

maintained. The Great Synagogue is the Mother Congregation of Australian Jewry, and at one time, in New South Wales, it was the hub and centre of Jewish life. It is not therefore surprising that leaders and prominent members of the Synagogue were active in the formation of the Historical Society. The Synagogue as well as the Society however, control and manage their own historical and other archives. The Synagogue itself has a collection of Registers, Minute Books, letters and other records and items of special interest to historians, including those concerned with genealogical inquiries. The Historical Society holds microfilm of the Registers of Births, Deaths and Marriages which can be inspected without resort to the original Registers. The Society is most fortunate in being located within the Synagogue precincts, conveniently and centrally located in the City. As regards the Society's Journal it has been published, without interruption, for almost 50 years, containing original Papers of great value to historians of the Jewish community. The Journal is held by practically all leading libraries in Australia as well as overseas.

The Monograph includes a brief conspectus of the history of Australian Jewry contributed by Alan Crown to *The Jewish Spectator*, New York. It also features a Paper by Percy J. Marks on "The Jewish Press of Australia", read by its author in 1913 before the Jewish Literary and Debating Society. This article was printed, shortly after Marks' death in Vol. I of the Historical Society's *Journal*. The Editors of the Monograph, in their Supplementary Notes, have contributed an historical survey of the Jewish Press in Australia, which brings Marks' account up to date. They have made reference to writings by Solomon Stedman and by Suzanne Rutland relating to that subject, all of them in the Society's publications.

"Periodical Publications From The Australian Jewish Community" is of course of primary value to writers, librarians, researchers and students wishing to consult source material but it also serves as an indication that Australian Jewry is by no means the cultural and spiritual desert of which uninformed critics have sometimes spoken. Many of the publications in this bibliography are held in Sydney. It might be added that the Victorian Branch of the Historical Society has valuable archives and a reference library. The Secretary, Mrs Beverley Davis, of 3 Alma Road Camberwell, receives and answers inquiries.

M.Z.F.

SIR MATTHEW NATHAN

by Anthony P. Haydon, University of Queensland Press, 1976.

This Society has recently been presented with Dr. Anthony Haydon's biography of Sir Matthew Nathan, British colonial Governor and Civil Servant. This volume of 280 pages, the subject of which has been fully researched and documented, is of special interest to students of British colonial administration, particularly during its consolidation period in the earlier years of the present century. The book, however, also contains penetrating insights into the Jewish background of its subject. It is also of special value to Australian readers with an interest in Nathan's last Governorship in Queensland. Several chapters of this work originated as a doctoral dissertation at Yale University where the author did his post graduate studies, obtaining financial assistance from Yale and later grants from the Myer Foundation and La Trobe

University. He was particularly indebted to the Bodleian and Rhodes House Libraries of Oxford University where the extensive collection of Nathan's Papers is housed.

Matthew Nathan was born in London in 1862, his parents being Jonah and Miriam Nathan. The father, a middle class merchant, was the great-grandson of an 18th century German migrant, a quill maker. The mother, much younger than her husband, was an educated woman who was most ambitious for her children. In this, incidentally, she resembled, to some extent, the mothers of Sir John Monash and Sir Isaac Isaacs, both of whom exerted a dominating influence on the future careers of their famous sons. Miriam Nathan appears to have steered her children away from the confines of the Jewish community, seeking military and civil service vocations for them. At that time Judaism was still not recognized as a creed for entry on a soldier's official file. The Rev. F.L. Cohen — in passing — was then most keen to encourage Jewish recruits into the Imperial Defence Forces and was to become the first Jewish Chaplain.

Mrs Nathan, we are told, played down the Jewish extraction of her children. "Papa wishes everyone home", she wrote, "who can be for the fast. I shall be very glad when that day is over, I cannot say that I ever feel very devotional." Her expectations materialised when Matthew Nathan proved himself to be outstanding among the students of the Military Academy, joining the Royal Engineers and serving at a very early age in West Africa and Egypt. Not long afterwards Matthew secured a posting to India where he was already a "self-possessed careerist", and marriage and romance had little place in his plans. On his return to England Nathan became a member of the New West End Synagogue, leaving it to his mother to select a seat, remarking, "if one did wish to use it, it is more pleasant to sit where we did than among the stuffy old gentlemen with exuberant shirt frills who sit behind the desk." As the author notes, Nathan remained a nominal Jew, pursuing his career but always avoiding all controversy, mindful of his own future, and aided by official patronage. At the relatively young age of 36 he was an acting Governor of Sierre Leone, probably the first professing Jew to occupy such a position. He was apparently regarded by the Colonial Office as a golden boy, dutiful to carry out instructions and maintaining the status quo. "Never ask, never refuse", was the personal motto by which Nathan was motivated.

