

*The Jew in
Southern life
and society.*

The Jews in the South have made a remarkable record, and in his "Jews of South Carolina" (Lippincott) Dr.

Barnett A. Elzas of Charleston has given a full account of his people in that State. The author's aim has been to show the part taken by the Jew in commercial, professional, political, and social activities; and the showing is a very favorable one. The volume includes chapters on the beginnings of the Jewish settlements in the colony, their religious organization and religious dissensions, the part taken by Jews in the wars and in the affairs of government, the expansion of the Jews over the State, and short biographies of the most prominent members of the race. The first Jewish congregation of Charleston was an offshoot of the Spanish-Portuguese community of Bevis Marks, London. In South Carolina, then not friendly to slavery but desirous of obtaining a white population, the Jews were welcomed. The author declares that "in South Carolina, from the day of his settlement the Jew has never labored under the slightest civil or religious disability whatever. In this respect South Carolina was unique among the British provinces. It took the Jews of England over one hundred and fifty years to win by steady fighting, step by step, the civil and religious equality that was guaranteed to the first Jew that set foot on South Carolina soil." And it is a notable fact that the newer States to the west and south of South Carolina have been influenced by the former's example. In the Lower South, the Jews have at all times exercised an influence out of proportion to their numbers. Perhaps it was one of the results of slavery which united all whites, but at any rate the Jews have from the beginning formed a respected portion of the population, and have mingled socially with Gentiles to a greater extent than elsewhere. This is partly a cause and partly a result of the superiority of the Southern Jews. In South Carolina, Dr. Elzas declares, was to be found, before 1825 at least, the best Jewish population in America; and certainly the Southern Jew has not yet been surpassed. Many of the Jewish leaders of other sections have come from the South. The Jew is usually considered a man of peace, but the record in South Carolina tells a different story. In every war the Jews furnished more than their share of men. "South Carolina can boast of no more loyal and devoted sons and

daughters than were the Jewish citizens in the hour of her need." For material on which to base his account, Dr. Elzas has searched all the records of the State, printed and in manuscript, as well as Jewish records in other States, leaving no source of information unexamined. The bibliography appended "is not complete," he says; but it is not likely to be completed. As an instance of his industry, we may mention that to get the names of the Jewish soldiers in the Civil War he went over "several times" the lists of 70,000 names in the archives at Columbia, and examined the complete file of Gazettes in the Charleston Library. The general reader will object to the padding with long lists of names taken from directories, and to the numerous extracts from newspapers; but to one who is directly interested, and to the future historian, these sources of information are valuable. The "general reader" can do some judicious skipping. It would have been well had the author explained more fully the distinctions, historically and socially, which he hints at, between the German Jews and the Spanish-Portuguese Jews of South Carolina. But in spite of minor defects, the work has a great value as an account of one of the influential elements in Southern society.
