him—and this one was *forced upon him by law*—usury. The first Jew who lived by lending money on interest was the learned Rabbi Jacob Tam, of France, whom crusading hordes had plundered in 1146. He complained bitterly of the necessity that forced upon him such an occupation: "We have been left no other branch of industry to support life and to pay the onerous taxes imposed upon us by our landed seigneurs." Bernard de Clairvaux admonished his followers, during the second crusade, against persecuting the Jews, because, if the Jews

* A recent writer, Mr. W. Cunningham, in his "Growth of English Industry and Commerce" remarks that, in the Middle Ages in England, "the Jews had no rights or status of their own; they were the mere chattels of the king, all that they had was his. * * * Their transactions were all registered in the Exchequer; debts due to them were really due to the king, and they might not accept composition for payment, or grant a secret release. As a matter of fact, therefore, the king had indirectly a monopoly of the money-lending of the country, so that the expulsion of the Jews by Edward I. was a permanent loss of revenue to the crown."

were not there, he said, "Christian usurers would deal more hardly by the people than the Jews did." In 1430 the Florentines betook themselves to the Jews of their city, who accepted lower rates of interest, in order to escape the extortions of Christian usurers. Centuries before the reproach of usury was raised against the Jews, organized bands of Christian usurers, under the name of Lombards, Etruscans, Florentines, Cahorsins, Ultramontanes, marched through Europe under the protection and recommendation of the Roman Curia, in order to enrich it by means of fraudulent loans and usury.

Of course only the wealthier Jews could lend money; the mass of the people were sunk in the deepest misery and condemned to labors which the Christians shrank from with loathing, to labors that degrade men and stamp upon them the mark of the Helot, the slave. "As if all powers of earth had sworn," says Dr. Graetz,— "and indeed they had so sworn,—to exterminate the Jewish race from the circle of humanity, or to change it into a brutalized horde, even so did they attack it."

If it be supposed that I am drawing too dark a picture of Christian atrocities, and too partial a presentment of the innocence of the victims, I can only say that I have spared my readers the bloodiest and most revolting scenes in this hideous tragedy, and refer them for these to the pages of the Rev. Dr. Milman, Dean of St. Paul's. According to him, every great mediæval institution, was, in turn, a cause of anguish to the Jew. The Crusades were the signal for relentless carnage, pillage, and violation. We read of eight hundred Jews in one place, thirteen hundred in another, at the same time ruthlessly massacred, and of Jewish parents everywhere slaying their children and themselves to escape the tortures of the fanatics. Shortly after the accession of Philip Augustus, a golden crucifix and other ecclesiastical treasures having been found in possession of a Jew, the following Sabbath, when the Jews were peacefully assembled at worship, their synagogues were surrounded by royal troops and they were all dragged to prison. The upshot was the entire confiscation of their property, and the publication of a royal edict commanding them instantly to leave France. Twenty years later they were readmitted to the kingdom, and, as Milman says, "forgetting all past injuries, *in the steady pursuit of gain*," they returned under infamous restrictions only to be again plundered and expelled.

This "love of gain" is the single indictment urged occasionally against the Jews by Dean Milman, whom an unflinching study

of history evidently smote with the horror which all humane hearts must experience in reading the unvarnished record of Jewish persecutions. And even this accusation is unsupported by facts. The Jews did not select the vocation of usury; it was enforced upon them by law, and whenever they were left to a free development they chose other occupations in preference. Then again the love of money which Dean Milman confesses was the Christians' main motive in murdering, torturing, and robbing, was only natural in a race to whom wealth was the sole possible barrier—and that an inadequate one—against the brutality of despots and mobs. The devoted nation literally had no resting-place for the sole of their feet; if exiled from France, it was only to be slaughtered in England or Germany, in Spain or Italy. Therefore, when they received permission to reënter their former home, it is scarcely charitable to suppose that the "love of gain" prompted their return among the people who, however cruel, spoke their own language, and whom despite every injustice, they still recognized as fellow-countrymen.

After the Crusades, came the insurrection of the peasants, the "Pastoureaux," armed bands of shepherds marching through France, "driven by the sternest fanaticism," says Milman, "to relentless barbarities against the Jews." The latter appealed to King and Pope in vain. Five hundred of them being besieged in Verdun, where they had taken refuge, the shepherds set fire to the gates; "the desperate Jews threw their children down to the besiegers in hopes of mercy, and slew each other to a man." When this sort of horror was quelled then followed the plague, for which the Jews were held responsible, and, as the chronicle says, "they were burned without distinction."

