



לנער — ספרות ארץ-ישראל  
**PIONEERING PALESTINE**

№ 1.



## The Story of Daganía

FROM THE HEBREW BY

Joseph Baratz

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To  
**The Children of Dagania**  
from  
**Joseph**



The Children of Dagania

## FOREWORD

A STONE'S throw from Tiberias lies Dagania. And five hundred years separate old, grey-bearded, stooping Tiberias from young, strapping, straight-backed Dagania. Tiberias is a town with narrow meandering lanes, where the stones on one side of the road bend down towards the stones on the other side—almost kissing. Jews with side-curly and rounded shoulders walk the streets of Tiberias. They trade, making a small profit. They sit at the doors of their diminutive shops waiting for customers who bargain for half an hour before they part with a penny or spend a cent.

In Dagania they work the land from early morning until late at night, with a merciless sun scorching their bare bronzed backs. Young men and young women tend the cows, watch the banana plantations, water the orange groves and see that the golden corn appears in due season. And they sing, for the joy of work possesses them.

Chubby faced children, magnificent specimens, "work" the land, speaking a Hebrew that makes you happy when you hear it...

How is it that Dagania has a Jew different from the Jew of Tiberias?

Because present-day Dagania is built on the blood and the sweat of pioneers who feared nothing and dared all.

A shot from a stray Beduin and the best man in Daganía lies dead. The demon that lives in Lake Tiberias becomes suddenly wild and sinks the boat in which a hero of Daganía is returning to his work. More terrible than human enemies, more dangerous than the demon of the Lake, is malaria which creeps up from the Jordan swamps near Daganía. It marks down his man and makes a victim of the woman in the fields. It seems, at first, as if this Djinn cannot be exorcised. Its hideous touch turns all to ruin.

In the pages which follow, the story of the Pioneers who have built Daganía, who have died for Daganía, is told by one who was himself a fighter for it. They live together, the people of Daganía, pooling their labour and their resources and sharing the fruits of their labour equally among all. That is why they are called a *kvuza* and it is of the *kvuza* of Daganía that this small book speaks.

## NOTE ON THE AUTHOR

JOSEPH BARATZ is himself a "Palestine product" worth knowing, a most respected personality in the workers' movement of Erez Israel, in and with which he has grown up.

Baratz is a Pioneer, a creative and devoted worker, an experienced agriculturist, an organiser and leader of the *kvuza* movement in Erez Israel, a publicist depicting unafraid, truthfully and sympathetically, the socialist and labour problems with which he wrestles himself. His occasional feuilletons abound in rich humour and usually treat of his propaganda activity outside Palestine. Popular as Zionist, orator and emissary, he is above all friend and comrade, liked by all and especially by the youth.

Baratz was about 17 years of age when, 25 years ago, he emigrated to Palestine from Kishinev. He was a youngster in the *Zetse Zion*, one of those early manifestations of Zionist youth which in Erez Israel constituted the foundation of the first Palestine Labour Party, *Hapoel Hazair*. He was a little more than a child when he came here, but from the first day he set about developing himself, society, the soil, and indeed everything about him.

Soon after his arrival he became a member of one of Palestine's earliest trade unions in the country, that of the Jerusalem stone-cutters (a craft that in those days was wholly Arab). He was one of the first "winners of labour"

in the old settlements, and together with several comrades went to the most trying and dangerous spot of all, malaria-infested Hedera. There was created the first commune that served as the nucleus of the *kvuza* of Daganian, of which to-day he is still one of the leading members.

From time to time he is called upon to leave Daganian and to wander through far countries on various missions. Thus he has visited America several times, on behalf of the Jewish Workingmens campaigns. Of simple tastes, as befits a workman, he loves the people, whom he attracts by his conversation, his beloved songs, and his dancing, too. American Zionist youth has a warm place in his heart and he is deeply interested in the creation among them of a Halutz (i.e. pioneer) movement.

Now the man himself may tell of his work.

M.

May, 1931.

## THE STORY OF DAGANIA

(CORNFLOWER VILLAGE)

SINCE the *kvuza* of Daganian has not even reached its twenty-fifth birthday—it was founded in 1909—this brochure cannot sum up a rounded period of its existence. But enough time has passed for the group of comrades to have gained a large experience in the art of living together as a collective unit, being urged thereto by discontent with the beaten paths and constant searchings, now here now there, for a purer and more upright form of society. Here is the motive for setting up the *kvuza*, the collective Jewish settlement that will yield a livelihood to the group in return for the personal labours of the comrades, without aid from hired workmen.

All the knowledge that Daganian has gained through its experiments will doubtless at some time or other be formulated into a kind of written law for those who will follow in its footsteps. For the present, there is only a kind of oral law which disciples must study at first hand: Daganian B and Beth Zera and Gesher will follow with firmer steps on a trail far less rough than that blazed by Daganian A.

In this brochure, which is published by the Jewish National Fund, I have set down only a very little of all that is etched into the memories of those who have worked at Daganian from the beginning down to this day.

The Waters of the Jordan at Dagania



#### A STRUGGLE WITH NUMBERLESS OBSTACLES

All who would know more must come to live and labour in the land itself.

In its long struggle with numberless obstacles, Dagania has depended upon a small group of men and women who have stood unwaveringly in the ranks from the very first day. This pioneer group, which devised the social forms of Dagania, was soon joined by other comrades who strengthened its efforts, so that the *kvuza* has not been exposed to continual shocks and changes. The high standard of fellowship set up for itself by the group was fostered by several outstanding personalities within it, like Aaron David Gordon and Joseph Bussel.\*

Very valuable, too, especially during the early years, was the aid given to Dagania by Dr. Arthur Ruppin, who was the ever-helpful guide and adviser of the group, and yet left it complete freedom to mould its life in the way that seemed best to itself.

Referring to the first colonization attempts on Jewish National Fund land, we find the following passage in Dr. Ruppin's book on "The Agricultural Colonisation of the Zionist Organisation in Palestine":

"The Jewish National Fund had been founded by the Zionist Organisation in 1901 in order to acquire some pieces of land in Palestine as the inalienable property of the Jewish people. Between 1905 and 1907, the Fund bought some territories (Kinnereth-Dagania, Hittin, Hulda, Ben Shemen), yet could make no use of them, and either left them lying fallow, or farmed them out to Arabs

\* See the story of their lives in Appendix II. and III.

in order to avoid the *Mahlul* (confiscation by the Government of all pieces of land left fallow for three consecutive years). There were no Jews ready to lease and cultivate the land. The old colonies possessed sufficient and more than sufficient uncultivated land, so that there was no need of starting on isolated territories. Who knows what might have been the fate of these first territories of the Jewish National Fund had not the Palestine Land Development Company intervened? The Palestine Land Development Company was founded in 1908, together with the Palestine Office. The Company leased the territories Kinnereth-Dagania from the National Fund and started farming activities with its own means."

National Fund colonisation was begun at Kinnereth in 1908 and at Dagania in 1909. The beginnings at Kinnereth and the founding of the Palestine Land Development Company, which was headed by Professor Otto Warburg, aroused great opposition in Zionist circles at the time, and much controversy in the Palestinian press.

The Kinnereth and Dagania *kvuzot*\* are intimately connected in their origins. In fact, the story of Dagania cannot be told without some preliminary details about the founding of Kinnereth. There is a certain episode which preceded the founding of Kinnereth which is in place here.

The Jewish National Fund had planted an olive grove at Ben Shemen as a unit in the Herzl Forest. The work was done by Arab labourers supervised by an agricultural expert named Berman. This arrangement roused much resentment in the ranks of Jewish labour. A group of workers from

\* "Kvuzoth" is the plural of "kvuza."

Russia and Rumania, known as the "Rumanian commune," left Petah Tikva for Ben Shemen to seek work at the tree nursery, and were at once taken on by the supervisor. Nevertheless, the resentment of the Jewish workers throughout the country was not abated. So it happened that on a certain Sabbath, about fifty young men and women workers went to Ben Shemen from Petah Tikva, and in a merry mood uprooted all the saplings that had been planted. Though the supervisor was very much annoyed at this affair, he asked the "Rumanian commune," whose conscientiousness had won his esteem, to go up to Kinnereth to settle there.

