

When Editors Were Independent of the Jews

How Bennett, of the Herald, Said "No" to New York Jewry, and Made It Stick. A Chapter From American Newspaper History

THE first instinctive answer which the Jew makes to any criticism of his race coming from a non-Jew is that of violence, threatened or inflicted. This statement will be confirmed by hundreds of thousands of citizens of the United States who have heard the evidence with their own ears. Of recent months the country has been full of threats against persons who have taken cognizance of the Jewish Question, threats which have been spoken, whispered, written and passed as resolutions by Jewish organizations.

If the candid investigator of the Jewish Question happens to be in business, then "boycott" is the first "answer" of which the Jews seem to think. Whether it be a newspaper, as in the case of the old New York *Herald*; or a mercantile establishment, as in the case of A. T. Stewart's famous store; or a hotel, as in the case of the old Grand Union Hotel at Saratoga; or a dramatic production, as in the case of "The Merchant of Venice"; or any manufactured article whose maker has adopted the policy that "my goods are for sale, but not my principles"—if there is any manner of business connection with the student of the Jewish Question, the first "answer" is "boycott."

The technique is this: a "whispering drive" is first begun. Disquieting rumors begin to fly thick and fast. "Watch us get him," is the word that is passed along. Jews in charge of ticker news services adopt the slogan of "a rumor a day." Jews in charge of local newspapers adopt the policy of "a slurring headline a day." Jews in charge of the newsboys on the streets (all the street corners and desirable places downtown are preempted by Jewish "padrones" who permit only their own boys to sell) give orders to emphasize certain news in their street cries—"a new yell against him every day." The whole campaign against the critic of Jewry, whoever he may be, is keyed to the threat, "Watch us get him."

An Attack Made From Ambush

JUST as Mr. Gompers and Justice Brandeis believe in "the secondary strike," as a recent Supreme Court decision reveals, so the Jews who set out to punish the students of the Jewish Question believe in a secondary boycott. Not only do they pledge themselves (they deny this, but the newspaper reports assert it, as do unpublished telegraphic dispatches to some of the newspapers) not to use the specific product in question, but they pledge themselves to boycott anyone else who uses it. If the article is a hat (it is unlikely to be a hat, however, hats being largely Jewish) not only do the Jews pledge themselves to refrain from buying that kind of hat, but also to refrain from doing business with anyone who wears such a hat.

And then, when anything seems to occur at the hat works which indicates slackness, the Jews, forgetting all about their denial of a pledged boycott, begin to boast—"See what we did to him?"

The "whispering drive," the "boycott," these are the chief Jewish answers. They constitute the bone and sinew of that state of mind in non-Jews which is known as "the fear of the Jews."

They do not always notify their victim. Recently the young sales manager of a large wholesale firm spoke at a dinner whose guests were mostly the firm's customers. He is one of those young men who have caught the vision of a new honor in business. He believes that the right thing is always practicable, and, other things being equal, profitable as well. Among the guests were probably 40 Jewish merchants, all customers of the firm. In his address the young sales agent expressed his enthusiasm for morality by saying, "What we need in business is more of the principles of Jesus Christ." Now, as a matter of fact, the young man knows very little about Jesus Christ. He has caught fire from the Roger Babson idea of religious principle as a basis of business, but he expressed it in his own way, and everybody knew what he meant; he meant decency, not sectarianism. Yet, because he used the expression he did, he lost 40 Jewish customers for his firm, and he doesn't yet know the reason why. The agents of the firm which got the new trade know the reason. It was a silent, unannounced boycott.

This article is the story of a boycott which lasted over a number of years. It is only one of numerous stories of the same kind which can be told of New York. It concerns the New York *Herald*, one newspaper that dared to remain independent of Jewish influence in the metropolis.

The *Herald* enjoyed an existence of 90 years, which was terminated about a year ago by an amalgamation. It performed great feats in the world of news-gathering. It sent Henry M. Stanley to Africa to find Livingstone. It backed up the Jeannette expedition to the

Arctic regions. It was largely instrumental in having the first Atlantic cables laid. But perhaps its greatest feat was the maintenance during many years of its journalistic independence against the combined attack of New York Jewry. Its reputation among newspapermen was that neither its news nor its editorial columns could be bought or influenced.

Its proprietor, the late James Gordon Bennett, had always maintained a friendly attitude toward the Jews of his city. He apparently harbored no prejudice against them. Certainly he never deliberately antagonized them. But he was resolved upon preserving the honor of independent journalism. He never bent to the policy that the advertisers had something to say about the editorial policy of the paper, either as to influencing it for publication or suppression.

Suppressing Facts About the Jews

THIRTY years ago the New York press was free. Today it is practically all Jewish controlled. This control is variously exercised, sometimes resting only on the owners' sense of expediency. But the control is there and, for the moment, it is absolute. One does not have to go far to be able to find the controlling factor in any case. Newspapermen do not glory in the fact, however; it is a condition, not a crusade, that confronts them, and for the moment "business is business."

Thirty years ago there were also more newspapers in New York than there are today. There were eight or nine morning newspapers; there are only five today. The *Herald*, a three cent newspaper, enjoyed the highest prestige, and was the most desirable advertising medium due to the class of its circulation. It easily led the journalistic field.

At that time the Jewish population of New York was less than one-third of what it is today, but there was much wealth represented in it.

Now, what every newspaperman knows is this: most Jewish leaders are always interested either in getting a story published or getting it suppressed. There is no class of people who read the public press so carefully, with an eye to their own affairs, as do the Jews; and many an editor can vouch for that.

