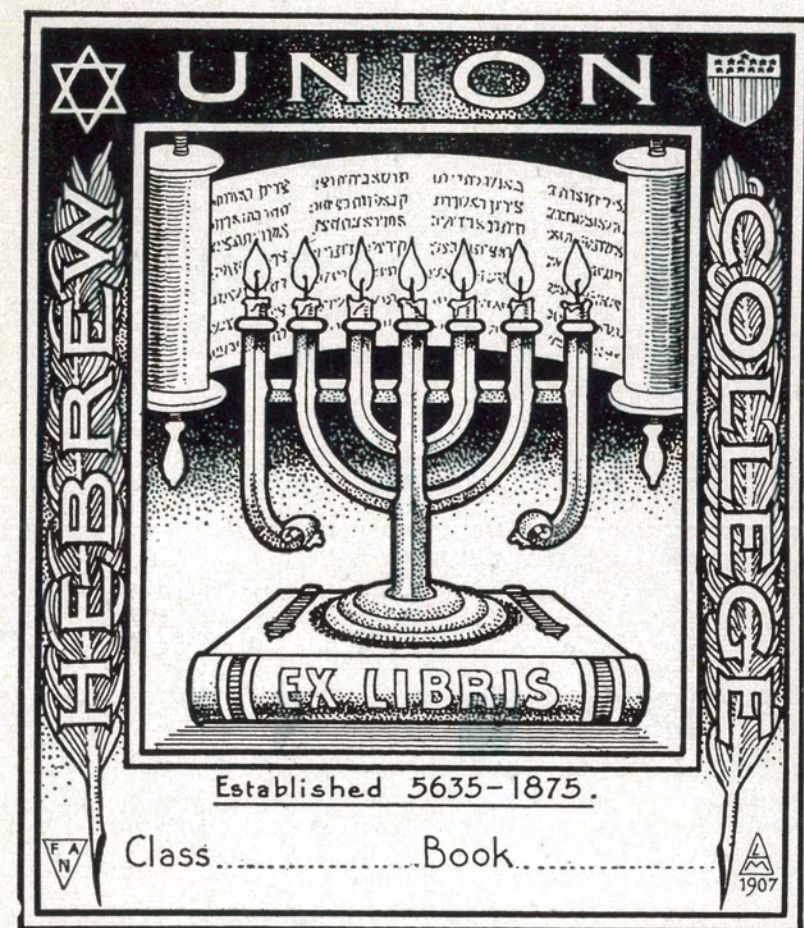




New Shakspere Society.

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VI.

ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND AND THE JEWS.

BY SIDNEY L. LEE.

(Read at the 131st Meeting of the Society, Friday, February 10, 1888.)

IN 1579, at least eleven years before the Elizabethan drama had shown any unmistakable sign of greatness, it was vehemently denounced as "a mischievous exercise" and "a nest of sin." The pamphleteer Stephen Gosson allowed that a few plays of his day were "without rebuke," but these could be "as easily remembered as quickly reckoned." Of the righteous remnant a drama entitled *The Jew*, which was being performed at the Bull Inn in Bishopsgate Street, was selected for special commendation. Its plot was defined as representing "the greediness of worldly choosers and the bloody minds of usurers." Like so many of its companions on the Elizabethan stage, the piece itself is no longer extant, and Gosson's familiar reference to it is the only direct evidence to prove that it once existed. But Gosson is not altogether uncorroborated. In the same year Edmund Spenser the poet, while replying to a playful note of Gabriel Harvey, in which much reference was made to the contemporary stage, signed himself "he that is fast bownde unto the in more obligations than any marchant of Italy to any Jew there."¹ The context makes it nearly certain that Spenser's signature embodies a theatrical reminiscence—a reminiscence of that lost play of *The Jew*, which, according to Gosson, was achieving at the moment a deserved popularity at the Bull Inn.

Thus the Elizabethan playhouse in its earliest days found a place for the Jew. In the thirty succeeding years, during which the Elizabethan drama grew to maturity, the Jew's prominence is

¹ Harvey's *Letter-book* (Camden Soc.), 1884, p. 78.

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unmistakable. The fact has eluded attention. But it is easy to show that the Jew's position was almost as well assured on the Elizabethan stage as in the London theatres of the 18th century. Five years after Gosson and Spenser wrote of *The Jew* at the Bull Inn, there was published in London, "as it hath been publicly played," "a right excellent and famous Comedy called 'The Three Ladies of London,' written by R[obert] W[ilson]." This tedious production marks the slow transition from the morality-play to the genuine drama, and has little claim to the title of comedy. Its *dramatis personae* are personifications of Fame, Love, and Conscience, who do battle with personifications of Lucre, Fraud, Usury, and Simony. Into this impersonal environment there is incongruously introduced one Mercatore, an Italian merchant, who speaks broken English, traffics in expensive luxuries, and is harassed by a Jewish creditor named Gerontus. Three scenes deal solely with the Jew's claim on the Italian, and they are worth the attention of the literary historian, who has persistently overlooked them. "You know," says the Jew, in the first scene,

"I lent you two thousand ducats for three months' space,
And ere the time came you got another thousand by flattery and
thy smooth face;
So when the time came that I should have received my money,
You were not to be found, but was fled out of the country."

In a second scene the Jew opens the attack thus—

"Signor Mercatore, why do you not pay me? think you I will be
mocked in this sort?
This three times you have flouted me,—it seems you make thereat
a sport.
Truly pay me my money, and that even now presently,
Or by mighty Mahomet, I swear I will forthwith arrest thee."

The merchant is obdurate, and the Jew places him under arrest. The Jew's suit is the subject of the third scene. Gerontus briefly states his complaint before "the learned judge." Mercatore pleads that he has turned Turk (the scene passes in Turkey), and has thus, according to a recognised Turkish law, relieved himself of his debts. But while the merchant is repeating after the judge a formal renunciation of Christianity the Jew interrupts—

"Stay there, most puissant judge. Signor Mercatore, consider what
you do.

Pay me the principal, as for the interest I forgive it you."

"Mer. No point da interest, no point da principal.

Geront. Then pay me now one half, if you will not pay me all.

