

JERUSALEM DIARY

By David Dainow

"Open House"

A GRACIOUS lady is Lilian Ruth Friedlander. I am spending with others a few days on her fine estate at Sichron Yaaqov. When in 1936 a son of hers passed away in his early youth, Mrs. Friedlander decided to devote her newly built private home for the benefit of painters, sculptors, writers, actors, singers and musicians. At "Beth Daniel," these folk come in urgent need of rest. Some pay a low price for accommodation, whilst others are never charged.

The surroundings are lovely. The breeze coming up from the ocean is a balm to overworked nerves. The aroma of tens of thousands of orange and olive trees arouse a pleasant langour. From the wide balcony of the house built on the slope of the Carmel range of hills one gazes at the mountains of Ephraim on the right, and the green waters of the Mediterranean on the left.

Among my fellow-guests are struggling poets, actors, musicians, singers and writers. A special hostel has lately been set aside for free use by members of the Society of Palestine Painters and Sculptors. It is no wonder that Lilian Ruth Friedlander, who insists on contributing her bit to the daily housework of "Beth Daniel," is adored. When praised, she says: "But this house is not mine—it belongs to all of you."

Early Arrivals

SOME forty years ago, a young married couple, fresh from the intellectual Jewish circles in London in which they had moved, came out to Palestine and developed a large estate which they had bought in the orange grove area of Sichron Yaaqov. This had been named in honour of the father of the beloved baron, who had been so generous to the still earlier settlers.

The action of Michael Lange and his wife, Nita Bentwich, in coming out to what was then still a wild and unsettled area, and cultivating it and building a permanent home came as a surprise to the intimate circles of British Jewry among whom they had been brought up.

To the farmers of Sichron Yaaqov, the English couple was an oddity, and their attempt to dwell in Eretz Israel was looked upon as a caprice.

As I sat in the home of the Langes—surely one of the loveliest in Palestine—now a health sanatorium, I realised the project had been no caprice. Both Michael Lange and Nita Bentwich, loving each other deeply had concentrated their affection on Eretz Israel, and they now rest side by side in the land they loved. It is on a part of the Lange estate that the "Beth Daniel" has been erected and is doing such magnificent work.

Accepting an Invitation

Some twenty-four years ago in Warsaw, I saw a much-troubled broken down motor vehicle. Its sides were full of bullet holes. A few hours earlier, gentle hands had removed

the bodies of two Jewish heroes. They were those of Israel Friedlander and Bernard Cantor, two staff members of the Joint Distribution Committee. They had gone into the brigand-infested areas of Russo-Poland with a vehicle full of hundreds of millions of inflated marks to help starving Jewish communities. It was on this mission of mercy that they were set upon and killed.

When Michael Lange in Sichron heard that his sister-in-law Lilian was widowed in New York, he invited her and her six children to come and live at Sichron. The kindly summons were accepted. Later, it was found, that Michael, despondent because of the death of Nita, had left the whole estate to Lilian.

"Salzburg" Festival?

In the years of Mrs. Friedlander's ownership, the estate at Sichron has become a shrine to the memory of two fine souls. There is an exquisite pine forest and lovely walks. Painters have come to Sichron and are expressing the beauty of the countryside in their works. Musicians go back to their labours refreshed and inspired. Open-air concerts and recitals are often held in the lovely grounds.

The idea has lately come to Lilian Friedlander to organise a kind of Salzburg musical festival. The conditions are ideal and the neighbourhood is perfect. It would need a good deal of preparation and expert organisation and, perhaps, the time is not quite ripe.

In the vision of Lilian Friedlander, however, there is a picture of glorious annual Palestine "Salzburg" Festivals taking place on her wide estate on the lovely slope of the Carmel range of hills.

A Singer and his Audience

A group of Schubert songs, exquisitely rendered by a full-throated voice, expertly controlled. The audience at "Beth Daniel" this evening is chiefly composed, besides the temporary residents at the home, of paying guests from the modern health sanatorium established in the old Lange household.

The singer is a man who performed in his younger days in the State Operas of Berlin, Vienna and Stockholm. He had been an important artist at the famous Salzburg Festivals. To-day, Marcel Noe struggles along on the giving of music lessons. When his voice is heard in public concerts, or on the radio and Hebrew intonation is necessary, he learns the same from specially prepared script of the national language written out in Latin characters.

*I note that in the eyes of the members of the audience there are tears as the sweet music of Schubert is wafted up to them in lovely tone. It fills many of them with memories of a Germany they loved. How many of these kindly, neatly dressed and efficient looking folk will stay in Eretz Israel after the war? They are German-speaking, yet I observe as they arise and bid each

other farewell, it is in the words of "shalom" and "Leilah Tov."

They appear to be so esconced as a part of the growing life of the Yishuv to which they make so important a contribution, that I am one of those who believe that they will stay. One thing is obvious and these people know it in their hearts—their children, who are Jewish conscious and Hebrew-speaking, will stay on. They are already deeply rooted in the soil and life of Eretz Israel.

A Heroine

Rather than submit herself to the rough searches on her person by Turkish police officers, Sara Aaronson, in 1917, asked permission to go to the bathroom of her home and there shot herself. In the same house lived her brother, Aaron Aaronson, the great agronomist, accused with her of spying for the British. It was the heroic work of this brother (later killed in an aeroplane accident) and of his sister which was later acknowledged by General Allenby as an important contribution to the conquering of Palestine.

Whilst at Sichron Yaaqov, I called in at the Aaronson home in which still live Alexander and Rebecca, the two other members of a famous family. The house has become a shrine to the memory of a man and woman who risked their lives in the service of England. I saw the room in which Sara Aaronson had slept and then, in deep reverence, I entered the bathroom in which she bravely and calmly took her life.

Honour

Besides his service to England in its hour of danger in the last war, Aaron Aaronson contributed a great deal in the scientific discovery of a means of successful wheat growing in Palestine. He also kept copious diaries of political events of importance in the era in which he lived so actively. These diaries, so carefully preserved, are now being prepared for publication. They are likely to give an illuminating picture of the political repercussions of an interesting period of modern history.

I came away from the beautifully kept Aaronson household with a feeling of pride that quiet heroism exists amongst our people and can demonstrate itself on an occasion when death appears to be preferable to dishonour.

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