

THE YEAR

5664

BY CYRUS L. SULZBERGER

No startling tragedy marked the year 5664, and interest centred mainly in the political and diplomatic field. Entirely bloodless no Jewish year can be. A reminder of Kishineff was given in the Gomel riots at the end of August, 1903; in the early part of September rioting in Galicia caused injury to a number of persons, and destruction to much property; in April Jews in Bulgaria were attacked on account of the blood-accusation, and Jews of Neustadt, East Prussia, were attacked and plundered; on May 1 five persons were killed in anti-Jewish riots in Bessarabia. Morocco, however, bears the malign supremacy for the year. In November, a hundred Jews fleeing from Taza reported that the Sultan's troops while occupying the town had massacred a number of Jews, violated the women and girls, and pillaged the shops. In December, in the city of Statt, an attack upon the Jews reduced 1500 to misery, and caused a property loss of 500,000 francs. Again in January a rioting mob attacked the Jewish quarter of the city of Morocco.

Less shocking, but more surprising by far, was the thunderbolt from the blue launched by Father Creagh in Limerick. Here the Jews had been residing in peace for twenty years, until last January, when this Roman Catholic priest made an onslaught upon them from the pulpit before a congregation numbering three thousand persons. The sole basis of

the attack appeared to be that some of the Jews of Limerick are largely engaged in the sale of goods on the instalment plan, and the buyers frequently found it onerous to keep up their payments. This would hardly seem to warrant the indictment of an entire people, but it sufficed for Father Creagh. Here is an extract from the address as reported in the Limerick daily press: "Nowadays they dare not kidnap and slay Christian children, but they will not hesitate to expose them to a longer and even more cruel martyrdom by taking the clothes off their backs and the bit out of their mouths. Twenty years ago, and less, Jews were known only by name and evil repute in Limerick. They were sucking the blood of other nations, but these nations rose up and turned them out. And they came to our land to fasten themselves on us like leeches and to draw our blood when they had been forced away from other countries." This in the face of the testimony of the Limerick *Daily Express* that "as a race the Jews have, since persecutions in Russia have driven numbers of them to Ireland to find a home, proved themselves an eminently industrious and law-abiding section of the community."

In Western Europe, as in Eastern, the mob spirit is easier to arouse than to allay. Despite the "industrious and law-abiding" character of the Jews, the rabble attacked them on every hand, crying "Down with the Jews," "Death to the Jews." A general boycott against them was declared and carried on, and the entire community was said to be in danger. Michael Davitt promptly took up the matter in a letter to the Dublin *Freeman's Journal*, in which he denounced the outrage. The Roman Catholic Bishop promised his assistance to the extent of his powers, which, however, were lim-

ited because of Father Creagh's belonging to an independent order. John Redmond, M. P., leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, disclaimed any sympathy with the attack, and the Irish Mission to the Jews at its annual meeting, held in Dublin, adopted resolutions of protest and denunciation, in the course of which the Jewish community of Ireland was declared to be "always sober, industrious, and law-abiding." On the other hand, the Limerick Confraternity of the Holy Family (a secret order numbering 6000) tendered Father Creagh their best thanks for his lecture, and expressed their fullest confidence in his views.

At about the date of this attack, there were renewed disturbances against the Jewish employees of the Steel Works at Dowlais, Wales. These events might be regarded as sporadic were it not that the testimony given before the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration, the report of that Commission, and the debate thereon, and on the East African Zionist project in the House of Commons, are all indicative of the existence of anti-Semitic feeling in Great Britain. It is quite true that in most cases the English anti-Semites lack the courage of their narrow-mindedness. The Commission, which was ostensibly inquiring into the general subject of immigration, was really concerned only with the Jewish phase of the subject, and its results, although not avowedly directed at the Jews, had in fact no other aim. The expressions in debate were in many cases most friendly to the Jews, though those giving utterance to them voted the other way. The Parliamentary discussion on the proposition to establish in East Africa an autonomous Jewish settlement under an English protectorate disclosed a similar condition. Mr. Burke is reported as saying in the House of Commons, on

June 20, 1904, that he would be "the last to deny the immense contribution to civilization, science, and art for which we are indebted to the Hebrew race . . . but it is against the public interest of this country to strengthen the forces of Judaism as against Christianity, or even, he would say boldly, as against paganism." On the other hand, at the same sitting, Mr. Lloyd-George stated that he saw no objection to the proposed Jewish settlement, one of his reasons for favoring it being that "there were a good many of the Jews we might spare."

More satisfactory conditions prevailed in the House of Representatives at Washington, where the continued efforts of Representative Henry M. Goldfogle to secure recognition of the American passport in the hands of a Jewish citizen not only called forth no discordant note, but had at least so much result that Francis Burton Harrison, of New York, and Alfred Lucking, of Detroit, Mich., made strong speeches in the House in support of the resolution, and both the Republican and Democratic parties in their national conventions included in their platforms outspoken utterances which should bear good fruit. Especially noteworthy in connection with this was the reference to the subject in the speech of Mr. John Sharp Williams, temporary chairman of the Democratic convention. An added instance of the "diplomacy of humanity" was the action of President Roosevelt when rumors of a contemplated renewal of rioting in Russia at the usual season disturbed the community. No one can know what might or might not have happened had the President remained inactive. However, it is certain that his prompt communication with our country's diplomatic representatives in Russia proved his thorough sympathy with our oppressed brethren there, as

completely as did his acts a year ago in connection with the Kishineff petition.

