A "CHASSIDIC" MELODY.

Found and Lost.

Is Jewish Folk Music Dying Out?

By J. KHLINO.

In a little cafe in Berlin a group of admirers of Jewish music came together to hear the Jewish composer, Engel, who had just arrived from Moscow with his colleagues, singers and instrumentalists, and to hear what they had to tell us exiles from Russia what had been happening in that country the last few years in the sphere of Jewish music. The arrival of this little group from the "country of the dead" brought us a strong blast of fresh air. We had a report of conditions entirely different to that to which we had become accustomed. It was not a picture made up entirely of black masses. It was not a series of Jeremiads. It was a bit of welcome news from Jewish Russia, a ray of light which suddenly cut through the all-enveloping darkness. It was a joyful message and it told us that during the last few years not only had there been scattered about all over Russia new Jewish graves, not only had the treasuries of our people been enriched with ever-growing lists of dead and rivers of tears, but that great things, too, had been achieved, and in particular in the sphere of Jewish music.

It will come as a surprise to many people, but the period of Jewish folk music is drawing to an end. Our music is throwing off its swaddling clothes.

OBSTACLES OVERCOME

In times of suffering in Russia, in the days of hunger and cold, the elect of the people, the men who always go on creating, overcome all the obstacles in their way. They did not give up their work and droop and die. They went on creating, adding links to the golden chain of our art. It was not enough for them to guard the treasure-house in which lay that which was already garnered—the ancient treasures, forgotten by most of us, never recognised by the world at large—they went on adding to the store, hoping that there would come a day when they would be able to deliver up their treasures to the Jewish people. That moment has largely now come. Engel told us all what the Jewish composers had been doing during the year they spent in Moscow, Petrograd and the other towns of Russia.

The principle task naturally was working up the great mass of material bequeathed by Ansky. The vast collections of folk songs, folk stories and folk legends which Ansky collected during many years has served and is still serving as the great-reservoir, the source of inspiration, and it will continue to be that source for many years to come. It was Ansky who marked out the soil, and it is his followers who are cultivating the ground. And the ground is bearing fruit. How often our Jewish composers have mourned the death of the father of the Jewish music expedition! How much Ansky could still have done!

Engel told us:

"While we were travelling with Ansky through the towns and villages of Russia we collected a mass of wonderful folk motives. One melody was missing, one link to complete the chain of *Chassidic* music, the melody of the creator of *Chassidism*, the melody of the *Baal Shem Tov*. One day, when the expedition was about to leave the township of Skwide, in the province of Kiev, our luggage already packed and the innkeeper's bill already paid, the attendant of the Rabbi of Skwide came running up and he sang to us the long sought-for melody of the creator of *Chassidism*, the melody of the *Baal Shem Tov*. It was impossible, however, to stop. We could not take it down on a gramaphone record, as we did usually. We wrote down the words and notes on a piece of paper and during the upheaval in Russia it was lost, together with many other valuable things. It was not the only loss which was sustained by the expedition. But what remained was enough for the Jewish composers to go on working upon."

Engel has written a large number of children's songs. He left Moscow and settled in a Jewish children's colony, Malachowke, and here among the children he created his children's songs. Later on came his greater works. The great art theatre, the Habimah, was developed, and it had to have its music. Engel became its composer. He wrote the music to Ansky's "Dibuk," a work miles in advance of the primitivism of the folk songs from which it derived. Here is the beginning of an independent complex of Jewish national music.

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Engel has written a great deal of music for Hebrew folk songs, Yemenite folk songs from Palestine, Bialik's songs, and the songs of other Hebrew poets. And he encountered a difficulty. How was he to read the words of the songs? In the Sephardic or the Ashkenazic manner? It would mean so much difference to the construction of his melody.

Engel told us that Bialik, too, had said that for this reason it was difficult to write anymore folk songs, the question whether to adopt the Ashkenazic or the Sephardic manner was a very grave obstacle.

Engel and the rest of the Jewish composers in Russia decided to adopt the Sephardic manner and it is in accordance with that manner that all their music has been written.

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After Engel's name come the names of Jewish composers, old and new, who have created for us a great musical literature. Alexander Krein, who has written a great deal of music to Bialik's words and was the first to write a Jewish sonata. It must be realised what a daring step this was. Our Jewish musicians often doubt their own powers. They remind themselves frequently how recently it was that they

John Grouch.

