

CHAPTER XLIII

THE MOVEMENT IN AMERICA

Zionism echoed in America—Emma Lazarus—A call—Emma Lazarus and George Eliot—Mrs. Rose Sonnenshein—The Opposition—A Tour to Palestine—The Colonies.

THESE ideas were echoed in a sublime form in English-speaking American Jewry by the poetess Emma Lazarus (1849-1887), one of the most eloquent champions of the Jewish national idea in the English language.

The story of Emma Lazarus' life is the story of a soul ever striving and pressing ahead towards truth and the light. Her works clearly reflect the progress of her ideas. She was a born songstress, yet she did not sing like the nightingale for the joy of being alive. There was a shadow of sadness resting on her entire being, something born with her as part of her disposition and temperament, the stamp and heritage of a suffering race. *Hebraism* lay dormant in this Jewish poetess. She was much influenced by Heinrich Heine (1797-1856). Charmed by the beauty of his poetry, the whimsical play of his imagination and the heart's muffled outburst audible through it all, she was nevertheless unaware of the actual bond that united them: the relationship in the blood, the unquenchable flame of the tragic Jewish passion of eighteen hundred years, which was smouldering in her own heart, and was soon to break forth and change the entire tendency of her thoughts and feelings.

The persecutions of the Jews in 1880-1884 were for Emma Lazarus a clarion call that awoke slumbering and unrealised feelings and aspirations. She was an assimilated Jewess herself at the beginning of her literary career. She had been in search of heroic ideals in alien fields, in Pagan mythology and in mystic, mediæval Christianity, ignoring all the time her birthright—the glorious vista of a great past and of a still greater future for the Jewish nation. Judaism had been a dead letter to her. But with the outbreak of the persecutions she found herself again. From this time dated the mission which she undertook on behalf of her race, and the expansion of all her faculties, that growth of spiritual power which is always stimulated when a great cause is

championed and strong convictions awaken the soul. Emma Lazarus became an inspired poetess of the Jewish national idea. Her whole being had reshaped itself and found nourishment at an inexhaustible source. She threw herself into the study of her race, its language, its literature and history. Breaking the outward shell, she soon reached the kernel of the faith and the "miracle" of its survival. What was it other than the ever-present, ever life-inspiring spirit itself, which cannot die—the religious and ethical zeal which fills the whole history of the Jewish people, and of which she herself felt the living glow within her own soul? She had discovered the secret and the genius of Judaism—that complete transfusion of spirit with body and substance which, taken literally, often reduces itself to rites and ceremonies, but viewed in a proper light takes a nobler shape and form, and spreads its light over humanity in the prophets, teachers and saviours of mankind.

The idea that aroused the imagination of Emma Lazarus was a restored and independent nationality and the repatriation of the Jews in Palestine. In an article on the "Jewish Problem," she wrote:—

"I am fully persuaded that all suggested solutions other than this of the Jewish problem are but temporary palliatives.¹

"The idea formulated by George Eliot has already sunk into the minds of many Jewish enthusiasts, and it germinates with miraculous rapidity. 'The idea that I am possessed with,' says Mordecai, 'is that of restoring a political existence to my people, making them a nation again, giving them a national centre, such as the English have, though they, too, are scattered over the face of the globe. That is a task which presents itself to me as a duty. . . . I am resolved to devote my life to it. At the least, I may awaken a movement in other minds such as has been awakened in my own.'"

Could the noble poetess who wrote these words have lived until to-day, she would have been astonished at the flame which her torch has kindled and the practical shape which the movement brought to public notice by her has begun to assume.

In November, 1882, her first *Epistle to the Hebrews* appeared as one of a series of articles written for the *American Hebrew*. Addressing herself to a Jewish audience, she unfolded her views and hopes for Judaism without reserve, on the one

¹ *Century*, February, 1883, p. 610.

hand passionately urging its claims and its high ideals, and on the other dispassionately describing the shortcomings and peculiarities of her race. She says : " Every student of the *Hebrew* language is aware that we have in conjugation of our verbs a mode known as the *intensive voice*, which, by means of an almost imperceptible modification of vowel-points, intensifies the meaning of the primitive root. A similar significance seems to attach to the Jews themselves in connection with the people among whom they dwell. They are the *intensive form* of any nationality whose language and customs they adopt. . . . Influenced by the same causes, they represent the same results : but the deeper lights and shadows of the Oriental temperament throw their failings, as well as their virtues, into more prominent relief."

In drawing the Epistles to a close,¹ she summarized the special objects she had in view : " My chief aim has been to contribute my mite towards arousing that spirit of Jewish enthusiasm which might manifest itself :—

" *First*. In a return to the world pursuits and broad asylum of physical and intellectual education adopted by our ancestors :

" *Second*. In a more fraternal and practical movement towards alleviating the sufferings of oppressed Jews in countries less favoured than our own :

" *Third*. In a closer and wider study of *Hebrew* literature and history : and, finally, in a truer recognition of the large principles of religion, liberty and law upon which Judaism is founded, and which should draw into harmonious unity Jews of every shade of opinion."

