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A Criticism and Critique of Isaac Harby's Plays and Essays

by

James L. Apple

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in Hebrew Letters and
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THESIS DIGEST

The name, Isaac Harby, is relatively unknown both in Jewish and in non-Jewish circles. The question arises, therefore, of what importance was this man, that he should be the subject of an ordination thesis? The answer is very simple. Harby was one of the few Jews in the early 1800's who attempted to enter and to be successful in the field of literature. He also was one of those rare individuals who tried to improve and modernize his Judaism, despite the fact that he was a layman. This thesis endeavors, therefore, to discover the intricate workings of Harby's mind, as well as to offer a critique of his works.

Harby wrote three plays, all of which were box office failures. The finest of his plays was Alberti, which President James Monroe had the pleasure to witness. The paramount reason why Harby failed as a playwright can be traced to his idealism, in that he wrote a play for the sake of drama, and not for the whims of his own uncultured generation.

His essays, dramatic and literary criticism, and newspaper editorship, portray a man full of sparkling wit, of bitter sarcasm, and of gentility. Harby, in all of his writings, tried to be honest and objective. Many times, however, his emotions interfered, and made him subjective. The prime example of Harby's wit, objectivity, and subjectivity can be observed when he discussed Napoleon Bonaparte.

Harby's finest contribution to humanity was his organization of the first liberal Jewish movement in the United States. He led "The Reformed Society of Israelites" in its campaign to reform and modernize the Spanish-Portuguese liturgy of Beth Elohim, Charleston, South Carolina. In conclusion, Harby was a good example of the early American Jew, struggling to eke out a living by a career in belles-lettres.

To

Judi--the source of my inspiration

and

L.Y.G.--friends in the time of need

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INTRODUCTION

In college, I had two focal points of interest. One was Reform Judaism and the rabbinate, and the other was the field of literature. My interest in the rabbinate was evidenced by the fact that I enrolled in the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. Those who knew me well also realized that despite a heavy schedule both in college and seminary, I managed to squeeze in the study of American literature. Thus, when it came time for me to pick a thesis topic, I wanted a topic which would incorporate both of my major interests.

As I scanned the field of American Jewish history, the name of Isaac Harby suddenly seemed to captivate my interest. Here was a relatively unknown author, critic, essayist, and playwright, and the leader of the first Reform Jewish movement on American soil. In essence, the deeds and actions of Isaac Harby had aroused my two main interests so much, that I was motivated to write my thesis about him.

Unfortunately, there has been no book dealing with every aspect of Harby's accomplishments. Thus, few people have ever heard of him. Charleston, South Carolina, for example, boasts of having the first Reform temple in the United States, yet gives little credit to Harby. When one reads a criticism of William Shakespeare, one seldom refers to Harby's masterful comments. I have attempted, therefore,

to rectify the injustice done to him by writing what I believe to be the first complete biography of Harby's life.

CHAPTER ONE

A BRIEF PICTURE OF SOUTH CAROLINA AND OF CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA, DURING HARBY'S LIFETIME--1788-1828

The state of South Carolina was peculiar from its origin, both by its situation and by the nature of its inhabitants. Isolated by vast stretches of trackless country from the more populous centers of even her sister states, South Carolina was left to the tutelage of her mother country, England, more so than any other state. Thus, South Carolina for many decades was, of all the colonies, the most accessible from England. Many English ships would berth at Charleston Bay and transmit "British" culture, ideas, and attitudes.[1]

After the Revolutionary War, life in ante-bellum South Carolina was not static, but it was resistant to any change tending to cause it to conform to the ideology and practices of the industrial North. "The generality of the people of South Carolina and, indeed of the entire South, was superior to the industrial civilization of the North in that the former conserved and perpetuated a way of life which ennobled the individual."[2]

Agriculture was the backbone of South Carolina's economy. The great staples of the state were rice, indigo, and tobacco.[3] However, when Whitney's cotton gin, invented in 1792, became known and available to the South Carolina planter, cotton became the main agricultural product.[4] F. J. Turner, a noted historian of this period, wrote:

"Never in history, perhaps, was an economic force more influential upon the life of a people...The price of cotton was in these years the barometer of southern prosperity and of southern discontent."[5] By 1825 manufacturing in South Carolina had declined. It was far more profitable for South Carolina to be a plantation state and raise cotton, than to spin it.[6]

The decade 1820-1830 was critical for South Carolina. Her uprush of prosperity from cotton subsided as states to the West glutted the market. Cotton entered a long depression lasting until 1832. From her founding up to 1815, South Carolina had steadily drawn immigration. The white majority of 31,283 in 1790 had been supplanted in 1820 by a black majority of 27,861. South Carolina was fighting a losing economic battle, until in later years she would develop new economic resources. This economic loss South Carolina suffered along with most of the old seaboard states, but she was one of those most severely afflicted.[7]

Into this somewhat sketchy picture of South Carolina, we now insert Charleston, and turn to a detailed examination of her society, economy, and culture. Charleston in Harby's day appeared as a quaint and old fashioned port city. It bore the imprint of English influence and usage. It had narrow streets paved with cobblestones, the old market over which hovered turkey buzzards, the graceful church spires weathering in mist and sunshine, and of course, the venerable live oaks and magnolias sheltering stately homes

adorned with balconies.[8] It was a social and political meeting place in colonial times. The governor, the colonial legislature, the courts, and the minor royal officials resided at Charleston. Northern South Carolina--the up country or the back country, as it was then called--was shut off from the rest of the world. Overland communication was very slow and expensive. The low country, of which Charleston was a part, had the advantage in wealth, in intelligence, and in political power.[9]

Charleston, indeed, in 1795 was already an international city. A large portion of the inhabitants exhibited a great variety in their language. At this time Charleston was the most aristocratic city in the Union. There was complete nobility in everything but title.[10] "The small society of rice and cotton planters at Charleston," says Henry Adams in describing the America of 1800, "with their cultivated tastes and hospitable habits delighted in whatever reminded them of European civilization. They were travelers, readers, and scholars; the society of Charleston compared in refinement with that of any city of its size in the world, and English visitors long thought it the most agreeable in America."[11] Indeed, the planters led the town. Their life as semi-military, semi-patriarchal masters of men and land made them leaders, if there was any material within the man on which to build.

J. Hector St. John De Crèvecoeur sadly noted:

While all is joy, festivity and happiness

> in Charles-Town, would you imagine that scenes of misery overspread in the country. Their ears by habit are become deaf, their hearts are hardened; they neither see, hear, nor feel for the woes of their poor slaves, from whose painful labours all their wealth proceeds. Here the horrors of slavery, the hardships of incessant toils, are unseen; and no one thinks with compassion of those showers of sweat and of tears which from the bodies of Africans, daily drop, and moisten the ground they till. The cracks of the whip urging these miserable beings to excessive labour, are far too distant from the gay capital to be heard. The chosen race eat, drink, and live happy, while the unfortunate one grubs up the ground, raises indigo, or husks the rice; exposed to a sun full as scorching as their native one; without the support of good food, without the cordials of any cheering liquor.[12]

The political professions of her leading men in those days were of the Jefferson school, but their practice was that of an aristocracy--a planter aristocracy. However, as the years rolled on into the 1820's, titles of nobility disappeared along with heredity estates.[13] This type of aristocracy was carried on to the extent that it was held disreputable to attend to business of almost any kind; even the learned professions were admitted into the front rank in society only to a limited extent.

The commerce of Charleston during this period of time exceeded anything of later years, as her exports were great, and her imports were equal, not only to her own consumption, but to supplying a large portion of Georgia on the one hand, and North Carolina on the other. The smuggling trade in British manufactures to the then Spanish and Portuguese South

American colonies was immense and extremely lucrative, bringing in return large quantities of specie, and innumerable cargoes of coffee, cocoa, and sugar, which were then reshipped to European ports. Many merchants accumulated large fortunes, which enabled them to compete with the planters in style of living.[14]

By 1830, the decay of Charleston, the decline of her commerce and consequent decreases of population and wealth were seen and felt. The cause of this depression was due to the introduction of steam navigation. Before 1830, the produce of the interior was brought on wagons by the growers to Charleston, and afforded business and employment to a great number of merchants and laborers. The former had erected, at a great expense to themselves, both warehouses and dwellings in which to house the produce. Now, with the introduction of steam navigation, both warehouses and buildings were unnecessary. The produce was collected at Augusta, Hamburgh, and other places in northern South Carolina, and brought to the wharves in Charleston on boats, towed by steamboats. At Charleston, the produce was received by a few foreign and American agents who thus were enabled to transact a business which previously had given life and wealth to every part of the city.

The consequences of this change in the system of trade were financially ruinous to many, while its benefits were felt by few. Many, whose rents in Charleston gave them an entire independence, were reduced to poverty; houses, for

example, that rented for from ten to fifteen hundred dollars a year, became tenantless, or were rented for one-fourth the amount.[15]

As far as cultural patterns went in South Carolina, Charleston was pre-eminently the cultural center. It had the Charleston Theater, many playwrights, music, and a great many men of literary ability.[16] If one were to title Charleston as a cultural center between 1800-1830, an adequate description might be, "the Athens of South Carolina."[17] If we can title Charleston thus, the important question arises, what was the literature like of this period?

Ludwig Lewisohn partially answered this question:

> What differentiates the literary origins of South Carolina from the literary origins in other States is the fact that on account of (1.) the isolation of the province from its sister provinces and its comparatively easy accessibility from England, and on account of (2.) the liberal character of its inhabitants, we find here a somewhat more perfect development of pure literature of the eighteenth century type, especially in prose, than in any other literature producing States...The history of literature in South Carolina is practically the record of what was written in one city. What Athens was to Attica, Charleston was to South Carolina...It was here that literature originated, developed, and declined.[18]

The style of writing was extremely ponderous and stilted within this period of 1800-1830. Foreign expressions were regularly employed when the exact idea could be expressed in English. Latin and Greek words were evidently more admired and preferred than Anglo-Saxon ones,

and this, it must be noted, is the general genre of literature found in Charleston and in South Carolina.[19]

One area which up until this time has not been touched, is that of the position of the Jews in South Carolina. Were they treated as equals or as second-class citizens? Could they have developed a literature which would include their deepest thoughts, or was there even any indication of their feelings and reactions? Were they happy with their surroundings, or just biding their time until something better came their way? In other words, what was the role of the Jew in South Carolina in general, Charleston in particular?

The constitution of South Carolina was written by the great English philosopher, John Locke, who in his liberality arranged toleration for "Jews, Heathens, and Dissenters."[20] Here indeed was a glorious invitation for the Jews to settle in an English colony which would grant them the rights, from which they were so often deprived in Europe.

The Jews showed their appreciation of the liberality of South Carolina during the Revolutionary War. The largest group of Jewish soldiers from any one colony was that of South Carolina, because that colony had a regular militia in which every able-bodied man was enrolled. Twenty-six Jews served in the company of a Captain Lushington, who commanded the men from a certain section of Charleston. They did excellent service particularly during the siege of Charleston by the British; after the city's capture, some of

them were imprisoned and many expelled from it. Because of the large number of Jews enrolled, Captain Lushington's command was often referred to as the "Jews' company."[21]

The Charleston sentiment toward the Jews was a fine reflection of the liberality of the United States Constitution regarding religious toleration. Contempt was shown to the German cruelty towards the Jews. Maryland was ridiculed for her bigotry in denying full political rights to the Jews.[22] The Jews, indeed, enjoyed certain rights in Charleston and in South Carolina, which had been denied to them for many centuries on the European continent.

With the South Carolina Jews possessing first-class citizenship, one might expect a tremendous outpouring or publication of Jewish literature. However, Isaac Leeser wrote in his Occident and American Jewish Advocate that Jewish literature was not at home in the United States, and that higher education was a thing neither sought nor valued.[23] He was unhappy in the 1860's that so few Jews, in proportion to their numbers, enrolled in colleges or universities. Hence, although there might have been a great many who wrote for newspapers and magazines, few indeed devoted their time to composing a book or some type of Jewish literature.

The next step in this thesis is to briefly examine the life of Isaac Harby, and see how it fits into the colorful world of Charleston between the years of 1800-1830.

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CHAPTER TWO

ISAAC HARBY'S BIOGRAPHY

Sometime during the fifteenth century, Nicholas Harby lived in the County of Cambridge, England. The son of Nicholas was William, who in turn became the father of Thomas. Thomas' son was Clement, and Clement, Jr., represented the next generation.[24]

Clement, Jr., was the first to introduce the Jewish element into the Harby blood strain. After being knighted at Whitehall in 1669, he took the consulship of Morea in 1681. There he married a Jewess. The couple later moved to Morocco, where Clement, Jr., became secretary to the king and filled the post of Royal Lapidary.[25]

Clement, Jr., had a son, Isaac Harby, the grandfather of the Isaac Harby with whom this thesis deals. Isaac, to all intents and purposes, was raised as a Jew. His first name, Isaac, was a fine biblical one, and it is probable that his religious beliefs were to a great extent influenced by his mother. We know about him that he was "about the middle of the eighteenth century employed in the business of a lapidary at Fez in Morocco and in his barbarian majesty's good confidence. Some threat of his life, either on account of his wealth or doubt of his conversion to Islamism, induced him to attempt and effect his escape to England. He there married an Italian lady."[26]

From this marriage, six children were conceived, the youngest of whom was Solomon, born in London, 1762. Solomon

Harby left England bound for America. He remained in Jamaica from 1778 to 1781, before embarking for Charleston, South Carolina.[27] In 1787, he married Rebecca Moses in Charleston. She was the daughter of Myer Moses, a wealthy and patriotic Jew who had assisted the thirteen colonies during the Revolutionary War.[28] Isaac Harby, the first born of this union, humorously remarks, "My father died without leaving me anything but a decent education and sufficient honour and virtue to bar my preferment in this world."[29] In his will, Solomon Harby mentioned Isaac only, of all his children, appointing "my dearly beloved son Isaac Harby to be my successor as Trustee to the New Burying Ground at Hampstead," and bequeathing to him his desk and all his books, "they having been originally purchased for him in the Pursuit of his education."[30]

L. C. Moise makes mention of a manuscript in which Isaac Harby pokes fun at his surname.[31] It is evident that he did not know his complete ancestral history, otherwise he scarcely would have joked about the possible Hebraic derivation of the name. He states in the family Bible: "My great ancestor Isaac ben Solomon was distinguished by the appellation of 'herab' (a swordsman), whence I suppose the family name Harby, חַרְבִּי, literally 'my sword'."[32] Harby had no idea whatsoever that his surname originated from a non-Jewish source. He probably thought that it was a biblical word, חֶרֶב, which one of his ancestors chose.

Let us, however, continue with the background information. Isaac Harby was born in Charleston, South

Carolina, November 9, 1788.[33] He received all the advantages of a liberal education from one of the most renowned and distinguished classical scholars of his day, Dr. Best. Harby was such a precocious student that he repeatedly acted the part of a tutor to the rest of his class, preparing them, in his leisure, for serious examinations. He also possessed a happy mirthful nature, which made him the center of a bright, animated group of companions.

