

Pictures

SOME very delightful Jewish homes are being erected in Johannesburg. It has been my privilege to visit a few of these lately. There can be no doubt about the excellent taste displayed in homes furnished with most modern equipment. Many of them have attractive gardens.

What has rather intrigued me is the fact that few genuine paintings are seen on the walls. This is a great pity because a home is not really complete without a few paintings and art-objects in it.

I thought of this deficiency on Friday afternoon last when I was an interested spectator at an exhibition of paintings of Jewish and Palestinian subjects by Nahum Gutman. Here, indeed, were some exquisite paintings, sketches and drawings by an artist of genuine talent.

I was glad to hear that a few of the pictures were bought by some of our wealthy folk, but really many more of Gutman's paintings should find their way into the homes of those who can happily afford them.

This suggestion is not offered by me in a patronising manner. I am eager to see the addition of artistic beauty in well-built and spacious modern houses.

There is one big canvas in the exhibition of a Jerusalem scene, which I consider should find its way into some large Jewish institution, like the Jewish Club in Durban or the Jewish Guild in Johannesburg.

I would like to learn if a wealthy donor could be found to make the necessary purchase.

"Education"

IT would appear that the present regime in Germany is proceeding along definitely unrepentant lines in connection with education. Every effort is made to eliminate knowledge of the work of any known Jew, no matter if such contribution is one hundred per cent. German. An interesting notice in this direction appeared in the issue of November 5 of the "Frankfurter Tagezeitung." From this it is learnt that instructions are proceeding for the re-writing by German literary men of the "words" written by Jews to the music of German composers.

A further order has been issued to the effect that Mendelssohn's musical compositions for Shakespeare's "Midsummer Night's Dream" are to be abandoned and German composers are invited to invent new music. It is declared that Mendelssohn's work is "not at all in the spirit of Shakespeare and that its setting is of an effeminate and soft character."

I heard the other day of an inspector examining a class of children at a German school. The children were asked the following:

"What happened in 1889?"

The reply was: "Hitler was born."

The inspector complimented them highly upon their great knowledge.

He then asked: "What happened in 1892?"

The whole class replied as follows: "Hitler was two years old."

Current Communal Comments

By
"Hamabit"

The inspector went away greatly pleased with the progress the children were making.

Kalewala

HOW many of my readers have heard of "Kalewala?"

This is the name of the Finnish national epos. It happens that this great work has just been translated into a wonderful Hebrew by no less a person than Saul Tschernikowsky, the famous Hebrew poet. These Hebrew translations are greatly appreciated by the people of Finland and as a result Tschernikowsky has been invited to take part in the centenary celebrations at Helsingfors in February next.

Until the 19th century, the "Kalewala" existed only in fragments in the memories and on the lips of the peasants. The first collection of a few of the scattered songs was published in 1822. Further collections were published in 1835, 1849, and the most complete text appeared in 1887. Translations have been made into English, German, French, Swedish and other languages, all soon after the original Finnish publications appeared. Tschernikowsky is almost the only living translator of the "Kalewala."

General Gordon

A FEW days ago I read in a local newspaper that a meeting was held recently in Durban to make arrangements for the observance of the 50th anniversary of the death of General Gordon, the hero of Khartoum. A committee will submit proposals for a local celebration.

The celebration is of some interest to us, for this General "Chinese" Gordon, who was a good Christian at heart, displayed some attention in the welfare of the Holy Land of his day. After leaving South Africa in 1883, he went to Palestine for a while. In his letters to his sister, General Gordon writes of his adventures in Eretz Israel, but he has no references to the then efforts of Jews to colonise there. It is so unlike the case of that other famous South African, Laurence Oliphant. Again, in comparing him with the instances of other famous Englishmen such as Sir Charles Warren and Earl Kitchener, who conducted valuable archaeological work in Palestine and who, too, were intimately connected in some manner with South African affairs, General Gordon leaves no deep imprint of his personality on the Jewish factor.

Heroes

A STORY of great heroism lies behind the bald announcement which appeared in the press of the world a few weeks ago, to the effect that the Russian Government has awarded to members of the crew of

the icebreaker "Litke" orders for distinguished service.

The "Litke" carried out one of the most remarkable expeditions in all history. Setting out from Vladivostock on June 28 last, it traversed the entire Arctic Sea region from east to west in one journey, reaching Murmansk on October 7, after 83 days spent amid the bitter cold and the unimaginable difficulties of the dread Arctic regions. There were times when the captain

had to stay for thirty hours continuously at his post on the bridge. The strain of these events upon the crew can scarcely be pictured. This is the first time in the whole history of navigation, that a ship has sailed the entire Arctic Sea region from east to west in one voyage.

Leading members of the crew of the "Litke" were five Jews: Boris Bronstein, the Deputy Commander; his brother, Liev Bronstein, the cinematographer; Olieg Kuksin, chief wireless operator; Benjamin Bogrov, hydro-biologist; and A. Libnitzky, ship's electrician. Truly it can be said that Jewish courage is not dead.

Oddities

UNTIL Christian universities taught medicine scientifically, no court or bishopric in Europe was without its Jewish doctor.

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In the Middle Ages, so as not to derive profit from work done on the Sabbath, Jews used to ask Christians to milk their cows on the Sabbath and retain the milk for themselves.

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Rabbis in later centuries were much troubled to decide whether alarm clocks might be used on Sabbath.

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Poor Jews were known to use eggshells for holding Sabbath and Chanukah lights.

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In the Middle Ages, it was the custom, as a matter of Jewish practice, for mistresses not to deduct the cost of broken crockery from their servants' wages.

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Scarcely a great Rabbi of the Middle Ages ended his career in the land of his birth.

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Not until the 14th century were Rabbis dependent on the support of their congregations.

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At one time the royal lion-tamers in Spain were all Jews.

A Strange Cast

I DARESAY there are a large number of film fans amongst my readers. Some of them will recollect the recent showing of Walt Disney's famous "Three Little Pigs," consisting of extremely clever animated coloured drawings in action.

The manager of a local theatre in which this attraction was shown tells me the story of a little Jewish boy, whom he noticed walking out of the theatre in the middle of the picture. He stopped him and asked:

"What's the matter, my son? Don't you like the picture?"

"Oh, the picture's alright," the lad replied, "but I don't like the cast."