

What Shall I Read?

IN CHAINS. By Joseph Delmont. (Hutchinson and Co., Ltd.) Darter Brothers and Co.

A tale of the life of the Russian Jews during a reign of terror before the war. In chains is written with a candour and a brutal directness which is rather disconcerting at first. Mr. Joseph Delmont likes to call a spade a spade—in fact, he sometimes goes a little further. The style is transparent, and of a clarity which conveys the author's meaning to the reader without hindrance, so that scenes leap into his mind as if they were actually happening before his eyes.

Tremendous dramatic power, coupled with this quality of sincerity help to create some unforgettable scenes. This is one example.

"On the fourth night he was awakened by a curious noise. He was sitting with his back to a tree. Beside him lay Gregor's corpse covered with snow and brushwood. A strange sound fell on his ear.

"It was far away.

"It was like the long-drawn-out cry of a man.

"He wanted to answer the call, but his throat felt as if it were tied up.

"Again the call sounded. It was answered from various quarters.

"He could now distinguish the sounds clearly, and he jumped up in horror. It was not the voices of men calling. It was—wolves—wolves!"

The petty intrigues, the narrowness of life in a small Russian village are described with an intimate knowledge which can only come from actual acquaintance. The characters are real and full of pathetic humour. Dovidl, the wandering musician who searches thirty years for his lost love; the Rabbi who cannot resist a good meal and whose beard glistens with goose-fat; and Wolff Fuchs, the warm-hearted, hot-tempered champion of the persecuted Gittel are characters to remember and to love.

The most striking feature of the book is the scathing exposé of the corrupt and sadistic Russian officials who had it in their power to punish and to torture to death those poor unfortunate wretches delivered up to them.

Nor does the author spare the Jews. "Rabbi," says Haschel, on his return home from the terrible years in Siberia, "all over the world the Jews are demanding toleration, yet in their fanaticism they are the most intolerant of all! They expect goodwill from the world, and are lacking goodwill themselves!

"You, Rabbi Loeb, and all the other fanatics, cannot hold back the hands of the clock. All other religions have adapted themselves to the march of time. But the Jews in the great cities all over the world are a prey to the antiquated doctrines of their fanatical Rabbis, and are therefore hated and despised."

A powerful book, a moving book, and one which will shock every Jew to profound thought.

The Unconquerable Jew.

A CRITICAL STUDY.

By S. J. SCHNEIDER.

G. K. Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc and many of their literary contemporaries dislike Jews. So did their prototypes a century or two back. Right down to the earliest times the race has been regarded with a critical eye; the unfriendly scribe, the laudatory critic, the pungent satirist, all having contributed their share to the literature of Judaphobia. Maligned at one moment, extolled the next, this tenacious race has run the gauntlet of fire and fury. A singular people, you will say, to have survived instead of perishing miserably in this variegated and unquenchable morass. But the Trojan strength of the Jewish people, the wonder of the civilised world, has not detracted from their value as a race; indeed, their strength has been supplemented by an occasional call to arms, as it were, a command to the apathetic to shake off the listlessness of indifference, and resume the martial fervour of old. In Biblical times the Jews were a warlike race. To-day they desire to be at peace with their neighbours. But peace at any price is not necessarily a characteristic of the Jew. He has laid down the implements of war, and has no other fighting material than that of his personality, his pen and his communal power. Some will add that his wealth is also a very valuable adjunct; but this by the way. The greatness of the Jew cannot be based upon his monetary wealth. It has been built up by its thinkers, its philosophers, scientists, musicians and literary men and women. Its glory shines not so much in its financial brain as in the works of its intellectual brain. And in this sphere the Jewish people to-day can boast an Einstein, a Bergson, a Freud and others. From Chassidism to extreme Reform; from extreme Reform back to Chassidism, the eternal cycle, without beginning and without end. From pronounced orthodoxy to one-day Judaism, the Jew is the same creature of circumstance as of old, eager to gain the plaudits of his non-Jewish neighbours, sharing with them the burdens of State, the ups and downs of administrative government, his influence being felt in every department of human affairs.