But the heart sickens at these endless narratives of blood and fire. Let us turn to the other side and see what excuse is offered for the crime. The charges against the Jews are summed up in the story of Agobard, Archbishop of Lyons under Charlemagne. "Jealous of the enviable opulence of this alien people" (I quote Milman's words) he endeavored to prevent all communication between them and his flock, and issued several obnoxious Episcopal edicts. The Jews, who enjoyed a high degree of toleration at that time, appealed to the Emperor for redress. Agobard was summoned to state his grievances, and thereupon drew up a petition in which he accused the Jews of "cursing daily Christianity and Christ in their synagogues, and of insufferable pride in vaunting the royal favor; he complained that they went

freely in and out of the royal palaces, that the highest persons solicited their prayers and blessings, and that they boasted of gifts of splendid dresses to their wives and matrons from royal and princely donors." He complained also that "Jewish preachers had more hearers than Christian preachers, and were held by the uninstructed to be the better of the two." The only two charges of any weight made by him were that the *Jews sold to the Christians meat unclean to themselves*, and that they stole Christian children to sell them as slaves. He wound up with a long theological argument proving the wisdom and justice of persecuting the Jews. The ignominious contempt with which the Bishop and his petition were received proved the grave charges which are maintained by ignorant bigotry to this day to have been even then without foundation. Throughout the whole of Milman's volumes, so black with the perfidy and cruelty of his own sect, this petition of Agobard's is the one formal arraignment made against the Jewish people, and the Rev. Dean evidently considers it as ridiculous as did the Emperor Charlemagne.

It has been remarked with bitter truth that "if the Jews under the fearful tortures they have endured, had become a nation of idiots, they would only have formed a fitting monument to the brutality with which through the ages they have been wantonly persecuted."* Let us leave, however, these revolting pages for a brighter side of their history; and before narrating their tardy emancipation, within the present century, and its brilliant results, let us glance at the one sunny spot which shines forth amid the mediæval darkness. While the rest of Europe was buried in superstition and barbarism, the dominion of the Moors exempted a large part of Spain from the influences of the Church. Here the intellectual and moral development of the Jews had free scope, and we find them consequently engaged in all branches of productive industry,—silk-merchants, dyers of purple, glass-manufacturers, as well as superintendents of the noble colleges founded by the Saracens, scholars, doctors, poets, statesmen, and philosophers. They were, according to Draper, the "leading intellects of the world." Their beneficent influence reached upward to the South of France. Fauriel, in his history of Provençal poetry, says:

"History has never sufficiently acknowledged the influence of the Jews in the Middle Ages, upon the culture of Europe in general, and especially upon that of Southern France. Their medical schools, as well as their schools for the promotion of a knowledge of oriental languages, were of the highest importance."

* "Nineteenth Century." February, 1881.

Milman tells us:

"Their commerce was unrestrained, except by a limitation enforced upon Charlemagne rather by the irreverent covetousness of the clergy, than by the misconduct of the Jews. * * * From the ports of Marseilles and Narbonne their vessels kept up a constant communication with the East. In Narbonne they were so flourishing, that of the two prefects or mayors of the city, one was always a Jew. The most regular and stately part of the city of Lyons was the Jewish quarter. The superior intelligence and education of the Jews in a period when nobles and kings, and even the clergy could not write their own names, pointed them out for offices of trust. They were the physicians, the ministers of finance to nobles and monarchs." (Vol. III, pp. 142, 143). "They rose even to higher dignities." (Pp. 144, 145).

Space forbids more than a passing mention of the illustrious Jews who, under a benign rule of tolerant enlightenment, adorned the annals of their race in Spain: Samuel ha-Nagid, the "Prince" (died 1055), nominally prime-minister, but virtually little less than Regent of Granada, under two successive kings, for thirty years; Moses ben-Ezra and Jehuda ha-Levi, poets of the first rank, from whom Heine drew a large part of his inspiration; Ibn-Gabirol, better known by his Spanish name of Avicbron, poet and philosopher, in whose works may be found the germ of Spinoza's system, and whose sublime poems have been incorporated in all Jewish rituals, side by side with the hymns of the Psalmist and the prophecies of Isaiah; last and greatest of all, Maimonides, the physician of Saladin, "the glory of the West, the light of the East, the Eagle of the Synagogue, the Second Moses,"—such men as these shed luster upon humanity.* And these are only the most eminent from a long and splendid list, for which I refer my readers to Graetz's "History of the Jews."

