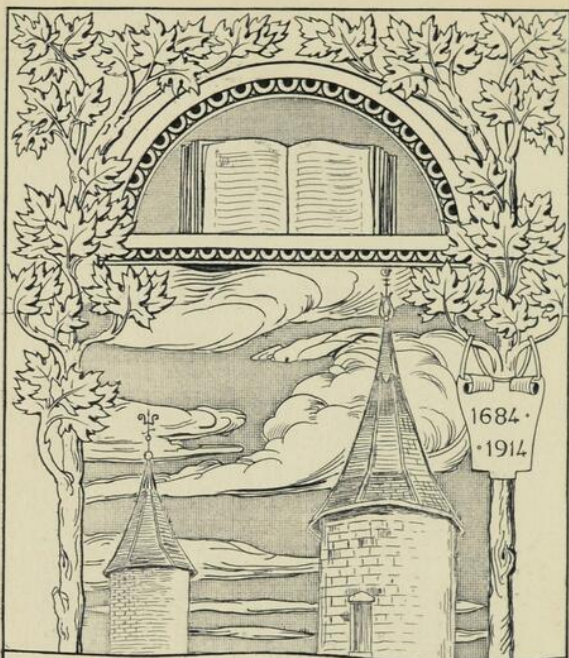


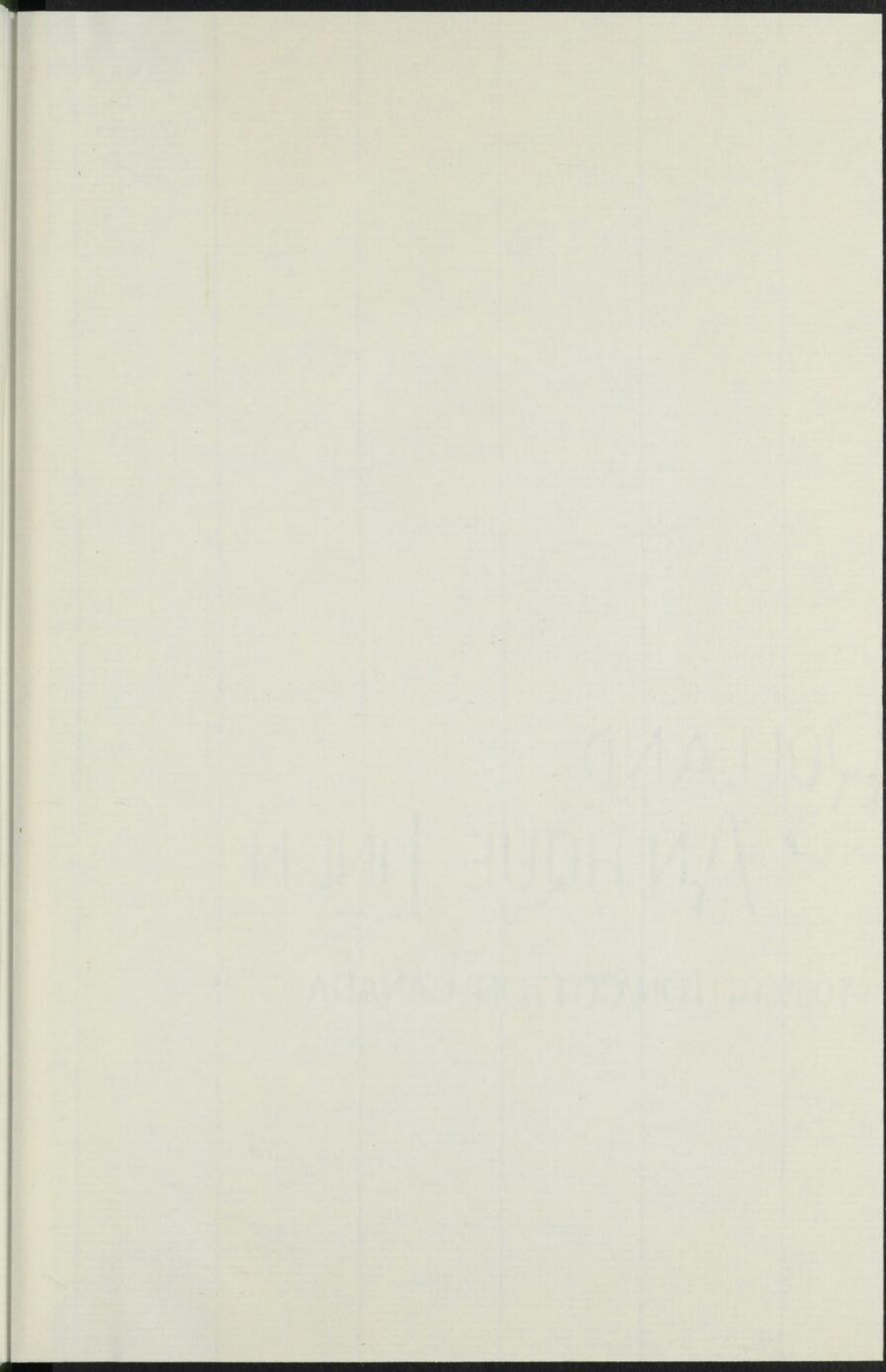
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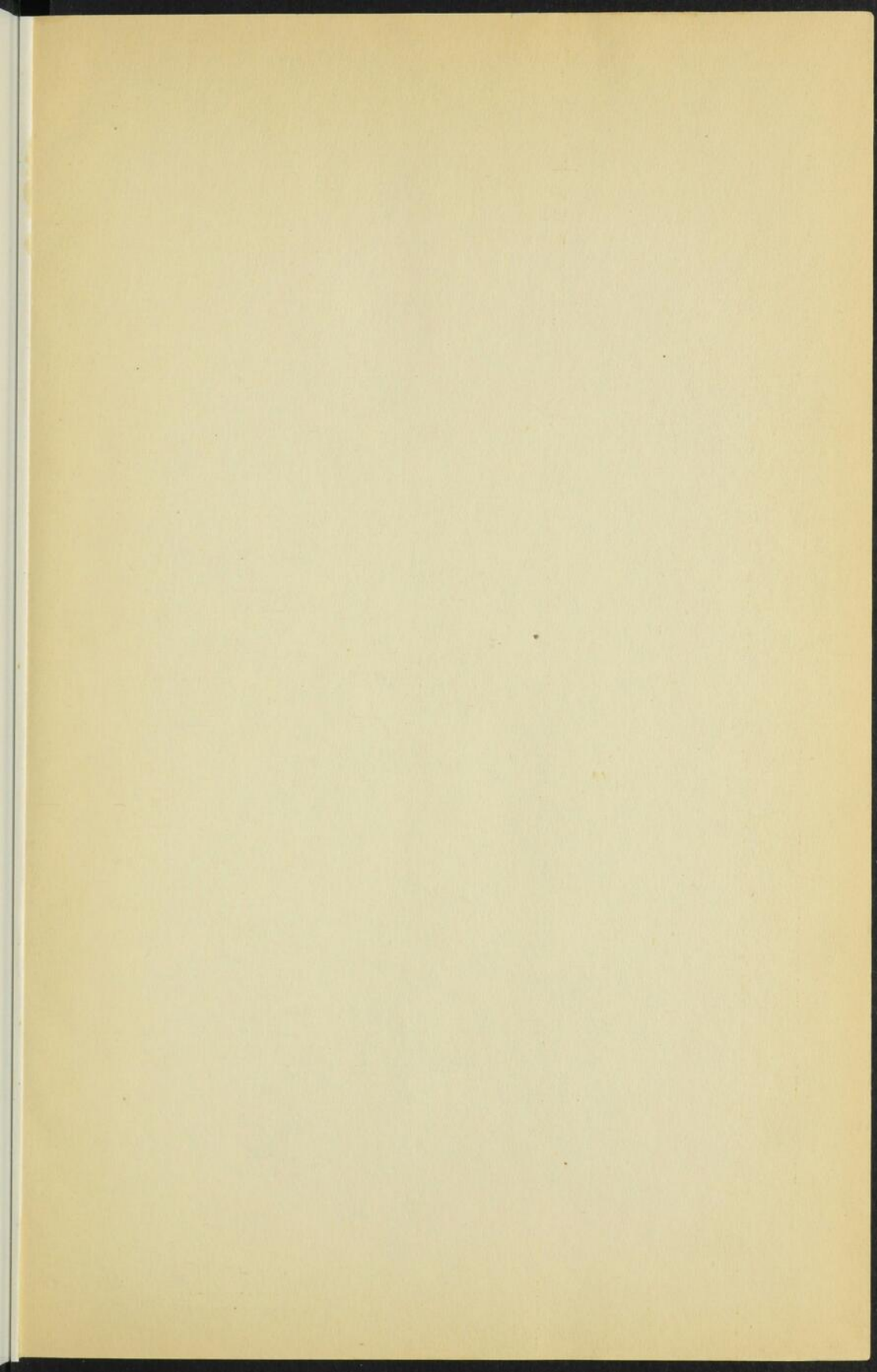


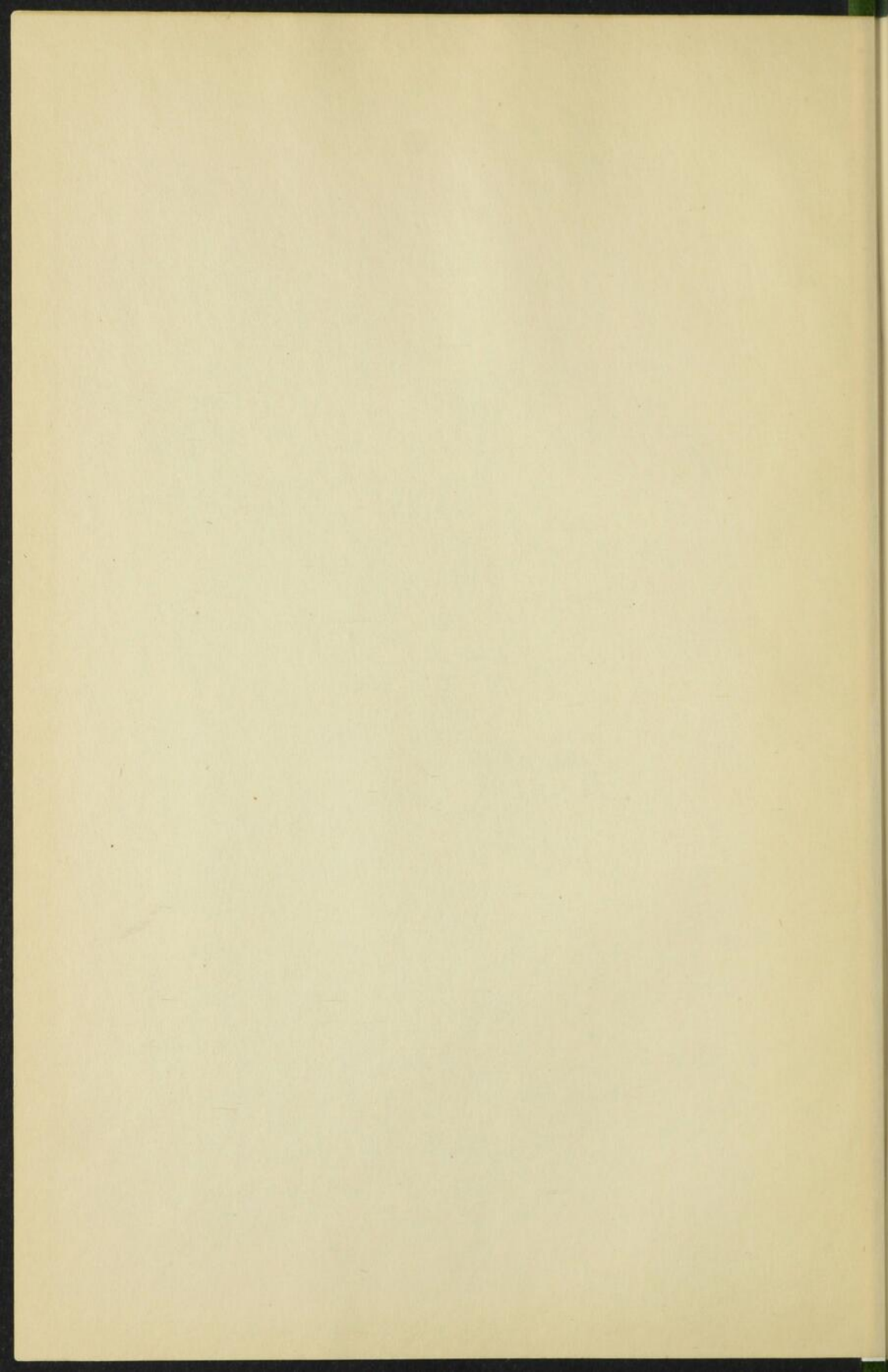


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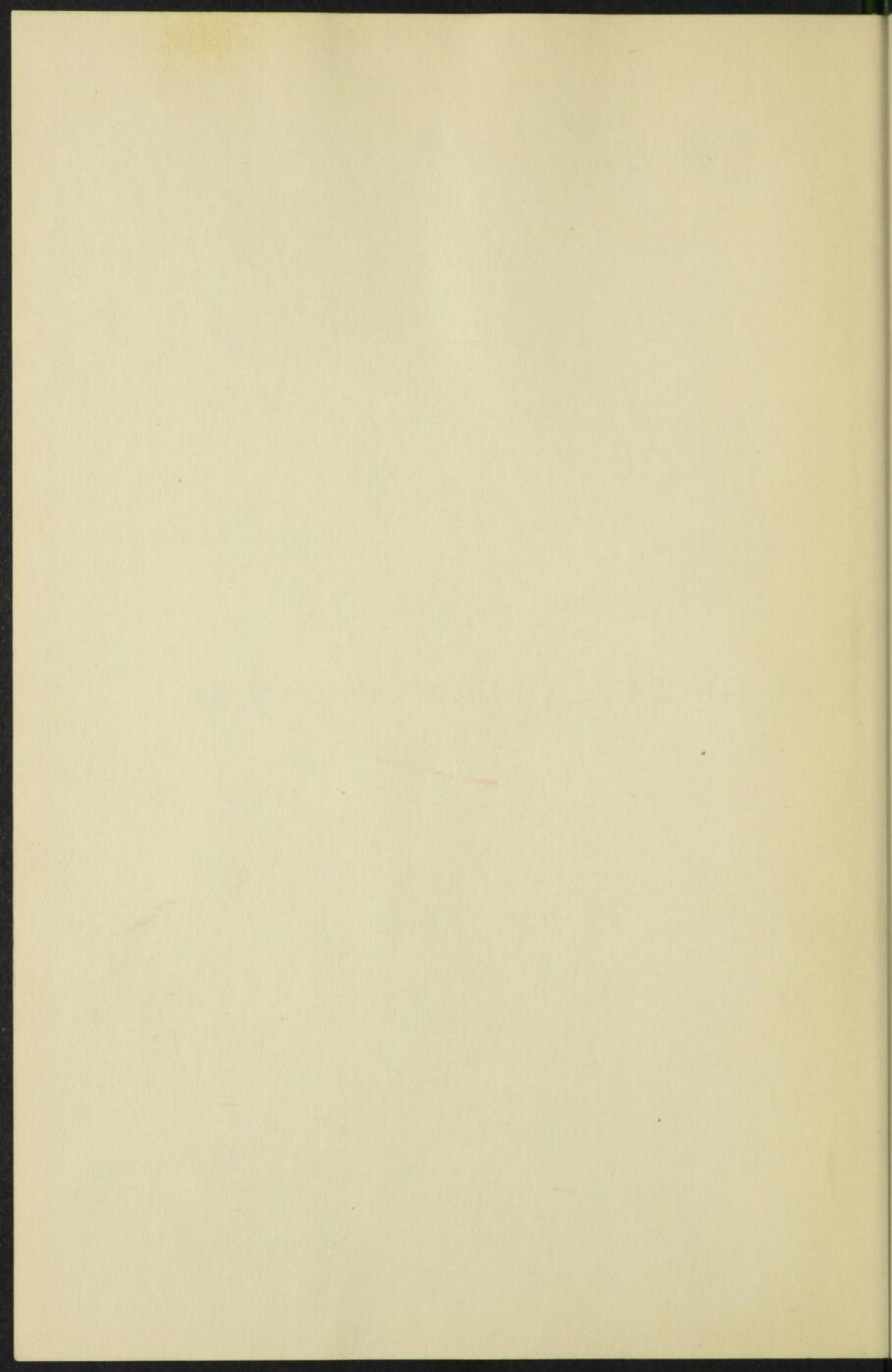
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**HISTORY OF THE JEWS IN CANADA**



# HISTORY OF THE JEWS IN CANADA

*From the Earliest Beginnings  
to the Present Day*

*by*

BENJAMIN G. SACK

IN TWO VOLUMES



BIBLIOTHEQUE  
Volume One

FROM THE FRENCH REGIME TO THE  
END OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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Canadian Jewish Congress  
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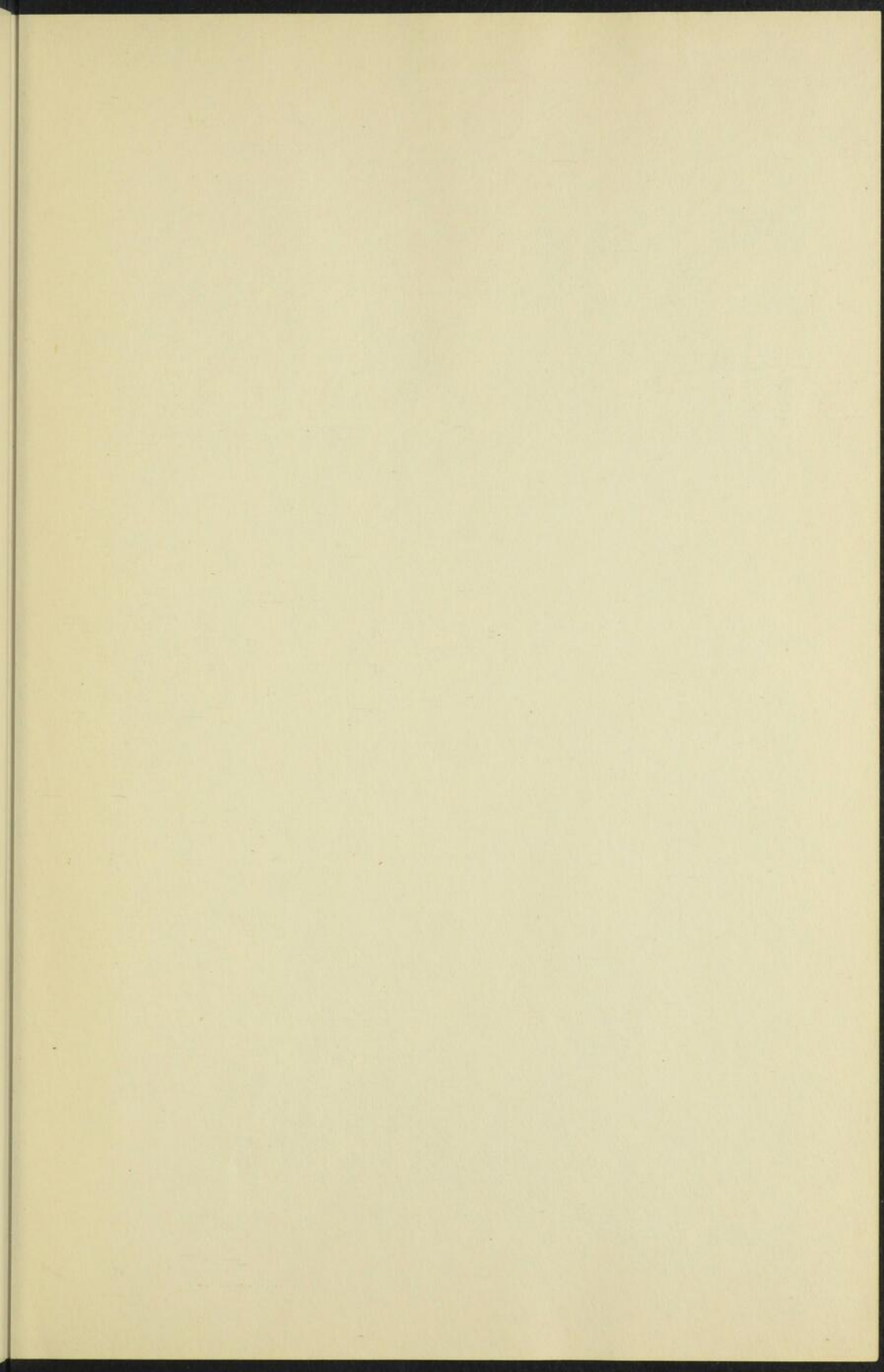
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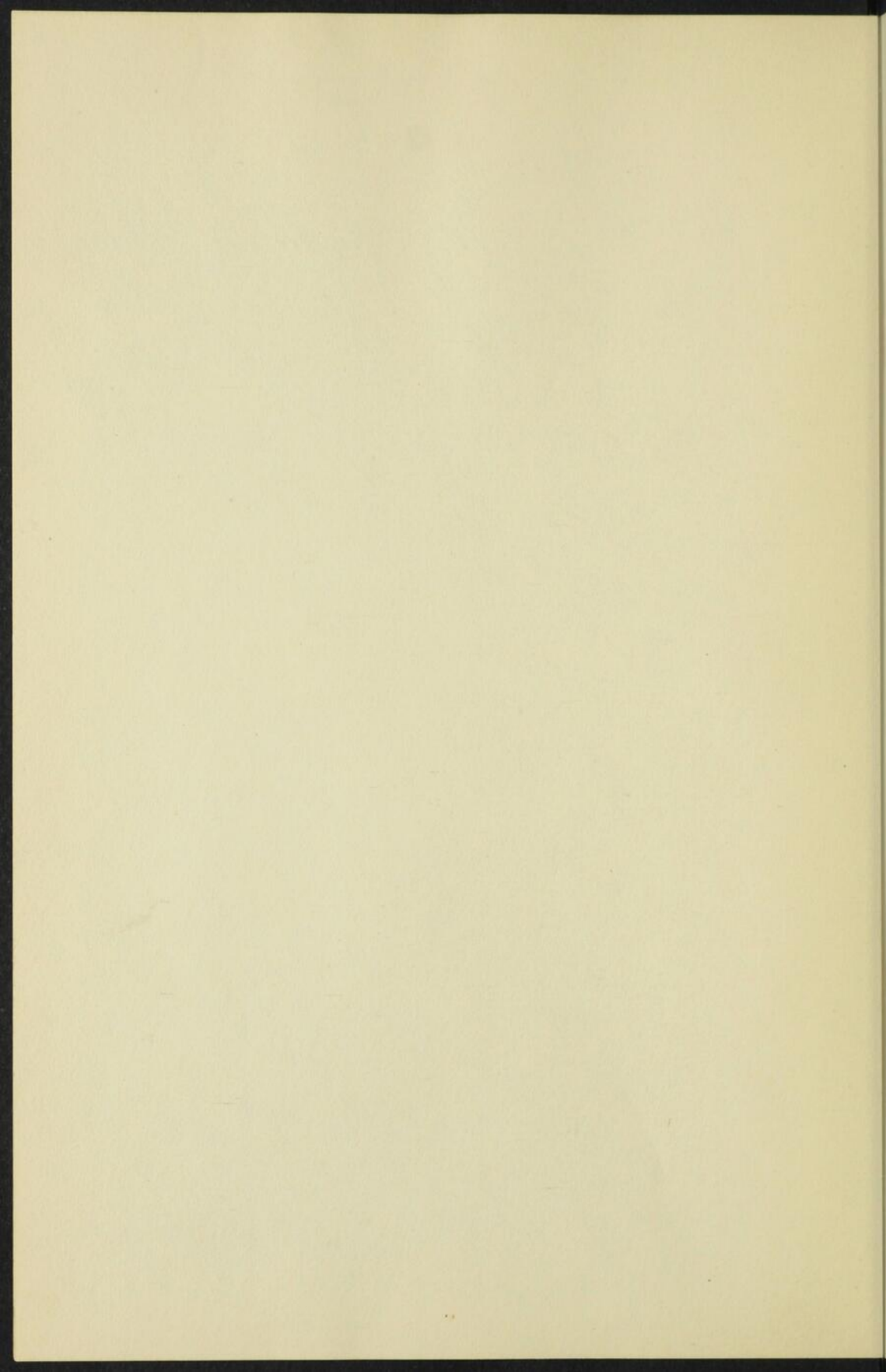
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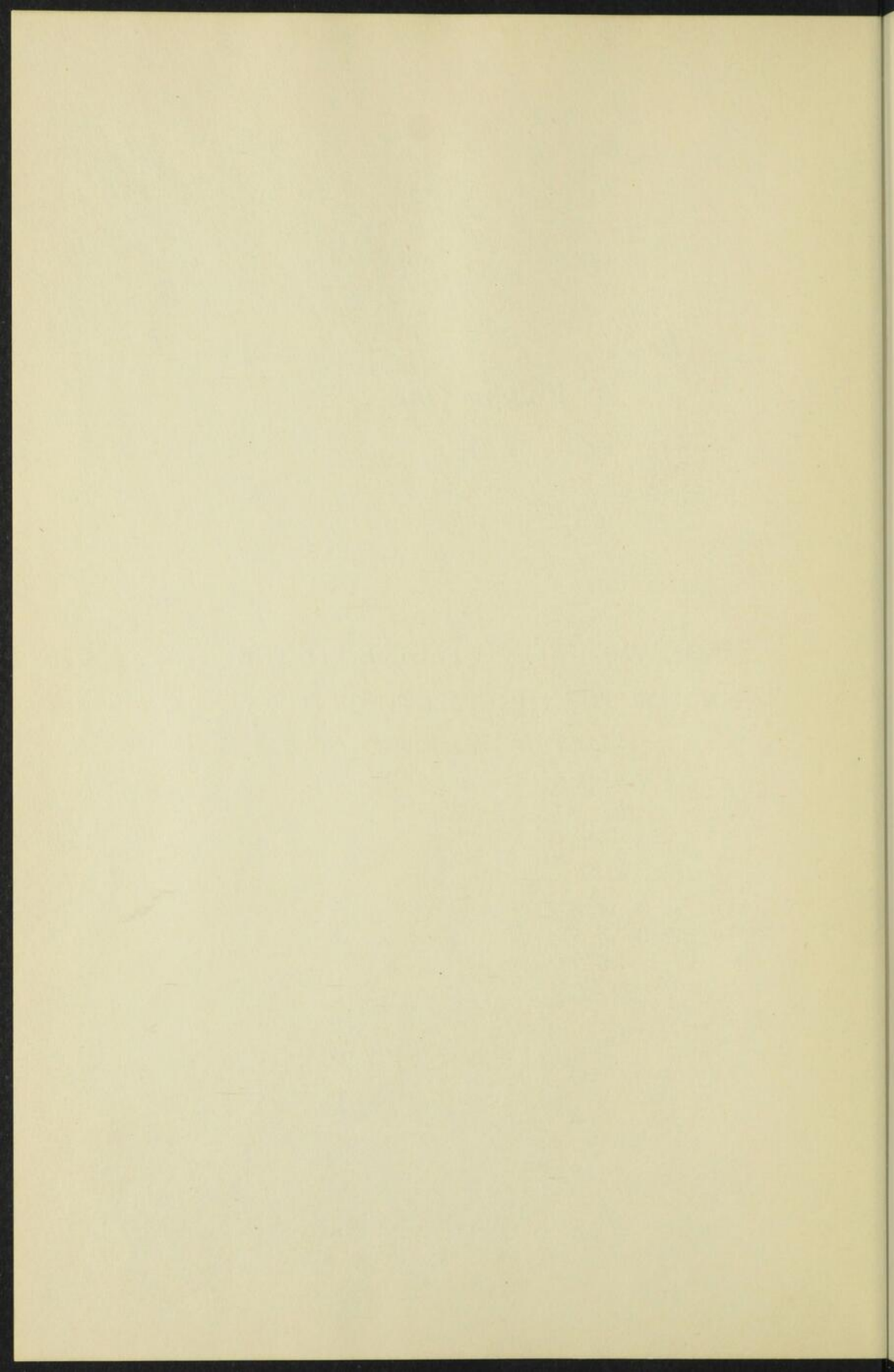
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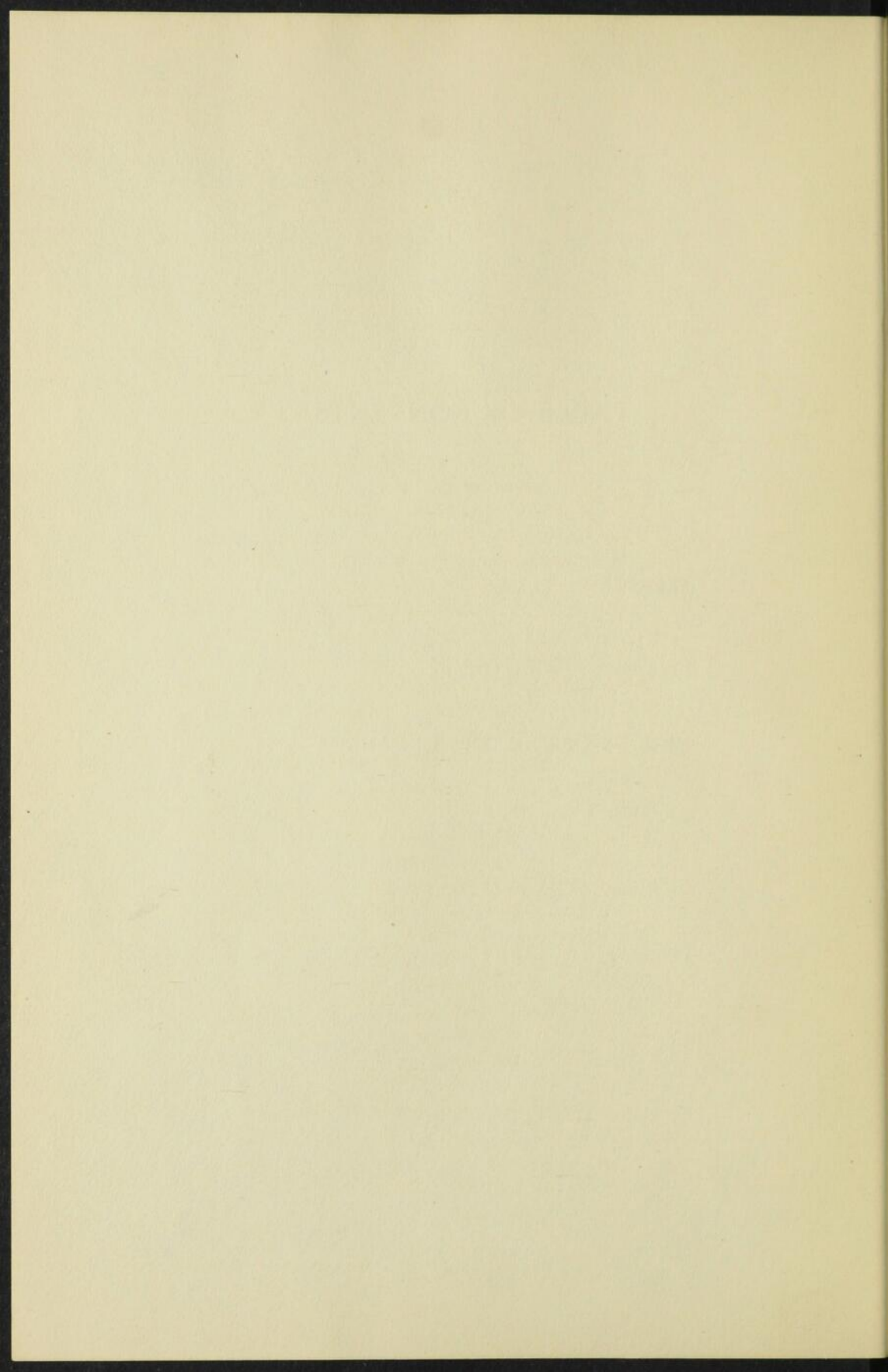
FROM THE FRENCH REGIME TO THE  
END OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY



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## PREFACE

THIS work was conceived a number of years ago in an attempt to provide a history of the Jews in Canada from the viewpoint of systematic and objective research.

The existing literature on the subject at that time was scanty and did not cover the field thoroughly or on the basis of source materials. Much of what purported to be an outline of the community's history was but a repetition, in some form or another, of the writings of Clarence I. de Sola, the true pioneer in that field. To the latter's credit it must be said that by his original contributions to the subject and by the many salient facts which he brought to light he laid the foundation for the writing of Canadian Jewish history. The more important earlier treatments are to be found in the materials he published during the closing years of the past century; particularly in his contribution to Borthwick's *History and Biographical Gazetteer of Montreal* (1892) and his article in the *Montreal Star* of December 30, 1893 on the 125th anniversary of the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation of Montreal. Of far greater value, however, were his articles in the *Jewish Encyclopedia* and his "History of the Corporation of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews 'Shearith Israel' of Montreal," which was issued in 1918 in pamphlet form.

An early venture into the same field had also been made by Andrew C. Joseph in the first volume of the *Publications* of the American Jewish Historical Society but this was largely based on data published by de Sola the previous year.

An article in the *Montreal Herald* of August 31, 1913, by Frederick Wright and several biographical sketches in both editions of Morgan's *Canadian Men and Women of the Time* complete the list unless we care to add Olivar Asselin's article "Jews in Montreal" in the *Canadian Century* of September 16, 1911. Painstaking search might disclose an odd chance reference to Jews in other volumes and doubtless articles of biographical interest may be found in a number of other publications, but in substance this was the bibliography on the Jews of Canada when we began our studies.

Ignorance of the elementary facts of Canadian Jewish history was widespread, to the extent that in one of the early (1873) attempts to coordinate some information concerning the Hart family, Arthur Wellington Hart, a grandson of Aaron Hart and one who surely should have been in a position to know, actually gave the date of his famous ancestor's coming to Canada from England as 1779, that is some twenty-seven years later than the date which has been firmly established.<sup>1</sup>

Investigation of the archives which has led to the throwing of invaluable light on many phases of the Jewish past in this country was virtually unknown. In particular the French period of Canadian history was not examined and nothing was known of the relation of Jews to this country before the English occupation. To overlook so important a period and its relation to the Jews is surely to overlook a great deal; it is conclusive proof of the primitive state in which historical research concerning the Jews in Canada then found itself.

From the foregoing it will be seen how numerous and formidable were the obstacles to be overcome once the author had assumed the task of writing the history of the Jews in Canada. Obviously the work could proceed only according to a well-defined method and plan. To begin with it was necessary to discover—literally—whether a Canadian-Jewish history existed at all; only then could it be pursued and tracked to its sources. It soon became clear to the writer that he could not, as others had, take the British occupation as his point of departure but would inevitably be compelled to trace it to its origins in New France. One of the first histories of Canada, Marc Lescarbot's *Histoire de la Nouvelle-France*, first published in 1609, even contains words in Hebrew script. There was only one sure approach: to comb carefully through almost every known work treating the history of the country generally in order to find some date or fact which might possibly have a bearing on Jews. In more than one instance a clue so found opened the way to further research and eventually led to rewarding discoveries. It was necessary to delve into tens of musty tomes; into the voluminous works of historians, native and foreign; into archive catalogues, minutes of historical societies, unpublished manuscripts, reports, documents, old newspapers and journals; and towards the end, too, into

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<sup>1</sup>The Lyons Collection. *Publications*, Am. Jew. Hist. Soc., no. 27, pp. 490-493.

materials of purely Jewish concern, such as the minutes and archives of the oldest Jewish congregations and institutions in the country.

Later it became clear that the origins of Canadian Jewry must be sought in the histories of France, England, the United States, and, of course, Canada itself. These, to a great extent, were used as direct source materials or else furnished valuable clues to further research. Particular attention was given to the various Canadian sources, including the entire body of archive data then available. From this abundance of materials whenever any information could be gleaned which concerned the Jews, if only vaguely and indirectly, it invariably opened the doors to fruitful investigation and encouraged the work to strike out in new directions.

It was in this manner that the author was enabled to accumulate a vast store of information concerning Canadian Jews which threw a new and unusual light on their history and, with regard to some phases of it, was almost in the nature of a revelation. The following work is an attempt to systematize this information and to project it from a historical perspective. For the author, while it has entailed much arduous labor, it has also afforded deep personal gratification.

Over a century ago Lord Durham, in his famous Report on conditions in Canada, referred rather disparagingly to the history of the French-Canadians. The latter rightly regarded his remarks as an insult which to this day has not been forgiven him. But their national pride has reacted constructively as well: it has found expression in the work of a series of prolific historians who, beginning with Francois-X. Garneau, have with love and earnest care put together the monument of their recorded national history. No people has shown greater sincerity or painstaking vigor in bringing to light the story of its past.

There remains much that we can learn from our French-Canadian neighbours in this respect. From the rich storehouse of information concerning our people in this country we can draw much to familiarize ourselves with and make us conscious of our past. We should know who we are and what our role has been in Canada from the time that our earliest pioneers first landed on its shores. We should and must know—and let others know as well.

"Je ne me rapelle rien concernant les Juifs au Canada durant le régime français," the late French-Canadian historian, Benjamin Sulte, once stated in a letter to the author, adding that he had consulted some of his colleagues on this point to no avail. But even so

competent a historian as Benjamin Sulte might have been capable of overlooking, not necessarily with any ulterior motive, the unique relations between the Jews and New France—a factor not unknown to Camille Jullian and other French historians. These relations outlined in the first three chapters of our volume constituted the beginning of Jewish history in this country and paved the way for the time when, with the transfer of power from France to Britain, Jewish life began to assume a distinctive and native hue.

Since that time the process of development has been continuous. It manifests itself in the events of varying magnitude, in the deeds and accomplishments of the most diversified nature which marked the lives of our forebears in this country. And as the tempo of this process grows ever more intense and feverish the overall picture of Jewish achievement that emerges becomes richer, fuller and charged with meaning. For from modest, scattered beginnings through the ever-changing panorama of history there slowly evolved a distinguishable Jewish body and ultimately the community that we know today.

This community presents a distinctive appearance, with its own specific traits, and has long enjoyed full recognition in the Jewish world as well as in Canada. Its flourishing local branches, scattered over the length and breadth of the Dominion, have begun to attract considerable interest. In this country of diverse origins Canadian Jews occupy ninth place in numbers alone—according to the 1941 census. But it must be emphasized that their many-sided contribution to Canadian life is out of all proportion to their numerical relation to the rest of the population.

The "History of the Jews in Canada," of which this is the first volume, is an attempt to explain how this immense development came about. Certainly it is to my knowledge the first attempt to treat the question basically through the use of original sources. The serious reader will know how to use this book to best advantage. He will appreciate the spirit in which it was written, the time and effort devoted to it. For the average reader it will serve to supplement his information; it will bring to his attention much that is of interest concerning the Jewish past in this country. The student of history should find a wealth of material in the bibliographical notations since, with the exception of certain obvious cases, all sources used are precisely indicated.

With the publication of this first volume of the "History of the Jews in Canada," it should be noted that the material previously published by the author in "The Jew in Canada" is here presented in an entirely new form, thoroughly revised in the light of the most recent research. The warm critical response which greeted the appearance of my earlier work had indicated that there was need of a broader and more comprehensive treatment of the subject. The present volume is intended to supply that need, covering as it does the period from the French régime to the end of the nineteenth century.

The goal I had set myself was to write the "unwritten book" of Canadian Jewry, to write it according to the views I had formed as the result of many years of research and study. It is for others, of course, to determine whether this goal has been achieved. The author cannot help but suspect that here or there an error has inadvertently been committed, that something has unavoidably been overlooked. Works of this kind, particularly if ambitious in scope, are seldom completely free from error. It should be taken into consideration that the field in which the author chose to work was wholly new and undeveloped. Occasionally an insurmountable obstacle would crop up, such as the inaccessibility or disappearance of certain vital documents. For example, there is a gap of almost a century in the records of the Sephardic Congregation in Montreal—and the period involved is one which saw the rise of so important a personality as Dr. Abraham de Sola, who was the congregation's spiritual leader. Other equally invaluable papers which might have shed much useful light on the Jewish past in Canada have similarly vanished.

Of the many useful documents pertaining to the French régime which were placed at my disposal, several came from the archives of the Gradis family, which before the war, were located in Bordeaux, France. Copies were forwarded to me by M. Raoul Gradis with whom I had been put in touch through the friendly offices of M. Jean de Maupassant, archivist and librarian of Bordeaux. I now take this opportunity of expressing my gratitude to both. As these lines are written, there is still some doubt concerning the fate of these important Franco-Jewish archives which were used by many a French historian and to which Heinrich Graetz, too, had access.

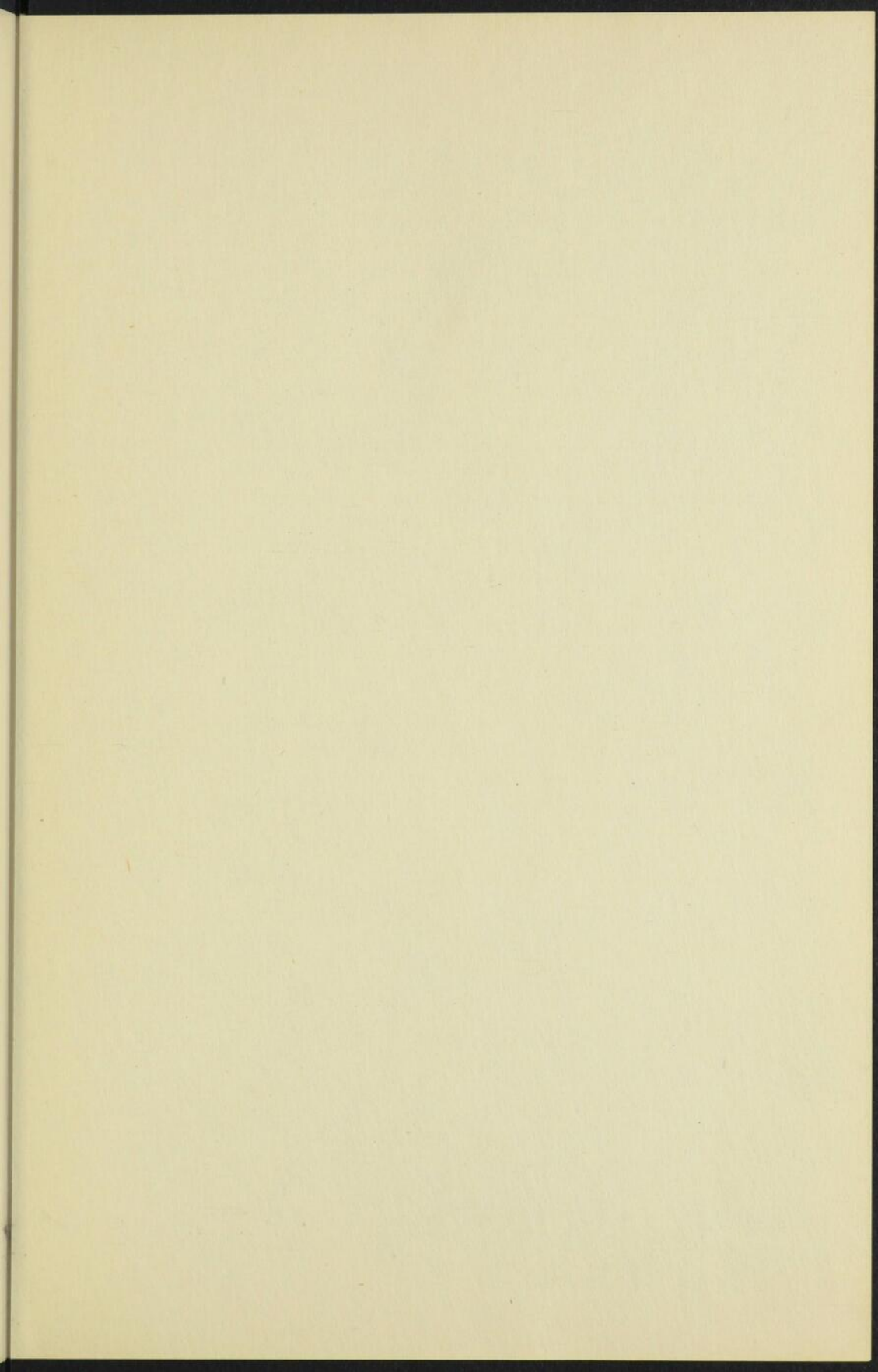
Thanks are also due all those who have shown an interest in this work and who, through the material they have either contributed or

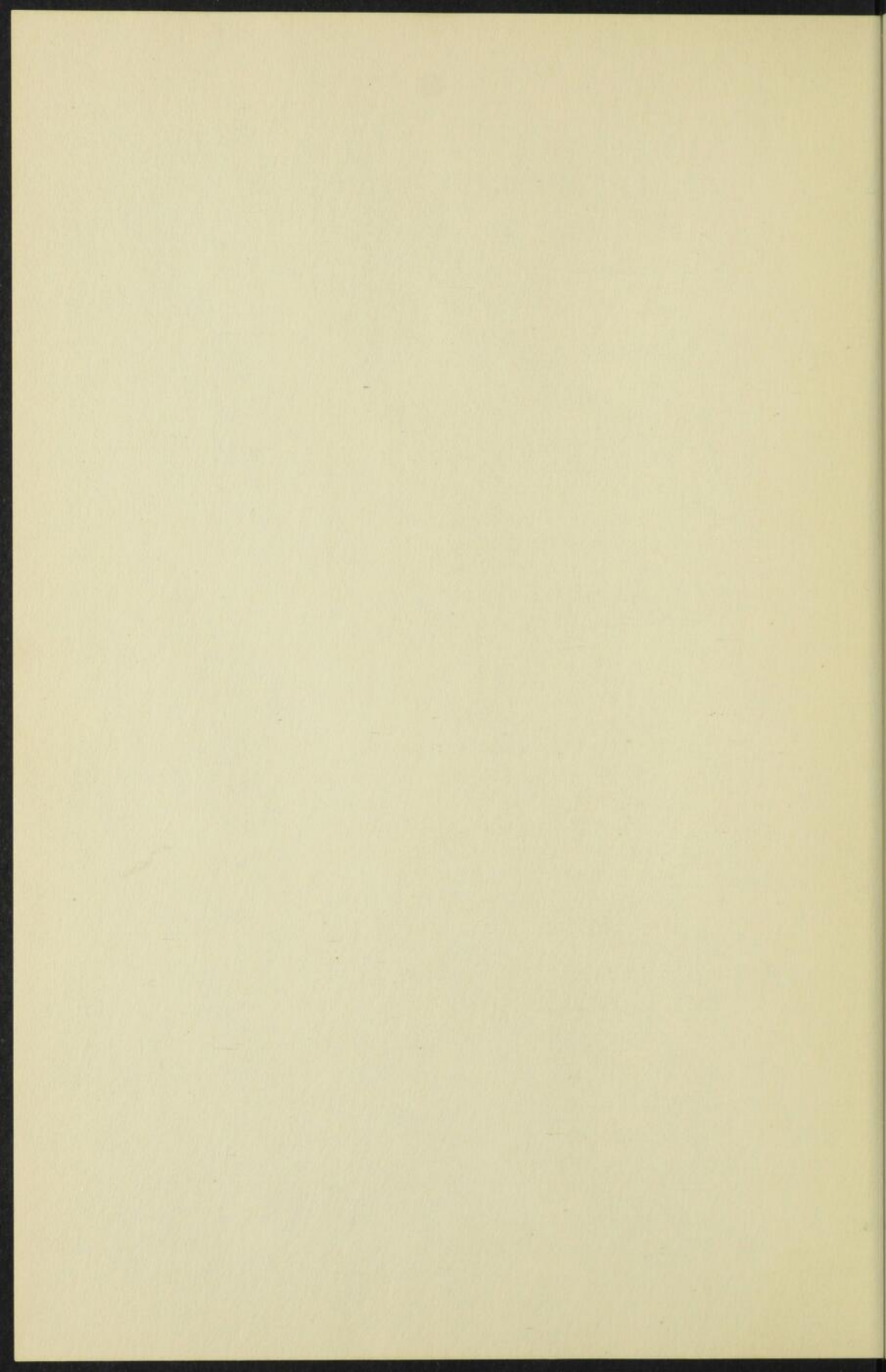
brought to my attention, have been extremely helpful. I should mention here the late Benjamin Sulte whose suggestions some years ago proved useful, and again Jean de Maupassant who so courteously placed the results of his own research within my reach. I am also obliged to Dr. G. Lanctot, Dominion Archivist, for valuable assistance; to Pierre-Georges Roy, former Provincial Archivist of Quebec, and particularly to the late Francis J. Audet, one-time Chief of Information, Public Archives, Ottawa, who was always cooperative and unfailingly provided me with any record or document I requested. I take this opportunity, too, to note with gratitude that the use of certain material of purely Jewish content was made possible through the fact that the well-known communal leader, the late Lyon Cohen, had at one time made accessible to me his library, together with the archives and records of the Baron de Hirsch Institute, the Canadian Committee of the JCA, and the "Shaar Hashomayim" Congregation.

I wish also to express my deep appreciation to the Canadian Jewish Congress for having undertaken the publication of this volume to mark the tenth anniversary of its existence. The sincere interest shown by H. M. Caiserman, Saul Hayes, Michael Garber, K.C., and A. B. Bennett in this connection was an important factor in making this possible. In addition, I am greatly indebted to Dr. S. Levine, of the archives of the Canadian Jewish Congress, who prepared the Index and to Ralph Novek who translated the manuscript from the original Yiddish. And lastly, in concluding these prefatory remarks, I must say that I owe special thanks to my wife who helped to ease some of the difficulties I encountered and whose encouragement always proved a great aid.

BENJAMIN G. SACK.

February 8, 1945.  
Montreal, Canada.





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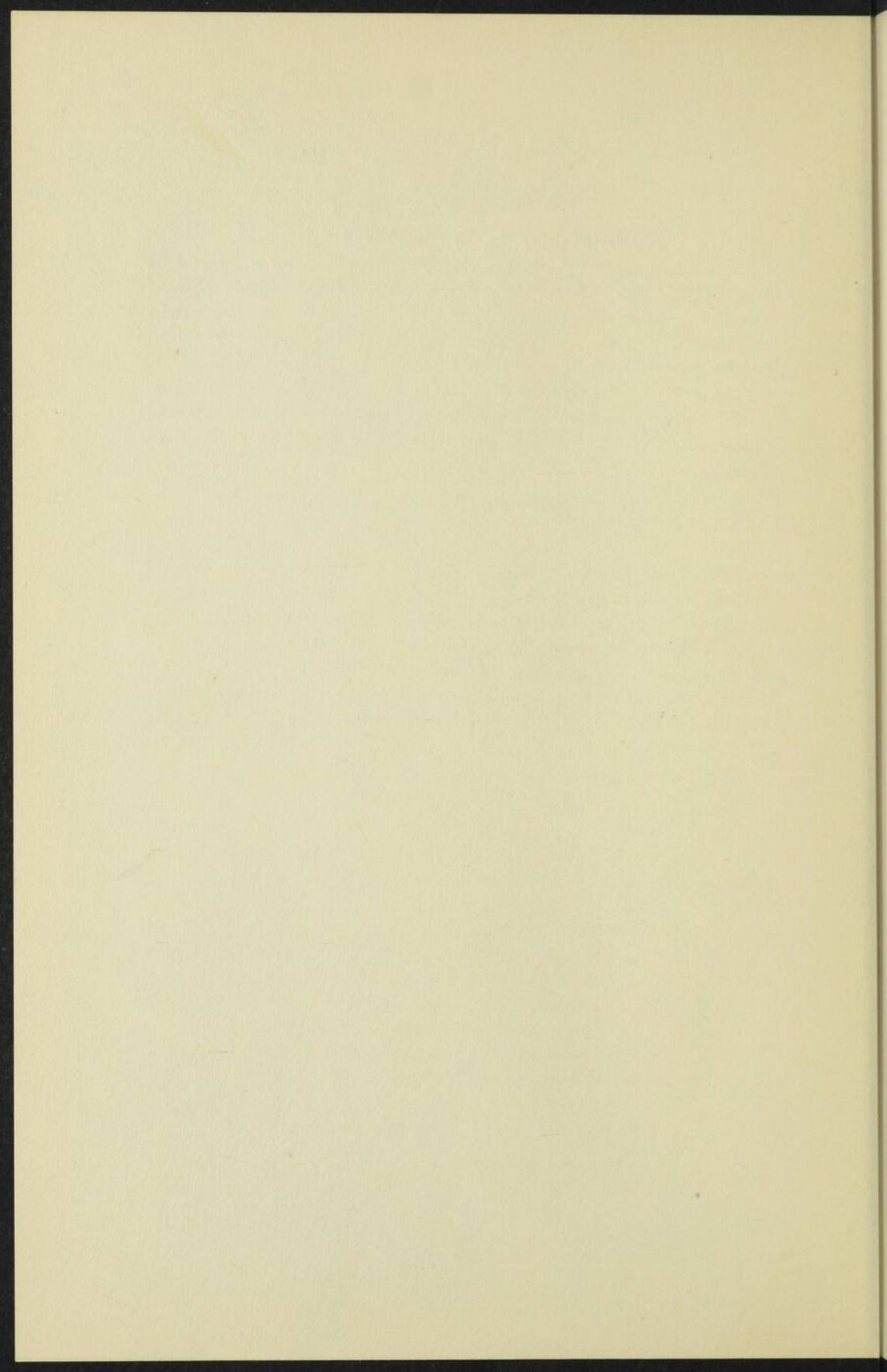
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## THE FRENCH REGIME

### CHAPTER ONE

#### FIRST CONTACT WITH THE COUNTRY

THE history of the Jews in Canada begins long before the British occupation and penetrates far into the era of the French régime. Hardly distinguishable from the history of the country as a whole at its earliest stage, its influence on the main stream of events in New France was negligible enough. Its roots, feeble and tenuous, are only vaguely Jewish in origin and are often shrouded in a mist of legend. Colourful, if at times dubious, these legends provide the background for what is essentially only a fragment of the history of our people as it unfolds itself in an obscure corner of North America. That it is difficult if not impossible to draw a precise line of demarcation between fact and myth at this stage should be clearly understood.

Nevertheless, a careful examination of the period reveals that Jews were drawn to this country at an early date and came into contact with it upon different occasions and under widely varying circumstances. One thing becomes clear: from an obscure beginning to the present day the Jews have played an increasingly significant role in the development of Canadian life. At one time Jewish influence served France's interests in Canada and sought to extend her position and colonial hegemony throughout the North American continent. The accomplishments of one noted Jew under the French régime—to whom Graetz, incidentally, devotes considerable space—so impressed an eminent French historian that he was moved to declare that he had done more “to protect and represent France than royalty itself.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “parut protéger et représenter la France plus que la royauté elle-même.” CAMILLE JULLIAN, *Histoire de Bordeaux*, 1895, in-4o, p. 542.

By virtue of a decree promulgated in 1685 by Colbert, Prime Minister of Louis XIV, Jews were forbidden to settle in the colonies, the North American colony included. The decree was intended to bar all non-Catholics, i.e., Jews and Huguenots, from every French colonial possession. This, of course, was one of the main reasons for the absence of Jews as such in New France, disregarding their frequent contacts with it. In certain documents pertaining to that period we therefore encounter some of them under Anglicized or gallicized names, or under names which have only a semi-Jewish ring. We find, too, the interesting fact that a vessel bearing the biblical name *Benjamin*, fitted and provisioned by its Jewish owner, brought relief to the inhabitants of the French colony at a time of dire need. This was at the height of a critical famine when the latter, according to a report dated September 9, 1752, from the Intendant of New France to the French Minister, had been reduced "for six weeks to a quarter pound of bread a day."

It is especially interesting to note that in his lively and lyrical chronicles, Marc Lescarbot, the first historian of New France, conveys the impression that not a few spiritual leaders of the Canadian colony had some Jewish associations.<sup>1</sup> With typically Jewish colloquy and sophistry, biblical phrases and passages are liberally interwoven in his writings, as are many words in Hebrew script, such as *תבה, איש, אשה, שלום, סגן, בספרר (?)* and others. It can be seen that he was not only conversant with Hebrew and even with the Talmud, from which he cites a few passages, but also with Flavius Josephus; at the same time he displayed a particular affection for the People of the Book. Together with many of his contemporaries he laboured to establish a currently popular belief: that the Indians were descended from the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. He attempted to prove his point by comparing the Hebrew tongue with that of the Indians and by noting similarities between certain practices observed among the latter and ancient Jewish customs or those of biblical origin.

Marc Lescarbot's attitude toward Jews was one of warmth and sympathy. This explains, at least to some extent, his hatred of the Spaniards whom he denounced for the brutal treatment they dealt to the Indians, the first to greet them on the American continent and the true heirs to that continent. Written slightly more than one

<sup>1</sup> MARCLESARBOT, *Histoire de la Nouvelle-France, suivie des Muses de la Nouvelle-France* Paris (Tross). 1866, 3 vols. First published in 1609.

hundred years after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, his portrayal of the Spanish people as vicious and inhuman blended readily with the prevailing Jewish sentiment. In one passage he writes:

"They (the Spaniards) have completely exterminated the natives by the most inhuman tortures the devil has been able to invent, and by their cruelties they have made the name of God a name of shame for these unfortunate people . . . The Romans . . . have made many wars upon the nations of the earth in order to plunder their riches, but the Spaniards' cruelties have no parallel in history. The others contented themselves with pillaging vanquished peoples, but they never murdered them . . ."<sup>1</sup>

Little is known of the historian himself, neither the year and place of his birth nor the year of his death. It has been determined that he was an advocate by profession, from which it need not necessarily be inferred that he was a Jew. There can, however, be no doubt that for part of his education he was indebted to Jews with whom he evidently was on friendly terms culturally as well as socially. Whether they were interested in his travels it is difficult to establish, although it may be surmised that his Jewish friends were aware of his proposed adventure.

The remarkable legend which is woven about the early beginnings of Jewish history in Canada may also be ascribed to this era. This legend concerns Henri de Lévy, Duke of Ventadour, who was Viceroy of New France (1625-27) and who is reputed to have been of Jewish descent. The name "de Lévy" or "de Lévis" is closely associated with various periods in Canadian history and has survived to the present day in the geographical nomenclature of the Province of Quebec. Moreover, Champlain describing in 1629 his voyage to Canada, refers to a place bearing this name. He calls it "Cap de Lévy," later known as "Pointe de Lévy."<sup>2</sup> This point was named after the Viceroy with whom General de Lévis, his descendant, should not be confused. The General, who won the last French victory in Canada, has given his name to the present city of Lévis.<sup>3</sup>

Thus there arose the myth that the representative of Louis XIII in Canada, although of highest French aristocratic lineage, had, despite their remoteness, some Jewish connections. Those who

<sup>1</sup> *Opus cit.* vol. 2, pp. 431 and 432.

<sup>2</sup> In French "de Lévy" and even "de Lévi."

<sup>3</sup> See J.-EDMOND ROY, *Histoire de la Seigneurie de Lauzon*, vol. 1, p. 20 et seq. Cf., also Max J. Kohler, in *Publications*, Am. Jew. Hist. Soc., no. 4, p. 87.

have done some research in the matter have only come up against variations of the form in which the story is told, all of which lead to the same legendary background of de Lévy's Jewish origin. For example, one version of the story declares that in the family chapel of the de Lévy's in France there was a painting of the Virgin Mary and one of the de Lévy's standing before her with head uncovered and hat in hand. "Cover yourself, cousin," Mary, according to the inscription beneath the painting, is said to have urged him. To which he retorted: "It is more comfortable this way, cousin." In another version Mary says to him: "Be seated, cousin." And the reply is: "No, cousin, it is more comfortable for me to stand."<sup>1</sup>

Of unique interest, too, is the presence, among other heraldic symbols, of three stars on the coat of arms of the Duke of Ventadour which closely resemble the Star of David. The legendary nature of the information we possess is further enhanced by the fact that many important details of his life are unknown. Thus, some hold that he died at the age of thirty-five while others insist that he attained the ripe old age of eighty-five. Again, there may possibly be a psychological bridge between his distant Jewish origin and his efforts to entrench Catholicism in the new colony. To achieve this end he laboured with an almost unnatural zeal far surpassing that of his predecessor and successors.

More direct traces of the early association of Jews with Canada are reached upon encountering additional names of Jewish origin or which have a Jewish sound. We find, therefore, that one of the first Catholic missionaries to come to this country, the Jesuit Biart, (arrived at Port Royal, 1611) was descended from the Marranos. His name recalls a place in Spain where a Jewish community existed before the expulsion of 1492. This name had infiltrated into France through the Marranos who everywhere adopted the names of the places from which they had been expelled, such as "Toledano," "Valenci," "Almercydo," and so on. The Jews of Bejar, which was situated south of the Spanish province of Salamanca, had migrated there by way of Navarre. In the course of time their name underwent various modifications, such as Bérard, Brard, Bérardi, Bérardo, Bart, Biard or Biart, and others.<sup>2</sup> When we consider that Jews were not tolerated in France at that time and that many of the escaped Marranos had become assimilated by the peoples among

<sup>1</sup> *Le Moniteur universel* (Paris), 19 décembre 1881.

<sup>2</sup> *Le Mercure de France*, 1 mars 1922.

whom they took refuge, it is by no means surprising that one of the first preachers of the gospel of Christ to the Indians of America should have been a descendant of these Marranos.

Under the French régime Jews had established themselves in Canada—through what series of coincidences it is difficult to explain—to the extent that several Jewish names were to be found in the ranks of the country's militia. A Joseph da Silva, obviously a Portuguese Jew, was a creditor of the government of New France. He resided in Montreal and is referred to in a document of that time as "the so-called Portuguese." His name and the term "Portuguese" leave no doubt that he was a Jew, though it is certain that he did not openly avow it. The name Maranda, which seems to have been corrupted from Miranda, appears in a register of the year 1711. This name was brought here by a Jewish family of Bayonne. A Jacob Coste (Costa?) is mentioned in a declaration of 1744 and similarly with other names. Although these are all isolated instances, it is nevertheless abundantly clear that the descendants of former Marranos who had renounced Judaism were to be found in Canada at various periods of French sovereignty. We are therefore led to conclude positively that even those of Jewish origin were well received in the colony, providing that they desired and were able to embrace Catholicism. Their number must, however, have been quite small. It need hardly be added that in every case they lived in harmony with the other colonists and intermarried with them.

It is here that the strange tale related in a document found among the English archives possibly belongs. This is a report by Colonel David Dunbar, dated August 25, 1732, in which he discloses the presence at Louisburg of "six French men-of-war full of Jews, to settle on the Island of St. John's (now Prince Edward Island) in Bay Verte," and that the French settlers already there "would supply and maintain this new intended settlement with bread, corn and live cattle, if not prevented."<sup>1</sup>

This story has a doubtful ring and it is superfluous to add that it was far from true. Nevertheless, it is quite possible that it was based on the fact that Jewish-owned merchant vessels, particularly those with biblical names, were engaged in the traffic between France and her American colonies. No ship, however, of that class put into Louisburg until at least fifteen years later.

<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office, Board of Trade, Nova Scotia, vol. VII, E29.

Mention of Jews in Canada as such is made for the first time in connection with two separate incidents. The first has an almost picaresque quality while the other recalls the days when Jews still were living under the shadow of the Inquisition.

Disguised as a boy and under the assumed name of "Jacques La Fargue," a Jewish girl arrived at Quebec in September, 1738, on the ship *Saint-Michel*. This passenger had attracted considerable attention until the remarkable discovery was made that the comely, spirited youth whose manners were so refined was in fact no "Jacques" but "Esther"—Esther Brandeau. The Intendant ordered her arrest but, due to lack of suitable quarters, she was held under surveillance at the Quebec hospital. The problem of what to do with her so baffled the Minister of Colonies and the Intendant that the King himself was compelled to intervene and settle the question of defraying the cost of her return passage to France.

The incident is fully detailed in the archives. In his first report to the Minister outlining the case of Esther Brandeau, Hocquart, the Intendant writes: "Since her arrival in Quebec she has maintained a great reserve, and seems to be desirous of being converted to Catholicism, but fears lest her relatives should come here and discover her."<sup>1</sup>

The Intendant was greatly embarrassed by her presence. She could not be kept long in the hospital and a more convenient place for her had to be found. In addition, the girl's story was fantastic as revealed in the declaration made by her before the Marine Commissioner of Quebec on September 15, 1738, part of which is given below:

"This day, before the undersigned, Commissaire de la marine, chargé à Québec de la police des gens de mer, appeared Esther Brandeau, aged about twenty years, who embarked at La Rochelle as a passenger, dressed in boy's clothes, under the name of Jacques La Fargue, on the vessel *St.-Michel*, Sieur de Salaberry commander, and declared her name to be Esther Brandeau, daughter of David Brandeau, a Jew, trader, of St. Esprit, diocese of Daxe, near Bayonne, and that she is of Jewish religion; that five years ago her father and mother placed her on a Dutch vessel, Captain Geoffroy, in order to send her to Amsterdam, to one of her aunts and to her brother; that the vessel having been

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<sup>1</sup> JOSEPH MARMETTE, *Report on Canadian Archives*, 1866, Introduction. p. xxxiii.

lost on the bar of Bayonne, in the moon of April or May, 1733, she was happily brought safe to shore with one of the crew; that she was received by Catherine Churiau, a widow living at Biaris; that two weeks thereafter she started, dressed as a man, for Bordeaux, where she shipped as a boy, under the name of Pierre Alansiette, on a vessel commanded by Captain Bernard destined for Nantes, that she returned on the same vessel to Bordeaux, and there shipped again in the same capacity on a Spanish vessel, Captain Antonio, for Nantes, that on reaching Nantes, she deserted and went to Rennes, where she took service as a boy at the house of one Augustin, a tailor," and so on and so on.

Upon being asked why she had concealed her sex for five years, she replied that "after she had been rescued from shipwreck and had arrived at Bayonne, she had entered the house of Catherine Churiau, as above stated, whereupon the latter made her eat pork and other meats the use whereof is forbidden among the Jews, and that she thereupon resolved not to return to her father and mother in order that she might enjoy the same liberty as the Christians."<sup>1</sup>

A record of the case was drafted and forwarded to the Minister in France who, in his reply to the Intendant, confessed that he had grave doubts concerning the girl's story. "I do not know," he wrote, "if we can completely believe the declaration of Esther Brandeau who, disguised as a boy, last year embarked for Canada on the ship *St-Michel*, and who claims that she is a Jewess. However that may be, I approve her admission into the Quebec hospital and shall be pleased to hear that she has been converted. Apart from this, your behaviour toward her should be governed by her conduct in the colony and also by the information about her which Sieur de Pelissier, Ordinator of Bayonne, will forward to you."<sup>2</sup>

Many attempts were made to persuade the girl to abandon her religion, an act which she steadfastly refused to consider. All the eloquence of her would-be reformers was of no avail and it was finally decided to deport her to France. In a letter to the Minister, the Intendant complained that nothing could be done with the Jewess: "Her conduct has not been wholly bad, but she is so frivolous

<sup>1</sup> *Public Archives of Canada: Archives Nationales, Archives des Colonies (Duplicates of French National Archives)*, Series F. vol. 70, pp. 66-69.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Series B. vol. 68-1, p. 140.

that at different times she has been both obedient and obstinate with regard to the instruction the priests desired to give her. I have no other alternative than to send her back. Sieur Lafergue, captain of the ship *Le Comte de Matignon*, will see to it."<sup>1</sup>

Later, the question of payment for her return passage compelled Louis XV himself to intervene. After the case had been brought to his attention, he declared that he himself, that is, the State, would indemnify the owner of the ship which by that time had returned the Jewess to France. Failing her adoption of the Catholic faith, as was desired, it was considered of vital importance to deal with her in the strictest manner. The possibility of her remaining in New France could no longer be tolerated. It was necessary to deport her.

The deportation of the obstinate girl, in whose behalf couriers kept travelling between France and the North American colony, was carried out on the express orders of the King. By this time her deportation had become an "affaire officielle" and conferences and audiences had taken place between the King and the Minister of Colonies. In a letter dated January 25, 1740, written to the admiral of the French fleet, the King among other things divulges that after "my cousin, Sieur Hocquart, Intendant of Canada, upon my orders had sent the Jewish girl, Esther Brandeau, back to France on the ship *Le Comte de Matignon* of La Rochelle, the owner of the ship, Sieur La Pointe, applied to me for reimbursement of the passage money . . ."<sup>2</sup> and, as can be seen from a subsequent passage, the King granted this request.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, Series F, vol. 71, p. 132; cf. also "La Petite Histoire", in *La Presse*, Montreal, Feb. 6, 1924.

<sup>2</sup> As a curious document, the full text in the original is given here:

"Lettre du Roy a M. L'Amiral.  
A Versailles, le 25 janvier 1740.

