

Sir B. Merriman Springs Surprise.

Jerusalem, 20th November.

Sir Boyd Merriman sprung a surprise to-day by calling on Mr. Pinchas Rutenberg, Chairman of the Vaad Leumi (National Council of the Jews of Palestine) before Mr. Stoker, Counsel for the Arab Executive, had completed his cross-examination of Mr. Luke. At the outset Mr. Rutenberg said that Chief Rabbi Kook, with tears standing in his eyes, had told him about the renewed Moslem building work on the Wailing Wall, and the undignified position in which is placed the Jews, and he had felt the humiliation deeply.

Mr. Rutenberg's evidence took up the whole of the morning session, except for three-quarters of an hour at the end, when Mr. Luke, who had been waiting in an ante-room, was recalled and Mr. Stoker continued his cross-examination, and in the afternoon Mr. Rutenberg was again heard in camera. His public evidence dealt with past events in connection with the outbreak, and it is understood that the evidence he gave in camera concerns the more recent happenings, since Mr. Rutenberg, previously standing aloof from politics, has been interesting himself in affairs, culminating with his acceptance of the Chairmanship of the Vaad Leumi.

Feeling the position keenly, Mr. Rutenberg said he had gone to see Mr. Luke on 8th August, and had told him that the excitement among the Jews was becoming dangerous. Mr. Luke thought that he was exaggerating, but he told him of some Jewish youths in Haifa who intended coming to Jerusalem for Tisha B'Av and had asked him (Mr. Rutenberg) to use his influence to prevent it.

This point is of some importance, since Mr. Luke in his evidence on Saturday said that Mr. Rutenberg had told him about the youths coming from Haifa. Mr. Rutenberg went on to say that he had promised to arrange that no one should come from Haifa, but he had insisted that Mr. Luke should prevent large crowds of Jews registering a protest on Tisha B'Av, because of the possibility of a reaction on the part of the Arabs. He advised Mr. Luke to use British police to regulate the visitors to the Wall, allowing them only in small parties. Mr. Luke had promised to do this.

Mr. Rutenberg said that he had told Mr. Luke that he foresaw an unavoidable clash owing to the provocative attitude of the Arabs, who were interfering with the worshippers at the Wall and causing them annoyance and irritation.

Mr. Rutenberg said that he had left for London the following day and saw there Sir John Chancellor on 20th August, and complained to him because Mr. Luke had taken no heed of his warning and had permitted a Jewish demonstration and an Arab counter-demonstration.

The Blowing of the Shofar.

On 11th October, Mr. Rutenberg stated, passing to the point of the prohibition of the blowing of the Shofar at the Wailing Wall on the Day of Atonement, Mr. Harry Sacher had asked him as Chairman of the Vaad Leumi to use his influence with the Rabbis not to blow the Shofar at the conclusion of the Yom Kippur service at the Wailing Wall. Mr. Rutenberg thereupon saw Sir John Chancellor, who advised him to speak to Mr. Luke. He did so, and Mr. Luke explained that he had given the order prohibiting the blowing of the Shofar because the Moslems had protested against the Shofar having been blown a few days before at the Rosh Hashanah services.

Mr. Rutenberg warned Mr. Luke that no Government is entitled to interfere with the Jewish order of service, that not only Jews, but the Christian world, too, would be shocked by this action, and the Government would break its neck on that blowing of the horn. Both he and Mr. Sacher, he proceeded, had pointed out that the Government had yielded to threats. Mr. Luke was impressed by the argument and said that he would inform Sir John Chancellor.

If the Government thought the blowing of the horn would bring trouble, Mr. Rutenberg said, the Government should have made the Wall inaccessible to Jews rather than force them to a departure from their ritual. Sir John Chancellor, he said, had refused to demand the prohibition.

Wailing Wall Jews' Holiest Place.

Mr. Silley, for the Palestine Government, cross-examining Mr. Rutenberg, tried to get him to agree that Chief Rabbi Kook had wanted the status quo changed and had claimed the right of consultation as to what should be allowed on Moslem Wakf property.

Rabbi Kook considers the Wailing Wall the holiest place of the Jewish people, Mr. Rutenberg replied. The Chief Rabbi is entitled to be consulted on matters affecting freedom of worship and decency at the Wall. His only hope, he said, was to bring about a dignified solution of the problem with the assistance of the Government. He agreed with Chief Rabbi Kook's complaints, Mr. Rutenberg said, against making the Wailing Wall pavement a thoroughfare, against the muezzin's call in the middle of the Jewish prayers, and against Arab donkey drivers passing by during the service and annoying Jewish worshippers. There is nothing in the new regulations about the blowing of the Shofar, Mr. Rutenberg continued, and its prohibition is humiliating to the worshippers and offensive even to non-observant Jews. Chief Rabbi Kook had agreed to omit an essential part of the Jewish service in order to save lives, and although the Shofar had always been blown in previous years.

"SYNCOPIATION" AT THE ASTORIA.

"Syncopation," showing at the Astoria is 100 per cent. American, the scenes of cabaret and restaurant festivities, the straight love story with its masher and its devoted hero, the highly optimistic attitude towards big money, the jazz music and the genuine nasal twang and intonation of the voices, all make it a real and everyday expression of "Yankee" life.

As a "movie" it is no better and no worse than the average film. As a "talkie" "Syncopation" is not quite so perfect. The realism with which the American voice is rendered sometimes makes hearing a trifle difficult to unaccustomed ears. This, however, is almost entirely overcome after the first half hour.

The rest of the programme is unusually interesting. A very fine and clear address by Sir Robert Baden-Powell on the World Peace Scout Movement is as moving and as life-like as if the old Chief Scout himself were standing on the platform, while the Micky Mouse Sound Cartoon is as funny as its predecessors.

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