

## In and Around the Peninsula.

### Lecture by Mr. Z. Avin.

On Tuesday evening, 16th inst., Mr. Z. Avin lectured to the Hebrew Circle at the Zionist Hall on "From Mendele to Shalom Asch."

Mr. A. Levin, the President, in his opening address, said that it was our concern to discover the character and value of the new Jewish literature, which was different from the older, but it would be premature to state that the difference was essentially a sign of progress.

One value of the modern Jewish literature with which the lecturer was going to deal was its recalling to mind the immediate past, which while still vivid in the minds of the older generation, was in great measure strange to the younger. The trouble was that the latter could not, or would not, find the time to read, or read hurriedly without gaining insight into the author's mind.

Mr. Avin spoke of the crisis which reigns in Hebrew literature to-day. There is a lack of classical writers just now when our literature can least dispense with their aid. The works published have been a means of widening and improving the old road rather than an extension of it.

The author's true function is to provide his readers with vision, to give them matter for thought, and to point the right way towards a definite goal. The inspired writer can express feelings by means of words which he uses as arrows to pierce his reader's heart.

The lecturer attributed the scarcity of good books and the difficulty of creating a modern Hebrew classical literature to the grandeur of the Bible and the works of the Ga-onim which make later writings insignificant in comparison. The literature which is being created to-day is not so much a Jewish literature as a literature in the Jewish language.

The first to pave the road for the new Jewish literature was Mendele Mocher Sefarim, but he saw his characters through dun-coloured spectacles with the result that the modern reader has not the patience to read him.

Yehudah Leib Gordon's "Jewish Women" is a work of art but prejudiced.

Mapu in his "Ahavath Zion" proved himself a true follower of the Bible, but his later work does not show the artist's skill that Mendele's work does.

Sholom Aleichem portrays the psychological aspect of the Jewish mind and has given us "Tevia der Milchiger" besides "Menahem Mendel." He it was who erected the second milestone on the path of Jewish literature. The third one was placed on the road by J. L. Peretz, who cast aside the body and occupied himself with analysing the soul. He is a master artist. His work, like

Shakespeare's "Hamlet" and Goethe's "Faust," have the some universal, all-embracing appeal as the Bible. He gave the lie to the idea that the Jew is merely a realist without any feeling for mysticism or phantasy.

Peretz's disciple is Shalom Asch, the difference between him and his teacher being that Peretz is silent, letting his characters talk, whereas Asch is afraid of profaning his characters' sanctity by breaking their silence and talks for them. He is a sceptic as shown in "The Strict Watchman."

Mr. Avin also touched on the works of Nomberg. On the whole he considered Yiddish literature as the "hamlet" type. He then went on to tell of the argument between Berdichefsky and Ahad Ha-am concerning the necessity for the creation among us of a literature such as other nations have, and explained that in Eretz Yisrael a new road for modern Jewish youth was being opened up.

After some discussion in which Messrs. G. Telem and A. Levin took part the meeting closed.

### The Zionist Conversazione.

A very successful conversazione was held in the Zionist Hall on Tuesday evening last, some fifty to sixty persons being present. Mr. and Mrs. L. Burman were to have acted as host and hostess but owing to an indisposition on the part of the former, Mr. H. M. Bloch presided over the gathering.

Mr. Getz read the Jewish news of the week after which Miss Fanny Gurland recited a speech from Euripides' "Trojan Women," and on being enthusiastically encored, a short humorous sketch.

The main feature of the evening, which was a discussion on the question of Jewish

students, was then begun. It was initiated by Dr. J. Mibashan, who is at present in Cape Town on a short holiday and to whom, as to Mrs. Mibashan, who was also present, Mr. Bloch, in his introductory remarks, extended a hearty welcome. Mr. Bloch also welcomed Mr. D. Cohen, who is on a short visit to Cape Town.

In his address Dr. Mibashan attempted to answer three essential questions—what has Judaism and the Jewish people given to the Jewish student, what has the Jewish student given to Judaism, and has the Jewish student done his duty to his nation and national spiritual treasures?

In answer to the first question the speaker pointed out that Judaism had given the Jewish student the right to call his own the oldest, most highly cultured race in existence, and to be a co-operator in a civilisation which had survived with lasting positive results to human happiness and the progress of the world.

The Galuth, that calamity to Jewry, was in a way a blessing in disguise, for in the dark underground cellars in the Eastern European homes Hebrew culture had flourished whilst the storms of persecutions had raged furiously without. It was in such cellars that the most learned students had been found. To-day we did not have this type of student but the University student who was not so keen on learning as such but as a means to an end.

In answer to the second question Dr. Mibashan recalled that it was the Bilu—a few hundred students of the Universities of Kiev, Odessa and Kharkov—who had hoisted the Zionist flag in 1882, pilgrimaged to Palestine and founded the first colony there. He mentioned the work of other East European students in spreading the principles of Zionism and in sacrificing themselves in the Zionist cause. To-day the situation had changed. In Eastern Europe the student was passing through a crisis. His bread and butter existence was imperilled, his spiritual and mental life hindered by such things as a numerous clausus, anti-Semitic agitations, etc. In Western Europe the student was more favoured economically and politically and was too happy to be a good Jew. He feared that Zionism and his patriotism were incompatible.

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