

Serious and Otherwise

* by ben dor *

"WONDER" VIOLINIST TO VISIT JOHANNESBURG

A BREEZILY self - possessed, school-boyish looking young fellow with a thatch of gleaming blondish hair, Yfrah Neaman, who became "famous overnight" as London's wonder-violinist, will make his debut in Johannesburg on June 4.

The son of Dr. Pinchas Neaman, Hebrew educationalist now in South Africa, Yfrah was born in Palestine 22 years ago. Yafrah's musical gifts became marked at a very early age, and after turning nine, he went to study at the Paris Conservatoire. Here he became the "star" pupil of Jacques Thiraud, the greatest violinist France has produced for the past half-century. His success was instantaneous and resounding, and three years later he played solos as the representative of the Conservatoire, being acclaimed by leading critics as a great virtuoso.

When war broke out he was persuaded to leave for England, being accompanied by his mother and younger sister. He resumed his studies in London under the famous Max Rostal, but these were soon interrupted by the Jerry. "blitz." Anxious to do his little bit, Yfrah, then only 18 years of age, became a factory worker and shared with his fellows many thrilling experiences. In the odd hours between shifts and during brief rest periods, his violin was a never-failing consolation and recreation.

The most outstanding event in Yfrah's London career came in December, 1944, when, at a few hours' notice, he deputised for Max Rostal, who had broken his wrist. It was at a Jay Pomeroy concert at the Cambridge Theatre, and he carried out Rostal's entire programme, including the Beethoven D Major Concerto. This among other encomiums, earned for him a double column article in the "Daily Express" from no less an authority than the great James Agate. "The audience," wrote Agate, "listened, hushed and rapt, to a performer who is a musician first and a virtuoso afterwards. This was playing in the Haifetz manner, with something of the same pure, warm tone. And it was also Beethoven at his most celestial quality, the suggestion of a soul sliding through liquid

bliss, to have caught which was one of the glories of Wisney's 'fantasia.'"

Modestly, Yfrah himself ascribes a lot of the praise given him for intonation and phrasing, to the instrument he uses—it is a Guanerius and over 200 years old.

De Villiers Was a "Jew"

THE discussion in the local press as to whether the de Villiers family is really the oldest family in South Africa, reminds me of a member of the family who played an outstanding role in Anglo-Jewish life of a generation ago. I refer to Sir John Abraham Jacob de Villiers, who died some years ago. He was a convert to Judaism.

Born at Aliwal North, he was the son of Jacob Hendrik Daniel de Villiers, who, when a student of divinity at Utrecht, Holland, met Hanna Groen, a Dutch Jewess of that city. He married her in 1860.

Early in life Sir John Abraham de Villiers embraced the Jewish faith. He was greatly attached to our people, and in his autobiography, "My Memories" (1931), he recalls how, as a representative of British Jewry, he attended the restoration of the grave of a son of Menasseh Ben Israel, in 1912. "I felt absolutely in my place equally by right of race, birth, my own choice and other's election," he wrote. For a long time he was also an active participant in communal affairs in England. He did much for the Hambro Synagogue in London.

A brilliant scholar and linguist, Sir John was for many years a well-known official at the British Museum, where he was in charge of the maps, and from 1920 to 1924, he was Deputy-Keeper of Printed Books.

He also greatly assisted in the preparation of maps and handbooks which were laid before the various peace conferences arising out of World War I. He was often called upon to submit expert evidence on geographical proofs in boundary disputes. He did valuable work in connection with the famous demarcation of the boundary between Canada and Newfoundland. He was knighted in 1927.

Development of Pharmaceutical Industry in Palestine

MANY industries have made amazing progress in Palestine. War-time conditions and the reorientation of markets brought about by reason of war-time needs and the influx of masses of troops gave a tremendous impetus to factories and industrial production generally. Great development was shown by the pharmaceutical industry, and in chemicals generally. This industry was started under very adverse conditions in 1932. It had certain advantages at the start, namely, a medical profession in Palestine with a high standard, plus many outstanding scientists and highly specialised and experienced workers from Germany and Western Europe. Against this, were weighed certain important factors. The industry was young, the quality of its products were unknown to doctors, hospitals and patients. Many raw materials had to be imported and no protection was afforded it even in the local market by reason of the peculiar effect of the Mandate under the League of Nations.

Nevertheless, step by step the industry developed and began to gain a foothold into the local market, while important orders were received from neighbouring countries. Local resources gave many of the ingredients required. Medicinal plants were collected on an increasing scale, whilst from the Dead Sea materials were made available. The quality of the Palestinian product was of a high standard and became popular amongst doctors. In medicine no prejudices can exist. Merit finds its own reward and the demand aroused helped to maintain a steady turnover enabling the industry to stand its ground and proceed with research.

Technically great strides have been made during the war and this industry has progressed with seven league boots.

The Yishuv now produces 80 per cent. of all the medicines that it requires, including difficult preparations such as Prontosil, Rubrum, Sulphaquanidine and Histidine. These are produced in very few countries. Preparations have already been made in the sulphanilamide group.

Chemicals are also produced for the various industries and numerous substances required in the manufacture of plastics, paper, leather, dyestuffs, cosmetics, textiles, paint and food are now available locally.

The values of the production rose from £20,000 in 1938 to £1,000,000 in 1945, and exports from £1,161 in 1938 to £245,980 in 1944.

In Palestine itself the per capita consumption of pharmaceutical products (foreign and local) rose about 66 per cent. between 1938 and 1943.

It is confidently expected that the Palestine pharmaceutical industry will maintain its predominance in the local market. Its main problem now is the maintenance of export markets and the acquisition of new markets. Many avenues are available. This work requires much time, money and publicity. No doubt the brains and ability which succeeded in the establishment of the industry will find means to ensure its steady development and future prosperity.



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