While still extremely young, he obtained a position as an instructor in Charleston College, for he had impressed the public through various articles that were printed in the local press. Losing no opportunity to improve his mind and increase his knowledge, he was a voracious reader. The best literature of the ages was always before his eyes, and translations from Latin, Greek, and French were never necessary.[34] Harby had a retentive memory plus a quick and acute perception of things. He seldom had to read a thing twice, and what he once committed to memory, he never forgot. His judgments of both men and things were not of patient investigation, rather they were formed at first impression. Harby's biographer sadly notes that he was too eager for the "immediate rewards of success" to undergo the pains and unremitting labors that bring the very highest achievements.[35]

In 1805, at the age of seventeen, he began the study of law with a distinguished fellow townsman, Langdon Cheves. But before he was able correctly to estimate the law profession, he abandoned the study, and turned to journalism

and teaching. Harby found these vocations more congenial and enjoyable to his brilliant and imaginative nature.[36]

With the death of his father in 1809, Isaac found himself the sole support of his mother as well as a large family. Depending upon the faith and generosity of his friends, Harby decided to open a school on Edisto Island, and to do the only thing he knew how to do--to teach. He was so successful with his school that he was induced to move it to Charleston, due to the demands of his many gratified followers. His biographer remarks:

> As a teacher, he had few equals, probably no superior in this State(i. e., S. Carolina). His method was peculiar to himself. He paid little attention to rules and none to former systems. He instilled knowledge more by verbal explanation and familiar conversation not unlike the admirable plan of Socrates, than the ordinary modes of "taxing" the memory with the weight of long and tedious exercises.[37]

Harby first studied the student and never lost interest in the material he had to mold.[38] One of Harby's finest qualities as a teacher was his sense of fairness. He loved to participate in sporting events with his pupils. He would soundly thrash the boys who were not perfect in their preparation. "But in the very next hour" he was playing with them during the recreation period.[39] Harby, it appears, would not carry over the mistakes a pupil made in one class, to another class or activity. He took each class and activity as a new and separate event in the life of a pupil. His qualities of affability, patience, and industry made this teacher a first rate school man.[40]

In 1810, while still teaching, he married Rachel, the only daughter of Samuel Mordecai, of Savannah. Unfortunately, little is known or written about Mrs. Harby. It appears that the marriage was a happy one, because it produced eight living children. Mrs. Harby died at the young age of forty-five in the year 1827. Isaac, lamenting the loss of his beloved wife, wrote tersely in the family Bible, "Mysterious and unsearchable Providence."[41] However, the attractions of the family circle and of social life were not alluring enough to make Harby cease or neglect his studies of the classics of literature. He was constantly storing in his memory information which would enable him to write witty and ingenious essays on the current subjects of the day.[42]

In 1804 he became a member of the Philomathian Society, a literary and debating club made famous by a membership which in later years occupied commanding stations in society. The membership of this select group aided in arousing Harby's pride and ambition for status in the "Society" and to stimulate his hope for future renown.[43]

From this period and onward, we find Harby emerging as a public writer. He first undertook the editorial department of The Quiver, a weekly Charleston periodical.[44] This paper did not have a long life, and not a single copy of it is available.[45]

He was almost without means, but in association with a friend, Harby purchased the Investigator, and proceeded to

edit it. His editorial policy brought him into the public eye as the eloquent champion of the Republican cause. This venture of Harby's was a gamble, for if the literary tastes of the Charleston populace had not approved, he would soon have been bankrupt. However, due to his energy, leadership, and genius, it appears that the Investigator prospered.[46]

Yet Harby was not satisfied with the character and policies of the Investigator. "He took upon himself the heavy charge of changing the whole character of an established paper, and by altering its name to that of the Southern Patriot, and diversifying its columns with the effusions of his lively and felicitious pen, the offspring of his creation seemed at once to rise like a phoenix from its own ashes."[47] In it he ably supported the administration of President Madison. Public confidence rapidly increased so much in the Southern Patriot that in less than a year, the number of subscriptions had grown sufficiently to insure long life and establish the character of the paper.[48] In May, 1817, he sold his interest to Robert Howard, whom he had taken into partnership in 1816, and returned to teaching.[49] However, due to the increase of the public and private schools, Harby was soon induced to return to the editorship of the City Gazette in 1822. He also wrote the editorials for the Charleston Mercury during the absence of its editor.[50]

As an editor and writer, he wrote easily and brilliantly. Nothing escaped him which would elicit a lively comment or an

instructive truth. Although he wrote almost daily, never were his efforts labored or inappropriate. In fact, Harby's diction was beautiful, his style elegant, and his imagination ever alive to vivify the ridiculous and the sublime.[51]

Harby, moreover, was not only a teacher and a gifted newspaper editor, but he also was an exceptional dramatist, critic, essayist, and journalist. Yet, with the majority of his lifetime consumed by his literary efforts, he still found the time to become an outstanding and gifted leader in matters of religion. Each one of the aforementioned things is an integral part of Harby's life, and is too important to be lightly explained in this biographical chapter. Therefore, the ensuing chapters will examine in detail Harby's dramatics, criticism, essays, journalism, and involvement in Judaism.

In June, 1828, Harby resolved to leave Charleston. He had just lost his wife, whose long sufferings he had been helpless to alleviate. His means of livelihood were gradually becoming more slender and precarious. His health was seriously impaired by some chronic affliction.[52]

Harby took up residence in New York City, and with his sister as assistant, he began to teach again in a school which was established in his home.[53] He also became an occasional contributor to the New York Evening Post. The Evening Post used the words of Harby's "Defense of the Drama":

> We cannot omit to ask the attention of our readers of taste to the following beautiful, and learned, and masterly discussion of our elegant correspondent, in defense and recommendation of theatrical exhibitions. Its perusal, we think, must dissipate the most inveterate prejudice, and conciliate the good will and approbation of the most honest but mistaken opposition.[54]

A tribute to the high regard in which Harby was held in New York was when the new Bowery Theater was about to be opened. Dr. DeKay, Isaac Harby, and Ogden Hoffman were the committee appointed to decide on the merits of the poetical address offered for the opening of the theater.[55] The name of Isaac Harby appearing on a committee proudly called "so very competent," scarcely three months after his arrival in New York, attests to the high regard and respect others gave to him.[56] The Evening Post described Harby as an "esteemed personal friend and accomplished scholar... who occasionally honored our columns with proofs of his learning and genius...distinguished and eminent scholar and writer of no ordinary taste and intelligence";[57] "a friend and impartial critic of the drama";[58] "the ripe and refined scholar, the respectable citizen, and the upright and moral man, who fulfilled in an exemplary manner the various duties he felt himself called upon to discharge in the relations of father, brother, and friend."[59]

In little more than six months of his New York career, Harby became seriously ill and died December 14, 1828. He died at the age of forty-one in the prime of his manhood.[60]

A sad commentary on his life is that he died in abject poverty. In fact, the Bowery Theater announced promptly after his death that it would devote the proceeds of a certain performance to his orphan children, "wholly dependent upon the charities of the world for subsistence."[61]

When the news of Harby's death reached Charleston, Miss Penina Moise, the blind poetess, wrote a touching poem "On Isaac Harby's Death."

> ...Light of my youth, shall not my timid muse
> In tributary verse her woe effuse?...
> Wert not thou he from whom my spirit caught
> Its proudest aspiration to high thought?
> Whose genial beam chased intellectual gloom,
> Whose mental radiance cherished fancy's bloom,...
> Whose buoyant brilliancy could e'er dispense
> Vivacity and vigor to the sense,
> With flexible and ingenious art could spread
> Rich classic gems o'er the colloquial thread,
> With frolic humor laugh in sunny glades,
> Or walk with science in her deepest shades...[62]

Isaac Harby, as we can now imagine, was no ordinary hack writer. He was a man of genius, of imagination, of courage, and of ideas. He absorbed as much of the Charleston literary and cultural atmosphere as he could. However, it was not a one way track, for Harby responded by airing his wit, brilliance, and thoughts to a highly literate people. It is this literature of Harby's to which we now turn and examine. Within Harby's prose, we will begin to find some of his views on life, people, and politics.

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CHAPTER THREE

HARBY'S PLAYS

> American drama in the first half of the nineteenth century has little of aesthetic worth to offer to the modern reader, scholar or critic. Our professional theatre was young and immature; its roving troupes and local stock companies clung to the cultural centers--New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Richmond, Charleston for precarious reasons; the staple repertoires consisted of English importations and adaptions of French and German melodramas. The tradition of foreign plays was so strongly established with both managers and the public that American writers either ignored the stage altogether or, as sometimes happened, assumed pseudonyms and passed themselves off as British playwrights.[63]

These were some of the problems which were personally experienced by Isaac Harby, a dramatist who was no better or worse than any of his contempories.[64] In fact, Ludwig Lewisohn, in his Expression in America, did not deal in any great detail with early American playwrights or dramatists of Harby's era. He wrote: "I repudiate once more the antiquarian argument that we must concern ourselves with bad plays and poems and stories, work meaningless in itself and without fruitfulness for the future, because the age in which those plays and poems were written, produced works even worse."[65] Therefore, it was not suprising that Isaac Harby, a young talented American author, should have encountered great difficulty in obtaining a hearing for his plays. Harby, in fact, was to experience many heartaches and rebuffs as an early American playwright. His first play, for example, was a failure. He was more successful with his second play, which was produced in 1810. Nine

years later, President Monroe attended the performance of his Alberti, which was moderately successful. Harby's struggling efforts to become a promising playwright can be seen in his first play. It is this play to which we now turn.

ALEXANDER SEVERUS

Alexander Severus was Isaac Harby's first play. He wrote it at the early age of eighteen, after having made successful efforts at criticism. Messrs. Fagin[66] and L. C. Moise,[67] on the one hand, call this play a comedy, while A. Moise[68] and Harby,[69] on the other hand, call it a tragedy. Which opinion is the correct one, cannot be determined, because no copy of the manuscript is available.[70] Yet, if Harby called his play a tragedy, one would assume that the author certainly knew what type of dramatic piece he wrote.

Harby told us that the hours given to this play's composition were "the intervals between the drudgery of an attorney's office, and the time allotted to rest and repast." Childishly he remarked that he was buoyed up, not by expectations of success, but by the belief that his play would be presented on the Charleston stage. As as after-thought, Harby saw no reason why it should not run as good a chance of success as did several plays recently presented.

> But, so frail are men's hopes. Alexander Placide, the manager, to whom I was necessitated to submit, what he could not understand, very kindly informed me that 'de englese vas not veri coot, dat de play ad not de incidents, des avantures, de something to catch de people, dat Mons. Harby

> vish to write like Shakespeare, and dat vas wrong, because Shakespeare vas old, but he vas young, and he make de people laugh, just after he make dem cry.' Finally, he gave the tragedy general praise as a virgin performance, and told me if I would write another with more adventures and better English(!!!) he would have it performed.71

M. Placide should have remembered that the play upon which he pronounced his cruel veto was the work of an eighteen-year-old boy. Alexander Severus doubtless lacked the expert stagecraft needed to bring it any measure of success. Still, it must have possessed some remarkably strong and eloquent passages, which merited high commendation, rather than unqualified censure, or lukewarm praise. As in his other plays, Harby used the blank verse of iambic pentameter, echoing that of Shakespeare. Here are some of the lines spouting forth from the mouth of an eighteen-year-old boy as he described Sicily, Aetna, and Rome:

> Sometimes I'd wander through
> The trackless woods to hunt the famish'd wolf,
> Or cheat the dweller of the limpid stream
> With luscious bait, to woo his own destruction.
> Sometimes I've seen the blushing grape invite
> The eager lip, or the luxurious corn,
> Tipt with the golden tinge of autumn's sun,
> Bend like a suppliant to the reaper's hand.
> And the next hour observed the furious Aetna,
> From his black jaws spout cataracts of fire,
> And in a smoking deluge of hot sulphur,
> Drown all these riches of industrious nature.
> But even these scenes have lost their pleasure to me,
> And tir'd of farms, of solitude, and books,
> The winds have blown me into bustling Rome,
> Where in this mart of various motley contrasts,
> I may observe the characters of men,
> Amuse my fancy with their rare commixture,
> And feast upon variety forever.72

He did not, however, permit himself to become

discouraged by Mr. Placide's remarks. In 1807 he completed a second play, The Gordian Knot or Causes and Effects.[73]

THE GORDIAN KNOT OR CAUSES AND EFFECTS

This play in five acts is a romantic melodrama based upon Mr. William Henry Ireland's novel, The Abbess. Harby writes in the preface to his play:

> The origin of this essay...in the Drama is the Secreto Maligno of some unknown Italian novelist. The ground work of which furnished the imagination of Mr. Ireland (though he does not own it) with the materials for his "Abbess," and by the aid and circumstances of midnight assasinations, dreary vaults, mysterious warnings, horrors, and the inquisition, he has deck'd out his terrible story in the true spirit of Germanic romance. The principle Scenes in the two first acts of this play, are taken from that novel, but no farther,--for, in pursuing NATURE, I found my road to be widely different from the path followed by Mr. Ireland...As for what I myself have thought and written, let the play speak for itself--had I believed it needed any other apology than youth, I should have never preferred it before the eyes of the public.[74]

This play achieved a longer and more glorious history than its predecessor. Upon its completion in 1807, it was submitted to M. Placide, of Charleston, and Mr. William Warren, of Philadelphia. Both managers at first accepted and then later rejected the manuscript. Harby describes his trials and tribulations in this humorous way:

> When I presented it to the manager of our Charleston Theatre, after I had waited a month, I called upon him and was informed he had forgot to read it, but would make it his business to do so the ensuing week. At the end of which, he met me in the street, said he had read the play, but would defer giving me his opinion of it till to-morrow. Having a shrewd conception, that to-morrow..., as

Shakespeare says, would creep in this petty pace from day to day, I requested that the prince of comedians, the excellent HATTON... to use his interest for me; and, as he expressed a high opinion of my drama, its stage effect, and the certainty of its bringing a full house--the Manager, (after some curious demurres) designed to accept it...

He /Mr. Placide/ mentioned first its beauties; the plot on account of its bustle, pleased him very much, the characters more; the speeches were passionate, and he was glad to find I had left none of my persons in the lurch, but had bestowed them, in some shape or other, etc. etc. He then enumerated the faults and commented on them in a very singular manner; he observed in reading the manuscript, much false grammar...Mr. Placide, who is always sociably disposed was kind enough to consult me with regard to such speeches as were to be cut out, and such dialogues as were to be shortened...Thus smooth the current was running--the characters were cast, etc. When all of a sudden the benefits began, and so did the summer--which made the actors scamper as fast as they could to more northern climes.

When things had arrived to this crisis, I sent for my manuscript, and feeling no inclination to offer it again to the Manager, I had the very gracious alternative of making a bonfire, or of making a publication. I decided for the latter--how wisely, time will show. But in the very heat and progress of typography--an actress...requested of the manuscript to be performed for her benefit. After some demurs, I consented. Well the parts were written, cast, and studied; and the unlucky wight of an author was called upon to exhibit what the players term "a reading," before their august highnesses...All were seated--and Mr. SULLY having well shook and amalgamated his ignorance and his impudence together, began to read the part of "Hubert," for which he was unfortunately and unnecessarily cast. Such reading! But it passes description. Then Mr. GREEN began his "Marcello," interlining sneers and jeers, to the infinite amusement of his audience. Then Mr. SULLY read, ever and anon uttering such sheer wit, as the taste of the gallery has rendered him celebrated for. Then Mr. GREEN replies. Then Mr. SULLY rejoinders. Till, at last, the "acting manager" cried out, "Damn it SULLY, you'll keep us here till twelve o'clock; let Mr. HARBY read his own play." Accordingly, the patient HARBY...began to read. But Mr. SULLY preferred reading himself; and when the author good-naturedly informed him, that a word

> containing two syllables, logically contained more than one, the "acting manager" started upon his feet, and with the utmost pomp and magnificence of manner, said, "Sir, I am manager here; and if you are determined to teach an actor in my presence, I am determined not to submit!" Upon uttering which he went off. The confusion and dismay this excited might suit HOGARTH to describe, or some future comedy,... but here I shall not attempt it. For, although I kept pursing up my lips with all the nerve I was master of, I could hardly refrain from bursting into a fit of laughter. However, I must compliment my philosophy; for taking up my hat and manuscript, very calmly, I bid the gentlemen and ladies "buenos noches," and came home to my supper.75

Professor Arthur Hobson Quinn believed that "The Gordian Knot deserved a better fate."[76] In reading this play, one cannot help feeling that its author was a promising young playwright. Harby's poetic sensitivity and dramatic ability show a mature young man with considerable talent. He aped Shakespeare's style in the writing of this play. Though The Gordian Knot cannot be placed in the same category or class as Shakespeare's works, it was, nevertheless, a well-constructed and eloquently expressed vehicle for a stage which was given to absurd heroics and ear-splitting bombasts.

The play was a romantic melodrama, full of revenge and of Gothic scenery. Yet, in the hands of Harby, this play, with emphasis upon its characters, became humanized and almost believable. Professor Quinn pointed out that its two pairs of lovers "are a refreshing departure from the usual lovers of romantic plays of the period in being almost real."[77] Fagin said: "The feat of creating even 'almost' real characters in a plot and a tradition which reek with

melodrama is a surprising achievement. Harby was able to accomplish it because he had the wisdom and the artistic impulse to use the Italian story--or Ireland's adaption of it--only as a starting point and to depart from it, after the second act, in search of truth rather than mere mystification and the thrill of horror...His high ambitions, at eighteen, may not have resulted in the creation of another Macbeth or Othello, but his The Gordian Knot is certainly many cuts above the mediocre product of a dramatic period which wallowed in bloody claptrap and unspeakable fustian."[78]

Although one can agree with Fagin's theory of Harby using the Italian story as a springboard, through which he could make his characters seem "real," Fagin has completely neglected the influence of drama in the United States upon Harby. At the end of the eighteenth century the American theater was pretty well established, but an original American drama was still far in the future. Repertories were mainly foreign; it would have been folly to expect a native drama to compete with royalty-free plays such as Macbeth or Richard III. In the beginning, however, many Americans experimented with the dramatic form, all the time trying to make their characters seem less wooden and more lifelike. After the Revolutionary War, the Elizabethan dramatic influence began to disappear. In its place, patriotic, nationalistic, and local color plays began to be written. On the one hand, none of these plays were of any

dramatic worth, but, on the other, they did point out the strivings of the American dramatist to create human situations and characters. However, it must be noted, the process of Americanization was a gradual one, and the influence of the English playwrights, as well as the Continental ones, still held a strong grip on the American dramatist.

Harby, thus, was influenced by both the English writers and also by the birth pains of American drama. He no doubt understood and participated in the struggle of the American playwright, who constantly was trying to make his characters more human, or in the words of Fagin--"real characters." Harby, however, was not that nationalistic or steeped in local color to write a play about his native country, or situations found therein. Rather, he chose to turn to Italy and to write plays about the local habitat and dilemmas. Yet, in the meantime, the growing American drama was striving to give characters and plays more of a human, believable quality. This influence can now be seen in Harby's two pairs of lovers, who present an "almost real" picture of reality.

