

DEATH OF THE REV. PROF. D. M. ISAACS.

As briefly announced in a portion of our last week's impression, the Rev. Prof. David Myer Isaacs, Minister of the Great Synagogue, Manchester, died at Southport on Thursday, the 1st May. The deceased was born about the year 1810, at Leeuwarden, Holland. His father was a merchant in comfortable circumstances, but owing to speculation in French and Dutch stocks after Napoleon's disastrous campaign in Russia, he was ruined, and came to England with his family. Being a man of considerable attainments, especially in Rabbinical literature, he opened a school in Ilionce Street, Spitalfields, about the year 1818 and soon afterwards he was appointed *Kahronim Rabbi* (Burial Minister) and Sabbath Lecturer to the New Synagogue. His third son David received his principal Hebrew instruction at home. When David was about 14 years old he was appointed attendant to Mrs. Herschell, the wife of the late Chief Rabbi. Mrs. Herschell was blind and David Isaacs was engaged to read to her. When he outgrew this employment he became teacher to the sons of several leading Jewish families. During this time he studied very closely and was one of the most regular attendants at a Talmudical Class held by the late Dayan *Shayyib*, the Rev. Israel Levy. He then went to Bristol and afterwards to Liverpool, where he was appointed minister of the congregation, and it was here about forty years ago that he began to preach occasional sermons in English. While in Liverpool, he was engaged to preach in Manchester on alternate Sabbaths. Some years after, he was elected minister of the Manchester Great Synagogue, which post he has filled for upwards of twenty years. Gifted with a forcible, somewhat impulsive and eloquent style of oratory, tinged with a peculiarly caustic humour, he became very popular as a preacher. He belonged essentially to the "old school." He was uncompromisingly orthodox. In his pulpit addresses he never failed to vigorously expose what he believed to be the shortcomings of his congregation. He spoke quite extemporaneously and his sermons teemed with citations from the Midrash and other Rabbinical writings. Although rigidly orthodox, he was a fairly tolerant man. He accepted an invitation to preach in the Manchester Synagogue of the British Jews, and invited his pulpit to the Rev. Dr. Gottheil, the then minister of that congregation. It has been usual for all the ministers of the Manchester Synagogues to join in a united Service on the local "Hospital Sunday." He took much interest in the Manchester Jews' Schools, and gratuitously gave to the advanced pupils religious instruction. He was for some years Professor of Hebrew at Owen's College. Several of his sermons and writings have been published, and we believe have had a large circulation. He was particularly eloquent and successful in preaching "Charity Sermons." His exertions in aid of the Lancashire Cotton Famine Fund is still generally remembered, and were highly appreciated throughout the county. He was ever active in behalf of all charitable objects, and was connected with all the Jewish charitable societies in Manchester. Among his endeavours to mitigate human suffering must be included the successful invention of an ingenious fire-escape, in which he took much pride. The poor will lose by his death an active, warm-hearted friend. Although he had been in failing health for some time, owing to a cold caught while attending a funeral, his death was somewhat unexpected. He was widely respected by all classes in Manchester, both Jewish and Christian. The deceased leaves a widow and a large family to mourn his loss.

The funeral took place on Sunday at the Jewish Cemetery, Prestwich, amid manifestations of the deepest respect. The funeral arrangements, which were made by a sub-committee appointed by the General Committee of the Congregation, partook largely of a public character. The leading members of the four Jewish congregations in Manchester assembled at half-past two o'clock in the school-room below the Synagogue, York Street, Chetham, and proceeded thence in thirty mourning coaches and more than double that number of cars and private carriages to the late residence of the deceased in Brunswick Street. The funeral cortège then returned down York Street, past the Synagogue, and New Bailey Street, and proceeded to the place of interment. The departure of the procession was witnessed by a large crowd of persons, many hundreds of whom, in omnibuses, and on foot, accompanied the cortège to the cemetery. There were also present representatives of the Jewish communities in London, Birmingham, Liverpool, and other towns. The Jewish Board of Guardians, the Manchester Jews' School, and other Jewish bodies were also officially represented. Amongst the clergy present were the Rev. G. J. Emanuel (Birmingham), Rev. M. Joseph, Rev. Dr. Stern, Rev. H. Prag (Liverpool), Rev. H. D. Marks (South Manchester Synagogue), Rev. J. H. Valentine (Spanish and Portuguese Congregation), Rev. L. M. Simmons (Manchester Congregation of British Jews), Rev. M. Klinkowstein, and Rev. M. Morris. At the cemetery an immense concourse of persons had congregated. The coffin having been carried into the mortuary chapel, the usual prayers were read by the Rev. M. Klinkowstein.