No single phase of political activity has been of greater interest than the matter of immigration restriction in both America and England. At home, the subject was largely in the public eye. Many bills were introduced in Congress, all looking to more rigid enactments and aiming chiefly at illiterate and assisted immigrants. The chairman of the Senate Committee, Mr. Lodge, and the Commissioner of Immigration, Mr. Sargent, published their views in magazine articles and in public addresses, and the spokesmen of the Immigration Restriction League were active throughout the year. In the early summer, the steamship companies having reduced their rates for third-class passengers and the number of immigrants having increased, the administration at Ellis Island became more rigid in the examination of arrivals, and there was a considerably larger number of deportations on the ground of "likelihood to become public charges."

The Jewish immigration for the year will be the largest on record. Since 1884 the United Hebrew Charities of New York has kept statistics of the Jewish immigrants arriving at the port of that city. Prior to the present year the largest number arriving in any one year was 62,500 from October 1, 1890, to September 30, 1891. In the year 1902-1903, the number was 60,800, and for the current year the indications point to over 80,000. More than 69,000 arrived up to July 31, and the arrivals in the months of August and September are always numerous.

This greatly increased movement is directly traceable to Kishineff and Gomel, not so much because of the number

coming from those cities as on account of the feelings of unrest and fear created by the disturbances there. It is interesting to observe that the immigration from Roumania is smaller, both in proportion to the whole and absolutely. Conditions there have been ameliorated to a considerable degree, and as the sense of danger in Russia has increased the movement, so that of peace in Roumania has decreased it. To us in America, dealing with a problem of the magnitude of ours, the perturbation of England over Alien Immigration—which is a British euphemism for Jewish immigration—is incomprehensible. According to the estimate of Mr. Joseph Jacobs for the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, the East End (alien) Jewish population of London is about 100,000, and the increase by immigration about 2500 per annum. When this is compared with the 11,509 who arrived at the port of New York in the single month of July, 1904, whereof 7804 remained in the city of New York, not alone is the contrast presented most striking, but it becomes difficult to understand the genesis of the Alien Immigration Bill, involving, as it does, a reversal of centuries of tradition. It is an inscrutable mystery that when this bill was up in Parliament, certain of the Jewish members could vote in its favor, when by reference to the conditions in New York they could have learned that a Jewish population nearly five times as large as London's, in a total population far smaller than that of London, was no menace to the city's well-being. On the contrary, the Jewish immigrants have added to the material prosperity of New York without making a drain, even fractionally proportionate to their numbers, upon either the charity budgets or the penal institutions. Yet, notwithstanding all this, and notwithstanding the opposition of men like

Sir Charles Dilke, Bryce, Trevelyan, and Asquith, when the bill was up on second reading, but three of the ten Jewish members of Parliament ranged themselves against the bill, and five abstained from voting. Never was public contempt more thoroughly earned. The bill has been abandoned for this year, and will probably never again be revived in the form in which it was introduced at this session of Parliament. In the agitation both in and out of Parliament, Major Evans-Gordon has been the most active restrictionist. His book, "The Alien Immigrant," and his magazine articles show the interest which the subject has for him, and although he visited Eastern Europe in order to study the matter at close range, and was convinced of the deplorable conditions under which the Jews are living, he nevertheless advocated the setting up of restrictions against their admission into England. The narrowness of his view and its incompatibility with British traditions were admirably pointed out in a letter to him by Haham Gaster of London under date of May 4.

The Russian situation, probably because it has become chronic, has seemed less acute. There was no considerable bloodshed, much talk of amelioration, some action in that direction, and quite as much or more in the way of further restriction. What was given with one hand was frequently taken with the other, and if so vacillating a policy as was pursued can be characterized at all, it may best be described as one calculated to avoid arousing the active concern of the world. Whether as a result of the agitation and the representations following Kishineff, or on account of certain letters in the London *Times*, or because of the discovery that in the war with Japan public favor affords the only means by which financial requirements can be satisfied, the atroci-

ties of former years have not been repeated, demonstrating by their absence in this crucial year that their occurrence at other times is due to governmental connivance or indifference. In fact, the Holy Synod issued a pronunciamiento to the clergy instructing them that when a hostile attitude is taken toward the Jew, it is their duty to point out to their people that such attitude is wrong, and to endeavor by their sermons to correct it. At about the same time it was directed that Jewish exiles to Siberia be permitted in exceptional cases to have their wives and children follow them. Although this permission was granted only in special instances, it is evidently a concession, since it had formerly not been allowed at all to Jewish exiles. One is inclined to stop and wonder why the Government, being anxious to rid itself of as many Jews as possible and exiling to Siberia as many as it does,—it is said that 90 per cent of the political suspects arrested at Odessa are Jews,—does not send the families with the exiles, or, at all events, freely permit them to follow. In connection with this, an encouraging item of news comes in the month of July, 1904. Political crimes are no longer to be punished by administrative order, but only after conviction in court. How much this may mean, how real a trial in court may prove, it is, of course, impossible to say. It may well be that the proceedings in all political cases will be farcical, and yet it is an advantage to have such a trial rather than none at all. Not even Russia can forever withstand the ridicule of the world, and the form of judicial process once granted the substance must ultimately follow. What Russian law courts are, is clearly shown by the inadequate sentences imposed upon the Kishineff murderers, the treatment accorded the attorneys in the matter, and the fact that

Danievsky, who assaulted Krushevan, the immediate instigator of Kishineff, was sentenced to five years' imprisonment and the loss of all civil rights.

The real responsibility for Kishineff was never so clearly disclosed as after the assassination of de Plehve in the latter part of July. Andrew D. White, formerly Ambassador of the United States to Russia, spoke of the late minister in these words: "His part in the horrible massacre and plunder of the Jews—men, women, and children—at Kishineff caused him to be regarded with abhorrence by the whole world." The London correspondent of the *New York Sun* said of him that "the world's greatest oppressor and Liberty's bitterest enemy died appropriately by an assassin's hand. That, in brief, is the view that monarchical Europe takes of the murder of M. de Plehve, the recent Minister of the Interior." The press of the civilized world agreed as to the execration in which his memory was held by right-minded men. Count Cassini, however, described de Plehve as "a man of the highest integrity and moral rectitude."