N. Bryllion Fagin gave a summary of the plot, which was so economical, yet so exacting, that it seems best to summarize it. Abbess Vittoria, head of her convent, suddenly comes upon Count Marcello, a Florentine nobleman. Upon gazing at him, she believes Marcello to be her long-lost son. In order to determine this, she sends the monk

Ubaldo to summon Marcello to meet her at midnight in the secrecy of the cloisters. On his way to see Vittoria, Marcello meets and speaks with Madalena, a novitiate in the convent. Ubaldo reports the conversation to her father, Duke Betrocci. The latter immediately summons Madalena home.

Meanwhile, the Duke's niece has fallen in love with a knight named Alphonso. The knight is upset, believing that his father does not love him. In reality, his father is the Duke, whom Alphonso is being trained to murder. The ending is happy, however, for Alphonso fumbles the job. Father and son are united; Alphonso marries Clara; Marcello gets his Madalena; and, virtue, innocence, and gallantry triumph over evil.[79]

In criticising his own play, Harby concluded by remarking: "Dramatists too often think their task completed, if they have justly described the local manners of man. I have preferred to picture him in his general nature. On that basis has rested the immortality of Shakespeare; and I am proud to own, I write for fame."[80]

Harby indeed was a promising young playwright to be reckoned with. Out of rather shoddy materials he was able to create a play which contained tension, "human characters," moving scenes, skillful wit and humor, and word-play. However, these decorative features have little or no value, unless they aid in bringing forth the message of the author. In this particular play, Harby comments on love and hate, on

revenge, on the shedding of blood, on religion and marriage.

Here are Harby's comments on marriage as shown by the dialogue between Marcello, who is in love with Madalena, and Hubert:

Marcello: Aye, but if fortune smile upon my hopes,
My hand in marriage--...

Hubert: Marriage!

Marcello: Certainly.

Hubert: You jest!

Marcello: As serious as Plato in his lectures.

Hubert: Why then, adieu. What! will you sacrifice the freedom of frequenting where you please, The right of toying with each pretty girl, The liberty of looking with your eyes, Of taking loco-motion with your feet, Without a shrill tongue ringing in your ear. Domestic discord? Will you give up these for a babe's brawling, and its mother's frets? When you are married, or rather, when you are marr'd.81

Harby had a keen insight into the emotions of man as can be seen when he speaks through Ferdinand on the subject of anger and revenge:

Ferdinand: They say that time blows feverish anger cool,
And that revenge will slumber till new wrong.
So think the million--judging by themselves. The Grecian bard knew human nature better,
And says that insult, to a noble soul,
Will never be forgiven. I shall prove
A striking comment to that text of truth.
But this Alphonso--I have labor'd hard
To pluck this stubborn kindness from his heart--
Yet he is modest, gentle, delicate, brave;
Enraged, a wounded lion at his prey--In peace, as gentle as the spring-time dove.

> Ha! Yes, in the tenderest point will I assail him. Vengeance most perfect! He shall deal the blow. But soft! he comes--[82]

Harby's genius is quite evident when he tries to answer one of the most commonly asked questions, "What is love?"

> Madalena: Pray what is love?
>
> Clara: Love! 'tis a non-descript, a head-ach, Heart-ach;
> A painful pleasure and a pleasing pain;
> A something, nothing, that torments, delights us;
> Shot, like a basilisk, on the spell bound eye, It heats the blood, and melts the hearts away, In sighing out--heigho![83]

Within the following conversation between Madalena and the Abbess, Harby has expressed his own personal view of religion:

> Madalena: I pray you, madam, pardon my default
> That I have spoken on this sacred morn,
> With one who wears no veil.
>
> Vittoria: Nay, Madalena, If every breach of our rigid rules Deserv'd reproach, I should myself be guilty, Religion is not harsh; her ways are mild. Her hand ne'er shuts us out from social joys Whatever bigots say.[84]

Harby's attitude toward convent life in 1810 reflected the anti-Catholic feeling held by Protestant Charleston, as well as the America of the early 1800's.[85]

> Madalena: Heigho! neither morn, noon, nor evening have charms for me. Hid here, in a convent, like money in an iron chest, I neither mingle with the world, nor am enjoyed of it. Our catholic Fathers think their daughters mere merchandize, and set them by, 'till some purchaser calls for them...[86]

Although The Gordian Knot or Causes and Effects was finally presented in Charleston by a professional cast, Harby

probably realized that he must wait maturer years before writing more drama.[87] And so, in 1819, the promise indicated in The Gordian Knot was realized when Alberti was produced at the Charleston Theatre.[88]

ALBERTI

Harby's preface gave the source of his five-act play:

> The original object in the composition of the following Play, was the vindication of the character and conduct of LORENZO D'MEDICI, from the calumnies of ALFIERI, in his tragedy, called "The conspiracy of the Pazzi."[89]

Yet again, as in the preface to The Gordian Knot, he stated why and to what extent he departed from his source:

> I was soon, however, obliged to abandon the above named; for truth is at least one of the essentials in a Historical Drama, and I could not, without perverting facts, have formed incident and character, or that unity of design and execution so necessary for effect upon the stage. Still in the chronology of "ALBERTI," and some of its allusions as well as names, the traces may yet be seen of my first design. But I was obliged to invent a story...

Instead of adding another revenge play to a stage already cluttered with stories of gory deeds, Harby preferred to create a drama which elicited "moral feeling from the struggle of natural passion, and the picture of greatness of soul." He modestly admits that he may not have succeeded, but then, "who has not found it much easier to conceive than to execute what is excellent?"[90]

There were various objections raised against his play, which Harby readily answers in his preface. The first one

he cheerfully conceded: Alberti "has neither thunder, lightning, assassination, banditti, battles, scenery, nor song to recommend it. Probably my aim was higher, or my taste not exactly conformable to the admirers of Melo-Dramatic extravaganza."[91] The second objection which he named was the belief of certain critics that his heroine, Antonia, should have committed suicide when she learned that she could never marry the man she loves. To this objection, Harby replied:

> I am aware that suicide, (dramatically speaking) is quite the fashion; and that a species of atheistico poetical refinement has lately usurped the place of many of our vulgar notions. But--if I am allowed to know anything concerning beings of my own creation--I can assure the reader, (who is of course a critic) that Antonia happened to be brought up religiously and morally; and, however unhappy she might have been, she reflected too correctly to have ever contemplated such an act.[92]

The third and final objection--that his play is an American production--Harby accepts as a very great compliment:

> To this charge, (as I do not know how to get over it) I must plead guilty. I have even the hardihood openly to acknowledge, nay, be proud of the accident of birth, which has placed me under the protection of laws that I revere, and in the bosom of a country that I love.[93]

L. C. Moise, with one minor exception, gave a fine summary of the plot. Because of its brevity, it is worth summarizing. Brotherly hatred between Alberti and Ridolpho causes Alberti to insist that his son Ippolito stop seeing Ridolpho's daughter. Finally, he explains the reason why

he gave such an odd order to his son. While Alberti was off at war, Ridolpho's wife died and the latter took Alberti's wife. When Alberti returned from war, a fight ensued and he was left as dead. He recovered from his wounds, however, and stole his son back. Thus, the lovers were half-brother and sister. When identities are made and proved, forgiveness and reconciliation occur.[94]

Fagin, however, pointed out one correction, which it was necessary to make in this summary. He noted, that when the play begins Alberti is not "bitterly hated" by his brother Ridolpho. "On the contrary, Ridolpho suffers from the pangs of conscience and would gladly accept forgiveness. This error on the part of Mr. Moise was carried over probably from his source, an unpublished thesis by Robert Duncan Bass of the University of South Carolina."[95] I tend to agree with Fagin's observation because of this speech which Ridolpho gives:

> I must meet him straight--
> Alberti,--thou posses'st an influence o'er me,
> That startles my belief in nature's laws.
> To all men else, open and bold and cordial--
> To me alone mysterious; like some magician
> To whom my inmost thoughts were known, thou
> stand'st, And pouring forth the secrets of my soul
> In mine own ears, 'till I shrink back appall'd
> At horrid recollections--How I dread,
> Yet long to meet him![96]

Alberti, even more than The Gordian Knot, makes it clear that Harby refused to write plays merely to provide vehicles for actors, for theatrical entertainment for the public, or for lining his pockets with money. On the contrary, he respected the stage as one area through which man could

transmit moral and philosophical ideas. As Fagin said:

> Being a good playwright, he avoided burdening his play with didacticism, but his characters were conceived as human beings torn by the tensions of good and evil, capable of growth and development, and of arriving at moral responsibility. General Alberti is dominated by a passion for revenge, but after a lifetime of seeing war and bloodshed, conspiracy and rebellion and betrayal, he rises to the nobility of returning good for the evil done to him. He resolves the disorder of his world--which is but a reflection of the disorder in his mind--and achieves harmony and tranquillity.[97]

Harby contrived to end his play on a high optimistic note. He made General Alberti's final speech a logical poetic overflow of a strong and courageous man, who celebrated his greatest victory--that over himself. It is as if Harby is saying to the entire human race--"man's greatest enemy is himself, but the moment that he overcomes his bad habits or immoral thoughts, the world is but his for the asking." As Alberti said:

> Bless thee, my children.
> My brother--friends--my country too at peace--
> And Florence independent still! Why then
> Let monarchs wage their wars--truces be made,
> And arms break down the policies of peace;--
> Let empires rise and set; as do those stars
> That glitter in the milky way awhile,
> And then are lost in dark oblivion!--
> The present day is ours--the storm is past,
> In safety we have buffetted the billows,
> And trust we've reach'd the harbour of good welcome,
> Where we may moor securely.[98]

Harby's eloquent and animated description of General Alberti cannot be withheld from this thesis:

> The smile of patience on his lips, when toil
> And parching heat upon the plains of Italy
> Have melted down the hardiest of his troops.

Then he was dazzling, great, his mind and body
Form'd for stern war, and hazardous achievements
And yet, when peace and midnight came upon us,
I've seen him sit and meditate; the while
Flashes of anger--aye, and traits of mercy
Came mantling o'er his face--that noble face,
Like some pure stream reflecting every object;[99]

When Ippolito found out that Antonia was his sister, he bitterly said:

The instant gone,
I trod a path where the mild morning light
And odorous zephyra breath'd around;--the earth
Strew'd with sweet flowers, and each bush and grove,
A choir of melody; and now my steps are cross'd
By serpents coil'd--
Mine eyes are blasted with a sulphurous flash
That comes from hell. What! To have lov'd my sister,
Affianc'd to have married her![100]

And then, in a few moments, he spoke with Alberti about the irony of honor:

Ippolito: O cruel fortune!
Not for love that I did bear Antonia--
For sure there is no guilt in ignorance--
But that the close affinity of blood
Makes her a being whom I dare not love.
Strange and unprecedented destiny!
Religion, custom, law, the world's decree--
Honour itself conspires to make me wretched.

Alberti: To make thee happy rather; to be honourable
Is to be happy; for honour is our own.
The world cannot take that away, Ippolito.
'Tis the proud self-love of superior
natures, The fire Promethean breathed by
virtue's self, In bosoms cultured. My
Ippolito, Honour is virtue's champion.[101]

What can be more eloquent than Alberti's reproach to tyranny:

By heaven, methinks,
Dear as I love the soil on which I live,
If tyranny were planted here, I'd cross
The yet unblemished wave of the Atlantic,
Find some green virgin spot, some wild
retreat, And there court Independence.[102]

There can be no doubt that this play was--for its day--beautifully and elegantly composed. As Mr. L. C. Moise so expertly observed: "The blank verse is flexible and there is symmetry and unity in its construction."[103] Harby proudly said that Alberti "has neither thunder, lightning, assassination, banditti, battles, scenery, nor song to recommend it."[104] In effect, he was saying that Alberti's greatness rested in the realm of both the play's dialogues and the element of human passion. Harby refused to use any type of dramatic "gimmick" in order to achieve popularity. Rather, he intended Alberti to be accepted on its verbal merits, and not upon anything else. In this respect he succeeded, for Mr. Lewisohn called Alberti a "very stiff and colorless tragedy."[105] Evidently, Mr. Lewisohn was displeased with Alberti's turgid style of sustained dignity, long speeches and soliloquies, and lack of humor. However, he added that Alberti was typical of the plays of that time, and as such was "nearly valueless, but as presenting a phase in the development of South Carolinian and, therefore, of American literature," it fully deserved "the notice that has here for the first time been given."[106] Thus, it was to Harby's credit that he did not believe in being an opportunist, and "playing up" to audiences. Rather, he preferred to bring the audience up to his level. This idealism of Harby was a fine thing, but sadly enough, the public did not feel the same way the author did. In short, Alberti was Harby's last attempt at drama. His play has

provided a somewhat interesting link in the chain of the development of American drama.

Alberti was produced in 1819 at Charleston by an English actor named Cleary and his professional cast. The Southern Patriot says: "This play went off with the highest 'eclat' and fulfilled the expectations entertained from the talents of the author, who received the most flattering proofs of the approbation and pleasure of the audience."[107]

Before the play was performed, announcements of its performance were published in the daily papers. For some odd reason Harby's name was not mentioned as the author of Alberti--rather, "written by a gentleman of this city."[108] In fact, the author was known to the public

> as a person of literary taste and talent which have been advantageously directed into the channel of drama. He has shown considerable originality of incident, skill and ingenuity in its combination and evolvment of plot without complexity or confusion. The author will have the whole power of the present company at his command, esteemed...to be the richest in the United States.[109]

One of the proudest days in Harby's brief life took place on April 30, 1819. President Monroe, who was then on tour through the United States, showed up at the second performance of this play. As A. Moise wrote:

> The house was on that occasion filled with many of our most distinguished citizens, and a large number of respectable strangers. The performance went off with considerable spirit, and the production itself received, as far as we could judge from loud and frequent peals of applause, the unqualified approbation of all present.[110]

The Southern Patriot said:

> The theatre last evening was again attended by the President of the United States. Not withstanding the warmth of the weather, and the dread of pressure...upwards of a thousand persons attended to witness the second performance of Alberti.[111]

The Southern Patriot could not cease boasting about Harby. It strongly urged that "the claims of dramatic genius should be felt with ten-fold force by a free people"; that under "such a government as ours, the influence of the drama must be good--next to the Press in importance."[112]

Arthur Hobson Quinn and his early nineteenth century predecessor William Dunlap are probably the two most important critics of the literature of this period. Quinn wrote that Harby was "one of the writers of the time whose work has the touch of inspiration,"[113] while Dunlap had written about Harby that "the author of this tragedy died in New York much regretted."[114] Harby never became wealthy by virtue of his plays. On the contrary, he--as did many of the authors of his day--died in poverty.[115]

Just why he stopped writing plays cannot be known. However, we can postulate that Harby had to eat and so did his family, and he did not receive enough royalties for support of a household. Then again, Harby was an idealist. He, in fact, refused to prostitute himself to the sensualized taste of his generation, preferring rather to write for artistic purposes. It is somewhat ironical that a man of Harby's caliber and potential may have had to cease

being a playwright, simply because he was too advanced for his generation. The realm of American literature has always had men like Harby. However, where Harby failed, others carried on. Harby became too quickly discouraged and stopped writing plays after his third one. Authors like Sinclair Lewis, Ernest Hemingway, or Ludwig Lewisohn faced the same type of situation, but they continued to write, actualizing their potential promise. Harby could probably have been one of the greatest nineteenth century American playwrights, had not his idealism and the need to support a family cancelled out his potential greatness.

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81. Ibid., p. 15.

