

## THE MEDIÆVAL JEWS OF LINCOLN.<sup>1</sup>

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The precise period in which the Jews of ancient date settled in this country is involved in obscurity. There exist no traces of their existence in England before the middle of the eleventh century. Whatever may be urged to the contrary, the mere haphazard mention of the word "Judei" in some of the early penitentials and charters affords no basis for the conclusion that Jews dwelt in England either during the Roman period or under the sway of the Saxons.

It may be accepted as a matter of certainty that the Jewish race first found its way into this realm either at the Conquest in 1066, or some very few years subsequently. They came originally from Rouen, and were favored by William the Norman, who assigned them certain localities for their residences. These localities were appointed in the larger towns solely, such as London, York, Lincoln, Winchester, &c. As a rule, their dwellings were in the immediate neighbourhood of the king's royal castles, and the Jews, termed "Judei nostri," were placed under the jurisdiction of the Constables of the respective castles, so that they might, as far as was practicable, be protected from molestation and ill-usage.

This policy subserved a motive of self-interest on the part of the monarch. It was desired that the Jews should be located in one quarter only of a city or town, in order that the Constable might readily obtain access to them and control them, and might freely ascertain the nature and amount of their property, they being taxed apart from the other inhabitants, and required to yield a large proportion of their gains for the king's needs.

The comparative benignity of William the Conqueror naturally attracted many Jews to these shores. They flocked over from Normandy in vast numbers, and settled among their earlier brethren. London and Lincoln became

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their favorite resting-places. Bringing with them immense treasures, these they employed in lending out at usurious interest to needy barons, to the clergy, and the commonalty, earning, however, for their complaisance, nought but obloquy and reproach. Their restless spirit did not allow them to remain stationary, if money was to be had elsewhere than in the places already assigned them. With the connivance of the authorities, they found means to spread themselves all over the country, so that, after no very lengthened period, scarcely a town or village existed in old England that did not contain its Jew or its contingent of Jews. Bungay in Suffolk, for instance, became a favorite locality for the Hebrews, and here they flourished not only as money-lenders, but as corn and wool merchants, and traffickers in all kinds of vegetable produce. It must be noted, however, that while dwelling on sufferance in prohibited localities, they were required to register themselves as Jews of the nearest royal city, and were taxed with their brethren of such town.

The Jews who settled in Lincoln soon after the Conquest made their way to the northern part of the city, and dwelt in that portion known as the "Bail," being partly under the jurisdiction of the Constable of the castle, and partly under the authority of the Bishop of the diocese. Here they formed a "communa," or community, being permitted the free exercise of their religious rites and ceremonies, subject to the control of their Rabbis and their other clerical officers. From the very earliest day Lincoln was distinguished for its Jewish notabilities, both clerical and secular. The name of Aaron of Lincoln is well known, he being doubtless the prototype of Isaac of York, made famous by Sir Walter Scott in *Ivanhoe*. Leo, or Levi, of Lincoln, is cited in the records as being one of the richest men in England. Magister Joce was another of similar character, and Magister Benedict fil' Magister Moses was in a later age the most prominent figure in Lincoln during the latter part of the reign of Henry III. We shall have something to say of each of these in his turn.

This freedom and royal license to conduct their rites and ceremonies after their own pleasure produced, as a result, the extension of Scriptural and Rabbinical know-

ledge amongst them. Their synagogue in the upper part of the city was well attended, and all classes of Jewish society vied with each other in supporting it with efficiency. In the records of the times it is termed the "scola" or school, an appellation which finds its counterpart in the word "shool," current everywhere at the present day when Jews are speaking of their place of worship. The synagogue was not merely the meeting house for prayer, but formed also the school for study; and in the Lincoln synagogue the rabbis taught the Scriptures and the commentaries, not only to their own co-religionists, but to such of the Christian clergy as desired to benefit by their instruction. From first to last Rabbinism, with all its minutiae and refinement of ceremonial, secured a strong hold in the city of Lincoln, to such an extent indeed that the very highest classes of Jews drew up their agreements and acquittances in Rabbinical fashion, stating very distinctly over and over again that these were written "after the usage of the sages." It is curious to note that the barons and lords of manors who availed themselves of Jewish loans, were more content to accept a deed or an acquittance from their Hebrew creditors, written in Hebrew "after the usage of the sages," than receive a Latin document embodying the same particulars. The motive for this procedure lies on the surface. The debtor had more confidence in a Hebrew instrument with such weighty religious supports to it as an oath taken on the Ten Commandments, or on the scroll of the Law, or more commonly, the holding in the hand of some sacred emblem, than in the mere signature of his Jewish friend attached to the fag end of a Latin deed.

In proof both of the learning and the wealth of the earlier Jews of Lincoln, we may here cite a fact dating as early as the year 1169. In that year a Jewess of Lincoln was married to a son of a Jewess of Cambridge, the latter popularly known as "the Countess" by reason of her riches. The parties contracted these nuptials without royal license, the result being that every one concerned was fined in a sum forming a total of seven gold marks. This Countess of Cambridge had favoured one Anesty with sundry loans at the rate of fourpence per pound per week for the use of her moneys, and during her age she became

a well known character. Now the Hebrew for "the Countess" is "Hannassiah," and it is a well established fact that a certain Moses, son of Hannasiah, flourished in England as a famous scholar and linguist, being the author of a Hebrew Lexicon, still to be found in the Bodleian Library, which has not yet been printed. This Moses has never been identified, simply because no one could guess who was "the Countess." It is no stretch of imagination to urge that this Moses was the very person mulcted with others of seven gold marks, because of his having chosen a bride without King Henry's consent. Jewish women named Cuntasse are frequently mentioned in the records, both in Hebrew and Latin; but this is the only female, popularly known as "la Comitessa," for which "Hannasiah" is the Hebrew equivalent.

