

SPREAD OF JEWISH CONSCIOUSNESS IN JOHANNESBURG.

An Association of Jewish Groups.

(From a Correspondent.)

When, about three months ago, the organisers of the Association of Jewish Groups began to suggest its formation, they discovered one thing which surprised them, and that was the immediate and spontaneous approval with which their proposal was greeted by everybody they approached. They found that, instead of having to argue or persuade, they had, as it were, merely to apply a match to well-prepared tinder. In particular, young men and women who had previously been apathetic to anything connected with their Jewishness, now seemed anxious to learn all about it, and welcomed a movement which would help them to do so. What, one asks, had caused this new feeling?

It was the sudden realisation, forced upon them from outside, that in spite of all appearances to the contrary, they were not really at home in South Africa, but merely on a semi-foreign though friendly soil. In this respect their conclusion agrees with that reached by numerous enlightened Jews in other lands, where Jew and Gentile are accustomed to mingle much more freely than they do here. For instance, Ludwig Lewisohn has told how, even at the time when he regarded himself as one hundred per cent. American, he was unable to feel towards the United States in the same way as his Gentile intimates. He, unlike them, was always conscious of tension and discomfort of soul in his environment, and he came to the conclusion that this unrest was caused by the fact that he was attempting to force his inward life into a mould essentially alien to it. He realised then, as Johannesburg Jews are doing now, that the claims of his blood and tradition were inescapable, and that if he wished for peace of spirit, he would have to take full cognisance of these claims. He has done so since, and he has testified to the inward poise and certainty, to the flowering of the faculties, which has rewarded him as a result.

One factor has perhaps delayed a return to Jewishness on the part of many of the more emancipated local Jews. That is a belief that such a process would involve merely a return to a cramping ritual which in practice they had discarded. Yet if Jewishness were no more than mere legalism, is it conceivable that it could have held the race together through every bodily and mental torture which human ingenuity could devise? Moreover, as has been pointed out by numerous writers, the spirituality of Judaism was so great that it overflowed into Christianity and Islam—indeed it forms the "saving" part of these religions—and through them has become a principal foundation of all Western and much of Eastern civilisation. Is it too much to expect that if Jews once more turned to it, if they once more vibrated along their own spiritual wavelength, they might make yet another valuable contribution to the welfare of mankind? There are already signs that this expectation might be fulfilled.

The truth of the modernity of Judaism or Jewishness was strikingly illustrated by Jabotinsky during his recent visit. By dint not of his controversial political views but of his personality, his war record, and his graphic eloquence, he succeeded in bringing something of the spirit of Zionist Palestine home to Johannesburg Jewry, and making them taste the freedom of it. More than that, he convinced them that the responsibility for the future of Jewry rests with them, especially with their youth, and that they could not evade this responsibility even if they desired to do so. The only choice left to them was whether they would fit themselves for their task, or merely remain unprepared.

These, then, were the causes which kindled natural feeling to a new intensity among Johannesburg Jews. That this new feeling does not conflict with their duty to South Africa is shown not only by the fact that if a person is true to himself he cannot be false to any man, but also by the tenets of Judaism, for example, Jeremiah's "Seek ye the peace of the city of your captivity, and pray for it." The feeling has found one expres-

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sion in the Association of Jewish Groups, whose aims are defined as follows:—

The Association of Jewish Groups is formed for the purpose of assisting its members to:—

- (1) Study and discuss Jewish History and Literature.
- (2) Acquaint themselves with Modern Jewish Problems and all other matters of Jewish interest.
- (3) Learn Hebrew as a living tongue.
- (4) Identify themselves more closely and intimately with the Jewish National Movement.

On the question of organisation it was decided to avoid one large body, in which the chief activity would fall into the hands of a few. So the unit adopted is a group of 25 members, consisting of friends and neighbours, and meeting once a fortnight at the house of one of the members. The various groups are unified by a central committee and a small executive. Seven groups are already in existence as well as the Hebrew classes. Anyone wishing fuller information should apply to—

The Chairlady, Mrs. O. Guinsberg, 45, Hillbrow Street;
or to either of the Joint Hon Secretaries:
Miss Tilly Cohen, 4, Frere Road, Parktown;
Mr. R. Rudolph, "Welgelegen," Primrose Terrace, Berea,
Johannesburg.

YEOVILLE HEBREW CLUB.

A Hebrew Club has been formed by the Jewish children in Yeoville and is being directed by Miss Ben-Yacob. The following are the hon. officers: President, Charles Braudo; Joint Vice-Presidents, Joan Kantorowich and Jeanette Jaff; Joint Secretaries, Yvonne Lejeune and Jeanette Jaff; Joint Treasurers, Oscar Beiles and Leslie Coleman. Committee: Leslie Sacks, Geoola and Daniel Cornfeld, Phyllis Braudo, Peggy Kantorowich, Molly Braudo, Matitiah Cornfeld, Esme Harris, Doris and Cecily Bronks, Basil Mendelsohn, and Theodore Guinsberg.

MR. LEONID BIRSON.

The accomplished violinist, Mr. Leonid Birson, will give a recital at the City Hall, Johannesburg, on Sunday evening next, with Mr. John Connell at the organ. Mr. Birson will play Handel's Sonata and two movements from Ceasar Frank's Sonata, also a group including Dvorak's Slavonic dances and the Wieniawsky Scherzo Tarantelle. Mr. Birson has just returned from Durban, where he played with the Durban Orchestra. Beethoven's Concerto in a brilliant manner.

"CHARLEY'S AUNT."

The amusing farce "Charley's Aunt," with its everlasting appeal to the comic instinct, is to be produced on Monday at His Majesty's Theatre by Mr. Frank Neil and his comedians. The farce is famous throughout the English-speaking world, and its repeated revivals are keenly enjoyed by audiences everywhere. The fun of "Charley's Aunt" and its comical situations never appear to lose its appeal.

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