

Death of Mr. M. D. Hersch

A Great Loss to South African Jewry

WE deeply regret to announce the death which occurred on Thursday evening last of Mr. Meyer David Hersch, the well known Jewish pioneer of South Africa and a man of outstanding personality and of fine Hebrew scholarship.

The news has been received with the deepest sorrow in Johannesburg and throughout South Africa, where the name of Meyer David Hersch was deeply respected.

It is indicative of the fine Zionist sentiment of the deceased that his last public action was to post his vote in favour of his nominees to the forthcoming Zionist Congress. He signed the form in the General Hospital just a few days before he passed away.

Meyer David Hersch was born in Janishky, Lithuania, on the 20th Iyar, 1858. He was known from his early youth as an *eihu*. Entering *cheder* at the age of five, he became well learned in the Talmud and developed, as a young man, into a great Hebrew scholar.

At the age of nineteen, he began to take a keen interest in public affairs, showing a special interest in Hebrew education, first in Janishky, then in Shavel and Warsaw, where he later resided. This keen interest in Jewish affairs, he brought with him to South Africa, when he came here for the first time forty-three years ago and remained with him throughout his life. His particularly deep interest in Hebrew education was manifested to the last, for had he lived, he was to have laid the foundation stone of the *Talmud Torah* of the Berea Synagogue on Sunday afternoon last.

Mr. Hersch was one of the first men to take an interest in modern Zionism. It was at his home that the first meetings of the old *Chovevi Zion* movement were held and he was one of the first members of that activity in Russia. From his earliest childhood he wrote a classic and fluent Hebrew and he later contributed to many journals in Russia, including the *Hamelitz*, *Hazefirah*, *Ha'Ivri*, etc.

When Mr. Hersch first came to this country, he resided near Germiston, and was one of the founders of the Germiston Hebrew Congregation. He returned after four years to his native land, where he then married Mrs. Ida Hersch, and settled in Warsaw. They remained there for nine years. During this period he took an active part in all Jewish literary and social movements of the time. He then came to South Africa and settled here finally and was soon followed by the members of his family, in whom he instilled a great love for Judaism and inspired them with an enthusiasm for the Jewish National revival.

He was the father of six sons and three daughters. Four of his sons are settled in South Africa, one of whom, Mr. Benzion S. Hersch, is the ardent Zionist worker, who has been intimately associated for the last thirty years with the development of South African Zionism, and who was, for many years, a most important member of the Executive Council of the S.A. Zionist Federation. Mr. Hersch's labours during the last few years have been specially notable for his chairmanship of the Editorial Board of the *Zionist Record*, —a position he only relinquished some two years ago on account of the state of his health.



The Late Mr. M. D. Hersch.
[Photo by Levenson.]

The eldest son is Professor L. Hersch, of the Geneva University, who is a well known authority on sociology, and one of the eighteen international experts who contributed to the authoritative work entitled "What Will Be the Character of the Next War?", recently published by the League of Nations. One of the late Mr. Hersch's sons, a doctor, was murdered some years ago in Russia. His widow and children are now resident in this country. The youngest son is Mr. I. J. Hersch, the well known communal worker and president of the Berea Hebrew Congregation.

The late Mr. Hersch is survived by his wife and his five sons and three daughters. Mrs. Hersch is one of the finest women Hebrew scholars and Talmudists in South Africa.

The Funeral

THE funeral on Friday afternoon was attended by a large course of mourners and was representative of every angle of Jewish life on the Rand.

The cortege, which left the home of Mr. and Mrs. B. S. Hersch, in Lily Avenue, made a halt at the Berea Synagogue, of which Mr. I. J. Hersch is President, and of which the deceased was a loyal member. Here an impressive short service took place and prayers were recited by Cantor S. Steinberg.

The cortege then proceeded to the Jewish cemetery in Brixton, where a large assembly of mourners had already gathered. All the mourners then proceeded in stages to the graveside, where prayers were intoned by the Cantor S. Steinberg.

Chief Rabbi, Dr. J. L. Landau, expressed, in moving terms, the sense of loss felt at the death of Mr. Hersch, not only by the immediate members of his family, but by the whole of the Jewish community.

Dr. Landau referred to the fine qualities possessed by the deceased, who had influenced all who came into contact with him, with his fine idealism. He had, however, left great possessions behind him in his children, all of whom he had imbued to take an active interest in the welfare of the Jewish community.

The chief mourners were his widow, Mrs. M. D. Hersch, his sons, Messrs. Benzion S. Hersch, J., M. B. and I. J. Hersch, and his daughters, Mrs. M. Levy, Mrs. J. Levy, of Benoni, and Miss Sadie Hersch.