At this period of their history flourished the famous Aaron of Lincoln, whose life and dealings are of such importance that they will demand elucidation in a separate paper.

Aaron of Lincoln had as coadjutors in his money-lending business, his brothers Senior and Benedict, and his sons Elias, Abraham, and Vines. One of the charters of this noted Aaron was drawn up in the year 1176, and granted to William Fossard, a great Yorkshire baron, who was relieved of his pecuniary necessities by the monks of the wealthy Abbey of Meaux in Holderness. Fossard's debt to Aaron had accumulated in 1176 to the formidable total of 1,260 marks, or £840 sterling.

Aaron of Lincoln often appears in the records as Aaron le Riche, and one Benedict fil' Isaac is known by a similar designation. This Benedict fil' Isaac, in the year 1185, lent to the Earl Albric of Dainmartin the sum of £115 sterling at the rate of 1d. per pound per week interest. In consideration of this loan, the Earl mortgaged to Benedict his manors of Rihale, Haton, and Wakelingewurd. In connection with this transaction, it is to be observed that the sum mentioned includes both capital and interest in the first instance, and had to be paid off in five periodical instalments. The 1d. per pound per week was not to accrue at all till the expiration of the latest date, and then was only to accrue provided the Earl had not discharged his debt at the time appointed.

While alluding to this Benedict fil' Isaac, surnamed le Riche, it is to be observed that he calls himself Elias fil' Ursell, and sometimes Elias fil' Isaac ; and this leads us to make the following remark. The Jews, during their entire stay in England, possessed their synagogue or family names, known technically as "Shem Hakkodosh" or sacred names, these being derived generally from the Scriptures. The constant recurrence of such names as Moses, Isaac, Samuel, Abraham, &c., proved a source of worry to the Christian clerks, so that it was deemed very essential that the Jews should vary their titles. This was done accordingly, and aliases abound in great numbers. How was a Christian clerk to put upon record such an uncouth description as Jekuthiel ben (son of) Joseph Yechiel, a famous Lincoln money-lender? How much easier was it to cite him as Bonefy fil' Josce? These aliases form a great stumblingblock in the struggle to ascertain who are the actual persons engaged in a money transaction, or those signing a Hebrew or Latin deed. It is only by intense study and comparison that this difficulty can be overcome, and accurate identifications be made out.

Besides possessing its famous rabbis and leading men, Lincoln shared with Norwich the credit of having at all times within its walls a goodly proportion of notable men, then popularly characterised as Nedevim, the plural of Nodiv, a term similar in meaning to Nabob. Under the sway of Henry II., Lincoln had its Nodiv Rabbi Isaac and its Nodiv Rabbi Joseph ; Rabbi, by the way, being under all circumstances the mere counterpart of "Mr." of the present day. These Nodivs undertook the duty of protecting their poorer brethren when oppressed, of encouraging learning in the scolas, of paying indigent scribes their wages for writing scrolls of the Pentateuch, and taking a leading part indeed in all matters which concerned their body politic. Among other things, they paid the talliage imposed on their poorer brethren, they redeemed Jewish captives if enslaved, they furnished dowers to poor Jewish maidens, and acted the rôle of the Mœcenases of their age. The most famous of these Nodivs were Aaron of Lincoln and Isaac of Norwich. If these men laboured hard to amass riches, we must at least give them credit for being

lavish and judicious in their charitable dealings, and for allaying much misery, wretchedness, and destitution by means of their open-handed liberality.

The Public Record Office possesses among its archives some documents of a very early date in which figure the names and dealings of Aaron of Lincoln and his sons, and of Benedict fil' Isaac le Riche. Barons and clergymen frequently sought their aid, and in several instances, the latter, when in difficulties, pledged and mortgaged their tithes to Aaron and the others for certain money considerations specified in detail.

The Jews of Lincoln seem to have enjoyed a fair run of prosperity during the reign of Henry II. Their main difficulty consisted in procuring a suitable piece of ground in the suburbs wherein to deposit their dead. Up to the year 1177 they were compelled to inter their dead in the burial-ground common to all the Jews of England, situate outside Cripplegate, London, close to Jewin Street of the present day. Henry II. accorded them the privilege of purchasing burial places in other localities; but it appears that the Jews of Lincoln either could not, or would not, avail themselves of the king's concession till a later date. They joined the Jews of York in the purchase of a plot of ground outside the latter city, which was denominated "Jewbury," a name which is still retained. In the sale of the Jews' property which fell to Edward I. on their expulsion in 1290, mention is made of sundry houses and tenements, pieces of empty ground belonging to them in Brauncegate, St. John's, St. Martin's, St. Michael's super Collem, St. George's, St. Benedict, and St. Cuthbert's, and allusion is also made to the scola and the burial ground.

The reign of Richard I. opened fatally to all the Jews of England, the Lincoln Jews sharing in the vicissitudes and misfortunes of their compatriots. The massacre of the London Jews in 1189 was followed up by a similar onslaught on the Lincoln Jews during March 1190. They seem, however, to have taken refuge in the Castle, the Constable of which protected them against injury and maltreatment. They did not, however, escape scot free, as 30 of their number, at least, fell victims to the fanaticism of the rabble of the city. There can be no doubt

that the benign influence of Bishop Hugh proved to them most beneficial in its results, and it is related on good authority that when this excellent prelate died in 1200, the Jews of Lincoln gratefully acknowledged the services he had rendered them. They marched mournfully with the funeral procession, following the Bishop to his last resting-place, and shed bitter tears at the loss they had sustained. Bishop Hugh was certainly one of their most considerate and influential friends.