To a later period, that of Ferdinand and Isabella, belonged another great Jew, Don Isaac Abarbanel, scholar, philosopher, and minister of finance. On account of his indispensable services, his unblemished character, and his profound learning, he was made the single exception in the decree expelling the whole Jewish nation from Spain. He threw himself at the sovereigns' feet, and offered the fortune of a prince to redeem his unhappy nation; but when this was refused, he himself declined to profit by the royal favor, and voluntarily went forth to misery and exile with his co-religionists.

The details of this expulsion of the Jews from Spain, at the instigation of the priests of the Inquisition, are harrowing beyond

* Maimonides may be held as the founder of Rationalism, the first who endeavored on broad principles to establish the harmony of reason and religion." Milman, p. 160.

description. "They had no alternative," says Milman, "but baptism or exile. For three centuries their fathers had dwelt in this delightful country, which they had fertilized with their industry, enriched with their commerce, adorned with their learning. Yet there were few examples of apostasy or weakness; the whole race (variously estimated at from 300,000 to 800,000) in a lofty spirit of self-devotion determined to abandon all rather than desert the religion of their fathers. They left the homes of their youth, the scenes of their early associations, the sacred graves of their ancestors. * * * They were allowed four months to prepare for this everlasting exile. * * * Their property they might sell, but the market was soon glutted, and the cold-hearted purchasers waited till the last instant to wring from their distress the hardest terms. * * * Incidents which make the blood run cold are related of the miseries which they suffered." Dying with cold, hunger, squalor, and thirst, they yet were refused admission to the inhospitable towns where they attempted to land—Genoa, Rome, Fez, etc. Some were disembarked, naked and destitute on the coasts of Africa, and were devoured by wild beasts; some plunged into the sea and "sunk like lead"; thousands were sold into slavery. The King of Portugal, Joam II., son-in-law of Ferdinand and Isabella, appointed a day for them to quit his kingdom, and in the meantime issued a secret order to seize all Jewish children under fourteen years of age, and disperse them to be baptized. "Great God of Mercy!" exclaims Dean Milman; "this was in the name of Christianity! Frantic mothers threw their children into wells and rivers—they destroyed them with their own hands."

For fully three centuries there remained in Europe no spot of refuge for the luckless race, until the French Revolution, breaking a million chains, brought with it also their emancipation. Wherever the French rule was established, the Jews were accorded full rights of citizenship, but almost a century was needed to complete their enfranchisement throughout the rest of Europe—nor is it to-day completed.

And in what condition emerged from the darkness this people who, as we have seen, might reasonably be expected to come forth "a nation of idiots"? "A few decades of freedom," says Johann Jacoby, "were sufficient to efface the inherited traces of an oppression lasting two thousand years." Only thirty years after their emancipation in Holland, Ritter J. D. Mayer, Judge of Instruction in Amsterdam, bore public witness to their unimpeachable conduct under the new administration, and concluded: "Facts prove

that even where nothing has been done, either by the government or in any other way, for the moral elevation of the Jews, mere social equality has ennobled them and will ennoble them gradually more and more."

In England they were emancipated in 1829, gained admission to the Bar in 1833, and to Parliament in 1858. Sixteen years later, a man of Jewish birth and characteristics, if not of Jewish creed, became for the second time, Prime Minister of England, and during six years was leader of the proudest aristocracy of Europe. To-day, fifty years after the Jews' admission to the English bar, the Master of the Rolls is Sir George Jessel, a Jew both by race and creed, reputed the greatest equity lawyer in England.

"The German Jews," says a recent writer in the *"Revue des deux Mondes,"* "so long oppressed and repressed, held in tutelage and bondage, treated like pariahs or like cattle, now obtained complete civil and political emancipation, and, as soon as emancipated, they became a power, to the huge displeasure of a great many persons who had conscientious or interested motives for disliking them. * * * They form an insignificant minority in Germany, and yet they already preponderate in the municipal councils of the largest cities of Prussia. They have taken possession of journalism. * * * The place they occupy in the universities, at the bar, in all the liberal professions is entirely disproportioned to their numbers. As soon as the doors of Parliament were opened to them they distinguished themselves in it."

