

# A FEW WORDS

TO

## THE JEWS.

---

---

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE PRESENT AGE AND JUDAISM.

THIS is a wonder-teeming age, very great and very glorious. Science and art take giant strides. Improvements and discoveries are brought forth in such quick succession that yesterday's marvel is consigned to oblivion by to-day's more wonderful exploit, or rare invention, or work of surpassing interest.

The world was once borne down a slow and turbid stream; it passed along like a huge barge upon a stagnant river; but now it is carried forward upon a resistless tide, and with full-spread sail it meets the wind and wave and surge. We leave the ancient landmarks far behind us, and for this new era time must invent some new method of chronicling its annals, for the old

B

ones are not sufficient guides as to the novelty and antiquity of our works. The Crystal Palace that rose into life and beauty, as by a magician's wand, and disappeared like a phantom, was a symbol of the age. It contained within its precincts the works of science, art, and humanity, that are the glory of the age. The vast edifice, its long aisles, its crowded galleries, were hung with the trophies won by genius and industry, won in hard-fought battles by the veterans whose hair had grown gray and bodies feeble in the service of their liege masters; and there, in proud array, those trophies rose one above another, and, glittering in the sun of a bright May morning, they smiled a welcome on each passer-by, on peasant, peer, and prince.

There lay the harvest of the noblest conquest of all time, the fruit of a victory not gained over helpless human creatures, over fallen nations, over an enslaved people; but of mind over matter—of genius, of labour, and of patience over the despotism of poverty, over the intolerance and the ignorance of society. No wail of misery, no widowed or orphaned anguish, no clamours of a pining liberty, no execrations of a chained despair, mingled with the triumph. This victory was solemnized by all nations, was saluted by

THE PRESENT AGE AND JUDAISM. 3

a universal rejoicing, was consecrated by prayer, and was dedicated to the Supreme Being.

From this vast storehouse of perfected labour the mind travels to scenes of active industry. It explores the manufactory, investigates the ponderous locomotive, examines the delicate and skilful machinery, surveys the busy hands turning the wheel, weaving bright textures at the loom, and hammering at the iron forge. It penetrates into the sanctuaries of science and genius, seeks the chemist's laboratory, the poet's hearth, the artist's studio; and everywhere, alike in the stirring presence of commerce, in factory, mill, and dock, and in the quiet home of thought where mind labours in solitude and in silence, we meet with teeming heads and hearts, that are giving birth to new enterprises, new ideas, and new discoveries, that shall make earth more beautiful, the world more true and holy, and man greater and wiser.

The creative genius of a few gifted minds and the industry and toil of the many are not, however, the chief characteristics of the age; they lie most especially in the moral and intellectual progress of the mass. Education is no longer confined, like entailed estates or funded property, to the upper and wealthy classes; it is no longer

4                    A FEW WORDS TO THE JEWS.

the exclusive possession of a caste ; is no longer inclosed in collegiate walls, in the seminaries of rich men's sons, in the libraries of noble mansions ; but it works its way amidst the people, and penetrates into dark alleys and humble homes. It is the good genius of many a lowly hearth. Schools, clubs, mechanics' institutes, libraries for the working classes, are rising up in every city and district, and the indigent student, the poor artist, the intellectual labourer have found, at last, an oasis in the desert of their lives—a fountain of sweet waters amid the arid wastes and parched ground around them. Who shall say what new stores of happiness, what widened sphere of thought, is thus opened to many an aspiring mind? Who shall say, through this timely help, how many an impulse is developed into action, how many an embryo conception is quickened into life? A blessing on the age which, amidst its profuse expenditure, amidst its pomps and its shows, has not forgotten the wants of a common humanity ; but watches over and assists the moral and mental development of the mass ! It is a happy thing for England this education of her people, for from amidst her people her ranks of greatness must be filled. Their moral strength and intelligence must reno-

THE PRESENT AGE AND JUDAISM. 5

vate their country's vigour ; they are like the tributary streams which, small in themselves, yet feed the wide and noble river ; and as these gush forth with an impetuous power from the bare mountain side and jagged rock, so do the people's energies spring from a rough and uncultivated nature, but are pregnant with a vitality unknown to the more polished and luxurious class.

This energy has to be directed, for, if left to its own untutored guidance, it may stray into a wrong channel or overstep the boundaries of prudence, and then would devastate, instead of enriching, the land.

There is another happy tendency in this age, which is, the growing sympathy between rich and poor. They are still, indeed, too widely separated by distinct interests, by the artificial conventionalities of society, by abysses over which neither extreme ignorance nor pride can pass. But still many a connecting bridge has been built between the two classes.

