HEBREW HUMOUR

AND

OTHER ESSAYS

BY

J. CHOTZNER, PH.D.
LATE HEBREW TUTOR AT HARROW

LONDON
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(PUBLISHERS TO THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO)
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TO MY WIFE

PREFACE

THE present volume contains a collection of essays, the majority of which were read as papers before various literary societies, such as the International Congress of Orientalists, the Biblical Archaeological Society, and the Jews' College Literary Association. Several of them have already appeared in various periodicals, such as the *Imperial Asiatic Review*, the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, and the *Jewish Chronicle*, and are now reproduced, with some slight modification, by the courtesy of the editors. Translations of some of the essays have also been published in Hebrew, French, and German periodicals.

The essays, it may be remarked, deal somewhat extensively with the humour and satire that is not infrequently to be found in the works both of ancient and modern Hebrew writers; and, as this subject has hitherto attracted but little attention, I am not without hope that these pages may be of interest to the general reader.

J. C.

LONDON, *June*, 1905.

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I

ERRATA

Page 34, line 28, read *Philo* instead of *Plato*.

Page 37, line 27, read *conjux* instead of *coniux*.

Page 79, line 14, read ופירוש . . . פירוש instead of ופרוש . . . פרוש.

I

HUMOUR OF THE BIBLE

THE Hebrew Bible rightly deserves to be termed the Book of Books in the world of letters: it is distinguished from other literary productions by the richness of its sentences, its charm of style and diction, its pathos, and also by the flashes of genuine humour, which here and there illuminate its pages. Naturally its humour differs materially from the broad, rich humour of Sterne, Cervantes, Voltaire or Heine, but it has a stamp of its own, which is in some respects akin to that found in certain passages of the ancient classics. One or two examples will serve.

In the first book of the *Iliad*, Homer describes a scene on Mount Olympus, in which the Greek gods and goddesses are represented as seated at a banquet, and waited upon by the lame Hephaestus. Observing his halting gait, they burst into peals of laughter. Comparable, perhaps, with this is the description of the well-known scene on Mount Carmel, when Elijah, the true prophet of God, gathered round him the false prophets of Baal. After they had leapt on the altar from morning unto even, crying incessantly, “Oh, Baal, hear us,” Elijah stepped forth, and exclaimed mockingly, “Cry ye louder, for he is a god; perhaps he talketh or walketh, or is on a journey; or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awaked” (1

Kings xviii. 27). The Aristophanic punning on proper names is paralleled not infrequently in the Bible. Thus, for example, the Hebrew word *Nabal* (1 Sam. xxv. 3), which means “rogue,” is well applied as the proper name of a man, who was noted for the baseness of his character. Characteristic, too, is the name of one of Job's fair daughters, *Keren-happuch* (Job xlii. 14), which literally means “a horn (or box) of cosmetics,” suggesting the means by which the owner of that name may occasionally have embellished her charms. To the same class belongs the term *Tsara* (צרה), which has the double designation of “a rival wife,” living in a country where polygamy is in vogue, and also of “misery.” The humour hidden in these three words is certainly not brought into prominence in the authorized English version, where they are respectively translated by “folly,” “Keren-happuch,” and “adversary.” From these examples it will be seen that an acquaintance with the idiom of the Hebrew tongue is essential to the thorough understanding of the Bible, and as Biblical critics have hitherto paid but little attention to this particular subject, the remarks to be offered on it in the present essay may, perhaps, be of some interest.

A careful perusal, in the original Hebrew of certain orations in the Bible cannot fail to impress the reader with the force of the sarcasm which the authors, acting on the proverb, *Castigare ridendo mores*, have used in their attacks on the shortcomings and follies of their own, and sometimes also of other nations, with whom they happened to come into political contact. The greatest satirist among them was undoubtedly the prophet Isaiah, whose orations combine the pungency of satire with the charm of an exquisite poetical style. Somewhat in the manner of Demosthenes and Cicero, Isaiah often wages war

against the vices which prevailed among the higher and lower classes of his people. He frequently derides princes and leaders for not preserving and upholding that true spirit of patriotism, which generally helps to make a country secure from external invasion. “Ye are,” he exclaims with bitter irony, “Ye are only *mighty to drink wine*, and men of *strength* to pour out *strong drinks*” (Isa. v. 22). Isaiah's orations frequently contain graphic and satirical descriptions of how things will be when that fatal day—the *dies irae*, *dies illa*—comes, on which the enemy will reign supreme within the capital of the Judaeans, bringing with them the suffering of famine, sickness, and pestilence. These poorly clad and careworn men will surround the lucky owner of a decent garment, saying: “Thou hast still clothing, be thou our ruler, and let this ruin be under thine hand.” But he will decline the proffered honour with the humiliating remark: “I will *not* be an healer; for in my house is neither bread nor clothing: make me not a ruler of the people” (ibid. iii. 6 and 7). The then prevailing need and distress will not be less felt by the Jewish women, most of whom the disastrous war will have deprived of their husbands and natural protectors. The consequence of this will be that “On that day *seven* women will take hold of *one* man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, and thus take away our reproach” (ibid. iv. 1).

The extravagance, wantonness, and luxurious habits of the fair daughters of Zion, Isaiah denounces in the following drastic lines:—“Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton (or, deceiving[3-1]) eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet . . . it shall come to pass that instead of sweet smell there shall be bad odour, and instead of

a girdle a rent, and burning instead of beauty" (ibid. iii. 16–24). And just as Isaiah reproves the Hebrew women for their pride and arrogance, so he censures the cowardice and effeminate habits of the men of Zion, whose motto, he says, was "Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die" (ibid. xxii. 13).

The burlesquing of idols and idolatry always afforded a ready mark for the sarcasm of the prophets. As Aristophanes in *The Birds* ridicules the Greek gods and goddesses, so Isaiah satirizes the sham gods of *his* country, which were held in great estimation by not a few of his own people. His description of the origin and manufacture of an idol is certainly full of humour. "He" (the pious idolater) "heweth down a tree (he says) and burneth part thereof in a fire; one part serves him as firewood, by means of which he roasteth meat and is satisfied; yea, he warmeth himself therewith, and saith: Aha, I am warm; I have seen the fire. And out of the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down before it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith: Deliver me, for thou art my god" (ibid. xliv. 14–17).

With equal humour Isaiah makes merry over the false prophets of Israel, whom he compares to blind watchmen and to dumb dogs. "His (Israel's) watchmen," he says, "are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot even bark; they lie down as if dreaming, and are fond of slumber" (ibid. lvi. 10).

Sometimes the butt of Isaiah's sarcasm were persons of high standing, who belonged to nationalities other than his own, such as the Babylonians, the Egyptians, the Moabites, and others. Highly diverting is the sarcastic address which he

directed to one of the Babylonian kings who, after making an unsuccessful attempt to conquer Palestine, had been ignominiously defeated in his own country. It is to be found in the fourteenth chapter of Isaiah, a short extract from which runs as follows:—"The whole earth is now (after thy fall) at rest and quiet; people break forth into singing. Yea, even the fir-trees rejoice at thee, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, Since thou art laid down, no feller is come up against us. Hell from beneath is astir at thy coming; it rouseth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it has raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us? . . . how art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!"

In an equally amusing and drastic manner is Babylon's fall described by Isaiah. "And Babylon," he says, "the glory of the kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah . . . neither shall the Arabian pitch his tent there, nor shall the shepherds make their fold in that place. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant places" (ibid. xiii. 19–23).

Next to Isaiah, no other author of any part of the Bible is so prolific of satirical remarks as the author of the Book of Ecclesiastes. For the present purpose it matters very little whether the writer of the book in question was King Solomon, to whom the authorship of the Book of Proverbs is commonly ascribed, or some one unknown, who had assumed the

pseudonym of “Koheleth.” But this is certain that he does not belong to that class of writers whose humour is but a mixture of bitterness and melancholy, and who, like the authors of *Faust* and *Manfred*, speak bitingly of humanity at large. His humour is mostly of the cheerful order; and far from weeping over the foibles and follies of the human race, he makes merry over them. The gist of his philosophy may be said to be embodied in that frequently quoted line from Amphis (*Gynaecocratia*, p. 481), which runs thus:—

Πῖνε, παῖζε· θνητὸς ὁ βίος.
ὀλίγος οὑπὶ γῇ χρόνος

(Drink and chaff, for life is fleeting; short is our time on earth). Or, to quote Koheleth's own words: “Behold that which I have seen: it is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all the labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for this alone is his portion” (Eccles. v. 17).

The objects of Koheleth's satire are of a varied description. High functionaries of state, foolish kings, scribblers, tedious preachers, bookworms, idlers, sceptics, fools, drunkards, women—they all come under his scrutiny. His sympathies are always with the poor, helpless, and oppressed, rather than for the rich and affluent, whose “abundance of wealth does not suffer them to sleep[6-1].” Koheleth once met a poor man, who had long and vainly tried to obtain, in the High Court of Justice, redress for wrongs done to him, and he put down in writing: “If thou seest oppression of the poor, and violence done to justice and righteousness in the provinces, do not feel astonished at that: for one that is high watches over the high, and over them are yet higher ones” (Eccles. v. 7). Elsewhere he

condemns a land, “whose king is childish, and whose princes *feast* already in the *morning*,” but he praises such a one “whose princes eat at a proper time for *strengthening* sake, and not for the sake of *gluttony*” (ibid. x. 16, 17). In the same chapter (5, 7) he makes the following ironical remark: “There is an evil which I have seen under the sun: *folly* is set in *high places*, and the rich (in intellect) *sit* in *lowness*. I have seen *servants* on *horses*, and *princes walking like servants* on the *ground*.”

What Koheleth thought of scribblers and tedious preachers may be gathered from the following: “But more than all these, my son, take warning for thyself: avoid the writing of endless books, as well as much (dull) preaching, which is a weariness of the flesh” (ibid. xii. 12). The bookworm, too, was no great favourite of his, for he refers to him with, as it were, a pitiful smile: “Where there is much study, there is much vexation, and he that increases knowledge, increases pain” (ibid. i. 18). And again: “The wise have (as a rule) no bread, nor the man of understanding riches, nor the man of knowledge power” (ibid. ix. 11).

Women were to some poets of antiquity, just as they are to many a writer of modern times, a favourite subject for sarcasm, and Koheleth has also made a few remarks about them which, in point of satire, resemble somewhat those made by Hesiod, Simonides, and others. Though he does not compare woman to a hog, an ape, and an ass, as several ancient writers have done, yet the opinion he expresses about a certain class of women is by no means flattering to the fair sex generally. “I find,” he says, “more bitter than death the woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and whose hands are bonds: he that is deemed good before God will escape from her; but the sinner will be caught by her.” And again: “*One* (perfect) *man* among a thousand did

I find; but *one* perfect *woman* among all these did I *not* find" (ibid. vii. 26 and 28). In the Book of Proverbs, which is commonly ascribed to the same author, there are several references to women, in one of which a quarrelsome woman is compared to "the continual downpour on a very rainy day." The husband of such a woman, the author adds, would as little succeed in hiding his wife from the outer world, as if he were trying "to hide a *wind*, or the *perfume* of scented oil" (ibid, xxvii. 15, 16).

In the same book (xxiii. 29–35) there is a humorous description of a drunkard, which ought not to be omitted, when examples are quoted to prove the existence of light humour in the Bible. It runs as follows: "Who hath woe? who hath pain? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of the eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed drinks. . . . Thine eyes shall behold strange things, and thine heart shall utter nonsensical words. Yea, thou shalt be as one that lieth down in the midst of the sea, as one that reposeth on the top of a mast. Oh, how they have stricken me (thou shalt say), how they have beaten me, and I felt not; when shall I awake? I shall yet seek it (the drink) again."

The greatest satirists among the minor prophets of the Bible were Hosea and Amos, and their short orations abound in flashes of rich humour and biting sarcasm. The former, for instance, when reproaching his people with their faithlessness to their God and their king, remarks sarcastically: "For now they say, We have no king; as we were not (even) afraid of God, what can a (mortal) king do to us?" (Hos. x. 3). Whatever they did under the pretension of honouring God was, in Hosea's opinion, nothing but hypocrisy, for "although Israel has forgotten his maker, yet he *buildeth temples*" (ibid. viii.

14). Those of his people, who fancied they would obtain atonement for their sins by merely offering sacrifices, he derided, saying: “They sacrifice *flesh* for the sacrifices, and *eat* it (themselves)” (ibid. viii. 13).

On another occasion, Hosea ridicules certain persons who, like the inhabitants of Samaria, worshipped the *calves* of *Beth-aven*, though they were otherwise not very anxious to uphold and respect the common rights of man. And referring to them, he says with biting irony: “Concerning them, one may (aptly) say, They slaughter *man*, but kiss the *calves*” (ibid. xiii. 2)[8-1]. Continuing to deride those credulous men, who expect pardon for their sins by the offer of sacrifices, Hosea remarks with crushing sarcasm: “I desire mercy, and not sacrifices; and the knowledge of God, more than burnt offerings” (ibid. vi. 6)[8-2].

One would have expected that the priests at least would set a good example to the people; but they were as bad as the people themselves. “They were *eating up* the sin offerings of the people, and looked out even longingly for their (the people's) iniquity” (ibid. iv. 8), so that they might materially profit by it. Speaking of the king and the ruler of the people, Hosea considered him not a bit better than his profligate courtiers, who spent the greater part of the day in feasting and debauchery. There was especially no end to their orgies at the celebration of the king's birthday, and the same prophet described their behaviour on that day in the following sarcastic terms: “It is our king's day! The princes are already sick with the fever of wine; he himself (meaning the king) stretches out his hands with the scoffers” (ibid. vii. 5).

Amos, too, makes a good many droll remarks on the follies and misdoings of his people. Addressing the fat judges of the

people of Samaria, who were noted for their pompous gravity and effeminate habits, he calls them, most appropriately, “kine of Bashan[9-1].” These worthies were always thirsty; and their constant cry when dealing with the poor was: “Provide for us that we may have something to drink” (Amos iv. 1). The patricians of his people followed the bad example of the judges. They lived an easy and luxurious life, indifferent to the approaching common danger with which they were threatened —the loss of their freedom and independence. Speaking of them, Amos says bitterly: “Woe to them that put off the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near, that lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches; . . . that sing to the sound of the harp; they invent for themselves instruments of music like David; that drink wine out of bowls, and anoint themselves with the best ointments, but are not grieved for the ruin of Joseph (Israel). Therefore now shall they go *at the head* of the captives” (ibid. vi. 4–7).

The hypocrites among his people, who, notwithstanding their dishonest dealings with their neighbours, were exceedingly strict in their observances of the holy seasons appointed by the Jewish law, were rebuked by Amos in the following manner: “Hear ye,” he says, “that swallow up the needy, and destroy the poor of the land, saying, When will the new moon be over, that we may sell again corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the *ephah small* and the *shekel great*, and *falsifying* the balances for *deceit*? That we may buy the poor for money, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell even the *refuse* of the wheat?” (ibid. viii. 4–6).

These quotations may have already sufficiently supported the argument stated in the introduction to this essay concerning

the existence of genuine humour in the Bible. The following are intended to show that even some of the most austere Biblical personages, such, for instance, as the prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Moses himself, possessed a vein of light humour, which they sometimes used with considerable effect.

Jeremiah addresses the hypocrites among his people in the following caustic terms: “How, will you steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense, and walk after other gods whom you know not; and (then) come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are *now delivered to do all these abominations*? Is this *house*, which is called by my name, become a *den* of *robbers* in your eyes?” (Jer. vii. 9).

He elsewhere recommends his people to try an experiment in the streets of Jerusalem, which, by a curious coincidence, was once put into practice by the Greek philosopher Diogenes, who went about the streets of Athens in the daytime carrying a lighted lantern in his hand in search of a *perfect man*, saying: “Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and seek in the broad places thereof, if you can find a (perfect) man . . . if there be any that seeketh the truth, and I shall pardon it” (ibid. v. 1).

The idols, the great plague of Judaea, also received at this great prophet's hand their proper share of ridicule. He describes them with genuine humour, as follows: “They are upright as the palm-tree, but speak not; they must needs be *borne*, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them, for they cannot do any *evil*, neither can they effect any *good*” (ibid. x. 5).

Of Ezekiel's humour no specimens can be given here. It is,

like Swift's, rather coarse, and not altogether palatable. The curious may be referred to the sixteenth and twenty-third chapters of the Book of Ezekiel.

Moses, though of stern and austere disposition, is also sometimes fond of indulging in ironical remarks with pleasing propriety. So, for instance, when he once admonished his people to give the soil of their possession a year of rest periodically, he gave them at the same time to understand that unless they did so willingly, they would have to do it later on by the force of circumstances. “When,” he says, “you shall be in your enemies' land, *then* shall the land *rest* and enjoy her sabbath” (Lev. xxvi. 34). And again: “Because thou didst not serve *the Lord thy God* with joyfulness and with gladness of heart, while there was (around) an abundance of all things; therefore shalt thou serve *thy enemies*, whom the Lord shall send out against thee, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and *in want of everything*” (Deut. xxviii. 47, 48). The messengers sent out by Moses to search the land of Canaan are reported by him (Num. xiii. 32) to have given the following description of it: “It is,” they said, “a land that *eateth up* its own inhabitants,” a sufficiently ironical definition.

In his last famous address to his people, which is commonly called his swan-song, Moses recalled to their mind the happy days, when God led them “as the eagle stirreth up his nest, fluttereth over his young, spreadeth abroad his wings, seizeth them, beareth them aloft on his pinions” (Deut. xxxii. 11–13). But at the same time he foresaw with the far-seeing eye of a prophet, that, as soon as they will have grown “*fat*, *thick*, and *fleshy*” they would forsake the God of their fathers, and worship idols. And, in consequence, he gives them God's divine message, which is couched in the following sarcastic

terms: “They have moved me to jealousy with that which is *not God* . . . and I will provoke them to anger by a roguish nation” (ibid. xxxii. 21).

There are a good many more fragments of delightful humour to be found in the Bible, which, for lack of space, must be omitted here. Yet a brief reference should be made to some of the witty puns and plays on words (*ludus verborum*, or *Wortspiele*) that occur in the same sacred volume. In his well-known short poetical strain (comp. Book of Judges xv. 16), Samson, the noted wit of the Bible, purposely uses, as it would seem, the Hebrew term *Chamor* (חמור), because it has two meanings, namely, an *ass* and a *heap*. The humour of the Hebrew lines in question will at once be noticeable by the following rendering of them:—

> With the jaw-bone of an ass
> Have I plenteous asses slain:
> Smitten thus it came to pass
> Fell a thousand on the plain.

A good pun may also be detected in the word *Ro*pheïm (physicians) and *Re*phaïm, which latter word signifies “corpses”; or in שֹׁפֵט “a judge,” and טִפֵּשׁ, meaning “the stupid one.” Such and similar puns abound in the Bible as well as in the Talmud, as, for instance, the phrase found in the latter work: אֱכוֹל בָּצֵל וְשֵׁב בְּצֵל “Be satisfied with a *meal* of *onions*, and enjoy living under the *shadow* of thy own trees” (comp. Talmud, *Babyl. Pesachim*, 114 *a*); but no further specimens can be given here.

These remarks will, it is hoped, help to show the wealth of hidden meaning contained in the Bible, which can only be detected by the study of the original Hebrew text, and which

the translators, either through oversight or inability, have failed to reproduce.

Footnotes:

[3-1] The Hebrew term משקרות is probably derived from שקר, meaning “false” or “deceiving.”

[6-1] Cp. Eccles. v. 11.

[8-1] Cp. Juvenal, *Satire* 15:—

> “A sheep or goat they may not eat, but human flesh they may.”

[8-2] Cp. Horace, *Carm.* iii. 23. 17:—

> Immunis aram si tetigit manus,
> Non sumptuosa blandior hostia
> Mollivit aversos Penates
> Farre pio et saliente mica.

[9-1] Cp. Amos iv. 1.

II

THE BIBLE AND THE ANCIENT CLASSICS

FOR several centuries past, previous to the middle of the eighteenth century, a general notion used to prevail that the contents of the Hebrew Bible consisted entirely of purely theological matter. This idea originated from the circumstance that most of the commentators of the Bible living in those times had treated it as a book that was full of religious mysticism, which theory had commonly been accepted by their readers as the only correct and plausible one.

These commentators have gone so far as to declare most emphatically that even the “Song of Songs,” that masterpiece of Hebrew poetry, and one of the few ancient literary gems extant in the world of letters, was but a mystical allegory with much religious colouring about it. They thus altogether ignored its many poetical charms, just as they disregarded those to be met with here and there in other parts of the Bible. Fortunately, however, a book appeared about the middle of the eighteenth century, which brought about a great modification in these ideas. It contained a number of lectures which Bishop Lowth (1710–87) had delivered in Latin at the University of Oxford on “Ancient Hebrew Poetry[13-1],” and in which he essayed to

prove that the Old Testament contained, besides much theological matter, several other highly interesting things. In his opinion its contents were of a varied description, and of such a nature that they could not fail to attract the attention of religiously inclined people, as well as of all those readers who had a taste for poetry, history, philosophy, or oratory.

These lectures at once attained great popularity, and were eagerly read in England and on the Continent, so much so that the ideas expressed therein concerning the actual contents of the Bible were soon adopted and further enlarged upon by several English and foreign Biblical scholars. Some of them, and more especially Herder (1744–1803) and Sir William Jones (1746–94), devoted their earnest attention to the study of the sacred volume. Sir William, who was one of the most eminent Orientalists of the day, wrote about it as follows: "I have regularly and attentively perused the Old Testament, and am of opinion that this book, independently of its divine origin, contains more true sublimity, more exquisite beauty, more important history, and finer strains of poetry and eloquence than can be collected from all other books that may have been written[14-1]." One of the most interesting parts of Bishop Lowth's book is that which deals with the metaphors and similes of the Hebrew Bible, and the object of the present essay is to attempt to show that there is a striking similarity between them and several of those employed by some of the classical writers. As the subject is too extensive to be fully discussed within the limits of a short essay, a radical and minute investigation cannot be expected. The result, however, may be sufficient to conduce to a wider and more careful study of the contents of the Bible in their relation to the ancient classics.

At the outset, it will be necessary to show that the ancient Greeks and Romans had come in contact with the Hebrews of old, and that they thus may have had an opportunity of getting to know something about the existence and the contents of the Bible. Now, in the latter volume, as well as in Josephus (comp. Gen. x. 2–5; Isa. lxvi. 19; Josephus, *Apion*, i. 22), this intercourse is fully recorded as an historical fact. Particularly interesting is the passage in the Book of Joel (iv. 6), in which it is stated that the Ionian Greeks living on the west coast of Asia Minor (Ἰωνία) were in the habit of buying Hebrew slaves. Thus it is a curious coincidence that the district is commonly known as the very place in which the two most famous epic songs of the ancient Greeks, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, were written[15-1].

As regards the Romans, there are likewise certain historical records which go to show that in the year 50 A. D. they had already swayed the sceptre over the Hebrews. There are, moreover, several allusions to them in the works of some of the best-known Roman writers, such as Tacitus[15-2], Cicero[15-3], Juvenal[15-4], Horace[15-5], and others. Now, if in addition to these facts, another important circumstance is taken into consideration, namely, that the famous Greek translation of the Bible, called the *Septuagint*, had in olden times circulated widely in various countries, what objection can be raised to the assumption that it attracted the attention of some Greek and Roman writers, and influenced them to a certain extent in the composition of several of their beautiful metaphors and similes? It is almost universally admitted that later and more modern versions of the Bible have exercised a perceptible influence upon modern writers, such as Shakespeare, Milton, Dante, Racine, Goethe, Schiller, and others, and in the same

way a connexion between the Bible and some of the ancient classics might reasonably be established.

Coming now to the main subject under discussion, we notice that metaphors are found everywhere in the Bible, but that they especially abound in its poetical parts. The way in which they are there employed varies greatly, and they derive their inspiration from both animate and inanimate life. Space, however, will not permit of more than a few illustrations, and these will, for convenience' sake, be specially selected from Hebrew nouns that occur here and there in the first few chapters of Genesis.

The third verse in the first chapter of Genesis, which, by the way, is one of the most effective sentences in the whole Bible, contains twice the term "light" (*or*, אור). Now, this word was frequently employed by some authors of the Bible as a metaphor. Thus, for example, using the term "light" in a spiritual sense, and making it signify favour and grace, they applied it, in the first instance, to God, as the Psalmist puts it, "For with thee (O Lord) is the fountain of life: in thy *light* shall we see *light*" (Ps. xxxvi. 10). The same term is frequently employed by the prophet Isaiah as the emblem of enlightenment as well as that of joy and exultation. In fact, some of Isaiah's most beautiful metaphors are taken from this very word, one of which runs thus:—"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death upon them has a light shined" (Isa. ix. 1). In another place (ibid. xlii. 6) he says: "I the Lord have called thee in righteousness . . . and given thee for a covenant of the people, for a *light* of the nations." It is interesting to note that some of the authors of the New Testament have often employed the term "light" in a number of striking metaphors,

tacitly borrowed, it may be observed, from the Old Testament. Martin Luther, too, failed to acknowledge his obligation to his Hebrew tutor, Nicolaus de Lyra, who helped him greatly in the preparation of the famous German version of the Bible[16-1].

Turning now to some parallels found in the Greek and Latin classics, we meet one in the fifth ode of the fourth book of Horace, in which the latter implores the absent Emperor Augustus to return speedily to the Roman capital, where his noble presence was anxiously looked for by his loving subjects. The stanza in question runs thus:—

> Lucem redde tuae, dux bone, patriae;
> Instar veris enim vultus ubi tuus
> Affulsit populo, gratior it dies,
> Et soles melius nitent.

> Restore, Great Sir, your country's light;
> For, as in spring the sun is softly bright,
> So, when on us thy countenance's beams arise,
> Fairer days appear, and smile o'er the skies[17-1].

Homer, too, often uses light and fire as metaphors, which are in some instances quite of a Biblical type. Take, for instance, the following lines that occur in the eleventh book of the *Iliad*:—

> As the red star shows his sanguine fires
> Through the dark clouds, and now in night retires:
> Thus through the ranks appear'd the godlike man,
> Plunged in the rear, or blazing in the van;
> While streamy sparkles, restless as he flies,
> Flash from his arms, as lightning from the skies.

Again, in the nineteenth book of the *Odyssey* (35–41), Homer has a metaphor from fire, from which it may be seen

that in his time a notion was prevalent among the Greeks that a miraculous light was a sure token of the presence of some divinity. The lines in question run as follows:—

> What miracle thus dazzles with surprise;
> Distinct in rows the radiant columns rise!
> The walls, wherein my wondering sight I turn,
> And roofs amidst a blaze of glory burn.
> Some visitant of pure ethereal race
> With his bright presence, deigns the dome of grace[17-2].

Not less prolific in metaphors of the same description is Virgil.

But particularly interesting is one of his metaphors that occurs in the eighth book of the *Aeneid* (409–13), inasmuch as it seems to be a poetical imitation of another found in the last chapter of the Book of Proverbs, in which the model housewife —the *Esheth Chayil*—is so beautifully described, who rises early in the morning, wakes her housemaids, and prolongs the day with the help of a lamp. It runs thus:—

> Now, when the night her middle race has rode,
> And his first slumbers had refreshed the god,
> The time when early housewives leave the bed;
> When living embers on the hearth they spread,
> Supply the lamps, and call the maids to rise;
> With yawning mouth, and with half-opened eyes
> They ply the distaff by the winking light,
> And to their labour add the night[18-1].

We pass now to another fruitful subject, from which the writers of the Bible have often taken metaphors, viz. the sea, the torrent, and the waters, generally that mostly serve to typify calamity. So Job (vi. 15) has a long and quite Homeric metaphor, formed from a torrent, which begins with the words:

“My brothers have dealt deceitfully as the torrent, nay, as a channel of torrents that pass away.”

Sometimes roaring waters are used in the Bible as symbols of a battle cry, or of the tumult of an invading army. Thus we find in the eighth chapter of Isaiah the following description of the invasion of Palestine by the king of Assyria: “Behold, the Lord bringeth up upon thee the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria: and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks . . . he shall overflow and go over and shall reach even to the neck.” A similar metaphor is contained in the seventeenth book of the *Iliad* (263), which runs thus:—

> Like a mountain billow that foams and raves,
> Where some swoll'n river disembogues his waves;
> Full in the mouth is stopp'd the rushing tide,
> The boiling ocean works from side to side,
> The river trembles to his utmost store,
> And distant rocks re-bellow to the roar:
> So fierce to the charge great Hector led the strong,
> Whole Troy embodied rush'd with shouts along.

Metaphors of a similar kind are also now and again employed by Virgil, and once he uses both fire and the torrent at the same time as similes of uproar and destruction, which usually take place on the battlefield. The simile in question, which occurs in the *Aeneid* (xii. 760), reads thus:—

As flames among the lofty woods are thrown
On different sides, and both by winds are blown;
The laurels crackle in the sputtering fire;
The frighted sylvans from their shades retire:
Or as two neighbouring torrents fall from high,
Rapid they run; the foamy waters fry;
They roll to sea with unresisted force,
And down the rocks precipitate their course:
Not with less rage the rival heroes take
Their different ways; nor less destruction make.

An equally wide field for Biblical metaphors is supplied by the world of trees, flowers, and plants. Man is often compared with them, but, strange to say, in two opposite directions: sometimes, inasmuch as he is like them, liable to decay and death; sometimes because unlike them, he does not revive again after death. As instances, the beautiful metaphor in the 103rd Psalm may be quoted: “As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone: and the place thereof knoweth it no more.” To this may be added a similar, but shorter, metaphor, the author of which was the often-quoted Ben-Sira. Of this only a small part has been preserved in the Talmud (*Erubin*, p. 54), which runs as follows: “*Rab* said to *Rab Hammuna*: My son if thou hast (aught) enjoy it, for there is no enjoyment in the nether world (*Shéol*), and death does not tarry. And if thou sayest, I will leave (aught) to my children, who will declare to thee the law in the nether world? The sons of men are like the grass of the field; some of them blossom, and some wither away.”

Homer has a striking parallel to it in the sixth book of his *Iliad* (190), which runs thus:—

Like leaves on trees the race of man is found,
Now green in youth, now withering in the ground.
Another race the following spring supplies,
They fall successive, and successive rise:
So generations in their course decay,
So flourish these, when those are passed away.

Speaking about metaphors from vegetation mention should be made of an exceedingly pretty simile composed in German by the late Ludwig August Frankl, of Vienna, and probably borrowed from the beautiful lines occurring towards the end of the fifty-fifth chapter of the Book of Isaiah, viz. “As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not hither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater,” &c. In his simile Frankl compares the heaven with a bridegroom who weds the earth in springtime as his bride, and she late in the summer season bears lovely fruit. The English version runs somewhat as follows:—

The Beautiful Month of May.

This charming month is like a kiss,
Given by heaven to his bride, the earth;
Telling her with a hidden blush
That a mother's joy will soon be hers.

Another word occurring at the beginning of the first chapter of Genesis that is now and again used in the Bible as a metaphor, is *Ruach* (רוח), meaning sometimes “wind,” and sometimes “spirit,” or divine inspiration. It is so commonly used in the latter sense that no comment is necessary here. What is, however, worth mentioning in connexion with it is that Homer also used it in the same sense, whenever he referred to the influence which his deities exercised on the

human mind. There are likewise several fine Biblical metaphors modelled on *Ruach* (“the wind”), when it is employed either in its ordinary sense or as the emblem of punishment and calamity. So Jeremiah (iv. 11): “A dry wind blows from the high places in the wilderness toward the daughters of my people, not to fan, nor to cleanse; a powerful wind it is that shall come from those *places* unto me, and now I will hold judgment upon them.”

Isaiah's simile, “As the trees of the wood are moved with the wind” (Isa. vii. 2), has found a pretty parallel in Virgil's *Aeneid* (iv. 638), which runs thus:—

> As when the winds their airy quarrel try,
> Justling from every quarter of the sky;
> This way and that the mountain oak they bend;
> His boughs they shatter, and his branches rend;
> With leaves and fallings most they spread the ground;
> The hollow valleys echo to the sound;
> Unmoved, the royal plant their fury mocks,
> Or shaken, clings more closely to the rocks.

The following is another metaphor of a somewhat similar kind, employed by Homer in the *Iliad* (xvii. 57), which bears a great resemblance to the lovely one found in the 103rd Psalm, to which reference has been made above. It runs as follows:—

> As the young olive in some sylvan scene,
> Crowned by fresh fountains with eternal green,
> Lifts the gay head, in snowy flowerets fair,
> And plays and dances to the gentle air;
> When lo! a whirlwind from high heaven invades
> The tender plant, and withers all its shades;
> It lies uprooted from its genial bed:
> A lovely ruin, now defaced and dead.

Passing now from inanimate nature to animate things, there

are in the Bible a good many metaphors based thereon. Here, again, it is the prophet Isaiah who furnishes us with the largest number of instances. One of them is the bee that symbolizes an invading army, working all kinds of mischief. Thus we read in Isaiah (vii. 18):—“On that day will the Lord hiss for the fly that is in the uttermost part of the river of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria, and they shall all come and rest in the desolate valleys, and in the holes of the rocks, and upon all thorn-bushes, and upon all the pastures.” A fine parallel occurs in Homer's *Iliad* (ii. 87), which runs as follows:—

> As from some rocky cleft the shepherd sees
> Clustering in heaps on heaps the driving bees,
> Rolling and blackening, swarms succeeding swarms
> With deeper murmur and more hoarse alarms;
> Dusky they spread, a close embodied crowd,
> And o'er the vale descends the living cloud:
> So from the tents and ships, a lengthened train
> Spreads all the beach, and wide o'ershades the plain:
> Along the region runs a deafening sound;
> Beneath their footsteps groans the trembling ground.

Towards the end of the Book of Ecclesiastes (xii. 5) a comparison is made between an old man who gradually loses his white locks and an almond-tree that sheds its white blossoms. Anacreon has in one of his Odes (the eleventh) a few exceedingly pretty lines, which recall the foregoing figure. They run as follows:—

> Oft I am by women told,
> Poor Anacreon! thou grow'st old;
> Look how thy hairs are falling all:
> Poor Anacreon! how they fall!

The Biblical story found in the fourth Book of Moses (xiv.

2–11) seems to have been known and partly reproduced by Virgil in the first book of the *Aeneid*, 148. There the following lines occur, which offer a most striking parallel:—

> As when in tumults rise the ignoble crowd,
> Mad are their motions, and their tongues are loud;
> And stones and brands in rattling volleys fly,
> And all the rustic arms that fury can supply:
> If then some grave and pious men appear,
> They hush their noise, and lend a listening ear:
> He soothes with sober words their angry mood,
> And quenches their innate desire for blood[23-1].

The few observations offered here will no doubt give some idea of the importance attaching to a closer investigation of the whole subject[23-2]. Many volumes are annually devoted to the study of the Old Testament, but these are almost exclusively written from a religious point of view. Surely, it could not but gain in popular estimation if its great literary worth attracted more general attention.

