

GOETHE CENTENARY

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visited Goethe in Weimar. Goethe speaks of his intention in a letter which he wrote to his friend Charlotte Stein in 1782. His production of the novel was laborious and extended over a period of many years. As time went on, as a result of Schiller's influence the character became more abstract and ideal until finally there was no room in the novel for the specialised character of a Jew.

Leaving Goethe's literary contacts with the Jewish people, we come to his more personal relations with them. We have already seen how in Frankfurt he passed through a period of prejudices into one of tolerance. In Weimar where the hey-day of his life was spent he had frequent opportunity of meeting Jews, some resident in Weimar like Elkan, the theatre wardrobe manager, and others like Heine who made pilgrimages to his shrine. Among Goethe's many civic duties in Weimar was that of "Theaterdirektor" producer and general supervisor of plays presented. In this capacity, two stories of his sympathy towards Jews are related. When a play was submitted to Goethe in which the Jews were held up to opprobrium and ridicule, he is said to have replied "It is a shame to make a laughing stock of a nation so illustrious in the arts and sciences."

IN the poem "Auf Miedings Tod," an elegy written on the death of the theatre carpenter, Goethe originally had the following lines "Elkan, the Jew runs about with remnants and the commotion points to a celebration." Elkan whom we have already mentioned, seems to have been the company's tailor and old-clothes man and the lines were obviously not written with a disparaging intention. Afterwards this same Elkan rose to a more distinguished position in Weimar social circles and was, in fact, the founder of a family which subsequently moved in the highest society.

When Elkan's family had attained this more exalted position, they were naturally anxious to forget their humble origin of which Goethe's lines stood as a permanent memorial. Hence, in order to remove at least the literary perpetuation of old Elkan's name, a member of the family asked Goethe to alter this line. This Goethe willingly did, and the line in question has since that time always been published "the energetic Jew" etc.

In speaking of Goethe's acquaintance with this new type of emancipated Jew, cultured, wealthy and influential, we may mention his relations with the Jewish Salondamen of Berlin, Rahel Levin and Henriette Hertz, who did more perhaps than anybody at the time to spread the Goethe cult. In his later years, Goethe remained in constant correspondence with them and in exchange for the delicate and no doubt fascinating compliments of which he was to lavish to his feminine friends, they paid him their meed of praise and homage which he was not ill-pleased to receive. From Börne, on the other hand, the baptised Jew, who was one of the leaders of the Young German movement, Goethe received nothing but opprobrium, much of it springing from jealousy, none of which, however, could disturb Goethe in his olympic calm.

OF Heine's meeting with Goethe, we have two accounts; one is by Heine himself and is for that reason, perhaps, the less credible. From one account, we gather that when Goethe asked him what literary work he had in hand, Heine replied with typical Jewish "Chutzpah"—"A New Faust." Whereupon, Goethe is said to have hastily concluded the interview. In Heine's own account in "Die Romantische Schule" he tells us that before his interview with Goethe he had prepared mighty and illuminating opinions which he intended to vent but that when he was brought

face to face with the great man, he could speak of nothing but the excellence of the cherries which grew on the road to Goethe's house. Of one thing we may be certain; it is that Goethe, despite Heine's great admiration for him, did not find in the Jewish Poet a sympathetic character.

OUR knowledge of Goethe's opinions on the Jews must always remain scanty because he never maintained a definite thesis on them. At times, as we have seen, his disposition towards them was friendly; at other times he felt an aversion for them. We know that he was bitterly opposed to Karl August's emancipating decree on the Jews in 1812. In particular was he opposed to the legislation of the marriage of Jews and Christians. In one of his conversations with von Muller (1812) he says "The General Superintendent should rather give up his post than marry a Jewess in church in the name of the Holy Trinity." Nevertheless Goethe had an unbounded admiration for the vigour and persistent striving of the Jewish people. And he has shown in Faust, he regarded the purpose of life as consisting in the struggle rather than in the achievement. In Wilhelm Meister, we have the wonderful song beginning "He who has never eaten his bread with tears" . . . In the Jews, repelled as he was by the sordid conditions in which most of them lived at the time, he saw a community of people, all of whom ate their bread with tears. It is thus that he could say of them as he does in "Wilhelm Meister"—"The Jewish people has never been much good, as its leaders, judges, kings and prophets have reproached it a thousand times; it has few virtues and most faults of other people; but in self-reliance, steadfastness, bravery and even leaving all that aside,—in toughness, it's equal is yet to be found. It is the hardest people in the world; it is, it was, and it will be to glorify Jehovah's name to all time."

Monthly Chamber Concert by Shulman Quartet.

Fine Broadcast Performance.

In these modern times when musical compositions are all too frequently compounded in equal parts of dissonance and prolixity, it comes as a welcome relief to be able to listen to music of the kind given us by the Shulman String Quartet at their monthly chamber concert broadcast from JB last Tuesday night.

The principal work submitted was the Mozart Clarinet Quintet—a charming work packed with colour and beauty. Pure and limpid in its style of writing, it contains a good deal of canon skilfully worked into the tissue of the whole, while the organic growth of the work from beginning to end is practically flawless.

Mr. van den Brandhof played the clarinet part with no little amount of technical fluency, and the other instruments all helped to make the performance a very charming and colourful one. There can indeed be little doubt that the Shulman players have improved a great deal since they first came together to play chamber music. They have learnt how to coalesce their own individualities in the ensemble; they played with more fluency than before; and on Tuesday night they again gave ample proof of the fact that they are an acquisition to the musical life of this city.

The other contribution to the programme was Greig's C Minor Sonata for violin and piano, which, although frequently per-

formed, still retains its charm and appeal. Well equipped to deal with music of this type, Mr. J. Shulman (violin) and Miss M. Williams (piano), were enabled to treat the Sonata in a very competent manner. There were, indeed, many delightful moments in their performance.

The members of the Shulman Quartet are: Messrs. J. Shulman, J. Miller, B. Sack, and E. Levitz. While their efforts merit the highest praise, I submit that it would be a popular experiment if the players would, one day, give a performance locally of some modern work written in the Jewish Idiom, such as "Variations on a Jewish Theme for String Quartet," by M. Gnessin.

J. S.

WOMEN'S ZIONIST LEAGUE—MAYFAIR BRANCH.

The annual general meeting of the above branch was held at the residence of Mrs. J. Katz on Monday, 11th inst. Mrs. B. Leader was in the chair and welcomed the representatives from the Central Committee, viz., Mesdames Patley, Reinhold and Udwin.

After the annual report was read and confirmed, nominations for the committee were called, which resulted as follows:—Chairlady, Mrs. (Dr.) B. Leader; Hon. Secretary, Miss R. Cohen; committee: Mesdames C. Engel, S. Friedman, I. Green, J. Katz, S. H. Meyerowitz, C. Michelow, H. Michelow, J. Michelow, A. Sevel, and Miss G. Jankelowitz.

The meeting closed with a hearty vote of thanks to the hostess, proposed by Mrs. Udwin.