"In the Italian Parliament," says M. de Lavelaye, "there are three or four more Jewish deputies than there ought to be in proportion to their numbers; a certain proof that they succeed by reason of their talent, since they reach the highest positions in despite of prejudice."

Let us examine how far facts go toward proving the oft-repeated assertion that no Jew can be a patriot. As we have seen, the French Revolution bestowed upon him liberty,—but when the French troops invaded Germany all the Jewish communities sprang to arms and emulated the Christians in their zeal for the fatherland. Whole Jewish regiments were formed, a great many Jews were promoted to the rank of officers and gained high distinction in the field. Yet a few years later when the conservative reaction set in, the Jewish veterans were excluded from the reward and honors offered to their Christian brethren in arms.

* G. Valbert, better known in America by his real name Victor Cherbuliez, March, 1882.

When the Hungarian War of Independence broke out, Jews fought side by side with Christians, and "the precious vessels of the synagogues, the silver caskets that contained the *Thora*, were sacrificed with the same cheerful devotion upon the altar of patriotism as that wherewith the Catholics offered their holy reliquaries and the chimes of their cathedrals." * "By what means," asks the Talmud, "should a man be revenged upon his enemy? By conferring on him many benefits." But after every benefit conferred by the Jew upon his persecutors, the reaction against him (what Milman calls "the singular dread of his dangerous superiority") revives with fresh violence. Thus six years after the conspicuous Jewish efforts for German freedom in 1812, the position of the Jews was legally restricted in 1818, and rendered worse than it had been before the emancipation. In the Roumanian War of Independence the first gun captured from the Turks was taken by a Jew who was decorated on the field for his services, and yet immediately after the war the Roumanian persecution began. Theories are stronger than facts. Whenever the Jews in any nation have sealed their patriotism with their blood and their gold, as on either side in the Franco-Prussian war, in our own civil war, and in the Russo-Turkish war, the wave of prejudice has swept back, and the old accusations of alienism, narrowness, and sectarianism are reiterated.

Even in America, presumably the refuge of the oppressed, public opinion has not yet reached that point where it absolves the race from the sin of the individual. Every Jew, however honorable or enlightened, has the humiliating knowledge that his security and reputation are, in a certain sense, bound up with those of the meanest rascal who belongs to his tribe, and who has it in his power to jeopardize the social status of his whole nation. It has been well said that the Jew must be of gold in order to pass for silver. Since the establishment of the American Union, Jews have here enjoyed absolute civil and political freedom and equality, and until the past few years, a large and in some places almost entire immunity from social prejudice. Their toleration, it is now asserted, has failed to produce beneficial results; on the contrary they have degenerated, rather than improved, under these favorable conditions. While I admit the fact that America has no such brilliant list of Semitic names as the Europe of to-day can show, I find nothing to support the theory of the

degeneracy of the race. Being subjected to the same influences as are the Christians who surround them, they simply evince the same proclivities. In this commercial country and commercial age they have been known chiefly as thriving merchants, tradesmen, and bankers who have enjoyed, as a rule, a high degree of credit and respect. If they have not surpassed, neither have they fallen behind, their competitors of other sects. They have been good citizens, furnishing, as statistics prove, proportionately fewer inmates to the prisons and fewer numbers to the proletariat than their neighbors of other descent. They have shared all national burdens and sorrows, fighting the battles of the Revolution and of the Union, grudging neither life nor money to the fortunes of the Republic. They are the prominent patrons of all musical enterprise—the only general division of art which has attained nearly as advanced a state of cultivation here as in Europe. The leader of free religious thought, and an indefatigable promoter of the better education of the poor in New York is a Jew—Felix Adler. The race is represented in every liberal profession, in the army, the navy, and the house of Congress.

And yet here, too, the everlasting prejudice is cropping out in various shapes. Within recent years, Jews have been "boycotted" at not a few places of public resort; in our schools and colleges, even in our scientific universities, Jewish scholars are frequently subjected to annoyance on account of their race. The word "Jew" is in constant use, even among so-called refined Christians, as a term of opprobrium, and is employed as a verb, to denote the meanest tricks. In other words, all the magnanimity, patience, charity, and humanity, which the Jews have manifested in return for centuries of persecution, have been thus far inadequate to eradicate the profound antipathy engendered by fanaticism and ready to break out in one or another shape at any moment of popular excitement.

II.