Mer. No point da half, no point denier; me will be a Turk, I say.
Me be weary of my Christ's religion."

Gerontus confesses himself shocked by the merchant's dishonest conversion, and rather than be a party to it, releases him from the debt. Mercatore returns to his old faith, and congratulates himself on cheating the Jew of his money. The judge adds—"Jews seek to excel in Christianity, and Christians in Jewishness," and the episode closes.

Crude as are these three scenes, in which the Jew plays a very respectable part, they are superior in dramatic point to the rest of the play, and have so slight a connection with the encounters of vices and virtues which constitute elsewhere the slender action, that they might be regarded as interpolations by another hand or from another play. It is possible that the Jewish scenes in *The Three Ladies* are adapted from the lost play which was familiar to Gosson and Spenser. There are, too, similarities between the dialogue of Mercatore and Gerontus and that of Antonio and Shylock, which suggest that Shakspeare knew *The Three Ladies*, or the source whence its Jewish scenes were borrowed. For our immediate purpose it is more important to note that the so-called comedy with its three Jewish scenes was exceptionally popular after the progress of the Elizabethan drama had left its point of development far behind. It was reprinted for a second time in 1592, when plays of literary repute were also on their way to the press.

By that date Christopher Marlowe, the first English dramatist, had nearly ended his short life. Of Marlowe's six extant tragedies—tragedies which inaugurated a new departure in English art—one, as every one knows, deals almost exclusively with the Jew. *The Jew of Malta* was written about 1590. In the prologue the author leaves the audience in no doubt as to his subject—

"I come not I
To read a lecture here in Britain,
But to present the tragedy of a Jew."

The first scene discloses the Jew Barabas in his counting-house with heaps of gold before him, congratulating himself upon his successful speculations in all parts of the world. "They say," he acknowledges, "we are a scattered nation," but he boasts that he has Jewish correspondents in almost every country of Europe, and that their close tribal union renders their fortunes almost invulnerable. Abigail, the Jew's beautiful daughter, assists her father in his cunning plots to guard his wealth. The plot is beside our present purpose. Barabas is for the most part a brutal caricature. His bitter hatred of the Christian and his greed for money combine to obliterate almost all trace of human feeling. But in his most characteristic utterance there is an obvious reflection of Jewish feeling—

"I am not of the tribe of Levi, I,
That can so soon forget an injury.
We Jews can fawn like spaniels when we please;
And when we grin we bite, yet are our looks
As innocent and harmless as a lamb's.
I learned in Florence how to kiss my hand,
Heave up my shoulders when they call me dog,
And duck as low as any barefoot friar,
Hoping to see them starve upon a stall,
Or else be gathered for in our Synagogue—
That when the offering basin comes to me,
Even for charity, I may spit into it."

The popularity of Marlowe's *Jew* on the stage is remarkable. It was performed at more than one of the London theatres between 1591 and 1595. Its representations exceeded in number those of any other play of the day, even including Shakspeare's plays.¹

The succession begun with *The Jew* "shown at the Bull" and *The Three Ladies* lapsed only when the Elizabethan drama was nearing extinction. A greater dramatist than Marlowe helped to carry it on. It was doubtless the popular reception accorded to *The Jew of Malta* that led Shakspeare in 1596 to write his *Merchant of Venice*. Shylock is a different creation to Barabas, but there are phrases in *The Merchant of Venice*, and a few features in the plot, like the introduction of the Jew's daughter, which irresistibly recall *The Jew of Malta*. It is unnecessary to dwell on Shakspeare's Jewish hero. His dignified

¹ Henslowe's Diary, *passim*.

claim on behalf of his race to be treated as a man, his strong tribal sentiment, and his domestic affections are among the characteristics that are sometimes overlooked. *The Merchant of Venice* is not Shakspeare's greatest play: Shylock's character is alone elaborately drawn; but Shylock is so finished a portrait as to extort the comment, that it can only have been drawn from the life. That it should have been painted by the greatest of all dramatists, at a time when his powers were reaching maturity, is conclusive proof of the strength of the interest excited by Jewish character in Elizabethan England.

Meanwhile the Jews continued to figure in less exalted dramatic work. In an anonymous play, describing the career of an Eastern barbaric potentate, entitled *Selimus*,¹ Abraham, "a cunning Jew," professing physic, appears in the train of the hero. Abraham is an evil type of Jew. He will venture anything for gold, and is well versed in poisons. Nearly forty years later the story of *Selimus* was again treated in another tragedy, where Abraham the Jew, under the new name of Hamon, plays his old part.² Douce, the Shaksperian scholar, mentions a play acted at Cambridge in 1597 called *Machia-vellus*, of which the hero was a Jew.³ In 1601 'Iacke Drum's Entertainment' was first published: one of its prominent characters is described in the *dramatis personæ* as "Mammon the Usurer with a great nose." Six years later a popular topical play by John Day, entitled *The Travels of the Three English Brothers, Sir Thomas, Sir Anthony, and Mr. Robert Shirley*, introduced a new Jewish usurer, named Zariph, to the stage. His is not a pleasant character; he is treated with contumely, and repays bigoted hatred with interest; but he is clearly the outcome of the dramatist's careful study. Of later date is a lost play by Decker, called *The Jew of Venice*, and another lost play by Richard Brome, entitled *The Jewish Gentleman*. In Beaumont and Fletcher's *Customs of the Country* (1622), Zabulon, a Jew, plays an important part, and an attempt is made there to do some justice to his racial characteristics. The English actors, who in the early part of the seventeenth century were

¹ Printed with Greene's works in Dr. Grosart's edition.

² *The Raging Turk, or Bajazet II.*, by Thomas Goffe (1631).

³ A copy is in the Bodleian Library (MS. Douce 234).

in the habit of making professional tours in Germany and Austria, included in their repertory a confusing play apparently constructed out of both Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* and Shakspeare's *Merchant of Venice*.¹ Their repertory was very limited, and the appearance in it of a Jewish play is additional proof that the English actors regarded Jewish topics as exceptionally attractive and effective.

