

ליהודים היתה אורה :

17A

AN

ADDRESS ON THE POSITION

IN

THE JEWS IN BRITAIN,

WITH REFERENCE TO

THEIR LITERARY, POLITICAL, CIVIL, AND
RELIGIOUS CONDITION.

BY MOSES SAMUEL,

OF LIVERPOOL.

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AN ADDRESS TO THE JEWS OF GREAT BRITAIN.

BRETHREN,

HAVING seen in the "Voice of Jacob," No. 65, February 2nd, a Letter from M.,* addressed to Sir Moses Montefiore, upon the position of the English Jews; I most respectfully beg to lay before you my opinion upon the subject which that letter endeavours to unfold, as interesting to yourselves, and gratifying to those who have your welfare at heart. Some years have elapsed since I put pen to paper for the purpose of appearing in print in relation to your spiritual and temporal state, a serious illness having for a long time deprived me of the will and of the means of addressing you; but having, with the blessing of God, recovered my health, and as the age in which we live is teeming with events extraordinary and interesting, I shall require but little apology in addressing you at present. I must first draw your attention to the gratifying accounts from abroad.

Mark the contrast between the pursuits of English and foreign Israelites—what are they doing in Leipzig, Prague, Lemberg, Brody, Berlin, and Hamburgh? Lay before our unfortunately neglected, yet knowledge-seeking Hebrews, the heart-cheering account of the exhumation of the splendid works of our poets and philosophers, which had been mouldering in manuscript for centuries in public and private libraries.

Behold our foreign brethren, as it were, raising to life a Jewish Shakespeare, in the works of Moses Luzzato,† a prince of poets, a name scarcely known here, whose genius soared aloft in majestic metre, rivalling all who before him, had launched into the higher regions of thought, and had chained their conceptions to expressions of sublimity in the sacred language.

Let us catch a spark from the poetic fire of his lately dis-

* On going to press, I learned, and have permission to state, that the talented writer of the letter is Mr. Mears Lawton, of Bristol.

† In coupling his name with that of our immortal English bard, it is not for the quantity and degree of his writings, but for the high rank which he holds amongst Jewish poets.

covered work, מגדל עוז "Migdol Oz," and deplore the long neglect of Israel, to seek his mouldering bones, and revivify them by the press.

His drama לישורים תהלה "Layshorim Tehilla," his לשון למודים "Leshon Limudim," or Biblical Rhetoric, and some other works long known and admired, have procured for him a renown for the classic beauties of his language; but this Hebrew poetic effusion מגדל עוז has raised a "strong tower," immortal to his genius and mental excellence.* He flourished in 1750. His biography, attached to the work, is written by S. Luzzato and M. Letteris; as well as a most beautiful dissertation in Latin, upon our best modern Hebrew poets and their works.

Give us a translation of that superb sacred drama by a living author, Nachman Fishman, lately published at Lemberg, at the expence of the highly gifted and respected Joshua Schlesinger; "The Fall of Sisera, and Israel's Success through Barak and Deborah." The introduction is written by Jacob Budak. In the first act of the fifth scene; the poet gives the soliloquy of the mother of Sisera, on the report of her son's death, a few lines of which may not prove unacceptable:—

הָהָהּ מִלְחָמָה אֲכַזְרֶזְהָהּ! תְּשׁוּקָה נִוְרָאָה!
 לֵהֵב עֵזוֹ לָךְ • אֶת נִשְׁגָּבָה • נִפְלְאָה •
 עַל כַּנְפֵי דַמְיוֹן תִּדְרָכְבִּי • בְּאַבְרוֹתָיו תִּדְאִי •
 רַחֲבֵי לֵבָב אֲנוּשׁ • בְּחַזְיוֹן שׁוֹא תִמְלָאִי •
 מִשְׁאוֹת שׁוֹא וּמְדוּחִים • בְּרֶשֶׁת וּשְׁבָכָה
 תִּכְרְשֵׁי לְרַגְלֵי • עַד תִּוְבִילֶיהוּ הַבְּכָא •
 מָה יֵשׁ לְכִי? אֲשֶׁר אֶת כָּל תִּמְשׁוּכֵי •
 תִּלְכְּדֵי לֵב נְבִיר־מַחֲשַׁבּוֹתָיו תִּחְפּוּכֵי?

Not being able to write poetry, or in any way to do justice to the lofty thoughts of the author, I shall attempt to give the

* He was a native of Padua. Livy, the Roman historian, was also born and buried in this celebrated city. A copious biography of Luzzato is given in the *Kerem Chemed* for 1838, by Joseph Almantzi, well worthy the perusal of every lover of learning.

translation in prose, leaving it to poetic genius, to give the beauties, the graces, and the fire of the original.

“Tyrant war, mighty desire, fiercely burning, exalted!—rendered wonderful! Riding upon imagination’s wings, taking a lofty flight, thou fillest the hero’s expanded heart with vain—visionary schemes! With deceitful allurements thou spreadest a net for his feet, till thou bringest him to destruction. Wherein exists thy art to attract—to entrap the heart of man—to overturn his soul?”

The writer of the introduction, makes the following remark upon this beautiful apostrophe:—

מה גדול תקפו של השיר הזה! היוצא מקרב לב
אשה קשת רוח • מלאה חרון וכעס על רוע מצבה • כי
לא תדע ולא תשמע שום דבר מבנה אשר ירד למלחמה •
ולכן מתלוננת וצועקת מרה על תשוקת כל אנשי חיל
לצאת על שדי המלחמת • אף אם יצלתו וינצתו
במלחמתם —

“How forcible is this poetic effusion! excited by the feelings of a broken-hearted woman, in the fulness of grief, lamenting her fate, not having before known, or heard any thing of her son, who had gone to war! thus bitterly reprehending the fondness of valiant men for entering the field of battle, notwithstanding their success and their conquests.”

The translator of the “Idyllia,” of Bion and Moschus,* says in his preface, page 18, “They will go down hand in hand to future ages, as long as the beautiful language in which they wrote shall continue to be understood; as long as there are hearts that can feel, or there is taste that can appreciate the graces of pure writing.”

I trust the same will be said of Luzzato and Fishman. I hope that some of our literati will be induced to give us translations of the works of these poets, as well as of the “Hakoloth Yachdolun” of Rumenali; of the “Meluchoth Shaul”† of Efrathi; the

* Two Greek Poets

† This sacred drama, “The Monarchy of Saul,” is a splendid piece of Hebrew writing. The description of the madness of Saul; the solemn heart-stirring prayer of old Kish, in blessing his grand-children under the nuptial canopy, show the elevated style and exalted thoughts of the poet.