82. Ibid., p. 25.

83. Ibid., p. 27.

84. Ibid., p. 29.

85. Progress of the Catholic Church in America and the World's Columbian Catholic Congresses(Chicago, 1897), pp. 276-94.

86. Ibid., p. 43.

87. Quinn, p. 191.

88. Isaac Harby, Alberti(Charleston, 1819), p. 7(to be cited hereafter as Alberti).

89. Ibid., p. 5.

90. Ibid., pp. 5-6.

91. Ibid., p. 6.

92. Ibid., p. 6.

93. Ibid., p. 6.

94. Moise, p. 11.

95. Fagin, p. 9.

96. Alberti, p. 12.

97. Fagin, p. 9.

98. Alberti, p. 54.

99. Ibid., p. 11.

100. Ibid., p. 42.

101. Ibid., p. 43.

102. Ibid., p. 46.

103. Moise, p. 11.

104. Alberti, p. 6.

105. Lewisohn, "Books We Have Made," July 12, 1903.

106. Ibid., July 12, 1903.

107. Southern Patriot, April 28, 1819.

108. Ibid., April 27, 1819.

109. Ibid., April 13, 1819.

110. Life and Writings, p. 22.

111. Southern Patriot, May 1, 1819.

112. Ibid., April 26, 1819.

113. Quinn, pp. 191-192.

114. William Dunlap, A History of the American Theatre (New York, 1832), p. 409.

115. New York Evening Post, December 18, 1828.

CHAPTER FOUR

HARBY'S LITERARY AND DRAMATIC CRITICISM

In his "Essay on Criticism," written in 1810, Harby stated that the law of criticism

> is to avoid, as much as possible, all human passions, and their dominion in any degree; and to apply the powers of intellect, and the sentiments of justice to the analysis and sensation of outward objects. Criticism, then, is the right perception of things; and like every other faculty, can arrive at perfection only by practice, and the chastest attention to truth and delicacy.[116]

Harby was very grateful to Aristotle for formulating the best canons, but he readily understood that these canons were based on the practice of the ancient Greek dramatists, and were not a prescription for later writers. Harby showed that Aristotle took Homer as his model, and from there we are led through the history of the improvement of criticism. Harby took his reader through from the time of Homer to the fall of Constantinople when "literature was suffered to shake the poppies from her brow," on to "the age of Louis the 14th, and Francis the 1st, whose faults have long been forgiven them for their encouragement of literature," into consideration of Voltaire, Bossuet, Boileau, and other modern critics.[117]

The benefits of criticism appealed to Harby so much, that he readily admitted that Shakespeare had great genius. Yet, "it must be conceded on all sides, that had Shakespeare, great as he is, applied the powers of his fine understanding to the rules of composition, or rather to the

laws and effects of nature and the passions, with more attention; in fine, had he been more of a critic and less of an actor, his works would have been free from many of their imperfections."[118] And then, in ascribing the cause for the mediocrity of the writers from the time of Lucan to that of Milton and Racine, he observed: "The standards of excellency were before them in the poems and tragedies of the ancients; but the books to direct them to those standards, and to point out the qualifications of every department of literature, were either wanting or rejected."[119]

Harby concluded his "Essay on Criticism" by saying that the critic must "scrupulously search into the nature of his own feelings" and weed out any suggestions of bias or prejudice. He also must, on the other hand, through "the perception of the human mind," be able to understand the sensations of the human body and the working of the heart in order to arrive at the truth. Homer and Shakespeare, for example, were great because of their "critical knowledge of nature and of man." Likewise Columbus, for his genius lay in "the adoration of truth, and the most acute criticism in astronomy and mathematics." This in turn enabled him fearlessly "to direct and impel his gallant ship upon the yet green and unpolluted bosom of the ocean; and to confound malignity and ignorance with the discovery of a new world."[120]

Perhaps the best insight into this essay is that nowhere do we find Harby slavishly insisting that what was good enough for the ancient Greek critics is good enough for

the critics of his day. On the contrary, he used these great writers of the past as a springboard by which to show the present critics of his day some guideposts to use in being a critic. It must be noted that Harby did not offer anything new or original in his view on criticism. All that he has done is to modernize and make meaningful the techniques of the famous critics of earlier generations.

Oscar Wegelin, an important literary critic, wrote in 1900 that "Harby is said to have been the finest dramatic critic of his time in America."[121] L. C. Moise, endorsing Wegelin's opinion, wrote that Harby

> was a precise critic. He was fond of pure argumentation, but he was also a controversialist of no mean parts. His clear logic was backed by facts, the source of which he was ever ready to give and their weight was heavily borne upon the head of his opponent. There was no device of rhetoric to which he did not resort. Humor, satire, ridicule, indignation were his faithful weapons, though candor and calm reasoning were never beyond reach of his pen.[122]

William Gilmore Simms, an important South Carolinian litterateur of the nineteenth century, said: "He wrote essays and orations with spirit, grace, and effect."[123] In fact, the highest praise of Harby's efforts comes from the December 27, 1828, edition of the New York Mirror:

> The death of this accomplished scholar and able writer has awakened great and merited regret in the circle of his friends and admirers. Possessing vast acquirements in classical learning, endowed with a chaste and refined sensibility and gifted with a lively and active imagination, he was highly

> successful in his literary pursuits.
> As a critic he was considered
> unrivalled in this country.

However, as great as Moise, Wegelin, and the New York Mirror portray Harby to be, there is room for disagreement. Harby, indeed, was a critic of "better than average" ability, but definitely not "the finest critic of his time." Rarely, if ever, is Harby's name mentioned in the annals of literary achievement. If he had any exceptional ability, his name certainly would have been included among the literary giants of his day. It, however, was not. Fagin summed up Harby's true literary character:

> He lacked the hardiness of a Poe to use
> the rapier or the sledgehammer--both of
> which are useful and necessary instruments
> in an age when the temple of the dramatic
> muse harbors a great many mountebanks.
> His mind was first rate, his taste excellent,
> and his knowledge of his craft comprehensive,
> but his temperament was gentle. Thus after
> criticizing a play which deserved demolition,
> we find him apologizing. "I have stated my
> objection," he writes, "pointing out what
> I conceived an excellence, and particularizing
> what I esteemed a fault(why and wherefore),
> with perhaps more candour than politeness."
> He hopes that the author will "prefer one
> just remark that may correct an error to
> the indiscriminate praise of a thousand."[124]

There is little doubt that Wegelin, Simms, the New York Mirror, and Fagin have painted in rather glowing terms a fairly comprehensive picture of Harby, the critic. Yet, all of them have neglected one important area dealing with Harby, the critic--his personality. In short, we first must gain an insight into Harby's many-faceted personality, before we can begin to realize the worth of his literary and dramatic

criticism.

As an author, especially a playwright, Harby had been subjected to severe criticism. He knew intimately the pains of remorse and sorrow, brought on by the harsh words of a critic. He was aware, therefore, that a critic must be gentle, yet, at the same time, completely honest and objective. It was this "code" of honesty, objectivity, and gentility, that caused Harby to write his essay in literary criticism, "The Quarterly Review and Melmoth."[125]

William Gifford, critic and editor of the Quarterly Review in 1809,[126] gave an unfair review of Charles Robert Maturin's play, Melmoth, in the Quarterly Review. Harby, being a playwright himself, empathized with Maturin, and thus sought to publicize the untruth of Gifford's unjust article. He realized that Gifford did not believe in the Harby policy of being honest, objective, and gentle, and so Harby bluntly stated:

> Gifford, as far as his head is concerned, would have made an excellent critic; but as far as his feeling is concerned, he appears to have been intended by nature for an executioner...[127]

Not being content, however, simply to rebuke Gifford, Harby also turned his wrath upon the non-objective Quarterly:

> It is curious to trace the names and characters of those who are hated by the conductors of the Quarterly Review, and of those who are beloved. For there is no gentlemanly or decorous medium--no literary candor towards those who differ from them--no liberal allowance of this kind.[128]

After Harby had ceased chastising Gifford and the Quarterly Review for not following his own personal "code," he commenced defending the play, Melmoth. He noted that Gifford was not honest in his criticism because he unjustly compared passages having no connection with each other. When these passages were brought together, most definitely the results would show a poorly written play, thereby vindicating Gifford's criticism. In fact, Gifford attempted to point out the profanity used in Melmoth, by listing every passage which he considered obscene language:

> --"'O Ch__st,' ejaculated the housekeeper."--vol. i, p. 21.
>
> --"There stop, for holy J___s's sake."--vol. i, p. 154.
>
> --"'You lie, you b___h,' growled the dying man." --vol. i, p. 21.
>
> --"'Ye lie, ye roundhead son of a b___h,' roared the cavalier tailor."--vol. i, p. 118. 129

Harby, however, easily refuted Gifford by saying:

> Now, in reading the work, nobody would be struck with these blasphemies. They are vulgar and passionate expressions belonging to the situations and characters of persons in the romance. The 1st, is the exclamation of a drunken Irish housekeeper--the 2nd a prayer, not a blasphemy--the 3rd, the exclamation of a dying and morose miser,... and the 4th, the imprecation of a bedlamite! Taken in alliance with those portions of the text, to which they legitmately belong, they are appropriate and characteristic, or at least are "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."130

Although he gave a complete criticism of the Quarterly and Mr. Gifford, Harby failed to use his barbed tongue and caustic wit. Rather, he methodically, and with a great

deal of dullness, plowed through all of the errors made against Maturin, correcting the injustices done to the latter. This should appear to make the reading of this critique quite boring, but this is not the case. If one understands Harby's "code," the points brought out are salient.

Harby's "code" recurred as he criticized Sir Walter Scott's poem, The Field of Waterloo. In the following quote, Harby was gentle, yet, extremely objective:

> The "Field of Waterloo" is a very tame and jejune production, quite below the usual pitch of its author, who, though not remarkable for his invention, has always been conspicuous for his taste and judgment.
>
> As a battle-scene, it possesses neither order nor distinctness of arrangement in the beginning, nor that selection of groups, that fixing of the attention upon some conspicuous individuals, in the conduct of "Marmion" so highly interesting.[131]

Harby's intellectual honesty was so acute, that he strongly objected to Scott "making Bounaparte/sic/ and ruin synonymous."[132] He considered the author to be perverting the facts of battle, in his description and comparison of the French and English troops. Harby noted that:

> Lord Wellington himself has been infinitely more candid than the poet. In his letter to his mother he expressly mentions, in terms honourable both to himself and his antagonist, the skill and courage of Bounaparte/sic/ and the excellent disposition of his troops.[133]

Having also been influenced by the classic writers like

Homer, Harby found Scott's descriptions of the battle, "no descriptions at all," since no individuals were particularized. "We are instituting no comparison between Homer and Walter Scott," wrote Harby, but such description was highly effective only "in proportion as the objects presented excite by an association of ideas, the subauditum of human feelings...the poet can never engage our attention, if he does not awaken our sympathy for some particular group...And what 'field' presented more interest and variety --more self-devotion and heroism, than the great battle which decided at once the fate of France and of Napoleon?"[134]

In concluding his criticism of The Field of Waterloo, Harby shed his mantle of "gentility" for the first and only time in his career as a critic, and bitterly attacked Scott. He observed that Scott had added a footnote to the effect that Napoleon had shown no cowardice, nor lack of poise, nor self control. Harby angrily retorted: "Thank you, Mr. Scott --we really should have thought Bounaparte/sic/ a coward, but for this seasonable explanation."[135]

Following his wrathful chastisement of Scott, Harby wasted little time in returning to his old familiar role as the kindly, but objective critic. Perhaps, feeling some twinges of conscience due primarily to his scathing attack on Scott, Harby concluded his critique of The Field of Waterloo on an optimistic note. He praised Scott for

> great animation and fire; a rapidity in the measure, which echoes, as it

> were, the spirit and energy of the fight; and an exaltation of tone and dignity of manner, which evince how capable is Mr. Scott to succeed in the sublime as well as the beautiful.[136]

It is important to observe that within this poem, part of Harby's personality as a critic has been clearly sketched. He, rarely if ever(as in the case of this poem), would venture from the confines of his personal critic's "code." Harby was rigid in his devotion to a belief that the critic must be gentle, yet, intellectually honest and objective. However, as this literary criticism has pointed out, the critic was allowed to stray from the "code" for an instant or two, but then had to return to it immediately, becoming a "maverick" only on the rare occasion, as illustrated below.

William Shakespeare was Harby's literary idol. The former was, however, not above being criticized for any slip which he had made. Harby's sharp eye was ever ready to take Shakespeare to task for any character, scene, or action that was misrepresented. Usually Harby remained true to his "code" as he gave criticism. Once, however, he searingly criticized Shakespeare for the creation of the character Shylock in the play, The Merchant of Venice. Harby, as a Jew, was personally affronted by the play. It affected him so much, that he decided to prove to the literary world that Shakespeare's Shylock was a complete misrepresentation of the typical Jew during the Elizabethan era. He could not rest until he had proven this. Thus, Harby bitterly wrote:

> ...there is a certain unnatural atrocity about the character of Shylock, which renders disgust so prevalent over our admiration that the effect of the whole is ...almost destroyed...When we observe in drama, an Irishman represented as a rogue,...a Frenchman a monkey, and a Jew an usurer, we evidently are aware, that the author's sole objective is to gratify the malignant passions of mankind.[137]

Harby found in Shylock "'no redeeming spirit,' which can possibly elicit our forgiveness of his bloody and desperate design--or give to his actions the plausibility of human motives. 'Tis all demoniacal and black atrocity."[138] He did not believe that an Israelite of Venice, a state notorious for its harsh laws and prejudices, "would confidently enter a court of justice with a knife in his hand, and demand 'the penalty of his bond' a pound of flesh!" from one of its powerful citizens.[139]

In this court scene, with scales and knife, as well as that of the extrusion of Gloucester's eye or the strangling of Cordelia(King Lear) was there to be found the work of a great playwright? Harby painfully concluded that Shakespeare "suffered his mighty mind to be swayed by the passions and the false taste of an age he was destined to instruct and immortalize."[140] In short, Harby, as a Jew, was bitterly stung by Shakespeare's Shylock. Harby, therefore, was compelled to show to both the secular world and also to the literary one, that the typical Jew was not a cunning usurer--rather, that the Jews of the Elizabethan era were something

far different than Shakespeare had characterized, and that mankind should understand the mistake which was made in the creation of the character, Shylock, the Jew.

As a critic of dramatic performances, Harby was honest and as objective as possible. He took the actor, Thomas Abthorpe Cooper, to task for the poor way in which he portrayed the character Othello, in Shakespeare's Othello.[141] "Mr. Cooper rather read than acted Othello. He threw a tameness and equanimity about the character, which were quite foreign to it..."[142] Harby belittled Cooper for wearing a Turkish costume in the role of Othello. He said: "A man would hardly wear the costume of a people whom he held in abhorrence. When we mention costume, we mean something in the shape of a Turkish gown, which hung from Mr. Cooper's shoulders to his feet, and which not only hid all his attitudes, but even impeded his motions," and which "tends to hide Mr. Cooper's grace of figure and energy of attitude."[143]

The meeting between Othello and Desdemona, Harby scored as "rehearsed, not acted." Then, in order to soothe the bitter feelings which Cooper might bear toward him, Harby said of Cooper that: "he has departed from his usual method, and suffered himself to be biassed/sic/ by some model, by no means so true to nature as the decisions of his own judgment and feeling."[144] Finally, in order that he could end his criticism on a high optimistic note, Harby praised Cooper's ability for making "us forget the fate of Desdemona," in the outpouring of sympathy for "the noble and

unhappy Moor."[145]

Since Harby was a white South Carolinian, the question might arise of his objection to Othello, on the grounds that he was a non-white. Nowhere within his writings, however, did Harby reveal his attitude toward a non-white. Probably, his attitude was that the Negro slave was part of a Southern gentleman's way of life, and that the colored man was simply a chattel. As far as the field of literature was concerned, Harby regarded the non-white, namely Othello, with as much respect as he would give to King Lear, Desdemona, or Coriolanus.

If one were to examine Harby's critique of Edmund Kean's Othello, one would immediately discover that the criticism was quite scathing. Cooper's Othello, in comparison with Kean's, received a mild scolding. Cooper, Harby found, presented a tame and misdressed Othello. Kean's version, he noted, rose as high at times--and at times, fell lower than any presentation he had ever witnessed.

> The apology of the Moor before the Senate was s sketchy, hurried and ineffective, as the meeting with Desdemona(in the next act, after escaping shipwreck) was full of the tenderest pathos and most natural look and intonation... Thus with Mr. Kean; his acting is <u>sui generis</u>...the style of Kean owes its vigour and brilliancy to the impulses of an ardent mind that overcomes the disadvantages of nature.[146]

Harby, in essence, found flaws and negligence in Kean's Othello. However, he said optimistically: "As in some

production of Rafaelli or Michael Angelo, if accident has injured the canvas, the picture is still invaluable, because /It is/ glowing with touches of genius."[147]

The reason, perhaps, as to why Harby harshly criticized Kean's Othello, was its variance of levels. Cooper's Othello, on the one hand, was played at the same mediocre level. Kean's, on the other hand, was brilliant at one time, and ineffective at another.

