THE JOHANNESBURG JEWISH GUILD.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS.

A RECORD YEAR'S ACTIVITIES.

The following is the presidential address delivered by Mr. Fred Cohen, the retiring and re-elected president of the above formation, at the annual meeting held on May 8th, last, and pressed, in an exaltedly record of the services rendered, not only to the members of the Guild itself, but to the entire community by the Executive for the year 1917-18.

Mr. Cohen said: Once again it is my very great privilege to present to you the Annual Report of the Jewish Guild, and again I have to ask your indulgence to an indifferent speaker, who perform must rely upon the reading of copious notes. The importance of this occasion will further excuse my adhering to that procedure. In all the activities which it will be my duty to detail, the criticism may be offered that the Guild has covered no new ground; on the other hand, I think it will have to be conceded that the ground of those activities has been covered to a fuller extent, and that the progressive advance of the institution has been further consolidated. Neither I nor any member of the retiring Committee will claim credit for the extension of the Guild's activities by reason of any innovations of policy. It has been our great pleasure to continue on the lines adopted by our predecessors in office, lines which to my certain knowledge have been continuous for at least the last eleven years. It is pleasant and honourable to have been able to carry on and further such a record. Undoubtedly the great factor enabling the increased activities of the Guild, has been the acquiring of the Conservatory Rooms as a home—even if only a rented home—for the Guild. The increased work accomplished has been reflected in an increase of membership. Starting with 365 members at the commencement of the year we now have 674, an increase for the year of 169.

The corresponding improvement is shown in the Guild's finances. We commenced the year with an overdraft of £291 13s. 11d. and closed it with a credit balance of £294 18s. 10d. For the careful custodianship of our funds, we owe our thanks to our Finance Committee under the direction of our Treasurer, Mr. Monto Smollan.

Anyone who has attended Guild events in these rooms must have been impressed by the fact that our accommodation here is inadequate. The increasing membership the inadequate becomes a very serious problem, and again the question of permanent suitable housing has occasioned your Committee much anxious thought. To add to our troubles, the proprietors of this building notified us that we should have to pay an increased rental of £30, instead of £20, and it was only after some personal influence that the increase was reduced to £25. It is understood that the rental of these rooms is assessed at £40 per month, and there can be no doubt, therefore, that we are indebted to some personal sympathy of the owners for a financial sacrifice by which they have evidenced their goodwill to the Guild. That the problem of housing is receiving sympathetic consideration is further evidenced in the opinion which we hear continually expressed, that the time has arrived for the Guild to own its own building.

Our most important work is naturally devoted to the promotion of thought on Jewish subjects. In that connection I am proud to report that no less than 17 lectures and 2 debates on Jewish subjects were held during the year, these being as follows:—April 8th, "The Wander- Jews," Rev. W. Woolf; May 20th, "A Modern Jewish Philosopher—Bergson," Mrs. Asher; May 6th, "The Jewish and the War," Mr. M. Kaunitz; June 24th, "Dreams that come true," Rev. W. Woolf; July 8th, "Intolerance and its Effects on our History," Mr. A. L. Cohn; July 22nd, "Jewish Universities of Antiquity," Mrs. Asher; August 12th, "For the Jew after the War—What?" Rev. W. Woolf; August 19th, "Some aspects of Zionism," Mrs. Bertha Goudvis; September 9th, "Assimilation," Mr. A. L. Cohn; September 23rd, "The Jew in English Literature," Mrs. Asher; November 25th, "A South African Jewish Voortrekker," Mrs. Asher; December 9th, "The Jew in South Africa to-day," Mrs. Millin; January 22nd, "Is the Jew a Semite?" Mrs. Asher; February 24th, "The Purim Mystery," Mr. L. Cohen; March 3rd, "Jewish Genius," Dr. Landau; April 7th, "The words of Job—If a man dies—he shall live again," Mr. A. L. Cohn; April 24th, "Second Lecture on Judaism in Music—Meyerbeer" with Musical Illustrations, Dr. Landau; April 25th, Debate on Zionism, opened by Mr. Benzon Hersch; July 15th, "Is a reform of the Synagogue Necessary and Practicable at the present time," Messrs. A. L. Cohn and N. Levi.