The beginnings of settlement on National Fund land and the migration of Jewish workers to Galilee created much stir in the labour ranks. Jewish farm labourers were, indeed, already working in the Galilean settlements of Milhamiah, Yavniel, Kfar Tabor and Sejera; but the new labourers were going up *to settle on nationally owned Jewish land*. This was something very different.

In those days, there was no "travelling" to Galilee, for no trains as yet ran between Jaffa and Haifa, and as for automobiles — no one had imagined such a thing in his wildest dreams. To go up to Galilee involved either tramping it or riding on horseback by way of Zichron-Jacob and Haifa. However one got there, the journey from Judea to Galilee, which took several days, was considered an "event."

To migrate to Galilee now meant for the Jewish worker entry into a life of totally new content. The distance between Judea and Galilee was more than geographical



because conditions in the two zones were radically different.

A labourer coming from Galilee was at once known by his heavy coat of tan, his white headkerchief, red shoes and peculiar Hebrew accent (always pronouncing the Hebrew V as B). To Judean ears the adventures of the workers in Galilee sounded like so many legends of sowing and reaping grain in wide spaces, of defence against frequent Beduin attacks, and so on. These tales aroused longings in the hearts of the Judean labourers to go to Galilee themselves to lead the true peasant life.

The first labour group that went up from Judea to Kinnereth in Galilee were the admiration and the envy of their comrades in Judea; but when they reached Galilee, they were received in very different fashion by the workers already there. These resented the supervisor Berman's doings at Ben Shemen and objected to the National Fund engaging him for its colonising efforts. Many insisted that, under the circumstances, the group from Judea ought not to settle at Kinnereth. In order to discuss the issue, a general conference of all the labourers of Galilee was called at Yavniel by the Ploughman's Association which had been founded in 1907 with the object of fostering grain-raising as the more suitable form of Jewish agriculture for Palestine, inasmuch as bread is the staff of life both for the people and the land. Thus a true Jewish peasant class would be created in Palestine, the very element that was so lacking in the Diaspora. There was objection to plantations (orange groves, vineyards, etc.) in that these forms of agriculture did not bring their owners close to the

soil.\* Proposals were made at that conference to boycott the Kinnereth settlement, but in the end the workers showed their sense of responsibility by adopting fairly mild resolutions.

The first pioneering group of eight arrived in Kinnereth in the autumn of 1908. The first domicile of these young men is described as follows by "Rabbi Benjamin" in an article entitled "From the First Hour":

"There was a ruined khan (Arab inn) on the top of a hill facing the sea which had formerly served as a sort of halfway house for travellers. Round about were vestiges of ancient fortifications... The land of Kinnereth is situated west of the Jordan, where the river flows out from Lake Kinnereth. Far in the distance Mount Hermon is seen, wearing a crown of white snow upon its brow. The domicile was more like a cave for wild beasts than a palace for kings..."

Those young men could endure the living conditions in the khan only because of the high significance of their task, which was to mark a turning point in Palestinian colonisation.

At that time, the economic and spiritual state of most of the Jewish villages both in Judea and in Galilee was deplorable. The majority of the farmers were so heavily in debt that they could see no hope ahead. The young people, who had been reared by the ICA (Jewish Colonisation Association) officials in the spirit of the latter, escaped from the villages and took refuge wherever they could. Labour on the soil, the essential factor in agriculture, d'd not attract them. And their mainstay, Baron de Rothschild, had abandoned his system of subsidies.

\* The reader should refer to the Constitution of the Ploughman's Association in the Young Worker, December 1908.

The new Zionist colonisation was therefore the only bright spot in all the surrounding gloom. Through it young people were attracted to agriculture, and they sought for ways and means of settling on the land.

Meanwhile, the Kinnereth labourers were finding their khan intolerable. When the rains came, the roof leaked and water coursed down the walls, while the winds howled and wailed inside the rooms. The work was very hard, and the food very bad. Clearing the fields of stones and blasting out the rock demanded feverish labour from dawn to dark. At first, the supervisor Berman tried hard to establish good relations with the workers, eating in their kitchen, sleeping in their quarters, and trying hard to redeem the reputation he had lost at Ben Shemen. However, when he showed a tendency to employ Arab labour at Kinnereth as well, relations grew so strained that finally a strike broke out, and the workers petitioned the Jewish National Fund to dismiss the supervisor. In the end, radical changes were made in the administration.

The year 1909 was full of many other difficulties and of perils as well, for public security was unknown. The labourers guided the plough with one hand and held a revolver in the other. The air of Galilee was charged with electricity. Kinnereth suffered much from the jealousy of the tribe that had previously owned the land. These Arabs attacked the settlers on the roads, lay in wait for them in the fields and behind the khan, set fire to the threshing floors, and gave them no peace by day or night.

Nor was there greater security in the other villages

of Galilee. At Sejera, a quarrel broke out between the Jews and the Arabs of a nearby village. During Passover of 1909, a Jewish watchman, named Israel Korngold, and S. Melamed, a farmer, were killed.

Added to all this, malaria was rife, and one by one the workers of Kinnereth were taken to the hospital at Zichron Jacob.

In summing up the year, however, the workers at Kinnereth felt it had been worth while. They had learned a good deal about the work from the supervisor, and each man had come to know what he might and might not expect from himself. All their discussions were now focussed on one point: how to pave the way toward a settlement to be operated on their own sole responsibility. The first group, the "Rumanian commune," felt that Kinnereth would not lead to this goal, and decided to go on to Hedera in Samaria.

Finding the administrative methods at Kinnereth inadequate from every point of view, the Palestine Office of the Zionist Organisation considered handing over the land and the farm to the labourers themselves. Such an experiment, however, was difficult to carry out on a large scale. It was therefore resolved to hand over to the workers' group that part of the Kinnereth lands whose working involved special difficulties, since it lay beyond the Jordan. This was the Um Juni tract, now the site of Daganian.

Um Juni covered an area of about 3,000 dunams. It had been purchased from a Persian effendi by the National

Fund, but about 2,500 dunams remained in possession of the original owner for several years after the Jews had settled there. The effendi worked his land with Arab labourers who received a certain part of the crop in addition to their wages. Cultivation at Um Juni was very difficult for the Jewish workers, since the land was not definitely parcelled out, and they had to work different sections each year. Besides, lacking all other accommodation, they had to live in a nearby Arab village.

When the Jordan was in flood, during the winter, it was impossible for the workers at Um Juni to cross the lake to Kinnereth on horseback or by wagon. Only boats were available for transporting freight to Tiberias. They therefore had to bring their loads by wagon to the banks of the Jordan and then transfer them to boats. The mules were unharnessed from the wagon, and set to pushing the boats. Often the mules would become confused and pull the boats far from the ford, endangering the lives of the occupants. At night matters were still worse, because the Arab boatman would not respond for fear of the robbers who requisitioned the boats for their own purposes.

The "Rumanian commune" was the first to be asked to go up to Um Juni and cultivate the land there on its own responsibility. When it refused, for various reasons, another group—composed of the flower of Jewish labour in Galilee—occupied the tract. This was in 1910. The members of this latter group had no fixed plans, nor did they attempt to look far into the future. But they did bring a keen sense of responsibility to their task, realising that upon its success

or failure might depend the fate not only of their comrades in Galilee, but of the future of Palestinian colonisation as a whole. This group consisted of six men and one woman, additional labour being engaged when seasonal work demanded.

A contract was made for one year between this pioneer group and the Palestine Office as an experiment. The experiment proved a success. The very first year the threshing floor covered all expenses, so that the farm paid its way. At the end of the year, the Palestine Office agreed to hand over the tract for permanent labour settlement. But—who were to be the permanent settlers?

The "Rumanian commune," then at Hedera, was the first to be asked. Its members preferred Merhavia, which was also situated on National Fund land, and which was destined to become the nucleus of Jewish settlement in the Valley of Jezreel. However, they finally accepted the Um Juni offer, and took over the farm during the week of Tabernacles, in the year 1911.