EVEN so cursory a review of historic facts as I have condensed into the foregoing pages suffices, I think, to establish the chief points I desire to maintain, viz: that the Jews are naturally a race of high moral and intellectual endowments, and that such superficial peculiarities as may not infrequently be found among them to-day which excite the aversion of Christians, are the lingering traces of unparalleled sufferings. The mere survival of the Jew, despite every provision made for his extermination, evinces the vitality of a singularly well-equipped organization, while the

* Dr. A. Schütte's "History of the Hungarian War of Independence."

elasticity with which he rebounds as soon as the strain of adverse conditions is removed, is without parallel. "Naturalists will tell you," says Emile de Lavelaye, "if, in the struggle for life, one race surpasses others, it is because it is endowed with some superiority. This is evidently the case with the Jews. A philosopher would discover still another cause. 'Like creed, like people,' says Quinet. Now, detach from the Mosaic creed the customs enforced by the necessities of climate, and there remains a splendid Deism, without superstition, without anthropomorphism, and in the Prophets are sentiments of equality, charity, and fraternity which Christianity tried to realize, and which answer so perfectly to the needs of humanity, especially in our own epoch. Pascal saw in the continuance of the Jewish people in the midst of persecution, a miracle and a proof of the Divine curse. When we consider the influence they actually exert at the present moment, and the power which the future seems to reserve for them, we can more readily believe in the fulfillment of the Messianic doctrine held by the chosen people themselves, who hope some day to reign over all the kingdoms of earth. Darwin would grant them the palm."

The insatiable thirst of the Jews is not for money, as calumniously asserted, but for knowledge. In those districts of Poland and Russia where they are refused admittance to the schools, they have had books of natural science and Darwinian treatises translated into Hebrew in order to follow the intellectual movement of the age. In the Russian universities, where they have been granted admission under onerous restrictions, they already largely outnumber the proportion of Christian students. The first use they make of their freedom invariably is to embrace all methods of higher instruction, and to strive toward a more complete intellectual development. It is assumed by Christian historians that the Jews, with their inflexible adherence to the Mosaic Code, are, as a people, a curious relic of remote antiquity, a social anachronism, so to speak, petrified in the midst of advancing civilization. This assumption is without foundation; the Jews are, on the contrary, most frequently the pioneers of progress. The simplicity of their creed enables them more readily and naturally to throw off the shackles of superstition and to enlarge the boundaries of free speculation than any other sect. Considering their religion from the highest standpoint, their creed to-day is at one with the latest doctrines of science, proclaiming the unity of the Creative force. No angels, saints, or mediators have any place in this sublime conception,

VOL. XXV.—57.

arrived at intuitively in a pre-historic age by the genius of the race, and confirmed by that modern scientific research which has revolutionized the thought of the world. The modern theory of socialism and humanitarianism erroneously traced to the New Testament, has its root in the Mosaic Code. The Christian doctrine is the doctrine of consolation; the kingdom of heaven is held out as a glittering dream to suffering humanity. Poverty exalted into a mission, the vocation of the mystic, the spiritualist, the idealist, enjoined equally upon all, a vision and an ecstasy offered to the hungry and the needy; what provision is here made for the world as it is? On the other hand, the very latest reforms urged by political economists, in view of the misery of the lower classes, are established by the Mosaic Code, which formulated the principle of the rights of labor, denying the right of private property in land, asserting that the corners of the field, the gleanings of the harvest belonged in *justice*, not in *charity*, to the poor and the stranger; and that man owed a duty, not only to all humanity, but even to the beast of the field, and "the ox that treads the corn." In accordance with these principles we find the fathers of modern socialism to be three Jews—Ferdinand Lassalle, Karl Marx, and Johann Jacoby.

As an example of the difficulties that impede the progress of religious reform among the Jews, it may be stated that when a large number of Prussian Israelites first founded a German "Temple" in Berlin, in order to put an end to obsolete rites and sighing after Jerusalem, and to introduce German hymns, a German ritual, and an organ accompaniment, the government interfered, and prohibited such services as "Deistical sectarianism." Preaching in the German tongue was especially forbidden, in the avowed fear that the Jews might thereby succeed in converting Christians.

