

Current Communal Comments

By "HAMABIT."

Good Sense.

A certain member of Parliament in the Golden City has made himself notorious by some vulgar attacks on the Jews in this country. The "enlightened" gentleman blames Jews for the present depression, and suggests that fifty thousand of them leave South Africa. He advised Jews to release their money and stop the depression, and hoped that they would take the warning. If they did not, he declared, "We shall drive them out!"

This reminds me of a story I heard the other day about a Jew who entered a train in Germany. The only other occupant was a cultured German gentleman, and the two of them spoke together amicably for hours on all manner of subjects. The German gentleman then began to talk of the present economic depression in his country and declared that that was all due to the Jews.

"Yes," answered the other occupant of the compartment, "Jews and umbrellas."

"Why umbrellas?" asked the German gentleman in surprise.

"Why Jews?" replied the Jew quietly.

I am only sorry that the vulgar tirade of the "enlightened" member of Parliament has called forth letters from Jewish defenders in the Johannesburg press. Oh! if we would only be saved from our "friends" who rush into print at the slightest provocation. What has become of Jewish dignity these days?

The decision of the S.A. Jewish Board of Deputies in deciding to take no official action in regard to the reported speeches, which are held to be unworthy of notice, is a dignified attitude to adopt, and I congratulate the Board upon its good sense.

"1930."

The last twelve months have been replete with momentous happenings on the horizon of World Jewry. Jews were never so much in the spotlight as in 1930 and as the year has passed into the limbo of history, it may not be useless to summarise some of the outstanding events of the period. I give them as follows in the order of importance:—

- (1) The issuance of the British White Paper and the Simpson Report.
- (2) The publication of the Shaw Commission's report.
- (3) The death of Lord Balfour.
- (4) The Mandates Commission's statement on Palestine.
- (5) The anti-Semitic riots in Berlin.
- (6) The anti-Semitic outbreak in Roumania.
- (7) The establishment of a united front in American Zionism.
- (8) The arrest of the Minsk rabbis.
- (9) The appointment of Sir Isaac Isaacs as Australian Governor-General.

News in connection with the above events was blazoned forth throughout the Press of the world. As a matter of fact, they not only interested Jews, but also the general newspaper reader. Each of the events recorded affected not only a handful of Jews of one country, but had repercussions throughout the Jewish world.

The most unique of the above Jewish news-stories was, perhaps, the death of Lord Balfour. Seldom has the passing of a non-Jew caused such genuine anguish and elicited such widespread regret and sorrow among world Jewry as did the passing of Lord Balfour. Forever associated with the Palestine cause, by virtue of having been the author of the Balfour Declaration, Lord Balfour's death was certainly one of the big Jewish news-stories of the year.

The arrest of the Minsk rabbis at the height of the Russian drive on religion aroused world-wide protest. Jews and non-Jews joined in a huge torrent of protest. When the news came that the rabbis faced death, a thunderous wave of revulsion against the Soviets shook the world. The rabbis were the leading actors in a tremendously powerful world drama of persecution. From the dramatic elements alone this story merits inclusion in the above list.

Habimah.

I note that the Habimah players are further enhancing their reputation. On their present visit to London this famous group of Hebrew actors repeated their success in "The Dybbuk" and had a distinguished audience on their first night at the Phoenix Theatre. Amongst those present was Sir Denison Ross, who afterwards stated that he understood every word of the Hebrew play. I wonder how many Jews in the audience could truthfully have said the same. Another interesting visitor was Mr. Gordon Selfridge, the celebrated department store owner, who was much impressed by the magnificent acting he witnessed.

A performance on the part of the Habimah players which has intrigued London theatre-goers is that of Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night." The translation is by Saul Tchernichowsky, and the conception shown in the production is entirely new. It is all a riotous farce, carried out with gusto and knock-about clowning. It must be rather interesting to see the central figure of Toby Belch rollicking about in Hebrew invectives.

Incidentally, I wonder if it is not possible to secure a visit of the Habimah players for South Africa. The acting of this company of artists would be a revelation to the average play-goer. Large audiences could be assured in Johannesburg, Cape-town and some of the other larger centres. In any case, I throw out this valuable suggestion to Mr. I. W. Schlesinger. He would be doing a service to Jewish art and at the same time a visit from so famous a company of players could not possibly prove a serious commercial loss.

Goodwill!

The movement to create goodwill amongst Jews and Christians is spreading in America. Recently a minister in a fashionable quarter in New York set up a statue of a prominent Jew of our day in recognition of his worth to the human race. As a result, a well-known leader has challenged the Jews to display a similar breadth of spirit. He asks the Jews to reclaim Jesus as one of their great sons.

I fancy that if Jews would agree to this suggestion, the first condition would be that the Christians cease teaching that the Jews crucified Jesus, and the second condition would be to remove from the highways and byways of the world the figures of Jesus on the cross, his body dripping with blood—a spectacle that stirs up and perpetuates revengeful judgment of the Christians towards the Jew. The Jew will view the character of Jesus differently only when the latter is no longer a symbol that permits his followers to perpetuate a libel of two thousand years.

The test, therefore, is rather upon the Christian than the Jew in any movement of goodwill between the two peoples.

Another Jewish Genius.

The Jewish race has not yet reached its period of decline predicted so often by its detractors. For there is Einstein, the product of German Jewry, and Yehudi Menuhin, the product of American Jewry.

In recognition of the genius of this thirteen-year-old marvel, six of the oldest and most famous orchestras in Europe will for the first time so alter their regulations that during the course of next year they will allow themselves to become his accompanists in concerts to be given under their auspices.

Joint concerts with Yehudi Menuhin and the following famous orchestras will be held next year: the Hamburg Philharmonic, under Karl Muck; the Berlin Philharmonic, under Fritz Busch; the Leipzig Symphony, under Bruno Walter; the Budapest Symphony, under the composer Ernest Donanyi; the Paris Conservatoire Orchestra, under George Enescu, and the Vienna Philharmonic, under Franz Schalk.

The world will watch with keen interest the career of this young Jewish musical genius, in the hope that he may escape the wastage that often overtakes the fate of the infant prodigy.

A Year!

As a distinct contribution to Jewish humour, the following peculiarly South African "quip" is of interest.

The question is asked:

"What is the difference between a *piccanin* of eight years and a *piccanin* of nine years?"

And the answer is: "Ah Shwartz Yohr."

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