The comrades of the "Rumanian commune" had known each other as members of the *Zeire Zion* party while still in Europe. In Palestine they had worked as a unit, first at Petah Tikva and then at Kinnereth, where they were joined by several individuals, among whom was the late Joseph Bussel. As already related, they had been disappointed at Kinnereth and gone on to Hedera. However, they were unable at Hedera, as at Kinnereth, to find a farm to be worked on their sole collective res-

possibility. Each member of the group worked for some individual Hedera farmer spending his days in the company of Arab labourers. Only at night could the comrades meet and weave dreams of a new form of existence. Nevertheless, that year at Hedera did them good. They learned all branches of farm labour there, and gained much experience in the collective mode of living. By this time they had become a firmly knit unit, and the inner relations among the members were truly beautiful. The group included two young women who worked alternately in the kitchen and in the fields, and took an almost motherly interest in their comrades. When a man returned from his day's work in the fields, he found waiting for him a basin of water to wash in, a clean towel, and a change of clothing.

The evenings were given up to discussions of the details of the daily tasks, of the problems of the group, of Jewish colonisation as a whole. At one time, the *kvuza* form was much discussed after a two days' visit from the Russian author Soloviev.

Hedera that year was a sort of centre for the Jewish farm labourers and watchmen of Galilee. The departure of the "Rumanian commune" for Um Juni caused a great stir both in Hedera and throughout the country, for all saw in it a new phase in the resettlement of the land. The comrades looked upon themselves as in a sense the emissaries of the Palestinian labour movement, though the Labour Federation did not yet exist and they held no formal credentials from their comrades. On their way to Um Juni they passed through the Judean villages as on a triumphal tour.

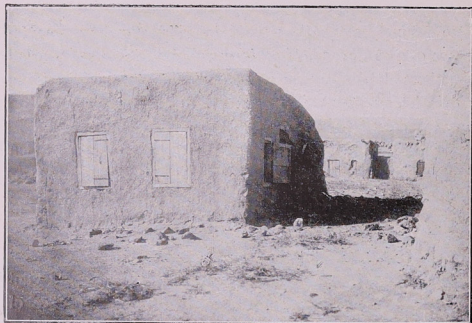
The festival season they spent in Jaffa, attending a conference of the *Hapoel Hazair* party, of which they were all members. Their presence invested the gathering with a particular atmosphere, so that it was afterwards referred to as the "colonisation conference."

The group on taking over Um Juni consisted of ten men and two women.

The chief motive of the "Rumanian commune" in settling at Um Juni was to conduct a farm on the collective responsibility of its own members. The "conquest of labour" in the existing Jewish villages did not content them. Nor did they approve of the produce of the Judean villages, which depended wholly upon foreign markets. They saw the Jewish farmer in Judea surrounded by a multitude of labourers who were ruled by officials and supervisors doing exactly as they saw fit; and the workers said:—

"It would be something new in the land and a great triumph if Jewish labour were to supersede Arab; if Petah Tikva and Rishon le Zion and the rest were full of Jewish workers. But on that road lies no redemption for the people. True, the national humiliation would be the less, in that the Jews would be doing their own hard work; but the crops of these villages are intended for export, and must necessarily depend upon hired labour. Here is neither salvation for the individual nor redemption for the nation. The Jewish workers must adopt other methods of settlement. They must work the soil with their own hands and raise only the crops required for their own sustenance."

But how achieve all this? Other Haluzim had preceded



The first building\* of the Dagania kvuza



Threshing at Dagania in 1911

#### A FAMILY OF COMRADES

them. There were the *Bilu*,\* who had come to Palestine with the same ideals as theirs. They, too, had wanted to set up a different economic system, one free from the shame of parasitism. Yet in the end they had to yield to circumstances. How could the evil be forestalled? What, in general, were the hopes of success?

To all these doubts and qualms, the "Rumanian commune" had one certain answer. All obstacles would be overcome with the united strength of the collective. Individuals were apt to give way under the strain of the hardships peculiar to Palestine; but cooperative life and labour would triumph over everything. The central thesis of the plan was Mutual Aid, the root of all successful effort. By means of the co-operative system, a life of fellowship and justice would be achieved. The *kvuza* was to be a family of comrades.

At Hadera there had grown up a spirit of patience, equality, mutual aid and freedom in the relations between the comrades. Their aims were modest and limited, and they did not try to pierce the misty veil of the future. There was nothing dogmatic about their ideal of the commune. It had not been borrowed from other lands or other peoples. It had not been dug up out of musty volumes. It was an original, Palestinian creation deriving from the sources of the national and ethical idea which the pioneer movement brought to the Jewish homeland. The comrades chose this form of society because it suited their own needs and desires and they had no intention of imposing it upon the masses.

\* So named after the Biblical verse, "House of Jacob come, let us go up," the initial letters of these words in Hebrew being B.I.L.U.

Nor had they any fears because this form of society might not be acceptable to the "masses." The path of the crowd is broad and smooth; but for themselves this group of comrades chose a rough and narrow path to a far-off goal. For themselves they would create the cell of a righteous society. There would be others to follow their example.

The tract assigned to the "Rumanian commune," when it went up to Um Juni in 1911, was only half the area of the section acquired by the National Fund. They took up their lodgings in Arab clay huts and barracks. At first the Arabs believed that, like the other Jewish farmers in Galilee, the new group would have to hire Arab labour for sowing and threshing their grain. When they found, as they soon did, that these were working farmers who did all their own work in the fields, they came to esteem the Jews highly, and the mutual relations were quite good. Boundary lines not yet having been defined, the division of tracts for cultivation between Haluzim and Arabs was purely temporary. The former therefore could not make any definite plans for the establishment of their farm.

The contract between the *kvuza* and the Palestine Office throws light on the relations between the settlers and the colonising agency in those days. The text follows:

"We, the undersigned, members of the Hedera commune, pledge ourselves to work from this day to the end of the grain harvest for 1911 as labourers of the Palestine Land Development Company in the village of Um Juni, and to obey the instructions of its officials. Our wage is to be fifty francs a month each.

"In addition to this wage, we are to receive one-half of the net profits which shall be considered to be that portion of the income remaining after all expenditure and taxes shall have been deducted. Depreciation of machinery is to be reckoned at 12% of its value. Losses and damage are to be charged against income as follows: the whole damage to equipment and half the injury to livestock. Should a cattle plague break out in the district, such losses are not to be included in the reckoning.

"If at the end of the first year, the area cultivated will be larger than at the beginning of the year, the difference shall be appraised according to local prices and added to the income. Should the area be smaller at the end of the year, the difference shall be added to the expenditure. At the end of the year half of the profits shall be paid over to the Palestine Office."

To this contract were also attached pledges from two administrators within the group who were to be responsible for the farm equipment.

The wage of fifty francs a month was based on an estimate of the normal needs of a village labourer. Fifty per cent. of the net profits would go to the National Fund for the capital invested and fifty per cent. to the *kvuza*. Losses were to be borne by the Fund alone.

The inner arrangement of the group was different from what it is now at Daganian and other *kvuzoth*. The expenses of the kitchen were divided equally among all the members, but all other items, such as clothing, shoes, cultural needs, assistance to relatives, etc., were charged to each worker individually. Separate accounts had therefore to be kept for each member, except that only one account was

kept for the nine members of the "Rumanian commune." The individuals of the latter group had no separate accounts among themselves.

Health conditions, during those early years, were none too good. Conditions at Um Juni brought on a recrudescence of malaria which had stricken down the workers at Hedera. Many fell ill of malaria, some even of the yellow fever. Death came stalking through Dagania.

Nor were robbery and murder infrequent at first. The farm was close to the ford over which robbers used to carry off their booty to Transjordan. Guard duty in the fields was very exacting. As the two regular watchmen were unable to cope with the task, the comrades took turns with them in the fields after a long day's labour. (These watchmen were also members of the group, since hired watchmen could by no means have been reconciled with the principle of doing all the work of the *kvuza* without outside help). In those days the slogan was: He who works the land must also be able to protect his crops! It would happen that men watching in the grain fields, revolver in hand, ears attuned to every slight rustling, eyes closing from severe fatigue, would suddenly feel a bullet from some hiding place whiz past their ears. Yet the danger did not deter them. If anything, it added new zest to their efforts.

That first year at Um Juni was a sort of prolonged honeymoon. The men would go out to the ploughing before dawn. Song would burst from the throats of the six riders with six pairs of mules as they moved along the banks of the winding, swift-rushing Jordan, whose forsaken

waters had not had such a welcome in many a day.

The six ploughs turned up black clods in wide-stretching fields. Sacks of seed were emptied happily one after the other. The workers were joyous in victory: at last they were peasants, tillers of the soil of their homeland.