At Libau in September, 1903, the Czar received a deputation of Jews and accepted from them a gift of a Scroll of the Law. Unfortunately he seems unable to read Hebrew, for, within a few months thereafter, eighty Jewish families were expelled from Kieff, and a short time later, in February, 1904, according to the *London Daily Express*, the Government ordered the expulsion of Jewish residents from towns along the Trans-Siberian Railway with a degree of cruelty and barbarism almost incredible. They were not allowed to return by rail on the ground that the railroad was needed for the troops. From two to three thousand people—men, women, and children—were compelled to travel afoot a

distance ranging from twelve hundred to two thousand miles with the temperature from twenty to forty degrees below zero, without shelter at night and with the Russian officials prohibited (if any such prohibition were required) from giving the travellers any facilities. Comment on this performance is superfluous.

In the line of concession was the opening of fifty-seven new places of settlement in the Pale, and as an offset a considerable restriction of existing rights of residence and trading outside the Pale, together with a more rigid enforcement of the law on this point. At the Demidoff Lyceum, where formerly Jewish students were admitted to the extent of 5 per cent, a limit of 3 per cent has been fixed. A striking illustration of Russian intelligence was the closing by the police of the Congress on Technical Education, because it protested against the anti-Semitic policy, and of the Russian Medical College, because it adopted resolutions setting forth the unsanitary results of the overcrowding of the Pale. The *London Times* in December reported the result of a circular of inquiry issued by M. de Plehve, as Minister of the Interior, to the fifteen provinces in which Jews reside. Much space in the replies is devoted to the success or otherwise of the attempt to make Jewish farmers. The Governor of Podolia says it is a failure, while the opposite view is taken by the Governor of Minsk and the Governor of Ekaterinoslav. Most illuminating are the statistics supplied by the Governor of Cherson, a strong anti-Semite. According to these, 73 per cent of the Jewish population in his district were engaged exclusively in agricultural work, 19 per cent in agriculture in connection with some commercial pursuit, and 8 per cent in trade or industry. In both Ekaterinoslav and Cherson

the Jewish Colonization Association in its annual report, submitted July, 1904, states that the insufficient amount of land renders existence very difficult, and that in consequence arrangements are pending for the recruiting of immigration to the Argentine colonies. The Governor of Wilna, to his honor be it written, in his reply to the circular advocates the abolition of educational restrictions.

There seems to have been on the part of de Plehve a special fondness for holding symposia on the Jewish question. In the spring, he summoned to St. Petersburg sixty representatives of the leading communities, and instructed them to prepare an address to the Ministry setting forth the needs of the Jews and the reforms they considered desirable. Among the things asked for were the abolition of educational restrictions and the extension of the right to reside in the country. In the course of his address to these representatives, Minister de Plehve is reported to have said: "If we admitted Jews to our universities without restrictions, they would overshadow our own Russian students, and dominate in intellectual life. The Jews have declared war on the Russian Government through the press of other countries, which your race controls. I warn you that every war costs heavy sacrifices; take care that these sacrifices are not required from you and your people. The Russian Government is disposed to improve the economic condition of the Jews in Russia, but only very slowly and cautiously. You have no prospect of obtaining the same rights of citizenship as are possessed by the non-Jewish inhabitants of Russia." For brutal candor this is admirable. It is, however, quite in accord with de Plehve's letter to Herzl, under date of August 12, 1903, written, as he says, "to remove anything

that could give rise to exaggerated hopes or disquieting doubts." In this letter the Minister of the Interior expresses his approval of Zionism "insofar as it consists of a desire to create an independent State in Palestine, and offers the prospect of organizing the emigration from Russia of a certain number of her Jewish subjects." He is opposed to mere propaganda serving to bring about "Jewish national concentration in Russia," but says that the movement "could reckon on moral and material support on the day when certain of its practical measures would serve to diminish the Jewish population in Russia." The letter concludes with a reference to the amelioration of the condition of the Jews brought about by the extension of the Pale, "especially if emigration decreases their number." In an interview with Mr. Lucien Wolf some six months later, de Plehve again speaks of emigration as a potent remedy, and a cable despatch received by the *Jewish Daily News*, in July, 1904, indicates the organization of a movement in Russia looking towards a systematic hastening of the emigration of large numbers. When it is borne in mind, however, that the annual natural increase in the population of five millions is about one hundred and fifty thousand, and that heretofore the largest annual emigration has never nearly equalled this number, the hope of amelioration in this direction must be abandoned, unless a successful issue of Zionism should by its sentimental associations largely stimulate the movement.

Since the death of Dr. Herzl, Zionism has hardly had a chance to adapt itself to the new conditions imposed by the loss of its leader. The Sixth Congress at Basle, in August, 1903, was the largest yet held, the delegates numbering about six hundred. The two great events of the Congress were the

publication of the letter from de Plehve and the East African proposition. De Plehve's letter, as outlined above, promised moral and material support to the movement. "This support," the letter says, "would consist in protecting the representatives of Zionism in their dealings with the Ottoman Government, in facilitating the action of the Emigration Societies, and even in meeting the needs of such Societies, obviously not at the expense of the State, but by contributions levied on the Jews."

