# Entre Nous.

**The Jews in Literature.**

Mrs. Eileen Bigland in her book, *A Laughing Odyssey*, tells of an incident which happened to her while travelling in Germany in a railway carriage, the other occupant of which was a Jew. Two Storm Troopers swaggered in and after flinging down their belongings on the seats marched out into the corridor again. The Jew lowered the coat-collar he had raised at their entrance. 'It is my nose,' he remarked plaintively, 'always my nose.' And Mrs. Bigland says, 'I thought of William Blake's, "Why was I born with a different face?" and wondered if he had visualized Nazi Germany several centuries before its time.'

Professor Montagu F. Modder has produced a book, *The Jew in the Literature of England—to the End of the Nineteenth Century* (The Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia; $2.50), which traces the story of the trials and the tribulations, the emancipation and the rise of the Jews, the people with 'the different face,' from the time of William the Conqueror to the end of the reign of Queen Victoria, as it is reflected in our literature. The book is a beautifully printed and produced monument of patient diligence and research. The notes show the amount of historical research that has gone into the making of this book. From Chaucer to George Meredith there is hardly an author of any eminence who has not been laid under tribute. Even the dust heaps of literature have been sifted and many a forgotten novelist and dramatist is resurrected. Not even the periodical literature of each era has escaped the all-inclusive search of the author. Such a treatment might easily develop into a wearisome catalogue of names and references, but Professor Modder consistently shows himself a master of the art of concise yet vivid summary and of relevant quotation.

The book is the literary record of a people often hated and never really liked. Professor Modder quotes a writer in the *Spectator* (1880) as saying, 'The main reasons for the dislike, we believe, are two; the first being that the Jews in all countries remain Jews, that is distinctive, and thereby acquire the dislike with which any foreign race whatever, similarly successful, would be regarded; and the second, that they are an exceedingly pushing people.' The separatist attitude has always been a barrier. A Jewish Rabbi in an anonymous novel, *Count Teleki* (1869), is quoted as almost regretting the increase in toleration which his race was then receiving. 'The very liberality we enjoy is detrimental to the purity of our religion. . . . Formerly, when persecuted and oppressed, our people clung together, united in one bond. There was sympathy in our seclusion. . . . But now that the arena of life is open alike to Hebrew and to Christian, the result is that the former is rapidly losing that exclusiveness of religion which is the very essence of Judaism.' In the works of Israel Zangwill 'the ghetto dweller regards himself as belonging to the "we" group; everybody else belongs to the "they" group.' In fact, says Professor Modder, 'It was the conviction of Professor Goldwin Smith that the separatist character of the Jews was not the effect, but the cause, of their persecution.' As for their material success—as early as the thirteenth century the peasants are envying their stone houses which rival the churches and the cathedrals. In 1621 Robert Burton in *The Anatomy of Melancholy* is giving as their characteristics that they are 'most severe in their examination of time,' that is, that they are 'very industrious, while amongst Englishmen the badge of gentry is idleness. . . .' And by the nineteenth century the great influx of Jews from Russia, Poland, and Germany was becoming a real problem in the economic system of the country. It is curious to note how punishments meted out to Jews have always been calculated to heap indignities on them. In the time of King John, a recalcitrant Jew who would not pay taxes was sentenced to lose a tooth daily until the money was collected. At the beginning of the nineteenth century a Jew, as a punishment, is compelled, in Germany, to sweep the streets for a twelvemonth. Thomas Hood in *Up the Rhine* tells of Frankfort, 'whose inhabitants in the nineteenth century still amuse themselves occasionally, on Christian high days and holidays, with breaking the windows of their Hebrew townsmen.'

It is a surprising thing to find two great figures averse to the Jews. Thomas Carlyle showed what Froude called 'a true Teutonic aversion for that unfortunate race.' 'He is said to have remarked as he stood in front of Rothschild's great house at Hyde Park Corner, "I do not mean that I want King John back again, but if you ask me which mode of treating these people to have been nearest to the will of the Almighty about them—to build them palaces like that, or to take the pincers for them, I declare for the pincers."' Curiously

enough Thomas Arnold was also against their emancipation. 'For the Jews,' he said, 'I see no place of justice whatever; they are voluntary strangers here, and have no claim to become citizens but by conforming to our moral law, which is the Gospel.'

It is well-nigh impossible to do justice to a book with such a wide sweep and such an army of quotations and references in so short a space. Its value is immeasurably enhanced by very full bibliographies and by an excellent Index.

After reading it, one is moved to thankfulness that our nation, while not without its times of ferocity, was on the whole more tolerant to Jews than any other country.

Professor Modder quotes an appeal of Edward Nicholas in a tractate written in 1648 in which he pleaded, 'for the glory of God, the comfort of those afflicted people, the love of my own sweet native country of England, and the freeing of my own conscience in the day of account, we show ourselves compassionate and helpers of the afflicted Jews.' To-day, three centuries later, the words are not out of place.