It was dark again when they returned from the fields. Hurriedly they bathed, ate their supper, and went out to the stable to look after the mules. Then to their clay hut that served the farm for an office, where Bussel had established himself. Bussel would then read out the correspondence to the interested listeners: the letters of the *kvuza* to the Palestine Office; the letters of the Palestine Office to the *kvuza*.

The contact between the *kvuza* and the Palestine Office (of which Dr. Ruppin was then the head) was very intimate. When a mare died, the misfortune was sorrowfully reported to the Palestine Office, and words of comfort would come in reply. Or, if a wedding or other happy event was reported, cordial congratulations were sure to follow. But the workers had the full responsibility for the management of their farm, which they took very seriously.

For more than a year the group continued to live in the Arab clay huts and in the rickety wooden barracks which rocked every time the wind blew. Once on a very stormy night one of the barracks was blown down, and he wind carried its remnants far off to the village of Semakh. Meanwhile the all but naked comrades stood about joking over the incident.

During that year two important labour conferences

were held. One was the first general conference of the *Hapoel Hazair* party to be held in Galilee, while the other was the first general agricultural conference, at which the bases were laid for a federation of agricultural labourers.

The first attempt at living in a commune, which was then being made at Um Juni, had much effect upon the labour conferences, and traces of that influence were long evident in the developments of the labour movement throughout the country. Um Juni became the symbol of personal labour and cooperative living in practice.

After a year or so in the Arab village, the group began to consider erecting permanent structures for their settlement. Violent controversy arose over the location of the site. The one finally chosen had both advantages and disadvantages, but it was felt that the former outweighed the latter. The advantages of the site were its proximity to Lake Kinnereth and the Jordan, to the Tiberias-Semakh highroad, and to the railway station. The disadvantages lay in the nearness of the Jordan swamps and the long distance between the dwellings and the fields. This latter made guard duty very difficult and expensive during the early period. After all the pros and cons had been thrashed out, the site was fixed at a point where the Jordan flows out from Lake Kinnereth, nine kilometres from Tiberias and more than a kilometre from Semakh. The location is 198 metres below sea-level. The buildings were planned not for a mixed farm, such as Daganía now is, but for the usual type of Galilean grain farm. There was a large barn with granaries. The original plans did not include either a shed for cows nor

a poultry run. Nor were the dwelling quarters arranged in accordance with the requirements of the climate. The barn was too near the kitchen: the sleeping rooms were too near the mess hall. These mistakes have been avoided in the later labour settlements. The water installation was planned for the household needs alone. There was one small pump worked by a single mule and a small cistern that are now insufficient even for the household alone.

Together with the erection of the building, trees were planted. The group had no liking for the bare Galilean villages without trees or gardens, and wanted their farm to resemble a Russian village with all kinds of shade and fruit trees (plum, apple, pear, etc.). A few years later, it was found, of course, that many of these varieties were unsuited both to the soil and the climate, and the trees had to be uprooted. On the other hand, local varieties such as the olive and the carob flourished. Soon rows of cypress and pepper and other trees sprang up near the houses.

The foundations of the permanent Daganía were laid during the spring of 1911. Then came the question of a name for the settlement. Some suggested Kfar Goon, the historic name of the site; others, Jordania, Jordanon, Nahalaim, etc. In the end, the suggestion of Joseph Bussel was adopted: Daganía, for the blue flower that springs up between the blades of corn.

The erection of permanent buildings meant that the group now passed from a provisional to a more or less fixed form of existence. The number of comrades had grown larger, and the state of public security was somewhat better



(though for a long time afterwards there was no security in the fields). A year and a half after the "Rumanian commune" had occupied the Um juni tract, one of the comrades was murdered.

My friend T. and myself, both members of the group, were returning from Damascus on mules which we had gone there to buy. For two days we rode through narrow, stony paths among the mountains of Transjordan, much concerned for the welfare of our animals. As we descended into the valley and neared the shores of Kinnereth, we spurred on our mules and entered the borders of Dagania after dark, singing and in a happy mood. But a blank silence met us, as we glimpsed our comrades at the entrance to the lane of trees their faces grief-stricken and guns in their hands. Then they told us that the night before, two comrades—Moshe Barsky of Dagania and Joseph Salzman of Kinnereth—had been murdered. It had happen in this way.

One of the comrades at Dagania had fallen ill. Moshe Barsky, who was always the first to volunteer for errands, rode on a mule to Milhamieh, a nearby Jewish village, to secure some medicine. At twilight his mule returned riderless. A panicky search was made for him on all the roads by the light of lanterns, but it was almost midnight before he was found murdered near the road between Dagania and Milhamieh. It appeared that Moshe had purposely sent the mule home so that it might not fall into the hands of robbers while he tried to defend himself. Three bullets entered his body, and then the assailants clubbed him in the face until he was dead.

Farmer Salzman of Kinnereth had been shot by four Arabs while ploughing in the fields near that settlement.

Barsky was still under 19 when death marked him down. He was the son of parents living in a small Russian town and ardently devoted to the ideal of the Jewish renaissance. He came to Dagania on his very first day in Palestine, and threw himself into the work with a devotion that knew neither weariness nor sadness. He loved his comrades and was beloved by them. But only eight months later he was laid to rest in an olive grove he himself had tended beside the waters of the Jordan. His was the first grave in the Dagania cemetery. When his death was reported to his parents in Russia, this is the answer that came from his father:—

"Dear Friends of Dagania,

"I have received your precious letter, written with tears of blood. I found there true words that had welled up from loving and faithful hearts bound together by an eternal bond. Dear brothers! The unexpected has befallen us. I know that, great as is the disaster that has come upon us, you will not—God forbid!—let your spirits fail you. On the contrary, may the memory of my son inspire you with still greater strength and courage to fight your holy battle until you attain to the great ideal for which my son gave his life.

"Comrades in spirit! It is not only to thank you for your sympathy with my grief that I write you, but also to send you words of comfort. For, is not your grief my own? Come, therefore, and let us hope together that the blood of our precious victim, of my son and your comrade, Moshe, will be accepted, and that he may be the

last sacrifice upon the altar of our exalted ideal."

This letter did indeed infuse the comrades at Dagania with renewed faith and courage. And soon after, Moshe Barsky's younger brother came to Dagania—"to fill the place of the son who had fallen." At Dagania we said: "If such parents remain in Israel, need we grieve or despair?"

\* \* \*

Though European ploughs and sowing and reaping machines were acquired at the start, and a threshing machine some years later, the Dagania farm did not materially differ from others in Galilee. The use of the machinery involved no actual change of method, which was that of the single grain crop. If that crop failed, a whole year's work went for nothing. So it was in the Galilean villages, which restricted themselves to grain-growing, and bought all their household necessities—eggs, milk, vegetables, etc.—from their Arab neighbours. The Dagania group finally realised that success did not lie in that direction, and therefore decided to vary its crops.

Again, how was this to be done? The comrades lacked all experience in other branches of farming, nor had they anyone to teach them. There was as yet no agricultural experiment station in the country, and the Jewish farmers in Galilee followed the ancient Arab system of growing grain alone. There was nothing for it but to experiment, and to accept responsibility for the results. The comrades groped in the dark, making many mistakes wherein the ridiculous alternated with the pathetic, and they wasted much time and money.

The first planting of trees was made after much prayerful consideration. I well remember the day when the pepper saplings were set out in rows at the entrance to Dagania. Since the comrades were grain farmers and knew nothing of horticulture, it was decided to invite experts to plant the trees,—some girls from the training farm at Kinne-  
reth. Deep trenches were dug. Water was brought to the scene in barrels. The trenches were filled with water from the barrels, while a young man and a girl descended into the trenches and planted the saplings in fear and trembling. Despite this treatment, the trees took root and grew quickly. And the comrades grew along with them, learning many new things. After the pepper saplings, a small orange grove was planted, and eucalyptus, olive and almond trees. The planting of the trees had no particular relation to the plan of the farm: there was no expectation of deriving any income from them. For income, the group looked to its grain crop alone. As for the trees, they were intended merely to provide a rural atmosphere and some fruit for the household needs. Moreover, they were regarded as something of a luxury, and one could only feel sorry for the man assigned to them when he begged for the help of another man or for a couple of animals.

The attitude taken up toward the trees applied to the vegetables as well. Little was expected from the kitchen garden, since it never occurred to anyone that vegetables could be grown for sale. The idea was merely to have a few green things for the table.