Another branch of the Guild's activities, certainly not a secondary branch, is the promotion of Jewish intellectual and artistic interest. Under the former heading I am able to report that 19 lectures were delivered, being as follows:—April 5th, I. Science of Physical Culture, Tromp Van Diggelen; June 10th, 2, Socialism—True and False, Mark Lucas; June 15th, 3, A Criticism of the National Guild Scheme, E. J. Moynihan; July 30th, 4, National Guild's "An essay in reconstruction" R. T. A. Innes; August 26th, 5, "University Development," Dr. G. S. Corstorphine; September 2nd, 6, "The History of the Native Races in South Africa," Dr. M. Nathan; October 14th, 7, "Rome and Juliet"—the tragedy of petty quarrels, Rev. W. Woolf; October 21st, 8, "Rotation," Prof. J. P. Dalton; October 28th, 9, "Some Facts and Impressions concerning the South West Protectorate," Mr. E. A. Nathan; October 31st, 10, "The Violin—How it is made and played," Sig. Casi-rachi; November 4th, 11, "The nature of Scientific Theories," Mr. P. Stein; November 11th, 12, "An Essay in Revision of Continuation of lecture given on July 29th," Mr. R. T. A. Innes; November 18th, 13, "The Physical Basis of Music"—(with lantern illustrations), Mr. Leo Weinberg; December 23rd, 14, "Napoleons of the World of Con- quering," M. Eugenio de Sanon; January 15th, 15, "The W.E.A. What it is and What it Aims At?" Messrs. G. M. Clark and L. Brown; January 29th, 16, "Secret Societies," Mr. W. T. Lee; February 5th, "World and its Visions," Rev. W. Woolf; March 3rd, 18, "The Inquiries of our Jewry System," Mr. L. Harris; March 10th, 19, "Experiences around Verdun," Capt. A. M. Holloway. As well as these debates, Ten Minute Readings and Four Meanings of
the Parliamentary Debating Society.

During my year I continued the practice (which I inaugurated in this Guild) of inviting various prominent townsmen or members to preside at Guild Lectures, and in the way I think we have succeeded in adding interest to each occasion. Among the chairmen thus selected has been Mr. A. L. Cohn, who has ever been ready at short notice, either to address or preside at the Guild, other chairmen on various occasions have included — His Worship the Mayor (Mr. T. F. Allen) Mrs. B. Goudies, Messrs. H. Newhouse, M. J. Harris, R. T. A. Innes, H. Graumann, J. Langley, L. Lionel Goldsmid, L. Harris, G. Freeman, Emilie Nathan, Max Laugener, Dr. Corstorphine.

We are represented on the Jewish Board of Deputies by Mr. M. J. Harris, and on the Wittwatersrand University Committee by Dr. A. Abelheim.

We have continued our valued connection with the Johannesburg Public Library, and our membership roll shows numbers 550.

In accordance with the resolution taken at the last half Annual General Meeting, the Public Library has been approached for the purpose of arranging the opening of two sections for Yiddish and Hebrew, but no decision has as yet been arrived at by the Library authorities.

Under the heading of promoting artistic pursuits, I have first to record that as a result of the complimentary benefit we organized in the Selborne Hall on April 25th, 1917, Miss Dora Dorfman received a presentation amounting to £39, which we trust she found of service in encouraging the continuation of her musical studies.

We had the honour of producing a play by Mrs. Bertha Goudies, entitled "A Husband for Rachael," and the result of that production should certainly have sufficed to encourage that talented lady's further effort in play-writing.