Similar conclusions may be drawn from the incidental references made to Jews by the Elizabethan dramatists. These references are seldom complimentary, but they bespeak exceptional familiarity at any rate with the term Jew. "A Jew would have wept to have seen our parting," says Launce in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, when describing his parting with his family. "I am a Jew else, an Ebrew Jew," says Falstaff, by way of confirming his account of his encounter with the men in buckram. "If I do not love her I am a Jew," sighs Benedict of Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*. In many plays notorious usurers are reproached with the title of Jew. In Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*, a Puritan named Zeal-of-the-Land Busy is nicknamed Rabbi Busy, and for fear of being confounded with the Jews declares, with evident knowledge of Jewish custom, his intention, "by the public eating of swine-flesh to profess our loathing of Judaism." "Would I were a Jew," says a character in Webster's *White Devil* when reflecting on the bitter religious dissensions among the Christians of his day. "Oh, there are too many," remarks a bystander. "You are deceived," says the first speaker; "there are not Jews enough, priests enough, nor gentlemen enough." When asked to explain his meaning, he answers, "If there were Jews enough, so many Christians would not turn usurers." In an anonymous piece, published in 1609 (though probably written earlier), called *Every Woman in her Humour*, a city wife suggests to a neighbour various means of obtaining a dress to enable her to go to court, and concludes the discussion with the words, "Or if all fail you may hire a good suit at a Jew's or a broker's; it is a common thing, and especially among the common people."²

¹ Cf. Meissner, *Die Englische Comedianten in Oesterreich*, 1884, pp. 130—189, where the play is printed from a Viennese MS.

² Bullen's *Old Plays*, vol. iv. p. 363.

It is not customary with the critics to study dramatic literature as a source of social history. "It is our business," they say, "to look at the drama as a work of art, and there our function ends." Mr. Ruskin favours another line of investigation when he asserts that "it is a constant law that the greatest poets and historians live entirely in their own age, and the greatest fruits of their work are gathered out of their own age." Shakspeare expressed himself more emphatically and with greater authority to the same effect. "The purpose of playing both at the first and now, was and is to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature, to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure." These words define the object Shakspeare set before himself, and make it incontestably reasonable to regard Elizabethan dramatic literature as an accurate reflexion of contemporary society. In works of the highest art, local and contemporary features are naturally subordinated without in any way transgressing Shakspeare and Mr. Ruskin's rules to those characteristics of human nature which are common to all ages and all nations. Dramatic masterpieces therefore betray comparatively few traces of their creator's particular environment. But in the many Elizabethan dramas which rank below the masterpieces, and even in those scenes of the masterpieces which touch earth, historical students and dramatic critics will find, if they take the necessary trouble, that local and contemporary topics are very thinly veiled,—that passing events are mirrored with comparatively slight distortion. He who seeks to thoroughly realize the condition of Elizabethan England must study the drama as well as the professedly historical authorities; and he who seeks a full comprehension of the Elizabethan drama, and wishes to understand how it presented itself to Elizabethan spectators, must closely study it in connection with Elizabethan history.

This conclusion as to the interdependence of Elizabethan history and literature has an important application to the subject in hand. If it be accepted, it follows indubitably that the Jew could not have absorbed so much of the attention of Elizabethan playwrights and playgoers had he not occupied a correspondingly important position in contemporary society. In Europe, out of England, there is no

question that the sixteenth-century Jew wielded hardly less influence than his descendant wields at the present time. On the other hand, historians are in the habit of asserting that Elizabethan England was altogether free from Jews. "From the time of Edward I. to that of Cromwell," writes Mr. J. R. Green, "no Jew touched English ground."¹ There is undoubtedly much to be said for this view. The original authorities for the reign of Elizabeth give little or no indication of the presence of any Jewish population in England, and some contemporary authorities categorically deny their presence. Dr. Thomas Wilson, in his well-known *Treatise of Usury* (1572), states that the Jews were banished from England in the thirteenth century, because of their usurious practices, and that their place was held in his day by Englishmen, whose extortions exceeded those practised by the Jews in foreign countries. Other contemporary books about usury either omit all mention of the Jews, or insist on the fact that they were excluded from England. Similarly a traveller, William Davies of Hereford, wrote an account of a journey to Southern Europe, undertaken in 1597, and described the condition of the Jews in Turkey, Italy, and France. "They inhabit," he writes, "all parts of Christendom, *England excepted*;" and after noticing their modes of life and worship, he concludes with the pious ejaculation, "I beseech the Almighty God that this our land of England may never be defiled either by Pope, Turk, or Jew!" At a first glance, it would therefore seem that the English dramatists must have obtained their knowledge of Jewish life and character from foreign sources. Then, as now, the English were a well-travelled people, and many other travellers besides William Davies printed their foreign experiences. Hakluyt's *Voyages*, first published in 1589, include descriptions of Jewish settlements throughout the world. Laurence Aldersey, who visited Venice in 1581, described in detail the condition of the Jews there. A translation of a Frenchman's Travels in Turkey, issued in London in 1585, devotes a whole chapter to an account of the Jewish physicians of Eastern Europe; and elsewhere the same writer describes

¹ This sentence is unaltered in the new revised edition (1888) of Mr. J. R. Green's *History*.

the Jews monopoly of the trade in the Levant.¹ But these travellers' tales fail to account for the detailed Jewish characteristics which are visible in the Jews of the dramatists, from the rudimentary sketch of Gerontus to the finished portrait of Shylock. If Wilson and Davies are to be taken at their word, how comes it that in a comedy of manners, like *Every Woman in her Humour*, a thoroughly English city-wife should advise a friend to borrow a court suit from a Jew's second-hand clothes shop? It is plain that the Jewish features of the Elizabethan drama defy explanation, unless we can prove that Jews resided in Elizabethan England, and met the dramatists face to face.