It cannot be claimed that the comrades showed any

great skill in laying out the kitchen garden. When the first tomatoes were to be planted, two young men armed themselves with great shovels and dug trenches like those intended for grape vines. Then the tomatoes were set out in those trenches. The irrigation, too, was no more expertly done.

The dairy dates back in its beginnings to the Um Juni period. Two Arab cows were bought in the village and housed in the stalls. They were most carefully tended. In fact, the comrades paid more attention to the needs of the cows than to their own. For all that, the cows gave no more milk than before. Later a few more cows were bought, and in 1913 the foundations of the present dairy were laid with the importation of some cows and heifers from Beirut. The *kyuza* suddenly found itself with the makings of a large dairy on its hands, but with no proper facilities and without much of a market for the milk. Even to day, herds of goats can be seen stopping at kitchen doors in Tiberias, and housewives buying their milk at the source. How much the more did the Tiberias community have to be persuaded in those days to buy and drink cow's milk.

There were no dairy experts to consult. The comrades own notions of feeding were more than vague. Everything was an experiment, and the number of experiments was equalled by the number of errors. Besides, most of the Beirut cows died in a cattle plague that broke out in Galilee. Only stubborn faith and boundless energy carried the dairy of Dagania forward to its present status as one of the most important features of the farm.



Threshing at Dagania in 1928

Even in the growing of grain, the native product, experiment was heaped upon experiment. Conditions are different in the Jordan Valley from those in other grain zones in that it has not much rain and no dew whatever. It is impossible to plant summer crops, and so a special rotation of crops had to be devised for restoring to the soil the richness sucked from it by the corn, and the fertility of which the Arabs have robbed it through many generations. The pains taken had their due reward until the War came, when the Yishuv\* in Galilee became suddenly much larger owing to the expulsions of Jews from Jaffa and the surrounding district. Palestine being besieged and cut off from the world, there was a great scarcity of grain. All the settlements in Galilee, including the Zionist farms, increased their wheat and barley crops without a thought of what would happen later. The grain they then grew did indeed bring high prices, but when the War was over, those gains turned into losses. The abused soil refused to respond to the efforts of the tillers, and it required much hard work to restore it to its former fertility.

After all its trials and experiments, Daganía has discovered that the proper form of agriculture in the Jordan Valley is that of the mixed farm with many crops, based chiefly on large-scale irrigation.

Running parallel with the economic problem of the *kvuza* were manifold human problems, for some of which no solution has been found even to this day.

\* The Jewish people in Palestine.

The woman comrade undoubtedly forms one of the outstanding problems in the *kvuza*. Inequality between the men and the women comrades became obvious at Um Juni as soon as the group had gone up to occupy the tract. The men thirstily breathed in the odours of the fields as they turned up the clods with their ploughs, while the women remained in the house beside an Arab stove whose bitter smoke all but blinded them. The young men would return from their day in the fields happy and cheerful only to find their girl comrades exhausted and depressed at the sight of their day's work: a meal amply spiced with smoke but insufficiently cooked.

All the comrades, men and women alike, had come to Palestine with the same aim of changing their lives through and through. Here, the woman who had been caged within the walls of her home in the Diaspora, would find her freedom in tilling the soil beside her brothers. But the group that had gone up to Um Juni, numbering twelve souls, included only two women,—just the number needed for the domestic work.

The difficulties of the situation were not easily to be overcome. The place of settlement was only temporary, and it was impossible to set up a definite homestead. There was no irrigation, and so there could be no vegetable garden. However, it must be confessed that the men were still psychologically unprepared for the radical step of including women among the field labourers. All of them had come from middle-class families, where the father was always the wage-earner and the mother always cooked, took care of the children,

and so on. This attitude on the part of the men made it difficult for the women to secure their rights. Even later, when irrigation facilities had been installed, the question cropped up time and again as to whether it would not be better to put a man in the vegetable garden and a woman in the kitchen. This controversy continued at Dagania for a long time and is still pending in some of the other kvuzoth, even though certain important farm activities are conducted entirely by the women on their own responsibility.

The problem of temporary hands, also, was a harassing one for the comrades. Just as long as the farm was restricted to the single crop of grain, it was not possible to have a fixed number of workers for the whole year. During the sowing season, twelve to fifteen men sufficed, whereas when there was weeding to do or the pulse had to be harvested, a large number of temporary workers were required for a few days or weeks. The presence of these temporary workers had serious social implications in a *kvuza*. Here again appeared "farmers" and "hired men." Though the working conditions were identical for all, it was not possible to ignore the existence of two distinct groups with differing rights: the one a group of established settlers, the other one of sojourners for the night, doing as they were told and then free to go where they would—or could.

This problem was partly solved with the introduction of fruit and vegetable-growing, for then it was possible to keep the same number of workers busy throughout the year, merely transferring them from one crop to another

with the changing of the seasons. However, the question of temporary hands cannot be said to have been completely solved even to this day.

To take on permanent workers as comrades was also not simple. There long remained a clear demarcation at Dagania between the "Rumanian commune" from Hedera and the individual members who had been admitted at different times and who did not, like the original pioneers, form a unified group with common memories. However, as time passed, this distinction was blotted out. There is now no such thing as a group within the group at Dagania and personal accounts have long been abolished because there is full partnership in all goods. Yet certain essential differences between new comrades and old still persist. The beautiful past of the *kvuza* in which they themselves have had no share, arouses a sort of envy in the hearts of the newcomers, and they feel a strong desire to begin all over again, to become creators in their own right, without following in the established traditions.

This may be the reason for the constant shifting of personnel in *kvuzoth*. At Dagania farm these changes caused severe losses because, instead of improving its methods and increasing its income, the *kvuza* became a sort of training school. The newcomers paid no attention to that which had been tried and tested before their time. The opponents of the *kvuza* idea offer this shifting about as proof that the collective is merely a transitory form of organisation, a station on the way to more permanent and less amorphous settlements.

But there was yet another reason for workers leaving *kvuzoth*. For the Halutz\* who came to Palestine fifteen or twenty years ago, the country was a field of combat with Beduin, malaria and other ills. As long as the pioneer settlements were only temporary affairs, keeping themselves going as by a miracle, and the workers lived in Arab villages or barracks, with danger lying in wait for them everywhere, the Halutzim looked upon themselves as conquerors. Later, however, when children were born to the first pioneers and they embarked upon family life, they accused themselves of having "taken a conquered city," the desire growing within them to arise and conquer new positions. At times the comrades of Daganian felt the mountains beyond the Jordan beckoning and calling to them to come up and redeem their wastes; and they yearned to answer the call. There was a good deal of talk in those days about Baron Edmond de Rothschild's holdings in the Hauran. Some of the comrades wanted to turn Daganian over to others and themselves go on to new outposts. But others opposed this tendency. Bussel, in particular, skillfully explained that there was no especial heroism in conquering new places. "It is easier to stand on the battlefield during a violent assault when your life is not worth a minute's purchase than to remain patiently and persistently at one spot from the time the foundations are laid until the last slate is affixed to the roof."

This desire to bring new positions under cultivation is proof not only of pioneer zeal, but also of a certain

\* Pioneer.

light-mind attitude toward the established villages. The labourer who entered a *kvuza* in those days did not think of making a place for himself, or of founding a family, but always regarded himself as a sojourner, a passerby preparing the way for others yet to come. Hence the idea of bachelorhood which for so many years prevailed in the labour ranks. Here is the real cause for the shifting of personnel which so handicapped the first *kvuzoth*. Things were begun and left unfinished, one method was dropped another tested. There were always new people, new methods. So many changes were made in the farming methods that the very existence of a *kvuza* would be endangered. Daganian finally succeeded in rooting out from its midst this tendency to wander. Certain *kvuzoth* still suffer from this evil, but the day is not far distant when it will have been left behind. Where words have not availed, experience has convinced.

With the advent of the first family—when the first child was born in the *kvuza*—still another problem arose.

What of the mother of the child, she who had been so active and efficient a worker on the farm? What was she to do now? Was she to give up her work and devote all her time to the child? And what kind of care would she give it, having no experienced mother of her own near to teach her how to rear her first child? All were at a loss for an answer.