But while extolling the praises of a people, we must not lose sight of its shortcomings. It is easy to find fault, a mere bagatelle to destroy. But it is no easy matter to construct—to build up on the ruins of dethronement. For example, the disparity between riches and poverty is very well exemplified in the daily life of the Jews of this country. Parents, desiring the best for their children, often deny themselves the necessities of life in order to compete with their neighbours in the battle for educational advancement. They impoverish themselves in the mad scramble for prowess in "Matic." It is like a game of Rugby where the greatest number of broken heads bears witness to the success of the victors. Having reached "Matic," our well-meaning parents still further impoverish themselves by pushing their children higher up the educational ladder. When a child, I lived in London, in the

heart of the Ghetto, and I remember very well the crowded reading room of a public library where one table was occupied by Jewish boys and girls, amid a multifarious collection of books, from the fables of Aesop to the philosophy of Max Nordau. These boys and girls, their faces aglow with enthusiasm, their spirits imbued with the lust for knowledge, were the children of poor parents. They had no desire to become professional men and women; indeed that consummation would have been financially impossible. They loved to find themselves in an intellectual atmosphere, and the books of the great writers of the past and present provided that atmosphere, without which their lives would have been an empty dream, with the foul odour of the Ghetto as an ever-present reality. And among these boys and girls might have been a potential poet, writer, scientist or musician. There was no hope of becoming professional men and women, of entering the ranks of the so-called respectable avocations of law, medicine, etc. Such heights were unattainable in view of the poor circumstances of the parents; but the will was there, the fire and zeal deeply impregnated in their hearts and minds, to be frustrated by dire necessity and the need of that superlative luxury—"cash." Conditions such as these do not exist to any great extent in South Africa. I suppose the climate

is not conducive to protracted study, and prowess on the tennis court or in the ballroom will call forth loud plaudits from the multitude. Behold, a Suzanne Lenglen in the making! Crowd around her, ye votaries of the ball and racquet. Give homage to another star in the firmament of sport. Sing loud paeans so that your voices will be heard in all their clamour, and the nations around you will say: "Behold, they have become as one of us." What a contrast. What an interesting mingling mass of intellectual decrepitude and moral decay! But if I go on writing in this strain I shall probably be branded as a pessimist or somebody will apply the dictum of Carlyle: "A bore of the first magnitude." Well, there is still some hope for the lost and weary on the path to rectitude. We cannot all reach to the top of the tree, but we can, at least, abolish from our minds the incubus of vanity and snobbishness that is so potent a characteristic of our people in this country. It is, indeed, so conspicuous in certain well-defined circles that it is already having its effect in aiding the much-deplored assimilation and intermarriage that is eating like a cancer at the vitals of our race. *Harold Hovolim*, sings the poet in *Ecclesiasties*, and it is the vanity of vanities that we must eliminate before we can set an example to the rest of the civilised world.

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יאהאנעסבורג.
אום צו נעבן אונזערע אידישע פריינד דעם בענעפיט פון אונזער אייגענצייטיגסטע
פארעם עקספּאַנענציע, דראפט, קעש טראנספּער און פּערזענלעכע איבערשיקונג ביזנעס האבן מיר
געגעבן אונזער מר. לענאקס דאָענע-וועלכער איז וואַרשיינליך אייך גוט בעוואוסט - צו פאר-
מיניגען עטליכע טעג אין דער שטאט מר. לענעווע וועט זיין אין אונזער בראנש
פּענליך פון 10 אין דער פרי ביז 4 נ.מ. אין די אויבענדערמאנטע דאטעס. און וועט מיט
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איר ווילט אדער ער וועט אייך העלפן אין וועלכע שוועריגקייטן איר האט צו שיקן געלט קיין
אויסלאנד. אינפאלס אז די שטונדן זיינען אונבעקוועם וועט ער מיט פּערזענליך אראנזשירן
איינצוואַרען אַ מיטטיג פון אידישע איינוואוינער וואס זיינען פאראינטערעסירט אין דעם
דאָס געזעס.

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דאָס געזעס.