"Mon Cousin le Sr. Hocquart intendant en Canada ayant fait embarquer à Québec sur le Navire Le Comte de Matignon de La Rochelle la noée Esther Brandeau Juive qu'il avoit a renvoyer en France en exécution de mes ordres, et le Sr. La Pointe, propriétaire et armateur de ce navire m'ayant fait représenter que pour l'indemniser des fraix de ce passage il demandoit a estre dispensé d'embarquer sur le premier navire qu'il armera pour le Canada deux Engagez sur le nombre qu'il serait tenu d'y embarquer aux termes de mon Reglement du 15 Novembre 1728, j'ay accordé cette dispense a cet armateur, et je vous fais cette Lettre pour vous dire que mon intention est que nonobstant ce qui est porté par ce Reglement, il soit exempt d'embarquer ces deux engagez de moins, sans estre tenu de rien payer pour raison de ce, et que les expéditions nécessaires pour la Navigation de Son Navire Luy soient delivrées au Siège de l'amirauté de La Rochelle. Et La pointe n'estant a autre fin, &c. Ecrit a Versailles le 25 janvier 1740." (*Public Archives of Canada: Archives Nationales, Archives des Colonies*, Serie B, vol. 71, p. 13).

Thereby ended the singular adventure of the Jewess who, disguised as a sailor or cabin boy, had become, in a sense, the first Jewish "immigrant" to appear on Canadian shores. From the dates given, her stay in this country was for approximately a year. According to the circumstances surrounding her sojourn it may quite safely be assumed that at the time there were no Jews as Jews in Canada.

Equally remarkable is the experience of a Dutch Jew, also a ship's passenger, although here events shaped their course rather differently. In this case as well coercion was employed, but apparently with greater success. A social pressure is felt which recalls the persecution of the Jews under the Spanish Inquisition, the persecution which pursued them long after the exodus from Spain—directed to the end that they embrace Christianity. Bound for Canada on the ship *La Fripbonne* in 1752, the Jew was baptised upon reaching mid-ocean after "he had been enlightened with the truth of the Roman Catholic and Apostolic faith, and had recognized the falsehood and horror of the Judaic religion in which he had hitherto professed faith." The method of "enlightenment" may well be imagined, for it was obviously not done of his own free will. It is somewhat incredible that a Jew from Holland should have set out for New France at that time in order to assume Christianity.

Upon the ship's arrival at Louisburg, the Jew was conducted to the local chapel where the ritual of conversion was performed anew in the presence of Comte de Raymond, Governor of Acadia, and other persons. The story is related in a document which bears four signatures attesting to this accomplishment.<sup>1</sup>

Typical though they were of their times, these incidents are the first in the archives of Canada in which specific reference is made to Jews. But it can easily be surmised that others must have visited the North American colony in the years intervening between the two episodes, perhaps under assumed names and concealing their origin as "children of Israel."

During the latter period of the French régime Jews began to have more frequent contact with New France. Trade was, of course, the principal allure to attract the occasional traveller here. But with regard to Jews, traffic with the colony was of relatively minor importance, despite their prominent position in the world

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, Series F, vol. 179, p. 16, Etat Civil-Louisburg. 1752-1754.

of commerce at that time. This may be attributed to two reasons: first, that communication with New France was extremely difficult, and second, that here as well as in the other French colonies it was impossible for Jews to remain any length of time if their real identity was not to be discovered. Under such circumstances few indeed must have been the visits for any appreciable period, even in the interests of trade or of investigating the possibilities of trade.

Nevertheless we find them assuming an early and vital role in the development and expansion of France's commercial interests, particularly in the trade with the French islands in America. These were mainly Portuguese Jews whose importance, because of their initiative in commercial affairs, was constantly growing. The large volume of their trade was a factor in cementing closer ties between the motherland and the scattered empire. Thus they won the confidence of influential circles and of the King's advisers. The latter even granted them special privileges in recognition of their services. It was by virtue of these privileges that Jews were eventually permitted to come to Canada.

As early as 1724, we learn, the Franco-Jewish firm of *David et Mendes* was established in San Domingo and three years later also in one of the smaller French Antilles. However, Jewish trading vessels under such names as *David* (also called *Roi-David*) and *Ange-Mikaël* had far earlier engaged in the traffic between France and her islands in America. French colonial commerce expanded in direct proportion with Jewish participation, but this participation was only made possible by the special statutes of January, 1716, and the royal letters-patent of April, 1717, which regulated colonial trade.

With the relaxation of some of the former discriminatory restrictions, the way was now opened for the development of trade relations with Canada. This was an opportunity which at least one enterprising French Jew was not slow to take advantage of.

## CHAPTER TWO

## THE JEWISH CONTRIBUTION TO NEW FRANCE

THE early trade of the French Empire was marked by the brilliant achievements of the Gradis family. One of the leading families of Portuguese Jews who, after lengthy wandering, had finally settled themselves in France, in their hands lay their adopted country's most vital interests. To them France was indebted for her commercial leadership as well as for the founding of her merchant marine and thereby for the defence of her widespread colonial possessions. Insofar as the rivalry for the New World was concerned—a rivalry in which France took a leading part—they also to a large extent controlled France's destiny.

The name of Gradis is closely linked to Canada from the year 1744 until the firing of the last shot in defence of France's claim to the country. Later, when François Bigot, Intendant of Canada, was by order of Louis XV arrested in Paris "to bring to trial the authors of monopolies, abuses, vexations and prevarications that have been committed in Canada," and who thereby contributed to Montcalm's defeat, Abraham Gradis (1699?-1780) was invited by the Versailles government to testify against him. Gradis was extremely popular in official circles where great faith was placed in him. His efforts to maintain France's prestige in the New World at a time when her influence was rapidly waning have earned him a particular niche in the history of the French régime in Canada.

The Jewish banking and commercial house that served France so well in developing her colonial trade and in supplying defence materials during her American wars was founded by David Gradis, whom the city of Bordeaux later honored by naming a street after him. He was familiarly known as the "Portuguese merchant" and had business relations with England, Holland, Southern France and the French colonies. Until 1760 he was one of the few Jews to become a citizen of the city of Bordeaux, this privilege having been conferred upon him on January 29, 1731.

His eldest son, Abraham, who succeeded him as head of the firm, not only followed in his father's footsteps but went beyond them. A man of extraordinary abilities, he possessed a penetrating keenness of mind, great foresight, unusual strength of character and a deep understanding of current issues. At an early age these personal

attributes brought him in contact with the most influential French circles of his time and also with Monsieur Maurepas, Louis XV's most trusted adviser. His talent for anticipating historical events led him to take particular interest in the security of the French Empire, or rather in the well-being of French Imperialism in general.

At that time the French colonies in America, and especially New France, were poorly protected. The government showed no great concern in this matter and left it largely to the care of private individuals who, on its behalf, from time to time forwarded provisions for the colonists as well as troops. Among these individuals was Abraham Gradis. He approached his duties, however, with far greater sincerity and thoroughness than did the others. As his chief concern he set himself the task of strengthening the weakened ties between France and Canada. His first move was to send a number of ships, under government commission, with badly-needed commodities for the colonists; as time went on the sailings of these ships became more frequent until eventually there developed a fairly regular traffic between the motherland and the colony.

Toward the end of December, 1744, Gradis had fitted out the first of his ships to sail for Quebec, the *Fort-Louis* under the command of Captain François Drouillet. A year later this ship again headed for New France as part of a convoy escorting the Duke of Anville's expedition. The English had recently occupied Louisburg and the King of France had entrusted the Duke with the task of dislodging them. The expedition, however, was unsuccessful. Violent storms dispersed the entire squadron after it had safely reached Chibouctou (now Halifax). A number of the ships succeeded in returning to France while the rest were lost on the way. The *Fort-Louis* was surprised by three English warships off San Domingo. She fought bravely until her captain resolved to sink her rather than have his ship fall a prize to the enemy.

The war with England which later broke out for the possession of Ile Royale (the Island of Cape Breton), with Louisburg as the chief goal, found Gradis very active. He provided France with additional ships and personally supervised the work of arming and fitting them. His ships, the *David* and the *Superbe*, earned particular distinction. The *David* made several return voyages in 1748, maintaining communications with New France and supplying it with foodstuffs and munitions.

The French colonies were in no position to offer strong resistance in the war against the English. Canada was poorly defended and was woefully lacking in troops, ammunition and food. Nor were her relations with France satisfactory. Versailles had always shown little interest in the far-off colony. But when events took a crucial turn, the error of this policy was perceived and the need for improving communications with New France was recognized. Gradis was given the task of carrying out the new policy and he outlined a project which for that time was both novel and daring: to maintain constant sea communication with the North American colony and by this means to make possible the necessary contact. This traffic was to be on a commercial basis. He submitted his proposal to Government officials and also corresponded with François Bigot, the Intendant of Canada, and with Jacques-Michel Bréard, the French Marine Controller at Quebec. On July 10, 1748, these negotiations culminated in the formation of the "Society of Canada." The principal object of the Society was to encourage trade with the colony. Gradis erected large warehouses in Quebec which were used to store the provisions, munitions and other supplies shipped from France.<sup>1</sup> The French Government later defrayed the cost of this project, but credit for the achievement, whether or not it was successful in bringing about the desired result, belongs to him alone.

The aims of the "Society of Canada" were defined in the eight component clauses of its statutes. It would probably have attained its goal had France been represented in Canada by officials other than Bigot and Bréard. It might even have proved to be a turning point in North American history. For had Gradis been allowed full freedom of action and had he received the necessary co-operation, New France would have been able to hold out much longer and would not have fallen so easily to the English.

Under the statutes of the "Society," Gradis undertook to maintain ship traffic between Bordeaux and Quebec for a period of six years, and to transport various commodities to Canada, each time in accordance with a memorandum to be issued from Quebec. The ship's captain had the right to sell the entire cargo or to release it to the Intendant and the Controller who were, in turn, to forward a credit note for the amount or, as an alternative, to supply certain products in exchange. Another clause made provision for extending

<sup>1</sup> TH. MALVEZIN, *Histoire des Juifs à Bordeaux*, 1875, p. 241.

the scope of the "Society" to create trade relations between Quebec and the Antilles. For this, however, it was stipulated that a written agreement between the Intendant, the Controller and Gradis was required.<sup>1</sup>

The ship *Renommée* which Gradis placed in the service of the "Society" was specially designated for the trade with Canada. The *Renommée* left France on her first voyage to the St. Lawrence River in the month of April, 1749, with a cargo of supplies for the inhabitants of the colony. The cargo was unloaded in the "Society's" warehouses under Bigot's supervision. Bigot had the right to dispose of it as he saw fit—a right which, as later was shown, he seriously abused.

This continued until the outbreak of the Seven Years' War. Until then the *Renommée* had made regular voyages to New France, maintaining uninterrupted communication. Gradis later equipped additional ships which were commissioned by the Government for American service. Upon each vessel's arrival, however, its cargo was commandeered by the Intendant. Neither Gradis nor his captains could exercise any control over his manner of handling them.

Under such circumstances it was impossible for the enterprise to achieve its purpose. The plight of the colonists steadily grew worse. Those among them who had hoped for an improvement in their lot as a result of the closer ties with the motherland were doomed to disappointment. The condition to which the population had been reduced was unbearably tragic. The acute shortage of supplies caused terrible privation and distress. Food stocks dwindled to the point where starvation threatened to wipe out the colony. A desperate plea for help was sent to France. It was then that the Minister of Marine urgently summoned Gradis for consultation.

From December, 1751, until the end of January, 1752, Gradis conferred with Government officials in Paris. It was decided that he was, with all possible speed, to ship a cargo of flour to the hunger-stricken people of Canada. Accordingly he purchased a large consignment of flour which he forwarded on his newly-bought ship, the *Benjamin*. That Gradis received no commission for this transaction is divulged in a letter he wrote to a friend at the time. The

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<sup>1</sup> A duplicate of the statutes of the Society of Canada, with the signatures of Bigot and Bréard, was to be found among the archives of the Gradis family in France (5,35).

ship sailed for Canada on the 17th of April, 1752, and arrived literally in the nick of time. It was following the arrival of this ship that the Intendant, in a letter to France, reported that the colonists had for six consecutive weeks subsisted on a meagre daily ration of bread.<sup>1</sup>

From the time that Louis XV's advisers acquainted him with the true situation, Gradis plunged enthusiastically into the work of improving conditions in Canada. As many ships as he could acquire were fitted out and sent to Canada. As a result he became deeply involved in financial difficulties. Most of his dealings were based on credit, not infrequently bringing scant returns. In a letter to a friend, he wrote:

"I chartered them (the ships) at the same rates, and often at lower rates, than I could have obtained from others, who would pay immediately . . . There is due me today a sum of over eight hundred thousand pounds, not reckoning the amounts of overdue notes for many commercial transactions, which sums I have advanced to various persons both in France and in America, without my having received a sou in payment. Naturally, this has caused me considerable embarrassment, obliging me to conduct my business with restricted means, a condition to which I am unfortunately not accustomed."<sup>2</sup>

Notwithstanding the great financial hardships it entailed, this work continued throughout the year 1753. He exerted every effort to bolster trade relations with New France. In a letter to M. Marin, of Guadeloupe (one of the French Antilles), on March 26 of that year, he wrote:

"I was loaded with the work of equipping and dispatching various vessels to Quebec. Four ships left in one month. I still have the *Superbe* which will set sail for the same port in a week and the ship *David* which sails for Louisburg, the Minister having asked me to furnish him a cargo of flour. He also ordered me to ship 140 tons of flour on the *Superbe*. The balance is for my own account."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Archives Nationales: Archives des Colonies*. Canada—Correspondence Générale, vol. 98, Folio 141. (Duplicates of the French National Archives).

<sup>2</sup> JEAN DE MAUPASSANT, *Un grand armateur de Bordeaux*, Abraham Gradis. Bordeaux, 1917, p. 40.

<sup>3</sup> *Opus cit.* pp. 40-41.

Despite the heavy duties he had imposed on himself, especially with regard to maintaining an unceasing flow of trade ships to Canada, Gradis persevered in his plans with a remarkable singleness of purpose. It is no reflection on his deep-rooted patriotism to suggest that, as an experienced man of affairs, he could not help but be impressed by the considerably lesser risks involved in these ventures. However small the reward, it was sure—although he invariably filled orders from the government on credit. He was never more pleased than when, in time of need, he could aid the Government to the full extent of his resources. This won him the esteem and confidence of the ruling group in France. But apparently Gradis had far broader plans in view. Not content with having successfully set up regular communications between France and the Canadian colony, he aimed as well to stimulate commercial traffic between France and Louisiana. That this scheme appeared quite practicable to him may be seen from his attempt to enter upon a correspondence with the Governor of Louisiana. He laid his proposal before him, at the same time pointing out that he had been charged with supplying the late Governor of Canada (La Jonquière) with all requirements; he was acting in the same capacity for the Intendant Bigot, and had recently received a similar commission from the Marquis Duquesne. "The usual custom is for them to address themselves for that purpose to the Minister of Marine, who orders Monsieur de Rostan that such and such quantities of goods be shipped to the Governors and Intendants." It is quite possible that his intention was to found a "Society of Louisiana," patterned after the organization which conducted trade with New France. Nothing, however, resulted from these negotiations.

Meanwhile the impending clash with England shadowed the horizon. Relations had been strained to the point where war appeared inevitable. Nevertheless, Gradis' ships could still navigate the waters to the French colonies with a fair degree of security. In the month of March, 1755, the ship *Renommée* set sail for New France on behalf of the "Society of Canada," the last peacetime voyage to Canada made by any of Gradis' ships. Under the command of Captain Jean-Joseph Rozier, an intrepid French seaman who was later to guide Gradis' ships through waters teeming with English cruisers, the vessel reached Quebec safely with its valuable freight. Flour and other essential commodities as well as wines and liquors made up the cargo which was unloaded at the warehouses

of the "Society." This body was later (February 16, 1756) dissolved, after its charter, at the request of the Intendant, had been extended another year.

The outbreak of the Seven Years' War found France helpless and ill-prepared. The ministers of Louis XV, deeply enmeshed in the endless web of court intrigue at Versailles, were left seemingly unimpressed by events across the sea. This conflict, the first in history for the possession of the North American colonies, was not of France's making. She entered into it of necessity, but without enthusiasm and therefore without adequate preparation. Following the declaration of war (May 18, 1756), the courtiers and political advisers abandoned the Canadians to their own devices, with little prospect of help from the mother country. But Canada was if anything even worse prepared than France. The affairs of the colony were in the hands of corrupt, incompetent officials who, from the Intendant down, were primarily concerned with robbing the Government and the country and with exploiting the predicament of the colonists for their own ends.

It should not be forgotten that the hitherto-existing connection with Canada had been highly precarious and irregular. The defence of the colony had been entrusted to private individuals—ship builders or shipping merchants—acting on behalf of the French Government. Among them was Abraham Gradis. Possibly less audacious than some of his colleagues, he was on this account more methodical and calculating; in his achievements he excelled the others by far. But it was not until the outbreak of war that he displayed his real talents. In the face of difficult, almost insurmountable obstacles he doggedly continued to provide the means for resistance against the advance of the English forces. Within a relatively short period, as time was then reckoned, he had equipped and sent twenty-six vessels carrying troops, ammunition and food.

Gradis had by then become well known in Canada. In the grave crisis which the French colony was undergoing it was common knowledge that he was mainly responsible for preserving contact with the mother country. His efforts on behalf of the colonists were widely understood and appreciated. In France, too, the real significance of his pioneer work in developing regular communications with Canada now became clearly perceptible. For when this traffic could no longer be used commercially it was readily adapted to

military purposes. The most illustrious Frenchmen of his day, as well as later French historians, paid high tribute to his achievements. Camille Jullian, one of the forty French "Immortals," observed that in striving to assist her colony to withstand attack, Gradis showed far greater patriotic devotion to France than did the King's court politicians.

In the years following the outbreak of the prolonged war, Gradis exerted almost superhuman effort to help France defend her position in North America. All his time, all his energy, all his means went into this task. He was in constant contact with Louis XV's closest advisers, with ministers, officers and functionaries. Feverishly he worked to organize new expeditions, to increase the number of ships and generally to strengthen French sea power. Much of his time was spent in Paris where he was assigned to many important posts. On his part, Gradis fulfilled his functions with the utmost vigor and determination. He became in effect the King's marine agent, vested with the powers and prerogatives of a high official, and next to Monsieur de Rostan, Ordinator of Bordeaux, was regarded as the greatest authority on naval matters in France. The latter was instructed to co-operate fully in the operations conducted by Gradis.<sup>1</sup>

The first squadron he armed for service in New France consisted of a number of ships, among them the celebrated *Robuste* which distinguished itself in engagements with the English, and also the ship *Black Prince* which was owned by another Jew, David Alexander of Bayonne, a close relative of Abraham Gradis. At various times during the course of the war, Gradis enlisted the support of other French Jews whose trading vessels were impressed for service in the military expeditions to Canada. The first expedition met with success, thereby increasing confidence in the Jewish ship-owner who was given the responsibility of commissioning an even greater flotilla. This he did without great delay, although he found the new task far more difficult—so difficult that had it not been for his skill in handling delicate situations the entire undertaking would have miscarried. This in turn would most certainly have hastened the French collapse.

It now became imperative that the Government send not only ammunition and food to the hunger-stricken people of New France, but also reinforcements for Montcalm's army. However, the

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<sup>1</sup> *Opus cit.* p. 56.

Government found it difficult to enlist soldiers while those who could be secured refused to sail for Canada. It then fell to Gradis' lot to help recruit troops, provide them with all essential equipment, and transport them in his ships. Thanks to his untiring endeavours he succeeded where others had failed and, in the month of April, 1757, he dispatched a contingent of four hundred soldiers commanded by a handful of officers to Canada.<sup>1</sup> But this time the squadron failed to reach Quebec intact. Two of the ships fell to the enemy. The ship *David* which managed to put into Quebec was promptly seized by the English on her voyage home. The others had the good fortune to return safely from Canada, but not until the *Robuste* had fought her way through several engagements in waters dominated by enemy patrols. The *Robuste* put up a gallant resistance and succeeded in disabling an English ship. Herself severely damaged, she was compelled to take part in another encounter with an English warship before finally reaching a French port. Her owner, Abraham Gradis, was naturally pleased with her courageous exploits and still more pleased with Rozier, her captain, who by his conduct had merited distinction.

<sup>1</sup> *Opus cit.* p. 61.

## CHAPTER THREE

## ABRAHAM GRADIS AND GENERAL MONTCALM

OFFICIAL circles in France finally began to realize the true gravity of the situation. The population of Canada was small—all of New France counted about 58,000 inhabitants—and the country was difficult to defend, especially from abroad. France had reached a state of crisis. Although she had no desire to lose possession of Canada, it was necessary to exert the most strenuous effort in order to send reinforcements to the colonists whose position was becoming more and more uncertain due to enemy pressure and the great scarcity of foodstuffs and other necessities.

With the methodical thoroughness demanded by a problem of such magnitude, Gradis began to organize a large, new expedition to bring speedy relief to the French in Canada. Many of his ships had already been sunk or captured by the English. Extraordinary endeavour and even great personal sacrifice were required of him since his losses, as a result of France's impoverishment through her wars in America and consequent inability to liquidate her debts for some time had placed him in a precarious position. Nevertheless he soon adjusted himself to these changed conditions and continued to carry out his share of his country's defence effort.

Gradis purchased ships in several ports. He also chartered the vessels of other shipowners, Raphael Mendes and Benjamin Gradis among them, and in this manner assembled an expedition which set sail for Quebec in 1758, carrying food, soldiers, ammunition and other supplies. The expedition consisted of fourteen ships, eight of which were his own. With the exception of one ship which was attacked by an English cruiser off Ile Royale, they all reached Canada safely, bringing assistance sorely needed by the French fighters.

The return voyage was less fortunate. When a fleet of English cruisers both greater in number and better armed was encountered, the French could offer little effective resistance. Despite the superiority of the English, the tiny flotilla battled stubbornly until it was virtually annihilated. Of the fourteen ships only one returned to Bordeaux. The rest were either sunk or captured. Among the vessels lost, the following belonged to Gradis: *l'Aigle*, the *Cheval-Marin*, the *Foudroyant*, the *Charmante-Nancy*, the *Jason*,

the *Prudent*, the *Marguërite*, and the *Mars*. Every one of the eight ships he owned which had been fitted out and sent to Canada was lost. Most of the ships were either not at all or only partially insured. The extent of his losses and the straits in which he was placed may well be imagined. But as usual Gradis remained undaunted and with renewed energy continued his work of aiding France in every possible manner.

Gradis is frequently mentioned in General Montcalm's "Journal" (Diary) as well as in his personal correspondence with his family in France. This gallant general who has inscribed such heroic deeds in the history of the French régime showed remarkable confidence in him. In a letter dated September, 1757, he wrote his mother, the Marquise de St. Veran, at Montpellier: "M. de la Porte, chief clerk of the Navy Office, is so neglectful, that I must ask you not to write through him any more, but through M. Gradis, at Bordeaux . . ."<sup>1</sup>

Montcalm also refers to the arrival of many of Gradis' ships at Quebec with reinforcements for him. He cites such ships as the *David*, the *Superbe*, the *Renommée*, the *Robuste* and others which distinguished themselves in the war. By that time France had already been rendered incapable of prolonging the struggle and Canada would undoubtedly have been lost far earlier without the help received through Gradis.

At one time Montcalm was desperate. The English were far better equipped and supported than the small Canadian army he could field against them. From no source was he able to secure reinforcements. It was even more difficult to send them across. For a time the colony was completely cut off from France. At that very hour, it was Gradis who came to his aid. As mentioned previously, he helped recruit the sorely-needed soldiers; he literally sought them out himself, as a historian relates,<sup>2</sup> and managed to assemble a force of four hundred men which he dispatched to Canada. These troops formed part of the army led by Montcalm when he defeated the English under General Abercromby at Ticonderoga.

The arrival of the transports bearing a detachment of the soldiers sent across by the Jewish shipbuilder of Bordeaux is duly recorded in Montcalm's "Journal." Under the date of June 9,

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Public Archives for 1929*, Ottawa, p. 61.

<sup>2</sup> JEAN DE MAUPASSANT, *Un grand armateur*, etc., p. 59. et seq.

1757, he remarks that he has just learned of the safe arrival at Quebec of two of Gradis' ships, the *David* and the *Jason*, with food, weapons and troops. The ships also brought news of an attempt on the life of the King and of internal unrest in the country. "But the most important news for us," he observes, "is that we have received food, powder, soldiers and all that we have latterly requested. We can only hope that this assistance will continue to arrive punctually."<sup>1</sup> An entry in his "Journal," dated June 13, deals anew with this subject and again mentions Gradis. A similar entry, bearing the date June 16, reveals that he had just been informed of the arrival of another of Gradis' ships. There are several other allusions to Gradis, all gratefully acknowledging the assistance received through him.

Of greater interest is the manner in which he writes of Gradis in letters to his family in France. The following letter, dated July 6, 1757, is typical. It was written to his wife, the Marquise de Montcalm, at Montpellier:

"I have got your letter No. 13, dearest, dated November 28, by way of M. Gradis, etc., from which I learn that there are eleven numbers in arrear, captured or lost, or which will come in the mails from Court. The report, herewith, will tell you our news. All the particulars in those you write me give me untold happiness. My supplies from Montpellier and from Bordeaux were sent by several ships; three (of which) have come in. The *Robuste* was in a hard fight, and put back into this port. There is no news of the *Superbe* and of the *Renommée* . . ."<sup>2</sup>

On July 28, 1757, he requests that an intelligent and capable young man be found to act as his secretary, his former secretary having married, and that Gradis send him to Canada. Apparently he desired even a commission of this sort to be looked after by Gradis. From another letter written to his mother, dated September 13, 1757, it may be gathered that Gradis' ship, the *Superbe*, had been surprised by the English and captured. He refers several times to the *Superbe*. On another occasion he informs his mother (in a letter dated June 2, 1758) that more ships sent by Gradis with essential provisions had reached port safely. Conditions in the

<sup>1</sup> *Journal du Marquis de Montcalm*, Québec, 1895, p. 212; see Appendix to this volume, p. 249, note<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> *Report of the Public Archives for 1929*, Ottawa, p. 57.

colony at the time were deplorable: ". . . the people were beginning to eat grass and herbs . . ."<sup>1</sup>

From what the Marquis de Montcalm, who waged France's last battle on the North American continent, has written it is evident that Gradis had become his "right hand." The sole support he had received from France had been through Gradis' efforts. For contact with France, and even with his family of which he speaks with so much affection and longing, he was also dependent upon Gradis.

Inevitably, the longer the war lasted the more restricted grew Gradis' means. However, the hopeless position in which France found herself because of her inability to put up a proper defence, aside from the impossibility of covering his heavy personal losses, did not dishearten him so much as the fact that Louis XV's ministers were such incompetent politicians. This greatly distressed him, as may be seen from a letter to M. Marin of Guadeloupe, dated November 25, 1758, in which, among other things, he wrote, baffled and embittered:

"For twenty months nothing has been done except to allow our marine to be destroyed. We have just lost Ile Royale, and now Canada is threatened. We have not a single warship left; they have all been captured. The price of foodstuffs is enormously high and it is impossible to send a single ship to the colonies . . ."<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless he could not be deterred from his vital duties to France. He exhibited the keenest interest in all that the French Minister of Marine was doing to maintain communications, however limited, with the embattled army in Canada. He somehow managed to secure several ships for the Government, helped to provide credit extensions, concerned himself with the fate of French prisoners, executed various missions on behalf of the Marquis de Montcalm whom he kept informed of the most significant developments at home, and was constantly having audiences in Paris and Versailles. In the copious personal correspondence he left, which was preserved in the archives of the Gradis family in France, there is a letter describing one such audience. The letter is addressed to his nephew, Moïse Gradis, whom he informs that he has visited M. Berryer, the Minister of Marine, who was known to have a harsh and irascible disposition. The Government was at the time indebted

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> JEAN DE MAUPASSANT, *opus cit.*, p. 76.

to him for many millions of pounds and Gradis felt himself at the end of his resources. The Minister told him that "one had to adapt oneself to the times," while others present, officers and high marine officials most of whom he did not know, showered him with compliments.<sup>1</sup>

There is a remarkable anecdote in the *Secret Memoirs* of Louis Petit de Bachaumont concerning this same interview, to the effect that Berryer had directed a stream of abuse against Gradis. Whereupon Gradis, hurt and angry, sprang to his feet and, looking him straight in the eye, proudly declared: "The name of Gradis, better known in the four quarters of the globe than that of France's Minister, is clear of all blemish. No taint of any kind covers its escutcheon!"<sup>2</sup>

By that time the Seven Years' War had reached a stage where there could be no question of the outcome. Although the struggle for Canada continued a few years longer, her fate was already sealed. It was obvious that the French could not defend Canada indefinitely and the weight of superior numbers and equipment would in the end prevail. In France there was still some endeavour, attempts were still being made to forward support for the army and the population of the hunger-stricken colony; this was France's last gesture toward Canada before the bond which had been maintained for over two hundred years was finally broken and Canada was lost to her for all time. And even in these last-minute attempts to send relief the Jewish shipowner of Bordeaux remained the moving spirit. But his ships were constantly being challenged by the enemy who was beginning to appear in ever-increasing numbers in the waters near New France. One such encounter figures prominently in the history of that period among the attendant circumstances which led to the fall of New France.

This was shortly before the siege of Quebec and the historically decisive battle of the Plains of Abraham which rang down the curtain on French dominion in Canada. An English fleet consisting of twenty ships and carrying a force of eleven thousand men appeared at the mouth of the St. Lawrence River. The army which later besieged and stormed Quebec was led by General Wolfe. Un-

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<sup>1</sup> I am obliged to M. Raoul Gradis, of Bordeaux, who was good enough to forward a photostatic copy of this letter to me.—B.G.S.

<sup>2</sup> The above-mentioned *Secret Memoirs*, vol. XV, London, 1784, pp. 260-261. Cf. also SIMON WOLF, *The American Jew as Soldier, Patriot and Citizen*, p. 480, where the same is related according to Graetz.

familiar with the course of the channel, the English had experienced great difficulty in navigating the St. Lawrence. Upon encountering a small frigate owned by Gradis, they captured her master, Denis de Vitré of Quebec, who was known to be an expert pilot and, threatening to hang him, compelled him to guide the expedition through the channel. De Vitré had once before been captured with one of Gradis' ships. He showed no great courage and the French never pardoned him for having traitorously conducted the English forces to Quebec. The English entrenched themselves at once and began the siege on July 26, 1759. The great battle which was to decide the destiny of the country took place on September 13. At the outset Wolfe was wounded fatally. The English had their revenge on the same day for Montcalm was also struck by a ball and paid with his life. On September 18 the city capitulated.

Of Gradis' many fine personal qualities none was so warmly acknowledged as his compassion for French prisoners in England. He intervened on their behalf and gave them every possible assistance. Through his influential friend in London, Benjamin Mendes da Costa, he was able to free a number of them and to aid them in many other ways. On one occasion Gradis wrote to da Costa that he had just learned of the defeat of some French vessels in a clash with the English. Since the possibility existed that many prisoners had been taken, Gradis begged him, at his expense, to do everything possible to improve the condition of the captured French captains, commanders and men. "I rely upon your friendship sufficiently," he wrote, "to hope that you will be good enough to render me this service. I do not know of any greater service that you can render me since I feel such great obligation toward all that body of men . . ."<sup>1</sup> Graetz, too, on several occasions refers to this highly characteristic act.<sup>2</sup>

With the fall of New France and the beginning of the British occupation, Gradis' connection with Canada came to an end. Only the record of his achievements remains, a record unfortunately

<sup>1</sup> JEAN DE MAUPASSANT, *opus cit.*, pp. 90-91.

<sup>2</sup> It is strange that neither in the English translation of his *Geschichte der Juden*, nor in the Hebrew one by "Sapir," is this episode referred to, although Graetz himself considered it sufficiently important to record in the original German edition of his monumental work. (See vol. XI, p. 190) Cf. also Graetz, in his *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*, where he writes ". . . Abraham Gradis gab einem Geschaeftsfreunde in London den Auftrag, den gefangenen franzoesischen Capitaenen und Commandanten auf seine Rechnung Alles zu verabreichen, was sie noethig haben sollten, um ihre Lage zu erleichtern." (*ibid.*, vol. XXIV, p. 452).

forgotten in Canada. These achievements were not forgotten in France. Their value was openly recognized and officially set forth in a document surviving from that period—the royal letters-patent of several years later, dated August 21, 1779, and signed by Louis XVI.

The activities of the Gradis family are completely summarized in this document, activities for which, as the letter states, France is deeply indebted. It declares that "David Gradis et Fils" had been charged "with the provisioning of Canada and of Isle Royale, from the year 1748 until the time when these vast regions had the misfortune to fall into the hands of the English." The letter goes on to state that by their devotion they had called forth the praise not only of all the Ministers whose confidence they had always enjoyed, but also that of the administrators of the French colonies; that, in time of peace as well as in time of war, they had furnished large sums of money and provisions to commanders of squadrons as well as to other marine officials to enable them to carry out the missions with which they had been entrusted by the Government, etc., etc.<sup>1</sup>

By the terms of these letters-patent, the Gradis family was accorded full and equal rights, including the right to own immovable property in the colonies and to enjoy there the same measure of privilege and freedom as enjoyed by other French citizens, "all commands, ordinances, decrees and regulations to the contrary notwithstanding." This was a short time prior to the granting of full civil rights to Jews by the French National Assembly. But by then, of course, Canada no longer belonged to France. For this reason Abraham Gradis was unable to receive here the recognition which his services to this country had merited. For this reason, too, he has left nothing to commemorate him here other than the imperishable place he has won for himself in the history of this country in the last years of the French régime.

It is regrettable that Gradis' accomplishments have remained almost unknown in Canada. Historians, even to the present day, have consistently ignored one of the salient features of early Canadian history. But the Jews of Canada may well remember with pride the part played by one of their race in the closing chapters of French dominion.

<sup>1</sup> "... les dits sieurs David Gradis et fils auraient été également chargés de tous les approvisionnements du Canada et d'île Royale depuis mil sept cent quarante-huit jusqu'au temps où ces vastes contrées ont eu le malheur de tomber sous la domination des Anglais, etc., etc." (*Arch. Gradis*, 11, 128).

France was destined to lose Canada sooner or later. It was impossible for Montcalm to sustain a prolonged siege. For it must not be forgotten that at the same time he had to contend with hunger, disease, and decadent, corrupt officials whose infamous acts drove the inhabitants of New France to despair. And it was at this crucial hour that the Jew of Bordeaux alone came to his aid. Montcalm himself openly acknowledged this aid and hoped that it would continue to reach him without interruption. But although fully documented in Casgrain's *Collection of Manuscripts* which was published in Quebec City, his relations with Gradis have elsewhere been almost completely overlooked.

Regarding Abraham Gradis' personal life, it is important to note that he felt a close attachment to his people and was deeply rooted in Jewish traditions. In this connection Graetz tells an anecdote concerning him and the Duc de Richelieu.<sup>1</sup> The latter while driving sighted Gradis and, ordering his carriage to halt, invited Gradis to accompany him. Gradis declined—it was the Sabbath. "In that case," said the Duke, stepping out of the carriage and taking his arm, "we shall both walk." His personality has given rise to many legends. One typical anecdote appears in different versions. When on his death bed, surrounded by his family, he withdrew a small, sealed box from a locked drawer of his writing table. This box, he informed them, contained the promissory notes, for large sums, of honest persons whom he had at one time or another assisted financially. He had never demanded payment of the money and now that he was dying he feared that his eternal rest would be troubled if his heirs acted differently. Whereupon he removed the notes and burned them in the presence of his family.<sup>2</sup>

Abraham Gradis died on July 17, 1780, but the spirit of patriotic service to France survived among the Jews of Bordeaux. The American War of Independence provided them with an opportunity to give tangible expression to this spirit. According to the records of the local Portuguese Jewish community, the Jews of Bordeaux collected a fund with which to present a warship to the Americans in the name of France. The list of subscribers to the fund is dated June 9, 1782.<sup>3</sup> It was both a contribution to the struggle and a

<sup>1</sup> In his *Monatsschrift*, etc., vol. XXIV (1875).

<sup>2</sup> ELIACIN CARMOLY, in *Archives Israélites*, 15 mars 1875.

<sup>3</sup> *Revue des études juives*, vol. XXV, p. 104.

tribute to what Abraham Gradis, of whom the Jewish community of Bordeaux was justly proud, had on a far broader scale accomplished for his country.

It is interesting, in connection with the unforgettable part played by Gradis, to record here another remarkable fact. It was not only Montcalm who found himself closely allied with a Jew in the battle for North America. It is not generally known that General Wolfe, too, was considerably aided by a Jew, Sir Alexander Schomberg, a member of his staff. Captain Schomberg, a naval officer in command of the frigate *Diana*, was frequently consulted by General Wolfe who valued his judgment highly. Next to Admiral Saunders who was in command of the British fleet in Canadian waters, it was he who carried out the operations requiring the greatest daring and enterprise.

Several attacks against the French were personally directed by Captain Schomberg. So vitally strategic a point as Montmorency Falls was taken by him. He was the first to set foot there, later giving the signal for his troops to land. His capture of this important position made it possible for General Wolfe to reach Quebec with his army and to besiege the city. Sir Alexander Schomberg's "Journal," which is interspersed with French words, abbreviations and nautical terms, describes the many different operations he executed. Not only did he participate in the siege of Quebec, but also in that of Louisburg and in the various engagements which occurred in the Gulf of St. Lawrence in 1759 and 1760.

He was the son of Dr. Meyer Low Schomberg, a well-known London physician at the beginning of the 18th century, and a member of an eminent family of doctors and Hebrew scholars. This family also won distinction in the English naval service to which it contributed several vice-admirals and commanders. Captain Schomberg was born in 1716 and, at the age of 27, entered the navy where he gained steady promotion. He was transferred from the *Richmond*, to the command of which he had been appointed in 1757, to the *Diana* with which he took part in the capture of Quebec. He was later appointed commander of the warship *Essex*, a ship of 64 guns, and, in 1761, assisted in taking the Straits of Belle Isle which lead from the upper part of Newfoundland to the mouth of the St. Lawrence.

Captain Schomberg died in Dublin on March 19, 1804. His "Journal" in which he describes his part in the campaign against the

territory surrounding Quebec, from July 11 until September 10, 1759, contains many notations pencilled in by General Wolfe as well as a map drawn by him.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *JOURNAL OF SCHOMBERG, 1759-1776*, *The Archives*, Ottawa; *Army and Navy*, London, April, 1898; *Jew. Encycl.*, vol. XI, p. 106; *Report of the Public Archives of Canada for 1923, Miscellaneous*, p. 18. See Appendix to this volume, p. 250, note<sup>2</sup>.

## THE ENGLISH COLONIAL PERIOD

### CHAPTER FOUR

#### THE BEGINNING OF JEWISH SETTLEMENT

**I**N EVERY era of history the social dynamic of the times has deeply influenced the pattern of Jewish life and has often forced its radical reorientation upon new paths. It was upon such new paths that, by a whim of history, Jewish life was diverted at the close of the fifteenth century. The expulsion of the Jews from Spain, on the one hand, and the discovery of America, on the other, were the basic factors which contributed to the opening of a new phase of Jewish history. For simultaneously with Spain's decision to expel the Jews came Columbus' embarkation on his voyage of discovery to the continent that was later to become the home of millions of Jews. Similarly, in the rivalry among European imperialisms for new fields for conquest and new spheres of influence the hard-pressed Jews of Europe found a partial solution to their problem. Already renowned for their mercantile abilities, they even became to a certain extent the vanguard of this imperialism and thereby prepared a haven for themselves in the New World.

Jews were barely tolerated in England at that time and the possibility of another expulsion from that country was ever present. Nevertheless they were well received in the English-American colonies where they were granted certain privileges which enabled them to remain there. The Jews in turn reciprocated. Thanks to them the areas concerned were economically stimulated and trade flourished everywhere. Thus, by way of the American colonies, they came into early contact with the English part of Canada which, according to the "Treaty of Utrecht" signed in 1713, embraced that area which today is the Province of Nova Scotia and a portion of New Brunswick. Consequently the first Jews to enter or to have any relations with Canada under the English are connected in name with well-known Jewish families then resident in America.

Jewish merchants and travellers had for some time sailed the seas leading to the newly-discovered continent. Its unrevealed possibilities enticed and obsessed all. There was an element of mystery in it—something to be unfathomed, disclosed. Ahead lay a New World—its countless islands and peninsulas waiting to be discovered, waiting for men to exploit their rich natural resources. One of these little-known areas was the Labrador Peninsula. Although Labrador had previously been discovered by Cabot, Hudson and others, there is a Jewish name intimately associated with it—that of Joseph de la Penha, head of an old Spanish-Jewish family living in Holland.

A document, carefully preserved to the present day, bears witness that in 1677, while drifting in the waters off Canada, several of de la Penha's ships touched the coast of Labrador and that he promptly claimed the territory for England over which William III, who was also ruler of Holland, then reigned.

Some twenty years later the same Joseph de la Penha chanced to rescue William's life when the vessel on board which the King was sailing to Holland was caught in a violent storm at sea and began to sink. As a reward William III granted to de la Penha the very region which, twenty years earlier, he had claimed for England and on November 1, 1697, an official proclamation to that effect was issued. The original text of the document is in Dutch. Translated roughly, it reads:

“William By the Grace of God, King of England, Scotland, France and Ireland, Prince of Orange, Hereditary Governor and Stadholder of Gelderland and the County of Zutphen, Holland, Zeeland, Westfriesland, Utrecht, Overysel, and the Province of Drenthe, Hereditary Captain General and Admiral of the United Provinces.

“Make known,

“Whereas in the year 1667 discoveries and possessions have been made in our name of certain territories situated in the northern part of America formerly in no one's possession but known for shipwrecks suffered on the coasts under the name of Labrador, Central and Estotiland and that since the aforementioned taking possession, on the twenty-third day of September of the said year, our Coat of Arms of Nassau and Orange have been fixed there in order that we might dispose of them to

people who may wish to establish there a commerce under our authority and protection.

“As such and being willing at the instance of Joseph de la Penja (original spelling of the family name, of Spanish origin), citizen and inhabitant of the City of Rotterdam, by virtue of therefore mentioned taking possession of the said territories and thereonto belonging, having granted and do grant by these unto the said Joseph de la Penja the nominal and territorial rights, high, middle and lower jurisdictions to and over the said territories and the coast as far as it extends itself from the 54th to the 60th degree of Northern latitude, with all the land, woods, forests, rivers, fruits and fisheries situated therein, and of the same with the full right, never ceasing, perpetual or immortal tenure, inheritance for them and his lawful heirs and successors, be they men or conformably to the regulations of the Feudal Law.

“In granting or giving away unto others any part of these lands by tenure it is provided that after the expiration of two years from the date hereof shall be paid or cause to be paid in our behalf forever and to our heirs or those empowered unto offices for the time being appointed for that purpose, one per cent of all goods or wares which shall be exported from them or to other countries.

“And that said tenure shall be subject to a feudal gift with a northern Eagle or 10 golden ducats, each time of its coming into other hands, demise or other dispositions, and paying Homage to us our heirs or into the hands of our deputies and taking the Oath of Allegiance and conforming in every respect to this, we therefore promise to the said Joseph de la Penja and his posterity the possession of the said territory and protection and defence as our vassals, against all vexations and molest.”<sup>1</sup>

The document was signed by King William himself who forwarded it to la Penha together with a personal letter bearing the same date.

Joseph de la Penha never availed himself of the grant, nor did his heirs ever lay claim to it although they were aware that a document confirming their right to the land was somewhere in existence. It was only some 225 years later that, in an attempt to verify their title to the territory, they presented a claim to the Privy Council,

<sup>1</sup> *Montreal Star*, November 6, 1926; *The Gazette*, Montreal, April 17, 1935.

the highest judicial authority in England. One of the claimant heirs was Isaac de la Penha, a descendant of Joseph de la Penha and cantor of the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation in Montreal.

The first English proposals for colonizing certain parts of Canada struck a responsive note in Jewish circles. In 1749 these circles seriously considered establishing some Jews in Nova Scotia. At that time a project for settling English, Scottish and Irish colonists was being developed in England. Protestants especially were encouraged to emigrate to Canada. As a potential new point of settlement it was also recognized by Jews and great pains were taken to persuade impoverished Jewish families to settle there. Plans were even made to support such settlers for a period of three years.<sup>1</sup> Not a single Jew, however, was to be found amongst the colonists then transported here, the majority being English Protestants.

Nevertheless we find that from the outset Jews had evinced a certain amount of interest in the Canadian Province of Nova Scotia and had come in contact with it even before the whole of Canada was occupied by the English. They had frequently journeyed there from the nearby English-American colonies, but only for business purposes and as purveyors to the English Army, an occupation in which many of them were engaged. In this connection several letters are to be found in the Canadian archives extolling the promptness and conscientiousness with which they transacted their affairs with the army.

Under the heading, "Halifax, October 18, 1752," the archives also disclose that one Israel Abrahams wrote to the London Board of Trade offering to undertake the production of potash according to the Flemish method. He enclosed several samples and emphasized the advantage of this industry to the Canadian Province.<sup>2</sup> Mention is also made of an Abrahams, a Halifax landowner, in the "Amherst Papers," where it is specifically stated that he was a Jew.<sup>3</sup> It may be concluded that Jews had most certainly settled there even before they settled in Montreal and before the entire country fell to the English.

It is assumed, although on meagre grounds, that the first Jews to settle in Canada came over with General Braddock's colonial

<sup>1</sup> A. M. HYAMSON, *A History of the Jews in England*, London, 1908, p. 267.

<sup>2</sup> *Report on Canadian Archives for 1894*, p. 185.

<sup>3</sup> *Publications*, Am. Jew. Hist. Soc., no. 35, p. 5; see also Appendix, p. 251, note <sup>3</sup>.

troops in 1755 and that they later took part in some encounters with the Indians. One or two Jews are also said to have been included in Washington's army when he marched against the French through the Alleghany Mountains the previous year.<sup>1</sup> Conclusive evidence, however, is lacking to show that these were the real beginnings of Jewish settlement in Canada. But it is none the less true that Jews had displayed a lively interest in the country's commercial possibilities long before there were any visible indications of Jewish settlement in present-day Canada, as may be gathered from a statement made by Michael Gratz that from 1759 to 1763 "on his own account and risk he engaged in his first experiments with the coastal trade between Halifax and Georgia."<sup>2</sup>

From these and other instances, isolated though they may be, it is nevertheless possible to glean some conception of how Jewish attention was gradually focused on Canada in the period of English colonial rule and how the foundation for a permanent Jewish settlement in the country was laid. For Canada, then laboriously undergoing the transition from one authority to another, it was a time of difficult experiences. The Jews showed a marked preference for the English to whom the French had ceded the country, and were grateful for the opportunity to throw in their lot with the new régime. But they did not come empty-handed. They came prepared to contribute their full share to the common enterprise and to participate actively in the affairs of the colony.

A sort of by-product of the struggle for the country, the arrival of the first Jews to locate themselves in Canada coincided with the coming of the English. The historical drama then being enacted on the stage of the North American continent, which saw the end of France's role in the northern part of the New World and the beginning of England's, also saw the advent of Jews upon the scene. A small group of Sephardic Jews reached Canada together with Lieutenant-General Sir Jefferey Amherst. These were the first Jews to set foot on Canadian soil with the intention of making this country their home.

By then Jews were no longer unfamiliar with the country. David Franks, a relative of David Salesby Franks, together with his partner, Isaac Levy and his father and brother, Jacob and Moses Franks, were chief purveyors to the British forces in Canada and in

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<sup>1</sup> DR. C. ADLER, in *Jew. Encycl.*, vol. I, p. 503.

<sup>2</sup> *The Gratz Papers*, in *Publications*, Am. Jew. Hist. Soc., no. 23, p. 4.

the American colonies prior to the English conquest of the country. They held this office during the wars with the French and the Indians and for several years after. The official dispatches and correspondence of General Monckton, General Amherst, General Gage and Colonel Bouquet make frequent mention of these members of the Franks family and praise them warmly for the efficient manner in which they conducted their branch of the army service. David Franks was in almost continuous correspondence with the highest officers of the English army to whom he communicated essential information and he was often charged with the task of supplying transportation for the troops. The Franks, it should be added, resided in New York and Philadelphia but frequently came to Canada in connection with their duties to the British troops stationed here. As a consequence they developed an early acquaintance with this country and the names of Moses Franks, Jacob Franks, Isaac Levy and Mathias Bush of Philadelphia, and Naphthaly Franks are to be found among the first applicants for free land in Cape Breton.<sup>1</sup>

Foremost among the Jews who came to Canada at the time of the British occupation was Aaron (also called Aaron Philip) Hart. Born in London, England in 1724, he was a lieutenant in the English army serving with the "German Legion," as it was called. In 1752<sup>2</sup> he accompanied Sir Frederick Haldimand and Colonel Bouquet on a visit to the American colonies and subsequently remained in New York. He later re-enlisted in the British army and was appointed commissary officer to the troops of Sir Jefferey Amherst. He also assembled a battalion to help the English conquer Canada. His battalion, part of the 60th Royal American Regiment of New York, counted in its ranks several other Jews who had come over with Amherst.

It is believed that he was even about to assume command of an entire regiment but later contented himself with more modest military duties. When Amherst and his invading army marched on Montreal, Aaron Hart was a member of his staff and when, following the city's surrender (September 8, 1760), Amherst triumphantly rode through the old city gates, Commissary Hart was one of the officers who rode by his side.

<sup>1</sup> *Report on Canadian Archives for 1894*, p. 296.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix, p. 251, note.<sup>4</sup>

Among those who came over with Amherst were also Hananiel Garcia, Emanuel De Cordova, Isaac de Miranda, Lazarus David, Uriel Moresco, Jacob de Maurera Abraham Franks and several others. In one capacity or another they were all connected with the army, some of them as officers, and took part in the various operations of the colonial troops. A document dated some years later refers to Jacob de Maurera as a former sergeant-major in the army. According to their military ranks, it may be seen that these Jewish arrivals participated actively in all the events that marked the transition of North America from French occupation to English.

Samuel Judah who arrived here at the same time as Aaron Hart was a close relative of his; they had previously sailed together from England to the American colonies. Both settled in Three Rivers where Hart continued to hold his military post. Later, when Haldimand assumed command of the Canadian forces, he appointed Hart his Commissary General.

The city of Three Rivers was then an important centre of the fur trade that had begun to thrive with the coming of the English. Well-skilled in commerce, both Aaron Hart and Samuel Judah engaged in the trade and exported extensively to England. Of the two, however, Aaron Hart's contribution to Three Rivers was the greater; his diversified commercial activities were of material benefit to the city, one of whose most respected citizens he soon became. Judah, who preferred a more congenial environment, later moved to Montreal. The atmosphere of the young Sephardic community, the nucleus for which had meanwhile been formed with the arrival of a few more Jews, was more to his liking. Several years later he left the country and settled in New York.

The first arrivals in the years immediately following the capitulation of Montreal may justly be termed the pioneers of Jewish settlement in the country. In addition to those already mentioned, they included Uriah Judah, Levy Solomons, Ezekiel Solomons, Manuel Gomez, Simon Levy and Fernandez da Fonseca, who were soon joined by several others. Their names reveal their origin. Almost at the same time a few Jews settled in Quebec City and other points. Able merchants and experienced in every phase of American colonial trade, most of them came over at the request of General Amherst. Among them were many men of means and the English governor recognized them as a valuable element essential to the development of the country.

One of the first Jews to respond to Sir Jefferey Amherst's invitation was Samuel Jacobs who settled outside Montreal soon after the fall of the city. He established himself at St. Denis on the Richelieu and quickly gained prominence in the district. In addition to his extensive trade he also engaged in furnishing provisions to the army and enjoyed widespread connections. He was noted for his wealth and owned real estate in Montreal, Sorel, Quebec, St. Denis, Albany, New York and Philadelphia. His name appears on a petition that was signed in 1764 in connection with the Walker incident. Some twenty other signatures appear on the petition in which Jacobs is described as a "principal merchant."<sup>1</sup> He would frequently, and often gratuitously, lend sums of money to the local inhabitants. A curious method he employed to remind a debtor of his obligation was to have it proclaimed in church. He was, on the whole, held in high esteem by all. A letter of Colonel Moses Hazen, Commander of the District of Montreal, pays tribute to his resourcefulness in furnishing supplies to the army.

Samuel Jacobs, who died in 1787, differed in one important respect from the other Jewish pioneers of that period. The latter, some of whom descended from the onetime Marranos, did not lack the courage to maintain the traditions and the faith for which their ancestors had once so greatly suffered. Jacobs married a French-Canadian girl and his children were educated at the Ursuline convent in Quebec. His will, dated October 7, 1775, bears the signature of one "Thomas Jacobs," his brother, who married a Christian girl as well. The marriage took place at the Roman Catholic cathedral in Quebec on February 26, 1781, according to an old church register. A Captain Jacobs, commander of the ship *Defiance*, belonged to the same family. He was closely associated with General Haldimand for whom he carried important dispatches from Bic and Halifax to New York.

Among those who made their home here during the first period of Jewish settlement should also be included Andrew Hays, David Salesby Franks, son of Abraham Franks, Meyer Solomons, Jacob and David Franks, Elias Seixas, Moses Hart, brother of Aaron Hart, and Joseph Bindona. Abraham Franks soon moved to Quebec. We find that a Franks was even chief of the fire brigade in that city. Far earlier than Abraham Franks' arrival, however, the name of

<sup>1</sup> *Report, etc., for 1888*, p. 7.

Eleazer Levy is to be found on a petition from Quebec addressed to the King of England for the recall of General Murray.<sup>1</sup>

The conditions then prevailing in Canada were not encouraging to further immigration on a larger scale. This held true for Jews as well as non-Jews. Due to these same conditions many who had settled here did not remain; after staying a short while, some who had drifted north from the American colonies migrated to New York, Philadelphia and other points. Such was the case with Eleazer Levy and several other Jewish pioneers who had earlier settled in Montreal and Quebec, for several years later they are to be found among the members of the Spanish-Jewish "Shearith Israel" congregation in New York.<sup>2</sup> Typically enough, they did not lose contact with the friends they had left in Canada. The friendship between Aaron Hart and Eleazer Levy, for example, endured through the course of many years.<sup>3</sup>

It has already been stated that many of the first Jews to come to Canada or to have relations with the country after the British conquest were connected with certain well-known Jewish families then living in the colonies to the south. Whether prompted by curiosity, adventure or trade—or perhaps a combination of all three—interest in the newly-acquired territory ran high among the Jews of the older colonies and many of them moved north. Although not all who came remained here, they had a profound and lasting influence on the shaping of Jewish life in the young and little-developed country.

Canada and the nearby American colonies were then as one country, but a community of interests obtained among the Jews of the two regions possibly to a greater extent than among the non-Jews. For the small group of Jews that had gathered in Montreal this was especially advantageous since it provided them with the rudiments of a communal life. Now, once he had taken root in the country, the new settler would have an added incentive to remain.

The Jews who first settled in this country were, as their names suggest, mainly of Spanish and Portuguese origin. They came either directly from England or from the American colonies to which they or their parents had made their way from different parts of the Old

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<sup>1</sup> *The Archives*, Series B, vol. 8, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *The Lyons Collection in Publications*, Am. Jew. Hist. Soc., vol. 27, p. 40.

<sup>3</sup> RAYMOND DOUVILLE, *Aaron Hart, récit historique*, Trois-Rivières, 1939, pp. 102, 109, 110.

World. It should be noted, however, that the number of Jews from England who settled in the American colonies was small in comparison, for example, with the number of English colonists in the West Indies alone. This may be explained by the fact that there were relatively few Jews in England when colonization of the Americas first began, and even when their number grew larger most of them preferred to remain in England rather than set out in search of new homes. But later, as awareness of Canada's immense resources became widespread and as the country grew in importance as a colonial centre, there was a revival of immigration and an increasing number of Jews hopefully set out from the British Isles to seek their fortune in the New World.

Those who came in this manner either from England or from the bordering colonies quickly proved their usefulness to their adopted country. Arriving in the very midst of the upheavals and disturbances that marked the transition period following the war, strangers in an alien land, they adjusted themselves to their new environment with remarkable speed and introduced their energetic and enterprising spirit into the country at a time when it was most needed. They were more than content to remain and enjoy freedom and opportunity where the people and the atmosphere were so hospitable. Most of them engaged in trade with great success. From old letters and documents relating to their business interests, it appears that they had established wide commercial relations with many parts of America and England. An old business letter<sup>1</sup> discloses that Samuel Judah's fur trade with London at one time amounted to 30,000 pounds, which for those days was a considerable sum. In a comparatively short period some of them attained economic and social prominence and were regarded as highly desirable citizens who played an important role in, and contributed a great deal to, the life of the country.

The first Jewish landowners in Montreal were Lazarus David (born in England, 1734; died in Montreal, October 22, 1776) and one Levy Simon who is none other than the previously-mentioned Simon Levy. Both their names are inscribed in the register of landowners in the city of Montreal for the year 1767. They are followed by Ezekiel Solomons (1780) and Solomon Levy (1782), the

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<sup>1</sup> This letter, together with many other old papers and documents, was for a long time in the possession of the late Lewis A. Hart.

largest Jewish real estate owner, as may be gathered from the fact that his name appears under three different numbers in the old register. These in turn are followed by Samuel David, Samuel Judah, Samuel Jacobs and others.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Livre-Terrier de la Seigneurie de Montréal*, in *Mémoires et Documents* of the Montreal Historical Society, vol. II.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## THE FOUNDING OF THE FIRST COMMUNITY

AS CONDITIONS favorable to settlement gradually developed, the Jews became more and more acclimatized to the country. They fitted readily into the general social and economic pattern. Accordingly, many of those who adopted Canada as their home in the early years of that era not only attained a measure of success but rose to positions of great prominence in the colony. They were warmly received by the community at large, including the more influential circles, as citizens of the most desirable type. Canada needed their ability and initiative. Nor did they fail to justify the confidence placed in them.

The experiences of these early pioneers who hewed a path through the wilderness of the new country would in themselves afford material for an interesting chapter—a chapter that would tell of human adaptability and endurance under the most trying conditions. In many cases no trace of their lives remains; only here and there the vague record of a Jewish name in some obscure county register redeems them momentarily from oblivion. Among these first residents were men whose cultured manners and personality and keenness of mind soon opened all doors for them. Many clung tenaciously to the traditions and faith of their people for they took great pride in them and saw in them no obstacle. They did not consider it essential to conceal their national identity in order to win the respect of their Christian neighbours or to take part in the life of the country.

Aaron Hart, it has already been noted, settled in Three Rivers and became influential both in that city and in the surrounding district. His friendship with Haldimand and with military circles in general, which began before the British occupation, added greatly to his prestige. Like most Englishmen who settled in Canada after the war, he engaged in commerce, to which by training and inclination he was well suited. As his commercial operations in the fur trade and in other fields expanded, so did Three Rivers; his business became in effect the economic nerve centre of that city. More than any other individual, Hart was responsible for the development of Three Rivers as an important centre. For over a century the Hart family was closely associated with this city where traces of the family

remain to the present day. Three Rivers may well be grateful to the Harts. No event of any importance occurred there during the period indicated without their close participation, as the thick volumes of municipal and private archives attest.

Thus it was at Three Rivers that, from the very beginning of the British occupation, a pregnant chapter of Canadian Jewish history was written by the Hart family which was intimately related with the entire course of Jewish life in the country. The second post office established in Canada to facilitate communication with England and certain parts of America was located at Three Rivers in the home of Seigneur Hart.<sup>1</sup> So popular was he that his home was frequently the gathering place for the aristocracy of the country. When Edward, Duke of Kent, and father of Queen Victoria, came to Canada in 1791 to assume command of the 60th Regiment—the same regiment for which Hart had organized a battalion several years earlier—he called on Hart; more than a personal tribute, this visit was an indication of the high regard in which Jews were then held.

From numerous papers and private letters, some of which have been preserved in the British Museum's collection of manuscripts, it may be seen that Hart was closely associated with the leaders of the political, social and economic life of the country. According to notices appearing in the *Gentlemen's Magazine* and other English publications following his death, he was reputed to be the wealthiest man in the British Empire outside of the British Isles. He was especially revered by the people of Three Rivers among whom he distributed large sums in charity. His generosity to the poor and needy, even to the Catholic monastery, won him the title of "Pope of Canada" among French-Canadians.

At the same time, Hart did not permit the hard core of his Jewish consciousness to be dented by his environment. Although mixed marriages were inordinately prevalent at the time, Hart solved his marital problem in quite a different manner; he sailed for London where he married his cousin, Dorothea Judah, a sister of Samuel Judah and of Uriah Judah who was Prothonotary of Three Rivers. It is of interest to note that Aaron Hart was one of the first free-masons in America. His certificate of membership is dated New York, June 10, 1760. Inscribed on a large parchment, it is now

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<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires et Documents*, Montreal Historical Society, vol. v, p. 268.

faded with age but still legible. It is not known, however, if this was the original certificate or merely a letter of recommendation from his lodge on his joining Amherst's army prior to its leaving for Canada. Aaron Hart died at Three Rivers on December 28, 1800, leaving eleven children of whom only eight are mentioned in his will.

Although Montreal was not the only point of settlement for Jews, comparatively few indications of Jewish residence are to be found elsewhere. This may be attributed to their having largely intermingled with the gentile population; the old registers of Montreal give some inkling of the extent to which Jews practised mixed marriage. It is not known what became of the first marriage registers (1760-1765) which were kept by army chaplains, but later registers show that marriages between Jews and gentiles in Montreal, where a Jewish nucleus had by then been established, were common occurrences. Even more so must this have held true for small communities where there were no more than one or two Jews.

Further study reveals that the Jews who first settled in the Quebec region were neither American nor English—they were mainly German Jews who apparently came over with other German immigrants. No trace of them remains for they were completely engulfed by their surroundings. The only proof of their existence are names recorded in old Catholic registers—Joseph Scherer, Henry Kremer and others. One or two Jewish names are also found among a group of German colonists who were granted a land concession in a district of the same region on October 14, 1783.

Little can be said with regard to the communal life of the Jews in Montreal at that time. Although they lived in close association with their neighbours, as may easily be imagined, most of them kept themselves distinctly apart as Jews and, on that account, sought to retain their identity by living in a homogeneous group and by developing the closest common interests. A factor of no little influence on the entire course of Jewish life in this country, this attitude explains why for many years Jews preferred to settle in Montreal rather than in other parts of Canada. Nowhere, however, did their Christian neighbours regard them as strangers, as aliens, but looked upon them as equal British subjects. Consequently they felt themselves free and secure—secure as human beings and as Jews.

This feeling slowly gave rise to a desire to express themselves as a national and religious entity. The need was felt for a place of worship on the Sabbath and on holy days. A meeting, held on Decem-

ber 30, 1768, to discuss the matter resulted in the founding of the first Jewish congregation in Canada. The name chosen for the congregation was "Shearith Israel," a name dear to the Jews of Spanish and Portuguese descent who had emigrated from England or from the English and Dutch colonies, from Barbados, Jamaica, Curacao and other places. But unlike so many other early communities in America and the West Indies and even some later ones in Canada, the new community founded in the northern part of the continent was to be permanent and to grow in strength with the years. This may be attributed to the friendly environment and to the liberal attitude displayed toward Jews, even though they did not at that time possess autonomy in civil matters affecting their own community.

For nine years their place of worship was on St. James Street. Services were conducted according to the Sephardic ritual and close connections were maintained with the Portuguese Jews in London who presented them with two scrolls of the Law which are still to be found in the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue in Montreal. Religious problems were referred to Dr. Raphael Meldola, Chief Rabbi of England. The place of worship soon proved inadequate and a movement was started for the erection of a permanent synagogue. Members of the youthful congregation contributed toward a fund while the land was donated by David David (born in Montreal, 1764; died 1824) who inherited it from his father, Lazarus David. In 1777 the first, and for the next eighty years the only, synagogue in Canada was erected. The synagogue was situated on Notre Dame Street near the site of the present Court House. It was a low, stone structure, with a high, red roof, fenced around by a lofty whitewashed wall. A tablet placed by the Numismatic and Antiquarian Society now marks the site. A few years previously the community had also acquired a piece of land on St. Janvier Street, in the vicinity of the present Dominion Square, for a cemetery. Lazarus David was the first to be interred there, in 1776. His remains and tombstone were subsequently transferred to the present Spanish and Portuguese cemetery. The original headstone has been preserved to the present day and is the oldest Jewish gravestone in Canada.

Piercing through layers of accumulated historic dust, the old minutes of the Sephardic Congregation in Montreal shed much revealing light on that era. The small, newly-formed community

was closely bound up with the synagogue which was the focal point of Jewish life. But even in the events which centred about the synagogue that life was arid and sterile. The "Sephardic style," aristocratic, conservative and orthodox, set the rigid pattern for every occurrence in the Jewish world. The inner life of the small community, as may be gathered from the same records, was directed by the communal heads, consisting of the Parnas, the Gabay and three associates who together formed the "Junto." On a dais reserved for them alone, they sat apart from the rest of the congregation in the synagogue. Those who were honoured by being selected as "Junto" were styled "Gentlemen of Mahamad" or Elders, an exceptional distinction carrying special privileges. The Elders were invested with extraordinary, autocratic powers over the rest of the community. Acutely conscious of their descent from ancient and venerable families, conscious of their forbears who once frequented royal courts and were prepared to be burned on the auto-da-fe rather than abjure the faith and traditions of their people, they took excessive pride in their ancestry. The past represented their highest ideal—represented, too, a criterion for the present. Inevitably this ideal gave rise to an aristocratic aloofness which surrounded them like a wall, effectively insulating them from others; for many years it exercised a profound effect on Jewish life in this country. Immersed in themselves and in their traditions, they zealously and stubbornly upheld every tenet of orthodoxy and conservatism, even to affecting powdered perukes, high stocks and huge ruffles.

The original founders of the Sephardic Congregation in Montreal were accorded various communal privileges, including that of a double vote at all community councils; their sons inherited this privilege when they reached the age of twenty-one. This is but one example of the almost patriarchal social relations obtaining among the Jews at that period, of which a salient feature was the unlimited authority possessed by the community leaders who, at the same time, tried to maintain a voluntary discipline marked by friendly co-operation. Thus, from the old by-laws of the "Shearith Israel" Congregation we learn that the Elders had constituted themselves a kind of "Beth Din" with the power to command any member of the congregation to appear before them at their discretion. They were also empowered to impose penalties for any misdemeanour. The original by-laws of the "Shearith Israel" Congregation, dated "the 3rd day in the month of Tebeth, 5538" (1778), bear the

signatures of Levy Solomons, Parnas; Uriah Judah, Gabay; David David, Abraham Franks, Andrew Hays and several others. In the minutes of the 25th Elul 5538 (September, 1778), it is recorded that on that day Ezekiel Solomons and Levy Michaels were respectively selected "Hatan Torah" and "Hatan Bereshith" for the year, and that Isaac Judah, Myer Michaels and Andrew Hays having declined these offices, they were each condemned to pay a fine of two pounds and ten shillings. Samuel Judah, it is further recorded, was fined three pounds for refusing to serve as Parnas.

The statutes of the Synagogue constituted a sort of code of laws for the entire community aimed at preserving internal unity as well as a dour and inflexible orthodoxy. One clause, for example, imposed a penalty upon "any person absenting himself from the House of God on any frivolous pretence." Other clauses were equally harsh. Severe penalties were decreed for any violation of the code or for any breach of communal morals in general. Nevertheless when a dispute arose within the community a few years later, the leaders were unable to cope with it and were compelled to submit it to the courts of law.

It has previously been mentioned that during its first years the young congregation was in close touch with the Portuguese Jews of London and referred all questions relating to Judaism to the Chief Rabbi there. Gradually, however, the need for a spiritual leader grew stronger. Accordingly a request that someone be designated to fill the post was forwarded to London where an agreement was entered into on February 13, 1778, between Hyam Myers, on behalf of the Jews in Canada, and Reverend Jacob Raphael Cohen who undertook to act in the capacity of "Shochet, Hazan, Teacher and Reader" for the Jews of Montreal. He arrived in Canada that same year to assume his post, thereby placing the tiny Sephardic congregation on an equal footing with its sister congregations in America. And judged by contemporary standards Jewish communal life was on the whole quite satisfactory, even surpassing that of other denominations, as may be gathered from a report submitted to London deploring the precarious condition of the official "Church of England." "At Quebec," the report reads, "the only clergyman is a very old Swede, who cannot speak a word of plain English. At Montreal the case is the same. At Three Rivers the situation may be called shameful; the conduct of the clergyman would disgrace the meanest profession. He speaks English worse, if possible, than

the others, and was expelled for some flagitious act from a community of friars."<sup>1</sup>

The fact that the Jews in Canada did not then possess the fundamental rights of British subjects did not prevent them from figuring prominently in society or from holding public office. Jacob Kuhn was bailiff of Montreal in 1777 and held this position for a period of ten years or more, as may be deduced from his testimony at the hearings held in 1787 to reform the administration of justice in the country.<sup>2</sup> He later became what today would be known as Police Commissioner, and appears to have continued in this office for a considerable length of time.<sup>3</sup> An immigrant German Jew, Jacob Kuhn had previously served in the English army; his name appears among those who fought in the ranks of the Loyalists as well. Two similar names are listed on the roll of the 2nd Battalion of the King's Royal Regiment in 1785.<sup>4</sup>

Obviously Jewish life was not immune to prevailing social influence and Jews readily adopted the customs of their neighbours. It is therefore interesting to view their relationship to the greatest social evil of the time, the slave trade which then flourished throughout the continent. Samuel Judah is mentioned several times in connection with the slave traffic then being carried on in the country.<sup>5</sup> A striking illustration is furnished by Borthwick.<sup>6</sup> "In the courts of 1781," he writes, "held in the month of April of that year, one Samuel Judah makes a complaint that a negro man named Jacob was sold to him by Mr. Lauzon, having lived with him as his servant slave for about five months, that he did assault him and take him by the collar, etc., etc." The negro who had dared assault his master was committed to prison and was ordered to post security for his future behaviour.<sup>7</sup>

The order and harmony that reigned within the Montreal community did not endure long. A few years later a dispute over

<sup>1</sup> *Report on Canadian Archives*, 1890, p. 168.