The theory of the *kvuza* was, that since the women worked on the farm together with the men, they ought not be burdened with the sole care of the children. But how was this theory to be applied in real life? No

one knew. However, the first mother herself solved her problem. She simply took the baby with her to the scene of her work—to the barn, or the vegetable plot. But when that baby cried, all Daganía cried with it. Everyone resented the mother's "cruelty." She tried hard to appease her comrades: "Don't worry about him. He'll surely stop. He has nothing at all to cry about." And so the child became accustomed to this novel method and the others realised the possibility of a mother working in the fields.

With the birth of the second child, the problem grew even more acute and more complicated. How would the mothers be able to continue their work on the farm? Would any woman be willing to hand her child over to another woman's care? One comrade suggested a private kitchen, another a contract with some woman to take charge of the babies (the monthly, individual-wage system was still in vogue in Daganía at the time), and a third the employment of a nursemaid. But Joseph Bussel said: "The duty to take care of the children rests not only upon the mothers, but upon all the women of the group, even upon the unmarried ones. If all the women would take a share in the rearing of the children, the mothers would be able to do all other forms of work. As for the expense of rearing and educating the children, this should be shared by all the members of a collective. No one should be exempt merely because he himself has no children. All such distinctions undermine the bases of the collective idea."

And by these words of Bussel's the children's mode of life was determined. Contract labour was not used and

no nursemaid was entrusted with them, but one house was set aside for all the children to live in, under common supervision.

Daganía has been visited by many afflictions,—by disease, death, famine, war and what not, but all these have passed the children by. No harm has ever befallen them. In the trying climate of the Jordan Valley, they have been saved by the kind care and attention they receive in the collective nursery.

To this very day, the attitude of a woman toward the common nursery is still the touchstone of her fitness for life in the *kvuza*. She can be judged as soon as her first child is born; and not every mother measures up to the test. Age long habit holds the young mother in its clutches. She has all sorts of fears and suspicions that her child will not receive proper care. These bugbears can be dispelled only by a well equipped and hygienic nursery in charge of experienced children's nurses who are very patient and discreet in dealing with the mothers.

The children at Daganía are divided into two age-groups,—one including those up to two or two and a half years of age, and the other, those attending kindergarten and schools. (The three *kvuzoth* of Daganía A, Daganía B and Kinnereth now have a common school). The children remain in their quarters from morning till evening, when the little ones are sent to their parents' rooms and the older ones to other rooms. Although a young child is apt to disturb the sleep of his parents, the parents have a profound spiritual need for such intimate contact with their child.

Even when the initial problem of how the children were to be cared for had been solved by the cooperative nursery, the problem of the type of education they were to receive still remained. The children were growing up. Should they have a farm of their own? Should they work on the common farm? And more and more of such questionings, which are not peculiar to Daganía, and still lack their definitive answer.

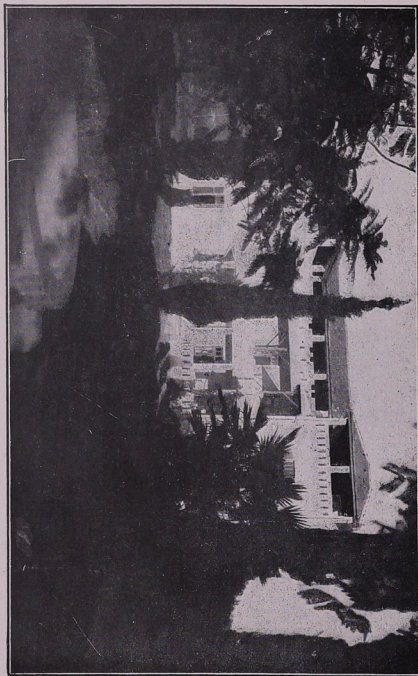
The first children born at Daganía suffered much for lack of companionship of other children. As a result, they spent too much time with the adults, taking part in their activities and maturing much too early.

There are now 140 children in the Daganía district, of whom 40 to 45 are of school age. Many are already able to help on the farm. When the work is heaviest, and especially during the school vacation, the older children help with the planting and the hoeing. They do not find the work too hard, and work with a will when they realise that their help will make the farm run more smoothly.

The cornerstone for a district school for the Jordan Valley settlements was finally laid on September 19th, 1930. The ceremony was attended by a large number of visitors from all nearby *kvuzoth*, *kibuzim*\* and *moshavoth*.\* Two by two, grown ups and children, they passed along the excavation while each threw in a handful of cement. Inside the foundations there was placed a parchment scroll with the following text:—

“On Friday, Ellul 26, in the Year of the Creation

\* Names of Settlement forms.



The present building of Daganía



5690 (i.e. 1930), we have laid the cornerstone for a School where it is hoped that the children of the Jordan Valley may grow up in the ways of labour and learning. May this house, to which its builders attach its dearest hopes, rear our children in knowledge and understanding, teaching them the virtues of cooperation, loyalty and efficiency, so that they may carry forward the task begun by this, our generation, which has transformed a hot and barren land into a region teeming with life, yielding abundant harvests, and blessed with a labouring Yishuv,\* strong and numerous, which will render back to the land its pristine strength as in days of old. May the blessings of plenty, co-operation and love of the country rest upon the sons of an exiled people which has returned to its borders."

The scroll was signed "by the men of the first generation of the labour settlements in the Jordan Valley: Representatives of Dagania A, Dagania B, *kvuza* Kinnereth and Kfar Gun."

After the laying of the cornerstone, there were speeches, but not one speaker succeeded in conveying what he felt on this occasion. It is nearly nineteen years ago that the cornerstone was laid for the first permanent buildings of Dagania, which was then the only Jewish settlement in Transjordan. All around the land was waste. There was no tree, no bit of green, no road, no automobile to be seen. Dagania was cut off from the rest of the Yishuv\* by the Jordan, beyond which there passed only flocks of sheep and caravans of camels. Robber bands threatened the settlers with spoliation and massacre. Never did we expect to see such mighty changes in the district. No one could foresee

\* The Jewish people in Palestine.

a celebration such as this, or so large a number of children who will soon be ready to plant and hoe. Only ten years ago it was thought that children could not be brought up in the trying climate of Dagania. Many proposals, varied and curious, were made for houses in the hills, for travelling to the farm by bus and car for sending the children away in the summer. And here we see a troop of more than a hundred healthy and vigorous children who will follow in their parents' footsteps as the heralds of the new colonisation, of close Jewish settlement in the Jordan Valley.

Hence the great rejoicing over the event. It took place after sundown. The heavens were unusually clouded for the time of the year. The heat had lifted, and the pleasant autumn weather was announced by a caressing wind blowing through the Jordan Valley. There were signs of imminent rain, hinting at a new year of sowing and planting—a year of blessing. The whole assemblage fell under the spell of a common mood. Young and old formed a circle and danced till dark.

Another round of stones has been added to the structure begun almost twenty years ago. One more institution had been established to shed light over the region.

\* \* \*

A further problem is that of the relations between the *kvuza* and the rest of the Yishuv. The path of the *kvuza* has not been strewn with roses. The economic and social problems of the group have always exceeded the powers of the active members to cope with them. Nevertheless, both the *kvuza* as a unit and its individual

members have always taken part in the activities both of the labour movement and of the Yishuv in general. These public activities have interfered with the work on the farm, because it was just the most efficient farmers who were most active in public affairs. Very often the sense of public duty triumphed, since this was the bond between the *kvuza* and the rest of the country. For example, during the war, when the Jews were expelled from Jaffa, Joseph Bussel devoted much time and energy to the exiles and especially to the orphaned children. During the Damascus arrests, one of the Daganias comrades went up to that city to help the prisoners and exiles.

There could always be seen at Daganias members of other *kvuzoth* who had come to gain experience. Among these were Trumpeldor and his comrades. Before them there was a group from Lodz which wished to continue as a working unit in Palestine. They went up to Hittim as early as 1914, but could not stay because of an unending struggle with the Arab landowners. The members then dispersed among various other *kvuzoth*.

When the Zionist Organisation took over the agricultural settlement work of the National Fund after the war, the original contract between the Daganias group and the Palestine Office was cancelled. The partnership with the Jewish National Fund ceased, and the farm passed entirely into the control of the *kvuza*. The transfer was a formal act. No other contract was signed. The farm had not been fully established. In point of fact, it has been in the process of development ever since. Each year some

improvements are made, though usually too late in the season. Only in 1928 were large irrigation facilities being installed at the two Daganias and Kinnereth. The unduly prolonged process of establishing a farm hampers its progress, and much money and energy are wasted through the delays.

