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## What Fools These Mortals be . . .



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## Romance of a Name

By N. Pearlroth

### BERLIN

IT was at the time of the so-called "Phony war" before the United States became a belligerent. Out of curiosity I went to an Italian Fascist meeting in New York. The various speakers always concluded their orations by shouting "Viva Roberto." A friend who accompanied me to the meeting asked me later, "Who is Roberto?" I explained that this was a veiled reference to the unholy alliance between Mussolini, Hitler and Hirohito. "Roberto" was a composite of the initial syllables of the three capitals, Rome, Berlin and Tokyo. My friend's name is Berlin, and he sighed. "I think I'll have to change my family name," he said. "I never could understand why my ancestors, who came from Russia, selected the name of the German capital, as their family name."

I reassured him by explaining that the Jewish family name Berlin had nothing to do with Berlin, Germany.

About 700 years ago Jewish parents first adopted the custom of

bestowing secondary (animal) names on their children. If the child's Hebrew name was Isachar, it received the double name of Isachar-Bear. The "bear" was an allusion to Genesis 49, 14 where the patriarch Jacob in an ante-mortem blessing of his descendants compared his son Isachar to a strong ass. "Ass" as a personal name did not appeal overly to Jewish parents. They substituted another animal famed for strength, the Bear.

"Bear" was transformed into the diminutive "Berl." By adding the suffix -in, the name was transformed into the possessive case, acquiring the meaning of "son of Berl." Where a patronymic was made into a family name, those who were sons or descendants of an ancestor named Isachar-Bear or Berl, adopted the family of Berlin.

It is only a coincidence that the name of Hitler's (now ruined) capital derives its name from a heraldic bear in the city's coat of arms. Here the name Berlin means "The City of the Bear."

## From Near and Far

By Ben Dor

### Sigi Needs No Teacher

WORD has been received in Jerusalem that Sigi Weissenberg, the 18-year-old pianist who has gone from Jerusalem to Philadelphia for advanced study, has been engaged to appear with the Philadelphia Orchestra at their subscription concerts next season. Weissenberg, it will be recalled, gave a series of concerts in South Africa last year.

This exceptional honour came to the young musician after an audition with Mr. Schnabel in New York, at which Weissenberg was told by the master that he "needed no teacher."

Weissenberg was also given an audition by Mrs. Olga Samaroff, of the Philadelphia Conservatory, and was invited to appear with the Philadelphia Orchestra under Ormande, being granted at the same time a scholarship to the Conservatory.



SIGI WEISSENBERG

### STILL PAINTING AT 83

MR. ABRAHAM WOOLFF, of Cape Town, is still painting at the age of 83. He spends two hours a day in his studio, painting portraits of his friends and making copies of interesting people from newspaper photographs. The walls of his studio in Oranjezicht are lined with the pictures he has executed during the last 60 years.

Mr. Woolff started a photographic business in 1894, and after this was in the hide and skin busi-

ness, from which he retired 20 years ago. He was born in Lithuania and attended the art academies at Berlin and Koenigsberg. Mr. Woolff has done his painting for relaxation and has never made a penny from it. Many famous personalities, including the late Rev. A. Bender, of the Cape Town Hebrew Congregation, have sat for him.

One of his biggest portraits is a full-length one of his father, a white-bearded rabbi, who is pictured at prayer. This was executed 52 years ago.

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