That an order for the expulsion of all Jews from England was promulgated by Edward I. in 1290 is beyond dispute; but it is important to remember that it was an order in council, and not an Act of Parliament. With what thoroughness the order was originally executed we have no means of determining. The Jewish community in England in 1290 probably numbered sixteen thousand persons, and there would have been obvious difficulties in transferring the whole of the proscribed sect at one time to places beyond the frontier, *i. e.* beyond the seas. The feast of All Saints, 1 November, was the day appointed for their departure. One authority states that a ship-load of the exiles was wilfully wrecked off the Thames. There is no indication in the Chronicles of the stir which the operation of removal, if thoroughly carried out, would naturally have caused throughout a country whose every city had its Jewish settlement. We know that Edward I. issued similar orders for the expulsion of Jews from Gascony, then under English rule, in 1289. There is positive evidence to show that the Gascon Jews had not been disturbed thirty years later.²

Monasteries in England were conspicuously zealous in the conversion of the Jews; they were very powerful in country districts, and their virtue was not incorruptible. Specious promises of apostasy, accompanied by money gifts, might well have preserved many Jews

¹ *The Navigations . . . made into Turkie by Nicholas Nicolay . . . translated out of the French by T. Washington the younger.* London: 1585.

² *Black Book of the Admiralty* Rolls series, vol. ii, p. 371.

in England, even in districts where attempts to execute the expulsion order were made. That the Jews as Jews lost all civil rights and all their property in 1290 cannot be denied, and no endeavour appears to have been made in their behalf to regain civil rights by legal enactment until the time of Cromwell, more than three centuries and a half later. Thomas Wilson in his *Treatise of Usury*, as we have seen, ascribes to Edward I.'s edict of banishment the alleged absence of Jews from Elizabethan England, and in the seventeenth century petitions for its repeal prove that it was well remembered. But experience shows that orders in council excluding any special class from a populous country, unless re-enacted from time to time, lose their practical effect. The edict of banishment was never re-enacted, and could only be enforced by the elaborate and slow machinery of the Privy Council. Any Englishman might doubtless lodge a complaint with the council, and secure on the production of legal proof the expulsion of a Jewish resident; but voluntary powers of this kind are fitfully exercised, and there would be nothing inconsistent with the fact that the law was unrepealed in the discovery that for all practical purposes it was in habitual abeyance.

The object of this paper excludes consideration of the relations between Englishmen and Jews before the sixteenth century. Were it otherwise, I think I could show that the growth of commerce and increased facility of communication with the continent occasionally brought new Jewish settlers to this country between 1290 and the close of the middle ages. Here and there we can trace the presence of a Jewish physician, and the Italian merchants in London during the middle ages were often suspected of Jewish practices. One mediæval institution has, however, an important bearing on the later history of the Jews of England. Early in the thirteenth century vigorous attempts were made to convert the Jews to Christianity. In 1233 Henry III. constructed out of a Jew's forfeited residence in Chancery Lane a large public building with a chapel attached, for the residence of Jewish converts, who were thus taken under the immediate protection of the English crown. This building—known as the Jews' House or *Domus Conversorum*—stood on the site now

occupied by the old Rolls Court and Chapel, and was richly endowed at its first institution. The converts were not only housed and fed, but clothed and pensioned. The establishment survived the order of expulsion—a practical proof that the order was not rigorously enforced. It showed signs of life in almost every one of those three hundred and sixty-five years which intervened between 1290 and the date of Cromwell's endeavours to formally reinstate the Jews in England. The number of inmates was at no period very high, and varied from year to year, as the signed receipts for their pensions—often in Hebrew characters, and now in the Record Office—testify. As many as twenty-two Jews were living in the house in 1332. The number fell to nine in 1340, and rose to eleven in 1355. In 1367 the office of Warden of the Jews' House was amalgamated with that of the Master of the Rolls—an arrangement in force until the beginning of the present century. The extant records of the house cease in 1609, and there are gaps in the series for earlier years; but they are numerous enough and continuous enough to disprove the assertion, that "between the reign of Edward I. and Cromwell no Jew touched English ground."

When late in the 15th century Henry VII. was negotiating the marriage of his son Arthur with Catherine of Aragon, the Spanish ambassadors in England complained that many Jews who had been driven from Spain by the expulsion of 1490 had found an asylum in England. The infidels, he explained, were the natural enemies of his master, the champion of the faithful. Henry in reply politely swore by the faith of his heart that no one who was hostile to his Spanish Majesty should have his protection.¹ A Spanish historian, Amador de Los Rios, asserts that Spanish Jews made their way after the great expulsion to London, York, and Dover, and that they established a synagogue in London.² It is plain that Henry VIII. consulted Italian Jews about his divorce, and brought at least one rabbi to England. About 1540 the Privy Council ordered the arrest of several persons suspected of adhering to the Jewish faith: their houses were searched, and inventories made of their goods, but

¹ *Cal. Span. State Papers*, I. 164.

² *Historia de los Judios de España y Portugal* (1876), iii. 377-8.

apparently no further molestation followed.¹ In April 1550 one "Ferdinando Lopus, a physician, which was a stranger dwelling within St. Helen's," in the words of a contemporary chronicler, was convicted of gross immorality. According to the chronicler he was a Jew born, but that fact did not prevent the interposition of powerful friends. The Spanish ambassador, and "other of the King's Privy Council," contrived a temporary respite from punishment. Although Lopez's public confession of guilt soon rendered his friends powerless, and he "was banished the realme of England for ever," no one seemed to have suggested that the presence of a Jew in England contravened any legal enactment.²

With the reign of Elizabeth the foreign relations of England underwent an important change. Commerce advanced at great bounds; English merchant ships travelled to all parts of the world. Turkey and the Levant, Barbary and India, helped to stock the English markets. Foreign merchants and their agents settled in London and the chief ports in constantly increasing numbers. Questions of policy encouraged the immigration of aliens. England had become the champion of Protestantism in Europe, and the persecuted Protestants of Italy and France, Holland and Germany, were received with open arms by their English co-religionists.