Daganias has served as an experimental station for the new type of land settlement. Out of its trials and tribulations there at last emerged the knowledge of how a farm should be organised; what acreage is required for the support of a family; what types of farming best suit the respective zones. All the comparisons made nowadays between the respective costs of setting up a farm in one district and in another and between the earlier and the later forms of settlement are valueless, inasmuch as the conditions are not identical.

As soon as the Daganias farm came into the full control of the *kvuza*, its whole inner organisation was changed. All the individual accounts were dropped, the small inner group was dissolved, and the whole *kvuza* went over outright to the collective form of society.

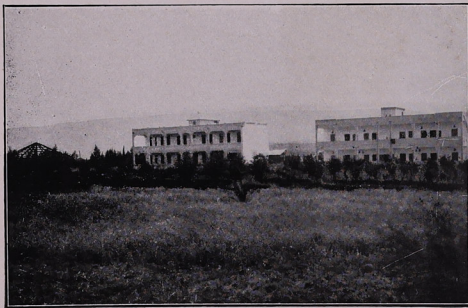
Had the original twelve members allowed themselves to be drawn along with the progress of the farm from the single-crop method to the mixed form of agriculture, Daganias would long ago have become a large *kvuza*. Comrades who came by accident and were not fitted to live in a collective group would have had to be co-opted, even though rapid increase of numbers would have infringed upon the ideal of the *kvuza*, which is rooted chiefly in the quality of its human interrelations.

But, as the *kvuza* remained small, an applicant for membership was asked not only to consent in principle to its theoretical bases, but also—and chiefly—to prove his ability to adapt himself to its practical requirements. Such a choice is not easily made. Many comrades have passed through Daganiam without being absorbed into its organism, and many were doubtless unable to find their ideal society in the *kvuza*.

For a long period it was the custom at Daganiam to permit a comrade to work on the farm for two and even three years without requiring him to decide whether or not he wished to become a permanent member. Later, an end was put to this excessive freedom, and one year was set as the trial period for both parties. In exceptional cases, the period of trial was extended to two years.

The time came when issue was joined as to the future form of Daganiam. Should it become a large *kvuza*, or should the farm be checked in its development by the elimination of certain of its features? To limit the powers of absorption of the fertile tract would have been to ignore the national needs of resettlement of the land. It was therefore, finally decided to divide the tract with other *kvuzoth* of the same type as Daganiam. So it came about that Daganiam B was founded in 1920 and Daganiam C in 1921. The Rutenberg electric project and its irrigation works in the Jordan Valley seemed about on the point of fruition, and it was therefore assumed that each of the three groups would find 1,000 dunams of the Daganiam tract sufficient for its farm, together with the other smaller

areas that were being acquired in the district. But that hope failed at the time, and Daganiam C was dissolved before any concrete measures had been taken for its establishment. Its members went over to *kvuza* Ginegar in the Valley of Jezreel. Thereupon Daganiam B took over 1,500 dunams, or half of the original tract.



The building of Daganiam B

The number of workers at Daganiam A is about 60 or 61, including 20 families. The others are temporary workers, — relatives of members of the group, apprentices, comrades from other *kvuzoth* come to acquire experience, etc. The number of children is 36. The numbers at Daganiam B are about equal to these, with the same ratio of adults and children.

Those who remember Daganía's meagre beginnings will realise how high a level has been reached by the Jordan Valley settlements, though they are but at the beginning of their development. The climatic conditions and the proximity of the Rutenberg electric works are factors favouring close settlement on a large area. Just as the agricultural zone of Judea, owing to its special suitability for citrus-growing, is only in the first phases of its development, so the Jordan Valley is destined to excel in intensive mixed farming.

Long ago the comrades of Daganía used to sit together in the evenings dreaming their dreams out loud, seeing the flat area of the Jordan Valley, the Um Juni tract, Semakh, Delhamieh, Beisan, Gesher, and beyond — covered with a series of Daganías: Daganía A, Daganía B, Daganía C, and so on. There would be point after point of cooperative settlements, and one day all these points would be fused into a single unit.

Meanwhile, many of those seers of visions have been taken away: year by year new graves have been dug at Daganía. Every stone on the farm has its story to tell of struggles and victories, sufferings and hardships,—the birththroes of the resettlement of the land.

Not all of those who did not succumb to the hardships held out until the dream came true. The exacting conditions of the locality, the difficulty of adapting personal characteristics to the collective mode of living, doubts, despair, inner ferment, search for new paths through severe labour and fatigue,—because of all these many have left

Daganía in the course of the years. Some have merely gone on to other *kvuzoth*, while others have entered upon a different type of life. But those whose hearts did not fail them on the long, rough road, as they now look backward, find new faith and courage to go on. Today the whole Um Juni tract is held by the Jewish National Fund, together with part of Semakh. Most of the Delhamieh area has been acquired by the PICA.\* Gesher is developing into an important Jewish point. They see that they did not dream in vain of a network of Daganías. The goal is still remote, indeed, but the road is open to those who tread it in faith and uprightness on their way to a community of workers bound together by common ideals of freedom and justice, where comrade helps comrade with all his heart and soul and might.

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\* Palestine Jewish Colonisation Association.



A shady alley

## APPENDIX I.

### THE FARM OF DAGANIA

THE tract occupied in 1908 by 12 persons now supports 200. The farm of Dagania is divided up as follows: Grain, 1,400 dunams; vegetables, 71; orange grove, 32; bananas, 45; olives, 50; vineyards, 36; hay, 30; watermelons, 80.

As the areas allowed for fruit and vegetable-growing were increased, the grain sections were reduced, until there remained only 1,000 to 1,400 dunams for the latter. This area being insufficient for the needs of the farm, Dagania, together with the other Jordan Valley *kvuzoth*, leased land in the neighbourhood from the PICA (Palestine Jewish Colonisation Association) and in the villages of Semakh, Um-Juni, Delhamieh and Gura (the latter the property of the Palestine Electric Corporation). The income from grain, which includes fodder for the farm animals and dairy cattle and bread for the workers, has steadily fallen owing to lower prices. The yield at Dagania is not ideal, but it could be increased. The average annual rainfall is from 400 to 500 millimeters. In 1928, however, there were only 220 millimeters, and the grain crop was ruined. Most of it was cut for hay, and the flocks were sent out to graze in some of the fields.

The grain crop depends chiefly upon the mercy of

Providence, and will continue to do so until the Rutenberg irrigation works reach as far as Daganian. Grain fields are already irrigated in Germany in the form of artificial rain, which is used not to counteract drought, but merely to water the fields as needed. The grain crops in Germany have been largely increased by the use of artificial rain. But, even aside from this, there are other methods of retaining moisture in the ground through rational cultivation. In this way it is also possible to increase the yield.

The tropical climate and the proximity of Lake Kinnereth and the Jordan make it possible to raise early vegetables at Daganian. The areas for vegetable-growing are increased from year to year. The 75 dunams under cultivation yield produce valued at LP 1,500 a year. The vegetables are marketed only in Palestine and Syria, but the need for an export market is already becoming urgent if this branch of the farm is not to be checked in its development. The growing of vegetables is well worth while in that it not only yields a good deal of employment, but does not require large investment of capital.

The most profitable fruit crop is the banana, which was first grown in the Jordan Valley at Migdal in 1924, and later at Kinnereth. When the experiments showed that the Jordan Valley was well suited for the cultivation of the banana, it was introduced at the Daganian farm also. Expert opinion agrees that the Jordan Valley is peculiarly suitable for banana-growing, and that even the disease to which this fruit is commonly subject can be overcome by the very favourable climate and soil.

The vineyard was at first satisfactory. Latterly the yield has depreciated and it is doubtful if it will be maintained except for domestic use.

Oranges do not thrive so well in the Jordan Valley as in Judea. It seems that the soil is not especially suited to the ordinary orange, but on the other hand, the grapefruit flourishes and this was substituted for the oranges. Some trees are in the second fruit bearing year and compare favourably with Judean plantations. They also ripen earlier.