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**J. K. Thomson.**

'Born on 6th September 1886, in Forfar, the county town of Angus, James Kyd Thomson died in Edinburgh on 1st May 1939. At his death he was one of the best known and best beloved ministers of the Church of Scotland, universally trusted and admired. Few ministers in any denomination have given better service to the Church of Christ; few men can have made for themselves a wider circle of friends, or at their death left behind a deeper sense of personal loss.'

In this way the Rev. E. D. Jarvis begins the short memoir (44 pages) which prefaces the collection of J. K. Thomson's sermons just published by James Clarke (6s.), with the title *I Have Kept the Faith*. It is a good memoir, for E. D. Jarvis and J. K. Thomson were friends from earliest days. While all material facts of J. K.'s life are given, the chief interest of the story is that it deals with his inner life—'the ways by which God made J. K. Thomson a saint and a pillar of His Church.'

He was born in a democratic home in a democratic community. His father was a bookseller in the town, Liberal in politics, and with considerable intellectual interests and independent in thought. He was a man of piety.

Thomson benefited to the full by the excellent educational system open to all boys and girls in Scotland. His health, however, suffered, and much of his later struggles with tiredness, sleeplessness, and depression came from the overwork of early years. Between sixteen and nineteen, as a pupil teacher, he both taught elementary children and was himself taught. He did double work again in his university years, as he took his teacher's training simultaneously with the degree work.

J. K. Thomson taught for a few years, and then after much hesitation and prayer he decided on the ministry and entered New College, Edinburgh, in 1911. He had two churches subsequently—in Lanark and Aberdeen. In both he worked tremendously hard, visiting incessantly, writing out in full, every week, five or six addresses, besides doing all the routine work. After his wife's tragic death at the early age of thirty-six, he felt he must leave Aberdeen and go where the work would be lighter. And so the last years were spent at Mayfield, Edinburgh.

J. K. Thomson was one of the men who keep a diary, and his diary is mostly given up to 'self-scourging.' 'How many,' Mr. Jarvis asks, 'who saw him in his young manhood, so competent, so genial, so apparently at leisure from himself, and sometimes giving the impression of being a shade cynical, would have thought that he scourged himself unmercifully?' In 1919 he speaks of the 'curtain of a new world lifting,' and there follows entries such as: 'For years I have been led astray by the lust for a "sign," for a striking, miraculous turning. Now I understand that for me the Spirit is there, and that I may really trust Him, and give myself to Him. It is my part to give myself to Him, day after day and all day to seek His help. It is a campaign, not a sudden assault.' After his wife's death there were no more entries in the diary. As the years passed he became willing to rest in the greatness of God. He wrote to his sister in 1931: 'You and I both go wrong in feeling that we have to do it all ourselves, in struggling and straining, when we should be resting in God.'

There are seventeen sermons in the volume, and we hope it will not be the last collection of J. K. Thomson's sermons to appear. For these sermons are modern in language and approach, and very evidently the outcome of a life lived with God.

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**W. M. Macgregor.**

Many addresses, excellently though they may have served their turn, are better unpublished. But everything of W. M. Macgregor's has a wider public waiting for it, and we are glad that Messrs. T. & T. Clark have published a collection of his

addresses to students. Several of these are appreciations—as of Professor A. B. Bruce, Dr. James Denney, and Dr. Alexander Whyte. Others deal with preaching.

From the opening words of each essay Dr. Macgregor is interesting. He begins, for example, his essay on Montaigne and Pascal with Dr. Sayce's account of his first Sunday as an undergraduate at Oxford. Mark Pattison concluded his address with the words: 'It will be an ill day for the Church of England when dogma and authority gain the upper hand, and reason is denied its rightful place as the cornerstone of all religion.' In the afternoon he heard Liddon who sounded the counterblast: 'Dogma and authority, authority and dogma—these two form the keystone in the arch of all religion.' There is a third way of approach to faith. In his *War and Peace* Tolstoy records that one of his characters had all at once come to know, not through words or arguments but by his own immediate feeling, that God is here and everywhere. Dr. Macgregor takes Montaigne 'the sceptic' and Pascal as representatives of the last two of these ways of approach.

Dr. Macgregor is a great preacher, and so we must not forget that the volume contains also addresses which are nearly akin to sermons. We have given one of these in shortened form in 'The Christian Year.'

The format of *Persons and Ideals* is attractive with its pleasant green binding with gold lettering (3s. net).

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**'I will be with you when you pass through waters; no rivers shall overflow you.'**

'If our eyes are on the temporary matters of the passing show, we shall lose our spiritual balance and come to grief.

'An incident of Central Asian life came to my mind, recalling an occasion where an Eastern friend, in a few wise words and quite unconsciously, taught me in a parable one of the things which has become basic to my Christian life. "To-day," he said, "you will have to cross a dangerous river. You will need to learn how to look over water." . . . "You must learn how to look over water," repeated my Chinese friend. "There are men who know this river well," he continued, "and one of them will lead your horse across, but when you reach the middle of the river, man and even horse may lose footing, but there are others near who will come to your rescue; you will certainly get over safely if you remember my instructions—keep your eyes fixed on the further bank, for safety lies in only seeing the torrent with the unmoving bank as background—if you look down at the swirling water you may lose your balance and then nothing can save you from falling."

