

Early Days of the Wellington (New Zealand) Congregation.

By the late PHILIP FRANKEL,*
Senior Trustee to the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation, Queensland.

*(Read before the Society by his sister-in-law,
Mrs. William L. Cohen, 8th July, 1943.)*

My father, Jacob Frankel, was a Hebrew scholar. Soon after his arrival in England, he came under the notice of Chief Rabbi Solomon Hirschell, at whose home he recited the customary prayers after the demise of my father's mother.

The Chief Rabbi invited my father to study for the ministry. He did so, and later received an appointment in England to a congregation.

He resigned, however, after three years' service, from the position, and entered upon a business career, choosing Greenwich and the surrounding towns as his field of operations. In 1835, at Greenwich, he was married to Miss Miriam Moses.

His wife's brother, Mr. Elias Moses, visited England from Australia in 1841 and persuaded my father to migrate with his wife and family to Australia. Accordingly, in June, 1842, he sailed from England with his wife and three children in the sailing ship *Calcutta*. His destination was Hobart in Tasmania, where they disembarked in October of the same year. There he took part in the founding of the Hobart Hebrew congregation.

In 1847 he suffered misfortune by the death of his wife, and his sister-in-law, Mrs. Elias Moses, of Sydney, took over the care of the two younger children. One of these, Simeon, was later for about thirty years the Secretary of the Great Synagogue in Sydney. The eldest

*Mr. Frankel, at the invitation of the Publication Committee, made a revision of his paper. He did this from his sick bed. Unhappily, he passed away before seeing the Committee's notes on his revised text, which in the circumstances was referred to the Secretary of the Wellington (N.Z.) Hebrew Congregation for the comments of his Board of Management. The President of the Wellington Congregation has been good enough to reply making helpful suggestions. These have been adopted by the Publication Committee. Mr. Frankel died on September 21st, 1943, aged 80 years.

daughter, Mary, was also taken care of by another brother residing in Sydney.

In 1849 my father made a voyage to San Francisco, U.S.A., and after his arrival he acted as an officiant in the Hebrew congregation, "Scheareth Israel." About 1852 he decided to return to Australia, and, on hearing of his intended departure, the congregants presented him with a memento in the form of a gold medal bearing a Hebrew inscription on the one side and on the reverse a translation in English, reading as follows:—

Presented to Jacob Frankel, Esq., by the Congregation Scheareth Israel as a mark of esteem and respect for his kindness in rendering his services as Hassan, Tishri 5612, San Francisco October 1852.

I am the possessor of that heirloom, which my father promised his friends would remain for all time in his family or among his descendants.

On his return to Australia, my father started in business in Melbourne, but later he assisted the Rev. Moses Rintel at the Bourke Street Synagogue. By that gentleman he was married to my mother, Miss Mary Marks. He left Melbourne again in 1861 and went to Dunedin in New Zealand, where I was born in 1863; but he remained there only till 1864, when he removed to Wellington.

There were a few families of very fine Jews there, but I can only carry on my story so far as I can remember, namely, 1869-1870.

At that time, the Sabbath services—Friday evening and Saturday morning—were held in the drawing-room of the late Jacob Joseph, of Lambton Quay, and conducted by my father. I well recall that the reading desk, which stood in the centre of the room, was about five feet high, with a sloping top which used to lift up, and in it were kept the large volumes from which the prayers were read. There was no Sepher Torah, so far as I can remember. The bottom portion of the desk was a spacious box-like drawer in which books and Talaisim were kept. My seat was at the top of that drawer. The desk top was supported by four pillars. The principal worshippers were Messrs. Jacob Joseph (who was blind), Joseph Nathan, Ben. Levy, Morris Marks, Lewis Moss, Henry Phillips, Ben. Cohen, Jacob Selig, the Hon. L. W. Levy, David Asher, Phillip Moeller, Lionel Harris, Maurice Samuel

and Sol. Levy, with their wives and families, and others.

The congregation later became too large for the room, and moved to the Masonic Hall in Boulcott Street. My father called a meeting of all co-religionists in and around Wellington, and as they agreed that the time had arrived for a Synagogue to be established it was decided to secure a central site for same. For this, Wellington Terrace was chosen. Subscriptions were invited, and on land granted by the Government a pretty little Synagogue was built. I remember my father received great assistance from the Rev. Archdeacon Stock, then the head of the Anglican Church.

My father and mother worked very hard, and I believe they handed over the building free of debt to the congregation. There was a very fine choir, and I can remember the inaugural ceremony. My father and mother, with the Committee and the Choir, stood on the front porch, and the congregation and others stood around in the area in front while the dedication hymns were sung to music composed by my father for the occasion. The whole of those present then entered the building, and my father consecrated the building to God's service.

My father assisted with the services until the arrival of the Rev. Herman Van Staveren. This was early in 1876.

My father died on 30th August, 1899, and my mother died on 14th December, 1899. Both are buried in the Jewish Cemetery at Wellington, New Zealand.

Joseph G. Raphael.

By Ald. E. S. MARKS, C.B.E.

The subject of this paper was born on the 16th February, 1818. His parents were Phillip and Grace Raphael, of London.*

Of his boyhood in England nothing is known. At an early age he is said to have arrived in Australia. According to one of his descendants, he came out as one of the complement of an English vessel, which, in consequence of harsh treatment, he did not rejoin while the

*From the records of the Great Synagogue.