<sup>2</sup> *Public Archives of Canada*, Series Q, vol. 30-2, p. 536.

<sup>3</sup> REV. J. D. BORTHWICK, *History and Biographical Gazetteer of Montreal*, 1892, pp. 47 and 477.

<sup>4</sup> DR. WM. CANNIFF, *History of the Settlement of Upper Canada* (Appendix).

<sup>5</sup> In *Report on Canadian Archives for 1888*.

<sup>6</sup> *History and Biographical Gazetteer of Montreal*, p. 27.

<sup>7</sup> No mention is made of this trial in the Court Archives for the district of Montreal, and the late Mr. Francis J. Audet, who was kind enough to look it up, could find nothing concerning the same affair in the *Quebec Gazette* for March, April and May, 1781.

the remuneration of the minister that not even the stringent discipline enforced by the congregation could prevent, split the community into two camps, of which the smaller sided with the Rabbi. The latter was finally compelled to bring suit against Levy Solomons, then Parnas of the synagogue, for the balance of his salary. This strange occurrence is duly recorded in a document containing a detailed report of the trial. According to the brief, the plaintiff, Rev. Jacob Raphael Cohen, demanded of his congregation, or the Parnas, "the sum of forty-nine pounds, six shillings, and seven pence, as his salary and wages for acting in the duties of Shochet, Hazan, Teacher and Reader to the Jewish Congregation for three years according to agreement in writing signed and sealed on the thirteenth day of February, one thousand seven hundred and seventy-eight by Hyam Myers of London acting for and on behalf of the Jews in this Province; that of the said Sum above mentioned the sum of thirty pounds, sixteen shillings and three pence, was a Balance that remained due for the term of three years, and for officiating as Hazan or Reader at the instance of the Defendant for four months, at the Rate of fifty pounds a year the sum of eighteen pounds, ten shillings and four pence half-penny became due to him, making in the whole the sum of forty-nine pounds, six shillings and seven pence . . ."<sup>1</sup>

The dispute was prolonged for several years and, on May 6, 1784, the court reversed the original judgment, which had been in favour of the plaintiff, and dismissed the action with costs. Simon Levy and Samuel and Uriah Judah were among the witnesses who appeared for the Rabbi. After this incident Rev. Jacob Raphael Cohen left Montreal and went to Philadelphia where he was engaged by the Sephardic congregation "Mickve Israel." He remained there for twenty-six years until his death in 1810. For many years after the departure of Rabbi Cohen the Montreal congregation did not engage a permanent Rabbi. During that period they were in close contact with the Portuguese congregation in New York whose spiritual leader paid frequent visits to Montreal and officiated at circumcisions, weddings and other religious ceremonies.

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<sup>1</sup> *Public Archives of Canada*, Series Q, vol. 33-1, pp. 17-30.

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CHAPTER SIX  
DURING THE AMERICAN WAR OF  
INDEPENDENCE

THE Jews in Canada were not solely preoccupied with their personal affairs nor with the affairs of their own community. Concerned with political and social developments, they were often deeply involved in the turbulent events of their day. Dissatisfaction with the governing régime and with the conditions it had imposed was rife in the colony. Ever more insistent grew the demand for reform from large sections of the population, ever increasing was the agitation for an elected House of Assembly. This movement evoked a lively response from the Jews who readily identified themselves with it.

The first petition forwarded to the King in London requesting an Assembly for the colony lists Eleazer Levy among its signatories. Written some time between 1763 and 1764, the memorandum declares that "our settlement of this country, with respect to the greatest part of us, takes its date from the surrender of the colony to Your Majesty's arms . . ." <sup>1</sup> For this reason the petitioners prayed that the colony be granted an Assembly. The same request is contained in another petition framed in 1770 (the exact date is not known) which bears the signature of Aaron Hart, among others. <sup>2</sup> Dated November 29, 1773, a similar petition submitted by residents of Montreal and Quebec contains more Jewish names: Samuel Jacobs, Joseph Bindona, Levy Solomons, Ezekiel Solomons and Jacob Maurera. <sup>3</sup> With the exception of Jacob Maurera these same names are to be found on yet another petition forwarded to the King of England three months later. <sup>4</sup>

In 1774 this agitation resulted in the passage by the British Parliament of the "Quebec Act" which, among other things, granted Canada a Legislative Council. So little pleased were the Canadians, however, that on November 12, 1774, they again forwarded a petition to the King asking that the "Quebec Act" be repealed and that the country be given an elective House of Assembly. Some fifteen Jews were among the signers of this petition, including Aaron

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<sup>1</sup> *Public Archives of Canada*, Series B, vol. 8, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Series Q, vol. 7, p. 359.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Series Q, vol. 10, p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

Hart, Samuel Jacobs, Lazarus David, Joseph Bindona, Simon Levy, Andrew Hays, David Salesby Franks, Isaac Judah, Ezekiel Solomons and others.<sup>1</sup> In time the demand for political reform in the colony grew stronger and more outspoken. From individual citizens, Jews as well as non-Jews, it spread to the broad masses. But the outbreak of the American Revolution constituted an abrupt setback to the movement. Far from being carried along by the wave of revolutionary sentiment emanating from the American colonists, Canadians as a whole reacted in the opposite manner. They firmly set out to demonstrate their loyalty to England, even to forgetting their own grievances. No more was said of greater political freedom. For the time being the demand ceased.

Although its progress had been halted for a few years the movement later re-emerged, for it had never been completely subdued. In 1784 the demand for constitutional reforms again rose to the fore. As time went on it became more widespread, more insistent, and, as before, Jews figured prominently among the citizens who assumed command of the movement. On November 24 of the same year another petition expressing the desire of the "British freeholders, merchants and traders in the Province of Quebec on behalf of themselves and others" for reform, was presented to the King. Exposing the lamentable political and economic situation in the province, this memorandum, couched in much stronger terms than the others, demanded a constitution and a government based on "fixed and liberal principles." Among the many signatures which accompanied the document were those of some twenty-five Jews, among them Elias Solomons, Hyam Myers, David Jacobs, Aaron Hart, Abraham Hart (Montreal), Jacob Kuhn, Moses Hart, Ezekiel Hart, John Franks, David David, Isaac Abrams, Levy Solomons, Uriah Judah and others.<sup>2</sup>

From the foregoing it may be seen that the Jews in Canada identified themselves with the struggle for political and constitutional liberties from its very inception. What is particularly noteworthy is that they had already become sufficiently firmly rooted in the new colony to take an active part in the political and social life about them. "It is astonishing," remarks a French-Canadian historian, "to consider that the Jews of that time, although

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, Series Q, vol. 11, p. 98.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Series Q, vol. 24-1, p. 1, also Series Q, vol. 27-1, p. 431.

small in numbers, were deeply immersed in the course of events in the metropolis and in the country in general . . . Their names are constantly to be found on the petitions of the merchants and land-owners of Quebec, of Montreal and of Three Rivers, demanding political reforms. Encouraged, perhaps also favoured, by the politics of English protection under which preference was given to the conquerors and their friends and from which the old French colonists were steadily excluded, they were skilful in obtaining certain official and remunerative posts. Aaron Hart was postmaster of Three Rivers (1763-1770). Uriah Judah was prothonotary, also in Three Rivers, in 1768. Jacob Kuhn occupied several posts in Montreal—he was postillion, bailiff, warden and police commissioner. His son, August Ferdinand, was chief secretary in the office of the general warehouse in Quebec. John Franks was the first chief of the Quebec fire brigade (1790-1799), and similarly with others." Reluctant to ascribe their success to favoritism or protection alone, the same historian is constrained to add: "I wish at the same time to acknowledge that if the Harts, the Davids, the Kuhns, the Judahs, the Solomons and the Josephs did occupy important positions, it was without doubt due to their own attributes. They brought honour to their kind."<sup>1</sup>

As the Revolutionary War developed and the rebelling Americans under Montgomery and Arnold began to penetrate into the country, the Jews of Canada grew increasingly apprehensive. In the conflict that raged around them with mounting fury they could not remain indifferent spectators. There was every reason for them to be deeply grateful to England, there was every reason for them to remain loyal; and, despite the not inconsiderable pressure exerted from the south, with very few exceptions they whole-heartedly supported the British cause.

This was a time of grave internal disturbances for the small Jewish colony. But its basic structure was not too seriously shaken; few lasting changes were wrought in the Montreal community except for the inevitable marks left by some incidents which had a direct bearing on Jews. Of the few hundred volunteers who answered the call of Sir Guy Carleton to repel the invading Americans, several were Jews. The latter engaged actively in the struggle to defeat the enemy. The provisioning of the Loyalist troops, in

<sup>1</sup> GERARD MALCHELOSSE. *Les Juifs dans l'histoire canadienne. Les Cahiers Des Dix*, no. 4, Montreal, 1939, pp. 179-180.

Canada as well as in America, was almost exclusively, or at least to a considerable extent, in the hands of Jews.

A more accurate picture of the devotion of Jews to the Motherland and of their contribution to the Loyalist cause may be seen by examining the names of the United Empire Loyalists. These were colonists who, unwilling to see the colonies separated from the Empire, either fought on the side of the British during the Revolutionary War in America or else aided them in many other ways. Later, compelled to leave their homes, they crossed into Canada; among them were many who, as their names leave no doubt, were Jews. From the Official Returns of Lieutenant-Colonel de Peyster as well as from the lists of applicants for the many thousands of acres of land which the government then distributed among Loyalists and others who had left their homes in the war, they may be traced to the different parts of the country in which they settled. Often, too, they moved from one place to another. Moses Hart (not related to the Hart family in Canada) of Rhode Island, who is mentioned as a Jewish Loyalist,<sup>1</sup> was an applicant for land in Lower Canada several years after the American Revolution. His name appears under two different numbers.<sup>2</sup> He subsequently moved to Upper Canada where a village in the Province of Ontario, in the district where he received a free land grant, bears his name to the present day. Among the Loyalists who migrated here following the American Revolution and who settled in the Eastern Townships region of the Province of Quebec, the following appear to have been Jews: Isaac Fridenberg, Herman Valentine, Aaron Boner, David Huffman, Abraham Snyder, John Jacobs and some ten others whose names are more or less Jewish but, because of the uncertainty, are omitted here.

An important part in that era was played by the Franks family of whom mention has previously been made. The Franks were Sephardic Jews who, long after the expulsion from Spain, moved to England where their original name of Franco and Franco-Dacosta became Anglicized. They later came to America and for many years were active in a number of fields. In this way members of the Franks family soon came into contact with Canada where some of them settled. At the outbreak of the American Revolution it was no more than natural that the Franks, possessed of widespread

<sup>1</sup> *Publications*, Am. Jew. Hist. Soc., no. 23, p. 97.

<sup>2</sup> *The Archives*, Series Q, vol. 72-73-1, p. 86, also vol. 72-73-2, p. 370.

interests and of great personal influence, should be drawn into the great tide of events.

The case of David Franks who sharply opposed the separation of the American colonies from the mother country and who suffered greatly for his loyalty to England is worthy of note. A resident of Philadelphia, he used from time to time to visit Montreal where he would often remain for a considerable length of time and show the keenest interest in the affairs of the local Jewish community. As early as 1748 he was a member of the Pennsylvania Assembly. Some years later, following the defeat of General Braddock in 1755, he was one of the contributors to a fund raised to aid the British.<sup>1</sup> In 1775 he was in favour of maintaining colonial currency in the country and added his name to a petition to that effect.<sup>2</sup> His "Toryism" grew even more pronounced during the course of the same year—he acted as intermediary on behalf of the English war prisoners and supplied all their needs. The following year, in May, 1776, he is referred to as an "agent for the contractors for victualling the troops of the King of Great Britain"; he had taken it upon himself to supply British prisoners with provisions and other essentials.<sup>3</sup> His profound sympathy with the English cause which he in no wise attempted to conceal, ultimately cost him his high social position and his wealth. On October 2, 1780, he was arrested on the charge of having surreptitiously aided the English. He was summarily ordered to leave the country and, as security that he would not return for the duration of the war, his entire fortune amounting to the considerable sum of two hundred thousand pounds was confiscated.

The most incriminating evidence against him was a letter which he had secretly attempted to forward to England and which had been intercepted. "Resolved," reads the charge against him, "that the contents of the said letter manifest a disposition and intentions inimical to the safety and liberty of the United States; and Mr. Franks, having endeavoured to transmit this letter by stealth within the British lines, has abused the confidence reposed in him by Congress, to exercise within the jurisdiction of these states the office of commissary to the British prisoners.

"Resolved, that Major-Gen'l. Arnold be directed to cause the said David Franks to be arrested, and conveyed to the new Gaol

<sup>1</sup> T. WESTCOTT, *History of Philadelphia*, vol. II, p. 1002.

<sup>2</sup> *Idem.*, vol. I, p. 366.

<sup>3</sup> *Publications*, Am. Jew. Hist. Soc., no. 1, p. 70.

in this city (Philadelphia), there to be confined till the further order of Congress."<sup>1</sup>

Upon his expulsion from the United States, David Franks came to Montreal where he remained for a brief period, later sailing for England. After the war he obtained permission to return home and he again settled in the United States. He died in Philadelphia in 1793. David Franks is said to have renounced the Jewish faith in his youth upon his marriage to a Christian.<sup>2</sup> But at a much later date he contributed to the fund for the erection of the synagogue in Montreal. In a document relating to him and dated a year before his death it is explicitly stated that he was a Jew and that he had taken his oath upon the five Books of Moses.<sup>3</sup>

Other members of the Franks family, with one notable exception—that of David Salesby Franks—remained equally attached to England. In 1774 and 1775 Moses Franks was one of the chief purveyors to the British troops in Quebec, Montreal, Massachusetts, Illinois, New York, etc.<sup>4</sup> Abraham and Jacob Franks, too, proved their sympathy with the Loyalists and their devotion to the British cause in many ways. The former had for some time lived in Quebec and, with the outbreak of the war, moved to Montreal.

It would appear that at first it was only a chance incident which led David Salesby Franks, a son of Abraham Franks, to make common cause with the rebelling Americans in whose ranks he subsequently won great distinction. Born in England, at an early age he came to Canada where he received his education. Here, too, he acquired a knowledge of the French language that was later to help him greatly in his diplomatic career. Throughout the years 1774, 1775 and the first half of 1776, he lived in Montreal. He was active in local Jewish affairs and for a short time served as Parnas of the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation. Impulsive and fiery of temperament, with a deep urging to participate in public life, he was soon swept into the turbulent politics of the day by an incident which occurred in Montreal.

At that time there was a bust of King George III on Place D'Armes Square. One morning this bust was found daubed over with tarry paint, a chaplet of potatoes placed on it, and beneath an

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> MARKENS, *The Hebrews in America*, p. 71.

<sup>3</sup> *Publications*, Am. Jew. Hist. Soc., no. 1, p. 103.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 10, p. 165.

inscription which read: "Behold the Pope of Canada and the English Sot."<sup>1</sup> This occurred on May 2, 1775 and, although the inscription was in French, one of the Americans then in Montreal was suspected of being the culprit. A contemporary English periodical gives the details of the affair and how Franks came to be involved in it:

"... A reward of 100 guineas was offered for the discovery of the perpetrator, and much indignation was expressed among the French inhabitants, eager to manifest their loyalty to England, one French gentleman even expressing his opinion that the act ought to be punished by hanging. Upon hearing this severe opinion, a young English merchant of the name of Franks, who had settled at Montreal, and who at that time happened to be near the speaker, replied to him in these words: "In England men are not hanged for such small offences," which he repeated twice or three times. This provoked Monsieur de B.—(de Bellestre), the former speaker, to such a degree, that, after giving the young man much opprobrious language, he at last proceeded to blows, and struck him in the face and pulled him by the nose; upon which the other gave him a blow that knocked him down. The next day, May the 3rd, upon a complaint of M. de B.— to three officers of justice of a new order, called the Conservators of the Peace for the district of Montreal, not of the blow he had received from Franks (for to this he was conscious, he had given occasion by striking him first), but of the words pronounced by the latter, that "in England people were not hanged for such small offences," the Conservators issued the warrant for committing young Franks to prison. He was accordingly carried thither by a party of soldiers with bayonets fixed, and £10,000 bail, that was offered to procure his liberty, and be security for his appearance to take his trial for the offence, was refused. And there he continued for a week, at the end of which time, the same Conservators of the Peace (by the direction, as it is supposed of Governor Carleton) ordered him to be discharged without any bail at all."<sup>2</sup>

In the warrant for his discharge his name is given in full as "David Salesby Franks"<sup>3</sup> which leaves no doubt that he was the

<sup>1</sup> J. D. BORTHWICK, *History and Biographical Gazetteer of Montreal*, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> *The Remembrancer, or Impartial Repository of Public Events*. London, 1776, pp. 100-106

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

same statesman, diplomat and patriot who later carved his name in American history. This incident, as was later evident, impressed him deeply. His arrest for "seditious utterances" aroused a passionate love for civil liberties within him and brought him close to the struggle of the American people. When Montgomery occupied Montreal in November, 1775, he joined the colonists and even advanced funds to aid the Revolutionary Army. In 1776 General Wooster appointed him paymaster to the garrison at Montreal and when the American army was driven out of Canada he enlisted as a volunteer and joined a Massachusetts regiment. That same year (June 29, 1776) he was granted permission to enter the United States<sup>1</sup> and it is from then on that most historians identify him with the American Revolution. A year later, however, he was still in Montreal, as may be inferred from a letter written by Sir Guy Carleton to Lord George Germaine in England on May 8, 1777. In this letter, Carleton alluded to David Salesby Franks as one of the "Americans" then living in this country who sympathized with the rebels. A list of names is appended to the letter with the following notation: "Inclosed your Lordship will receive a list of the principal leaders of sedition here. We have still too many remaining amongst us that have the same inclination, though they at present act with more caution and so much subtlety as to avoid the punishment they justly deserve."<sup>2</sup>

Franks later again entered the United States. Enlisting in the army, he soon became adjutant and secretary to General Arnold. Henceforth he became a notable figure in leading American circles and was entrusted with important tasks. When Arnold was tried for treason, Franks was honourably acquitted and was later raised to the rank of colonel. In 1781 Congress delegated him to Paris on an important diplomatic mission. A few years later he again offered his services to the United States in the same capacity, declaring that his knowledge of the language and manners of the French people gained during his residence in Canada made him particularly suitable for the post.<sup>3</sup> Congress accepted his offer and sent him to France with the triplicates of the ratified peace treaty which recognized American independence. Toward the end of the same year, in September, 1784, he was appointed American

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<sup>1</sup> *Publications*, Am. Jew. Hist. Soc., no. 11, pp. 190-191.

<sup>2</sup> *The Archives*, Series Q, vol. 13, p. 98.

<sup>3</sup> *Papers of the Continental Congress*, No. 79, vol. III, p. 267.

vice-consul at Marseilles. A personal friend of the first president of the American republic, he participated in Washington's inauguration a few years later.

Another member of the same family, Col. Isaac Franks, also won distinction in the Revolutionary Army. Isaac Franks was closely attached to his friends in Canada and used to visit them quite often. Upon one such visit he remained in Montreal for some time and took a deep interest in the activities of the Jewish community there.

The case of Levy Solomons, the only one among the Jews in Canada to be implicated with the rebels, and then not of his own accord, is of special interest. Levy Solomons has previously been mentioned here. Connected with the Franks family through a second marriage, before settling in Montreal he lived in Albany and would, from time to time, return there on business. In common with most other Canadians, his sympathies at first were with the English. But when Montgomery invaded the country and captured Montreal he regarded Solomons as a former American and, as such, ordered him to supply food for the army and hospital facilities for the wounded American soldiers. Solomons had no alternative but to obey the order. He furnished a large house for this purpose and later two additional houses for smaller infirmaries and even provided all the necessary supplies for the patients. All this was done at his own expense, as he later complained in a memorial to the American government.<sup>1</sup>

When, after having been defeated, the Revolutionary Army was forced to withdraw, he was exposed to the enmity of the English who branded him as a traitor for having openly fraternized with the enemy. In addition, the Americans had requisitioned and confiscated all of his possessions prior to their retreat. "After the Continental forces had retired from Montreal," he charged in the same memorial, "General Arnold sent a party from Laprairie who without the consent or privity of your petitioner seized and carried off from La Chine a quantity of Brazil and Carrot Tobacco with other Indian goods, the property of your memorialist and by him destined for Michilimackinac for which he never obtained a receipt or any acknowledgment whatever." A few days later, he continued, on the orders of General Burgoyne, the British commander, he and his family were ejected from his own home by soldiers and

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 35, pp. 149, a. b. c.

turned into the street, exposed to the contempt of all, even of his co-religionists ("to insults and injuries from people of every denomination in the Province.")<sup>1</sup> He was literally driven out of Montreal. After many trials he finally secured permission to return. By granting this permission the British exhibited far greater tolerance and magnanimity than did the Americans who persecuted the United Empire Loyalists relentlessly. The American government never compensated Solomons for the losses he had sustained or for the help he had rendered the Revolutionary Army, and ignored his petition. He died in Montreal on May 18, 1792.

In the same manner the American government repudiated the claims of Aaron Hart, even though he pressed his complaint energetically. The case of Hart, to whom the Revolutionary Army garrisoned at Three Rivers remained indebted for a considerable amount, was rather different from that of Levy Solomons. For over six months Three Rivers and the surrounding district were in the hands of the Americans. Like the others, Hart had no alternative but to place his business establishment at the disposal of the Americans who did not hesitate to take advantage of it. At the same time, however, he was paymaster of the British troops and was closely connected with the forces attempting to oust the Americans. He also had permission in writing from General Carleton to "travel back and forth between the army in Three Rivers and in Quebec"—then a privilege not easily granted.

Aaron Hart remained a fervent British patriot although unable to avoid having dealings with the Americans. When an inventory of his estate was taken after his death, it was found that the Americans had left notes for large sums of money. Neither he nor any of his heirs was ever able to recover even a portion of the debt.

These episodes demonstrate clearly that the Jews in Canada did not all react uniformly to the events of their times. However, the great majority, grateful for the hospitality extended to them, remained loyal to England.

It would perhaps be pertinent to refer here to an incident which, although familiar in Canadian history, is little known in that an apparently Jewish name is involved in it. Toward the beginning of May, 1797, there suddenly appeared in the Province of Quebec a handsome and immaculate stranger who gave his name as "Jacob

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

Felt." His identity was unknown, but it was obvious that he wished to convey the impression that he was a Jew. His strange behaviour, his furtive appearances and sudden disappearances, soon drew marked attention. To a few people he confided that he was a French general sent by M. Audet, the French ambassador to the United States, to foment an uprising which would bring Canada again under French domination. The stranger was quickly denounced and arrested. "Jacob Felt" was revealed to be David McLane, an American who, disguised as a Jew, had come here to incite the population against the English. The death sentence imposed upon him was carried out some few days later in the manner prevailing at the time.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> J.-EDMOND ROY, *Histoire de la Seigneurie de Lauzon*, vol. III, p. 279 et seq.

## THE FORMATIVE OR SEPHARDIC PERIOD

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### CHAPTER SEVEN

#### THE "JEWISH QUESTION" FIRST APPEARS

THE part played by Jews in the movement for political reforms has already been touched upon. The numerous petitions forwarded to England demanding these reforms ultimately achieved the desired result and led to a general investigation of the judicial system in the country. A number of prominent citizens were invited to submit their opinions. Uriah Judah appeared at one such inquiry and it is recorded that, as a Jew, he was sworn on the Five Books of Moses and that he had been a merchant in Montreal for over seventeen years.<sup>1</sup> Without exaggeration, it may be said that the Jews were to no small extent responsible for the success of the movement. This success was concretely expressed in the Constitutional Act of 1791 which granted the colony a constitutional government and a Legislative Assembly. Politically this represented a great stride forward for Canada.

Since they had not yet, as Jews, experienced any restriction of their "political rights," at that time an extremely hazy concept in any event, the mode of life of the Jews was not greatly affected by the new legislation. The evolution of their small community followed its own course and was only indirectly contingent on the social and political developments which accompanied the growth of the country as a whole. It was primarily dependent on chance, external influences which would, from time to time, suddenly stimulate vigorous activity and then, as suddenly, cease.

One dominant influence which then, and for a long time thereafter, left its mark on Canadian Jewry was that of the communities

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<sup>1</sup> *Public Archives of Canada*, Series Q, vol. 24-1, p. 1.

to the south. Every phase of their communal relations was faithfully patterned, on a smaller scale, after the communal structure of the Jews in the older American colonies. This influence retained its power even after the American colonies separated from England and set up a republic. The community in Montreal did not cease to maintain the closest connection with the larger centre in the neighbouring republic and was in many ways dependent upon it. As far as possible the Jews of Montreal attempted to keep their community confined within the bounds of what they considered to be the most seemly channels of its activity. This restricted function satisfied their needs. Under such circumstances any potential initiative or achievement in the field of cultural Judaism was inconceivable. The young community did not progress beyond this stage of development until much later.

Judaism in Canada at that time was essentially, and continued to be, severely orthodox. Neither vitiated nor enhanced by secular culture, Jewish life hardly stirred. Leisurely, monotonously, the same pace was maintained until well into the first half of the nineteenth century when a change first became perceptible. In the physical growth of the Jewish population the stagnation which characterized this period was most clearly manifested. The rate of increase was negligible and the community barely held its own. Similarly, this stagnation was reflected in the community's spiritual life. Forces were lacking to extend the work of the early pioneers and to provide the necessary leadership. Since immigration on the whole was then on a very limited scale, few Jews entered from either the United States or England. In addition, the ranks of the colony were steadily depleted by mixed marriages, a consequence it was scarcely possible to avoid.

By way of compensation Jewish energies found expression in another direction. Jews were not found wanting in their contribution to the progress of Canada. Their names linked with great achievements in commerce and industry as well as in other fields, several of them won particular distinction. For their services to the country in various undertakings over a number of years, the David and Joseph families gained widespread recognition.

Henry Joseph, who was born in England in 1775, came to Canada at an early age upon the advice of his uncle Aaron Hart. He soon obtained a post with the commissariat of the English troops stationed at Fort William Henry on the Richelieu River. Several

years later he gave up this post to launch a business venture in Berthier. His commercial operations steadily expanded to the point where he became a highly successful merchant. Extremely capable and enterprising for his time, he developed widespread trade with many points. The first, and in his day the only merchant to conduct considerable freight traffic over the inland waterways as well as to establish direct overseas trade relations with the Motherland, Henry Joseph virtually founded the Canadian merchant marine.<sup>1</sup> Among the vessels he controlled was the *Ewretta* which is recorded as early as March, 1801.<sup>2</sup> That is to say that many years before the first Canadian steamship sailed from Montreal for Quebec, Henry Joseph had put into effect direct ship service between Canada and England. Other members of this family were equally noted as pioneers in railway construction, in organizing the first telegraph lines in Canada as well as in other public utilities. But of them we shall have occasion to speak later.

An important part in the enterprises of Henry Joseph was played by Jacob Franks, the younger, who was his business associate for some time. As early as 1792 he had made his way to Green Bay, Wisconsin, on a trading expedition. Two years later he came to Canada and obtained a large tract of land from the Indians.<sup>3</sup> Restlessly seeking fresh outlets for his energies, he penetrated far into the wilderness of the Northwest, into regions where a white man had never before set foot. Industrial development next claimed his attention and in 1805 he erected the first saw and grist mill in Canada. Other successful ventures contributed materially to the progress of Canadian industry. Documents dated 1817 show that he became an army purveyor in that year.<sup>4</sup> As a sidelight on his career, it is interesting to note that the founder of the fabulously wealthy Astor family was one of his early employees. Jacob Franks spent the last years of his life in Montreal.

Much prominence was also gained by David David whom we have mentioned here before. David was counted among the most respected citizens of Montreal. His name was intimately associated with every economic enterprise, with every philanthropic and social event of importance. Few men were more active in the public

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<sup>1</sup> J. D. BORTHWICK, *History and Biographical Gazetteer of Montreal*, p. 470.

<sup>2</sup> *Diary of Samuel David* (in MSS).

<sup>3</sup> *Publications*, Am. Jew. Hist. Soc., no. 9, pp. 151-152.

<sup>4</sup> *Public Archives*, Series Q, vol. 143, pp. 215, 217.

affairs of the city. One of the founders of the Bank of Montreal, he was appointed a director of that institution at the first meeting of the Board held on February 27, 1818, and continued in that capacity until his death in 1824. He was also a charter member of the Montreal Board of Trade, originally the "Committee of Trade," when that body was founded on April 11, 1822. He was among the first life governors of the Montreal General Hospital and generally displayed the keenest interest in every public institution in the Canadian metropolis. When the merchants of Montreal, contending that the commercial interests of the country were jeopardized because of the lack of a customs house in the city, petitioned the British government to declare Montreal a port of entry, David David and his brother Samuel David added their signatures to the list. It was pointed out that although Montreal was a far greater trading centre, Quebec possessed the only customs house. The request was later granted.

It was quite natural that the achievements of Jews in public life should have had a decided influence on the attitude of society to them. Long before the question of their civil or political status was raised, several of them occupied more or less official posts. To those already mentioned in the previous chapters may be added the name of Myer Michaels who served as a juror in Montreal. With others he was sworn in as juror for the assizes of that year at the opening of the courts on January 10, 1800. Apparently there were no objections to him on the grounds that he was a Jew.

Although their numbers were few, at an early stage Jews began to spread over certain regions of Lower Canada and also to penetrate into Upper Canada. But this dispersion was by no means permanent nor did it serve to extend the roots of Jewish settlement more broadly throughout the country. The Jewish names which are to be found amongst the many applicants for land toward the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries indicate the period when the Jews first began to settle or to arrive in Upper Canada. They include such names as Moses David,<sup>1</sup> David Jacobs, Samuel Phillips, Thomas Gohen (Cohen?), Jacob Levitz, Abraham Cutler, Benjamin Herche (or Hertz) and many others who are represented as applicants for land between 1796 and 1803. However, the centre of the slowly expanding Jewish com-

<sup>1</sup> Is also mentioned in *Diary of Samuel David* as a resident of Sandwich, Ont., in 1813, but, as may be seen, he was in Upper Canada long before that year.

munity was and remained in Lower Canada. From the outset the old Province of Quebec was destined to play an outstanding part in the life of the Jews in British North America. For here it was that they gained a measure of recognition and here that they made their greatest contribution to the country. Consequently it was here, too, that the "Jewish question" arose for the first time in any form in Canada.

At this point it would be interesting to compare the Old World with the New in their application of the liberal ideas, which were then beginning to permeate both, to the Jews. Althout the New World began to write its history at a much later date, in this respect it quickly overtook Europe. By contrast with her North American colony, even Britain proved to be backward in emancipating the Jews, having been anticipated by more than a quarter of a century. To the present day this action is recognized as a demonstration of the high standards of liberalism set by the young colony.

As in England, so, too, in Canada the entire problem of the Jews centred about political and certain civil rights, primarily the right to administer their own communal affairs. There were no other restrictions upon them in the ordinary sense of the word, since from the beginning they were permitted to live anywhere and to pursue their professions unhindered. The issue of Jewish rights was first presented in tangible form during a session of the Parliament of Lower Canada. Heightened in intensity by the inflammable substance of the attendant circumstances, the most heated and bitter political debates of the day had their origin in this question. A violent rupture between the English and French factions in the Legislative Assembly resulted, a rupture accompanied by acrimony, hatred and the most vicious expressions of bigotry. From the controversy a Jew emerged as the central figure: Ezekiel Hart, who was fated to occupy so prominent a place in the history of his time.

Ezekiel Hart (born in Three Rivers in 1770; died in 1843), a son of Commissary Aaron Hart, was one of the most distinguished citizens of Three Rivers and was widely respected. In 1807 the esteem in which he was held was given concrete form when he was elected to the Legislative Assembly to fill the seat of the Hon. John M. Lees. Of the three candidates he proved to be the most popular, polling fifty votes as against the forty-one of Thomas Coffin and the ten of Matthew Bell, his two opponents.<sup>1</sup> His victory was the more

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<sup>1</sup> R. CHRISTIE, *A History of the Late Province of Lower Canada, Parliamentary and Political*, p. 256.

impressive in view of Coffin's attempt to incite popular prejudice against him because of his race.<sup>1</sup> His political success, which perhaps came as a surprise to him, could not be enjoyed long since it was won fully a quarter of a century before Jews were granted the full privileges of citizenship in the country. Disappointment confronted him from the very beginning. The same day that Hart arrived at Quebec to assume his seat, Parliament was prorogued to be convened only a year later. The Legislative Assembly met again on January 29, 1808. When the oath was proposed to him he refused to take it upon the New Testament, according to the Christian creed, but insisted on swearing according to the Jewish custom upon the Books of Moses with head covered. No objections were raised and on January 30, the day following the opening of Parliament, he arrived to take his seat. This was the signal for a general outburst and protests and representations were heard from different parts of the House. Hart soon realized that the atmosphere of the Assembly was anything but friendly.

Although a Jew, he had not come to Quebec as a delegate of the Jews but as the representative of the City of Three Rivers for whom many French citizens had voted. Relations between the English and French members of the House, however, were strained almost to the breaking point and both parties engaged in bitter, incessant feuds. It followed, then, that the French members would seize this opportunity of avenging themselves on one who was their political opponent, of avenging themselves so discourteously and brutally that they literally ejected him from the House.

Religious or national antipathies cannot be said to have been the sole motives behind the objections to Hart's occupying his seat in the House. Cloaked in juridical verbiage, at first glance these objections would appear to have been legitimate and constitutional. It was inevitable that his opponents would attempt to capitalize on the fact that Hart was a Jew in order to deprive the English minority of a member and, at the same time, to strike a blow at Sir James Craig, the Governor-General and a close friend of Hart's, who was at loggerheads with the French-Canadians. The somewhat analogous case of Robert Christie, the Canadian historian and parliamentarian, which arose several years later adds weight to this contention. Elected several times to the Legislative Assembly,

<sup>1</sup> T.-P. BEDARD, *Histoire de Cinquante Ans*, (1791-1841), Québec, 1869, p. 71.

Christie was repeatedly expelled by the French majority to whom he was *persona non grata*.

Whatever the interpretation of his adversaries' motives, one truth remains unaltered—the polemics hurled against him and the battle waged around him derived only from Hart's being a Jew. The discord and dissension created in Parliament were stirred up on the basis of his Jewish origin and the faith he professed. In its final form the question resolved itself into whether or not, as a Jew, he had the same right as a Christian to sit in the House and to take part in its deliberations. The French members contended that the oath he had taken was not in conformity with the Constitution and that a deputy whose religious persuasion did not permit of his taking the oath "on the true faith of a Christian," holding his hand on the New Testament, could not be considered a Parliamentary representative. On the 12th of February, after a prolonged and heated debate, the House finally decided by a vote of 25 to 5 to receive and consider the petition which Ezekiel Hart had presented. In this petition consisting of five concise paragraphs, he reiterated his right to retain his mandate and deplored the opinion of the Legislative Assembly to the effect that his oath was invalid. He was convinced, he continued, that the oath taken by him on January 29 was in conformity with the English statute which allowed Jews to omit the words "on the true faith of a Christian" when taking oath. His oath, therefore, was legal and valid. Nevertheless, although he had sworn in accordance with the law, he was prepared to have the oath administered to him once more. He therefore requested that he be permitted to exercise his constitutional rights by taking his place as a representative of the people.<sup>1</sup>

For two days, the 15th and 16th of February, the House was rocked by stormy debates. The discussion revolved around the rights of Jews as they were, or could be, interpreted by English law. Hart's petition, which was considered by a general committee of the House, was the focal point of the controversy. At the beginning it appeared as if the efforts of Hart's friends, who conducted a spirited defence of him, might be successful, for at the sitting of February 17 they succeeded in steering through a resolution which declared that in the opinion of Parliament "the manner in which the said Ezekiel Hart, Esquire, took the said oath is that practised in Courts

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<sup>1</sup> *Journaux de la Chambre d'Assemblée du Bas-Canada*, année 1808, p. 77.

of Justice when oaths are administered to persons professing the Jewish religion."<sup>1</sup> This meant that from a legal viewpoint his oath must be considered valid and that his right to sit in the House could not be contested on the ground of illegality. But his opponents quickly gained the upper hand. Although they consented to allow Hart to appear before a tribunal of the House in order to present his plea, their attitude remained unchanged and on February 20 they introduced the following resolution in the Legislative Assembly: "Resolved, that it is the opinion of this Committee that Ezekiel Hart, Esquire, professing the Jewish religion, cannot take a seat, nor sit, nor vote in this House."<sup>2</sup> Although the English minority protested strongly against this measure, it was quickly overruled by the hostile French group. When the House carried the resolution by vote of 21 to 5, Hart was compelled to accept the will of the majority. In effect, the Parliament of Lower Canada had ruled that Jews in the country did not possess the same rights and privileges as Christians and that consequently no Jew could sit in the Assembly as a representative of the people.

But not without turbulent demonstrations, not without sharp clashes between the two political parties, did this resolution gain the approval of the Assembly. Lengthy and virulent debates fanned already aroused passions to burning intensity. These debates clearly reflected the attitude toward Jews of their friends as well as the attitude of those who, for purely political reasons, had become their enemies. In them, too, the spirit of the times was faithfully mirrored. For the first time the Legislative Assembly of Lower Canada had witnessed the sorry spectacle of racial prejudice and anti-Semitic hatred, cloaked in weighty, legalistic phrases, incited as a direct result of political bickering. Fortunately for the Jews, the effusions of their enemies did not gain wide currency nor did they leave a lasting impression. Almost typically medieval anti-Jewish prejudices were re-echoed in the arguments of Hart's political opponents. Obscurantist and illogical, they displayed no trace of the liberalism that later suffused Canadian thought. The Attorney-General of the Province, for example, attempted to bar the Jewish member-elect from the Legislative Assembly on the flimsy pretext that although the validity of oaths sworn according to Jewish custom

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

was of necessity recognized in the Courts of Justice, it was hardly essential that a Jew sit in Parliament!

Under the leadership of Pierre Bédard, the antagonism of the French deputies to Ezekiel Hart soon assumed an outright anti-Semitic character. Basing their thesis mainly on evasive technicalities relating to the "invalidity" of a Jewish oath, they respected the letter and spirit of the law only to the extent that it helped them to achieve their ends. The "line" they adopted was expressed in this false syllogism: the Jew Hart had not sworn in the same manner as the others; in the eyes of Christians his oath was invalid; therefore, if his oath was invalid, he was not entitled to sit in Parliament. In support of this argument the Attorney-General even invoked Canon Law, from which he cited a passage to the effect that all oaths must be taken on the Evangels. Since Canon legislation was recognized by English law, the implication was that the Jewish deputy's oath could not be considered legitimate even in English law and it followed that he was not qualified to retain his mandate.

On the other hand, the friends of Ezekiel Hart led by deputy Richardson, stressed the principle that no man may be excluded from Parliament because of his being a Jew. Under English law which must be considered in this case, they contended, a Jew in Canada had the right to be elected as a representative of the people and Ezekiel Hart was as much privileged to sit in the Legislative Assembly as any Christian. Quoting from a statute passed under George II (Statute 12, George II, Chap. 7), Mr. Richardson emphasized that this measure conferred all the privileges of natural-born British subjects on Jews, with certain exceptions which excluded them from sitting in the Privy Council and in the English Parliament, from filling civilian or military public offices and from receiving land concessions in the United Kingdom. It was therefore clear, he pointed out, that there was nothing legally to prevent a Jew from sitting in the Legislative Assembly of Lower Canada.

Two other English members, Mr. Mure and Ross Cuthbert, defended their Jewish colleague with equal warmth. Appealing to the entire House, they asked the members not to permit themselves to be swayed by prejudice and hatred toward Jews, but to seek a just and equitable solution to the question before them. Their impassioned appeal had little effect. Prejudice, born of an issue which at first had little to do with Ezekiel Hart—the squabbling between the French members of the House on the one hand and the English

members and the Governor-General on the other—finally triumphed and the doors of Parliament were shut upon him.

This represented the first stage of the long and arduous struggle for equal rights for Jews in Canada. Not until more than a quarter of a century later were the last bars to full suffrage for Jews removed. To the unremitting efforts of Ezekiel Hart the successful culmination of the struggle can in no small part be attributed.

CHAPTER EIGHT  
THE HART CONTROVERSY

THE SCOPE and intensity of the debates in and around the Legislative Assembly over the question of Ezekiel Hart may readily be conjectured. Repercussions of the bitter struggle waged about the rights of Jews were heard throughout the country and eventually came to a climax in the forced dissolution of the House. At this point a closer study of the actual debates which led to this climax is rewarding. From them a period in the history of the old French-Canadian province, a period now happily consigned to oblivion, may be reconstructed. They afford as well an unexcelled depiction of the uneasy, explosive times when, from the welter of hysterical racial feeling and accompanying political ferment, there slowly emerged the concept of the emancipation of Jews in Canada.

Especially fierce and venomous were the harangues of Pierre Bédard, the leader of the French faction. Energetically and with the most twisted logic Bédard campaigned to defeat the principle of equal political rights for Jews. His diatribes were a hodge-podge of technical subterfuges, oratorical virtuosity and legalistic casuistry in which was emphasized his profound hatred of Jews, although his knowledge of the Jewish people was extremely limited and derived mainly from hearsay. The number of Jews in Lower Canada at that time was very small and, if the esteem in which they were generally held was any criterion, Bédard's many disingenuous attempts to brand them before his countrymen as the embodiment of "evil" had absolutely no basis in fact.

Bédard's main speech was reproduced in *Le Canadien*,<sup>1</sup> the first French language periodical to appear in Canada, from which it is quoted by Benjamin Sulte. This newspaper, of which Pierre Bédard was one of the founders, was the organ of the militant French representatives in the Assembly and waged an incessant campaign of agitation and vilification against the Jewish member and his English friends. Later, when *Le Canadien's* attacks grew sharper, when its articles assumed a note of provocation and instigation and even became seditious, Sir James Craig, the Governor-General, felt himself compelled to suppress the journal and caused its paper and type to be seized and its publishers to be arrested.

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<sup>1</sup> *Le Canadien*, 2 mars 1808.

Bédard eagerly pounced upon the very same law invoked by Hart's friends in his efforts to prove that Jews were prohibited from holding a Parliamentary mandate. It was absurd, he contended, that naturalized British subjects should have greater rights than natural-born subjects. Although Hart was in fact no naturalized subject but one born in a British colony, it made no difference to him. The law expressly stipulated that a naturalized Jew was to have the same rights and privileges as a Jew born in England. How then was it possible to permit a Jew living in a colony, whether a naturalized or a natural-born British subject, to exercise a privilege which the Jews in England itself did not enjoy, for example, that of sitting in Parliament? It was true, he conceded, that the law (Statute 13 George II, Chap. 7) prohibited them from sitting in the British Parliament only and contained no reference to the colonies. However, it could not be inferred that in Canada a Jew could be a member of Parliament while the same Jew would in England be barred from the House, since this would constitute a great injustice to the Jews living in England. Indeed, he continued, the Jews had once been expelled from England and at no time prior to their expulsion had they possessed citizenship rights. They were regarded as chattels of the King who could buy, sell or imprison them at his pleasure. Even after Oliver Cromwell permitted them to return to the country, their status was still that of non-citizens with no civil rights. In other Christian countries their lot was no better for nowhere was there any desire to confer the rights of citizenship upon them. This situation could not be attributed to a desire to be cruel or unjust to the Jews; on the contrary, it was due to the unwillingness of the Jews themselves to become citizens of any country.

Many of Bédard's perversions appear to have been borrowed from the "father of anti-Semitism" in the Book of Esther, for he argued almost in the same vein. The Jews, he insisted, are dispersed over the entire world and consider no land their own. They settle only where it is worth their while, only where they can carry on profitable business. No fatherland exists for them, only a temporary abode. Religious convictions alone determine their attitude to life since they await the coming of the Messiah, their own King, and until the time of his coming they refuse to bind their loyalty and allegiance to any other King or Kingdom.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *La Revue canadienne*, 1870, p. 415.

Having presented his curious assemblage of "facts," Bédard then attempted to conclude that no Jew, regardless of where he was born within the Empire, could by law be permitted to sit in any Parliament in any of the King's Dominions. This applied as well to Jews naturalized by Act of Parliament. Ezekiel Hart, the person under discussion, was born in a colony and could most certainly not be considered an exception. It was therefore superfluous, he concluded, even to refer to the appropriate law since this point was obvious and should be clear to all. It is interesting to note that the very arguments and accusations employed by Bédard were echoed in the British Parliament some twenty-five years later during a debate on the same question—the question of political rights for Jews—by an anti-Semitic faction that attempted to bar Jews from sitting in the House of Commons. Belonging to no country, aliens upon the earth, sympathetic to none, the Jews, they caviled, firmly believed that God would return them to Zion as had been promised them. They therefore considered themselves not as citizens but merely as transients in other countries. By what right then could they demand to be permitted to sit in Parliament?<sup>1</sup>

The defence of their Jewish colleague who had suddenly become a storm centre in the House was regarded by the English members as of paramount importance to themselves. Not only were their political interests at stake, they felt, but also their honour. Truth had been distorted, an elementary right denied in order to injure them, the minority group in the House. They could not remain silent. Richardson, Mure and Cuthbert lodged a vehement protest. Richardson rejected Bédard's allegations as empty and stupid perversions which would completely deprive a British citizen of his rights. Citing concrete facts and evidence he showed that Bédard's interpretation of the law was diametrically opposed to that of English jurists and Government officials. A Jew born in an English colony, he declared, must like all others be considered a "natural-born subject" with the right to discharge a mandate in the Legislative Assembly. According to law, Richardson, Cuthbert and Mure argued, Jews had the right to fill civilian and military offices, except in England; whereby it followed that a Jew could legally sit in the Legislative Assembly.

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<sup>1</sup> SIR ERSKINE MAY, *Constitutional History of England*, vol. II, pp. 474-75.

Ezekiel Hart's opponents soon found themselves in an embarrassing position, their arguments and inferences completely crushed under the weight of irrefutable evidence introduced by friends of the Jewish member. This evidence consisted of several memoranda by English jurists, among them a statement by the Solicitor-General who indirectly confirmed the thesis that the privileges of the Jewish member of the House could not be withdrawn. His opinion was expressed as follows:

"I see no legal objection to the eligibility of a Jew who was elected to and sits in the Legislative Assembly after he has taken the required oath.

(Signed) V. Gibbs, Solicitor General.

London, September 24, 1807."<sup>1</sup>)

Since an opinion on a legal question by so eminent an authority as the Solicitor-General of the Home Government was not lightly to be challenged, the French majority, sensing that the tide of battle was turning in favour of its opponents and thirsting for revenge, quickly abandoned its former tactics and adopted a new strategy. Conceding that it was lawful for Jews to hold official military and civilian posts in the colonies, its spokesmen quibbled that there was no evidence to show that representing the people in the Legislative Assembly was included within the scope and meaning of the law. It had certainly not been the intention of the Parliament of Great Britain to enable the Jews of Canada to make laws for Christians, they reasoned. It followed then that Jews could not sit in a colonial parliament, not excluding the representative of Three Rivers. Hart's political foes continued their embittered arguments in this vein until their overwhelming preponderance in numbers forced his expulsion.

Once the issue had been raised, however, it could not be confined to the House alone. It was taken up by the press where those who had so stoutly defended the Jews did not feel themselves bound by parliamentary discipline. Freely expressing their opinions, they sharply censured the conduct of the majority in the Assembly. Here the part played by the English weekly, *The Mercury*, was as typical as that played by *Le Canadien* on the other side. The English organ plunged into the fray with a spirited defence of Hart and minced no words in castigating his opponents. His expulsion was termed "an act of tyranny of ignorant fanatics." A corres-

<sup>1</sup> *La Revue canadienne*, 1870, p. 419.

pendent, who signed his letter "An Elector of Three Rivers," angrily gave vent to his opinions<sup>1</sup> and spoke of Canada as a "cold desert" where attempts were made to deprive citizens of their rights. He ascribed the treatment accorded Ezekiel Hart to the whim of an ignorant and fanatical rabble and considered it an outrage to the voters of Three Rivers whose representatives had as much right to sit in the Assembly as any Catholic or Protestant.

In the issue of February 29 the same correspondent broached the subject more heatedly with a sharp denunciation of the Catholics. He pointed out that the constitution and laws of England gave greater rights to Jews than to Catholics and that only by virtue of the Quebec Act had the latter been placed on an equal footing with Jews. A clause in this Act, he continued, prevented the Assembly from disqualifying any of its members before a bill enabling them to do so had been ratified by the English Parliament. A contravention of the laws in force in the province, the resolution against the Jewish deputy was not based on any precedent and was unparalleled in the history of parliamentary procedure. "What is there," he asked, "that empowered the Catholics by a mere vote of the House to deny the just rights to a people more sympathetic to the English than they are?" "Will the Governor General allow," he asks further, "the Legislative Assembly to overrule the Legislative Council, the King, the House of Lords and the English Parliament in such questions of law? Ezekiel Hart has been legally elected, has taken his oath and could therefore not be deprived of his rights as member of the Legislature. If the members of the Assembly deem a Canadian Jew unworthy of sitting in their midst, if the Catholics altogether wish to deprive the Jews of their natural rights, let them state it expressly in a bill and not in a resolution framed in such cowardly fashion. Let the Catholics remember that they are themselves gathering the sticks with which they shall later on be trounced." "It is reported," he continues, "that some members of the Legislative Assembly were talking about the religious superstitions of Ezekiel Hart. These superstitions cannot however be compared to the idolatrous worship of the Catholics, who expose wooden images on public roads. Let these gentlemen remember that they are more superstitious than he. Many a Jew in South America has fallen victim to the fanatical frenzy and the wild super-

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<sup>1</sup> *The Mercury*, February 22, 1808.

stitutions of the Catholic monks! The present tyrannical dictator of France (he refers to Bonaparte) seeking means of saving his ruined finances has deprived the Jews under his rule of many rights which they previously enjoyed, while other Jews were raised to the Legion of Honor. Were Ezekiel Hart an ignorant Catholic, one of those who sell their produce on the market place, he would be received solemnly and with profound respect by the Assembly.

"The Jewish member has the right of sitting in Parliament until a bill shall have been passed depriving him of it. Our city is otherwise denied of its constitutional representation and all proceedings of the Assembly are unlawful. The adopted resolution has even robbed the Jews of the right of being heard and of presenting their case, which right Parliamentary practice has given even to the humblest slaves when laws concerning them are about to be enacted."<sup>1</sup>

Thus ended the first act of the drama precipitated by the denying of political rights to Jews. There was only a brief interval until the second act began with the same protagonist on the stage. Three Rivers again went to the polls in May, 1808, and Ezekiel Hart once more was a candidate. Heedless of his previous expulsion from Parliament, their faith in him unshaken, the voters of Three Rivers gave Hart a substantial majority over his two opponents, Pierre Vezina and L. Foucher. A severe blow to his political opponents, his triumph served as a warning that the people had not been blinded by anti-Jewish preachments.

The opening of the Legislative Assembly took place on April 10, 1809, and Ezekiel Hart again took his seat among the English members. Confused and startled, his opponents made no hostile move for some time while they vacillated over the attitude to be adopted toward him. He even took part in several Parliamentary divisions. But this time as well he was not allowed to enjoy his triumph long since it was too bitter a pill for his enemies. Nine days later, on April 19, Mondelet, the member for East Montreal, drew the attention of the House to Ezekiel Hart's presence and the question of his eligibility was raised anew. Motion after motion was presented in order to deprive him of his mandate. Mondelet himself now led the movement against Hart and exploited the preponderant French voting majority as his principal weapon. The first resolution he formulated read as follows:

<sup>1</sup> Quoted according to Joseph Tassé.

“Resolved that Ezekiel Hart, Esquire, returned as one of the representatives of the Borough of Three Rivers, to serve in the present Provincial Parliament, and who is now sitting in the House, is the same Ezekiel Hart who was returned to serve in the fourth session of the Provincial Parliament in the room of the late Honourable John Lees for the aforesaid Borough.”

Renewing the challenge to Ezekiel Hart's friends, this resolution was carried by a vote of 24 to 12. But Mondelet was not yet satisfied and he soon proposed another resolution: “That Ezekiel Hart, Esquire, who sits in the present Parliament as one of the representatives of the Borough of Three Rivers, is the same Ezekiel Hart, who was returned as one of the representatives of the said Borough, in the last Parliament, and was declared incapable of sitting and voting in the last session as he professed the Jewish religion.”

The adoption of this second motion by a vote of 35 to 5 was the prologue to a renewed attack on Hart and his eligibility to sit in Parliament. For several consecutive sittings the oath he had taken was the chief topic of discussion; again the right of a Jew to sit in a House that legislated for Christians was disputed. Hart soon perceived that the sentiment of the majority was inimical to him and that a repetition of the previous year's outrage was imminent. He did not wait long—no sooner did Pierre Bédard come to the aid of his party than the proceedings of the House took a disgraceful turn. On May 5 Bédard, as he had the year before, proposed a motion to expel him from Parliament. The new resolution differed from the previous one in that it did not merely express an opinion but definitely declared that—“Ezekiel Hart, Esquire, professing the Jewish religion, cannot sit, nor vote in the House.” By 18 votes to 8 the resolution was carried and for the second time Ezekiel Hart was compelled to withdraw from Parliament.<sup>1</sup>

It is important to note that one point in the proceedings which led to the second expulsion of Ezekiel Hart from the Legislative Assembly is not sufficiently clear—the point relating to his oath. According to evidence that is more indirect than direct, Hart is said to have taken his oath upon the *Evangelists* with head bared after his second return to the House. Only two French members of the group that consistently voted against him testified that they had seen Hart swear in this manner. He held his hand upon a book,

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<sup>1</sup> *Bulletin des recherches historiques*, Lévis (Que.), mars 1905.

they declared. When the same book was handed to Mr. Blackwood, the Solicitor-General, the latter asked: "What book is this?" Whereupon the commissioners administering the oath replied: "The New Testament." Blackwood then took the oath, kissed the book and handed it to Hart who did the same.<sup>1</sup> As outlined here, and as recorded in the Journals of the Assembly, the facts are rather obscure. Hart is first said to have taken an oath on some book; the book was then handed the Solicitor-General to be sworn upon; finally Hart is said to have taken the same book again.

Thus nine days after the incident had taken place was it recorded in the Journals of the Assembly—according to testimony supplied by Hart's adversaries. It is difficult to believe that one who had never been ashamed of his race, and had from the outset so bravely insisted upon his rights, could later have betrayed national pride in order to gratify personal ambition by taking the oath of a non-Jew. In addition, the Journals fail to make clear why only the testimony of his two opponents was taken, while Mr. Blackwood and the commissioners who administered the oath were not heard, although they were in a position to offer impartial evidence. On the other hand, there is the testimony rendered by Justice Foucher during the proceedings against Ezekiel Hart the previous year. The Judge declared that "he had known Mr. Hart since 1803 as a Jew, that he had never taken an oath otherwise than in the Jewish custom and that he had even asked him, Justice Foucher, for the privilege of being dispensed from coming to Court on Saturday, his day of rest and the day of rest of all Jews."<sup>2</sup>

Although the second expulsion of Ezekiel Hart over the protests of the English group represented a definite triumph for the French members of the House—a triumph heightened by its flavor of political vengeance—they were not yet fully satisfied. The spectre of Hart's being returned to the Legislative Assembly for a third time by the voters of Three Rivers still haunted them. Legislation to thwart any such eventuality was hastily introduced; a bill was proposed to disqualify Jews from sitting in Parliament under any circumstances. The bill was also aimed to strike an oblique blow at Justice de Bonne who had, at the eleventh hour, made a *volte face* in Hart's favour. Highly incensed by the outrageous conduct of the French majority and by its attempts to arrogate more and more

<sup>1</sup> *La Revue canadienne*, 1870, p. 422.

<sup>2</sup> *Journaux de la Chambre d'Assemblée du Bas-Canada*, 1808, p. 121.

power to itself, Sir James Craig, the Governor-General, was no longer able to remain indifferent. The entire controversy had presented a challenge to him personally and to the prestige and dignity of his government. At several sittings of the Executive Council this matter had been discussed in Sir James' presence. Expert judicial opinion submitted to the Governor-General had left no doubt that the Assembly had acted illegally and had overstepped its powers. It had also been indicated that the Governor-General might be compelled to exert the fullest measure of his authority and dissolve the Assembly.<sup>1</sup>

May 15 was the day set for the third reading of the bill. In order to frustrate any further extension of the infamous proceedings, the Governor-General unceremoniously dissolved the Assembly on the same day and harshly rebuked the members. "You have dissipated your time," he said, "in passing acts which appear to be unconstitutional infringements of the rights of the subject, and repugnant to the very letter of the statute of the Imperial Parliament under which you hold your seats, and to have been matured by proceedings which amount to a dereliction of the first principles of natural justice." At the same time the Governor-General declared that he gratefully acknowledged the services of a considerable number of representatives who had endeavoured to combat the unjust activities of the Assembly.<sup>2</sup>

Needless to say, the proceedings of the House against Ezekiel Hart aroused dissatisfaction and indignation in many quarters. On May 25, 1809, it was proposed in Montreal to tender publicly an address of thanks to the Governor-General for his firmness in dissolving the Legislative Assembly. The address was signed by almost every leading citizen of Montreal.<sup>3</sup>

Official correspondence between Quebec and London commented on the actions of the French members of the House, with special emphasis on their treatment of Ezekiel Hart, in the following manner: "With a view to try how far they would be permitted to go, motions were frequently made implying a right in the Assembly to superintend and control the Executive power, and more particularly to decide by their own resolves on the privileges to which the House might lay claim. The right of prohibiting not only individuals, but

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<sup>1</sup> *Publications*, Am. Jew. Hist. Soc., no. 23, p. 49 et seq.

<sup>2</sup> T.-P. BEDARD, *Histoire de Cinquante Ans (1791-1841)*, pp. 84-87.

<sup>3</sup> *Diary of Samuel David* (in MSS).

certain classes of His Majesty's subjects from being elected members of the Assembly, was attempted in the sessions of 1808 and 1809, to be carried by a simple resolve of the House, and such was the nature of the proceedings on the occasion, that the Governor, with the unanimous advice of the Executive Council, dissolved Parliament and issued writs for a new one."<sup>1</sup>

On this occasion, too, Ezekiel Hart, displaying great courage and tenacity, refused to yield to his enemies and to withdraw from the field without a struggle. Elections for the new Assembly in Lower Canada were held in October, 1809, and for the third time Hart announced his candidature in Three Rivers. Re-election was certain, but knowing in advance that he would be compelled to undergo the same unpleasant experiences of the previous two years and not wishing to rekindle the fires of animosity between the English and French sections of the population, Hart withdrew his candidature the next day. This marked the end of his political career. It did not, however, mark the end of the movement which he had indirectly created—the movement for the emancipation of the Jews. The seeds he had sown bore their fruit; once the first shoots had emerged they could not be prevented from flowering. Several years later the idea of emancipation once again came to the fore but under quite different circumstances and with far different results.

In connection with the political storm that raged around the person of Ezekiel Hart during the years 1808 and 1809, it may be of interest to note that he was not the only member of the Hart family to desire a Parliamentary career. His elder brother, Moses Hart (born 1768; died 1847) had entertained similar aspirations during the very first years of the Assembly. Their father, Aaron Hart, who was then still alive, strongly opposed the projected move. In a letter to his son he urged him not to announce his candidature and warned him that because he was a Jew he would encounter obstacles which would inevitably bring greater humiliation upon his people than any possible honour he might attain.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ROBERT CHRISTIE, *History of the Late Province of Lower Canada*, Quebec, 1854, vol. II, pp. 193 and 328.

<sup>2</sup> RAYMOND DOUVILLE, *Aaron Hart, récit historique*, 1938, pp. 124-125.

CHAPTER NINE  
JEWS ATTAIN EQUAL STATUS

HOWEVER narrow and lacking in cultural significance Jewish life in Canada may have been for a time, it was imbued with that captivating, almost idyllic quality which is often characteristic of the life of true pioneers. Despite the fact that for many years the number of Jews was very small, they found it impossible to live in a cohesive group close to each other but were widely dispersed. Here and there an isolated Jewish family was to be found in some remote settlement; to the extent that conditions permitted it tended to surround itself with Jewish traditions, to observe the customs and maintain the faith of its people in order to create a familiar and truly Jewish atmosphere.

Henry Joseph was a salient example of this spirit. He had settled in Berthier, where not another Jew might have been seen for years. Since both he and his wife Rachel (daughter of Levy Solomons) were extraordinarily pious, he studied the laws of Shechita.<sup>1</sup> He also devised a *Luach*, or Hebrew calendar, to enable him to keep track of the Sabbath and holy days so that his children might observe them and not forget their origin. Ever present, however, was the danger of losing their identity completely in their environment. One other Jewish family had settled in the district but so great was the distance between them that only the most infrequent visits were possible. In her religious zeal, Rachel Joseph then taught her children to listen attentively to their father while he recited his prayers. Repeatedly she emphasized that both she and her husband were Jews and endeavoured to educate her children in this spirit. She told them of their people and taught them the lessons of Judaism. She encouraged them to make contacts with their neighbours but warned them not to become wholly assimilated (a warning not entirely heeded).<sup>2</sup>

Religious sentiment was on the whole widespread and exerted a powerful influence among the Jews. The lack of a spiritual leader even in Montreal, centre of the scattered colony, was felt keenly. New York usually made good this want and the leader of the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation in that city would from time to time minister to the religious needs of the Jews in Canada. But the

<sup>1</sup> A. HARKAVY, *Hasefirah*, 1888, no. 29; see Appendix, p. 251, note <sup>5</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> *The Occident*, January, 1856, p. 469 et seq.

distance between New York and Montreal was very great in those days and represented a journey of a week or more; only on rare occasions was the Rabbi able to come to Canada. In the Minute Book kept by Rabbi Lyons of the congregation "Shearith Israel," New York, we therefore find such curious entries:—

"Tuesday 4th Iyar, 5570. Circumcised a son of Mr. Ezekiel and Mrs. Frances Hart, of Canada, aged 8 months and 2 weeks and named him Ira James Craig . . . On the 19th of October left New York for Canada. Arrived at Montreal on the 27th. On the 28th circumcised a son of Mr. Benjamin Hart, named Aaron Uri. On the 8th of November I circumcised a son of Mr. Henry Joseph at Berthier, naming him Benjamin Solomon and on the 14th of November I left Montreal and arrived safe home on the 21st of November, 1811."<sup>1</sup>

Thus one facet of Jewish life in Canada at that time is highlighted. No matter how widely scattered the handful of colonists, the majority endeavoured at all costs to maintain the ties that bound them to their people. In this they were greatly aided by the centre of American Jewry in New York. Because of the difficult journey from New York, it was often necessary to wait until several religious occasions, such as circumcisions and others at which the attendance of a rabbi was indispensable, had accumulated. New York filled a gap in the life of the Canadian community and served as a link between it and the more spiritual aspects of Judaism. Some of the active members of the Montreal community were connected with the "Shearith Israel" Congregation in New York and owned pews in the synagogue there, though they would visit the city only once or twice during the year.

Events of great magnitude soon came to the fore—in the Napoleonic Wars which had begun to rage in Europe about that time; insofar as England was involved, their effects were also felt in Canada. Patriotic sentiment ran high. In the month of January, 1806, news reached Canada of Nelson's great victory at Trafalgar where the French and Spanish fleets which Napoleon had been preparing for the invasion of England were almost completely annihilated. Rejoicing was general throughout the British colonies and a special celebration was held in Montreal. Only a few were invited to take part in the official festivities and among them were David David and Samuel David who represented the Jews of Montreal.

<sup>1</sup> *The Lyons Collection, Publications, Am. Jew. Hist. Soc., no. 27, pp. 76-77.*

The events in Europe later had far more severe repercussions in the New World when, after a series of incidents, relations between England and the United States deteriorated rapidly. A break was imminent and on June 18, 1812, the United States declared war on England. Three armies were hastily organized to invade Canada which the Americans were eager to annex. Compared with the population of the United States, that of Canada seemed far too small to carry on a successful war, while England, in the throes of a life and death struggle with Napoleon, was far too preoccupied to render any aid to her colonies at the start. In addition to this initial advantage, the Americans expected that large numbers of disaffected Canadians who had long been agitating for greater political freedom would join them. This, however, was not the case. Not only did their early advantage prove to be slight but their other calculations were shown to be equally fallacious. Internal grievances were laid aside and Canadians quickly united to repel the invader. Volunteer regiments to fight the Americans arose everywhere. It was mainly due to the energetic and spontaneous action of the people that Canada was saved for the British Empire.

The Jews could not remain apart from the conflict and from the outset became deeply involved in the struggle. Many of them volunteered in the army and took an active part in various engagements; several casualties were suffered in the discharge of their military duties. Among the officers who responded to the Governor's appeal on the 9th of July, 1812, were Samuel David, David David, Henry Joseph, Benjamin Hart, Alexander Hart, Jacob Franks, Benjamin Franks, Benjamin Solomons and Myer Michaels.

Henry Joseph joined a battalion at Richelieu and took part in an engagement in that district. Jacob Franks similarly fought on the side of the English; the Americans wreaked their vengeance on him by utterly destroying his home at Mackinac. Ezekiel Hart distinguished himself as an officer in the militia which he had joined as far back as 1803. He was soon promoted to a lieutenancy in the 8th Three Rivers Battalion which took part in the War of 1812-1814. He was later transferred to another regiment and subsequently became a captain in the 1st St. Maurice Battalion. His brother, Alexander Hart, and Isaac Phineas, of Three Rivers, were also in the militia from the beginning. Samuel David was a captain in the 2nd Montreal Battalion of Volunteers and later became major in

command of the same regiment which was composed mainly of French-Canadians. David David was a captain in the 1st Division and in command of a regiment of English-Canadians stationed at the borders of Lower Canada.<sup>1</sup> Myer Michaels was a lieutenant in the same regiment. Joseph Herse was an officer in the 3rd Division while several other Jews were to be found in other detachments. All saw active service in the great battle at Chateauguay where De Salaberry, commander of the Canadian Voltigeurs, won great distinction. The battle ended with the defeat of the Americans under General Hampton.<sup>2</sup>

Their concern for the general welfare of the country was concretely expressed by the Jews when they took an active part in gathering relief for the war-stricken. Especially affected by the war was the poorer section of the population in whose behalf a relief fund was organized. Most of the Jews in Montreal contributed to this fund when a drive was opened in April, 1813. A number of them also contributed to a "Patriotic Society" which had been formed to aid the population of Upper Canada.

Despite the vigorous participation of the Jews in all phases of the life of the country and despite, too, the generally unbiased attitude toward them, certain isolated incidents revealed the existence of deep-rooted prejudice against them. Strangely enough, one such incident occurred in the militia where of all places it might be supposed that prejudice did not flourish. In this instance the central figure was Benjamin Hart of Three Rivers—bearer of a name that had once before precipitated a political tempest in the province. But this time the circumstances were far different. Personal revenge—in one sense an echo of the strife in the Legislative Assembly—was the sole motive here.

On February 12, 1811, Benjamin Hart addressed a request to Sir George Prevost, the British commander and Governor-General, that he be permitted to enlist in the militia. Since the issue of whether Jews might hold military or civilian posts in the colonies had long been settled and all doubts had been removed, Benjamin Hart's request was referred to Col. Coffin, commander of his district, for attention. The latter, however, appears to have shelved the matter and to have ignored it completely. Only a year later did he reply to the Governor, advising against such permission on the

<sup>1</sup> *Archives Israélites*, 1842, Tome III, mai (p. 295).