The East African proposition was an offer from the English Government to place at the disposal of the Zionists a suitable tract of land in East Africa with local self-government for the people under a Jewish Governor and a British Protectorate. This subject was discussed with great heat, and by a vote of 295 to 177 it was decided by the Congress to send a Commission to East Africa to investigate on the spot and report to the next Congress, the expenses of such commission not to be a charge upon the Zionist funds. Immediately after the announcement of this vote occurred the great dramatic episode of the convention. The cheering with which the result had been received by the majority had not yet ceased when the Russian leaders of the minority arose from their places with the Actions-Committee, left the platform and marched down the centre aisle of the hall. Instantly the entire minority rose as one man, and followed their leaders out of the convention. They regarded the entire proposition, even to the extent of a Commission of Investigation, as disloyalty to the Basle platform, which calls for a "legally, publicly assured home in Palestine." They immediately went into a meeting of their own, many of them in tears and mourning, declaring the day a new Tisha b'Ab, but after an

all-night session, in the course of which they permitted Herzl and Zangwill to plead with them, they returned on the following day, and participated in the concluding proceedings of the Congress.

The African proposition was not, however, so easily disposed of. What gave promise of a permanent schism was created by a conference held at Charkov, and it was only at the meeting of the Greater Actions-Committee at Vienna in April that a truce was reached, after renewed expressions of fidelity to Palestine on the part of the East African advocates.

Meantime the English people had not taken kindly to the proposition that a large tract of land be given over to "aliens," and the matter came up in Parliament on the ground of "the danger to the peace of East Africa, arising out of the steps now being taken, with the sanction of his Majesty's Government, for the establishment of an alien settlement in East Africa on lands now in the occupation of native populations." Reference has already been made to the debate on this occasion. The Commission ordered by the Congress has not yet gone, the present obstacle being lack of funds.

In America the Federation of Zionists held a convention at Cleveland in June. Professor Richard Gottheil declined re-election as President, and Dr. Harry Friedenwald, of Baltimore, was chosen his successor. At about the same time the Zionists of Pittsburg dedicated their new building, the Zion Institute. A Zion Institute was also dedicated at Cleveland.

The whole Zionist party at the close of 5664 is in gloom, and all Israel joins with it in mourning the loss of the great

leader, Theodor Herzl. To speak of his qualities in moderate terms is to speak of them inadequately. What would ordinarily seem lavish praise of the dead is, in this case, simple justice to a man of heroic mould. The charm of his manner, the breadth of his cultivation, the tactfulness of his diplomacy, and the ardor of his love for his people, combined to make him the one man capable of organizing Jewry, which for two thousand years has been unorganized, and for a large part of that time has been disorganized. His tact as well as his dramatic instinct were well shown in his opening speech at the last Congress. He had the whole house rise and stand while he read from his message the brief reference to Kishineff, the silent tribute thus paid being far more effective than any oratorical display. Again, in the handling of the de Plehve letter he showed his diplomatic skill. He was publicly asked whether there was any correspondence with Russia that could be laid before the Congress, and he replied that he would answer on the following morning. On that morning he announced that the Russian correspondence would be found published in *Die Welt* (the official organ) of that day, and that the letter was not before the Congress for discussion. In this, as in the Kishineff matter, he eliminated a debate which could only have been bitter, and might have been disastrous to the Jews in Russia. Whether the movement which he created is permanent or not, certain it is that during his leadership it was very real, so real that when England had a proposal to make to the Jews, it was made through the Zionist organization, and when Russia wanted to announce its policy to the Jews, it was announced through him; so real that the Sultan of Turkey repeatedly negotiated with him, and the King of Italy and

the Pope of Rome were willing to discuss with him the prospects of Zionism. No ordinary man this who, a decade ago unknown beyond his immediate circle, and dying before the full vigor of his powers had yet been reached, left as his mourners an organization of thousands who loved him as a father and an innumerable unaffiliated multitude who recognized in him the largest figure that has loomed on the Jewish horizon in many a century. Officially represented at his funeral were the King of England, the Emperor of Germany, the King of Italy, the Sultan of Turkey, and the President of France. Unofficially present was the whole great grief-bowed heart of universal Jewry desolate and sorrowing in its irreparable loss.

A meeting of the Greater Actions-Committee will be held on August 16 for the purpose of deciding whether a special Congress shall be called to elect a successor to Herzl. Temporarily the Committee has selected Herr Oskar Marmorek, of Vienna, to act as chairman. The success of the new Zionist leader, whoever he may be, will depend not so much upon himself as upon the intrinsic strength of the movement. If Zionism continues it will be through the appreciation, by the general membership, of the world-mission which it may have. Those to whom Zionism has meant simply a philanthropic movement for the amelioration of Jewish conditions, have not grasped even the beginning of its possibilities. To gather from the fields of Mesopotamia, once the world's granary, a harvest abundant to feed the starving Orient, and, in supplying this need, to make the Jew once more a tiller of the soil; to accept from the sisterhood of states the responsibility of holding in trust the key to the East, and to establish under the guardianship

of that sisterhood a State whose ideal shall be peace and whose weakness would be its strength in keeping the peace, thereby giving Judea the opportunity to work out the concepts of its teachers—these are part of that “perpetual ideal” which Dr. Herzl once called Zionism. If this “perpetual ideal” really inspires the hosts of Zionism, its leader will be found, and the movement will succeed; but if Zionism be a mere cry and vent for enthusiasm, leadership is unimportant, for not even under Herzl himself could it have achieved results.

Communal leaders, too many, has death claimed during the year: Bernard Lazare in Paris, one of the first to arouse the world to the Dreyfus infamy; Julius Plotke, of Frankfurt, and Alfred L. Cohen, of London, both members of the Council of the Jewish Colonization Association; Colonel Albert E. W. Goldsmid, of London, soldier, Zionist, and founder of the English Jewish Lads' Brigade; Myer S. Isaacs, of New York, President of the Baron de Hirsch Fund since its foundation, and foremost in all good works; and Leo N. Levi, President of the B'nai B'rith, whose large soul and keen intellect inspired the Kishineff petition. His wise and energetic administration of his office raised the Order of B'nai B'rith in the brief term of his incumbency to an important body, to be reckoned with in Jewish affairs. He was succeeded as President by Mr. Simon Wolf, of Washington. At the meeting of the Executive Committee at which this selection was made, a resolution was adopted declaring that no action was to be taken upon any public question except by the concurrence of the President, Vice-President, and Honorary Secretary.

