

ON THE COMMUNAL STOEP

THE RELIGIOUS CONSCIENCE OF LOCAL JEWRY —THE "ELLUL SHOFAR"—AN OBTRUSIVE AFFAIR —AN APPROPRIATE SUGGESTION.

The Editor must not be deemed responsible for the opinions expressed by his contributors.

Signs of re-awakening of the religious conscience of Johannesburg Jewry are not only manifest all round me at the present time as I sit "On the Communal Stoep," but they absolutely protrude themselves into my meek, unoffending observation wherever I may cast my unoffending eye.

The religious conscience of our local Jewry is a strange and wonderful thing to behold. That that part of the religious organism of other Jewries may be equally strange and wonderful, I am not prepared to gainsay, but they do not come within the horizon that bounds the communal Stoep which I am at present inhabiting, and therefore my observation does not extend to them. It has become a trite saying that religion is dead for eleven months of the year and is revived for a period extending from three weeks to a month. In most cases, however, it is not even three weeks but only three days—*Rosh Hashona* and *Yom Kippur*—that there is any fluttering of the Jewish heart of sufficient intensity to give the impression that there is life yet in the four-thousand-year-old Jewish conscience.

So deep is the sleep, so comatose is the condition, so great is the oblivion, and so unconscious is the conscience of Judaism throughout the eleven months of the year, that it takes a full month of daily trumpet-blowings to bring some signs of life and movement in the religious body of Jewry, and therefore is it so necessary that, as is the custom, the *Shofar* should be blown throughout the month of *Ellul* up to *Rosh Hashona*.

And the Jewish conscience lets you know that it is awake throughout this short period of its activity, it obtrudes itself on your gaze willy-nilly, it asserts itself on every possible occasion and, in short, lets you know that it is there. There is no mistaking it, and as evidenced round the communal stoep on which I am now meditating it is a remarkable creation. Everywhere signs of its activity are manifest. *Chazanim* and choirs are busy rehearsing the sacred melodies of the *Yonim Noroim*...which some punning cynic once translated as "awful days" (he is long since dead and must now be having an "awful" time of it for his religious light-heartedness)—*Parnassim*, *Shammosim* and congregational secretaries are occupied more than ever in congregational matters, in allotting seats to members and *Yom Kippur* Jews, and in the thousand and one preparations that evidence the approach of the Jewish religious season. Even in my daily paper I see signs of the religious activity protruding themselves in the shape of advertisements of the various congregations notifying the times when the respective seating committees are in attendance for the purpose of allotting seats to applicants, and incidentally receiving cheques for the same.

One of course expects these advertisements as natural in the Jewish press circulating within the community, but why they should protrude themselves on one's gaze whilst reading the few cables that do find their way in the local dailies, or particulars of the latest squabble in the Tin Temple, passeth the understanding of the average layman. Is it only another means, in addition to the blowing of the *Shofar* in *Ellul* to awaken the sleeping Jewish conscience deep down in the heart of the son of Israel who never looks at a Jewish paper, alas, not even in the holy month of *Tishri*, and therefore our communal leaders are obliged to go into the highways and by-ways to search for the wandering sheep and bring them back to the fold!

But it is on the great Holy Days themselves that the Jewish religious conscience is most obtruding. I am, of course, not referring to the inside of Jewish homes—which should be pervaded with the religious atmosphere all round

the year, but especially on those most sacred days. Then do we see evidences thereof on the market-place, on the Exchange, aye, and even in our trams. For to the glory of Israel be it recorded that the trams are crowded on *Rosh Hashona* and *Yom Kippur* with Jews not, God forbid, going to their offices and places of business, but to worship in the synagogue and, on *Yom Kippur*, to spend the best part of the day in the sacred edifice. The market place is deserted, the Stock Exchange is closed, the trams are crowded with worshippers going to the synagogue with their praying shawls and prayer books in their hands; aye, and most wonderful of all, Parktown and Fordsburg cannot be distinguished for once in the year, for both are frock-coated and top-hatted, and although the gloss in the top-hats of the one may not be as brilliant as on those of the other, the contrast is not so great as to be noticeable at first glance.

So as not to spoil the holiday dresses of Jewish ladies and gentlemen of Yeoville and Berea by being obliged to come in contact with non-Jewish passengers on the municipal trams on *Rosh Hashona* and *Yom Kippur*, may I make a suggestion, which can be adopted either by the Jewish residents in those quarters themselves acting as a body, or by the committees of the synagogues patronised by them. It is that they should engage a number of special cars for the Holy Days mentioned to take them at pre-arranged times to and from synagogue. The advantages of such an innovation would be many besides the sartorial one above-mentioned. For instance, Divine service could be commenced in the trams on the way down simultaneously with services in the synagogue, and thus a saving of time would be effected on the part of all concerned, and incidentally more time could be spent at the breakfast table on *Rosh Hashona* and *Yom Kippur* mornings.

Are not all these strange and wonderful things to behold? And therefore, as I have said above, is not the religious conscience of our local Jewry a strange and wonderful thing, deserving of being recorded in the books of Johannesburg Jewry.

IF I CAN LIVE.

If I can live

To make some pale face brighter, and to give
A second lustre to some tear-dimmed eye,

Or e'en impart

One throb of comfort to an aching heart,
Or cheer some wayward soul in passing by;

If I can lend

A strong hand to the fallen, or defend
The right against a single envious strain,

My life, though bare

Perhaps of much that seemeth dear and fair
To us of earth will not have been in vain.

The purest joy

Most near to heaven, far from earth's alloy,
Is bidding cloud give way to sun and shine;

And 'twill be well

If on that day of days the angels tell

Of me, "She did her best for one of thine."

The Postmaster-General notifies that the establishment of a sub-telephone exchange in Yeoville, to serve the northern suburbs is expected to be completed and opened for business during next month. Intending subscribers should make early application for connections.

TO THE MAME-MAMO SYNDICATE

Dear Sir—Having tried your remedy for the cure of Consumption for the last four weeks, I have the great pleasure in testifying to the remarkable improvement effected since first taking it.

I might add that the soreness hitherto experienced both in chest and throat has entirely disappeared, and likewise the violent coughing.

I was able after a few days to resume work, and since then have not had occasion to remain at home.

You might make what use you like of this statement, and I shall certainly do all in my power towards advancing the interests of this treatment.

I beg to remain,

J. L. CALDWELL ("JINKS")

Poilmaker, S.A.R., Durban.

Durban, June 10, 1912.

Dear Sir—I have for years been worried with an ever recurring Bronchial Cough, I have been recommended to try your Mame-Mamo. I have done so. I am bound to say the result has become most gratifying.

M. BUTCHER.

So'd at all Chemists and Stores at 6s. 6d. and 8s. 6d
per bottle. Post free from the MAME-MAMO Syndicate
Box 918, Durban.