

OUT OF THE ORDINARY.

By Rozilda.

The Oldest Member of the Congregation.

MR. JOHN ALEXANDER.

It is rather amusing to think that one of the oldest members of our community should also be one of the busiest. Mr. John Alexander, the veteran member of the Gardens Congregation, is, judging by the difficulty we had in locating him, one of the most peripatetic of the sages.

The first time we made an attempt to interview Mr. Alexander, we simply and confidently went to the Queen's Hotel on a bright and sunny morning and asked to see him, trusting that it was not too early an hour to wake an aged gentleman. Mr. Alexander, however, had been up and doing long before we arrived and was out. We called again one afternoon after lunch, when most leisured people are taking their mid-day siesta. Mr. Alexander was at a meeting. We telephoned one evening to find out at what time he would be engaged the following day. We learnt to our consternation that he would be out the following morning, at a conference in the afternoon and that he had a dance in the evening.

Then we gave up the struggle for some weeks. Finally we made an appointment for a time two days ahead. We arrived at the hotel punctually at 10.30 on a wet morning, expecting to find him sitting before a fire with a rug over his knees. We found him in the reception hall weighing two American multi-millionaires. That is typical of the life Mr. John Alexander leads.

The Secret of Keeping Young.

Few people who see Mr. John Alexander can help wondering how it is that he manages to keep so youthful looking. His fresh pink complexion would do credit to any girl. His halo of thick, wavy, yellowish white hair would add beauty and charm to any face. His hands grip with the strength of a hundred horse-power he-man, and his sprightly walk and upright bearing are those of a man in the prime of his life. Mr. John Alexander is now in his eighty-second year.

"What keeps you so young, Mr. Alexander?" we asked.

"I don't know. I suppose it is because I have so much to do. If I had nothing to do I should go wrong!"

The Modern Girl.

Asked what he thought of the modern girl, Mr. Alexander replied: "I should not like to say. I do not like to see girls in short dresses with their knees showing. I do not like to see girls walking about smoking cigarettes. I do not approve of these things."

Although he is fond of music, Mr. Alexander does not approve of jazz, which he ranks in the same category as short skirts and smoking. Mr. Alexander does not notice any change for the worse in the young men of to-day. He is pleased to see young men push their way ahead. He has not time for young men who only want to loaf.

His Real Amusement.

Although Mr. Alexander was at one time the secretary of the old Philanthropic Society, he now finds his time so fully occupied that he cannot work actively on any society.

"I have no amusements," he said. "I play patience in the evening. My real amusement is my work." That he takes this amusement very seriously is obvious by the enormous success with which this hobby has met. His motto is:

"I never undertake to do a thing, unless I am sure that it will be a success." And yet he says that, given his time over again, he would never run an hotel. "One who runs an hotel is the slave of the public." The last thing Mr. Alexander resembles, however, is a slave. His friendly and pleasant personality and his courteous manner make him an ideal host, and there is no doubt that he is the real presiding genius over the large caravanserai which stands as a monument to his labours.

A Contented Mind.

Mr. Alexander's long years of experience have ripened a simple philosophy of life. In his opinion the thing most worth having is a contented mind. A man who is at peace with himself is a healthy man and a happy man.

He has been in this country for sixty-two years, during which period he has been overseas four times. But of all places in the world he likes South Africa best.

"I don't want to go again. The climate is enough to keep a person here." Mr. Alexander is eminently content to live in the land of his adoption.

He has been a member of the Gardens Synagogue since 1868, and while he thinks that a Synagogue at Sea Point may be quite desirable he says that he would not give up his old membership of the Gardens Congregation.

He recalls the little Mother Synagogue which he visited a few days after his arrival in this country.

"It was very primitive," he said. "There used to be a row of seats like school forms round the walls. There were no book rests, and the only lights were candles. The late Rev. Rabinowitz was the minister. There were very few Jews in Cape Town at that time. He recalls Mr. Leon Lewis, Mr. and Mrs. Rodolf and a Mr. and Mrs. P. Lewis and family.

Mr. John Alexander came out to South Africa in 1867 to join a brother who was in business in Cape Town as a wholesale cloth merchant. He was nineteen years old. To the lad who had come from Birmingham and knew what English towns were like, Cape Town seemed a small dorp. There was no pavement in Adderley Street. All the buildings had stoeps in front of them with little steps leading down to the level of the street. To the man who wanted to avoid the heavy traffic of this main thoroughfare a walk along

the safety zone was full of ups and downs. There were few residential houses in Adderley Street. The buildings were principally merchant stores and there were no shops.

Excursions to Sea Point were frequently made by the adventurous young folk of his day. They went by horse tram! On Sundays it was possible to go to Sea Point, too. Trams ran from church time on Sunday mornings until one o'clock, and then there was not another tram to be had for love or money until church time in the evening. Sea Point, with the exception of one or two houses, was a bare stretch of land.

The Queen's.

The Queen's Hotel was originally a boarding house, known as the Wentworth. Later it was converted into an hotel. In 1886 or 1888 the name was changed to Queen's. About this time Mr. Alexander acquired it. It was a fortunate accident, both for the hotel and for Mr. Alexander. He found here a metier for his own particular talent, and in the course of time made from the little thirty-roomed hotel a large and efficient concern which is now one of the finest in the country.

We have often thought it a great pity that there is no really first-class Kosher hotel in Cape Town. This lack has made itself felt on those occasions when distinguished Jewish visitors, like the Ezras and the Gestetners, who wish to observe the dietary laws, seek accommodation here. We asked Mr. Alexander whether it would not be possible to institute such facilities at the Queen's by adding a Kosher kitchen. Mr. Alexander said that it would not be at all practicable. One or more Jewish chefs would have to be employed, there would have to be special cooking and a special dining room. The number of strictly orthodox visitors was limited for the majority of Jews preferred not to segregate themselves.

"The eating Kosher food does not make them more religious," said Mr. Alexander.

Progress.

Everywhere, Mr. Alexander says, he sees progress, except in the relationship between the English and the Dutch. He thinks the racial hatred between the English and the Dutch most deplorable. He considers the Dutch a very hospitable race, and says that if they were led by different men South Africa would be far better off than it is at present.

ROZILDA.

The Zionist Immigration Department, the headquarters of the Labour Organisation at Tel Aviv, and the Jewish community offices are crowded with applicants for immigration permits for their relatives to enter Palestine. Such pressure of applications for immigration permits has not been known since the big immigration boom in Palestine.

Thousands of Jewish workers in New York are in danger of being thrown out of employment by a strike which is being threatened in the fur industry. The Left Wing Union of Furriers has decided to call the strike soon. The Right Wing Union is opposing the strike, and has issued a statement declaring that any members who join the strike will be expelled from the Union.

Seven Arabs were brought up for trial recently at Nazareth for attacking several members of the Pinks Kvutzah, near Nahalal, who caught them trespassing on the colony land and stealing vegetables. Five members of the Kvutzah were injured by the Arabs, one of them seriously.

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