OVERPOWERINGLY AND HAUNTINGLY BEAUTIFUL.
Not only the vastness of the stage which accommodated a cast of 6,200 who participated in the presentation of “The Romance of a People” at Soldier Field in Chicago recently, but the magical lighting effects used to heighten the dramatic incidents of the tremendous spectacle, were brought out in the gorgeous picture shown above. This was only one of the many eye-filling and heart-quivering scenes that deeply moved the audience of 125,000.

Romance of the Jewish Past
Impressions of the Gigantic Spectacle that Marked Jewish Day
at the Chicago Exhibition

A Letter from Chicago
By
Meyer F. Steinglass

The following article describes the stupendous pageant that was performed recently before the largest Chicago audience that ever witnessed a Jewish event.

AFTER America had set up the Century of Progress Exhibition at Chicago as a shrine for its industrial and scientific achievements, more than 125,000 Jews, almost 75 per cent. of Canada’s entire Jewish population, assembled at Soldier’s Field to present to the world not the products of mechanical or scientific labours, not the most modern Pullman car nor the most perfect steel furnace, but the essence of their culture, the secret of their survival down the ages—the Torah. When twelve men deposited a giant replica of the scrolls upon an illuminated altar near the centre of the world’s largest open air stadium, when the stirring voice of an unseen narrator bade the mass of humanity dip into the Bible and there read forty centuries of Jewish history and destiny, there was unfurled a pageant whose lofty sweep and majesty penetrated the very marrow of the Jewish soul and lifted the Jewish heart to new heights of faith and courage.

With an artistic excellence rarely equalled the gigantic spectacle of “The Romance of a People” depicted the story of the Jewish people—a story in which only now and then do celebrations and rejoicing disperse the darkness of despair and suffering. The scrolls lay on an altar of fire, facing the same sky, the same moon, under which their epic story was first enacted. Beyond the walls of Soldiers’ Field, this enormous temple-for-a-day, stood the gaily coloured modernistic monuments to industry, to commerce, to science. They tell us that these are merely flimsy paste-board structures. How significant of the mad rush of progress, of the ever-increasing complexity of things that demands new symbols, new implements daily. Progress destroys as it builds; builds as it destroys. The scrolls lay on an altar of fire. They lay there as they did many centuries ago in the temples of Israel—eternal symbols of man’s baffling encounter with the cosmos, of man’s endless search for the meaning of life. They lay there as the testament to the permanence of the Jewish contribution to civilisation.

The largest audience that ever witnessed a Jewish event has assembled on this red letter day in American Jewish history. As the bell-like voice of the leading cantor declaims the opening words of the Bible, as he intones “Bereshis Boru Elokim” (In the beginning God created) a wave of awe engulfs the vast audience. On the stage we behold a remarkable dance representing creation. A mass of gray figures that only a moment ago lay motionless and lifeless has been infused with the breath of life. The shofar is sounded. Its compelling call brings
the gray figures to life. Almost two thousand arms and hands sway in a flood of light, producing the vivid picture of efflorescence—as if the earth were suddenly to give birth to vegetation. This is creation and with creation comes the first manifestation of the belief in monotheism, as cantors and choruses chanted the words: “God is one” in a sound-proof room behind the immense stage. A deep religious fervour grips the dancers and chorus. Again the shofar is heard. The orchestra reaches a crescendo and the prologue of the pageant is brought to a mighty climax with the repetition of the declaration by the Jews of their faith in one God.

The scrolls lie on an altar of fire. The narrator begins to roll them for us and we read a chronicle of a people that is more than a historical record, more than the Pandora of resurrection of powerful scenes of suffering and triumph, more than a procession of the Jews of their faith in one God.

The narrator begins to read passages of the Bible, and figuratively would say enough to the trials that blesses thousands that have gathered before. All the history for the Jews of the world is unfolded before. All the grandeur of the pageant was the largest in the world and its floor was equipped with glass panels for special lighting effects. Underneath the stage in a sound-proof room, singers and orchestra performed unseen by the vast audience. Composed of four levels, the stage was designed to form the Star of David terminating at the topmost level at the doors of a Temple from whose dome shone the Mogen David in a rain of golden stars. The Chicago Tribune states that the production cost was $80,000, Zionists announced at their convention, held at the same time at the Audubon, that the pageant raised more than $50,000 for Palestine. Local organisations as well as those in other parts of the United States who co-operated in the pageant also benefited materially.

How noble and inspiring is this sublimated form of money raising in comparison to the emptiness and drudgery of Campaigns.

Jehovah's Witnesses

Johannesburg League for the Working Palestine

A general meeting of the above will take place on Sunday, the 28th August, at 2.30 p.m., at the H.O.D. Hall. Agenda: Executive’s reports, arrangements for forthcoming meetings, election of executive. All members and sympathisers are invited to attend.

Enrol a Subscriber to
“the Zionist Record”