Furthermore, our Dramatic Section has held 14 Readings and 5 Plays, as follows:

**Readings:**
- Masterlineck's "Blue Bird."
- "A Winters Tale."
- "Lady Wintemare's Fan."

**Play:**
- "The Man who Married the Street," (Produced by Miss Muriel Alexander, Actors: — Mr. Geo. Kremer, Mr. B. Kahn and Miss Karra)

A Husband for Rachael," (written and produced by Mrs. Bertha Goudies) and have on the programme, Actors: — Miss L. Lefkowitz, Misses Novo, Leon, L. Lionel Goldsmid, I. Solomon, M. Goldstein and I. Oarin.


"The Dear Departed."

"The Grand Messers."

On one occasion Messrs. G. Fallowes and Stephen Black together with the donor were present to judge of the achievements of certain members, and a Gold and Silver medal, presented by Mr. L. Lionel Goldsmid, were then awarded respectively to Miss G. Groundland and Messrs. B. Karra. The Guild is under a great debt of gratitude to Miss Marion Norman for her sagacity managed and coached our Dramatic Section for the first half of the year, and to Miss Muriel Alexander, who performed that service for the remainder of the year. During the first six months of that year Mr. Goldsmid acted as Chairman of that section, and for the second half, owing to that gentleman's various business pre-occupations, the Chairmanship devolved upon me.


Our special thanks are due to the individual members of the Entertainment Committee, each of whom was responsible for the organization of at least one musical evening: I have the honour of conducting the affairs of the Entertainment Committee as its Chairman during this year, receiving the able assistance of Hon. Secretaries in the persons of Mr. G. Oarin and Mr. W. Driman, and the Official Secretary, Miss Miller. In addition to these musical evenings there were eleven Cinderellas held during the year, being organized on a modest scale, as it is quite realized that any ambitious endeavor in the way of social functions would be quite out of place and contrary to general sentiment during this war time.

I cannot close reference to the Entertainment Committee without again referring to Miss Marion Norman and her brothers, Messrs. H. and W. Norman, who rendered invaluable assistance in this connection.

The "Omar Khayyam" evening and other entertainments permitted by these three talented artists will be long remembered by those candid members and visitors whose good fortune it was to be present.

Several benefits were organized in aid of Jewish charities and the Governor General's Fund, as follows:
- There was a Gilbert and Sullivan Evening held at the Palladium which resulted in a benefit to the Governor General's Fund of £254 3s. 4d.
- A Ping-Pong Tournament was held in January, resulting in a benefit of £5, the proceeds of which were handed over to the S. A. Jewish Orphanage.
- A "Court of Injustice" was held on February 17th, presided over by Mr. Clarence Becker and Mr. L. Lionel Goldsmid occasioning a great deal of amusement, and as a consequence £23 15s. 3d. further was handed over to the Governor General's Fund.
- The "Apex Films Co." (through their Manager, Mr. Zimmerman), very kindly presented the Guild with a free screen of the "Manxman," by Hall Caine. This function was held in the Town Hall on March 5th last, the proceeds totalled £213 9s. 0d. and were devoted to the Jewish War Victims Fund. A large portion of the sum mentioned was due to the great service of Mrs. Fisher, who catered for the programme advertisements.

This completes the list of benefits organized to various charities, making a total of £495 18s. 7d. irrespective of the complimentary benefit to Miss Dora Dorfman.
The Chess Section was inaugurated by Mr. Asher early in the year, Mr. Monto Smolan assumed the Chairmanship shortly afterwards, and Mr. E. Schwab has acted as Hon. Secretary. This section has played tournaments with the Union Chambers and the Ladies Club. The Chess Club plays in these Rooms every Thursday evening, and for those who desire to be instructed in the royal and ancient game, there are always ready for their instruction. We found ourselves fortunate in having several excellent players, and on one occasion Mr. S. Driman gave a lecture on Chess to the members of that Section.

