

# CURRENT COMMUNAL COMMENT

By "Hamabit"

## Engineers

I WAS sorry to hear that owing to ill health Mr. Morris Udwin has been obliged to resign from the important position he holds of Chief Engineer of the Rand Water Board. Mr. Udwin has been associated with the Rand Water Board for some thirty years and was largely responsible for the introduction of the huge additional water supply schemes for the Rand.

Born in the Cape Province, Mr. Udwin had a brilliant scholastic career. He is a graduate of the old South African College, and is much thought of in local scientific circles. In 1932 he was elected President of the South African Institution of Engineers. Although for many years past he has been too busy a man to take up active communal or Zionist work, Mr. Udwin did assist in a number of Zionist campaigns, taking charge successfully of the organisational work in Johannesburg. He was for a short time on the Executive of the S.A. Zionist Federation.

An old friend tells me that Morris Udwin was one of the founders of the Pirchei Zion Association, established by youngsters in Capetown as far back as 1905.

The career of this fine engineer calls to mind other members of our community who have made their mark in this profession. There is the instance of Mr. H. Smith, who holds the important post of Water Engineer of the Borough of Durban and has achieved distinction in his work.

Some of my older readers may still recollect Mr. Leopold Kessler, when he practised in Johannesburg many years ago as a mining engineer. Mr. Kessler, who wrote two books on Rand mining problems, is now resident in London and is, incidentally, the chief shareholder in the company owning the London "Jewish Chronicle." He was one of the earlier Zionist pioneers and an intimate friend of Theodor Herzl.

## Anticipation

THE other day I came across an amusing story about a group of Arabs in Palestine, which was related by Mrs. Edgar Dugdale, the niece and biographer of Lord Balfour, in the course of a lecture recently delivered by her to a London audience.

Mrs. Dugdale is an ardent champion of the Zionist cause, having been converted to her advocacy of it by Dr. Weizmann. She has made many visits to Palestine, and knows the country well, and she vouches for the truth of her delightful story.

A Jewish settlement and a nearby Arab village, Mrs. Dugdale told her audience, had lived on particularly cordial terms. One day Arab notables came to the settlement and said they had a matter of great importance to discuss.

They had learnt from the Italian broadcasts in Arabic that the British Forces would soon be chased out of the Middle East and that Mussolini would give the Arabs all the land belonging to the Jews.

There was, however, a certain difficulty. They did not know how to manage a tractor on the Jewish settlement, and so would the Jews be so kind as to give them some instruction before they were actually driven out?

## Hebrew Songs

ON a recent Friday evening a number of folk listened to the broadcast of a selection of Hebrew songs over the Cape Town radio. It was an interesting experience. The songs of modern Palestine have a quality of their own. They are tuneful and interesting in comparison with the old Yiddish ghetto songs, so full of sentimental sadness. The Palestinian songs are bright, colourful and pregnant with courage—indicative of the attitude of modern Jewish Palestine towards its national future.

It is so infrequently that any specific Jewish item is heard on Rand radio programmes that I hope an opportunity will be afforded to many of us to hear a further group of these Hebrew songs—this time over the Johannesburg radio.

## A Statesman

FROM France comes a report that Paul Heymans, the great Belgian statesman, has died at the age of seventy-five, in a French provincial town. His death has again aroused a controversy regarding his Jewish ancestry. A Belgian journalist recently gave some interesting details on the subject. Heymans, he said, was a grandson of a pious Dutch Jew, Shlomo Heymans, who migrated from Amsterdam to Antwerp over a hundred years ago. The Jewish community in Antwerp was not yet established in those days. The grandfather, though a fine Jewish scholar, was a staunch assimilationist, and he brought up his two sons in an atmosphere very much removed from Judaism.

One of his sons, the father of Paul, became known as a Belgian historian. He married out of the faith, and converted his son to the Protestant Church. Paul, however, married the daughter of the Goldsmid-Brodskys,

one of the best known families in Western Europe. He never denied his Jewish origin with which he was always taunted by the anti-Semite. Occasionally he attended Jewish functions, but felt always a stranger in the midst of Jews.

Heymans had a brilliant political career in Belgium. He was the only Belgian statesman, and probably the only man of Jewish descent, to have occupied the post of President of the League of Nations. His interest in science led him to become chairman of the Administrative Council of Brussels University. In recent years Heymans retired from politics and led a quiet life. He was, however, often seen at the Palace of King Leopold, who held him in high esteem.

## In the States

I HEAR that L. S. Schneiderman, the Yiddish journalist who spent some time in Johannesburg about three years ago, has managed to escape from France and is now settled in New York.

Though he stayed in this country for only a short period, he is quite attached to South Africa and it was thanks to him that the Peretz Writers' Union of New York recently held a very successful South African evening. Amongst those who spoke at the function were Mr. Harry Lourie, who is at present on a visit to America, and Mr. Leon Segal, of Capetown.

Both speakers described Jewish life in South Africa and gave an account of our communal organisations. Schneiderman also spoke during the evening, and delivered an interesting talk on the Jewish press. Chairman of the evening was Mr. S. Z. Zuckermann, who also lived in South Africa some years ago. He recited to the gathering a story from Rachmiel Feldman's book, "Shwarz Und Weiss."

All in all it was a truly South African evening, and I am glad to know that our pen-colleagues in New York have had an occasion to learn something about Jewish life in this country.

## Thrift

MR. CHAIMLOWITZ asked his wife: "Have you now fixed the status of the new tenants who have taken the house next door?"

"Yes. They have no motor car, no wireless set, no piano and no electric washing machine."

Mr. Chaimowitz commented: "Perhaps they have a bank account."

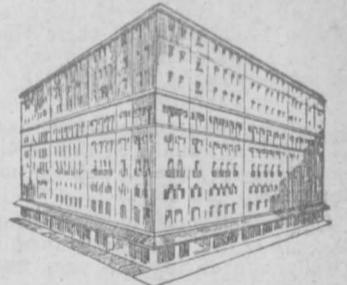
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