On the return of Richard I. from Germany in the fifth year of his reign, he found himself embarrassed in money matters, and, as a natural consequence, determined to extort aid from his Jews. A roll of three membranes is still in existence among the ancient Exchequer Miscellaneous Rolls, giving in detail the names of all the Jews in England who subscribed to a talliage of 5000 marks, dating from September 3rd, 1193, to September 2nd, 1194. The antiquity of this famous roll is not its sole recommendation to notice. We have here an authentic record of the names, and in many instances the quality, of all the Jews then resident in England—an authentic record of valuable information. The most important towns only of England are mentioned, although York is missing from the list. An analysis of the rolls shows that the Jews were most numerous in Lincoln and in London.

Among the Lincoln Jews figure the names of Aaron's three heirs, and his brother Benedict aforementioned. Then we have the name of a lady, Pucella, one of the creditors of William Fossard in the charter of 1176, and side by side with her is Benedict le Riche, the creditor of Earl Albric. Lincoln is here "Nicole," and Lincolnshire, "Nicol Sir." We may notice the following. Samson and Josse are spoken of as "bissop" and "episcopus." It is not to be imagined that these two held any clerical office. The Jews then as now were distinguished as belonging to three distinct religious classes. First and foremost are those who trace their descent from Aaron, the first Pontifex Maximus of their race. These individuals have ordinarily but not invariably the name of Cohen (priest), although their sacerdotal functions are at present almost nil. Samson and Josse belonged to this class, as do now the Rev. Dr. Adler, chief rabbi, and Mr. Arthur Cohen,

Q.C., M.P. for Southwark. The second class adds the designation Levi to their names, and are the descendants of that tribe, but not of the House of Aaron. The third class comprehends the largest proportion of Jews, who do or may belong to the other tribes of Israel. In the Hebrew records copied by the writer, this class distinction is invariably maintained. To resume. The Lincoln Jews could then boast of a Manasses le Gros (fat or great); Peitevin fil' Jacob, evidently from Poitiers; Acer the Lombard, evidently from Italy. One Vines is described as Scriptor, and further on as le Scrivenur, he being one of the poorer classes patronised by the Nodivs of his day. His occupation consisted in writing out family deeds, acquittances for debts, &c., and in making copies of Hebrew works for the wealthier classes. The synagogue is represented in the persons of Abraham the Parnass and Benedict the Parnass. This term is in common use now for the President of a Jewish congregation. Sir Nathaniel de Rothschild is as well known among the Israelites of the present day as the Parnass of the Great Synagogue in London, as Abraham and Benedict were recognised as the Parnassim of the Lincoln synagogue of old. There is much on this roll in reference to other localities worthy of observation, but it is our purpose to note that only which refers to the city we are discussing.

During the reign of King John, we obtain further glimpses of the dealings of the Lincoln Jews, all of one and a similar character. In 1200, Hugh de Bard, who was indebted in the sum of £101 sterling, acquires the right of having twelve legal Jews of Lincoln and twelve freedmen (Christians) to assemble under an inquisition and to decide a dispute he has with Manser fil' Leon and Solomon of Eden'n, both Lincoln Jews. The result is not recorded. This year also Elias, Aaron of Lincoln's son, pays a mark as a fine to the king for an order to admonish Roger the Constable to pay him certain demands the Jew professes to have on the Christian. In 1201, Pucella, the wife of Deodatus, pays ten marks to have a dispute settled between her and Aaron of Lincoln's family. Jacob, son of Samuel of Northampton, pledges himself that the lady shall be ready with her proofs against the defendants on a certain day. In 1202, Simon de Dena contends with Deudone



fil' Samuel over a debt of £9 3s. 4d., which he owes on account of debts originally Aaron of Lincoln's. In 1204, King John releases Petronilla, Countess of Leicester, mother of the Earl, of 55 marks owing to the Crown on the debts of Aaron of Lincoln. In the same year Matilda of Colchester pays 20 marks and gives a palfrey to the king, in consideration of her regaining the land which Jacob senex of Lincoln held of her in the parish of St. Cuthbert. This year also, Vines fil' Aaron offers the king ten marks to have seisin of the lands of Ralph Lovell; but the king will not take the fine, "quia non placet." Vines' uncle, Benedict, brother to Aaron of Lincoln, gets into hot water with Ursell of Lincoln, accuses him of forgery, and offers his liege lord xx marks for the opportunity of substantiating his accusation. From all that we read here and elsewhere of Ursell, we are inclined to set him down as a *mauvais sujet*. Meanwhile one Benedict fil' Jacob is convicted of felony, and loses a messuage he possesses in Lincoln, which King John kindly gives to Geoffrey, his salter. Geoffrey, who appears to have been a favorite with his master, obtains other possessions of the Jews, both in Lincoln and in London. Other Jews and Jewesses figure about this time, and large sums of money usually accompany their names. Vines, son of Aaron of Lincoln, occurs frequently, and we have repeatedly the names of Elias of Bungay and Manasser Grassus, formerly cited as le Gros in the roll of 1194. Elias Blund (the white or fair) of Lincoln gives 200 marks of silver and 2 marks of gold to the king in the course of a suit of law which he enters against Robert de Veteriponte. In 1206 Bona, the wife of Jacob of Lincoln, having lost her husband, claims her dower of 40 marks against her son Peitevin (mentioned in the roll of 1194), and the justices of the Jews allow her claim in consideration of her forfeiting to the Crown one quarter of the sum demanded. In 1207 a certain John de Russell seems to be in difficulties. King John, in order to raise the 20,000 marks he engaged to pay King Phillip of France, laid a tax of 3s. on each hide or rather carucate of land throughout the kingdom. The Jews of England, under the pretence that their charters required confirmation, were compelled to pay 4000 marks out of this sum. John de Russell, who had been paying