Footnotes:

[13-1] *De Sacra Poesi Hebraeorum*, Goettingae, 1758.

[14-1] The words here quoted were found on the fly-leaf of Sir William's Bible.

[15-1] Lecky, in his *History of European Morals*, vol. I, p. 366, refers to a modern writer, who maintains that Homer derived the noblest conception of his poetry from the Old Testament; and that its contents have greatly influenced Demosthenes and Plato.

[15-2] *Annales*, ii. 85.

[15-3] *Pro Flacco*, §§ 66–70.

[15-4] *Satirae*, iii. 10.

[15-5] *Satirae*, i. 4.

[16-1] This omission of common courtesy is recorded in the following jocular Latin lines:—

Si Lyra non lyrasset
Lutherus non saltasset.

“Had Lyra not furnished the music,
Luther could not have danced.”

[17-1] Almost all the English translations of the extracts from Greek and Latin poetical writings quoted in this essay are from the renderings of Pope and Dryden. Space will not allow to give here more than a few quotations from the originals.

[17-2]

Ὦ πάτερ, ἦ μέγα θαῦμα τόδ' ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ὁρῶμαι.
ἔμπης μοι τοῖχοι μεγάρων καλαί τε μεσόδμαι
εἰλάτιναί τε δοκοὶ καὶ κίονες ὑψόσ' ἔχοντες
φαίνοντ' ὀφθαλμοῖς ὡς εἰ πυρὸς αἰθομένοιο.
ἦ μάλα τις θεὸς ἔνδον, οἳ οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἔχουσιν.

[18-1]

Inde ubi prima quies medio iam noctis abactae
Curriculo expulerat somnum; cum femina primum
Cui tolerare colo vitam tenuique Minerva,
Impositum cinerem et sopitos suscitat ignes,
Noctem addens operi, famulasque ad lumina longo
Exercet penso.

[23-1]

Ac veluti magno in populo quum saepe coorta est
Seditio, saevitque animis ignobile vulgus;
Iamque faces et saxa volant; furor arma ministrat;
Tum, pietate gravem ac meritis si forte virum quem
Conspexere, silent arrectisque auribus adstant;
Ille regit dictis animos et pectora mulcet.

[23-2] An interesting article on the same theme written by Mr. C. G. Montefiore appeared in the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, vol. III, No. 12.

III

ART AMONG THE ANCIENT HEBREWS

THE ancient Hebrews were an art-loving people, and occupied a fair position among those Eastern nations of antiquity, who attained some success in the production of works of artistic merit. Their success in Music and Poetry was undoubted, and becomes even more striking when it is remembered that it had been won by the Jewish nation at a time when in Greece, for instance, the cultivation of these arts was still in its infancy. The period of their artistic activity extended from the days of Moses to the time of the destruction of the last Temple in Jerusalem by Titus (70 A. D.). It is proposed in the present essay to deal, first with the *Architecture*, then with the *Music*, and finally with the *Poetry* of the ancient Hebrews.

Just as among other nations of antiquity architecture had its origin in religion, and owed its development to religion, so it was among the Jews. The first feeble attempt at architecture, though it is perhaps incorrect to call it by that name, was the erection of the Tabernacle in the wilderness. This was certainly nothing more than a large-sized movable tent, and had no special beauty about it, but the fact that the original design was

retained and used on a larger scale at the construction of the subsequent Temples of Jerusalem, invests it with more than ordinary importance. From this it may also be seen that the Jewish architect, even in those early times, had in the drawing up of its ground-plan some glimmering of symmetry and purity of form. Noticeable also is the great skill manifested at that time by the Jewish artisans in the manufacture of the furniture of the Tabernacle, the beautiful covers and curtains with their inwoven cherubims, the seven-branched golden candlestick of beaten work, and the circular-shaped laver made by them from the metallic mirrors presented by the women of the community (Exod. xxxviii. 8). The erection of the Tabernacle was followed by some centuries of architectural and artistic barrenness. This epoch includes the time of their sojourn in the Arabian desert, and the period during which they were governed by the Judges, and subsequently by King Saul. Those years were marked by internal and external struggles, and consequently did not admit of the free development of any of those arts which, generally speaking, flourish only in times of undisturbed peace, and under the protection of a strong government. In the reigns of David and Solomon, however, when the Jews began to enjoy the first-fruits of peace and national prosperity, the general spread of culture and architectural skill at once became manifest. The sacred and royal buildings erected by the various Jewish kings, and particularly the Temple of Solomon, show the pitch of artistic excellence which they had attained.

There is no doubt much exaggeration in the statement made by some writers that classical antiquity was largely indebted to the Temple for many details of art, and that throughout the Middle Ages the form and shape of all Christian churches were

modelled after its design. Considering, however, the attention and interest which the Temple has excited, there can be little doubt of its extraordinary artistic value. Its original form and mode of structure have already been so often and so minutely described by learned men of all ages and countries that there is hardly anything new left to be said about it. A few observations, however, concerning the builders, and the difficulties encountered by them at its erection, may not be out of place here. Some writers are of opinion that the fame and magnificence of the Temple were entirely due to the skill of Phoenician artisans, and not to the proficiency of Jewish workmen. The soundness of this theory is, however, very questionable. In the first place, we have it on the authority of the Biblical memorials that the assistance given by the Phoenicians to the Jewish workmen at the erection of the Temple consisted mainly in felling cedar-trees on Mount Lebanon, and in manufacturing the artistic metal-work of the building. Next, the fact already mentioned that the original Mosaic model of the Tabernacle had been retained, and used on a larger scale in the construction of the Temple, proves at once its purely Jewish character. We must also come to the same conclusion when we consider that its internal and external decoration consisted mostly of flowers and plants that only grew on Palestinian soil.

As for the structure itself, it may be mentioned that many difficulties had to be overcome before the actual building operations began. The summit of Mount Moriah, on which King David had decided to erect the Temple, was too narrow to permit of large buildings being established thereon. Thus gigantic supports and walls had to be erected, which, owing no doubt to their great strength and durability, have been

preserved to the present day. They bear a great similarity to the Cyclopean walls built by the oldest races of Greece in Asia Minor, and the immensity of each block of stone is such that it has excited the wonder of various modern travellers (cp. Layard, *Nineveh and Babylon*, p. 62). These enormous stones were, strange to say, put together without the aid of tools. The latter, made as they were out of a material from which weapons of war are manufactured, were used as little as possible at the erection of a building which was intended, in conformity with the true spirit of Judaism, to serve as a symbol of Peace. There is another noticeable feature in connexion with the building, namely, that all its bronze works were cast in earthen moulds in the valley of the Jordan. This spot was specially selected for the purpose, on account of its fine clay soil. Thus it will be seen that even at this early period in the history of architecture the Jews must have had some knowledge of mining. Later on, at the time when the Romans were the masters of the land, the mines of Phaino enjoyed a very great reputation (cp. Ewald, *History of Israel*, ed. Carpenter, vol. IV, p. 192). A modern writer of note (James Fergusson), in referring to the Temple of Solomon, expresses himself thus:—“Whatever the exact appearance of its details may have been, it may safely be asserted that the triple Temple of Jerusalem—the lower court, standing on its magnificent terrace—the inner court, raised on its platform in the centre of this—and the Temple itself, rising out of the group and crowning the whole—must have formed, when combined with the beauty of its situation, one of the most splendid architectural combinations of the old world” (cp. Smith's *Bible Dictionary*, *sub* Temple).

In connexion with the Temple two other branches of

architecture may be mentioned here—the water conduits and bridges, or rather viaducts, built by King Solomon. The former must have been of some importance; they are quoted by Tacitus, who speaks of *Fons perennis aquae, cavati sub terra montes* (cp. *Hist.* vol. 12). As for the bridges or viaducts, it is said that they were four in number, and of a peculiar construction. One led over the valley of Gihon; another, called by Josephus *gerupha*, connected Mount Zion with Mount Moriah, and served as a viaduct for the king on his visiting the Temple (cp. *Ant.* xv. 11. 5). The third and fourth are referred to in Talmud *Jer. Shekalim*, 4. 4, and in *Yomah*, 4 *b*.

In subsequent times two more Temples were built after the design of Solomon's—one by Zerubbabel with the permission and assistance of the Persian king Cyrus (558 B. C.), and another by King Herod (16 B. C.), who, next to Solomon, was the most art-loving monarch the Jews ever had. During his reign the influence of Greek taste began to make itself felt in Palestine, and we are told that, in addition to the temple, he also built colonnades, theatres, and castles (cp. Jos. *Ant.* xv. 8. 1). According to the same authority (*Bell. Jud.* 5. 44), the beauty of King Herod's residential palace was beyond all description. It consisted of a block of various marble buildings, with artistically formed roofs, each building having magnificent halls and colonnades. Pleasure grounds, tiny forests, and gardens of every kind surrounded it, and elaborate waterworks were built to give these grounds a never-failing freshness of appearance. The Greek style did not, however, altogether supersede the Phoenician, for even as late as the *Mishna*, mention is made of Tyrian windows and porches (cp. Talmud, *Baba Bathra*, p. 36).

It would not be easy to describe here all the other

architectural works of Solomon and the rest of the Jewish kings. The former's palace ought not, however, to be passed over unnoticed, especially as in splendour and architectural beauty it rivalled the Temple itself. It consisted of a row of large buildings, among which the king's private residence, that of the Egyptian princes, and the so-called house of the forest of Lebanon, were the most prominent. With the aid of his great waterworks in the neighbourhood of the city, Solomon laid out all kinds of gardens and pleasure-grounds, the beauty of which was enhanced by the addition of fountains and artificial lakes (cp. Cant. iv. 13–15). At Etam he had a magnificent park and gymnasium, which he occasionally visited. Not far from Lebanon he erected some lofty towers ornamented largely with gold and ivory (Cant. viii. 11; *Ant.* iii. 7. 3).

That the Greeks used ivory for the ornamentation of houses and public buildings, may be seen from the passage in Eurip. *Iph. Aul.*, where ἐλεφάντινοι δόμοι (houses made of ivory) are mentioned.

Referring to the great taste for landscape culture displayed by the Hebrews of old, Humboldt says that nowhere in antiquity, and not even among the Greeks, is so much sense for the beauties of nature met with as in the Bible. With regard to sculpture it ought to be mentioned that the ancient Hebrews did not to any great extent cultivate this art. This was in consequence of the law which forbade them to introduce any kind of graven image in their places of worship. A few monuments, however, are mentioned as having been erected by them, such as the one built by Absalom, which, according to Josephus (*Ant.* vii. 10. 3), was a marble column. Another, erected in memory of Queen Helena, consisted of three small pyramids, and was considered a beautiful work of art (ibid. xx.

4. 3).

The tools that were used in those times by Hebrew artisans were, in addition to the more common ones, such as the axe, saw, and others, the compass (*Mechugah*) (Isa. xliv. 13), the plumb-line (*Anach*) (Amos vii. 7), and the measuring-reed (*Kav*) (cp. Job xxxviii. 5).

As for the artisans' position it may be said that they were not merely servants and slaves as among the Greeks and Romans, but men holding some rank in society. For instance, of Bezaleel and Aholiab, the principal architects of the Tabernacle, it is said that “they were filled with the spirit of the Lord” (Exod. xxxvi. 1), and had they not been classed among the wisest men of their time, and held in high esteem by the community at large, no respect would have been paid to them by the Biblical memorials. The number of Jewish artisans of every description appears to have been considerable, and this was specially the case during the time when the national prosperity was advancing (Jer. xxix. 2). Even during the Captivity, and later on when the Jews were finally scattered over the world, their Rabbis urgently recommended them to teach their children some art or handicraft.

The same exaggeration in respect of the achievements of the ancient Hebrews in the art of architecture is also found in reference to the perfection which they attained in science and the art of music. However that may be, it can hardly be denied that they were, on the whole, an eminently musical people. This can be seen from the comparatively large number of Hebrew words denoting song and chanting, as well as from Hebrew poetry, a considerable portion of which has been conceived in the form of psalmody or sacred lyric song. As

among the Greeks, Jewish tradition ascribes the invention of the first musical instrument to shepherds. Jubal is designated in the Bible as the father of all such as handle the harp or organ (Gen. iv. 21). Other passages in the same book relating to musical instruments and to their use, are found in connexion with Laban, Miriam, and Jephthah. But a real and systematic cultivation of the art of music did not begin before the days of Samuel and Saul; the former of whom seems to have been the founder of a regular school of music (1 Sam. x. 5). There a great number of students received their training, and the most able among them were subsequently selected for the choir of the Temple. Already in the time of David 4,000 singers, mostly Levites, assisted in the service of the Lord, being presided over by the sons of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun. In subsequent ages their services are recorded in connexion with the laying of the foundation of the second Temple (Ezra iii. 10), and again, after the great victory of the Maccabean army over Gorgias (1 Macc. iv. 24).

The instruments used by the ancient Hebrews were of three different kinds—percussion instruments, such as tambourines, drums, and cymbals; wind instruments, such as trumpets, horns, and flutes; and stringed instruments, such as harps, psalteries, and guitars. Another peculiar instrument is mentioned in the Talmud (*Erachin*, ii *a*) as having been used in the Temple service, which was called *Magrepha* (מגרפה). This is said to have had about a hundred different tones, and was audible at a very long distance. These instruments seem to have been used in the Temple service after a pause in the singing. Such a pause was perhaps notified by the word *Selah* (סלה), which is so often met with in the Psalms, and is translated in the Septuagint by *diapsalma* (διαψάλμα) (cf.

Bötticher, *De inferis rebusque post mortem futuris Hebraeorum et Graecorum opiniones*, Dresden, 1868, p. 198). That the Temple music must have exercised a vast influence on the cultivation and development of the Church songs and music can hardly be doubted. Martini, who was a great authority on such matters, maintains that the first Christian choral songs were taken from the songs of the Temple. It is quite natural, he says, that the Apostles should have introduced into the Church services only those melodies that had been familiar to them from their earliest infancy (cp. *Storia della Musica*, p. 350).

But it was not in the service of religion alone that music was performed among the ancient Hebrews: it permeated their whole public and private life. Following the example of David and Solomon, who had attached to their courts "singing men and singing women" (2 Sam. xix. 36; Eccles. ii. 8), the rich men in Israel often, employed music and song at their banquets (Amos vi. 4–6). When bridal processions passed through the streets, they were accompanied with music and song (Jer. vii. 34). The same was the case when victories were celebrated, or when the Jewish armies went to battle (Exod. xv. 20; xx. 19). There seems also to have existed a kind of Jewish troubadours, who sang love-songs before the windows of their chosen ones (Ps. xlv, title). The harvest was gathered in to the tunes of merry songs (Isa. xvi. 10), and at funeral processions mournful music was played (Jer. ix. 17–20).

That a high position must have been assigned by the ancient Hebrews to those who were skilled in song and music, may be seen from the term applied to them in the Hebrew writings. There they are frequently called *Nebiim* (נביאים), "Prophets," and of Jahaziel, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, it is said that

“the spirit of the Lord came over him” (2 Chron. xx. 14). Thus the art of music was looked upon by the Hebrews as being the outcome of divine inspiration, and its disciples were consequently held in great esteem by them. But music and song only flourished among them so long as they were masters in their own country, and were free men in a free land. When their nationality had ceased to exist, and they were led into captivity, they hung their harps on the willows by the streams of Babylon, and uttered those memorable and touching words: “How shall we sing the song of the Lord in a foreign land?” (Ps. cxxxvii. 4).

The third branch of the arts to which I now pass is Hebrew Poetry. Martin Luther, in his *Table Talk*, compares it with the sweet melody of a nightingale, and it is frequently admitted that, the Greeks and Romans perhaps excepted, no nation of antiquity has produced anything in the shape of poetry that can be compared with that of the Hebrews. There are three kinds of poetry in the Hebrew literature—*dramatic*, *gnomic*, and *lyrical*. The latter occupies the most prominent position. The drama is represented by two pieces, the Book of Job and the Song of Songs. The Book of Job is considered by many as the masterpiece of Hebrew poetry. Its fine introduction with its double scene in heaven and on earth, in which Satan plays so prominent a rôle, was imitated by Goethe in his “Faust.” Equally grand, though in a different style, is the Song of Songs. Herder, in referring to it, says that it is the most beautiful piece of poetry that has ever been produced by any poet of ancient or modern times. He is of opinion that in no other poem has love been so charmingly depicted as there, and even now, in spite of its great age, it has lost none of its freshness of colouring and beauty of diction. It is a true

monument of genuine pastoral and idyllic poetry.

The gnomic poetry comprises that section of Hebrew literature which contains pithy maxims or proverbs. To this class of poetry belong the Book of Proverbs, the Book of Ecclesiastes, and the Proverbs of Jesus ben Sirach, better known under the name of Ecclesiasticus. Though the religious element is not entirely excluded from these books, yet they chiefly treat of worldly subjects. Some passages therein contain humorous descriptions of various human characters. The bookworm, the scribbler, the miser, the dull preacher, the quarrelsome woman, the drunkard—they are all referred to, and spoken of with good-natured humour and irony[33-1].

The lyric poetry of the Jews is almost entirely of a religious nature. To this class belong the Psalms, which are confessedly the peculiar product of Hebrew Art. They have never been surpassed in any other literature in simplicity of diction and originality of sentiment. Being the classical expression of the speech of the religious mind, they have naturally become a treasure-house for the language and thought of the Christian world. The Christian liturgy and the songs of the Church abound with beautiful sentences borrowed from them.

The Book of Psalms contains 150 songs, most of which are said to have been composed by King David. Psalms occur also here and there in other parts of the Bible, such as those of Samuel's mother (1 Sam. ii), of Isaiah (chap. xii), of Hezekiah (ibid. xxxviii. 9), and of Habakkuk. There are also Hebrew songs which are similar to the Psalms in respect of form, but not of subject. To this class of Psalms belong, for instance, Jacob's last blessing, Balaam's prophecies, the Song of Deborah, and the Lamentations of Jeremiah. In the Psalms

songs are also met with which are of a joyful nature, such as wedding songs, love songs, and wine songs.

Hebrew poetry has many characteristics of its own, the most prominent of which are national and local colouring, and, secondly, its profound humility and reverence. Its writers never lose sight of the grand idea of their nation, which subordinates all and everything in the universe to one supreme power called God, the Creator of heaven and earth. Even man, the crown of the creation, is, according to them, only an *Adam* or *Enosh* (אדם, אנוש), an insignificant, helpless being, in comparison to *Eloha* (אלוה, Arab. *Allah*), the most powerful Lord of the universe. Thus man is compared by them to a flower that withers, to a shadow that passes by, and to a cloud that vanishes in the air; while at the same time they call the thunder “the voice of the Lord,” the wind “his messenger,” the clouds “the cover of his brightness,” the lightning “his servant,” and the sun “the herald of his majesty.” But though they let Nature be subservient to and dependent on God, yet they preserve a loving attachment to it, and endow it, as it were, with life and animation. They let it share man's sentiments; it rejoices and trembles with man, and it laughs and weeps with him.

Every extraordinary event in the life of the nation affects Nature as it does the human mind. So, for instance, when the Hebrew exiles are described by the prophet as returning to the land of their nativity, the desert rejoices and changes into a beautiful garden filled with rose blossoms, and fragrant with the perfume of sweet plants. The mountains and the hills break forth into song, and the trees of the fields clap their hands. In those happy days, neither the light of the sun nor the brightness of the moon will be required by the liberated exiles, for the Lord will be unto them an everlasting light (Isa. xxxv. 1; lv.

12; lx. 20). On the other hand, when God sits in judgment, and a great catastrophe is imminent over the inhabitants of the land, then the earth shakes and trembles, and the foundations of the hills move. The heaven becomes clouded, and the brightness of the sun disappears; the moon and the stars shine no more (Ps. xviii. 8; Ez. xxxii. 7).

The *form* of Hebrew poetry has been widely discussed. Some writers, such as Philo, Josephus, Eusebius, St. Jerome, and others, maintain that in some Biblical poems the Iambic, Alcaic, and Sapphic metres were used, and that in others the heroic metre was employed. Others, again, are rather inclined to think that the Hebrews wrote in no regular metrical periods, but only preserved a kind of parallelism of sentences. No one will deny that the Greeks and the Romans have produced literary works, which in elegance of expression and symmetry of form are much superior to those of the Hebrews. But at the same time it will be conceded by those who have a taste for genuine poetry, that in the freshness of colouring, depth of thought, and vivacity of representation, the poetical pieces of the Bible stand very high. Though written thousands of years ago, they still preserve their sway over the human heart, and afford consolation and hope to the afflicted and oppressed.

From what has been said it will be seen how unfounded the charge is, so often made in certain quarters against the Jews, that they have never rendered any particular service to the nations with whom they have come in contact. Surely, if they had done nothing else but given them the sacred volume, the Book of Books, which contains so many golden rules for the cultivation of the human mind and heart, they would, for that reason alone, be entitled to expect acknowledgment and gratitude, not only from the present but also from all future

generations.

Footnotes:

[33-1] Cp. above, p. 5.

IV

THE LIFE OF THE HEBREW WOMEN OF OLD

An erroneous notion has long prevailed regarding the place assigned to the Hebrew woman at home and in society by the Mosaic law. Even now the idea obtains that the law placed the Hebrew woman almost on the same footing as the low-born slave, and denied her all mental and spiritual enjoyments; that, because polygamy was silently tolerated by the law, and because it gave fathers and husbands a certain amount of authority over their wives and daughters, the position of the Hebrew woman must therefore have been exceedingly low. But the student who closely examines the Old Testament passages relating to her domestic and social life, will soon see that this assumption is without foundation. A consideration of her life during Biblical times will, in fact, show that she enjoyed more freedom than other Oriental women of that or even of the present time, and that in some respects her position was not much inferior to that of her modern descendants.

The Old Testament gives two distinct periods in the history of the Hebrew woman. The first extends from the times when the Israelites became established in Palestine, and the second from that date to the building of the second Temple. The most

prominent feature of the first period is an extreme simplicity of manners in both sexes, occasioned by their living in the open air or in tents. It resembles in many respects the heroic age of the ancient Greeks, and especially with regard to the social position of the female sex. But while in the Hebrew world the woman is known as “Ish-shah” (אשה), “wife,” being equal in moral as well as in literal etymology to “Ish” (איש), “man,” the Greeks had separate words for *man* and *wife*, namely, ἀνήρ, γυνή, suggesting, perhaps, the inferior rank of the weaker sex among them. Again, while the Greeks called their *first* woman *Pandora* as the bringer of all evil to man, the first woman of the Bible, *Eve*, is introduced to us as a part of her husband's being, and as having been created to be “a helpmeet for him” (עזר כנגדו) (Gen. ii. 18). Except Eve, who seems to have lived with her family in the open air, the women belonging to that period dwelt in tents. Such a tent was called in Hebrew *ohel* (אהל), and sometimes *baït* (בית)[37-1], and consisted of a walled-in enclosure covered with curtains of a dark colour (Cant. i. 5). It was divided into two or more apartments, one being always reserved for the females of the family; but sometimes each female had a separate tent (Gen. xxxi. 33; cp. also Homer, *Iliad*, vi. 247–9). When travelling the women's tents were fastened on a broad cushion (כר), and placed on the backs of the riding camels (Gen. xxxi. 34). The occupations of the married woman were multifarious. She rose early in the morning, and spent the day in attending to her children, distributing food at meal times, and weaving various textures for the use of her family (Prov. xxxi. 15). Cp. Homer, *Odyss*. x. 221; and Virgil, *Georg*. i. 293–5:—

Interea longum cantu solata laborem
Arguto conjux percurrit pectine telas.

The cooking was also done by the mistress of the house, and even women of rank did not consider it beneath their dignity to help in culinary work (Gen. xviii. 5). Sometimes a nurse was kept for the younger children of the family, and was held in great estimation by her employers (ibid. xxxv. 8). The surplus of their manufactures was usually sold to merchants (Prov. xxxi. 24), but was sometimes given away for religious purposes (Exod. xxxv. 22).

The unmarried women had, besides their share of the domestic duties, the daily task of tending the flocks and of taking them to the well, where the neighbouring shepherds met them and indulged in gossip and hilarity (Gen. xxix). On these occasions they moved about freely, and could even dispense with the veil usually worn out of doors by Oriental women (ibid. xii. 14). These diversions ended when they entered upon the matrimonial state, which they did between the ages of twelve and eighteen years (Buxtorf, *Synag.* VII, 143). Sometimes courtship preceded marriage, as in the cases of Jacob and Samson; but the mediation of a third party was usual in marriage negotiations (Gen. xxiv. 4). When the parents approved of the bridegroom's proposals, the bride was sometimes asked for her consent; but when she was of a higher rank than the bridegroom, the father offered her hand to him as a mark of special favour. Thus Jethro did to Moses, Caleb to Othniel, and Saul to David. The wedding itself had no definite ceremonies connected with it. At the wedding of Rebekah and of Ruth only a blessing was pronounced by those present. At a much later period an oath was added in ratification of the union (Ezek. xvi. 8). Indeed, marriage was always considered among

the Hebrews as an institution proceeding from God (Gen. xxiv. 50; Judges xiv. 4); and the name given to it in post-Biblical times and retained to the present day is *Kiddushin* (קדושין), i.e. “sanctification.” The Greeks and Romans, on the other hand, called it συζυγία and *coniugium* respectively, meaning “yoking together of two persons,” and emphasizing essentially the civil nature of the union.

Though polygamy was not actually forbidden by the Mosaic law, yet it appears from the phraseology employed at its first institution that monogamy was the only legitimate practice. In Gen. ii. 24 it is said, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and cleave unto his wife,” and not his “wives.” Elkanah's *second* wife is, quaintly enough, called in 1 Sam. i *Tsara*, which term in Hebrew also means “misery.”

The simplicity manifested in the manners of the Hebrew women found its counterpart in their attire. This was generally of a primitive order. On festive occasions, however, apparel of a more elaborate character was used (Gen. xxiv. 53). Personal ornaments were also sometimes worn; these were mostly articles of gold, and, perhaps, even jewels, since precious stones are mentioned in the Pentateuch. While in Egypt, the Hebrew women learnt the use of mirrors, which were then made of a mixture of copper and tin. These mirrors they gave freely for the fabrication of the laver of the Tabernacle (Exod. xxxviii. 8). At that time they appear also to have acquired some proficiency in singing, dancing, and playing on musical instruments; for on the shore of the Red Sea we find them singing an ode together with Miriam. Later on, they shared with the men the privilege of being summoned to hear the reading of the law (Deut. xxxi. 12). An old Sanscrit proverb says: “Women are instructed by nature, but men obtain

learning by books"; nor are illustrations wanting in the Bible to prove the truth of this saying. The Hebrew women had already cultivated a taste for flowers (Gen. xxx. 14), song, and music; they were active in their households, charitable to the poor and needy (Prov. xxxi. 20); and, above all, they were sensible of the blessing of freedom and independence.

During the second period of Biblical history, from the settlement of the Israelites in Palestine to the rebuilding of the second Temple, a remarkable change occurred in the life, habits, and social standing of the Hebrew woman. The simplicity of manners which had characterized the first period gave place in course of time to luxurious living—the result of residing in large towns and in permanent dwelling-houses, and of closer social intercourse with men of their own and foreign nations. The females of the poorer and middle classes occupied the same room or rooms with their husbands; but the wives of the rich and nobles had a separate set of apartments for themselves, called *harmon* (הרמון) (Amos iv. 3), most probably derived from *harem* (חרם) (forbidden), and akin to the modern *Harem*.

Yet the seclusion of women among the wealthy Hebrews was at that period much less strict than with the modern Mohammedans, or the ancient Persians and Greeks. As among the Greeks (Homer, *Odyss.* i. 329–331), the Jewish females occupied the upper part of the house, as instanced in 2 Sam. vi. 16, and 2 Kings ix. 31–33, in connexion with Michal and Jezebel. But, while the former were not allowed to see any one but their nearest relations (cp. Wieland, *Attisches Museum*, II, 131), the latter moved about freely, and sometimes took an active part in public life. As instances of this may be mentioned Jephthah's daughter, Deborah, Jezebel, Athalia,

Huldah, Esther, and Noadiah. Deborah and Hannah, as composers of excellent odes, have the honour of being the first poetesses in history. Women were also hired to chant doleful songs at the funerals of persons of high rank (Jer. ix. 16). Sometimes they were even employed to plead causes at the royal courts (2 Sam. xiv. 2; 1 Kings i. 11). Then, again, there are instances of women who, by their bravery and oratorical powers, saved a whole town from destruction (Judges ix. 53; 2 Sam. xx. 18–23).

Their recreation consisted chiefly in paying visits to their relations and friends, on which occasions refreshments were served (Cant. viii. 2), and in attending at public festivals. These were of frequent occurrence: religious celebrations, or weddings, when the women assembled in the streets to watch the gay procession of the guests (Jer. xxv. 10); vintage festivals and harvest festivals where, amidst merriment and laughter, men and women danced to the strains of sweet music (Judges xxi. 21; Isa. xvi. 10; Jer. xxxi. 3,4). Recreation-houses[40-1] also existed, and were frequented by women of rank (Micah ii. 9), but their exact nature is not clearly defined. The prophet Isaiah devotes a whole chapter to the description of the dresses and trinkets worn by the Hebrew women of his time; and even as far back as the days of King Saul, women wore rich dresses of scarlet and gold. David, when bewailing Saul's death, says: “Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet with other delights, who put ornaments of gold upon your dresses” (2 Sam. i. 24). This extravagance in women's attire continued to the time of Christ; and according to Edersheim (*Life and Times of Jesus*), a lady could then get in Jerusalem “from a false tooth to an Arabian veil, a Persian shawl, or an Indian dress.” The Jewish women, like the

Egyptian, the Greek, and the Roman, used precious ointments and perfumes for their heads and dresses (Cant. i. 3). The cost of a moderately-sized bottle of those perfumes is stated to have been equal to £6 of our money. Women of rank also used cosmetics for the eyelashes (2 Kings ix. 30; Jer. iv. 30). Isaiah, deriding this practice, says that the women of his time were "lying with their eyes" (משקרות, from שקר, Isa. iii. 16). The Hebrew term for this paint is *puck* (פוך), being equivalent in etymology to φῦκος and *fucus* of the classics. The Hebrew women must generally have been of great natural beauty, for many such are found in the Old Testament. According to Canticles (ch. ii), pet-names were often given to women, such as *rose of the valley*, *dove*, *Aurora*, *sister*, *sun*, and *star*.

If the character of a nation is reflected in its proverbs, the passages in the Bible relating to the worth of women prove the high estimation in which the Hebrew women were held by their husbands. They joined the latter at meals (Job i. 4), and took part in their social life—a privilege withheld from other Oriental women even at the present day.

It is, therefore, evident that the common idea as to the low position of the ancient Hebrew woman is incorrect. She enjoyed, at all events, much greater freedom than was permitted to the wives of the highly-cultured ancient Greeks. She was held in higher regard than the women that lived in the time of Luther, who in his *Table Talk* quotes, and as it seems approvingly, the old Latin proverb: *Tria mala pessima: ignis, aqua, femina*. And finally, the liberty granted by the Mosaic law to the Hebrew women was never condemned by contemporary poets or prophets, while modern writers and philosophers, such as Hartmann, Schopenhauer, and others, do not hesitate to inveigh against the privileges granted to them in

modern life. In the book *Über die Weiber* (*On Women*, vol. VI, P. 549), Schopenhauer says that the low position of the Oriental women suits them better than their freedom in the West.

It is true that the Old Testament has its share of gossiping, over-curious, quarrelsome, and superstitious women, but they only form a small proportion to the large number of model women that appear in its pages. The esteem in which the Hebrew woman was held is shown throughout the Bible, as the following few quotations from it will prove:—"Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord" (Prov. xviii. 22). "A gracious woman retaineth honour, as the hand of the industrious increaseth wealth" (ibid. xi. 16). "A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband" (ibid. xii. 4). "House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: but a prudent wife is from God" (ibid. xix. 14).

Footnotes:

[37-1] In Arabic the term *baït* has the same signification as in Hebrew.

[40-1] The original Hebrew term means "houses of pleasure."

V

CURIOSITIES OF CERTAIN PROPER NAMES IN THE BIBLE

SHAKESPEARE, in one of his plays, asks “What's in a name?” That he himself believed that there was a good deal in a name is shown by his fondness for reading certain characteristics into the personality of the possessors of certain names. Thus, for example, in the dialogue between King Richard and Gaunt (cp. *Richard II*, Act 2), the former says:—

> What comfort, man? How is it with aged Gaunt?
> *Gaunt.* Oh, how that name befits my composition!
> Old Gaunt indeed, and *gaunt* in being old!

With this may be compared Falstaff's remark in *2 King Henry IV*, Act 3, Scene 2, where he says:—“I told you John a Gaunt he beat his own name; for you might have thrust him and all his apparel into an eel-skin.”

In Greek literature, too, several names occur which are even more striking, inasmuch as they foreshadow the future fate, and sometimes also the mental or physical disposition of their bearers[43-1]. Similarly, certain Hebrew proper names are found in the Old Testament, which are attended with peculiar significance. So, for instance, in the name of the first man

Adam (אדם, from אדמה, “the earth”), the final destiny of man seems to have been predicted. At a subsequent period in Adam's life, this hidden allusion to his future fate is made even more clear by the words: “For *dust* art thou, and unto *dust* shalt thou return” (Gen. iii. 19).

Something similar is noticeable in connexion with the first woman, *Eve*. She was first called *Ish-shah* (אשה, from איש) “because she was taken out of man,” but subsequently, after she had tasted of the “tree of knowledge,” her name was changed into חוה = “Eve” (from חיה, “living”), which is evidently a name showing that she was destined to become “the mother of all living.” In the name of one of her sons, *Abel* (הבל, signifying “breath” or “nothingness”), a prophetic prediction of his brief life seems to have been expressed; and the names of the descendants of her second son *Cain*, viz. *Jabal*, *Jubal*, and *Tubal* (יבל, יובל, תובל), indicated their respective occupations after reaching manhood.

At a later period in Biblical times, we meet with the names *Noah* (נח, meaning “rest” or “comfort”), *Abram* (אברם, “the exalted father”), and *Sarah* (שרה, “the princess”), and it is interesting to notice how these names foretold the future fate of their owners. There are three more proper names in the Pentateuch, which belong to the same category, viz. *Korah*, *Balaam*, and *Balak*. *Kerah* signifies in the original Hebrew “coldness,” exemplified by his apathy to divine ordinances, when he brought about a rebellion against the authority of Moses. It has also another meaning in Hebrew, viz. “baldness,” and it is curious to observe that it gave some ardent followers of the Church of Rome a ready handle with which to banter Calvin (Lat. *Calvus*, *Calvinus* = “bald”) as being homonymous

with his predecessor (קרח) in schism (cf. Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, sub *Korah*).

