

THE

HISTORY OF THE JEWS

IN

GREAT BRITAIN.

BY THE

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&c., &c.

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CHAPTER IV.

The number of Jews in this country.—The number of Synagogues—Birmingham—Liverpool—Manchester—Bedford—Bristol—Hull—Falmouth—Penzance—Exeter—Sheffield—Cheltenham—Ramsgate—Newcastle-upon-Tyne—Jewish liberality.

THE number of Jews in this country has been differently estimated by the various parties who have hitherto written on English-Jewish history. Mr. Blunt puts down the number at thirty thousand. Mr. Egan estimates them at five and twenty thousand. These gentlemen may not have had such good opportunities for obtaining the correct census of the British Hebrews as writers of themselves. Those, however, who had the means to do so, and deserve to be relied upon, furnish us with a far more extensive estimate of the number of Hebrews in Great

Britain. The Rev. D. M. Isaacs and Mr. Moses Samuel of Liverpool, state in their prospectus of the "Kol Yeshooth,"* that there is "a population of sixty thousand Jews in this country."† This estimate is by far the most correct one.

This population of sixty thousand, is not confined to the Metropolis, but is dispersed over the United Kingdom, and it behoves the historian to give some account of that population in the different places where many of them have settled. Particular inquiries into the dispersion of the sons of Jacob show the fact, that besides the ten large synagogues which are found in London, there are thirty-six in the provinces. In connexion with which are various charitable literary institutions.

The following is an alphabetical, correct, and authenticated list† of the Jewish synagogues

* "Cup of Salvation," a monthly periodical which was conceived by the above Hebrew *Savans*. They published the first number in the month of March 1846, but it proved abortive; it dragged on a miserable existence for eight months, but want of support, and natural weakness brought it to an untimely end.

† "Ibid. Page. 18.

† See Valentine's "Hebrew and English Almanac, for the years 5611, and 5612 from the Creation, corresponding with the C. E. 1850, 1851, and 1852."

avail themselves of the assistance it afforded." The number of Israelites in this place is now estimated to be no less than three thousand.

The Liverpool congregation may date their effectual improvement to the time when the Rev. D. M. Isaacs was elected as its minister. This intelligent individual, conceiving the idea that public preaching was the most powerful instrumentality for improving a congregation, determined to act upon the idea, and commenced lecturing in the synagogues of Liverpool and Manchester, on the alternate Saturdays; and he may be said to be the first Hebrew lecturer, in the whole of the United Kingdom. He has moreover devoted all his energies to the cultivation of the minds of the rising generation, as well as to the abolition of obnoxious customs in the synagogue service, in which he was backed by several of the influential members of the community. Since Mr. Isaacs was appointed head of that congregation, the unseemly custom of selling the privileges of the synagogue service, by public auction, was abolished, and the Liverpool Synagogue was the first which made a stand against this scandal. The arbitrary mode of pew letting, was also abolished, since he came to Liverpool. Decency

and order distinguish now the synagogue of Seel Street.

As an instance of Mr. Isaac's effective preaching, may be mentioned the fact that whenever he preaches any charity sermon, it produces the desired effect, namely a most liberal collection. In the year 1840, he preached in behalf of his poor brethren at Jerusalem; his text was from Isaiah lxii. 1, and the collection amounted to eighty-two pounds seven and six pence. His published sermons* show him to be a man of no ordinary attainments, and worthy of a first place amongst the names of the Hebrew *literati* of Europe. Those who have the honour of knowing the worthy minister of the Seel-street Synagogue will not be surprised at the encomiums lavished upon him by a brother Jew, Mr. S. Abraham, of New York. That gentleman, when writing from Jerusalem to Mr. Daniel Myers, of Lord-street, Liverpool, concludes his epistle thus:—"Above all, do not forget to remember me to our mutual

* See his "Funeral Oration, delivered on the occasion of the burial of his Most Gracious Majesty King William IV;" (1837.) Also his "Funeral Address" at the interment of the late Joshua Van Oven, Esq." (1838.) As well several sermons published in the "Cup of Salvation."

friend, that erudite scholar, that good and pure-hearted Israelite, the Rev. D. M. Isaacs. And let me tell you that after seeing all the great men in America, and most of them in Europe, the equal of our distinguished friend is not to be found; he is in fact *נר נרן* (one distinguished in his generation), and I almost envy your situation in residing in the same city with him."

In the year 1843, a split took place in the Hebrew congregation of Liverpool, which divided the community into two synagogues. The separatists purchased a large house in Hardman-street, which they fitted up as a synagogue, and appointed a Mr. J. Levy, as their minister, but there is nothing particular in that individual, with the exception of repeated threatened ejections, of which he is the object to deserve any notice.

The Liverpool Jews generally are held in great esteem, by their Christian fellow-citizens. It was a Liverpool Member of Parliament who first introduced the bill for the admission of Jews into Parliament,* and the Liverpool Christian merchants petitioned Parliament, in the most emphatic terms, to the same effect. When Prince Albert visited Liverpool for the purpose

* See Vol II., p. 256.

is called Synagogue-place, leading out of St. Mary's Arches-street. Many individual Hebrew families residing in various places in the vicinity of that city, attend that synagogue.

The congregation have organized among themselves several societies, literary and charitable, both of which are in very flourishing conditions.

SHEFFIELD.

About a century since many Jews visited Sheffield in consequence of its peculiar manufacture, but only in the capacity of merchants, and therefore left the place as soon as they had made their purchases. A few indeed were ultimately tempted to settle there altogether; but those few were very tardy in forming themselves into a congregation, and it was not till the year 1838 that they resolved to constitute themselves as a congregation of Israel. Messrs. Emanuel and Jacobs were the principal movers of that resolution. There is nothing in a name, but it sounds rather curious when one asks for the synagogue, to be told it is in Folly-street. The Jewish population do not exceed twenty families.

DOVER.

About 1770, a small congregation was formed at Dover, by the following three gentlemen, who were in the habit of spending the summer months there, viz., Samuel Moses, Elias Goldsmid, and Elias Polack. The congregation continued small for many years after its organization, and prayers were therefore wont to be offered up in a small room. In the year 1833, however, the congregation was large enough to warrant the establishment of a properly fitted-up synagogue. The congregation was considerably strengthened by the establishment of Mr. Cohen's Classical and Mathematical Boarding School for the Jewish youth of the higher classes.

There is no Jewish burying place at Dover; their dead, therefore, are interred at Canterbury.

CHELTHENHAM.

By the exertions of Messrs. Lewis Isaacs, Elias Migs, and Isaiah Alexander, a congregation was formed at Cheltenham, in the year 1824; but the members were then too few in number to call for an especial edifice to be set apart as a synagogue, so that for the space of fifteen years after the formation of a congregation, Divine service was performed in a hired room. But in