The *Herald* simply adopted the policy from the beginning of this form of harassment that it was not to be permitted to sway the *Herald* from its duty as a public informant. And that this had a reflex advantage for the other newspapers is apparent from the following statement:

If a scandal occurred in Jewish circles, influential Jews would swarm into the editorial offices to arrange for a suppression of the story. But the editors knew that not far away was the *Herald* which would not suppress for anything or anybody. What was the use of one paper suppressing, if another would not? So the editors would say, "We would be very glad to suppress this story, but the *Herald* is going to use it, so we'll have to do the same in self-protection. However, if you can get the *Herald* to suppress it, we will gladly do so too."

A Jewish Mayor for New York

BUT the *Herald* never succumbed. Neither pressure of influence nor promises of business nor threats of loss availed: it printed the news.

There was a certain Jewish banker who periodically demanded that Bennett discharge the *Herald's* financial editor. This banker was in the business of disposing of Mexican bonds at a time when such bonds were least secure. Once when an unusually large number of bonds were to be unloaded on unsuspecting Americans, the *Herald* published the story of an impending Mexican revolution, which presently ensued. The banker frothed at the mouth and moved every influence he could to change the *Herald's* financial staff, but was not able to effect the change even of an office boy.

Once when a shocking scandal involved a member of a prominent family, Bennett refused to suppress it, arguing that if the episode had occurred in a family of any other race it would be published regardless of the prominence of the figures involved. The Jews of Philadelphia secured suppression there, but because of Bennett's unflinching stand there was no suppression in New York.

A newspaper is a business proposition. There are some matters it cannot touch without putting itself in peril of becoming a defunct concern. This is especially true since newspapers no longer receive their support from the public but from the advertisers. The money the reader gives for the paper scarcely suffices to pay for the amount of white paper he receives. In this way, advertisers cannot be disregarded any more than the paper mills can be. And as the most extensive ad-

vertisers are the department stores, and as most department stores are owned by Jews, it comes logically that Jews often try to influence the news policies at least, of the papers with whom they deal.

In New York it has always been the burning ambition of the Jews to elect a Jewish mayor. They selected a time when the leading parties were disrupted, to push forward their choice. The method which they adopted was characteristic.

They reasoned that the newspapers would not dare refuse the dictum of the combined department store owners, so they drew up a "strictly confidential" letter which they sent to the owners of the New York newspapers, demanding support for the Jewish mayoralty candidate.

The newspaper owners were in a quandary. For several days they debated how to act. All remained silent. The editors of the *Herald* cabled the news to Bennett who was abroad. Then it was that Bennett exhibited that boldness and directness of judgment which characterized him. He cabled back, "Print the letter." It was printed in the *Herald's* editorial columns, the arrogance of the Jewish advertisers was exposed, and non-Jewish New York breathed easier and applauded the action.

The *Herald* explained frankly that it could not support a candidate of private interests, because it was devoted to the interests of the public. But the Jewish leaders vowed vengeance against the *Herald* and against the man who dared expose their game. They had not liked Bennett for a long time, anyway. The *Herald* was the real "society newspaper" in New York, but Bennett had a rule that only the names of really prominent families should be printed. The stories of the efforts of newly rich Jews to break into the *Herald's* society columns are some of the best that are told by old newspapermen. But Bennett was obdurate. His policy stood.

Bennett, however, was shrewd enough not to invite open conflict with the Jews. He felt no prejudice against the race; he simply resented their efforts to intimidate him.

A \$600,000 Advertising Boycott

THE whole matter culminated in a contention which began between Bennett and Nathan Straus, a German Jew whose business house is known under the name of "R. H. Macy & Company," Macy being the Scotchman who built up the business and from whose heirs Straus obtained it. Mr. Straus was something of a philanthropist in the ghetto, but the story goes that Bennett's failure to proclaim him as a philanthropist led to ill feeling between the two. A long newspaper war ensued, the subject of which was the value of the pasteurization of milk—a stupid discussion which no one took seriously, save Bennett and Straus.

The Jews, of course, took Mr. Straus' side. Jewish speakers made the welkin ring with laudation of Nathan Straus and maledictions upon James Gordon Bennett. Bennett was pictured in the most vile business of "persecuting" a noble Jew. It went so far that the Jews were able to put resolutions through the board of aldermen.

Long since, of course, Straus, a very heavy advertiser, had withdrawn every dollar's worth of his business from the *Herald* and the *Evening Telegram*. And now the combined and powerful elements of New York Jewry gathered together to deal a staggering blow at Bennett—as years before they had dealt a blow to another citizen of New York. The Jewish policy of "Dominate or Destroy" was at stake, and Jewry declared war.

As one man, the Jewish advertisers withdrew their advertisements from Mr. Bennett's newspapers. Their assigned reason was that the *Herald* was showing animosity against the Jews. The real purpose of their action was to crush an American newspaper owner who dared be independent of them.

The blow they delivered was a staggering one. It meant the loss of \$600,000 a year. Any other newspaper in New York would have been put out of business by it. The Jews knew that and sat back, waiting the downfall of the man they chose to consider their enemy.

But Bennett was ever a fighter. Besides, he knew Jewish psychology probably better than any other non-Jew in New York. He turned the tables on his opponents in a startling and unexpected fashion. The coveted positions in his papers had always been used by the Jews. These he immediately turned over to non-Jewish merchants under exclusive contracts. Merchants who had formerly been crowded into the back pages and obscure corners by the more opulent Jewish advertisers, now blossomed forth full page in the most