

ISAACS, ABRAM SAMUEL (Aug. 30, 1851–Dec. 22, 1920), son of Samuel Myer Isaacs [q.v.] and Jane (Symmons) Isaacs, was born in New York City, and died in Paterson, N. J. The pattern of his life was determined by the ardent interest in Jewish literature and Jewish life which characterized his home. After receiving the degree of A.B. in 1871 and that of A.M. in 1874 from the University of the City of New York, he continued his studies in the University of Breslau and the Jewish Theological Seminary of that city, specializing in German literature and Semitics. On his return to America he was given in 1878 the degree of Ph.D. *honoris causa* by the University of the City of New York. He was married, Apr. 23, 1890, to Lily Lee Harby, who bore him two sons.

In 1857 his father had founded a weekly paper in New York, the *Jewish Messenger*, as an exponent of traditional Judaism. On his father's death in 1878, Isaacs took over the editorship, which he maintained until the paper was absorbed by the *American Hebrew* in 1903. From 1886 to 1894 he was professor of Hebrew, and from 1887 to 1895 professor of German also in the University of the City of New York. He was professor of German literature in the post-graduate department from 1895 to 1906, when he became professor of Semitics. Besides these journalistic and professorial duties, he found time to be minister in the East Eighty-Sixth Street Synagogue, New York, in 1886 and 1887, and to serve as preacher in the Barnert Temple (B'nai Jeshurun) of Paterson, N. J., from 1896 to 1905. He also lectured extensively through the country. In addition, he produced a steady stream of books. Among these should be mentioned: *A Modern Hebrew Poet: The Life and Writings of Moses Chaim Luzzatto* (1878), *What is Judaism? A Survey of Jewish Life, Thought and Achievement* (1912), and the following books for juvenile readers: *Stories from Rabbis* (1893, 2nd edition 1911), *Step by Step: a Story of the Early Days of Moses Mendelssohn* (1910), *The Young Champion: One Year in Grace Aguilar's Girlhood* (1912), *Under the Sabbath Lamp: Stories of Our Time for Old and Young* (1919), *School Days in Home Town* (1928), and he edited *The Old Guard and Other Addresses* (1906), by his brother Myer S. Isaacs. He left a valuable manuscript work on Schiller, which is as yet unpublished. In 1907 he edited the Jewish department, and in 1919 the Semitic department of *The Encyclopedia Americana*. Hundreds of journalistic articles, book reviews in the *New York Times* and *Bookman*, and many charming poems, must be mentioned to complete the record.

His simple literary style reflects the modest simplicity of the man. He had the gift of terse and interesting presentation both as teacher and as writer. The mantle of scholarship he wore with the light grace of an urbane gentleman of innate refinement, broad culture, and fine taste in letters, art, and the art of living. Perhaps the principle determinant of his character was a Jewish religious loyalty and deep spiritual feeling. These came to expression in well wrought hymns, some of which have been adopted by the Synagogue.

[Joshua Bloch, *N. Y. Univ. Alumnus*, Mar. 1921; *Publ. Am. Jewish Hist. Soc.*, vol. XXXI (1928); Nathan Stern, in *Central Conference of Am. Rabbis, Thirty-Second Ann. Convention*, vol. XXXI (1921); *Gen. Alumni Cat. of N. Y. Univ. 1833-1905, College, Applied Science and Honorary Alumni* (1906); J. L. Chamberlain, *N. Y. Univ.* (1901), pt. II; *Jewish Exponent*, Dec. 31, 1920; *N. Y. Times*, Dec. 24, 1920; *Who's Who in America*, 1920-21.]

D. deS. P.