

The Bookshelf

“General De Wet”

Reviewed By S. A. Rochlin

IN his book, “General de Wet,” believed to be the first full study of its kind in English, Mr. Eric Rosenthal gives a fair and sympathetic account of one who is generally regarded as the pioneer of mobile and guerilla fighting and who achieved world-wide fame for his exploits during the South African War. The publication is most fitting and timely, for De Wet's particular military strategy commands more than the usual attention these days.

De Wet was an unskilled farmer who had never read a military textbook, and Mr. Rosenthal tells in great detail much of his personal life, both before and after 1900. After tracing at some length the genealogy of his family (incidentally the author does not mention another well-known Cape family of which Mrs. Koopman de Wet was the outstanding member), Mr. Rosenthal gives us an interesting glimpse of the life of the renowned Boer leader before he became the Commander-in-Chief of the Orange Free State forces during the bitter struggle between 1899 and 1902. “I had but three months of schooling,” De Wet once confessed. And among others who taught him to read, as Mr. Rosenthal reveals, was Isaac Baumann, a Jewish pioneer of Bloemfontein.

It is not generally known that during the South African War a young Russian Jew served De Wet as his secretary. He was “the bravest man I knew,” declared the redoubtable Boer warrior. It is a pity that Mr. Rosenthal does not give us his name.

This was not the only occasion that De Wet had contacts with Jews. Apart from meeting Jews who had fought for his cause during the Boer War, he would often speak kindly of a Russian Jewish storekeeper and his wife who had given him shelter during the 1914 Rebellion. And among the artists who sculptured him and for whom, too, he often expressed a particular regard, were the gifted Jews Moses Kottler, Joseph Mendes da Costa and Aronson.

Histadruth Ivrieth, Port Elizabeth

Many members of the Histadruth Ivrieth attended a monthly meeting at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Rappaport on October 21.

The Chairman, Mr. J. Mizrachy, gave a short review of the events in Eretz Israel during the year 5706.

Mr. Goodman then gave a most interesting and instructive paper on the “Creators of Modern Hebrew Poetry,” making special mention of Steinberg, Uri-Zwi, Greenberg and Avigdor Hameiri. He read several poems illustrating the strength of their style.

Rev. Klaff then sang several new Palestinian songs. At the conclusion, the chairman on behalf of all the members, congratulated Mr. and Mrs. A. Lichter on the marriage of their daughter.

Another very interesting meeting took place at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. J. Mizrachy. Mr. P. Neaman and Mr. Herzl Zuckerman of Eretz Israel were the speakers.

Mrs. R. Lipschitz proposed a vote of thanks.

It is to be regretted that a few errors have crept into what is undoubtedly a most readable volume. Percy Molteno was not “a well-known Englishman” (p. 121), but a South African whose father was the first Prime Minister at the Cape. In several places he misspells the name of Dr. E. Jorissen. An important work not listed in Mr. Rosenthal's extensive bibliography is Michael Devitt's “The Boer Fight for Freedom.”

“General De Wet,” by Eric Rosenthal. (Unie Volkspers, Beperk.)

FIRST MEETING OF UNION OF ORTHODOX HEBREW CONGREGATIONS

THE first meeting of the Provisional Governing Body of the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations was held on October 27 at the offices of the Board.

Mr. I. A. Maisels was in the chair, and the attendance was extremely good. That the newly-elected members of the Governing Body realised the importance of this meeting was illustrated by the fact that they came from all parts of the country, Johannesburg, Pretoria, the Reef, Kimberley, Potchefstroom and Durban.

After keen discussions on the future aims and activities of the Union, a number of sub-committees were formed, to go into different aspects of the work. These sub-committees include the Draft Committee, which is to draw up a Constitution, a Finance Committee, which is to make recommendations for the provision of funds necessary to cover the Union's budget, and an Actions Committee, which will work out plans for immediate activities. Following suggestions made at the meeting, the Actions Committee, will, among other things, discuss ways and means of assisting small rural communities, the question of bringing in Ministers from overseas, pastoral tours and the provision of Field Rabbis.

There was a very full discussion about the proposed Rabbinical Council, the formation of which is one of the main aims of the Provisional Governing Body. Here, too, a sub-committee was appointed to consult with the ecclesiastical members of the Governing Body about the Constitution of the Rabbinical Council.

SOLOMON AND COATES IN BEETHOVEN CONCERT

A TENSE audience heard the Leonora Overture No. 3 as Albert Coates conducted the City Orchestra in a memorable Beethoven concert on November 7. The hall was completely full and the audience listened enraptured to a concert which was an event in our musical calendar.

The well-known overture was played with that delicacy and unity which we have come to expect of our orchestra these days and was a delightful prelude to Solomon's great performance of the Emperor Concerto. His performance was truly magnificent. Every note, whether pianissimo or rising in a colourful scale to a tremendous climax, was full of sweetness and firmness and meaning. His technical perfection was particularly noteworthy in the trills and octave work which this great work entails. His interpretation was beautiful and truly Beethoven.

The Fifth Symphony under Mr. Coates' baton was very impressive. This great conductor seems to sweep his players into the moods of the symphony with an economy of movement yet with a dramatic intensity that is truly remarkable. From the popular first movement with its dramatic opening theme, to the last joyous movement, the orchestra gave us of their best and made this a most satisfying concert for all those who appreciate and love the works of Beethoven.

R.M.

Cyrildene-Observatory Hebrew Congregation

The fourth annual meeting of the Cyrildene-Observatory Extension Hebrew Congregation was held at the Communal Hall on October 1. There was a good attendance.

The following office-bearers were elected: Mr. Louis M. Weiner, Chairman; Mr. C. Noik, Vice-Chairman; Mr. M. Sieff, Treasurer; and Mr. J. J. Hoffman, Hon. Secretary. A committee of ten was also elected.

JEWISH EX-SERVICE LEAGUE Branch Formed at Germiston

At a meeting of Jewish ex-Servicemen and women held in Germiston on October 28, it was decided to form a branch of the League. The meeting was addressed by Mr. Michael H. Kam, National Secretary, and Major A. L. Kowarsky, of the Johannesburg Branch, and was presided over by Major J. Liebman.

A provisional committee was elected: Chairman, Major J. Liebman; Secretary and Treasurer, Mr. B. Davidoff; Committee, Messrs. E. Rich, J. Isaacs, A. Liebman, S. Rosenberg, I. Zeger and D. Isaacman.



Prof. C. W. Biecard Jeppe recently opened an interesting exhibition of paintings donated by local artists and art collectors at the home of Mr. and Mrs. I. Kuper. The exhibition was arranged by Ophir in aid of destitute Jewish artists overseas. Many well-known South African artists, including Deszo Koenig, Lippy Lipschitz, Maud Sumner and C. G. Brassau presented their works. Photographed with Prof. Jeppe are Mrs. Kuper (centre) and Mr. C. Gershtater (left) chairman of Ophir.

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