

could not get over the fact that a girl student of the age of sixteen or so had told him that the class was bored to death by Bialik's "Hamatmid." "What difference does it make to us," she wanted to know, "whether that fellow in his miserable village was actually going to turn into a rabbit or not?"

The state of mind of the home-grown youngsters was strengthened by the second world war and the isolation which resulted. Transla-

tions multiplied apace, and the vocabulary for all kinds of daily requirements underwent a vast expansion.

The new state of mind found expression in something written not by one of their own number but by Hazaz, with his remarkable gift for sensing a mood, a period or a culture and extrapolating it even when it had nothing in common with his own self. In a fragment called "The Sermon," one of the most important

pieces, in many respects, of all that has been written in Eretz Israel during the past twenty years, he denounces the whole course of Jewish history for the past two thousand years. The denunciation is voiced by a kibbutznick in a settlement, and the nature of the charge is that for two thousand years the Jews have been merely pushed around by others, but have never made, or even wanted to make their own history; history, that is, in the sense accepted

by the civilized world. Many things have happened since then. But as far as Hebrew literature is concerned the chief one is not the story of the destruction of a third of Jewry — not yet, a least — but the liberating effect of the War of Independence. For this has liberated the Eretz Israel-born writers and has given them the courage to use their own specific type of Hebrew for literary purposes. The past eighteen months have seen the appearance of several journals of a semi-literary nature, including a couple sponsored by the army, in which a whole crop of new names can be found for the first time in twenty years.

For the first time since the Midrash or at the latest Hakalir this is a natural, vernacular, unstudied Hebrew which is in use; and it is

therefore important, more important for the greater part than that which the youngsters are writing in it. Much of their work is crude, repetitious and a search for modes of expression already perfected many hundreds of years ago. Yet the interesting element, often enough, is the creative fashion in which ancient usages and turns of phrase are quite unconsciously revived and expanded. These youngsters, admittedly, know no Hebrew beyond that of their own generation and no culture beyond the very youthful and immature one of the Kibbutz and its urban equivalents. Yet those among them who are real writers will find their places in the Hebrew literary tradition of which they are the rightful though unconscious heirs.

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