In the names of *Balaam* and *Balak*, some of the old Jewish and Christian commentators on the Bible have detected a particular meaning. In *Balaam* (בלע־עם) they saw a future "devourer," or "destroyer of the people," and in *Balak* (בלק) a representation of "incompetence," illustrating their subsequent conduct towards the Jewish people. Similarly, too, the name of *Achan* or *Achar* (1) (עכר Chron. ii. 7), which latter word means "to cause trouble," and *Machlon* and *Chillion* (מחלון, כליון) "the sick, the perishing," seem to be foretokens of the subsequent fortunes of their owners.

Interesting, again, is the name *David* (דוד), which means "the beloved one," or "the friend," and was given to the child that subsequently became the sweet singer in Israel. In connexion therewith a play on words may be mentioned here, which seems to have hitherto been overlooked by students of the Bible. When King Saul, who hated David after his victory over Goliath, missed his presence at the royal table, he asked his son Jonathan, "Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat?" (אל הלחם). Thereupon Jonathan ironically replied: "David has asked leave of me to go to *Beth-lehem*" (בית לחם). By this play on words Jonathan seems to have intended to tell his father that David had a home of his own where there was plenty of food (לחם), and he could therefore readily dispense with the hospitality of the royal palace.

This play on words is found elsewhere in the Bible, in connexion with proper names, viz. בתי אכזיב לאכזב, "The

houses of *Achzib* (from כזב) shall be a 'lie'" (Mic. i. 14); and עקרון תעקר, "*Ekron* (from עקר) shall be destroyed" (Zeph. ii. 4). It is noticeable that the idol which the inhabitants of the latter town used to worship was ignominiously called in the Bible "*Baal-Zebub*"—"The Lord of Flies." It is said in 2 Kings i. 2, not without a slight touch of irony, that King *Ahazia* had sent messengers to this impotent deity to inquire about the issue of his protracted illness.

There are four other proper names in the Bible which have seemingly foretold the future characteristics of their respective possessors. These are: *Solomon* (שלמה), being a name which signifies "Peace" (from שלום); *Malachi* (מלאכי), "My Messenger," the future Jewish prophet; *Ezra* (עזרא), "The Helper"; and *Nehemia* (נחמיה), "God's Comforter." The subsequent history of the two latter in leading back to Palestine the bulk of the Jewish exiles from the Babylonian captivity shows that their names were not ill-bestowed.

There are also a few female proper names in the Bible of similar interest. Besides the names of *Eve* and *Sarah*, to which reference has already been made, there is the name *Miriam* (מרים, from מרי, "rebellion"), which suggests her and her brother Aaron's revolt against Moses on the occasion of his marrying the Cushite woman. Jacob's only daughter was called *Dinah* (דינה, from דין), signifying "judgment," and that name seems to have foreshadowed punishment for her unprotected wanderings. *Deborah* (דבורה), "The Bee," made the enemies of her race feel her sting in the great battle that she fought against them. Another Biblical heroine, *Hannah* (חנה, from חון, "to pray," or חנן, "to be favoured"), afterwards received

that favour which her name prognosticated. She longed and prayed for a son, whose life was to be wholly devoted to the service of God, and her prayer was favourably received. She subsequently became the mother of Samuel, who was the first of the regular and unbroken succession of prophets.

Footnotes:

[43-1] Cp. the ἑλέναυς, ἕλανδρος, ἑλέπολις of Aesch. *Agam.* 689, and the play on the word Πενθεύς in Eurip. *Bacch.* 508.

VI

SKETCH OF THE TALMUD

THE old proverb "Habent sua fata libelli" is perhaps nowhere more strikingly illustrated than in the Talmud. This gigantic literary work has a peculiar history of its own. Now honoured, now decried, it has been at once the study of the scholar, the butt of the sceptic, and the scapegoat of the bigot.

In the Middle Ages, some of the high dignitaries of the Roman Church thundered their anathemas against it, and caused edition after edition to be publicly burnt. What strikes one most is their profound ignorance of its real contents. They were satisfied to condemn it on hearsay evidence, or on the strength of some garbled quotations. Henricus Seynensis, a Capucin friar, having heard a good deal about the heretical Talmud, took it to be a Rabbi, and swore that he would ere long have him put to death by the common executioner. The censor, too, whose duty it was to amend any passage or expression found in the Talmud which might be construed in a sense hostile to the representatives of the Roman Church, displayed, as a rule, more zeal than erudition. Thus, for the Talmud to say, for instance, that a Roman swore by the Capitol or by Jupiter, was sufficient for the censor to find a hidden allusion to the Vatican or the Pope, and to alter the nomenclature, so that the Roman swore by the capital of

Persia, or by the God of Babylon. This substitution of inappropriate names rendered many passages obscure, and this is one of the chief reasons why the Talmud has been repeatedly condemned as an unintelligible and nonsensical production. The great majority, however, of modern scholars, theologians, and orientalists read the Talmud, not to refute it, but rather to bring to light the vast store of knowledge hidden therein. And yet, in spite of the many allusions there are to it in theology, in Biblical lore, and in sacred geography, it still is to the majority of students a sealed book. The object of this essay is therefore to sketch in outline its essence and character, and to give some idea of its subject-matter.

The year 70 of the common era was a most disastrous one for the Jews. After having bravely struggled against the formidable armies of Vespasian and Titus for their national independence, they had finally to submit to their conqueror. The holy Temple of Jerusalem, in which their religious, political, and civil life was centred, was reduced to a heap of ashes before their very eyes, and from that time forth their nationality was destroyed, and they remained without a king and without a fatherland. Other nations, whose vitality was less prominent, might in such circumstances have disappeared from the face of the earth. Not so the Jews. When the time for their national dispersion arrived, they abandoned the sword for the pen. In the seclusion of the new homes they had made for themselves in Persia and Syria, they devoted all their energies to the study of their literature. Their leaders founded there colleges and schools, in which the sacred flame of learning was kept aglow in the midst of the darkness of the times. The Bible was still in their hands, that sacred treasure which gave them solace for the tribulations of the past, and patience and hope

for the uncertainties of the future. From that time forth it remained the centre of their mental activity. In spite of the fact that the Romans had fixed the penalty of death as a punishment for any one that imparted instruction in the Bible, teachers were not wanting who taught its doctrines publicly to large numbers of pupils. One of them, Rabbi Akiba by name, being asked by a friend why he continued to expound the law publicly at the peril of his life, replied in the following parable:—"Once upon a time a fox was walking along the river side, when he saw the fish swimming to and fro in great consternation. He asked them what was the matter, and what they were afraid of, whereupon they pointed to the nets, which were spread out to catch them. Thereupon the fox advised them to come to live with him on dry land, and be safe." But the fish replied: "Thou wilt never persuade us to follow thy advice, for if in our element, the water, we have good cause for fear, surely, when we depart from this element, the danger will be even greater." "So it is with us" (said Rabbi Akiba); "if our life is imperilled while our mind remains fixed on the study of the Bible, which is the soul of our existence, how much greater must our danger be, when we leave our element and cease to study."

At this time, the mental activity of the Rabbis was confined to the exposition and investigation of the text of the Scriptures, which they called the "written law." But a little later their attention was also directed to the study of the "unwritten law," or oral traditions, to which reference is sometimes made in the Pentateuch. Thus a new sphere of activity was opened to them, which soon begot a science, embracing diverse branches of study, and rising by degrees to very large proportions. The mode of teaching adopted by these masters was somewhat

similar to that employed by Socrates. Questions were put and answered, and the decisions of the teachers were committed to memory by the pupils. This method, however, had the disadvantage attendant upon constant migration. Rabbi Jehuda, surnamed "the Prince," thereupon, towards the early part of the third century of the common era, collected all the floating dicta of the sages, together with the large mass of law and rulings, and recorded them for the first time in writing. In this way a code was drawn up, the materials of which the editor divided into six sections. The first section is named "Seeds," and treats principally of agrarian laws. The second, called "Feasts," contains the ordinances relating to the Sabbath and festivals. The third, entitled "Women," deals chiefly with marriage and divorce. The fourth, called "Damages," discusses civil and criminal law. The fifth is named "Holiness," and treats of sacred things, such as the Temple, sacrifices, &c. The last section, entitled "Purification," deals with various Levitical and sanitary laws. The whole collection was then called *Mishna* (from *shannah*, "to study"), which means "learning or teaching." As in process of time a great many new traditions sprang up, the *Mishna* formed the materials for a new compilation which is called the *Talmud*, sometimes also the *Gemara*. Both names have the same signification—study and learning; the only difference between them is, that the word Talmud is derived from the Hebrew, and Gemara from the Syrian language. There are two Talmuds—the Jerusalem and the Babylonian. The first was compiled at the beginning of the fourth century of the common era, from the decisions of the colleges in Palestine, and the second from those of the Academy of Sora in Babylonia.

Rabbi Ashe, who lived at the end of the fifth century A. D., is

mentioned as the editor of the Babylonian Talmud. This is the Talmud *par excellence*, and is about four times as large as that of Jerusalem. It covers 5,154 folio pages in twelve folio volumes. This gigantic work became the bed-rock of Jewish literature for many centuries, and was at the same time the link that kept the Jewish community together during the years of their persecution in various countries. A few characteristics of this most important work may be mentioned. The Talmud is, as the late Emanuel Deutsch has it, a microcosm, embracing, as even the Bible does, heaven and earth. It is a republic of literature, and a library in itself. It treats of law, history, medicine, astronomy, mathematics, legend, social life, theosophy, and metaphysics. It passes from myth to morality, from legend to logic, from grave to gay, from lively to severe topics. The Talmud is a product of those centuries when the Jews were considered beyond the pale of the law, and it tells the story of the stormy life of thirty generations. Though at first sight it might appear to be written without method and system, it will soon be seen that it is composed of two elements—the legal and the legendary, or prose and poetry. The first is called *Halacha* or legal decisions, and the second *Agada* or moral maxims and legends. As regards the Halacha, it is obvious that its laws, its spirit, and its details, cannot be adequately analysed within the limits of a short essay. We therefore propose to make some observations merely on the two highly important subjects of education and capital punishment. Basing their argument on the ordinance found in the Bible that every parent is obliged to have his children properly trained, the masters laid down the rule that education should be compulsory. If a child, they say, is idle, and does not wish to study, he is not to be chastised too severely; but he is to remain sitting among those children who are industrious and

attentive, that he may follow their good example. The chastisement of children in schools was unknown in the Talmud. The principal maxim of these masters was as follows: “Above all things study. Whether for the sake of learning, or for any other reason, study; for whatever the motive that may impel you at first, you will very soon love study for its own sake.”

Respecting the criminal legislation of the Talmud, it may be observed that nowhere in its pages are any traces to be found of the use of the rack or of any other kind of torture to compel the accused to implicate himself. The judges were obliged, according to the Talmud, to search for innocence rather than for guilt. To judge a man charged with a capital crime, no less than twenty judges had to be selected from among the most eminent doctors of law; so extreme was the care taken of human life. The examination of witnesses in such a case was so rigorous that a sentence of capital punishment became almost impossible. The Talmud goes even so far as to declare that the tribunal which imposes the penalty of death once in seven or even seventy years, is a court of murderers. Thus it will be seen that the severity of the Mosaic code had been modified by the influence of these oral conditions, which tell us also that “paying measure for measure” is in God's hands only, and that he who has sustained any bodily injuries must rest satisfied with an indemnification of money.

Equally interesting, and much more entertaining, is the second portion of the Talmud—the Agada. It is, as already stated, the poetry of the Talmud. It contains fairy tales and words of wisdom, plays of fancy and jests, parables and legends. The patriarchs and some of the kings and prophets of the Bible were mostly the characters from whom the allegories

of the Agada were derived. So, for example, of Solomon, a favourite hero of the Agada, the following pleasant little story is told: “This monarch was once visited by Queen Sheba, who wished to ascertain in person whether all was true that was said about him. So she appeared one day before him in his palace, holding in each hand a bouquet of flowers. And though one was natural and the other artificial, their resemblance to each other was so great that it was impossible to tell from a distance which was the production of nature, and which of art. This, however, Solomon had to decide. Observing, by chance, a swarm of bees hovering about outside, he ordered the windows to be opened, and as soon as this was done, the bees rushed in, and at once fixed on the natural flowers. Queen Sheba was satisfied with the genuine wisdom of the Jewish monarch.” From this story, says one of the humorous Agadaists, a good moral lesson can be derived, if applied to ladies generally, namely, that the bee only rests on the natural beauties, and never fixes on the painted ones[52-1].

The Agada tells another story about King Solomon. He had the reputation of understanding every language in existence, including that of the animal world, and once heard a bird talking to his mate that was sitting on the dome of the Temple. “If,” he said, “I were to stamp my foot hard, the whole Temple would collapse in a moment.” Hearing this grandiloquent remark, King Solomon called the male bird, and assuming an angry look, asked him what he meant by such language. Trembling with fear, the bird excused himself, saying that he merely wished to tell his mate how strong he was. After being cautioned not to be so boastful in future, the bird returned to his wife, who was anxiously awaiting his return. And on her asking him what the great king wanted of him, he answered

and said: "King Solomon urgently implored me not to destroy his beautiful Temple."

Sometimes the Agada occupies itself with the exposition of certain Biblical passages, which take the form of homilies. Thus, for instance, quoting the passage in Jeremiah xlvi. 28: "Fear thou not, my servant Jacob, for I am with thee; I will make a full end of all the nations by whom thou art oppressed, but of thee I will never make a full end," the Agada speaks to the Jewish people living in exile: "Thou art grieved," it says, "that thy Temple is destroyed, and that thy sons and daughters are scattered and dispersed to all quarters of the globe. But the Temple of God is the whole universe, and wherever thou wilt address thyself to him in prayer, he will listen to thee most graciously. Therefore, though thou art in a strange land, do not forsake the God of thy fathers; erect schools and colleges, and keep up the flame of knowledge in thy midst. Let this flame be a substitute for thy fire-offering, and thy heart a substitute for the altar of old. Both can be replaced by good actions. If thou hast taken pity on the poor and needy, and by consoling words thou hast soothed the grief of the widow and the orphan; or if by any charitable work thou hast saved even one life from misery and degradation, thou hast done a nobler deed unto thy God than if thou hadst offered him a thousand sacrifices. Thou art grieved because thy priests are no more; but it lies within thy power and that of every Israelite to lead as holy a life as they did. Let each man among you be a disciple of the High Priest Aaron, a friend of peace, a promoter of peace, and a friend of all men, and he will be as agreeable to God as the High Priest himself. Thou art scorned, ridiculed, and persecuted; the nations among whom thou livest try to get rid of thee; their leaders and statesmen treat thy race like a horde

of outcasts; but do not despair of a better end. For the time is not far distant when the dawn of brighter days will break; when the rays of an enlightened age will disperse all the clouds of ignorance and superstition, and then thou wilt shine again in the golden sun of liberty[54-1].”

In another place the Agada quotes a proverb of its own: “Never cast a stone into a well out of which thou hast drunk.” And after having reminded every Israelite of his duty to be grateful even to inanimate things of Nature from which he has ever derived any benefit, it addresses the peoples of the world, saying—“Had you acted on this principle, how much better would the treatment have been which Judaism and its confessors have ever received at your hands! Have not the books of our poets and prophets served as an ever flowing source of religious truth and morality, offering at the same time consolation and hope to millions of your people in times of sorrow and distress? And why did you cast stones into the well which has so often quenched your thirst for religious and ethical knowledge?”

Seeing that, even at the present day, some curious ideas prevail as to the domestic and social position occupied by the Hebrew woman in Talmudical times, it may be of interest to see what the Agada has to say on this point. It appears that Hebrew maidens used to go out into the fields and vineyards on a certain day in the year, clad alike in white garments, so that there might be no distinction between the wealthy and the poor, and there they invited the young men of the neighbourhood to dance with them; and it was their privilege on these occasions to propose marriage to their partners, stating at the same time their different advantages. Those who could boast of their noble birth, or who were distinguished for

their personal charms, boldly drew attention to their attractions. The less well-favoured dwelt upon the value of enduring love and the happiness which they were prepared to offer to those young men who would choose them for their wives. There is other evidence in the Talmud which shows that the Hebrew woman, unlike Orientals, enjoyed comparative freedom in public, and was likewise allowed to take part in domestic and social affairs. It is true that polygamy was then still legally permitted, but it existed only in theory, and had ceased to be generally practised long before it was wholly interdicted. A witty Agadaist tells us the following tale regarding the evil consequences of polygamy: "An elderly man, whose hair had already begun to turn grey, married two wives, one of them young and beautiful, the other old and plain. The latter, thinking that her husband would be fonder of her if he looked as old as she did, pulled out all the black hairs in his head. Her younger rival, acting on the same principle, removed all his grey hairs. The consequence was that, in course of time, the unfortunate husband had no hair left on his head at all, and whenever he made his appearance he was held up to mockery and derision[55-1]." The masters have some witty sayings about womanhood generally. "Ten measures of talk," they say, "came down to the world. Women received nine measures for their own use, and the rest of the world one measure." Commenting on the passage in Genesis, "And God formed the rib, which he had taken from the man, into a wife," another humorous Agadaist says: "She was not formed out of a man's head, in order that she might not be proud and keep her head too high; not out of his eye or ear, that she should not be curious, wishing to see and hear everything; not out of his mouth, that she might not be too talkative; not out of his heart, that she should not be jealous; and finally, not out of his hand

and foot, in order that she might not touch everything nor go everywhere. To avoid all these contingencies, she was formed out of his rib, that is hidden from sight, and might serve as an emblem of modesty and virtue."

The Agada is especially rich in pithy maxims, which bear on everyday life, and have a permanent ethical value. The following specimens will give an idea of the contents of some of the rest:—"Who is strong? He who subdues his passion." "Who is rich? He who is satisfied with his lot." "Morning slumber, midday wine, and idle talk with the ignorant destroy a man's life." "Do not be near a pious fool." "Luck makes rich, luck makes wise." "It is not the place that honours the man, but the man who honours the place." "What is hateful to thee, do not unto thy neighbour." "Charity is the most important part of divine worship."

Commenting on the last-mentioned maxim, a moralizing Agadaist quotes the following:—"There once lived a man in the East, who had three friends, two of whom he loved very dearly, but the third he neglected. Once he was summoned before the judge, where, though innocent, he was accused of a serious crime. 'Who amongst you,' he said to his friends, 'will go with me, and plead my cause?' The first friend excused himself immediately, and said that he could not go on account of other pressing engagements. The second went with him as far as the gate of the courthouse, and then he turned and went home. But the third, whom he had always ignored, went into the court, appealed to the judge on behalf of his friend, and obtained his pardon. Man has three friends in the world—wealth, relations, and good deeds. How do they behave in the hour of death, when God summons him before his tribunal? The wealth, which was his best friend in life, leaves him first,

and goes not with him. His relations and friends accompany him to the brink of the grave, and then return to their homes. His good works, however, which he used to neglect during his lifetime, accompany him as far as the throne of the All-merciful Father of men, where they speak for him, plead his cause, and obtain for him God's favour and grace.”

From all that has been said it will be seen what a wonderful work the Talmud is, and that many a legend, allegory, and maxim found in ancient and modern literature has flowed from the realms of its boundless fancy. But the student who wishes to get an insight into this treasure-house of Rabbinical literature, should not feel discouraged if his early researches seem to yield him nothing but dross. One of the Jewish sages once compared the Talmud to the sea. As the moods of the sea vary, so do those of the Talmud. Many a student has dived into this vast sea of learning and has brought up nothing but a handful of empty shells; but there are others, whose searchings have been wider and deeper, that have won for themselves pearls of the finest water, and of considerable value.

Footnotes:

[52-1] Cp. *Curiosities of Literature*, by I. D'Israeli: *sub* Solomon and Queen Sheba.

[54-1] Cp. *Megilla*, p. 29; *Succah*, p. 49; *Berachoth*, p. 15; also *Menachoth*, p. 110.

[55-1] Cp. *Bab. Kam.*, p. 60; *Aesop* (*Halm*, 56), and also *Lafontaine*, I, 17.

VII

THE HUMOUR OF SOME MEDIAEVAL AND MODERN HEBREW WRITERS

After the disintegration of the Jewish state in 70 A. D. a large number of refugees went to live in Spain, in that land of flowers and sunshine that was already known in Biblical times under the name of Tarshish. There they lived happily for several centuries, under the rule of various Gothic kings, until one of them, Reccared by name, who lived in 590, embraced Christianity. This was the commencement of a prolonged period of religious intolerance, which continued till the invasion and conquest of Spain by the Moors in 711 A. D., when religious independence was proclaimed. The privileges thus obtained were a direct incentive to the Jews to participate in the literary and scientific life that flourished round them under the immediate protection of the high-minded Caliphs. The finest productions of Jewish thought were brought to light through the cordial friendship which they entertained for their Mohammedan neighbours, and their friendly intercourse resulted in far-reaching advantages to both of them. The Arabs, by this means, became acquainted with the beautiful legends and maxims found in the Rabbinical writings, a good many of

which they subsequently used as material for enriching their own literature; while the Jews gained an insight into the beauties of the Arabic poetry, which they, in their turn, essayed to imitate in Hebrew. The Spanish era, which extended over more than six centuries, may be justly called the golden age in the post-Biblical history of the Jews. For, while nearly the whole of Europe was during that time plunged in the depths of ignorance and superstition, Spanish Judaism distinguished itself by its efforts within the field of original classical work. In fact, had it not been for the labours of the Spanish Jews in handing over to the West some of the literary treasures of the East, together with those of the Greeks and Romans, it is doubtful whether these valuable works would have been preserved to us.

The principal representatives of the Spanish Hebrew poets were—Solomon Ibn Gabirol, Abraham Ibn Ezra, Jehuda Halevi, and Jehuda Alcharizi. But as their lives and works have already been largely dealt with by several eminent scholars, it is only proposed to give here a few specimens of their humour.

Solomon Ibn Gabirol, who was born in Malaga in 1020, acquired the reputation of being a profound philosopher, but his special claim to recognition rests on his poetry. The leading characteristic of his verse is its sadness, although some of his poems were written in a vein of pure humour. His poem entitled *Kether Malchus* (the Royal Crown) is undoubtedly one of his best poetic compositions. It has for its theme the loftiest of subjects—God, the Universe, and Man. Humboldt considers it to be the noblest monument of Neo-Hebraic poetry, inasmuch as it contains vivid flashes which recall the poetical inspiration of the prophets.

Ibn Gabirol's humour is, however, best represented in his famous “Wine-song,” which he composed at a banquet given to him by a wealthy but niggardly man called Moses. Gabirol and the other guests had nothing offered to them to drink but water, and indignant thereat he wrote a few stanzas, the refrain of which was easily taken up and chanted by the whole company. The song runs in a free English translation somewhat as follows:—

I

Full sweet of a truth is the sparkle of wine,
But sorely we miss this blessing divine,
And how can we waken a song or a laugh
When we find that we simply have nothing to quaff
But water, mere water?

II

The banquet has little contentment to bring,
Bears little incitement to joke or to sing,
When the potions we hoped to our future would fall
Turn out in the end to be nothing at all,
But water, yes water.

III

Good Moses of old caused the waters to flee,
And led all his people dryshod o'er the sea;
But Moses, our host, at the precedent frowns,
And us, his poor guests, he unflinchingly drowns
In water, cold water.

IV

We sit round the table like cold-blooded frogs,
Who live out their lives in the watery bogs;
Well,—if we have fallen on watery days,
Let us, too, like them, croak a paean in praise
Of water, dear water.

V

Long, long may our host here with main and with might
By night and by day for his temperance fight,
And may he and his line find it writ in the law
That their business in life will be ever to draw
Water, pure water[60-1].

Gabirol died when he was only about thirty years of age. It is said that a Moor, who fancied himself to be a great poet, being jealous of Gabirol's success, which he was unable to equal, invited him to his house on a dark night and put him to death.

Abraham Ibn Ezra (1088–1167) achieved a certain amount of fame because of the genuine humour which characterized both his prose and verse. Like so many other men of genius, Ibn Ezra had all his life been in very straitened circumstances, but he never permitted his ill-fortune or disappointments to interfere with his natural cheerfulness. His is the courage which laughs at misfortunes. Thus he writes:—

In vain I labour, all my toil is vain,
For never can I boast of riches' gain;
The fates have frowned upon me, since my birth,
And failure is my portion here on earth.
Were I to take the notion in my head
To deal in shrouds, the cerements of the dead,
Then to establish how ill-starred am I,
No man who lives on earth would ever die;
Or should I try to make wax-candles pay,
The sun would shine by night as well as day[61-1].

When Ibn Ezra saw that it was impossible for him to earn a livelihood in his native country, he determined to try his fortune abroad. He thus visited Egypt at the time when the famous Maimonides was the physician at the Court of the Sultan Saladin. He made several vain attempts to see him, and in the end he composed the following epigram:—

I call on my Lord in the morning,
I am told that on horse-back he's sped;
I call once again in the evening,
And hear that his lordship's abed.
But whether his Highness is riding,
Or whether my Lord is asleep,
I'm perfectly sure, disappointment
Is the one single fruit I shall reap[61-2].

More fortunate as regards worldly possessions was Jehuda Halevi, the most celebrated Hebrew poet since the close of the Hebrew Canon. Born in Toledo, in Spain, about the end of the eleventh century, he received an excellent education, and his genius showed itself very early. Though following the medical profession with conspicuous success, he is chiefly known as the author of some philosophical works and of numerous charming poems in Hebrew. Some of them have been made

familiar to the literary world by Heinrich Heine, who speaks of their author as follows:—"When his soul was on the point of leaving heaven, she was kissed by the Creator. This kiss re-echoed afterwards in the poet's mind, and vibrated in all the poetical offsprings of his genius."

Particularly fine is the sacred song which Jehuda Halevi composed under the title of "An Ode to Zion," a condensed version of which in prose runs somewhat as follows:—

"Hast thou, O Zion, forsaken thy captive children? Hearest thou not the heartfelt greetings thy flock sendeth thee from the end of the earth? They look to thee with longing hearts, and from year to year they shed their tears on thy beautiful hills and mountains. Had I but wings I would fly to thy ruins, that my head might touch thy sacred ground, and my feet rest on the holy tombs of my fathers. In thy fragrant air I should breathe the breath of life, and inhale the perfume of thy dust, and eagerly I should drink the sweet waters of thy streams. O Zion, crown of beauty, towards thee are bent the hearts of thy lovers; they rejoice in thy joy, and weep with thee in the days of thine affliction. Towards thy gates they pour forth their fervent prayers, and long for the shade of thy palm-trees. Oh thrice happy mortal, who shall live to see the dawn of thy renewed glory, and be present when thou wilt shine again in splendour and beauty as in the days of thy youth."

Jehuda Halevi has also written a considerable number of secular poems and songs, having love, friendship, and the joys of life for their theme. Some of them are light and humorous, as the following lines will show:—

A FANCY[63-1].

I once nursed Love upon my knee,
I saw his likeness in my eye,
He kissed the lid so tenderly,
'Twas himself he kissed, the rogue, not me.

A Serenade.

Awake, O my dear one, from slumber arise,
The sight of thy face will give ease to my pain.
If thou dreamest of one that is kissing thine eyes,
Awake, and the dream I full soon shall explain[63-2].

On a Rain Cloud[63-3].

Without an eye it weeps, and we
Do laugh with joy its kiss to see,
But when its eyeless face is dry,
'Tis then our turn to weep and sigh.

The last of the famous quartette of Spanish Hebrew poets living in the Middle Ages, exclusive of the famous Moses Ibn Ezra, was Jehuda ben Shelomoh Alcharizi. He flourished in Spain in the first half of the thirteenth century, and was famous in his day not only as a linguist and philosopher, but even more so as a master of sparkling rhymed prose and verse. His reputation rests chiefly on his charming book entitled *Tachkemoni*, which consists of fifty chapters, having for their model the peculiar form of the so-called Makāma, which the author has adopted from his favourite Arabic poet, Al Hariri. Alcharizi and his *Tachkemoni* have in modern times been exhaustively criticized, so that there is very little left to be said about him. A specimen of his humour may, however, be aptly given here; it is an extract from the sixth Makāma of the *Tachkemoni*, which is called “The Unlucky Marriage.”

“Thus relate Hayman the Esrachite:—While living in Tarbez, a town pleasantly situated in the East, I sat one day in one of the public bazaars in company with some friends. I suddenly noticed among the crowd a haggard man whom I soon recognized as Heber the Kenite, an old and intimate friend of my youth. I quickly ran up to him, and amidst cordial greetings and embraces I questioned him about the state of his health, and about his intended plans for the future. At the same time I suggested to him that he should settle down in my neighbourhood, so that I could look after him, and even assist him in making a suitable marriage. When Heber heard my last remark, he sighed deeply, and said: ‘Dear friend, I entreat you with all my heart and soul not to induce me to get married to any woman, for my past experiences of wedlock have been so painful that I should not like to have them repeated.’ And on my pressing him to let me know what had happened, he told me the following tale:—

“‘Some time ago, it so happened that I was rather depressed in mind at my lonely bachelor state, and thus I resolved to enter upon matrimonial life, which I fancied would bring me happiness and contentment to my heart's desire. This pleasant thought at once took hold of me, and being unable to stay in the house, I rushed out into the street in search of some imaginary pretty girl, whom I intended to marry, and be happy with ever after. Presently an old and mysterious-looking woman came up, and greeting me humbly, addressed me as follows:—“May God be with you, young man, and grant you a long and prosperous life. From afar I have closely watched you, and admired your handsome face and erect figure. But you seem to be sad, and in want of a lively companion whom you would call your wife. Now I know a most beautiful

maiden in town, who would be a suitable match for you. She belongs to an excellent family, is highly accomplished, and, as for her looks, they are simply fascinating, and especially her eyes send forth a glorious light, like the lovely stars in a cloudless sky. Happy will the man be who will succeed in winning her love, but this can only be done if he assigns to her a dowry of two thousand ducats, payable to her father on the day of her marriage."'

"After a short pause my friend Heber went on to relate the story of his strange adventure, saying:—

"'The glorious description given to me by the old woman of my future bride caused my heart to beat loudly within me, and in answer I said that I would willingly agree to pay the stipulated sum of two thousand ducats, if I could only first obtain a glimpse of the lovely girl who was to be my wife. But the woman hurried away, having assured me that my desire would be fulfilled on the following day, when everything would also be ready for the celebration of the marriage ceremony. Thereupon I went home in a most agitated state and passed a sleepless night, looking forward to the happy morning when I expected to meet my charming bride. Next day, at an early hour, the old woman made her appearance, and told me, with a beaming face, that my future father-in-law would soon be here to give his consent to the wedding. And hardly had she said so, when the door of my room opened, and my future father-in-law came in, accompanied by several elders of the community, whom he addressed as follows:—"Brethren and friends, this young man here, who is well off and belongs to a good family, is desirous of marrying my daughter, and of assigning to her a dowry of two thousand ducats. Be ye now witnesses that I fully consent to this proposed marriage, and

that I readily accept the amount of the dowry which he has promised to pay for the privilege of enjoying the advantage of our near relationship."

"'I was about to remonstrate against these proceedings, when the marriage contract was quickly thrust into my hands which, after some hesitation, I duly signed and handed over to the notary who was present. Thereupon the preparations were soon made for the wedding ceremony and its subsequent feast, which were to take place in the evening of that very day. When it got dark the wedding guests arrived, and brought with them the fair maiden that was to become my lawful wife. Her face was covered with a thick veil, and thus standing close to me, the wedding ceremony was solemnized in the usual way. Then the feasting and merry-making began, and lasted for some time. But gradually the crowd of the wedding guests disappeared, and when I was left alone with my wife, I blushingly spoke to her for the first time the following tender words: "Oh, thou fairest of women, remove the veil from thy sweet face, that I may behold and admire the beautiful eyes which shine like the stars in a cloudless sky." She removed her veil; then lo, and behold, what an awakening! The female that stood there before me was not a fair maiden with softly shining eyes, but rather a monster in female guise, who had a fierce and threatening look about her, and filled me with feelings of horror and consternation. Presently recovering from my shock, I asked my wife whether she had any trinkets and jewels, costly robes, and precious shawls that had been given to her by her father as a dowry. In a husky voice she answered: "I have assuredly left a large bundle in my father's house, which is filled with veils and slippers, nightcaps and aprons, and several other things that my poor departed mother had bequeathed to

me as my marriage portion. All these things are there ready for my immediate use.”’

“After a few minutes' silence, my friend Heber concluded his story as follows: ‘On hearing the shrill voice of my wife, and the description she gave me of her wedding outfit, I got mad with rage. Like a flash I rushed out of the house, and ran all night on the road until I came to a thick forest, which afforded me shelter till the following morning, when I continued my flight from the unlovely society of my spouse. Since that fearful night I am wandering from place to place, and all that I ask of you, my friend, is, to let me go away in peace.’”

Light humour is also frequently met with in certain little Hebrew poems extant, which end in a “point,” especially of the satirical kind. They are somewhat similar in form and construction to the epigrams found in ancient and modern literatures, and are termed in modern Hebrew *Michtamim*. They form, according to Steinschneider[67-1], an important branch of Neo-Hebrew literature, and rival in excellence and copiousness any other class of epigrams in existence.

Hebrew epigrams have both mediaeval and modern Jewish writers for their authors, and the following rendering into English of some of them will give the reader an approximate idea of their contents.

I

The Grey Hair. By Jehudah Halevi[67-2].

One day I observed a grey hair in my head;
I plucked it right out, when it thus to me said:
“Thou mayest smile, if thou wilt, at thy treatment of me,
But a score of my friends soon will make mock of thee.”

II

The Song of the Pen. By Alcharizi[67-3].

My Muse, though airy, glides softly along,
Singing full oft a voiceless song;
My pen, though frail and slim of figure,
Has a serpent's tooth and a lion's vigour.

III

The Unhappy Lover. By the same author[67-4].

O lovely maiden, thou hast drawn my heart
To thee, as though by some magician's art,
Yet though my love is like a glowing flame,
Thy coldness brings me but to scorn and shame.
Mind, if I perish through thy chill disdain,
The folks will say, “Here's one by woman slain[67-5].”

IV

The Gift of the Benevolent. By the same author[68-1].

The gift a noble soul may bring,
Is like the dew that heaven sows;
It gently falls on hill and dale,
But how it cometh, no man knows.
The promise of a wicked heart
Is like unto the thunder peal,
Lit by the lightning's lurid flash
With ne'er a drop of rain to heal.

V

Happiness amidst Troubles. By Immanuel di Roma[68-2].

Whenever troublous hours I find
That rob me of my peace of mind,
To thee I haste, my little bride,
And all forget, when by thy side.
Let others laud their castled towers,
Their magic grots, their gladsome bowers:
For me that place hath chiefest charms,
That brings me, dearest, to thine arms.

VI

The Mouth and the Ears. By Palqera (1264)[68-3].

My friend, speak always once, but listen twice,
This, I would have you know, is sound advice;
For God hath given you and all your peers
A single mouth, friend, but a pair of ears.