<sup>2</sup> J. D. BORTEWICK, *History and Biographical Gazetteer of Montreal*, p. 43.

ground that, as he put it, Christian soldiers would not tolerate a Jew in their midst. When this reply was forwarded to Hart he immediately perceived the source of the antagonism to him and in protest addressed the following petition to the Governor:

"To His Excellency, Sir George Prevost, Baronet, Captain-General, and Governor-in-Chief in and over the Provinces of Lower Canada and Upper Canada, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and their several dependencies, Vice-Admiral of the same, Lieutenant-General and Commander of all His Majesty's Forces in the Provinces of Lower and Upper Canada, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and their several dependencies and in the Islands of Newfoundland, Prince Edward, Cape Breton, Bermuda, etc., etc.

"May it please your Excellency.

"Your Memorialist though impressed with the sentiment that the present urgency of time leaves to your Excellency few moments to be spared on private concerns, yet is emboldened to recall to your Excellency's consideration the representation lately made to your Excellency by your Memorialist of having been omitted in the promotions of the Militia of Three Rivers. Your Memorialist having been informed by an indirect but credible channel, that Colonel Coffin's objection to your Memorialist being promoted was that it would give dissatisfaction to people in general and more particularly to the Roman Catholics on account of your Memorialist's Religious Profession, your Memorialist conceives it to be his duty to submit to your Excellency that this objection (if made) is without the least foundation and a misrepresentation. Your Memorialist begs leave to refer your Excellency to the enclosed certificate from the Hon. L. C. Foucher, Judge of this District and Lieut-Colonel of this Division, from the Rev. François Noiseux, Grand Vicar of this District, from the Rev. Doctor Short, and as well one signed by Major Courval and the Officers and Privates of this Town. To prove how insincere has been Colonel Coffin in his representation, your Memorialist will point out to your Excellency a public fact, that your Memorialist's brother, Ezekiel Hart was twice elected a Member of the House of Assembly and once to the exclusion of Col. Coffin himself. And, to show to your Excellency how inconsistent is this representation of Col. Coffin with his own conduct your Memorialist will recall to your

Excellency's memory that but lately Mr. Isaac Phineas was promoted as Ensign in the Division under Col. Coffin, though of the same religious persuasion as your Memorialist. If Col. Coffin made such a representation he followed only the dictates of some private resentment against your Memorialist. Your Memorialist in making this application for a commission is induced by his zeal and loyalty in supporting the cause of his King and Country, and whatever may be your Excellency's pleasure, your Memorialist will feel gratified in having expressed the truth to your Excellency. And your Memorialist as in duty bound will ever Pray.

(Signed) Benjamin Hart.

Three Rivers, 26th Aug., 1812."

The certificates mentioned in the petition are typical in that they reflect the relationship of the various social classes with the Jews. Public opinion was friendly and unprejudiced and, although it was possible that a Jew could be refused entrance into the militia because of a personal grudge, such action was far from expressing the views of the average Canadian.

The certificate of Justice Foucher, referred to by Benjamin Hart, read as follows: "Mr. Benjamin Hart having asked me if I am aware of any prejudice existing among the French-Canadians against him because of his religion or other motives, which (as he was told) should be the cause of his being refused a commission in the militia, and wishing to have my testimony regarding this, I state that to my knowledge no such prejudices exist, and, on the contrary, that for the many years that I have lived in the same city as Mr. Hart, he appeared to me as being generally beloved. I further state that his conduct has always been that of a loyal and devoted subject of His Majesty.

L. S. Foucher.

Three Rivers, 25th Aug., 1812."

On the same date F. Noiseux, Vicar-General of Three Rivers, wrote: "I, the undersigned, certify that for sixteen years I have been residing in Three Rivers, and that I have always known Mr. Benjamin Hart with whom I have often had business connections, to be an honest merchant, a good citizen and a loyal subject of the King." In a similar vein also wrote Rev. F. Short, Rector of the Protestant Episcopalian Church of Three Rivers and acting Chaplain to the garrison in the same city, declaring that he knew of

nothing to "justify any calumny against him or his loyalty as a citizen." What exposed the partiality and groundlessness of the objection against him in the most striking manner was the following statement by members of the Militia: "Nous les Soussignes certifions que nous n'avons aucune objection, ni repugnance, a servir dans la Milice avec M. Benjamin Hart soit comme officier ou autrement. Trois Rivières, Août 26me., 1812." (47 signatures follow).<sup>1</sup>

After the petition had been forwarded, Hart received a reply from the Governor, dated September 23, 1812, to the effect that his request would be considered and the decision communicated to him in due course. Whereupon Hart replied on the 29th of the same month, expressing the hope that the Governor would do him justice and not be swayed against him because he was a Jew. He felt confident that the Governor would pay little attention to the opinion of Colonel Coffin. "Your Excellency well knows," he wrote, "that should I have failed by merit, I would gladly have become a volunteer in the line, rather than apply for a commission. But inasmuch as I am a loyal subject, I would rather seek a commission . . . I was also informed recently that I was undesirable because I was a Jew, yet I have sent you a number of names of the militia who are very willing to serve with me in the ranks." Strangely enough, the matter later appears to have been forgotten and Hart's request remained unfulfilled. The reason for this is not known, although it would seem that Prevost attached weight to Colonel Coffin's opinion and did not wish to create an unpleasant incident. Hart nevertheless triumphed over his adversary, although it was not until eight years later, and in another district. On October 15, 1820, he was commissioned a lieutenant in the 1st Battalion of the Militia in Montreal, to which city he had moved by that time.

Despite his unpleasant experience, Hart did not hesitate to demonstrate his loyalty to England during the War of 1812-1814. Sir George Prevost, anxious to arm 100 men to garrison Fort William Henry (now Sorel), was informed by Col. Battersby that this project was impossible to carry out without money to pay the recruits their bounty and daily pay. According to the Army Paymaster, the sum of £1,000 at the very least was required. No money was forthcoming for this purpose, neither in Three Rivers nor

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<sup>1</sup> The documents respecting Benjamin Hart quoted above are to be found in the Archives, Internal Correspondence, Series S.

in Quebec. Upon learning of the government's plight, Benjamin Hart promptly offered to come to its aid. His offer was accepted and, thanks to him, the organization and equipment of the small garrison became possible. In the month of November, 1813, Hart, then living in Montreal, enlisted as a private in a regiment of Volunteers which had been formed to help repulse General Dearborn's army advancing on the city. He was later instructed to proceed to Three Rivers with orders to the militia there to engage the Americans.<sup>1</sup>

As previously mentioned, the rate of increase in the Jewish community was scarcely perceptible. In 1825 there were only 90 Jews in Lower Canada and by 1831 they had barely increased to 107. Nevertheless they slowly grew aware of the anomalous situation caused by their lacking the authority to administer their own communal affairs. A movement was begun to improve their position but it was not until several years had elapsed that it gained practical expression. On December 4, 1828, a number of Montreal Jews petitioned Parliament to allow their community to keep its own official register of marriages, births and deaths. Several days later, on December 13 of that year, a bill to that effect was introduced in Parliament, bearing the rather ponderous title, "An Act to extend privileges therein mentioned to persons professing the Jewish faith and for the obviating of certain inconveniences to which others of His Majesty's subjects might otherwise be exposed."<sup>2</sup>

Thus the question of the civil status of Jews in Lower Canada was once again raised but this time without the rancour that had accompanied its previous emergence. The bill was speedily adopted. An examination of the "Journals of the Assembly" for the session of 1828-29, containing reports of the proceedings in connection with this bill,<sup>3</sup> clearly shows the contrast between the attitude now prevailing in the Assembly and that prevailing during the stormy sessions some two decades earlier. But so nebulous was the content of the bill and so ambiguous its framing that, although the enabling legislation was passed by both Houses, a train of perplexity was left in its wake. Not only did a difference of juridical opinion with regard to the formalities necessary to obtain its ratification arise,

<sup>1</sup> *The Archives*, Series Q, 1840, p. 382.

<sup>2</sup> Neither the original nor any copy of the Jewish petition may be found today. It would appear that they were destroyed during the fire of 1916 which devastated the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa. See Appendix, p. 252, note <sup>6</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> *Journals of the House of Assembly*, Lower Canada, 1828-1829, vol. 38.

but the Attorney-General angrily declared that the provisions of the bill were "inexpedient, imperfectly and insufficiently framed and not such as would be required to answer the purposes intended."<sup>1</sup> In accordance with this opinion, the same bill, but in a modified form, was again submitted during the session of 1830 and was immediately passed.

The preamble to the revised bill is especially interesting. It states that the Jews labour under serious difficulties as they are unable, under the existing laws, to keep registers of births, marriages and burials; that this may injuriously affect the interests of other subjects of His Majesty, and particularly so those acquiring immovable property which previously belonged to Jews. It is therefore desirable, the bill sets forth, to adopt a law which would permit them to keep registers of civil status as they would be permitted if they professed the dominant religions. The bill was sent to Sir James Kempt, the Governor of the Province, with a special address by the Legislative Council stating that it was a measure "of the highest importance to a great portion of His Majesty's subjects in this Colony," and praying that he cause the bill "to be transmitted to England without delay, for the purpose of being laid before both Houses of the Imperial Parliament previous to the signification of His Majesty's assent thereto." On the 13th of January, 1831, the bill was sanctioned and became a law which is in force to this day.

The Jews properly considered this law to be an important step forward on the road to complete emancipation. They recognized it as a portent that the time was not far distant when they would acquire all the privileges of British subjects. Encouraged by the success of their drive to achieve independent communal administration and aware of the change in Quebec's point of view, they determined to persevere in their efforts until they had attained full recognition as citizens. A second petition was drawn up and on January 31, 1831, presented in the House on their behalf by Mr. Neilson, one of the English members of the Assembly and editor of the *Quebec Gazette*. The framers of the petition requested that, since the Government of Great Britain was favorably disposed to the Jews, they be granted the right to accept and hold any public office in the province. Their profession of the Jewish religion, their

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<sup>1</sup> *The Archives*, Series Q, vol. 188-2, p. 294.

argument ran, was not sufficient reason to bar them from such positions.<sup>1</sup> Several days later, on February 7 of that year, a second and far lengthier petition dealing with the same subject was read in the Legislative Assembly. The author of the petition, Samuel Becancour Hart, grandson of Commissary Aaron Hart, complained that he had been refused a commission as justice of the peace on the ground that as a Jew he could not, according to the decision of the Executive Council, take the required oath. He had been offered the commission by Lieutenant-Colonel Yorke, Secretary to Sir James Kempt, Governor of Lower Canada. Declaring it an anomaly "in an age of liberalism and universal tolerance," he drew the attention of Parliament to this circumstance and contended that the English laws which accorded privileges to Jews were never observed in Canada since, according to these laws, even a foreign-born Jew might become naturalized after a residence of seven years and thus acquire the right to fill various offices. He requested that the House take his "grievances into serious consideration and relieve him and his brethren from every disability to which they are now subjected through the illegal acts of the Colonial Executive."<sup>2</sup>

Undeniably there was a new spirit abroad. It was a time when the turgid political atmosphere was already being charged with the tenseness generated by the incipient 1837-1838 struggle for freedom, and Parliament reflected the *zeitgeist* in a more liberal attitude toward Jews. Their demands met a warm and sympathetic response. Both Houses of the legislative body were agreed that steps should be taken to give greater freedom to the Jews and to place them on a level of equality with other citizens. It was the psychological moment—nor was it permitted to expire unfruitfully. It is of interest to note that Louis-Joseph Papineau, who subsequently led the rebellion and whose name is intimately linked with the birth of democracy in Canada, was an ardent supporter of the petition. Papineau, a man of progressive ideas who had become speaker of the Assembly as early as 1814, was especially pleased that the present Parliament was in a position to undo an injustice committed by another Parliament some twenty years earlier.

To implement the Jewish petition and that of Samuel Becancour Hart, both of which he had presented, on March 16, 1831, Mr. Neilson introduced a bill to grant Jews the same rights and priv-

<sup>1</sup> *Journals of the House of Assembly, Lower Canada, 1831*, pp. 37-38.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 102-103.

ileges as enjoyed by other citizens of the province. This bill, regarded by the Jews of Canada as their "Magna Charta," was adopted by the Lower and Upper Houses almost without discussion. Second reading took place on March 18 and promptly on the next day, the 19th, the formality of a third reading was gone through. Since passage of the bill took only three days, it would appear that the Assembly sincerely wished to redress the wrong it had previously committed. In no other manner can we explain why passage of the bill to emancipate the Jews not only met with no obstacles but was actually expedited in order that it might the sooner become law.

Once adopted, the bill received the King's sanction on June 5, 1832, and went into effect. By virtue of this Act, the Jews in Canada, both in fact and in law, were recognized as fully emancipated citizens entitled to the same civil and political privileges as all other subjects. This statute, subsequently amended in order to give it a broader application, established the fundamental rights of Jews in this country and provided that all Jews, whether British-born or domiciled here, would have the rights and privileges enjoyed by other subjects of the King, his heirs and successors, on all occasions and to all intents and purposes; that they would be allowed to accept and fill every public office or position of trust in the province of whatever importance. This statute is known as 1st William IV, Chap. 57, and is entitled "An Act to declare persons professing the Jewish religion entitled to all the rights and privileges of the other subjects of His Majesty in this Province."<sup>1</sup> Thus since 1832 the Jews in Canada have been on a footing of complete equality. By granting them the fullest measure of liberty and all the benefits of citizenship, the country took a definite step forward on the path of liberalism and progress.

Joseph Tassé, the renowned French-Canadian historian and writer, in characteristic praise of what had thereby been achieved, expressed himself in the following words:

"The Jew, Ezekiel Hart, lived long enough to see the passing of the law and how far ideas have progressed from the days that Parliament closed its doors to him and forced him to renounce his political life. Canada by the political emancipation of the Jews was greatly in advance of England in the ways of justice and liberality; in fact they were still discussing in Westminster in 1847, 1850, 1857, 1858, the question as to whether they ought to

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<sup>1</sup> *Provincial Statutes of Lower Canada, 1832, p. 83, William IV, Chap. LVII.*

accord to Jews political rights while our Provincial Legislature had accorded to the Jews full plenitude from 1832. Thus an English colony, which has been too often reproached as modelling its laws upon the Imperial Legislation, this time set an example to the Mother Country which she thought wise enough to follow later on. It was not the first political lesson which our country gave to the English, and we believe it is not the last."<sup>1</sup>

But the fact that Jews attained political equality here before they did in England is not in itself extraordinary. The attendant circumstances—far different in England from those in Canada—must be fully understood and appreciated. The English members of the Quebec Assembly were more than pleased by the proposal to extend equal rights to the Jews and could not but act in the spirit of their traditional attitude. At the same time, the French-Canadians, then in the midst of a struggle for greater freedom and political justice, seized the opportunity of giving direct and tangible expression to their principles.

Some uncertainty regarding the exact definition of the rights possessed by the Jews still remained and later led to a voluminous official correspondence. Finally, after Queen Victoria herself intervened, all grievances were adjusted and all doubts removed.

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<sup>1</sup> *La Revue canadienne*, 1870, p. 425.

CHAPTER TEN  
THE TRANSITION PERIOD

THE Jewish community showed very few signs of expansion. After nearly three-quarters of a century it increased much less than was the case in the early period of settlement. While new Jewish names are constantly encountered during the first few decades of British rule in Canada, they are rarely met with in the later stages.

The number of Jews living in Lower Canada in 1825 and in 1831 has already been given. Joseph Bouchette's estimate sets their total at 90 in 1825, while by 1831 the community had increased to 107 souls according to the religious census of that year. The slight difference between the figures for these years indicates that Bouchette's conjecture was not far wrong. Only in the following years did the Jewish community increase to any appreciable extent. The 1844 census shows a Jewish population of 154 in Lower Canada, the majority living in Montreal; Quebec, Three Rivers and other points held the remainder. The leisurely growth of the colony gradually made it possible for some Jews to penetrate into Upper Canada and to settle there.

About that time the community in Montreal was severely shaken by a crisis which threatened to disrupt its very foundations. Only by the untiring efforts of some of its more zealous members was the congregation saved from complete disintegration. The land upon which the synagogue was situated having reverted to the heirs of its former owners, it became necessary to abandon the site. The building, for over half a century the permanent House of Worship, was demolished and the Jews were once again compelled to gather in some private house for prayers. For several years this state of affairs continued during which time many important communal activities were neglected. Finally a drive was started to raise funds for a new synagogue and for a general reorganization of the congregation. Almost immediately the drive bore fruit. The fund was established, mainly from local contributions of which the greatest was that of Mrs. Frances Michaels who donated £575. Moses Montefiore was also a donor to this cause. In 1835 a lot on Chenneville Street near Lagauchetiere Street was purchased and a new synagogue was erected. The dedication took place in 1838. A small but handsome structure, the interior tastefully decorated in

distinctive Jewish style, it was then the only synagogue in British North America.<sup>1</sup> Among those who were most deeply concerned with the building of the new Sephardic synagogue was Moses J. Hays, a son of one of the first Jews to settle in the country. Possessed of great vigour and diversified talents, his qualities often stood the community in good stead and brought him to the forefront of Montreal's most active citizens. But there will be occasion to refer to him again.

The cholera epidemic of 1832 that raged so appallingly throughout Europe and America, snuffing out countless lives, did not spare the community in Canada. Many Jews fell victims to the dread disease, among them Henry Joseph who died on the 21st of June, 1832, immediately after the death of his eldest son from the same cause. On the same day 159 persons perished in Montreal. Not only did the epidemic bring death and destruction everywhere, but it also left destitute many families who had lost their breadwinners. The burden of helping them fell on the others, by no means an easy task for the small Jewish body.

As already observed, after the law proclaiming Jewish emancipation had come into force there still remained some uncertainty as to the manner in which it should be interpreted. A painful situation arose which not infrequently caused great embarrassment both to the Jews and to the public officials charged with administering the law. To unravel the tangle and to clarify all equivocal points became imperative. Upon the initiative of the Governor-General, Lord Aylmer, a special committee of the Legislative Assembly was appointed with instructions to make a thorough study of the problem and to render a decision which could be regarded as definitive. A message to this effect was sent to the Assembly by the Governor on February 8, 1834, and a committee armed with the necessary powers was at once nominated. At the hearings held by this body many persons appeared to volunteer their opinions and to give account of their personal experiences. Moses J. Hays and Benjamin Hart represented the Jews of Montreal. Samuel Becancour Hart of Three Rivers and Adolph Mordecai Hart of Quebec also appeared before the committee while Aaron Ezekiel Hart and Aaron Philip Hart were concerned with the juridical problems involved. The committee's report was presented on

<sup>1</sup> *Hochelaga Depicta. The Early History and Present State of the City and Island of Montreal.* Montreal, 1839, pp. 110-111.

February 28, 1834. It went carefully into the question of the rights of Jews in England and especially in the American colonies, and came to the conclusion that in Canada they possessed all the rights and privileges of British subjects.<sup>1</sup>

That effective enactment of the 1832 legislation was severely hampered by its indeterminate wording became apparent when it was realized that the statute did not provide for the form of oath to be tendered Jews on their entering public office. A test case presented itself when Lord Aylmer offered the above-mentioned Moses J. Hays and Benjamin Hart appointments as Justices of the Peace. They were obliged to decline since the Act adopted by the Legislature made no reference to the form of oath Jews were required to take on accepting this or any other public office. Thus the executive powers of Lower Canada were placed in a peculiar position in regard to the Jews. In a comparatively short time Parliament had passed two bills, the object of which was to confer equal rights upon them. Even after these bills had become law, they were still unable to assume civilian posts offered them by the administration of the province. Lord Aylmer himself complained of this condition in a letter addressed to the Colonial Secretary in England. He pointed out the dilemma in which the Executive found itself and inquired if the Imperial Parliament could not do something to rectify matters. On June 18, 1838, he wrote:—

“Being about to issue a new Commission of the Peace for the Province of Lower Canada in which the names of several gentlemen not in the existing commission will be introduced, I proposed to two individuals, Messrs. Benjamin Hart and M. J. Hays, resident of the City of Montreal, and professing the Jewish religion, to become magistrates, an office which they are now competent to fill by Law. It appears, however, that the omission of the words ‘upon the true faith of a Christian’ in the oath which must be tendered to them on entering upon office, not having been provided for, this circumstance operates as a bar to their acceptance of my proposal, which they have accordingly declined. I have now the honor of transmitting herewith a copy of the joint letter addressed by these gentlemen to my Civil Secretary to that effect, and of the legal opinion of the Professional Gentleman who it appears has been consulted by them

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<sup>1</sup> *Journals of the Assembly of Lower Canada, 1834, Appendix G. G.*

upon the subject, and I take leave to submit to your consideration the expediency of affording relief in this particular to these parties, and others who may be under similar circumstances in the Bill in favour of persons professing the Jewish religion, which is understood to be now in progress through the Imperial Parliament, more especially as *any enactment on this subject in this Country, would not (as I am informed) avail.*

"I have the honor to be, Sir,

"Your most obedient Humble Servant,  
AYLMER."<sup>1</sup>

The letter of Benjamin Hart and Moses J. Hays to which Lord Aylmer referred, read as follows:—

"Since we had the honor of signifying to you for the information of His Excellency the Governor-in-Chief our willingness to qualify ourselves as Justices of the Peace for the District of Montreal in acceptance of the Office tendered to us by His Excellency, we have in consequence of doubts arising in our minds respecting the possibility of our taking the Oaths of the Office as required by law, consulted a Professional Gentleman, whose opinion we beg to enclose with this, and who does not think that we can possibly omit the words 'upon the true faith of a Christian,' which form part of the abjuration oath which is obliged to be taken by Justices of the Peace, the Provincial Legislature not having gone far enough in the Act 1, Wm. 4 C. 57 which was passed 'to declare persons professing the Jewish religion entitled to all the rights and privileges of the other subjects of His Majesty in this Province,' nor having provided for the omission of the above words in the taking of the abjuration oath. We must therefore beg of you to signify to His Excellency the Governor-in-Chief that finding it impossible under the present existing circumstances that we can as Jews take the oath of abjuration in accepting the office of Justice of the Peace, we must request respectfully that we may not be included in the New Commission; at the same time we must tender to His Lordship our sincere acknowledgement of the honor intended us, and we pray that His Excellency will be pleased to bring the question in some way before the Imperial Parliament so that this only remaining disqualification of the

<sup>1</sup> *The Archives*, Series Q, vol. 209-1, p. 68.

Jews in this Province may be removed, and that no objection to their hereafter accepting offices or places of trust in this Province may remain.

"We have the honor to be, &c., &c.,  
 Benjamin Hart.

"Lieut. Col. Craig,  
 Civil Secretary,  
 Quebec."<sup>1</sup>  
 M. J. Hays.

The "Professional Gentleman" referred to in both letters was Aaron Philip Hart, then a well-known advocate in Montreal, who was consulted as a legal expert. After having carefully analyzed the various acts that dealt with the Jews he came to the conclusion that "under existing circumstances I am decidedly convinced that persons professing the Jewish faith cannot take the oath of abjuration necessary to be taken by Justices of the Peace until some legislative enactment be made providing for the omission in the abjuration oath of the words in question."<sup>2</sup> It was with this in mind that Lord Aylmer wrote to the Colonial Secretary, fully confident that the Home Government would act to remove the last obstacle which barred the Jews of Canada from attaining full rights as British subjects.

Although the Lower Canada Executive Council was thoroughly convinced of the necessity of correcting the injustice to which the Jews were thus exposed, its intention was not easily fulfilled. The state of affairs which had occasioned such lengthy official correspondence was protracted for several years. During this time it was forgotten by many while others came to consider it as inevitable. That the Executive did everything in its power to ameliorate the situation and that there was no opposition to permitting Jews to hold public office was not sufficient to produce the required amendment. In the month of June, 1837, Arthur Wellington Hart, who happened to be in England at that time, received a letter in the name of Lord Glenelg, dated the 22nd of that month, which stated that the English Government could do nothing in this matter. "It rests with the Legislature of Lower Canada and not with Her Majesty's Government," he was informed, "to alter the oath required of persons appointed to act as Justices of the Peace within the limits of that Province, and that however much we may regret

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

the exclusion of persons professing the Jewish religion, it is not in his Lordship's power to afford them relief."<sup>1</sup>

However, all the labour expended was not wholly unavailing—the effort finally achieved success. Not long after, on August 5 of that same year, Moses J. Hays and Benjamin Hart were both appointed Magistrates, the first Jews in Canada to be so honoured. An honour indeed it was—for the document that raised them to the Magisterial Bench was signed by Queen Victoria herself. Deepest feelings of gratitude were aroused among the Jews in Canada. Unrestrainedly they showed their appreciation of what they considered to be a most gracious and friendly act on the part of the English Queen. To them had been extended a privilege which the Jews in England did not then possess.

On December 24, 1837, Arthur Wellington Hart expressed the thankfulness of the Canadian Jews in a somewhat rhetorical letter to Lord Glenelg. "The receipt of an important communication from Canada at the present moment when the country is in a state of open rebellion," he wrote, "incites me to copy such parts as may be considered of importance to the Government, and laying the same under your inspection. Ere I do so, my Lord, I have a duty of a personal nature to perform, and I can in doing so quote as my motto on this occasion, 'That the heaviest debt is that of gratitude when 'tis not in our power to repay it.' The first act of our gracious Queen on issuing the Commission of the Peace, subsequent to my letter to your Lordship of June last, for the District of Montreal, was placing the name of my estimable and worthy parent on the list and his consequent elevation to the Magisterial Bench. My Lord, the Israelites of the North American and West Indian Colonies are deeply indebted to you for gratuitous exertions in endeavouring to extend civil and religious liberty, and in granting them immunities and privileges unextended to the Hebrews of this Kingdom. On behalf of my father, I tender, my Lord, my heartfelt thanks for the honor conferred and in assuring your Lordship that the confidence of Her Majesty and yourself in the loyalty and devotion of the Jewish residents in Canada is not misplaced. The struggle now unhappily existing will prove their attachment to the Government under which they have the happiness to receive protection."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 242-3, p. 827.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 852.

And thus, through the agency of Queen Victoria, the problem that had first begun to trouble the Jews and others in Canada some three decades earlier, and had even caused considerable political unrest, was finally and irrevocably settled. Their status was secure. No longer could their rights as British subjects be challenged.

While the colony in Lower Canada was weathering many storms and entrenching itself more securely, other Jews slowly began to make their way into different regions. This occurred quite naturally and parallel to the development of these regions and the consequent influx of new settlers. As previously indicated, Jews first began to appear in Upper Canada towards the end of the eighteenth century. Vast and fertile, the unpopulated areas of this territory soon attracted many eager colonists, among them several Jews who would journey there from time to time. Occasionally the odd traveller would attempt to settle permanently in the more inhabited districts.

Essentially transient, this sporadic colonization could not succeed in taking root. Whether due to unfavourable circumstances or to some other reason, the sphere of Jewish settlement in Canada was not appreciably broadened, though the groundwork was slowly prepared. In Lower Canada the Jewish colony was compelled to undergo several transformations before it attained a measure of stability. As a rule a small group would settle in a new location. When one hardy individual acted as a trail blazer, he would carefully investigate the prospects of taking up residence on the new site and, if favourable, would encourage others to follow. To a certain extent this procedure also was observed in Upper Canada which had a population of little more than 70 thousand at the beginning of the nineteenth century, according to the 1806 statistics.

It may therefore readily be presumed that there were Jews living in York (renamed Toronto in 1834) some time before there were any indications of a Jewish community in that city. This must have been comparatively early in the previous century, certainly not much later, although it is difficult to establish the exact date. It is equally difficult to determine with any exactitude who these pioneer residents were and how long they remained. Reference to Jews in Toronto is made for the first time in a communication, dated 1817, sent by the Attorney-General to Mr. Cameron, the Government-Secretary, together with the provincial statutes governing marriages. In it he outlined the form of civil marriage ceremony

applicable to all residents, with the exception of Quakers and Jews who were exempted, since the English law regulating such marriages applied in their case.<sup>1</sup> In other words, the Attorney-General indirectly confirmed the presence of Jews in Upper Canada by pointing out the exception to the civil laws in force in the province that must be made in their case and in the case of Quakers. May it not then be concluded that his attention had been directed to the fact of a Jewish marriage, or even two, although the civil status of Jews had not yet been defined even in Lower Canada?

The first Jew known to have established himself at an early date in Toronto is the above-mentioned Arthur W. Hart. According to the municipal directory for 1833, he maintained an insurance agency in Toronto that year under the firm name of "A. W. Hart and Company." It is understood, of course, that he must have lived there for some time prior to the publication of the directory. His case fully bears out the observation that individual Jews seldom remained long in one place unless encouraged by the arrival of others. For, as we have seen, the same A. W. Hart had moved to England by 1837. It is not known when he left Toronto, to which city, incidentally, other Jews had by then been attracted. What is certain, is that he never returned there. Other names that crop up about the same time lead us to conclude that the Jewish colony in what is today Canada's second greatest city was founded sometime during the '30's. Most frequently met with is the name of Joseph—pioneer residents in that city—of whom there were several. Less spectacular than the arrival of Jews in Montreal some seventy years earlier, and unaccompanied by the epoch-making events of that time, their coming to Toronto together with others nevertheless laid the foundation for the small community that later developed.

Even in those days they played an important part in the commercial and industrial life of the young city. Although their undertakings could not be compared with the activities of the early Jewish settlers in Montreal, Quebec and Three Rivers, they were by no means insignificant. It was in Toronto, too, that Jews first became connected with the clothing industry in Canada, an industry they were later to develop so successfully. In 1834 one L. Joseph had a general store in Toronto. A William Myers—the name is not thoroughly Jewish—was a printer and a P. I. Samuel was mentioned

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, Series Q, vol. 322, 1-2, p. 216.

in the Directory as an official—Deputy-Secretary and Registrar. The following year, in 1835, Goodman and Samuel Benjamin, who later moved to Montreal, operated a clothing business under the name of "Benjamin Bros." One of the first important enterprises of its kind in Toronto, they contracted with the Government of Upper Canada to supply coats to the troops during the Rebellion of 1838.

In 1838 there arrived in Toronto Henry A. Joseph and Judah G. Joseph who were distantly related. Judah G. Joseph was born in England in 1798 and in 1830 emigrated with his family to the United States where he remained for several years, later moving to Toronto. A skilled optician and jeweller, he set himself up in his trade and in time developed a flourishing business. He had his establishment at 56 King Street East where he dealt in optical instruments and articles of jewellery. His many endearing qualities made him highly popular and respected among all who knew him. He had been well brought up in England, imbued with a sincere devotion to Jewish interests which never failed. Strongly orthodox, he made a point of closing his business every Friday evening before sunset. He was also one of the founders of the Toronto Jewish community which evolved a few years later. It is interesting to note that among the first subscribers to the *Occident* which began to appear in Philadelphia during the early '40's, were J. G. Joseph and Joseph Benjamin of Toronto.

Henry A. Joseph, a native of Sorel, Quebec, came to Toronto in 1838 and engaged in fur trading there. Having married a Christian, he slowly lost contact with other Jews. The late '30's found still another Joseph in Toronto—Gershom Joseph, a student at Upper Canada College which he had entered in order to prepare for a professional career. The beginning of 1838 saw him enrolled as an undergraduate at the University of Toronto. After having graduated from the Faculty of Arts with the degree of Master, he took a course in jurisprudence to prepare for the Bar. In addition he studied for five more years under Chief Justice Meredith and Judge Mondelet in order to complete his knowledge of law. Gershom Joseph was one of the first Jewish advocates in the country to be appointed a Q.C. (Queen's Counsel).

As far as is known, these were the first Jews to settle in Toronto. It is worth mentioning here that the first literary work, if so it may be called, to be published in Canada by a Jew appeared in that city.

This was a pamphlet of 61 pages published in 1844, a "review of the teachings and chronology of Mr. William Miller," as it was styled.<sup>1</sup> The name of the author is not known as he concealed his identity under the pseudonym "An Israelite."

Of those mentioned above only a few were directly concerned with the formation of the congregation which was founded in Toronto a few years later. The small community failed to grow and at that stage there could be little hope of achieving any communal progress or expansion. But even as early as the middle forties there had already emerged one interesting figure from that tiny nucleus. This was Jacob Maier Hirschfelder, a learned Hebraist and authority on oriental languages, who won great popularity in intellectual circles in Toronto where in 1845 he was a Hebrew instructor at the University. That year he published a German text-book which, under his name, listed his titles as "Tutor at the University of King's College, Toronto, and Teacher of Arabic, Syriac and German." At the end of the volume there was appended a sample page from a Hebrew grammar he was preparing. Later he also published several other works of merit.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Review of the Doctrines and Prophetical Chronology of Mr. William Miller.* By an Israelite. Toronto, 1844. 61 pp.

<sup>2</sup> DAVID ROME, "Jacob Maier Hirschfelder," in *Daily Hebrew Journal*, Toronto, December 12, 1940.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

## JEWS AND THE 1837 REBELLION

**B**LOWN from different sources, strong gusts of democratic opinion had already begun to reach Canada by the close of the eighteenth century. The great French Revolution was in full swing when Canada was granted the Constitutional Act of 1791. Although the American Revolution had ended some years earlier, it had not failed to leave a marked impression on the minds of Canadians. England was well aware of these trends. In London it was even feared that this colony too would eventually merge with the American States. To prevent this, the granting of a free civil government to the people of Canada was taken into serious consideration.

In Canada even the United Empire Loyalists who, faithful to England, had migrated here during the American War of Independence were demanding a new government. They too were beginning to show signs of dissatisfaction with the devious machinations of the existing political system in the country and with those influential people who unopposedly exploited the system for their own corrupt purposes.

Internal dissension and disunity arising out of deep-rooted abuses of the country's political machinery had prepared both national factions, the English and the French, to respond readily in 1837-38 to the call of their revolutionary leaders—Papineau in Lower and Mackenzie in Upper Canada. But they themselves had no clear understanding of what they wanted. Their aims were not lucidly expressed. Only when the cleavage between them and the ruling power had become more sharply defined, when the leaders of the rebellion had formulated spirited, radical slogans—only then did there emerge concrete demands to be presented to the Motherland. At first the dissident masses would have been content with little had it been granted them. They demanded only a responsible people's government and more political freedom for themselves. But later when both Papineau and Mackenzie had been carried away by their own revolutionary momentum, when they had begun to stir up the people and to speak in their name, they began to demand a free democratic republic modelled after the nearby American Republic.

The truth is that it had never occurred even to the French-Canadians to secede from England. Under British rule they were undoubtedly far better off than under the feudal system which had formerly enslaved them and had subjected them to the most outrageous exploitation at the hands of the *seigneurs*.<sup>1</sup> In addition, by virtue of the Quebec Act of 1774, the Catholic Church had received all the concessions it required. The same Act had established French civil law in Quebec so that French-Canadians had every reason to be satisfied with their new political masters.

But if the masses in their political immaturity<sup>2</sup> made no such demands, they were made by those who spoke in their name. And the masses, the Quebec French, submitted readily to the influence of the more articulate amongst them. Papineau, Jacques Viger, Duvernay, Wolfred Nelson, Marin, Taché, Georges Cartier and others—their oratory seemed to cast a spell over all who listened. Intoxicated by their heady talk the people became imbued with a sense of their own power—a power that others would be forced to reckon with. Under the spell of this oratory there emerged also in all their complexity the problems of race, of culture, of language, even or religion—problems not fully solved to this day—which the French regarded as a wall separating them from their fellow-Canadians.

What of the Jews while these crises were developing? What was their part in the climacteric events that were later to engulf the country in a tide of unrest and to engender a revolutionary outbreak?

Both the Quebec Act of 1774 and the Constitutional Act of 1791 have been dealt with briefly above. But even before London had acted a movement to bring pressure—at first mild and friendly—upon the British power and *compel* it to make these concessions had already arisen in the Canadian colony. In this movement the Jews, as has already been observed,<sup>3</sup> played a part out of all proportion to their small numbers. Later, after the movement had burst into the open and the entire country had been fired with the spirit of revolt, a few of them were to be found amongst those consulted by the revolutionary leaders while the insurrection was being planned. At the same time Jews were counted in the ranks of the most ardent loyalists who fought to keep the colony British and to prevent a

<sup>1</sup> ALFRED D. DECELLES, *A Chronicle of the Lower Canadian Rebellion*, Toronto, 1920, pp. 2-3.

<sup>2</sup> FRANK BASIL TRACY, *Tercentenary History of Canada*, vol. III, p. 801.

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter Six.

much-feared rupture with the Motherland. It is known that a number of Jews occupied high posts in the military services on the loyalist side.

At the time of the outbreak of the 1837-38 Rebellion there were scarcely two hundred Jews in Canada, possibly fewer. As Canadians, whatever their attitude to the principles involved, they could clearly not remain aloof. Only a few years had elapsed since they had gained equal political rights. Well did they remember the long and arduous struggle, the many bitter years of strife, the violent campaigns in the press, in Parliament and in political circles generally until their goal was attained. One of Lord Aylmer's last official acts had been to approve the bill adopted by the Quebec Legislature to confer equal rights on the Jews. They could not help but feel deeply grateful, then, to the governing body and to Britain for the liberal treatment they had received. At the same time they could not forget that exceptional circumstances, directly related to the abnormal conditions now prevailing in the country, had made it possible for them to attain equal rights in Canada far earlier than in England. They could not forget that it was due to the support of the French-speaking majority in Parliament led by Louis-Joseph Papineau that they had won equal British citizenship in Lower Canada.

Consequently when the atmosphere grew pregnant with impending unrest, when belated but powerful echoes of the French Revolution and the American War of Independence reverberated ominously throughout the country, Jewish sympathies were divided. It would be false to assume, as it generally is, that the Jews took part only on the Loyalist side. To the extent that they saw truth and justice in their demands, many of them sided with the French Patriots. This was particularly true of those who happened to reside in the wholly French-speaking sections of Lower Canada. Nor, having to take into account the feelings and sentiments of those amongst whom they lived, could they have done otherwise.

Benjamin Sulte, the noted French-Canadian historian, sheds some light on this phase of the Rebellion in an interesting tale related in his collected works. From this tale it might be inferred that the most vital plans for the revolutionary activity of the Patriots were laid at the home of Ezekiel Hart, then one of the most prominent citizens of Three Rivers. This story sounds strange indeed, the more so in view of the reputation of the Hart family for

patriotism and loyalty to Britain. It is a well-known fact that the Hart residence in Three Rivers was a favourite rendezvous of the local "quality," not excluding members of the Royal Family and the highest English aristocracy. Ezekiel Hart himself was a close friend of a former Governor of Canada, Sir James Craig, and of other Quebec authorities. It is also a matter of record that Sir James Craig had personally opposed the French majority in Parliament on Hart's account. Revolutionary sentiment had become so firmly embedded in the mass of the French population from the start, however, that those who came in constant contact with it could not help but succumb. Residing in Three Rivers where this sentiment ran high, it is not inconceivable that Hart might have given way to its influence and even became one of its converts.

Benjamin Sulte writes that even in 1835, after the revolutionary manifesto, the famous "Ninety-Two Resolutions," had aroused grave anxiety in the country, Ezekiel Hart still maintained the most intimate connections with the revolutionary leaders. Although the country's mood had by then grown extremely tense and those responsible were regarded as politically dangerous persons, Hart continued to have personal contact and to be on the most cordial terms with them.

The "Ninety-Two Resolutions" had marked the climax of an embittered political struggle in the Legislative Assembly of Lower Canada. Already Papineau and those who supported him had been branded as hardened, uncompromising foes of England. Yet at this time Ezekiel Hart invited these preachers of sedition and fomenters of revolution to his home and staged a celebration for them in the grand manner. There were gathered together the guiding intellects of the movement—Papineau, Jacques Viger, the well-known French-Canadian writer who was also the first mayor of Montreal, Roy de Portelance, and many others. Although all the English-speaking citizens of Three Rivers had been invited, with one exception they stayed away in protest. They indignantly refused to attend what seemed to them a most improper entertainment. That the home of Ezekiel Hart, where the English aristocracy in the country had so often gathered, should be the scene of a function in honour of the leaders of revolution was extremely repugnant to them.<sup>1</sup> The impression made on the English circles with which he

<sup>1</sup> BENJAMIN SULTE, *Pages d'histoire du Canada*, 1891, p. 429; idem, *Mélanges historiques*, vol. 19, pp. 54-55.

had so intimately been linked is not difficult to imagine. For them no interpretation was possible other than that Hart had betrayed them and cast in his lot with the anti-British faction.

Benjamin Sulte also details how Ezekiel Hart's son, Adolph Mordecai Hart, a prominent journalist and advocate in Three Rivers, appeared before the courts on many occasions in 1837 to defend arrested rebels. During one such trial he was himself sentenced to an hour's imprisonment and fined five louis for contempt of court.<sup>1</sup> It was a generally accepted fact that only lawyers who sympathized with the rebels could be persuaded to represent them before the courts, and only in this light could the Jewish advocate's conduct be viewed.

Another interesting point is that at a revolutionary meeting held in Three Rivers on April 20, 1834, Moses Hart, Ezekiel Hart's brother, and Henry Judah, an advocate in that city, arose to deliver fiery, revolutionary speeches. Both condemned the regime in Quebec for its bureaucratic methods and its abuse of power. Coming as a distinct shock to the entire audience, their words demonstrated how closely they were allied in sentiment with the revolutionary movement.<sup>2</sup> This was at a time when the entire French-Canadian intelligentsia was indoctrinated with the democratic slogans proclaimed by Papineau and his friends. Strongly idealistic, they dreamed many dreams only to see them later shattered and crushed. Defeated, exhausted, their enthusiasm quickly waned. It is not surprising to learn therefore, that as the mood of Three Rivers changed and as the spirit that had formerly inspired the French populace evaporated, Moses Hart and Henry Judah soon lost their early revolutionary ardour.

Essentially episodic in character, these incidents reveal only a small part of the role played by the Jews during the period of unrest and disturbance in the Canadian colony. The great majority of them, it must be stressed, did not fail in their duty to the country which, by granting them freedom, had given them sufficient reason to feel both allegiance and gratitude. English Jews for the most part, at the first threat of rebellion they immediately rallied to the loyalist ranks and took their stand with those who fought to keep Canada within the Empire. Insofar as their small numbers permitted, they figured prominently in the events of 1837-38. Their

<sup>1</sup> *Idem*, *Pages d'histoire du Canada*, 1891, p. 430.

<sup>2</sup> HERVE BIRON, "Les troubles de 1837," in *L'Action catholique*, Québec, 18 avril 1937.

names are linked with important military operations and with every undertaking in defence of British interests. No wonder then that the English were favourably impressed with their conduct. They were included in many of the hastily-organized battalions of loyal citizens. At many important points they were connected with the high command and with the main military guard. Several Jews even commanded militia detachments in engagements with the rebels. The courage and patriotism they exhibited in helping to suppress the rebellion won them great favour with Sir John Colborne, the military commander-in-chief, who was charged with restoring order in the country.

In this connection it would be interesting to go over several well-known episodes which demonstrate how Jews fought in the loyalist ranks and participated in the various operations. On November 7, 1837, Captain Eleazer David was ordered to patrol the streets of Montreal at the head of a detachment of cavalry. This was after the city had been the scene of a bloody encounter between the English "Constitutionalists" and the French "Sons of Liberty," and it was feared that the disturbances would assume a more serious character. David's task was to prevent any further clashes. On the 10th of November Lieutenant Moses Samuel David was dispatched to St. John with cavalry to arrest the leaders of the rebellion there. About the same time another member of the David family, Dr. Aaron Hart David, joined the Montreal Rifle Brigade in charge of the medical service.<sup>1</sup>

How the Jews of Canada served with distinction in the revolutionary disturbances of that time is told in the Franco-Jewish publication *Archives Israélites* for the year 1842, i.e., four years after the Rebellion. Among other things it relates that at the battle of St. Charles which took place on November 25, 1837, Captain Eleazer David, in command of the cavalry, had his horse shot from under him but himself escaped injury.<sup>2</sup> He so distinguished himself in the battle that Sir John Colborne promoted him to the rank of major a few days later. Jacob Henry Joseph (1814-1907), serving with the troops at Chambly and the Richelieu River, was entrusted with the task of carrying important dispatches between Sir John Colborne and General Wetherall. These dispatches were

<sup>1</sup> B. G. SACK, "The Canadian Civil War a Hundred Years Ago," in *Jewish Daily Eagle*, Jan. 30th, 1938.

<sup>2</sup> *Archives Israélites*, 1842, Tome III, mai (p. 295).

carried at night, the papers concealed in leather linings to prevent their falling into the hands of the rebels. His brother, Jesse Joseph (1817-1904), a leader in Montreal's industrial development, was also enrolled in the militia.<sup>1</sup>

In a letter to friends in London dated the 5th of July, 1838, the president of the Montreal congregation wrote: "The various troubles that we have experienced for the past nine months have caused us to forget all civil duties to perform military ones, and I am sorry to add our troubles are not yet over."<sup>2</sup>

Throughout the period of Rebellion the Jews were active in all phases of military service. Often they were charged with duties which involved danger, such as standing guard at night or carrying vital messages. This had a disturbing effect on the communal life of the meagre Jewish population. The most important congregation, in Montreal, suffered greatly as its functioning became disorganized. A great deal of material, mainly chronological, on the role of the Jews in the rebellion is to be found in the "Diary" of the David family whose members were amongst the first Jewish residents in the country. An important historical document, this manuscript register of dates and events relating to members of the family, to other Jews, and to contemporary Canadians was started by Samuel David. He was the son of Lazarus David, one of the pioneer settlers in Montreal after the British occupation. Samuel David was born in Montreal in 1766. Upon his death in 1824, other members of the family continued his "Diary." In one place his son, Lieutenant Moses Samuel David, makes an interesting entry about himself in connection with the rebellion. Sent by Sir John Colborne, the commanding officer, with an urgent dispatch to Sir Francis Head, the Governor of Upper Canada who was then waging a merciless campaign against William Lyon Mackenzie, the revolutionary leader there, David gives a vivid account of his journey from Montreal to Toronto. He tells how he set out in a caleche on the stormy winter night of January 13, 1838, how travelling day and night through torrential rain and almost impassable marshes he finally reached Toronto—a journey of six-and-a-half hours by train today—after five days on the road.

Particularly noteworthy was the part played by Benjamin Hart at that time. The Rebellion had flared up at the end of summer,

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<sup>1</sup> BENJAMIN G. SACK, *The Jew in Canada*, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

1837, a short time after his appointment as Justice of the Peace. His new duties, added to those he already carried as an army officer, imposed a heavy burden upon him. On November 4, 1837, the first evidence of treasonable acts on the part of the rebels was presented before him in his capacity as magistrate. Two days later, on the 6th, after the rebels had surprised and attacked the loyalists, he boldly made his way out into the streets in order to secure first-hand knowledge of the disturbances. He found a tumultuous crowd of several hundred persons led by one Naysmith. Promptly he read the "Riot Act," arrested the leader, and signed a requisition to the commandant of the garrison ordering out the militia since the demonstrators had begun to get out of hand. A clash ensued between the "Sons of Liberty" and the English "Constitutionalists" of the Doric Club in which the latter slowly gained the upper hand. Flushed with victory they attacked the home of Louis-Joseph Papineau, wrecked the office of his paper, the *Vindicator*, and would no doubt have carried out their threat to fire or demolish the houses of the rebels that night had Hart not restrained them. At his request the militia maintained a constant patrol of the streets of Montreal for several consecutive days. Throughout the nights of November 6, 7, 8 and 9, combining the functions of a magistrate with those of an army officer, he was at the head of the militia charged with keeping guard over the city, since it was considered unwise to entrust a French-Canadian magistrate with this duty. For almost three months he remained at his post in the Peace Office where he took depositions, heard charges and, at the request of the Attorney-General, issued over a hundred warrants for the arrest of persons accused of high treason.

It was widely rumoured at the time that the Government planned to repudiate any magistrate sued for false arrest. Many English magistrates, unwilling to assume the risk, withdrew from their duties. Fearful that the city would be left defenceless, a number of citizens and merchants called upon Hart and begged him not to allow himself to be intimidated. Simultaneously a similar request was addressed to him by Mr. Day, the Attorney-General, who assured him that should action be brought against him and damages awarded, he would undertake his defence and the merchants of Montreal would indemnify him against all loss.

The British secret agents operating in the United States forwarded all their reports to Benjamin Hart who in turn turned them

over to the Government. In addition he took almost every one of the voluntary confessions made by arrested rebels and devoted months of his time to this and similar work. On November 4, 1838, after the second uprising, General Clitherton in the name of Sir John Colborne requested Hart to arrest every person suspected by him of being a rebel leader, as it was feared that once rekindled the flames of revolt would spread with even greater intensity. Hart obeyed the order and caused over twenty persons to be arrested that day. His name is connected with another incident which occurred in the month of May, 1839. Although the insurrection had been suppressed by then, a number of irreconcilable rebels attacked Lieutenant-Colonel Barnard and Major Dickson of Sir John Colborne's staff. Both would have been murdered had not Hart, at the risk of his own life, rushed to their assistance and effected their rescue.<sup>1</sup>

Many other instances of his fearless devotion to duty in the face of danger could be cited. When the country's interests were threatened he did not hesitate to expose himself. All that naturally added greatly to the esteem in which he was held by many. Benjamin Hart was numbered among the leading citizens of Montreal. He had an unbroken record of almost forty years' service as a Grand Juror for the District of Montreal and Three Rivers. For some years he was also an executive member of the Montreal "Committee of Trade," parent body of the present-day Board of Trade.

This was indeed a period of grave crisis for Canada. Repercussions of the disturbances were to be felt not only in the political but also in the economic life of the country for many years to come. Adversely affected by the uncertain conditions, every mercantile enterprise suffered a sharp decline while the country's financial structure was shaken to its very foundations. In 1835 Papineau's exhortation to the merchants to demand gold from the banks had led to widespread loss of confidence in paper money. In this connection it would be interesting to tell of the financial experiment made by Moses Hart—an experiment which raised him to the forefront of the pioneers of private banking in Canada. Hart founded a bank which issued its own notes in varying denominations. The bank remained in existence from 1835 until his death in 1847 when it closed its doors. It neither went bankrupt nor suspended payments but merely called in its outstanding bills. About that time the government of Lower

<sup>1</sup> *The Archives*, Series Q, 1840, p. 382.

Canada had at the request of the leading merchants suspended specie payments, despite Papineau's appeal. A number of wealthy merchants established their own banks. Notes issued by these private banks circulated mainly amongst the French-Canadians and were accepted more readily than those of the Bank of Montreal since the owners, including Moses Hart, were known and trusted by the people. Moses Hart was a man of great ambition although lacking the healthy ability of his father, Aaron Hart. In addition to his financial business he also operated the steamers *Toronto* and *Montreal* between Montreal, Three Rivers and Quebec.

Whether in the course of natural evolution or as a result of more favourable external circumstances, a marked change became apparent in Jewish life. The decade that had seen the rebellion also heralded the dawn of a new and brighter era for the Jews in Canada. It was a time of transition, a time of broadening communal interests and expanding social awareness. Every aspect of their life suddenly assumed a greater significance. The diary of Sir Moses Montefiore contains a note which provides one reason for this development. In the year 1838, he records, many English Jews began to emigrate to New South Wales and Canada.<sup>1</sup> Undoubtedly it was the arrival of these immigrants that acted as a new and powerful stimulus on the young Jewish community in Canada.

<sup>1</sup> *Diaries of Sir Moses and Lady Montefiore*, edited by Dr. L. Loewe, 1890, vol. 1, p. 167.

## THE PERIOD OF INCREASED JEWISH ACTIVITY

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### CHAPTER TWELVE

#### BEGINNING OF GERMAN-POLISH IMMIGRATION

ABOUT that time Canadian Jews began to show a marked tendency to broaden their interests. Many of them entered institutes of higher learning to complete their education and prepare for a professional career. While in the past they had mainly concerned themselves with trade, commerce and various crafts, a number of them now began to enter medicine and law. These constituted the first Jewish professional group in the country.

As far as is known, the first Jewish advocate was Aaron Philip Hart who practised law in Montreal as early as 1833. By 1837 he was an examiner of candidates for the Bar. Aaron Ezekiel Hart, Samuel David, Henry Judah and Adolph Mordecai Hart also completed their law studies at an early date and were more or less engaged in the profession. Dr. Philip Hart was the first Jewish medical graduate in Canada. He completed his studies at McGill University in Montreal and took his degree on May 25, 1835. Dr. Hart died on June 18, 1842. Dr. Aaron Hart David (born in Montreal 1812; died 1882) also graduated in 1835. Most of his studies were pursued abroad after he had taken a preparatory medical course in Montreal. In 1833 he left for Edinburgh to continue his studies. In 1834 he became a licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons and one year later received his degree from Edinburgh University. He then returned to Montreal where he devoted himself to the practice of medicine.

Of these early Jewish professional men, none attained the same degree of prominence or contributed as much in his day to the welfare of Canadian Jews as did Dr. David. A scholar of wide renown, he was considered one of the outstanding medical men in the country. Gifted with a facile pen, he was a frequent contributor to several Anglo-Jewish periodicals as well as to the local press. To him we are indebted for our knowledge of many of the events which took place in Canadian Jewish life at that time and with which he took pains to acquaint the Jewish world. Although he eventually attained fame, Dr. David found the path to success a thorny one at the beginning. Medicine was apparently one of the less remunerative professions in those days and Dr. David soon abandoned Montreal for Three Rivers because, as he confesses in his "Diary," he found it difficult to make ends meet in the metropolis. In addition anti-Jewish prejudice was becoming prevalent in certain quarters of the city. He points this out with great emphasis and also speaks with bitter irony of his own friends who treated him with extreme coldness. The following passage is quoted from his "Diary":—

"June 1840, Three Rivers—Most important events have occurred since I last opened this Diary. I and sisters have left the place of our nativity and have come down to Three Rivers to live. My reasons for doing so are very numerous. I was living far beyond my means in Montreal and without any prospects of my practice increasing sufficiently to enable me to meet the required expenses of an increasing family; the reason for which I attribute religion. People have such an aversion to a Jew. There is a capital opening here and people have not the same aversion to our religion as in Montreal and it is a reasonable place for living in, home rent low, wood cheap and everything in the same ratio. After living so long together as we all had, to think we were breaking up our establishment and separating was dreadful. However things had turned out, I do not regret in the slightest degree the steps I have taken. Eleazer has gone off, never in all likelihood will he come to this part of the world again. We have now been nearly a month and a half here. All well and all pleased. I chartered the Hart steamer when we came down and nothing was broken. I lost a small toy which was stolen after we landed. I brought Gershom Joseph down to assist me. Our friends in Montreal were very kind. Not one of them but my old friend Tom Judah asked us to their houses.

Never mind, to some of them I will have it in my power to return this great cruelty . . ."<sup>1</sup>

But Dr. David did not remain long in Three Rivers. A few years later he returned to Montreal where he subsequently became highly successful. He was appointed to the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Bishop's College and later rose to be dean of the faculty. He was president of the Natural History Society of Montreal, corresponding member of the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec, general secretary of the Canadian Medical Association, extraordinary member of the Royal Medical Society of Edinburgh and a member of many other British and American scientific societies. In 1849 he was appointed attending physician at the Montreal General Hospital and was on the staff of another city hospital as well. That same year he was appointed Secretary to the Central Board of Health of Canada—a post that required special qualifications.<sup>2</sup> Despite the heavy burden of professional and other activities, he devoted a great deal of his time to Jewish communal affairs. An energetic worker, he took a keen interest in everything that concerned the community.

In 1843 the Jews of Canada were greatly moved by the loss of a member of their community who had won their deepest respect and admiration. This was Ezekiel Hart who died in Three Rivers on September 16 at the age of 73. His death stirred reminiscences of an early episode in his life when he had been the central figure in a bitter political controversy. The intervening years had wrought many changes. More than ever before he was beloved in Three Rivers and his funeral was the most impressive that city had ever seen. Most of the shops were closed on this occasion while the funeral procession included the local judge, members of the Bar, high Government officials, a minister of the Episcopalian church, officers of Her Majesty's 81st Regiment stationed at Three Rivers and many other dignitaries.<sup>3</sup>

Several references have already been made to Moses Judah Hays whose father, Andrew Hays, scion of a noted Dutch-Jewish family,

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<sup>1</sup> *The Diaries of the David Family* (in MSS).

<sup>2</sup> *The Occident*, vol. VII, September, 1849, pp. 331-332.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, November, 1843, p. 408. (Rabbi J. J. Price is wrong in stating that the letter to the *Quebec Gazette* regarding the death of Ezekiel Hart which he reproduces in no. 26 of the *Publications* of the Am. Jew. Hist. Soc. as an "unpublished letter," was never given publication. That letter, slightly modified, was published in the *Quebec Gazette* of Sept. 22nd, 1843, and also reprinted in the *Occident* of the same year, to which we refer here.)

came to Canada with the first party of hardy Jewish pioneers. Himself a pioneer in the true sense of the word, Moses J. Hays created an imposing record. His boundless energy—a source of amazement to many—constantly sought new outlets. Not only did he accomplish a great deal for the community which was so dear to him but he also devoted himself to furthering the interests of the city that held a special place in his affections. It will therefore be necessary to dwell on the man himself at some greater length than on his activities which were of incalculable value in developing the young Canadian metropolis. His works constituted a new departure for his day and won him wide recognition.

Born in Montreal in 1789, at an early age he displayed a variety of talents and a special interest in civic problems. In 1832, when Montreal was incorporated, he contributed an important modern development—the city's first water system which he operated until 1845. For this purpose he built a reservoir in a building he owned on Notre Dame Street near Bonsecours Street.<sup>1</sup> The same building housed the entire municipal administration.<sup>2</sup> In 1848 he erected the Hays Theatre on Dalhousie square. For many years this theatre was the amusement centre of Montreal where the social elite, the *intelligentsia*, and visitors from abroad used to gather. This theatre was also connected with an incident which caused a stir throughout the country at the time. Its brief career ended when it was razed during the great fire of 1852.

In recognition of his public service, especially his devotion to civic interests, Moses Judah Hays was accorded an unusual honour for a Jew—in 1845 he was appointed Chief of Police of Montreal, a position he held for sixteen years until his death in 1861.<sup>3</sup> That he was able to continue in this post for so many years, even at the age of seventy, speaks well both for his abilities and for the esteem in which he was held. In the course of his career his name became linked with many of the more sensational episodes of his times. One of these was during the tragic days of 1847 when an influx of immigrants was accompanied by the terrible pestilence known as "ship fever." Hays himself has graphically described the part he played then.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Gazette*, Montreal, January 20, 1931.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Les Cahiers des Dix*, no. 4, Montréal, 1939, pp. 185-186.

<sup>4</sup> J. D. BORTHWICK, *Montreal History and Biographical Gazetteer*, pp. 85-86.

Another episode in which he figured is notorious in Canadian history and has left behind painful memories even to this day. It concerns the burning of Parliament in Montreal in 1849, when a group of British loyalists broke into the building, smashed and destroyed everything they could find and then set fire to the structure. Montreal and the entire country seethed with indignation. The means adopted to settle accounts with the Government for having passed the "Rebellion Losses Bill"—a measure designed to provide compensation for those who had sustained losses during the insurrection—and the stoning of Lord Elgin, the Governor, for the same reason, threw the whole of Canada into a ferment. The enraged mob burned and pillaged the homes of Cabinet Ministers and Members of Parliament. It was no easy task, under the circumstances, to maintain order in the metropolis. Small as it was, the police force under Moses Judah Hays did what it could. The inciters to violence were arrested and every effort was bent to restore order. However, as the turbulent mob grew and riots broke out in the streets, the inadequate police force was helpless against the infuriated thousands and the militia was called out.

After the Parliament building had been destroyed on April 25, 1849, the legislators lacked a meeting-place to conclude the session. Whereupon Police Commissioner Hays offered the use of the only suitable structure—his theatre. Promptly on the next day Parliament took up quarters there and, until the session ended on May 31, Hays was the landlord, so to speak, of the Lafontaine-Baldwin government. At the same time, despite his preoccupation with public duties, he did not fail to take an active part in Jewish communal affairs. He was Gabai and later president of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue. He was also one of the founders of the first "Hebrew Philanthropic Society" in the country, organized in Montreal in 1847. Hays was married to a Miss Levy, daughter of Rabbi Myer Levy whose father, Simon Levy, had come to Canada together with Amherst. He died on the 12th of November, 1861, leaving five children.

Although the older Sephardic element, its imprint firmly engraved on every facet of communal life, continued to exercise its predominating influence, a new factor was beginning to broaden the sphere of Jewish activity and to lend it added colour. This was the arrival of a number of English, German and Polish Jews who stimulated the local community into action.

The years that followed immediately after were of particular significance for the Jews in Canada. In the course of these years their position took a decisive turn. In Montreal, as in other places, signs of increasing Jewish activity became apparent. Under the influence of the novel and vigorous ideas and aspirations introduced by the newcomers, the veil of stagnation which had stifled the community for so long was suddenly lifted. An attempt was even made to found an Ashkenazic congregation in Montreal, as the new arrivals felt acutely uncomfortable in the Sephardic synagogue and in following the Sephardic way of life. The project, though well advanced, never saw fulfilment. Two synagogues were one too many for the small community to support. It was about the same time that the Jews of Montreal welcomed a new and potent addition to their ranks in the person of Rev. Abraham de Sola who had been appointed permanent minister of the local Sephardic congregation. He served in this capacity until his death thirty-five years later.

After the departure of the first incumbent, the Sephardic congregation did not appoint a successor for some time. It was only in 1840 that Rev. David Piza was invited to lead the congregation and for several years he ministered to the religious needs of the Jews of Montreal. Before him Hazan de Lara, Myer Levy and Isaac Valentine officiated at religious ceremonies from time to time. In 1837 a Mr. Bernstein was engaged to teach Hebrew to the children as well as to instruct the adults in various Jewish studies. Rev. David Piza remained in Montreal until 1847 when he was called to the Sephardic congregation of Bevis Marks, London. Rev. Abraham de Sola was invited to succeed him; pending his arrival Rabbi Myer Levy was again requested to assist the congregation. As a token of appreciation for his services, Rabbi Levy was presented with a handsome, suitably inscribed silver goblet bearing the date October 16, 1846.<sup>1</sup>

Reverend A. de Sola assumed his duties as leader of the Sephardic congregation at the end of January, 1847, having first arrived at New York where he spent some time as the guest of Rabbi Lyons. A young man barely over twenty-one, his coming to Montreal embarked the local community on a new phase of its social as well as religious life. Throughout his career as rabbi, scholar and profound student of Jewish lore, he was a strong and invigorating force in Canadian Jewry. It was in his time that the Sephardic congrega-

<sup>1</sup> *The Occident*, vol. IV (1846), p. 406.

tion attained the highest summit of its glory, a glory, true enough, that was reflected and derived more from its rabbi than from the congregation itself.

Abraham de Sola was born in London, England, on September 18, 1825, a descendant of an ancient Spanish-Jewish family. His father was rabbi of the Portuguese congregation in London and had written several theological works in addition to having been the first to translate many portions of the *Mishna* into English. At an early age Abraham de Sola received a thorough Hebrew education. His secular training was not neglected and he soon became absorbed in the study of oriental languages, literature, theology and Jewish history. A prolific writer, his keen wit, his comprehensive knowledge and his intellectual endowments soon made him a prominent figure, and indeed he became one of the most distinguished Jews of his time. He was a brilliant speaker and a lecture by him was a cultural event in Montreal. In 1852 he was married to Esther Joseph, the youngest daughter of Henry Joseph of Berthier. One year after his arrival in Montreal, he published "A History of the Jews of Persia" as well as a work on biblical zoology. Shortly afterwards he was appointed professor of Hebrew and rabbinical literature at McGill University and subsequently also became professor in the Faculty of Arts and lecturer on Spanish literature. He occupied his professional chair with distinction for the remainder of his life. He wrote copiously and many were the distinguished historical, theological and scientific essays that flowed from his pen. One of the most active members of the Natural History Society of Canada, he was president of that body for a number of years.

The American-Jewish press as well as the organs of public opinion in Montreal warmly approved his appointment as professor at McGill. One Jewish periodical in the United States commended: "An honourable distinction had been conferred on the Rev. A. de Sola of Montreal, by his election to the professorship of Hebrew and rabbinical literature at McGill College (McGill University) of that city. It is the first time a Jewish minister has obtained a public appointment in any town in America, and it is more to the credit of both, the appointing power and the appointed, that he was chosen without regard to creed."<sup>1</sup> Both the *Montreal Transcript* and the *Montreal Herald* praised the Governors of McGill University for having created the chair of Hebrew and rabbinical

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. VI, 1848, p. 307.

literature and for having given the appointment to de Sola. Wrote the *Herald*, "We are happy to have this further pledge given to a numerous and highly respectable class of our fellow-citizens, that all prejudices of class and creed have ceased among us. Mr. de Sola enjoys a high reputation for learning as well as for attention to spiritual interests of his flock. We would wish him a better appointment; but we hope that, at least, he may have the gratification of seeing his acquirements turned to some valuable accounts."<sup>1</sup>

Devoted as he was to the interests of his people, his primary concern was to assure the spiritual and social welfare of the Jewish community. He established a Sunday school where at least once a week the children could receive instruction in the elements of Jewish belief. The first Jewish school in the country, it counted twenty-one pupils shortly after it opened—a not inconsiderable number for those days. In time the number of pupils increased to over thirty. The school was conducted under de Sola's personal supervision and he himself taught the older students. The curriculum for the latter included translating passages from the *Mishna*, the Bible, prayers and so forth.

Another and by no means less important achievement was the founding of the "Hebrew Philanthropic Society," the first Jewish society to be organized in Canada. The Society's aim was to provide assistance for the poor and needy, especially for those among the newer immigrants. Founded in 1847, for many years the Society was the hub of Jewish communal work around which every other activity was centered. Moses J. Hays was president while Rev. de Sola was secretary-treasurer. The annual membership fee was three dollars. The first meeting called for the purpose of organizing the Society was attended by almost every Jew in Montreal. A graphic account of the social and economic conditions under which the Jews then existed may be gleaned from the report submitted to the first annual meeting of the Society. One of the functions of the Society was to help impoverished and sick Jews. We learn that "during the past summer many poor Jewish immigrants, mostly from Germany, to the number of 30, many of them with their families, have received the bounty of the benevolent Society," and that the number of immigrants from Germany had lately become "unprecedentedly large." The philanthropy of that time, it may be gathered from the report, was harsh and severe; the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

wealthier class did not look kindly on large-scale immigration. Incidentally, we learn too that even then the United States had enforced certain restrictions on immigration.

Because it is an interesting commentary on its times, the report is sufficiently important to be reproduced. Extracts from the text follow:—

“The first annual meeting of this Society which has been formed through the instrumentality of the Rev. Abr. de Sola, was held on Sunday, June 18th, 1848, when the annual report, etc., was submitted to the members. M. J. Hays, Esq., the President, occupied the chair. In the report, the Committee do, in the first place, return their most fervent thanks to the Almighty Dispenser of all good, that, though humble in origin and limited in means, they had, nevertheless, been enabled during the past year to alleviate the distress and satisfy the present wants of almost every Israelite, compelled by destitution to seek the charitable aid of their brethren in Montreal. They remark that the cases requiring their charitable consideration were unexpectedly numerous, but before proceeding to particularize these cases, they would beg to say a few words in connection with the origin, design, and utility of the Society.

“The Montreal Hebrew Philanthropic Society was established from the same motives which have given birth to similar societies in other places. It has resulted from the deeply-felt conviction that ‘Union is Strength’, and that if Israelites would combine in their acts of charity, that they would effect a much greater amount of good, and would be enabled to afford such an extent of relief to deserving cases, which, individually, they would find it impracticable. It has originated in the belief that while the respectable, but decayed, has suffered from a modest unwillingness in forcing his claims upon the attention of his co-religionists, the professed and sturdy beggars, by repeated and pressing importunity, obtained an undue amount of relief, that an executive whose duty it is, and whose opportunities would necessarily be numerous, to inquire into the worthiness of applicants, was a desideratum, and that most persons are satisfied with giving their alms, without caring or inquiring whether they are properly bestowed or not. The object of the Montreal Hebrew Philanthropic Society is to promote a more just and efficient mode of relief. This Society is not satisfied with disbursing certain

moneys to certain persons professing to be poor Israelites; but it uses every possible precaution, and institutes every possible inquiry to assure itself that the applicants are really what they pretend to be. Its object is not to relieve the pecuniary difficulties only of the poor Israelites in Montreal, but it seeks at the bedside of the sick, in the attic, the loft, the hospital, even at the grave to prove that Jewish benevolence, when invoked by the plaintive voice of suffering, is not invoked in vain; that it has no limit, and that mercenariness can erect for it no barrier over which it will not gloriously and triumphantly pass."

