

Folk Songs.

The project for the establishment in Johannesburg of a Jewish national choir is an excellent one indeed. During the last decade, there has been a remarkable development in the unearthing and arranging of old folk tunes and in the creation of new Hebrew songs. So many of the amateur operatic societies have in their midst Jewish members that it is well that some of these voices should be occasionally engaged in the interpretation of purely Jewish music.

In other parts of the world the folk-music concert has become a permanent feature of Jewish life. There is no reason why such a development should not occur here. A strong Jewish national choir could organise concerts of a very popular character and be in a position—at a later stage perhaps—to invite to this country a great folk-song interpreter like Kipnis, who would bring with him a large store of the latest folk songs and leave a permanent influence in Jewish musical circles in South Africa.

Sephardim.

I note it is reported from Madrid that the Grand Rabbi of the Bulgarian Sephardim is visiting Spain and delivering a series of lectures on the history of Spain since the Expulsion of 1492. It appears that the Rabbi, who has written several Spanish plays, is a man of both literary culture and worldly wisdom, and is labouring for the maintenance and strengthening of the Spanish Jews in the country. The tenacity with which these Sephardim have remained loyal to Spanish culture is a proof of the capacity of Jews for allegiance and patriotism.

Communities of Spanish Jews are settled throughout the world—although I do not know of any in South Africa. In Palestine the Sephardim are an important community and it is their pronunciation of the classic Hebrew which has formed the basis of the usage in our revived national speech. It was at the time of the great Expulsion that the glory of Spanish Jewry departed, but with the doors opening anew into Republican Spain, it may be that we shall see in our own day a renaissance of cultural and spiritual activity on the part of the Sephardim.

A Champion.

In the death of Dr. Adolph Stern, former member of the Roumanian Parliament, world Jewry has lost a remarkable personality. He was the founder and first President of the Union of Roumanian Jews. For many years

Current Communal Comments

By
'Hamabit'

Stern was one of the most active fighters for the cause of Jewish emancipation in Roumania, and when the historic Berlin Congress was held in 1878, with Disraeli and Bismarck as its dominating figures, he was present as the representative of Roumanian Jewry. He did a great deal to influence Disraeli, and other delegates, to take up the cause of the Roumanian Jews and to secure the adoption of the famous Berlin Treaty, which states that "hereafter in Roumania difference of faith shall keep no one from acquiring civil and public rights."

The question of the emancipation of the Roumanian Jews was thought to be settled with that, and one effect of the provision was the naturalisation of the Jews. Dr. Stern himself was naturalised in 1880, and opened a law office in Bucharest. He encountered great difficulties, however, as the first Jewish lawyer in Bucharest, and he describes these in his memoirs. Nevertheless, he made a big reputation as a lawyer, and he also published a number of annotated law books, which became known as "The Code Stern."

A Fighter.

Stern continued his efforts to obtain complete emancipation for the Jews of Roumania, not only on paper, and he conducted a campaign against the Jewish persecution in the country, on account of which he had to leave Roumania in 1894 to escape an attack organised against him by the Roumanian students. A proposition was made to exclude him from the practice of the law, but this was defeated in Parliament by a small majority. As the anti-Semitic laws increased and made life unbearable for the Jews, Dr. Stern saw the need for a purely political organisation, and in 1909 he founded the Union of Roumanian Jews. In 1915 he secured the interest of the late Luigi Luzzatti, the Jewish Prime Minister of Italy, for the protection of the Roumanian Jews.

Dr. Stern also made a big reputation for himself as an author. In addition to his memoirs, he published a number of books, and translated Shakespeare into Roumanian and also translated some of the Roumanian writers into German.

Music.

The first performance of an overture entitled *Ha-Chalutzim* was given in Tel Aviv recently by the Palestine Symphonic Ensemble. The composition was conducted by A. W. Binder—a noted composer. This was the first time that the premiere of an orchestral composition based upon musical material gathered in Eretz Israel was presented and at the same time conducted under the baton of the composer.

A definite musical consciousness is being aroused in the National homeland, which to-day contains a large number of music schools, a permanent orchestra, an opera company, and oratorio choruses. There is much musical research work proceeding. All this is creating a basis for the progress of a broad musical scope, which if developed will undoubtedly lead to Palestine taking its place side by side with the great musical centres in Europe.

An interesting side light to this development is that Jewish folk songs, coming from Palestine, are deviating to a great extent from the old custom of adapting foreign melodies to new song-poems. There one finds a great many new melodies, which may be definitely designated as Palestinian, for the authors have tried to combine in their work musical elements found in the liturgical songs of our people, together with the musical characteristics found in Yemenite and Arabic songs.

Undaunted!

A peripathetic *schadchan* recently called upon a successful Johannesburg bachelor.

"I am sorry," replied the latter when he learned the purpose of the interview, "I am not interested."

"I have a girl of a very good family with a dowry of £2,000."

"I told you," repeated the bachelor, "I am not interested."

"I have another girl on my lists—a really fine girl of good family—with a dowry of £3,000."

"I must again repeat that I am not interested."

"But surely," pleaded the *schadchan*, "you do not intend to remain single all your life. And I have another girl, who owns a building in town and . . ."

The tenacity of the *schadchan* annoyed the successful bachelor, who said, "If I marry at all, it will be for love."

At this the eyes of the *schadchan* opened wide and he exclaimed, "Why did you not tell me before? I have a number of clients who wish to be married for love."