



MRS. A. SILVERMAN
A land and a promise

(continued from previous page)

To-day that disease has disappeared. Jewish science has driven it out. Shouldn't the Arabs be grateful?"

"They should be."

"They should be, and they are, sir. They had malaria, too, don't forget, and typhus and dysentery, and other loathsome diseases. Now they have doctors and nurses and hospitals and schools, and you tell me that they are not grateful."

"I told you that they are grateful, or should be."

"And don't forget either, sir, that we have raised their standard of living from about 6½d a day in your money to five or six times as much. And you say that they don't want us there!"

"No, Mrs. Silverman, I asked you to tell me how they feel about you."

"How would you feel about anyone who saved the lives and sight of your children, banished disease from your home and put clothes on your back instead of rags?"

"Grateful, I hope."

"Yet you dare to tell me, sir, that the Arabs are not grateful!"

"Mrs. Silverman, I have told you nothing. I am asking you questions."

Questions for the Questioner

"Well, let me ask you some questions. Why all this solicitude for the Arabs? Arabs, Arabs, why always the Arabs? How solicitous were you for the Maoris when you took their country? You killed them off."

"We did kill a lot of them, and they killed a lot of us. But that was in a smash-and-grab period of world history. Do I understand you to be saying that the Jews are now doing in Palestine what all nations did once?"

"What do you mean?"

"Smashing into Palestine."

"Before God, sir, you amaze me. You either don't listen to me or you don't want to hear me. *Palestine is ours!* God gave it to us—and no power on earth will take it away from us a second time. But we are not smashing our way in. We are buying our way — and before God aren't we paying! The Arabs are bleeding us white. Fifty pounds an acre for rocks and sand and swamp! And in the meantime my people are dispersed and dying. No country wants them, and I say 'Let us go back home then; to our own place; to Zion.'"

She drooped suddenly and was silent. I was embarrassed and ashamed. Then she said very quietly: "Why did you come to see me, sir?"

"To get information."

"No, sir! Not to get information. When I speak to you there is a wall of suspicion or doubt or indifference between us, and my words bounce back again."

"But you treat me as a hostile witness."

"Don't say that. Don't go away and say that you met with hostility. I am not hostile. I welcome your questions, but when I answer them you ask them again. I can't understand you."

"Then I had better go. I am sorry that we can't speak plainly, but apparently we can't."

"All So Simple"

"Sit down, sir—please. We must not part in misunderstanding. I am prepared to answer any question, but what more do you still require to know? What more does anyone require to know? It is all so simple: A Land; a promise; a claim maintained for 2000 years; an acknowledgment by Mr. Balfour and a contract by 52 nations. And now ourselves at the gate saying, 'Fulfil the promise of God and man and let us in.' That is all, sir. There are no questions. God gave us His holy word, and the powers of Hell will not prevail against us."

* * *

WRITTEN down it now seems tame and flat. Apart from anything else not a tenth of what was said has been recorded, and to make up that tenth I have selected only the politically safe and diplomatically permissible things. It is nowhere a verbatim report of either questions or answers. But it is faithful as far as it goes, and if I have not retained the atmosphere that is because scorn, passion, vehemence and white-hot faith are difficult to imprison in a reporter's note-book.

A GERMAN officer who surrendered two days after he reached the Western Front from the East told a BBC commentator: "In Russia we were told that the Luftwaffe was in the West. In Normandy we are told that the Luftwaffe is in the East. I can't stand that sort of trickery."

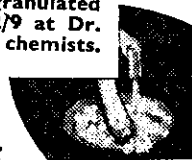


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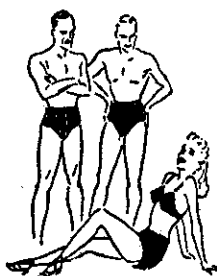
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