The report then proceeds to state that "the unprecedented number of the arrivals of poor Israelites last summer arose from the circumstance of immigration to the United States having been rendered more expensive and select; since that government in consequence of the fatal visitation, which more or less accompanied the immigration<sup>1</sup> of last year, had taken the precautionary measure of allotting a certain number of square feet to each person, whereby they might secure the arrival of the better and healthier class of immigrants, the result of which step was to pour into Canada an unprecedented amount of immigration, and that too, of the worst possible description, as the awful extent of distress and sickness but too fatally proved. The Committee, therefore, felt themselves bound then to relieve all the worthy objects of this class, making twenty-nine persons relieved, exclusive of those already resident, or not arriving as immigrants in Canada, making in all thirty-nine persons relieved during the year, at an expense of one hundred and eleven dollars. Besides these the Society had contributed towards the support of one pensioner." The report goes on to praise "the very great interest, attention and readiness displayed by the Honorary Secretary, the Rev. Abraham de Sola, in the performance of his duties, and in promoting the best interests of the Society, as also of the valuable services and extensive kindness of H. A. David, Esq., M.D., who most feelingly and attentively visited the sick immigrants and dispensed medicines to them gratuitously." The report was unanimously adopted. The meeting then proceeded to nominate officers for the coming year and the following were elected: Moses J. Hays, President; Simon Hart, David Moss and Joseph Lyons, Committee; and Rev. Abraham de Sola, Secretary-Treasurer.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The typhus epidemic of 1847.

<sup>2</sup> *The Occident*, vol. VI, 1848, pp. 368-370.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN  
A GLANCE AT SOCIAL RELATIONS

FROM the casual remark made by Dr. Aaron Hart David in his diary, as quoted in the previous chapter, it might easily be assumed that the Jews were generally disliked and discriminated against. Such an assumption would be false, for Hart's observation appears to have been rather exaggerated. The attitude to Jews was one of widest tolerance and even friendliness. Many of them were entrusted with high public office. They were not considered inferior in the social scale nor was there any hesitation in bestowing recognition on those amongst them who had earned it. Evidence is not lacking to show that they were readily accepted in social and military circles. On such an occasion as the reading of Queen Victoria's proclamation, which Montreal observed with a great display of civil and military pomp on August 4, 1837, Jews were well in the foreground. Captain Eleazer David was in charge of the cavalry. Half a year later, on February 27, 1838, his brother, Samuel David, was placed in command of the cavalry escort at the swearing-in of Sir John Colborne as Governor-General.

On the whole relations between Jew and gentile were harmonious, as is made abundantly evident by several entries in the memoirs of the David family. For example, mention is made of a musical soirée at the home of Mrs. Henry Joseph on June 24, 1834, attended by some two hundred guests among whom were Lord Aylmer, the Governor-General, and Lady Aylmer. We learn, too, that on April 17, 1840, General Clitherton and his wife visited the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue in Montreal and witnessed the services. Several other instances are recorded which demonstrate clearly the cordial rapport then existing. There were Jews who held high office in the Masonic order even in those days.

Nothing reflected the prevailing attitude toward Jews more faithfully than an incident which created considerable excitement and aroused widespread sympathy in favour of the Jewish population. A matter of purely Jewish concern, it became a major object of public interest in its day.

On October 6, 1848, a messenger from the near East, Rabbi Nissim ben Shelomoh, arrived in Canada on a relief-gathering mission for the Jews of Persia. Cruelly persecuted and suffering unbearable privation, the Persian Jews had sent Rabbi Nissim to

acquaint the Jews of Canada with the lot of their unfortunate co-religionists and to raise funds in their behalf. He arrived in Montreal on the day before Yom Kippur eve. The next evening, at Kol Nidre, Rabbi de Sola made a stirring appeal in the synagogue. With him was the emissary of the Persian Jews who remained as his guest during his five weeks' stay in the city. Passionately and eloquently Rabbi de Sola exhorted the assembled worshippers to assist their unhappy brothers in the distant Mohammedan land. A collection of seventy dollars resulted which, although not inconsiderable in those days for so tiny a congregation, was not even sufficient to defray the expense of the lengthy journey to Canada. It was therefore decided to make a public appeal at a lecture to be given by Rev. de Sola, the entire proceeds of which were to be devoted to the relief of the Persian Jews.

This undertaking aroused the liveliest interest in all circles and became the topic of the day in the Canadian metropolis. Not Jews alone but many Christians as well showed great sympathy to Rabbi ben Nissim's mission. Clergymen based their sermons on this subject and urged their congregations to attend the lecture and contribute to the worthy cause. Every newspaper devoted an editorial to the event, praising the Jews and commiserating with those whose lot was so tragic. We quote from the *Montreal Transcript* of October 26, 1848:

"Independently of the great interest excited of late years by everything relating to the Jewish people, to whatever land they may belong, there will be this evening a strong provocative administered to the curiosity of the visitors in the appearance of an 'accredited messenger' from his oppressed brethren in Persia. A crowded audience is anticipated, so much so, that the Temperance Hall has been selected in preference to the old News Room, in St. Joseph Street, at which place the lecture was previously announced to be delivered.

"In the course of lectures given before the Mercantile Library Ass'n last winter, was one from the same gentleman who proposes to speak this evening, his previous lecture having had for its theme the persecutions endured by the Jews for centuries in Great Britain and other nations of Europe—now happily unknown and unfelt, except among the semi-barbarous Sclavonian nations of Russia and Poland—in England, France and Germany, and in southern Europe the Jews being now generally acknow-

ledged among the most loyal, and in many cases, the most respected subjects of these empires.

"We recollect with what a feeling of interest the lecture we speak of was regarded—although the lecturer spoke only of sufferings long and patiently endured, but now passed away for ever. With how much more eagerness, then, will the discourse of this evening be listened to? It will refer to a people, the oldest as a distinct race, that the world had known; commercially and politically amalgamating, yet socially distinct from other nations—unchangeable, though all but themselves have changed—adhering still to that faith whence we derive our own, and to the customs and forms of worship of their forefathers, alike through prosperity and adversity, through good and through evil report; while that portion of this people to whom it will more particularly refer, are still suffering victims of persecution, of the most cruel and degrading character.

"There is something in the mission of the Rabbi which calls for a more than usual exercise of generosity, for in the words of the *Herald* of yesterday morning, we may say: 'after centuries of changes, one of the people most stable in their faith, comes from Persia, a land most stable in its manners, to a country inhabited by the most restless nations in the world, After ages of enmity, a member of one of two hostile faiths comes from a country where the antagonists are alike oppressed, to plead for both, where each is equally free, and both are friendly.'

"We hope the plea will be responded."

On the evening of Rev. de Sola's dissertation, October 26, 1848, the hall was packed to overflowing with the largest audience ever assembled in Montreal until then. Both the lecture and the cause with which it was associated had aroused the broadest interest and all classes were attracted to the event. The Speaker of the House, the Attorney-General, judges, professors, clergymen, scholars, journalists—all the local intellectuals, in fact—were included in the audience. For his part the speaker amply fulfilled his auditors' expectations. His depiction of the suffering of the Jews in that remote country greatly moved his hearers and left a deep impression on all present.<sup>1</sup> The following Sunday a number of clergymen again broached the subject from their pulpits. Typical were the words of

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<sup>1</sup> The *Montreal Transcript*, October 28, 1848.

the Rev. Mr. Corder, of the Unitarian Church. "The feelings of Christians toward Jews in former times," he said, "were absurd and wrong. The Jewish authorities in Jerusalem caused our Lord to be put to death some eighteen centuries since. But even their descendants should not be held by us as responsible for this, still less the Jews of other times and places. We might as well hold all Catholics responsible for the massacre of Bartholomew's day, or all the Episcopal Protestants for the rigour and tyranny of Laud, or all Scotch Presbyterians for the murder of the Bishop of St. Andrew's, or all Calvinists for the murder of Servetus. Christians are bound by the law to treat all men kindly and with paternal sympathy."<sup>1</sup>

We have dwelt at some length upon this incident, though part of it has no direct bearing on the Jews of Canada, in order to provide a concrete example of how the latter were regarded, at least by the more cultured elements in the country. Earlier prejudices, if any still survived, were now completely dispelled. Additional proof of this was given a short time later when a Montreal Jew became the first member of his race to hold aldermanic office in Canada. On March 5, 1849, Samuel Benjamin was elected to the Montreal City Council, largely on the non-Jewish vote.

Thus two important metropolitan offices were occupied by Jews at that time, since, as pointed out in the previous chapter, Moses Judah Hays was chief of the Montreal police force. Particularly significant was Benjamin's election for he had emigrated from England and was not Canadian-born. Like Hays, he too was deeply concerned with the affairs of the community and was president of the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation for a number of years. During his tenure of municipal office he won wide recognition as an ardent promoter of civic interests. Mr. Benjamin did not remain in Canada. He later returned to England and, when word of his death was received, the flag over the Montreal City Hall was lowered to half-mast in sign of mourning. A few months after Samuel Benjamin's election as alderman—on July 20 of that same year, in fact—Samuel David, who has been mentioned here several times, was appointed Clerk of the Circuit Court of St. Johns, Quebec. Public reaction was favourable to the appointment. "It will be regarded with additional satisfaction," one commentator wrote, "as evincing the absence in the Canadian Government of that illiberality

<sup>1</sup> *Occident*, vol. VI, January, 1949. See Appendix, p. 253, note 7.

and bigotry which would exclude the worthy from offices of honor or public trust, merely because of their religious convictions."<sup>1</sup>

This happy phase of Jewish life was tinged by an incident to which, however, too much importance must not be attached. Resulting from a chain of circumstances which had not the slightest connection with the Jewish population, this episode reflected upon them only insofar as, along with a number of prominent gentiles, it involved one of their leaders. Diversity of political opinions, it would appear, is one trait which the Jews of Canada have always shared with their neighbours.

In 1849 Canada witnessed the upsurge of a movement that was both new and strange—strange in that, although born of a desire to secede from Britain, it found many supporters in the loyalist camp. It was proposed that Canada break away from the Motherland and join the United States. This movement emerged as the consequence of economic factors as well as from a purely political issue—the strong dissatisfaction engendered in loyalist ranks by the Government's "Rebellion Losses Bill." Lord Elgin's endorsement of the bill had provoked the burning of Parliament (see previous chapter) and attacks on his person. The loyal British element had confidently expected him to veto the bill; his approval left them seething with anger which increased in fury when the Government in London ratified his stand. This time, however, their dissatisfaction did not manifest itself in riots or disturbances, but sought other outlets. It found expression in the agitation for union with the United States. A manifesto issued in Montreal set forth the reasons for this demand and was signed by many of the most prominent citizens of the metropolis, including Benjamin Hart.

Retribution followed swiftly. In accordance with Lord Elgin's orders, public officials and other office holders were struck off the official lists, while advocates who held the title of "Queen's Counsel" were deprived of it. Benjamin Hart was removed from the Commission of Peace and, in addition, lost his military rank as Lieutenant-Colonel of the 1st Battalion Montreal Militia. As is known, both positions had been attained only after a long and arduous struggle. Disgruntled at the harsh treatment which took none of his great services into account, an old man of seventy, he left Montreal and moved to New York. A week before his death the

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. VII, September, 1849.

Government attempted to correct the injustice done him and offered to restore his rank and title. But Hart refused the offer. He died in New York at the end of February, 1855, at the age of 76.<sup>1</sup>

By and large, it may be said that a boldly liberal spirit reigned in Canada toward the end of the first half of the nineteenth century. Whether or not inspired by the example of the neighbouring American republic, the average Canadian was free of racial and religious prejudices. In an atmosphere of tolerance Jewish life could not help but be profoundly stimulated. It is important to note that in this respect Canadian Jews were in a more favourable position than those in England. There the struggle for full emancipation was still being waged against the accumulated dregs of ancient superstitions. This subject, typical of its day, was treated by Rev. de Sola in a lecture he delivered in Montreal on April 19, 1848. He declared—and his words always commanded an attentive audience—that the comparison reflected greatly to Canada's credit. He stressed the deep interest shown by Jews in the welfare of their country, particularly in Montreal where many of the city's most important institutions could be attributed directly to that interest.<sup>2</sup>

That the good rabbi had not exaggerated was conclusively established in the ensuing years when many Jewish names became identified with different phases of the country's development. Circumstances had gradually enabled them to take an ever-increasing part in this development, and they did not hesitate to do so. In the fields of commerce, industry and in the various ramifications of Canadian economy, Jewish energies and capabilities made a notable contribution. The achievements of certain individuals won deserved recognition even in other countries.

The Joseph family, from whose ranks came one of the pioneers of Canada's merchant marine, has been mentioned before. In later years other members of this family distinguished themselves as trail blazers in the various enterprises which accompanied the expansion of the youthful country. Jacob Henry Joseph was connected with one of the first railways to be built in Canada—the Champlain-St. Lawrence line which began to operate on July 21, 1836. He was also interested in the introduction of the first telegraph system. Associated with the most important commercial enterprises of his day, he was particularly active in developing the telegraph and rail-

<sup>1</sup> *New York Times*, March 1, 1855.

<sup>2</sup> *Montreal Transcript*, April 21, 1848.

road industries. He helped to organize the first telegraph line to link Canada and the United States by way of Plattsburg, as well as the first transatlantic cable connection. In addition to these activities, he was largely instrumental in founding several leading banks when those institutions began to appear in Canada. Jesse Joseph, his brother, built and for many years operated the "Théâtre Royal" in Montreal. He was president of the Montreal Gas Company, with which he was associated for nearly forty years, and also president of the Montreal Street Railway Company. With the introduction of electric tramcars he withdrew from the latter company, contending that in Montreal, where the street rails were covered by snow in winter, electricity could never replace the horse as motive power. He was director of a number of banks, one of the first directors of the Great North West Telegraph Company, and was a founder of the People's Telegraph Company.

A noteworthy achievement of his was the development of close commercial relations with Belgium and the institution of direct ocean communication between Canada and that country. The appreciative Belgian government, in recognition of his services, appointed him its diplomatic representative in Canada in 1850. The first Belgian consul in the country, he held this position for over half a century until his death in 1904. In addition the Belgian government conferred many high honours upon him. It should be noted that members of this family were well represented in the Belgian consular service. Abraham Joseph (1815-1886), a brother of the two mentioned above, was Belgian consul in Quebec for over thirty years until his death. An outstanding personality in the old Canadian capital, he had settled there in 1832. He was president of the Quebec Board of Trade, president of the Dominion Board of Trade, president of the Stadacona Bank, director of La Banque Nationale and director of a steamship company. For a number of years he sat on the Quebec City Council. So popular was he with the French-Canadian people that, when he entered the mayoralty contest in 1858, he failed by only the narrow margin of less than 400 votes. After his death he was succeeded in his consular post by his son Andrew C. Joseph (died in 1921), who likewise held it for thirty years.

Unusually interesting, too, was the career of another Jew—Sigismund Mohr. Born in 1827 in Breslau, Germany, where he received his education and graduated in electrical engineering from the local university, his remarkable proficiency commanded atten-

tion at an early age. In 1871 he came to Canada and was the first to harness the country's water power to the wheels of modern industry and modern needs. So great were his achievements in developing the mighty resources of potential electrical energy that he may justly be termed the father of hydro-electricity in Canada. In Quebec City, where he had settled, he installed the newest improvements of his day—the telephone and electric lighting. He set up and operated some of the first telephone equipment devised by Dr. Graham Bell, with whom he was closely associated. He founded the City and District Telegraph Co. and the Quebec and Levis Electric Company. He died in Quebec in 1893.

This instance of a Jewish immigrant who gave of his best to his adopted land is by no means isolated. Just as immigration on the whole proved to be a vital factor in accelerating the progress of the young country, so too did Jewish settlement, on a far smaller scale, act as a leaven. Because of the more or less primitive state of the country, any potentially productive person was warmly welcomed. Canada's open doors, her hospitality to strangers, the unlimited possibilities of her wide expanses—all beckoned to men of vision, energy and ambition. But even under such auspicious conditions there was scant increase in the Jewish population. The end of the first half of the nineteenth century found no appreciable growth.

Nevertheless the community, however imperceptibly, continued to increase, due mainly to a steady trickle of immigration. New faces, new people were to be seen here and there. From the older European Jewish centres for the most part, the newcomers as a group presented a sharp contrast to the Sephardim who preceded them here. While the latter were largely merchants and men of means, the new arrivals came unencumbered with possessions. No great opulence could they bring with them. Poverty, defeat and suffering were their heritage—as was evidenced by the report submitted to the Hebrew Philanthropic Society. Many were forced to seek charity. Yet if they brought no material riches, they brought something else—a deeper consciousness derived from generations of closely-welded unity with the living sections of their people. This consciousness soon began visibly to affect the physiognomy of Jewish life in the new country. In addition, it infused a more specifically national colouring in the Jewish community generally. At this period Jews were to be found not only in localities where they had securely established themselves many years earlier, but also in

districts where, until now, their presence had been more or less accidental and of brief duration. If they now began to settle in these regions it was with the firm intention of becoming permanent residents.

These new immigrants, labouring unsparingly, gradually laid the foundations for the many flourishing communities that were later to rise. As in the past, Jewish penetration into new regions closely paralleled the general development of the country. According to the 1851 census, there were 351 Jews in Lower and Upper Canada at the time. Of these, 181 lived in Montreal, 77 in Toronto and vicinity and 40 in Quebec. Adequate data is lacking on how they were divided into economic and other categories. What is unmistakably clear is that even then they were mainly concentrated in the larger population centres and the great majority of them were urban dwellers. This was only natural in view of the great hardships that living in a far, outlying district meant for a Jew.

And yet they were scattered through more than fifteen towns and villages in Canada. It is interesting to discover that some of them lived in regions where even today hardly a Jew is to be found. Thus, for example, the tiny village of Cap des Rosiers in the Gaspé Peninsula counted six Jewish inhabitants in 1851. In this remote place, where only half a century later not a single Jew resided, the first Jewish mayor in Canada was elected in 1858—William Hyman, who was continuously returned to office until his death in 1882. Born in Russia in 1807, he later came to Canada and settled in the Gaspé district in 1842. He took an active part in developing the district and what was, and still is, its principal industry—fishing. No greater tribute could be paid him by his French-Canadian neighbours than to elect him mayor for twenty-four consecutive years. True enough, this was an isolated instance. Yet it was typical of the Quebec *habitant* who so effectively and simply solved the problem of Jewish rights which had occasioned many ponderous debates in Parliament at Westminster. William Hyman displayed keen interest in every important activity of the Jewish community in Montreal where he would often visit. He was an officer in the Canadian militia and Justice of the Peace for over twenty years.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN  
NEW COMMUNITIES FOUNDED

FOR MANY years the Sephardic congregation in Montreal was the only one in the country. About it revolved most of the activities of the community, even those of a purely social character. But Montreal was not the only place that could boast of a Jewish house of worship, for a synagogue was maintained in Three Rivers by a number of families residing there. This synagogue appears to have been founded by Aaron Hart shortly before his death, possibly around 1800. After him the synagogue was sustained by Ezekiel Hart and other members of the Hart family. Between 1820 and 1835 Isaac Valentine acted as spiritual leader of the Jews of Three Rivers and conducted their religious services. That the synagogue actually existed is confirmed by the municipal plan of the City of Three Rivers for the year 1815. It was destroyed by fire in 1860.<sup>1</sup>

The fifties of the last century saw the emergence of several new congregations in Montreal, Toronto and Quebec. Although they barely managed to survive the first arduous years, they gradually gained a firm footing and in time their continued existence became more or less assured. None, however, grew as strong and eventually developed into so influential a communal centre as the German-Polish congregation in Montreal. Organized by immigrants from England and Germany, some of whom had formerly been connected with the Spanish and Portuguese synagogue, the new congregation came into being as a result of its founders' desire to break away from the Sephardic ritual and provide themselves with an independent place of worship. As early as 1846 its members had been incorporated as a separate congregation of "English, German and Polish Jews" (9th Victoria, Chap. 96). But so feeble was the new congregation at its inception that it existed more in name than in fact. Lacking a permanent synagogue of their own, its members were compelled to hold their services in a private room on St. James Street—now the bustling financial centre of Montreal—for which they paid a monthly rental of ten dollars. Later the makeshift synagogue was moved to a room on St. Gabriel Street.

On September 12, 1858, a meeting was called to consider plans for the erection of a permanent place of worship. Specified as the

<sup>1</sup> BENJAMIN SULTE, *Mélanges historiques*, vol. 19, p. 55; idem., *Pages d'histoire du Canada*, p. 148.

purpose of the meeting was the establishment of a synagogue where services would be conducted "after the manners and customs of the English, German and Polish Jews." Thirty-six persons attended, among them being L. Ollendorf, M. Ollendorf, B. W. Warner, S. Silverman, S. Hoffnung, A. Hoffnung, I. Cochenthaler, M. Kortosk, B. Kortosk, and others. Chosen as chairman and secretary respectively were M. Ollendorf and A. Hoffnung. An appeal to the Jews of England and the United States for support was drafted by the secretary and it was decided to publicize the appeal through the medium of the Jewish press—the *Chronicle* of London and the *Messenger* of New York.

Great enthusiasm was aroused by the announcement that the brothers David and Edward Moss would each contribute five hundred dollars to the building fund. Others followed their example, so that close to three thousand dollars was raised at the initial meeting. At the same time Samuel Hoffnung, who had formerly been minister of the Hebrew congregation at Cheltenham, England, volunteered to serve the new congregation without compensation until a permanent rabbi could be appointed. He also undertook to instruct a class of youths in Hebrew twice a week.

According to the act of incorporation, the congregation could not be organized unless its members were British subjects duly registered with the prothonotary of Montreal. This formality, however, was observed without difficulty. With the purchase of a lot on St. Constant Street (now De Bullion), an important step forward was marked in the effort to establish the German-Polish congregation on a firm foundation. On this site, which bore the street number 41, a stone structure was erected capable of seating 150 men; a women's gallery with a seating capacity of 50 was included. The general plans also made provision for adding a spacious school house and a separate dwelling for the minister. The senior Portuguese congregation was "officially notified" of the birth of a sister congregation and, at the same time, was sounded as to the use of its cemetery by members of the new synagogue. The reply is not given, but the German-Polish congregation later acquired a burial ground of its own in close proximity to the Portuguese.

Obviously, the Sephardic Jews did not look with favour on the growing power of the erstwhile immigrants. Particularly distasteful to them was the latter's increasing influence as manifested in the founding of an independent congregation with its own synagogue.

In their eyes it presaged the introduction of an unfamiliar and alien spirit into the colony in Montreal. For this reason many of them were not only cold and unsympathetic, but even openly hostile to the new project. Proof of their attitude came in the refusal of the leaders of the Portuguese synagogue, including Rev. Abraham de Sola, to participate in the laying of the corner-stone which took place on July 12, 1859. Invitations to attend the ceremony had been forwarded to the Portuguese congregation, to Rev. de Sola and to the Mayor of Montreal. While the latter accepted, in conformity with a city council ruling approving the participation of the mayor and municipal corporation in the event, the others declined. Characteristically, their replies to the invitation neglected to specify their reasons for refusing. Addressed to A. Hoffnung, they are reproduced here as taken from the minutes of the "Shaar Hashomayim" congregation.

Reply of the secretary of the Portuguese congregation to the invitation to participate in the laying of the corner-stone for the German-Polish synagogue:

"Montreal, July 8, 1859.

"Sir,

"At a meeting of the Trustees of the Portuguese congregation held this afternoon, your letter of this day's date was laid before them by the President, Mr. Alex Levy, and I beg to hand you a copy of the resolution adopted in relation thereto.

"Resolved, 'That the Trustees of the Portuguese congregation beg to decline the invitation of the President and Trustees of the congregation of German and Polish Jews, to be present at the laying of the corner-stone of their synagogue on Tuesday, the 12th inst., and that the secretary notify the same to the Hon'ry Secretary of the said congregation.

"I have the honour to be, Sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"A. H. David, Sec. K. K. S. I."

The reply received from Rev. A. de Sola declining the same invitation read:

"Montreal, July 10th, 1859.

"Dear Sir,

"I duly received yours of Friday afternoon, informing me that you had been instructed by the President and Trustees of the English, German and Polish congregation to invite my presence

at the laying of the corner-stone of their synagogue on Tuesday next, the 12th inst., at 3 o'clock p.m., and I employ the earliest leisure to request that you will inform the President and Trustees of the German and Polish congregation that I cannot accept this invitation for that occasion.

"I have the honour to remain,  
"Your most obedient servant,  
"Abraham de Sola."<sup>1</sup>

It was suspected that the fact that another rabbi, Rev. Morris J. Raphall of New York, had been invited to attend the ceremony had possibly given rise to resentment. With this in mind a committee of the German-Polish congregation went to discuss the matter personally with Rev. de Sola and appeal to him to change his decision, but without avail.

The corner-stone of the new synagogue was laid by David Moss. On May 22, 1860, the building was dedicated and thus the second synagogue in the country—and the first Ashkenazic synagogue in British North America—came into being. M. Ollendorf was its first president. Rev. Samuel Hoffnung was succeeded as spiritual leader by the Rev. Mr. Fass who was in turn succeeded by a Rev. Dr. Cohen. After a serious dispute the latter was forced to resign and was followed by the Rev. E. M. Myers who acted as Hazan, lecturer, reader and teacher. The synagogue also had its own *shochet*. For its now secured existence the new congregation was in large measure indebted to the Moss family. Immigrant English Jews, the Mosses were passionately devoted to the interests of their people. The brothers, David, Edward and Lawrence Moss—and later others of their family—repeatedly donated large sums of money to the congregation and also liberally supported its free school. When David Moss left for England in 1865, he left a parting gift of \$800 for the school. His brother Edward gave an even greater amount when he returned to England in 1869. In addition, David Moss bequeathed a fund in his will, the interest on which was to be distributed annually in prizes to the two best Sunday school pupils.

Despite the unpleasant incident that cropped up at the time of the corner-stone laying, relations between the two congregations were essentially amicable. Members and leaders alike of both syna-

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<sup>1</sup> *Minute Book of the Shaar Hashomayim Congregation* (in MSS), Montreal.

gogues often met together and cooperated in communal work. But after a few harmonious years a dispute arose between them which, when brought to court, culminated in a victory for the Ashkenazim. The City of Montreal having decided to expropriate the land on which the old cemetery was situated, it became necessary to remove the remains to another burial ground. The leaders of the Portuguese congregation agreed to remove the bodies at six dollars each. After the city had paid for the expropriated land, disagreement developed over the share to which the German-Polish congregation was entitled. As no settlement could be reached, the issue was referred to the courts and on August 24, 1864, a decision in favour of the new congregation was handed down.

Although there had been Jews living in Quebec since the English occupation, it was infinitely more difficult to form a congregation there. The trivial rate of increase proved a stumbling block in the way of any communal organization. As early as 1760, Eleazer Levy had settled there and engaged in business. The same year Abraham Franks also took up residence in Quebec and it is known that his son, David Salesby Franks, was in Quebec prior to 1774. In 1784 Elias Solomon, David Jacobs and Hyam Myers lived in that city. John Franks was chief of the Quebec fire brigade between 1790 and 1799—the first to hold that post.<sup>1</sup> In the thirties of the nineteenth century Abraham Joseph, who became so prominent in the city, Henry Benjamin, who headed a large business enterprise, and several others settled there. But it was not until the latter part of the year 1852 that an attempt was made to organize a congregation. A plot of land was acquired for a cemetery and quarters were rented for a synagogue where services were held from time to time. Engaged, too, was a spiritual leader who combined several duties.<sup>2</sup> But many years passed before the Quebec congregation was placed on a firm footing and only in 1892 was the first permanent synagogue, the "Beth Israel," built.

No easier was the task of organizing the community in Toronto. The first Jews to settle there have been discussed in a previous chapter. According to the religious census of 1846, that year found only twelve Jews living in Toronto and the first evidence of any organized communal life came to light only in 1849. A deed in the municipal registry office, dated September 1st of that year, records

<sup>1</sup> *Bulletin des recherches historiques*, 1900, p. 222.

<sup>2</sup> *Occident*, vol. XV, March, 1858.

that the Hon. Beverley Robinson transferred a plot of land on Pape Avenue to Judah G. Joseph and Abraham Nordheimer. The land, for which the sum of twenty pounds was paid, was to be used as a Jewish burial ground. Provision for the administration of the cemetery was also made in the document. The oldest tombstones in this cemetery, belonging to the years 1850-52, are those of Simeon Alfred Joseph, Lewis Lyons and Judah G. Joseph.

Abraham Nordheimer and his brother Samuel came to Toronto at an early age and there founded the famous Canadian piano and music house which bears their name to this day. Born in Memsdorf, Bavaria, they emigrated to New York in 1839. Shortly afterwards Abraham Nordheimer was appointed music instructor to the family of Sir Charles Bagot, the Governor-General, and with his brother moved to Kingston, then the capital of Canada. There they established the music house which they subsequently transferred to Toronto (in 1844). From the outset, Abraham Nordheimer was deeply concerned with communal affairs. He helped to organize the congregation and supported many of its activities. The earliest records of the "Sons of Israel," later to be known as the "Holy Blossom" Congregation are dated 1856. But only when the Jews of Toronto had increased their numbers substantially were they able to build a permanent house of worship. Abraham Nordheimer did not remain in Toronto. In the sixties he returned to Germany where he died in 1869. His brother, who was appointed German consul in Ontario in 1887, was for many years president of the Toronto Philharmonic Society. Having drifted away from Judaism, he had been converted to the Anglican faith. Upon his death in 1912 only a minor portion of his substantial fortune was left to charity and an insignificant sum to a Toronto Jewish benevolent society.

The forties also saw the arrival in Toronto of the Rossin brothers, Marcus and Samuel. Natives of Germany, they opened a "Jewellery, Watches and Fancy Goods Establishment" and, in the course of a few years, became prominent citizens. In 1855 they built the famous "Rossin House" at the corner of King and York Streets. Toronto's most exclusive hotel, during its existence it sheltered the most distinguished visitors to that city, including the Prince of Wales and his suite in 1860; General Slistel, acting Lieutenant-Governor, who lived there for over a year; and many English noblemen, European authors, dramatic artists and others. Having met

with reverses in several of their enterprises, however, the Rossin brothers left Toronto a few years later. The first Russian Jew to settle in Toronto was Isaac Davis. Born in Moscow in 1806, he came to Toronto in 1854, having first resided in Quebec and in Montreal. Mr. Davis was among the first Jews, if not the first, to become naturalized in this country for he had acquired Canadian citizenship as early as 1837. He was actively interested in every phase of the work of the youthful congregation in his city.

With the arrival of a number of other families, the nucleus of a Jewish colony was formed in Toronto and presently a permanent house of worship became a pressing need. Thanks to the untiring efforts of Lewis Samuel (born in England in 1828; died in Toronto in 1887) and others, this need was satisfied in June, 1856, when the Jews of Toronto organized a congregation. A temporary synagogue was set up in a rented room over a chemist's shop at the corner of Richmond and Yonge Streets.<sup>1</sup> One Hyman Goldberg was engaged to perform the necessary duties about the synagogue. On April 8, 1857, Mr. and Mrs. G. I. Ascher of Montreal presented the new congregation with a *Sepher Torah*. In recognition of this gift, a special resolution engraved on vellum was sent to them and they were elected "honorary members of the congregation for life."

The Ascher family had come to Canada from Glasgow, Scotland, in 1841 and had settled in Montreal. Possessed of abundant means, they had engaged in the jewellery business with considerable success. About 1851 they opened a branch in Toronto in charge of G. I. Ascher's two sons, Jacob G. and Albert G., of whom the former did not remain long in that city. Gottschalk Ascher, the father, who lived to the ripe old age of 96, was severely orthodox and in presenting the Jews of Toronto with their first *Sepher Torah* he stipulated that the newly-formed congregation must always adhere faithfully to traditional Judaism and never deviate to Reform. The "Holy Blossom" Synagogue, where these scrolls of the law may be seen to this day, did not, however, later fully observe this condition.

It is interesting to note that many of those who settled in Toronto at that time came from Montreal where they had first lived upon their arrival in Canada. English-born Jews for the most part, foremost amongst them was the above-mentioned Lewis

<sup>1</sup> S. J. BIRNBAUM, in *Canadian Jewish Times*, Dec. 20, 1912.

Samuel, whose name was intimately linked with every event of importance in the Toronto community of his day. Prominent as a citizen, he was an active member of masonic lodges and societies and was generally held in high esteem by Jew and Christian alike. He was vice-president and later president of the Mechanics' Institute—no small honour for a Jew—and also commanded great respect in business circles. Mr. Samuel devoted much of his time to establishing the local congregation on a firm basis and to looking after its various needs.

By 1875 the number of Jews in Toronto had increased to the point where the quarters serving them as a synagogue had become far too cramped. Lewis Samuel who, as one old resident of Toronto put it, was "president, vice-president, treasurer and everything,"<sup>1</sup> then took it upon himself to start a fund for a newer and more suitable synagogue. His drive was successful and in 1876 the first permanent synagogue in Toronto was dedicated. It was situated on Richmond and Victoria Streets. The project was liberally supported by the Jews of Montreal. In the Minute Book of the German-Polish congregation there is mention of a letter from Lewis Samuel, president of the Toronto congregation, thanking the leaders and members of the Montreal synagogue for their generous contributions.

Almost at the same time that Toronto was recording an influx of Jews, the colony throughout Canada was exhibiting a tendency to branch out, to spread its roots. In 1857 Noah Friedman settled in Lancaster, Ontario, to be followed there by William Jacobs, the Kellerts, the Levinsons and several other families. Some of these immigrants who came from Poland were people of means. When the Indian territory in that district was opened to colonization they began to settle near Lancaster. Even earlier there were Jews living in Hamilton where a small community was slowly taking shape. In 1857 Herman Levy opened a jewellery business there under the name of "Levy Brothers." That same year Moses Bilsky settled in Ottawa. As far as is known, he was the first Jew to make his home in the Canadian capital. While the Jewish population of Ottawa remained insignificant for a number of years, in Hamilton the Jews were able to organize a congregation at an early date, the "Anshe Sholom" Congregation having been incorporated in 1863. For a

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

period of twelve years, from 1873 to 1885, Edmund Scheuer presided over the congregation and was the guiding spirit of the budding community which by that time numbered some twenty-odd families. Born in Rhinish Prussia in 1847, he came to Hamilton in 1871 from where he moved to Toronto in 1886. His many fine qualities served the Jews of Hamilton well, as they later served those of Toronto, and he showed himself to be a pioneer in every sense of the word. In 1872 he organized a branch of the "Alliance Israelite Universelle" in Hamilton where he also founded a Sabbath School that same year.

In 1858 Henry Jacobs and Michael Michaels established a cigar factory in Dundas. The first in Canada, it proved to be an important factor in developing the cigar industry in the country. Both founders later moved to Montreal. At approximately the same time, the first known Jews came to the Maritime Provinces. Noah Green, Solomon Hart and Henry Levy settled in Saint John, New Brunswick, between 1858-60. Closely related to each other, they had at first come to the United States from England, but later took up residence in Saint John. Solomon Hart was descended from an Alsace-Lorraine family whose name was originally Hertz. To be accurate, they were not the very first Jews to settle in the Maritime Provinces—certainly not including Nova Scotia. That province, as has been previously pointed out, had seen Jewish colonists even before Montreal and though they were few indeed their reality has been established beyond doubt.

As it had been even before they had become firmly rooted, so, too, the attitude now displayed toward the Jews was a blend of tolerance and hospitality mellowed by a feeling of sympathy. The influx of Jewish residents had occasioned no change in the sentiment of the people. Almost everywhere the new immigrants were warmly welcomed and the mutual esteem between them and their Christian neighbours soon became evident to a marked degree. The average Jew was highly regarded; even more so was the one who distinguished himself in any field. Needless to say, the treatment accorded the Jews served to bind them ever closer to the land where they had found new life and the liberty and justice that had been denied them in the countries of their origin. Thus we read, for example, of their holding a day of fast as a token of sorrow for the British killed in the Indian Mutiny of 1857. The 27th of November of that year having been declared a day of national mourning by official proclamation, the Jews observed it with prayer and fasting. In the

Portuguese synagogue, Rev. A. de Sola delivered a touching and eloquent sermon, taking as his text: "And a time of distress it is unto Jacob; yet out of it shall he be saved" (Jeremiah XXX, 7), his words leaving a profound impression on the assembled congregation.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Gazette*, Montreal, November 27, 1857.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN  
COMMUNAL LIFE AND THE PACIFIC  
COAST SETTLEMENT

DESPITE the colony's steady expansion throughout the country, its inner life remained circumscribed and poor in events. For this reason any occurrence of more than average importance in the Jewish world became doubly so for the Jews of Canada.

The year 1855 marked a significant victory for the Jews of England with the election of David Salomons as Lord Mayor of London. Aside from providing concrete evidence of the progress made by democratic thought in that country, this event also denoted an important step forward in the struggle for civil and religious liberty. Everywhere throughout the British Empire—and in the United States as well—the news that David Salomons had finally emerged victorious from his lengthy uphill battle was hailed with jubilation. A Jewish Lord Mayor of the world's metropolis! This was not only a personal triumph—it was a tribute to an entire people.

The great rejoicing and deep satisfaction aroused in Jewish circles were warmly echoed in Canada. On November 1 of that year a special evening was dedicated to celebrating the event and to expressing the pride and elation of the Jewish population. Under the chairmanship of Dr. A. H. David, the gathering in Montreal was attended by an overflowing multitude animated by an enthusiastic holiday spirit. The chairman briefly outlined the great event which had occasioned the meeting and expressed the universal belief that liberalism and enlightenment were beginning to prevail. First to speak was Rabbi de Sola who, as usual, held his eager audience spellbound. For as his carefully-chosen words rang confidently through the densely-packed room, they clearly reflected the thoughts that filled the new Jewish mind—the thoughts of free citizens in a free and democratic country. They had come together, he told them, not to express their gratitude over a "favour" done their brethren in England, but, enlightenment having finally triumphed over ancient prejudices, to congratulate them on having won their rights. Especially should Canadian Jews rejoice, he said—they who enjoyed the blessings of a saner and more impartial government in

this great, happy and enlightened country ("colony"), where the doors of Parliament, the temples of culture and dignified public office were open to all. Now there resounded once again:

"Let there be light; and there was light."

He pointed to the many disabilities to which the Jews of England had so long been subjected and told of the arduous struggle for emancipation. He cited the case of the Jewish Lord Mayor who had battled indomitably for many years, enduring insults and humiliation until, by his indefatigable efforts, he had attained the highest of civil offices.

Especially interesting was that portion of his address which dealt with the history of the familiar oath containing the words "On the true faith of a Christian," which had so often proved to be an obstacle to Jews in every part of the Empire. During the first quarter of the nineteenth century, as interpreted by English law, this oath served effectively to exclude Jews from almost every civilian and military office. In 1828 Sir Robert Peel and the Duke of Wellington had attempted to remedy the situation, but to no avail. Only nineteen years later, in 1847, did the British Government, under Queen Victoria, introduce a bill in Parliament for the "Relief of Persons of the Jewish Religion elected to Municipal Offices." The bill, which became law four months later, eliminated the words "On the true faith of a Christian" and was a great step forward toward the complete emancipation of the Jews in England. "No more yellow badges!" Rabbi de Sola exclaimed at the conclusion of his address. "No more Ghetto; no more Judenstrasse; no more civic disabilities; no more religious tests. The Jews wish to hold their heads as other men do, as God has created them. They want to be the equals of their fellow-citizens of other creeds."<sup>1</sup>

In similar vein were the other speeches of the evening. Alexander Levy emphasized the contrast between England and Canada where all were equal irrespective of creed. "The Jews," he said, "have had here Magistrates and Justices of the Peace and only a few years ago a Jew was elected Alderman in Montreal." There was no doubt in his mind that had the same gentleman presented himself as candidate for the mayoralty, he would not have been rejected merely because he was a Jew. Edwin Morris, another speaker, expressed

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<sup>1</sup> *Montreal Herald*, November 3, 1855.

himself with particular vehemence. "It is of import," he declared, "that the Jews hammer their way through to freedom; that they do it incessantly until the aim is reached, just as David Salomons, who was undaunted by all obstacles, who struck one blow after another, and stormed and destroyed the bulwark of intolerance." So, too, spoke William Benjamin. He expressed the hope that the day was not distant when enlightenment and understanding would put an end to narrow-minded prejudices and Jews everywhere would enjoy the fullest liberty. He referred also in passing to the cruel persecution of Jews in "despotic and barbarous Russia."

The meeting closed with the adoption of four resolutions congratulating the Lord Mayor of the Empire's capital upon his great victory. One of the resolutions, proposed by Rabbi de Sola and seconded by David Moss, read as follows:

"Resolved, that this meeting learns with the most complete satisfaction of the election of David Salomons, Esq., to the dignified office of Lord Mayor of the City of London; and that while they tender to their esteemed and distinguished co-religionist their warmest felicitations on the gratifying event, they would convey to him the high appreciation they entertain of the zealous, untiring and important services which, during a period of more than a quarter of a century, he has rendered to the cause of civil and religious liberty, and more especially of the efforts he has made to obtain for British Jews complete immunity from the disabilities under some of which they still suffer."

Copies of the resolutions adopted, together with a report of the meeting, were forwarded to the Lord Mayor of London.<sup>1</sup>

There can be no doubt that Rabbi de Sola was largely responsible for the cordial relations then existing between Jew and gentile in Canada. Erudite, intellectual, he served as a link between the two groups and it was due mainly to him that the community won greater understanding and appreciation from its neighbours. In 1858 McGill University conferred a well-deserved honorary degree of Doctor of Laws upon him. By that time his reputation as learned author and rabbi had become firmly established. The world of letters knew him well as did the Jewish world where the renown of his multi-branched scholarship had spread far and wide. Now at its height, his intense literary activity produced a voluminous flow of

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

essays and critiques which were published in non-Jewish as well as Jewish periodicals. It was during this period, too, that he was invited to deliver a convocation address at McGill.<sup>1</sup>

In 1850 Dr. Hall, editor of the *British American Journal*, invited him to become a regular contributor and de Sola responded with a series of memorable essays. The author's style as well as his erudition and approach aroused wide-spread interest. No less popular was he as a lecturer and his public addresses were often the subject of comment far beyond the boundaries of Canada. An address which he delivered in 1870 as president of the "Natural History Society" on the occasion of the visit of Prince Arthur, later the Duke of Connaught, won the approbation of Queen Victoria. The Prince, much impressed by de Sola's discourse, had asked that a copy be sent to the Queen. Two years later the American Government under President Grant invited him to invoke a prayer at the opening of the 1872 session of Congress in Washington. An extraordinary honour for a Jew who was a British subject to boot! Although he conducted the ceremony after the Jewish custom, with head covered, he gained universal approval. Sir Edward Thornton, the British Ambassador, formally thanked Dr. de Sola while Mr. Gladstone, the Prime Minister, communicated his satisfaction in a personal letter.

Basking in the sunny glow of propitious social conditions, the Jews of Canada, although their numbers were still infinitesimal, enjoyed to the full all the privileges of free citizens in a free country. Rightly did the *Jewish Chronicle* of London comment that the Jews in the Canadian colony "live under favourable conditions and are highly respected by their Christian neighbours."<sup>2</sup> But however favourable the conditions, they could not palliate the serious problems with which any growing Jewish community had inevitably to contend. With the arrival of new immigrants, many of whom were far from self-supporting, the need for an organization to care for them—a need that had hardly existed before—began to make itself felt. Intensified by the outbreak of Civil War in the United States, this need grew ever more pressing as the unrest in the Republic diverted a steady stream of fresh immigration northward. Many Jews were included, and the burden of supporting them lay heavily on the shoulders of the Montreal community. It was to meet this

<sup>1</sup> *Occident*, vol. XXII, no. 4, p. 191.

<sup>2</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, London, February 7, 1862.

critical situation that the "Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society" was founded on July 23, 1863. The late David A. Ansell has cast some diverting sidelights on the Society in his reminiscences.

"In the year 1863," he relates, "there lived in Chenneville St. a remarkable woman whose name was Mrs. Roman. She kept a Jewish boarding house and during the American Civil War her house was the rendezvous for a large number of men from the United States who found a home under her hospitable roof. Quite frequently old inhabitants of Montreal would also come to dine there or to while away a few hours.

"An optician, named Franklin, likewise lived at Mrs. Roman's, and this Mr. Franklin may truly be said to be the instigator of the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society. This young man, who was about thirty years old, and who witnessed the number of poor coming from the United States to Canada, asked me if I would assist in establishing a young men's Hebrew benevolent society in Montreal. I at once coincided with his views and forthwith drew up a circular giving the object of the society, and the late Messrs. David and Edward Moss were the first subscribers on my list.

"At that time we had two synagogues in the City of Montreal, one for the Portuguese, and the other for the German, Polish and English Jews; but I regret to say that the feeling between the two congregations was not that of brotherly love—caused by each congregation trying to get any new member that arrived in Canada to their synagogue.

"When I called upon the members of the Portuguese congregation they thought the object a good one and much needed in Montreal; but they would have liked to have their own benevolent society. I replied that we were quite willing to join them in their undertaking; if it was for them a matter of honor, they could have all that honor. At last the important meeting for the election of officers took place. I recollect going to that meeting about 8 o'clock at night, and as no gas was on the premises we had to use a coal oil lamp.

"Among those present were Dr. David, J. Samuel, M. Gutman, I. G. Ascher, Levey Brothers, L. A. Hart, Dr. de Sola, B. Kortosk, and others. The election took place, and you will note that all persons elected were members of the Portuguese synagogue. I was perfectly satisfied, however, for I had

obtained what we wanted—a Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society, but the credit will ever belong to Mr. Franklin, the optician, who first conceived the idea of it."

From this modest embryo there developed the organization which was later to be incorporated as the "Baron de Hirsch Institute and Hebrew Benevolent Society," ultimately to become one of the most important charitable institutions on the North American Continent. It was Canadian Jewry's proudest achievement and for many decades its sheltering arms spread protectively about every phase of Jewish philanthropic effort in the country. It was the intention of the Society's founders to have its administration controlled exclusively by unmarried men, thereby relieving men with families from the financial and other responsibilities entailed. Another motive was to stimulate an interest in communal work amongst the younger generation. Evidently this restrictive policy met with the full approval of those who attended the initial meeting, for a resolution to that effect was carried unanimously. Some years later, however, the restriction was lifted and married men were permitted to become members. The first officers of the Society were:—L. L. Levey, president; L. B. Davis, vice-president; S. G. Levey, treasurer; and H. Moss, secretary. As members of the committee, were chosen:—S. Littauer, I. Ascher, M. Gutman, J. Samuel, Lawrence Cohen, S. Ollendorf, L. Silverman, H. L. Levey, and B. Kortosk. All were prominent in Montreal communal affairs of the time.

The I. Ascher who was a member of the committee and participated in the founding of the Society was none other than Isadore Gordon Ascher, the poet and publicist. A son of G. I. Ascher, he was born in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1835. As a bright-eyed youngster of six he came to Canada with his parents who settled in Montreal. There he received his formal education and in 1862 graduated in law from McGill. Literature had always been his dearest passion. Even in his student days the attention of literary circles had been drawn to his poems which were published in the local press. In 1863, the year in which he figured as one of the founders of the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society, a collection of his verses appeared under the title "Voices from the Hearth and Other Poems." The volume was well received in England as in Canada. Ascher himself followed the successful trail of his book and in 1864 left Montreal for England where he devoted himself exclusively

to writing. His literary productivity included short stories, verse, and, from time to time, articles for the press. Wide critical acclaim greeted his sonnets, especially the poem "Canada" which many considered a masterpiece. He died in 1914.<sup>1</sup> Far more active than he, both in the newly-formed society and in communal work generally, was his brother, Jacob G. Ascher. Over a period of years, he was connected with the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society in one capacity or other—as secretary, vice-president, president—and always was one of its most energetic and capable members. From 1864 on, for over two decades his name occupied a prominent place in the minutes of the Society. Some years later when, in answer to the appeal of Sir Moses Montefiore, collections were raised to aid the persecuted Jews of Roumania, he was appointed secretary-treasurer of the Canadian fund. Like his brother, Jacob G. Ascher possessed literary talent and would occasionally publish light essays, verses and other writings.

The Society had set itself the task of caring for the newly-arrived immigrants. Many were the difficulties to be overcome in the first years and more than once the Society found itself precariously tottering on the brink of the abyss. For example, the annual meeting in 1867 revealed a balance of twenty-nine cents in the treasury! But, overcoming all obstacles, the organization which was later to develop into the Baron de Hirsch Institute steadily grew and expanded. Notwithstanding the hard times it encountered, its means slowly augmented and enabled it to branch out its activity in the field of social work. It is worth noting that the "Montreal City and District Savings Bank," of which Henry Judah was then president, made this institution an annual grant as did the Quebec Provincial Government. In 1869 the question of a charter arose and Lewis A. Hart (1847-1923), the first Jewish notary in the country, and Gershom Joseph, then practising law in Montreal, undertook to look after the Society's incorporation. On November 16, 1870, the charter was secured and the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society became a legally incorporated body. It now took its place with the other charitable institutions in the country and so prepared itself for the great and difficult tasks that later years were to impose upon it.

<sup>1</sup> EDMOND LAREAU, *Histoire de la littérature canadienne*, 1874, pp. 83-84; H. J. MORGAN, *Canadian Men and Women of the Time*, 1912, p. 41.

Although the older part of Canada was still the focal point for every new Jewish arrival, now the thread of Jewish life slowly and hesitantly began to unwind in another direction—in the direction of Canada's far West. By the end of the first half of the nineteenth century a number of Jews had penetrated there, some of whom had even from the outset taken a prominent part in the life of their new home. Obscurity shrouds the exact date when the first Jewish foot trod the soil of Canada's great Northwest. Equally obscure is the name of the first Jew to settle there. Swept along by the mighty tide of eager, fortune-hungry men that surged northward when gold was discovered in 1858, a number of Jews came to British Columbia and soon the nucleus of a community sprang up along the shores of the Pacific. Victoria was the centre of the greatest concentration and Jews were, in fact, among the founders of that city. Thus, one year after Victoria received its charter, they were able to organize themselves into a congregation and to build a synagogue, the corner-stone for which was laid with great ceremony on June 2, 1863.

Jewish settlement in British Columbia developed against an exciting and colourful background. It has even been conjectured that there were Jews in that region as early as the sixteenth century. This theory has been advanced by Bruce A. McKelvie, the well-known historian of British Columbia. According to him, they migrated from China and settled somewhere along the northern coast. They were perhaps coeval with the European discoverers of Canada. McKelvie has based his theory on the traces of Jewish manners and customs, and even words of Hebraic origin, which have survived among the local Indian tribes. Because they did not intermarry with the natives they left no distinctive ethnological traits.<sup>1</sup>

What is certain is that Jews began to appear in British Columbia and Vancouver Island immediately after these areas were opened for colonization. The majority came from San Francisco and amongst the first were the brothers Gottfried, Carl, David and Isaac Oppenheimer. Born in the medieval German town of Frankfurt-am-Main, they emigrated to the United States in 1851 and perilously made their way to California. Rumours of vast and fabulous gold strikes in British Columbia began to reach avid San Franciscan

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<sup>1</sup> *Jewish Daily Bulletin*, New York, April 13, 1928.

ears around 1856, and that same year the doughty brothers again pulled up stakes and struck north for Canada's Pacific Coast where they eventually settled in Victoria. They later moved to Yale and again back to Victoria. After the Oppenheimers there followed, in 1858, Kady Gambitz, Frank Sylvester, the Boscowitzes, the brothers Lumley and Selim Franklin, Gustav and Emil Sutro and others. The contemporary American Jewish press reported that "many Jews" had settled in Victoria that year.<sup>1</sup> Within the next year or two the small Jewish group increased considerably. "Benjamin, the Second" in his *Three Years in America*, has given a fascinating account of that era. He had made an early visit to Victoria in 1861 and wrote feelingly of the Jewish inn where he had stayed. He referred to Selim Franklin and added that the Jews of Victoria, numbering about a hundred souls, had founded a benevolent society as early as 1859.<sup>2</sup>

With the growth of the colony a serious problem began to trouble the Jews of Victoria. Apparently the so-called "School Question" did not first crop up in Quebec but in British Columbia. In 1861 the Jews of Victoria demonstratively withdrew their children from the local public school for a typical reason, as reported then in the *London Jewish Chronicle*. The following lines are quoted from that journal:

"... Let us cast a glance, in the extreme West, at a Jewish settlement, quite of recent date, which is far distant from all others. We allude to the small congregation at Victoria, British Columbia. The discoveries in Vancouver's Island have brought to notice these remote possessions of the British Crown and, no doubt, drawn to the capital a number of co-religionists who have formed themselves into a congregation. Little beyond this fact is known of them. All that has transpired quite recently is that its members have in a body withdrawn their children from the public school in consequence of the attempt made by the teaching staff—members of the Church of England—to seduce them from the religion of their fathers."<sup>3</sup>

Geography having situated Victoria some thousands of miles away from the heart of Jewish life in the country, the community

<sup>1</sup> *Occident*, December 1858, p. 459.

<sup>2</sup> *Drei Jahre in Amerika*, 1859-1862, Part III, Chapters 1 and 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Jewish Chronicle* (London), February 7, 1862.

there, lacking reinforcements, experienced little growth and has remained small to the present day. This, however did, not diminish its importance, for the Jews of British Columbia played a tremendous part in the early stages of the province's development. Pioneers and trail-blazers, their names are indelibly etched on the pages of British Columbia's history.

Extraordinary, too, were the relations between the Jews and their Christian neighbours. The third mayor of Victoria was Lumley Franklin who was swept into office in 1866 with a large majority. He was congratulated upon his election by the Chief Rabbi of England in a letter written in Hebrew. His brother, Selim Franklin, was returned to the Legislature of Vancouver Island in 1860 and thus became the second Jew, after Ezekiel Hart, to be elected to a local parliament in Canada. The question of his oath almost precipitated a repetition of the Hart incident, but, the atmosphere being untainted by any trace of anti-Jewish sentiment, the problem was smoothed out and he was not deprived of his seat.<sup>1</sup> In 1863 he was re-elected for a second term. Another Jew, Henry Nathan, was destined to play an even more significant political role in that region. Born in London in 1842, he settled in Victoria in 1862 and became the first, and thus far the only Jew to sit on the Legislative Council of a Canadian Province. In November, 1870, he was elected to the Upper Chamber of the British Columbia Legislature and was to a great extent responsible for bringing British Columbia into Confederation. Victoria elected him to the House of Commons by acclamation in 1871 and returned him with an overwhelming majority the following year. Thus he was privileged to sit in the first two Parliaments immediately following Confederation as a staunch supporter of Sir John A. Macdonald.

No better manifestation of the extremely friendly attitude to the Jews could be provided than the occasion of the laying of the corner-stone for the Victoria synagogue on June 2, 1863. Jew and Christian alike took part in the ceremonies which were accompanied by a display of pomp under circumstances unparalleled in Canada. A holiday mood was in the balmy Victoria air; the occasion was a sort of gala event for the entire populace. The band of *H.M.S. Topaz* came from Esquimault to take part in the ceremony. The members of the congregation were met in open procession by the Germania Sing Verein, the French Benevolent Society, St. Andrew's

<sup>1</sup> DAVID ROME, *The First Two Years*, Montreal, 1942, p. 65 et seq.

Society, Masonic lodges, fraternal societies and others who marched in parade to the site where the corner-stone was to be laid.

John Malowansky, one of the earliest Jewish settlers in Victoria, read a prayer in Hebrew. Samuel Hoffnung, speaking for the congregation, proudly pointed to its great accomplishment in so short a time. "Who would have thought," he asked rhetorically, as reported by the press of that day, "that in the short space of five years we should have a temple erected where aborigines were then lords of the domain? Who would have dreamt that in this isolated part of the globe, where, ere now, feet of white men have hardly trod, a comparatively large city would spring up, studded with magnificent edifices and inhabited by a large concourse of intellectual people? Who would not have ridiculed the idea that where, ere now, naught but the hunter's step and wild beast's roar disturbed the wilderness, should at this early day be erected a synagogue to the scattered tribes of Israel? With feelings almost amounting to envy we beheld the erection of churches of almost every denomination extant; but what could we, a handful of people, do to gain a similar edifice? It is easy to remember the advent of the first Israelite. Nevertheless, scattered as our race is over the world, and limited in numbers as we generally are, compared to our Gentile brethren, I am proud to say that since we first made our appearance, one by one, we have each and all striven manfully to uphold the religion which has been handed down to us by our forefathers."

The *British Colonist* of June 3, 1863, devoted a large part of its issue to a report of the ceremony, concluding:

"Thus terminated an eventful day in the history of the Jews in Vancouver Island, and it must be a source of infinite gratification to that body, that the ceremonies of this day, partaking as they did of a purely denominational character, were participated in by all classes of our community with a hearty goodwill and brotherly feeling, evidencing in acts more powerful than words the high esteem in which they are held by the fellow townsmen of the City of Victoria."

And it was indeed a day of special significance—not for the Jews of Vancouver Island alone. It marked an important milestone for the Jews of Canada generally, for they were now established not only in the Maritime Provinces but also in the remote region by the Pacific—from Coast to Coast of the future Dominion.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN  
ON THE EVE OF MASS IMMIGRATION

WE HAVE seen that the Jews of British Columbia played a unique role in the pioneer stages of that province's development. Nor did the vigour of their participation in every phase of British Columbia's activity diminish in later years. Merchants, most of them, they were well represented in the import trade with a liberal sprinkling in the fledgling industries which were beginning to spring up in the villages and towns of the province. It may safely be said that they shared in almost every important public enterprise. One of the first railway lines in British Columbia, an important link in the Cariboo Road, was built through the efforts of Carl Oppenheimer. When David and Isaac Oppenheimer moved from Victoria to Vancouver, they took a leading part in the incorporation of that city and in the negotiations with the Canadian Pacific to provide Vancouver with its first railroad. Neither David nor Isaac was a member of Vancouver's first city council but both were elected by acclamation to the second council from Ward Five. The following year David was elected mayor and Isaac was re-elected alderman and chairman of the finance committee for that term.

David Oppenheimer was returned as chief magistrate of Vancouver for three more successive terms, remaining in that office until the end of 1891. His brother, although he too showed a marked flair for public life, withdrew from politics and devoted himself entirely to business. Embracing as they did every sphere of industry and commerce in the young city, the ambitious interests of their firm required all his attention. With their sharp business acumen, the Oppenheimers were the first to foresee the importance of speedy and direct communication between Vancouver and New Westminster. To this end they organized a syndicate with three other businessmen, also Caribou pioneers, secured a provincial charter and constructed a railroad between the two cities. Vancouver and British Columbia generally had much to be grateful for to the Oppenheimers, particularly to David who was the more active in the family enterprises. He was president of the Vancouver Improvement Company, the Westminster and Vancouver Tramway Company, the B.C. Dredging and Dyking Company, as well as of

the Vancouver Board of Trade, the Vancouver Club and of numerous other commercial and social bodies. His brother, Isaac, moved to Spokane some years later where he died (in 1922) at the age of eighty-eight.

No less active were many other early Jewish settlers in British Columbia. Among them were the Leumeisters who held a military supply contract from the British government; Moses Sporborg; the Sutros, one of whom later became mayor of San Francisco; Nathan Koshland and others. We hear of Dr. M. H. Boscowitz, a practicing Jewish physician in Victoria in 1863. Another one, Simon Leiser, was counted among the most eminent citizens of Victoria. For fifteen years he was an executive officer of the Board of Trade of that city and at one time presided over that body for two successive terms. He was a director of the Royal Jubilee Hospital, was actively connected with the Victoria Opera House Company and took a leading part in the building of the Royal Victoria Theatre. Another old-timer in British Columbia, J. P. Davies, one of the founders of the Jewish community in Victoria, stood for Parliament there in 1878 and was defeated by only a few votes. He died the following year.

Politics was one of the more important occupations of the Jews in British Columbia; they plunged into the treacherous political stream energetically and with zest. The same could not be said for those in the other provinces. In later years Sir John A. Macdonald, Canada's first Prime Minister, was to remark, with some truth, that "the Jews as a body have taken perhaps a wiser course in avoiding the worries of political life." It is known, however, that many Jews were keenly interested in the movement which gave birth to Confederation. To the great National Convention held in Toronto on June 27, 1867, on the eve of Confederation, there came a few Jewish delegates of whom Mark Solomon, a Toronto tobacco manufacturer, was the most prominent.<sup>1</sup>

In this connection, it might be well to dwell for a moment on David Abraham Ansell (born in London, 1834; died in Montreal, 1914) and the friendship he had formed with the great Canadian statesmen of the time—men like Sir George Etienne Cartier, Sir Charles Tupper and Sir John A. Macdonald. With the latter he was especially intimate, their friendship dating from pre-Con-

<sup>1</sup> HON. JAMES YOUNG, *Public Men in Public Life in Canada*, vol. 1, appendix VI.

federation days, when they would often discuss the political questions of the hour including the great national plan to merge the scattered provinces into one Dominion. While yet in England, Ansell had become a familiar figure in political circles and he did not sever his political affiliations when he came to Canada in 1860. An ardent conservative, his political views were clearly enunciated in a number of documents among his personal papers which include several letters from Sir John A. Macdonald.

Ansell virtually fathered the idea of economic imperialism and was promulgating this doctrine long before Joseph Chamberlain conceived of it. He was the author of a work—"The Welding of the Links of Empire"—in which he proposed a plan to effect an economic union between the Mother Country and the colonies. The substance of his plan was later woven into the basic pattern of imperialist thought in England. Another project of his, for which he succeeded in winning Macdonald's support at an early date, was to persuade the British Government to recognize the Republic of Mexico. He undertook to propose the matter to Gladstone and to this end entered into a voluminous correspondence. The result of his labours was that Great Britain finally consented to the recognition of the Mexican Republic and sent an envoy there. For his services he was appointed Canadian consul-general for Mexico in 1888, upon the recommendation of the British Government. This post he occupied for twenty-five years, resigning it only because of old age.

The seventies and the early part of the eighties saw the rise of a number of Jewish philanthropic and social organizations in Canada, some of which are still in existence. Founded in 1878, the Ladies' Montefiore Benevolent Society was the first philanthropic society to be formed in Toronto. That same year the Deborah Ladies' Aid Society was founded in Hamilton through the efforts of Mrs. Herman Levy who was its first president. The first B'nai B'rith lodge in the country came into being in Toronto on June 13, 1875. Early in 1877 another philanthropic society, a women's organization called the Ladies' Hebrew Benevolent Society, was formed in Montreal. Reference to the new body is made in the minutes of the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society for May 13 of that year. At a meeting of the older organization held on November 4, a communication was read from Mrs. John Moss, secretary of the Ladies' Hebrew Benevolent Society, which announced the formation

of the Society for the purpose of helping poor and needy Jews and urged that both associations co-operate in the best interests of community relief. The second B'nai B'rith lodge in Canada was formed in Montreal on June 5, 1881—six years after the first was founded in Toronto—while the previous year, in September, 1880, Montreal had also witnessed the birth of a social and dramatic club which bore the name of the great Jewish philanthropist Montefiore. The first cultural body of its kind, the club was to be the centre of many activities in years to come.

Presaging the impending transfiguration of Jewish life, herald wavelets of the onrushing immigration tide of the eighties had begun to reach Canadian shores. In ever-increasing numbers they came, Jews from Eastern and Southern Europe, penniless and destitute most of them. They soon overtaxed the limited facilities of the charitable institutions in Montreal and Toronto. Despite the valiant aid it received from the women's organization, the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society soon found itself confronted by a formidable situation with which it was hardly able to cope. Harassed members of the Society discussed and pondered the problem at many a meeting.

In 1874 a movement was begun in Montreal to form a colonization society in which every charitable organization was to take part. For this purpose the government had authorized a grant of twelve thousand dollars. Although the sum was pitifully inadequate in view of the large numbers of immigrants who were then pouring into the country, the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society decided to participate in order to obtain some share of the grant. To this end it was decided, at a meeting held on January 25 of that year, that the president, together with Mr. M. Lesser, represent the Society on the new body and take part in all its activities.

Once again the immigration question was raised at the Society's annual meeting which took place on November 14, 1875. In his report the president pointed out that the Society had passed through a year of great stress and had received unprecedentedly numerous requests for aid. Of the projected colonization society nothing further had been heard—it had vanished into oblivion. But the Society itself, the president's report declared, had sustained a deficit which the treasurer had been obliged to cover. He complained, too, that the Ladies' Emigration Society, a Jewish organization in London, had been sending entire families of immigrants to

this country who arrived absolutely destitute and helpless. Such immigrants were a constant drain on the slender resources of the Society and, he added, representations had already been made to communal leaders in England. Amplifying the president's report, Rev. de Sola, chairman of the relief committee, presented a more detailed account of the immigration situation. The protest of the local body against the indiscriminate dispatching of immigrants whom the community could not support had been published in the London *Jewish World* and *Jewish Chronicle*. Both Anglo-Jewish journals had, in commenting editorially, fully justified the position taken by the Jews of Canada.

But little improvement could be noted. Impoverished immigrants from the other side whose sole hope was the help that might be extended to them in Canada did not cease to arrive. Throughout the following year, the minute book of the Y.M.H.B.S. related, this organization had to support from week to week entire families who were utterly dependent upon it. The local community, unable to cope with the problem, grew frantic. Some in whom despair had overcome humanitarian feeling suggested that all poor families be refused relief, thus compelling them to move to other parts where they might perhaps find friends or relatives to assist them, or where the possibility of work for them existed. But the attitude of the Jews in Montreal could not alter the general situation to any appreciable extent and, if it had any effect at all, it was only temporary. London on the one hand largely disregarded their protests and representations while on the other hand the surge of immigration, once under way, would not be stemmed. To the persecuted and economically down-trodden masses in Europe, America the fabulous shone as the one beacon of salvation and Canada could not avoid getting its quota of penniless but sanguine wanderers.

By 1877 immigration had attained a hitherto-unequaled peak. Heedless of the terrible plight that awaited them and of the inability of Canadian Jews to support them, the London organization was shipping emigrants overseas at an alarming rate. Communal leaders in England were concerned only with ridding themselves of the mass of Eastern and Southern European Jews who, having descended upon them, constituted a most serious problem. This in turn tended to aggravate still more the already acute position of the local Jews. Hardly established here themselves, even by the most prodigious efforts they could not adapt themselves to a situation for

which they were ill-equipped. New protests, sterner in tone, were sent to London accusing communal leaders there of attempting to free themselves of a burden by shifting it on to the Jews of Canada. It should be noted that between 1871 and 1881, due mainly to the influx of immigrants, the Jewish population had more than doubled.

But immigration was not the only problem that vexed the minds of Jewish leaders in Montreal. Early symptoms of what was later to become the celebrated "Jewish School Question" in the Province of Quebec were beginning to crop up—a direct result of the recent immigration. Where no problem had existed before, a serious one now loomed threateningly on the Montreal horizon.

By virtue of the Education Act of 1841, organized education in the Province of Quebec was divided into two school systems—Protestant and Catholic; the rights of the so-called denominational schools were more clearly defined by the British North America Act of 1867. Under the existing legislation no provision was made for Jewish educational rights. However, by virtue of a law enacted in 1870 and which remained in force for over thirty years, Jews were free to pay their school taxes into either one of the two panels. Mainly they contributed to the Protestant panel and thus secured the right of their children to attend Protestant schools. But there were often instances when they were obliged to pay taxes to the Catholic fund, and it soon became evident that the education of Jewish children was largely dependent upon chance agreements and compromises dictated by expediency—and subject to all the hazards and disadvantages which such agreements entailed. Many were the difficulties under this agreement which soon grew irksome to the Jews of Montreal. It was detrimental to Jewish education for the public school failed to gratify the elementary educational needs of the Jewish child. Both congregations maintained their own *Cheder* where the children received instruction in Jewish subjects and, having been unable to reach a satisfactory agreement with the Protestants, they began seriously to consider establishing their own secular school. The initiative was taken by the Sephardic congregation. At a meeting held on August 30, 1874, the members of the German-Polish synagogue read and approved a proposal submitted to them by the older congregation which called for the unification of both bodies for the purpose of founding a joint "Hebrew Institute."

The reaction of the community to the project was both immediate and enthusiastic. But it appears that united action by the

two congregations, which had so optimistically been proposed, became impossible after a heated controversy over the question whether the form of prayer—which was to have been included in the Hebrew curriculum—was to be taught after the Sephardic or Ashkenazic custom.<sup>1</sup> Undaunted, the members of the German-Polish congregation resolved to implement the plan by themselves. A committee of nine was appointed to consider ways and means of establishing a secular school. Within a few days the committee had prepared its report which recommended that a school be opened where elementary educational subjects would be taught side by side with Hebrew studies. A happy medium was to be struck between the new English learning and the traditional Jewish teachings.

The following extract from the minute book of the German-Polish congregation refers to the report of the committee of nine which was submitted on November 29, 1874. In this report it was recommended that:

“This corporation do establish a secular school in connection with the Hebrew school, where children of both sexes be taught at least the rudiments of the English, French, and German languages, geography, writing, arithmetic, and receive a thorough knowledge of the Hebrew language, the Mosaic faith, and Scriptural history.”

The recommendation was adopted and it was then resolved:

“That this school be under supervision of the school committee annually elected by this corporation according to the by-laws.

“That children be admitted to receive education in all the above branches of knowledge, from the age of 5 years to that of 13, after which age and until they attain that of 15, they be admitted only for the purpose of completing their religious and Hebrew education.