Death was busy, too, among scholars and writers. Dr.

Marcus Jastrow, rabbi and Talmudist, and Simon A. Stern, the *littérateur*, both of the Publication Committee of the Jewish Publication Society; Karl Emil Franzos, Jewish novelist; A. B. Arnold, physician and writer; and Chaim Selig Slonimsky, scientist and journalist, are some of those who died during the year. The passing away of two military men of high rank, Leopold Sée, French general, and Jacques Nissim Pasha, Turkish surgeon in chief, brings to mind the condition in Germany. In March, Justizrath Feigl, of Berlin, wrote to the Emperor complaining of unfair discrimination against his son in the army, stating that in thirty years not one Jew had been promoted to the rank of a commissioned officer, and he felt this all the more keenly because he himself had been a commissioned officer in the Franco-Prussian war, and had been honored with the Iron Cross. The Emperor ordered a reconsideration of the case, and after such reconsideration young Feigl was notified that he was not promoted because he did not reach the required standards.

His failure is interesting in connection with the resolutions of the German Societies for Combating anti-Semitism, setting forth the facts that there is not one Jewish officer in the army to-day, and there are but two Jewish surgeons, and protesting that the discrimination is not made frankly as against the Jews, but always on the ground of unfitness. It is remarkable how circumstances alter cases, and the unfit become fit. At the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese war, of 180 Russian surgeons sent to the front, 110 were Jews. The discrimination here assumed a most contemptible shape, the non-Jewish doctors getting 1250 roubles for travelling expenses, while the Jews got but 900 roubles. Nor does Jewish

unfitness extend to Austria, where Sigfried Popper, chief engineer of the Austrian navy, was promoted to the rank of general.

No pleasanter picture can be found than by turning to Italy, where Luigi Luzzati has been appointed Minister of the Treasury, and Dr. Alessandro d'Ancona, Signor Eduardo Arbib, and Baron Alberto Trevis dei Bonfili have been appointed senators by the King. There are now nine Jewish senators in Italy.

In France, the *affaire* is still the *affaire*. Another revision of the Dreyfus case is in process at the time of this writing. It is of interest to note that Dreyfus's son was Bar Mizwah in Paris during the spring.

In Holland, Josef Israels celebrated his eightieth birthday and his friends and admirers presented him with a testimonial in the shape of 20,000 gulden. With a greed for gold which all anti-Semites agree is a universal Jewish trait, he offered the money to a fund for the erection of a suitable building for Rembrandt's great picture, "The Night Watch." Israels has been elected a member of the Berlin Academy of Fine Arts.

The year's benefactions include three notable instances. The Rothschilds in Paris set aside 10,000,000 francs for the erection of model dwellings for the poor. In New York, Mr. James Loeb donated \$500,000 for the establishment of a Conservatory of Music, and Mr. Adolph Lewisohn gave to Columbia University \$250,000 for the erection of a new building for its School of Mines. Unique of its kind was the gift of a collection of books by Mayer Sulzberger to the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, causing its library of Hebraica to rank among the three or four most valuable in the world.

The first graduation from the Seminary since its reorganization took place in the early summer, and was an event of imposing and dignified character. The conferring of an honorary degree upon Lewis N. Dembitz is noted, not alone because of the high attainments of the recipient, but also because the title of Doctor of Hebrew Literature was here bestowed for the first time.

The installation of Dr. Kaufmann Kohler as President of the Hebrew Union College awakened renewed interest in that institution, and the half-million dollar "Isaac M. Wise Memorial Fund" has so far progressed that subscriptions to it amounting to \$400,000 have been obtained.

The biennial session of the National Conference of Jewish Charities was held in New York. Interest centred chiefly in the day on the East Side, when, by visits to the institutions there and general inspection of the quarter, delegates from other cities were shown the overcrowded conditions and the need for co-operation in the work of the Removal Committee. This work has gone on increasingly, the number of removals from New York during 1903 having been 5525, as compared with 3208 during the preceding twelvemonth. The total number of removals from New York made by the Society in its three years of work now aggregate 13,000. In the face of the tremendous number of arrivals this would seem useless but for the thought that those established elsewhere will serve to attract their relatives and friends to the same places, and thus ultimately secure the diversion of a considerable number from New York.

The tendency towards a resumption of agricultural pursuits has been more marked, although it cannot be said to have reached an epidemic stage. The Hebrew Colonial So-

ciety of Maryland, an organization of Russian tailors living in Baltimore, has bought a considerable tract of land near that city, and its members contemplate carrying on their work there in conjunction with tilling the soil. A similar spontaneous movement is on foot at Pittsburg, and yet another in Texas. As these were all undertaken at the initiative of the people concerned, they hold forth far more hope of success and of duplication by others than had they been set in motion by charitable or semi-charitable organizations.

With the growth and dispersion of population in America, synagogues have been established where a few years ago Jews were unknown, and over forty houses of worship were dedicated during the year. The Union of American Hebrew Congregations is organizing circuit preaching under the directorship of Rabbi Zepin. Several new Jewish newspapers were launched, and one monthly magazine was reorganized and made into a valuable addition to the list of periodical publications. The *American Israelite* celebrated its semi-centennial anniversary. The establishment of the *Voice of Sinai* at Calcutta, the only Jewish paper in India, bears testimony to the widespread scattering of the Jewish people.