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started. How long is it since they were at the elementary stages, and how quickly they are now striding forward. Alexander Krein dared to write the first Jewish sonata. In addition to that, he has written a musical poem, "Solomayo", and a new *Kaddish*, and a whole series of other works.

Then there is the second Krein—Gregory Krein—who writes songs without words. There is Achron, with his old motives turned into a new works. Achron's "Koldunie" (The Witch) has very little in common with the old-time "Koldunie", but it has grown out of it. Then Saminski has given us his "Tales for the Pianoforte", his "Psalms" and his "David in the Wilderness."

And again, Ansky is the man who influenced Milner to write a Jewish opera for the words of his "Ashmodai".

And finally, there is Genessin, who has been recently in Palestine and wrote his "Song of the Holy Land". Genessin stands in the vanguard, maybe at the very head of our music. His musical drama, "The Childhood of Abraham", has aroused everywhere immense attention.

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This long list of musicians and their works could be extended much further. It makes one's head dizzy to reflect what was out total possession only a short while back and what it is to-day. What did we have? About 30 folk songs, which were already become hackneyed, repertoire of every musical evening we arranged. And to-day? A great storehouse, a mighty collection which gives confidence and hope in the creative powers of our people.

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A Student's Philosophy of Religion*

This book is the outcome of a course of lectures on the philosophy of religion delivered by Prof. Wright to the students of Cornell University. Among them were Christians, Jews, and others who professed adherence to no faith. These circumstances help to explain the striking objectivitad, impartial, fair-mindedness of the book. The author writes more as a philosopher than a religionist and this perhaps gives the book both its weakness and its strength. For though the author writes that every man should dispassionately seek, on purely intellectual grounds, to know whether there is a God, yet it is doubtful whether merely intellectual enquiry often leads a man to religion. First one is a religionist and then one's philosophy enables one to give reasons for the faith that is in one. In "Natural Law and the Spiritual World "Prof. Drummond tells us how his religion and science occupied separate compartments of his mind and then the two currents overflowed and combined. As a rule however, the two compartments are not kept separate, but as a man's intellectual powers and his general knowledge grow, so all the time they give fresh body, consistency and strength to his religious faith. But if the fervour with which the religious philosopher advocates and justifies his faith is to a certain extent wanting in this book yet we have compensating advantages. The author deals with religion as a whole and not with any one faith in particular. He seeks to make the significance of religion clear both by a consideration of various religions and also of different types of religious character. There are excellent chapters on Brahmanism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and the religions of Greece and Rome, and also accounts of the religions of savage tribes and even of tribal customs that cannot strictly be called religion at all. And by the consideration of all these developments the author is led to define religion as "the endeavour to secure the conservation of socially recognised values through specific actions that are believed to evoke some agency different from the ordinary ego of the individual, or from other merely human beings, and that imply a feeling of dependence upon this agency."

This may be a good natural history definition of religion. But as the acorn is known from the oak and not, vice versa, so is religion apprehended from its highest forms and not from its earliest stages. We should have preferred a definition that regarded recognition of the Deity and of our duty towards Him as the essence of the matter. It is true that Buddhism does not specifically acknowledge a Deity and yet is full of noble inspiration. But may that not be the specific weakness of that great faith which needs to be embodied in it to make Buddhism truly universal. Again, while the merits and the defects of the great religions are pointed out, there is scarcely a sufficiently strong sense of their fundamental unity, such as is so splendidly emphasised in Miss Underhill's latest work "The Life of the Spirit and the Life of to Day" That great religions evolving independently should have so much in common, and should be so full of inspiration, is in itself a striking testimony to the validity of the religious ideal, and to the objective reality of the object of its devotion. In the psychological section the author deals with the nature and development of the religious sentiment, and has some good chapters on prayer and mysticism. After thus elucidating the nature of religion, he is created to deal with the scientific treatment of its objective reality. This last is the best part of the book. We see how the development of thought has brought about great changes in the conception of the Deity. Traditional theistic and pantheistic ideas have been superseded, and modern theistic and pantheistic conceptions are often held concurrently. The conceptions of the latest religious philosophers are given and evaluated. There are biblographies at the end of every chapter of the book and valuable notices also in the notes. The bibliographical notices to this section of the book are particularly important and enable the student to pursue the subject thoroughly. While the author gives his own views, he everywhere enables and encourages the student to work out his own