In Thomas Abthorpe Cooper's characterization of Shakespeare's Coriolanus, Harby could only bring forth the warmest of praise. This criticism, therefore, was quite different from the one concerning Cooper's Othello. Harby prided himself on being an impartial critic, and as such, accepted each new play and actor as a new experience. He was always willing to praise an actor when the latter deserved the proper kudos. In fact, Harby glowingly wrote:

> Indeed, we consider him in this character to be, comparatively, faultless...In the scene in which Coriolanus solicits for the consulship, Mr. Cooper gave a forcible expression of the anti-democratic patrician. He begged, as if he would demand. In the last act, the supplication before the walls of Rome, was a scene we have never seen excelled. The workings of his countenance, the restraint which pride and false honour lay upon nature and humanity, were inimitably pourtrayed/sic/.[148]

Harby reached the summit of his extolling Cooper's characterization of Coriolanus by saying that "Mr. Cooper exhibits rather than masters emotion. There is much strength

and nature in this manner...that he takes us in spite of the cold dictates of judgment, and hurries us along in the rapidity and glow of his own conceptions."[149]

Another example of Harby's eagerness to praise an actor for a role well-played was Kean's Sir Giles Overreach. The plot of this little known play, Sir Giles Overreach, written by Philip Massinger, dealt with an extortioner, who wanted to elevate his status position.[150] To do this, he cheated his nephew, Wellborn, defrauded a widow of her estate, and hoped to marry his daughter to a peer of the land. When his daughter eloped with her lover, and Wellborn recovered some of his wealth, Sir Giles went mad; he was potently insane, since he was giving money away to everyone he met. In essence, the play, written in the seventeenth century, was an amusing satire on the acquisitive instinct.[151]

In acting out the role of Sir Giles Overreach, Kean was given more praise than he received in the role of Othello. Harby described Kean's acting as "a clear, decided, almost rigid chasteness."[152] He lauded Kean for his dialogue, so intelligently and studiously conceived. A typical example of Harby's praise was:

> The looks, the tones, the very postures of the worldly-minded father, gave emphasis and power to the whole, and the discrimination Mr. Kean displayed in his interview with Wellborn, when he discloses Sir Giles secret nature, were as worthy admiration, as the highest exhibition of passion in any succeeding scene.[153]

In contrast to the praise of his Sir Giles Overreach,

Harby scolded Kean for his performance of King Lear. In this criticism, one can again observe Harby's objectivity as a critic. He was ready, willing, and able to reward Kean with praise when he performed well, but when the actor was poor, the latter received his just punishment. This objectivity of Harby made him one of the outstanding critics of his day.

In Kean's characterization of King Lear, Harby found that it "loses in comparison with his other performances. Lear should melt an audience into the tenderest sympathy. Mr. Kean was rather too hard,(shall we say too cold?) with few exceptions, throughout."[154] Harby discovered the instinctive fire and passion typical of Kean, lacking in this performance. Yet, he held out an olive branch by saying: "If Mr. Kean will bestow the same pains, discrimination and study, on the character of Lear, as he has upon Richard and Sir Giles, he may yet find a triumph in his art beyond anything he has yet achieved...the intense application and study of an actor can alone bring them within his power to conceive or to exhibit."[155]

Another insight into Harby's personality was his great love for scholarship and puzzles. All his life, Harby enjoyed any type of challenge that required the use of logic. In the literary criticism, "LeSage and DeSolis," the power of Harby's logical and intellectual personality was revealed. Through research and scholarship, he discovered that a problem existed concerning the true authorship of the novel, Gil Blas. Immediately, his curiosity got the better of him.

Harby was determined to reveal to the literary world that either LeSage or DeSolis was the correct author of the novel, Gil Blas. As he himself wrote about this problem: "It is a heavy attempt to unravel what nobody cares to see exposed."[156]

He began "LeSage and DeSolis" by noting J. F. De Isla's view that Gil Blas

> was robbed from Spain, and adopted in France by Monsieur LeSage...we are therefore inclined to consider it as, on the whole, nearly certain that Gil Blas is a translation from the Spanish; and as no such work had been printed in Spain before the time of LeSage, he must have made it of course from an unpublished Spanish manuscript of which he had in some way obtained possession.[157]

Harby immediately rejected this idea of plagiarism by saying:

> The inferences drawn from internal evidence appear to us to rest upon very tottering foundations--What are the premises? Language--Hispanicisms: Therefore, the original writer was not a Frenchman. He has also used many Gallicisms--therefore the writer was a Spaniard, and LeSage only the translator! Is this fair logic? In the splendid work of Gibbon we discover several Gallicisms...But will posterity take this peculiarity as a proof that The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire was a production of a French author?[158]

Thus, Harby intimated that E. G. LeSage was dramatically correct in using the language of the country where his story was located. And so, Harby said concerning Gil Blas: "Its spirit is essentially French--though the scenes and persons are in Spain."[159] At this point, Harby's true leanings were revealed. He definitely thought that LeSage was the author of Gil Blas, because of the latter's topographical and phraseological errors. LeSage, according to Harby, "is

evidently...unacquainted with certain minutiae of which the most ignorant citizen of Madrid could inform us."[160] Harby contended that if Gil Blas had been written by a Spaniard, there would not have been these topographical and phraseological mistakes. Yet, there were; therefore, LeSage could have been its author. Harby stubbornly refused to accept the theory that "wherever Gil Blas displays the finest tact and excellence, he shows a Spanish original; and where the work exhibits error or ignorance it shows the carelessness of the transcriber."[161] He would not accept the weak idea of a "transcriber's error," because this was the only remaining reason by which Messrs. Isla and Llorente could prove that DeSolis, and not LeSage, was the correct author of Gil Blas.

To prove without a doubt that LeSage was the author of Gil Blas, Harby examined Antonio DeSolis' literary life:

> Antonio de Solis retired at the age of 57, into a convent. His previous life was engaged in public affairs, and his productions in the drama, and in history were all published with his name. Why should he not avow the authorship of Gil Blas?...
>
> The hypothesis, that the Marquis de Lyone, Ambassador of Louis XIV, at the court of Madrid, procured(either through love or money) the manuscript of Gil Blas; that he bequeathed it with the rest of his library, to his son the Abbe Jules; who at his death in 1721, bequeathed it to LeSage, his intimate friend--that is merely an ingenious idea of Llorente, which he supports(as he does many others) by bare-faced assertion; not a jot of proof. The situation of DeSolis forbids the idea of his selling his fame.[162]

Thus, Harby, using the skill of logic, proved conclusively that LeSage, was the true author of Gil Blas. He has left no doubt in the mind of his reader as to whom the correct author of Gil Blas was.

Harby's great love for challenges reappeared in the criticism of Lord Byron's poem, "Ode to Napoleon Bounaparte /sic/." Harby was not altogether certain "whether Bounaparte be such a being as Lord Byron has described him."[163] He decided, therefore, that the only honorable thing for him to do, was to examine the poem and show proof either supporting Byron's description or his own beliefs.

Harby noted that many United States citizens tended "to stamp the character of Bounaparte with every feature of villainy, meanness, and tyranny."[164] Lord Byron, he contended, was no different. In fact, Harby sadly said that "the subject of this poem may not be so 'ignobly brave' as he is charged withal."[165] He could not understand why Lord Byron would accuse Napoleon of cowardice and of meanness. And in refutation, Harby wrote:

> Not to "hoard his own," but to spare the blood of his soldiers; not to save his life, but to save his Country did Bounaparte abdicate his proud and extensive dominion. To accuse of cowardice the man that dared death in every shape--to say that he would shrink from danger who has marched up to the blazing cannon, and in the smoke and thunder of battle, has sought the bubble, honour--is absurd and unbecoming.[166]

However, Harby agreed with Lord Byron's execration of Napoleon's military despotism:

> We regard Bounaparte as the scourage of his country and of Europe--and no motive, but that his powerful mind should wield the energies of a powerful nation, acting as a counterpoise and check to the cupidity and tyranny of England, and balancing the great interests of mankind, could make us wish him success...We view him not as an emperor--but a man--as one whom fortune has wearied with her tugs, but still exhibiting some natural feature of greatness, which the loss of the empire could not eclipse.[167]

Unfortunately, nowhere within Harby's criticism of Lord Byron's poem, was his own opinion about Napoleon revealed. The only place where Harby's actual thoughts about Napoleon were made public, was in the Southern Patriot of September 5, 1815. He told his public that he did not greatly admire Napoleon, but that he did not hate him. He respected Napoleon because of what he did for the cause of "liberty."[168]

In resolving the challenge brought on by Byron's description of Napoleon, Harby did clarify for his readers the fact that Bonaparte was neither a coward nor a tyrant; rather, he was a man who felt dedicated to save his country. Harby was also saddened by the fact that Byron, a possessor of poetical genius, was not above "national prejudices," in castigating Napoleon.[169]

The "Defence of the Drama" was perhaps the best dramatic criticism Harby ever wrote. This essay was, however, more than just a learned and masterly discussion of what the theatre had to offer the civilized community. It clearly presented the idealistic side of Harby's

personality as a critic. He must be respected because of his optimistic outlook toward the literary community, but at the same time, be criticized because of his impractical idealism.

The "Defence of the Drama" was published in the New York Post, and it was written because of the opening of the Bowery Theatre.[170] Harby would have liked to have been given the honor of making the keynote address at the opening of the Bowery Theatre, he, however, was appointed to the committee responsible to select the speaker. Therefore, since he could not submit an address, the occasion stimulated him to write an essay on "the cultural values of the theatre as a social institution." The editors of the Post accepted his essay with a great deal of enthusiasm, and printed it with high praise.[171]

Harby decided that the stage and drama "are not merely to supply curious critics with subjects for comparison and analysis, to sum up the tremendous difference between the styles of A and of B; these amusing themes are to be considered only as the auxilliaries of ambition--the flank companies to stir up talent and keep in countenance the advance of enterprise and talent." He, however, did not utterly disregard the idea of using the stage and drama for mere amusement. Rather, he found it "of no considerable consequence." He definitely was aware that the theatre was more than "the source of a people's rational entertainment." It was "the sphere where The Poet lives and enacts his wonders." Harby viewed a play like "the great masters of Grecian

Tragedy and of Roman Comedy viewed it--it is a spectacle of life, as it is, and was, and ever shall be. A representation, more vivid than any other art can create, of passion and of sentiment. The mirror of man 'held up to nature!' a living, moving picture, pregnant with truth and animation."[172]

Harby then proceeded to cite the works of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, Foote, and LeSage, who in some way or another influenced civilization. The stage, he pointed out "is, indeed, a powerful engine...a moral lever." It molded public sentiment. It made a strong and a direct appeal to the hearts of people. In fact, its political significance had been proved in the past. "It speaks with such fidelity, it is so direct in its passion, so vivid in its portraits, so full of life and mobility, that it can lift a weight quicker than, if it cannot sustain it as long as, the press."[173]

Striking a contemporary note, Harby turned to the possible effect of the stage and of the drama upon young men. As he said: "If they pay no regard to what passes <u>on the stage</u>, they cannot entirely escape from what Hume calls 'the contagion of opinion.'" Harby asked, "If the dissipations of a city cannot be restrained and broken up in every channel--is it not well to <u>direct</u> the torrent which we cannot oppose?" Realistically viewing the world and human nature, he urged men overcome by fastidious religious scruples to reflect "that our feelings and propensities and passions will exist, and that by turning them into an intellectual course decorated

attractions, we win what we cannot command, and metamorphose the brute sensualist into a reasoning and polished member of society."[174] Harby pleaded: "Let the temples of the dramatic muse become not only the rendezvous of fashion, and of taste, but let them redeem our youth from the dull excitement of the tavern, the poisonous contact of the gaming tables."[175]

L. C. Moise correctly diagnosed that Harby closed his "Defence of the Drama" in a tone of tacit resignation to the opportunism he had deplored but a few years back in the play, Alberti.[176] Harby candidly said:

> The eccentricities of the stage are but the eccentricities of public taste: the application of it to other purposes than those to which it was peculiarly or originally intended, is but in obedience to the public will. He who opposes that will, weds his ruin.[177]

"Defence of the Drama" appeared to have been more idealistic than realistic.[178] Harby's dream was that the theatre would no longer accept the inferior type of literary productions which the public demanded. Rather, he yearned for the day when the masters of drama, like Shakespeare, would be common household words. He knew that better plays could be written and produced. In effect, Harby's keen sense of literary and moral values forced him to try and arouse some type of literary standard among the writers of his day. His idealistic plea was unheard and unheeded, and, sadly enough, too far advanced for his generation of writers.

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CHAPTER FIVE

HARBY'S ESSAYS AND LETTERS

L. C. Moise made mention of two essays which Harby wrote, but which were never formally printed.[179] Therefore, in order to do justice to Harby, these two essays cannot go unnoticed.

The first essay was called "Discovery of the Art of Printing." Moise says about this essay the following:

> Prior to the advent of Laurentius Haarlem /a German printer/, 'the most enlightened quarter of the globe' was enveloped in a thick mist of superstition. 'Intellect was kept in close confinement, science(knowledge) was construed as sacrilege...Science, who so long had slumbered, at length raised her drooping head, hand in hand with printing. And to this invention must be ascribed the ultimate cause of human progress, the most important of all considerations.'[180]

His second essay was on retaining the study of classics in the universities. Harby was overly enthusiastic in putting forth his arguments. He mentioned the general unfitness of translations. He pointed out, for example, "in the translation of Herodotus, Gillies is held up to scorn for egregious errors, and Mr. Murphy in his work commits a 'faux pas which a child at school would have been flogged for...There are no translations.'"[181] Harby no doubt saw the errors of scholarship in translations of classical works, and probably wrote this essay as a plea to the universities and to the intellectuals to be more careful.

Isaac Harby's Letters

From Harby's literary works, we have discovered him to be a playwright, an editor of a newspaper, an essayist, a literary and dramatic critic, and a religious rebel. And, in all of these works, we have had to sift and examine his prose and his poetry to gain a keen insight into Harby's basic personality, thoughts, and attitudes. Two of Harby's letters help us to understand this complex man a little better. It is these two important letters to which we now turn.

The first letter, written to Langdon Cheves on February 8, 1815, concerns Harby's business interests. In those days, it was the practice of the Federal government to print all the laws that it passed in two of the leading newspapers of each State. Harby wrote to Langdon Cheves: "In most of the States <u>two papers</u> are employed for that purpose, but in this State, almost of equal importance to any in the Union, but one paper is employed. It is well known in So. Carolina that the 'Southern Patriot' circulates in parts of the States where no other paper does. It is generally acknowledged as the leading Republican paper being cherished under the wing of the most influential members of the Republican family. My application therefore, is not to divest another of what he may be entitled to, but to <u>circulate</u>, in a paper friendly to the <u>Union</u>, the laws."[182]

We can see from this letter that Harby had a "head for business," and that he would not hesitate to go after something and make his views on a matter known. The question

now is, did Harby have his request granted?

In a letter dated February 13, 1816, written to James Monroe, Harby said: "We have the honour of acknowledging the receipt of your official favor dated the 1st January, and shall accordingly commence this day to republish the Laws of the present session of Congress, and shall continue to do so from the 'National Intelligencer.' We shall also pay attention to the instructions contained in your communication."[183] Harby had indeed succeeded in obtaining what he had originally desired.

The second letter shows Harby as an angry man, who is writing to tell James Monroe, then Secretary of State, his bitter feelings about the Mordecai M. Noah case. Before this letter can be fully understood, some background material is necessary. In the summer of 1815, Mordecai M. Noah, United States Consul at Tunis, was recalled by James Monroe, President Madison's Secretary of State. Among the reasons given for his dismissal was the fact that Noah was Jewish. As Monroe wrote: "At the time of your appointment as consul at Tunis, it was not known that the religion which you profess would form any obstacle to the exercise of your consular functions."[184]

It was this last statement of Monroe's which aroused Harby's wrath so much that he wrote a letter to James Monroe concerning that statement and his overall attitude towards Jews.[185] Harby wasted little time in rebuking Monroe:

> ...I do think that the successful termination of Mr. Noah's negociation/sic/ generally, his zeal and industry for the interests of his country-men, his manners so well adapted to win his way among strangers--these, taken together, should at least have entitled him to a full and impartial hearing, before your sudden fiat had issued, to his injury and to the astonishment of his friends.

He, in fact, could not overcome his amazement that Monroe would actually say that "Religion disqualifies a man from the exercise of his political functions." Once Harby brought his emotions under control, his rational mind began to function with its accustomed clarity and he tried to argue logically with James Monroe:

> Jews...are by no means to be considered as a religious sect, tolerated by the government; they constitute a portion of the people. They are, in every respect, woven in and compacted with the citizens of the Republic...I do, therefore, appeal to you, not only as a philanthropist, but as a politician, not only as a just man, but as the Secretary of State to this free government, to erase the sentence in your letter above alluded to...
>
> Should the dictum by which Mr. Noah was recalled stand among the archives of the government, the opinion will, in a short time, amount to precedent, and precedent become law! What innumerable evils would spring from one hasty sentence!

After calmly reasoning with Mr. Monroe, yet at the same time bawling him out, Harby, with the skill and tact of a seasoned politician, deliberately ended his letter on a high note of optimism. This, Harby calculated, would cause Monroe to gravitate to his own point of view:

> With respect to any reparation(not on account of Mr. Noah; he is only secondary

> in the affair), for the sake of a large portion of the American people from whom such a transaction should be for ever buried, for the sake of justice, of the constitution, of your own cause, I certainly must leave everything remedial to your well-known candour and your better judgment, suggesting, however, at the same time that...honourable mention of Mr. Noah, would be highly satisfactory to his feelings, to the feelings of all his co-religionaires, and, I doubt not, to the feelings of your bosom.

In writing this letter, Harby placed himself in the select group of individuals like Roger Williams, James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, and Thomas Kennedy, who fought for religious liberty in America. He would not accept the idea that the Jew was a second-class citizen, and this letter has shown Harby's vigor in combating such a claim.

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CHAPTER SIX

HARBY AS A JOURNALIST

In order to complete the full literary picture of the man, Isaac Harby, it is necessary for us to view him in the light of his work as a journalist. This phase of his labors will enable us freely to observe Harby's attitudes and opinions towards people, life, government, and politics.

