

Werners

A few days' time, it will be a century since a sainted rabbi was born. I refer to Rabbi Aba Werner. He was born in Telz in 1837 and at the age of 18 received a rabbinical diploma from great rabbonim. One of his earliest appointments was that of rav in Telz. In 1883 he went to Helsingfors and later became Chief Rabbi of Finland. In 1891 he visited London. At that time the famous Chevra Machzeke Nassas was founded and he accepted the position as rav. In the East End of London he was revered, and when he died in December of 1912, the funeral was attended by tens of thousands of mourners. Werner was undoubtedly one of the greatest rabbonim of his day.

A well-known South African Jewish personality, Mr. Jacob Werner, of Middelburg, is the son of the late rabbi Werner. It might be said in

Current Communal Comments

By "Hamabit"

honest in all his dealing with them, being the only emigration agent of whom this can be said."

In view of the strange sound of a certain word now prevalent in South Africa indicating the impossibility of Jews acclimatising themselves to conditions in this country, it is well to realise that there was a Bergtheil amongst the early colonisers of a prosperous province.

"HAMABIT" LEAVES FOR PALESTINE

OUR contributor, "Hamabit," having felt the call of Eretz Israel, has left on a visit to Palestine and Europe. These weekly comments, which the author has been writing consistently for over six years, will, therefore, cease as from next issue. Upon the return to South Africa a few months hence of "Hamabit," the feature will re-appear.

In this case that the apple has not fallen far from the tree, for Jacob Werner is undoubtedly one of the finest specimens of Jews to be found in any part of the world. Just as his father was revered in London, so is Jacob Werner respected and honoured in South Africa.

Emigration Agent

I HAVE lately been reading two newly-published volumes dealing with the early days of Natal. One is titled "More Annals of Natal" and the other "Pioneer Days in Natal"—the latter is written by Mrs. Barbara Buchanan.

In both of these works, reference is made to the pioneering work of Elias Bergtheil, a conforming Israelite, who did so much for the Natal of his day. He it was, it will be recalled, who sponsored the successful German settlement scheme in the Garden Province sometime in the middle of the last century. Much has been written about Bergtheil's energy and industry in promoting the welfare of his adopted land, and the following tribute to him from the pen of Mrs. Buchanan is a further testimony as to his character:

"The fortunate of the pioneers were the German immigrants, whom Mr. Bergtheil brought out and settled at Swartkops. He had been to Natal before he brought them out, so he knew the conditions, and he took care that they were well equipped with implements and other necessities. Then, too, he was strictly

A Society

THE Van Riebeeck Society of Capetown has just conferred an honour upon the Jewish community of South Africa by issuing Volume 1 of Nathaniel Isaacs' famous "Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa." The work, which was first published in London in 1836, has been edited by Dr. Louis Herrman, who is already well-known as the author of a pioneer "History of the Jews in South Africa."

The Van Riebeeck Society has been in existence for more than a decade. It has performed valuable work in connection with the promotion of historical knowledge in South Africa. The object of the society is to print, or reprint, for distribution among the members and for sale to the public, rare and valuable books, pamphlets and documents relating to the history of this country. The annual subscription is ten shillings.

Among those who have edited books for the society have been Mr. H. J. Mandelbrote and Professor Schapera, both of the University of Capetown. Mr. Mandelbrote, who is a Senior Lecturer in History, edited the works of an 18th century German traveller to the Cape, O. F. Mentzel, while Professor Isaac Schapera, a noted student of matters Bantu, translated and edited the original texts of some early South Africans, who wrote about the Cape Hottentots.

The efforts of the Van Riebeeck Society ought to be widely patronised. I do hope that many members of our community will join such a praiseworthy body.

Opera "Names"

THE other evening I listened to a South African singer who has gained a reputation for herself as an operatic artiste in Europe. I happened to know the parents of the singer—nice, unassuming Jewish folk — yet their daughter was billed to appear at the recital under a thoroughly resounding Italian name. In this connection, Italian sounding names with soft vowel endings are the supreme ornaments of opera artists. There appears to be enough of this nomenclature in the melodious Italian language to go round, even if hosts of Jewish artists should want them.

It may be remembered by some people, that the Jewess, who was one of the leading singers in the Metropolitan Opera House in New York in the "nineties" during the run of the famous de Reszke Brothers, was Rosa Olitzka, the daughter of a cantor. It is not generally known that Alma Gluck, the famous opera singer, was a Jewess. She married Zimbalist, the famous violinist. Nannette Guildford, who won fame in New York at the Metropolitan, was a young American Jewess by the name of Gutmann.

Perhaps with the establishment of a symphony orchestra in Jerusalem and the rise one day of a Palestinian opera, young Jewesses entering the operatic profession will not be influenced to take unto themselves specifically sounding Italian names, but that they choose more beautiful Hebrew nomenclature.

Shertok

TO the South African Jew, very little is known of the gentleman who gave such important evidence before the Royal Commission in Palestine—Moses Shertok, head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem. As a matter of fact, Shertok happens to be the youngest member of the Agency's executive. Until elected some little while ago to his present important post, he was known only to a few outside of Palestine and to the inner Zionist circle.

Behind the scenes, however, Shertok has long been a key figure. It was he who assisted the late Dr. Chaim Arlosoroff (whom he succeeded) and he has been, for some years, a leading figure in Zionist political negotiations. In these he revealed fine diplomatic and executive talents, which are successfully employed in dealing with the Palestine Administration.

There can be no doubt that in the Zionist leadership of the future, Moses Shertok, with his sterling ability, indefatigable vigour and courage, is likely to take a prominent place. He is certainly one of the outstanding Jewish personalities in Palestine today.

Evidence

CHAYIM (to his wife): My dear one. It is a fact that without any exception, every woman is given over to the habit of repeating herself.

Yente (angrily): It is not true! It is not true!

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