The Tennis Section has continued to enjoy the hospitality of Club members who have kindly placed their courts at our disposal. Dr. Aronson is the Chairman of this Section, and from his report I gather that there has been some falling off of interest, due no doubt to these depressing times. Tournaments were organized in April, May, August and November, all of which were very successful and well attended.

A Swimming Club was organized, Mr. N. Wolff being the Hon. Secretary.

An immense amount of work has been done by the members of the various committees, particularly by those of the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee has held 13 regular monthly meetings and 22 special meetings. Several changes took place in the personnel of the Committee during the present year, the Rev. Wolff, Mr. A. V. Jacob and Miss D. Wessob retiring at various times and their places being filled respectively by Mr. E. Schwab, Mr. J. Mendelman and Miss Grace Freeman. Miss Miller’s services have been patient, painstaking and really excellent.

Among special duties voluntarily undertaken by the Executive Committee have been the stewardship by its individual members at all Guild functions, also at the commencement of the year a rota was arranged of individual members to attend banks for the purpose of popularizing these Rooms, and several pleasant functions were thus organized. Further, your Committee has been occupied for the greater part of the year in a rota of Duty Beds, which it is hoped will be pressed for consideration by a Special General Meeting as an early date. These rules are, as a matter of fact, in the hands of the printers.

It was intended by the Jewish Board of Deputies to hold a South African Jewish Congress during this month, and we had made arrangements to be represented, but the proposal has fallen through owing to the accentuated war conditions.

During last month the Vice-President and I were summoned to a meeting in the Mayor’s Parlour, where we found that representative Jewish leaders had been invited to discuss uninformod popular notions regarding the attitude of the Jews to the War. You doubtless know that certain action is proposed by the Jewish Board of Deputies. His Worship the Mayor was courteous itself, and no doubt learned something of the true facts. The meeting was of a confidential character, and I cannot go into particulars further than those which have already been published.

The Jewish Board of Deputies has asked this Guild’s assistance in obtaining contributions to a Fund which has been established, for entertaining Jewish soldiers who are passing through South African Ports, en route from England to "somewhere in the East," and I am sure that this is a matter which has only to be mentioned to receive your sympathetic furtherance.

Towards the end of last year the inspiration of the world was stirred by the British Government’s declaration favouring the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine. Being requested so to do by the local Zionist organisation, the Guild held a Special General Meeting on December 2nd, at which the following resolutions were adopted:

- That this meeting of the Johannesburg Jewish Guild strongly favours the reconstitution of Palestine as the National Home of the Jewish People.
- This Meeting greatly appreciates the declaration by the British Government of its sympathy with the principle of reconstituting Palestine as the National Home of the Jewish People and is grateful for its declared intention to facilitate the achievement of this object.
- This Meeting respectfully expresses His Majesty’s Government that any action to achieve that great hope of Jewry will be acclaimed with gratitude and the confirmed loyalty of Jews throughout the British Empire.

That these Resolutions be conveyed to His Excellency Viscount Buxton, Governor General of South Africa, for kind favour of transmission to His Majesty’s Government.

In due course a letter was received from Lord Buxton indicating his pleasure in transmitting, on behalf of the Guild, the above resolutions.

The war, which we all hoped would have been over, is still with us in all its unabated fury, but through the clash and storm, comes a message of hope. The Jewish people, and, indeed, the world, have reason to rejoice in hearing of the new, better world looms before us. We Jews especially have cause to feel happy to observe the spirit of religion and faith animating the mighty forces of Great Britain and her Allies. Our prayers are with them and with our brave boys fighting everywhere.

Ladies and Gentlemen! I merely have to propose formally that this report and the financial accounts (which latter have been circulated to every member) be adopted.

The General Dealer’s business registered by Joseph Sher, Revenue Office, Johannesburg, January, 1918, in respect of 132, Elloff Street, Johannesburg, has this day been sold and will be transferred to Joseph Henry Hicks.

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