'I started to cross. One man took my horse's bridle and another went ahead, stick in hand, to test each step and direct those who came behind. As we reached the middle of the torrent the swirling waters were terrifying. I felt my horse stumble and I thought nothing could save me. In a moment I was looking down into a confusion of eddies and whirlpools which robbed me of all sense of direction, but remembering instructions, I tore my eyes from the water and looked fixedly at the bank ahead. In a moment I was steady again.' [1]

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**The Church and Freedom.**

'Having always been an ardent partisan of freedom, I turned to the universities, as soon as the revolution broke out in Germany, to find there defenders of freedom. I did not find them. Very soon the universities took refuge in silence.

'I then turned to the editors of powerful newspapers, who, but lately in flowing articles, had claimed to be faithful champions of liberty. These men, as well as the universities, were reduced to silence in a few weeks.

'I then addressed myself to the authors individually, to those who passed themselves off as the intellectual guides of Germany, and among whom many had frequently discussed the question of freedom and its place in modern life. They in their turn were dumb.

'Only the Church opposed the fight which Hitler was waging against liberty. Till then I had no interest in the Church, but now I feel great admiration and am truly attracted to the Church which has had the persistent courage to fight for spiritual truth and moral freedom. I feel obliged to recognize that I now admire what I used to consider of little value.' [2]

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**Historic Choices.**

'I [Professor Niebuhr] met a member of the Peace Pledge Union to-day. He was full of self-righteousness about the sins of the British Empire which a good Christian must disavow. . . .

'Nevertheless I do not find much virtue in the kind of moral sensitivity which gags at the sins of the British Empire and leans ever backwards

[1] Mildred Cable, in *The British Weekly*.
[2] Einstein, reported in *Evangile et Liberté*.

to appreciate the Nazis. Nothing is quite so difficult, and so genuinely Christian, as to remember on the one hand that in all political struggles there are no saints but only sinners fighting each other, and to remember on the other hand that history from man's, rather than God's, perspective is constituted of significant distinctions between types and degrees of sin. Whatever may be wrong with the British Empire or with American imperialism or French nationalism, it is still obvious that these nations preserve certain values of civilization, and that the terror which is sweeping over Europe is not civilization. A moralism which dulls the conscience against this kind of evil is perverse. It is well to know that God judges all men and that in His sight no man living is justified. But we are men and not God. We must make historic choices.' [1]

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**A Summer Church.**

'Browning says:

God uses us to help each other so,
Lending our minds out.

'Many religious people dream of a genuine Christian Community Church, where devout people from various denominations and sects will worship together without any self-consciousness; that is, without being aware that they are doing anything unusual. . . . How are we to get earnest and devoted Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Christian Scientists, and Catholics, to come together in the same building and listen to the Gospel? Naturally, you say, they won't; it can't be done. It is a pretty dream, desirable in many ways, but beyond the bounds of possibility. Yet in our Huron City Church, to use Kipling's phrase, "the thing that couldn't has occurred."

'About fifty years ago . . . I occasionally took the pulpit and preached an informal sermon. These substitutions increased in number year after year; and finally, in 1922, I took entire charge in summer of the Huron City Church, preaching regularly at three o'clock in the afternoon for thirteen consecutive Sundays.

'I have been asked, "What do you preach to such a collection of sects? Do you give a literary lecture or a moral talk?" My answer is that I preach only the simple gospel and nothing else; and there being so many members of so many sects in the audience, I leave out non-essentials and dogmas peculiar to individual churches (winds of doctrine) and stick close to the central theme of the New Testament.

'No member of the congregation enjoys this church more than I. As I go into the pulpit and look over that audience of hard-working farmers, their wives and babies, and know that they and many others have given up their Sunday afternoon and motored many miles to be present, I feel a thrill unspeakable.

'In one respect our church is like a mediæval parish church; after the service, the people are in no hurry to leave. They gather around the doors outside in the cool summer air, and exchange news and pleasant gossip. . . . There is no formality about this church, and there is no one to greet visitors with a professional smile and handclasp; people enter this building as they enter their own home.

'During the summer of 1930, our church received a compliment, both charming and unexpected. As we were assembling a few minutes before three on a brilliantly clear Sunday afternoon, a message was handed to me from Port Austin, a town eight and a half miles' distant. It seems that on that very afternoon a professional baseball game had been advertised to begin in Port Austin at the exact hour of our service, but, said the writer of the note, "There are so many people in our town who want to attend service in the church at Huron City, we are going to postpone the game till a late hour in the afternoon; and won't you announce the fact?" . . . I informed the audience that we had received a great compliment; there were so many persons in Port Austin who wished to come to our church that they thought it best to postpone the ball game.

'I chronicle this because it is *News*. Talk about the man biting the dog! When summer afternoon church services are given up because too many people want outdoor recreation, that is not news. But to postpone a professional ball game, where some of the players had been brought from Detroit to play, and to postpone it because of a church service nearly nine miles away!' [1]

[1] *Leaves from the Notebook of a War-bound American.*

[1] William Lyon Phelps, *Autobiography with Letters*, 744.

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