No sort of restriction was placed by the authorities on this invasion, and it was quickly recognized that the new-comers included many besides the victims of religious persecutions. As the movement grew the insular feeling declared itself. The contempt for foreigners invariably exhibited by the rabble of the great English cities occasionally placed the visitors in bodily peril. England was divided in opinion as to the wisdom of opening her doors to the foreign hordes. Native artificers and merchants vehemently complained of foreign competition, and their bitter cry was identical at all points with similar manifestations of the present moment. But the ministers of Elizabeth never checked the incursions by legal enactment. In 1593 the whole subject was debated in the House of Commons, when a Bill was introduced prohibiting aliens from

¹ *Privy Council minutes*, temp. Henry VIII., vol. vii. p. 304.
² Wriothesley, *Chron.*, ii. 36-7.

selling by retail any foreign commodity. Sir Robert Cecil in the course of the debate expressed the best educated feeling of the day when he asserted, that relief afforded by England to strangers "hath brought great honour to our kingdom; for it is accounted the refuge of distressed nations, for our arms have been opened unto them to cast themselves unto our bosoms."¹ Each alien paid twice the amount of the subsidy charged to the native taxpayer; exceptional duties were sometimes placed on their exports and imports; nor could they own land. The insular prejudice of their newly-adopted countrymen often subjected them to petty social tyranny; but on the whole their position was secure and their disabilities few.

To meet expressions of discontent the Government ordered from time to time a census to be taken of the foreigners in London, although the immigrants were by no means confined to the metropolis. These reports are extant, and they prove indubitably the magnitude of the invasion. When Elizabeth ascended the throne it was estimated that there were rather less than three thousand aliens in London. Four years later the number had risen above four thousand and a half—an increase of nearly sixty per cent.; and of the new-comers only seven hundred and twelve were stated to be refugees on religious grounds: nine hundred and sixty-seven were immigrants from other causes. In 1571 the aliens numbered more than seven thousand, an advance of eighty per cent., and early in the reign of James I. they reached a total of ten thousand, and this at a period when the inhabitants of London numbered little more than three per cent. of the present population.² Meanwhile Canterbury and Sandwich, Norwich and Yarmouth, Maidstone and Southampton, and almost every town of any consequence in the country had its foreign settlers. When we remember that four or five millions is the highest figure at which the population of Elizabeth's reign can be fixed, the proportion of immigrants is seen to be gigantic. All trades were represented among the new-comers; but merchants, goldsmiths, and the professional classes, like painters, musicians, and doctors, pre-

¹ D'Ewes's *Journals*, 508-9.

² See *Notes and Queries*, 2nd Ser., viii. 448, and W. D. Cooper's *Foreigners Resident in England, 1618-88* (Camden Soc.).

dominated. How familiar a feature the foreigner was in average Elizabethan society is shown by the constant appearance on the Elizabethan stage of Italians, Frenchmen, Spaniards, Germans, and Dutchmen, each speaking broken English with his peculiar awkwardness.

That the Jews figured to an appreciable extent in this alien invasion of Elizabethan England is a natural suggestion. Early in the seventeenth century a pamphleteer wrote, "a store of Jewes we have in England, a few in court, many i' the city, more i' the country." We meet with no like statement until the alien immigration was well developed. For obvious reasons the extent of the Jewish immigration cannot be precisely determined. No foreigner was officially described as a Jew in the censuses. There was some danger in an open parade of Judaism. The powers of the Privy Council under the old edict of expulsion, although rarely exercised, were not forgotten. Prudent Jews would consequently disguise their names and conceal their religious opinions. But there was nothing to prevent their landing in England as professing Jews, and a few of them were so situated as to remain here as professing Jews without molestation. In the higher classes of society the irrational hatred of the Jews was obviously expiring. Sir Robert Cecil's dictum illustrates the growth of tolerant principles of statesmanship, and the Queen herself did not refuse intercourse with Jews and Jewesses. Of the favour she showed a Jewish physician in her service I shall have occasion to speak immediately. In 1591, according to Jewish historians, she received at Court a Portuguese Jewess named Maria Nunes, who with her brother had been taken prisoner by an English captain on the high seas while on their way to Holland. For some months the Jewess served the queen as a Lady-in-Waiting, and on one occasion rode with Elizabeth through the streets of London. Maria Nunes declined an English nobleman's offer of marriage, on the ground that she would not forsake her ancient faith, and was at length allowed to join her friends in Holland.¹ A few years later Elizabeth received a very loyal letter from a lady named Esperanza Malchi of Constantinople, who described herself as "a Hebrew by

¹ Graetz's *Geschichte der Juden*, ix, 514 and note 10.

law and nation," and a devoted admirer of the English Queen.¹ Among the middle and lower orders of society the same tolerance could not be reckoned on; but the ancient prejudice was not at all times alive, and judicious tactics might preserve a Jew from the evil effects of its awakening.

An English book in 1584 emphasized, as we have seen, the monopoly exercised by the Jews in the Levant trade. An English company, promoting English trade with the Levant, was formed about the same time, and it is clear that Jews and Englishmen were associated in its councils. That the words Jew and usurer were synonymous in Elizabethan England suggests the presence of Jews of another occupation; but the point must not be pressed too far. There were Jews in England who followed different pursuits, and there were undoubtedly many usurers in England who were not Jews. English usurers were more extortionate, according to Thomas Wilson, than any foreign Jews in Christendom. According to a pamphlet—*Choice of Change*, etc., by S. R. Gent—issued in 1598, there was a scarcity of Jews in England because Christians made a practice of usury; and Webster the dramatist made, as we have seen, the same observation in his *White Devil*. It is curious to note that Stowe, the contemporary historian of London, states that Houndsditch was largely tenanted then, as now, by "sellers of old apparel;" but he complains that there had lately crept in among the old dwellers a number of pawnbrokers—"a base kind of vermin, or rather, as St. Bernard thinks it more convenient to term them, 'baptisatos Judaeos,' who take to themselves to be Christians." When we associate Stowe's words with that practice of hiring court suits at a Jew's mentioned by a dramatist, Elizabethan Houndsditch may fairly be credited with clothiers and pawnbrokers of Jewish origin.²

Of another pursuit practised by Jews in Elizabethan England we can speak with greater certainty. All the fashionable doctors of Elizabethan England were foreigners, and it is possible to detect Jews among them. By the Queen's special interposition, a doctor named Jacob was admitted to the college of physicians in 1585, and was soon afterwards sent at Elizabeth's expense to attend the Czar of

¹ Ellis's *Orig. Letters*, 1st ser., iii. 52. ² Stowe's *Survey* (ed. Strype), i. 144.