The Rev. G. J. EMANUEL then addressed the assembled mourners. He said:

When I gaze on this assembly, when I behold a son bewailing the death of a beloved parent; when I regard a congregation grieving for the loss of a revered pastor; when I see a great community mourning the departure of a good man, I feel that I have been bold even to rashness in undertaking the duty of expressing your feelings. Yet however inadequate my powers, could I hesitate to pay this or any tribute of respect to the memory of one who was more than a brother minister, nay, who to me and to ministers like myself was a venerated teacher, guide, and leader. During all the years that we have been religious instructors, when with us the preaching of God's Word was but a vague longing, a wild ambitious dream, while we were slowly acquiring the various rudiments of knowledge, nay, while we were infants prattling on our mother's knee, he was discoursing Sabbath by Sabbath, and Festival by Festival, in great and admiring assemblies. It will never be forgotten by the Anglo-Jewish community that he was the first to deliver regular weekly discourses in the familiar mother tongue, which is the only gate that leads to the heart. Before his time it was thought that Jewish learning could be conveyed and Jewish doctrine taught only in a barbarous jargon, a patois formed of German, Polish and Hebrew. It was thought that the English language was necessarily unsuited for

and happiness. That during this long continued period of active work, he should never have stirred up in men anger or hostility, would have been utterly impossible. He was too earnest in his faith, too devoted to his holy calling to view with equanimity and indifference violation of the laws of his God. And each infraction aroused his vehement indignation, and called forth his rebuke, expressed in withering sarcasm, or with eloquent denunciation. Yet his rebuke was always directed against the offence, not the offender. Like David, he prayed "O that sins were made to cease from the earth." But these offences, if they can be so termed, are forgotten now. In all this vast assembly there is not one angry recollection, but a thousand memories of winning grace, of gentle, human, happy wit, solid learning, brilliant eloquence, and earnest soul-deep piety. The old think with affection of their guide, the young with gratitude of their teacher. All unite to avince by their presence their esteem, their veneration and their grief. This great concourse, swelled by brethren coming from outside your body, testifies to the sorrowful conviction "a chief and a great man has fallen this day in Israel." Yet I may say to you, in the words of the prophet, "Weep not for the dead, neither grieve for him." He is taken from us, but gone to his God. He is removed from the sphere of his work, but he is called where his work is measured, approved and compensated. "And the good God is a faithful master, He will give him the full reward of his labour." My brethren, gladly would you have seen his form among you for many years yet to come. It was your hope that his presence would still adorn that pulpit, whence it was his delight to teach, and your delight to learn, the glorious truths of Judaism. But God has willed it otherwise. He has called your pastor to yet holier shrine, where he will behold the perfection of God's truth, and contemplate the beauty of God's holiness for ever and ever. You should not mourn his departure. The blessing pronounced on the good man is as verified in him, "He has come in full age to the grave as a shock of corn is gathered in its season." The moment chosen by God is always the right moment for death. As the husbandman sometimes cuts down his ears of corn while they are yet green so does God, in His wisdom, sometimes summon men while in their prime. Yet though every period is, if God so will it, the right moment of death, there is peculiar appropriateness in old age as the period of departure from this world. Our revered friend was not prematurely called away. As a shock of corn is harvested when fully ripe, so his life was continued until much good work was fully accomplished, until numberless deeds of righteousness were altogether completed. Then he was called away. Was not that the right moment? not too soon, not too late. On the words I have just quoted from the Book of Job, a renowned Jewish expounder *Shabot* so beautifully remarks, when the corn is fully ripe then it should be cut down and gathered to the storehouse. If it remain longer it will not improve, it will scatter and dissipate its seed. So