

**RACHEL LEWIN.**

(Continued from page 11.)  
of one of the "Nine Muses," Belche's sister, Voegele, afterwards baroness Fanny von Arnstein in Vienna, among whose descendants today are numbered counts von Fries, counts von Coudenhove and barons von Gablenz, and one small instance in her life is worth recording as typical for the change of times in Judaism at the end of the 18th century.

Voegele had married Nathan Arnstein, a member of the leading banking firm of Vienna, Arnstein and Eskeles. Her father, Adam (Loeb) Anstein, was a pious Frankfort Jew, retaining the traditions of his former home. So it was natural that R. Nathan Adler (1741-1800) when passing through Vienna was entertained at his house together with his disciple, the afterwards celebrated leader of orthodoxy, Moses Sofer (1762-1839). By accident the young Bahur strayed into the room of Frau Fanny who was just attended to by a hair dresser. Moses told her in plain language what he thought of her. It was certainly not very complimentary, and Fanny at once presented the ultimatum to her father-in-law that either the guests must leave the house or she would. It was a ticklish situation. Nathan Adler was a saint, a cabbalist. A young man in Frankfort who had disregarded the rabbi's prohibition of the growing laxity of young men who would take walks with girls had died of the rabbi's curse. To turn this riddick out of the house would invite disaster. With tears in his eyes, old Adam laid the case before the rabbi. The latter was kind enough to decide that domestic peace was more important than the "honor of the Torah," and left the house absolving his host from all responsibility, but a year later (1785) Adam Arnstein died.

This single incident shows the wide gap between fathers and sons in the post-Mendelssohnian era. Moses Mendelssohn's granddaughter, Rebecca, the sister of the composer, after reading Berthold Auerbach's story, "Dichter und Kaufmann," which deals with Berlin Jewish society of her grandfather's time, writes: now I understand and share father's bitter hatred for everything Jewish which I always considered unjust. The hero of this story is Moses Ephraim Kuh, the first Jew to write German verse. He died as a Jew, while all his family, domiciled in Breslau, converted to Christianity, giving occasion to a Jewish wit to make the clever remark that all Jewish cattle is turning Christian. The same condition prevailed in other large cities with cultured communities, and especially in Berlin. A most interesting case occurred during Mendelssohn's lifetime. Moses Isaac Fliess, a wealthy banker who foresaw apostasy in his family, stipulated in his will that if his children "forsook the true Mosaic religion," they would be deprived of a share in his estate. Upon his death in 1776 his daughters converted to Christianity and contested the will. The courts consulted experts among whom was Prof. Olaus Tychsen of Buetzow upon whom Rabbi Jonathan Eybeschuetz had conferred the Haber degree who declared that Christianity was "the true Mosaic religion." It is rather to the credit of the Prussian courts that they did not accept the sophistry, and the will was declared valid. Mendelssohn, in a letter to his friend, Elkan Herzin, Leipzig, expresses his joy at this just decision. He did not know then that he would need a similar provision for

his six children, five of whom abandoned the paternal religion in later years.

The case of Moses Fliess' daughters might also help us to understand the psychology of Rahel Lewin. She belonged to the middle class which is very unfortunately situated in Jewish society. Daniel Itzig had nine daughters which was not considered a blessing in any Jewish household, but there was always some itinerant rabbi who took notes on such conditions, and who came to Vienna and told Loeb Arnstein that Reb Daniel had a daughter, Voegele, who would be just the kind of wife needed for his son, Nathan, and so it went with Blimche who was married to David, the son of Reb Chayim Friedlaender in Koenigsberg, like Reb Daniel, fortunate possessor of a Generalprivilegium. What could Rahel expect? Her father belonged to the "Balbattim"-class, not rich enough to aspire to be on terms of intermarriage with bankers from Vienna and manufacturers from Berlin, but too high on the social ladder that his daughter should marry a peddler or a second-hand shopkeeper who had never heard of Goethe and Lessing. In Christian society this was different. There it was not a question to be decided between Reb Daniel of Berlin and Reb Chajim in Koenigsberg through the mediation of the rabbi of Wolkowysk who peddled his latest book and carried a matrimonial line as a side issue. Might we not understand from this truly feminine sentiment Rahel's statement in a letter to her brother, Ludwig Robert, a fourth-rate poet, that religion was an epidemic disease and Judaism a mortal wound inflicted at birth?

Rahel succeeded without the aid of a shadchan. She angled a young diplomat, then, during the Napoleonic period, a very promising profession and with a name worth a few thousand thalers among brothers, Varnhagen von Ense. And she married at the age of 43 when she was out of style on the odds and ends counter of the shadchan, an attache of an embassy, a noble of 29. If it had not been for the disadvantage of Judaism, she might have done equally well twenty years sooner. It was all the fault of the Jews with their obstinate clinging to their silly superstition. The enlightened Jews like herself could easily make their way. Princes of royal blood, scientists of international fame like Alexander von Humboldt, poets like Goethe and Grillparzer, rising statesmen like Theirs would consider it a distinction to be received by her and to correspond with her.

She learned soon enough that the solution was not so easy. A woman wrote a novel, entitled "Charlotte Sampson" which presented just these Christian Jewesses in the most unfavorable light (1800), and Schleiermacher, the most popular Berlin preacher of these days, who also belonged to Rahel's admirers, thinks that only jealousy of the social success of the Berlin Jewesses inspired this libel. Still worse was the impression made upon her excellency, Frau von Varnhagen by the Hep-Hep movement, a miniature pogrom wave in 1819. "What do these people want?" she says, "one-half of the Berlin Jews is already baptized, the other half is soon going to be baptized." It is not to the credit of Graetz that he took this wild statement, never intended as serious statistics literally. The modern nationalists in history repeated this statement over and over again, just as they repeated also on Graetz's authority

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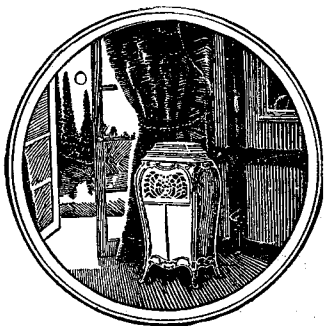
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