The pall-bearers were: Messrs. M. Levy, J. Levy, T. Hersch, L. Melamed, R. Lissoos, I. Oschry, H. Jacobson, L. J. Markowitz, H. Savell, Max Levy, H. Lourie J. Janower, S. Kessel, D. Mierowsky, and M. L. Genusow; Arnold Ullman, H. Ullman, Anton Ullman, W. Senior, S. Tolkin, H. Schmidt, S. Gordon and A. Behrman.

Appreciations

THE lesson which both the Bible and the Rabbis impress upon us, the Bible in the famous fables of Jotham, and the Rabbis in the well-known story of José Ben Kisma, has rarely been disregarded with impunity. The roots of the noblest plants placed in a barren, arid, sapless soil must die, and noble souls which lack the vital elements of a spiritual environment must share a similar fate.

I knew two gifted men in South Africa, N. D. Hoffmann and David Goldblatt, both men of ability and literary ambition. N. D. Hoffmann came to this country as author of several Hebrew books and as a well-known Hebrew journalist, enjoying the respect of his contemporaries. He was the first editor in South Africa of a Yiddish journal, of Hebrew publications and of a Yiddish Year Book. David Goldblatt was perhaps a man of minor talent, yet full of energy, literary ambition, the editor of journals, and the man who conceived in this country the ambitious idea of publishing an encyclopaedia in Yiddish, and actually published twelve parts of the first letter. Both these men achieved little with all their labours and personal sacrifices. They did not even receive the appreciation and encouragement of their South African fellow-Jews. Hoffmann died poor and worn. Goldblatt left for America and disappeared in the raging tide of American-Jewish life.

Meyer David Hersch, who left his native country as an able and learned young man, full of idealism, one of the first *Chovevi Zion* in Poland, found here in the last decades of the previous century a real desert, fit only for the natives and adventurers. He was exposed to most trying social conditions, but he fortunately travelled with a *Sefer Torah* in his arms, and with its ideals deeply enshrined in his soul. He was privileged to retain his Jewish idealism, the faith in the invincibility of the Jewish national spirit, and his strong conviction of the ultimate victory of the Zionist ideal.

He was also fortunate in possessing in his wife a learned daughter of Zion, who not only shared his ideals and convictions, but had also drawn her faith and inspiration from the same fountain of Jewish literature. She was able to add

strength and force to his views and beliefs, and to offer him that sap of life which the barren ground of South Africa had denied him. He was also fortunate in transmitting his inspiration to his sons and daughters, in whom his spirit will continue to live, to weave threads of idealism in the growing web of South African Jewish national life.

J. L. L.

A Great and Wise Friend

THE late Mr. M. D. Hersch was above all a modest man, and would not have desired panegyrics to be lavished upon his memory. Nor is the writer actuated by the wish to praise, but only by the wish to pay the tribute of truth to the memory of one esteemed and loved by all.

He was a Hebrew scholar of very considerable attainments, distinguished by a natural facility for self expression and a capacity for writing a Hebrew that combined modern lucidity with the richness and ingenuity of the Maskilic period. Already some forty years ago he contributed to the Hebrew paper *Hazefirah* a series of articles which delighted the widely scattered readers of Hebrew by the vivid expressive style in which the strange and far off land of South Africa, was depicted.

He possessed a profound knowledge of the Bible with all the extensive rich lore that has grown around it. Indeed, it was more than knowledge that he possessed. The Bible and its lore was rather an experience of his deeper self. Its world was to him a living reality in which he moved freely and with sureness; Abraham and David were as near and self evident as the heroes of his own day. One even felt that something of the spirit of the Old Testament pervaded his own life and personality.

It has been rightly said that the heroes of the Bible were not divine figures standing aloof, in their super human splendour, from the human scene. On the contrary, they are portrayed as mortal men and women whose greatness lies in their dignified humanity, their unflinching faith and their regard for life in its brief sojourn on Earth.

Mr. Hersch impressed one deeply with his gentle humanity, his never failing optimism, his regard for the every-day needs of his fellow human beings and his tolerance of their weaknesses as well as admiration of their finer qualities.

Though his generation failed to comprehend the need for and the possibility of, a secular Judaism, he himself so well understood human reality and its demands that he made his own the newer orientations in Jewish life and destiny.

For himself he accepted sorrow and even calamity with nobility and serenity of spirit that was truly inspiring. We have lost in him a great and wise friend whose very presence in our midst was a stimulus and a source of confidence.