The melancholy and disgraceful fact being established that, in these closing decades of the nineteenth century, the long-suffering Jew is still universally exposed to injustice, proportioned to the barbarity of the nation that surrounds him, from the indescribable atrocities of Russian mobs, through every degree of refined insult to petty mortification, the inevitable result has been to arouse most thinking Jews to the necessity of a vigorous and concerted action of defense. They have long enough practiced to no purpose the doctrine which Christendom has been content to preach, and which was inculcated by one of their own race,—when the right cheek was smitten to turn also the left. They have proved themselves willing and able to assimi-

late with whatever people and to endure every climatic influence. But blind intolerance and ignorance are now forcibly driving them into that position which they have so long hesitated to assume. *They must establish an independent nationality.*

Neither we nor our immediate descendants can hope to see humanity at that point of perfection where the helpless and submissive victim will, as such, be respected. Existence continues to be a struggle in which the fittest can survive only through the energetic assertion and constant proof of superiority. The idea formulated by George Eliot has already sunk into the minds of many Jewish enthusiasts, and it germinates with miraculous rapidity. "The idea that I am possessed with," says Deronda, "is that of restoring a political existence to my people; making them a nation again, giving them a national center, such as the English have, though they, too, are scattered over the face of the globe. That is a task which presents itself to me as a duty; * * * I am resolved to devote my life to it.

At the least, I may awaken a movement in other minds such as has been awakened in my own."

"Revive the organic center," says Mordecai with still more eloquence. "Let the unity of Israel which has marked the growth and force of its religion be an outward reality. * * * When our race shall have an organic center, a heart and brain to watch and guide and execute, the outraged Jew shall have a defense in the court of nations, as the outraged Englishman or American. And the world will gain as Israel gains. For there will be a community in the van of the East which carries the culture and the sympathies of every great nation in its bosom; there will be a land set for a halting-place of enmities, a neutral ground for the East as Belgium is for the West. Difficulties? I know there are difficulties. But let the spirit of sublime achievement move in the great among our people, and the work will begin."

I am fully persuaded that all suggested solutions other than this of the Jewish problem are but temporary palliatives. Could the noble prophetess who wrote the above words have lived but till to-day to see the ever-increasing necessity of adopting her inspired counsel, though her own heart would have been lacerated by "the hideous obloquy of Christian strife," yet she would have been herself astonished at the flame enkindled by her seed of fire, and the practical shape which the movement projected by her in poetic vision is beginning to assume. Highly significant in this connection are the labors of the "Alliance Universelle Israélite" and the recent Jewish conference held in Berlin

on April 23, 1882, where the chief cities of Germany, England, France, and the United States were represented, where such men as Lasker, Professor Derembourg, Sir J. Goldsmid, professors, privy-councillors, and members of the Imperial Diet took prominent part, and where a vast Jewish system of mutual coöperation and aid was organized. "The result of the present Russian persecution," says the "American Hebrew," "has been to knit Jew to Jew as never we have been knitted since the dispersion." From the princes of European finance to the most wretched despoiled refugee who steps from the steerage of the emigrant steamer upon our soil, every true Jewish heart to-day burns with the same sentiment of patriotism and of sympathy. Mr. Laurence Oliphant's scheme for the colonization of Palestine has been too thoroughly and clearly defined in his own interesting volume, the "Land of Gilead," and has attracted too much attention from the press of Europe and America to need more than brief mention here. Strongly impressed with the advisability on political, commercial, and philanthropic grounds, of establishing a Jewish colony in Palestine, Mr. Oliphant started three years ago on an exploring expedition through the land east of the Jordan. The result of his travels was to intensify into an ardent faith his conviction of the practicability and desirability of the plan. In commenting upon it in the "Nineteenth Century" of August, 1882, he writes:

"The idea of a return to the East has seized upon the imagination of the masses and produced a wave of enthusiasm in favor of emigration to Palestine, the force and extent of which only those who have come in direct contact with it, as I have done, can appreciate."

How politic and rational, as well as humane, is his suggestion, is proved by the fact that it met with cordial encouragement from princes and statesmen, among others the Prince of Wales, the Prince and Princess of Schleswig-Holstein, the Prime-Minister of England, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Grand Vizier of Turkey, Khairreddin Pasha. Committees were organized, and Palestine Colonization Societies were formed. All over Russia, Roumania, Poland, Galicia, and Bulgaria, thousands of Jewish families registered themselves as ready to start, a fund of over £2,000,000 was raised, and official agents were appointed all over Turkey, when suddenly the whole movement was paralyzed by the Sultan's ordinance prohibiting Jews from settling in Palestine.