VII

The Miser and the Fisherman. By Ben-Zeeb (1785)[68-4].

A miser once into a river fell—
Hard by a boatman heard his frenzied yell;
He swiftly ran and cried, “Give me your hand,
And I shall bring you safely back to land.”
“Give,” moaned the miser, “when I've ne'er before
Given, No—never!” He was seen no more.

VIII

The Miser and the Poor. By the same author[69-1].

A miser once dreamed he had given away
Some bread to a beggar he met on the way.
In terror he woke, and he solemnly swore
That the rest of his life he would slumber no more.

IX

The Gourmand and Late Riser[69-2].

My piteous plight oft makes me weep—
I cannot eat when I am asleep.

X

An Epitaph. By Ben-Jacob[69-3].

Here lies *Nachshon*, man of great renown,
Who won much glory in his native town:
'Twas hunger that killed him, and they let him die—
They give him statues now, and gaze, and sigh—
While *Nachshon* lived, he badly wanted *bread*,
Now he is gone, he gets a *stone* instead.

XI

Naomi's Troubles. By the same author[69-4].

The weather's been so bad that I
A place of worship could not try;
But now that my new frock I see,
I'll go whate'er the weather may be.

XII

The Miser and the Mouse. By the same author[69-5].

A miser saw a tiny mouse
Nimbly running through the house,
“Hence,” he cried, “voracious beast,
Here is nought whereon to feast.”
Thereupon the mouse did say:
“Be not angry, sir, I pray:
In me a lodger plain you see,
And I have brought my food with me.”

XIII

The Penitent. By the same author[70-1].

A rich, but not a holy man,
Grew old, and to repent began;
So, to perform a pious deed
That would procure him heaven's meed,
He thought, and thought, then bade at last
His *servants* one whole day to fast.

A frequent charge preferred against Jewish literature by modern critics[70-2] is, that it is deficient of humour. The instances given in this essay, as well as in some others forming part of the present volume may, perhaps, contribute in some small degree to dissipate this fallacy.

Footnotes:

[60-1] There is also in existence a witty epigram composed by the same author when a certain Jewish scribbler plagiarized one of his poems, and circulated it as his own. In this epigram Gabirol compares himself to an ever-flowing stream, which continues its course, and does not mind if some poor mortal draws from it now and again a bucketful of water. Cp. Dukes, *Shire Shelomo*, p. 50.

[61-1] Cp. Geiger's *Jüdische Dichtungen*, Leipzig, 1856, p. 21.

[61-2] Cp. *Orient*, 1843, Literaturblatt, p. 658.

[63-1] This translation is taken from Mr. Joseph Jacobs' article on “Jehuda Halevi,” published among the *Papers read before the Jews' College Literary Society*, 1886–7.

[63-2] Cp. the above article by Mr. Joseph Jacobs.

[63-3] This translation from the original Hebrew was done by Mr. Israel Abrahams.

[67-1] Cp. Steinschneider, *Jewish Literature*, p. 171.

[67-2] Cp. Dukes, *Lit.-Blatt des Orients*, p. 709.

[67-3] Cp. the ninth Makāma in his *Tachkemoni*.

[67-4] Cp. the twentieth Makāma in his *Tachkemoni*.

[67-5] The latter phrase occurs in the Book of Judges ix. 54, and is here wittily applied by Alcharizi to his own purpose.

[68-1] Cp. *Catalogue of the Hebrew MSS. of the Montefiore College Library*, compiled by Dr. H. Hirschfeld.

[68-2] Cp. third Machberoth.

[68-3] Steinschneider, *Manna*, p. 84.

[68-4] Cp. His תלמוד לשון עברי, p. 190.

[69-1] Cp. Ben-Jacob, *Epigrammata ac Poemata varia*, p. 104.

[69-2] Cp. Schlesinger, *Meassef*, 1805.

[69-3] Cp. Ben-Jacob, *Epigrammata*, &c., p. 19.

[69-4] Ibid. p. 7.

[69-5] Ibid. p. 101.

[70-1] Cp. Ben-Jacob, *Epigrammata*, &c., p. 38.

[70-2] Cp. Froude, *Carlyle's Life in London*, II, p. 480; and also Renan, *Histoire des langues sémitiques* (I, 9, 11), wherein the following curious remark occurs: “Les peuples sémitiques manquent presque complètement de curiosité et de la faculté de rire.”

VIII

YEDAYA BEDARESI

A FOURTEENTH-CENTURY HEBREW POET AND PHILOSOPHER

THE year 1306 was a fateful one in the annals of the Jews in France. At the beginning of that year Philip IV, surnamed *Le Bel*, issued an edict of expulsion against all the Jews living in his dominions. The edict practically confiscated all their property, and its terms were so rigorous that any Israelite found on French soil after a certain time became liable to the penalty of death.

Philip's mandate was promptly executed by the royal officers, and some 100,000 Jews were mercilessly driven out from their native land—a land in which their forefathers had resided long before Christianity had become the dominant religion there. In consequence of this expulsion, several famous Jewish seats of learning, such as those at Béziers, Lunel, and Montpellier ceased to exist. Among the refugees was Yedaya En-Bonet ben Abraham Bedaresi, the subject of the present essay. Yedaya, known also under the poetical pseudonym of Penini, has left no documentary evidence concerning the incidents of his life. The best biography,

however, of a man like Yedaya is that which is found in his own works. There is some diversity of opinion among biographers as to the exact date of Yedaya's birth, for while Bartolocci, Wolf, and de Rossi say that he was born in 1298, Steinschneider and Neubauer put the year of his birth between 1255 and 1260, without, however, attempting to fix the year of his death. Graetz, again, maintains that Yedaya was born in 1280, and died about 1340, and that his birthplace was Béziers and not Barcelona, as some biographers believe[72-1]. The only indisputable fact in connexion with Yedaya's early education is that he entered the school of Rabbi Meshullam of Péziers when he was fifteen years old. From Yedaya's numerous writings it is obvious that he was a philosopher and moralist, a Talmudical scholar and an expert in medicine, and above all a clever writer of Hebrew prose and poetry. It is chiefly to his ability in this direction that he owes his prominent position among the Jewish savants of the Middle Ages, and for that reason special attention will have to be paid in the course of this essay to his chief work entitled *Bechînath Olam*, "The Examination of the World." It is true that Graetz finds fault with this poetical composition, which he condemns for its empty grandiloquence and artificiality. But, on the other hand, Munk, in his *Mélanges*, p. 495, and Buxtorf, in his *Bibliotheca Rabbinica*, speak very highly of Yedaya's poetical talent; and the latter calls "The Examination of the World" an excellent literary production. And, indeed, the same opinion will be shared by all those readers of the *Bechînath Olam* who, like Munk and Buxtorf, are not prejudiced against it, on the ground that its style is not so pure, elegant, and clear as that met with in some of the writings of the most prominent representatives of the so-called Spanish and Italian schools of Hebrew poetry. It has, in fact, always enjoyed an extraordinary popularity

among the Jews; and it is remarkable to notice the comparatively large number of MSS. of the original, and of the commentaries on it, which are to be found in various libraries. It may further be mentioned that it has passed through more than forty-four editions, issued both with and without commentaries, at various times and in various countries, and has been frequently translated into German and into Jargon, while there were Latin, English, French, Italian, and Polish versions as well. It is interesting to note that the eleventh and twelfth chapters of one of the German editions, issued at Prague in 1795 by Moses Kunitz, were rendered into German by Moses Mendelssohn; and that the French translation, published in Paris in 1629 by Ph. d'Aquin, was dedicated to Cardinal Richelieu. The English version, which appeared in London in 1806, was inscribed by its author, Rabbi Tobias Goodman, to "The Most Reverend Solomon Hirschell, Presiding Rabbi of the German Jews"; and the Latin one, which has for its title *Examen mundi, R. J. Bedrishitae, latina interpretatione*, was done by Uchtman, and issued at Leyden in 1650.

Curiously enough the editor of the first of the forty-four known editions of the *Bechînath Olam*, printed, as some biographers think, at Mantua between 1476 and 1480, was a lady called Estellina, the wife of a certain Abraham Conath. She was assisted in her task by Jacob Levy of Tarascon. The last known edition of the book, or rather the greater part of it, was published only a few years ago by Dr. Harkavy, of St. Petersburg, from a MS. in his possession. Dr. Harkavy is also the owner of a hitherto unpublished commentary thereon, composed in 1508 by Isaac Mançon of Reggio. In some prefatory lines the author states that he was induced to write

the commentary, because he had noticed that many young men in his country were in the habit of learning the original by heart, without knowing anything about its contents.

As regards the style and composition of the *Bechînath Olam*, which seems to have been composed by Yedaya after the expulsion of the Jews from France in 1306, it must be admitted at the outset that the general reader will not find them quite in harmony with modern taste. De Lacy, in his *Magasin encyclopédique*, III, p. 321, censures the author for his use of certain Biblical phrases in a sense different to that which they bear in the Bible. But he readily admits that the Church fathers during the Middle Ages, and certain Arabic writers, at all times, have taken the same liberties with the Scriptures and the Koran respectively. The greatest of the Spanish-Jewish poets, not excluding Ibn Gabirol himself, allowed themselves the same licence, while Charizi often made his happiest points by the witty misuse of a familiar Biblical phrase. Despite this defect, it cannot be denied that the *Bechînath Olam* possesses a peculiar charm of its own.

Those who are acquainted with the Hebrew Bible, the Midrash, and the Talmud, cannot fail to appreciate the art with which Biblical phrases, used with an occasional striking play on words, are worked into a mosaic. Take, for instance, the following sentences which occur in chapter IX:—

אפס כי לא תהיה תפארת הממנות נמשכת—עוד מעט ויצאה רוח אלהים לבזור רכושיך—ויהיו כלא היו חמשים אלפי זהב אשר בקנינם מכרת נפשך• תתהפך הזמן כמעט רגע לקחת חן וכבוד מעל ראשך—תרד אש האלהים מן השמים ותאכל אותך ואת חמשיך•

“By no means let thy pride in thy wealth endure, for at any moment a blast may come from God, which will scatter and disperse all thy treasures. Then will vanish as naught the fifty thousand ducats for which thou hast bartered thy soul, and thy former honour and glory will likewise depart at thy sudden reverse of fortune. Or a fire may come down from heaven, and devour thee along with thy five myriads of ducats.”

Here it will at once be seen how cleverly the author uses for his own purpose certain phrases found in the second chapter of 2 Kings in connexion with the prophet Elijah, and how ingenious the play on the word חמשיך is.

As this peculiar mode of composition is a marked feature of the *Bechînath Olam*, a few more examples of a somewhat different kind may be given here for the sake of illustration. In chapter IV we read as follows[74-1]:—

Thy belongings in sooth are but passion and lust,
Thy strength sinks asunder like light crumbling dust;
Thy treasures, like thorns, are surrounded with stings,
Thy most precious possessions are but worthless things,
Thy pride is enkindled like flames in the night,
Thy riches, like insects, soon hasten to flight.

And again, in chapter XI, the author gives the following description of the four seasons of the year:—

The lovely Spring gives me no peace,
For constant cares disturb my ease.
The Summer, too, is full of pain,
Its glow and heat are but my bane.
The Autumn has no charms for me,
From cold and ills I ne'er am free.
When Winter brings its snow and frost,
Oh, then I am undone and lost[75-1].

Another conspicuous feature of the *Bechînath Olam* is its frequent use of poetical metaphors, which the author employs with great aptitude and force. The eighth chapter of the book in question, beginning with the words: התבל ים זועף may fitly serve as an illustration of this, and the following free English translation of it will afford the reader at the same time an insight into the general contents of the whole poem. It runs as follows:—

"The world is as a boisterous sea of immense depth and width, and time forms a fragile bridge built over it. The upper end thereof is fastened to the ground by means of weak ropes, and its lower end leads to a place which is shone upon by the rays of the divine light, emanating from God's majesty. The breadth of the bridge is but one short span, and has no balustrade work to save one from falling over it. Over this narrow path, thou, O son of man, art compelled to go, and notwithstanding all thy might and glory, thou canst not turn either to the right or to the left. Now, threatened as thou art on both sides with death and destruction, how canst thou maintain thy courage, and how can thy hands remain firm? In vain dost thou pride thyself on the possession of vast treasures obtained by thee through violence and wickedness; for of what avail are they to thee when the sea rises, and rages, and foams, thus threatening to wreck the little hut (i.e. the body) wherein thou livest? Canst thou boast thou canst calm and subdue the powerful waves, or wilt thou try to fight against them? Drunk with the wine of thy vanity, thou art pushed hither and thither, until thou sinkest into the mighty abyss; and tossed about from deep to deep, thou wilt at last be merged in the foaming waves, and none will bring thee to life again."

The ninth and eleventh chapters of the *Bechînath Olam*

contain some passages which refer to the author's own sufferings, at the time of the expulsion of the Jews from France, and to the cowardice then displayed by some wealthy French Jews, who, in order to be permitted to remain in the country, and to retain their riches, had embraced Christianity. How shamefully these renegades behaved, in the face of the great calamity which had befallen their co-religionists, may be seen from the following passages, which occur in chapter XI:—

> What care they for those gloomy envoys of fate?
> They dance all the night, and they rise very late.
> Feasting they love, and high play and flirtation,
> And laughter, and pleasure, and wild dissipation.
> They look upon evil, of whatever sort,
> As a mirth-causing jest, and an innocent sport[76-1].

The chief fault of the book is the frequent use of Chaldaic and Aramaic words and phrases, a proper translation of which is almost impossible, but these are more than counterbalanced by its many merits.

Another small treatise, composed by the same author when he was eighteen years old, is one that bears the title צלצול כנפים, and has for its subject “The Defence of Women.” Till about fifteen years ago there was one MS. in existence—that in the Bodleian Library; but Dr. Neubauer published it for the first time in the *Jubelschrift* (Berlin, 1888), issued by some friends of Zunz on the occasion of his celebrating his ninetieth birthday, under the title of אוהב נשים, “The Women's Friend” This title is more appropriate than the one it originally bore, for the simple reason that the treatise in question was evidently written by Yedaya in opposition to another, composed in 1208,

by the physician Judah ben Sabbatai, under the title of שונא נשים, "The Woman-hater." This treatise, which Yedaya dedicated to two of his friends, viz. to Meïr and Judah, the sons of Don Solomon Del Infanz, is written in rhymed prose, intermixed with a few short verses. Its style is rather heavy, and all that can be gathered from its subject-matter is this, that a certain king, called Cushan Rishataïm, a great woman-hater, once waged war against an army composed of the friends of womankind, and led by a general named Seria. The latter ultimately defeated the king and his hostile troops, and, out of gratitude for his great victory, he was himself proclaimed king by his own followers. Under his reign a new and happy era opened for the women, who are then wooed and married, and loved more dearly than before; and wedded life is everywhere declared to be the most desirable state of existence.

The אוהב נשים closes with the description of the appearance of Judah ben Sabbatai's ghost on earth, and of how it agrees with all Yedaya's statements made there, with the exception of one. Every man, the ghost declares, ought certainly to marry once; but it would be the height of folly on his part if he were to enter again upon the matrimonial state, after his first marriage had turned out a failure.

In passing, it may be mentioned that the same controversy about the merits and demerits of the married state was still carried on in the sixteenth century among some learned Jewish writers in Italy. Among these are most conspicious: Jacob of Fano, who in his poem שלטי הגבורים, "The Shield of the Mighty," makes a strong attack on women, and Judah Sommo, of Portaleone, who in his treatise מגן נשים, "The Women's Protector," which exists in a MS. in the Bodleian Library,

presents himself as a champion of women. To these writers may be added Messer Leon (flourished at Mantua, at the end of the fifteenth century) who, in a commentary on the thirty-first chapter of Proverbs, eulogizes the female sex in general, and a few specially named women in particular. Among them he mentions Laura, the lady-love of the poet Petrarch; and it is interesting to notice the trouble which the author takes to prove that Laura was by no means a myth, as some writers on Petrarch consider her, but that she really existed in person, and was remarkable for her exquisite beauty and grace.

Resuming now our review of Yedaya's literary compositions, especially of those he wrote when he was still very young, we have to refer to a Hebrew hymn of his, well known under the title of בקשת הממין, the formal characteristic of which is this, that each word of it begins with the letter *Mem* (מ). Bartolocci, in his *Bibliotheca Rabbinica*, III, p. 7, gives the same hymn the title of תהלה לשם, "Praise of God." This seems to have been Yedaya's first literary attempt, it being generally assumed that it was composed by him at the age of fourteen. His father, Abraham, himself a writer of Hebrew verses of inferior quality, was so delighted with his son's hymn that he sang its praises in a short Hebrew quatrain. Although, from a literary point of view, the *Supplication of the Memmin* has little to recommend it, it has passed through fifteen editions, and has frequently been translated into German, and once also into Latin by Hil. Prache, who published his version at Leipzig, in 1662.

Another short composition belonging to an early period of Yedaya's life is his ספר הפרדס, "The Book on Paradise," which was composed by him at the age of seventeen, and

appeared for the first time in print at Constantinople, in 1517. It is divided into four chapters, each of which has a different heading, while the fourth chapter is again subdivided into four sections. The principal subjects discussed in these chapters are (*a*) The worship of God; (*b*) Friendship and Enmity; (*c*) The Lack of Stability in the World; and (*d*) The Desirability of Studying Science after the usual Devotions. After having reached manhood, he wrote several other treatises of a similar description, each of which will be briefly noticed here.

(1) לשון הזהב, "The Golden Tongue." This forms part of a commentary (existing as a MS. on the *Agada* and the *Midrashim*), and was first printed at Venice in 1599.

(2) A MS. bearing the inscription פירוש מסכת אבות ופירוש אגדות בתלמוד, Commentary on the Ethics of the Fathers, and on the Agadoth in the Talmud.

(3) אגרת התנצלות, An apologetical Letter. This well-known and often-quoted letter was addressed by Yedaya to Rabbi Solomon ben Adereth (רשב״א), on the occasion of his publicly censuring the Jewish communities of the Provence for their occupying themselves with scientific studies. There a passage occurs which throws some light on the author's own ideas thereon. It was as follows:—

"We cannot give up science; it is as the breath of our nostrils. Even if Joshua were to appear and forbid it we would not obey him; for we have a warranty which outweighs them all, viz. Maimuni, who recommended it, and impressed it upon us. We are ready to set our goods, our children, and our lives at stake for it[79-1]."

(4) A Liturgical Poem. It is composed of a number of words,

each of which begins with the letter *Aleph* (א), and refers, according to Graetz[79-2], to the sufferings endured by the French Jews in 1306.

(5) A Treatise on Medicine, based on a similar work composed by the Jewish philosopher Ibn Sina.

(6) כתב הדת, “A Treatise on Intellect.” This, too, is based on another book treating of a kindred subject, and bearing the inscription ספר השכל והמושכלות, the author of which is Al-Fabri. A Latin translation of the latter exists under the title of *De Intellectu et Intellecto*, Venice, 1595.

(7) הדעת בשכל החמרי, “Opinions on the Material Intellect.”

(8) המאמר בהפכי המהלך is a philosophical treatise on the movements of bodies, and has been quoted by Ibn Habib under the title of כתב הפכי האנח.

(9) כתב ההתעצמות, “Treatise on Consolation.”

(10) Is a MS. without any title; but judging from its contents, it seems to correspond with the ספר הצורות המיניות once quoted by the same Ibn Habib.

(11) מדבר קדמות, “The Desert of Kedemoth.” This is a commentary on the twenty-five propositions placed by Maimonides at the beginning of the tenth chapter of his מורה נבוכים.

(12) A Hebrew poem, having for its subject the thirteen articles as arranged by Maimonides.

The authorship of the following four compositions is also

attributed to Yedaya:—

(1) A Divan, compiled by a member of the family of Bedaresi, that member being, according to Luzzatto, no other than our Yedaya.

(2) מעדני מלך, “The Pleasure of a King,” is a short treatise on the game of Chess, and has several times appeared in print.

(3) Wolf, in the *Bibliotheca Rabbinica*, I, p. 403, attributes to Yedaya the authorship of a commentary on another commentary, written by Abraham Ibn Ezra on the Book of Genesis, the former of which exists as a MS. in the Paris National Library.

(4) אגרת התשובה, “A Letter of Response,” This letter, which was published by Dr. Berliner in 1888, and copies of which are found in various MSS., is attributed to Yedaya by Bartolocci and de Rossi.

Enough has been said to show the industry, which was Yedaya's most striking characteristic. At a time when a man's mind is perturbed by external influences, involving not only his abilities but even his personal safety, it would seem that intellectual work would be impossible: it was, however, at such a time that the bulk of Yedaya's work was undertaken and executed.

Footnotes:

[72-1] Cp. Graetz's *Gesch. d. J.*, VII, p. 277.

[74-1] החוקים מחשכים—וכלי הנשקים שקים,
הפנינים צנינים—והשושנים קמשונים,
הרהבים להבים—והזהובים זבובים•

[75-1]

1 האביב לא יאנה השקימני—כאובות במכאובות חדשים יבקעני—
2 הקיץ יקוץ בחיי במצוקות יציקני—יקיצני משנת מנוחה מקטב מרירי—
3 החורף יחרפני למות יחרף לבבי מהיות שלו בפגעי—
4 הסתיו יסית צנה וסגריר לבלעני חנם•

[76-1] לא האמינו לשמועתו—אורבי מחולות—אוהבי כלילות—חושקי יעלות—נושקו אילות—שוחרי עדניו—סוחרי רנניו—חשבוהו כמהתל—ויהי כמצחק בעיני חתניו•

[79-1] Cp. Miss Löwy's translation of Graetz's *Gesch. d. J.*, IV, p. 42.

[79-2] *Gesch. d. J.*, VII, p. 269.

IX

IMMANUEL DI ROMA

A THIRTEENTH-CENTURY HEBREW HUMORIST AND A FRIEND OF DANTE

In the present essay a short sketch will be given of the life and works of Immanuel di Roma, the Heine of the Middle Ages, as Graetz terms him, commonly called Immanuel ben Shelomoh; and reference will also be made to his literary and friendly relationship to the poet Dante Alighieri. It ought, however, to be stated at the outset that, although Immanuel was the composer of several Italian sonnets, he owes his fame mainly to his Hebrew production entitled *Machberoth*. Apart from its value as an entertaining book it is at the same time the chief source from which information about its author's life is obtainable. But as such the volume is not always entirely reliable, as certain episodes mentioned therein have hitherto not been fully authenticated. Modern writers, however, among whom Graetz and Güdemann may be especially mentioned, have ably utilized the old and new material available, and, thanks to their fruitful labours, a more complete and trustworthy sketch of Immanuel's life and works can now be given. According to Graetz's ingenious combination of dates

and circumstances (cp. *Die Geschichte der Juden*, VII, note 3), it would seem that Immanuel was born in the year 1265, which is also the year of Dante's birth. Immanuel's parents, Solomon and Justa by name, belonged to a renowned Jewish family called Ziphroni, and occupied an honourable position in the Jewish community of Rome. They devoted great care to their son's early education. One of his earliest teachers was Benjamin ben Yechiel, a clever physician and a great Hebrew scholar, who made him acquainted with the works of Maimonides. Later on he was taught by a relative, Leone Romano by name, who held the post of Hebrew instructor to Robert, king of Naples, and was also the translator of the works of Albertus Magnus and of Thomas Aquinas. He had another master in Judah Siciliano, author of several pretty Italian poems, who cultivated in his pupil's mind a taste for poetry and literature. Through these teachers, who mingled with the best society of Rome, Immanuel often came in contact with the members of a secret literary and political society called “Young Italy.” It was composed of young men of education and talent, and its object was to propagate liberal ideas among their less enlightened countrymen, and to induce them to shake off the yoke of the dominant Church, which at that time pressed heavily upon them. Dante, during his brief stay in Rome, used to attend the meetings of this society; and there young Immanuel seems to have first entered on a friendly relationship with the poet, whose genius and personality could not fail to impress themselves on him. In fact, he has so many points in common with Dante, that it may well be believed that he took him for his model. There is also a curious similarity in the history of their life and death. Both of them, who had in the prime of life occupied prominent positions, were obliged in their declining years to wander forth into exile, and both found

their last resting-place far from their native city. From the literary point of view they, too, resembled one another; but of this more will be said later on. Reference will also be made to some recent publications which seem to show that Dante, for his part, also entertained friendly feelings for Immanuel. The following two lines, which occur in *Paradiso* (Canto v. 80 and 81), show that their author may have been favourably disposed to the race from which Immanuel sprang. They run thus:—

> Uomini siate, e non pecore matte,
> Si ch'il Giudeo di voi tra voi non rida.

> Act ye as men, and not as stupid cattle,
> Lest the Jew in your midst should scorn you.

It is not known whether Immanuel underwent any special training to obtain his medical qualifications. There is, however, no doubt that he practised successfully for a number of years in his native town. On reaching manhood he married the daughter of Rabbi Samuel, president of the Jewish community of Rome, whose functions seem to have been secular as well as religious.

His marriage was a happy one. Immanuel considered his wife a model of womanhood, and never wearied of singing her praises. With the exception of the untimely death of their only son Moses, which naturally caused them intense sorrow, nothing occurred during the greater part of their married life that could have seriously interfered with their happiness. In his leisure hours Immanuel continued to enlarge his acquaintance with books treating of grammar, exegesis, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, philosophy, and cabbala, and acquired at the same time some knowledge of Latin, Greek, and Arabic. He occasionally wrote essays on some of these subjects, but his favourite occupation was the composition of verses, either

in his native tongue or in Hebrew. The rhymed prose (מליצה), which he wrote in Hebrew, was his best work. In the year 1315, when Immanuel was just fifty years old, his father-in-law was murdered by robbers whilst travelling in the country, and Immanuel succeeded him. In his new position, as the spiritual head of the Jewish community of Rome, he enjoyed a continuance of his popularity, his kindness of heart and his great literary attainments procuring for him a large following of admirers and friends. His fame as a scholar and a poet spread even as far as France and Spain.

In the midst of his prosperity, however, a misfortune occurred, which changed the whole tenor of his life. According to Immanuel's own account, he had stood security for some friends of his, and, as the latter failed to redeem their obligations, he himself was obliged to satisfy the demands of the creditors. Being thus reduced to poverty he emigrated, and turned his back for ever on the scene of his unmerited misfortune. This explanation, however plausible it may appear, does not throw any light on the mystery of Immanuel's forced resignation of the post he held in the community. But it would seem that there were among his flock several persons who hated him as the author of erotic poems, and of other compositions in which certain religious rites were lightly spoken of. While he had ample means at his disposal, and was independent of the community, they dared not attack him publicly. However, they took advantage of his monetary embarrassment to denounce him as an unbeliever and heretic, who in their opinion was unfit to occupy his position; and they ultimately succeeded in effecting his removal.

But, whatever the explanation, the fact remains that Immanuel left Rome as a prematurely aged and broken-hearted

man, and that he wandered about for some time with his wife until he arrived at Fermo, a town situated in the district of Ancona. There a wealthy and liberal-minded man, Benjamin by name, and at the same time a great admirer of Immanuel's poems, took him and his wife into his house, and provided for their wants. But this happiness did not last long, for in the year 1321 he lost both his wife and his friend Dante. Bosone da Gobbio, a renowned lawyer in his time, and a friend of both Dante and Immanuel, on hearing of this sent him the following lines as a token of his sorrow and sympathy:—

BOSONE TO THE JEW MANUELLO AFTER DANTE'S DEATH.

Two lamps of life have waxèd dim and died,
Two souls for virtue loved and blessèd grace;
Thou, friend, may'st smile no more with happy face,
But weep for him, sweet song's and learning's pride.
And weep for her, thy spouse, torn from thy side
In all her charm of native loveliness,
Whom thou hast sung so oft ere thy distress,
That is mine, too, and with me doth abide.

Not I alone bewail thy hapless lot,
But others too: do thou bewail thine own,
And then the grief that all of us have got,
In this the direst year we e'er have known;
Yet Dante's soul, that erst to us was given,
Now ta'en from earth, doth glisten bright in heaven.

MANUELLO'S ANSWER.

The floods of tears well from my deepest heart;
Can they e'er quench my grief's eternal flame?
I weep no more, my woe is still the same;
I hope instead that death may soothe the smart.
Then Jew and Gentile weep, and sit with me
On mourning-stool: for sin hath followed woe;
I prayed to God to spare this misery,
And now no more my trust in Him I show.

When Immanuel's time of mourning was over his host suggested that he should devote himself to a collection and revision of his compositions. Immanuel gladly accepted this proposal, partly because he wished to perpetuate the memory of his beloved wife and that of his friend Dante, and partly because he thought that this would be the best occupation for his declining years.

The work occupied him till his death in 1330, when he was sixty-five years old. Bosone received some lines referring to Immanuel's death, composed by Cino da Pistoza, a noted lawyer and poet of some renown in his time. These lines are interesting in so far as they contain an unmistakable reference to the friendly relationship that existed between Dante and Immanuel. They run as follows:—

CINO TO BOSONE AFTER THE DEATH OF DANTE AND THE JEW MANOEL.

Bosone, your friend Manoello is dead,
Still keeping fast to his false, idle creed;
Methinks to the regions of hell he is sped,
Where no unbeliever from anguish is freed.
Yet not 'mongst the vulgar his soul doth abide,
But Dante and he still remain side by side.

BOSONE'S ANSWER.

Manoel, whom thou hast thus consigned
Unto the dark domains of endless night,
Has not within those regions been confined,
Where Lucifer holds sway with awful might.
Lucifer, who once 'gainst Heaven's lord,
In lust for empire drew rebellion's sword.

And though he in that loathly prison pine,
Where thou hast brought him though he willed it not;
What fool will trust this idle tale of thine,
That he and Dante should be thus forgot;
Well, let them for a time endure their fate,
God's mercy will be theirs or soon or late![87-1]

As already stated Immanuel wrote various books on Hebrew grammar, exegesis, and cabbala, and composed, in addition to several Biblical commentaries, a collection of Hebrew novelettes and poems. But while his *Eben Bochan* and *Migdal Oz*—which exist only in MSS. and treat of Hebrew grammar and cabbala respectively—would, at the present day, hardly be considered to have any literary or scientific value, his commentaries on the Bible, and more especially those on the Book of Proverbs (published at Naples in 1487), deserve some attention. The latter is particularly interesting, inasmuch as it throws some light on the author's views on the study of secular subjects by his Italian co-religionists, and gives us some idea of the general feeling and spirit of the time. The following example will give an idea of Immanuel's method when

commenting on a passage that seemed to him to offer an opportunity for adding a thought of his own. Thus, in the commentary on the Book of Proverbs (xxvi. 13), Immanuel explains the passage, “The slothful (man) saith, There is a lion in the way; a lion in the street,” as follows:—

“This passage refers specially to those persons who are too slow in the acquirement of knowledge and wisdom, which they consider as dangerous as it is to meet a fierce lion in the street. They say, How should we apply ourselves to the study of general science, since among its most prominent devotees there are so many sceptics and unbelievers; or how should we be expected to study logic, as it is a subject that infatuates the student and leads him to erroneous conclusions? As to philosophy (they say) we must shun it altogether, since it owes its existence to Aristotle, who, like the rest of the ancient philosophers, did not believe in the divine origin of our law. But these fools (Immanuel continues) forget that we must accept truth from whatever quarter it may come. Moreover, every kind of science which these sluggards describe as ‘foreign’ (חיצונים), belonged originally to the Jewish people, and was first taught in our sacred tongue. Unfortunately those very books were lost during our perilous wanderings through the world. Of King Solomon's numerous poetical and scientific works we only possess three. It is more than a mere legend that kings and learned men of different countries came to him with the express purpose of being instructed by him in those subjects, and that they subsequently committed to writing the information they received. These teachings are still in the possession of other nations, while we, ourselves, lost them during our wanderings; and it is even a wonder that the twenty-four volumes of Holy Writ have been preserved by us up to the

present day. It is, therefore, most probable that natural science, metaphysics, and philosophy were originally taught by Solomon, although their origin is nowadays ascribed to Plato and Aristotle. With regard to the excellent art of music it is well known that it originated in our religion, and has found keen votaries in men like Asaph and Samuel; but in our own time it is exclusively practised by Christians, while the Jews have very little knowledge of it. As for logic, it certainly does *not* lead the student astray, but, on the contrary, it cultivates his mind and prepares him for the study of other sciences. Therefore, whoever calls logic a 'foreign' science, or speaks contemptuously of Plato and Aristotle, because they did not belong to the Jewish nation, is like the sluggard who exclaims: 'A lion is in the way.'"

This extract, being a specimen of the contents of Immanuel's commentaries on various parts of the Bible, shows that there is nothing particularly noteworthy in the author's exposition of the text, but that the interest lies rather in his interpolations.

His reputation chiefly depends on his collection of Hebrew novelettes and poems, called *Machberoth*. This volume stands unrivalled in the whole domain of Hebrew literature. It consists of twenty-eight chapters, in almost all of which the so-called Makāmāt form is used, that is to say, they are written in rhymed prose, interspersed with poems. Some of these are composed in the melodious form introduced by the Italian poet Fra Guittone di Arezzo (about 1259), the principal characteristics of which are *rima chiusa* and *rima alternata*. But, although his poetry is full of charm for style and expression, it must yield to his rhymed prose. The principal feature of this kind of composition lies in the application of short Biblical phrases to profane objects or actions. It was first

used by certain Arabian poets, who treated the text of the Koran after this fashion, and who subsequently found several imitators among Hebrew writers, especially among those belonging to the so-called Spanish school. In fact, according to Rabbi Moses ben Chabib (about 1486), the writing of rhymed prose in Hebrew was in his time a universally approved rhetorical device. But there was a vast difference between Immanuel and the other writers of this school. While the latter, as a rule, endeavoured to preserve a spirit of reverence towards the Hebrew text, Immanuel placed no restraint upon his pen. Not seldom he sacrificed good taste and decency to his point, and many a simple Biblical phrase he turns into a vehicle for a pun or satirical remark of a coarse description. His favourite subjects were Love, Wine, and Song, and he was not less fond of occasionally making mock of sacred things. Even the sight of an old churchyard with a heap of ruined tombstones could not check his buffoonery. It seems to have become a second nature with him, so much so that having once begun to scoff at the follies of other people, he does not hesitate to make merry over his own vanities, and it is in this sense that the strange expressions of self-approbation, which are found here and there in the *Machberoth*, must be construed. That Immanuel's self-praise should be regarded as serious seems scarcely compatible with the frequent eulogies of others with which his book abounds.

