

Fiction

A GREAT compliment has just been paid to a South African writer. In the course of an address in London on "The Jew in Modern Fiction," Mr. M. J. Landa, the well-known literary critic and author, gave vent to some interesting remarks. He declared that Sarah Gertrude Millin was to-day the one Jewish writer in the British Empire, who had struck a new note. She understood Jew and Gentile, white and black, with amazing thoroughness. She had a deep and true understanding of the complexities of different peoples and could express the feelings aroused by their contacts in modern life with skill, with shrewdness and with sympathy. In the "Coming of the Lord" she had brought Aryan and Semite and Negro into contact with a rare understanding of all three.

Mr. Landa cited from a number of other books to show how the Jewish characters were depicted and asked: "Suppose I wrote a novel of English life of to-day and depicted the Englishman as the ignorant, coarse, and brutal fellow he was in the medieval days—aye, in Shakespeare's time and even later. Yet the Jew is treated as if immutable in the midst of evolutionary and legislative changes, unaffected by normal or cataclysmic events. He is the villain and the comic relief, defying all laws . . . always an Asiatic, although for generations the majority have lived in Europe. It is not the Jew but the Judeophobe who obdurately remains rooted in ignorant superstition. And, of course, no Christian ever worshipped the golden calf."

I feel that recent novels by non-Jewish writers in which Jews are depicted as fictional characters show a better understanding. This is notably so in the "Cross of Peace," by Sir Philip Gibbs; "German Family," by L. C. N. Stone; and "Crooked Cross," by Sally Carson. Even Hilaire Belloc, who has been one of the most pronounced anti-Semitic writers for years, has changed his attitude, for he sees now that anti-Semitism is not merely anti-Jewish but anti-religious and anti-Christian.

Songs

I ADMIRE the initiative on the part of a choral group in Johannesburg which has announced an invitation to musicians all over the world to participate in a competition for composing a musical setting to three Jewish poems. A prize of £50 is being offered. Competitions of this nature have been held in the past in many musical centres and they have been instrumental in bringing to the fore many famous composers.

The recent competition held in connection with the Schubert centenary for the completion of the latter's "Unfinished Symphony" brought to fame a young genius. But this is the first occasion that a Jewish song competition has been inaugurated. There is a need for first-class Jewish secular choral works and a lack of encouragement probably prevented our composers from producing in that branch of composition.

Current Communal Comments

By
"Hamabit"

The action of the A.Z. Idelsohn Choral Group is a fine gesture of encouragement indeed, and Johannesburg Jewry should be proud of this party of enthusiasts, who are trying to place it on the world's musical map.

"Fair Play"

IT was but natural that the "defenders" of fair play in the German Reich should decide that the name of Albert Ballin is no longer to figure among the ships of the Hamburg-America Line. The founder of this great shipping activity was a Jew and it is, therefore incompatible that a ship bearing the name of a person of an "inferior" race should remain in the service of an "enlightened" shipping line. And so the "Albert Ballin" is shortly to be re-christened the "Hansa" and all Jewish association of the flagship will be exterminated.

It may be said incidentally that Ballin, who was a splendid industrialist, was very little of a Jew—being such really in name only. It was under his direction that the giant vessels "Vaterland," "Imperator," and "Bismarck" were constructed. Ballin proved himself to be a shipping genius, whose contribution to German development as a great world power was incalculable. The elimination of his name from the present flagship of the Hamburg-America Line is just the type of action which well illustrates the mentality of the present rulers of an ancient country.

A First Ovation

I WAS interested to learn that Hirsch Maslianski, that veteran Zionist maggid, is now happily retired and settled in Palestine. Before he started upon his brilliant career as an orator, Maslianski ran a cheder in Pinsk and one of his pupils was a bright-eyed boy by the name of—Chaim Weizmann. During that period Maslianski was a keen worker for the Chovevei Zion and one day he sent out his pupils to sell portraits of Sir Moses Montefiore in aid of the movement.

Young Weizmann was put at the head of the "campaign" and in order to justify the appointment he took fifty pictures to sell. In the evening the canvassers assembled at the home of Maslianski to report on the progress of their work. The last to arrive was Weizmann driven in the carriage of the "gevir" of the town. To the amazement of his fellow-pupils Weizmann produced the sum of 50 roubles, being the proceeds of all the fifty pictures he undertook to sell, whilst not one of the other canvassers managed to dispose of more than ten.

It appeared that Weizmann canvassed the town all that day with little success. To-

wards evening he felt that he must not betray the trust put in him by his fellows, so he took a "desperate move" and marched into the home of the "Pinsker gevir." There he must have used a little of the persuasive power which stood him in good stead in later years, and the rich man not only took all the pictures, but sent him back in his own luxurious carriage. For this feat Weizmann received a hearty ovation from his cheder-friends.

When telling of this incident Maslianski remarks: "I will always remember that ovation, for it was the first applause that Weizmann received for Zionist achievement."

"A Prince"

WHEN the Soviet regime was ushered in Russia some seventeen years ago hundreds of thousands of people went into exile. Amongst them were many members of the aristocracy including generals, princes and bankers, who were obliged to taste the "sweets" of the "golus" with which we Jews have been so well acquainted for centuries past. All the exiles had no legal status until they came under the protection of the League of Nations, which created a special office in Geneva to deal with their position.

The man appointed to act as head of this activity for Russian emigrés was greatly respected and looked upon as the "Prince of Exiles" and protector of their interests in turbulent Europe. For many years the high office was held by a member of a famous old Russian family. He died recently and there was much concern as to who would be his successor. Finally the choice has fallen upon Jacob Rubenstein. This selection is undoubtedly a compliment to Jewish charity and incidentally to Jewish lack of vindictiveness. Rubenstein, who has already done yeoman service in the interests of the Russian refugees, has shown a remarkable practical sympathy for his down-trodden and homeless countrymen. Yet irony must be attached to the fact that in newer circumstances, notorious pogromists and anti-Semites of the old Czarist regime are eager to have their interests protected by a member of a race, which they at one time despised and persecuted.

"Ancestors"

THEY were boasting about the unparalleled bravery of their ancestors.

Said the German: "Have you heard of the mighty Alps? Its mountain peaks were built by my forefathers."

Said the American: "Have you heard of the great canyons—those immense beauties of nature? Well, as a matter of fact they were erected by my ancestors."

Said the Jew: "Have you heard of the Dead Sea in Palestine? Well, it was my ancestors who killed it."