American Jewry looks with confidence into the future. Growing in numbers and importance, in culture and the means of culture, it recognizes the problems wherewith it has to deal and its shortcomings in handling them. The closer kinship with the newcomer has been slow of attainment, yet those on the lookout see the signs of the better day. If that day shall dawn during the coming year, joyfully will Israel write 5665 as a happy New Year.

August 12, 1904

REV. GERSHOM MENDEZ SEIXAS

“The Patriot Jewish Minister of the American Revolution”

BY N. TAYLOR PHILLIPS, LL. B.

“Through all Eternity to Thee
A joyful song I'll raise.
For oh! Eternity is too short
To utter all Thy praise.”

The foregoing, with the Thirty-fifth Psalm, poetically arranged, was written by Rachel Levy in a Festival Prayer-book, now in the possession of the writer, printed in Amsterdam in the year 1726, in which are also recorded the births of her children, one of whom is the subject of this sketch. She was the daughter of Moses Levy, who was born in Spain about the year 1665. When quite a young man he went to London, where he became a merchant, and was the owner of many vessels engaged in the trade with the north of Africa. He arrived in New York about 1705, and he immediately took an active interest in the affairs of the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation Shearith Israel in New York City. He was for several years, and at the time of his death, which occurred 14th of June, 1728, its Parnas (President). He was buried in the Cemetery on New Bowery, New York, of the Congregation, and the inscription on his tombstone, which is in Hebrew, Spanish, and English, can still be seen. Rachel Levy, his daughter, married in 1741 Isaac Mendez Seixas, born 1708, a native of Lisbon, Portugal. He was a merchant in New York, and afterward removed to Newport, R. I., where he engaged in active business until his death in 1780. His remains repose in the ancient Jewish

cemetery at Newport, made world-renowned by Longfellow's beautiful poem. He was one of the signers, in 1770, of the agreement to make more stringent the "Non-importation Agreement," whereby the merchants of the Colonies took the first concerted action to resist the oppression of Great Britain.

All the six children of Isaac Mendez Seixas and Rachel Levy became prominent in American Jewish history. Their son, Gershom Mendez Seixas, was born in the city of New York on the 14th of January, 1745. At a very early age he evinced a disposition to follow the Holy Service of the Synagogue, and when but five years old read a portion of the prayers in the Synagogue of the Congregation Shearith Israel in New York City. As early as 1766 he adopted the ministerial profession, and was formally elected and installed, with considerable ceremony, as pastor of the above-mentioned Congregation, which position he occupied amid vicissitudes for half a century. It is said that he was always a serious man, and, even when very young, by his bearing and manner he impressed those with whom he came in contact as being very much further advanced in years.

From the beginning he seems to have secured the affection of the members of his Congregation. He was an ardent patriot during the preliminaries to the struggle for independence, and it is related that when at length the crisis came, rather than continue the Synagogue under British auspices, he closed the doors of the edifice, which act was fiercely contested, even families being split apart as the result of it. Many of the members of the Congregation were merchants in active business in New York City, and their interests naturally were with the Tories rather than with the feeble little band of patriots endeavoring to secure freedom for the Colo-

nies. When the patriot members of the Congregation were about to flee from the city upon the appearance of the British fleet in New York Bay in August, 1776, preparatory to the occupation of the city by Lord Howe, the Rev. Gershom Mendez Seixas preached a sermon in English, in which he feelingly stated that the service on that occasion might be the last to be held in the historic old edifice situated in Mill Street (now South William Street), then approaching the half-century mark, and we are told that it was delivered with such force and eloquence that tears were shed by all present, men and women alike.

He left New York to seek retirement in Stratford, Conn., where he took with him for safe-keeping the scrolls of the law and the articles of ceremonial belonging to the Congregation. The records of the Congregation Shearith Israel show by statements rendered by the Rev. Mr. Seixas how he personally superintended the closing of the Synagogue and the transfer of its property in his flight from the city before the enemies of his country. By 1780 the Jewish patriots who had fled to Philadelphia, which city was selected by many as a place of refuge after incurring the displeasure of the Tories elsewhere, demanded the establishment of a permanent Congregation, and the Rev. Seixas was requested to officiate, which he consented to do. He at once left Connecticut, taking with him the sacred objects of holy worship, and established at Philadelphia the Congregation Mickvé Israel, a majority of the members being patriot refugees from New York. When the newly-erected house of worship was ready for dedication, he was one of a committee who waited on the Governor of Pennsylvania, inviting him to attend the ceremony. The occasion was most impressive, the Rev. Seixas deliv-



GERSHOM MENDEZ SEIXAS

ering a memorable patriotic address, and it is related that he invoked the blessing of Almighty God "on the members of these States in Congress assembled, and on his Excellency George Washington, Commander-General of these Colonies."

During his entire stay at Philadelphia he continued his labors in the cause of liberty. I must digress here to mention the public spirit that was manifested by the Seixas family whenever tyranny or oppression became evident. Certain it is that the brothers of Gershom Mendez Seixas were just as strongly devoted to the patriotic cause as the minister himself. One of them, Benjamin, was an officer of the Patriot Militia in New York at the outbreak of the Revolution. He was also one of the founders of the New York Stock Exchange. Another brother, Abraham Mendez Seixas, was a colonel in the Georgia Brigade of the Continental Army, serving actively and zealously throughout the entire struggle, and a magistrate of the City of Charleston, S. C. He was distinguished as an officer in the confidence of Generals Lee and Laurens. The eldest brother, Moses, was also devoted to the patriotic cause. He addressed a letter of congratulation to George Washington, upon the first President's inauguration, to which General Washington sent a reply, the original of which is still in the possession of his descendants. Moses Mendez Seixas was one of the founders, and for many years, until his death, President, of the Bank of Rhode Island at Newport, and the first Grand Master of Masons of the State of Rhode Island. A word must also be said of Grace, sister of Gershom Mendez Seixas, who shared the natural ability possessed by her brothers. She was thoroughly conversant with many of the subjects to which her sex are usually strangers, and could discuss politics, finance, and commercial affairs with startling

intelligence. Many of her writings are still in the possession of her descendants, and display striking evidence of her capacity.

