

"The" Book

I WAS glad to learn that the Afrikaans Bible which was published last year has already sold over quarter of a million copies. The great success of the translation is, I am sure, the finest reward to the enthusiastic band of workers who for many years devoted themselves to this great task.

The movement to translate the Bible into Afrikaans was started some sixty years ago. At that time it was felt that the language had not yet developed to such an extent as to be a convenient and exact medium for the Scriptures. In 1879, Rev. Du Toit translated the Book of Genesis, the Psalms, the Songs of Solomon and portions of the New Testament. His translation, however, was more in the nature of an interpretation of the Bible.

It was only in 1916 that a conference of the Dutch Reformed Churches decided upon an elaborate scheme of a complete translation of the Bible. Originally it was thought to base the translation on the "Statevertaling" (Netherlands translation), but the translators soon discovered that the only way to achieve their aim would be to use the original Hebrew and Greek texts. The Dutch people in South Africa have always been ardent readers of "The" Book, and have had ingrained in them a deep respect and love for the Hebrew prophets.

I glanced through the Afrikaans Bible recently and was struck by the simplicity and grace of the style. With a little knowledge of Afrikaans, it is possible to read any of the prose sections of the Book and to understand and enjoy them.

A Pianist

ON a recent Sunday evening I heard a beautiful rendering of the first movement of probably the best-loved of Beethoven's piano concertos. It was rendered by a soloist who is but rarely heard on the concert platform. I am referring to Isador Epstein, the well-known pedagogue, who is doing good work in raising the standard of piano playing in this country. A few months ago Epstein gave an almost inspired performance of the great Fantasia in C by Schubert with the Johannesburg Symphony Orchestra.

It was ill-health which drove Epstein to leave a highly successful career in London to come here. His doing so has been a great musical gain for Johannesburg. Epstein was a chosen pupil of the great Busoni, who was a king of pianists in his day. Busoni was essentially a performer and only taught a few pupils of great talent. He singled out young Epstein and took a personal interest in the latter's work and development. Had not Isador Epstein gone into the pedagogic side of the piano, he would have become one of our great performers. As it is, his rare public appearances show him to be the possessor of a brilliant technique.

It is not generally known that Epstein is the son of a famous London *chazan*. His father was Cantor Epstein, of the New Synagogue in the great metropolis. He was a man of commanding presence, who had a beautifully gifted voice. One of the

Current Communal Comments

By
"Hamabit"

chazonim of the old school, he looked upon his profession as a sacred calling and felt himself to be truly a *sheliach zibur*—a messenger of his congregation to the Lord of Hosts.

"Mr. Cohen Takes a Walk"—

THERE will shortly be shown upon the screen a highly interesting talkie film. It will deal with the story of a certain Jewish merchant who "takes a walk," after casting off the shackles of success. He helps many in the ragged clothes he has donned as he never could in his smarter garments. He is regarded with suspicion and ridicule, but he goes on doing his good work and in the process of it all life has become a flowing stream and not a stagnant pool.

This unique film has just been finished at the Warner Bros. studio in England. A complete shop was erected, full of things which would have delighted every woman. It was a strange shop, however, for women could enter but not buy. The actor who impersonates "Mr. Cohen" is Paul Graetz, who is tremendously enthusiastic about the film and declares that it was a most delightful experience to portray the tribulations, ideals, suffering and happiness of this Jewish storekeeper.

I hope we shall have an early opportunity of seeing "Mr. Cohen" taking his walk on the South African screen.

"Canned"

IN America everything appears to be tending towards standardisation. The complaint has been heard that even meals are becoming standardised; millions of people throughout the vast land are eating the same kind of breakfasts, luncheons, and dinners. As regards the food itself, most of it is "canned" and millions are eating the same concoctions out of hygienically packed tins.

Now a new evil has arisen. Standardisation has attacked the press and has even spread its tentacles to Jewish newspapers. In the old days every Jewish journal published its own exclusive news and features and was especially proud of its editorials. Such news and features have for some time been syndicated by press agencies formed for the purpose, and now I hear that editorials are being specially written and sent out to all the smaller Jewish newspapers throughout the country.

It is one thing for a group of newspapers to club together in order to acquire feature material which they otherwise would not have been able to get, owing to the high cost. The farming out of editorials, however, is an entirely different matter. An editorial, whether it be in a daily or weekly—secular or Jewish—newspaper is the soul and spirit of the publica-

tion. A newspaper is frequently judged by its editorial policy. The filling of editorial space with "canned" editorial matter may affect a certain saving and considerably lighten the task of the publishers and make the position of the editor a sinecure (perhaps even eliminate him). Such a procedure, however, deprives the publication of any claim to individuality or to any opinion of its own.

The above outlined custom, which I observe is being introduced by an increasing number of the smaller American-Jewish newspapers, must lead to an atrophied Jewish press in that country. A serious aspect, too, is the danger of publishing as wide-spread Jewish opinion something that is written as the opinion of a single individual. No responsible newspapers should really be a party to what amounts to public deception.

New Communists!

THERE is an old saying that the Devil quotes Scripture to suit his own purpose. I am reminded of this by the fact that the *Emes*, the official organ of the Jewish Communists in Russia, has now garbed the grandfather of Yiddish literature, Mendele Mocher Seforim, in the Communistic regalia.

This year will mark the hundredth anniversary of Mendel's birthday, and is to be observed with true Communistic *èclat*.

Strange, indeed, to consider Mendele a Communist! It is almost as humorous as describing Trotsky as an *Agudasnik*.

Who knows what the Yiddish Communists may do next? Possibly they may take Moses and adopt him as a member of the Communist Party, because of this great leader's advanced social legislation. Or perhaps they might even enrol the prophet Amos in their ranks!

No Promises

FOR playing cards with a Jew in a public place, the Mayor of the town of Magendorf was dismissed from his office. This is the new type of punishable "crime" which makes one wonder where civilisation is hiding itself in Germany.

I heard the story the other day of two Jews, who were walking along the Kurfurstendam in Berlin and were gesticulating and discussing the Fuehrer. A uniformed and heavily-armed Nazi officer came up behind them. It looked as if the two Jews were about to have a bad time.

All that the Nazi officer said, however, was: "What right have you to talk about Hitler? Has he promised *you* anything?"

Cheaper

MRS. SCHWARTZ: "Harry, the woman next door has a hat exactly like mine."

Mr. Schwartz: "Nu, Rivke, now I suppose you'll want me to buy you a new hat?"

Mrs. Schwartz: "Well, dear, that would be cheaper than moving."