

IN AND AROUND THE PENINSULA

Bnoth Zion Association.

"The History of the Marranos" was the subject of an interesting lecture delivered by Dr. H. W. Altschul to the Bnoth Zion Association on Tuesday afternoon.

Though not the most momentous, the history of the Marranos formed a most romantic and unique period of Jewish history, said Dr. Altschul. We had a mental picture of thousands of Jews being tortured and burnt at the stake because they would not forsake the faith of their fathers and become converted to Christianity; a picture of Jews developing a secret religion underneath an outward conformation to the dominant religion.

History showed two main ways of national defence—one rigid, that defies all opposition regardless of whether or not it will survive, the other elastic, yielding to the dominant force, though hoping to win out. And in the history of the Marranos we found the adoption of the dictum of the Rabbis that life should be saved by any means except murder, incest or idolatry.

In France, Germany and England the vast majority of Jews had unquestionably preferred martyrdom "for the sanctification of the Name" rather than become converted. In Spain, however, centuries of well-being and social assimilation, combined with the fact that avenues of escape to France, Germany and England were closed to them, led to large bodies of Jews being baptised, so much so that in the course of a few years over 35,000 Jews were converted to Christianity.

The Jews could roughly be divided into four categories: (1) Those avowedly remaining Jews; (2) Sincere converts to Christianity; (3) Insincere Jews who were now insincere Christians, and (4) The Marranos who accepted conversion only to escape death.

The last class kept all traditional ceremonies as far as possible, visited the synagogue furtively and transmitted their Jewish faith to their children, while as outwardly conforming Christians they now entered freely avenues hitherto closed to them—law, the army, the administration and even the church itself. During the fifteenth century they all but dominated Spanish life, as for example the Santagel family.

This rise to power excited the jealousy and cupidity of the populace, while within the church itself the unsatisfactory religious adherence of these new Christians heightened and finally gave form to this growing antagonism by the institution of the Inquisition—the recognised means of testing the devotion of the members of the church.

A reign of terror began, many suffered cruel deaths, others fled from the country, chiefly to Portugal, and legislation decreed that not a single Jew should remain in Spain.

The tolerance shown to the Jews in Portugal ceased, however, on the marriage of Isabella of Spain to the reigning Portuguese monarch. But as the Jews played an important part in the rising Portuguese commerce, following on the decree of the banishment of the Jews was an order in

1497 for the baptism of all children between four and fourteen years of age.

It was notable that throughout these times Jews always thought and spoke of the Land of Promise—Palestine. Women, since they led a secluded life, played an important part in preserving and handing down to their children the religious customs and beliefs of their forefathers.

Concluding, Dr. Altschul remarked that despite centuries of persecution and oppression there still could be found in certain parts of Portugal small groups of people who had not forgotten Judaism.

The revolution of 1910 finally destroyed the power of the church and granted religious freedom to all sects, and it is an interesting fact that owing to the generosity of Baron de Rothschild and a relief committee appointed for the purpose, the first synagogue was built at Oporto in 1924.

An excellent review of "The Oppermans" was given by Mrs. H. Lieberman during the course of the afternoon, and a lively discussion ensued.

Miss M. Oblowitz presided and Mrs. A. Orman proposed a vote of thanks to the speakers.

Mrs. E. Maisel read a report on the W.I.Z.O. "Pioneers and Helpers." No. 10.

At the conclusion of the meeting it was announced that "Three Cities" by Shalom Asch, would be reviewed at the April meeting.

Oneg Shabbos.

At the Oneg Shabbos held last Saturday afternoon in honour of the delegates to the tenth Young Israel Conference, an address was delivered by Mr. Israel Dunskey on "The Fall of the Second Jewish State."

Mr. Dunskey pointed out that at the time of the fall of the Jewish State, the Jews showed remarkable heroism, superb courage, and magnificent skill in their defence against the Romans. There were individual cases of almost superhuman bravery amongst the Jews. Nevertheless, all the heroism, courage and determination of the Jews were of no avail—for a very simple reason. Because when the Romans were knocking at the gates of the town, the Jews within were arguing amongst themselves, because in the face of the enemy, there was no discipline, no subordination of different views. Right throughout Jewish history, said Mr. Dunskey, we saw bitter illustrations of the Jews' eternal inability to agree to co-operate. We found the same thing happening to-day. Although only a section of the Jews believed and actively participated in the establishment of a National Home, even that section was divided and split by internal dissensions. In the face of the enemy, in the time of stress and crisis through which we were at present passing, our work was irritated by internecine strife. These dissensions amongst ourselves had of late assumed alarming proportions—indeed there were many who placed the party ideal before the Zionist ideal, who lost sight of the ultimate goal in their petty partisan quarrels. The youth had not only to educate themselves to despise this partisan spirit within Zionist ranks, but by their example and by incessant

propaganda at every meeting and at every opportunity had to urge upon all Zionists that there had to be a common authority.

Mr. Dunskey's speech was followed by the singing of Hebrew songs and refreshments, and a spirit of enthusiasm and joyous endeavour permeated the participants in the Oneg Shabbos.

Correction.

An error occurred in the report of the Cape Jewish Orphanage annual meeting published last week. Mr. Morris Alexander was stated to have said that the cost of the children's education amounted to £63 10s. 6d. per annum per child. Mr. Alexander actually stated that this amount was the general maintenance cost per child per annum.

Histadruth Ivrit.

A special Pesach function is being held under the auspices of the Histadruth Ivrit on Wednesday evening, 4th inst., in the Minor Zionist Hall. A very entertaining programme has been arranged and all are welcome. Refreshments will be served.

"Confounded Confusion."

"Confounded Confusion" will be the subject of a talk by Adv. H. M. Bloch at the next Zionist Conversazione in the Zionist Hall on Tuesday evening, 3rd April.

Talmud Torah Boys' Minyan.

The Talmud Torah Boys' Minyan are holding services in the Talmud Torah Hall on the first two and last two days of Passover.

Services will commence on Friday evening at 6.30 p.m. and on Saturday morning at 8.45 a.m.

Nuts will be distributed to the boys after the services.

The annual general election of the Minyan will take place on the first Sunday after Passover at 8 p.m.

In Brief.

Mr. Israel Dunskey left on Tuesday on his return to Johannesburg.

Mr. M. Haskel returned to South Africa on Monday by the "Warwick Castle."

Mr. Morris Kentridge, M.P., left on Wednesday on his return to Johannesburg.

Mr. J. Herstein is at present on a visit in Johannesburg.

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Saturday Night—6.30.
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