off by instalments the debts which had been contracted with Aaron of Lincoln, received in 1207 a respite for the remainder of his liability, owing to the Crown then £8 12s. 8d. of Aaron's debts. Having paid into the Treasury the sum of 6 marks, he obtained the king's acquittance for the remainder.

Some idea of the wealth of Aaron of Lincoln may be estimated from the fact that in 1208 his son Elias paid 200 marks into the treasury to have license to secure payment on 400 charters drawn up by his father during his lifetime, which he represented of being of no value to the king. He also paid a further sum of 200 marks to obtain possession of 40 other charters of a higher value. Aaron of Lincoln appears to have owned several houses situated within the precincts of the Bail. An inquisition was held on these houses, and the jury returned a verdict to the effect that they had escheated to the Crown at the decease of Aaron the rich, and were of value 60s. and more per annum. Lands also in the parish of St. Michael's, which originally belonged to Senior, the brother of Aaron, escheated to the Crown, their value being set down at 10s. per annum. The recital of these facts goes to prove that the Jews were most numerous in Lincoln during the reign of King John, that they thrived immensely in spite of his exactions, and that they not only possessed personal property and chattels of great value, but that they had acquired in course of time the right of acquiring real property likewise. It is wholly a mistake to imagine that the Jews spent lives of privation, penury, and squalor. They had their "pauperes" certainly, for allusion is made to them; but as an offset, the majority of them rolled in riches. There is evidence to prove that they acquired sumptuous dwellings in the city of Lincoln, and these proud mansions, added to the too ostentatious habits of the owners, conspired to arouse against them bitter feelings of animosity, which had its dire outlet in the accusation made later against them of having crucified a boy in despite of the Christian religion.

Acts of spoliation are recorded of King John up to the very end of his reign. Thomas de Neville, his clerk, obtained by the favour of his master, possession of a house in Lothbury, near Walbrook, London, which had belonged

to Aaron of Lincoln; while Jordan de Esseby, Constable of Lincoln Castle, was equally fortunate in obtaining a house in Lincoln which had belonged to Moses, a resident in the Bail. This latter person had been murdered by the retinue of Walter de Evermeu, the persons implicated in the felony being summoned to Westminster, in 1220, to answer the charge made against them. There had evidently been some raid on the houses of the Jews, for on the day of their appearance at Westminster, the mayor of Lincoln was commanded to produce the persons concerned in the murder of Sarah, the wife of Deulecresse, the latter being summoned also to give his evidence in the matter. The sheriff of London was reprimanded by the justices for his negligence in prosecuting these matters as they deserved.

In the earlier part of the reign of Henry III. the Jews of Lincoln appear to have had considerable dealings with the priories and monasteries of the vicinity, Elias especially having ingress into the priory of Bullyngton as if he were the veritable owner of the property. At this time also another Aaron of Lincoln appears on the scene, one of this name being summoned before the justices of the Jewish exchequer at Westminster. He and several others had had a dispute with William fil' Herlicun, and on their putting in an appearance, the Court required them to swear on the five books of Moses, the scroll of the law being brought from the synagogue, and held in the arms of the attesting witnesses while the oath was administered. Ursell of Lincoln, the presumed forger and *mauvais sujet* was also summoned to Westminster, on the plaint of Engeram de Bovinton and Johanna his wife, from whom he had seized two carucates of land in Oureby. And now for the first time we meet with a deed, wholly couched in Hebrew, made out to an English priory. Josce fil' Elias de Nicol—for so he signs himself—gives an acquittance to the abbot and monks of Newhouse (Newsome) for the moneys received from them in payment of the debt of William fil' William de Silvedune, who had pledged his three bovates of land to his Jewish creditor. Josce takes the money of the abbot, and William resigns the land to him. In this acquittance, as in all others, the Jew or Jews writes his name, and uses no seal. The deed is

attested in Hebrew by others in the same way. The state of Hebrew learning must have been pretty considerable if the commonest Jew was able to write out and sign his acquittances, while his noble creditor was compelled perforce to employ a seal. In many of the Hebrew deeds coming under the observation of the writer, two incongruities are made apparent. First, the names and titles of persons, places, saints' days, terms and times of payment, &c., assume a Hebrew garb, which is altogether strange. For certain letters and sounds—*th* for instance, or the final *ch* in Norwich—there exists no equivalent in Hebrew, and the attempt to bridge over the difficulty becomes ludicrous. Again, the desire of making the Hebrew a perfect legal document in all particulars led to the attempt of translating the Latin in complete detail. The attempt was novel and laudable, and has succeeded admirably. The distortion of the Hebrew jars very much on the ears of a student of the ancient language. This Josce fil' Elias was evidently a scholar; and the name of one Josce of Nicol is mentioned in terms of high commendation in certain marginal annotations printed with the Talmud, technically called Tosephoth (additions). His decisions on Rabbinical questions are recorded and received with all the authority due to his eminence and learning, as are likewise those of a Benedict of Nicol, of whom we shall hear further. It is not certain whether this Josce fil' Elias is the actual Josce of the Talmudical quotations, as a Josce fil' Moses likewise resided in Lincoln at a contemporaneous period, one of the two having a son, Aaron, pursuing a flourishing business at Ipswich. The most eminent rabbis were nothing loth in earning a livelihood by lending money to the impecunious. Both of the Josces mentioned, together with a Judah le Franceys, all Lincoln Jews, had monetary dealings with William fil' Roger de Castre, who was unable to pay his debts and redeem his houses pledged to the Jews. Thereupon the abbot and priory of Newhouse stepped in, purchased the debt, and received in exchange for their cash the Hebrew acquittance of the Israelite creditors, and a charter of gift from the man they had aided. Two of these three Jews were men of importance in their day, for when Henry III. summoned a Jewish parliament at Wor-