Her verses rang out as they had never sounded before, like clarion notes, calling a people to heroic action and unity, to the consciousness and realization of a great destiny.

What the annals of the " Lovers of *Zion*" in America tell us concerning the rise and progress of the Zionist idea shows that the seed sown by Emma Lazarus took deep root in the hearts of the Jews, and brought forth abundant fruit. She created a high sense of Jewish self-consciousness, and spread a holy love and devotion to a great ideal in the hearts of those who had not hitherto reflected on their national duty and its importance.

In the *American Jewess*² an article appeared on the " Dream of Nationality," by Mrs. Rose Sonnenshein, the editress, one of the few Jewesses who had as yet written a

¹ February 24, 1883.

² April, 1897.

word on this question. She wrote : " To our mind there is no loftier ideal worth realization than *Israel's* dream of Nationality. . . . What Jew has not dreamed of *Israel* again as a nation ? It can be confidently asserted that among the sons and daughters of the Covenant it is an exceptional one who has not at some time dwelt upon such a possibility. Who has not given the loose rein to fancy and indulged in visions of *Judah* re-born, free, great and glorious, one of the Sister States in a modern federation of nations ? . . . has not had visions of ourselves as patriotic Jews, proudly pointing to the Eagle of *Judah*, the emblem of a free and happy people ? To the wandering son of *Israel* the knowledge that a recognized government stood behind him to protect him in his rights when he demands reparations of insult or injury and sustain him as the equal of citizens of other nations would endow him with a dignity of which centuries of oppression have robbed him, and which not even the widest modern freedom has fully restored."

The question of the attitude of the Jews, particularly of " the leading and wealthy Jews," towards Zionism arose at different times in the English Press. Amid much friendly criticism called forth by the publication of Emma Lazarus' writings, two plausible objections were raised. The first was that before an appeal to the world, an appeal should be made to the Jews themselves, in order to elicit some evidence as to their feelings on the question. The second was that, even were the Jews to be restored, a difficulty would immediately arise as to the means of subsistence or the kind of employment to be found for them.

It was not an easy task to gain the sympathy and the support of many " leading and wealthy Jews " for the national idea in Western Europe and America. Many who were ready to admit the truth of the Zionist conclusion were troubled by their ideas about humanity. It must be borne in mind that only in the nineteenth century did the idea of nationality reappear in its ancient form, and that as late as the end of the eighteenth century it was considered a sign of advanced culture to have triumphed over national narrow-mindedness and to desire emancipation for the whole of humanity. The Middle Ages knew nothing of nationality in our sense, and therefore a sense of nationality could not be expected of the Jews. But in the nineteenth century first hatred and then science began to recognize the nationality of the Jews. On the one hand

antagonists zealously put forth new arguments to prove that the Jews were a distinct people, who had never yet been absorbed by their environment ; on the other hand scientific research brought forward undeniable proofs of the physical, intellectual and moral peculiarities of the Jewish race. And just because separatism was emphasized and made use of by their enemies, some Jews considered that for the purpose of self-defence it was best to deny it : or at any rate their unjustifiable timidity and unreasonable sensitiveness prevented them from admitting it. They forgot that for centuries the furious storms of invective and calumny had been raging around their people, and that there were no malignant suspicions, no treacherous insinuations, no absurd accusations, that had not been levelled at them, whether they admitted the fact of their distinctiveness or not. Anti-Semitism raged most against those Jews who showed particularly assimilative tendencies, and aroused against them every kind of hatred and rancour, regardless of the question whether they were faithful to their past and to their ideals, or otherwise.

Some Jews imagined erroneously that the question at issue was one of their rights in different countries. They forgot that they must demand equality of rights as Jews, and not as a prize for giving up what they could not give up—their history, their distinctiveness. Others, again, confounded Jewish national self-consciousness with what the gentiles regard as nationalism—aspirations generally of an aggressive and reactionary character. Some wealthy Jews were unfortunately lulled into a pernicious feeling of security or fatal indifference. What did they give to the masses ? A cheque for charity, whenever it was wanted, of course ; but that was all. Insurance money or conscience money, whichever it may be called, they gave ; but of personal devotion, of serious anxiety or steady resolve to ameliorate the lot of *Israel*—nothing. They asked, how can a national ideal help poor people ? They did not understand that it can help them more than money : that it eases their sufferings, renders their sorrows and disappointments less distressing, teaches them to search their own hearts, to consider their own ways.

It is clear that the "Lovers of *Zion*" in England and America had a hard fight. They knew that if they attempted to satisfy all sections of Jews they could not remain faithful to the nation, whose greatest interest and immediate

concern it is to pave the way for a final solution of its problem. The truth had dawned upon them that for thousands of years there had always been a restless desire on the part of the Jews to get back to Palestine, and that this wish arose from deep religious, traditional and national principles and hopes. It is a feeling inherited by the Jew and fostered in him from the cradle. The ancient home of the ancient nation is Palestine: to that land their eyes, their hopes and their hearts are always turned. This attachment does not interfere with their sincere patriotism and loyalty to the countries wherein they live. Those who live in other countries, and are satisfied, may remain there. The Jewish masses will go to Palestine as soon as they have the possibility of doing so. Palestine must become the home of the nation, not merely of individuals. It did not matter to the "Lovers of Zion" that some wealthy Jews did not wish for the national re-birth; they simply emulated careful and prudent physicians, who, when they visit their patients, do not ask them what they like best, and then prescribe what is most pleasing to their palates, though perhaps most hurtful, but, having carefully studied the ailments of their patients, order them to take what they deem most necessary for them, even though it be not pleasing or acceptable.

