

A Journal

THE appearance in Johannesburg of a well-printed journal devoted specifically to the interests of traditional Judaism in this country, is an event of some importance. It gives evidence of a concerted effort being made to organise the forces of orthodox Judaism.

There can be no doubt that the successful development of reform Judaism in Johannesburg has proved an incentive to the orthodox elements to endeavour to set their house in order. The danger, in my opinion, is not so much any increased adherence to reform or liberal Judaism on the part of certain groups of our people, but a developing spirit of indifference to the tenets of Judaism generally pervading the South African Jewish scene.

It is obviously necessary for the synagogue—reform or orthodox—to enter more closely into the life of the people. It should not merely be a building where for an hour or two a few certain official prayers are uttered. There should be much activity around the synagogue—cultural and social—to attract the younger and even older elements. The synagogue should help to revitalise Judaism in this country.

The problem is a serious one and many difficult aspects. There can be no doubt, however, that the publication of a journal in the interests of orthodox Judaism is a step in the right direction.

A Song

THE other evening at a fashionable dance at the Empire Exhibition I heard the strains of that famous old tune, "After the Ball," as thousands swung along a brilliantly lighted ball-room. With another old song, "Daisy," this tune appears to have quite a vigorous revival these days. Modern youth is apparently becoming satiated with jazz and the lilt of older songs are being appreciated and enjoyed.

It may not be known to-day that the famous song, "After the Ball"—which still sells in thousands of copies all over the world—was composed by Charles K. Harris, an American Jew, who passed away only a few years ago. It was this composer who also wrote the music and words of "Break the News to Mother"—a song which still lingers in the memory of many of the older people of the present generation.

Harris wrote many hundreds of songs and ballads, but it was his "After the Ball" which gained for him fortune and international fame. If there is immortality to be gained in the writing of a tune, then it surely goes to Charles Harris.

Columbus

WAS Christopher Columbus a Jew? So often the contention has been made, so often disputed, and yet there is to-day not one definite fact

Current Communal Comments

By "Hamabit"

to substantiate the claim than at any other period. The fact remains, however, that there is a strong claim.

An authority on the Columbus controversy has just disclosed fresh proof for this contention. According to the author, Columbus constantly associated himself with influential Marranos—secret Jews; he never made use of the word Jesus except when he was afraid of being branded a heretic; his prayers and Biblical exhortations were similar to those used by the Marranos; his first correspondence announcing the discovery of America was made to the leading Jews of Spain.

The writer further points out that some years ago Professor Amzalak unearthed evidence which showed that Columbus' cryptic signature proves he was familiar with Hebrew and that this signature was composed of a combination of initials of Hebrew and Spanish words. The result of other evidence, too, is that his real name was Christopher Colon and that his parents came from Galicia and that they were Ghetto Jews.

All this is interesting surmise, but one day, I dare say, historical research will enable us to know definitely whether the discoverer of America was indeed a co-religionist of ours.

Yiddish Bible

ALTHOUGH the Bible has been translated into every spoken language, there has never been a complete text in Yiddish. The interesting announcement has now been made by the Yehoash Committee in New York, that the translation of the Bible in Yiddish from the text prepared by the late poet Yehoash (Sol Bloomgarten) has now been completed. In this connection, it is also interesting to recall that four hundred years have elapsed since the publication of the Bible in Tyndale's translation into English.

The translation into other languages still goes on in many parts of the earth. The British and Foreign Bible Society, since its foundation in 1804, has issued nearly half a billion (476,000,000) Bibles, Testaments and portion of the Scriptures. The number of languages into which the Scriptures have been translated "stands at 705," according to a recent report, and "some portion is published in a new language about every five weeks."

The appearance of the Bible in a perfect Yiddish translation is undoubtedly an event of great importance to the Jewish community throughout the world. The celebration of the "Siyum Hatorah" will indeed not only be an event for Yiddish speaking groups, but for all Jews who appreciate the importance of adding another translation to the greatest book ever produced—and this time in a language spoken by a large section of our people.

Bloch's

QUIETLY sitting at his desk in his New York office, a well-known personality recently celebrated his seventieth birthday. He was busily engaged with his daily tasks. I refer to Charles E. Bloch, the head of the famous Bloch Publishing Company, which devotes itself exclusively to the publication of the Jewish Book. The "grand old man" of the Jewish publishing world started his career in 1878 as a "printer's devil" in his father's office.

The original firm was established in Cincinnati as long ago as 1854. The firm was the publisher of the two first Jewish newspapers—the weekly "American Israelite" and the monthly "Die Deborah." It steadily expanded as publishers and booksellers, a number of their books being among the first of Jewish interest to appear in the Western world. The business has grown very old in these thirty-five years. To-day it is the oldest largest and best known of its particular kind throughout the world, and has published many hundreds of books of Jewish interest. They are mostly in English and combine almost every branch of Jewish literature.

The "Bloch" book can be found in many a Jewish home in English-speaking countries. The recently published catalogue of the firm indicates a fine selection of enlightened books of Jewish interest.

Would that more of the volumes were to find themselves in Jewish homes here!

Candour

A FATHER of a little boy brought him to the Principal of a Talmud Torah in the new district into which the parents had just moved. After the boy had been placed in a suitable class-room, the father said:

"There is a little secret about the lad which I wish to have kept. The little chap is very sensitive, for his left eye is a glass one. I do not wish the other children in the class to know about it."

The Principal then sent for the teacher of the class and explained the matter to her. She promised every sympathetic consideration of the child's sensitiveness. Upon her return she found the class-room in an uproar.

"What is the matter?" she asked. "Well, the new boy," shouted the children, "has a glass eye."

"How do you know?" she asked in great surprise.

The class replied: "He took it out and showed it to us."



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