cester, anno 1240-41, Judah the Frenchman and one of the Josces were selected as delegates to meet the monarch.

In 1228 we read of John de Neville coming before the justices at Westminster, ready to abide by their decision relative to the debts his father Geoffrey had contracted and left unpaid to Deulecresse of Lincoln. Deulecresse is a name which appears very often. It stands as a common name, and may represent any Shem Hakkodosh. At this time, also, we hear of the nuns of Halywell receiving as a gift the house in Lincoln of Abraham the son of Aaron, the arrears of taxation on the domicile being remitted in their favor. Henry III. was as free with the money of the Jews as he was with their property. In 1233, two Lincoln Jews, Isaac Peitevin and Dyaya, heirs of Elias Matrin, were said to owe the king £44, which they were paying off at the rate of 12 marks each per annum. The money came in too tardily. Henry offered them a compromise; let them give him an additional hundred marks, and he would let them off at the rate of six marks per annum. The Jews accepted the terms, and the agreement was enrolled accordingly. This was evidently a period of some distress, for Josce fil' Moses, mentioned before, could only afford 3d. off a talliage of 5000 marks imposed on the community, and another 3d. off a second talliage of 6000 marks.

In 1236 Ivo fil' Robert de Wickham, who had possessed lands in Netelton, county Lincoln, failed to meet his engagements with his Lincoln creditors. Again the abbot and convent of Nehus (Newsome) came to the rescue, and a repetition of the former procedure takes place. Translating the Hebrew acquittance in this instance, we find the names of the persons to be as follow: Garsie ben (son of) Judah the Cohen, Dyaye ben Elias, Vives ben Moses, Bendit ben Moses (brothers), Manser ben Dovey, attorney for Josce his father in law, and Josce ben Samuel. Josce, the father in law, is Josce fil' Abraham of Bungay, another of the Jewish representatives at the congress held four years later. In another Hebrew deed of the same date, Garsie of Nicol alone gives an acquittance to the abbot of Newhouse of the ground acquired by purchase from Ivo de Wickham. Some of the individuals here mentioned wielded great authority in Lincoln. When Henry III.

required money from his Jewish subjects about this time, he appointed some of their principal men to act as inquisitors and tax gatherers in each of their towns. It is unnecessary to repeat all the names even so far as Lincoln is concerned. Leo of Lincoln was one, being represented in the rescript as one of the six richest Jews in the realm; Garsie le Eveske, alluded to before as the Cohen, was another; Josce of Bungay, mentioned above, was a third; Judah Gallicus (le Franceys of before) follows; and Moses "sine brachiis" with others, completes the number. The mode of procedure with regard to the assessment of individuals is set forth with great precision and care, but it is apart from our purpose to enter into details here. We have not yet done with the abbot of Newhouse. This excellent gentleman, ever ready to oblige, acquitted Geoffrey Berner of Harburg, county Lincoln, of his debts to Leo of Lincoln, just mentioned—Leo, that enormously wealthy Jew, who dwelt in their midst. The acquittance was drawn up and signed by Jacob, Leo's son, and the Hebrew states that Leo was detained in London at the moment, probably following up some suit or answering some plaint at Westminster. Some time after this, Leo is "dampnatus," why or wherefore is not stated, and his house in the parish of St. Martin's, held by William Badde, escheated to the Crown under an inquisition held in 1275. Its value is set down at 20s. per annum. This Leo, in another Hebrew deed, covering his own signature, acquits the abbot of Newhouse of a debt they had paid on behalf of Hugh Parnel of Lincoln, the abbot receiving in return lands of the debtor lying in the parish of St. Martin. The deed mentions Hannah as the wife of Leo. His daughter was married to Moses Crespin, one of the wealthiest Jews then residing in London.

In a roll of the year 1239 we read of Dyaya de Risinges, son of the Moses of Lincoln who had been murdered, as the possessor of several counterparts to charters relating to sums he had lent to sundry Christian debtors. This Dyaya is also enrolled among the "dampnati." He had a daughter named Avigay (Abigail) who was so deeply versed in the art of money-lending that a facetious clerk of the exchequer caricatured her, with others of her tribe, on the top of an exchequer roll in 1233. A fac-

simile of this cartoon with an explanation of its significance may be seen in the first volume of Mr. Pike's "History of Crime in England."