with man, there is a time after which continued life is useless, sometimes injurious. Our departed friend in very few years would have approached that time. God called him while yet every power and faculty was being employed in godly work. Truly, that is the moment that may be called "the right time to die." It has been told me that his fatal illness was contracted or intensified by devotion to his duties, and his death accelerated by his performing for another the last mournful rites we are now rendering to him. If it be so, while to us it is occasion for intense regret that so valuable a life should have been shortened of a portion of its possible duration, to him it was doubtless a source of comfort and exultation. The true soldier thinks it glorious to die in the service of his country. The worthy minister of religion holds it supreme happiness to die while engaged in the service of his God. From the synagogue to the sick bed, then a short period of delusive hope, then yielding up his soul to God with pious resignation and loving heart—who can look back on this closing scene and not say, "Let me die the death of that righteous man, and may my last end be like his." Brethren, I say again, "Weep not for the dead, neither bewail him." We should not weep for him, but rejoice that he is in a better world. We should not mourn, but keep him long in memory; he should live for years and years in our respect and veneration. You should think of him in your synagogue, the place he most loved, converse of him in your family circle, speak of him to your children. By his death, sudden at the last, our brother teaches us the lesson expressed thus by Solomon, "At all times let thy garments be white." Be always prepared for death. Not Solomon only, every wise man has taught the lesson. But your pastor has taught us most effectively the truth that "in the midst of life we are in death." We hear the words of men, even the wisest and instantly forget them. But the teaching of our brother pierces through our levity. We thought him recovering, we heard that he was dead. Ah, life is uncertain. We know not when it may be ended. We are God's servants. He may summon us when it pleases Him. Let us always be ready. Say not we shall have due warning. The hand of death may descend swiftly, and ere we realize its presence it may sweep us away. Let us be ready when God calls to reply in Samuel's words, "Speak, O God, for thy servant heareth. Command, Lord, thy servant will obey. Dust thou call my Father I am ready to depart." Our brother, in his death, teaches us to be ever ready to die, by his life he teaches us how to live, to exert all talents, energies and opportunities for the public good, to fulfil faithfully every obligation of Judaism. And while we on earth still benefit from his influence, may God give him his reward in heaven. May that reward endure for ever and ever!

The body was then removed to the graveside, where brief addresses in eulogy of the character and life of the deceased were delivered by the Rev. Dr. Stern and the Rev. J. Prag. The coffin was lowered into the grave by members of the congregation, and the ceremony terminated.

The Manchester Great Synagogue was draped in black, and will remain so during the month of mourning. A Special Memorial Service will be held on Sunday week.

In the Synagogue of the Manchester Congregation of British Jews on Sabbath last, the minister, the Rev. L. M. Simmons, delivered the following Sermon: Angels and mortal men took hold of the Ark of the Covenant, the angels conquered the mortals, and the Ark of the Covenant is vanished (from the Talmud, Ketiboth 104a). It is related that when the patriarch Rabbi Jehuda Hanassi, the compiler of the Mishnah, was suffering from his last illness, all the inhabitants of the town round about Zephoris assembled in order to be of assistance to him, to sympathise with him. That his disease would be fatal, no one thought possible. So excited was the multitude, that they threatened to slay anyone who brought the fatal news. All was over, and then one named Bar Kappara, with his head covered and his garments torn, uttered the words which I have quoted, "angels and mortal men took hold of the Ark, the angels conquered, and the Ark is vanished." When the people heard these words, they cried out in a tone of despair, "His soul is a rest! He is dead!" Upon which Bar Kappara answered, "Ye have said it!" You know why I bring this before you to-day. The Jewish community of Manchester has sustained a severe loss. My respected friend and colleague, David Myer Isaacs, has