To return to the subject of this sketch. After the city of New York had been evacuated by the British, the Rev. Gershom Mendez Seixas returned to his native city, March 23, 1784, and assumed his old charge as Minister of the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation. He was recognized as a truly patriotic American and a public-spirited citizen. There never was an occasion of general thanksgiving or day of fasting or prayer in which he did not take the initiative in leading the congregation in a public manner. He was one of the first ministers of any denomination to preach a regular Thanksgiving sermon on Thanksgiving Day and conduct services in connection therewith. To Leon Hühner, Esquire, the well-known Curator of the American Jewish Historical Society, we are indebted for the discovery of much valuable information relating to the career of the Rev. Gershom Mendez Seixas. In an excellent article published in the *Jewish Comment*, January, 1902, he observes:

Washington's proclamation to him was more than a mere formality, and the Jewish minister received it in the proper spirit. His conduct in this connection was extensively commented on by the press of the day, and among others the following extract from the *Daily Gazette*, December 23, 1789, may not be inappropriate here. After stating that a discourse had been delivered by the Rev. Gershom Seixas in the Jewish Synagogue on Thanksgiving Day, November 26, 1789, it continues: "This excellent discourse (to which is annexed the order of service), the first of the kind ever preached in English in this State, is highly deserving the attention of every pious reader, whether Jew or Christian, as it breathes nothing but pure morality and devotion."

Theology never crowded out other themes in this minister's

sermons; he seems constantly to have seized on subjects that agitated the public mind and from which some lesson could be drawn or which would enlist the sympathies of his audience in some charitable enterprise. The country and its institutions were always favorite subjects with him.

He instituted a recital of a prayer for the Government in English, it having been theretofore always read in the Spanish language, insisting that as Americans his Congregation could not tolerate the use of any tongues but the sublime one of Israel and that of their adopted country. Whenever it was necessary to raise money for public purposes—for example, to carry on the wars, to repel invasion, to relieve the sufferings of persons in other States who had endured Indian incursions, etc.,—the Rev. Mr. Seixas never deemed it beneath his dignity as a Jewish minister to invite public free-will offerings in the Synagogue for these objects, and I have drafts of formulas in Hebrew, in his handwriting, for use on such occasions.

His name is found in the charter of Columbia College as one of the original incorporators, and he was a trustee of the College from 1787, the year of incorporation, uninterruptedly until 1815, in which year he resigned the position. He is the only Israelite who has ever sat upon the Board of Trustees of that institution, they being uniformly of the Episcopalian faith. He was highly respected and esteemed by his associates on the board and by the ministers and ecclesiastics of the Church of England in New York, and it was common for him to deliver addresses in the Episcopal diocese of this city. One of these, which was delivered in St. Paul's Church in the month of August, 1800, contained an historical sketch of the Jews in New York City up to that time. The suggestion to

follow the example of the Rev. Seixas in inviting Episcopal ministers, clothed in their robes of office, to seats on the altar of the Synagogue during divine service would probably at this date be considered out of place, but it was common enough then.

The distinguished Jewish divine received many public honors. On the inauguration of President Washington as the first President of the United States, at New York, 1789, the Rev. Mr. Seixas with thirteen other clergymen of various denominations participated in the ceremonies, which notable fact may serve to remind American citizens for all time that our republic is founded on the very broadest principles, tolerating every race and creed, and American Israelites should ever recall with pride that the lives of Hebrews like the Rev. Gershom Mendez Seixas and his brothers, who cheerfully offered their lives and fortunes for the establishment of American independence, give to their brethren throughout the world a right of asylum on these shores which no true-hearted or grateful American will ever have the temerity to challenge. The Jews of New York City can also ever be proud of the fact that while the clergy of other religious faiths, with scarcely an exception, sided with Great Britain against the Colonies, the Rev. Gershom Mendez Seixas, "the Patriot Jewish Minister of the American Revolution," from the very beginning of the struggle, loyally and unflinchingly took his stand for the cause of liberty, and constantly made the walls of the only Synagogue on the Island of Manhattan ring with his eloquence in behalf of the doctrine of human rights, educating his Congregation to strike for liberty, until the day finally arrived when, as a magnificent climax to his efforts, he led forth a majority of his flock in flight north-

ward over the plains of Harlem and Washington Heights to a seven years' exile from the city of their birth, abandoning in a single day homes and fortunes.

Something of the Rev. Mr. Seixas' public spirit during the War of 1812 may be shown by a sermon, recently reprinted, which was delivered at the time when many were violently opposed to the existing administration for having declared war with Great Britain. After admonishing his hearers to support the administration of President Madison, he said :

For the citizens at large it is sufficient for us to know that our rulers are chosen to be judges on all affairs concerning the welfare of their constituents. They have declared war, and it is our bounden duty to act as true and faithful citizens, to support and preserve the honor, dignity and the independence of the United States of America, that they may bear equal rank among the nations of the earth.

These sentiments are followed by a touching appeal to his flock to help the families of those whom the war has impoverished, and by a description of the horrors of war, which he calls on Heaven to end.