It would be at once vain and superfluous to offer an apology for the frivolities and the uncouth wit which characterize the *Machberoth*. Immanuel, although a Hebrew by descent and training, and eminently proficient in Jewish lore and tradition, was at the same time thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the Italian nation and literature. The character of his writings will

be recognized from the fact that the principal representative of the Italian novelists belonging to the period was Boccaccio, the author of that collection of humorous but licentious tales, the *Decameron*. It seems reasonable to suppose that Immanuel, in adopting the style of the Italian novelists of his time, thought he would attract and amuse Jewish readers by reproducing in a Hebrew garb popular ideas and expressions. In this he attained considerable success, though he was placed at a disadvantage as compared with his Italian rivals. For, while they had the whole world for their field, Immanuel had to content himself with using as the objects of his satire persons and things known only to the small circle of his own acquaintances. Thus he mostly ridiculed the vanities and follies of his Jewish neighbours, the petty quarrels of husband and wife, or the jealousies of the would-be literary man. But, notwithstanding their defects, the *Machberoth* possess a lasting charm. They have always found a great number of readers, although they were condemned by Moses di Rieti (died about 1500), the author of a short history of Hebrew literature called *Mikdash Me'at* (מקדש מעט), and their perusal was interdicted a century later by Joseph Caro, the compiler of the well-known code, the *Shulchan Aruch*. The best proof of their popularity lies in the fact that they have gone through several editions, the first being produced at Brescia, in the year 1492, and the last at Lemberg in 1870. In recent years parts of them have been translated into German by Steinschneider, Stern, Geiger, Fürst, and others.

As regards the title of the book and the arrangement of its parts, the following remarks are offered. The word *Machberoth*, or, as some people would read it *Mechabroth*, is the plural of the singular noun *machbereth*, formed of the radix

חַבֵּר, which originally means “to join” or “to put together,” so that in the present sense the noun signifies “collections.” Immanuel purposely used the plural form as the title of his book to prevent it from being confounded with a similar work composed by Alcharizi, which is entitled *Machbereth Ithiel*, where the same term appears in the singular. Immanuel's work consists, as already stated above, of twenty-eight chapters, which seem to have been written at different times, and to have then been loosely strung together. Only the second, third, and the last three chapters of the book bear a superscription to indicate the subject of which they treat. Several of these chapters were composed by the author when he was still comparatively young, and are distinguished by the same genial Epicureanism which Horace displayed when he sang:—

> Quid sit futurum cras fuge quaerere, et
> Quem Fors dierum cunque dabit lucro
> Appone.

On the other hand, there is no doubt that the greater part of the *Machberoth* must belong to a later period in the author's life, when he had experienced the caprices of fortune, and his troubles had disturbed the serenity of his mind. But even then his laughter does not entirely desert him. It ought, moreover, to be remembered that injustice would be done to Immanuel, if his private life and character were to be judged in the light of his writings. In these he certainly appears as an absolute libertine, and as a scoffer at religion and religious practices; but in real life he was very different. One would rather think that the *Machberoth* were intended to serve as a mirror, in which the culpable habits of a certain class of his Jewish contemporaries were reflected. And it is for this reason that they have more than a mere literary value. They furnish the

reader with a description of the moral and social condition of an important section of the Italian Jews during part of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and have been referred to by our modern Jewish historians in this connexion[92-1]. Thus, for instance, we gather from some passages occurring in the *Machberoth* (chap. 1) that the Jewish community of Rome was at that period in a flourishing condition, that many of its members lived in large and magnificently furnished houses, and that some of them also possessed estates in the country. Further, we are told (ibid. chap. 23) that general science, philosophy, and poetry were assiduously studied and appreciated by the Jews of Rome, and that those who attained great learning among them were held in high estimation. How eager Jewish young men in Italy were in those days to increase their knowledge of books may be seen from the following incident recorded in the *Machberoth* (chap. 8). A Jewish bookseller, travelling from Spain to Rome, left at Perugia one of his boxes containing various books, together with a list of their titles. Immanuel and his young friends were so anxious to read the contents that, in the absence of their owner, they broke the box open, and read the books it contained with the greatest delight. When on his return the bookseller learnt what had happened, Immanuel appeased his wrath by the witty remark, “that the Prophet Moses on his once breaking the two tablets of the Covenant, not only did not arouse God's anger, but was even praised for the act.”

Of the Jewish women of the time Immanuel does not always draw a flattering picture. They, or rather those belonging to the best and most educated families, mixed freely with men; but their desire for beautiful and costly apparel led the girls to prefer the wealthy suitor to his poorer, though perhaps more

deserving, rival. A great many Jewish ladies, however, were, according to him, modest and simple in their taste; and if he satirizes the luxurious habits of Jewish women, and their laxity in point of good manners, it need not be supposed that they were in the majority.

To convey to English readers some idea of the contents of the *Machberoth* a few extracts are here given, which cannot of course be expected to present the charm of the original, but are accurate in themselves.

After a short prologue, in which Immanuel speaks of the tendency of the *Machberoth* and of the reason which induced him to publish them, the author addresses his muse in a passage, of which the following lines form a part:—

> Oh, let thy teachings softly flow like heaven's dew,
> That they inspire mankind with what is good and true;
> And let “Immanuel” a potent watchword be,
> Ever to make all men in soul and body free.

The first chapter of the *Machberoth* was apparently written at a late period of the author's life, when he was in exile. He speaks bitterly of his open and secret enemies, who were the direct cause of his ruin; but he consoles himself with the thought that he is their superior in culture, and that he had a wife and comforter, who excelled their wives in virtue and beauty, and who might serve to all women as a model for imitation. That virtue and beauty do not always go hand in hand is a frequent maxim of his:—

> Virtue dwells rarely in the bright-eyed and fair,
> But in wrinkled old crones with silver-white hair.

The author is now in his proper element, and pretending to

stand with a friend of his on the public promenade, where the ladies of the town are walking to and fro, he singles out two of them. The one, called Tamar, he describes as a model of perfect beauty; and the other, Beriah by name, he designates as the personification of ugliness. The merits of the one, and the demerits of the other, are described by Immanuel in the following manner:—

Tamar looketh up, like the stars shine her eyes,
Beriah appears, and Satan's self flies.
Tamar's form divine excites angels' desire,
Beriah e'en crows with dismay might inspire.
Tamar, like the sun, makes all things bright appear,
Beriah were an omen, if seen at New Year.
Tamar is most lovely and fair to distraction,
Beriah gives mankind of love not a fraction.
Tamar, bright as the moon, is yet e'er full of light,
Beriah might be queen 'mongst the fiends of the night.
Tamar, would I were a flower, tender and sweet,
To be trampled to earth by her pretty feet.
Beriah 'tis from fear of beholding her face
That Messiah delayeth in showing his grace.
Tamar is enchanting, delighting the eyes,
Beriah a nightmare in woman's disguise.

Some beautiful lyrics devoted to the same subject are to be found in the sixteenth chapter of the *Machberoth*, two of which, under the respective headings “Thine Eyes” and “Paradise and Hell,” run as follows:—

THINE EYES.

Thine eyes are as bright, O thou sweetest gazelle,
As the glittering rays of the sun's golden spell,
And thy face glows as fair in the light of the day
As the red blushing sky when the morning is gay.

Thy tresses of gold are as neatly bedight,
As though they were wrought by enchantment's kind might;
Thou openest thy lips in a smile or a sigh,
And thy pearly teeth gleam like the stars in the sky.

Ah, shall I praise the bright charm of thine eyes,
That move every heart, that win all by surprise?
For peerless thy charms, and unequalled thy birth;
Thou art of heaven, all *others* of earth.

Paradise and Hell.

At times in my spirit I fitfully ponder,
Where shall I pass after death from this light,
Do heaven's bright glories await me, I wonder,
Or Lucifer's kingdom of darkness and night?

In the one, though 'tis perhaps of ill reputation,
A crowd of gay damsels will sit by my side;
But in heaven there's boredom and mental starvation,
To hoary old men and old crones I'll be tied.

And so I will shun the abodes of the holy,
And fly from the sky, which is dull, so I deem;
Let hell be my dwelling; there is no melancholy,
Where love reigns for ever and ever supreme.

There are several novelettes in the *Machberoth* dealing with various piquant incidents, but the two following are perhaps most suitable for quotation. In themselves they are slight enough, but they become a ready vehicle for the author's satire. In one of them (chap. 14) a clever trick is described; how a certain legacy hunter succeeded in obtaining a large gift from some trustees. A wealthy Jew living in Rome had a quarrelsome woman for a wife and a spendthrift and a fool for

a son, both of whom embittered his life. One day, the wretched man fled from his native town with all his movables, and settled in Greece, where he lived for a number of years in peace and contentment. Shortly before his death he made his will, leaving all his property to his prodigal son. As executors of his will he nominated some elders of the local community. When in due course the father died, and the intelligence of his death and testament was made known in Rome, the son took no steps to have the will executed. Meanwhile a certain swindler, hearing of this, presented himself before the executors with every sign of grief, and claimed the legacy as the son and heir of the deceased. The executors, without troubling themselves very much about his credentials, handed over the legacy to him. When some time after the rightful heir appeared, he was laughed to shame, in spite of his producing genuine credentials.

In the second novelette (chap. 23) an incident is recorded that occurred to the author in his practice as a physician. He was once called in to a patient, who was suffering from indigestion. Immanuel prescribed some medicine, and advised him to remain in bed till the following morning, when he hoped to see him again, and to find him completely recovered. Now, the patient was by way of being a poet, and on that particular night, feeling himself inspired, he got out of bed and composed a long poem. This he proudly showed Immanuel on the following morning, telling him at the same time that the medicine had done him no good. “Pardon me, my friend,” said Immanuel, “my medicine has had an excellent effect upon you: it has removed from your brain a large quantity of rubbishing poetry.”

Wit of another kind is shown in Immanuel's exegetical

dialogue (chap. 11), in which he explains some Biblical passages and phrases that had been misunderstood by various persons, who had come to ask him for his opinion. The following will serve as a specimen of the whole.

A man, who apparently considered himself an expert in Biblical lore, asked the author quite seriously how it was that, having always been told that the "law" had been given on Mount Sinai, in another passage, occurring in the Book of Esther (iii. 15), it is expressly stated that "the law was given in Shushan," thus mistaking the Mosaic law for that promulgated by King Ahasuerus (for the destruction of all his Jewish subjects). But Immanuel was equal to the occasion, and in an equally serious manner said: "You are quite right, my friend, but you seem to have misunderstood the meaning of the word "Shushan." The latter does not refer to the *place*, but to the *time* in which the law was given. This was in the Shushan-season (שושן="rose"), when the rose is in its full bloom, which is, as everybody knows, in spring time."

On another occasion Immanuel treats satirically of the theme which Horace dealt with in his first satire, beginning:—

Qui fit, Maecenas, ut nemo quam sibi sortem, &c.

The author represents a number of persons, each of whom is dissatisfied with his position. They learn, however, that those very persons who had been the objects of their envy, themselves suffered from various unimagined evils, and accordingly declare on oath that they would never consent to change from what they actually are.

Immanuel does not, however, restrict himself to humorous subjects. He shows himself possessed of tender sensibility,

which finds expression in several pathetic passages. The sight of tombstones and graves, the death of a near relative or friend, or any kindred event, at once brings with it serious reflections. He then addresses himself to God in fervent prayer, and pours out his innermost soul in strains that are full of warmth and feeling, and impress the mind by their earnestness and devotion. There are nineteen prayers and hymns to be found in the *Machberoth*, most of which bear the stamp of the author's religious sentiments; the one that occurs in chapter 26, beginning with the words אלהים נפלו פני בזכרי וכ׳, has been inserted in the so-called Roman *Machsor* (published in the year 1436), which proves its effectiveness as a liturgical poem, and shows at the same time that even a century after the author's death his name was honourably remembered by the Jews of Italy.

To this class of poetry may be added a lengthy epitaph (chap. 21), composed by Immanuel as a kind of "In Memoriam" of himself. In the same chapter is also to be found a funeral oration in rhymed prose, which the author set down as an exemplar of the one he expected would be delivered at his bier after his death. But, even when discussing so serious a topic as death and burial, Immanuel cannot abstain from making jokes on himself and his supposed mourners. Why, he asks mockingly, should he himself fare better than Noah and Solomon, who had to leave behind them, the one a splendid vineyard, and the other a number of beautiful wives? Those who mourn for him, will, he thinks, no doubt forget how to laugh after he is no more, but he expects that they will regain their spirits when they read his posthumous work.

The last, and in some respects, perhaps, the most interesting chapter in the *Machberoth*, is the one entitled *Ha-Topheth-ve-*

Ha-Eden, or “Hell and Paradise.” If, after all that has been said, there is still any doubt about the friendship between Dante and Immanuel, this chapter, as well as the circumstances in which it was written, will effectively dispel it. According to recent investigations (cp. Ersch and Gruber's *Real-Encyklopädie*, *sub* “Dante”), it would seem that Dante's *Inferno* and *Purgatorio* were not published before the years 1314 and 1318 respectively, because certain incidents and events that happened during those years are mentioned therein. At that time Immanuel was about fifty years old, and had just begun his wanderings in a state of destitution. Now, considering that in those times, before the invention of printing, a written copy of any important work could only be procured by wealthy people, the question naturally arises, From whom did Immanuel obtain a MS. copy of the *Divina Commedia* that enabled him to compose an imitation of it in Hebrew? This perplexing question can, however, be answered in the following manner. Although Immanuel was not in possession of a copy of Dante's poem, he had most likely heard it read and recited by the author himself before the members of the political and literary society called “Young Italy,” to which reference has already been made. And he was no doubt so deeply impressed by the work that it remained fresh in his memory for a number of years. It may, perhaps, be supposed that he was thus able to write his Hebrew imitation without actually having a written copy before him.

As regards the merits, the conception, and the style of the *Ha-Topheth-ve-Ha-Eden* it may be said that it holds a unique position in Hebrew literature. In the introduction the author states that, having reached his sixtieth year, the sudden death of a younger friend caused him much anxiety about his own

future, and he wished to know the fate that awaited him beyond the grave. To effect this he invoked the spirit of the Prophet Daniel. Thereupon the vision of a venerable old man appeared to him amidst thunder and lightning, and told him that he had come to show him his future place in the world of spirits. Immanuel asked to be first conducted to the regions of hell, and the old man led him there. On the way they passed through several places, which are reminiscent of Dante's *Inferno*, such as “a valley of corpses,” and “the gate of rejection,” in front of which “a flaming sword turned in every direction.” Myriads of souls were then being dragged through the gate by evil spirits to receive their punishment for sins committed by them in life, and on that gate the words were inscribed: “Here is an entrance only, but no outlet.” These words recall the passage in Dante (*Inferno*, iii. 9):—

Abandon hope all ye who enter here.

Passing through the gate into hell Immanuel sees tortures inflicted upon sinners, among whom are specially mentioned sceptics, gamblers, adulterers, misers, spendthrifts, and hypocrites. A certain class of Jewish preachers and precentors are also placed by Immanuel in the infernal regions, because they were in the habit, whilst preaching or reciting prayers, of lifting up their eyes to the women's gallery instead of heavenwards. At the mention of these hypocrites Immanuel, remembering his own failings, became pale with fear. But his conductor reassured him by saying that, though he could not pronounce him quite free from sin, yet he hoped that his virtues and his merits as an author of several excellent books would procure for him a seat in Paradise. Presently Immanuel and his leader leave Hell and betake themselves to Paradise. Looking round him, he sees the souls of all the Biblical and

post-Biblical personages, who have in some way or other reflected credit on the Jewish race, either by their literary works or by their valour, honesty, and virtue. He is greeted with great joy by Moses, David, and Solomon, who eulogize the commentaries he had written on their literary productions. On leaving them, Immanuel notices another group at some distance, which was enveloped in a dazzling blaze of glory. And asking his leader who they were, he was told that they were *the pious of all nations* (חסידי אומות העולם) who, during their life on earth, had been pre-eminent in charity, virtue, and learning, and were in consequence rewarded with seats of honour in Paradise. Close to them Immanuel noticed a magnificent throne in the course of erection, which he was given to understand was to be occupied by a friend, or rather a brother of his, as he is called, Daniel by name. It is still a matter of uncertainty to whom the author referred. But, on reading the context, it seems an inevitable conclusion that he must, as Geiger suggested, have alluded to Dante (Daniel). Near the throne of his friend, he was told, his own would be erected, so that they might both be united again after death and enjoy together heavenly bliss ever after.

The few special passages bearing on this friendship are so characteristic of Immanuel's liberal-mindedness that a reproduction of them here may not be out of place. They run somewhat as follows:—

"I do not know what has caused me to think of my friend Daniel, who, as an associate and friend, was to me of inestimable worth. It was he who showed me the path of truth and righteousness, who helped me greatly when fortune had forsaken me, and whose gigantic intellect is still spoken of on earth with unqualified admiration. On my asking my guide

where my own throne would be placed after my death, he said: ‘You are certainly far inferior in greatness to your friend, whose name and fame will always be held in great honour by posterity. Yet, because you have both lived after the same pattern, and have both striven after truth, you shall be united again after death. Your throne shall be erected near to his, and, sitting hereafter close to each other, you will be like Joshua, who once was the attendant and disciple of Moses. Having been united in life by a mutual bond of friendship, no power shall separate your souls for ever.’ When I heard this my joy was unbounded, so happy was I in the thought that my lot would be like his, and that we should both have seats in Paradise. And having asked my conductor to let me see the throne destined for my friend, he took me by the hand, and led me to a tent where the hand of a master builder had erected a monument wonderful to view. Angels passed to and fro, women ornamented it with different costly textures, and numerous spirits made it ablaze with gold, rubies, and sapphires. And soon there stood before my wondering eye a throne formed of ebony, covered with purple and gold, and surmounted by a beautiful, glittering crown, which shone like the beams of the sun. This, said my guide, is Daniel's throne. You see, my son, the work that he has erected in the world is full of fame and renown, and equally great and glorious shall be the throne which he is to occupy in the world of spirits.”

The *Ha-Topheth-ve-Ha-Eden* closes with the guide's request that he should write down for the benefit of posterity all that he saw in his wanderings through Hell and Paradise. Thereupon he vanishes in the tumult of a storm, which causes the author to awake from his dream.

From what has been said it will be seen that a marked

mental affinity existed between Dante and Immanuel. To both history, scholasticism, and romanticism provided materials for their work. They were both influenced by the new national spirit that had inspired the members of "Young Italy" to struggle for the liberation of their countrymen—bodily and mentally—from the yoke of priestcraft and superstition. Finally, it will be admitted that the *Ha-Topheth-ve-Ha-Eden* in style, dramatic effect, and graphic description has much in common with the *Divina Commedia*, although the condensed imitation is, of course, vastly inferior to the original. Yet there are several features in it which are peculiar to Immanuel. The most remarkable one is this: while Dante is narrow-minded enough to exclude from Paradise all and every one who does not profess Christianity, including even his leader, Virgil, Immanuel assigns places of honour there to the good and righteous of all nations and of all ages, provided they do not deny the existence of God and of a divine spirit in man.

Professor Th. Paur refers to this point in the essay that was mentioned above, and writes as follows:—

"If we closely examine the sentiments set forth in the little poetical volume (*Ha-Topheth-ve-Ha-Eden*), we must confess that the Jew Immanuel need not blush in the presence of the Christian Dante. It is true that he, like Dante, condemns those philosophical theories in which the personality of God, the creation of the world by his power, and the existence of a divine spirit in man are denied. But Immanuel shows more courage than Dante by effectively stigmatizing hypocrisy in all its various shapes and forms. He also possesses a greater spirit of tolerance than the latter had shown towards men professing creeds different from his own—a beautiful human *naïveté* in matters of religion—which must be sought after with the

lantern of Diogenes among the Christians of that period."

In the introduction to the present essay mention was made of some sonnets composed by Immanuel in the Italian language, which show that he must have been well versed in the literature of his native country. Three of them were published for the first time some thirty years ago in a book entitled *Letteratura e filosofia, opuscoli per Pasquale Garofalo, Duca di Bonita* (Naples, 1872). Perhaps it will not be out of place, in conclusion, to quote one of them here. Its English translation is somewhat as follows:—

"Love has never read the *Ave Maria*. It knows no law, no creed, neither does it hear nor see: it is boundless. Love is an unrestricted, omnipotent power, which insists on obtaining what it craves for. . . . Love does not suffer itself to be deprived of its pride and power by a *Paternoster*, or by any other charm; neither is it afraid of carrying into effect what it is fond of. *Amor* alone knows what causes me grief; whatever I may offer him as an excuse, he meets me always with the same answer: It is my will and wish."

Footnotes:

[87-1] It should be added that the eminent Dante scholar, Theodor Paur, was strongly inclined to doubt the authenticity of these poems, and that he was sceptical with regard to the whole question of the friendship between Immanuel and Dante. On the other hand, he readily admitted that Immanuel imitated the *Commedia* in his *Ha-Topheth-ve-Ha-Eden*. (See *Jahrbuch der deutschen Dante-Gesellschaft*, III, 1871, pp. 423–462.)

[92-1] See Graetz, *Geschichte*, VII; and Güdemann, *Geschichte des Erziehungswesens und der Cultur abendländischen Juden während des Mittelalters*.

X

KALONYMOS BEN KALONYMOS

A THIRTEENTH-CENTURY SATIRIST

During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries there were in France, Spain, and Italy several Jewish savants whose literary labours did much to keep alive among Jews generally a taste for Hebrew literature as well as for philosophy and general science. Among them was Kalonymos ben Kalonymos, the subject of the present essay. He was born at Arles, a small town in Provence, in the year 1287, being the son of Kalonymos ben Meir, who bore the title of *Nasi* ("the Prince") and occupied a prominent position in the local community. The management of civil affairs was at that time in the hands of the resident archbishop, who confined all the Jews within a single street, although their predecessors had been permitted, since the middle of the fourth century, to live wherever they chose[103-1]. In this ghetto Kalonymos first saw the light, and there he also spent a great part of his early youth, devoting much time to the study of Biblical and Rabbinical lore, as well as the acquisition of the classical and Oriental languages. He subsequently continued his studies at a school in the neighbouring town of Salon, under the tuition of Moses of Beaucaire and Astruc of Noves[103-2].

As a young student he easily distinguished himself by the translation of several philosophical, mathematical, and medical books from Arabic or Latin into Hebrew. King Robert of Naples, who was then living in the south of France, hearing of his proficiency, commissioned him to go to Rome and translate some Hebrew books into Latin for him. While Kalonymos was in Rome he was a great favourite with all who knew him intimately, and, owing to his fine appearance, his prominent position, and his manifold accomplishments, he had no difficulty in obtaining entry into the best Roman society. Several of his contemporaries, and more especially Immanuel di Roma, a friend of Dante, speak of him in high terms, and bestow upon him, too, his father's title of *Nasi*.

Whilst in Rome Kalonymos was asked by the leaders of the Jewish community of Avignon, where he and his parents had lived for some time, to come thither in order to take a petition to the Pope, who was then residing there, praying that he would exert his influence in favour of the Jewish inhabitants of Avignon, for whose extermination the Christian population had planned a secret plot. It is not known what the result was. Graetz, in his History of the Jews (vol. VII, p. 305), states that Kalonymos died about the year 1337, but he does not mention the place of his death.

Kalonymos's chief work is, by general consent, his *Eben Bochan* (“The Touchstone”), manuscripts of which are to be found in several libraries, including those of Munich, Leyden, Paris, and Florence. Printed as an *editio princeps* at Naples in 1489, a second edition appeared at Venice in 1558; it was subsequently published at Sulzbach in 1705, and again at Fürth (without a date), and also at Lemberg in 1865. In 1878 Dr. Kayserling edited the late Dr. Meisel's posthumous German

translation in verse, to which he added a brief sketch in German of Kalonymos's life and principal works.

Among the scholars who have discussed the *Eben Bochan* may be mentioned Bartholocci, Wolf, Zunz, Geiger, Gross, Steinschneider, and Neubauer. It is pretty generally agreed that it was composed about the year 1324, that is to say, at a comparatively early period of the author's life. This theory is supported by the fact that it contains passages in which Kalonymos refers to his youth and unmarried state, and that its style is in many places marked by a singular freshness and vivacity which is seldom found in the writings of older men. The work is remarkable for its conciseness and epigrammatic force, and is further distinguished by the ingenuity with which Biblical and Talmudical phrases are woven into a kind of mosaic. It is somewhat similar in style to the *Bechînath Olam*, the author of which, Yedaya Bedaresi, was Kalonymos's contemporary. But while Bedaresi never failed to preserve the sternness and dignity peculiar to a moralizing philosopher, Kalonymos not infrequently relieved the seriousness of his narrative by flashes of humour and irony. He censures and ridicules the foibles of his Jewish contemporaries, but confesses at the same time, more in jest perhaps than in earnest, that he himself was not quite innocent of the same faults. One of the most humorous parts of the *Eben Bochan* is that at which the author makes merry over his own misfortune in being born a male child of Jewish parents. For as such he has during all his lifetime to bear the heavy yoke of the six hundred and thirteen precepts (תרי״ג מצוות), together with various other Talmudical restrictions. The following free translation will give an idea of the author's style and mode of expression:—

Oh, hapless sire, distraught with cares,
Whose wife to him male children bears,
For all of them, or rich or poor,
Have only suffering to endure;
This is caused by the Jewish creed,
Whose yoke is hard to bear, indeed.
Its many laws and regulations,
Which are unknown to other nations,
Every Hebrew must observe,
With watchful eye, and straining nerve;
E'en though he shares in public functions,
He still must follow their injunctions,
Which, I would tell you, have been seen
To be six hundred and thirteen.

But this is not the only feature,
Which makes the Jew a hapless creature:
For he must shun all jest and play,
And brood o'er folios night and day,
Mosaic and Rabbinic lore,
And books, which he may think a bore.
The Bible is not half enough:
Glosses there are and other stuff,
In which he erudite must be,
Especially in theology,
In all the Talmud may relate,
In authors' quarrels and debate,
In things particularly small,
Of no significance at all.

And if in an enlightened age
He'd fain become a cultured sage,
He must cram full his suffering head
With languages, alive and dead,
With ethics, logic, and philosophy,
Astronomy also and theosophy,
And cabbalistic learning too,
And history, old as well as new,
And fill his overloaded brain
With metaphysics' idle strain.
Oh, truly wretched and forlorn
Is every Jewish son that's born

Is every Jewish son that's born;
Miserable is all his life,
Full of toil, and pain, and strife.
Thank Heaven, life is very brief;
And death soon brings a swift relief!

Kalonymos then goes on to say that, had Providence decreed that he should be born a girl, his existence on earth would have been much more pleasant.

Happier, I would surely be,
If from this manhood I were free,
And entered on life's weary whirl,
As a lucky-fated girl;
Then my life would be as bright
As is a star in summer night.
And when full grown, I ne'er would shirk
From doing all a woman's work;
From early morn till late at night,
When shine the moonbeams' silvery light,
I'd spend the hours in peaceful knitting,
Contented to be ever sitting
Amidst a busy, smiling crowd
Of girls that sing and laugh aloud.
When nights were dark, we'd talk together
Of dress, and bonnets, and the weather;
And then we'd gossip too apace
Of all that happens in the place,
And end the evening's conversation
With jests, and tales of sweet flirtation.
As time went on, I would not tarry,
But some fit husband I would marry,
Who, I am sure, would ne'r decline
To give me sweets and luscious wine,
And would enhance his sweet embraces
With gifts of gems and costly laces.

Oh, heavenly Father, who—'tis told—
Didst work great miracles of old,
How truly grateful I should be,
If thou hadst but created me

If thou hadst but created me
A girl, devoid of worldly care,
And blessed with beauty ripe and rare.
Alas! it is of no avail
My hapless fortune to bewail;
Heaven has willed that I, a man,
Must even end as I began,
Until grim death, a timely friend,
Brings to my woes the wished-for end.
Thus will I bear with patient grace
What still befalls the Jewish race,
And not forget those wondrous pages,
Composed of old by worthy sages,
Wherein 'tis said that we must bless
Heaven in woe and happiness;
And humbly then these words I say
(With silent protest and dismay),
“O Lord, I thank thee ('tis not scorn)
That I was *not* a woman born[107-1].”

There are other similar passages in the *Eben Bochan*, in some of which the author ridicules, for instance, the way in which his fellow religionists were in the habit of celebrating the various feasts in the Jewish calendar. They entirely overlooked, he says, the moral significance attached to these days by their religion, but considered them to have been specially ordained for the sake of feasting and merry-making. Even the New Year's Day and the Day of Atonement were not spent by them in sincere devotion, but rather in quarrelling with each other about petty religious usages, to which they attributed much greater weight than they deserved.

Kalonymos elsewhere directs his attention to the prevailing faults of his neighbours. The objects of his satire are: the wealthy but ignorant Jewish snob; the conceited would-be literary genius; the questionable Talmudical and Hebrew scholar; and, lastly, the Jewish hypocrite, the man who essays

to appear outwardly religious, while his heart is full of roguery. The latter is described by our author as follows:—

A hypocrite is strange of race,
Who, with his sanctimonious face,
Would fain appear in others' view
As good, benevolent, and true;
Who never cares a bit or bothers
About the pleasant vice of others.
But though he sets up as a saint,
And boasts that none has made complaint
Of any dark or base transactions
In business or in other actions,
Yet do not on his word rely,
Remember "the spider and the fly."
For cunning is the hypocrite,
With shrewd and money-making wit,
And plays his game to great perfection,
Whene'er he can escape detection;
He robs and steals whene'er he can,
And strips the shirt off the poorest man.
His words may be as sweet as honey,
But never trust him with your money;
For once he's got it—to be plain—
You'll never see your own again.
Though he seems pious night and day,
And ne'er forgets his prayers to say,
And still performs his meet devotion,
With bended head and endless motion,
Yet, friend, as well as e'er you can,
Avoid this crafty, godless man,
Whose piety is dissimulation,
To God a base abomination.
Well may he sit with downcast look,
With eyes glued to his Hebrew book,
And shake his body to and fro
His splendid holiness to show.
But yet, in truth, his heart within
Is hard as stone, and black with sin;
And he is ever a sad disgrace
To Jewish creed and Jewish race.

The prevailing tone of the *Eben Bochan* is, however, serious. The author refers to the cruel persecutions which the Jews suffered in the years 1320 and 1321, being occasioned by the Shepherds and Lepers, as well as to the burning of the Talmud at Toulouse, which took place in the year 1319, at the instigation of a certain person named Bernard Gui. And elsewhere, again, in the same book, he appears in the capacity of a moralizing philosopher, impressing his readers with the necessity of making good use of their life, as it is so very short and uncertain. On one occasion he uses a beautiful metaphor, which is, indeed, not quite original[109-1], but nevertheless striking. It runs as follows:—

"The world is like a vast and endless sea, upon which there floats a small and fragile little boat—namely, man. It is of artistic make and form, and looks as if it were the work of a master-hand. It is steered by the power of the divine spirit that directs its course, and keeps it constantly moving onward and onward, together with its heavy load of cargo—that is, man's actions during his life. After having started from the coast where it first came into existence it moves ever forward till it reaches the opposite coast, where there lies a new realm called Eternity, which consists of vast regions that shine with eternal light and splendour, and also of others that are enveloped in everlasting darkness. And God, the ruler of the universe, sits there on his throne, surrounded by his mighty messengers, the angels, to judge every newcomer. Now, O Son of Man! it will entirely depend on the nature of the cargo that thou hast landed on the opposite coast—namely, thy deeds in thy past life, whether thou wilt be sent to the regions that glow with eternal light, or to those in which darkness reigns supreme."

Towards the end of the book Kalonymos states that he

composed it in honour of ten friends. Their names are as follows:—

1. Abraham Caslari, who lived at Bezalu, near Perpignon, and was an eminent physician and author of several medical books. 2. Maestro Benedit, who lived at Arles, and was famous as a linguist and astronomer. He was also physician-in-ordinary to Queen Joan, the wife of King Andrew of Hungary. 3. Don Jonah Cavalier. 4. Don Todros Isaac, of Girone. 5. Don Judah des Cartel. 6. Don Bonafoux Shealtiel. 7. Don Bonsenor Gracian. 8. Don Chasdai Crescas. 9. Don Samuel Beneviste, who, according to Kayserling, was physician-in-ordinary to Don Pedro IV, king of Aragon. 10. Don Astruc Crespin.

Kalonymos says at the end of the *Eben Bochan* that he finished it when he was eighty-three years old (בן שלש ושמונים שנה), while it is generally supposed that he died at the age of fifty. The only explanation that can be given of this discrepancy is, that the copyist of the manuscript may have put down by mistake that number for בן שלשים ושמונה =38, which would just be the time when Kalonymos was staying at Rome.

Less popular, though not less humorous, than the *Eben Bochan* is Kalonymos's *Massecheth Purim*, the whole title of which in Hebrew is given as follows:—

ספר מגלת סתרים וספר מסכת פורים

It would appear that it was intended by the author to be a parody on the manner in which Rabbis generally conducted discussions and debates on trivial questions, as described in the Talmud, with special reference to the rites and usages connected with the Feast of Purim. It was obviously a harmless

Purim prank, yet some ultra-orthodox Rabbis[111-1] took it seriously, and declared it to be an heretical work. Its want of popularity among Jewish readers in past centuries, and the limited number of its editions, must be attributed to this. It has only been printed three times altogether, first at Pesaro in 1507, then at Venice in 1552, and lastly at Vienna in 1871.

The Rabbis may have had yet another reason for their objections to the work, as the author advocates therein some slight reforms in the ritual of Purim. He puts, for instance, in the mouth of one of the disputants the question: Why should it be forbidden to read the *Megillah* on Purim in the vernacular, being a language that is generally better understood, by Jews and Jewesses alike, than Hebrew? Should an objection (he goes on to say) be made to such a procedure on the plea that the Book of Esther contains the word ככתבם, which means “according to their (the Jews’) own writing,” this obstacle could easily be removed by having the vernacular translation written in Hebrew characters.

Incidentally we learn from the *Massecheth Purim* that the Jews then living in Palestine were well-to-do farmers, and that those living in France and Italy frequently indulged in a certain game called סקקרי, which, according to Steinschneider, is equivalent to the Italian term *il schachiere*, and means the chess board[111-2]. We likewise gather from the book that the Rabbis of that time allowed dancing, provided that the dancers chose their partners from their own sex. It is interesting to notice, in passing, the variety of dishes which the Jewish ladies of those times were in the habit of preparing for the festivals. Kalonymos mentions, by way of example, the wife of the president of a certain Italian Jewish community, called

Kardinalith קרדינלית, who used to begin making the preparations at least a fortnight before the advent of any Jewish festival. Graetz's supposition[112-1], that the lady in question was a Cardinal's daughter, is not supported by any historical evidence.

The third original work of Kalonymos is entitled *The Letter of Response* (אגרת התשובה), addressed to the well-known Jewish philosopher Don Bonafoux Ibn Caspi (1280–1340), in which the latter's commentary on the Bible is critically reviewed, and especially his leaning to what is now called "the higher criticism". Kalonymos expresses the opinion that it is unwise and even dangerous to meddle with the ideas which people may have formed in early life regarding the sacred volume, and that Ibn Caspi's commentary on it was therefore doing more harm than good. Incidentally we learn from *The Letter of Response* that the writer was at the time of penning it a struggling youth, while Caspi was a man of affluence and position. It should, perhaps, also be mentioned that it existed at Munich in manuscript form till 1879, and that it was then published for the first time by the late Dr. Perles of Munich, under the title of *Kalonymos' Sendschreiben an Josef Caspi*.