Although Nathan took the oath of office, as the author mentions, "with his helmet on his head and his hand on the Old Testament", the new Governor seems to have avoided the handful of local Jews. Shortly afterwards he was appointed Governor of the Gold Coast. His administration was marked by freedom from direct taxation, which was maintained in the Colony for about 40 years. Three years later came the Governorship of Hong Kong, seen by Nathan as a "first-class" one. Here also he remained aloof from the Jewish community. His administration was very successful, a halcyon time for Nathan. His next post took him to Natal for two years where he tried to segregate the races but had to impose martial law on the Zulus. He was virtually a supernumary as a military Governor. He looked askance at moves to unify Natal with South Africa, concerned that the Afrikaners might cut the painter with Britain. The writer tells us that Nathan took a Durban synagogue seat but used it rarely.

Between 1910 and 1916 Nathan secured positions in London as Secretary of the Post Office and also as head of the Board of Inland Revenue. He was associated with Herbert Samuel, the Postmaster General. Nathan began to move and be seen in Downing Street politico-social circles and in 1916 was sent to Ireland as Under Secretary. In that post he shared the blame for failing to forestall the Easter rising, content to reassure the authorities that all was well. He preferred, it was said, a single

mindful attachment to his desk, leading an obituarist to later remark that Nathan had never married because "he had no time."

Finding himself unemployed, the Colonial Office yielded to Nathan's claims on its patronage when he was offered in 1920 the Governorship of Queensland which was suddenly vacant. It was thought that he would act as a brake on Premier Theodore, though the latter may have believed that the Governor would be sympathetic to a Labour Government. Indeed, Nathan raised no opposition to the legislation to abolish the Legislative Council. Nathan sensed that the Government would press for a local Governor but he agreed to a short extension of his term. He again, managed to avoid contentious issues. In his retirement he acted as Vice President of the Royal Geographical Society, chaired a Committee doing research on the Great Barrier Reef, served on a Royal Commission on the Ceylon Constitution, and held office as High Sheriff of Somerset. The author says that he was associated with the Friends of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and describes this as Nathan's "sole concession in later life to the cause of preserving a culture which he had long since deserted in favour of his land of birth." Nathan died in 1939.

Matthew Nathan, as Anthony Haydon concludes, was dedicated to the consolidation of the British Empire, his striking quality being a "caretaker mentality", albeit a narrow conception of Imperialism. The author has obviously sifted through numerous archives and source material from which he has assembled all the basic data relating to Nathan's career, with the result that this book is most readable and instructive. At all times Nathan's personality emerges. Jewish readers, in particular, are presented with many insights which indicate that the author achieved a complete understanding of the character of his subject. The book contains a lengthy and valuable Bibliography.

M.Z.F.

THE CHOSEN A HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN JEWRY

by Dr. Hilary Rubinstein

The history of Australian Jewry is inextricably woven into the fabric of a wider Australian context. However distinguishable it might be through religion, language and community structure, its meanderings in a benign and "lucky" environment have been *sui generis*.

Despite a proliferation of monographs and dissertations, no-one until now has attempted to write a comprehensive history. Hilary Rubinstein, having recently wetted a foot in describing the Victorian Jewish community, now has taken the complete plunge in tackling the continental saga. One would have hoped that this pathfinder would have been a comprehensive and authoritative volume, but it falls a long way short of this expectation.

The book suffers some restraints which cannot be laid at the author's threshold. It is not big enough physically to cover all the main issues of Jewish life and survival. The author must have agonised over the components that simply could not be included. These sins of omission wherever the *culpa* is to be laid, are nevertheless considerable.

This reviewer had just read Robert Hughes *The Fatal Shore* when requested to review the Australian Jewish History. A state of euphoria prevailed after reading a history so excitingly and imaginatively penned that it was deliberately read slowly. Each page a