Russia.¹ We have seen that a Jew named Lopez practised medicine in London under Edward VI.; and the only Jew of Elizabethan England of whom a biography can be written bears the same surname, and was a physician of the highest eminence at Elizabeth's court. It is necessary to dwell on his career in some detail.

Roderigo Lopez settled in England in 1559. In the foreign census of 1571 he appears as a resident in the parish of St. Peter le Poer, and is described as "doctor Lopus, a portingale, housholder, denizen," who "came into this realme about 12 yeares past to get his living by physicke."² Lewis Lopus, a brother, is mentioned as living with him, and it is curious to note that the same return describes as the doctor's neighbours men whose names faintly suggest a Jewish origin. Among them are Joseph the Venetian, glass maker, and Jeronome Destroralib, a surgeon. Lopez rapidly reached the highest places in the medical profession. He was the first to hold the office of house-physician at St. Bartholomew's Hospital. In 1575, while he was living at the hospital, his "parlour was boarded," on condition that "he should be more painful in his care of the poor."³ One of his colleagues at the hospital, William Clowes, in a medical work on "Gunshot wounds," remarks, that Lopez "showed himself to be both careful and very skillful, not only in his counsel in dieting, purging, and bleeding, but also for his direction of Arceus' apozema," a remedy which Lopez caused his assistants at St. Bartholomew's to adopt. Before 1569 Lopez had become a member of the College of Physicians, and in that year he was selected to read the anatomy lecture at the college.⁴ He declined this service, to the

¹ Coll. of Physicians' MSS. in Hist. MSS. Com. 8th, Rep. 227 b, and Munk's *Physicians*, i. 88. I have no positive evidence to show that this famous doctor was a Jew, but his name and profession make it very probable. An attempt was lately made to rehabilitate an old error and to represent the doctor's surname as *James*, of which it is pretended that *Jacob* or *Jacobus* is the Latinized form. But Dr. Munk showed long ago from the register of the College of Physicians, and of Trinity College, Cambridge (where the doctor graduated), as well as from Russian sources, that his surname was Jacob beyond all question. A Dr. John James was contemporary with him at the College of Physicians, and he is always called *James* in both Latin and English documents of that time.

² See *Notes and Queries*, 2nd ser., viii. 448.

³ St. Bartholomew's Hospital Reports (1882).

⁴ Munk's *Physicians*, i. 69.

annoyance of his colleagues, and in 1571 he was directed to return a fee which he had received from a servant of Lord Burleigh's on undertaking to cure a swelled shin-bone.¹ His practice grew in spite of such charges of unprofessional practices. In 1571 he was attending the Queen's secretary, Sir Francis Walsingham.² In 1575 his name stands near the head of a list of the chief London doctors, printed by Stowe. A year or two later he had become chief physician in the household of the Earl of Leicester, the most powerful nobleman of the day.³ In an elaborate contemporary libel on Leicester, the physician is described as "Lopez the Jew," and is credited with skill in poisoning, and other criminal arts.⁴ A friend of Leicester speaks of him, on the other hand, as "a very honest person and a zealous;" and Francis Bacon, who was never very well disposed towards him, wrote of him as "a man very observant and officious, and of a pleasing and pliable behaviour." His wife, named Sarah, whose home was at Antwerp, was clearly a Jewess. His numerous correspondents—friends and relatives at Antwerp and Constantinople, for many of whom he procured passports to England—were doubtless of his own race. At one time he lived in Wood Street, at another he had a house in Holborn called Mountjoy's Inn, which one of his patients built and gave to him, and he seems to have rented some property of Winchester College.⁵ In 1586 his fortunes reached their zenith. In that year he became chief physician to Queen Elizabeth. She treated him with consideration, and three years later granted him a monopoly for the supply of aniseed and sumach in England.

But Lopez's blushing honours were soon to encounter a killing frost. His intimacy with the Queen and the leaders of all parties at Court inevitably drew him into the fatal vortex of contemporary politics. On Leicester's death in 1588, Leicester's place as Elizabeth's personal favourite was taken by the impetuous Earl of Essex. Essex was rashly seeking to supplant the Queen's older and more cautious counsellors led by Burghley. He was agitating for a series of aggressive operations against Spain, and employed a number of

¹ Coll. of Physicians MSS. in Hist. MSS., Com. 8th, Rep. 227 a.

² Walsingham's *Diary* (Camd. Soc. Miscell. i.).

³ Lodge's *Illustrations*, ii. 224. ⁴ Leicester's *Commonwealth* (1584).

⁵ Birch's *Memoirs*.

secretaries to correspond with the English agents abroad in order to supply himself with foreign intelligence superior in quality and quantity to that acquired by the Queen's ministers. It is obvious that he sought Lopez's aid in this connection. Lopez had friends in Spain from whom Essex thought to gain useful information, but Lopez did not take kindly to the project. About 1592 Essex and his friends brought to England Don Antonio, a claimant to the throne of Portugal, who had suffered terrible indignities at the hands of Philip II. Antonio was enthusiastically received, and was paraded through England as a representative victim of Spain's cruelty and intolerance. But he knew no English, and Lopez, a distinguished linguist, was induced to act as his secretary and interpreter.

For a time matters went smoothly, but Essex and Antonio proved troublesome taskmasters. Both were restless, impatient, and impulsive. Lopez's temper was easily ruffled, and in the summer of 1593 he unwarrantably divulged some professional secrets which were said "to disparage Essex's honour."¹ A fatal estrangement followed, and early in 1594 Lopez had drawn upon himself the hatred of the Essex faction at Court. His foreign connections rendered him an object of popular suspicion as soon as attention was directed to them. Rumours were spread that he was pensioned by Philip of Spain to poison Elizabeth and Don Antonio, and such charges could always count on a warm reception by and at whomsoever they were levelled.

