

Echoes

Luckless People

By ETHEL BRODIE
(Durban)

How weighty is the blood you've shed
Down through the ages;
Unconquered still,
Enviied by some poor fools
Who count your gold,
But not your tears.
Surely they know not
That you strive in vain,
Hoping somewhere to find a
refuge

From this bitter world.
Must you forever walk alone?
Undesired nor understood?
Tell that your aggression
Is not real.

'Tis the mask of fear,
The shield of great intolerance.
And well you ask,
To what good end
Do they exert their cunning?
To this:
That some divine
Or mortal power
Should free them
From this Shylock's curse,
And give to them
The right to live,
As you do.

in the midst of her tears: "O God, let this Passover end in peace! Would that it had ended before it began!" Nor did little Fedka fare any better. He, too, received a thrashing, a hearty one, which he absorbed philosophically; but he could not understand what all the fuss was about. He heard one of the village telling his mother of something that had happened in the city: how Jews had trapped a little boy the day before Passover, had kept him in a cellar for twenty-four hours, and then "had set to work on him." Fortunately passers-by had heard the screams, and the child was rescued, but not before it had been cut in four places, four light cuts in the form of a cross. Fedka listened, and felt that somehow this story had to do with the excitement about him and Feitel. But why? And in what way? That he never found out.

There the incident closes, with two children bewildered by the incomprehensible behaviour of grown-ups, leaving us to ask where the peasant woman got that story. Was it a sudden resurgence of a piece of folklore, for which no one in particular was responsible? We know better. The poison in Kurechka and in the peasant woman and in millions like them was a mixture: part of it an internal secretion which had been growing weaker, part of it injection, which brought it to life again. There were men, skilful, vicious, diligent, whose business it was to reawaken the dormant folklore of anti-Semitism and turn it to political account. Their purpose was not to spread a certain point of view with regard to the Jews: they were much more ambitious. They sought to call up in the Russian masses, through the dark rebirth of anti-Semitism, a general darkness of the spirit.

Their success was only partial, and therefore temporary. Perhaps it was because they lacked the demonic will-power of their successors in Germany; perhaps because they lacked the technical equipment; and perhaps because the Russian masses were not so tractable. Certainly the Jews

(Continued on page 10).

Serious and Otherwise

* by ben dor *

Irving Berlin

A LITTLE while ago an item appeared in these columns describing the attention and honour bestowed by the Queen Mother on Irving Berlin, world's outstanding author



and composer of popular songs. Berlin recently received an honour of rather a different nature — a medal awarded annually by a leading American Jewish magazine, "The American Hebrew," for the promotion of Better Understanding Between Christian and Jew in America. The Committee of Judges, which is composed of sixty-five eminent Americans of all faiths, includes John Dewey, Eddie Cantor, Fiorello H. LaGuardia, Clare Boothe Luce, Thomas Mann and Roosevelt himself. Among the prominent personalities to have received the medal are Wendell Willkie, Cordell Hull, President Roosevelt and Arturo Toscanini.

Berlin was chosen for his "outstanding theatrical contribution to the morale of the nation, Christian and Jew alike; because the entire proceeds of his highly successful show, 'This is the Army,' were given to the Army Emergency Relief, representing the largest single contribution of its kind (several million dollars); and because his songs have been an expression of better understanding for all races, creeds and religions of over a quarter of a century."

Born in Siberia in 1888, Berlin came to New York at the age of four. His father was a cantor, and there had been cantors in the family for generations. Young Berlin also developed a voice, but his first job was singing in a cafe, and a little later he began composing and publishing his own songs. His rise to fame was meteoric. Soon the poor boy from the New York slums had become famous on the American and English stages, and established as a leading song writer. In the first world war his all-soldier show, "Yip Yip Yaphank," was a tremendous success, and when peace came one musical hit followed another, among them such song favourites as "Russian Lullaby," "White Christmas," and the Hollywood productions "Alexander's Rag-Time Band," "Top Hat" and "Follow the Fleet." As the present world crisis approached, Berlin caught the patriotic mood and expressed it in "God Bless America," which seems to have become almost a second national anthem. And then came "This is the Army," and its amazing success.

Berlin's music is sincere, unsophisticated and melodious, and he himself is as unassuming and modest. Thomas Dewey, Governor of New York, wrote to Berlin in his message of congratulation: "It has been a pleasure to observe a man who carries his success and the esteem of everyone who knows him with such un-failing modesty."

Choral Festival

THE accident happened just when the public part of the Festival was about to begin. But there was no panic. After the debris caused by the collapse of the open-air stage had been cleared up, and those hurt attended to, the concert went on as if nothing had happened.

It was the greatest rally of singers ever known in Palestine — 1,200 from almost 30 settlements and workers' choirs participated in the Ain Harod Choral Festival before an audience of 8,000. The songs ranged from ancient melodies, Renaissance madrigals and Bach Chorales and cantatas to opera and oratorio selections and works by contemporary composers, both European and Palestinian, all in Hebrew.

The organisers of this festival intend making a yearly event of it, and there can be no doubt that this decision will be of the utmost importance for the development and stimulation of choral singing and composing in the Yishuv. Local composers are being encouraged to devote the best of their powers to the creation of choral music for the singer. In Britain, for instance, the choir festivals have done much for English singing and music.

It is pleasing to note at a festival of this kind the love of singing and music-making that is being instilled into the young peoples' hearts and minds.

Musical critics in Palestine hailed the Festival as the greatest musical event in the Yishuv since Toscanini conducted the first concerts of the Palestine Orchestra.

Dancing, by the way, is an additional feature of the Festival. On the settlements modern creative dancing and singing occupy an important place in the cultural programme. The Festival is to take place every Passover and will form the climax of months and months of enthusiastic preparation on the settlements.

Kosher

IN the recent strike in Jerusalem in the diamond polishing trade, a number of orthodox Jewish workers were involved. One of them raised the question whether their religion permitted them to participate in an organised effort to bring pressure to bear on their employer. It was decided to submit the query to authority and accordingly a local Rabbi was asked to give his judgment. The matter was considered for several days and eventually a favourable verdict issued: the observant Jew was entitled to strike in view of the Talmudic injunction "not to withdraw thyself from the community." This, however, is not the first pronouncement of the kind. The late Chief Rabbi Kook, upon being asked, stated that he approved the formation of workers' unions for the protection of their trade interests.

Seeing is Believing

Berel: "Have you heard about Einstein? You know he wrote a wonderful book all about Relativity. Tell me, have you read the book?"

Schmerel: "Well, no, not yet. You see I like to see these things on the films first."



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