Harby was a "better than average journalist," whose talents were sought after. In the issue of the Charleston City Gazette of October 18, 1822, John Geddes, the publisher, stated that

> he is happy to relate he has made an arrangement with Mr. Isaac Harby, Esq., where that gentleman is enabled to devote all his time and talents to the advancement of the political and literary character of the establishment, in the conduct of the Editorial department.

In order not to confuse the readers of the City Gazette, Harby, in the same article, set forth the editorial framework out of which his opinions would spring:

> Mr. Harby's character is known through his conduct. He is a Republican, pure, consistent, constant. We advocate not all the present administration has sanctioned, nor all that it would advocate...But we advocate many measures that have been opposed by the thoughtless, the disappointed, the factious. No man, and consequently no set of men are infallible; we therefore advocate measures, not men. And neither the warm pressure of friendship nor the threats of hostility shall move us.

At the age of thirty-three, we find a maturer, a more responsible, a public spirited editor in Harby. Speaking

as the editor of the City Gazette, he urged the South Carolina Legislature to seriously consider the revision of the South Carolinian "Code Noir-a matter of vital importance to the happiness of the slave, and the tranquility of the master."[186] He wanted the South Carolina Legislature to legislate "with humanity and temperance, but at the same time with foresight and decision." Harby complained also about the lack of "justice" found in South Carolina:

> The frequent collisions between our Courts of Law and of Equity; the reversion of sentences; the reconsideration of decrees; the conflicting claims of two co-equal powers, are evils too long felt, and too deeply deplored, not to be looked into, and their remedies applied...give us, in the best manner possible, a prompt, efficacious, and final award of Justice.

He argued for better roads and finer police protection. Harby waxed hot on the severities against debtors. He bitterly wrote: "The Congress of the United States have done nothing for them. Let the States, and particularly South Carolina, soften the rigours of imprisonment for debt, or abolish the practice altogether. It is at variance with the...claims of justice and humanity."

During the year that Harby was editor of the City Gazette, he never signed his name to any printed editorial, except in one instance. This one exception was a religious poem, under which there appeared the signature "Ed. Cit. Gazette."[187]

October, 1823, Isaac Harby retired from his duties

as editor of the City Gazette.[188] Yet, one month later, we find that Harby had become the editor of an afternoon paper, The Examiner. William Gilmore Simms told us in The XIXth Century, that this paper was launched especially to support the candidacy of John C. Calhoun for the Presidency. If this plan failed, then the second choice, Andrew Jackson, would be pushed for the Presidency in the 1824 national election. He also said that Harby, in 1823, had another journalistic venture, The Pig and Whistle, whose political design was the same as The Examiner. Both papers were published in Charleston, and enjoyed only a short existence.[189]

Evidently, there was a conflict between what Mr. Simms told us about Harby's Presidential choice, and the latter's actual one. Harby's political beliefs for the Presidential election in 1824 were clearly set forth in his essays on "The Presidency," in that he favored Jackson over Calhoun. It was quite probable that Mr. Simms was mistaken about Harby's first choice, and that due to an oversight on the former's part, incorrectly considered Calhoun to be the latter's candidate.

Real wit combined with spicy and animated language were characteristic traits of Harby's two year editorship of the Southern Patriot. In January, 1815, about two hundred British soldiers landed on John's Island, where they burned a house near a battery and stacked their guns. The detachment of troops ordered out to reconnoiter, returned and reported that the enemy had retired so precipitously as

to leave behind a new hat. Harby then humorously remarked, "We trust at their next visit they may leave behind them some of their heads."[190]

He reported with capricousness the Baltimore marriage of Mr. Hugh Campbell and Miss Maria T. Death:

> For Death he zealously prepared,
> Nor wished the trial to be spared.
> The moment came, his Death he met,
> And joyful paid great Nature's debt.
> Clasped in the arms of Death he lay,
> Nor wished a resurrection day.[191]

In criticizing a contributor to the press, who subscribed himself "Cincinnatus," Harby with droll sarcasm remarked

> that it would at first blush seem presumptuous for such a writer to use the pen name of so great a hero, but the observant eye would easily see that the appellation was to show the public that he had been more accustomed to the plow than to the pen.[192]

Harby's capabilities as a business manager left much to be desired. He was caught up in his "idealism" of expecting people to honor their payments to his newspaper. Thus, economically the Southern Patriot in 1815 was not prospering, and so Harby wrote that nothing could make the staff of the Southern Patriot happier, than the payment of debtors. "Then...the heart made light will clear the head, and the columns of the Southern Patriot will exhibit selected as well as original material of interest and instruction."

Evidently, the debtors did not indulge in "punctual payment," for soon we read that Harby has associated with

himself a Mr. Robert Howard, "whose practical knowledge and experience" would permit the former greater opportunity in the editorial department. Harby probably needed Howard's capital to stay in business. This new combination immediately proceeded to announce its policy of looking to the "glorious vista of futurity which opens upon our country." Isaac Harby, due to the partnership of Robert Howard, also changed the format, "Published by Isaac Harby"[193] to "Published by Isaac Harby & Co."[194]

If Harby had reread his editorial of November 15, 1815, in the Southern Patriot: "What a man makes by his business is the surest proof of his ably discharging his duties," he would have recognized his failure as a businessman. In this editorial, he mentioned the high fees charged by Demosthenes, which, Harby added, were the causes of his independence and of his celebrity. Doubtless, Harby was influenced by Demosthenes, but he lacked the latter's keenness to earn high fees. Had Harby recognized his weakness in 1815, he most likely would not have had to enter into a partnership with Robert Howard.

As the editor of the Southern Patriot, Harby was very cosmopolitian and quite versatile. The arts, politics, patriotism, and championing the just cause were important components of his editorial policy.

Fearless in vindicating what was just, Harby cared little what his Charlestonian society would say or do. In his denunciation of bigotry, he supported Father Phillips,

a Catholic priest, who condemned the "gentlemanly" art of dueling.[195] Harby could not understand why people would support such a foolish sport, and thus, he was very rigorous in his censure of it.

Harby was also a firm believer in the establishment of a United States National Bank, because it would help stabilize the national economy. When the Congress refused to renew the charter of the National Bank in 1811, Harby thought that the last resort to strengthen the arm of government had disappeared like a vision of hope. He was sickened by the thought that the banking business of the country had passed into the hands of numerous state corporations and concerns of varying strength and soundness. Harby sorrowfully lamented: "The Bank bill has been negatived/sic/...We are comparatively without an army, and actually without money."[196] He had enough awareness to comprehend the fact that without a National Bank, inflation would and, in fact, had set in. He hoped that soon the Congress would awake from its deep slumber and pass a National Bank bill.

Parenthetically, in the January 17, 1815, issue of the Southern Patriot, we find Harby campaigning for the discontinuation of paper currency. He felt that "paper credit" was not the proper way to keep America out of its economic problems. The best type of specie, he noted, was coin, for it was longer lasting, did not depreciate as much, and would fortify our national economy.

Harby also placed his faith in a strong central government. "Union in the days of Greece and Rome," he wrote, "resulted from local causes. We shall give it life from moral ones."[197] He publicized this view to his readers because of the infamous Hartford Convention of 1814. The Hartford Convention bluntly stated that the "Union was a balance of economic powers and that the commercial states were in mortal danger of being dominated and ruined by a combination of southern planters and western farmers."[198] Harby bitterly resented what the Hartford Convention proposed to do; that it "will resist the government and dissolve the union";[199] that "no summary means of relief can be applied without recourse to direct and open resistance" to the government.[200]

In order to neutralize the effect of the Hartford Convention upon people, Harby spoke out with prophetic zeal. He claimed that a strong national government would bring both the blessings of a harmonious domestic and foreign commerce, and also preserve us from an internal civil war. To nullify any major threat posed by the Hartford Convention, Harby pleaded with Congress, "Amend your constitution where it is too weak for national defense, and give the Executive discretionary power."[201]

On the national and international scene, the War of 1812, which was waged between the United States and Great Britain, greatly aroused Harby. The latter's fiery and intense patriotism would not permit him rest until all the

current details of the War were printed. Harby became so emotionally caught up in his zealous patriotism, that he wrote a bitter invective against the anti-conscriptionists towards the close of the war. "The cry against the militia draft bill...appears to us after maturest consideration--unfound and unjust. Will Americans never consent to give up a small portion of personal liberty." Man, he wrote, can find strength only in union:

> The object of this draft is to secure yourselves by forestalling the approach of the enemy. Meet; unite; learn and practice obedience and systematic movement--enure yourselves to the habits of camp.../then/you will be aroused to a sense of your danger and the necessity of resistance when your cities are in flames, your brothers slain by your side.[202]

In the February 21, 1815, issue of the Southern Patriot, Harby rejoiced that the Treaty of Ghent, ending the War of 1812, was signed December 24, 1814. He was overjoyed with hope that the ruptured ties between Great Britain and the United States would be healed. He passionately begged: "Unlock the sluices of commerce and renew the intercourse of civilized states." Harby's optimism, however, fizzled out. When he heard of the maltreatment of American prisoners at Halifax, Nova Scotia, he angrily screamed at the British, "Shame, where is thy blush? Manhood and Honour, where have ye fled?"[203] "No land or wave can remain unpolluted by the touch of Britain. But we trust that her blood will be sacrificed to the genius of the West."[204]

Harby had another reason for castigating Great Britain. In the Treaty of Ghent, there was no clause forbidding Great Britain to seize and to impress American sailors aboard British ships.[205] He detested the idea of a forced labor of American seamen. "Compare," he wrote, "Britain's tyranny and impressment, leading to desertions. They will ride the seas in vain if the hands and hearts of her men are not willing."[206]

In the same editorial, Harby pans the efforts of the British Admirality to search out the secret of the construction of the American warboat, "The President." In regard to this secret which the British Admirality sought, he dryly remarked, "The Admirality may examine the secret, but until they imitate it, they will have only to wonder and despair."[207]

After the Treaty of Ghent had been signed, and the British had been given a verbal tongue lashing, Harby turned his editorial sights upon the most flamboyant personality in the early 1800's, Napoleon Bonaparte. Harby admired Bonaparte for what he tried to do for the French people, but he did not idolize him. His great fault, said Harby, was "presumption."[208] Harby, during the Napoleonic Wars, also sympathized with France, because of England's continued insults and impressment of American seamen.[209] He gravitated to the point where he felt that the European nations assembled their troops and emptied their treasuries "not against France, not against Frenchmen...

but against Napoleon Bounaparte/sic/ alone." Harby gallantly defended Napoleon by noting: "Surely the absurdity of the idea will never escape the honourable indignation, the profound contempt with which every friend of Liberty must regard the despotic...proscription which the tyrants of Europe would assume."[210]

The-German and British press, Harby reflected, were delighted in pointing out the indifference of Napoleon's second wife, Marie Louise, to him. Harby, however, did not agree with the German and British press attitude toward Marie Louise. He noted that when Napoleon slipped quietly away from the isle of Elba, Marie Louise returned "to the bosom of her victorious spouse."[211] When Napoleon was defeated on June 18, 1815, on the field of Waterloo, Marie Louise still insisted on his conjugal devotion. Harby thus proved his case--for the time being--that there was a bond of love between Napoleon and Marie Louise. He bluntly wrote, after all, "Is not Napoleon the father of her son? And has he not fascinating manners and personal beauty?"[212] Harby's argument concerning the true love between Marie Louise and Napoleon lasted only a few months after June 18, 1815. History bequeathed to us the fact that it was only a short while after Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo, that Marie Louise deserted him, and that his only son was reared in Austria.[213]

History has also told us that Napoleon, in March, 1815, secretly left Elba, and triumphantly marched on Paris. Louis XVIII was overthrown, and for a brief "Hundred Days,"

Napoleon enjoyed a return of his former glory.[214] Harby seriously asked his readers the question of why should the European powers be angry with the return of Napoleon? Will he not provide decision, beauty, and order, which the Congress of Vienna totally lacked?[215] If Napoleon was the "scourge of his country and of Europe," still Harby pointed out, as a counterpoise and check to the cupidity and tyranny of England, his case was not so bad.[216] He acidly questioned the guilty verdict ascribed to Napoleon by many people of the world. "Is there nothing in his patronage of science, nothing in the internal improvement of France, in his mathematical acquirements and achievements...Nothing in the height of grandeur to which he raised France?"[217] The Southern Patriot proclaimed to the masses "Napoleon's magnanimous and liberal policy as regards Religion would alone embalm his memory to posterity."[218] Harby, however, sadly lamented that Napoleon "must be given up to political damnation because he did not die in the field, struggling for a forlorn hope."[219]

Harby had become so identified with Napoleon's ideals and actions, that he chastised anyone who dared to speak untruths about Bonaparte. He severely criticized Lord Byron in his poem, "Ode to Napoleon Bounaparte," because the latter had called Napoleon a mean and cowardly person. Harby sourly remarked that a man of Lord Byron's power and genius should have been "superior to national prejudices."[220] He cursed England for the mean advantage she took in sending

Napoleon to St. Helena Island.[221] Harby lashed out with disdain "that the sentiments of malignant pleasure with which she seems to contemplate her prize, give horrible augury of her intentions."[222] Harby, therefore, had no real affection for England. When the Boston Gazette published the account of the battle of Waterloo under the byline of "Defeat of Bounaparte," he suggested that a better title would be "Immense loss of the British."[223]

Harby's political essays were published in the City Gazette of 1824 and were called "The Presidency." In essence, they were written to promote the Republican policies, and advocate the Presidential candidacy of General Andrew Jackson.[224] As L. C. Moise correctly observed, these essays "are fearless and profound discussions, displaying, besides their heat of patriotism and love of truth, an astounding grasp of the situation and the sure possession of an unlimited number of facts by which his arguments were supported. They exerted a very positive influence upon the people."[225]

The question of why Harby would suddenly choose to become a political commentator is an interesting one. However, there is little need for us to speculate, for he tells us his reasons:

> I design to discuss, briefly, yet boldly, some few points, intimately connected with the interests of our country. The state of parties, the temper of the times, the character and tendency of certain political opinions, and the all-important question of the Presidency, are subjects, I think, which

> ought to be regarded, not in the spirit of a partizan, but in that of an American; in this spirit I shall speak.[226]

Yet, it is not enough to know Harby's reasons for writing these political essays. We must know also about the political turmoil going on in 1824. Two famous historians, Charles and Mary Beard, give us keen insight into the developing political crisis of 1824.

When the election of 1824 arrived, there was no outstanding Presidential candidate to replace the outgoing James Monroe. New men, therefore, were jostling one another for place and power in the political ring. Puzzled by this state of affairs, the Congressional caucus nominated for the Presidency, William H. Crawford of Georgia, a man of ability, but not a commanding personality. However, the caucus' decree could not be enforced, because three other candidates insisted upon entering the Presidential race. John Quincy Adams, son of the second President, regarded himself as heir apparent, by virtue of his service as Secretary of State; while the frontier brought its fist down on the political table, announcing the rights of Henry Clay of Kentucky and Andrew Jackson of Tennesse to seek the Presidential nomination.[227]

Before dealing with the Presidential candidacy of General Andrew Jackson, Harby, in his essays, first decided to comment on the South Carolina political picture of 1824. He was rather upset over the depreciation of property and wealth in Charleston. Harby, in fact, blamed "the

Representatives of the People" for this, and bitterly assailed them:

> Let these Representatives be real, not fictitious. Let them stand forth as the true and legitimate expression of public sentiment; not the agents and abbettors of faction whether native or foreign; whether the satellites of a tottering ambition, or of an insatiable family party;...Let your Representatives regard the interest of the City--the District--the State--the Republic.[228]

Harby was also an anti-Federalist, believing in the individual autonomy of each State. He feared that a strong Federal government could impose its laws and statutes upon a state, thus forcing the state to do something which was against its will.[229]

Harby was not the type of man to criticize something without offering an alternative solution. Thus, standing in direct opposition to a strong Federal government, he presented his own solution to the "States' Rights" problem:

> ...the independent States of America, each jealous of its own rights, stand as centinals /sic/ against unconstitutional encroachments, and checks, as well as guardians over each other. Meanwhile, the national government devotes itself to great powers and purposes of war, and peace, and commerce, and treaties, and foreign relations.[230]

After discussing South Carolina's political problems, Harby turned to the main point of his essays, "who shall be the next President?" He noted that the President of the United States should be a man of candor rather than of learning; a man full of the purity of patriotism than of

ingenuity; rather of openness and elevation of character than a man of doubts and scruples of conscience and opinion. "Such a character would be known; his sentiments being as 'fair as day' whether right or wrong, the representatives of the people would be met, not as insolent opposers of his authority, but as friends to council blessings on the community."[231]

Harby, then, with little hesitation, began his campaigning for General Andrew Jackson. He regarded Jackson as first among the candidates for the Presidency. Harby praised Jackson's qualities of greatness by noting he had had fine military achievements, "a cultivated mind, sound legal knowledge, an eloquence of no common grade, and a soul of truth."[232]

Harby noted that Jackson's candidacy was welcomed with a great deal of enthusiasm. Yet, he was very wary of this attitude of the people, for he said: "Some of those who <u>now</u> pretend to advance his claims to the Presidency, were in 1821, the most clamourous against him."[233] In fact, Harby with a vengeance called Jackson's enemies a "chorus of lisping civilians, and unfledged reasoners on the laws of nations."[234] He explained that these same people, who, in 1821, had been most anti-Jackson, were now most forward in their praises. "With them the former tyrant has become a present patriot, the military usurper, an heroic statesman."[235]

Harby now turned to answer the challenges against Jackson's candidacy. The first objection was that soldiers should not be statesmen, to which he retorted: "as if Washington were less worthy to be trusted, because he was the soldier of liberty; as if Jackson evinced military talents alone; as if courage were incompatible with wisdom or genius, at variance with virtue; as if glory were not consonant to elevated views, or the smoke of the cannon could tarnish the purity of Republicanism."[236]

Many people protested against General Jackson's choice of Colonel Drayton, a Federalist, as Secretary of War. Harby, however, pointed out the honesty of General Jackson, because the latter refused to be caught up in the "spoils' system." Jackson, Harby contended, would choose a man on his merits and not because of a patronage commitment. As Harby said:

> Colonel Drayton was one of the few--the precious few, among those Federalists, who preferred their country to their party. He abandoned a lucrative profession for the pursuit of arms, and the honour of serving his native land in any capacity in which the Government chose to employ him... General Jackson...would have discovered talents of a superior grade, unsullied honour, and that which he particularly desired in the War Department.[237]

Harby was far-seeing enough to realize that General Jackson might not win the Presidential election, and thus, he would have to give his readers a "second choice":

> ...should General Jackson fail--should management overcome merit, and the contest lie between John Quincy Adams, Secretary of State, and William H. Crawford, Secretary of the Treasury; should it come to this point...that South Carolina be compelled--and not till then, to make her "second choice" --who that wisely regards her interests, her institutions, or her population, would hesitate between Mr. Crawford and Mr. Adams? To consider it even as a choice of evils, we could not hesitate to take the least. Our path lies right before us...we may yet find a torch to guide us on our way.238

Harby then began a comprehensive examination of the two leading candidates. He first examined John Quincy Adams.