When the accusation was first brought by Essex to Elizabeth's notice she dismissed it angrily, and told her favourite that he was "a rash and temerarious youth." But examinations under torture and threats of torture of Lopez's servants and his Portuguese friends, showed that he had been receiving presents of money and jewels from Spain. Ultimately in Feb. 1594 he was placed on his trial for high treason. Coke, the prosecuting counsel, denounced him as this "vile Jew," "a perjured and murdering traitor and Jewish doctor, worse than Judas himself." Conviction followed, and Lopez was hanged at Tyburn on 7th June following. On the scaffold Lopez affirmed, in the words of Camden, that "he loved the Queen as well as he loved Jesus Christ, which coming (Camden continues)

¹ Goodman's *Court*, ed. J. S. Brewer, i. 153.

from a man of the Jewish profession, moved no small laughter in the standers-by!" It is unnecessary here to discuss the question of Lopez's guilt.¹ The evidence against him proved little except intimacy with Spaniards and Portuguese in Spain and England, and that evidence was tainted by the torture and threats of torture by which it had been obtained. The Queen was clearly reluctant to execute the capital sentence, and declined to sign the warrant for nearly five months after the conviction. On Lopez's death, by a rare exercise of her prerogative, she granted to his widow (Sarah) all his property. She only reserved for herself a rich jewel stated to have been a present to Lopez from the King of Spain, and this jewel she wore in her girdle till her death.²

It is important to notice the emphasis laid in contemporary accounts of Lopez's tragic end, on the fact that he was a Jew. At the trial and scaffold it was remembered against him, and it is seldom omitted in the numerous references to his alleged treason in contemporary tracts and plays. John Taylor the water poet, a good representative of the less educated Elizabethan public, writes of the event thus—

"Lopez, a doctor, by descent a Jew,
A Portingal by birth, the queen's physition,
Forgetting duty to his sovereign due,
Would poison her to further Spain's ambition.

But this base Jew was taken in the trap,

And hanging his reward was good enough."³

¹ I have already discussed the question at some length in an article entitled 'The Original of Shylock,' in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for Feb. 1880. Cf. Forneron's *Phillipe II.* The full details may be gathered from the *Calendars of State Papers*, 1591-4.

² Sir Thomas Egerton, Lord Keeper, speaking in the House of Lords, 27 Oct., 1601, said: "I have seen Her Majesty wear at her girdle the price of her blood: I mean Jewels which have been given to her physicians to have done that unto her which I hope God will ever keep from her; but she hath rather worn them in triumph than for the price which hath not been greatly valuable." D'Ewes's *Journals*, 599.

³ The chief references to Lopez on the stage are to be found in Marlowe's *Faustus*; in Middleton's *Game at Chesse* (ed. Bullen), Act IV. Sc. ii.; in Dekker's *Whore of Babylon* (1607), G 4, H; and in *England's Joy*, a spectacle (1602). Taylor's verses appear in his *Churches Deliverance* (see Workes, 1630, p. 145).

Early in James I.'s reign there was published an illustrated sheet entitled 'Popish Plots and Treasons, from the beginning of the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Illustrated with Emblems and explain'd in Verse.' Sixteen prints are here engraved, and each represents the leading event in one of the chief political crises between 1569 and 1605. The thirteenth drawing is entitled, 'Lopaz compounding to poyson the Queene,' and bears the following inscription—

"But now a private horrid Treason view
Hatcht by the Pope, the Devil, and a Jew;
Lopez a Doctor must by Poison do
What all their Plots have fail'd in hitherto:
What will you give me then, the Judas cries:
Full fifty thousand Crowns, t'other replies.
'Tis done—but hold, the wretch shall miss his hope,
The Treason's known and his Reward's the Rope."

In the design a man wearing a Spanish ruff and broad beaver hat stands in a landscape in the foreground, with a church and house in the distance. He is addressing Lopez, who is in academic costume, and from his mouth proceeds a label printed with the words 'Qvid dabit?' The same drawing appears in Carleton's 'Thankfull Remembrance of God's Mercie,' 1624. (See Catalogue of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum. Division I. Vol. i. pp. 10 & 11.)

The sufferance extended to acknowledged and suspected Jews in Elizabethan England can hardly be better illustrated than by Lopez's life. But his story does not stand alone.

In 1581 one Jechim Gaunz offered to give information to the Government respecting new methods of manufacturing copperas and vitriol, and of preparing copper for commerce. He also proposed improvements in smelting copper and lead, and made experiments in the mining district of Keswick in Cumberland. For some eight or nine years he lodged in Blackfriars, but in September 1589 he visited Bristol, and Richard Crawley, a minister of religion there, discovered that he could speak Hebrew. Crawley was something of a Hebrew scholar, and they consequently held frequent discussion in the language. Gaunz's religious views were not suspected, and he was in friendly intercourse with many Bristol citizens. A common

acquaintance told Crawley that in a discussion on the Old and New Testament, Gaunz had declared himself an infidel, for "that he holdeth that Christ Jesus is not the Son of God." At their next meeting Crawley interrogated Gaunz on the point. Gaunz vehemently denied the Divinity of Christ. The Mayor of Bristol was informed of Gaunz's bold expression of opinion, and he was brought in custody before the local bench. In answer to inquiries, the prisoner stated that he was a Jew, was born at Prague in Bohemia, was brought up in the Talmud of the Jews, was never baptized, and did not believe any articles of the Christian faith. The magistrates, in doubt how to deal with him, sent him before the Privy Council at Whitehall, and he was probably banished.¹

Jews of another type were meanwhile being relieved at the converts' house in Chancery Lane. Throughout Elizabeth's reign the inmates were few in number, but the institution was still fulfilling its ancient functions. In 1599 there were three Jews there. Their names—Philip Ferdinando, "a Neophyte," "Nathaniel Menda, alias Yehooda Menda," and Fortunatus Massa—indicate a Spanish origin. A year or two later two other Jews, Arthur Antoe and James Wolfgang, together with a Jewess, Elizabeth Ferdinando, were also residents in the house. Few personal details of these Jews are accessible; we know, however, that James Wolfgang was one of the earliest visitors to Oxford granted, in 1608, the privilege of reading in the newly established Bodleian Library. He is described in the certificate of admission as "a man well deserving in the Hebrew tongue, and a convert from Judaism."² It is worth noting too, that on the 1st April, 1577, "Nathanael a Jew" was baptized in the Church of All Hallows in Lombard Street, and made public profession of his new faith in Spanish. The sermon at the ceremony was preached by the famous John Fox, the martyrologist, and it was printed with a dedication to Sir Francis Walsingham, the Queen's secretary. Nathanael, we are told by Fox, had come to England from Barbary in 1571, and had been "conversant amongst us by the

¹ I have transcribed all the papers in the Record Office relating to Gaunz. Cf. Cal. State Papers, 1581, 1589.

