CHAPTER II.

THE ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE JEWS IN EGYPT.

The opinion commonly held by scholars, based on literary sources, is that the main occupation of the Egyptian Jews was trade and money-lending. The papyri do not confirm this view. They teach us that the social conditions of the Jews in Egypt were as varied as they could be, and that their part in agriculture, cattle-breeding, military service and administration was by no means less than their achievement as merchants and money-lenders.

1. *Soldiers.*—The Aramaic papyri from Elephantine revealed to us the existence of Jewish soldiers in Egypt in the pre-Hellenistic period. The Ptolemies continued the old Egyptian custom of using foreign troops as mercenaries or as permanent garrisons in the fortresses and along the frontier, and to settle them on the soil. We have evidence of Jews serving in the fortresses (*Letter of Aristeas,* 13), guarding the frontier in Transjordan (*P. C. Z.*, 59003) and in Pelusion (*Ant.*, XIV, 99; *bell. Jud.*, I, 175), and settled as κληροῦχοι or κάτοικοι in Herakleopolis (*P. Hib.*, 96), in Fayum (*P. Tebt.*, 815, fr. 2, ll. 17-22; 817; 818; 820; 856, ll. 46-49; 882; 1075; *P. Gurob.*, 2; 8; *P. Freib.*, 12 *b*) and in the "Land of Onias" (*Ant.*, XII, 388; XIII, 62, 287, etc). The papyri show us Jews serving in the regular army and in the *Epigone* (reserve troops) as horsemen and infantry, soldiers and officers. Jews serving in the regular army are mentioned nearly thirty times in the papyri. Jews in the Epigone—not more than half this number. Among the officers we can name Tobiah, the Chief of the military settlement in Transjordan (*P. C. Z.*, 59003), and a "tactomisthos" (*P. Tebt.*, 818), who was perhaps a paymaster. A Jewish "hegemon" in Fayum is mentioned in an inscription (*S. B.*, 27). Like every soldier in the Ptolemaic army, all Jewish soldiers were designated by an *ethnicon* following their names ("X., a Jew"; "Y., a Jew of Epigone"). The ethnicon "Jew" was never used as a pseudo-ethnicon, like the ethnica "Macedo-