

Current Communal Comments

By "HAMABIT."

A Hebrew Journal.

I was rather interested to learn of the project being set on foot for the establishment of a Hebrew journal in South Africa. At first thought such a project does not appear to be feasible, but on closer study there should be a possibility here for the establishment of a small Hebrew monthly.

Evidence of the spread of Hebrew during the last few years is seen on all hands. Consciousness of the necessity for a knowledge of Hebrew is more or less well implanted in all sections of the community and the recent arrival here of a number of Palestinians and also immigrants from the Tarbut schools in Lithuania—all speaking a fluent Hebrew—has undoubtedly affected the situation.

I was deeply impressed when attending the Hebrew meeting addressed by Dr. Mossinsohn in Johannesburg and also, some time later, the remarkable Herzl memorial meeting at the Jewish Guild (organised by the Hebrew Speaking Circle) to note how a purely Hebrew meeting could attract such large audiences in the Golden City. There is obviously a considerable Hebrew-speaking section in Johannesburg and I know there are similar groups of Hebrew-speaking enthusiasts in various parts of the country. The publication of a monthly journal would further develop the spread of Hebrew.

The question, however, is one of finance. Printing in this country is an expensive item, and it would be necessary to secure considerable financial backing before such a publication could be issued. Is there sufficient "guts" in the movement to overcome a veritable mountain of difficulties?

£5,000 Needed.

The S.A. Jewish Orphanage is anxious to get a sum of about £5,000 wherewith to build and equip a very much-needed new wing to provide accommodation for about 100 more children. When "Arcadia" was bought and the children moved into it from Kensington and from the Doornfontein Jewish Aged Home, in the latter of which the children from Russia had been accommodated temporarily, no one thought that even the liberal dimensions of the Parktown home would prove inadequate for the needs of the South African Jewish Orphanage.

Nevertheless, that never-imagined state of affairs has been reached to-day, and with a total number of children amounting to 260 odd—a record figure that was also never anticipated in the early nineteen-twenties—it is not surprising that the committee has been forced to launch out with an appeal for the wherewithal to erect a substantial building on its property, although the present is a time of depression, and people are not at all flush with money.

The Orphanage, however, is a deservedly popular institution, and headed as it is by an excellent committee of hard workers, there is every reason to anticipate that the much-needed new wing will ere long be an accomplished fact.

Jewish Amateurs.

There is in South Africa a very high standard of dramatic talent amongst Jewish amateurs. It is quite obvious that the growing Repertory movement in Johannesburg is a result mainly of Jewish enthusiasm. At the head of this movement is Miss Elsie Salomon, the well-known and talented elocution teacher, and an excellent forerunner is Miss Muriel Alexander, who presides over the destinies of the Repertory Players.

It is always pleasing to note the fine work which is put into the amateur plays continually being produced. In other centres throughout the country there is similar activity on the part of young Jewish men and women who study roles in various comedies and plays and produce them before delighted Jewish audiences.

The pity of it is that hardly ever is a play of Jewish interest produced by these players.

It is true that there are not many plays written in English containing Jewish subjects, but still some such plays have been published, and we know of a few that have been written by South African writers. After all, amateurs of the Jewish persuasion should not merely copy the work of dramatic organisations in other communities, but should try to create a special atmosphere of their own.

One would like to see a performance of "The Melting Pot," by Israel Zangwill, or the famous play of "Dr. Kohn," by Max Nordau. A number of Shalom Asch's Yiddish dramas have been translated into English, and I believe that the Bloch Publishing Company of New York has a whole series of one-act plays of Jewish interest which are suitable for produc-

tion. Recently the Bulawayo Jewish Guild successfully produced a one-act play of Jewish interest by a South African writer, yet I have not heard that any other dramatic group has followed this example.

Jews Who Are Not.

The habit of claiming well-known people as Jews who are not members of our race or faith is reaching a degree when it has become rather nauseous. An instance of this was indicated by the recent death of Leopold Auer, the famous violinist, cited by the recent death of Leopold Auer, the famous violinist. One Jewish paper wrote of him as the great Jewish violinist. One newspaper hailed him as one of the greatest Jewish *virtuosos* of his time.

Now it is a fact that whilst Leopold Auer was born of Jewish parents, he was by no means a Jew. In the early 'twenties he was converted to Christianity. It was a purely voluntary act on his part, and he did it in a public manner. Throughout his life he protested strongly against any connection with Jewish people, and resented any reference to him as a Jew.

I feel sure that we can all admire Auer as the great violinist and teacher, and appreciate his contribution to the art of his time, but we can do so without in any way connecting him with our people. We take no credit in having given an artist to the world who all his life was ashamed of his historic origin.

A Colonel Passes.

At the early age of 44, there passed away in Switzerland Lieut.-Colonel Harold J. Solomon. A few years ago this brilliant scion of Anglo-Jewry was stricken down by a malignant disease, which robbed him of the use of his legs, yet he continued to face life with cheerful and unabated courage. The late Colonel was chairman of the Anglo-Palestine Club, of which the late Lord Balfour was patron and Mr. James de Rothschild is president. When the Palestine Potash, Limited, was established to work the Dead Sea salts concession granted to Messrs. Tulloch and Novomeysky, Colonel Solomon became a director of the company, representing the Jewish Colonial Trust on the Board. He was also a member of the Council of the Economic Board of Palestine and Governor of the Haifa Technical Institute.

During the war, Colonel Solomon rendered signal service to the Serbian Army. It was to him that the onerous task fell in a large manner, in the early days of the war, of reconditioning, re-equipment and re-equipping the routed and disorganised forces of Serbia. He acquitted himself nobly of what was in truth a superhuman task, for which his unique organising gifts and Army Service Corps experience peculiarly fitted him. It is, indeed, but the sober truth to say of him that he was largely instrumental in recreating the Serbian Army and enabling it once again to take the field as a valuable fighting unit.

Colonel Solomon was keenly interested in Palestine affairs, particularly in the industrial development of the country. Soon after the war he became Director for Commerce and Industry in Palestine Administration under Sir Herbert Samuel, a post which he held for a number of years. His death will be deeply regretted by Palestine Jewry, which admired this fine specimen of an Anglo-Jewish gentleman.

An Old "Free School" Boy.

Special interest is lent to the celebration of the golden wedding of Mr. and Mrs. Isaacs, of Pietermaritzburg, on account of the fact that they are amongst the oldest Jewish residents in that city.

Mr. Isaacs was educated at the Jews' Free School in Bell Lane, London, and was a contemporary of the late Israel Zangwill. This school was one of the most famous schools in London. Before it was incorporated in the educational machinery of the London County Council, thousands of Jewish children who exclusively attended were the special interest of the Rothschild family for years. There was annually a wholesale distribution of corduroy clothing, and this particular attire became known as the "Free School" clothings. The material was of so hard and durable a nature that the strongest antics of the lads did not succeed in making holes in the cloth. As most of the children were from poor families, it can be imagined what a boon the annual free distribution of such clothing was to the parents.

It was at the famous Jews' "Free School" that Mr. A. M. Abrahams, the respected president of the S.A. Zionist Federation, was engaged as a teacher when he accepted the call many years ago to come to South Africa.