“That this school be a free school, according to the School Act of this Province.

“That all children of proper age be admitted to the school upon payment of fees, such fees being limited to those allowed under the Free School Act, power being, however, reserved to the school committee to grant absolutely free admission in such cases as they deem fit.

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, p. 256, note 8.

“That this meeting appoint a committee of three to open and canvas a subscription list for the purpose required and that as soon as the amount of \$1,500 be subscribed, the committee with the assistance of the officers of this corporation establish a school as heretofore decided upon.”

With the adoption of the resolution the school problem was solved for the congregation, temporarily at least, including its financial aspect. Within a month and a half the necessary sum was raised and the machinery for the realization of the project was at once set into motion. The school, which was to provide the Jewish child with both a Hebrew and a general education was designed to supplant the “Hebrew Institute” which had originally been planned. The children were withdrawn from the Protestant schools and were hopefully sent to the new educational centre.

But the school was unable to survive long. Financial anaemia, the scourge of many a communal venture, soon set in and after a year and a half it was forced to close its doors. Once again the Jews of Montreal were forced to contend with a problem which, with premature optimism, they had believed solved. Once again both congregations came together to consider the steps to be taken. With Alderman Stephens as intermediary, negotiations were reopened with the Protestants in 1876 and, a working agreement having finally been reached, Jewish children returned to the Protestant schools. While details of the agreement are lacking, it evidently attained no degree of permanency for only a few years later further negotiations were entered into with Protestant school officials regarding the education of Jewish children. A rather strange compromise was reached when it was agreed to combine the general curriculum with the study of Hebrew, and to this end the Protestant School Board engaged a Mr. Jacoby who taught a class of Jewish children part of every school day.<sup>1</sup>

These were strange experiences for the Jews of Montreal as they crossed the threshold of a new phase of their life. Almost overnight, it seemed, they had attained maturity, had been invested with broader duties and greater cares. But their newly-assumed burdens did not lay too heavily on their shoulders—with difficulty at first, then with increasing confidence, they adjusted themselves to the load. Immigration, philanthropy, communal work, education—

<sup>1</sup> *The Gazette*, Montreal, September 28, 1882.

when had they not appeared on the daily order of Jewish life? Invariably these problems arose to confront the young community in a new country.

Early in the eighties two new synagogues appeared in Canada. One, an orthodox synagogue, the "Goel Tzedek," was founded in Toronto by immigrant Russian Jews on October 21, 1883. The other was the Reform "Temple Emanu-El," formed in Montreal in 1882 by a group with leanings to Reform Judaism.

The first Jew to hold municipal office in Toronto was Newman Leopold Steiner (born in Bohemia, 1829; died in Toronto, 1902). In 1851 he emigrated to the United States and for several years lived in New York where he studied sculpture. Around 1856 he moved to Canada and settled in Toronto. From the outset he evinced a deep interest in civic problems and thereby won the confidence of a wide section of public opinion. In 1880 he was elected alderman from St. James Ward with a large plurality and the following year the same ward returned him to office. For a short while he withdrew from politics but in 1883, 1884 and 1885 he was again elected, each time with a substantial plurality. In 1897 he was returned by the electors of Ward Three whom he represented in the municipal government for two terms. He was also the first Jewish Justice of the Peace in Ontario. Steiner, however, was a striking example of the type of Jew who lacks contact with his people, as was clearly demonstrated by an incident which made a highly unfavourable impression on the Jews of Toronto. In 1883 his was the privilege, as one of the senior municipal representatives, to name a new district in Toronto. Strangely enough, Steiner, a Jew, could select no other name than that of the anti-Semitic Chancellor of Germany. He named the district—Bismarck Avenue!

In 1882 Canadian Jews suffered a double bereavement with the loss of two of their greatest national figures—Dr. Abraham de Sola who died on June 5 and Dr. A. H. David whose death followed five months later. Not only had they over the course of many years contributed greatly to the advancement of Canadian Jewry but they had also been a potent force in cementing Jewish-Christian unity. Their death was considered a loss for the entire country. The medical faculty of Bishop's College adopted a resolution on November 9, 1882, which declared that in Dr. David's death—

“. . . the medical faculty of Bishop's College have to deplore the loss of their respected dean, who, from the inception of the

faculty until the last moments, took the deepest interest in the welfare of the college and contributed largely to its success."<sup>1</sup>

A similar resolution was adopted by McGill University in expressing regret at the death of Rev. de Sola who had for over thirty years been connected with this Canadian seat of learning. He died in New York and his remains were brought to Montreal to be interred in the local Sephardic cemetery. Having been cut short at the pinnacle of a fruitful literary and spiritual career when he was not yet fifty-seven, the great void his death left in the ranks of Canadian Jewry may readily be understood. One of his biographers wrote:

"His self-sacrificing devotion to the service of his race, his ceaseless labor in everything which could elevate and promote both their moral and intellectual welfare, his quick readiness to assuage with kind counsel and help the lot of those in adversity, and the rare talents which he had displayed in his multifarious writings, had won for him the warmest admiration and attachment of his people, and had gained him a reputation among them that was world-wide. His loss, indeed, was scarcely less regretted by Gentile than by Jew, for the prominence which his scholarly attainments had acquired for him among Canadian litterateurs, the active role which he had for thirty-five years played in our various learned bodies, and the distinguished position which he held in our leading University, achieved for him an illustrious place among Canada's public men."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Montreal Star*, November 18, 1882.

<sup>2</sup> J. D. BORTHWICK, *History and Biographical Gazetteer of Montreal*.

## THE RUSSIAN IMMIGRATION ERA

### CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

#### AFTERMATH OF THE 1881 POGROMS

ANTI-SEMITISM has always been a powerful, inexorable force whose brutal pressure has constantly diverted the course of Jewish history into new channels. Whipping and slashing at the masses of the Jewish people, this evil force has ever compelled them to uproot their lives and driven them in desperation to seek more secure fields in which to plant the seeds of hope anew. A consequence of the pogroms and the terror visited on the Jews of Russia in the early part of the eighties was the radical transformation of the panorama of Jewish history on this side of the ocean. Seeking sanctuary, the oppressed victims, their eyes fixed on the gleam of light from the New World that beckoned to them like a distant star, set out on the long and for them perilous journey. Weary, exhausted, they reached the hopeful shores. Little did the Jews on this continent dream at the time that the arrival of the newcomers would embark them on a new and greater stage of their existence here.

The outbreak of the bloody pogroms in Czarist Russia—and the repercussions which were felt in other Eastern European countries—led to a noteworthy colonization drive in Canada's far West. Until the 1880's, except in Victoria and Vancouver, only the odd Jewish settler was to be found in the whole of that vast territory. It is known that the first Jew in Qu'Appelle, in the District of Assiniboia (now Saskatchewan), was Max Goldstein who settled there in 1877. Jews began to settle in Winnipeg in the late 1870's, although they had been familiar with it earlier as a trading post of the Hudson Bay Company. It was only with the arrival of Reuben Goldstein and Hyman Miller in 1879—and of Philip Brown, David Ripstein, Samuel Ripstein, A. Biber, George Frankfurter and Louis Wertheim

the following year—that the nucleus of a small community took shape there. According to the 1881 census, the number of Jews in Manitoba that year totalled 33 and of these 21 lived in the province's chief city. Even Portage la Prairie boasted a long Jewish inhabitant—the subsequently noted Dr. Hiram N. Vineberg who had his practice there.

On the members of the Jewish colony in Winnipeg fell the burden of receiving the victims of Czarist oppression. Too onerous for their limited means and experience, it was a task which they could ill cope with. Upon arriving in Winnipeg, those who had fled the pogroms were greeted with abundant professions of brotherly sympathy—and little else. It had not been easy for them. Nor had their long and arduous voyage failed to leave its mark upon them. Only after months of tortuous journeying—months of wandering from place to place when it had seemed they would perish and only the help they received from Jews and good-hearted Christians had sustained them on their weary trek—had they succeeded in reaching their goal. Small wonder then, that few could conceive at that time that from their ranks would rise many of Winnipeg's most prominent citizens.

Yelisavetgrad was the scene of the first Russian pogrom on April 27, 1881. Eleven days later, on May 8, a pogrom broke out in Kiev and the following months saw the flames of hatred spread in fury to tens of cities, towns and hamlets in the south of Russia. Climaxed by an orgy of murder, looting and unutterable atrocities, the pogroms aroused a storm of protest in Western Europe and in America. A feeling of intense indignation mixed with horror swept the civilized world. Everywhere the conduct of the Czarist regime evoked loathing and condemnation. Simultaneous protest meetings held in London and in New York on February 1, 1882, reflected the sincere humanitarian sentiment that had gripped the English-speaking peoples. The sponsors of the demonstration in London included the most brilliant English personalities of the time, such as Charles Darwin, Matthew Arnold, James Bryce, Robert Browning, Cardinal Manning, and others.<sup>1</sup>

Emergency committees were quickly formed in several European centres to help the unfortunate Russian Jews who had fled by every devious route and were beginning to congest the port cities. The

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, p. 261, note <sup>9</sup>.

harsh blow that had struck them won them universal sympathy and everywhere the hand of help was extended. In London the Mansion House Committee, born of the great protest assembly, assumed the responsibility of caring for the refugees—those who had managed to reach England. With the assistance of Sir Alexander T. Galt, the Canadian High Commissioner, this body also directed the relief of those refugees who had been sent to Canada. At the same time a committee to aid the refugees was formed in Montreal upon the initiative of the local branch of the Anglo-Jewish Association which, together with the other Jewish bodies in the city, the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society and the Ladies' Hebrew Benevolent Society, founded the Jewish Emigration Aid Society. The first organization of its kind in the country, it had only a brief existence and was dissolved a few months after its formation, its activities having been transferred to the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society. Another committee to aid the fleeing victims was formed in Montreal by a number of non-Jews headed by Bishop Bond who bitterly denounced the Czarist outrages.<sup>1</sup>

It should be mentioned that the Canadian High Commissioner in London displayed a warm interest in the fate of the Russian-Jewish refugees and tried to help them by every means in his power. Time and time again his name appears in the minutes of the Y.M.H.B.S. It was primarily due to his intervention that in 1882 a tract of land was acquired in the North-West Territories to be used for colonization. Acting on the Mansion House Committee conjointly with the Lord Mayor of London, Cardinal Manning, the Archbishop of Canterbury and other English notables, he was indefatigable in his efforts. He even devised a project of his own for resettling Russian Jews in some part of the Dominion, and went so far as to take the matter up with Sir John A. Macdonald, the Prime Minister, stressing the urgency of setting aside a district for that purpose. He was constantly conferring with Jewish leaders, too, with the avowed intention of bringing this country into the colonization picture. To him it seemed highly feasible that the Jewish settler, having escaped the crucible of Russian terror, could be remoulded into an economically self-sustaining citizen of a new, free land.

The humanitarian attitude adopted by the Canadian High Commissioner in London was but a reflection of world reaction to the

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<sup>1</sup> *The Gazette*, Montreal, March 16, 1882.

abominable atrocities perpetrated upon the Jews, as well as of the very warm solicitude on their behalf shown in official Canadian circles—with one notable exception. A typical expression of the state of mind which then prevailed in Canada was the following letter addressed to the Marquis of Lorne, Governor General of the Dominion, by the Icelandic Agent in Manitoba:—

“St. Andrews, Manitoba,  
13th February, 1882.

“The Marquis of Lorne,  
Governor General of  
The Dominion of Canada,  
&c.           &c.           &c.

“My Lord,

“I had the honor of addressing Lord Dufferin in 1875 on the subject of the Icelanders who were suffering from the effects of a severe volcanic eruption in that desolate country. The favorable notice taken of my letter by his Lordship has been the means of promoting a desire for emigration, and of delivering some three thousand persons from a condition of helpless and hopeless poverty at home, to the enjoyment of prosperity and even affluence in this favored country.

“The administration of Lord Dufferin will be always gratefully commemorated by this considerate act.

“Recalling the kind reception of my appeal at that time, I feel encouraged to write to your Lordship in behalf of a class of sufferers in another country from the effects of a more terrible eruption, not however of a physical but of a social nature,—namely of the Jews in Russia and Poland.

“The extensive fertile country now being opened up by the Dominion Government of Canada presents a most desirable refuge for these oppressed and persecuted ones.

“Asking your Lordship’s favorable consideration of this subject, I would take the liberty of suggesting that under your Lordship’s kind influence and patronage, a suitable block of land might be obtained for this purpose from the Dominion Government and placed in the hands of trustees to carry out the benevolent design of providing new homes far removed from the cruelties and atrocities so shamefully perpetrated on this people in the name of religion.

"Such a timely measure for the relief of the Jewish refugees, if happily connected with those now being made in England, would be a lasting credit to this country and a bright memorial of your Lordship's distinguished administration.

"I have the honor to be,

"My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient servant  
John Taylor, Icelandic Agent."<sup>1</sup>

No action appears to have been taken with regard to the suggestion put forward by John Taylor. But in a private letter dated February 20, 1882, the Prime Minister himself took up the question of Jewish colonization with Lord Lorne, with special reference to the proposal made by Galt. "I enclose you a note from Galt, by which you will see he has been attending to the Jews," he wrote. "I hope something will come of this. He will be instructed to act for the Immigration Department, and we are quite ready to assign the Jews lands."<sup>2</sup> From the tone of Macdonald's letter, however, and from his unstatesmanlike remarks in another private letter, it becomes abundantly clear that his amenability to Jewish settlement was not inspired by the most exalted of motives. That, at a time when the whole civilized world was seething with indignation over the persecution of Jews, he should have chosen to speak of them with cynicism and contempt, does no credit to Canada's first Prime Minister.<sup>3</sup>

As for Jewish communal leaders in Montreal, they were easily carried away by the momentum of favorable public opinion. Some of them had devised an even more ambitious and far-reaching plan. It was proposed to form a society to be known as the "International Colonization Society of Canada," with a capital of one million dollars, for the purpose of attracting ever-greater numbers of Jewish immigrants. These were to be settled on the land of the great North-West. Inexplicably, however, the first flush of enthusiasm soon died away and nothing tangible was accomplished.<sup>4</sup>

In 1882, by dint of united effort, the first part of Russian-Jewish immigrants was successfully transferred to Western Canada.

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<sup>1</sup> PUBLIC ARCHIVES OF CANADA: The Macdonald Papers. Governor General's Correspondence, p. 44.

<sup>2</sup> Sir John A. Macdonald Letters to Lord Lorne, 1879-1844, p. 241.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix, p. 261, note <sup>10</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> *The Gazette*, January 22, 1882.

Numbering four-and-twenty souls, the little band reached Winnipeg on May 26. Included were Philip Radin; Tobias Finkelstein; the Weidman brothers and their father; Simon Lechtzier and his sons; Wolf Lerner; Wolf Moscowitz; Benjamin Zimmerman and others whose names were to become so familiar to Winnipeg's citizens. Several days later, on June 1st, a much larger group arrived consisting of two hundred and forty-seven travel-weary wanderers.

The tiny community in Winnipeg was at its wit's end. Its slender resources were by no means sufficient to support so many immigrants at one time. The tragic plight of the new arrivals aroused the sympathy of a number of non-Jews who attempted to help the Jewish community. Affirmations of compassion filled the pages of the contemporary *Free Press*. But sympathy alone, however well-intentioned, could neither feed nor clothe nor house the new settlers who found the early years fraught with bitter hardship and suffering. Vividly has one of the Russian-Jewish refugees recounted the experiences of the first arrivals. A long, narrow, ramshackle wooden structure on the southern outskirts of the town had been assigned them as a temporary barracks by the federal government. As the haggard wayfarers trudged wearily into their new home, the surroundings seemed to blend perfectly with their drooping spirits. Soon the air grew heavy with the sound of sobbing while the rough, unplanned boards of the new floor absorbed countless Jewish tears.<sup>1</sup>

Scarcity was rampant in Winnipeg at that time. A bushel of potatoes sold for as high as five dollars and, when the hungry immigrants sat down to their first meal, they were doled out half a potato per person. One of Winnipeg's older residents who came over with the first party of immigrants has described the "royal feast": "We had by then wandered about over a year and endured and suffered more than enough. I have now forgotten everything. But I shall never forget that early period in Winnipeg. Quite often as I sit at my table, where, thank God, nothing is wanting, I remember that first meal and it seems to me that I still see those hungry, wearied faces staring at the food before them."<sup>2</sup>

From the foregoing it is not difficult to picture the condition of the refugees. Among them were men of education and Hebrew

<sup>1</sup> A. ASOVSKY, in *Kanader Vid*, Winnipeg, May 16, 1912.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

culture, who had been fortified on their wanderings by a high, almost exalted optimism. When the grim reality of their lot was finally grasped, when they found themselves without even the prospect of being able to earn their daily bread, their anguish was beyond expression. Suffering terrible privations, some toiled on the construction of railways, hewed rocks and dug ditches in order to still the pangs of hunger gnawing within them.

Many more harsh experiences were to be undergone both by the immigrants and by the entire Jewish population before they became inured to the way of life in their new home. Group after group arrived, one following on the heels of another. This only tended to aggravate the general situation. Bewildered and dismayed, the community at length sought the aid of the municipal government only to have it denied. One of the two local newspapers, the *Times*, launched a vicious attack against the new immigrants, terming them idlers and ne'er-do-wells, and even demanded that they be deported. Promptly the *Free Press* rushed to their defense and characterized the *Times'* attack as unjustified in any way and motivated solely by prejudice.<sup>1</sup>

From a letter published in *Hamelitz* we may derive a clear and lively picture of the conditions then prevailing. In the somewhat florid style of the time but with passion and earnestness nevertheless the writer, an immigrant himself, tells of the experiences of the first little band of refugees sent by the London committee to Winnipeg, "a small town of some seven thousand souls which had been but lately built up and settled."

"There are not as yet any factories or shops here," he continues, "and hence it is difficult even for an artisan to earn his livelihood; the more difficult it is for those who have never done any work, and who, with their families are exposed to starvation.

"I know not in what to dip my pen, in the inkstand before me, or in the flow of tears running from the eyes of the unfortunates who have come hither with me, in order to describe their lamentable condition. One hears nothing but weeping and bemoaning one's youth destined to be wasted and vainly spent in this desert of Winnipeg. The sighing and moaning are heart-rending. See—one hears—how people, good, honest people have failed us. They told us that they only had in view our welfare,

<sup>1</sup> H. E. WILDER, *The Israelite Press, Souvenir Edition* (1932), p. 21.

and in the end they have sent us to a wilderness in order that we sell ourselves as slaves and domestics. They will build themselves palaces over there, while we shall labour with mortar and brick, that we may earn our bread and have a roof over our heads. Why have they deceived us so much? Go to Winnipeg—they said to us—there a committee will give to each of you a fertile piece of land, build for you houses, and provide you with all the implements that a farmer needs. You will lead a happy life out there. And now that we have come here we have not seen so much as one of the Committee. Like sheep without a shepherd we have wandered about seeking a resting place for our weary limbs.”

Here the correspondent describes at length their experiences during the long and wearisome journey, how unkind the elements were to them, how their steamer struck a giant iceberg, and how miraculous was their escape; and he continues:

“Ill-fated we were from the very first night that we arrived here. All day long we did neither eat nor drink, simply because we had not a cent to buy anything with. Hungry and thirsty we lay on the floor of our sheltering home, and the progeny of Pharaoh’s third plague preyed upon us. Thus we were tormented all night, and with the rise of dawn we hastened to work in order to earn the means to buy bread for our families. Before our limbs had as yet rested from our protracted and wearisome journey, before we could stand upon our feet, we had to haul heavy sacks of wheat from the steamer into the sheds . . . We had not been accustomed to perform such hard labor. Sixty men we are here, all learned and educated Jews; all are well versed in Hebrew and many of us also in some European language. We wanted to come here in order to honestly earn our livelihood in a land where we would not be exposed to the mockery and ridicule of our Gentile neighbours because of our faith and looks. We were exiled to a desert. Even such work as chopping wood, hewing stone or digging soil is not to be found, and the cost of living, to boot, is extremely high here.

“One does not so much as see the shadow of a Committee that would come to the aid of the wretched immigrant during the first days of his stay in this country. We shall perish from hunger and cold, which here reaches 40 degrees below zero during the winter. What is worse still is that there are very few regularly

built houses. There are only canvas tents, in which we, too live, for only the very rich people can afford to rent or build a house. Thousands (?) of Jews have been sent to desert regions, with an unbearable climate, where they are compelled to work at hard labor even on Saturdays and holidays in order to earn the barest livelihood. (And when sent to the remotest and most uncivilized regions to work at the construction of some railway line, they must eat stale and "trefah" meat so as to have the necessary strength to carry on their backs the heavy loads, or to do the pick and shovel work, and so forth.)

"It is evident that under such circumstances no one can think of anything of a higher order, such as the reading of a newspaper or of a book, as we were accustomed to do at home. Nor have we enough time to do our daily prayers. We come home at night and, wearied and exhausted, sleep overtakes us before we have even eaten. We shall all perish here and not have so much as a Jewish burial. The child of an immigrant died here today and there is no burial ground for it.

"We have but one thing left—to pour out our hearts before you, dear Editor, in the hope that our brethren in other lands may hear our cry of distress, and come to our rescue, for out of our earnings we shall not have, even in two years, enough to pay for our return."<sup>1</sup>

Even a superficial investigation would indicate that the writer exaggerated in many respects for the mood of black despair in which his account was written tended to colour all his observations. In a comparatively short time these immigrants in Western Canada had, through their own diligent and unceasing toil, materially improved their position. Once a measure of economic security had been attained it engendered a deeper attachment to the new country. The very writer who had earlier penned such bleak and woeful impressions now felt impelled to correct his first report on the shape of things in the new territory. In a second letter from Winnipeg, dated September 17, 1882, and published some months later in *Hamelitz*, he voices his satisfaction with the changed conditions and, incidentally, depicts vividly the environment and mode of life of the pioneers in Western Canada at that time.

"I know," he writes, "that my first letter was a source of pain to many of our people. Perhaps I have somewhat exaggerated

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<sup>1</sup> *Hamelitz*, No. 29, 1882

and, in truth, our living conditions in the first months after our arrival were, indeed, unendurable. The situation has, however, thank God, partly improved. We have gradually become inured to our hard labours, whether they be the construction of some new railway lines, the carrying of mortar and cement for the erection of some new buildings, or the laying of sewers in the streets of Winnipeg and similar other work. We are paid from \$2.50 to \$3.00 per day and we have found favour with our employers. The New York and Winnipeg newspapers have nothing but words of praise for the Jewish refugees in Canada, and compare us favourably with those of our brethren who have gone to the United States. The former, willing to work, endeavour with their own hands to earn their livelihood without relying upon the generosity of strangers, while the latter are still idling in the New York sheltering house for immigrants, are expecting to be fed, and disinclined to work, thus become a burden upon the Committee.

"Here, in this new country, even the cultured and well-bred among us have soon discarded their starched shirts and lacquered shoes, and have set themselves to work. In other cities, such as St. Paul and Chicago, they say that for the hardest day's work, one receives but a dollar and a half. We are thus, it seems, economically in a better position than our fellow immigrants who have found their way into the United States. One is grieved, however, with things educational and spiritual, which are growing worse daily. Our children wander recklessly about the streets and humiliate us in the eyes of our neighbours. None of us is concerned with engaging teachers for them to give them a religious education or otherwise to establish some school for them . . ."

He complains of the older residents of Winnipeg who paid little heed to Jewish education. But most interesting of all is his account of how the pioneers adapted themselves to their new surroundings:

". . . Rosh Hashonah was celebrated in our tents near the railway station, some forty miles from Winnipeg. Each of us donated three dollars and thus we collected the sum of one hundred dollars, which we have sent to New York ordering a *Sefer Torah* and a *Shofar*. We have all stopped from work and gathered in a large tent and poured out our hearts in prayers, before God, during the Day of Atonement. The Christian

inhabitants who had never seen nor heard the like before, collected in groups without, and admiringly said: "Away from the city and from human society, they still remember the God of their ancestors."<sup>1</sup>

Socially—and in other respects—the new arrivals were as a leaven among the Jews of Winnipeg. At first, as may be gathered from the account in *Hamelitz*, the older inhabitants treated them rather coldly—or so it seemed. But, by degrees, as its footing grew more secure, the newer element began increasingly to influence its environment. The handful of Jews had by now blossomed into a recognizable colony which, if still scant in numbers, was nevertheless possessed of all the attributes of a full-fledged community. To form a "minyan" was now no great task; the Jews of Winnipeg boasted their own "Shochet" and "Hazan" and, by the end of 1882, had acquired their first permanent synagogue, the "B'nai Israel." Several months later they organized their first fraternal society, "Ezrath Akhim." For many years the Jews of Winnipeg carried little political weight but, as early as 1883, Louis Weinberg was appointed Justice of the Peace, the first Jew to be raised to the magistracy in the Province of Manitoba.

While the refugees from the Russian pogroms were doggedly forging ahead in the Canadian West, other groups of immigrants were arriving constantly. Montreal was their point of transit where, too, they expected to find assistance. The sorely-tried local community was rendered more desperate with every new boatload of immigrants; although the treasury of the charitable society was bare, the lists of the needy continued to swell. It was finally decided to put the case before the Canadian High Commissioner in London so that he might bring pressure to bear on the Mansion House Committee. The Jews of Montreal also communicated directly with the Committee which showed little concern with the fate of the immigrants once they had arrived in Canada. In London there was no haste to reply; they were evidently content to let the immigrants shift for themselves. In Montreal, too, when the question was raised at a meeting of Jewish charity workers, one Moses Vineberg did not hesitate to introduce a "business-like" motion which threatened that "unless a remittance is received from England by the 25th inst. (Feb. 25, 1883), the immigrants, insofar as the funds permit, be sent back."

<sup>1</sup> *Hamelitz*, No. 43, 1882.

Such was the character of the "philanthropy" practised by some charity workers in those days. Hard, cold, rigid, it ignored the human element in those unfortunate beings who were dependent upon its tender mercies. Many of these "philanthropists" whose memories were conveniently short had forgotten that not so many years before they too had been immigrants, forced by bitter necessity to apply for charity. But fortunately the gravity of the situation had been impressed upon the Mansion House Committee and the sum of five hundred pounds was forwarded to Montreal. This sum was sufficient to carry on relief work among the destitute refugees in the city for some time and the more earnest members of the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society felt as though a great weight had been removed from their shoulders.

Although considerable numbers of the immigrants who flocked to Canada in 1882 and 1883 remained in Montreal, by far the majority of them were dispersed throughout the length and breadth of the Dominion, particularly in the West where they formed the nuclei of future thriving communities. They may, with no exaggeration, be termed the rightful builders of present-day Canadian Jewry. For the wave of immigration of that period—and of the years immediately following—bore with it the many, various forms that were later to be woven into the complex pattern of Jewish life in Canada. From the terrors of Russian Czardom and from the anti-Semitic reaction which then gripped Continental Europe, the immigrants fled to the young country, struck out for distant, sparsely-populated regions where there were no industries, no commerce and where a fellow-Jew was not to be seen for days on end. There, in the remote vastnesses of the Canadian wilderness, they built their homes and dug their roots deep in the virgin Canadian soil.

It is important to observe here that just as the growth of Canada may be largely attributed to the rise of the West, so too the flowering of Canadian Jewry is inseparably linked with that early immigration at first directed toward the Prairie Provinces. Its value in stimulating the evolution of Jewish life in the Dominion was incalculable. Not by leaps and bounds but slowly, gradually, the process of identification with the the country developed until the bond had grown firm and sure. Economically as well as socially the rich granary of the West meant no less to the Jews than to the rest of the country. For here it was, on the fertile plains, that Jewish

agriculture in Canada first became a reality—though a fleeting one.

From the outset the experiment met with little success and the glowing visions of its sponsors were quickly dissipated. As has been previously stated, the venture was made possible through the efforts of the Canadian High Commissioner in London who helped to obtain a land grant for Jewish colonization purposes in the North-West Territories. A Jewish colony, symbolically named "New Jerusalem," was to be established some twenty-five miles from Moosomin.

Laudable though the purpose of the experiment was, it was doomed to failure. The resulting failure was partly due to the chaotic and haphazard manner in which the project was carried out; with no experience in large-scale colonization the sponsors were unable to conceive and execute an efficient and workable plan. But mainly the plan failed because of the fruitless attempt to transplant to the soil men who for generations had lived huddled together within the teeming walls of the Russian "Pale," cut off from the land and denied any access to farm life. Strain as they might, they could not adapt themselves to farming in surroundings that were new and strange to them, in a region remote from civilization where few white men had set foot before them, where the summer was short and the winter unbearably long.

Most of these early colonists in Western Canada were drawn from the ranks of the first group of Russian refugees who, from the beginning, had been persuaded to settle on the land. For some time they worked on the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway and did not shirk the hardest physical labour in order to earn their bread. Later they availed themselves of the "Homestead" grants to try their fortunes in a new way of life. From the names of the first twenty-six Jewish "homesteaders" it may be seen that they were almost to a man members of the original immigrant group which had come to Winnipeg.

Their contact with the soil was of brief duration. Lacking a body to take an interest in them, to direct their work and to come to their aid when needed, they gradually deserted their farms and returned to the city. In a few years nothing remained of the settlement. The more than hundred souls who had bravely made up the "New Jerusalem" colony in the Moosomin district in the eighties had, by 1901, dwindled to one lone Jew according to the census of that year. Some of these Russian immigrants drifted to

the older provinces. Others left for the United States; but the majority of them settled in Winnipeg with the intention of remaining there. Sturdy and strong, having cleared forests, hewn rocks and tilled the soil, like true pioneers they grew steeled and hardened and gradually adapted themselves to conditions in Canada.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN  
AN ABORTIVE COLONIZATION PLAN

IN ITS development the community in Winnipeg followed closely the familiar pattern established by the older communities in Montreal and Toronto. For some time its potentialities remained inhibited and were not to find expression in one great outburst of activity. Maturity came slowly and gradually. To the "B'nai Israel" Congregation which was founded towards the end of 1882 there was added some three years later the "Chevrah Beth-El," originated by the new immigrants. For the children there was also a Sunday School which later evolved into a "Talmud Torah" with a complete Hebrew curriculum. Both congregations united in 1889 under the name of "Shaarey Tzedek" and built a synagogue on King Street.

Meanwhile a host of new faces was appearing on the Canadian horizon as the tidal wave of immigration swept on with increasing force. Unceasingly the twin lashes of terror and poverty were driving masses of Jews not only from Russia, but also from Roumania and Galicia. Presently immigration into Canada noted a sharp increase and again the community in Winnipeg was faced with the task of receiving a number of new arrivals. This time, however, the ordeal of acclimatization was less severe and the newcomers soon proved to be a valuable addition to the local colony.

Even before the close of the eighties several relief organizations and a few small communal institutions had arisen in Winnipeg. Visible indications of the community's existence appeared. In a few short years the city had become the Jewish hub of the Western provinces and the third largest in the country. But the settlements in the older provinces still remained the centre of Jewish gravity and, because of their location, were beset by their own special tribulations. In Montreal it was the problem of caring for the newly-arrived immigrants that chiefly occupied the local communal workers. Day in, day out, the situation grew more acute as new groups of immigrants arrived unceasingly, posing fresh problems for, and making ever-increasing demands on the Jewish population.

Intensified persecution of the Jews in Roumania sent a fresh stream of immigrants pouring into Canada in 1884, the first to arrive from that country. Although the philanthropic societies in Montreal had to some extent the necessary experience to handle such an

emergency, they lacked the required financial strength. Their predicament was heightened by the economic crisis which then gripped Montreal and which made it almost impossible to find work for the newcomers. Now more urgently than ever the need was felt for some institution which could serve both as a temporary asylum for newly-arrived refugees and as a home for the aged, the feeble and all others dependent on charity. How pressing this need was may be judged from the action of Rabbi S. Marks of "Temple Emanu-El" who took it upon himself to suggest to communal leaders in the United States that American Jewish institutions share the responsibility of caring for the needy in Montreal. In the end, however, the local community decided to establish a sheltering home of its own. But this decision was not to be carried out until years later.

It would be incorrect to assume that Jewish immigration in the period we are now discussing was limited to refugees from Russia, although the latter constituted the bulk of those arriving at that time. In 1865 charity workers in Montreal first began to keep statistical records of their cases, classifying them according to the country of their birth. From these records we learn that wanderers from many lands sought haven in Canada that year and among the applicants for relief were English and even American Jews. Much of the relief distributed was in the form of railway tickets for transmigrants who were eager to try their luck elsewhere. "Elsewhere" in most cases proved to be as barren of opportunity as the metropolis, but at least this movement away from the city momentarily eased the pressure on the Jews of Montreal for whom the problem grew more grievous every day.

Against this background was conceived the plan for a broad colonization undertaking to be carried out on a hitherto-unprecedented scale. Ironically enough, the birth of the project almost coincided with the founding of the first Jewish colony in Western Canada at Moosomin, as related in the preceding chapter. Proponents of the grandiose schemes were as yet unable to foresee the anti-climactic collapse of this initial attempt to bring Jews closer to nature. Carried away by their belief that "the plough brings good luck," the sponsors of the plan to turn immigrant Jews from the ghettos into independent farmers almost overnight plunged enthusiastically into their work. Their zeal was further enhanced by the desire to commemorate suitably the hundredth anniversary of the

birth of the great leader and philanthropist, Sir Moses Montefiore (1784-1885). An agricultural movement stemming from the broadest sections of the Jewish folk was to be a lasting memorial to this universally esteemed benefactor of his people. Out of this movement in the United States, under the leadership of Michael Heilprin, arose the "Montefiore Agricultural Aid Association" which soon branched out into Canada.

Thus in the latter part of 1884 the "Montefiore Agricultural Aid Association" made its appearance on the Montreal scene. Headed by Mark Samuel of Toronto, president, and Lewis A. Hart of Montreal, secretary, both of whom had from the start assumed the leadership of the movement in Canada, the new organization and its aims were widely approved and encouraged, especially by the members of the older "Montefiore Social and Dramatic Club." The tasks which the Association had set for itself were outlined in a circular letter, dated January 8, 1885 and signed by the president and the secretary. The letter was sent to various persons, mostly in Montreal and Toronto, who were invited to attend an important meeting which was scheduled for the following month. Membership dues were nominal—one dollar a year—and all were requested to join the Association.

Casting as it does a particularly revealing light on that chapter in Canadian Jewish history which marks the beginning of agricultural effort, the letter merits reproduction in full. It reads:

"The Montefiore Agricultural Aid Association  
"Montreal, 8th January, 1885.

"Sir:

"This Association has been formed in commemoration of the Centenary of Sir Moses Montefiore and for the purpose of promoting agricultural pursuits among the Jews. The amelioration of the condition of our people has been the life-long aim of our venerable and distinguished philanthropist; and the recent celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of his birth has seemed to furnish a favourable opportunity to do something for the benefits of our people that will be in harmony with his views, and serve to perpetuate his memory.

"For many ages the circumstances of our people have tended to restrict them to commercial, to the exclusion of agricultural, pursuits; and it is desirable at the present stage of our relations with other races and peoples to make organized efforts to direct

the enterprise and industry of our co-religionists into practically new fields of labor. And principally, we should devise and direct means of enabling them to share in the great and abiding source of the prosperity of nations—the benefits arising from the cultivation of the soil, and kindred pursuits.

“On religious grounds our people cannot be wholly isolated from one another. They must dwell more or less together in communities, so that any plan of getting them to enter in large numbers in an agricultural life must include a plan of settling them in colonies. It is proposed by means of this society to devise such plans and overlook their execution.

“It is not intended, at first, to do more than to gather all the information necessary to learn how a system of colonization among Jews can be successfully begun and carried on. We can find out from the promoters and leaders of the various Jewish colonies now in existence what have been the errors they have made, the difficulties they have had to encounter and the losses from which they have suffered, and thence learn how all these can be best avoided. We can study the systems followed by successful non-Jewish colonies and adopt whatever parts of their system may be suitable to our needs. We can ascertain from various sources where the best lands are situated, and where the most suitable surroundings can be had, and all details as to climate and modes of agriculture, etc. We can learn the best means of giving to our young people the agricultural education necessary to make them successful farmers. We can acquire a great deal of valuable information on these and other points and transmit the information thus obtained and our views thereon to the various Jewish societies and communities in other countries, and then see what financial arrangements can be made with them to further colonization by Jews and their settlement on farms. And it may be here stated that in order to make the work of this association a matter of interest to all Jews, and to enlist the cooperation of all, it is intended that the ministers, presidents and treasurers of all Jewish congregations shall be, *ex-officio*, *members* of the governing body or council of the association, and that all Jewish congregations shall have the right to appoint each a deputy to represent them at all meetings of the council. Again, we could furnish information and advice to persons who might be desirous of entering upon agricultural pursuits and of investing

their means in farms, etc. We could advise and direct the movements of a suitable and desirable class of immigrants; and we could prevent those from coming who might otherwise be induced to emigrate under erroneous and exaggerated impressions as to the prospects awaiting them, and whose consequent disappointment might only affect themselves injuriously and impose additional burdens on the community here. As a society we could achieve all this and a great deal more that we could not do as efficiently, nor as usefully, were we acting only individually and without proper organization.

"It is confidently expected that the objects of the association will meet with your approval, and that you will join it as member and actively co-operate in the work to be done. The minimum yearly subscription of members has been fixed at the nominal sum of one dollar; and a meeting of the members, for the general business and further organization of the association, will be held at the rooms (upstairs), No. 242 St. James on Sunday, the 8th of February next, at 10.30 A.M. This meeting you are cordially invited to attend.

MARK SAMUEL,  
President.

LEWIS A. HART,  
Secretary."

Thus, in bravely-articulated words the leaders of the "back-to-the-soil" movement set themselves precise and ambitious goals. Ignorant though they were even of how to approach their prodigious task, what they lacked in concrete understanding was compensated by the boundless fervour and genuine passion they poured into their work. With the faith of crusaders in behalf of a great national ideal, they were prepared to effect a complete transformation of the economic basis of Jewish life. For they were concerned not only with securing the immediate welfare of the immigrant but also with providing a solid foundation for the structure of Canadian Jewry. Unfortunately, as in many a similar undertaking, the first flush of enthusiasm soon waned; no trace of the project's existence, other than the circular letter, is to be found. It would appear that the venture did not proceed beyond the meeting which was scheduled to take place in Montreal on February 8, 1885. Beset by unforeseen hazards and pitfalls from the beginning, the sponsors reluctantly saw their magnificent visions fade into nothingness.

Faint sparks of the ideal that had inspired the movement still smouldered in the minds of the men who had so buoyantly hailed the dawn of an agricultural millenium; as the endless expanses of Canada's sparsely-populated acres spread before their eyes, they could not help thinking with regret of the unhappy millions on the other side of the ocean. The lush fields and valleys, even the woodlands and wildernesses, were singing a siren song, beckoning to the hemmed-in peoples of Europe. To those willing to work the land the government was making liberal grants. It was a time of opportunity, a time to be seized by men of energy and ability. The doors of Canada were opened wide and no man was barred because of his religion or his race. Communal leaders must have sighed wistfully. If only even a small portion of the Jewish masses could be brought over here to take advantage of these exceptional opportunities! But at the same time the more prudent could not help reflecting that to attempt such a venture would require far greater means than they possessed. And so nothing came of the plan formulated by the "Montefiore Agricultural Aid Association." But the idea lingered on and was later to be revived under different circumstances.

As the flow of immigration continued unabated, its concomitant problems ceaselessly plagued Jewish minds. It was far beyond the resources of even the wealthier classes to deal with every appeal made to them for help, however pressing the emergency. Cases of the direst need were daily increasing. In Europe the pressure of anti-Semitism was unremittingly driving thousands of Jews from Russia, Poland, Roumania, and also from other countries where living conditions were becoming more and more unbearable. Of the funds spent for relief purposes by the philanthropic and social organizations in Montreal, Toronto and other centres, by far the largest part went to help the newly-arrived immigrants rather than the local poor. What aggravated the situation still more was the exploitation of the wretched and helpless immigrants by unscrupulous steamship agents who fleeced them of their last cent and persuaded them to go to Canada instead of the United States where a large number of them had relatives. Many were the dupes of the most despicable swindles. So scandalous and widespread grew the abuses that an aroused public was moved to take energetic counter-measures. Broken-down, dispirited, and without a farthing in their pockets, the bewildered victims became a burden on the com-

munities. A committee of Montreal Jews took the matter up with the German consul and with the Anglo-Jewish Association as well, until finally the British government intervened to assure the protection of emigrants in European ports.

Although a sore trial for Jewish charity workers in many respects the influx of newcomers was not without its compensations. The human stream surging irresistibly into the Dominion provided the strongest incentive to Jewish communal life everywhere, tending to promote activities of a more varied nature. Shocking the older residents out of their lethargy and hurtling them into novel experiences, the newly-arrived immigrants compelled a heightened national awareness which timidly at first, but then more boldly, began to find expression. The population of the older communities multiplied rapidly while in out-of-the-way places the Jewish element became more noticeable. In Montreal particularly important changes were being wrought in the social structure. Where formerly the principal divisions in the community had been denominational—with Sephardic, Ashkenazic and Reform Jews all vying for supremacy—now religious divergences were almost wholly overshadowed by a deeper and more significant social cleavage. A new alignment, far sharper and more definitive than any before, split the Jewish population into two distinctive groups: the old-established, Canadianized citizens and the newly-arrived, unacclimatized immigrants. While only a few years' prior residence distinguished the first from the second group, this difference tended to be magnified to the point where it became a potent factor in communal relations. "Uptown" and "downtown" became terms of precise social demarcation.

But the line of demarcation was not absolute; the animosity which had pervaded the attitude of the Portuguese Jews to the first Eastern European immigrants was now happily lacking. Nor did the groups consciously avoid each other for there were frequent meetings and less formal encounters. The more cultured amongst the immigrants were graciously received by the older residents and treated with great respect.

One result of the growth of the Jewish population in the metropolis towards the middle of the eighties was that a considerable number of Jews began to move to the upper and west end of the city, in the wake of a general expansion in that direction. With the transfer of the older inhabitants from the Jewish quarter to neigh-

bourhoods where there were few Jews, it became necessary to transfer as well the synagogue they supported. As early as 1883 members of the "Shearith Israel" Congregation had dreamed of building a new and more spacious synagogue in a more convenient section of the city. A committee had been appointed to raise funds, choose a site and plan the entire undertaking. Because the money was not forthcoming until then, the actual work was begun only in 1887 when a lot was purchased on Stanley Street (where the Portuguese Synagogue now stands). That same year the corner-stone of the building was laid by Gershom Joseph, president of the congregation, and on August 31, 1890, the synagogue was consecrated. The German-Polish congregation, too, decided to move its synagogue to a different part of the city. A site was bought on McGill College Avenue and a building fund was started. The list of contributors includes names like Rothschild, Samuel Montague and Sir Julius Goldsmith. A number of Christians subscribed to the fund as well, among them Sir Donald Smith, later known as Lord Strathcona. In 1885 the corner-stone of the new synagogue was laid by John E. Moss, son of David Moss who had laid the corner-stone of the first synagogue, and the following year the consecration took place. At the same time it was decided to give the new house of worship a definite name; after the name "Beth-El" had been suggested tentatively, it was finally agreed to call the synagogue "Shaar Hashomayim." It was not until more than thirty years later, however, that the congregation was incorporated under this name.

Towards the end of the eighties several more congregations arose in the country. The "Chevrah Beth Jacob" in Hamilton was incorporated in 1887 and another was founded in London in 1888. In Montreal the old Portuguese synagogue was bought by the Roumanian Jews who named it "Beth David" while the synagogue on St. Constant Street was taken over by the Russian Jews in 1886 and named the "B'nai Jacob." (Today this congregation is located at Fairmount and Esplanade Avenues). In 1889 there was also founded in Montreal the "Shaarey Tefillah," mainly by Austrian Jews. Thus, by the end of the decade, Montreal had five orthodox synagogues in addition to a Reform temple. And now, too, the tendency of Jewish communal life to produce all sorts of "lands-manschaft" associations became clearly discernible.

One discordant note, however, disturbed the new-found serenity of Canadian Jewry and served notice that all was not well with it in

every respect. It became increasingly evident that the Jews were so far removed from the public life of their country as to be virtually isolated from it and further that this was due not so much to their indifference to politics as to the scarcely-veiled prejudiced feeling of influential Canadian circles. Much agitated on this score, Col. Arthur W. Hart complained in letters to the Premier, Sir John A. Macdonald and to Lord Lansdowne, then Governor General, that there were no Jews in public office in Canada. On January 11, 1888, the Premier replied:

"I have to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 18th ult., which pressure of business prevented my answering before. His Excellency, Lord Lansdowne sent me your note to him and I have it before me. I can only say that I am quite unaware of any prejudice on the parts of the various cabinets that have administered the affairs of the old province of Canada or of the Dominion against the employment of Jews in the public service. The fact is, however, that the Jews as a body have taken perhaps a wiser course in avoiding the worries of political life and have preferred to push their fortune in the various professions and industries open to everybody in Canada. Of course, no person can interfere with the free exercise of the franchise by the electors of the country and they cannot help it if the electors have not hitherto selected any Israelite as their representative. The late George Benjamin of Belleville was a Jew, though I believe he had become a Christian. His son is now in one of the public departments and a year or two ago I got an appointment for one of your race in the Post Office service in Toronto. As to the appointments of honour to which you allude, they are at the sole disposal of the Crown, the fountain of honour, and they are usually conferred for public service."

In this manner Macdonald attempted to explain away the grievance which had been brought before him. The defence was perhaps a poor one, the more so since some ten years earlier in another British colony, a Jew, Sir Julius Vogel, had held the highest post in New Zealand—that of Premier. But there was some truth in Macdonald's assertion that the Canadian Jews themselves had little desire to engage in politics and that it was not entirely a question of discrimination against them. Preoccupied with matters of a different nature, pressing needs and problems that absorbed all their attention, they had little time left for the political questions

of the day. Immigrants did not cease to arrive; it was necessary to provide for them, to help them adapt themselves to their new surroundings. These were problems at no time easy to solve. In addition the ever-recurring school question was once again troubling the Jews of Montreal, this time in a more acute and more complex form. It was a delicate matter, difficult to adjust. Public opinion was divided over the issue and even the Jews found it impossible to achieve unanimity among themselves.

The temporary working agreement with the Protestant School Commissioners which had been concluded a few years earlier could not long satisfy both parties. A fresh controversy which carried within it the seeds of future disputes arose to break the truce. Once again the issue was squarely joined.

What caused the new rupture was that some Jewish rate-payers who lived in predominantly Catholic districts and whose children could not in consequence attend Protestant schools found it more convenient to pay their school taxes to the Catholic panel. This greatly displeased the Protestant Commissioners who considered themselves entitled to the full share of Jewish taxes. Retaliatory measures followed; discreetly at first and then more openly Jewish children were discriminated against in the schools. In 1886 the issue reached a climax when a large number of parents concluded that it would be undignified to expose their children to further humiliation, especially since it was brought about through no fault of their own but by the peculiar situation in the Province of Quebec where public instruction was contingent upon a financial compact between Catholics and Protestants. Accordingly they switched their children from the Protestant to the Catholic schools and, at the same time, transferred their taxes to the Catholic panel. These amorphous relations obtained for about six months. In addition a temporary school to accommodate some of the children was established. Many Jews were in favour of concluding a formal agreement with the Catholics and of assigning all Jewish school taxes to them. Rabbi Meldola de Sola (1853-1918), who was one of the committee appointed to treat on the school question, was in fact more inclined to negotiate with the Catholic Commissioners than with the Protestant.

The matter grew all the more involved when the Protestant administration decided to admit children of taxpayers only to their schools. Since not all Jews owned real estate and did not belong in

the privileged category, a number of children were now deprived of what school facilities they had had before. The question was discussed at great length at a conference in Montreal and it was finally decided to reopen discussions with the Protestant Commissioners in the hope that some suitable compromise might be reached. One slight concession was gained. The Protestants were induced to accept the children of both taxpayers and non-taxpayers, provided that they were members of either the Portuguese or the German-Polish congregation. After more bargaining it was further conceded that such children were to be admitted with the same rights as the children of Protestant parents. Little heed was given to the children of the more recently-arrived immigrants who belonged to neither synagogue. Their number was not yet large enough to elicit any considerable interest in their educational needs. As to making provision for the future, the present was trying enough. And so the conditions were accepted and the school question in Montreal was again solved—for the time being.

CHAPTER NINETEEN  
NEW FIELDS OF ACTIVITY

OUT OF the vortex of the eighties with its feverish movement, its sudden spasms and conflicts, and above all its torrent of immigration, the Jews of Canada emerged with a new-found sense of affinity with their fellow-Jews throughout the world. For the new arrivals constituted a sort of bridge to the world outside and in many ways drew Canadian Jews out of their virtual isolation. From every class and circumstance came the immigrants of this period. Amongst them were men who, in the old country, had belonged to the *intelligentsia*, men whose minds, while avidly receptive of the new learning and enlightenment, were at the same time deeply steeped in the ancient wisdom of their people. It was not long before their rich personalities had left an indelible imprint on the inchoate culture of those amongst whom they had come to live.

Reports concerning Jewish life in Canada were then beginning to filter into the Hebrew press in Europe and were received with great interest. From the settlers in the distant, unknown land came greetings to the old country, greetings in Hebrew, then the language of Jewish culture. In the columns of *Hamagid*, *Hazefirah* and *Hamelitz*, the more articulate of the immigrants described conditions in their new home, unfolded their secret hopes and dreams and told of the bitter struggle to adjust themselves to the grey, unfamiliar reality about them. They were impelled to write not only by a desire to tell of themselves and their adopted country; there was also an undercurrent of yearning for the outer world and an eagerness to keep in touch with it. One of these correspondents was a young man who lived in Montreal during the latter part of the eighties, although he could not properly be classed as an immigrant. His erudition and quick intelligence soon attracted attention and won him a wide variety of friends. Outside of his circle, however, he was comparatively unknown and it was not until later that his fame spread throughout the Jewish world. The young man was Alexander Harkavy, the future Noah Webster of American Jewry, whose great philological and lexicographical work did so much to educate the Jewish masses on this side of the ocean. Part of his monumental work was begun while he was still living in Canada. Born in Novgrudok, Russia, in 1863 (died in New York, 1939),

Harkavy emigrated to America at the age of nineteen and in 1886 accepted a post as teacher with the German-Polish Congregation in Montreal. The ebullient Harkavy came as a fresh, invigorating breeze into the sedate Montreal atmosphere. Forceful, radiating richness and breadth of mind, the youthful pedagogue quickly exerted a powerful influence on the local community but not without arousing antagonism at first. Strange though it may seem, the young man who was to become the greatest Jewish lexicographer of his time and who even then showed promise as a scholar was tartly termed "not the most desirable teacher to be recommended" by the chairman of the German-Polish Congregation's school committee. Small wonder, then, that Harkavy had little affection for some of the leaders of Montreal Jewry, as evidenced in his contributions to *Hazefirah*.

Alexander Harkavy soon attracted about him a varied group of Hebraists and plain, simple folk who revered learning and the men who possessed it. In their admiring midst his social and intellectual life flourished and it was not long before the youthful teacher of children became a leader and a guide of men. The circle quickly expanded with the magnetic Harkavy at its centre. Not only did the Hebrew intellectuals, in whose company he felt most at home, seek to be close to him. Even the more assimilated elements in the community began to beat a path to his door—and with good reason. Although his appearance—that of a typical Russian-Jewish intellectual—might evoke genteel shudders, his attainments could not lightly be dismissed. Already he had mastered several languages, including English and French, and was a regular contributor to the local English press.

During the time that Harkavy lived and worked in Montreal he rendered invaluable assistance to the cultural growth of the community. Especially is his name connected with the earliest stages of the social-cultural movement which was then assuming form in Canadian Jewish life. He was also active in forming the first "Choveve Zion" Society in the country which was instrumental in leading Canadian Jews to join the Jewish national movement at an early date. Besides corresponding for the Hebrew press from Montreal, Harkavy, as already pointed out, contributed a number of articles to local papers. "My principal aim in writing at the time for the English press," he once confided,<sup>1</sup> "was to keep bright Jewish

<sup>1</sup> In a letter to this writer.

honor, to reply to attacks, etc." He was, however, destined to be the real pioneer of the printed Jewish word in Canada. In 1887 he conceived the idea of publishing a Yiddish newspaper in Montreal. It was called *Die Zeit* and its motto was "Education and Colonization." The paper was lithographed and was laboriously written for the stone in the "square style" by Harkavy himself because there was no Hebrew type in Canada at that time. But the first issue of the paper—the forerunner of the Canadian Jewish press—was also the last. This was due not so much to the expense, which was very small, as to the exceptionally hard work required to produce it.

Another interesting experiment attempted by Harkavy was to print the language of the Jewish masses in Latin characters. This innovation—introduced even before Ludwig Zamenhof broached the idea—came about accidentally as a by-product of a parliamentary election campaign. One of the candidates wished to circulate an address directed to the Jewish citizens; the English text was given to Harkavy with the request that he render it somehow in Yiddish. Lacking Hebrew type, Harkavy translated the address into Yiddish which in turn he transliterated into Latin characters, and in that form the circular was printed by "Lovell and Son."

The subject of Jewish folk-speech in general began to absorb Harkavy more and more while he was yet in Montreal. A treatise on Yiddish entitled "A Dissertation on the Judeo-German Language" (in English) was published in Montreal in 1888 at the "Witness Press." Unfortunately not a single copy of that undoubtedly interesting work remains. From Montreal, too, Harkavy contributed to Goldfaden's *Yiddische Illustrierte Zeitung* where there appeared his "Letters Concerning our Language," "General Rules for Yiddish Orthography" and other studies.

In the field of national-social activity Harkavy again displayed his customary initiative. Together with Joseph Bernstein, a prominent Montreal leader and a collaborator on *Hamelitz*, he organized a "Choveve Zion" Society on January 16, 1887. Within three weeks the Society had enlisted a considerable membership which included the Rev. Elias Friedlander. Harkavy was elected chairman of the Society while other officers were: vice-chairman, Schliosberg; secretary, Bernstein; executive director, Shindler.<sup>1</sup> This Society, which rallied about it all those who had faith in Jewish aspirations and in the Jewish national renaissance, paved the way

<sup>1</sup> *Hamagid*, February 16, 1887.

for the Zionist Movement which was inaugurated in the country eleven years later. The leaders of "Choveve Zion" in Montreal decided shortly afterwards to unite with the "Mazkereth Moishe" in Warsaw. A committee of seven was elected to draft the by-laws which were to be in both English and Hebrew. It was also decided to establish a library consisting exclusively of Hebrew books. At that time the "Choveve Zion" had a membership of over thirty, including David A. Ansell, Henry Jacobs and others. Once a month the members met in the schoolroom of the German-Polish synagogue where they discussed matters of national interest. But the days of the Society were numbered and, like so many others, it was later disbanded.

Spurred on by this revival of activity, Canadian Jewry embarked on a more intensive program of communal work. The ensuing years witnessed the launching of a variety of practical projects, some ambitious, some modest in conception. When it was learned that Baron de Hirsch had donated large sums to American Jewish benevolent organizations, communal leaders in Montreal made haste to contact him and to place their own problems before him. The great philanthropist was evidently impressed for he allocated a fund of twenty thousand dollars for relief work amongst Jewish immigrants in Canada. Promptly and with renewed vigour the work was reorganized and its scope extended. Upon receipt of the money in Montreal in August, 1890, a meeting was held at the Mechanics' Hall at which proposals for its use were discussed. A committee charged with the responsibility of administering the fund was appointed. It was decided, as an initial step, to concentrate on the immediate needs of the immigrants, the education of their children and the establishment of a sheltering home which could at the same time serve as a school. Interest in the colonization program which had lain dormant for some time was briefly revived; but it was soon realized that this project had to be left for later consideration. A building located at No. 7 St. Elizabeth Street was purchased and on December 1, 1890, the building was formally dedicated as the "Baron de Hirsch Institute" by the Hon. James McShane, Mayor of Montreal. On the same day a section of the building was opened as a free school with an enrolment of seventy-seven pupils. Other activities were also started and close relations were established with the "Jewish Colonization Association" and the "Alliance Israelite Universelle."

The year 1891 brought a fresh surge of immigrants into Canada. In order that they might be aided constructively the Baron suggested that they be settled on the land. Again the dream of an agricultural colony came to the fore and again plans were made, although they were still nebulous and impractical.

At the annual meeting of the Baron de Hirsch Institute held on November 1, 1891, Lyon Cohen (born in Suwalki, 1868; died in Old Orchard, 1937) was elected honorary secretary in place of S. W. Jacobs (born in Lancaster, 1871; died in Montreal, 1938). Both men became closely connected with the work of the Institute and retained their connection with it throughout their lives. When the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society adopted a resolution thanking the Baron for his generous gift, it was inscribed in the minute book of that association by S. W. Jacobs who at the time was a student at McGill University.

That same year (1891) a Colonization Committee was set up with David A. Ansell as chairman. The Committee undertook to carry out its task in conjunction with the general relief work amongst immigrants then being planned. In government circles the project was greeted with benign approval. Typical of the official reaction was a letter sent by the government representative in the North-West Territories to communal leaders in Montreal inviting them to settle immigrants in the Regina area. The letter, written on official stationery, was delivered to the Jews of Montreal through the Department of Agriculture in Ottawa as the writer did not know how to communicate with them directly. The text of the letter follows:

"Regina, N.W.T., January 15th, 1891.

"Sir:

"I notice by the papers that you are contemplating settling Russian Jews in the N.W.T.

"I take the liberty to inform you that the Russians already in the Regina district are all doing well, and that we have still a large quantity of Homestead land within a radius of ten miles from Regina.

"Any information you may desire will be cheerfully given.

" I have the honour to be, Sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"(Signed) JOHN J. STEMSHORN,

"Gov. Img. Agent, Regina."

This offer came at a time when the Jews of Montreal had already entered into tentative negotiations with the government. It was only the following year, however, that the Colonization Committee requested Sir John Abbott, the Prime Minister, to receive a delegation for the purpose of discussing the entire plan. Premier Abbott who was favorably disposed to the project designated January 11, 1892, as the date of the interview. With him to receive the delegation were the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of the Interior. After the various aspects of the scheme had been thoroughly thrashed out, the interview closed on a satisfactory note—satisfactory in that the delegation left convinced of the government's willingness to assist in the undertaking. The Colonization Committee had in the meantime received a letter, dated November 3, 1891, from Dr. Sigismund Sonnenfeld, director of the JCA in Paris, requesting detailed information concerning the possibility of colonizing Jews in the Canadian North-West. In the interview with the Premier and his two ministers the points touched upon in this letter were given careful consideration inasmuch as they had a direct bearing upon the entire project.

Clearly evident throughout the discussions was the consistently earnest attitude of the government—perhaps even more earnest than that of the Jews themselves. What particularly pleased Ottawa was that Baron de Hirsch's proposed colonization venture in Argentine having fallen through, the Baron was beginning to divert his attention to Canada. In fact, this topic inspired a lengthy correspondence between the government and Sir Charles Tupper, then Canadian High Commissioner in London and subsequently Prime Minister of the Dominion. The High Commissioner was in close touch with Jewish representatives in London and kept a watchful eye on developments in connection with the immigration problem. Indirectly, too, through the High Commissioner negotiations were carried on with Baron de Hirsch himself.

There exists a letter which sheds a particularly revealing light on these dealings. Addressed to the president of the Institute and marked "Confidential," the letter (dated December 26, 1891) bears the stamp of the "Office of the High Commissioner for Canada" and is written over the signature of Hugh Sutherland, secretary to Sir Charles Tupper.

"I have learned in a most confidential way," he writes among other things, "that some serious difficulties have arisen in the

Baron's negotiations with the Argentine Republic and an agent whom I know very well was dispatched last week to close up and retire from the Argentine, unless the Government recede from the stand they have recently assumed in regard to Jewish colonization.

"If negotiations are broken off, I am led to believe I have the first call for Manitoba on an extensive scale. In the meantime the matter stands until the return of the agent two weeks hence.

"I am using my endeavours to get the Baron to throw his weight in the direction of Manitoba and have blocked out a scheme which attracted his eye and the confidence of his agent. . . ."

Clearly this was a matter close to the heart of Canada's representative in Britain. Further, it is obvious that in the warm interest it displayed in the problems of Jewish colonization and in the Argentinian project the High Commissioner's office was not acting entirely on its own initiative. Certainly the government was aware of these negotiations and had probably inspired them. Ottawa was strongly determined to supplant Argentine in the plans which Baron de Hirsch was then considering. In order to attract the huge capital which the Baron was purportedly anxious to invest in colonization the government purposefully set out to focus Jewish attention on the vast tracts of arable land it had at its disposal. The fertile province of Manitoba, the most densely-populated in Western Canada, was enticingly dangled before the eyes of the Jewish world.

From the document cited above it would also appear that the government was eager to contact prominent Jewish personalities, especially those who might influence the Baron to include Canada in his plans. A further passage in the same confidential letter exhorts Jewish leaders in Montreal to establish close connections with the "London Committee," but warns them that under no circumstances are they to mention the High Commissioner's Office—for readily understandable political reasons. Regrettably, however, neither in England nor in Canada did the Jews grasp the full significance of the prospects opened before them. Perhaps this was to be expected. In England little heed was paid to Canada and what interest was shown was most perfunctory. And in Canada the immensity of the task and the grave responsibilities involved overwhelmed the local communities; to carry it out alone required far

greater strength and means than they could muster. Nevertheless the design for Jewish colonization was not entirely abandoned. In January, 1892, a fourteen-point memorandum embracing the various problems connected with the settlement of a considerable body of Jews on the land was sent to Premier Abbott. The memorandum came as a direct result of the earlier conversations with the Premier and its points were formulated on the basis of the question raised by Dr. Sonnenfeld's letter.

The reply from Ottawa came on February 5, 1892, in the form of a lengthy letter covering some ten pages. Each question was answered in detail and the general tone left no doubt that the Dominion Government regarded the matter seriously and was ready to lend its full co-operation.

"Your letter of the 16th ultimo," the letter reads, "addressed to the Prime Minister, on the subject of Jewish colonization, has been referred to this Department. Some of the questions you ask relate to the business of the Department of the Interior, and I am directed to say that the following answers have been prepared by authority of and under instructions from the Minister of Agriculture after consultation with the chief officers of the two Departments. . . ."

Here follow precise and detailed replies to the several questions. For our purpose it will suffice to cite one part which consists of the first question and the answer to it:

*"Question 1.* 'What available land have the Government upon which a colony say of 2,000 families, or say 10,000 persons, could be established?'

"There are several points in Manitoba and the North West Territories where desirable land could be found upon which such a colony could be established, but there are three main points within easy reach of railway communication to which special attention may be called, namely, the Prince Albert, Red Deer and Edmonton Districts. It might be well, however, for the Committee themselves to appoint some competent person to make an examination on their behalf of the localities mentioned and of any other localities which, on consultation with the officers of the two Departments, and on further consideration of the aims and objects to be accomplished and the nature and kind of the agricultural knowledge and experience of the people they propose to place, may be considered suitable for the purpose.

It has always been thought advisable that selections of land for settlement should be made by the intending settlers themselves or their accredited agents. Every facility for making this selection will of course be afforded by the Department of the Interior through its officers and agents in the North West."

Thus Ottawa was prepared to afford "every facility" to those who would undertake to direct Jewish immigration into an entirely new channel—and on a large scale. For the Committee's original plan, as outlined in the memorandum, contemplated the founding of an extensive agricultural settlement of some two thousand families or approximately ten thousand persons. Bearing in mind that the entire Jewish population of Canada at that time numbered no more than seven thousand, we can only conclude that the Committee's ambitious reach somewhat exceeded its grasp. In terms of present-day population the plan would propose the equivalent of settling two hundred thousand Jews on the land.

But this scheme, too, miscarried. Of the series of conferences, the negotiations, public and private, the hopes and aspirations, nothing concrete emerged. The momentous offer to provide free land for a self-sustaining colony in any section of their choice seems to have had a paralyzing instead of a stimulating effect on the Jews. Their will was atrophied; they were unable to act, unable to take advantage of this unique gesture. They failed utterly to foresee the consequences to their people of their inaction. A historic opportunity was forfeited. In the light of later events this seems doubly unpardonable. It may be that those involved felt themselves totally unprepared to shoulder the burden of executing so enormous an undertaking. An equally cogent reason for their reluctance, and perhaps the root of the entire matter, is that the project was completely at variance with their views on immigrant relief. The conflict, accentuated with every new arrival, was essentially between two diametrically opposed conceptions of social welfare. One stemmed from a belief in the necessity of long-range, constructive planning, while the other derived from the conviction that the immigrant, particularly the impoverished immigrant, was a mere object of philanthropy. The narrow, inflexible doctrines of those who held the latter view could find no room to harbour a plan of such daring and magnitude. Violating as it did their most cherished dogmas on the role of Charity, the project was disturbing and repugnant to them. Charity, they felt, should concern itself

only with the needs of the moment and could not, with propriety, assume any obligation towards the future of those who depended on it.

Illustrative of the attitude adopted by the communal leadership at the time is a letter which the president of the Baron de Hirsch Institute—himself a former immigrant and nouveau riche—wrote to the secretary of the Canadian High Commissioner. The Montreal philanthropist expressed his regret at his inability, because of the pressure of personal business, to study more carefully the question of colonization which, as he put it, was “so close to my heart.” Personal business took precedence over the welfare of an entire people at a time when the future of Canadian Jewry hung in the balance!

Under such circumstances the result was inevitable. The government soon became convinced of the fruitlessness of its efforts and broke off negotiations. The project was abandoned. But the Jews of Canada were not alone in their paradoxical conduct. Even the leaders of colonization enterprise in Paris to whom a full report of the talks with the Dominion government had been sent along with the other information requested showed little inclination to respond. A strange apathy seemed to have settled over the Jewish world.

In time the directors of the Baron de Hirsch Institute received an offer of help from the Mansion House Committee in London in the form of a proposal to transfer its land at Moosomin to the Institute for colonization purposes. Eventually, too, the long-awaited reply came from Paris and the path was cleared for unhampered colonization work. But, at the beginning, this venture as well met with little success.

CHAPTER TWENTY  
THE BROAD SOCIAL SCENE

FROM the JCA in Paris came assurances that adequate financial support would be forthcoming if an agricultural colony were founded in Western Canada. Whereupon the directors of the Baron de Hirsch Institute in Montreal, their zeal for colonization stimulated once again, determined not to let this opportunity pass without turning it to good account. Thoroughly convinced by now that protracted discussions were futile, they concluded that the one sure method of achieving their aim was to act—and to act quickly. Without further thought of the many difficulties that had to be overcome, they proceeded blithely to set the machinery in motion. Thus was created the colony in the district known as “Hirsch” in Saskatchewan where an initial group of forty-seven families was settled.

The colonists, many of whom had little actual experience in farming and were utterly incapable of adjusting themselves to the rigorous life, suffered greatly at the beginning. So desperate was their situation that in Montreal it aroused the “gravest perplexity” and the spectre of another failure haunted the Jewish community. That these fears were not groundless was attested to a short time later when of the original group of colonists there remained only nine.

In 1893 the colony was visited by the new chairman of the Colonization Committee, Lazarus Cohen (born in Suwalki, 1844; died in Montreal, 1914). A man of great energy with a sincere desire to work for the advancement of any good cause, he became deeply concerned with the fate of the colonists. The little settlement at Hirsch was on the verge of disintegration. This was averted only by the timely intervention of the JCA which, through the Baron de Hirsch Institute, extended the much-needed help. Following Mr. Cohen’s visit conditions in the colony began to improve but the settlers were to survive many vicissitudes before they attained any degree of security.

The experience so painfully acquired in the unsuccessful experiment of the previous decade now proved extremely valuable. Many useful lessons were drawn from it. Errors resulting from ignorance of the climate and the potential yield of the soil were now avoided. This does not mean, of course, that every new attempt to settle

Jews on the land in wild and barren districts met only with success. But definite progress was being made.

In many Jews the urge to rebuild their lives on an entirely new pattern was growing more and more powerful. Thus in 1892 a number of them arrived in Oxbow, about 25 miles from Hirsch. The first colonists settled there on their own initiative with no backing and few means. Years of privation and endless toil were undergone before they managed to pull through. The earliest Jewish pioneers in Oxbow were Jacob Pierce and his sons who came there in 1888; they later encouraged others to settle and take up farming. The first farmer in the Jewish colony at Wapella was John Heppner, a Russian Jew who came to Canada from England in 1886. Individual Jews began to settle at other points in the North West Territories during the nineties, and so gradually there came into being a small but integrated colony of Jewish farmers. The perseverance and will of these pioneers eventually overcame the many trials and hardships that confronted them at the start. In most cases, too, they could rely on the support of the Committee in Montreal which was in constant touch with the JCA in Paris.

