

## A Birthday

AN INTERESTING birthday is to be celebrated next month. The occasion will be a luncheon to mark the twenty-first year of existence of the Women's Zionist League in Johannesburg. I feel sure that Zionists all over the country will extend felicitations to the women of Johannesburg on the occasion of their unique *simcha*.

The League began in a small way and has carried out consistent service to Jewish nationalism throughout this long period. It has incidentally produced some fine and excellent workers, who have not only assisted in local Zionist activity, but have helped the movement in general throughout the country.

It is no secret that Johannesburg possesses no men's Zionist society on a large scale—although this fact is not evidence of any lack of the intense Zionist atmosphere among them. It is the women, however, who are well organised, and to them must be extended the heartiest congratulations on the completion of two decades of devoted service.

## Flying

TRAVELLING by air to Palestine is becoming a popular means of transit on the part of our people here. At dawn yesterday there stepped on to the aeroplane at Germiston three good and loyal Zionists in the persons of Mr. N. Kirschner and Mr. and Mrs. Wolf Senior. In some five days' time these people will be traversing the streets of Tel-Aviv.

It seems almost incredible that this should be so, but such is the mechanical advancement of the times due to man's inventive genius that the miracle has become real. When a Zionist in Johannesburg can talk of being in Jerusalem "next week," it is obvious that the National Homeland is being literally drawn closer to us.

I feel sure that flying to Palestine will become even more frequent as the months and years pass. Added efficiency may increase the speed of aeroplanes and it may yet be possible that a journey to Eretz-Israel from South Africa will come to be a matter of "a week-end flip."

## Kohut

A LOSS to Jewish scholarship has occurred in the passing away in America of George Alexander Kohut. He was a shining star in the history of modern Jewish letters.

Among the books which he wrote were "Early Jewish Literature in America," "Jewish Martyrs of the Inquisition in South America," a bibliography of the writings of Professor M. Steinschneider, "Ezra Stiles and the Jews," "A Hebrew Anthology" (two volumes), and "Beside the Still Waters," a volume of poetry. He was an authority on Lessing, the German poet, on the early annals of the Jews in America, and in the belletristic field.

As a bibliophile Dr. Kohut acquired a notable collection of his own and through the years bestowed hundreds of rare items on appreciative friends and

# Current Communal Comments

By  
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to various library collections. Throughout all his interests was the thread of his Jewish sympathies, and he unearthed numerous footnotes to Jewish history and sidelights on Jewish personalities in the byways of the literary world. Numerous articles of diverse nature came from his pen from time to time.

An indication of his love for books was the following really beautiful poem which George Alexander Kohut wrote in his twenty-ninth year:—

### A Farewell to My Books.

*If I must die, ere my time is come,  
O take me not, great God, as I recline  
In ease upon my pillow, soft and fine,  
Nor to the sound of fife and battle-drum  
Shall my unwarlike spirit journey home;  
Nor in the hush of prayer, when the  
divine  
Blends gently with the human, for a  
space  
Do I beseech this final boon of grace;—  
But rather let me perish as I stand  
Before my treasured shelves, my kind-  
ling eye  
Fixed fondly on my books in last good-  
bye—  
A well-thumbed tome clasped tight  
within my hand—  
Thus would I pass into the Promised  
Land,  
If I must die, great God, if I must die!*

## "Union" Cantors

IS a Chazan a reverend, or is he merely a worker? This thought has come to me in view of the news that the Chazonim in Chicago have organised themselves into a union and have affiliated themselves with the American Federation of Labour.

It would be instructive to know upon what basis they intend to carry out their work. In ordinary labour, there are such contentious points as piece work, overtime and other phases which have to be taken into consideration. The question, however is whether the "unionised" cantor will look upon the Sabbath morning service as overtime, when compared with the Friday night service? And is he to be paid at the rate of "time-and-a-half" for any extra vocal pyrotechnics? If the *chazan* would be paid on the basis of a schedule of hours, is it not possible that he may just finish when he is in the midst of a charming coloratura display—or even a falsetto demonstration? Will he have to cut his exhibition short, or will the union allow him to finish his gymnastics?

The position is full of difficulties. One *chazan* will complete his work during the High Holydays at one o'clock and another continue his warbling until three o'clock. There is a strange unfairness here. One possible advantage will appeal to the *chazan*. The obstreperous

*Parnass*, laying down the law and telling the cantor what he should do and what he should not do, may possibly disappear. It will be the business of the union to—but I had better stop, for I am getting into an unholy maze.

## Adar

THE month of Adar has just been ushered in, and I find it has an interesting connection with the Jewish calendar as well as with Jewish folklore. The origin of

the name is still shrouded in mystery. According to most scholars, it appears to be derivable from an ancient Assyrian source, meaning "cut down, reap." If that is so, then it tallies with the description of Adar being the month which witnessed in Eretz Israel the reaping season in spring.

On the other hand, the Midrash declares that the law-giver Moses was born and died on the seventh of Adar. Like other instances in other world-wide romances, Moses represents in Hebrew belief the typical saviour-hero type of humanity. The Samaritans believe that Moses will come again, for they are of the opinion that he is their Messiah.

Purim falls on the fifteenth of Adar; and the origin of the name of Purim is, too, still unsatisfactorily explained. There is no good Hebrew word "pur" meaning "lot," and the etymology depends upon a far-fetched parallel with the Assyrian "puru." Some scholars think that it might come from the Assyrian "pukhru" and Mandaean "pukhra," meaning "assembly," being the name of an original New Year when the gods assembled in heaven. Others, again, say that our word is a translation of the Greek name "Khutroi," suggesting "pots," the name of a Greek festival of wine casks.

## Sooner or Later.

HERSCHELE OSTROPOLER, the famous Jewish wit, once rushed into the office of the burial society and tearfully announced that his wife had just died and that he was in urgent need of money to buy a coffin and shroud. The society immediately gave him the money and appointed a committee to visit Ostropoler's house and prepare for his spouse's burial.

When the committee reached Ostropoler's house it was amazed to see the "corpse" engaged in the unghostly occupation of peeling potatoes.

The spokesman for the committee then turned to Herschele and angrily asked: "I thought you said your wife had died. What's the joke!"

The wag then replied:

"You'll get her sooner or later. What difference does it make if she stays with me for a little while."