The fourth and last original work of Kalonymos is entitled *The Book of Kings* (ספר מלכים), and deals chiefly with arithmetic, geometry, and astrology. It has hardly any intrinsic value at the present time as a scientific book, but deserves to be noticed because it was one of the few books which, as its title seems to indicate, was expressly written for the use of King Robert of Naples. It has never been printed, but exists as a MS. in Munich, where it was discovered some little time ago by Steinschneider[112-2].

Kalonymos also made translations of works in various languages, the titles of some of which will be quoted at the end of this essay. One of these, however, deserves special mention. That is the אגרת בעלי חיים, which consists of a free Hebrew translation of part of an Arabic work then in circulation under the title of *The Treatises of the Righteous Brethren*, and was edited by a certain Abalzapha[113-1]. It is a fairy tale, containing a dialogue between men and beasts, in the presence of the king of birds, in which the question is discussed, whether man has a right to dominate over the world or not[113-2]. Kalonymos invests this theme with a Jewish colouring by giving the chief part of the discussion to a Hebrew from the East, who is determined to prove by argument that the confessors of his own creed, at least, occupy a higher rank in the world than the animals. The former, he says, are the progeny of a noble line, and Moses and the other prophets have furnished them with numerous wise laws and regulations as to their proper conduct in life. They have, besides, temples and synagogues to pray in, as well as preachers and precentors to listen to, and their feasts and fasts afford them recreation for body and mind. In these advantages and pleasures, says the Hebrew in conclusion, the winged creatures do not participate, and it is therefore evident that they were destined by their Creator to be ruled by his chosen race.

The king of the birds replies that the Hebrew's arguments prove the reverse of what they were intended to prove. For the very fact that the confessors of the Jewish creed need laws and preachers, penitential and fast-days, shows clearly enough that they are not free from sin; and this being so, they have certainly no right to claim superiority over the winged creatures whose life is distinguished by simplicity and

innocence. To them the whole universe is one gigantic temple wherein they sing daily praises to their Creator with a pure heart and clear conscience. They need no preachers to admonish them, nor do they require fasts to obtain absolution for their transgressions. Finding, as they do, food and shelter in the fields and gardens, on mountains and in the valleys, they are always cheerful and happy without the aid of prescribed festivals, but their happiness is often disturbed by the wickedness of man, who has no right whatever to treat them as inferior to his own species.

In the introduction to the אגרת בעלי חיים and elsewhere Kalonymos censures the extravagant mode of living which prevailed among his wealthy Jewish contemporaries. He stigmatizes their intense fondness for display, which asserted itself so strongly as to arouse the envy and hatred of the general population, and frequently with lamentable results.

Kalonymos was therefore not merely a laughing philosopher like Democritus, but a stern moralist who ridiculed certain objectionable characteristics of the Jews, indicating thereby the way to self-restraint and good taste. There is also an interesting remark to be found in the אגרת בעלי חיים, which is to the effect that in Kalonymos's time the Greek philosophers were reputed to have made frequent use of the books on philosophy composed by Jewish writers[114-1].

A few remarks have still to be made on Kalonymos's style. He writes partly in plain and partly in rhymed prose, without, however, much elegance in either. His excessive fondness for idiomatic phrases taken from the Talmud, which he misapplies with extraordinary ingenuity, results in puns, plays on words, especially on proper names. The following example will give

an idea of the nature of the whole. It does not, however, bear translation, as the idiomatic point of the Hebrew cannot be reproduced in English. In the *Eben Bochan* there is a chapter wherein Kalonymos ridicules the way in which the Hebrew grammarians of his time quarrelled in regard to the importance which should be assigned to the accents (טעמים) attached to the Hebrew text of the Bible. Some of them were regarded in the light of the cabbala, and were believed to contain the most profound secrets regarding the present and future world. Kalonymos writes about these disputants as follows:—

אני ראיתי מחלוקה גדולה
בענין קדמא ואזלא
וריב גדול עד שהדם נשפך
בענין שופר מהפך
ומהם אומרים מעת משה ספרא רבא בישראל קביר
לא נהיה סוד עמוק כמו לפני דרגא תביר.

An instance of his plays on words may be given. He noticed that some of his neighbours did not abstain from drinking great quantities of wine during the so-called ten penitential days. He therefore gives them two Hebrew names by which some of Haman's sons are known, viz. פרשנדתא and המדתא. These names are composed of the words פרש־דתא and המם־דתא, which mean respectively “to be separated from, and, to distort, the law,” and they thus depict epigrammatically and wittily the religious character of the objects of Kalonymos's satire.

In addition to the אגרת בעלי חיים Kalonymos also translated several other works and treatises composed by other authors in the Arabic, Greek, and Latin languages, which deal

chiefly with medicine, mathematics, and astronomy. A detailed description of them will be found in the interesting book entitled *Les Écrivains Juifs français du XIVe siècle*, p. 424, by Neubauer. One of these translations, entitled אגרת בסדור קריאת החכמות, contains the significant remark that it was made by Kalonymos by command of King Robert of Naples. The king is there designated by the curious name of “The New Solomon.”

There are likewise some few books and treatises in existence, treating of various subjects, the authorship of which is attributed to Kalonymos. Among these may specially be mentioned a Hebrew translation of a circular letter sent by the above-named king to the Jewish community of Aix, containing the intelligence of his son's death.

Footnotes:

[103-1] Cp. Anibert, *Mémoires historiques*, II, 201, 397.

[103-2] Cp. Kalonymos's letter, entitled אגרת התשובה, which he addressed to Ibn Caspi, and to which reference will be made later on.

[107-1] Cp. The Daily Morning Prayer for the Israelite, in which the well-known blessing occurs:

ברוך • • • שלא עשני אשה•

[109-1] Cp. *Choboth Ha-lebaboth*, by Bachya ben Joseph Ibn Bakoda, and בחינת עולם by Yedaya Bedaresi, in which a similar metaphor is used.

[111-1] One of them was Moses ben Isaiah Wengrow, author of a book called ברית משה, in which the *Massecheth Purim* is declared to be a most dangerous book.

[111-2] Cp. Steinschneider, *Schach bei den Juden*, Berlin, 1873. See also I. Abraha *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages*, chap. XXII, p. 388.

[112-1] Cp. Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, VII, p. 306.

[112-2] Cp. Geiger, *Zeitschrift*, VIII, p. 118.

[113-1] According to Steinschneider (ibid.) his correct name is אבואן אלצפא.

[113-2] The book under review is also mentioned by Joseph Albo in his work עקרים, III, 2.

[114-1] Cp. Dukes, *Philosophisches aus dem zehnten Jahrhundert*, p. 21.

XI

ABRAHAM IBN CHASDAI

AND HIS BOOK “THE PRINCE AND THE DERVISH”

Among the minor Hebrew poets who lived at Barcelona in the early part of the thirteenth century there is, perhaps, none more remarkable than Abraham Ibn Chasdai. Little is known of him beyond what may be gathered from a letter addressed by him to his friend Alfakar. From it we learn that the writer was a native of Barcelona and a contemporary of the famous Hebrew grammarian David Kimchi (1160–1232), who is referred to there as *Hazakan* (“the old man”).

According to some historians[117-1] Abraham Ibn Chasdai was the spiritual head of the Barcelona Jewish community, but it is not impossible that he also may have been somewhat intimately connected with the medical profession. In his book *The Prince and the Dervish* there are several references to the healing art and its many intricacies, which suggest more than a superficial acquaintance with the subject. But there is no doubt whatever that Ibn Chasdai was an eminent Hebrew and Talmudical scholar, and that he had a considerable knowledge of Arabic and Greek, which enabled him to translate into

Hebrew some books written in these two languages[117-2].

His only book, however, which has a permanent literary and ethical value is *The Prince and the Dervish*. Though it is only a free Hebrew translation of an Arabic book, which was in itself a mere version of a volume that had originally been composed in Greek, it has always enjoyed much popularity among readers of neo-Hebrew literature. It has not only been repeatedly published[118-1], but it has also been translated into several languages, including Latin[118-2], Spanish, and Jewish German.

The Prince and the Dervish possesses in an eminent degree the qualities which make any book attractive, viz. a pleasing style and interesting subject-matter. In style it is a happy imitation of that found in the Bible, and is remarkable for the ingenuity with which certain verses thereof are used in a somewhat different sense from that which they have in it.

It consists of thirty-five chapters, full of charming tales and fables, together with many valuable maxims and proverbs. Rhymed prose intermingled with verse is generally used. The subject-matter is derived chiefly from the Talmud and the Midrash, but partly also from other Oriental sources. It is curious to note that several of the stories have been reproduced in a somewhat modified form by Boccaccio, Lafontaine, and other writers belonging to more modern times. But they possess a special characteristic of their own—they invariably end with a moral.

Passing now to a more detailed account of its contents, it is necessary to give the story, which is the framework within which the subordinate episodes are included. It runs as follows:—

“Once upon a time there lived in a certain state in India a cruel and despotic king, who only lived for his own enjoyment. He hated, in consequence, every kind of religious restriction, and even persecuted those of his subjects who, like the members belonging to the sect of the so-called Dervishes, led a retiring and ascetic life. His hatred of them acquired additional intensity when the chief of his courtiers disappeared one day from the palace, and was reported to have become a Dervish himself. A royal decree was issued, which forbade the Dervishes to remain in any part of the king's dominions, and which at the same time fixed a severe penalty for any disregard of the proclamation.

“Now it so happened that soon after this event a son and heir to the throne was born to the king. He summoned his astrologers to tell him of the future destiny of the newborn prince, and was informed that the prince would in the future become a great friend of the Dervishes, and favour and promote their cause. Thereupon the king ordered that the infant prince should be taken to a secluded castle, which stood upon a solitary island, and that he should be kept there under the closest surveillance until the time when he should ascend the throne. This order was strictly observed and carried out for a number of years by the king's servants. But when the prince had grown up, he was allowed by them to walk about the island by himself. Now on one of his walks the prince came across a strange looking man, who was sitting and meditating in a lonely spot near the sea. This man was the former chief courtier of the king who, as already stated, had joined the sect of Dervishes, and afterwards led a vagrant life. The strange appearance and peculiar attire of the Dervish attracted the attention of the prince, who, having engaged him in

conversation, was so greatly charmed with it that he expressed a desire to have this interesting meeting repeated. The Dervish consented, and in their subsequent meetings many topics, including chiefly theology, ethics, and philosophy, were discussed. The Dervish, according to the Eastern fashion, wove tales, fables, and maxims into his discourses, which interested the prince so much that he offered the Dervish his life-long friendship as a mark of his sincere attachment to him. He also assured him that he would extend his favour to the whole sect of Dervishes as soon as he should succeed to his father's throne."

Before proceeding to give some extracts from *The Prince and the Dervish* it should be observed that, as already stated before, it is written in rhymed prose, intermixed with rather heavy verse, it is impossible to translate them literally or fully. The few passages, however, that are here rendered will no doubt be sufficient to enable the reader to form some notion of the most interesting portion of the book.

One of the best moral stories that occur in *The Prince and the Dervish* is the following[120-1]. It runs thus:—

"In the far East there was a little island, the inhabitants of which had some strange customs, notably in regard to their selection of a king to rule over them. Being averse to an hereditary monarchy, they used to go once every year to the sea-shore, and choose the first poor and shipwrecked stranger whom they happened to meet there as their king. As such, he was driven in a state coach to a magnificent palace, and there he was permitted to enjoy for a whole year all the rights and privileges possessed by an Eastern potentate. But, as soon as the year of his reign was over, the king was stripped of his

royal garments, brought back to the very spot where he had been found, and there left to himself.

"Once, however, it so happened that the stranger, whom they had selected as their king, was a prudent man and experienced in worldly matters. Astonished at his sudden elevation, he made inquiries of one of the islanders whose confidence he had gained, and learned from him the real reason. He accordingly devised a plan, from which he hoped that he and his friend would derive some lasting advantage. They were simply to go on a dark night to the state treasury, and to take away from thence a quantity of jewels (which by right were the king's property for the time being), and hide them in a cave near the sea; they would thus have some means of subsistence when the year of the king's reign ended. The plan was speedily carried into effect. After his year's reign was over, he was taken back to the place whence he had come. He and his friend took possession of their hidden treasure, and with it they went on board a passing ship, which brought them to a foreign country, where the sale of their valuables enabled them to live a life of comfort and happiness."

This tale was related by the Dervish to the prince, in the course of one of their conversations, as an illustration of human life. When we come into existence, the Dervish said, we are, every one of us, helpless and poor, but after we have grown up we have at our disposal all the wealth and delights which this beautiful world of ours offers to all men. But we must never ignore the fact that our stay on earth is but brief, and that we are thus, as it were, kings for one year only. It therefore behoves man to devote his brief existence to the performance of noble deeds which will, when his life is ended in this world, procure him in the world to come God's

everlasting favour and grace.

All the tales contained in *The Prince and the Dervish* are not, however, of this character; there are several of a purely diverting nature. To the latter class of tales belongs the one which treats of a large doll (chap. 31), and resembles in several respects some of the frivolous stories that occur in Boccaccio's *Decameron*. This tale, which the curious will have to read in the Hebrew original, shows up the fickleness of will and the infidelity of women generally. The author here follows the example set by several mediaeval Hebrew satirists, such as Bedaresi, Immanuel, Alcharizi, Sabbatai, Zabara, and others, who made womankind the butt of their wit. In the same volume a whole chapter (the 18th) is devoted to love. One of the principal virtues of this passion, the author says, is that it often brings into prominence certain good qualities in the lover which might otherwise have remained concealed. To win his lady's affection he would become courageous, active, liberal, and fond of jovial society. But love, the author goes on to say in true Eastern fashion, has also its demerits, for it often brings its devotees to destruction. It not seldom happens that he who has been captivated by the charms of a fair woman gets indolent, and spends much of his time in the pursuit of distractions. He thus squanders his possessions, and is reduced to poverty. As a poor man he has many cares, which weaken him both in mind and body, and throw him on the bed of sickness. His illness is frequently fatal, and he thus pays the penalty of unrestrained passion with his life.

In the same chapter several charming love poems occur, which resemble in form and style those of Judah Halevy, Ibn Ezra, and Alcharizi. One of these pieces, supposed to have been addressed by a lover to a maiden, who had ignored his

avowed affection for her, runs as follows:—

> Thrice cruel maid, may Heaven frown on thee,
> For that by day thou hidest thyself from me,
> And yet thou robbest me of my nightly rest,
> For that thy face is in my eyes impressed.

Another instance, showing how a subject is treated by the author in two different ways, is found in chapter 17. There the question of travelling is discussed by the prince and the Dervish, and they arrive at the conclusion that travelling, which affords recreation for body and mind, is specially commendable to a man who is worn out with cares and troubles, as the change of scenery and climate cannot but be beneficial to him. And indeed, says the author, were travelling not conducive to health and happiness, God would surely not have commanded his faithful servant Abraham, saying, "Get thee out of thy birthplace, and rove through the country" (Gen. xii. 1). Elsewhere in the same chapter travelling is depicted in different colours. It is, he says, fatiguing and by no means pleasant; for it deprives man of his home comforts, and causes him to renounce the society of dear and devoted friends, who make his life happy for him. That travelling is not a boon the author proves by the fact that Cain of the Bible was told by God to expiate the sin of his crime by being a restless wanderer over the earth (cp. Gen. iv. 12).

A special feature of *The Prince and the Dervish* is the fable, which often serves as an illustration of the subject under discussion. The following[123-1] is a specimen:—

"King Solomon, to whom legend ascribes the knowledge of all languages, including those supposed to be spoken by animals, once gave an audience to a wealthy Jewish farmer,

and received from him a costly present. To show his appreciation of the gift, the king offered to bestow upon the farmer any favour he might ask. But, to the king's surprise, the farmer asked the favour of being initiated by the king into the secret of understanding the language spoken by farm-yard animals. After some hesitation the king granted the farmer's request, impressing him, however, with the necessity of not divulging the secret to anybody else under penalty of immediate death.

"Now it so happened that the farmer had a shrew for a wife, and, wishing to live in peace with her, allowed himself to be ruled by her in all domestic affairs. One day, while occupied in the farm-yard, he overheard a conversation between an ox and an ass, which amused him so much that he burst out laughing. At that moment his wife appeared, and insisted on being told the joke. He begged her not to press him to disclose a secret, on the keeping of which his very life depended. But she remained obdurate. Seeing that there was no way out of the difficulty, he told her that he would fulfil her desire in a few days, but that he had in the meantime to settle his worldly affairs, before going to meet his inevitable and premature death. To this she agreed. Next day, while again standing in the farm-yard, he heard his dog rebuking the cock for crowing as loudly as ever, though he was aware of his master's approaching death. But the cock said that since their master was a coward and a fool, he did not deserve to be pitied by anybody. 'Let him,' said the cock, 'take a lesson from me, and his life will certainly be saved. There are in the farm-yard a number of hens, who all obey me implicitly, as they know very well that any case of disobedience on their part would be attended with a well-deserved punishment. Now, our master

has only *one* wife to deal with, and if he is idiotic enough to allow her to rule over him, he must bear the consequences.'

"When the farmer heard the cock's wise remarks he regained courage, and presently meeting his wife, he told her that he refused to let her know his secret, and that he was fully determined to be and to remain the ruler in his own house from that time forward. These words had the desired effect, and from that day forth he lived with his wife in harmony and undisturbed peace."

The Prince and the Dervish is also exceedingly rich in pithy maxims, of which the following may serve as examples. On the question of paying visits to one's friends, he says[124-1]:—

Go not too frequently thy friends to see,
Lest they grow weary of the sight of thee;
When rain is scanty, then we pray for more,
But love not one continuous downpour.

Another maxim is reminiscent of the Biblical saying "For man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Sam. xvi. 7). It runs thus:—

Let not his humble vesture make thee blind
To one whose greatness is a learnèd mind:
For pearls may sometimes in the sand be found,
And stores of gold lie buried in the ground[125-1].

Humility of mind is thus spoken of[125-2]:—

Be ever meek and humble, nor essay
In path of pride and haughtiness to stray:
The tempest spares the hyssop on the wall,
But 'neath its wrath the proudest cedars fall.

The following lines must have been written when a dear

friend was about to take leave of him. They run thus[125-3]:—

> Now that the time has come for us to part,
> I feel how much thy loss means to my heart;
> For when the sun sinks suddenly to rest,
> 'Tis then that darkness grows most manifest.

Of a more humorous nature are the following lines[125-4] put in the form of questions and answers:—

Question. What is the most useful thing to any man in life?

Answer. Knowledge, or wealth, or a good and loving wife.

Question. But, if none of these commodities man has ever got?

Answer. Then by keeping golden silence he might improve his lot.

Question. And if he cannot do so, that poor and hapless knave?

Answer. Then let him go away at once, and dig himself a grave.

Apart from the literary value which *The Prince and the Dervish* possesses, it has a special importance which recalls to mind that all its versions have been rendered by Jewish writers into different languages. This fact lends support to the theory that the Jews have always displayed a peculiar aptitude in the translation of books, and more especially from Arabic, Greek, and Latin, into the sacred tongue of the Bible. By this means they preserved to posterity many valuable literary works which might otherwise have remained unknown or even perished. Among the more prominent Jewish translators living in mediaeval times were, besides several members of the famous Tibbon family, Kalonymos ben Kalonymos, Moses di Rieti, Immanuel di Roma, Alcharizi, Judah Romano, Elias del Medigo, and last, but not least, Abraham Ibn Chasdai, the author of *The Prince and the Dervish*. It should also be observed that several learned Jewish linguists have, in more modern times, been greatly helpful, in a literary sense, to many

of their less educated co-religionists by introducing to them in a Hebrew garb some of the best-known works of general literature, including Homer, Virgil, Horace, Shakespeare, Milton, Dante, Racine, Schiller, and Goethe. Thus it is interesting to note that the language of the Bible has, like the Bible itself, at all times rendered most valuable services to Jews as well as to those of other creeds.

Footnotes:

[117-1] Cp. Wolf, *Bibl. Hebr.*, I, 57; Delitzsch, *Geschichte der jüd. Poesie*, p. 46; Steinschneider, *Manna*.

[117-2] Among these may specially be mentioned:

(*a*) מאזני צדק, edited by Goldenthal in 1839, being a Hebrew translation of an Arabic work by Ghasali entitled אל מיזאן.

(*b*) ספר התפוח and סודות, which are Hebrew versions of two works composed respectively in Arabic and Greek.

[118-1] It was printed in Constantinople in 1518; in Mantua in 1557; in Wandsbeck in 1727; in Frankfurt a.d.O. and Frankfurt a.M. respectively in 1766 and 1769; in Zolkiew in 1771; in Fürth in 1769; in Lemberg in 1870; in Szitomir in 1873; and in Warsaw in 1884.

[118-2] The Latin translation exists as a MS. at the Nürnberg Library; it was done by Daniel Schwenter, having for its title *Proverbia filii regis Nazar*.

[120-1] Cp. chap. 13. A similar story is contained in Bachya's *Choboth Ha-lebaboth*.

[123-1] Cp. chap. 24. The same story is contained in the universally known *Thousand and One Nights*.

[124-1] Cp. chap. 8.

[125-1] Cp. chap. 26.

[125-2] Cp. chap. 30.

[125-3] Cp. chap. 18.

[125-4] Cp. chap. 15.

XII

ISAAC ERTER

A MODERN HEBREW HUMORIST

Though Hebrew literature is commonly reckoned as one of the ancient literatures it has an advantage over them which is not inconsiderable. It is that while no other ancient literature can be said to have ever risen to any remarkable height of excellence after the close of its golden age, in the case of the Hebrew there were at least three noteworthy revivals after its first classical period had ended. The first occurred some time about the return of the ancient Hebrews from the Babylonian exile to Palestine; the second during the Middle Ages in Spain, France, and Italy; and the third in modern times in Galicia, a country which forms part of the Austrian empire. During the second half of the eighteenth century a small band of writers of Hebrew prose and poetry, who may be regarded as the founders of what is now termed the Galician school, flourished there. The foremost representative of the school was Isaac Erter.

He was born in the year 1792 in a small Galician village called Janischock. His father, a poor innkeeper, in spite of his indigence, did not neglect to have his son educated in Hebrew

and Talmudical lore. When young Erter had made some progress in these studies, which, by the way, he only learnt mechanically and on no fixed plan, his father caused him to marry a Rabbi's daughter, who, however, died within the first year after their marriage. Old Erter, however, insisted upon his son marrying again; and the second marriage proved a very happy one, in spite of the difficulties which a married man with no definite means of subsistence is bound to encounter. Perhaps to relieve the monotony of his life he mixed with the members of a strange religious sect known by the name of “Chassidim.” Their chief characteristics were the hilarity and excitement of their lives, and their passionate devotion to their spiritual leader called “Rebbe.” Although these “Rebbes” are, as a rule, illiterate persons, they are nevertheless held in high esteem by their devotees, who credit them with the possession of supernatural powers, by means of which they are able to work miracles. But, after a time, Erter grew weary of this society and its absurd practices, and went to live at Lemberg, the capital of Galicia. There he soon became acquainted with several young men of talent and culture who interested themselves on his behalf, and procured him pupils whom he instructed in Hebrew and religious subjects. They also made him acquainted with the works of Maimonides and Mendelssohn, to the study of which he later on devoted many of his leisure hours. He here passed three happy years (from 1813 to 1816), and enjoyed the society and friendship of some genial spirits, among whom may particularly be mentioned Rapoport, afterwards Chief Rabbi of Prague, and Nachman Krochmal, the renowned Hebrew scholar and philosopher. Subsequently when Jacob Ornstein, the then Chief Rabbi of Lemberg, heard of the existence among his flock of a small and youthful band who occupied themselves with the study of

secular subjects, he became alarmed, and forthwith excommunicated all the culprits. The immediate effect of this upon Erter was the loss of his pupils, and with them of his livelihood. He consequently decided to settle in the neighbouring town of Brody. On his arrival there he met with a hearty reception from the enlightened section of the Jewish community, and as a new Jewish school had just been inaugurated there he was entrusted with its management. After a short time, however, he resigned his position, and made up his mind to prepare himself for a more independent calling. With this object Erter left his grown-up family of daughters in charge of some friends and went to Buda-Pesth, at the university of which town he intended to prepare himself for the medical profession. He was then thirty-three years old, and had neither money nor friends to assist him, but after five years' hard study, accompanied by severe privations, he succeeded in passing all the necessary examinations, and took his degree, and soon after began to practise in the country. It so happened that at that time the cholera was raging, and as Erter displayed considerable skill in dealing with the epidemic, he drew upon himself the attention of the Austrian government, which entrusted him with the task of preparing certain essays, treating of the origin and spread of contagious diseases. Ultimately he returned to Brody, and continued to practise there, making himself especially popular among the poor, who found in him a kindly benefactor. His leisure time he devoted to his favourite occupation, the composition of Hebrew essays, or rather satires on Jewish subjects. He usually sent them to his literary friends to be read and criticized before allowing them to be printed in the current Hebrew periodicals. Among them he reckoned, in addition to Rapoport and Krochmal, Professor S. D. Luzzatto, Shalom Cohen (editor of the Hebrew periodical

Bikurey-Ha-Ittim), and Dr. Letteris, the subsequent editor and publisher of Erter's collected writings under the title of הצופה לבית ישראל[129-1].

The last years of Erter's life were again visited by various trials, chiefly caused by the untimely death of his two married daughters, to whom he had been deeply attached. He did not, however, survive them long. He died in the year 1851.

From what has been said it will be seen that Erter's life was a hard one, and it is to this very circumstance that the existence of the excellent Hebrew satires contained in the *Zophe* is due. His sad experiences during the early part of his married life, his association with the “Chassidim,” the treatment he had received at the hands of the Chief Rabbi of Lemberg, and, finally, the observations he had made in his capacity as a medical practitioner—all these, and many other things, are graphically described therein. His style is full of humour and sarcasm, and the book possesses the true mark of excellence, inasmuch as familiarity with it merely adds to its attractiveness. Erter also wrote some poetical pieces, but they bear no comparison with his masterly prose, which, as Graetz well says, has points of resemblance to that of Heine.

The titles of the satires in question are: 1. מאזני משקל. 2. הצופה בשובו מקארלסבאד. 3. גלגול נפש. 4. תשליך. 5. תלונת סני וסנסני וסמנגלוף. 6. חסידות וחכמה, and each section treats of a different subject. It would be no easy task for any one to reproduce in English, or in any other language, the many beauties of form and style found in the original Hebrew of these satires. Equally difficult would it be to arrange them in order of merit, since each has a peculiar charm of its own. But the following free translation of some parts of the satire,

entitled גלגול נפש ("Transmigration of the Soul"), may, perhaps, give the reader a faint idea of Erter's methods. It begins as follows:—

"I am a physician, and it is my duty to heal the wounds, and to procure a remedy for every disease of the body. It is true that those of my colleagues, who can boast of possessing high-sounding titles, look down upon me with a certain contempt, inasmuch as they think that they alone have a right to speak with authority of things they do not know much about. But I am, nevertheless, as well qualified a medical practitioner as they are, and my patients do not fare worse than theirs. The only difference between them and myself is, perhaps, to be found in the fact that they drive to their patients' houses in splendid carriages, while I visit mine on foot. For the more horses and carriages a physician has, the more knowledge and medical skill is attributed to him by the members of the Jewish faith. Moreover, these distinguished and betitled physicians, who are mostly employed by the wealthy classes of the community, are generally handsomely rewarded for their services, even when their patients die an untimely death, for among the rich even death is an expensive affair. But I, whose chief practice is carried on among the poor, am seldom rewarded for my services, and if any of them die, then his or her soul 'goes out for nothing.'

"I once passed in front of the house in which one of my patients had died shortly before. He did not die quite suddenly, but had been ill for some time, and I was called in to prescribe for him. He happened to be well off, and after I had visited him once or twice, and he got no better, a great crowd of his female neighbours and relations came—for the rich are always surrounded by their relatives and pretended friends—and said

compassionately: ‘This poor sufferer is still in bed, and shall we keep silence? Can that man (pointing to me) be expected to restore him to health again? Where are his horses, and where is his carriage? Let us call in some better and more skilful men, and let them have a consultation about the case!’ Better and more skilful men were summoned; they arrived and examined the patient. They then nodded their wise heads, and prescribed a new medicine, which, having been fetched from the apothecary's shop, was given to the patient. He took it once or twice, and was soon after ‘gathered to his fathers.’”

Here follows a long and humorous description of the author's meeting with the soul of his recently departed patient. The soul told him the story of its many adventures during its long earthly career; how it frequently passed over from one body into another, and how it had once also been transferred from the body of an ass into that of a physician. In that capacity, the soul informed the author that it had prospered greatly, not on account of its cleverness or ability, but because it had acted on certain practical rules which it recommended the author to follow in his profession. The soul then goes on to explain what they are:—

“1. Powder your hair white, and place on the table of your study a human skull and some curious skeletons of the animal world. Those coming to you for medical advice will then say that your hair must surely have turned white through overwork in your profession, and through your protracted studies in the domain of natural science.

“2. Fill your library with large-sized books that are richly bound in red and gold. No matter whether you ever open and read them or not, people will always have a high opinion of

your great acquirements and wisdom.

“3. Sell and pawn everything for the sake of having a carriage of your own. Your patients may die right and left through your errors of judgment, yet the fact of having your carriage waiting outside their doors will shield you from adverse criticism.

“4. If called to a patient you must pay less attention to him and his malady than to those persons who are round about him. On leaving the sick-room assume a grave face, and say that the case is a very critical one. Should the patient die then you will have hinted at his death; but if, on the other hand, he gets well again, his relations and friends will naturally attribute his recovery to your extraordinary medical skill.

“5. Have as little as possible to do with the poor. For, as they will only send for you in hopeless and desperate cases, you will not gain any honour or reward by attending them. Be therefore exceedingly reserved with them, and keep them at a distance. Let them wait outside your house, and those who pass by will look with amazement at the crowd patiently waiting to obtain your services.

“6. Consider every medical practitioner as your natural enemy, and speak always of him with the utmost disparagement. If he happens to be young, then you must say that he has not had sufficient experience, and can do no good; and if he is old, you must declare that either his eyesight is bad, or that he is a little crazy, and is not fit to be trusted in important cases.

“7. If asked to take part in a consultation with other physicians, you will be acting wisely if you always loudly protest against the previous treatment of the case by your

colleagues. Whatever the issue of the case may be, you will always be on the safe side."

In the same satire Erter speaks in by no means flattering terms of his old enemy, the Chief Rabbi of Lemberg, to whom he had already alluded in another satire, entitled מאזני משקל. There he had censured him for having published a bulky commentary on the well-known code of Jewish laws, called *Shulchan Aruch*, under the title of ישועות יעקב, as being the work of his own pen. But Erter shows that the contribution of the learned divine was limited to the title-page, while the rest of it was in reality the work of other authors. Not satisfied with this revelation, however, Erter seizes the opportunity offered to him in the satire "Transmigration of the Soul" to refer again to the soul of the same Rabbi, who had once caused him such great trouble. This soul, says Erter, made him a full confession of its origin, and declared that it had formerly belonged to a mean, scurvy, and ill-tempered watchdog. Being too dangerous an animal to be allowed to move freely about, it had to be kept chained to its kennel. There it kept straining at its chain, watching all the time for any passersby; and when it saw some one coming it began to howl and to bark violently, and incited all the dogs in the neighbourhood to follow his example, resulting in a deafening uproar. Woe to the person who came within its reach without being provided with a long stick or some other protective weapon. For the dog would attack him suddenly, and cause him serious injuries. But, on the other hand, if the stranger were well armed, the savage brute would, in spite of its pretended courage, retreat at once and crouch behind its kennel. This dog once swallowed a big bone, in consequence of which it died an untimely death, but its soul continued its transmigration, and entered the body of a human

being. When the latter grew up and became a man he still retained the nature and the characteristics peculiar to the canine species, or rather to a cowardly watchdog. Unfortunately he thought fit to choose the Jewish ministry for his calling, and as ill-luck would have it succeeded ultimately in obtaining the guardianship of the souls of his flock. Far from following the golden path of a true minister of the Jewish religion, who is in duty bound to promote peace and harmony in his community, he allowed himself to be guided by his canine instinct, and hectored every one whom he disliked. He thundered forth his indiscriminate anathemas against those persons who wished to enter the portals of the temple of knowledge, and induced his adherents to assist him in carrying out his holy work. But, like his cowardly prototype, the watchdog, he only inflicted mortal wounds on the helpless and the unprotected, while he did not dare to harm the rich and powerful, as well as influential members of his flock who resisted him. When the Rabbinical tyrant died his soul, says Erter, migrated into the body of a fox, and thence, in due course, it again entered into the human frame of a spiritual leader of the “Chassidim.”

The “Rebbe” swindle and the clever tricks of the whole fraternity of these performers of supernatural wonders give plenty of scope to Erter's satire, and he is never weary of ridiculing them. In the satire under notice Erter gets hold of the soul of such a “Rebbe,” and causes it to relate some of the adventures through which it had passed during its earthly career. Among other amusing stories it also gives a description of a clever trick, by means of which its late owner, the “Rebbe,” had extricated himself from an awkward position, and shows how he had deceived his devotees even at the time of his death.

“My own son,” says the soul of the departed ‘Rebbe,’ “was once ill, and my wife, his mother, came to me and implored me to offer prayers to God that his life might be spared. ‘Be not afraid,’ I said to her, ‘the son of God's favourite will not perish.’ Next day, and the day after, my wife begged me again in the name of heaven and earth to intercede on behalf of the poor sufferer whose illness had meanwhile taken a turn for the worse. But I answered, and said, ‘Compose yourself, you silly woman. I have already assured you that my son shall not die.’ Later in the day my wife rushed into my room, bathed in tears, and exclaiming, ‘Alas, the Lord has dealt very bitterly with me, and has taken from me my beloved child. What shall I do, and what shall my life be without him, the joy of my existence?’ Now it so happened that several of my devotees were present when I told my wife that her son would *not* die, and again when she actually informed me of his death. I was thus placed in an awkward predicament; but soon a happy thought struck me, which helped me out of my embarrassment. I pretended to be amazed at the sad news, and exclaimed, ‘What? am I to believe that my own son has died, and no information has reached me from heaven? No! never. You may do with my son whatever you like, but I cannot acknowledge his death till it has been officially notified to me from the world of spirits.’ And when, in due course, the remains of my son were carried away to their last resting-place, I did not tear my garments according to the general custom, nor did I follow the funeral procession, pretending all the time to be unaware of the fact of my son's death. But after the lapse of several days, when sitting one evening in the midst of my adherents and devotees, explaining to them some passages of the Bible in my own mysterious way, I suddenly burst into tears. ‘Alas!’ I exclaimed, ‘now, just now, I begin to believe in my son's

death, for a heavenly message has just informed me of the sorrowful event.’ Soon after, I began to mourn over my son's demise, and all the people round about me looked on with amazement, and believed in me and in my holiness more firmly and more truly than they had ever done before.”

