

Dora Sowden Writes

From a Window in Europe

*Grand Old Man
of
Birmingham*

NO acquaintance with English Jewry would be quite complete if you have not met Mr. Ephraim H. Cotton, of Birmingham. Actually Mr. Cotton is more than half a South African. He is a brother of Mrs. J. L. Landau, of Johannesburg, widow of our late Chief Rabbi. And he spent many years in Port Elizabeth, where he is still remembered socially and commercially.

At 76, with the mental agility of a man of 30 and with the physical sprightliness of 50, Mr. Cotton is not only a personality. He is almost a phenomenon—something natural and right in the life of British Jewry. "Are you still in business?" I asked him when he mentioned his age. "In three—and we're building a new factory, too." You soon learn that Mr. Cotton's interests embrace a good deal more than business.

He has always taken an active part in every movement for progress and welfare. He did it for 20 years in Port Elizabeth. He has done it since he went back to his home town, Birmingham, in 1929. He believes that the Jew everywhere must fight for right as well as his rights. "Moral courage is our prime need as Jews," he says. And he lives by his own precepts. He has no doubts about the Jewish future. "I am an optimist," he declares, "and what is more, I believe our life and chances are bound up ultimately and inevitably with the Torah." In spite of difficulties, he foresees the revival of Talmudism as a certainty and the destiny of Jewry as the personal concern of every Jew.

"In England our chief enemy is ignorance. I gather that is still your main Jewish trouble in South Africa, too?"

*Collection of
Interesting Friends*

When you meet Mr. Cotton in London, where he comes periodically and is almost as well known as he is in Birmingham, he is always sure to be in the company of interesting people. His own nephew, Jack Cotton, is a pure chip of the avuncular block in business acumen and social consciousness. When we had dinner with him at the Dorchester there were also present Dr. and Mrs. Barou, whose name is so closely associated with the Jewish World Congress (which he promised to let me visit at another time) and there was also a man whose name I did not catch but who turned out to be the husband of the late Conchita Supervia.

And when I had lunch with him he introduced me to a Dr. Alan Schper, a young man with the learning of a Rabbi and the profile of an Ivor Novello, who was taking law exams. and preparing for the Bar as if that was easy,

too. We were lunching at a new and strictly Kosher restaurant, "Kedassia," in New Oxford Street, where Dr. Schper was pointing out to me many Jewish celebrities—Berl Locker (before the Basle Congress) and the author of "The King of Lampedusa." The maitre d'hotel came to see if we were satisfied, as we certainly were. "I shall write about you," I said. "Oh!" he replied, "we have a book for complaints and comments. So far there is only one entry. A client wrote, 'I lost my appetite downstairs.'" I need only add that that is where the main restaurant is, where you can get all that delights the Jewish palate.

*Dr. Neufeld—
Versatile and Good
Looking*

Younger people form a considerable section of Mr. Cotton's acquaintances, because, above all, he is young in his sympathies. "I am never bored," confessed Uncle Ephy (as everyone calls him). "The secret is to surround oneself with congenial spirits and take an interest in things that matter." He himself succeeds in this admirably.

Through Dr. Schper I met another brilliant and interesting Londoner—Rabbi Dr. Ephraim Neufeld, minister at one of the largest London synagogues in Stamford Hill. Youngish, good looking, of ready wit and excellent address, he makes an impression immediately and he surprised me when he told me that he came originally from Poland because his English is so fluent. Dr. Neufeld is a shining example of the adaptability and versatility of the Jew. Coming to Britain before the war, he studied at Oxford, London and Edinburgh Universities and received his D.Litt. degree in the Scottish University for a thesis on "Ancient Hebrew Marriage Laws." He already held a degree of the University of Warsaw in philosophy and law, had been in the famous Yeshivah of Mier for three years and become a rabbi in Warsaw. No wonder English held no terrors for him, and he mastered it so easily that he is now the editor of an outstanding quarterly, "The Jewish Forum," the only Anglo-Jewish periodical of such high cultural value. He and his wife both find time to do a great deal of Zionist work, Dr. Neufeld being a member of the executive of the Zionist Federation of Great Britain and Ireland.

Dark himself, Dr. Neufeld told me his two children were blonde and blue-eyed, like his charming wife. "Real little Anglo-Saxons," said Dr. Schper. "Don't say that," I replied. "I was just going to suggest that Dr. and Mrs. Neufeld would be excellent South Africans." Dr. Neufeld smiled rather broadly and said there might be something in that. And it occurred to me that I could do worse than write home about him.

At the moment he is reading the proofs of his "Hebrew Translation of Hittite Law," which is being published by the Yale University



Cantor Michael Kusevitsky, one of four famous brothers, who will visit the Union this year.

Press in America. It would be a pity if South Africa did not make a fair bid to attract such talent, learning and personality as Dr. Neufeld's.

And speaking of rabbis leads me to cantors. I was interested to see in the London press a picture of four Kusevitskys—all brothers and all cantors. The one who came here for a concert tour from Poland is, I understand, going to tour South Africa shortly. The other three all officiate in London synagogues. One of these days I shall give myself the pleasure of a tour of Hendon, Dalston and Whitechapel and compare the relative choral merits of the brothers—the famous Michael I have already heard. It will be interesting to find out whether they sing as much alike as they look.

THE ceremony of laying the cornerstone of a new building for the famous Slobodka Yeshivah which has been reorganised in Palestine, took place in B'nei B'rak near Ramat Gan. The building will accommodate 300 students. It will be erected with the help of funds provided by American institutions.

**MEDICAL PROGRAMME IN
GERMANY AND AUSTRIA
EXPANDING**

MEDICAL officers to supervise health activities in the U.S. zone of Germany and Austria have recently been appointed. This programme is under the direction of Dr. Wm. Schmidt, director of JDC-JWA medical work in Europe.

The programme is conducted in cooperation with UNRRA and local Jewish health organisations by providing supplementary funds, staff and supplies to these organisations.

In Germany a programme for systematic medical check-ups of all Jewish displaced persons is being carried out by medical examiners in the assembly centres. In the Bamberg-Regensburg area, "Jewish Health Cards" have been introduced. The JDC-JWA plans to assign Jewish physicians to work with each UNRRA team operating in a locality with large numbers of Jews. For this purpose, an agreement was concluded with the Association of Jewish Doctors in Bavaria and the Central Committee of Liberated Jews in Bavaria, according to which the JDC-JWA will engage doctors (displaced persons) in five districts of the U.S. zone as well as in the most important Jewish centres. In two of these districts medical officers have already been appointed and who will also cooperate with OSE in sending medical personnel into Germany.

**Sifrei Torah
Destroyed in London**

LONDON, Tuesday.—Twelve Sifrei Torah were destroyed when the Ark of the Dollis Hill Synagogue was set on fire yesterday.

The words, "You whip, we burn," were found chalked on the pillars of the Ark.

The police are investigating the fire which is believed to be a reprisal for the flogging of the British officers in Palestine.

Fire guards have been installed in various synagogues in London to prevent similar acts of desecration.

The ashes of the burned scrolls were removed to the Willesden cemetery for burial.

The windows of the Zionist centre in Birmingham were smashed during the night by three men who managed to make good their escape.

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