

Current Communal Comments

By "Hamabit"

"Three Cities," was modelled on the life of Shiozberg. The details of his private life are, of course, pure fiction, but people who knew pre-war St. Petersburg could not help seeing in Shiozberg a prototype of Halpern.

Shiozberg's last important public appearance took place in 1934 in Switzerland, where he participated at the trial in connection with the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion."

A Labourer?

CAN the person who conducts services at synagogues for payment be looked upon as a professional gentleman or as a labourer?

This question has long been discussed by the *chazonim* in the United States of America where there is a Jewish Ministers' Cantors Association. Ultimately a significant decision was arrived at, for the Association has been given a charter by the American Federation of Labour. The charter was presented at a mass meeting of cantors and aroused the greatest enthusiasm.

Henceforth congregations seeking the services of a *chazan* will have to deal with him as a member of organised labour, who must receive union rates of payment, and be given as much consideration as any builder-employer gives to his bricklayer.

I think it is rather a pity that so great a necessity for protection should have arisen in the case of the *chazan*, who represents the congregation in sending the prayer of the members in its flight to Heaven. The highest idealism should prevail in such a transaction.

That the cantor has to resort in America to such measures is no compliment to Jewish congregational life in that country.

Huberman

A FRIEND of mine in Australia informs me that Bronislaw Huberman is receiving an enthusiastic ovation in that country. His gifted violin-playing has stamped him as one of the great artists in this field of musical interpretation.

If Huberman could come to South Africa on his way from Australia, he would be sure of a fine welcome here. His arrival would be particularly interesting, coming so quickly after the departure of Mischa Elman. The latter's visit has undoubtedly opened the way for other famous world artists.

Surprise

A MIDDLE-AGED couple came to the rabbi of their little village and asked him to divorce them. The rabbi was greatly disturbed.

"Is it possible," he asked, "you have lived thirty years together and now you wish to be parted?"

"There you are," said the husband turning to his wife, "even our rabbi is surprised that I have waited so long."

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M.....
Wish(es) all Relatives, Friends and
fellow-Zionists a K'sivo Vach'simo
Tovo.

A Rabbi

I HAVE noted with interest that the site where the Prince Imperial was killed by the warring Zulus in 1879 has been proclaimed under the Union Historical, Relics and Antiques Act.

Few people are aware that several Jews hailing from England also served in the Zulu War. Among them was a certain Henry Cohen — a well-known personality in U.S.A. Jewry. This gentleman, who was born in England in April, 1863, came to South Africa as a young man and was interpreter to a French legation. He was severely wounded in the engagement with the Zulus.

After his return to London, he studied for the Jewish ministry. Proceeding to Jamaica, British West Indies, he became Rabbi of Kingston, and then later occupied a number of positions in America.

As he grew older Rabbi Cohen aroused the respect and esteem of American Jewry. He was for many years the spiritual head of the Hebrew Congregation of Galveston, Texas, and wrote about the Jewish settlement in that part of the world. He also translated into English from the German "Prayers in Bible and Talmud"—a work of the famous Nahida Remy.

Religion

THERE is a popular belief that religious practice is on the decline amongst the Jews in Poland, and that the workers in particular have come under the influence of atheism.

This is not borne out by an enquiry which has recently been conducted by a radical Jewish youth organisation with a view to finding out to what extent the workers of Poland are still religious. The results of the enquiry were somewhat astonishing. No less than 83 per cent. of the workers say their prayers daily until the age of twenty. After that age, the percentage is smaller; only 48 per cent. observe the orthodox precepts. But above the age of thirty, there is again an increase.

Still more remarkable is the fact that in the towns the workers are more pious than in the provinces. Hitherto one was led to believe that the *shtetl* was the stronghold of observant Judaism. An enquiry also showed that only 5 per cent. of Jewish working girls say their prayers daily, but this is not to be wondered at, since it is well-known that even a few decades ago praying was not considered a woman's business. It must be noted that the enquiry was conducted amongst the modern type of Jewish worker, the Chassidic section being expressly excluded.

How Odd!

It would appear as if very few members of our community are worried by the anxious doubt now besetting the minds of the leading mem-

bers of the Dutch Reformed Church in this country, who are not quite certain that we Jews are the Chosen Race.

This reminds me of the bright little line credited to the late Israel Zangwill: "How odd of God, to choose the Jews."

The prominent intellectual weekly newspaper in London, the *New Statesman*, asked in its recent literary competitions for a retort to this famous verse-line. Some of these are so good that I feel tempted to repeat them. There was previously, of course, a classic reply: "Oh, no, it's not: He knows, what's what!" One reader advocated the following conclusion to the verse: "And not, to 'spot' the purer, Fuehrer."

Another reader considered that the reasons for the choice were: "Tut, tut, 'twas but, to shock Belloc." The following were, I think, deservedly awarded prizes in the competition: "Were we, may be, too odd, for God?" "Why odd, of God? His Son, was one," and, "Is the clue, to the whim, that the Jew chose Him?"

Shiozberg

THERE passed away in Paris recently one of the last "Mohicans" of pre-war Russian Jewry. The name of Heinrich Shiozberg will be particularly remembered in connection with the Beilis trial where, together with Grusenberg, he was responsible for the defence of the accused and for the shattering manner in which the blood-libel was exposed before the Russian court.

Shiozberg belonged to the *shtadlan* type of Russian Jewry. As one of the most brilliant barristers of Tsarist Russia, he had been associated with the leading liberal minds of St. Petersburg and the doors of the mighty were open to him. He could thus exercise great influence upon the rulers of Russia and put in a good word when necessary. It was, however, at the bar that he displayed his great oratorical gifts and erudition.

After the Revolution, Shiozberg went into exile and spent his last days in Paris. At the invitation of an American newspaper, he had written memoirs which, I believe, appeared also in Russian with an introduction by Jabotinsky. It is a pity that works of this kind are not made available in English. The story of Shiozberg's life represents a glorious chapter in Jewish history of pre-war Russia. It is an open secret, by the way, that "Advocate Halpern," one of the leading types in Sholem Asch's