The soul then goes on to relate the circumstances which caused its departure from the “Rebbe's” body.

“One evening,” it said, “which happened to be the eve of the festival called Simchath Torah, the ‘Rebbe’ leaped and danced, according to his usual custom, round the *Bimah* (‘reading platform’) of his little synagogue, amidst the acclamations of his devotees. As on many other occasions he had then also drunk a good deal of intoxicating wine, and felt exceedingly jolly. In that sportive mood he called out: ‘Make room for all the saints of the Bible, who have just come here to rejoice with me on this joyful festival. Let me drink the health of Father Abraham and of the other patriarchs, who accompany him.’ And amidst his shouting and drinking he suddenly beheld a vision. It seemed to him that the walls of the synagogue were turning round and round, and, fearing lest he might fall to the ground, and his condition be observed by the bystanders, he quickly exclaimed: ‘Come ye, my spiritual guests, Abraham, Isaac, and all the rest of you, and follow me to my own room. There we will have a sacred meeting, and discuss our secret affairs.’ Saying which, he staggered into his own room, and locked and bolted the door behind him.

“When the devotees saw this, they said to each other: ‘No one is like our Master; no one can be compared to our holy “Rebbe”; he is a perfect saint, the Holy of holies to the letter. How they all left paradise, those great and exalted personages

of the Bible, and have come to his place of worship, in order to rejoice in his pleasant company. Nay, before our very eyes has he spoken to them as a man speaks to his friends, and amidst leaping and dancing has he addressed them familiarly, and loudly toasted their health. Now, they are all assembled in his room where they are discussing certain matters concerning ourselves, such as our final release from bondage, and our return to Zion by the help of the Messiah. Our "Rebbe" will also succeed in subduing the powers of the evil spirit, *Samael*, along with all the other legions of evil spirits; he will tread him under his feet, and will thus prevent him from doing us any harm.'

"While they were thus addressing each other, and their minds were occupied with the discussion of the 'Rebbe's' doings, a boy rushed in breathlessly, and, in the greatest consternation, told all those present that he had just seen the body of the 'Rebbe' lying lifeless on the ground in the yard of his house. Thereupon all the Chassidim ran out woe-stricken and terrified, and behold, there, on a heap of refuse, close to the window of the 'Rebbe's' room, lay his corpse, the dead body of the great saint. At the sight of which they began weeping and lamenting, and said: 'Alas, on account of our own sins and transgressions of the law that righteous man had died. The evil spirit *Samael* has overpowered him, and has thrown him through the window into the yard.'

"But the truth is—thus the soul concludes its narrative—that he had no quarrel with Satan, nor any fight with the rest of the evil spirits. The evil spirit that caused his untimely death was of quite a different nature. It was the spirit he had drunk that had cut short his existence. For, after his heavy potations of the evening, the 'Rebbe' felt rather ill. He opened the window of

his room, and leant out into the fresh air. No sooner had he done so than he lost his balance, and fell headlong on the stones below. No immediate help being near at hand he soon after expired."

There are several other passages in Erter's writings which treat the same subject equally humorously, but another short extract from one of the satires, having for its title "Piety and Wisdom," will suffice. After having pointed out in general terms the great advantages which the calling of a "Rebbe" offers, the author takes the young aspirant into his confidence, and describes its glorious prospects in the following words:—

"When," says he, "you are a holy man, you will have a greater treasury than the king has, inasmuch as all the gold and silver belonging to your devotees, who may live in your district, will be yours. Any king or ruler of a land, who wishes to levy taxes from his loyal subjects, is obliged to appoint and employ tax-collectors for that purpose, but your adherents will place all their money and wealth at your disposal without your asking for it. Should any one of them fall ill, money will be sent to you to offer up prayers for his recovery. You keep, at any rate, those monetary presents, for if such patients die it will generally be assumed that their death was a punishment for their previous evil doings; but if they are restored again to life and health, then that fact will be attributed to the efficacy of your prayers. The same will be the case when people come to you to obtain your advice in regard to business or matrimonial matters. If they are successful, and everything turns out to be according to their heart's desire, then it is you and your great divine power that have effected all this; but, on the other hand, if your counsel and foretelling lead them astray, they will have to ascribe their failure to their own follies and misdeeds."

Erter succeeded in infusing a new life and spirit into the Hebrew tongue, which is generally classed among the dead languages. To quote the words that he himself uses on behalf of the genius of the Hebrew language, “I am dead in the mouths of my children, but I live still in their hearts.” Erter did more than only protest against the lack of originality in later Hebrew writers; he himself supplied the deficiency. But he was no mere writer of Hebrew prose. He had the welfare of his Jewish countrymen constantly at heart, and it was with the object of improving their low mental and social position that he wrote those satires, in which their shortcomings and follies were censured and ridiculed. He spared no class; Rabbi and layman alike felt the sting of his scorn, and it was by this means that he really did some good. For some time he also edited, in co-operation with some friends, a Hebrew periodical under the name of *He-Chaluz* (החלוץ), which continued to appear after his death. This journal was intended to promote the enlightenment and learning of the Jews in Galicia, and gradually to win their sympathies for his favourite project, namely, the establishment of an agricultural colony in his own country, in which Jewish young men should be employed in tilling the ground, and in farming tracts of land on their own account. This healthy and useful occupation, he maintained, would help to decrease, to a great extent, the misery and poverty, which are, even now, the characteristic feature of that particular part of the Austrian empire. And strange to say the very plan, which was drawn up so many years ago by Erter without being carried into effect, has quite recently been taken up again in the capital of Austria by the most influential members of the Jewish community, at the instigation of the late Baron Hirsch.

Erter's writings form but a slender volume, but it may safely be said that they will outlive many a more pretentious work. True humour is a rare possession, and Erter's style will never cease to be a source of delight to those who have a relish for keen satire, and for an elegant and poetical employment of the language of the Bible.

Footnotes:

[129-1] Vienna, 1858; second edition, 1864.

XIII

LEOPOLD ZUNZ[140-1]

Among the prominent Jewish scholars of the nineteenth century Zunz will always occupy a high place. Like Moses Mendelssohn in his time, Zunz, in a later generation, carried on his spiritual work among his people with unceasing energy and ability, though in a somewhat different direction. While the former rendered a lasting service to the Jews by arousing in their minds a love for secular studies, Zunz conferred a no less important benefit upon them by bringing to light a large mass of literary matter, which was the result of his lifelong critical researches into Jewish history and literature. In these two departments Zunz was, in fact, a pioneer, and the works he published in connexion with them have proved themselves to be of considerable assistance to the student. The present essay is mainly intended to give the reader some notion of the contents of Zunz's most important writings, but it will also contain a brief sketch of his life.

Leopold Zunz[140-2] was born at Detmold, in Germany, on August 10, 1794 (15th of *Ab*, 5554). His early life was passed at Hamburg, where his father had opened a Hebrew school. There young Zunz received his first training, but after the death of his father he was sent by his mother to Samson's Free

School at Wolfenbüttel, where his intelligence attracted the attention of one of his teachers, Samuel Meyer Ehrenberg by name, who bestowed special care upon him. Here it may be mentioned, in passing, that Jost, the historian, was his schoolfellow, and that a close friendship sprang up between them, which lasted both their lives[141-1].

In 1809, when only fifteen years old, Zunz was already found capable of assisting in tuition at his own school, but while teaching others he made use of all the available time at his disposal to increase his own knowledge. He attended for some years the Gymnasium at Wolfenbüttel, and in 1815 he matriculated at the Berlin University, being the first Jew admitted as a student to a Prussian university. The principal studies he pursued there, were history, philology, and mathematics. He frequented especially the lectures of De Wette, F. A. Wolf, and Boeckh. He also employed part of his time in reading books of modern literature, and in 1817 he published a few pieces of light prose and verse in some Berlin periodicals. From a pecuniary point of view Zunz derived very little advantage from these literary contributions, but they were nevertheless useful to him, inasmuch as they made his name known in some of the Berlin literary circles, and thus paved the way for his subsequent appointment to the post of editor-in-chief of the *Sperner'sche Zeitung* that appeared daily in Berlin as a political paper.

It was fortunate for Zunz that, while at the university, he still kept up his previous studies in Hebrew and Rabbinical lore, for owing no doubt to the knowledge he possessed of these subjects he was appointed, in 1820, the first German preacher of the Reformed Synagogue at Berlin. This appointment, however, he gave up voluntarily, after having held it for two

years; the reason for so doing is stated in the preface to his *Collection of Sermons*, which he published at Berlin in 1823. It appears that Zunz, noticing the general indifference of his congregation in religious matters, spoke his mind pretty freely about it in the pulpit. His audiences consequently diminished, and his position became intolerable. He therefore resigned his office, but was lucky enough after to find employment on the above-mentioned paper, which enabled him to marry the lady of his choice. This was Adelaide, *née* Berman, a relation of David Frankel, Chief Rabbi of Berlin[142-1].

In 1835 Zunz accepted the offer made by a section of the Jewish community of Prague to become its preacher, but, after a year's stay at Prague, he returned to Berlin, where he was subsequently appointed Principal of the Training College for Jewish teachers. When, in 1850, this institution ceased to exist, Zunz retired into private life, receiving, however, a small pension from the Berlin community as an acknowledgment of the useful services he had rendered to Judaism by his contributions to Jewish science and literature. On this scanty income, sometimes slightly increased by the profits of his books, Zunz and his wife managed to live pretty comfortably, and even occasionally to entertain their friends. Among the latter may specially be mentioned Professor Gans, M. Jost, Joseph Lehmann, M. Moser, Dr. Carrière, the Deputy Warburg, and last, but not least, Heinrich Heine. Heine seems to have been especially attached to them. He used to read to them his poems in MS., some of them, which bear a specific Jewish colouring, were very probably suggested by his learned host[142-2]. In his visits to England, France, and Italy, Zunz inspected many rare MSS., which had been hidden away in various public and private libraries, and likewise obtained fresh

material for his literary works.

Zunz always referred to his wife in the most affectionate terms, and in a letter addressed to a friend some time before her death he said that for a period of forty-two years she had been a most faithful helpmate to him, sharing all his joys and sorrows, and encouraging him in his work. Her death, which occurred on August 18, 1874, caused Zunz the greatest sorrow, and from that moment he became more and more melancholy, and was never again in a fit state of mind to undertake any important literary work. Yet he lived, though in strict retirement, to celebrate his ninetieth birthday, on which occasion a tribute of respect was paid to him by some of his friends and admirers, which took the shape of a volume, entitled *Jubelschrift zum 90sten Geburtstag des Dr. Leopold Zunz*. It contained literary contributions from Steinschneider, Neubauer, Jellinek, Güdemann, David Kaufmann, Derenbourg, and other scholars. A few years later, viz. on March 17, 1886, corresponding to the 11th of the Hebrew month of *Adar*, Zunz died peacefully. Zunz's valuable and interesting library was subsequently bought by the Trustees of the Montefiore College Library at Ramsgate, while his unpublished MSS. were taken possession of by the Trustees of the so-called “Zunz-Stiftung,” founded at Berlin in 1864 in commemoration of Zunz's seventieth birthday, with the object of giving pecuniary assistance to Jewish authors, and enabling them to publish such of their MSS. as the authorities of the “Stiftung” considered fit.

Zunz's literary labours began at an early age. In 1818 he published an essay entitled *A Study in Rabbinical Literature*, which is specially interesting on account of its containing a definition of the various subjects that constitute Jewish literature, to which, however, neither past nor contemporary

students had paid due attention. It may at once be said that, though it was originally written with the view of inducing scholars of his time to work out the subjects mentioned therein, it was the author himself who did the most in giving effect to his own suggestions.

In 1823 he published a sketch of the life and works of the famous commentator on the Bible and the Talmud, Rabbi Solomon Yizchaki, commonly called “Rashi” (1040–1105). This essay may be said to be a model biographical sketch. It contains almost all the ingredients which go to compose an interesting and instructive whole. It is characterized by method and the critical acumen, which is generally sadly lacking in biographies written before his time, and has indicated new lines of thought in more directions than one.

A few years later, in 1830, Zunz's attention was drawn to a book entitled *Théorie du Judaïsme*, which a French priest, Chiarini by name, had published at Paris, in which he inimically discussed the Talmud and Rabbinical literature generally. Being himself unable to read the Rabbinical writings in the original, Chiarini contented himself with the repetition of almost all the adverse criticisms which had appeared in the writings of Buxtorf, Bartolocci, Eisenmenger, and others. At the time of the publication of this book Zunz was collecting materials for his intended great work *Homilies of the Jews*, but he found time to write and issue a small pamphlet under the title of *Beleuchtung der “Théorie du Judaïsme” des Abbé Chiarini* (Berlin, 1830), pointing out therein some of the more flagrant inaccuracies and plagiarisms of Chiarini's book.

But Zunz did not belong to that class of critical reviewers who, though quick in detecting the faults of others, cannot

show that they themselves would have done much better in the same field of work. For two years after the issue of Chiarini's book (in 1832) he published a work which showed at once the master-mind of a first-rate scholar, and gained for its author an enduring fame. This work was entitled *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden* ("Homilies of the Jews"). There the author gives a description of the evolution of culture among the Jews extending over more than two thousand years. Beginning with a general survey of the great moral influence, which the teachings of the Bible had exercised on the mind of the Jewish people, the author goes on to define Jewish tradition, and to describe its progress and its development. The reader thus becomes acquainted with the history of the genesis of the Mishna, the Talmud, and the Midrash, and likewise with the form of prayers and sermons that prevailed at different times among the Jews. Speaking of sermons Zunz shows in his *Gottesdienstliche Vorträge* that preaching has at all times formed an important part of the synagogue service, and that, during the eighteenth century, sermons were even delivered in the vernacular in several Jewish places of worship belonging to Portuguese congregations. Zunz's special object was to show the injustice of the decree of the Prussian government, which forbade preaching in synagogues, on the plea that it was an exclusively Christian institution. This he contended was not historically correct, as long before the dawn of Christianity the use of homilies in synagogues was common, and ought, therefore, not to be interfered with in modern times. Thus it will be seen that Zunz had a double object in view in this book. In the first place, he desired to point out to his own people the vast amount of interesting and valuable material to be extracted from the wide field of Jewish literature; and, in the second, he wished to afford the outer world an insight into the intellectual

life of the Jews of past ages. They were then, according to the evidence adduced by Zunz, much more civilized and cultured than their unscrupulous enemies declared them to be, and they had, therefore, a good right to claim in the country of their birth perfect equality in the eyes of the law.

Zunz's second great work, entitled *Beiträge zur Geschichte und Literatur*, was published in 1845. It contains a number of essays on diverse Jewish subjects, which are full of interest. In the preface to this work the author makes the following noteworthy remarks: “Jewish literature plays an important part in the general culture of the nations of antiquity, and is also closely connected with the origin and the gradual development of Christianity at large. It has likewise exercised a marked influence on past and present generations, and participating, as it did, in their common struggles and sufferings, it has become, as it were, a supplement to the entire literature of the world. And indeed, if mental activity generally may be compared to a vast and boundless sea, then Jewish literature deserves to be designated as one of the streams which flowed into it and helped it to a wider expansion.”

Though, as already stated, the contents of the *Beiträge* are of a varied description, they deal chiefly with that section of Jewish literature that owes its existence to the Jewish writers of the Middle Ages. Mention is made of a good many mediaeval Jewish commentators on the Bible and the Talmud, as well as of grammarians and moralists. Instructive remarks are made on some of them, most of whose names and writings had scarcely been known before. Here our admiration for Zunz's rare talents must be enhanced when it is observed how out of stray paragraphs and notes found in old and neglected MSS., in rare prints, or on almost illegible tombstones, he has actually

created a standard book of reference, which has now become indispensable to every student of Jewish literature.

In the course of his investigations in the *Beiträge* Zunz touches on a subject which ought not to be passed over unnoticed. He refers to the crass ignorance sometimes manifested by Christian scholars in regard to Judaism and its literature. He quotes, for example, the names of a few French writers, who had published books dealing with Jewish subjects, of which they knew as little as the aforementioned Chiarini. One of them, Cupefigne by name, actually won the prize offered by the French Academy for the best essay on the subject, *L'État littéraire des Juifs dans le moyen âge*. But as a specimen of what he actually knew of the Talmud Zunz quotes the following note he found in the essay. It runs thus: *Le Gemare titre Sanhed. Sectio 14; le Talmud même titre*. With this kind of Talmudical knowledge says Zunz, with just indignation, a French professor has ventured to write a long dissertation on Rabbinical literature, for which he was rewarded by the most learned literary society in France with a valuable prize[147-1].

Another masterpiece of Zunz, ranking almost as high as his *Homilies of the Jews*, is *Die synagogale Poesie*, which deals specially with the *Piyutim* and *Selichoth*, and which was published in 1855. It is virtually only the first volume of a work, which would certainly have remained incomplete without the two additional volumes, issued in 1859 and 1865 under the respective titles *Die Ritus des synagogalen Gottesdienstes* and *Nachtrag zur Literaturgeschichte der synagogalen Poesie*. Each of these volumes treats of a variety of subjects, though they all belong to one and the same department.

Though the literary matter contained and discussed in *Die synagogale Poesie* is extremely copious and interesting, it is impossible to do more, within the limits of a short essay, than to refer to it briefly. Beginning with the Psalms the author describes the process of the gradual development of psalmody into the so-called *Agadah*, and that of the latter into the various kinds of prayers usually read in the synagogue, including the "Penitential Poems," called *Selichoth*. These, containing, as they do, some of the most heartrending incidents in the mediaeval history of the Jews, Zunz discusses with special warmth and feeling. One particular passage excited the admiration of George Eliot, who printed a translation of it in *Daniel Deronda*. It runs as follows:—

"If there are ranks in suffering, Israel takes precedence of all the Nations;—if the duration of sorrows, and the patience with which they are borne, ennoble, the Jews are among the aristocracy of every land;—if a literature is called rich in the possession of a few classical tragedies, what shall we say to a national Tragedy lasting for fifteen hundred years, in which the poets and actors were also the heroes."

When some later writers, including Professor Paul Legarde, criticized the *Synagogale Poesie* adversely, asserting that Zunz had wasted his time and energy in the preparation of an elaborate work on the *Piyutim*, most of which are admittedly valueless, the late Professor David Kaufmann defended his friend, the author, in a remarkable pamphlet. He says, *inter alia*, that in writing about the *Piyutim* Zunz was chiefly actuated by the desire to display before the eyes of the world the unexampled miseries and sufferings, which the Jewish people endured during a period extending over more than a thousand years. Thus it was obvious that, whether the *Piyutim*

have by their existence enriched Hebrew literature or not, Zunz has, at all events, by his long dissertation on them, brought to light a piece of history of his people which, for various reasons, was worthy of a permanent record.

Another noteworthy point connected with the *Synagogale Poesie* is, that it contains a considerable number of versified German translations of pieces of liturgical Hebrew poetry, which renders them more intelligible to the ordinary reader than would otherwise have been the case. The following example may serve here as an illustration. One of the dullest liturgical pieces composed by the Hebrew writer Kaliri (about 700 A. D.) is no doubt the Hebrew hymn beginning with the words, *Adam-u-behemah* (אדם ובהמה), which is read in most of the synagogues on *Hoshanah Rabbah*. Yet Zunz translated it into excellent German. A free English translation is appended: —

On all that lives and moves
Look down, O Lord, with grace;
Preserve in health and strength
The feeble human race.
Oh, let the earth again
In spring-like aspect shine,
Producing lovely flowers,
Delicious figs and vine.
Let rain bedew the fields,
The mountains high and low,
That plants, and herbs, and trees
Luxuriously grow.
Arouse anew to life
All that abides on earth,
And let our hearts rejoice
In lively songs and mirth.

It may be mentioned here, in passing, that some of Zunz's

poetical German translations are in style and form hardly inferior to the specimen renderings of Eastern poetry found in the works of Goethe, Herder, Rückert, and Bodenstedt. In fact, it is not too much to say that Zunz's German poetry and prose are classical. His style is praised by Varnhagen von Ense, who describes it in his *Diary* as being in many places most elegant and attractive.

As already stated, it was in 1859 that Zunz published an additional volume to the *Synagogale Poesie*, called *Die Ritus des synagogalen Gottesdienstes*, which mostly consists of inquiries into synagogal rites. He alludes to the varied rites that had been in vogue among Jews living in different countries, and he points out certain customs adopted by the synagogue which had their origin in the Christian Church. To these, he says, belong the customs of making monetary offerings in the synagogue during the reading of the Law, which had, however, long been in use in the Gallic Church. There, in return for such offerings, the officiating priest was wont to read a prayer, called in Latin *Oratio post nomina*. This prayer corresponds, according to Zunz, to the one still recited in some synagogues by the precentor on mentioning the offerings made by the person “called-up” to the reading of the Law, which is well known by the name of *Mi-Sheberach* (מי׳ שברך). Zunz also thinks that the usage practised in the synagogue of reciting prayers in memory of the souls of departed parents and near relations, likewise originated in the Christian Church, as mention is made of it in the early Christian liturgy.

The third volume forming part of the *Synagogale Poesie* was, as already stated, published by Zunz in 1865 under the title of *Die Literaturgeschichte der synagogalen Poesie*. Though a small supplement was added to it about two years

later under the heading of *Nachträge zur Literaturgeschichte der synagogalen Poesie*, it virtually closed the series of Zunz's three epoch-making works that deal almost exhaustively with the most important branches of Jewish science and literature. In this particular field of study and research, Zunz proved himself to be a first-rate critic and investigator, and there he also attained conspicuous success. But, while admiring in Zunz his many-sided talents, and more especially his extensive knowledge of earlier and later Hebrew literature, credit must also be given him for the honesty with which he records the obligations he owed to his literary friends for their aid in the preparations of his literary compositions. Among them may be specially mentioned Delitzsch, Rapoport, Luzzatto, Sachs, and Dukes, with all of whom Zunz for many years carried on a lively correspondence. This helped him greatly in his researches. Thus, for instance, in 1832, Zunz was only aware of the existence of 200 *Selichoth*, but from the information supplied by his friends he was enabled to add to the list of these liturgical poems until they had reached the large number of 1,816.

It is natural that Zunz had many admirers among men of education, who were able to read and appreciate his German works. Yet it is interesting to note that a great many Jews, who were only slightly acquainted with German, but had an extensive knowledge of Hebrew and the Talmud, held him in great esteem as a Hebrew scholar. This distinction Zunz owed to his mastery over the Hebrew style, examples of which are to be found in the preface to his edition of Krochmal's *Morè Nebuche Ha-Z'man* (מורה נבוכי הזמן), and likewise in the Hebrew periodical *Kerem Chemed*. The latter contains a biographical sketch of the famous Jewish critic, Azariah de

Rossi (1514–98), which is not only remarkable for its learning, but also for the excellence of its composition. Zunz also wrote some pretty Hebrew verses, specimens of which he gave in his metric Hebrew translation of Klopstock's *Die Sommernacht*, which appeared (in 1819) in Heinemann's Annual, called *Yedidja*.

It is to be regretted that Zunz, when at the height of his fame, and already advanced in years, thought fit to write an essay published in the *Zeitschrift der deutsch-morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, vol. XXVII, pp. 669–89, embodying the views of Biblical criticism of the advanced school. There he tries to prove, for instance, that Leviticus and certain parts of Deuteronomy were composed at a much later date than tradition has assigned to them, and that the Day of Atonement and the festivals of New Year and Purim were unknown to the early composers of the Pentateuch. These views naturally aroused the anger of all strictly orthodox Jews, and they also brought him in conflict with his ultra-radical friend Geiger, who censured him for his obvious inconsistency, because in another essay (published in the second part of his *Gesammelte Schriften*) Zunz spoke of the practice of wearing phylacteries as a noble and sacred institution which ought to be rigorously observed, while here he questioned the sanctity of the holiest day in the Jewish calendar. But, though Zunz subsequently defended his apparently antagonistic views to the accepted traditions of the Jews, it would certainly have been better for his reputation had he left Biblical criticism alone.

Zunz was undoubtedly filled with a deep love for his people. By his labours he showed to the world that the Jews had, like other nations, a history, a science, a philosophy, and a remarkable literature, on the strength of which they were

entitled to claim equal rights and privileges with their fellow men in all that concerned their intellectual, social, and political life. In this point his aims and ideals were somewhat akin to those of his great prototype and predecessor Moses Mendelssohn. In fact, they had much in common both in respect of their life and their character. Both being of humble origin, they had both at the outset of their scholastic career to contend with poverty and want. They were both deeply attached to their people, and did what in them lay to remove their disabilities, and especially to encourage them in the correct use of their native tongue. It is true that in religious matters neither of them exercised a favourable influence on his surroundings. But this at least will be universally admitted that the admiration entertained by Heine for Hebrew literature was chiefly due to his long and friendly intercourse with Zunz, which no doubt gave rise to those laudatory expressions found in his *Perlen des Romancero*, his *Rabbi von Bacharach*, and more especially in his book entitled *Heine über Börne*.

Was Zunz ever really happy? This question, if raised, could hardly be answered affirmatively. Long before and after his marriage he experienced constant disappointments; and as for the state of his mind subsequent to the death of his wife—who, by the way, left him childless—we learn from the correspondence he then carried on with Professor David Kaufmann, how completely overcome he was. The fact is, that Zunz fancied that he and his works were not sufficiently known to, and appreciated by, his co-religionists and the literary fraternity of the day, and on this account he once sent to Kaufmann the following characteristic lines:—

Bist du mit Grafen nicht verwandt,
Und Börsenrittern unbekannt—
Du wirst—sei immerhin ein *Kant*—
Von Zeitungsschreibern nie genannt.

On another occasion, when writing to him, Zunz complains of the indifference manifested towards him and his works by the Jews, and with bitter irony he goes on to say that they would no doubt have established an annual fast-day in his memory had he been the Gedaliah of the Bible, a governor of a Jewish province, and murdered by an assassin's hand[153-1].

Zunz considered himself, and more especially in his declining years, a disappointed man; but if the extent of a man's happiness is to be measured by the amount of useful work he has done for the benefit of others, then Zunz deserves more to be envied than to be pitied. He has certainly not lived and laboured, as he himself fancied, in vain. He will always occupy a foremost place in the annals of Jewish history and scholarship, and will ever be honoured as the Nestor of Jewish science and literature.

Footnotes:

[140-1] A sketch of the “Life and Works” of Zunz by the writer of this article has appeared in German (in 1890) in Dr. Rahmer's *Literaturblatt*.

[140-2] In one of his letters to the late Prof. David Kaufmann, Zunz explains the origin of his name by saying that it was originally “Zons,” having been adopted by an ancestor of his from his little native town, which was situated somewhere on the banks of the Rhine.

[141-1] In another of his letters to Prof. Kaufmann, Zunz mentions the names of two works, the reading of which especially inclined him to the serious study of Jewish historical and literary works. These were the Jewish historical book צמח

דוד, by David Gans (1641–1718), and the *Bibliotheca Hebraea*, by Wolfius (1689–1739).

[142-1] He also was Moses Mendelssohn's Talmudical teacher.

[142-2] In one of his letters to Prof. Kaufmann, Zunz mentions that he had in his chest many old missives from Heine.

[147-1] In Geiger's *Jüdische Zeitschrift* (1868) Zunz has an article containing several other amusing mistakes made by Christian scholars, when translating Hebrew phrases into Latin, or into the vernacular. The following is a characteristic specimen: The well-known Hebrew phrase, occurring in the Passover Hagadah, זו פרישות דרך ארץ, is translated by Rittangel by *Dispersio per omnem viam terrae*!

[153-1] This letter to Kaufmann was written at Berlin, and dated Sept. 10, 1877.

XIV

SAMUEL DAVID LUZZATTO AND ZACHARIAH FRANKEL

I

THE nineteenth century is remarkable in the annals of Jewish history and bibliography on account of the many eminent Jewish scholars it has produced, men who greatly enlarged the field of what is known in modern phrase as the science of Judaism. They threw new light on diverse Jewish subjects of much importance, such as the Mishna, the Talmud, the Midrash, and likewise on general Jewish history and literature. Especially notable were Zunz, Rapoport, Geiger, Munk, Jost, Fürst, Jellinek, Luzzatto, and Frankel.

The two last-named savants form the subject of the present essay, and are here treated together, not merely because the centenary of their birth was some time ago celebrated in several Jewish communities within the same year, but because they were the renowned heads of two Rabbinical colleges, which brought about a revival of Talmudical and general Jewish studies.

Samuel David Luzzatto was born at Trieste, in Austria, in

August, 1800. He belonged to an old Italian Jewish family, several members of which occupied conspicuous places in the annals of Jewish history and scholarship. The most noted among them were Moses Hayim Luzzatto (1707–40), the well-known author of two delightful Hebrew dramas, entitled *La-Yesharim Téhilla* and *Migdal Oz*, and Ephraïm Luzzatto, who (in 1768) published in London a collection of charming little Hebrew poems and songs[154-1], which is spoken of in eulogistic terms by Franz Delitzsch, in his *Geschichte der jüdischen Poesie*. Samuel D. Luzzatto received his early education at the excellent Jewish Free School of his native town, where he studied Biblical and Talmudical subjects, general science, and ancient and modern languages. On leaving school, Luzzatto chose literature as his future calling, and with that purpose in view he applied himself with the utmost zeal to the study of the Italian language and literature, which he in later years knew almost to perfection. At the age of nineteen he became, by mere chance, known throughout the whole of Italy as a talented writer of Italian verses. It so happened that the then Austrian Crown Prince, who subsequently became Emperor of Austria, paid a flying visit to Trieste, and that the leaders of the local Jewish community commissioned young Luzzatto to write an Italian sonnet in commemoration of the royal visit. The Prince expressed his appreciation of its excellence by causing it to be published in several leading papers of the country.

But a far more substantial recognition of his attainments was accorded to Luzzatto a few years later in the shape of a professorship at the Collegio Rabbinico, which, at the instigation of the Austrian government, had been established at Padua in the year 1829. A little before this Luzzatto had

married the daughter of one of his former masters, and having just finished his first important literary work on *Targum Onkelos*, called *Oheb Ger*, he bestowed upon his firstborn son the name of "Philoxenes," which was a literal translation of the title of his book. The book was not printed for some time, as the only publisher who was willing to produce it, made the curious stipulation that the author should bind himself to buy 200 copies of his own work! This was the *honorarium* offered at the beginning of last century to a Jewish scholar for an epoch-making work. Undaunted by this discouragement Luzzatto continued his literary occupation, and the fruits of his labours ultimately appeared in print, partly during his lifetime and partly after his death. They dealt with a great variety of subjects, more especially with Biblical exegesis, homiletics, Jewish history, philosophy, and poetry. Poetry was one of Luzzatto's favourite subjects, and he enriched it with many valuable contributions of his own, which mostly appeared in his two volumes entitled *Kinnor Naïm* (כנור נעים). To Luzzatto credit is also due for having unearthed a great number of Hebrew MSS. containing poems and songs, which had Ibn Gabirol, Jehuda Halevi, the two Ibn Ezras, and other famous Hebrew writers of the Middle Ages for their authors. Luzzatto devoted a great deal of his time and attention to editing them, although he knew very well from past experiences that work of this kind was a labour of love only, and nothing more. He was always most willing to assist, in a literary sense, any one who asked him for the loan of a copy of a rare Hebrew MS., which he happened to possess, and would himself very often copy it out with his own hands. Writing to Luzzatto, Zunz once reproached him for his generosity to unknown persons, who often took advantage of his kindness and abused it. In his reply to Zunz he said: "It lies in my nature to act in literary matters

just as I do. If to-day Satan himself were to come to me and ask for a MS., which he wished to have printed in Hades, I would kiss his hands and cheerfully comply with his request. For surely I do not work for my own benefit, nor for any ambitious purpose of my own.”

For many years Luzzatto carried on a correspondence with some of the most renowned savants of his time, such as Rapoport, Zunz, Steinschneider, the Christian professors Delitzsch, Rosenmüller, and Martinet, in addition to whom might also be mentioned Geiger, Sachs, Dukes, Jellinek, Fürst, Kirchheim, Reggio, and Ghirondi. They all profited more or less from the literary contents of his letters, which they frequently utilized in their own work. Luzzatto wrote Hebrew, Aramaic, Latin, French, and German with a certain amount of ease and fluency, but he was a master of Italian prose and verse. A renowned Italian poetess, Eugenia Pavia Gentilomo by name, thought so much of his taste that she always submitted her poems in MS. to him before she sent them to the press for publication.

Though Luzzatto's general correspondence was large the bulk of it was with Rapoport and Geiger. It is a well-known fact that Geiger was greatly helped by Luzzatto in the preparation of his excellent German version of Jehuda Halevi's Hebrew poems and songs. On one occasion, when Geiger delayed in answering a long letter of Luzzatto's, the latter reminded him of his omission in a poem consisting of four stanzas, each of which was composed in another language. One stanza, written in French, is worth reproducing:—

Monsieur le Grand-Rabbin, Abraham Violoniste[157-1]
Avez-vous tout d'un coup cassé le violon?
Ne donne-t-elle plus votre main le doux son,
L'aimable mélodie, ranimant l'esprit triste?

Equally interesting is a German poem by Geiger to Luzzatto, accompanying a copy of Jehuda Halevi's works, in which he gratefully acknowledges his many obligations to Luzzatto. It runs as follows:—

Aus frommer Dichter Stamm, selbst frommer Dichter,
Ein Weiser, Edler, mild zugleich als Richter,
Ein Nil, der überströmend Segen spendet,
Doch Deines Wissensfluth nicht Schlamm aussendet.
Hast meine Fluren auch getränket,
Dort edle Reben eingesenket.
Die Frucht ist reif, lass sie Dir reichen,
Nimm sie als treuer Freundschaft Zeichen.

In spite of his multifarious literary occupations Luzzatto devoted particular care and attention to his professorial duties in the Collegio Rabbinico. It was his ambition to make it a model for all Rabbinical colleges. His disciples, consisting as they did of Italians, Germans, Poles, and Russians, loved and revered their master, who, in his turn, treated them as if they were his personal friends, and took the liveliest interest in their affairs. He took a special pride in noting in his own works any clever idea suggested by his pupils in the course of his lectures, and he thus encouraged them to literary enterprise on their own account. If the question were asked what the leading feature of Luzzatto's character was, it might unhesitatingly be answered that it was conscientiousness. When it is remembered how he had to struggle against absolute poverty for many years, and how frequently his home was visited by sickness and death, his

whole-hearted devotion to his duties, his enthusiasm in his literary pursuits, and his universal kindness become intensified. It was this conscientiousness which led him to decline the post of *Haham* to the Spanish and Portuguese congregation in London, because he thought that he could not acquire sufficient mastery over the English language to enable him to preach in it satisfactorily.

