

THE INFLUENCE OF THE JEWS UPON CIVILIZATION

by

Jacob Gartenhaus

Copyright @ 1943

CHAPTER SIX

LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY

The Jews have had an invaluable influence in the field of literature. We have already referred to the Scriptures, out of whose fountain the greatest writers have drawn inspiration. Both ancient and modern poets, philosophers, scholars and statesmen have paid their homage to these ancient writings.

Charles W. Eliot, in an address delivered in Boston, in November, 1905, said: "The ancient Hebrew poetry is full of the aptest, sweetest and most impressive descriptions of nature and all her works and of the influence of nature on the spirit of man. **'Canst thou bind the sweet influence of Pleiades?' 'He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters.'** **'Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow . . .'**" No race has ever surpassed the Jewish descriptions of either the beauties or the terrors of the nature which environs man."

"In the field of history," says Cecil Roth in *The Jewish Contribution to Civilization*, "no German Jew has risen to the eminence of Ranke, Mommsen or Gregorovius: but many have attained a considerable reputation." We are familiar with the name of Josephus, the Jewish historian, who is known the world over, and whose writings are frequently quoted in textbooks. We mention also the Jewish philosopher, Philo of Alexandria, whose philosophy has left its indelible impress upon the world.

Saadia B. Joseph, of the tenth century, at the age of twenty, completed the Hebrew dictionary, followed by his polemical works. His most important work is *The Book of Faith and Doctrines*. Solomon ibn Gabirol, the "Jewish Plato" and poet of the eleventh century, was barely twenty when he published a rhymed Hebrew grammar. He was the first teacher of Neoplatonism, Occidentalizing Greek-Arabic philosophy. His literary productions are many.

Moses Maimonides, the Jewish Aristotle of the twelfth century, philosopher, Talmudist and physician, was author of a completed commentary on the Mishna, composer of a treatise on the Jewish calendar and other treatises and author of *The Strong Hand*, a stupendous work of fourteen books, and other works, the greatest of which is *The Guide to the Perplexed*. Immanuel ben Jacob, of Rome, was an outstanding physician, poet and exegete. Moses Hayim Luzzati, was an Italian author and poet. Benedict Spinoza was a brilliant philosopher. The extent of Spinoza's influence on modern thought is beyond conception. He was one of the great thinkers of the world.

Moses Mendelssohn was a philosopher, critic and stylist. His *Phoenon* was the most widely read book of its time in Germany. It is said of him that he "set fire" to the intellects of his people.

Isaac D'Israeli wrote a series of literary anecdotes (beginning with *Curiosities of Literature*, and ending with *Amenities of Literature*, completed when he was old and blind in 1840) which were favorite works with more than one generation. His son, Benjamin Disraeli, the great English statesman, was the most scintillating political novelist that England, and perhaps the world, has ever known. Among his novels are *Vivian Grey*, *The Young Duke*, *Sybil* and *Tancred*. Karl Ludsig Borne was a brilliant essayist, critic and political writer. He was instrumental in founding the Liberal Party in Germany. Karl Marx was the founder of the historic economic philosophy of history. His collective works are in forty-two volumes, the most widely known of which is *Das Kapital*.

Two Jews have been awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. In 1910, it was won by a German Jew, Paul Heyse. In 1927, it was won by a French Jew, Henri Bergson, who held the chair of philosophy at the College de France.

Two other Jews have been awarded the Pulitzer Prize. In 1925, Edna Ferber won the award for her novel, *So Big*. In 1932, and again in 1937, George S. Kaufman won the award as co-author of the play, *Of Thee I Sing*, and as co-author of the play, *You Can't Take it With You*.

The recognition which these four Jews have received should of itself be sufficient to command for the Jewish people, a permanent place in the history of world literature.

There are many Jewish writers whose works, although not so well known, are by no means inferior. Louis Untermeyer, an American, is considered by many as the foremost critic of contemporary poetry. His anthologies are prized by both the student and the law reader. Many of the superior contemporary poets were "discovered" by Louis Untermeyer. Jean Starr Untermeyer, his wife, is recognized as one of the outstanding minor poets.