Witness the distressed situation of our fellow-citizens on our frontier settlements in the northern boundaries of our State; driven from their peaceful abodes in this inclement season of the year, their houses sacked and burned, destitute of food, raiment and of every necessary of life, often without a place to shelter them from the most piercing cold . . . consider for a moment the distress of twelve thousand souls in such a pitiable situation; widows and orphans, who after passing their blood-stained villages, their houses burnt, deprived of parents, husbands, sons, with many of their nearest and dearest connections massacred by ferocious savages and the unrelenting mercenaries of an implacable and inhuman enemy . . . Think, oh think, brethren, what must such a multitude suffer! Deprived of their earthly

comfort, where it is not in the power of one to help another . . . many would despair in such a miserable situation, but it is to be hoped that the kindness of Providence will still strengthen their minds to support the trials they are now laboring under. Who can hear so deplorable a recital without a sense of feeling? Humanity is shocked with the melancholy narrative. . . . Vouchsafe to accept our prayers and penitence, O Lord; deliver us from our present impending evils, and guard us in future from those who rise up against us; frustrate the designs and machinations of the enemy; restore us to the bosom of peace. . . . Let us be always ready and willing to ameliorate the conditions of the unhappy, and in the first instance of benevolence enable us to assist our fellow-citizens in the Northwest Territory at this juncture.

The Rev. Gershom Mendez Seixas was twice married, his first wife being Miss Elkalah Cohen, whom he married September 6, 1775. The following is a copy of the record of their marriage as contained in the archives of the Congregation Shearith Israel in New York: "On Wednesday, the 11th day Elul, September 6th, 1775, was married Hazan Gershom Mendez Seixas to Miss Elkaley Cohen, in New York." She was born in the year 1749 and died October 30, 1785. Their children were Isaac, born at Stratford, Connecticut, July 30, 1776, who lived but three hours; Sarah, born at Stratford, Connecticut, January 9, 1778, who married Israel B. Kursheedt; Rebecca, born in Philadelphia in 1780, died 1867, unmarried; and Benjamin, died at Baltimore, Maryland, unmarried. His second wife, to whom he was married on the 1st of November, 1789, was Miss Hannah Manuel. He had returned to New York City after the Revolutionary War, where they were united in marriage. The children of this second marriage were: David, unmarried, the founder of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb in Philadelphia (this institution was opened May, 1820, temporarily, at Mr. Seixas' residence, and still exists as one

of the monuments of Philadelphia benevolence); Joshua, a learned Hebraist and text-book writer, and at one time a professor at Andover, who married Miss Raphael, of Richmond, Virginia; Theodore J. and Henry N., twins, born 1803, the first of whom married Anna, daughter of Naphtali Judah, and died 1822, and the second of whom died single; Grace, born December 7, 1789, married February 1, 1815, Manuel Judah, and died in Richmond, Va., August 20, 1826; Elkah married Benjamin Solomons; Samuel, born in 1793, died in 1852; Rachel, born January 11, 1801, married Joseph Jonas, one of the pioneers of Cincinnati, and died in Cincinnati, February 19, 1827; Lucia Orah, born December 26, 1804, married Abraham Jonas, brother of Joseph Jonas, and died in Cincinnati, June 15, 1825; Selina, born 1806, married Lucius Levy Solomons, and died 1883; and Myrtilla, born November 22, 1807, married William Florance, of Philadelphia.

The death of Rev. Gershom Mendez Seixas occurred at 9 A. M. on July 2, 1816, Tammuz 6, 5576. Obituaries were published in various papers throughout the United States, and services in his memory were held both in New York and Philadelphia. Some of the eulogies delivered were published in pamphlet form, and I have copies of addresses delivered at his funeral by Dr. Jacob De La Motta, the Rev. Emanuel N. Carvalho, minister of Congregation Mickvé Israel, of Philadelphia, and by the late Mr. Naphtali Phillips, who was at that time President of the Congregation Shearith Israel, of New York, the last eulogium being delivered at the request of the Board of Trustees as a memorial of their beloved pastor. One paragraph, which strongly illustrates his career, reads as follows: "This city was not only his birthplace, but his favorite spot, and he spent the whole of his virtuous life within it, excepting those years when, during the

Revolution, he fled from the enemies of his country while they held it in occupation, for America was the country of his love." His remains were interred and still rest in the old Cemetery on New Bowery, New York City, of Congregation Shearith Israel, and the following is a copy of the English inscription which was on his tombstone. It is now entirely obliterated:

ERECTED
 BY THE TRUSTEES OF THE CONGREGATION
 SHEARITH ISRAEL
 AS A TRIBUTE OF THEIR
 RESPECT AND AFFECTION
 FOR THE MEMORY
 OF THE
 REVEREND
 GERSHOM MENDEZ SEIXAS,
 WHO FOR
 FIFTY YEARS
 FAITHFULLY PERFORMED
 THE DUTIES OF
 HAZAN
 OF THIS
 CONGREGATION.
 HE DIED ON THE 2ND
 DAY OF JULY,
 1816,
 IN THE 71ST YEAR OF HIS AGE.

In 1902 the "Hebra Hased Va Amet," a Society attached to the Congregation Shearith Israel having for its object the relief of indigent sick and the burial of the dead, which was founded by the Rev. Gershom Mendez Seixas, celebrated its

centennial anniversary. The Rev. Mr. Seixas' purpose in organizing the Society, which is now in a flourishing condition after a century of activity, was to secure for every Israelite of New York City not only substantial relief in his last hours, but respectable interment upon his demise. He foresaw the need of such practical charity for Jews in a great cosmopolitan city like New York, and his wisdom has been abundantly vindicated. As a tribute to his memory, and to perpetuate the virtues of this sterling patriot and distinguished clergyman, the Society caused to be erected a tablet of bronze and marble in the beautiful Synagogue of the Congregation Shearith Israel, Seventieth Street and Central Park West, New York City, where worship the descendants of New York's pioneer Jews, who revere the memory of the man, the lustre of whose life has shed glory upon the Congregation and upon American Israel for over a century, Gershom Mendez Seixas.