The claims of a common brotherhood are beginning to be felt ; the soft hand of refinement, and the rough one of labour, sometimes now meet in a grasp of fellowship, and words, not all pity on one side, or submission and subservience on the other, but of respect and sympathy

6                    A FEW WORDS TO THE JEWS.

upon both, are now interchanged. Society has begun to feel, at last, that humanity, though it wears many aspects, is essentially the same in all places ; that all human hearts from the cradle to the grave beat with the same joys and griefs, the same hopes and fears, no matter whether the cradle has been rocked by poverty or guarded by wealth ; no matter whether the grave be found beneath cathedral dome and sculptured monument, or under the green sod of a village cemetery. The child reared in palace or in hut—the youth studying in college halls or ragged schools—the man amidst his worldly greatness or in his laborious and indigent life, have alike experienced the deepest emotions that human nature is susceptible of. Both reposed in the innocence of childhood upon a mother's breast, both had their first tears wiped away by a mother's lips, both in twilight's dreamy hours have listened to the tale or hymn or words of solemn tenderness breathed by a mother's voice, and to both this mighty affection that sheltered them from evil, and wrapped them in a close embrace, remains a hallowed memory, never wholly obliterated, never wholly lost, but, like a star that is seen now through and now over the shifting clouds of a stormy sky, it shines now athwart and now above the darkest mo-

THE PRESENT AGE AND JUDAISM. 7

ments of their lives. Both have felt, and both remember as an era in their lives, the awakening of their intellect, the dawn of thought, the birthday of the soul, and both have sought in solitude and freedom to give vent to the new aspirations and new yearnings that were struggling for utterance and seeking for a wider development.

Both have felt the rapture of a first love, the thrilling emotion of another human heart beating in unison against their own, and both have then felt that the world had nothing more to give or nothing to take away if it but allowed these two hearts to remain thus for ever bound in perfect harmony, love, and truth.

Both have watched beside the loved and dying, both have wept tears of a choking grief above the grave of a buried happiness and buried hope. Both have struggled with temptation, battled with sin, wrestled with despair; both, in moments of moral anguish or of moral victory, have looked up into the same sky and called aloud upon the same Almighty Being, the "Father of the spirits of all flesh."

Oh, human hearts, does not the resemblance of your inner life outweigh the discrepancies of your outer existence!

The memories that twine around your heart like perfumed flowers round the tree's rugged stem, the aspirations that make your soul tremble within you and beat against its prison bars, as the bird longing for freedom flaps its wings against its cage, the unutterable joy of requited affection, the strife of passion with duty, the weariness of conflict, the hope of repentance that sheds its light upon the mind solemn and beautiful as the moon's calm beams shining upon the dim aisles of a darkened but still holy sanctuary, —these, these make up your lives, not your luxuries, not your wants, not your gold and silver, not your indigence, not your sumptuous attire, not your worn garments. Oh, human hearts, you are indeed bound together by indissoluble ties, by a kindredship of mind, and it is time for one mighty throb of universal love to beat in the bosom of mankind.

There is a glimmering light, the light of a true brotherhood rising from out the clouds of a long dark night. It gilds to-day the mountain top, but by degrees it will surely spread further and further until it illumines the whole earth. Thank God, that we, in our day, have seen its dawn.

In this age of progress, and change, and assi-



THE PRESENT AGE AND JUDAISM. 9

milation, there is yet one people in England who stand somewhat in an isolated position, and whose sphere of action is restricted.

There is a wall of separation between the Jew and Christian which resists the innovations of the present day. Let it be understood it is not meant by this that there is a partition-wall betwixt the mind of Jew and Christian; these may fraternize together, exchange sympathies and friendships: it is of the worldly life we speak, the life of labour, of enterprise, of distinction, and of fame. Some barriers, built by intolerance and guarded by fanaticism and prejudice, still exist; and besides these there are some on our side over which the Jew cannot pass. A faithful adherence to his father's creed necessarily restricts the Jew's vocations, and closes many a path against him which smiles an alluring invitation.

He has (for who has not, who owns a country and a home?) patriotism, enthusiasm, and ambition; but these are fettered, or at least must find another scope for their gratification than in the careers that usually afford both the incentive and the reward. He may aspire after military and naval fame; he may delight in an adventurous career; or he may long for an agricultural life,

10            A FEW WORDS TO THE JEWS.

for the country's bright skies, and vernal voice, and peaceful scenes; but the longing and the desire are subdued, for to cherish or to yield to either is to renounce a prouder ambition and a purer satisfaction, that of remaining true to the faith of Sinai, and sharing the destiny and enjoying the fellowship of those who hold a kindred name, a kindred worship, and a kindred hope.

Upon England's stately men-of-war, as they sail along the calm seas or gallantly battle with the rising gale and heaving waves, a brave crew offer up, night and morning, prayer and supplications to the God who rules the sea and storm. A day of rest is solemnized upon the wide ocean, and the Sabbaths celebrated on the deep seas, and the prayers that blend together above the voice of the waves, make the hardy sailor a yet braver man, fit him for his perilous life, nerve his heart and mind to face undauntedly danger and death. The Jew could not join in these religious rites, and his own religion would be desecrated or neglected. He cannot, then, as he dreams at night, take a place among that gallant crew, or wave upon the white-sprayed foaming sea his country's flag, or plant her standard upon a conquered shore.