An examination of a roll endorsed "Debita Judæorum inventa in archâ Cyr. apud Linc. die Lunæ prox. ante festum sci. Michaelis anno r. r. Hen. vicesimo quarto" (1240) reveals the names of nearly all the Jews then residing in Lincoln, together with the sums and nature of the debts appertaining to them. The Jews at this time must have been very numerous, and the amounts owing to them would make a fabulous total. Frequent mention is made of their dealings in corn; bussels of frumentum crop up repeatedly, summa avenæ, bussels of rye, ulnæ de russets, precium ulnæ x denarii, summa fabarum, summa albarum pisarum, &c., appear on the record. Every individual beforementioned is found on the roll; but it would answer no practical purpose to analyse it in detail, pregnant though it be with much curious matter for reflection. Genealogical tables might be formed from it, and every Jewish resident in Lincoln might be identified with his family belongings. French names and descriptions abound in it, and sacerdotal designations, such as le Prestre occur occasionally. It will be well to pass it over for the present.

In 1240-41 was held the famous Parliamentum Judaicum, alluded to before. All details relating thereto may be found in Tovey's "Anglia Judaica." Jews still plied their money trade with vigour and persistence. Jacob fil' Samson the Levite figures as the creditor of a Christian debtor, bought off by the Prioress and nuns of Grenefeld (county Lincoln) for a sum of money delivered into the hands of the Jew, Jacob giving his acquittance in Hebrew.

We now meet for the first time with another Jewish Lincoln worthy, Josce fil' Benedict, whose operations commenced about the year 1250. This man, Josce of Lincoln, par excellence, did a roaring trade with his contemporaries, and his acquittances are still found in the Record Office. He was a second Aaron of Lincoln in his way. His terms were uniformly 2d. per week per pound interest on the capital sum lent, with a mortgage upon houses, lands, and tenements, if the money were not forthcoming at a stated time.

The story of the boy Hugh of Lincoln may be omitted, so much has been written on the subject already. It may be taken for granted that the tale is a fabrication from beginning to end, fanaticism being its origin, and cupidity its aim and motive. Anyhow, the Jews of Lincoln suffered severely under the accusation. Judah of the Bail (Judah the Frenchman, probably,) was hanged; Deulecresse of Bedford was hanged; Elias ben Jacob met with a similar fate, and Joppin or Copin, the supposed ringleader, met with a horrible death. It is very probable that this Copin is the Jacob fil' Leo spoken of before. John the Convert was pardoned, as was also Benedict fil' Mosse. The great Leo was "dampnatus" and consternation spread throughout the length and breadth of the land. We meet henceforward with such suggestive additions to their names as "suspensus" "fugitivus" and "utlagatus" and in Hebrew the description "Hakkodosh" the martyred. It is a matter of difficulty to identify the various persons to whose names the term "Hakkodosh" is appended. Allusions are found to the martyred rabbis (Messrs.) Vivo, Isaac, Moses, Solomon, Josce, Yechiel, Yezreel, Yomtov, and others. The major portion of these sufferers lived in the Bail, and their houses were given over to individuals residing in the neighbourhood.

We now meet with a fresh batch of persons (1257) who flourished in Lincoln, whose names appear repeatedly on the records, and whose signatures are found attached to Hebrew deeds. Foremost among these were Manasseh of Bradford, Elias the Cohen, his son-in-law, and Moses of Colton. These three combined had a transaction with the abbot of Newhouse similar to those mentioned before. Josce of Lincoln was selected in 1260 to arrange the details towards an assessment of all the Jews in England for the due discharge of a fresh talliage of 10,000 marks. He will be remembered as the son of the man pardoned in the affair of Hugh of Lincoln. Contemporaneous with these were Hagin fil' Magister Mosse, Josce Bullock, Josce fil' Abraham de Bungay, David and his wife Licoricia, all leading people in Lincoln. Samuel of Lincoln (or rather Nicol) is found mentioned in two Hebrew deeds about this time, and Abraham ben Jacob figures as a creditor, letting certain lands in St. Trinity, Lincoln, to the prior



and monks of Bullyngton. Isaac the Gabay, *i.e.*, treasurer to the synagogue, succeeds to the house of Judah in the Bail, who had been executed. Among other prominent members of the Jewish race was Ursell fil' Sampson, who possessed property not only in his native city, but houses and tenements in Mancroft street and Nedham street, Norwich, which fell to the lot of his wife Cuntasse on her paying a fine to the king.

In 1264 the Lincoln Jewry suffered greatly from the brutality of the barons, then engaged in civil discord with Henry III. The barons, aided by an infuriated soldiery, sacked the Jewish quarter, maltreated the inhabitants, seized their books of learning, and made a bonfire of all the charters relating to debts, on which they could lay their hands.

We have now to consider an important document, drawn up wholly in Hebrew on the day immediately preceding the Jewish new year 5028, *i.e.*, September 1267, A.D. In this parchment, the leading rabbi of Lincoln, Magister Benedict, son of Magister Mosse, makes over to his son Hiam (Vives amongst Englishmen) the house which he had bought originally from one William Badde. With the house went a yard which he had purchased from William of Newark. The house and yard situated in the parish of St. Benedict, apparently the gift of Benedict the Master, was really the gift of the young man's maternal grandfather, Josce fil' Aaron, who gave £60 for it to his son-in-law, and handed it over to his grandson Vives. Two witnesses, Josce fil' Joshua and Hiam (Vives) fil' Jocepin attest this deed, which is drawn up thoroughly in accord with "the usage of the sages." It was deposited in the common chest of the Jews in Lincoln, and at their dispersion in 1290 found its way into the hands of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster Abbey, whose property it still remains. It is unnecessary to know who were two of the persons mentioned in this parchment, but it will be useful to recognise the other three. First is Magister Benedict, the father. The term Magister, where Jews are concerned, was only applied to those holding rabbinical jurisdiction, the corresponding Hebrew in this case being Rav, not Rabbi. Benedict was a leading Rav, holding much of a