In 1897 Mr. Herbert Bentwich, LL.B., organized in London the "*Maccabean*" tour to Palestine, in which twenty-one persons took part. Under his guidance this party of Jewish travellers proceeded to Palestine, and got into close touch with the Jewish population of the country, especially with the colonists. On *Sabbath Hachodesh* (3 April, 5657), the late Chief *Rabbi*, the Very Rev. Dr. Hermann Adler (1839-1911), delivered an eloquent sermon¹ at the Hampstead synagogue, in which he said:—

"... But one of the most attractive portions of your tour will, I think, be your visits to some of the colonies. And in this connection I may give an illustration of the vivid interest taken in your journey by the residents in the Holy Land. A well-informed correspondent writes to the *Jüdische Presse* expressing his regret that the only Jewish colony you contemplate inspecting is *Rosh Pinah*, certainly the most romantically situated, and that you will not see the prosperous settlement '*Rishon-le-Zion*,' nor the agricultural school '*Mikveh Israel*,' and he advises a route which would enable you to see a number of new settlements, and

¹ "God-speed to the Pilgrims."

some thirteen Jewish villages that have sprung up within the last ten years. Now undoubtedly great things have already been accomplished in training the hapless immigrants from Russia and Roumania to become hardy tillers of the soil . . . well-trained Jewish horticulturists are at the head of each settlement, that Jewish farmers, peasants and labourers toil with splendid diligence . . . 50,000 eucalyptus trees planted in *Gadra* to counteract malarial influences; 2,000,000 of vines that have been grafted by Jews in *Rishon-le-Zion*, *Petach Tikvah* and *Zichron Jacob*, and of the excellent wine that is produced there. In *Rishon-le-Zion* there are numbers of smiths and coopers. . . . But yet I feel confident that this pilgrimage will exercise an abiding effect on your spiritual life. It is a well-authenticated fact that *de Saulcy* [L. F. J. Cagnart] (1807-1880), the great Oriental traveller, confessed that he went to Palestine as an unbeliever, and that he returned from there with a profound faith in the truth of the Bible. You, I hope, do not need to have your faith thus strengthened. But I ardently trust that by this pilgrimage there will be engendered in your hearts . . . a stronger sentiment of brotherhood, . . . a more enthusiastic devotion to . . . *Zion* and *Jerusalem*, . . ."¹

The visit of this party was a new feature in the Jewish history of Palestine. It was looked upon with satisfaction, as indicating the growing interest of English Jews in Palestine. It took place at the very moment when modern Zionism entered upon the scene, on the eve of the first Congress, and, so far as English Jews were concerned, it had a good moral influence.

¹ *Jewish Chronicle*, 9th April, 1897, p. 21.

CHAPTER XLIV

BARON DE HIRSCH

His philanthropic activity—The Oriental Jews and the "Alliance"—Emanuel Felix Veneziani—Lord Swaythling—Dr. A. Asher—Laurence Oliphant.

BARON MAURICE (Moritz) *de HIRSCH (Freiherr auf Gereuth)* was born on December 9th, 1831, at Munich. His father, Baron Joseph *de Hirsch* (1805-1895), was a native of that city, and son of Baron Jacob *de Hirsch* (1764-1841), the founder of the family fortune. His mother (*née* Caroline Wertheimer of Frankfort) belonged to an old Jewish family which was universally known for its charitable work and sincere piety. Hirsch cherished very affectionate recollections of his parents, and particularly of his mother, who is said to have seen to it that he received good instruction in the Jewish religion.

The scope of his studies was somewhat narrow. He received his education in Munich and Brussels. Being of a practical turn of mind, he engaged early in life in several business ventures. In 1855 he married Clara (1833-1899), eldest daughter of Senator Raphael Jonathan Bischoffsheim (1808-1883), of the firm of Bischoffsheim and Goldschmidt, Brussels, which had branches in Paris and London. He did not, however, join this firm, as its business methods appeared to him too conservative to suit his enterprising temperament. Having inherited a considerable fortune from his parents, and received a handsome dowry with his wife, he embarked on railway enterprises in Austria, in Russia, and—with most success—in the Balkans. These enterprises, which consisted mainly in the construction of light railways, were only the beginning of his activities. A huge undertaking came in his way. A Brussels banking firm, which had received from the Ottoman Government a concession for building a railway through the Balkans to Constantinople, was unable to carry the project through. Hirsch acquired the concession, went to Constantinople, and succeeded in getting some of the conditions altered for the better. He then formed a company, and made all