

some of them as far as England in a few hundred years after the Romans had withdrawn from that country. Their history there naturally divides itself into two periods; the first extending from their arrival until their banishment in 1290; the second from their return under the Commonwealth to the present.

We have no explanation of the first appearance of the Jews in England, yet they are found there under the Saxons. They seem to have very soon succeeded in establishing a lucrative trade, but feeling the insecurity of their position as aliens, they attempted to buy from the kings of England the privileges of citizens, and after prolonged negotiations they are said to have purchased from the Conqueror the right of settlement in the country. Ever after the conclusion of this bargain the Jews were considered the absolute possession of the sovereign, and their condition varied with the character and circumstances of the reigning monarch. But whatever the disposition of the king toward the Jews might be, whether that of cruelty, indifference, or even an inclination to mercy, the hate of the people only grew fiercer, as they increased in wealth and influence. This intense hatred is traceable to two distinct causes, the Jews' contempt for Christianity and the dogmas of the church, and their avarice and extortion in the money market. These features led to horrible charges and unjust suspicions. As early as the reign of Stephen, dark tales that had gained credence on the continent began to be circulated in England, to the effect that it was a Jewish practice to crucify Christian children at Easter, in mockery of the crucifixion of Christ. This and similar charges were afterwards believed to be without foundation, originating as their historian remarks, "only when the king was manifestly in need of money."

The circulation of such reports afforded a golden opportunity to both king and people to fill their coffers at the Jews' expense. Without fear of justice organized gangs of plunderers ransacked houses and carried off their treasures. The king demanded large sums for private purposes. The Jews patiently endured all in the hope of again extorting wealth, and took silent revenge by means of their detested system of usury. A succession of such events, with a few months or years of comparative peace intervening,

characterizes the history of the Jews in England for many centuries. A notable outbreak was the well-known massacre that began at the coronation of Richard I. An idea of the popular feeling at the time may be gathered from the fact that where the greatest outrages were committed no one suffered for the crime, while the monk who records the tragedy piously exclaims, "Blessed be God who delivered up the wicked to death."

With the accession of John, fortune seemed to smile upon the Jews. But while this faithless king was heaping favors upon them with royal generosity, he was with brutal shrewdness aiming to increase their wealth which he planned to make his own at a single stroke. After ten years of favor their gracious king suddenly passed to the extreme of cruelty against them. Every Israelite, without distinction of age or sex, was imprisoned, their property confiscated, and the torture made to wring from them the disclosure of their secret treasures.

The same melancholy history pictures their condition throughout the long reign of Henry III., except that their woes increased, as experience showed to their enemies new methods of extorting gain from them. Then appears the novelty of a Jewish Parliament. Accompanying the sheriff's writs were terrible threats of punishment for all who should fail to appear, and when "his majesty's faithful Jews" were regularly assembled in legislative capacity they were coolly informed that their whole duty was, without debate, to assess and levy upon themselves the sum of 20,000 marks. A number in certain constituencies, less loyal than their representatives, questioned the right of this parliament to tax them and resisted payment. To meet this difficulty the king simply seized the collectors whose accounts were short, appropriated their property, and imprisoned them, together with their wives and children. As Henry's difficulties increased with the commencement of the Barons' wars his resources depended almost wholly upon the Jews. Again and again he drew from them enormous sums. That they continued for so long to meet these demands shows not only the vastness of their wealth, but also the rapidity of its accumulation, which can only be accounted for by the exorbitant interest they were able to collect, which was considered moderate at fifty per cent. There was a limit even to Jewish