position similar to that of the present Chief Rabbi, Dr. Adler, who is popularly known as "the Rav" among all classes of his people. Benedict's father was a Rav before him. He was enormously wealthy, and wielded both high ecclesiastical powers and a secular authority. He was the chirographer of the Jews of Lincoln, having charge of all the documents deposited for safety in the common chest of the city. Benedict under his Hebrew name Berachia, is cited in the marginal annotations of the Talmud as an authority in Jewish jurisprudence. He was a money lender, rabbi, author, *nodiv*, and chirographer all at the same time. His son Vives, or Hagin, or Hiam, will be alluded to further on. One of the attesting witnesses, Vives (Hiam) fil' Jocepin, acted as chirographer in concert with Master Benedict, whose daughter Belaset he had married. We shall hear of all these individuals again. Benedict and this latter Vives had each his key of the common chest, acting on behalf of the Jews, at the same time that Osbert fil' Egidii and John de Luda acted in the same capacity on behalf of the Christian debtors.

In 1268 we meet with a Norman-French deed, accompanied with a Hebrew addendum made in the handwriting of Hiam of Nicol, and attested by Cok fil' Deulecresse. The Hebrew speaks of a debt of 300 marks incurred by Sir Adam de Stratton. If this Hiam de Nicol (Hagin le fiz mestre Mosse) perform certain covenants during 1268, then the sum of 300 marks deposited with the umpires John Pirun and Richard of Enfield is to go to him; if he fail in any particular it is to revert to Sir Adam. This Hagin fil' magister Mosse was the son of a London "Rav" and was probably the brother of Master Benedict. The records of this period bristle with his name. A starr (Hebrew deed) of his is quoted in full on page 32 of Tovey's "Anglia Judaica," accompanied with observations bearing upon it; and this is followed by a Norman-French document, covering the signature of his son, Jacob le fiz Hagin. This Hagin of Lincoln, in a rescript of Henry III, and addressed to Philip Lovel and Simon Passelewe, his justices of the Jews, is desired not to plead before the ordinary justices, but to bring all his disputed concerns under the notice of the justiciars appointed to consider Jewish matters only. Hagin, among other properties,

had some tenements in the Thorngate, Lincoln, and a messuage with appurtenances in the parish of Little St. Martin, London. Hagin had bought this latter property from an eminent Jew, Abraham fil' Muriel, and had had his charter confirmed, subject to his paying into the exchequer the sum of 6d. every Michaelmas "pro omni servitio."

A Latin deed of 1270 speaks of these Lincoln Jews: Josce fil' Benedict, Hagin son-in-law of Benedict (both spoken of before), Moss fil' Josce, and Judah fil' Milo. But the gem of the Westminster collection of "starrs" is a well-preserved document, dated 5031-1271. This document demands special notice. It was none other than a betrothal contract drawn up by the leading people of Lincoln, and is important, as much for its age and rarity, as for the light it sheds upon the religious and social status of the Jews. The gist of the document is as follow: On Friday, the 3rd Shevot (February) 5031-1271, Judah fil' Milo, Abraham fil' Josce, and Josce fil' Joshua having received a preliminary "God speed you" from a "minyan" of ten (no important religious task is performed even now without the presence of ten male adults), undertook the functions of a Bethdin (a tribunal of three) to arrange, determine and attest the following transaction between Benjamin fil' Joce Yechiel on the one part, and Belle-assez, the daughter of the "Rav" Benedict on the other. This is Magister Benedict fil' mag. Mosse. Belle-assez undertakes to marry her daughter Judith to Aaron the son of Benjamin, giving as a wedding gift to the young bridegroom 20 marks sterling and a precious volume containing the whole 24 books of the Hebrew Bible, written on calf skin, properly revised as to accuracy and punctuation, according to the best authorities. Further details of this handsome book are appended. The young folks being too youthful to marry yet, the father of the bridegroom undertakes to take charge of the book, which is to be employed meanwhile for the "instruction of both the children." Belle-assez also delivers into the hands of the father these 20 marks sterling, to be lent out at interest to Gentiles, until Aaron is grown up. In lieu of this, at the period of Aaron's marriage with Judith, Benjamin undertakes to give them £20 ster-

ling, and as much more as has accrued out of the original 20 marks by way of interest in the meanwhile. Out of this sum also, he is to provide both bride and bridegroom with wedding apparel befitting their station, both Sabbath and weekday clothing, and to make a grand wedding feast, all out of the same proceeds. He has to put forth no further claim on Belaset, the mother. The wedding is arranged to take place during the month of Adar (February) 1275, four years later, unless some impediment arises, some impediment publicly well known. If such difficulty occur, the nuptials are to take place within one month after the lapse of such impediment. Benjamin mortgages all his chattels and property, real and personal, as a guarantee that he will perform his part of the covenant. Should the affair not proceed prosperously, Benjamin refusing at a future date to marry his son, he is to restore the precious volume or to retain it at his pleasure, giving 6 marks for it in exchange. With regard to the 20 marks Benjamin is to be believed on oath as to what he might have gained by them in the course of time, and undertakes to refund one half of the amount, reserving the other half to himself. The parties, each and either, then enter into a solemn compact and oath of the law, holding a sacred emblem in their hands, and swear to perform their respective shares of the covenant. They thereupon place a partnership deposit (or fine) in the hands of the Bethdin (tribunal), amounting to 100 shillings sterling, with the following undertaking. Should Aaron ever refuse to marry Judith and settle on her £100, "as is the custom of the isle," or should the father refuse his consent to the match, the deposit is to go absolutely to the mother of the jilted bride, or *vice versa*, she is to lose it, &c., &c.

