

A Fine Edifice

I DROVE out to Benoni on Sunday afternoon last to attend the consecration of the synagogue in that active Jewish centre. I was amazed at the genuine beauty of this remarkable edifice of worship. It is built as no other synagogue that I have seen—and I have visited Jewish places of worship in many parts of the world.

In a way, the Benoni Synagogue is an extremely interesting experiment in a modern, sound-proof and perfectly erected building. It is evident that the ideas of the architect and the builder have been given full sway by an enlightened synagogue committee. To an atmosphere of restful comfort and simplicity, there has been added an air of brightness, which must make attending service a really enjoyable experience.

I predict that the habit of going to synagogue is likely to become popular in Benoni—at least for some little time to come.

Silent Worshippers

I HAVE lately noticed that there is an increasing number of people who sit quietly in the synagogue and who do not participate in the service. In fact, such conduct does not seem to be a matter for surprise or comment. That is the situation in the orthodox *shul*.

I was under the impression that such lack of participation in services would not occur in a Liberal or Reform synagogue. That such is not the case has been shown by a prominent speaker at a recent conference of Liberal Jews. The speaker said: "The task of Liberal Judaism is to teach people how to pray again. One means to that end is to get them to take a more active part in the service. So often they only sit and listen to the singing of the paid choir." It will be seen that Liberal Judaism has not solved the problem of the lazy worshippers.

The fault is being put down to the present prayer-book. Revision like monetary inflation does not last long. Soon the revisionists themselves have to be revised. A call is, therefore, being made for the production of a prayer-book that will awake a response in the hearts of worshippers.

Another difficulty about worshippers in a Liberal synagogue appears to be the attractiveness of the address of the minister. Where such incumbent of office is a brilliant speaker, the synagogue is full of people who come specially to listen to him. But that is not the main idea of synagogue worship, and the whole subject of interest in services on the part of the worshippers is occupying the minds of leaders of Liberal Judaism.

South Africa-Palestine.

I HAVE lately been reading a fascinating little work, entitled, "Beside Galilee," written by a young man who was engaged for a while in journalistic work in this country. I refer to Hector

Current Communal Comments

By
'Hamabit'

Bolitho, a non-Jew who has lately given evidence of having fallen passionately in love with Palestine. It will be recollected that his fine volume on the late Lord Melchett was recently reviewed in this journal.

It has become a custom lately for well-known writers and authors to pay visits to Eretz Israel. It was not a matter of surprise that one of our own leading South African novelists, Mrs. Sarah Gertrude Millin, visited that country recently. The interview which she gave upon her return was really illuminating.

I make bold to express the hope that Mrs. Sarah Gertrude Millin will have found sufficient of interest in Palestine to influence her to include that country in her next fictional creation. Perhaps the closer and growing connection between South Africa and Palestine could be introduced by the hand of a gifted craftsman.

The "Chazonte"

THE according of equal membership rights to ladies in some of the Hebrew congregations in South Africa has aroused interest among our brethren in the far-off Dominion of Canada. Reference is made in a leading Canadian journal to the fact that when a gentleman in Johannesburg remonstrated on the ground that women would eventually wish to be rabbis and *chazonim*, he was indignantly silenced with cries of "why not?"

In this age when femininity is invading the sacred precincts of man's prerogatives, nothing seems impossible. In some countries there are female judges on the bench and policewomen on the streets. In the more liberal branches of Judaism, there are already woman preachers, whereas in many of the orthodox synagogues women have been given the franchise, if only for their money-raising abilities.

I cannot help being amused at the idea of the *chazonte* making her appearance on the *bimah* of a synagogue.

On the other hand, some of the *chazonim* are such poor exponents of the art of *chazanuth* that the arrival of *chazonte*—although it may be a sacrilegious thought—may not be really an unwelcome idea.

Simeon Jacobs

IN these days when so much interest is being displayed in current South African political developments, it is pleasing to learn more about a mid-nineteenth century conscientious and learned Jewish lawyer and politician, the

Hon. Simeon Jacobs (1830-1883), who, so far, has been the only one of our co-religionists to obtain Cabinet rank in this country.

I am much enthused about his remarkable career after reading a well-written article concerning him and his labours in the latest issue of the "S.A. Law Journal." My informant, Advocate M. Barnett, says, inter alia, that "many will utter surprise at not having seen the name before, and yet he occupied the highest posts in the legal profession.

"Unfortunately, no records," writes Advocate Barnett, "are available from which the date of his birth, or his birth-place, can be obtained." Looking up the "Jewish Encyclopedia," I discover that Jacobs was born in 1830. I am certain that if further research on this aspect of his life were conducted in England, we would have more definite results.

"His will, a copy of which is filed in the Master's Office, Capetown, is indeed a very fresh looking document," notes Advocate Barnett, "and rather interesting, as it shows that Jacobs, who had been made a C.M.G. in 1882, did not know himself how well off he was. After bequeathing his 'plate, linen, glass, books, pictures, prints, wine, furniture and other household effects to his wife, Ellen Jacobs' (born Nathan), he continues: 'I also give to her the sum of £700 to be paid to her within 12 months and I give for mourning to my wife the sum of £35 . . .'. After making very small bequests to his children, he concludes: 'I would give larger and more substantial gifts but I have so little to give.' And yet his personal estate was proved at twenty-three thousand pounds."

Some Hitlerisms.

QUESTION: Who is the most desired, most cherished woman in Germany?

Answer: The 100 per cent. Aryan grandmother.

In Germany it is no longer necessary to resort to profanity when toes are trod upon or when one is jostled in the street. The offended merely fixes the offender with his eye and coolly says: "I wish you a Jewish grandmother."

A Jew meets an acquaintance limping through the streets of Berlin. The latter's arm is in a sling and his head is swathed in bandages.

"For God's sake, what has happened to you?"

"Oh, nothing at all. I'm just an atrocity lie from head to foot."

Goering and Goebbles were taking a motor drive along the Kurfuertendamm in Berlin. It was a cold day.

Said Goering: "Will you just look at those Jews? How insolently they shiver!"

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