In literature, as in medicine, the Jew reached his peak in Germany. Among the German Jews who have gained world recognition as writers are: Ludwig Bóerne, journalist and political writer, one of the leaders of young Germany, author of twenty volumes of collected writings; Maximilian Harden, critic, political writer, editor; Heinrich Heine, essayist, satirist, lyricist, political journalist and the most outstanding German Jewish poet; Leon Feuchwanger, novelist, author of such works as *Power*, *The Ugly Duchess* and *Josephus*; Theodore Lessing, philosopher, social writer and reformist; Emil Ludwig, biographer, author of such celebrated "lives" as Goethe, Napoleon, Bismarck, Mussolini, Roosevelt and Christ; and, finally, Jacob Wassermann, one of the greatest of the German novelists.

In the field of journalism we have such names as Ignatz Kuranda, founder of *Grenzboten*, and for two years leader of the Austrian Liberals; Rudolf Mosse and Georg Davidsohn, editors of the *Berliner Tageblatt*, which speedily became known as one of the world's great newspapers. They were succeeded by Theodor Wolff and Leopold Sonneman, editors of *Frankfurter Zeitung*. Other outstanding journalists are: David Kalisch, who founded in 1848 the famous German humorous weekly, *Kladderadatch*; Moritz Gottlieb Saphir, the best known humorist in continental Europe; Rudolf Lowenstein, famous poet whose verses were to be found, prior to 1933, in every First Reader used in German schools; J. M. Levy who created not merely the *Daily Telegraph* but thereby popular journalism as a whole in England; Blowitz, the great foreign correspondent of the *Times*; Arthur Meyer, editor of *Le Gaulois*; Adolph Ochs, who made the *New York Times* one of the most powerful, most stabilizing forces in American public life.

Leopold Ullsten, founder of what was in its day the most important German publishing house; Reuter, Wolff and Havas, pioneers in the establishment of European news agencies. In the realm of publishing, we have the firm of Fischer, whose intellectual guidance was largely responsible for the revitalization of German literature at the close of the last century.

Among other modern Jewish writers we have such names as Franz Kafka, Stefan Zweig, Arnold Zweig, Ernst Toller, Alfred Neumann, Franz Werfel, Max Broad, Ernst Lissauer, Ludwig Fulda, Arthur Schnitzler, Ludwig Friedlander, Harry Bresslau, Bphilippe Auguste d'Ennery, Catulle Mendes, Georges de Porto-Richie, Tristan Bernard, Henri Bernstein, Baron Henri de Rothschild, who wrote under the pen name of Andre Pascal, Gustave Kahn, Andre Spire, Marcel Praust, Italo Svevo, André Maurois, Henri Barbusse, Israel Zangwill, Georg Brandes, Eduard Brandes, who is one of the most successful Danish playwrights of the last decades of the nineteenth century, Henrik Hertz, one of the most prolific Danish poets, Henri Nathansen, modern Danish-Jewish playwright, Ludwig Oscar Josephson, Oskar Ivar Levertin, Herman Keijermans, Isaak Costa, Israel Querido, Franz Molnar, Ludwig Biro, Ludwig Hatvany, Melchior Lengyel, Ottokar Fishcher, Frantisek Langer, Julian Tuwin, Antolni Slonimski, Isaac Babel, Boris Pasternak, Ronetti Roman, Salamone Fiorentino, Guiseppe Revere, Sabbatino Lopez, Eugenio Camerini, Alessandro d'Ancona and Graziado Isaia Ascoli.

Limited space permits mention only of a few additional Jewish writers and the variety of their interests and talents.

Poets: Maxwell Bodenheim, James Oppenheim, Alter Brody. *Light verse:* Arthur Guiterman, Newman Levy, Morris Rsykind, Dorothy Parker, Samuel Hoffenstein, Babette Deutsch.

Novelists: Fannie Hurst, Ludwig Lewisohn, Ben Hecht, Maxwell Bodenheim, Waldo Frank, John Cournos, Thyra Winslow, Sholom Asch, Robert Nathan, Irving Fineman, Lester Cohen.

Short Story Writers: Konrad Bercovici, Montague Glass, Octavus Roy Cohen, Dorothy Parker.

Journalists: Isaac Marcasson, Walter Lippman, David Lawrance, Simeon Strunsky, Michael Gold, Walter Winchell.

Critics: George Jean Nathan, Martin Lowenthal, Joel Spingarn, Clifton Fadiman, Joshua Kunitz

Philosophers: Morris Raphael Cohen, H. M. Kallen, Irving Edman.

~ end of chapter 6 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