It is needless to enlarge on this contract. It lays bare a state of things which scarcely anyone expected to exist in Lincoln among the Jews of the thirteenth century. Learning, riches, close bargaining, and rabbinical sway are represented here without concealment, and the document reveals an amount of prosperity among the Jews, the truth of which is borne out and confirmed by an examination of contemporaneous records. A word or two as to the parties concerned. Magister Benedict fil' Magister Mosse we know. Nothing is known of his daughter Belaset (Belle-

assez), unless indeed she be the Belaset of Wallingford, executed later on for clipping the coin. It is very likely. If so, the present Jew's House in Lincoln was probably the very house in which the marriage feast took place, and it will be henceforward regarded with sentiments of additional interest. It is curious to note that Hiam the cyrographer, the husband of Belaset, takes no part in the deed. Perhaps the lady was all-sufficient in herself and prepared for any emergency. Benjamin was Bonami fil' Josce, and an own brother to Bonefy fil' Josce, both leading men in Lincoln. Bonefy fil' Josce is found to sign a deed in that name, although his Shem Hakkodosh was Yekuthiel ben Josce Yechiel, as stated in an earlier portion of this paper.

The year 1272 shews further progress with the Jews in their money concerns, towering above them all being Manasseh of Bradewurth and Benedict the Parnass of the congregation.

Another suggestive document finds a place here, viz., a charter of Pictavin fil' Benedict le Jouene of London, made to the abbot and monastery of Bardeney. Pictavin yields, in exchange for 10 marks, the lands he held in the parish of St. Cuthbert, details of which are furnished. The deed is signed by the donor, countersigned in Hebrew by Hiam the cyrographer, acting on behalf of his coadjutor and father in law, Magister Benedict fil' Magister Mosse, and by Manasser, likewise a cyrographer. The deed is attested among others by William de Holgate the mayor, Richard de Buk'ham, and Walter Leftward, the prepositi, and by John de Luda and Osbert fil' Egidii, the Christian cyrographers or custodians of the chest. The exact locality of this property may easily be discovered by an examination of the original deed now at Westminster.

Allied to this is another deed in Latin, with the Hebrew signatures of notable men, some of them residing in Lincoln. The signatories are Manasser de Bradewurth, Judah fil' Magister Milo, Joce fil' Benedict, Moses fil' Josce de Londres, and Benedict de Londres. The charter takes the form of a stringent acquittance, made to William de Langefeld of the manor of Thornhill. The acquittance is so full and precise, that it would have

been a matter of impossibility for the Jews to evade its provisions, even if they had so desired.

From this time forward, for the next few years at least, little is known of the Lincoln Jews. Many of the old names crop up in the records, but as these are all concerned with money matters of slight importance, there is no need to recapitulate them. The designations Parnass and Gabbay frequently occur, proving that the synagogue was still led by its warden and treasurer. Jews are found buying and selling property in all parts of Lincoln, and lending money in all directions at the uniform rate of 2d. per week per pound. One Jew, Hake fil' Pittavin was outlawed, and his brother, Aaron died in the Tower of London. What misdemeanour they were guilty of is not easily ascertainable. Their property in Mikelgate was confiscated to the crown.

In 1275 two Lincoln Jews, Ursell and Samuel the Little, were accused of robbery, by which Roger de Haydon incurred a loss of 5 marks. Robert explained to the justices that when Gilbert de Preston was on circuit, he had looked into the matter, and had ordered William de Holgate, the mayor, then acting as coroner of the city, to bring the accused to justice. The coroner, instead of so doing, accepted a bribe from the accused, who had meanwhile fled away, and had allowed them to return in peace to their old quarters in Lincoln. This year also sees an order made by Bonami, a York Jew, directed to the cyrographers of Lincoln, the Christians before mentioned, and Manasser fil' Benedict and Jacob of Brauncegate, acting for the Jews. These are instructed to withdraw from the common chest a charter of 55 marks made out in the names of Laurence, prior of Thornholm, the debtor having settled the claim against him. Three Jacobs, all Lincoln men, sign the deed in Hebrew. Josce fil' Benedict, *i.e.*, Josce of Lincoln (so stated in the body of the order) also directs the Nottingham cofferers to do the same with two charters referring to loan he had given to Magister Laurence de Gadham. Josce acknowledges the validity of the deed in a Hebrew postscript, but curiously enough, signs himself Josce of Nottingham. The distinction is not easily reconcilable.

Nothing further is known of the Lincoln Jews. The

closing scene in their history dates in 1290, when they were despoiled of their property, embracing lands, houses, tenements, and rents, which were apportioned among their Christian neighbours, and themselves driven into exile. A list of such property reveals the names of all the individuals alluded to in the latter portion of this sketch, but affords no additional information worthy of being recorded. The total number of Jews who left the country was 16511, of whom the Lincoln contingent bore no mean proportion. The Lincoln Jews made no mark in the history of England; denied every avenue of profit, except that obtainable from the pursuit of usury, their history is monotonous in its tenor, and is associated with no event or incident (except that of Hugh of Lincoln) really worthy of being handed down to posterity. Money was the pivot on which their history turns, and it was by the means of money only that they held their own against oppression, during a period extending over about 250 years.