Every Israelite who entered the Ottoman Empire was obliged to sign a paper binding

him not to establish himself in the Holy Land, and thus the enterprise for the moment is at an end. Nevertheless it has afforded conclusive proof of two vital points hitherto generally denied, viz: first, that a very large majority of the Jewish people earnestly wish to be restored to the land of their forefathers, and second, that the Jews not only evince no natural repugnance to agricultural labor, but, on the contrary, enthusiastically proclaim their desire to pursue it. Says Mr. Oliphant in his letter of August 4, 1882, to the "Jewish Chronicle" (London):

"The impetus has been given, and though the movement has been checked, nothing can now retard its final accomplishment; on the contrary, the temporary political obstructions now existing will merely have the effect of damming a flood which will burst forth with greater violence when they have been removed."

Eternally grateful as all Jews must be to such Christians as George Eliot and Laurence Oliphant, they neither should nor need seek outside of their own ranks their guide or their spokesman. They who in our own generation have led the Conservatives of England, the Liberals of Germany, the Republicans of France, can surely furnish a new Ezra for their own people.

While a few years ago the most enlightened Jews, yielding to the indolent apathy of comparative security, would have ignored or ridiculed the vision of a Restoration, to-day it is no exaggeration to say that whenever two Israelites of ordinary intelligence come together, the possibility, nay the probability, of again forming a united nation is seriously discussed. "Already," as Mr. Oliphant says, "the alternatives loom in the near future,—either of race-extinction by marriage in countries which are too civilized to attempt it by massacre, or of separation as a young nationality."

There is something absolutely startling in the world's sudden awakening to the probable destiny of Israel. To judge from the current literature of the day, as represented by the foremost European periodicals, it has been reserved for Christians to proclaim the speedy advent of that Jewish triumph for which the Jew has hoped against hope during his prolonged agony of twenty centuries. In all such questions as this, that which is agitated to-day, is formulated and acted upon on the morrow, or as Emerson put it, "the aspiration of this century is the code of the next." Again and again has history repeated this

process. Where so many minds are considering how best to overcome the obstacles, the problem must sooner or later be solved, and when the hour strikes, the man will not be missing. The question is not one of narrow sectarianism; indeed it is scarcely any longer a religious one. Jews who are fully emancipated from the yoke of dogmas have this national sentiment not less, but rather more, fully than do the bigots and zealots who are necessarily men of inferior intellect.

A young Russian Jew of the former stamp expressed to me, in a recent conversation, views of such significance on this subject that with them I may fitly close my paper, for they sum up the desires and ambitions of the nation.

"The mission of the Jews throughout history has been to protest against corruption and despotism in religion and morals. The religious mission of the Jew belongs to the past: it is no longer necessary to preach the unity of God. But the moral mission remains unchanged: he has still to protest against narrowness, corruption, and materialism. As for his mixing with Christians, I have no fear nor objection in regard to it; he can but mix in blood; the genius of the Semitic race cannot be adulterated, but flows through history pure and distinct as the waters of the Rhone through the Rhine. * * * The racial tie binds Jews together even though they discard all religion. What they need is to be once more consolidated as a nation. They are essentially an original people, borrowing neither thoughts, emotions, nor manners of the nations around them. (From this statement I exclude American Jews, who have lost color and individuality, and are neither Jew nor Gentile.) Let them organize with sufficient strength under a competent leader, and establish their central government,—whether in Palestine or South America, East or West, is a matter of indifference. Thus only can they command respect from other nations. But I would not have all Jews congregate in a single community: their fate and their purpose is to be separated. They are to serve as the connecting link between hostile peoples, and to advance the glorious cause of our common humanity. In their midst is to be found every type of mind which a perfect community needs. They are the greatest hero-worshippers in the world; except in matters of religion, they can be more easily swayed and kindled to enthusiasm by an appeal to their imagination than any other people. Let the hero arise to lead. Such things have been seen before and shall be seen again. I am no dreamer; I speak of facts. In their present wretched condition the Jews have grown old, they have lived too long. But a new life will be instilled into them by such an achievement; and once more incorporated as a fresh and active nation, they will regain youthful vigor and power."

No, the nation is not dead that in its class of destitute outcasts produces men filled with so haughty a pride, so high a patriotism, and so indomitable a sense of election for a lofty mission as breathe through these literally-quoted words of a Russian pariah.

Emma Lazarus.