It is interesting to note that Luzzatto's literary activity continued almost till his death. His very last literary production was a Hebrew sonnet composed in commemoration of the sixth centenary of the birth of Dante. Luzzatto died after a short illness, on the eve of the Day of Atonement, in 1865.

The limits of an essay do not permit of entering on any detailed account of Luzzatto's multifarious books and treatises. Suffice it to say that, if put together, they would occupy a large space in a small library. It is, however, not the quantity but rather the quality of his writings that commands our close attention. This is specially the case with those which deal with the exposition of the Bible. To this particular branch of study Luzzatto devoted much time, and to his credit it must be said that he was one of the first Jewish scholars of the nineteenth century who took it up seriously and with conspicuous success.

It would be idle to ignore altogether Luzzatto's faults and inconsistencies, which resulted in a rupture with some of his best friends. As an instance may be mentioned his quarrels with Rapoport, Geiger, and some other friends. Again, he sometimes expressed the most radical views concerning the *Massorah*, and, on the other hand, attacked the works of Maimonides and Ibn Ezra on account of their liberal ideas in the exposition of certain Biblical subjects. But, in spite of all

this, we cannot and must not diminish our admiration for a man like Luzzatto, whose self-sacrificing efforts were always directed towards the advancement of the interest of Jewish literature generally.

II

ZACHARIAH FRANKEL

In the first part of this essay reference was made to the similarity between Luzzatto and Frankel in respect of their mental training, their vocation, and the first success, which they both achieved therein. It is now proposed to give a short sketch of Frankel's life, from which it will be seen that he, like Luzzatto, was ever animated by the noble desire of promoting the interests of Judaism, and its ancient and modern literature.

Zachariah Frankel was born at Prague, in Austria, on October 1, 1801, corresponding to the 24th of *Tishri*, 5562. He was the son of well-to-do parents, both of whom belonged to ancient Jewish families, and some of whose members had successively held the honourable post of Chief Rabbi there. Young Frankel received his early education in Prague. He studied Biblical and Talmudical subjects, but also devoted part of his time to mathematics, French, Latin, and Greek. At the age of twenty-three he went to Buda-Pesth, at the university of which town he continued his former studies, and there in due course he graduated as Doctor of Philosophy. Being already well known as a Talmudical scholar and as master of Jewish literature, and having, moreover, obtained the authorization to act in the capacity of Rabbi, Frankel was soon elected (in

1831) the spiritual head of the Jewish community of Teplitz, in Bohemia. After staying there for four years, during which time he introduced into the ritual the German sermon, which, by the way, was then quite an innovation in Austria, he was appointed Chief Rabbi of Saxony, having his domicile at Dresden. There a wide field of activity was at once opened for him, and he was not slow in showing his great abilities. He soon proved himself to be not only an eminent scholar and earnest writer and preacher, but also a man of singularly vigorous action in communal matters. It was chiefly due to his untiring and strenuous efforts that some of the civil disabilities, under which the Jews of Saxony then laboured, were removed by the government. To this category belongs the ancient form of oath, which used to be administered to them *more Judaico*.

While at Dresden, Frankel was offered the important post of Chief Rabbi of Berlin, which he, however, declined; but he consented to undertake the duties of organizer and Director of the Jüdisch-theologisches Seminar (Jewish Theological College), which was then about to be established at Breslau, and has subsequently become famous as a model institution of its kind. It was a post after his own heart. He cherished the hope that in his capacity as leader and teacher of numerous disciples, who would themselves one day be leaders in the synagogue, he would be able to serve the cause of Judaism better than if he were always to remain the spiritual head of one single community. Frankel lived to see the realization of his wishes; for a great many of his pupils occupied more or less important positions as Rabbis and preachers in different parts of the world, and some of them worked as professors in institutions that were almost identical in position and organization with the one over which he himself presided.

When the Breslau Seminary was opened (on August 10, 1854), there were two conflicting currents of thought prevailing in respect of Jewish law and custom. The Ultra-orthodox party advocated a *noli me tangere* policy in religious matters, and considered that any attempt towards the modification of any antiquated usage was levelled at the whole structure of Judaism. The opposite party, of whom there were many representatives in Germany and elsewhere, were in favour of such radical changes in the ritual as were calculated to create a positive revolution. In these circumstances Frankel recommended his pupils the adoption of a middle course in their future careers, showing that, while he tacitly admitted the necessity of some reform in Judaism, as it then existed, he was of opinion that the changes should be introduced gradually and with the utmost caution. He had already expressed these views publicly, notably at the assembly of Rabbis at Frankfort, and it is therefore obvious that he was not averse to moderate religious reforms.

Although at the time of the opening of the Breslau Seminary Frankel numbered among his colleagues such eminent scholars as Graetz, Bernays, Joel, and Zuckermann, he himself was and always remained the head, in fact as well as name. His lectures were chiefly on the Talmud, the importance and value of which he continually endeavoured to make clear to his pupils. He read and explained to them certain sections of it on each of the first five days of the week, and in so doing he made a somewhat free use of the mode of teaching that had been in vogue in the ancient Jewish academies. He allowed and even encouraged his pupils to enter upon discussions on the subject-matter of his lecture. By this means Frankel was able to test the industry and talent of each individual pupil. Once a week,

however, he gave a regular lecture in the classroom, at which there was no discussion. On these occasions he generally discoursed on the origin and development of the oral law, extending over a period of several centuries. These lectures were subsequently embodied in his book entitled *Darkè Hammishnah*, to which special reference will presently be made.

There is no doubt that Frankel was greatly in favour of a free and unrestricted investigation of Judaism and its teachings, and that he always essayed to reconcile them with what is called in modern phrase “der Zeitgeist.” Instances of this are to be found everywhere in his writings and treatises, many of which appeared in the monthly magazine *Die Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums*, which he edited from 1852 till 1868. As regards Frankel's books it may justly be said that they are classical, but want of space precludes a reference to more than three of them, which appear to be of special interest.

Frankel's first important volume appeared at Leipsic in 1841, under the title of *Die Vorstudien zu der Septuaginta* (“Studies in the Septuagint”). Several other writers, including the renowned Jewish critic Azarya de Rossi (1514–78), had already devoted their earnest attention thereto, but none of them attained the same measure of success as the author of the *Vorstudien*. Frankel throws much light on the genesis, the composition, and the tendency of the Septuagint, and explains the reason why its appearance was hailed with delight by the Alexandrian Jews, but condemned by that section of the Jews which then resided in Palestine. Equally instructive and interesting are the remarks he makes on the influence which it exercised on several of the subsequent ancient translations of

the Bible, and on the development of the so-called *Halacha*. But, he says, it has done much more than that. It has infused for the first time into the thoughts and language of the civilized nations of antiquity the lofty teachings of Judaism, and has directly and indirectly enriched the world of letters with many suggestive ethical and moral lessons. By the publication of this particular book Frankel accomplished two important things: in the first place he showed the world that the Jews, as the authors of the Septuagint, have contributed a great deal to universal literature; and then he also made his own people acquainted with some of the precious literary treasures which they possessed, but which they had hitherto ignored.

His second important work, published at Leipsic in 1859, is entitled *Darkè Hammishnah*, but it has also the following additional heading in Latin *Hodogetica in Mishnam librosque cum ea conjunctos, Tosefta, Mechilta, Sifra, Sifri*. It is written in an easy Hebrew style, which the author no doubt rightly thought would be thoroughly understood by all students of Rabbinical literature, as were not well versed in any other language. This volume contains, as its two titles already briefly indicate, much information on the ancient Rabbinical lore and tradition generally, but chiefly in respect of the Mishna. The latter is fully described there with regard to its many authors, its varied characteristics, its idiom, and its literary and scientific value. It seems scarcely credible, but it is a fact that this important and highly instructive work was at the time of its appearance vehemently assailed by some ultra-orthodox German and Austrian Rabbis, who publicly declared it to be a dangerous book, and one calculated to undermine the very foundations of Jewish law and tradition. On the other hand it is gratifying to note that Rapoport at once recognized its great

merits, and did his best to defend it.

Frankel's third and last work was his *M'bo Ha-Yerushalmi*, which means “An Introduction to the Jerusalem Talmud.” Like the *Darkè Hammishnah* it was written in Hebrew, and was published in 1870, that is to say, when the author was seventy years old. What makes the *M'bo Ha-Yerushalmi* particularly valuable is the circumstance that in it he broke entirely new ground. It has, in fact, become an indispensable guide to all who have chosen Talmudical literature as their special study. In it Frankel displayed his usual thoroughness in the critical analysis of its details, especially of its many compilers, its peculiar language, and its relation to the Babylonian Talmud.

The aims of Luzzatto and Frankel were in a large measure identical. They appeared in the early part of the nineteenth century when the presence of really able men was specially needed in the Jewish camp. At that particular time it was fast becoming evident that unless Rabbinical and other Jewish literature received an academical and classical treatment it would sink into utter oblivion, and it is mainly due to their exertions, both by the spoken word and the published writing, that this misfortune was averted. Their personal example moreover, in their capacity as heads of Rabbinical seminaries, stimulated their pupils to embark on original research into the various branches of Jewish science and literature, and showed them at the same time how to do it methodically and on scientific lines, with what results latter-day history has sufficiently demonstrated.

Like Luzzatto, Frankel was actively engaged in literary work till almost the very day of his death, which occurred on February 23, 1875. He left no children of his own to mourn

him, but, as this essay is in its humble way intended to show, he lives in the remembrance of his pupils, who revered him as a teacher and loved him as a man.

Footnotes:

[154-1] Entitled אלה בני הנעורים.

[157-1] The point lies here in the circumstance that the term “violoniste” is equivalent to the German word “Geiger.”

XV

THE INFLUENCE OF HEBREW LITERATURE ON HEINRICH HEINE

It is curious to observe that Carlyle, who frequently writes with unqualified admiration of the literary genius of certain representatives of modern German literature, such as Goethe, Schiller, and Jean Paul Richter, makes only one brief reference to Heine. He there stigmatizes him with even more than his usual savagery, “blackguard.” The injustice of this obloquy has been amply proved by Heine's popularity on both sides of the Atlantic among English-speaking people.

A writer in the *Quarterly Review*, some years ago, in a lengthy article on Heine, said that his writings differed from other works of the same nature in their bizarre and grotesque style, as well as in the delightful humour with which they often overflow—a humour vividly reminiscent of Aristophanes. Heine, he goes on to say, who was a direct descendant of the prophets in mind and inspiration, somewhat resembled the two great seers of Israel—Isaiah and Ezekiel. Like them, he found in the use of strange metaphors and wonderful visions a ready means of appealing to the imagination of his readers. The present essay is an attempt to show that, in a spiritual sense, Heine really had something in common with some of the great

authors of the Bible, whose peculiar style and beautiful diction he instinctively imitated.

The first and most important question that arises is naturally, Whether Heine had ever read the Bible or some parts of it in the original Hebrew, or whether he acquired his undoubtedly deep knowledge of it from a modern version? Two of the greatest authorities, Graetz and Karpeles, say that Heine was sent in his early days by his mother, Betty von Geldern, to a Jewish school, where he actually learned some Hebrew, together with various other subjects connected with the Jewish faith. However much or little it was, Heine retained a vivid recollection of it to the end, for in some of his later works are found some Hebrew quotations, which are mainly short phrases and sentences that occur in the Bible and in other Hebrew volumes of a more modern date[166-1].

But it was not only during the time he was at the Jewish school at Düsseldorf that he had an opportunity of learning certain important things about Judaism and its literature. It is known that he was a keen member of a Jewish society that was formed at Berlin in 1822 for the promotion of the study and knowledge of Jewish history and literature; and through his intimate acquaintance with several of the members, such as Zunz, David Friedländer, Moser, and others, Heine learnt to appreciate the charm of these studies. He was enthusiastic in his praises of the Bible, and likewise found in the poetry of the great Jewish poets of the Middle Ages a perpetual source of delight. His knowledge of them was derived from Michael Sach's well-known volume, entitled *Die religiöse Poesie der Juden in Spanien* (“Religious Poetry of the Jews in Spain”). Though his inability to read the writings of Jehuda Halevi, Ibn Gabirol, Moses and Meïr Ibn Ezra, and Alcharizi in the

original prevented him from an entire appreciation of their merits, yet he speaks of them in his *Hebrew Melodies* in terms of great admiration. Referring, for instance, to Alcharizi, he says that he was a Voltaire six hundred years before Voltaire lived; and of his special favourite Jehuda Halevi, he says that he was kissed at his birth by the Almighty, and that the sound of the kiss echoed in all his poems and songs.

There can be little doubt that his own works were influenced in no small degree by these illustrious predecessors, but it would seem that he was even more directly inspired by the Bible itself, and particularly by the lyric songs, which especially abound in the Book of Psalms and the Song of Songs. He refers to it more than once in eulogistic terms, but most characteristic are the following remarks[167-1]: "I have to-day," he writes, "again looked through the Old Testament. What a marvellous book it is! Its contents are wonderful, and so is its diction. Every word it contains is as natural as the growing tree, the smiling flower, the flowing ocean, the glittering star, and the living man. The Bible is divine and emanates from God, while all the other books in existence are but the poor products of feeble-minded mortals. The Bible is the drama of the human race, and may, moreover, be pronounced to be the book of books—*Biblia*. . . . The Jews ought, indeed, to console themselves for the loss of Jerusalem and the Temple, together with the Ark of the Covenant, and the precious jewels of King Solomon; such a loss is surely quite insignificant when compared with that indestructible treasure, the Bible, which they have luckily saved. . . . My admiration for it is extremely great."

These were the views of Heine, the sceptic and the mocker, who said, for instance, of Judaism, that it was not a religion,

but a misfortune. His early antipathy for his religion may not improbably have been due to the repellent effect, which the performance of a number of unattractive and to him meaningless rites would naturally cause to a man of his aesthetic sensibilities. But, as he grew older and more serious in disposition, he looked upon Judaism in a different light, and he changed his mockery into a hymn of praise and admiration. He was deeply impressed by the great antiquity of the Jewish race, which had bravely withstood the shocks of time, and continued to live and to endure in spite of the many obstacles and hostile influences to which it had been subjected. In his so-called “Confessions,” written when he was already advanced in years, he said that he felt proud of the fact that his ancestors had been members of the noble house of Israel, and that he was thus descended from those very martyrs, who had given to the world a God and an admirable code of ethics, for the sake of which they had often suffered and died.

Heine's knowledge of Hebrew was, as already stated, by no means so extensive as to make it credible that he had of himself been able to detect in the poetical portions of the Hebrew Bible certain beauties of form and diction, as well as many of the graceful irregularities which constitute a unique characteristic of their own. Yet he seems to have had a sort of instinctive feeling for them. That such singularities are also met with in many of Heine's lyric songs is a fact that will hardly be disputed, though it is uncertain whether they were really imitations of the Biblical ones or not. At all events, they possess many of the unique qualities which distinguish the poems in the Hebrew Bible. They are characterized by a certain peculiarity of rhythm, by their charming word-pictures, and by their changes from gaiety to melancholy, from sobriety

to mirth. They have, moreover, supplied the theme for many of the charming compositions of musicians, like Schubert, Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, and Schumann. Further, though they have been repeatedly translated into various languages by some of the most eminent scholars of the day, there is scarcely a single version which can be said to preserve a reproduction of the spirit of the original. The following two examples, which are English versions of a Hebrew and German lyric song respectively, may be considered sufficient to prove this. The Hebrew one occurs in the Song of Songs (viii. 6 and 7), and its English translation runs thus:—

> Love is strong as death;
> The passion thereof is hard as *Shéol*;
> Its heat is the heat of fire,
> A very flame of the Lord!
>
> Many waters cannot quench love,
> Neither can the floods drown it:
> If a man would give all the substance of his house for love,
> He would utterly be despised[169-1].

The second example is represented here by one of Heine's lyric songs, which in the original German runs as follows:—

> Leise zieht, durch mein Gemüth
> Liebliches Geläute;
> Klinge, kleines Frühlingslied,
> Kling' hinaus ins Weite.
>
> Kling' hinaus, bis an das Haus,
> Wo die Veilchen spriessen,
> Und wenn du eine Rose schaust,
> Sag', ich lass' sie grüssen.

Translation.

Softly ring, and through me spring
The sweetest tones to-day;
Gently ring, small song of spring,
Ring out, and far away.

Ring and roam, into the home,
Where violets you see,
And when unto a rose you come,
Oh, greet that rose from me.

The translation is by Sir Theodore Martin, whose versions of many of Heine's poems and songs are generally considered to be specially good, but it cannot truly be said that in either of these two renderings is there much more than the pale reflection of the charm of the original.

Again, it will be found that in the Biblical lyric songs and those of Heine there is a striking community of sentiment, and more particularly in the idealization of womanhood or of one of its fairest representatives. The following translation (again by Sir Theodore Martin) of two songs of Heine may serve as examples:—

I

Thou, so fair, so pure of guile,
Maiden of the sunny smile,
Would, to thee, it were my fate,
All my life to dedicate.

Like the sunbeam's tender shine,
Gleam these gentle eyes of thine;
Thy soft cheeks, so ruddy bright,
Scatter rays of rosy light.

Thy dear little mouth does show
Pearls within, a shining row,
But the gem of gems the best,
Is enshrined within thy breast.

It was love, divinely deep,
That into my heart did creep,
When I looked on thee erewhile,
Maiden of the sunny smile[170-1].

II

Thou art as a tender floweret,
So gentle, and pure, and fair;
I gaze on thee, and sadness
Comes over me unaware.

I feel, as though I should lay, sweet,
My hands on thy head with a prayer,
That God may keep thee, my darling,
As gentle, and pure, and fair[170-2].

Several poems of Heine, which are coloured with what is called in modern phrase the “Weltschmerz,” show even more clearly that their author has inherited something of the sombre spirit of the prophets. Any one who has, for instance, read the Book of Lamentations, or the 137th Psalm beginning with the words “By the river of Babylon there we sat down, and when we thought of Zion our tears did flow,” will hardly fail to detect an identity of feeling in the fine verses of Heine on Zion.

One of these poems runs in the original German as follows:—

Brich aus in tiefe Klagen,
Du düsteres Martyrlied,
Das ich so lang getragen
Im flammenstillen Gemüth!

Es dringt in alle Ohren
Und durch die Ohren ins Herz;
Ich habe gewaltig geschworen
Den tausendjährigen Schmerz.

Es weinen die Grossen und Kleinen,
Sogar die alten Herr'n,
Die Frauen und Blumen weinen,
Es weinen am Himmel die Stern'.

Und all die Thränen fliessen
Nach Süden im stillen Verein,
Sie fliessen und ergiessen
Sich all in den Jordan hinein.

From the examples given it may be seen that whether Heine sang the praises of his lady-love, or whether he lamented the sad fate of his long-suffering people, he was imbued with the same spirit which abode in the old singers of Israel. Similarly he would seem to have gone to the Bible for his inspiration when he took the wonders of nature for his theme. If, for instance, the 104th and the 107th Psalms, in which the moods of nature in her opposite aspects are so effectively described, are compared with those poems of Heine which deal with the same subjects, it will readily be seen how close is the resemblance between Heine and the Biblical models.

As in his poems so also in his sketches are found extraordinary visions, which have, moreover, frequently witty turnings. All these have something of Jewish Talmudism about them, and are in the true Rabbinic vein. Similar visions,

fancies, and witticisms are common in that section of the Talmud which is generally called the *Agada*, wherein the grave Rabbis often enlivened their learned discussions with curious and fantastic tales, love-songs, and sometimes even with facetious and satirical digressions. From them, therefore, Heine seems to have inherited much of the humour and incisive satire, which he now and again employs as a weapon against his own detractors and the enemies of the Jewish race.

Invested with something of a Jewish colouring are also some of his epigrams, *bons mots*, and witty descriptions of persons and things. Of these the following example may serve as a specimen. Speaking of Fortune and Misfortune, Heine offers the following amusing definitions: “Fortune, or Good Luck,” he says, “is like a young and lively girl, a relative of ours, who is staying with us on a visit. By her unaffected merriment, sweet singing, and airy gossip she makes her surroundings extremely happy, and her presence is therefore hailed by us with much delight. But, alas, she is, like a golden butterfly, flighty and restless, and cares not much to abide in one place for any length of time. Quite different, however, is Dame Misfortune, who may be likened to an aged relative, and a spinster to boot, that has a bitter look about her, and a sour temper. When *she* is paying us a visit, she considers herself quite at home, and would thus sit, and knit, and chatter, and moan, from morning till night. Oh, how ardently we all long for her speedy departure from among us; but she, for her part, is fully determined to stay on and on, for ever and ever.”

Even on his death-bed Heine could not refrain from a jest. Reviewing his by no means irreproachable past, he said he hoped that his heavenly Father would readily overlook his peccadillos, for *c'est son métier*. This remark is typically

Jewish, and it recalls a similar one once made by a dying Rabbi, who had been all his lifetime extremely religious, but had likewise always suffered much want and misery. “Do you know,” he said to those in the sick room, “if, after all the sad experiences I have had in the past, there is no future life, I shall be greatly amused.”

There is still one further remark to be made in conclusion. While there is much that is fine, much that is genuinely charming in Heine's work, it must be admitted that there is also much in which he might be said to rival Rabelais and Swift for licence. If any excuse for this be possible it may, perhaps, be regarded as an extenuating circumstance that he merely reproduced in his own language some faint reminiscences from the contents of certain parts of the Book of Ezekiel, of the Talmud, and the Midrash.

Footnotes:

[166-1] Among these may specially be mentioned *Im eshkacheych Yerush'layim tishkach yemini*, “If ever I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand wither”; *Lecha dodi likrath kallah*, “Come, my friend, to meet the bride”; *Mosheh Rabbenu*, “Moses, our teacher.”

[167-1] Cp. *Heine über Börne* in Heine's collected works.

[169-1] The author of this translation is Mr. C. G. Montefiore.

[170-1] Cp. *Song of Songs*, iv and vi.

[170-2] See the previous note.

XVI

MODERN HEBREW JOURNALISM

HEBREW is generally considered to be, like ancient Syriac, Arabic, Greek and Latin, a dead language, and yet it possesses so much flexibility, and has, moreover, been enriched in modern times with so many new words, phrases, and expressions that it has in some respects almost become modernized. There are at the present day, both in the Old World and the New, quite a respectable number of Hebrew periodicals, including a few daily papers, which seem to enjoy considerable popularity and support among a moderately large section of the Jewish reading public. These constitute as a whole what may appropriately be termed modern Hebrew journalism.

Modern Hebrew journalism has an interesting history of its own, and likewise an intimate connexion with the rise and development of Neo-Hebrew literature. It dates from the time when the sage of Berlin, as Moses Mendelssohn is commonly called, began to issue his epoch-making German translation of the Pentateuch, which made its first appearance in the year 1780. This translation was accompanied by an excellent Hebrew introduction to the Bible, or rather to the five books of Moses, entitled *O'r-La-netibah* (אור לנתיבה), of which Mendelssohn was the author, and likewise by an equally

excellent commentary, now well known under the name of *Biur*. Mendelssohn had several eminent Hebraists for co-operators in the commentary, among whom may specially be mentioned Hartwig Wessely, the renowned composer of the fine heroic poem, *The Mosaid*, called “Songs of Glory” (שירי תפארת). The introduction and commentary were both distinguished by their learning, as well as by the purity and freshness of their style. They were thus a great advance on the earlier criticisms, which were written in a Hebrew dialect that was a mere mumbling of a decrepit tongue, and they attained great popularity among the cultured community.

Among those who especially profited by these works were two clever young Jewish students, called Isaac Euchel and Mendel Bresselau. They had both enjoyed a Talmudical and academical training, and were tutors in the house of the wealthy and cultured Friedländers, residing in Königsberg, in Prussia, which city in those days stood in close literary relationship to the Prussian capital. These young men, in 1782, resolved, in the interests of Hebrew literature; to invite all the representative and cultured Jews in the world to help to found and to support a Hebrew periodical, the title of which was to be *The Gatherer* (המאסף). This invitation was readily accepted by many educated Jews living in Germany, Austria, Holland, France, Italy, Russia and Poland. Thus encouraged they set to work, and soon issued the first number of *The Gatherer*, which was the progenitor of modern Hebrew journalism. This number contained a variety of articles written almost exclusively in Hebrew, the most notable of which were two biographical sketches, one dealing with Don Isaac Abrabanel (1437–1509), and the other with Joseph del Medigo (1591–1655). There were also a few charming Hebrew poems, including some

anonymously contributed by Moses Mendelssohn, and the well-known Hebrew wine-song by Solomon Ibn Gabirol. Wessely contributed an article on Biblical exegesis, a subject which had been sadly neglected by the Jews of that period. *The Gatherer* thus started under happy auspices. It had been a bond of union between Judaism and modern culture, so much so that some Christians of note saw in it a powerful medium for educating the general mass of the Jewish people.

The Gatherer continued to be issued for fourteen years (from 1783–97), during which time it numbered among its contributors, in addition to those already mentioned, several other masters of Hebrew style, among whom may specially be mentioned Isaac Satanow, Ben-Zeeb, Joel Löwe, Aaron Halle, Moses Ensheim, and David Franco Mendes, the author of the Hebrew historical drama *Gemul Athalia* ("The Punishment of Athalia").

After its demise, nearly a quarter of a century elapsed before another Hebrew periodical of the same stamp made its appearance. This was called *Bikkurey Ha-Ittim* ("The Firstling of the Times"), and was started in Vienna (in 1820) by an able Hebraist, named Shalom Ha-Cohen. It had some of the most eminent Hebrew scholars of the day among its regular contributors, including Rapoport, Luzzatto, and Erter, the former of whom published therein five biographies of prominent leaders of Judaism of the Middle Ages, which gave an important impulse to the study of Neo-Hebraic literature. Erter, the greatest of Hebrew humorists of modern times, contributed some of his delightful sketches of Jewish life in the Ghetto.

After about twelve years the *Bikkurey Ha-Ittim* ceased to

appear, but a little later another annual Hebrew magazine was first issued by Goldenberg, and then by Senior Sachs, in Vienna and Prague respectively, having *Kerem Chemed* ("The Pleasant Vineyard") for its title. This publication was, like its two predecessors, largely devoted to the promotion of the Hebrew language and literature, but its principal interest was the study of Jewish history, which had been generally neglected before. Its chief contributors were Rapoport, Zunz, and Luzzatto, the last-named of whom published therein several valuable extracts from rare Hebrew MSS. The *Kerem Chemed* was, with regard to its learned contents and the purity of its style, one of the best Hebrew periodicals that has ever existed, but it only appeared for a period of ten years, viz. from 1833 to 1843.

Noticeable also are the *Otzer Nechmad* ("The Desirable Treasure"), which was edited for a short time in Vienna by Ignatz Blumenfeld, and had Dukes, Geiger, Steinschneider, Luzzatto, Carmoly, and Kirchheim as contributors; the *Kochbey Yitzchak* ("The Stars of Isaac"), issued for several years by M. E. Stern, of Vienna; and the *Jeshurun*, of which the editor, Joseph Kobak, of Lemberg, only published four insignificant numbers at irregular intervals. But it cannot be said that their influence on Neo-Hebrew literature had been very extensive. There were, however, two other magazines, which, having some special characteristics of their own, and being, moreover, of permanent literary value, are deserving of more than a passing notice.

One of them was started (in 1852) in Vienna by O. H. Schorr, under the title of *Ha-Chalutz* ("The Armed One"), and it counted among its contributors Krochmal, Geiger, Zunz, Steinschneider, and Erter. Though chiefly dealing with the

history of Jewish literature, the *Chalutz* was, as its title indicates, a Hebrew periodical with radical tendencies, advocating extensive reforms in the Jewish ritual. The editor himself, a highly learned man, devoted several articles to a consideration of certain abuses and superstitions found in some of the Rabbinical writings, by which pure Judaism was thought to have been disfigured. The essays were distinguished by the vigour of their tone, their caustic humour, and their amusing irony, and have served as a model to more than one writer of modern Hebrew prose.

The other was called *Ha-Shachar* ("The Dawn"), and made its first appearance in Vienna in 1868, under the editorship of Peter (or Perets) Smolensky, an excellent writer of classical Hebrew prose. His own sketches were remarkable both for humour and pathos, and have a certain ring of Thackeray about them. Among the contributors to *The Dawn* may be noted Rapoport, Jellinek, and Juda Löb Gordon (1830–92). The latter was an excellent poet and humorist, whose collected Hebrew verses were published in 1884 by Baron Ginsburg, of St. Petersburg, in memory of their deceased author. Several of them had previously appeared in *The Dawn*, and as they are pretty and rich in humour the following free prose translation of one of them may serve here as an appropriate specimen. It has a highly orthodox Russian Rabbi for its subject, and runs as follows:—

"On a sultry Sabbath afternoon a middle-aged Rabbi was sitting in his study dozing over a large folio of the Talmud. Suddenly an extremely religious member of his flock rushed in full of excitement, and told him that a Jewish lad had just been caught in the act of desecrating the holy Sabbath by carrying a watch in the open street. On hearing this shocking news the

Rabbi gave orders that the young culprit should at once be brought into his presence, that he might receive his well-deserved chastisement for openly breaking one of the Rabbinical laws. When the boy was brought in, the Rabbi looked at him, and lo and behold! he was no other than his own little son, who had furtively gone into the street, carrying in his waistcoat pocket the watch which had been given to him as a 'Bar-Mitzwah[178-1]' present. The Rabbi was for a moment rather perplexed, but soon a happy thought struck him, and turning abruptly to the excited crowd of bystanders, he addressed them as follows:—'Rabbothay' (gentlemen), he said, 'I have just come to the conclusion that my boy is guiltless of the charge you have brought against him. For, had you been as well versed in the Rabbinical writings as I am, you would have known that a watch is but an ornament, which is allowed to be worn by a Jew or a Jewess on a Sabbath day even in the open street. Thus my boy had only done what was right, and therefore deserves no punishment whatever.' When the people left the Rabbi's house, a wit among them observed to his neighbour, with a sly twinkle in his eye, that their 'Rav' was a cunning man, indeed, and knew how to turn matters to his own advantage, or to that of his near relatives. Thus, when a son-in-law of his ordered a cargo of citrons from Corfu, the 'Rav' forbade the members of his flock on the Feast of Tabernacles to use citrons grown in Palestine; and he also interdicted them from buying any ordinary wine after one of his married daughters had opened a shop for the sale of cheap raisin wine."

As regards the numerous Hebrew periodicals, which appear in different parts of the world, it is enough to say that, although they are not without merit, it is impossible within the limits of

a short sketch to do more than mention a few of the more important. Three of them are here selected as being specially worthy of note, on account of the fruitful work which they have done and are still doing in various ways in the field of Hebrew literature. The first to be considered are the three or four volumes issued annually at Berlin (under the editorship of Prof. Dr. A. Berliner) by the society *Mekitze-Nirdamim*, these being most useful literary publications, though perhaps not exactly periodicals. This society has, for instance, during the last few years brought out all the admirable religious and secular poems of Jehudah Halevi[179-1].

Equally useful and interesting is a monthly Hebrew periodical, entitled *Ha-Shiloach* ("The Messenger"), which was established in Berlin about eight years ago by Asher Ginsberg, of Odessa. A good many articles have a permanent literary value; others again, though less scientific, are written in such excellent Hebrew that, like Erter's works, they may be re-read with no diminution of pleasure.

The third Hebrew periodical that deserves special notice is *Ha-Magid* ("The Narrator"), which has, however, lately ceased to exist. It was started about half a century ago (in 1856) at Lyck, in Prussia, by the late L. Silbermann, Rabbi of the Hebrew congregation of that town, who issued it weekly with the laudable object of affording entertainment and information on general topics to those of his co-religionists, who were unable to read papers published in the vernacular[180-1]. The number of Jews of this description was, fifty years ago, fairly large, but has now, thanks to the spread of general education, been greatly reduced. Several Jewish *literati* used to contribute articles, and the paper had in consequence gradually become a medium for propagating a knowledge of Hebrew literature

among its numerous readers. Since then the Hebrew vocabulary has been greatly developed and amplified in such a manner as to be capable of describing not only the newest move in the politics of the world, but also the latest invention in the field of practical science. It is interesting to notice that there are at present three Hebrew daily papers in circulation in Russia, viz. *Ha-Yom*, *Ha-Meliz*, and *Ha-Zefira*, which were founded respectively by L. Kantor, A. Zedernbaum, and C. Slonimsky.

Summarizing now the merits of modern Hebrew journalism it may be said that they are far greater than is generally supposed. In fact, it has exercised a beneficial and far-reaching influence upon a large section of the Jewish community. For, not only has it enriched Hebrew literature with valuable additions, but it has also familiarized its readers, through the medium of translations, with some of the best-known ancient and modern works on general science and literature.

Footnotes:

[178-1] ‘Confirmation.’

[179-1] Several other poems by the same author hitherto unknown have recently appeared in a volume issued annually by another Hebrew literary society, called “Achiasaph,” that was established some years ago in Warsaw.

[180-1] To the *Magid* several Jewish savants have contributed interesting articles which have a permanent literary value. In the same Hebrew weekly also appeared a number of humorous *makāmāt à la* Alcharizi, composed by the author of the present volume. They were subsequently published in book form by David Nutt, London, under the title of: *Zichronoth*, or “Reminiscences of a Student of Jewish Theology.”

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Transcriber's note:

The original spelling of the book has been retained, even when wrong (Bosone da Gobbio [*Gubbio*], Bezalu, near Perpignon [*Besalú, near Perpignan*]), or variant (Juda/Jehuda/Jehudah Halevi/Halevy). The original transliteration of Hebrew words, which does not always follow uniform rules, has been preserved. Similarly, inaccurate quotations (e.g. Falstaff's remark "I told ~~you~~ John a Gaunt...") were not rectified.

Corrections reported in the *Errata* have been carried into the text.

The following typographical mistakes have been corrected:

- p. 54, last line: neighourhood → neighbourhood
- p. 78, l. 2: Jacob of Fano, who in his pom → Jacob of Fano, who in his poem
- p. 106, l. 33: and looks at if it were → and looks as if it were
- p. 181, col. 2, l. 33: *Boekh* → *Boeckh*
- p. 182, col. 1, l. 26: *Conat, Abraham,* → *Conath, Abraham,*
- p. 185, col. 2, l. 6: *Poesie Hebraeorum,* → *Poesi Hebraeorum,* [in conformity with the 1758 Göttingen edition cited]

- p. 186, col. 1, l. 34: “*Sommernacht, Die*, → “*Sommernacht, Die*,”

Some page references in the Index have been found to be wrong, and have been corrected:

- Baba Kamma, 56 *n.* → 55 *n.*
- History of European Morals, 115 *n.* → 15 *n.*
- Humour of the Bible, 1–13. → 1–12.
- Lyric songs, 189 → 30, 167–69.

Entries in the Index, which were either italicized or enclosed in double quotes, were left as found.

[The end of *Hebrew Humor and other Essays* by Joseph