The work of the Baron de Hirsch Institute which had become the guiding genius of many Jewish activities in the country was not limited to colonization relief alone. An important branch of its work, and one to which considerable attention was paid, was the education of Jewish immigrant children. The Institute's day school showed excellent progress; by 1893 the original enrolment of 77 pupils had swelled to 316 boys and girls who were taught elementary school subjects in addition to Hebrew. An English night school for adult immigrants was opened as well.

Praise for the Institute and its various functions was forthcoming from many quarters. When in 1893 Lord Aberdeen, the Governor-General, and Lady Aberdeen visited the Institute, they were greatly impressed by the efficient manner in which the school was conducted. Mme. Chapleau, wife of the Lieutenant-Governor of Quebec, also visited the Institute in 1895 and presented it with a banner.

The school played an invaluable role in educating the children of immigrant parents. Many of them, later to become outstanding figures in the medical, legal and other professions, received their first instruction within its walls. Notwithstanding the pressing need it filled in the community, the school at first ran into serious difficulties.

Even with the subsidy it received from the "Alliance Israelite," its means were insufficient for its purposes and inevitably there came faint-hearted suggestions that the school be closed. But hardier souls, pledged to save the school, determined to secure for it a larger share of Jewish school taxes. In the report of the Baron de Hirsch Institute's School Committee for 1893 we read the following:

"Last year a compromise was effected in relation to the distribution of the Hebrew School taxes by which the committee received the sum of \$800 towards the support of their school, but this sum is quite inadequate, and at least \$1,500 per annum must be provided . . . To close the school will undoubtedly be a calamity, not only to our own body but to the general public of our city . . . The children on their arrival in this country were not fitted to take their place in the public schools, and without an institution of this kind they would be deprived of all means of education to enable them to become good and useful citizens."

And the following year Maxwell Goldstein (born in Quebec, 1863; died in Montreal, 1939), discussing the same question stated that "after many years of fighting to obtain a fair and equitable adjustment of the Hebrew school tax" there now existed the probability that the school would get its just share. He announced that arrangements were being completed with the Protestants but that no "principles would be sacrificed."

In the midst of these problems, local and national, the Jews of Canada continued to thrive. Perceptible changes were being wrought in the inner and outer fabric of the community. Even as the core of Jewish life was growing more consistent and close-knit its sphere was broadening and assuming a more positive hue. Especially striking was the increase in numbers. Whereas in 1881 the entire Jewish population in Canada was 2,383, by 1891 this figure had almost trebled—to 6,414. In the intervening decade Jews had dispersed themselves throughout the country and, according to the 1891 census, were living in more than a hundred cities, towns, villages and even smaller settlements. Communities had sprung up in Burrard and New Westminster in British Columbia, in addition to the earlier colonies in Victoria and Vancouver. Brandon, Lisgar and Provencar in Manitoba possessed a number of Jewish residents. In Halifax, Cornwall, Glengarry, London, Windsor, Lambton, Nippissing, Labelle, Sherbrooke, and in tens of other places, tiny Jewish settlements emerged. Many of the Jews living

in the remoter sections were pedlars and small-traders, but there was also a liberal sprinkling of artisans among them.

Increased numbers led to more than the spreading of Jews to every corner of the land. Signs of organized activity became strikingly evident. Everywhere there was a straining for expression, an urge to satisfy a deeply-felt national need. Nor did this mass impulse lack direction; consciously and with a sense of its creative power it set about its task of enriching Jewish life in the New World. Philanthropic and social work as well as religious activity were the main channels into which this outpouring of communal energy flowed at first. Midway through the nineties some fifteen synagogues, including three reform temples, existed in Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg and other centres. The first Hebrew Sick Benefit Society in Canada was founded in Montreal in September, 1892, by H. Feigelson, M. Teperer, David Sack and others. At about the same time the first Jewish Benevolent Society in Toronto was formed through the efforts of Edmund Scheuer. That same year H. Bernstein (born in Russia, 1841; died in Montreal, 1923) together with Dr. Mintz of New York founded a second Zionist Society in Montreal. This society, named "Choveve Zion Number 2," was devoted to furthering the idea of colonizing Palestine. For several years the society functioned in Montreal and went out of existence only a short time before the Zionist Organization was launched in the Dominion.

Organizations whose programs were based on national, philanthropic and social work began to appear in Toronto, Winnipeg, Hamilton and London. There also sprang up a number of social clubs embracing the more cultured groups as well as several literary youth societies. In Montreal particularly associations of this type were numerous. In 1896, for example, the following organizations held their meetings regularly at the Baron de Hirsch Institute: The Ladies' Aid Society, the Ladies' Benevolent Society, the Hebrew Citizenship Association (of which Maxwell Goldstein was the first president), the Palestine Colonization Society, the Hebrew Benevolent Loan Society, the Sons of Benjamin, the Young Ladies' Work Society, and others.

But if the crystallization of communal life was being accelerated, the fundamental divisions in its structure were in the process all the more glaringly revealed. The line of demarcation between the new immigrants and the longer-established, wealthier class was

being drawn with intensified sharpness. The "uptown" Jews, themselves largely of immigrant origin, adopted an increasingly patronizing attitude in their relations with the more recent arrivals, particularly those from Eastern Europe. And this despite the fact that the Eastern European Jews were rapidly and willingly adapting themselves to the Canadian scene. Far from seeking to lose their identity or to become wholly assimilated in their new environment, they were on the contrary bringing to it much that was good of their own heritage. It was they who infused some of the finer national traits into the broad pattern of Jewish life in the Dominion; it was they who contributed the rich spiritual inheritance which was later to become an integral part of the culture of Canadian Jewry.

And now the end of a cycle, analogous to that of the forties when the influx of English and German Jews presaged the doom of the Sephardic era, could clearly be discerned. For the English and German Jews, too, had brought something new, had made an individual and creative contribution. In their time they had played a significant role in enriching Jewish life and in the course of several decades had, by the inexorable logic of history, become the dominant Jewish group in the country. Now, with the arrival of great masses of Eastern European immigrants and with the growth of their influence, it became evident that a similar process was under way. The influence brought to bear on their environment by the new arrivals, however, was far different from that of the earlier Western European immigrants who, in many cases, had possessed worldly culture and all that pertained to it but whose Jewish education had been schematic and superficial. Entirely dissimilar was the spiritual baggage which accompanied the immigrant from Eastern Europe. His were the immemorial traditions of his ancestors, traditions deeply rooted in the lands where for generations his people had lived and died. He was a different type—consciously Jewish, unafraid to proclaim his origin and unwilling to flee from it. He brought with him much of that dynamic quality which was so essentially a part of him. And above all he brought with him a strong appetite for all that was native and derived from the people, a sort of national yearning that found a rudimentary expression in the desire for Jewish society and surroundings.

Thus Jewish life in Canada gradually assumed definite form. True, this solidification did not happen overnight; it came about as the result of cumulative experiences and processes. Changed

conditions created changed demands; new needs and new requirements arose. Greater attention was paid to affairs of a broad national character. The need for a newspaper of their own was keenly sensed and the end of 1897 saw the appearance of the *Jewish Times* in Montreal. A bi-weekly, its first issue came out on December 10 of that year. The *Jewish Times* was born at a critical hour when it had become vitally urgent that the Jews possess an organ of their own to uphold their prestige and defend their interests. The editor of the *Jewish Times* was Carrol Ryan, a Christian friend of the Jewish people and a veteran of Canadian journalism. He had formerly been associated with the Montreal *Herald* and the *Witness*. The purpose of the paper, as enunciated by Lyon Cohen who, with S. W. Jacobs, helped to found it, was primarily to educate, and also to mirror the growth and development of Canadian Jewry.<sup>1</sup>

Chief among the motives which had engendered the desire to found a Jewish journal was the indignation aroused by the anti-Semitic agitation carried on by certain papers as a result of the Dreyfus case. This agitation could not be permitted to pass unchallenged. It became necessary to reply to the unscrupulous libels with which a portion of the press was suddenly filled—and the reply was to set up a Jewish tribune. "At the present juncture of affairs," we read in the editorial which introduced the first number of the *Jewish Times*, "it is doubly important that the Jews of Canada should have a reliable vehicle for the expression of their sentiments. The anti-Semitic movement in Europe is not without an echo in this country. It is to be found daily in those newspapers which take their Old World inspiration largely from those organs of opinion which are inimical to the Jewish people. This unjust and dangerous influence must be met and combated in the proper manner setting out the Jewish side of the question and guarding, as far as possible, against the spread of the moral poison which is not only a danger to us Jews alone but also dangerous, as experience has taught us, to those who absorb it as well."

The struggle against the spread of this anti-Semitic venom was taken up in spirited fashion in the next issue of the *Times*. A stand was made against the Irish-Catholic publication *True Witness*, a paper which had undertaken with great diligence and in the style of *Libre Parole* to interpret for Canadian public opinion the issues

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<sup>1</sup> *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, June 6, 1924.

involved in the Dreyfus affair. This case had fanned the flame of anti-Semitism not only in the Old World but had also yielded fuel for the Jew-baiting fulminations emitted by some papers in this country under the influence of Goldwin Smith on the one hand and of the anti-Semites in France on the other.

But if the Dreyfus scandal gave such impetus to the poisonous forces of reaction, it also provided the antidote. Throughout the Jewish world rang the call of national awakening, the call of the great national ideal that had been newly-born. In Canada, too, the Zionist appeal resounded and was heard with deep emotion. On January 30, 1898, a great mass meeting was held in Montreal for the purpose of forming a Zionist Society. The "B'nai Jacob" Synagogue (then on Cadieux Street) was filled to overflowing and the enthusiastic audience listened appreciatively to the addresses of Rabbi Aaron M. Ashinsky (born in Reigod, Poland, 1866), Rabbi Meldola de Sola and others. In an oration lasting two hours Rabbi Ashinsky analyzed the age-old plight of the Jews, the sufferings, pogroms and persecutions that were their constant lot and pointed to Zionism as the movement that would restore them to their ancient home—Palestine. Rabbi de Sola spoke in similar vein. With all the powerful oratory at his command, and with the same fearlessness with which he had earlier assailed the Reform movement, he destroyed the arguments of the assimilationists and proved that it was possible for Jews to be loyal citizens of their native land and ardent Zionists at the same time.

A provisional committee was appointed to draft a constitution as well as to promote the work of the movement generally. A short time afterwards the first Zionist Society in Canada, the "Agudath Zion," came into being with a membership of 201. Dr. David A. Hart (born in Three Rivers, 1844; died in Montreal, 1925) was elected president and Clarence I. de Sola (1858-1920) who later became president of the Zionist Federation of Canada was elected corresponding secretary. A publicity committee was also appointed, consisting of Hyam Bernstein, M. Roback, M. Coviensky, and others. In a letter which Clarence de Sola received from Dr. Herzl some time afterwards, the great leader expressed his satisfaction with the initial success of the Montreal Zionists. He referred to the forthcoming Congress in Basle and stated that the necessary instructions regarding a delegate would be forwarded to Montreal by the Congress Bureau. The letter was written in English in order

to show, as Dr. Herzl explained, that the Jews of all countries could understand one another.

Although the unhealthy influence of anti-Semitism was beginning to be felt in some sections of the country, it was for the most part of a local and limited nature. True, there were influential publications which in their commentaries on the events of the day were outspokenly anti-Semitic, but these were confined to the older provinces. In the rest of Canada prejudice failed to take hold; the people were on the whole extremely friendly to the Jews. The official attitude, it must be said, continued to show the liberalism of former times even when the provocations of the anti-Semitic journals grew more sinister and more numerous. The Jews had come to be recognized as a valuable element in the general community.

It was in this spirit that Canada extended an official welcome to the "Central Conference of American Rabbis" when that body held its eighth annual convention in Montreal in 1897. The delegates were greeted by Sir Joseph A. Chapleau, Lieutenant-Governor of Quebec, Joseph I. Tarte, representing the Federal Cabinet, Dr. James Guerin, of the Provincial Cabinet, and R. Wilson Smith, Mayor of Montreal. The welcome was a tribute not only to the Jews but also to the neighbouring republic from which almost all of the delegates had come. The convention, which lasted from July 6 to July 11, brought to Montreal such leaders of Reform Judaism as Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, Dr. David Phillipson, Dr. Kaufman Kohler, Dr. Emil G. Hirsch, Prof. M. Margolies and others. It came at a time when the conflict between Reform and Orthodox Judaism was at its height. Partisan feeling amongst American Jews was aroused to fever pitch. For a short time this intensity of interest was focused on Canada, scene of the controversial assembly. But if the convention was meant to be a demonstration of the Reform movement's strength it failed completely to add to its following in Canada.

It was at this convention that Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise delivered the famous address which created such a furore in Jewish circles. This was an attack and an open declaration of war on the Zionist Movement—only a few days before the first Zionist World Congress opened in Basle. Rabbi Wise declared himself opposed to the idea of a Jewish State in Palestine and the convention adopted a resolution which termed the Zionism of Herzl "an unpleasant episode in

our history" and flatly rejected it. But the position taken by the Reform Rabbis was not widely supported, certainly not amongst the broad Jewish masses. The reply of the Jews in Canada came six months later—enthusiastic affiliation with the World Zionist Movement.

At the end of 1897 there occurred in Vancouver the death of David Oppenheimer who until 1892 had served several terms as mayor of that city. He died on December 31 (his birthday) at the age of sixty-five, survived by one daughter. He had far earlier become a venerated figure in British Columbia and his name was connected with almost every phase of the province's development. During the visit of the Earl of Dufferin and Lady Dufferin to British Columbia in 1876, their reception at Yale took place at his home where they also spent the night.<sup>1</sup> Vancouver observed his death with fitting solemnity and gave him a public funeral such as had never before been seen in the Pacific province. To perpetuate his memory a monument was later (in 1911) erected in Stanley Park. The day fixed for the unveiling of the monument to the late Jewish mayor was proclaimed a civic holiday and the ceremony was attended by the most prominent men in the province, all city officials, members of the Legislature and representatives of the Provincial cabinet headed by Premier Richard McBride. Mr. McBride delivered a eulogy in which he lauded Oppenheimer's achievements on behalf of the City of Vancouver and the Province of British Columbia.

Regardless of the high stage of development reached by Canadian Jews at that time, their spiritual forces were still severely limited. Nevertheless the urge to strive for a higher cultural level persisted strongly. In Montreal and Toronto the social clubs and literary youth societies devoted themselves to educational work among their members, to literary discussions and similar activities. In the better-known universities, Toronto and McGill, Jewish students became more noticeable. Immigrants or the children of immigrants, in the faculties of Arts, Law and Medicine they drank thirstily from the new fountains of knowledge opened to them. In most cases they did honour to their "Alma Mater." Some of them in earlier years had left McGill to make a name for themselves. The second Jewish doctor to graduate from this university was Dr.

<sup>1</sup> GEORGE STEWART, JR., *Canada Under the Administration of the Earl of Dufferin*, Toronto, 1878, p. 455.

Levi who received his degree in medicine in 1874, the same year that Dr. David A. Hart graduated from Bishop's College (Lennoxville). Dr. Levi subsequently left for New York where he studied jurisprudence and became a noted barrister. From New York he moved to England where he settled permanently. Another Jewish McGill graduate of that time was Dr. Hiram N. Vineberg. Born in Russia in 1857, he came to Canada at an early age and gained his diploma in 1878 with the highest honours. Dr. Vineberg on leaving Canada became identified with several leading American hospitals and acquired high standing in the medical profession.

The first Jew to graduate in Arts from McGill and the second to receive a degree in jurisprudence from the same university was Lewis A. Hart who has been mentioned here several times. In 1880 he was appointed to the McGill faculty as lecturer on the "Theory and Practice of Notarial Deeds and Proceedings." His appointment was warmly commended in the local press. "The appointment," one newspaper declared, "is a further pledge to the friends of civil and religious liberty that no prejudices of class or creed find place in our chief seat of learning. Mr. Hart is of the Hebrew faith, and his name is but one of a list which has already done honour to McGill."<sup>1</sup>

The first Jewish woman doctor in Canada was Regina L. Landau who graduated from the Medical Faculty of Bishop's College in 1896. For a time she practised medicine in Montreal where she also helped to organize and lead the "Jewish Young Ladies' Literary Society." Another Jewish woman, Miss Caroline Hart (a granddaughter of Benjamin Hart) was identified with the kindergarten movement and helped to introduce this important and modern method of child education into Canada. Miss Hart came to Toronto from St. Louis, Mo., at the request of Sir George Ross, then Minister of Education for Ontario. From 1885 to 1892 she was supervisor of the Model School for kindergarten teachers in Toronto and in 1890 she was also appointed inspector of kindergartens for the province. In the official organ of the kindergarten movement of America, one of her closest collaborators in that field of education wrote of her:

"The rapid extension of the kindergarten throughout Ontario and the Dominion of Canada has been mainly due to

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<sup>1</sup> *Montreal Star*, July 8, 1880.

her ability and enterprise. Her appointment to the position of Provincial Inspector of Kindergartens, in 1890, gave added opportunities for furthering the cause so dear to her heart, and it is not too much to say that from the Great Lakes of Ontario to the Pacific Coast, wherever the kindergarten has gained a foothold, Miss Hart's influence and the inspiration of her life have gone with it; and Canadian kindergartens speak her name with pride and gratitude."<sup>1</sup>

Closely connected with the teaching profession in Canada at an early date was also Miss Etta Birkenthal, of Toronto, the first Jewish woman to direct a Canadian school. In 1897 she was assistant principal of the Palmerston Avenue School there and she held that post for a number of years.

A familiar figure in Canadian art circles before the close of the nineties was William Raphael (born East Prussia, 1833; died in Montreal, 1915). He received his training at the Royal Art Academy in Berlin and in 1860 came to Canada. From then on he resided in Montreal where he acquired a reputation as one of the foremost painters in the country. Many of his portraits and landscapes are to be found in private collections and several of his paintings adorned the walls of the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa. William Raphael was a Reform Jew and a member of Temple Emanu-El. One of the earliest members of the Royal Canadian Academy, he contributed much to the development of art in Canada.

In discussing the early Jewish contribution to art in Canada a few words should also be said about the theatre. In a previous chapter we have seen that Moses J. Hays built and operated a theatre in Montreal as far back as 1848. Jesse Joseph, a lifelong supporter of the drama, operated and owned the "Théâtre Royal," in its day the most important playhouse in Montreal. In later years, however, much more was achieved in the development of the Canadian stage by H. R. Jacobs whose firm "Sparrow and Jacobs" controlled the leading theatres in Montreal and Toronto. A man of great energy, he was tireless in his efforts to elevate the Canadian theatre to the level of the better theatres south of the border.

Yiddish theatre was introduced to Canada in 1896 when the American-Jewish dramatist J. Solaterevsky staged Jacob Gordin's "King Lear" in Montreal. The performance took place at the

<sup>1</sup> HENRY J. MORGAN, *Canadian Men and Women of the Time*, 1898, pp. 444-445.

"Monument National" Theatre but met with a lukewarm response—perhaps because the Jewish public was not quite ready for this type of play at the time. A second attempt was made with the presentation of Goldfaden's "Shulamith." This proved to be a great success, so great that in response to public demand another work of Goldfaden's, "Bar-Cochba," was presented as a benefit performance for the "Franz Joseph Lodge" of the "Sons of Benjamin." To these three performances Yiddish theatre in Canada traces its origin.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE  
JEWISH LIFE IN THE LATE NINETIES

BEFORE the turn of the century a number of Jews had already made their mark in Canadian letters. The literary activity of Dr. Abraham de Sola has been discussed previously and also, briefly, that of the Aschers. Clarence I. de Sola created a flurry of interest at the beginning of the nineties when he began to publish his studies in early Canadian Jewish history, while the same subject attracted the pen of Andrew C. Joseph as well. Especially well-known was Gerald E. Hart (1849-1936) whose original research made him prominent among Canadian historians. He was the author of the *Fall of New France, Notes of 1837* and *The Quebec Act, 1774*, in addition to lesser works. *The Fall of New France* particularly ranks among the best books written on the subject in Canada. Gerald E. Hart's collection of Canadiana, including autographs, old paper money and bank notes was one of the most remarkable in the country. He became an early member of the "Numismatic and Antiquarian Society of Montreal" and a founder and president of the "Society of Historical Studies." In 1892 he was one of the first to join the "American Jewish Historical Society" which was founded that year.

Mention should be made here of the journalistic career of Jules Helbronner who was editor of the authoritative French daily *La Presse* of Montreal. Helbronner, an Alsatian Jew, came to Canada as a young man in 1874. He was a student of economic problems and took to journalism at an early date. In 1887, together with a friend, he began to publish a commercial weekly *Le Prix Courant*. Shortly afterwards he joined the staff of *La Presse* and subsequently became its editor-in-chief. He resigned this post in 1896 in order to edit the new Liberal paper *Le Soir* but soon returned to *La Presse*. Helbronner was recognized as a front rank journalist and employed his talents freely, especially during the Dreyfus trial, in defence of the Jews against anti-Semitic attacks.

This, however, was but one aspect of the Jewish scene. There was another aspect, a far broader one, which struck the public eye much more glaringly. What was the economic condition of the great mass of recent arrivals? What was the status of the average Jewish worker? An analysis of these questions will lead to the unfolding of the whole social background of Jewish life in Canada in those years.

The economic level of the Jewish worker was admittedly inferior. His standard of living was low, little higher than that of the contemporary immigrant belonging to other ethnic groups. Only by unremitting toil could the families of Jewish workers manage to exist, only by suffering endless privations could they eke out their daily bread. Theirs was a life of unrelieved bleakness and dreariness bounded by misery and sorrow. It is not known if the conditions then existing in Montreal were paralleled in other industrial centres. What is certain is that they appalled even the hard-headed Commissioner of Public Works for the Province of Quebec. His report for the year 1897 discloses the grim picture—the Jewish worker hopelessly enmeshed in the devouring “sweat shop” system, labouring long and back-breaking hours in filthy, unsanitary shops for a meagre wage. The “sweat shop” system which then prevailed chiefly in the clothing industry was of so revolting a character that the Commissioner was compelled to comment on it at some length. Needle trade workers, including young girls and women, were exploited in the most shameful manner. Forced to work in close, dark, dirty, unventilated shops housed in old, decrepit buildings where the regulations governing industrial plants were totally ignored, or in private houses situated in alleys and backyards, in cellars and in lofts, they huddled together, bent over their work for endless hours without air and without light—and for starvation wages. The entire industry lay in the hands of the large Jewish clothing manufacturers who exercised sovereign control over it. And it was at these clothing princes that the *Jewish Times*, following the publication of the Commissioner’s report, pointed an accusing finger. With harsh irony the Anglo-Jewish organ observed that the clothing manufacturers assumed the role of philanthropists—but only during the annual meeting of the Baron de Hirsch Institute.<sup>1</sup>

So shocking were the conditions disclosed in the report that the local inspector made a point of attending a meeting where five hundred people were gathered in order to acquaint them with the facts. Patiently he explained to them the importance of observing the regulations concerning industrial establishments. To his astonishment he found that few present had any understanding of what he was talking about. In the report for the following year the subject again crops up. Mr. Lessard, the Inspector of Industrial Establishments in Montreal, tells of the deplorable state in which he

<sup>1</sup> *The Jewish Times*, Montreal, February 8, 1898, p. 73.

found Jewish shops, particularly bakeries. "What we saw in some bakeries," he states, "is beyond description; dirt and uncleanness adopted as principles; walls, floors and utensils in a horrible state of filth and infection . . . In such sorry places we listened to the complaints of the workmen, borne down by 80 or 90 hours of work instead of sixty per week, and working on Sundays in addition. A good many of these contagious dens are in the cellars of houses and in the hands of Italians and Jews . . ."

He observes an improvement in Jewish tailoring shops as compared with the previous year, although not in the entire industry: "The population of Montreal comprises a minimum number of ten thousand Jews. Most of them set up small shops where coats, vests, pants, caps, furs, etc., are made up. However, since we have pointed out certain facts in connection with the sweating system, a great improvement is observed. At our first visit they did not know the law of the country. All say that they are well disposed to respect it. We have discovered a number of places very badly kept, and though sometimes very badly received, we have nevertheless succeeded in having the law carried out."<sup>1</sup>

From this material a fairly clear picture of the social and economic status of the Jewish working class in Montreal at that time may be drawn. No great imagination is required to understand why, under the circumstances, little improvement could be noted in the material well-being of the Jewish population in general and of the poorer class in particular. Continuing immigration had over the course of a few years deposited large numbers of newcomers who could barely adjust themselves and who suffered constantly from poverty and need. These newcomers helped to aggravate the problem created by the slum districts, since they tended to settle in great masses in the destitute and overcrowded sections of the city. As for the wealthier class, few except the handful of earnest communal workers, some of whom subsequently became central figures in Canadian Jewish life, were troubled to any extent by the fate of their immigrant brothers. Welfare organizations were neglected and the more affluent rarely came to their aid. Not infrequently did the *Jewish Times* speak out in protest. This journal which consistently gave expression to healthy Jewish opinion severely criticized those rich Jews who, refusing to follow the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, February 17, 1899.

example set by the Rothschilds and the Schiffs, denied their less fortunate co-religionists the opportunity to become useful citizens of their country and a credit to their people.

Nevertheless the "poor co-religionists" managed to make their own way after their own fashion and without the benefit of outside help. Gradually they grew accustomed to their new environment, slowly they cemented the foundations of their new home. And as the process of economic adjustment ran its course so, in proportion to the increase of Jewish settlers in Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, London, Hamilton and other places, did the Jewish spirit entrench itself. For whatever the ostensible leadership in Jewish life, its influence was bound to be profoundly shaken by the swelled numbers which immigration had brought. Under the ineluctable pressure of the newly-arrived majority the minority of older residents was compelled to yield. Into the arteries of the community in Canada flowed new blood and new zest; the physiognomy of communal life assumed a more native Jewish aspect. Concrete manifestations of this changing appearance were not lacking; an increased preoccupation with traditional education and a revival of religious activity were among the outward symptoms of the deeper transformation which Canadian Jewry had undergone.

During the nineties in Montreal, Toronto and in other cities where there existed a sizeable community, the old traditional "cheder" made its appearance and began to function side by side with the public school, although the usual difficulty was experienced in maintaining it. A sort of "cheder" system had previously been set up but its activity had been sporadic and its value questionable. New synagogues and congregations also came into being. It is worthy of note, too, that the same decade which saw the "Shearith Israel" and "Temple Emanu-El" Congregations in Montreal and the "Holy Blossom" Congregation in Toronto move to new buildings also witnessed the emergence of the "Rash Pinah" Synagogue in Winnipeg (1893), the "Adath Jeshurun" in Ottawa (1895), the "Beth Jacob" in Toronto (1899), the "B'nai Israel" in London (1896, although the congregation there had been organized in 1888), and the "Ahavath Akhim" in Saint John (1899).

About that time, mainly through the persevering efforts of Rabbi M. Ashinsky, the first "Talmud Torah" was opened in Montreal. An unsuccessful attempt had been made to found a "Talmud Torah" at least a year earlier, but it was only with the

coming of Rabbi Ashinsky to Montreal in 1896 to become Minister of the "B'nai Jacob" Congregation that the project was realized. Rabbi Ashinsky enthusiastically took up the cause of providing a Jewish education for the rising generation which was rapidly losing contact with the learning of its fathers. And his work bore fruit. For a while the "Talmud Torah" was housed at "Shapiro's Minyan" opposite the old "B'nai Jacob" synagogue, but later moved to Lagachetiere Street. Following Rabbi Ashinsky's departure from Montreal, the direction of the "Talmud Torah" was taken over by Rabbi H. Cohen (born in Budwicz, Poland, 1862)—a labour to which he was lovingly and earnestly to devote the remainder of his life. For many years the maintenance of this free Hebrew school was made possible by the generosity of his brother, Lazarus Cohen. From this modest beginning there later developed that important institution of modern Hebrew education known as "The United Talmud Torahs of Montreal" (the name under which it was incorporated in 1922), with a handsome and spacious building of its own on St. Joseph Boulevard which also serves as a community centre.

At the same time that the older communities were becoming more firmly established, the small settlement in Saint John, New Brunswick was also making progress. The first Jewish residents there have already been referred to. It should be added that Nathan Green was the last person to be given the freedom of the city prior to Confederation and that the first Jewish marriage solemnized in the Maritime Provinces took place in 1882 with a rabbi from Boston officiating. Early in the nineties Jews began to settle in Saint John in larger numbers. Most of them had emigrated from Russia and Poland but there was also a sprinkling of English Jews amongst the newcomers. In 1896 an "Immigrant Aid Society" was founded which, on its own initiative, undertook to assist immigrants on their landing at Saint John. This was the first organization of its kind in Canada to consider its work more a social duty than a philanthropic enterprise. The printed constitution of the Society, a small brochure in Yiddish and in English, consists of thirteen articles. The booklet bears the address "77 East Broadway, New York" where it was published. The dues paid by its 36 members were the chief source of the Society's revenue.

At about the same time the Congregation "Ahavath Akhim" in that city was making plans for the erection of a synagogue of its own. Generous contributions were received from New York, Montreal

and Toronto, and in 1898 the building was completed. On January 11, 1899, the dedication was celebrated with great religious ceremony. Rabbi Nieto of the "Shearith Israel" Congregation of New York, who had been invited for the occasion, conducted the services in the presence of the mayor of Saint John, many prominent Christian clergymen and laymen, and the entire Jewish community. Rabbi Nieto presented the synagogue with a copy of the Book of Esther written in his own hand. An attractive roomy building with a seating capacity of 300, the new house of worship also had a Sabbath school and a lecture hall. It is interesting to note that one of the chief participants in the inaugural ceremony was S. Hart Green, later a representative in the Manitoba Legislature.

The events then shaping in Canadian Jewish life had a far greater intrinsic significance than might appear on the surface. For they constituted in themselves a complete and definitive period of transition, a period in which one phase of achievement passed into oblivion and a new and bolder phase was entered upon. The spirit of a new era could be felt quickening not in Montreal alone but in Toronto, Winnipeg and other centres. It is sufficient only to leaf through a volume of the *Jewish Times* of that day as it unfolds the changing panorama of Jewish activity in the country to sense the ferment in the atmosphere. Everywhere across Canada's broad expanses the Jews felt the ground grow firmer under their feet and they trod it with new-born confidence and assurance. And like men conscious of the firm earth under them they set out purposefully to strengthen and fortify their communities, to build and to create to the full extent of their abilities. Everything became imbued with direction and meaning for them, even if their approach was at times rather primitive. So, for example, in 1898 a group could meet at "Peoples' Hall" in Montreal for the purpose of forming a Yiddish theatre society. Although what became of the society and who its sponsors were is not known, the very fact that such an idea could have been brought into being at that time is in itself of more than passing interest.

Increased attention was focused on social and cultural organizations, too, although more often than not the emphasis was placed on the social rather than the cultural aspect of their programs, much to the pain of the more earnest souls. Thus we read that at a fortnightly meeting of the "Jewish Social and Literary Union" of

Toronto, the president, Mr. Leo Frankel, found it necessary to criticize sharply the conduct of some of the members. He deplored the fact that they were present only at entertainments and rarely attended a purely literary evening. At times, too, we find that a purely traditional festival is obscured and made the occasion for a mere diversion, as in the case of the curious "Purim" ball held by the Montefiore Club in Montreal in 1898. The revellers came dressed in a variety of masques, as Cleopatras, Lords and ladies; not one came as a Mordecai or an Esther!

But even these entertainments had their value, according to the standards of the time. And there was admittedly a heightened sense of conscious direction in the different branches of social enterprise in which Jewish energies found expression. The older communal leaders began to show greater initiative in their work while the generation of younger men, which was to produce some of the outstanding figures in the country, found a broader field of activity in which to exercise its talents. But Canadian Jewry was as yet unable to present the appearance of an integrated organism. With its comparatively small numbers scattered over a vast area, there could be no thought of achieving real unity between the different communities. Local problems and prejudices continued to act as a partial barrier, at least, between the Jews living in one city and those in another; at times provincialism rose to ludicrous heights. So, the Quebec congregation, inserting an advertisement for a "Shochet" in the New York *Jewish Gazette*, stipulated that the applicant must not be a "Litvak." A "Shochet" hailing from Lithuania was seemingly anathema to the Jews of Quebec; the question of his origin was of paramount importance to them. Small wonder, then, that Montreal still remained the focal point for all major events and that the history of the Jews in that city until the end of the last century is by and large also the history of the Jews in the entire Dominion.

The discovery of gold in the far-off Yukon in 1896 attracted hordes of eager fortune-seekers to the Territory. Soon conditions paralleled those in the Fraser Valley of British Columbia where the precious yellow metal had been unearthed some thirty-eight years earlier. A number of Jews were amongst those who took the long trail to the Yukon but they were few and there could be no question of establishing a permanent settlement in that icy region. Yet in the course of a few years a small colony was formed there and we

read of divine services being held in Dawson City during the high holy days in 1898 when some forty worshippers congregated in a store which one of them had given for that purpose.<sup>1</sup> Like everyone else there the Jews lived in tents; most of them had come from Russia or Poland and were engaged in small trading. But the colony failed to grow and although the 1901 census indicated a Jewish population of 163 in the Yukon, this number gradually diminished in later years.

The Yukon was not the only remote point where Jews were to be found at the close of the nineties. Even such then scarcely-known and sparsely-populated places as Nelson, Trent and Greenwood, all in British Columbia, possessed their quota of Jews. This followed as a natural corollary of the never-ending flow of immigration which sent Jewish settlers into the most distant corners of the land.

Meanwhile the school question in the Province of Quebec was a perennial source of friction between the Protestants and the Jews. This, too, came as a direct result of immigration which was constantly adding to the number of Jewish children in the schools. Several times the issue flared up anew, always in a more complex and crucial form. Negotiations were carried on; compromises were made; but no provisional, palliative measures could provide a lasting solution for a problem which was rooted in the school system as it existed in the province and, it might be added, in the country at large. Hence all the compacts and temporary expedients were doomed from the very beginning.

The Protestant School Commissioners began with a determined attack on what they contended was the excessive cost of educating Jewish children. To maintain Jewish children in their schools was a drain on their purse, they argued. There were then about 600 of these in the Montreal Protestant schools, of whom 350 attended Dufferin School, 120 Aberdeen School and 100 Mount Royal School, with the rest distributed among a few other schools. For the year 1897, for example, the Commissioners claimed that they had received in Jewish school taxes the negligible sum of \$4,678 from only 60 taxpayers. That the number of Jewish property owners was then so small could hardly be believed and the Jews promptly challenged these figures. It was also pointed out that the real taxpayer was not the landlord but the tenant who paid the rent, and that as

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, December 23, 1898.

long as there was no uniform system in the province the right of the Jewish minority to receive an education must be recognized equally with that of the Protestant minority.

By the terms of a previous arrangement, which had been in force for several years, the Jews paid their school taxes to the Protestant panel. In return the Baron de Hirsch school received from this fund eight dollars yearly for each child who attended it. The Protestant Commissioners had also engaged a Hebrew teacher (Rabbi M. de Sola) for the Jewish children attending Dufferin School, but after some time they began to consider this an irksome burden imposed on them. Both in the press and at the meetings of the School Board strong dissatisfaction was voiced with the existing order of things. And so the precarious equilibrium began to totter and relations grew more and more strained.

The Protestants were annoyed by the fact that Hebrew, "a language that appeals to nothing," as they put it, was being taught in a Canadian public school. Accordingly they applied to the Attorney-General of Quebec for a decision as to whether or not they were obliged in this respect to comply with the requirements of Jewish education. The Attorney-General replied that they were not. This, however, did not tend to solve the remaining facets of the problem which daily grew more involved. The recurrence of the school question in Quebec came at a time when the acrid memory of the "Manitoba School Question" and the political stir it had created still rankled in the minds of Canadians. Public opinion in Quebec was disposed to respect the rights of minorities. Not so, however, the Protestants; and though they could afford to waste thousands of dollars to support the proselytizing activities of the missionaries, they displayed great financial caution in so vital a matter as education. Their grudging economy was therefore questionable. Their attitude throughout smacked at least of unfriendliness to the Jews and of unwillingness to have their children in the schools. Some denounced it as savouring of outright anti-Semitism and Lewis A. Hart in a letter to the *Witness*<sup>1</sup> went so far as to compare it with the attitude which had once prevailed in Spain.

But no open breach resulted. In the meantime a measure had been introduced in the Quebec Legislature which, if adopted, might have solved the school question in quite a different manner. This was a bill which proposed the institution of compulsory education in

<sup>1</sup> *Montreal Witness*, March 14, 1898.

the province and would ultimately have led to the government's shouldering part of the financial burden. But, as was to be expected, the bill fell through. Most of the legislators personally approved the principle of compulsory education; but they qualified their approval with the specious argument that conditions in Quebec were not ripe for such reform—and never would be until a system of free schools for all existed in the province.

Thus the controversy raged on with prospects for its solution growing gloomier every day. A radical alternative was put forward—separate schools for Jewish children. Even those who would previously not have countenanced the idea were now compelled to admit its logic. The time was admirably suited to it. All the required pre-conditions existed and the small number of Jewish children would have made it quite easy to carry out the undertaking. Moreover in the Baron de Hirsch School there was already the nucleus for such a system and the experience acquired there would have been of invaluable assistance. Nor would the Provincial Government have hesitated to grant the Jews a certain measure of educational autonomy—no objection from any quarter could conceivably have been raised as was the case a quarter of a century later. But the Jews did not take advantage of the opportunity and the solution of the entire knotty problem was left to the future.

Another problem that troubled Jewish minds was the growth of anti-Semitism. Certain sections of the press were openly hostile. The vicious task undertaken so zealously by Goldwin Smith in the columns of the Toronto *Weekly Sun* found willing and eager apprentices in a few sheets in the Province of Quebec. Systematically they sought to sow the seeds of anti-Jewish prejudice among their readers. The former professor of history at Oxford did not scruple to *falsify* history, to distort well-established facts whenever that suited him for the purpose of slandering the Jews. And in Quebec his French-Canadian imitators slavishly repeated the libels published in *Libre Parole* or what they could cull from the writings of Drumont. Fortunately their propaganda failed to take root. Both in Ontario and in the old French province the people refused to be misled. They knew their Jewish neighbours too well, their relations were too close. Anti-Semitism, although disturbing in itself, failed appreciably to affect the position of the Jews in the Dominion. And this in the face of the anti-Semitic reaction which was then raging with unabated fury throughout Europe.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO  
AT THE END OF THE CENTURY

PROFOUND grief was caused in the Canadian Jewish community as it was throughout the Jewish world by the death of the Baroness de Hirsch in Paris on the 1st of April, 1899, three years after the passing of the Baron (April 22, 1896). In Montreal, where a memorial service was held at the "Shaar Hashomayim" Synagogue (on McGill College Avenue), great crowds thronged to hear the Baroness eulogized by Rabbi Meldola de Sola, Rabbi Bernard M. Caplan and Rabbi A. M. Ashinsky. Among those present were the Mayor of Montreal, the Hon. James McShane; the French, Swiss and Belgian Consuls; the Consul and Vice-Consul of Austria; and many prominent Christians. In Canada the name of Baron de Hirsch was perpetuated both by the Montreal institution which was at first located on St. Elizabeth Street and by the district called "Hirsch" in Saskatchewan which was originally settled as a Jewish colony. Another fine memorial was in the many philanthropic works which had been made possible by the generosity of the Baron and Baroness. The Baroness had been keenly interested in the activities carried on by the Institute in Montreal and had assisted them in many ways. In her will she bequeathed to the Institute the sum of six hundred thousand francs, or one hundred and twenty thousand dollars.

There is no doubt that both the Baron and Baroness, and the Institute which had been named for them, had done much to make Canada known to the Jewish world. But the opinions concerning Canada then prevalent among the Jews in general ranged from rosy optimism to downright indifference. As a centre of immigration the Dominion could hardly be likened to the United States. Nevertheless the attempts at colonization already made here, the fruits of which were even then, although at great cost, being harvested, served effectively to draw Jewish attention to this country. The agricultural experiment in Western Canada aroused lively interest and many saw in it uncommon possibilities for the Jewish people which they dared not ignore. And so speculation once again ran rife over the practicability of large-scale settlement in the Dominion. This time the long dormant plan was resurrected in the minds of certain Anglo-Jewish leaders who, impressed by the intensive publicity campaign then being conducted in Britain by the Cana-

dian Government in its search for immigrants, welcomed the idea of diverting part of the mass emigration from Europe to the Dominion.

When Sir Wilfrid Laurier after his sweeping political triumph at home made his first visit to England in 1897 to participate in the celebration of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, he was sounded out on this point by Herman Landau, a prominent member of British Jewry. To the Canadian Prime Minister Landau outlined a plan for the establishment of an agricultural colony in Western Canada which was then beginning to attract large numbers of settlers. The plan offered, at least in part, a practical solution to the ever-vexing problem of Jewish migration. This problem, as has been abundantly made clear, was a constant source of anxiety to Anglo-Jewish leaders. For the hordes of penniless wanderers from Russia, Poland, Austria and other continental countries who were then swarming into London were more than a problem—they were a thorn in the flesh of British Jewry. The Jews of Britain were prepared to do anything in order to get rid of them, in order to deposit them somewhere out of the way. And what better place could they call to mind than the British Dominion in North America with its soil clamoring for the cultivator's plow and its endless, empty prairies waiting to be transmuted into fertile granaries?

We may assume that Landau did not hesitate to acquaint Laurier with the entire situation. Nor did he neglect to point to the Argentinian experiment as an example of what might be accomplished in Canada. Not only did he succeed in convincing Laurier of the project's potential value to the Dominion as well as to the Jews, but he also managed to win his approval of mass settlement in general. For, as had been the case in 1892, the present plan spoke in terms of colonization on a broad scale and Landau was anxious to ascertain whether the Canadian Government would look on it with favour. To his immense relief the man who was later to become Canada's leading statesman evinced immediate interest in the project. Laurier counselled Landau to enlist the co-operation of other groups. In so doing it is not unlikely that he had the financial side of the undertaking in mind since the cost was bound to be enormous. He assured him further that the Canadian Government was not only willing to assist in every way possible but was also prepared, in the event that the plan was put into operation, to concede the Jews a measure of local autonomy.

"If you will take up this question seriously," Sir Wilfrid declared, "and select any part of Manitoba, the Dominion will grant the Jews such a measure of self-government as will enable them to make their own by-laws, substituting Saturday for Sunday."<sup>1</sup>

"If you will . . . select any part of Manitoba!" Implicit in this statement by the Prime Minister was a deeper meaning, a meaning that will readily be grasped. For it was more than an offer—it was a declaration of the utmost importance. It was an unwavering affirmation of the friendliness to the Jewish people that he was to manifest so boldly upon innumerable occasions in the course of his career. And it marked him not only as a thinking statesman but as a feeling statesman, a man of broad liberal perceptions and of the highest humanitarian ideals. Has ever the political leader of a country in modern times extended a more sincere or more unmistakable welcome to the Jews? Could he have set the world a better example than by expressing his frank and genuine pleasure with the thought that his country was about to receive and become the home of a large and homogeneous body of Jews? On his part this was but the first invitation of its kind; it was followed by several others.

It is therefore doubly to be deplored that his words failed to make the desired impression on those to whom they were addressed. Jewish leaders missed the full implication of Laurier's statement, could not or would not see that his proposal was much more generous and far-reaching than the earlier offer extended by Sir John Abbott. Not only did they fail to be impressed—they received the proposal with cold indifference. This may perhaps be attributed to two main reasons; first, that they shrank from the tremendous expenditure and the equally tremendous organization which the undertaking would have entailed; and second, that the Jewish Colonization Association of Paris, which would normally have played an important part in the scheme, was already too deeply involved in its Argentinian project. But at the same time the flow of migration still pressed on in its restless search for an outlet. True, it was as yet too early to think of an orderly directing of the stream into predetermined channels. "Controlled migration" as a concept was still too hazy and ill-defined. Nevertheless it is difficult to understand how the men who had assumed the responsibility of

<sup>1</sup> *The Jewish Chronicle*, London, January 19, 1906.

caring for the migrants could have been so apathetic to the opening afforded them in Canada. Must we, then, be content with the mere apology that they lacked far-sightedness, that they were unable to foretell what the passing years would bring?

On the whole confused impressions of conditions in the distant and "frozen" North American country were then widespread in Jewish circles. Nor were they the only ones who were misinformed. It was at that time that Rudyard Kipling in his famous poem gave Canada the picturesque but somewhat inaccurate title of "Our Lady of the Snows." Canadians were quick to resent what they considered to be a deliberate misrepresentation of their country by the great English poet and it was some time before they forgave him.

Conversely, it is not to be wondered at that there were those on the other side who tended to exaggerate the opportunities for immigrants in the Dominion. Fantastic schemes for extensive colonization projects were hatched—and gave rise to equally fantastic rumours in this country. The newspapers were filled with extravagant stories concerning the imminence of large-scale Jewish settlement. Typical is one dispatch from Winnipeg which was circulated in the press at the beginning of 1899. A rabbi from Ottawa had arrived in Winnipeg, so the dispatch ran, for the purpose of studying on the spot the possibility of establishing a mixed colony of Jews and gentiles in Western Canada. A thousand Jewish families were to be brought over from Austria and immediately settled on the land if the rabbi's investigation showed that the soil and climate warranted such a venture. The report also alleged that the government and the heads of the Canadian Pacific Railway were sympathetic to the project. It would be superfluous to add that the story did not contain the slightest vestige of truth.

Somewhat similar in tone and compounded of misguided notions concerning Canada in general was the strange tale published in the *B'nai B'rith Messenger* of Los Angeles. This was a highly imaginative report of a plan for colonization in Canada which the JCA was supposed to have undertaken. The organ of the "B'nai B'rith" Order was greatly displeased with the inordinate amount of attention paid to "ice-clad Canada" since, as the story put it, far better land might have been chosen to greater advantage elsewhere, in the United States, for example. "An agent of that Society," the story went, "is now travelling in the Canadian Northwestern Territory for

the purpose of examining the available land there. A million (?) dollars is to be devoted for colonization purposes there if conditions are found suitable. It is strange that the United States is overlooked in this respect. We have large tracts of land in our own State of California awaiting the necessary capital and willing hands to cultivate them. We have here a climate akin to that of Palestine. We have neither thunder nor snowstorms, and the husbandman can ply his vocation in the open field in January as well as in June. Why the wise heads of the administration shall go from one extreme to the other, from the tropical deserts of Argentine to the freezing zone of ice-clad Canada, when the finest country in the world under the most liberal government in existence is at their disposal, is an unsolvable anomaly. We understand that Mr. Ansell of Montreal who is a member of the Association drew the attention of those in authority to the adaptiveness of his country.<sup>1</sup>

Heedless of the many speculations which Canada and its possibilities had provoked, the immigrants who did arrive here attempted to solve their own problems to the best of their abilities. Not seldom did those to whose care they had been entrusted abandon them to their own destiny. Even the few who took their duties to the immigrants seriously—and their number in Canada, it must be repeated, was infinitesimal—approached their work from a purely philanthropic, not from a national or social point of view. For the most part the immigrants were left to their own devices, beset by difficulties, hindered by obstacles and even exposed to certain dangers. Typical children of the wandering people were these new immigrants, helpless and friendless, whose dejected appearances bore the marks of the terrible experiences, sufferings and bloody persecutions they had fled. Not all of them had friends or relatives they could turn to, and for these the ordeal of survival in this country was doubly painful.

It was on such miserable immigrants that those kind-hearted Christians who are so greatly concerned with the salvation of Jewish souls turned their eyes. A net of salvation was spread around them and from all sides benevolent missionaries sought to lure them with brotherly love. "Friendship" was offered the poor, unwary immigrant, "friendship" was thrust upon him and dogged his every step from Montreal to Toronto, Winnipeg and Hamilton. Bitter

<sup>1</sup> *Jewish Times*, September 2, 1898.

resentment was aroused in the Jewish people, for the missionaries, having easily won the confidence of those devout Christians who supported them, did not scruple at any method and even attempted to ensnare children and to convert them.

At last the Jews were goaded into determined action. The infamous intrigues of the missionaries in and around the Jewish quarter had assumed the nature of a deadly pestilence; the most energetic measures were required to combat the evil and to prevent it from spreading. It was at this time that a Jewish voice was heard that created a panic in the camp of the soul snatchers and almost paralyzed their work. Terror-stricken, the self-avowed saviours of Jewish souls now faced the dreadful prospect of having the good Christians who kept them so unstintingly supplied with money realize the folly of their position and turn from them in disgust. The voice was that of Lewis A. Hart who, with the fire and passion of a prophet of old, plunged into the battle and hurled his verbal thunderbolts at the would-be seducers of Jews from their people and their faith. His battle-ground was in the columns of the *Jewish Times*. There, in language unprecedented for daring and courage in the discussion of such subjects, he denounced the bigoted dogmas of the missionaries. With anger and fury, citing the Old and New Testaments, he shattered to bits the meretricious arguments of those unworthy "apostles" of Christianity. More than a polemic, Hart's writings were a reply, and a crushing reply, to all who preached conversion of the Jews and those naive and pious Christians who gave their money for that purpose. Later (in 1906) his articles were reprinted in a separate volume entitled *A Jewish Reply to Christian Evangelists*. In the Middle Ages both book and author would have been burned at the stake. In Czarist Russia the censor would have suppressed the book and punished its author severely. There are libraries in Canada where the book is banned; for some Christians it has been placed on a forbidden index.

The "Reply" created an immediate furore. Confusion was spread in the ranks of the missionaries and evangelists engaged in proselytizing work. But they soon rallied their forces. If some Christians displayed more caution in donating their money to this ignoble cause, certain renegade Jews found a profitable profession in apostasy. Many of these wretched creatures practised simple fraud, as a typical case in Hamilton revealed. And it was mainly because of their persistency that the mission houses continued to

plague the Jews in Montreal, Toronto and other cities. Evidence was shown that those who frequented the mission house in Montreal also came to the Baron de Hirsch Institute for charity. The soul snatchers found easy prey in the demoralized strata of the Jewish population; the effect of their work was only toward further moral degradation. It was an open secret that behind the missionaries stood the full weight of the Protestant Church. This the *Jewish Times* was quick to perceive. Sternly it advised the Protestant leaders to divert their unwelcome attentions elsewhere. The means and energy so wastefully expended in attempting to convert the Jews, the paper points out, could be turned to much better account, to "uplifting" the members of their own Church, for instance. The many nests of vice and iniquity in the major Canadian cities would prove a far more fertile field to work in; their successful conquest would redound to the greater glory of the Church than would the conversion of a few miserable Jews.

Of interest in this connection is a letter received by Rabbi Meldola de Sola from the Central Committee of the "Maskil El Dal" Society of Safed, Palestine, in which the Rabbi is commended for his courageous stand against the vicious tactics employed by the missionaries. Organized for the purpose of combating missionary work among the Jews in Palestine, the Society was greatly impressed with the fact that a Canadian rabbi—for Rabbi de Sola was indeed the first Jewish minister to be born and educated in Canada—had so frequently used his pulpit to confound the evangelists and to protest against their insidious propaganda.

Mass sentiment among the Jews, revolting at, and heightened by, the onslaught against their religious integrity, now welled up in a great surge of national consciousness. National feeling became the informing spirit of Jewish life in Canada; it became the living pulse beat of the youthful community. Its most concrete manifestation was in the one movement which had provided it with stimulus and direction. Zionism had prospered among the Jews in the Dominion. They accepted it eagerly, naturally, as did the Jews in other countries. In Zionism they found the living embodiment of all their national yearnings and monitions; the great ideal that at once kindled imaginations, freed creative impulses and promised to unravel, once and forever, the tortuous complex of Jewish problems.

In the short time which had elapsed since the founding of the first Zionist Society in Montreal, the movement had swept the country

and become firmly entrenched both as an organization and as a potent factor in Canadian Jewish life. Around it was grouped every element that found comfort and inspiration in the ideal of a Jewish renaissance in Palestine. Here was a common meeting ground for the recent arrivals—chiefly those who had been of the Hebraic *intelligentsia* in the old country—and for the more Canadianized Jews; here was a cause that could create unprecedented unity between the two basic components of Canadian Jewry. Zionist societies sprang up not only in Montreal, the headquarters of the Zionist Federation of which Clarence I. de Sola was president, but also in Toronto, Winnipeg, London, Hamilton, Kingston and in many other Canadian cities. Members of the National Council were: Rabbi A. M. Ashinsky, Rabbi M. de Sola, Rabbi B. M. Caplan, Mr. Alfred D. Benjamin (Toronto), M. Vineberg (Winnipeg), Israel Rubenstein, N. Forcimmer, M. Shapiro, Z. Fineberg, and M. Carman. The Zionist branch in Montreal was housed in a building located at 68 St. Lawrence Boulevard which was used as a lecture hall and where a library had also been installed.

For many Jews Zionism had a far deeper significance than its avowed aim of "establishing for the Jewish people a publicly recognized and legally secured home in Palestine." For them it constituted a powerful barrier against the strong assimilationist currents in their environment which often succeeded in uprooting them and isolating them completely from their people. But their allegiance to the ideal that had captured the imagination of their folk notwithstanding, many Jews were now faced with painful inner conflicts. It was difficult for them to achieve a satisfactory synthesis between Jewish nationalism and their own loosely-formulated convictions and desires that impelled them in the opposite direction. Some attempted to rationalize the dilemma in the following manner: Jewish nationalism, they convinced themselves, meant nothing more than Zionism; in no wise did it signify close contact with the Jewish masses, their life and problems; and finally, and above all, it was not at all incompatible with the orderly process of "Canadianization" as they understood it and had accordingly built their comfortable lives.

Thus the distinction between the "uptown" Jews—Zionists as well as non-Zionists—and the "downtown" Jews grew sharper and more pronounced. Contributing factors to this distinction were numerous—factors of class, social position, economic status, etc. Important among these was the fact that the "poor co-religionists"

stubbornly refused to conform to the rigid formula of Canadianization as laid down for them. This formula, absurdly barren and stultifying, arose chiefly from a haunting sense of inferiority. It was enough, for example, for any group of Jews anywhere to hold a public discussion concerning Jewish interests, and especially from a political point of view, to call down upon their heads the maledictions of their timid brethren. They were, in the phrase since made notorious, "un-Canadian." This despite the fact that the "poor co-religionists" were instinctively acting in the spirit of a great and indigenous Canadian tradition.

Ample proof of the patriotism of Canadian Jews, as of other sections of the population, was provided with the outbreak of the Boer War in October, 1899. The events into which the Empire had been drawn evoked new affirmations of loyalty to the Motherland from the Dominion and the Jews of Canada participated wholeheartedly in this sentiment. To the patriotic fund which was set up in the country they contributed generously. An impressive demonstration in support of the fund was carried out by the Jews of Winnipeg who, according to the *Jewish Times*, packed "Forrester's Hall" to hear impassioned speeches which expressed the loyalty, devotion and gratitude of the Jews, and especially of the Jews in this free and democratic Dominion, to England. In addition a considerable sum of money was raised for the fund. It is known, too, that a number of Jews from Eastern Canada enlisted in the Canadian Contingent which was sent to South Africa. One of these was the subsequently noted Dr. Herbert Lightstone (born in Montreal, 1878; died in London, England, 1942), then still a student of medicine at Bishop's College. When the appeal came for volunteers, and before he had ended his course, he enlisted in the Granby Regiment for service overseas. At first he served as a gunner but later transferred to the Medical Corps. For his services at the front where he helped to lessen the suffering of the wounded he won high distinction. Earlier he had also served in the Spanish-American War with the New York Red Cross.

But the Boer War and its attendant upsurge of patriotic sentiment soon faded into the dim recesses of men's minds; for the Jews of Canada there were other, more pressing problems closer at hand. Conditions in Europe which had always regulated the flow of immigrants into Canada suddenly took a turn for the worse; the stream of immigration which had gradually been dwindling was

again transformed into a mighty tide. Stern and exacting tasks faced the Jews in the Dominion as they prepared to receive the hundreds of new refugees from the gehenna that was Europe. And once again the contrast between the Old and the New Worlds was vividly demonstrated; the Old World repulsed the Jews, drove them from its shores while the New World, true to its tradition, received them with open arms. Before the turn of the century a large number of Jewish immigrants was admitted into Canada—the largest ever admitted in any one year until then. Fleeing the black reaction which then held half of Europe in its grip and threatened to extinguish the last sparks of freedom, decency and tolerance, close to three thousand Jewish wanderers landed on Canadian soil in 1899. Of these the greatest in number were Roumanian Jews. Emigration from that unhappy country whose rulers sought to emulate Czarist Russia in cruelty reached its peak that year. Vast numbers of Jews set out blindly, desperately, in search of peace and a new home. That year Canada admitted 2,202 Roumanian Jews; 426 came from Russia; and the rest from nine other countries.

So unexpectedly was this human tidal wave launched that in Montreal, from which point they were dispersed over the country, the community was at its wit's end. Advices had earlier been received from the JCA in Paris that the immigrants were being sent out at the rate of sixty a week. Instead, ninety arrived the first week and the proportion increased in succeeding weeks so that in one week a total of 347 immigrants landed in Montreal. Many arrived penniless and, lacking suitable central accommodation, were temporarily quartered in private homes all over the city. But it was obvious that they could not all be cared for in Montreal and calls for assistance were hurriedly sent to Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton and London. These cities absorbed a number of the immigrants and helped to redistribute them over the Dominion.

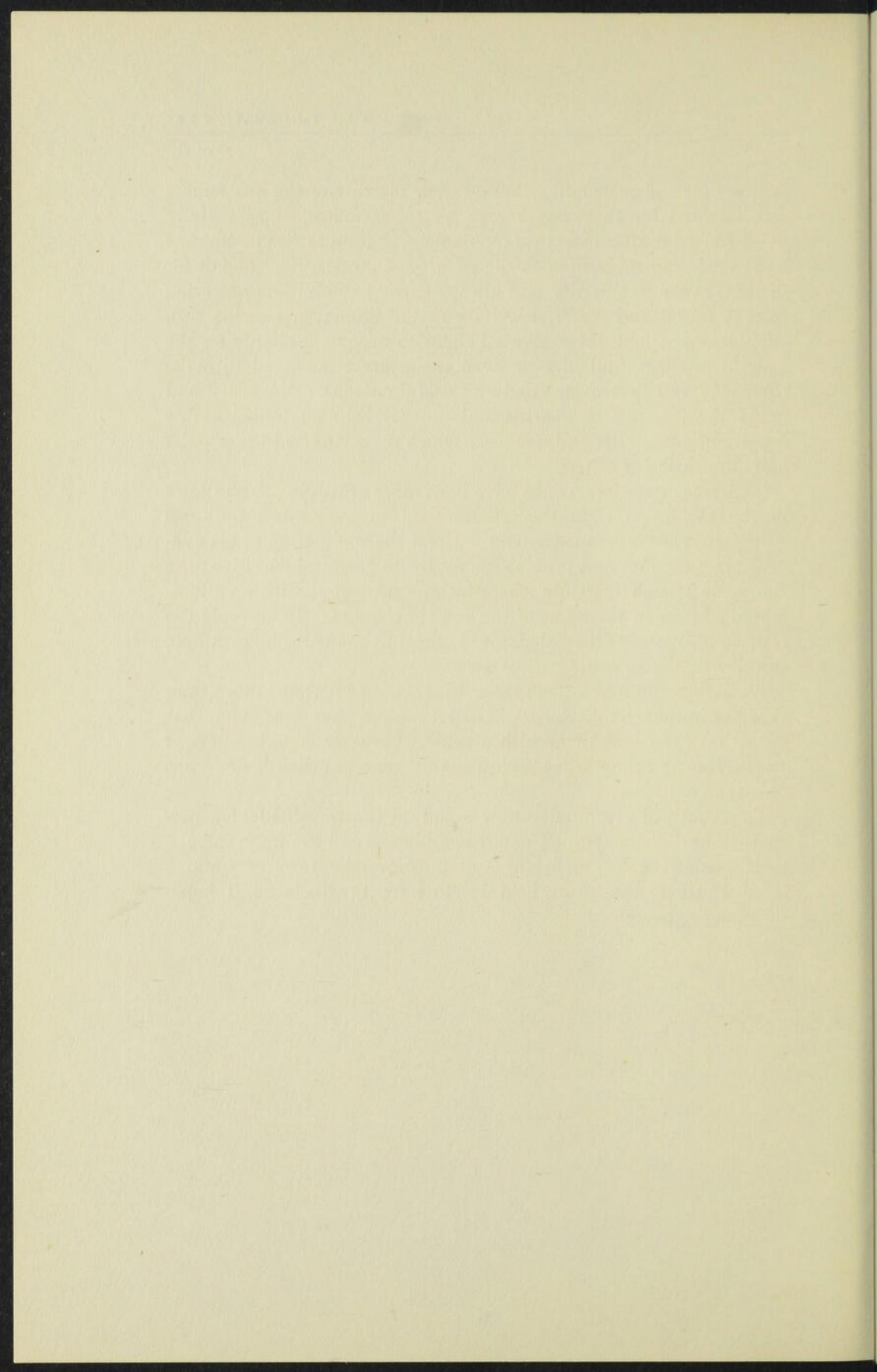
But by now the press had adopted a tone of uniform hostility to the newcomers. Unfavourable comment was not confined to such disingenuous sheets as the *Bystander* or the *Weekly Sun* of Toronto; so staid a paper as the *Montreal Star*, fearfully conjuring up a bogey, characterized the helpless immigrants as a "formidable menace" to the country and bitterly attacked the government for having permitted them to land; the *Gazette* was no better and even the usually liberal *Witness* was infected with the prevailing hysteria. The truth is that the moulders of public opinion, whatever their

motives for the onslaught, whether their distrust of the newcomers was inspired by their poverty or by other factors, had wilfully overlooked one all-important fact, namely, that no Jewish immigrant had ever become a burden on the country at large. For good or for ill the Jewish community had always carried the burden of caring for the moral and material welfare of the immigrants on its own shoulders and had never allowed them to become a charge on the general public. And in time even the poorest managed to make their way and to become good and useful citizens. Necessity had made the practice of charity and mutual help an indispensable feature of Jewish life and a feature which often aroused the wonder and admiration of others.

Nothing, therefore, could have been more gratifying to the Jews in the Dominion than the tribute paid to their work by Lord Aberdeen, the Governor-General. Upon the completion of his five-year term of office and prior to his return to England he visited the Baron de Hirsch Institute where he was presented with an illuminated address in the name of the Jews of Canada. In his reply the retiring Governor-General praised the diversified philanthropic activity of the Jews in glowing terms.

A fitting tribute to them indeed it was, and perhaps more than that; for in the parting words of Lord Aberdeen there was much that could have inspired them with a sense of greater consciousness of themselves at a time, when an interesting period in their history was drawing to a close.

The youthful community now stood on the threshold of a new century and a new era. Confident and secure in the knowledge their own strength and firmness of purpose, the Jews of Canada faced whatever the future held in store for them—faced it hopefully and expectantly.



A P P E N D I X

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A FEW SUPPLEMENTARY  
NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

A P P E N D I X

A NEW SUPPLEMENTARY  
NOTES AND EXERCISES

## APPENDIX

### A FEW SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

#### CHAPTER III.

<sup>1</sup>In his "Journal," Marquis de Montcalm makes reference to the following vessels—to some of them even repeatedly—belonging to Gradis: *Robuste, Prudent, Renommée, David, Jason, Vaillant, Superbe, Foudroyant, Fidèle, Président-le-Berthon, l'Eveillé, l'Angélique*, and *l'Aigle*. These were either bringing relief for the people of New France or reinforcements for his weak, distressed army.

We reproduce here in the original a significant passage from his "Journal," which shows his desperate state of mind. Incidentally, too, he tells of the loss of the ship *l'Aigle* which was carrying recruits, food-stuffs, munitions of war, and clothing for his soldiers:—

"Le 12 octobre 1758 . . . Voila donc le Canada environné de tous les côtés . . . La paix seule peut aujourd'hui sauver cette colonie. Je ne conçois pas comment la France a négligé de faire à Gaspé un solide établissement et une place forte. C'est la porte du Canada; sa position est infiniment préférable à celle du Louisbourg comme chef de la colonie, comme entrepôt et comme ville de commerce pour les gens de toute espèce. Ma crainte aujourd'hui . . . est que le Anglois en supposant qu'ils consentent à faire la paix cet hiver, ne veuillent éxiger que la France ne fera aucun établissement à Gaspé.

"Le même courrier nous a appris que *l'Aigle*, vaisseau du Roi de cinquante canons, a fait naufrage le 8 août sur les Cailles-de-Quincampoix, à huit lieues de Mécatina. L'équipage s'est sauvé, et n'a pour ressource, depuis le jour de son naufrage, que trente quarts de farine jetés par la vague sur le rivage. Ce navire portait recrues, vivres, munitions de guerre et l'habillement de nos bataillons . . ."

On another occasion he vividly portrays conditions in New France when he writes:

"Grande misère à Québec; murmure du peuple que l'intendant veut mettre, du 1er janvier, au quarteron; émeute de quatre

cents femmes; l'intendant accorde la demi-livre." (*Journal du marquis de Montcalm*, pp. 468-469, 492).

How welcome, then, must have been to him the aid he received from the Jewish shipbuilder of Bordeaux at a time when defeat on the one hand and starvation of the people on the other were grimly staring him in the face.

<sup>2</sup>We quote from the "Diary" kept by Sir Alexander Schomberg, and now in the Archives at Ottawa, the following interesting notes as written by him:

July 11.—receive orders from Admiral Saunders, to quit my station at St Laurent & to come up to join him.

at  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 7 A M

July 12, Found Ad. Saunders & anchor'd off Point Levis in 9 Fam. Water.

Point Levis SW  $\frac{1}{2}$  W

Quebec (the body) SW b W  $\frac{1}{2}$  W

Fall of Montmorency N b E -

At 8 A M went on shore at Montmorency Camp, & gave directions about disembarking the guns

July 13.

at  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 8, our Battery at Point Levi open'd & the Bomb vessel began to play- sky rockets was the Sig.-Dist from ye Battery to ye Lower Town about 130 yards

a number of Canoes with Indians, & women came down the river, & were received at Quebec, by a Volley of small arms in rear, they return'd the War Whoop this it seems is the ceremony when they join.

Note. This looks as if Gen. Amherst was not far off as otherwise they wou'd not send their Women down.-

July 18 -

Went on shore to reconnoitre the Ground - & the Coast may be approached from the Escarpe of the Fall of Montmorency beyond the first Redoubt -

July 19

Recd. orders from Adm. Saunders to hold myself in readiness to pass the Town of Quebec at 5 P.M. the Wind sprung up Easterly & I went on board to Capt. Rous of the Sutherland to receive his orders which were that I shou'd follow him.

#### CHAPTER IV.

<sup>3</sup>Another Jew by the name of Abraham (not to be confused with Abrahams), states the same writer in *Publications* no 35 of the American Jewish Historical Society, on the basis of a study made of the "Amherst Papers," "is mentioned as one of the soldiers taken prisoner with Captain Kennedy in Canada, in November, 1759. The circumstances in which the party was captured are typical of some of the worst hazards of the times. The military operations of the year centred chiefly on Quebec against which Wolfe was to lead an expedition. At the same time Amherst was to attempt to reach Canada by way of Ticonderoga and Crown Point. It was while Amherst paused at the latter place in order to build a fortress that he found himself unable to communicate with Wolfe at Quebec. He therefore sent Captain Kennedy, with some companions, including Abraham, to go through the forest by way of certain Indian settlements. Kennedy was instructed that, if he encountered any Indians, he was to reward them handsomely for taking him and his companions to Gen. Wolfe. But the Indians, instead of honouring his flag of truce, captured Kennedy and his men. The report of the capture was conveyed to Amherst by a letter from Montcalm.

"There is also mention, for 1760, of Jacob Wolf and Joseph Wexler, when military operations for the final reduction of Canada were in full swing. They were recruits reinlisted for the Second Battalion of the Royal American Regiment at Quebec. They were possibly German Jews." (FRANCES DUBLIN, A. M., *ibid.*, p. 6.)

<sup>4</sup>The year of Hart's arrival on this continent is variously given. However, from a note apparently written by himself in a prayerbook he left, it can be definitely established that it was 1752. He crossed the ocean that year coming first to Jamaica and after a short stay at Jamaica went to New York.

#### CHAPTER IX.

<sup>5</sup>The statement made by Clarence I. de Sola on one occasion ("History of the Corporation of Spanish and Portuguese Jews 'Shearith Israel' of Montreal," 1918, p. 28), to the effect that Henry Joseph established large trading posts "in conjunction with his father-in-law, Levy Solomons," and since repeated by others, is most absurd. It is probable that neither even knew of the other's existence while Levy Solomons was yet alive. The latter died in 1792, at approximately the time that Henry Joseph, then a youth of

17, came to Canada. According to the Diary kept by Samuel David, a contemporary of both, Henry Joseph was married to Rachel Solomons on September 28, 1803, or fully eleven years after Levy Solomons' death.

