

Fashion Notes and Notions.

By PENELOPE.

Following the Editor's invitation to all and sundry to give their opinions upon Judaism in all its aspects, a number of people meeting at a dinner party in a Jewish house the other evening were surprised to hear a man, prominent in professional life in Johannesburg, say, "Why won't the Jews work?"

There was a murmur of surprise from every one. "Work; why every Jew works! and what is more Jews always succeed where others fail. Look at the professions and the arts, they are crowded with Jews and all at the top."

"Ah! there you have it," was the reply. "Work of administration, work of commerce or finance, law or medicine, where the imagination and the brain hold sway, in such you find us, but when it comes to the staple industries of a country we leave the manual work to others. We are good masters and administrators; are we good servants? And can the world exist or the dream of Zion come true without servants?"

"And," he went on, "you have an illustration of what I say in this country. Here in a community with a big percentage of Jews the numbers working on the mines are negligible, in the labour section they are practically nil, in the staff, perhaps half a dozen on the whole of the reef, and yet there is no pressure of persecution brought to bear to keep them out. Is it lack of physical courage which perhaps makes most of us reluctant to face hardship and discomfort? Moral cowardice it is not, for over and over again, when necessity demands, the Jew has proved his courage and readiness to serve his country or his cause even at the risk of personal danger."

"Perhaps," said another, "it is because the mining vista has never appealed to us, an ambitious individualistic artistic race can see no career in the dead end occupation of mining, or for the matter of that, in factories and farms. Every one who has worked with the young Jew will find him difficult to control in mass, he is too conscious of himself, of his own thought, of his own interpretation of orders, to serve blindly and follow routine."

By this time every one in the room was busy proving their individuality and opinions came thick and fast from every side. I listened and found the general concensus of belief to be: Most Jews want the easy road to the top job, they like the professions, they want the educative stimulus and scope to develop their own individuality, they may not be miners but they control most of the mining houses, they may not be clerks but they hold high office as lawyers and judges, the medical profession in Johannesburg is theirs to command and the universities are crowded with them to the chagrin of the League of Gentiles. And speaking of the medical profession, has it been noted that most of the women doctors here are Jewesses? I am inclined to agree with the men who said that Jews don't like work, for to the man who has an imagination and brain administration may need concentration, art may need service, but it is a service of love in either case, and in the service of love there is no

hard work.

Miss Stern's Exhibition.

The great artistic sensation of the past week has been the Exhibition of Irma Stern's pictures at Leon Levson's, which we were the first to announce as being "en tapis."

Long before the opening date people were dropping in to Levson's Galleries to ask permission to see the much talked of work. Some came to praise but most came to scoff, for painting as interpreted by many of the artists of to-day is an art understood by few. Mr. Levson, who opened the exhibition, gave a most interesting address on the subject. He said: "I understand you have come here to listen to an explanation of what Modern Art means. Well, I am afraid you will be disappointed; for there is no such thing as Modern Art! In other words, that which has been Art thousands of years ago is art to-day, and that which is art to-day will be art for all time to come. But, as people seem to prefer the word modern—I shall tell you that art is always modern—and shall therefore hasten to explain to you what I mean by art always being modern."

He traced the history of art and told us that Rembrandt, who is honoured to-day, was looked upon as a revolutionary in his time.

Had Rembrandt lived to-day, said Mr. Levson, his work would certainly have been called modern, for he would have been influenced by different environments, and therefore would certainly have expressed his feelings for life and everything that surrounded him, through quite a different medium.

Every great man (or master) has a message to deliver to the people, and surely it would be no message if it were unoriginal. Originality does not necessarily mean being modern or any other phrase. Originality means the capacity to see more or to see something in life or do something in life which has not been attempted before.

Ask the man in the street who Rembrandt was, and he will say, "Of course Rembrandt was a Dutch Master," but put before him a Rembrandt picture, together perhaps with another one by Tintoretto—unless he has seen them in some Gallery or Museum, he would not know which is which—so you

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see, even after hundreds of years, the message that Rembrandt had to give, and the one that Tintoreto had to give, are still only understood by the very few.

In going on to explain what Art actually means he drew parallels between the arts of music and of painting, showing the difference between the musician or artist who was merely a copyist and the man who interprets another man's composition and the creator of new music. The composer who is not content with just interpreting beautiful sounds feels the movement of life, feels for the beauty of form, rhythm and harmony, as if it were together different sounds of birds, trees, sea, storm, woods, etc., and moulds them into a composition, full of form, rhythm and harmony, and therefore creates music which is a work of art, and he is a creator.

In the art of drawing and painting, he said, we have exactly the same standards. We have the Master who creates. The Artist who interprets. The Painter who imitates.

Mr. Levson explained that the first thing in judging a picture is to consider: Has it got design? Are the forms strong? Are the lines full of rhythm? Has it movement? Is the drawing expressed with feelings? Are the colours harmonious, and at last, is the technique suitable to the whole expression of that particular picture?

There is no such thing as a standard in technique. When people talk of technique they do so in the same manner as critics talk on Modern Art, simply to hide their ignorance.

It is the same as in literature. You have what we call style. Now, if every writer had the same style, none of them would be individual. The same applies to drawing and painting.

Every artist must, if he is a master, have a different technique.

Let me make it clear once more that, if people

would find it necessary to look at a picture and think, and try to understand what the artist meant, in the same way as one has to think what one reads, a picture would then be looked upon in the same intellectual way as writing. The Art of Literature came through the medium of writing, which from its beginning became intellectual by mere necessity. I believe the art of drawing and painting came through some higher feelings possessed by some great man, irrespective whether the masses will understand it or not.

And now, in our present time, what we call civilization, the majority of the people not only wish for the least exertion physically, but also mentally, and the result is, thousands and thousands of cheap novels, bioscope entertainments and so on, always the easiest things to see because they do not require thought.

The same applies to pictures—anything is considered a picture which tells a story.

Coming to Miss Stern's pictures, Mr. Levson said he was not going to say that they were all gems, but that she deserves a certain amount of credit, for she does not just paint to sell, or to please the public, therefore she is serious in what she is attempting to do. But, has Miss Irma Stern a message for us? From her present work, I do not yet think so, but if she is sincere, and will go on attempting to do that something which I believe she is feeling for, she may succeed. It is the sincerity that we have to encourage in our young artists, and this encouragement cannot be given to them by praise alone. They must be prepared for criticism not praise. Those who are lavish with their praises on artists should attempt to realise that they do no good to the artist or to the public.

It now remains to be seen how far the public agree with Mr. Levson!

PENELOPE.