L. M.

A Lover of His People

MEYER DAVID HERSCHE, who has just passed away, was a Jew of outstanding nobility, and possessed of a remarkable character. A man of sterling honesty, he had an unstinted belief in the good there is to be found in humanity. He loved his own people with an intensity which inspired all those who came in contact with him. When he spoke, one realised all the

"FROM FORDSBURG TO PARKTOWN."

The original play of Johannesburg Jewish life, written by Mr. David Fram, the well-known poet, is to be produced in Johannesburg on Thursday evening next at the Jewish Guild. Great interest is being taken in the production, which is in the capable hands of Mr. H. Hersh, the expert producer of Yiddish plays.

Rehearsals are proceeding apace and the company of talented artists are likely to give a very fine performance.

MARIE DRESSLER IN "POLITICS"

The famous emotional actress, Marie Dressler, is the attraction at the Metro Theatre this week. She will appear with Polly Moran in "Politics," the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer picture.

The great Marie has a large following among South African film fans, and the Metro is likely to be well filled this week. A further attraction in an entertaining programme is a Laurel and Hardy comedy entitled "Any Old Port." Archie Parkhouse will also give some items on the Wurlitzer.

incomparable treasures which were those of the Jewish people and for which we must be eternally grateful, in spite of all sorrow and persecution.

One of the aspects of the late Mr. Hersch's fine character was the noble and philosophic manner in which he accepted the curse of blindness which cruel Fate inflicted upon him a few years ago. Although to a man who read so intensely, the punishment was more than cruel, yet there was not a murmur of complaint. Always when one spoke to him there was a smile on his features and a kindly and witty remark would emanate from his lips, so as to put any concerned and anxious visitor immediately at ease.

It is no wonder that a man so full of wisdom and gentleness should be beloved by his children. It is no wonder that they adored him, and although he led a full life and lived for over three score years and ten, it is no surprise that his actual passing came as a great and inconsolable blow. His influence, however, in their hearts must be ineffaceable, and he will live for them as he will to all who came under the spell of his fine personality.

D.D.

Obituary

Mrs. I. C. ACKERMAN (Bethlehem).

Gloom has been cast over the community of Bethlehem at the news of the death, which occurred suddenly on Tuesday evening last in Durban, of Mrs. I. C. Ackerman, who had left for the Natal seaside resort a few days previously in good health.

The deceased always took a keen and active interest in the promotion of communal philanthropic work in Bethlehem and district. During the building of the local synagogue a few years ago, she held the position of chairlady of the Ladies' Building Committee, and it was under her leadership that the required equipment for the house of worship was supplied.

The deepest sympathy is felt for her sorrowing husband, children and relatives.

Mr. C. CHAITOW (Pilgrims Rest).

The death occurred suddenly on the 5th inst. of Mr. Chaim Chaitow, one of the oldest and most respected residents of Pilgrims Rest.

The deceased was a prominent Jewish worker and an earnest upholder of orthodox Judaism. He settled in Pilgrims Rest some twenty-five years ago and employed a shochet in his own home, and brought up his children in an atmosphere of ideal Judaism.

He always took an active part in Jewish affairs and was a keen Zionist for the last thirty years. He was an active worker for the local Hebrew Congregation, of which he was for a time Chairman and also supported Jewish institutions in Johannesburg and other parts of the country.

In the passing of Mr. Chaitow the Jewish community of Pilgrims Rest has lost its respected leader—one whose life was an inspiration to all he came into contact with.

The deepest sympathy is expressed to his sorrowing widow, two sons, and daughter (Mrs. Steckoll), in their bereavement.

THE "MIKADO" AT HIS MAJESTY'S.

A tremendous success has been scored by the D'Oyly Carte (Gilbert and Sullivan) Opera Company, at His Majesty's Theatre. "The Gondoliers" was a perfect production and one of the finest of its kind ever seen in this country. Next week's attraction will be that ever-popular favourite, "The Mikado," undoubtedly the greatest comic opera ever written. The production and mounting is on a lavish scale, and the company consists of gifted artistes, who are not only excellent singers, but splendid actors. His Majesty's is likely to be filled at every performance of "The Mikado" during next week.

"SHIPMATES" AT PALLADIUM.

"Shipmates," an original and delightful story of a sailor who fell in love with the Admiral's daughter, is to be shown at the Palladium on Monday. Robert Montgomery, always attractive, excels himself in a part that might have been written especially for him, and Dorothy Jordan is charming as the girl who discovered that the man who told her he was an oil magnate was only an ordinary sailor. Ernest Torrence and Hobart Bosworth give outstanding character studies, and Cliff Edwards provides the humour for this interesting production.

CUTHBERT'S FOR GOLF SHOES