<sup>6</sup>This petition has a strange and peculiar history. To all present appearances it is entirely an anonymous document, for we do not know the identity of the petitioners nor do we know by whom it was introduced in the Assembly of Lower Canada. Until recent years we did not even know the exact date of its presentation. The late Clarence I. de Sola, in his article "Canada," in the *Jewish Encyclopedia* (vol. iii), gives the date as 1823. He also refers to the proceedings which the petition brought about in the House in 1828. He was not, of course, aware at that time that both dates were really one and the same—1828. His information apparently was based on a typographical error which appears on page 422 in *La Revue canadienne* for 1870, in the article "Les droits politiques des Juifs en Canada," by Joseph Tassé. Not only was there no such long interval of time between the first presentation of the petition and the introduction of a Bill to remedy the situation, but the legislators of Lower Canada, mainly French-Canadians, were most anxious even to "speed" the passage of such a Bill when introduced.

This is amply borne out by the following extracts from the Journals of the Assembly of Lower Canada:

Saturday, December 13th, 1828.

Report on  
Petition from  
divers Israel-  
ites.

Mr. Solicitor General, from the Special Committee to whom was referred the Petition of divers Israelites, resident in the District of Montreal, reported that the Committee had examined the contents of the said Petition, and had come to an opinion thereon, which he was directed to submit to the House whenever it shall be pleased to receive the same; and he read the Report in his place, and afterwards delivered it in at the Clerk's Table, where it was again read, as followeth:

Your Committee having carefully examined the Petition referred to them, are of opinion that the prayer thereof ought to be granted.

Jews' relief  
Bill,

On a motion of Mr. Solicitor General, seconded by Mr. Louis Lagueux,

Ordered, That Mr. Solicitor General have leave to

bring in a Bill to extend certain privileges therein mentioned, to persons of the Jewish Faith, and for the purpose of obviating certain inconveniences to which others of His Majesty's subjects might be exposed.

received and  
read the first  
time

He accordingly presented the said Bill to the House, and the same was received, and read for the first time.

Ordered, That the said Bill be read a second time on Friday next.

Friday, 19th December, 1828.

Jews' relief  
Bill read the  
second time;

A Bill to extend certain privileges therein mentioned, to persons of the Jewish Faith, and for the purpose of obviating certain inconveniences to which others of His Majesty's subjects might otherwise be liable, was, according to order, read a second time.

On Motion of Mr. Solicitor General, seconded by Mr. Vallières,

referred.

Resolved, That the said Bill be referred to a Committee of five Members, to report thereon with all convenient speed, with power to send for persons, papers and records.

Ordered, That Mr. Solicitor General, Mr. Leslie, Mr. Quesnel, Mr. Viger and Mr. Lee do compose the said Committee. (JOURNALS OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY OF LOWER CANADA, 1828-29, vol. 38, pp. 141, 172).

### CHAPTER XIII.

It appears that doubts arose in the minds of some people as to the authenticity of the story told by Rabbi Nissim Ben Shelomoh, the messenger from Persia, and the genuineness of his mission. Rumors to that effect reached the ears of Rev. Abraham de Sola who, in order to justify his great personal interest in the charitable task which brought the Persian Rabbi to this continent, felt compelled to make public the following letter:

“TO THE EDITOR OF THE OCCIDENT

Montreal, 18th Ab, 5609.

“Reverend Sir:—In the July number of your periodical, you give extracts from, and a review of a letter received from Mr, Simeon Abrahams, of New York. In connexion with that letter.

you refer to R. Nissim Ben Shelomoh, the messenger from Hamadan, (more generally, though I think incorrectly, known as from *Shushan*), Persia, approving the conduct of those who responded to his appeals, and expressing your conviction of his honesty and veracity. From this circumstance, I would conclude that Mr. Abrahams was under the impression that our Persian friend was not, *de facto*, what he pretended to be. I am the more disposed to such a conclusion, because Mr. A., in a late communication to me, states that, when in Constantinople, 'several Persians, who lived near the place where R. Nissim came from, had heard nothing about the matter.' My worthy friend will, I am sure, pardon my referring to this much of a private letter. In a reply, which Mr. A. probably received after forwarding his communication to the Occident, I endeavoured to show him that the Persian's ignorance of the matter was no conclusive proof of the non-integrity of the Rabbi, or of his mission. This I did at some length. It is therefore not so much to clear R. Nissim with Mr. Abrahams, (who is, I trust, by this time quite convinced of the Rabbi's probity), as it is to show the Jewish public generally that 'Surely Brutus is an honourable man,' that I beg to present the following considerations. 1. Rabbi Nissim carried with him documents from the ecclesiastical and lay authorities of the 'Synagogue of Mordecai and Esther,' the principal Jewish congregation in Persia, of Morocco, London, etc., all bearing *the most conclusive internal evidence* of their genuineness. To show how far misrepresentation has extended, I might state, *en parenthèse*, that Mr. Abrahams was informed that both Portuguese and German Dayanim in London had refused to countersign the messenger's credentials. Now not only did they give the usual letters of recommendation\*, but the Rabbi spoke in terms of the warmest gratitude of the kindly consideration with which he was treated by the Rev. Mr. Meldola, presiding Rabbi of the Portuguese congregation, in particular. This gentleman, (whom I have the honour to call uncle), also addressed me in very favourable terms respecting Rabbi N., long before his arrival in Canada. 2. Some of the representations of Rabbi Nissim are authenticated by the published statements of those who, as having no possible interest

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\*That of the Portuguese Chief Dayan was attached to the parchment Hebrew MS.

for misrepresenting the matter, cannot be so charged; while others are supported by the little we already know of the state of our Persian brethren, and by the greater knowledge we have of their degenerate oppressors. 3. The Rabbi had no other inducement to undertake his mission but a respectful deference to the authority which sent him. He did not receive the usual one-third of the net proceeds for commission; he did not desire to receive the donations himself, but requested that they should be paid either to Mr. Samson (I believe) of New York, or to Sir Moses Montefiore, for remittance to their destination; and he only asked the necessary funds for the expenses of his road. This was his proceeding, not only here, but wherever he went, excepting, perhaps, some few places where the amount collected was small, and could not be remitted without a heavy and unproportionate expense. 4. The mission was a positive evil to him. He was physically weak, and of a too unsophisticated mind to battle with its difficulties, or to become a successful pleader. The poor man had moreover become almost blind from cataract, no doubt induced, as a medical friend, on whose opinion I place the greatest reliance, informed me by travelling in uncongenial climates; and still he pursued his journey, in spite of all its dangers, because 'his days were not fulfilled.' These considerations induce me, like you, to 'pledge my word that he is no impostor;' and I will cheerfully endeavour to prove this more fully, should circumstances so require. I would have added, in the fifth place, that his undeviatingly pious and proper deportment while among us would also tend to show his worth; but it is with surprise that I find you remark on his 'bad temper.' I trust that you merely allude to his reputed conduct elsewhere. and that you yourself never saw any indications of it. I am sure I need not remind you, sir, that when a man finds himself in a place where he cannot make himself understood, he undergoes a sufficient trial of his temper. Every Englishman who visits France, without knowing French, generally experiences this. Then how much more trying must it be for the Eastern traveller, who, let us charitably recollect, is always of a more inflammatory temperament than ourselves, and who finds habits and customs, as well as language, entirely strange to him? In justice to Rabbi Nissim, I must state that his bearing, during the six weeks he resided in Montreal, was such as to leave a most favour-

able and gratifying recollection, not only among his Hebrew friends, but among many intelligent and respectable Christians also. It is true that Rabbi N. was looked upon here as a *rara avis in terra*, being the first Persian known to have trod Canadian ground. But, granting that the Rabbi actually does possess this infirmity of temper, what follows? Simply that, satisfied of his own integrity and the justness of his cause, he eschews—not to say disdains—a more insinuating, conciliatory line of policy, to obtain what he considers should be accorded to him freely and readily. This, however wrong, cannot, or at least should not militate against the propriety of the mission, or deter any one from affording all possible relief. That a more fitting person might have been selected, is very possible; and that, as you, sir, remark, his ignorance of any European language ill qualifies him to make a successful appeal, is very sure; but I would beg to state, on the Rabbi's authority, that, the Haham excepted, there were few or none better qualified in this respect than Rabbi Nissim himself.

“I had intended making some remarks on the information I obtained from R. Nissim, relative to the present state of our Persian brethren; but as this communication has already extended to a greater length than was designed, and as I conceive that anything referring to Israelites, wherever they be, will always find a place in the Occident, I will send you these at some other time, as also will I forward you my ‘Notes on the state of the Persian Israelites, under the rule of Mahommed Shah;’ and should you consider either likely to be worthy of place in your periodical, I will render them at your service forthwith.

“Leaving to your sense of justice and impartiality the insertion of the above humble attempt to vindicate the character of a worthy man, I subscribe myself, with sentiments of respectful esteem,

Your obedient servant,

ABRAHAM DE SOLA.”

(*The Occident*, vol vii, pp. 315-317).

## CHAPTER XVI.

<sup>s</sup>It is to be regretted that the minutes of the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation of Montreal, covering that period, have been

lost. We are thus in the dark as to the ultimate course adopted by the leaders of that Congregation in solving the problem which confronted them. Here, however, are two interesting documents, recently discovered, which shed some light on the whole controversy. They not only go a long way in filling the gap of the missing minutes of the Portuguese Congregation as far as the School Question is concerned, but they tell us, too, of the causes which split the Jewish community of Montreal in two opposing camps. The documents read as follows:

October 13th, 1874.

S. Davis, Esq.,

President of The Portuguese Congregation.

Dear Sir,

I have to request that you will call together a General Meeting of the Congregation at as early a date as possible, in order that they may take into consideration the report that I have to make of the result of the labors of the Joint Committee of the Portuguese and German English Synagogues, and receive the recommendations that I think it my duty to make. In accordance with the notice given, a meeting of the Committees from the two Synagogues took place. I was elected Chairman of the Joint Committee thus formed, and it was proposed at this Meeting that the intended School should be called the Jewish Educational Establishment for the education of Jewish children in English and Hebrew, and that the expenses of the said School should be borne equally by the two Congregations. The said expenses would probably be \$1,000 annually to each, or perhaps more. That there should be three Masters for the School, one to be appointed by each Congregation, and the third to be selected from the most eligible teachers that might present themselves; that the salary of each Master should be about \$600 annually, and that the children should be educated according to the German Minhag only; these propositions emanating from the Committee of the German English Synagogue. I had personally no objection to these conditions down to the last clause. But this *last* proposition, the most important of all, I felt that I could not agree to. I held that it was an insult to the community that I represented, to ignore entirely the Portuguese Minhag; I felt that I should be traitorous to those who appointed

me, and recreant to the interests confided to my charge, were I to vote for the adoption of the clause that the German Minhag alone should be the one in which the children of both Congregations alike should be educated. I knew that our views were liberal and that we did not want to force upon them the adoption of our Minhag, and I felt that it was both bigoted and disrespectful on their part to urge the adoption of this last clause.

However they would not listen to any other proposition or idea than their own, they voted and carried by superior numbers the resolution so objectionable. They also mentioned that their Synagogue would not sanction any other arrangement, and this statement was confirmed, in my judgement, by the fact that several officers of their Congregation were present besides the School Committee. With this principal to start from, the evidence of such bigotry and illiberal views on the part of our Sister Congregation, I felt and I feel now that amalgamation is hopeless; there would be endless petty bickerings and trouble arising, and I have to resign the wish I so fondly held, that we should be able to complete the Establishment of a School for the United Jews at our next General Meeting.

This being the case, I have to ask you to convene a General Meeting of the Portuguese Synagogue, to take into consideration the immediate establishment of a School for ourselves, at which not only our own children, but those of the German English Congregation may attend if they wish. A School-Room could be secured for the 1st of November, we could get a Teacher on from New York at once, and Dr. De Sola, I am at liberty to mention will superintend the School and give us the benefit of his cordial assistance and able experience. We should no longer ignore our obligations to the children, but give them the benefit of such an educational Institution; and this we should do, not only as a sacred duty, but because we shall prevent any diminution of our own numbers which might arise should some send their children to the other School, and so be induced to give up their seats in our Synagogue.

There remains but one thing to be done, to send a reply to the German English Synagogue that having received the report of the Chairman of the Joint Committee on the School amalgamation we cannot sanction the resolution passed for the use of the German Minhag alone, and that we regret the termination

of the negotiations necessitated by such a resolution, and must decline to re-open the subject.

This is my opinion arrived at after much deliberation and with sincere regret.

Requesting you to at once call a General Meeting of the Portuguese Congregation for the above matter,

I am, dear Sir,

Faithfully yours,

(signed) D. A. ANSELL.

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### REPORT OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE

The Joint Committee appointed by the Congregations of the German and the Portuguese Jews of Montreal for the purpose of inquiring into the advisability of establishing in this City a Hebrew Educational Institute, in which the young of both sexes may acquire a thorough knowledge of the Hebrew language and Religion, and also a general secular education in primary branches, and the best plan of founding the same, if deemed necessary, beg leave to submit the following Report of the result of their deliberations:—

The Committee fully recognise the absolute necessity of establishing in this City a Jewish Free School; and they have arrived at the conclusion that such a School can be best formed on the following basis:—

1st. That each Congregation elect three Commissioners to form a Board for the Government of the School; one of each set of Commissioners to retire in turn every year, and to be eligible however, for re-election. These Commissioners shall annually select one of their number to act as Chairman of the Board, and such selection shall be made alternately from the Representatives of the German and Portuguese Congregations.

2nd. That the School be free to Jewish children of both sexes, who shall be taught, in separate departments, the rudiments of the English, French and German Languages, Geography, Grammar, Writing and Arithmetic, and a thorough knowledge of the Hebrew Language, and of our Holy Religion, and Scriptural History, according to ancient Orthodox custom.

That children be admitted to receive an education in all the above branches of knowledge from the age of five years up to that of twelve; after which age, and until they attain that of fifteen, they shall be received for the purpose only of completing their Hebrew and Religious Education.

3rd. That the Hebrew Language be taught according to the German pronunciation only.

4th. That no fees or charge be made or accepted for any pupil.

5th. That the Board of Commissioners accept the services of two competent teachers of the Jewish Religion, one to be appointed and paid by each Synagogue; and that, in the event of the failure of either Congregation to provide a Teacher, the Board shall do so, and shall collect his salary, which is not to exceed Six Hundred Dollars a year, from the Congregation so making default; any other Teachers who may be required shall be appointed by the Commissioners.

6th. The Committee estimate the expense of a Jewish Free School, such as proposed, at the yearly sum of Twelve Hundred Dollars, to be defrayed in equal shares by the two Congregations. This sum is exclusive of the salaries of the two Teachers before spoken of.

The Committee recommend that two hundred copies of this Report be printed and distributed among the Members of both Congregations; and that a Special General Meeting of either Congregation be called for the purpose of taking their Report into consideration, and, if approved of, of giving to it an immediate effect.

The whole of which is respectfully submitted.

DAVID A. ANSELL,  
Chairman.

B. KORTOSK,  
Secretary.

Heshoan, 5635.  
Montreal, October, 1874.

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#### MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE

D. A. Ansell,  
G. M. Jacobs,  
L. Kellert,  
J. G. Ascher,  
Alx. Saunders,

M. Lessner,  
L. Silverman,  
L. Abrahams,  
N. Freedman,  
B. Kortosk.

## CHAPTER XVII.

<sup>9</sup>The words spoken by Cardinal Manning on that memorable occasion are worth repeating today. Speaking on behalf of Catholics he declared:

"... Further, I may say that, while we do not intend to touch upon any question in the internal legislation of Russia, still there are laws larger than any Russian legislation, laws which are equally binding in London, in St. Petersburg, and in Moscow—the laws of humanity, of nature, and of God—which are the foundation of all other laws; and if in any legislation these are violated, all nations of Christian Europe, the whole commonwealth of civilized and Christian men, would instantly acquire a right to speak out loud. And now, my Lord, I must touch upon one point which I acknowledge has been very painful to me. We have all watched for the last twelve months what is called the anti-Semitic movement in Germany. I look upon it with a two-fold feeling; in the first place, I look upon it with abhorrence as tending to disintegrate the foundations of social life, and, secondly, with great fear lest it may tend to light up an animosity which has already taken fire in Russia and may spread elsewhere."

<sup>10</sup>Sir John A. Macdonald had apparently not been at all moved by the massacre of the Jews. The expressions of horror over the pogroms and of sympathy for the victims seemed to have left him personally indifferent. One might even infer that it was only the intense pressure of public opinion in England, as reflected in the correspondence of the Canadian High Commissioner, which led him to the decision he ultimately made. Unlike the Prime Minister, the High Commissioner had been deeply stirred by events in Russia, and urgently stressed the need for action. For reasons most likely known to him, he even found it necessary, in one letter, to assure Macdonald that "there can be no harm in cultivating them" (the Jews).

On January 25, 1882, Sir Alexander T. Galt, the Canadian High Commissioner, wrote to Macdonald in a letter marked "private":

"The Jewish persecution in Russia has induced me to write Rothschild suggesting that I would like to discuss with him the feasibility of removing the agricultural Jews to Canada. I have only sent my note to-day. It seems not a bad opportunity of interesting the Hebrews in our North West."

In another letter, also marked "private," he discusses the same question more fully. We reproduce it in its entirety:

"Dominion of Canada. Office of the High Commissioner,  
9 Victoria Chambers, London S.W.

"private 3 February, 1882.

"My dear Macdonald,

"As I mentioned in my last note I have had more or less conference with the leading Jews in regard to Emigration from Russia to Canada and at their request I have consented to act on the Mansion House Committee to which I was nominated at the very influential meeting held on Wednesday.

"From what I learn these Russian Jews are a superior class of people, partly farmers, but generally trade people. Most of them were well off and though many have been ruined, still my opinion is that a large proportion will still be found with sufficient means to establish themselves in Canada or the United States if Russia will let them go.

"I found the American Jews were actively promoting emigration to the United States and I thought what was good for them, could not be bad for us.

"When the Committee meet I will know what their ideas are and may perhaps be able to suggest some mode by which, we may get a share. The Jews are really now so influential in Europe, that there can be no harm in cultivating them.

.....  
Sir J. Macdonald.

A. T. GALT."

During the summer of that year Sir Alexander T. Galt visited Canada and on July 7 he wrote to the Prime Minister once more, this time from Montreal. His letter follows:

"Montreal, 7 July, 1882.

"My dear Macdonald,

"I wish you would read the enclosed and determine how far the views of the Jewish Committee can be met.

"I think it of great importance, especially in view of my return to London, and future influence with leading Jews there & in Paris, that you should find the means of giving a district for settlement to these people. It cannot fail to have a good effect.

"Could you give them the spare Mennonite Townships or if this cannot be done, might not some of the Colonization Companies be called on peremptorily to take this land or *leave* it. It seems absurd to have the whole district covered with bogues application (in many cases) to the exclusion of bona fide settlers.

.....  
A. T. GALT."

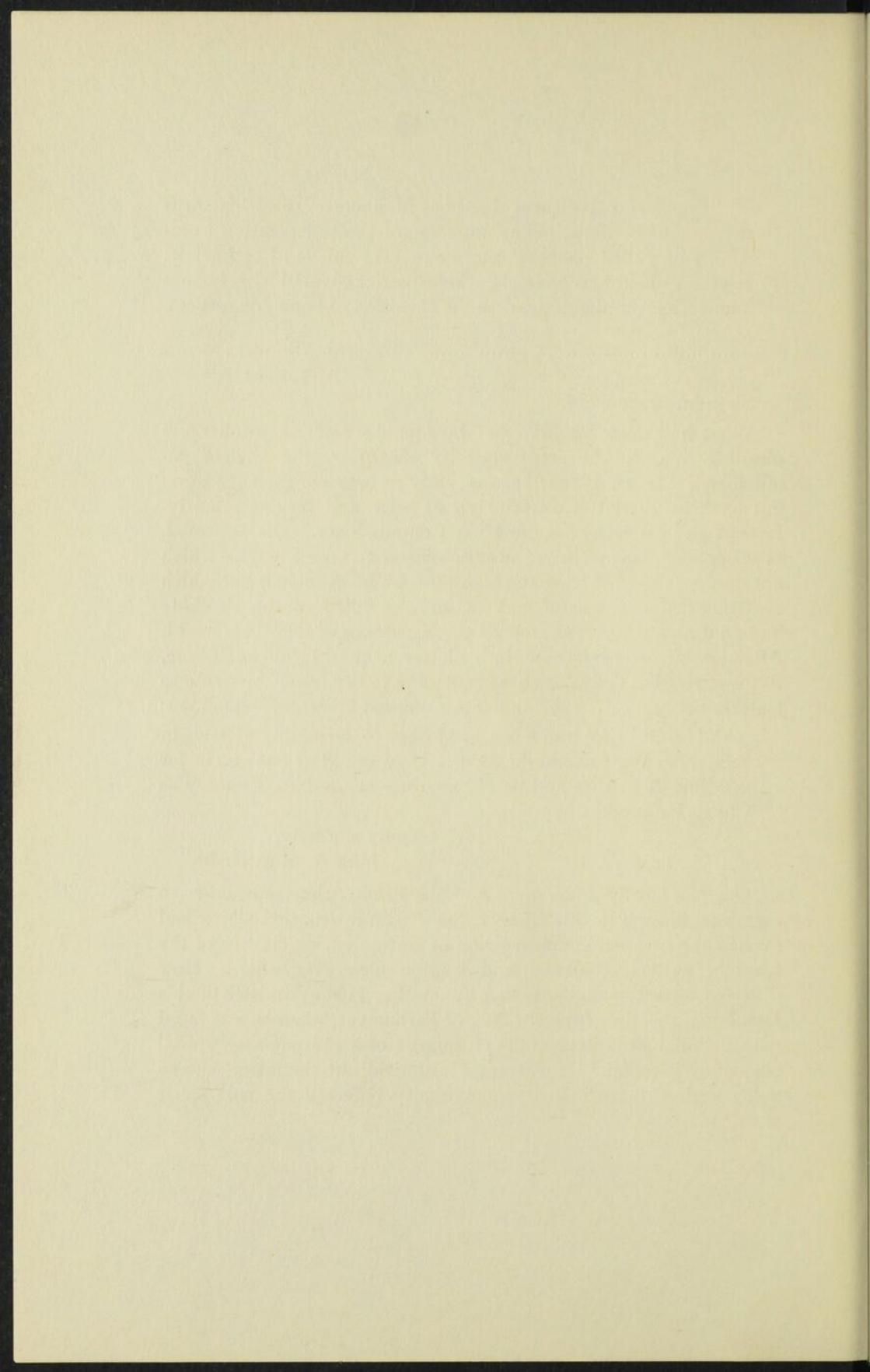
Sir John Macdonald.

What had been Sir John A. Macdonald's reaction to all these pleadings and to the great sincerity shown by the High Commissioner? It seems that he was ready to approve the suggestion put forth by the latter, in principle at least, and very reluctantly. He did so in a letter to the High Commissioner. His approval, however, was couched in the most despicable terms—language which not only was not befitting the high position he occupied, but which also revealed a shameful lack of understanding of the shocking human drama which had aroused the conscience of the whole world. After his sarcastic reference, in his letter to the Marquis of Lorne, to the effect that Galt "has been attending to the Jews," he wrote to Galt on February 27, 1882, in a letter marked "private," as follows:

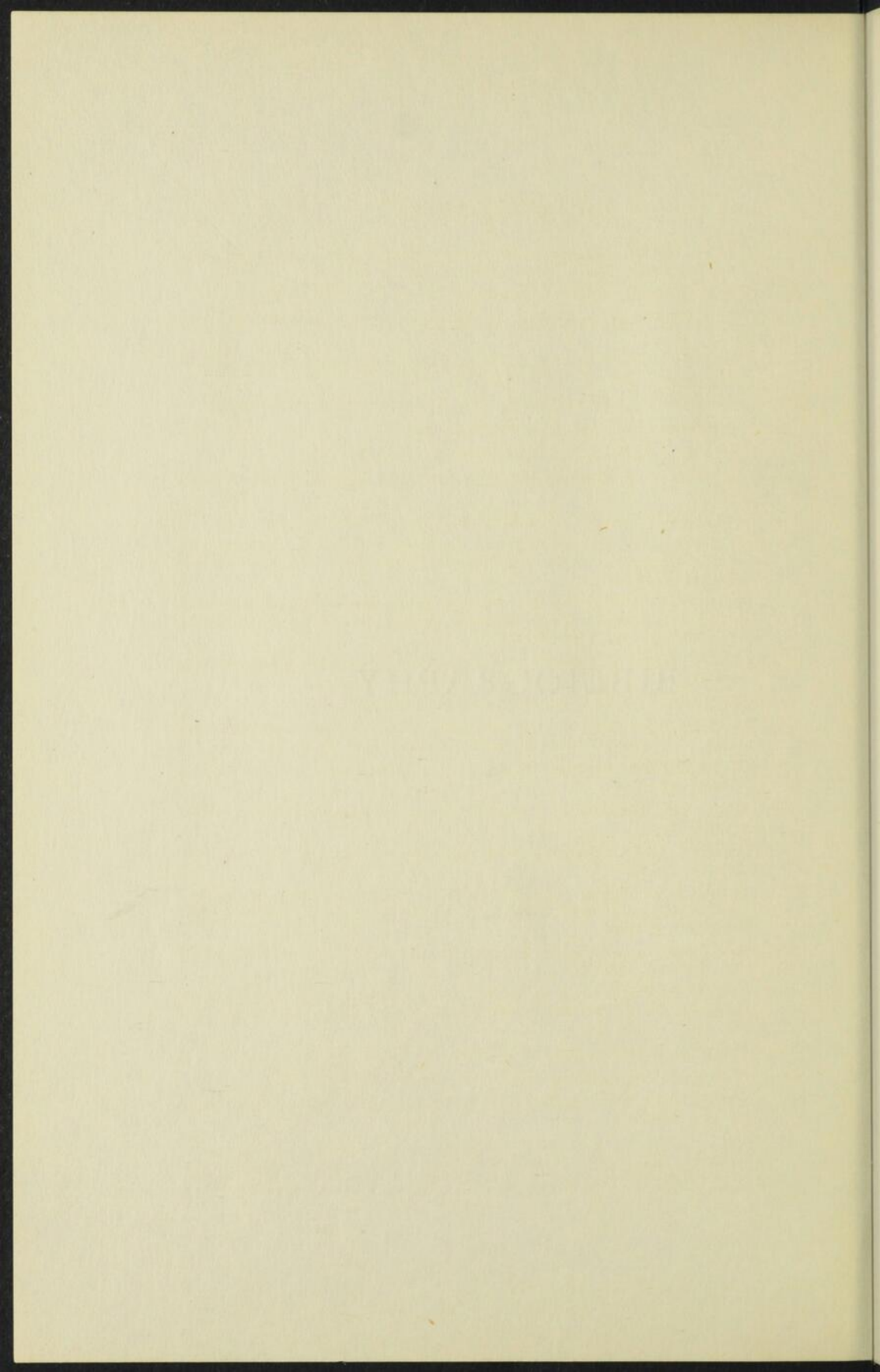
"The Old Clo' move is a good one—A sprinkling of Jews in the North West would do good. They would at once go in for peddling & politics and be of much use in the New Country as Cheap Jacks and Chapmen.

Yours sincerely,  
John A. Macdonald."

One can hardly understand how the Prime Minister could have expressed himself in this manner, faced with a situation which had evoked the greatest commiseration of statesmen, dignitaries of the Church, writers, thinkers, and leading men everywhere. How different were the words spoken by another Prime Minister of this Dominion, this time from the floor of Parliament, when he was faced with a similar situation less than a quarter of a century afterwards! One thing is certain—it was not Macdonald but the latter who so nobly and with such great magnanimity reflected the true spirit of Canada.



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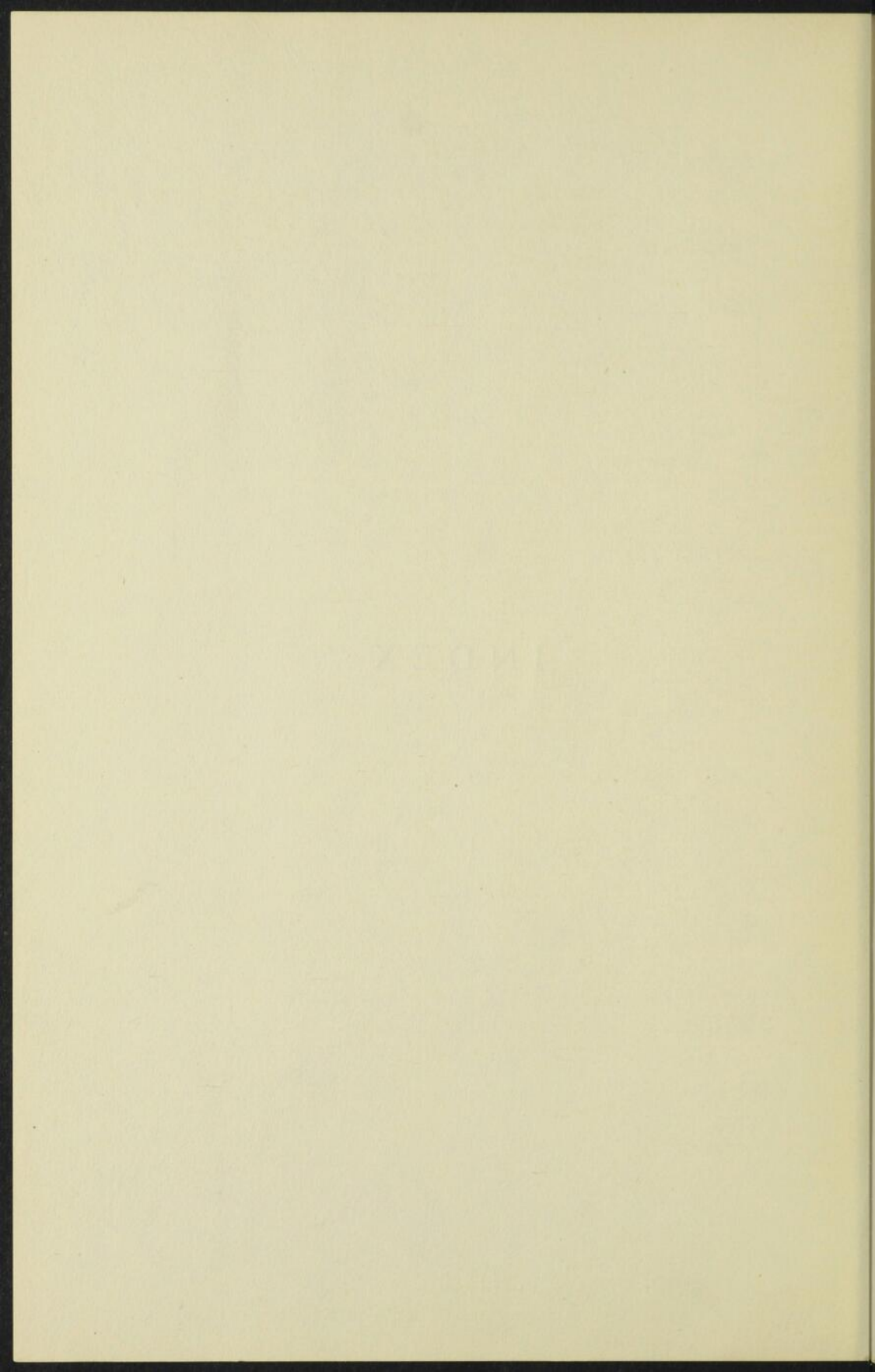
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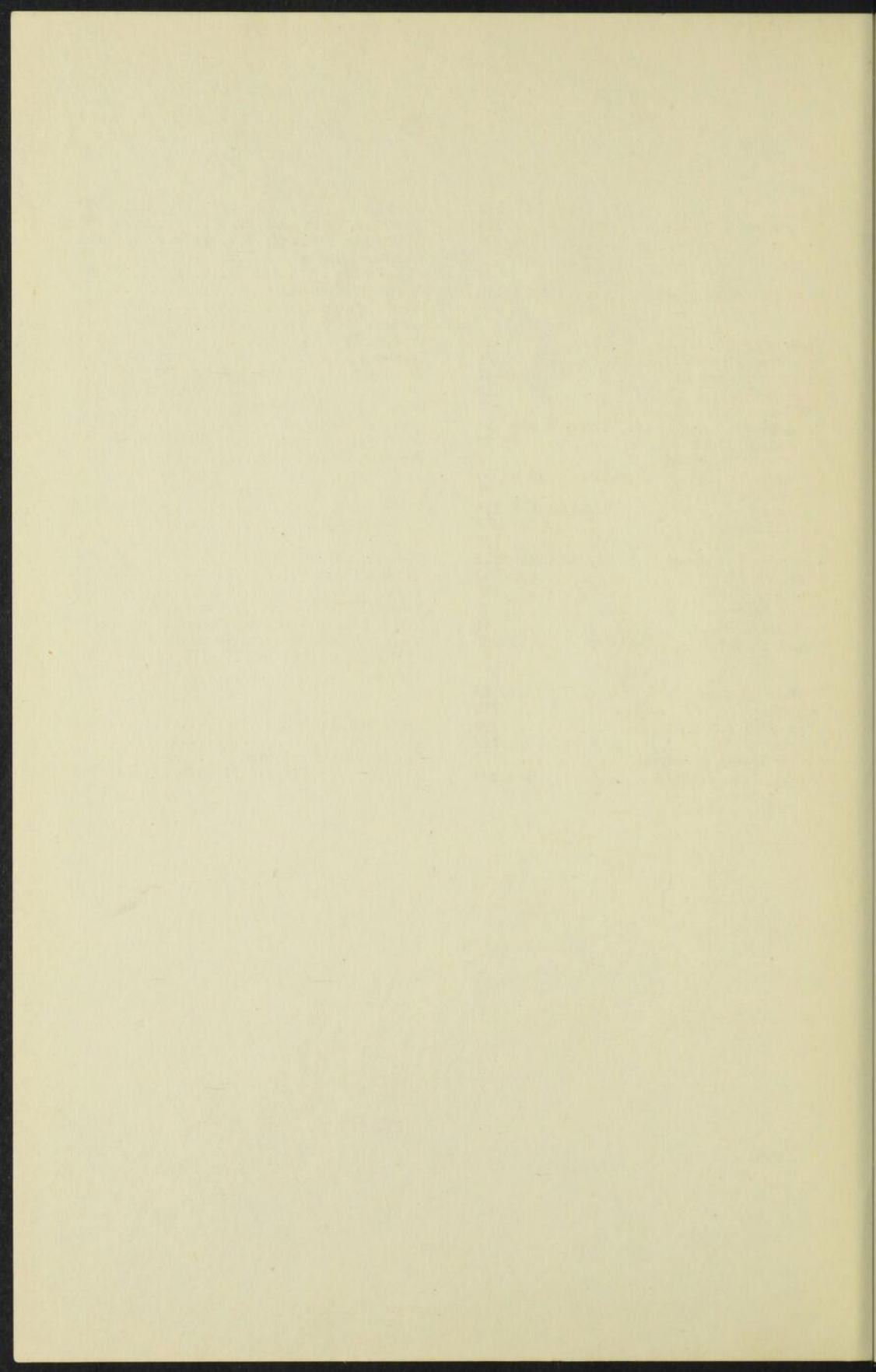
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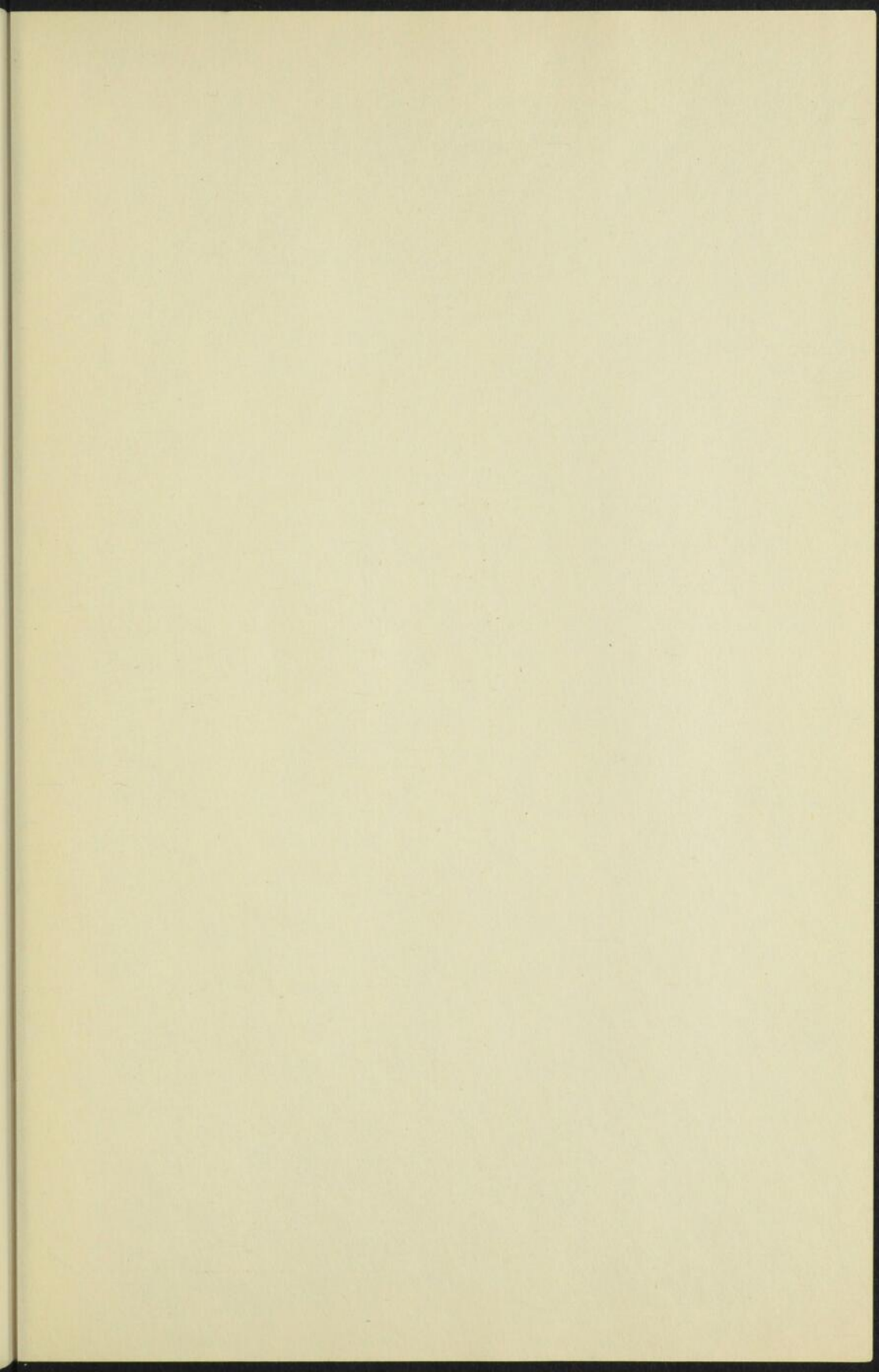
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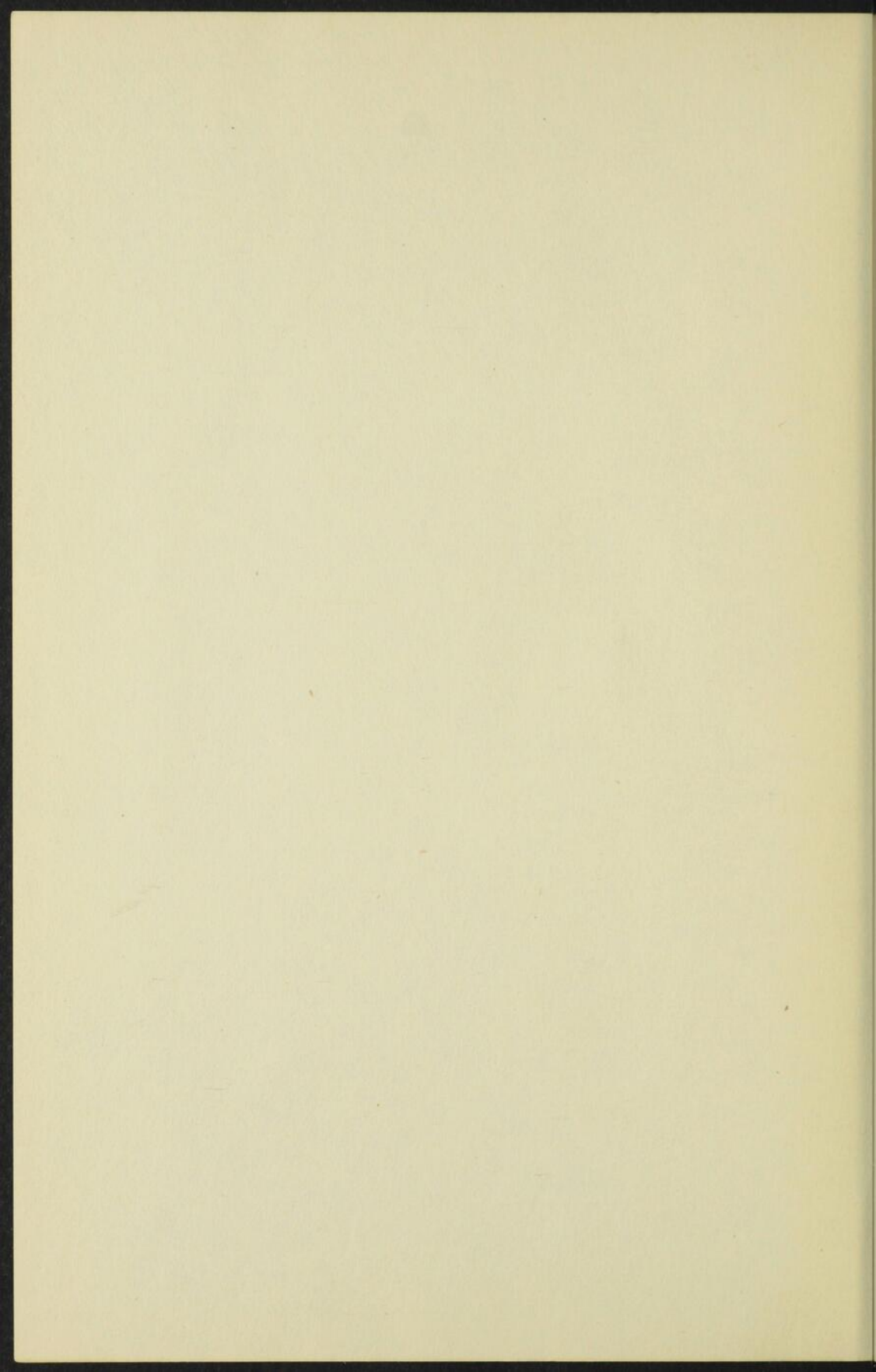
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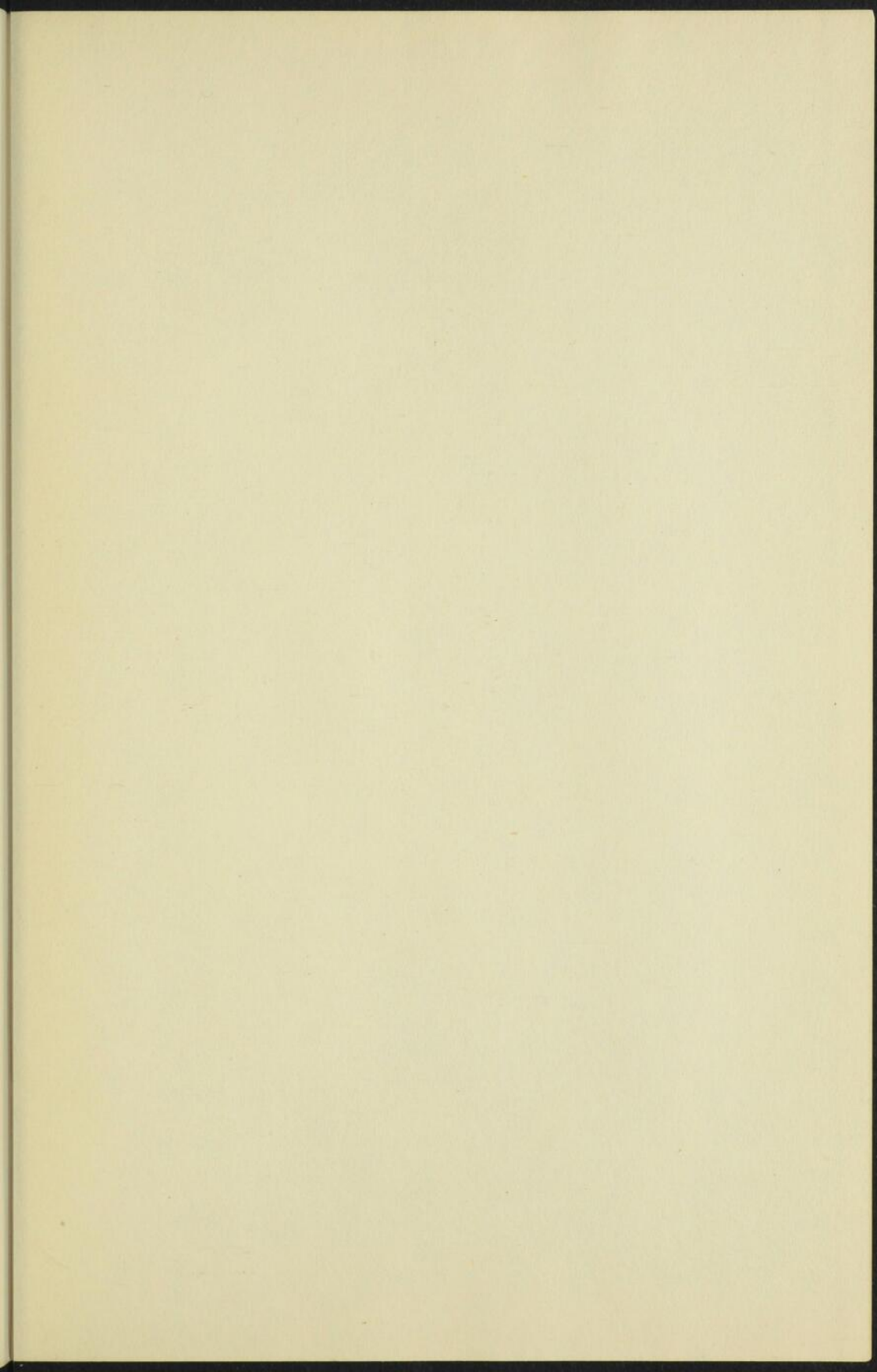
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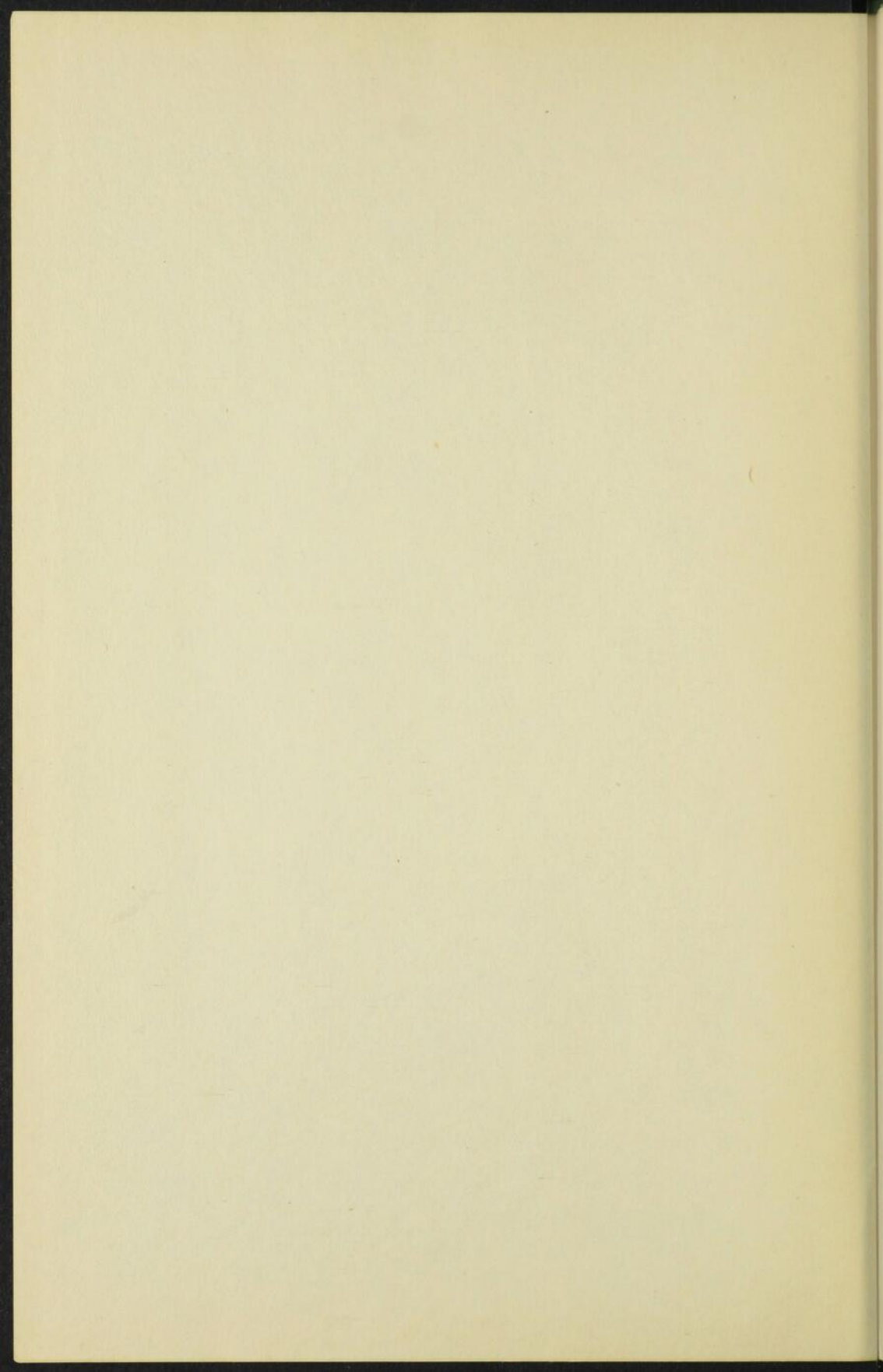
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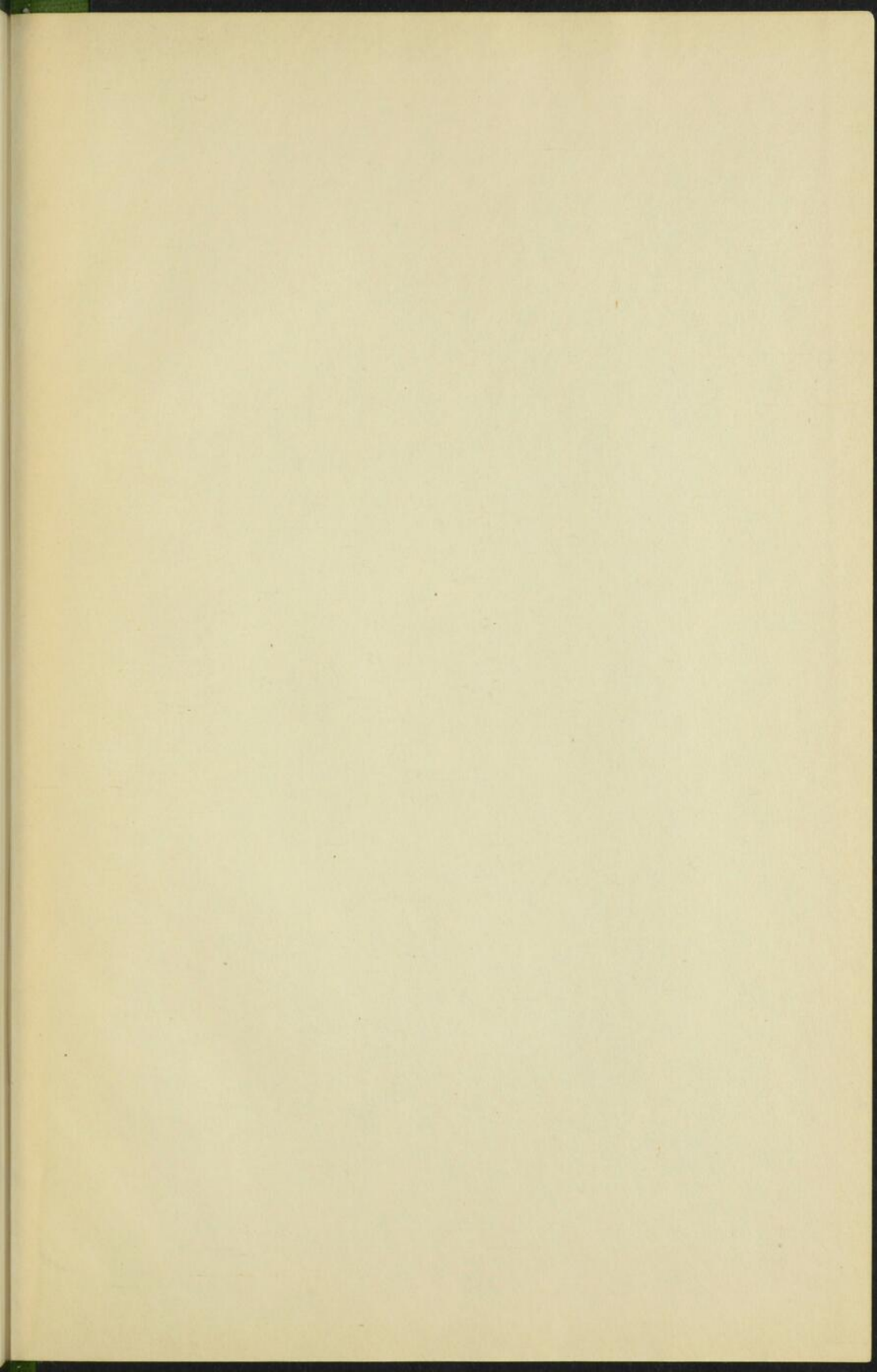


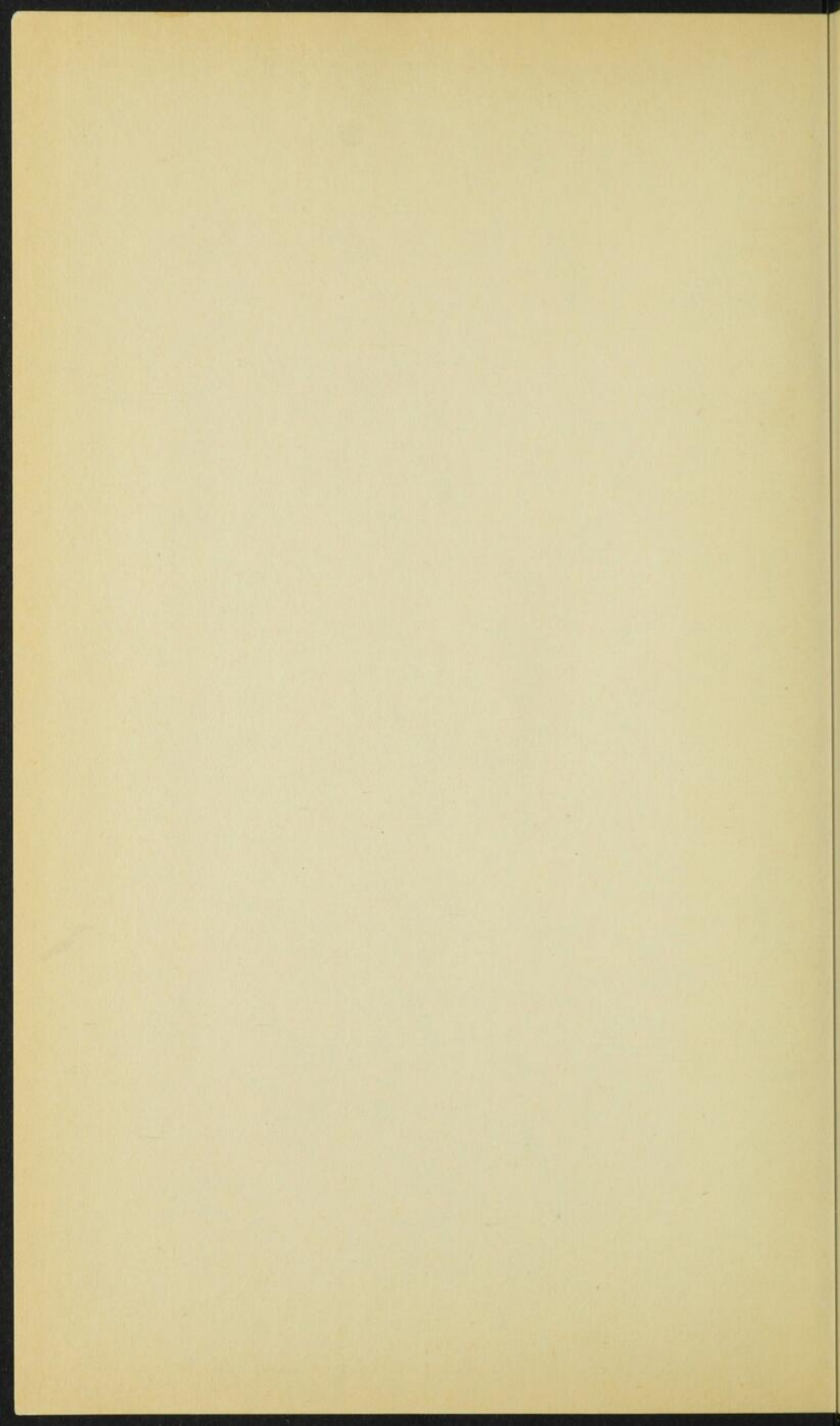


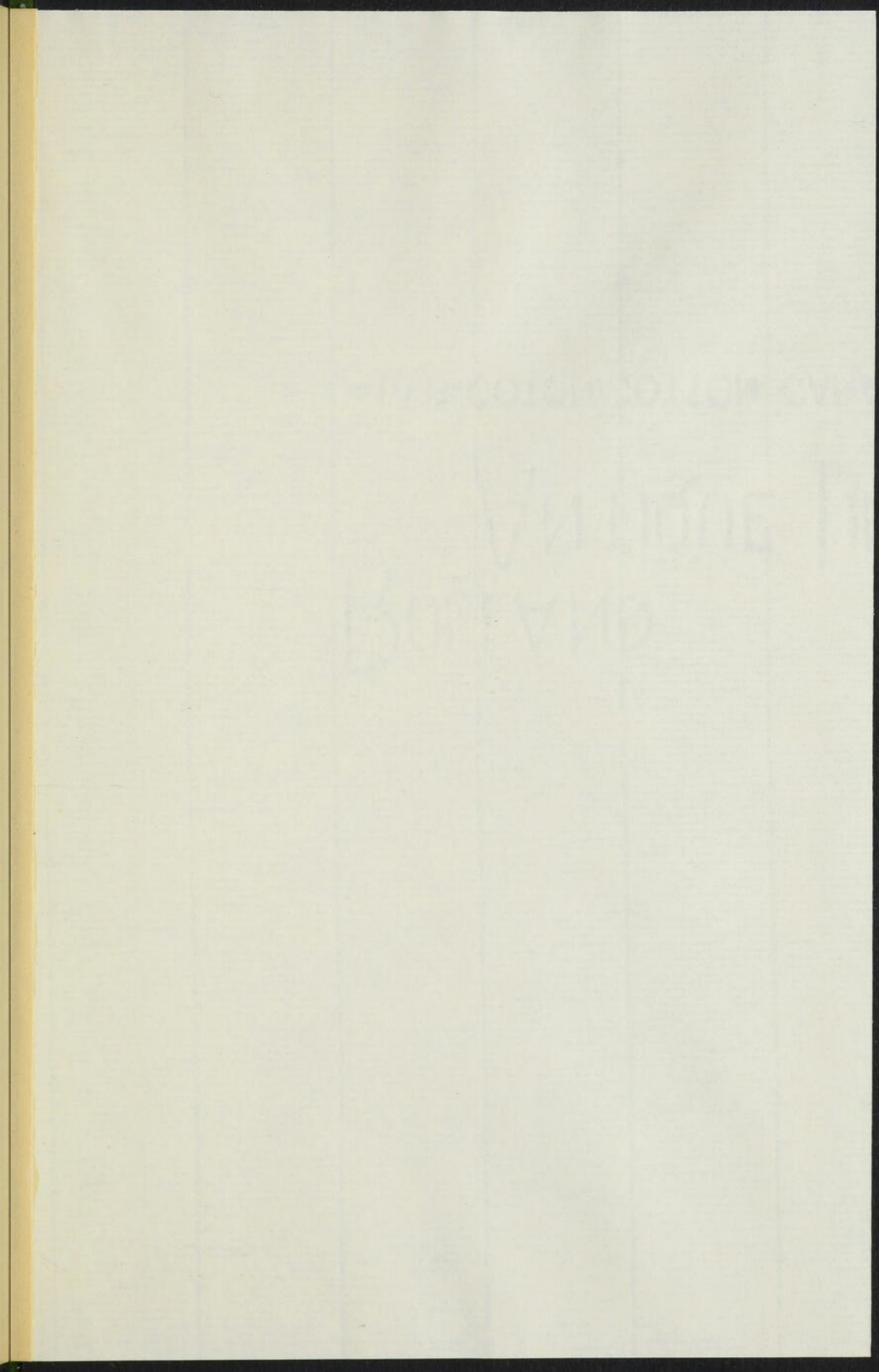


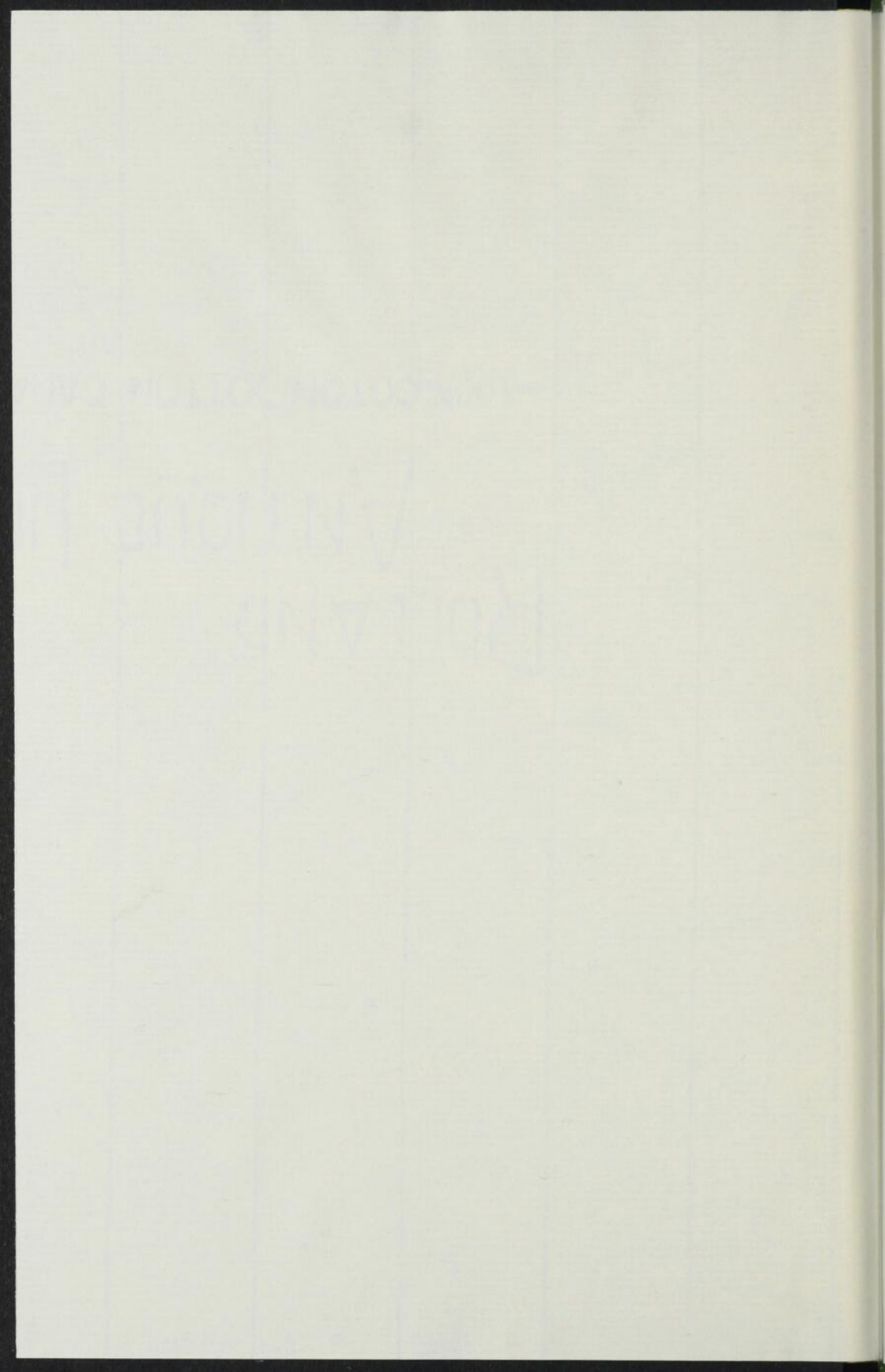


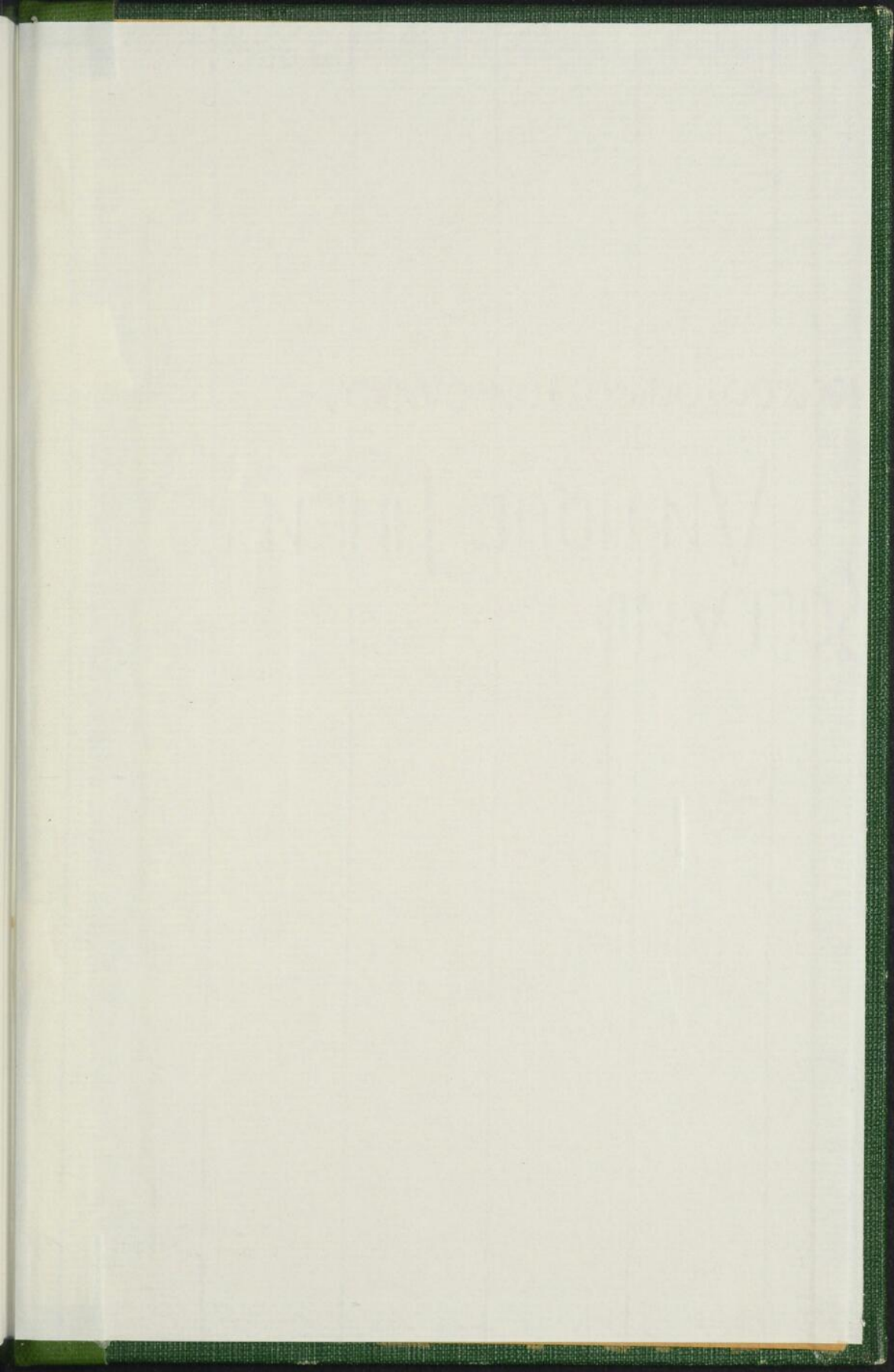












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