Harby bluntly said:

> When I pronounce Mr. ADAMS to be neither their first nor "second choice"--I truly speak the sentiment of both the Carolinas ...they oppose him on the public ground of political PRINCIPLES, and form their opinions from his acts and writings.239

He noted that Adams was a good scholar, but his books had "never conquered his sectional prejudices." As a matter of fact, Harby caustically observed, Adams "appears to be better suited for a commentator on what others do, than for doing aught himself." In fact, Adams "plays his game, too observant of his own moves, to be often checkmated...Mr. Adams slowly captures pawn after pawn, and leaves the king almost exhausted, to shift around as well as he can. He

wins the game by the 'fortiter in rei' never by the 'suaviter in modo'--and thus he leaves his adversary in an angry mood."[240]

Besides describing Adams as a poor diplomat, Harby decided to ruin Adams' chances of being elected from South Carolina by speaking out on the slave status question. He addressed himself to the merchants, mechanics, farmers, and planters, and in particular, the slave-holding states. He asked of these individuals:

> Are they willing to support, as the President of these United States, a man who has looked so unwisely on the "temper of the times," the character of our population, the guards, and bolts, and centinels [sic] and principles necessary to our prosperity.[241]

Harby was definitely afraid that Adams would destroy "States' Rights," and as such "destroy the guarantee which secures the possession of slaves to their owners."[242] And so, he said:

> Mr. Adams is far from being unexceptionable in the South; Mr. Crawford has been tried by the fiery ordeal of his assayers, and is found sufficiently pure to be put into circulation. The people may, therefore, deem him preferable to Mr. Adams, and be willing to take him, "With all his imperfections on his head."[243]

Having created several solid arguments against the candidacy of John Quincy Adams, Harby decided to deal the final blow to Adams' hopes by saying:

> How far Mr. Adams, if chosen, would venture to risk his popularity in the South, by endeavouring to effect the abolition of

> slavery...will depend much on the reality of his moral and religious principles... Instead of using his talents to promote the peace, and prosperity of interior, and to maintain honour, and independence in all exterior relations--he must busy himself in satisfying the demands of his rapacious adherents--he must also use his public trust, to compensate individual partizans. If he refuse to do this, he must quarrel with his own supporters--and having brought this to pass, his disturbed and comfortless distinction, will end with his first four years.[244]

Evidently, Harby considered John Quincy Adams the most serious challenger to General Jackson. He went to great lengths to persuade his readers that Jackson was the man for the Presidency, and not Adams. This is perhaps the basic reason why he picked William H. Crawford as the best "second choice." In fact, Harby's material on Adams completely overshadowed what he wrote about Crawford.

As he himself said: "I have never been an admirer of Mr. Crawford. I have opposed his elevation to the presidential chair, before General Jackson was a candidate, under the opinion of his unworthiness...But, the nearer I examine the character and public life of William H. Crawford, the more my prepossessions vanish, and my respect is won. I did say that the people may take him in the second choice 'with all his imperfections on his head.'"[245]

Crawford was better than John Quincy Adams, according to Harby, because his sentiments, emotions, and feelings were more Republican, more Southern, more

constitutional.[246] Harby praised Crawford as the "second best" candidate for the Presidency on the basis of his being a Southerner, a Republican, and a very capable Secretary of the Treasury:

> With regard to his conduct as Secretary of the Treasury of the United States, it must be admitted that Mr. Crawford is an enemy to extravagance...he has saved the nation several millions.[247]

To the unenlightened reader, Harby's essays proposed that General Jackson was the best Presidential timber to be found in the United States, that Crawford was "second best," and that Adams was "third-rate." Yet, the moment the reader paused to reflect with deep introspection on what Harby had said, he found a profound message. Harby, in effect, was saying, "At all costs, for the betterment of the United States, Adams must not be elected." However, Harby was too shrewd a politician to come out and openly say this, for it would definitely influence to a negative degree his candidate's chances of being elected President of the United States. Thus, what he did was to speak between these following lines the above thought. Harby beautifully praised Crawford, and at the same time said, "Elect Adams and we will all sink together."

> I should not hesitate to take the democratic candidate, Mr. Crawford, with his sober good sense and republican habits, in preference to his rival, Mr. Adams, with all his aristocracy of courts, and all the learning of the University of Leyden. The Treasurer has less scholastic acquirements, but then he has a better knowledge of men and things,

> which, if he does not look at through the "spectacles of books," he perhaps observes more accurately and palpably, in the temper, real fitness, and consistency of our institutions.248

What Harby, in effect, did in his political essays was to show himself a skillful politican. He told us little about the merits of General Jackson, or about William H. Crawford; rather, Harby told us all that was wrong with John Quincy Adams. The result is that while Harby was busy condemning Adams, he left the reader from the outset of his essays with the idea of Jackson's greatness. Thus, the reader fell into a trap whereby he thought that Adams was not the man to be elected, but that Jackson was. The amazing thing is that Harby failed to tell the reader what Jackson's policies were! He briefly showed Jackson in a positive light, and then spent the major part of his essays showing Adams' negative qualities.

A fourth candidate for the Presidency was Henry Clay of Kentucky. Harby, mincing no words, said this about Clay:

> If I have not taken Mr. Clay into the question, it is not that I do not appreciate his worth. His genius is peculiarly American--a combination of vast but irregular powers...Mr. Clay's chance will not even carry him into the House of Representatives; and as his system of domestic policy is at variance with the interests of the great majority of the people, they have never contemplated him as one among the probable three.249

The questions which now must be asked are: who was

elected as President of the United States in 1824?--and did Harby's political essays help the cause of Jackson? Charles and Mary Beard supply us with the answers. The returns from the polls were so divided, that neither Jackson, Adams, Crawford, nor Clay had a majority of the Presidential electors as required by the Constitution. Yet, Harby's political essays must have had some influence, for Jackson received the most electoral votes and Clay the least. Thus, since Jackson did not receive enough of the electoral votes to be declared the President, the election was thrown into the House of Representatives, where each state could only cast one vote. When Clay, as Speaker of the House, heard the cries of the Jackson hordes, he turned over his small number of electoral votes to Adams, thereby giving Adams the Presidency, with himself getting the Secretary of State's job.[250]

Harby did not cease campaigning for Jackson after the latter's defeat in 1824. In a letter to Jonathan Roberts, Esq., quondam Senator in Congress from Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, in 1826, he said: "A President of the United States should be a man like Jackson, of immense energy, of exalted candour, of the clearest judgement, of the purest public virtue."[251] In 1828, Harby's political campaigning paid off. On March 4, 1829, General Andrew Jackson took his oath of office as President of the United States.[252]

One of Harby's finest editorials appeared in the Southern Patriot of February 22, 1816. Harby's local pride influenced him to the extent that he admitted that Washington was easily one of the greatest figures of history. It was, however, unfair to call him the father of his country, when Franklin, Adams, Hancock, Jefferson--and he now added to the list these South Carolinians--Governor John Rutledge, Henry Laurens, and Governor Arthur Middleton "dared the front of danger and continued...to stand firm to the standards of their country. The American Republic has a host of fathers." Harby strongly felt that South Carolinians Rutledge, Middleton, and Laurens deserved to be included among the fathers of the American Republic because of their contribution to the Continental Congress, the Declaration of Independence, and above all, their service to the state of South Carolina. All three men, he noted, risked their lives in the service of their country; all three men were imbued with white hot patriotism. Harby, therefore, proudly wrote that these men should be recognized for their brave and noble actions, and be accorded the proper respect and honor due them, which had been neglected by historians.

Within the same article, one will find the true optimism of Harby. He had hoped that fallen France would conquer her invaders by her literature. "This would be

the noblest of victories." This in turn led him to this inspired emotional outpouring:

> After ages will begin a new era from the date and declaration of American Independence. The foundation on which our Constitution is built are the laws of Nature and of Nature's God. Until these are overthrown...we may easily expect perpetuity to our institutions.

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225. Moise, p. 21.

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228. Life and Writings, pp. 92-93.

229. Ibid., pp. 95-99. In a sense, he was prophetic in his views, because the Civil War of 1861-1865 was fought over the question of "States' Rights." In fact, this question of "States' Rights" has not ceased being a problem. As late as 1954, for example, the Supreme Court of the United States ordered the abandonment of all segregation in publicly supported educational institutions at all levels everywhere.

230. Life and Writings, p. 99.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

ISAAC HARBY AND "THE REFORMED SOCIETY OF ISRAELITES"

Previously, we have observed that Isaac Harby was a very capable playwright, critic, essayist, and journalist. His real value, however, actually lies in the realm of religion, specifically--Reform Judaism. Isaac Harby was the father of the first Reform Jewish institution to be established on North American soil--"The Reformed Society of Israelites," which began officially on February 15, 1825, when forty-four Charleston Jews broke away from the Spanish-Portuguese synagogue, Beth Elohim, to reform and liberalize some concepts and rituals found therein.[253] It predated Isaac M. Wise's national movement by at least fifty years, and was purely local. Sadly enough, many historians have neglected to give Harby his proper place in the Reform Jewish story. Indeed, in his capacity as a religious leader, one can find the most important role he played during his lifetime.

Before we can fully comprehend what Harby accomplished, an important question must be asked: What motivated Harby, a layman, to help create "The Reformed Society of Israelites?" The answer is two-fold, one part dealing in the secular vein, while the other, the religious.

Secularly speaking, Charleston, during Harby's lifetime, was one of the greatest urban and cultural centers to be found in the United States. The Charleston

Jews, in fact, had won a position of respect, sometimes even of distinction, having greatly profited by the civil and religious freedom they enjoyed from their first entrance into South Carolina.[254] Obviously, therefore, the Charleston Jews did not feel threatened by any detrimental external influences. Thus, we can assume that cordial relationships existed between the Jewish and Gentile communities.[255] In fact, the social intercourse was such between these two communities, that probably many Jews assimilated into the predominately Protestant community, due to the fact of the rigid quality of Judaism found at Beth Elohim. Harby, in an effort to eliminate this unfortunate situation, helped form "The Reformed Society of Israelites." Therefore, "The Reformed Society of Israelites" was created to close the flood gates of assimilation.[256]

A second reason as to why Harby led the movement to form "The Reformed Society of Israelites" had to do with the Jewish religious community. L. C. Moise wrote that "the autocratic Spanish and Portuguese community of Bevis Marks, London, which was the real parent of Beth Elohim of Charleston, still wielded its iron hand in the lives of its members. Strict orthodoxy demanded uncompromising obedience to dictates whose severity could only be explained by the civil and political disabilities under which England formerly labored, and the consequent

necessity of those in authority to require rigid conformity of conduct to laws of church and state."[257]

The worship service at Beth Elohim was about three hours in length. The entire liturgy was in Hebrew, and if read and chanted distinctly, would last about five hours. Yet, in actuality, the ritual was chanted and read without clarity and very rapidly, so that the congregation was often noisy and irreverent. Offerings were rendered in the Spanish language, and were not necessary in the support of the synagogue. English, in fact, was never used within the synagogue ritual.[258] Abraham Moise, in addressing "The Reformed Society of Israelites" in 1826, noted that "...substance has yielded to form, the religion of the heart to the observance of unmeaning forms and ceremonies. While we are forced to witness the impious exchange of the honors of the Synagogue for a consideration in pounds, shillings and pence." He complained that instead of the true religion of Moses and the Prophets, Judaism had, through the traditions of the Cabalistic and Talmudic writings and "the erroneous doctrines of the Rabbins," been corrupted into a system of "mental thraldom...so full of sophistry," that Reform must come unless Israel was to be "enveloped in utter darkness." A. Moise finished his characterization of Beth Elohim by noting that "their whole form of worship might have been regarded by the indifferent spectator as the idle and

unmeaning utterance of mere sound, rather than those pious appeals to Heaven, that uplifting of the soul to God, which bespeaks a heart filled with meekness and piety, and a mind deeply penetrated with the sacred responsibilities of religion." In fact, the youth became partially insensible to other considerations connected with their duties to society.[259] Isaac N. Cardozo, addressing "The Reformed Society of Israelites" in 1827, completed the true picture of worship practice at Beth Elohim. He observed that there was no semblance of order and decorum in the service. In fact, he strongly resented the prayers being read only in Hebrew. Cardozo wanted to use the language of his own country, English, within the worship service. English, he said, "would open the eyes of all to its /the religious service/ great worth and utility: a proper piety would be felt; an ardent and devotional love excited; and our faith become strengthened in the affection and fortitude of its followers."[260] Thus, Harby, due to the above two reasons, was unable to contain himself within Beth Elohim, and therefore led the fight to establish a truly American form of Judaism.

Secure in their belief that the president and the members of the Adjunta /Beth Elohim's board of trustees/ would seriously consider removing some of the defects of Beth Elohim's worship service, forty-seven members of the congregation formulated a "memorial" in 1824 and presented

it to the congregation.[261] In pointing out these defects of Beth Elohim's worship service, the memorialists sought "no other end, than the future welfare and respectability of the nation [Jewish community]." They could "not consent to place before their children examples which are only calculated to darken the mind, and withhold from the rising generation the more rational means of worshipping the true God."[262]

The memorialists proposed the following: 1.) to abridge the service, thus removing mere repetition, haste, and improper reading; 2.) to repeat in English any important Hebrew prayer, resting this proposal on the plea that there must first be understanding, if any improvement of the mind or heart was to be hoped for; 3.) to supply an English discourse through which the people could become acquainted with the ideals of their fathers; 4.) to eliminate the custom of giving offerings in support of the synagogue; and 5.) to curb all attempts at assimilation.[263] In formulating their creed, they omitted the belief in the coming of the personal messiah,[264] and also the tenet concerning bodily resurrection.[265]

In order to soften the impact of the "memorial" upon the adjunta, it was concluded with this soul-stirring appeal:

> We wish not to <u>overthrow</u>, but to <u>rebuild</u>; we wish not to <u>destroy</u>, but to <u>reform</u> and <u>revise</u> the evils complained of; we wish

> not to abandon the institutions of Moses, but to understand and observe them; in fine, we wish to worship God, not as slaves of bigotry and priestcraft, but as the enlightened descendents of that chosen race, whose blessings have been scattered throughout the land of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.[266]

This "memorial" was returned with the following message:

> Sir--The Memorial forwarded by your authority to the Parnassim and Adjunta, was submitted by the former to the consideration of the Private Adjunta. On its being read and gone through by the Secretary, the Parnass President declared it his duty to pronounce the same contrary to Constitution; and therefore could permit no debate... I am directed by the Parnass to communicate to you the foregoing, and to return the Memorial; and accordingly enclose the same without delay.[267]

In short, this "memorial" was rejected without discussion or right of appeal. This petition was declared unconstitutional "inasmuch as the constitutionality of said petition depended upon the signatures of a certain number of subscribing members of the Congregation, which number it was impossible to obtain, without including a large portion of the very body before whom it was to be laid."[268] The Fourteenth Constitutional Law was the one used by the Adjunta to show how this "memorial" could be rejected:

> Should any law of this Constitution prove detrimental to the interest of this Congregation, or require an alteration; or if any new law be found necessary, the Parnassim and the Adjunta, shall have power to call, or by a petition of two-thirds of all the subscribing Yachidim

> /members in good standing/, exclusive of the members of the Public or Private Adjunta, the General Adjunta in connection with the Private Adjunta, who shall convene to take into consideration, such alteration, amendment, or new law; twenty of whom shall form a quorum, and being adopted by two-thirds of them, and not otherwise, shall become binding and of full force in this Congregation.[269]

Evidently, both the Public and Private Adjunta thought that this "memorial" could be rejected and that the forty-seven Israelites, who submitted it, would cease to rebel and complain. They were convinced that these religious insubordinates would gladly return to Beth Elohim, licking their wounds, and thereafter be meek and subservient to the adjunta authority. This, however, did not happen.