Olive-growing without irrigation is not profitable. But the trees near the houses, which are irrigated, always thrive. The value of the crop is still doubtful as far as Daganian is concerned. For the present, the children's services suffice for the little hand-picking that is required. But no workers can be spared for the crop unless it proves profitable. On the whole, it seems that non-irrigated fruit does not do well in the Jordan Valley.

The fodder crops are an important item on the farm. With irrigation, clover yields five or six crops a year. 44 dunams of Alfalfa give good results. The basic success of all the crops depends upon the Rutenberg irrigation works.

The chief feature of the kitchen farm is the dairy. No traces remain of the Arab cows, but even blooded cattle have to be watched. When a cow yields less than 2,500 litres of milk a year, she is sold. The dairy has now reached a certain stability, averaging some 70 heads of cattle. About 10 are sold every year in addition to 20 or 25 calves killed for household use.

The following figures show the progress of the dairy in recent years:

1925 . . . . .	72,000 litres;
1926 . . . . .	87,000 "
1927 . . . . .	99,000 "
1928 and onwards	125,000 "

In 1929 the cattle suffered from various diseases and accidents, so that the development of the dairy was hindered.

The average yield of milk per cow is gradually rising as well.

In 1927 the dairy yielded an income of LP. 2,266, which is on an average about one-third of the farm. The dairy has an added value in that it is a source of manure for the plantations and the vegetables.

The raising of poultry is still in its beginnings at Daganía. The hot climate is detrimental to the fowl, but on the other hand it stimulates the laying of eggs in winter, when prices are comparatively high. The average yield per hen in 1927 was 145 eggs for the year. The development of this branch at Daganía depends chiefly upon the building of large, open coops suited to the climate.

All the products here mentioned have made much progress, and can be developed even more when improved irrigation is available from the Rutenberg electric plant, which is already supplying Daganía with power. The power is still expensive, but when the works are completed and it becomes cheaper, it will become possible to place larger tracts under irrigation.

The chief factor for the extension of the irrigated area on the farm is that of the markets. True, the local Palestinian market has not yet been fully exploited. Many vegetables, especially tinned, are imported into Palestine. The individual buyer has not yet been captured for local produce. Nevertheless, the export market is of vital concern to the producers.

\* \* \*

The balance sheet of Daganía farm for 1929-30 throws much light upon the agricultural development of the Jordan Valley and its future:

## INCOME

[All figures are given in round numbers]

Grain . . . . .	LP.* 607
Irrigated green fodder . . .	512
Vegetables . . . . .	1,542
Plantations (inc Bananas £2000) . . .	2,203
Dairy . . . . .	2,333
Poultry . . . . .	606
Incidental Earnings . . . . .	244

TOTAL LP. 8,047

However, annual balance sheets do not give the whole picture. Farming is affected by numerous natural factors such as heat, winds, drought, locusts, etc. The drought of 1928 put us back a good deal. Nevertheless, there is no doubt but that Daganía is now on the right track.

\* LP. 1 is equivalent to £ 1 or \$ 5.

If to the present income of Dagania is added the estimated returns from the citrus and banana groves and the vineyard, it will be seen that the settlement is on the way to establishing itself on a sound economic basis. It is true that mixed farming, which is based upon the personal labours of the farmer and upon crops intended chiefly to meet his own requirements, is nowhere in the world apt to bring enrichment at a single stroke, as in the case of plantations. When a good year on a mixed farm brings a bit of profit, the equipment is improved and debts paid, while a bad year puts a check on expenditure and increases indebtedness. In countries where the Government stands by the farmer, mixed farms are never exposed to sudden disaster. In Palestine, however, the Government does not come to the aid of the farmer in his time of need, and still follows the Turkish system of taxation. The Zionist institutions, for their part, are unable to come to the help of the Palestinian farmer when he requires outside support. When there is a season of drought, therefore, the settlements feel its effects for many years. The Jordan Valley settlements which are handicapped by insufficient rainfall and often exposed to drought, will be able to solve their problem only through large-scale irrigation works.

Health conditions at Dagania are not very favourable, so that there has always been much sickness in the *kvuzah*. Nowadays, before a settlement is established, the J.N.F. carries out preliminary reclamation works by draining swamps and centralising all the water in one spot. But such preliminary works were not carried out



Banana Grove at Dagania in 1929



at Dagania, which is surrounded by large swamps on every side. The Jordan overflows its banks at this point; on the west there is a valley rich in springs, and the River Jarmuk to the east. All this brings an abundance of mosquitos; so that malaria is an ever-present guest at Dagania. The heat also causes much sickness and weakness. Health conditions will improve somewhat when the Rutenberg works reach Dagania. There is need of sanitation measures on a large scale, but these cannot be paid for out of the ordinary income of the settlement. Only the Government or colonising agency may be in a position to carry them out.

## APPENDIX II.

JOSEPH BUSSEL

THE story of Dagania would not be complete without a short account of the lives of two of its heroes: Josef Bussel and Gordon. First, then, of Bussel.

In an olive grove by the banks of the Jordan we dug his grave. In that olive grove he had dug and planted, ploughed and hoed during his whole time at Dagania; and there he found rest, eternal rest.

For the new life of this people in its own land Bussel had envisioned the unit or family of labouring comrades called *kvuza*. The *kvuza* was to be the unit-cell of his nation, and his nation in turn a unit in the great family of humanity for all whose children there should be but one law and one judgment. With patience, trust, and heroic effort he went steadily forward toward the goal which beckoned to his spirit. But the thread of his young life was abruptly snapped.

Bussel came to Palestine from the small Lithuanian town where he was born in 1891. Being the son of pious parents, his childhood and early youth were spent in the *Heder*\* and the *Yeshiva*\*\* When still very young, the cause

\* Heder is the primary Jewish School.

\*\* Yeshiva is the more advanced School. In both, religious studies take precedence over all others.



Josef Bussel; born in 1890 died in 1919

#### A DREAMER OF DREAMS

of the national Jewish renaissance won him for its own. By virtue of his oratorical gifts he became the guide and adviser of a group of his youthful friends. He began studying for the Rabbinate, believing that in that field he could render the greatest service to his life's ideal. But, finding that Zionist work in the Diaspora—meetings, speeches, collecting shekels—brought him no contentment of spirit, he abandoned his plan: nothing would satisfy him now but actual work in the Land of Israel itself.

His comrades looked upon Bussel as a dreamer. They could not imagine that this frail, slender youth would rise up from his Talmud to become a tiller of the long-forsaken soil of Palestine. However, their doubts could not deter him. At seventeen he left his native town for the Jewish villages in the Russian province of Kher-son, where he did a year's preparatory work on the soil. Then he set his face toward Palestine.

Bussel's first experiences—at Petah Tikva—were very unhappy. He went on to work at Rehoboth, where he was somewhat more contented, but still could find no peace of spirit. The "conquest of labour" in the Jewish villages no longer seemed to him of great importance; in fact, he saw no value whatever in the creation of a class of paid Jewish farm labourers. Hence he set up a new aim: Not a "conquest of labour" by the Jewish workers in the Jewish villages, but the "conquest of the soil" by Jewish workers in settlements of their own.

He was one of the first to go up to Kinnereth in Galilee to work on the land of the J.N.F. There he found

congenial comrades to whom he clung till his last day. At Kinnereth he was secretly weaving dreams of a collective labour group, but was in no hurry to reveal them to others. With his intimate comrades he went from Kinnereth to Hedera, and from Hedera to Um Juni, that was to be Dagania.

The delicate youth became adept at every form of hard labour, and none excelled him in industry. He never knew fatigue, nor asked for rest. At the end of a long day in the fields, when others slumbered in the darkness of the night, Bussel sat by his tiny oil lamp making up accounts, writing letters giving voice to the aims that animated the deeds of his group.

The affairs of the Labour party and of the community as a whole made their demands upon him. Whenever and from whatever quarter there came a call for help, he was the first to respond. He worked with others, but followed no light save his own. During the War, when Galilee had to provide bread for the whole Yishuv and to stand by it in many other ways, Bussel was found at Tiberias, devoting himself wholeheartedly to the refugees, and especially to the orphans who had been exiled from Judea and were roaming the streets hungry and neglected. For these wards of the nation, he asked no bread of charity, but a life of labour on the soil where they might redeem themselves from the corruption of the cities.

Dagania for him was the centre of everything, for in the *kvuza* he saw the keystone to the new national life in Erez Israel.

Malaria and even the dread yellow fever attacked his

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