

Random Thoughts

I am in receipt of a communication from an ardent Zionist who complains bitterly of alleged "insult and ridicule" I have heaped upon his brethern. I publish Mr. Raphael's letter as I am glad to do any which bears a signature. It is only the communications of those who are moral cowards, who have been reared on a diet of "Ladies Home Journal Side Talks" and who have enjoyed the intellectual friendship of the "Ready Letter Writer" whose sizzling brain-outputs are relegated to the trash basket. But to the letter:

Dear Sir:

In your worthy issue we have noticed that the gentleman who contributes the worthy addition, "Random Thoughts" has taken the liberty time and again to ridicule Zionism and to insult its adherents. Now, we Zionists, generally let all such attacks pass unnoticed and unanswered. We think this course most advisable and we have followed this principle since we raised the standard of Zionism and intend to continue it till we, with the help of Him who loves Israel, will finally establish a place of refuge, a permanent home for our much wronged and suffering brethern; for our unfortunate and unhappy people that have been fleeing for ages from one country of barbarians to another, from the tender mercies of a tyrannical despot to the protection of a holy-cruel theologian. But when we see that one of our own people is trying to find fault with such a holy cause as Zionism, giving us no rational arguments and repeatedly insulting and ridiculing such a charitable undertaking we feel like asking the gentleman if he ever gave his sentiments regarding Zionism a second thought, to assert that the several present leaders of Zionism as Drs.

Herzl and Nordau only know what they want, while the entire Zionist organization is composed of a set of cattle, dreamers; an ignorant multitude. We wonder if that gentleman realizes the magnitude of our organization which embraces not short of a million Jews the world over. Now while we can well forgive him for his expressions, let me inform him that, I, his humble servant have advocated and propagated Zionism that is, the restoration of the Jewish nationality in Palestine under the sovereignty of the Turkish government with the consent and protection of the Powers, when the present leaders of Zionism thought that Austria and France were their Palestine and Vienna and Paris their Jerusalem. Those who read my various writings will gladly attest to the truth of my statement and I can assure that gentleman that I am not the only layman who wrote about Zionism, but if the gentleman in question is not acquainted with the Hebraic thought and its literature it is not our fault; we are fully acquainted with Anglo-Jewish thought and their literature. Zionism is above all criticism. Zionism is a divine revival of the Jewish nationality and religious spirit. It knows no sect, it ignores all visionary obstructions, it sees no obstacles, it fears no opposition and it cannot and will not be weakened by any criticism or by mere ridicule. We would never have had twenty-eight colonies in Palestine nor an organization so perfect and powerful, and I am most sure that the writer of "Random Thoughts" will admit that it is far better for us American Jews as well as for the unhappy refugees to be farmers and gardeners in Palestine than peddlers in the United States.

What can we do if we are unable to persuade our brethern to be tillers of the soil in Palestine, a branch of industry almost wholly lacking in Israel and which is so beneficial to a race both physically and morally. Now, in the name of Zionism and



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the Zionist societies we beg of him if he does not wish to give us reasonable arguments on the subject in question, let him not offer as arguments any more insults, he can by no means hurt our holy cause in the least, but he can hurt the feelings of many Zionists and among them is their devoted servant in Zionism,

R. B. Raphael.

* * *

The paragraph which provoked the foregoing outburst was this:

"The Zionists in America have no real conception of what they are after; a visit to the average Zionist meeting will confirm this. Perhaps Nordau, Gottheil, Herzl and Wise know what they want, but not the laymen."

This may be ridicule, it may be insult, but it is the truth nevertheless. In 1896 Dr. Herzl, the leader of the movement, published his pamphlet, "Der Juden Staat" mapping out the True Zionist scheme, namely the establishment of a Jewish Republic in Palestine.

As will be seen by referring to another article in this issue the idea was to have the Republic governed by an elective or appointive governor, there was to be an armed volunteer force and a flag. When this plan was made known throughout the world an ocean of protests surged over it and in 1897 it was completely submerged. At that time I did ridicule the notion of a Jewish State, but advocated what

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Mr. Raphael to-day stands for, nothing more nor less than a Jewish Colony for the relief of the persecuted Jews of Europe. If Mr. Raphael has followed my sentiments on the subject he will find that I always stood for colonization pure and simple, but no Jewish Empire or Republic. In the face of the tremendous storm of criticism Herzl and Nordau got under shelter and temporarily abandoned their scheme of establishing a state and modified it by using the word "colonization" in place of "republic." But despite this the leaders are still imbued with that idea of re-establishing the Jewish people in Palestine in order to re-establish the glory of Israel, while the average Zionist in this country desires nothing more nor less than a refuge for the persecuted of his people. If Mr. Raphael has other ideas than this one he is an exception, for I reiterate, attendance at Zionist meetings prove that the layman is merely a colonizer in idea and not a republic-establisher. I challenge the writer of the letter or any other Zionist to show where I ever took exception to the colonization scheme. The leaders of Zionism in this country with whom I have conferred on the question will assuredly bear me out in this position. I say that the Zionists as a rule have not caught the spirit of the movement as understood by their leaders, but have subscribed themselves to a home of refuge for the unfortunate. The establishment of a state is as chimerical to-day as it was four years ago when Herzl was compelled to strike his position in that regard.

The theory of the layman is practical, but nevertheless it is not in agreement with the ideas of the leaders. When Mr. Raphael cries out that Zionism is a divine revival, then he begins to catch the spirit of the movement which is, as I have always held to be, visionary. When a man permits himself to indulge into ecstatic panegyrics and looks at a question as having but one side then I begin to admit that he is a true Zionist. But such a condition does not appeal to the prosaic mind of the American Jew, and for this reason he can see but only one modified phase of what is known as Zionism, namely Colonization.

Mr. Raphael says that Zionism sees no obstacles, nothing can stand in its way. That has been the fault of the Zionists, they cannot remember that they are dealing with a very prosaic age and that it is no longer possible to establish an Empire on a rain bow; that dreams are a very poor inducement to secure financial support. One million dollars has been raised, but what of that, it is a drop in the bucket. Until the chimerical factor is thrown out of the equation the power necessary to open Palestine to the Jews in a colonization sense, will never be forthcoming.

I admit all that Mr. Raphael says about the advisability of transforming peddlers into farmers, of opening up Palestine to the persecuted; that I have always admitted, but such a plan is not Zionism; it is a plain, simple colonization scheme which could have been accomplished ere this had practical business men and not dreamers been at the helm.

Charles H. Joseph



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