After this genuinely peaceful attempt at reform had failed, the dissenters formed a new congregation. Thus, on November 21, 1824, "The Reformed Society of Israelites" came into existence.[270] It openly proclaimed a faith which could grow as well as be in harmony with the country where they lived. No longer would they submit to a "blind observance of the ceremonial law," but would "devise ways and means from time to time, of revising and altering such parts...of worship, as are inconsistent with the present enlightened state of society, and not in accordance with the Five Books of Moses and the Prophets."[271]

The new congregation began at once its work of reform. Early it was realized that the leadership should not

remain in a layman's hands. Accordingly, it was decided to "educate a youth or youths of the Jewish persuasion, classically in the English, Latin, and Hebrew languages, so as to render him or them fully competent to perform Divine Service...according to the true spirit of Judaism."[272]

"The Reformed Society of Israelites" was soundly influenced by the Hamburg Reform movement of 1817-1819. In fact, both the former and the latter were in agreement on the following points: 1.) the cleansing of the liturgy from needless repetitions and certain late accretions; 2.) the introduction of a sermon and prayers in the language of the land[273]; 3.) music would take place within the liturgical service[274]; 4.) the ceremony of Confirmation was to be introduced.[275] It must be noted, however, that where the Hamburg group ceased reforming, the Charleston one did not. "The Reformed Society of Israelites" took four more major steps, which were quite radical for their time. In the reforming of the liturgy, they omitted, on the one hand, the traditional tenets that declared belief in the coming of a personal messiah, and on the other hand, rejected the tenet concerning the bodily resurrection. The third new change was the resistence to rabbinical interpolations.[276] The "Society," as a result of this, was probably both anti-Talmudic and anti-Palestine in attitudes. The fourth and most radical step

was that the congregation worshipped with uncovered heads.[277] This was, indeed, far too modern a step for the modest German reformers.

In passing, it is well to note that "The Reformed Society of Israelites" added to the rejected "memorial" the ideas of having instrumental music in the service as well as the ceremony of Confirmation. In fact, the "Society" went so far as to be hostile to any rabbinical interpolations. It dropped the idea of preventing any people assimilating, because it would itself provide the needed stop-gap.

"The Reformed Society of Israelites" reached another milestone when Isaac Harby, Abraham Moise, and David N. Carvalho, in 1830, completed its prayerbook, Sabbath Services and Miscellaneous Prayers Adopted by the Reformed Society of Israelites. L. C. Moise wrote about this prayerbook that "its language is classic. It has no similarity to the Hamburg Reform Service published in 1819." He noted that its authors followed the Beth Elohim service, except in "the Articles of Faith, Services for Weddings, Confirmation, Circumcision, and the Naming of a Daughter. And for the first time, English hymns were included in a Jewish Prayer Book."[278] With all due sincerity, the authors, in the preface of this prayerbook, said that they did not want "to restrict the faith or conscience of any man. Let each one believe or reject

what his heart and undertaking...may rationally dictate to be believed or rejected."[279]

The most influential man in this movement was Isaac Harby.[280] His finest piece of writing was a "Discourse" delivered in Charleston, November 21, 1825, before "The Reformed Society of Israelites" on their first anniversary. Here are a few excerpts of the man's genius in speaking out for the causes of a "reformed Judaism":[281]

> In the short revolution of a single year, what a spectacle does your society present! You began your career with only a handful of men; some of them not yet determined how far their fears or their wishes might carry them. Your opponents falsely prophesied that this "handful" would soon melt away, and the "Reformed Society of Israelites" dissolve into air. But the spirit of the constant among you has been diffused throughout the whole mass, and you can now enumerate a respectable number...
>
> What is it that we seek? The establishment of a new sect? No; never...
>
> What is it then that we ask of the Hebrew Vestry /Adjunta/? The abolition of the ancient language and form of Jewish worship? Far from it...Our desire is...to throw away rabbinical interpolations; to avoid useless repetitions; to read and chaunt with solemnity; to recite such portions of the Pentateuch and the Prophets as custom and practice have appointed to be read in the original Hebrew, but to follow such selections with a translation in English, and a lecture or discourse upon the law...instructive to every age and every class of society...Is this sapping the foundations of our venerable faith? No...this is stripping it of foreign and unseemly ceremonies... beautifying that simple Doric column... which raises its plain but massy head amid the ruins of time and the desolation of empires!...

> The bigot tells you, seek not to understand what is above your comprehension; seek not for reason, where you have only to exercise faith. But the learned king /Solomon/ has said, "Wisdom is too high for a fool, but those who seek wisely shall find good," and the proverb of the heaven gifted Solomon is confirmed by the doctrine of philosophy, which tells you that faith is the result of rational demonstration, not of blind acquiescence...
>
> The temperature of our proceedings shall disarm hostility; and the authority, the true legitimate authority of the BIBLE on which we act, will lull the vigilance of bigotry to sleep...we wish to abstract, not to add--to take away whatever is offensive to the enlightened mind; but to leave in its original grandeur whatever is worthy to be uttered by men or to be listened to by the Deity.
>
> This is the course of things which every politic, every moderate man must prefer to the most successful schism...It would prove a victory over ignorance accidentally possessed of power, a victory over prejudices the result of long habit: a victory indicative of the moral influence of the Jews of Carolina: a victory that would make "AMBITION, VIRTUE."

Harby's "Discourse" immediately evoked praises from outstanding men of his day. Thomas Jefferson wrote to Harby upon his receiving his copy of the "Discourse": "Nothing is wiser than that all our institutions should keep pace with the advance of time and be improved with the improvement of the human mind."[282] Edward Livingston, an important American statesman between the years 1794-1836,[283] wrote Harby that "I should be ungrateful, if I did not express my thanks for the pleasure I have received in perusing the 'Discourse' you have been so good as to send me; a pleasure somewhat increased by finding the most

liberal sentiments expressed in elegant and classical language..."[284] In fact, Edward Rutledge of South Carolina, then rector of Christ's Church at Stratford, Connecticut, wrote asking the author for more information in behalf of himself and all other Christian ministers in the State of Connecticut.[285] The Charleston News and Courier, in reporting on the "Discourse," quoted an anonymous critic of a northern paper: "If Mr. Harby had never written anything but that address, his name would deserve to descend to the latest posterity as that of a superior and independent thinker."[286] Dr. Samuel Gilman, in reviewing the "Discourse" for the North American Review, called the movement a "spontaneous impulse towards better things, not produced by foreign violence or solicitation." His keen insight required him also to add: "what all the power and cruelty of all the potentates of Europe could never have wrung, by force or bribery, from the persecuted remnant of Israel, is now taking place under the influence of gentler circumstances." Dr. Gilman referred to Harby as a fine liberal thinker and said that "he has all the ardor and confidence of a reformer to whom obstacles are stimulants rather than discouragements."[287]

Harby and his "Discourse," however, were not above severe criticism. A Congregationalist of Richmond, Virginia, tore Harby and his "Discourse" apart by bluntly charging that:

> The zeal of this gentleman(who presents himself to notice in the character of a reformer) is to us a little paradoxical for if we are rightly informed he has not been a member of the Jewish congregation for the last Ten Years or subjected himself to any inconvenience by conforming to either Mosaic or Rabbinical laws. We fear he knows too little of the citizens, their origin, force, or value and/or that little is indebted to Hebrew writers.[288]

Probably, this Congregationalist was a first-class fundamentalist Christian. He most likely did not care to see any religion reformed or made relevant. He could no doubt sense the rationality of Harby's approach to Judaism, and thus he wrote: "The author of the address has unmasked the canon of reform against the fortress of Judaism. He advances with the banner of skepticism displayed with intent to weaken the force of prophecy and to destroy ancestral customs that grow out of the Law."[289] In fact, this anonymous author called Harby "an atheist of the first order...dissatisfied with his own religion."[290]

It cannot be claimed that Isaac Harby was the originator of the modern reform in Jewish worship. The true founder of the Reform movement had been Israel Jacobson, a successful German businessman. He had established a temple at Cassel, Westphalia, where his new ideas, rejected by the orthodox rabbis, were incorporated into the worship service.[291] Like Harby, Jacobson was a layman, and similarly, was interested in the welfare of his fellow Jews in an enlightened age.

David Philipson, in his The Reform Movement in Judaism, claimed that the Charleston movement had no leader.[292] If he referred to the lack of a rabbi, he was correct, because laymen read the services[293] and delivered the sermons.[294] In fact, Harby was its first appointed spokesman, the first chairman of its most important committee--the committee on correspondence--and its third president(1827). L. C. Moise has accurately observed that Isaac Harby was "the leading spirit and the greatest moral force of the reformation."[295]

In 1826, just two years after it was formed, "The Reformed Society of Israelites" decided to build a house of worship. It appealed to the city of Charleston for help to erect a "new temple to the service of the Almighty."[296] Evidently, the "Society" did not receive enough contributions to build their house of worship, for on May 7, 1833, a meeting was held for the dissolution of "The Reformed Society of Israelites." Thus, after eight years of uninterrupted and inspired effort, a meeting was held for winding up the "Society"'s affairs, at which it was decided to return the original building donations with accrued interest.[297] And so, the first organized struggle for reform among the Jews of America was over. The principal causes for the "Society"'s dissolution were three-fold. Perhaps the paramount cause for the "Society" having failed was the loss of its leader, Isaac Harby. In

1828, he left Charleston for New York City, because he could no longer properly support his family. The "Society" continued to function for five more years, but with the leaving of Harby for New York City, it lost its guiding light. The second and third causes L. C. Moise correctly noted. He perceived, on the one hand, that pressure was exerted upon the "Society"'s members from those connected by family ties; and, on the other hand, the fact that the movement was ahead of its time, because the masses were afraid to risk the experiment.[298]

Although the "Society" was disbanded in 1833, with the former reformers returning to Beth Elohim, by 1836 they wielded so much influence, that they managed to elect as Rabbi of Beth Elohim, Mr. Gustav Poznanski, whose convictions were in harmony with the reforms of the Hamburg Temple.[299] L. C. Moise was quite right when he observed that "such an event clearly attests the persistence of the movement eight years after the death of Isaac Harby and three years after the dissolution of the Reformed Society."[300]

It is somewhat of an enigma that little attention has been paid to this early Reform Jewish movement. All of the salient points which the Charleston Reformers used have been incorporated into the later Reform Jewish movement of Isaac M. Wise and David Einhorn. It is evident, therefore, that the giants of the later Reform

movement--David Einhorn, Isaac M. Wise, Max Lilienthal, Bernard Felsenthal, Emil G. Hirsch, and Samuel Adler--knew little or nothing of what had previously ocurred in Charleston. It is rather difficult to explain this fact, because Isaac M. Wise, following his application and visit to Charleston, was elected Minister of Beth Elohim in 1850.[301]

L. C. Moise correctly noted that "the Charleston movement was of minor importance because it lived but eight years and was isolated from greater achievements that followed."[302] It must not be forgotten, however, that the leaders of this early American Reform movement were heroic pioneers. They breathed the spirit of American freedom and liberality. They were caught up in a new era, where a man was given the right to speak and think as he pleased. Thus, this little group of men dared to revolt, to have a "minor revolution," against a stringent Orthodox Judaism, which took no cognizance of the changing times nor of the enlightened masses. "The Reformed Society of Israelites," in its constitution, creed, and prayers, definitely reflected much of the Republic's new laws and institutions. The leaders of the Charleston movement were business men, who knew little about their religion. Yet, due to the influence of the new and invigorating ideals of America, these men exhibited a distinguished Jewish leadership.

The controversy stirred up by the Charleston reformers

throughout America was reflected in a letter by Abraham Moise to Isaac Leeser, the spokesman of the Orthodox Jewish cause in America.[303] Leeser, in trying to nip the bud of Reform Judaism, attempted to establish an ecclesiastical authority governing every Jew in America. A. Moise, full of wrath and disgust, caustically roared back at Leeser's opinion concerning the setting up of a pan-American ecclesiastical authority:

> What chance do you think our voice would stand in a multitude of sticklers for the old system with all its defects and blemishes? I would not, however, have you to understand from these remarks, that I regret the institution of your plan: on the contrary, I am rejoiced at it--I am highly pleased to discover that you have taken the alarm, that you regard our progress as of sufficient importance to cause your apprehension, by inducing the efforts you are now making to bind the people still stronger and in such a way as may hereafter effectually prevent them, as you may suppose, from following in our footsteps.[304]

Moise cunningly insulted Leeser by inferring that the latter ought to be ashamed in permitting the use of his name "to build up a tottering system, that from its very nature, cannot be lasting."[305] Indeed, these early American reformers did not suffer from guilt feelings as much as their German counterparts did. The American spirit of liberalism was truly felt by these Charleston reformers, and no one man or idea could cause them to cease their activities. Isaac Leeser, the death of Isaac Harby, and the dissolution of "The Reformed Society of

Israelites" were only impediments in the way of American Reform Judaism. These Charlestonian reformers faced these challenges, and in the long run were the victors. We need only to see that in 1836, when Mr. Poznanski was elected as Rabbi of Beth Elohim, the reform element of the Spanish-Portuguese synagogue had succeeded in electing a man whose convictions were in harmony with "Reformed" Judaism.[306] Although Harby was not alive to see his movement falter, yet then succeed, he was the genius behind the movement. He gave it the impetus that it sorely needed, as well as his enthusiasm and his gifted leadership. We therefore can truthfully say that Isaac Harby was the founding father of American Reform Judaism.

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CONCLUSION

We have now concluded the investigation into Isaac Harby's life and his writings. The time has arrived, therefore, when we must distill and crystallize some of the key insights about the character of Isaac Harby--author, critic, teacher, religious rebel, husband, and man.

Harby was the proud possessor of an above average intellect. He was keenly aware of this situation and therefore capitalized upon it during his entire lifetime. Using the full force of his intellectual powers, Harby tried to be a creative individual. He was not satisfied with the typical dramatic works of the early nineteenth century playwrights, so he tried to create what he thought was a better product. He was not pleased with the Orthodox Jewish ideology of Beth Elohim in Charleston, South Carolina, so he led the movement to constitute a true form of American Judaism.

Harby was also a tireless worker. It is difficult to imagine an individual of today doing all the things which Harby did in the early nineteenth century. Harby, living in a less organized society than ours of today, managed somehow to teach, write plays, essays, and articles, edit a newspaper, make speeches, organize a new form of Judaism, and still be a husband and father. Evidently, he was so highly organized, that Harby knew

how to make the ultimate use of his daily schedule, and still have time to lead a fairly normal life.

Another insight about Harby was his love of a puzzle, challenge, or fight. He was always ready to solve any problem or difficult situation. He leaped with great pleasure into the literary criticism of "LeSage and DeSolis" or "Ode to Napoleon Bounaparte." One cannot dismiss the battles that Harby and his cohorts had against the adjunta of Beth Elohim or his editorial remarks about conscription in 1815. His white hot patriotism plus the immediacy of the great events of his day offered Harby much meat upon which to fatten his caustic wit and chiding sarcasm. Harby's fighting spirit made him a very opinionated individual, and gave him a definite personality.

On the debit side of the ledger, Harby had two weak points. The first one was that he was a "quitter." After his third play had proved to be his third successive box office failure, he quit writing plays. Harby ceased being a playwright because the playwright's path was too rocky for him to tread. Harby had talent, and if he would have continued his efforts in the realm of drama, he probably would have been successful.

The second weakness of Harby was that he did not always abide by his "code"; namely that his objectivity was often diluted by his emotions. Had Harby been less

apologetic and far more honest with his dramatic and literary criticisms, he would have risen to greatness. Harby was too gentle and too kind in dealing with personalities. He could not separate himself from his emotional leanings long enough to become aloof and coldly objective.

In essence, Harby could be compared to the acorn that never fully ripened into the oak tree. He had many potential qualities of greatness, but they never became actualized. One can point his finger and note that his early death, his "quitter" attitude, his emotionalism, all contributed to Harby's slow ripening process. Had Harby lived longer, perhaps he would have grown into a man of some great literary stature. This question can never be answered, for his untimely death cut off any possible answer.

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