² *Oxf. Univ. Reg.* (Oxf. Hist. Soc.), ii. pt. i. 266.

space of six whole years," before he renounced what Fox calls, "the natural contumacy of his native country." This convert is doubtless identical with Nathanael Menda of the Jews' house.

The cases of Lopez, Gaunz, and Nathanael make it quite clear that Jews entered Elizabethan England without hindrance. Lopez lived here prosperously for five-and-thirty years. Gaunz was not molested for at least eight years, and Nathanael for six years practised his faith before he contemplated baptism.

When Thomas Coryat, the famous Elizabethan traveller, was staying in Constantinople in 1612, he visited on Saturday, 7 August, "the house of a certaine English Iew called Amis, borne in the Croothed Friers in London, who hath two sisters more of his owne Iewish Religion, commorant in Galata, who were likewise borne in the same place." Coryat describes the ceremony of circumcision which he witnessed at Amis's house in the company of other English friends. This testimony strengthens considerably the argument in favour of Jews living in Elizabethan England and practising their religion there. (See Coryat's *Accounts of his Travels in Purchas's Pilgrims*, 1625: for the reference I am indebted to Mr. H. H. Furness of Philadelphia, who has noticed it in his recently published Variorum edition of the *Merchant of Venice*.)

The only definite trace of Jews in England out of London under Elizabeth or James I. is found in Oxford. The two Universities of Oxford and Cambridge possessed at all times wide privileges of asylum, and Mr. Thorold Rogers accepts the tradition, that from the date of the expulsion to 1840 or thereabouts a Jewish settlement existed in Oxford in Penny Farthing, now Pembroke Street, on the outskirts of the original Jewish quarter of the city. Dr. Neubauer is investigating the matter at this moment, and although probably true, the tradition cannot yet be said to be proved fact. Men learned in the Hebrew tongue would naturally be well received in an university town, and it was doubtless as Hebrew tutors that the Jews flourished in Oxford. When the Bodleian Library was first established in 1608 two Jews, who were not members of the university, were allowed to read there. One was James Wolfgang, to whom I have already referred; the other was James Levita, who is described

in the register of the library as "Judæus Orientalis."¹ A young Jew named Jacob Barnett was well known in Oxford at the same time. His Hebrew learning procured for him something like close intimacy with the chief professors and tutors of the University. About 1609 the scholar Casaubon met him at Oxford, and engaged him as a secretary. But Casaubon's means were small; with deep regret he parted with Barnett in June 1613, and the Jew returned to Oxford. Casaubon had discussed religious topics with the young man, and saw in him a likely subject for conversion. The Vice-Chancellor was informed that Barnett was willing to be baptized, and Casaubon was consulted by the Oxford authorities as to the fitting ceremony to be observed. A day was fixed for a public baptism, but when it arrived Barnett had fled the city. The proctors searched in vain, and much wrath was manifested in Oxford. But Casaubon more wisely smiled at the Jew's escape, and wrote to an Oxford friend that he did not think it a crime punishable by law to refuse to become a Christian.² The sleeping edict of expulsion was awakened, however, to deal with this case of contumacy. From an entry in the Privy Council Register, it appears that "Jacobus Bernatus a Jew" was banished from England in 16th Nov. 1613.³

Soon after these events another Jew, named Antonio Maria de Verona, became known to both universities. King's College, Cambridge, granted him £2 in 1623-4, and a pension of £40 seems to have been allowed him by the Government in 1625, to continue as long as he remained in His Majesty's dominions. Early in 1626 Queen Henrietta Maria applied to the Oxford Convocation in an autograph note for some special favour to be shown to Antonio, whom she described as her servant. The request was formally granted. Antonio is almost invariably described as a Jew, and the suggestion that he was a convert has not been established.⁴ At a little later date a Jew named Alessandro Amidei taught Hebrew at

¹ *Oxf. Univ. Reg.* (Oxf. Hist. Soc.), ii. pt. i. 266, 274.

² Pattison's *Casaubon*, pp. 414-16.

³ Note by Mr. Lucien Wolf, *Athenæum* for Sept. 10, 1887.

⁴ *Athenæum*, Aug. 27, Sept. 3 and 10, 1887. Notes by Dr. Neubauer, Mr. Lucien Wolf, and Mr. J. E. Thorold Rogers.

Oxford. He was a Florentine by birth, who, according to Anthony à Wood, was converted to Christianity late in life, and became reader of a Hebrew lecture in Sion College, London. To a satirical volume, entitled *Naps on Parnassus* (1658), Amidei contributed an Italian sonnet ridiculing a university poet. The verse was described as a "Sonetto in Lodi del autore, or in plain English, A Jew's letter in Ink to commend a Negro."

I have thus shown that the Jew figured in the Elizabethan play-house at all stages of the development of the Elizabethan drama, and that it is only possible to account for his presence by the assumption that he figured to a proportionate extent in Elizabethan society. I have confronted the accepted notion that Elizabethan England was wholly free from a Jewish population with undoubted proofs of the residence of Jews in London and Oxford in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Finally, I have urged as more than probable that the great alien invasion which was continuous throughout Elizabeth's reign brought to this country many more Jews than those whose names are recoverable. From the historian's point of view, these results justify no great conclusion. Elizabethan Jews would seem in many instances to have been absorbed into the general population, and the ethnologist may perhaps infer from the circumstance that the intermixture of Jewish and English blood is larger and of older standing than is commonly assumed. From a literary point of view more substantial interest attaches to these researches. When we set by the side of Shylock the tragic story of Roderigo Lopez, his relations with a living Antonio, and the popular feeling which his death evoked, we possibly may detect the model whence Shakspeare drew his portrait of the Jew. A comparison of the hero of real life with his counterfeit presentment on the stage may help to put the critic in the way of estimating the poet's power and method of transmuting mere fact into dramatic poetry. Sensible literary criticism cannot hope to secure a more profitable field for exercise.