

Modesty

I WAS an interested visitor to the receptions given to the honorary officers of the Chevra Kadisha by two important congregations in Johannesburg. I listened patiently to the speeches and was intrigued by the angry atmosphere which prevailed during one of the functions. This was, of course, excusable, when one realises the intensity of feeling aroused by the changes taking place in communal life here in connection with Jewish education and religious worship.

What impressed me most, however, was a group of elderly men and women, who sat quietly near the table of honour and who were not called upon to make any speeches at all. These were the *Baalei Mesaskim* and the *Mesaskos*—all honorary workers who undertake the task of performing the obsequies over the dead.

It is wonderful to feel that men and women in our community—all belonging to the *Baal-Habatim* class—are ready to undertake this great *mitzvah*. Such unostentatious work in the cause of Judaism is rarely recognised; it is all taken as a matter of course. I wish, therefore, to pay a tribute here to services rendered in the true spirit of Jewish modesty.

A Conductor

TO have arrived in this country some five months ago without knowing a soul, and at the end of this period to conduct one of the finest orchestral combinations at a concert full of the greatest merit, is certainly a credit to the energy and ability of Mr. Joseph Trauneck, a German Jewish refugee.

This young musical enthusiast decided, soon after his arrival in Johannesburg, to arrange an orchestra which should devote itself to the portrayal of classical works. Overcoming a great deal of opposition, he proceeded to organise the Johannesburg Symphony Society, and gained a number of influential subscribers. The gathering of the members of the orchestra alone was a stupendous task. These difficulties were finally overcome and the first recital at the Wanderers Hall was one of the most enjoyable musical experiences in the Golden City during a decade.

It is to be hoped that Johannesburg will not be slow in keeping permanently within its borders so brilliant a conductor, whose musical enthusiasm is contagious to players and audiences alike.

The Storm

IT must be difficult to know how to offset the evil effects of anti-Semitic literature. An example of the difficulty is shown by the fact that the recently formed Anti-Defamation League of New York has lately appealed to Jews and sympathetic non-Jews *not* to denounce a certain anti-Semitic book, because of the opposite effect it would have upon the sales. The experience had been that attempts to boycott a book caused an immediate increase in circulation.

Now a new idea has been set in motion. A Jewish Library of Facts is to publish an

Current Communal Comments

By
"Hamabit"

"annual" with various aspects of Jewish life in figures. One hopes that these "Jewish Library Annuals" will be well distributed throughout the world—although, of course, the facts are likely to be strenuously questioned by pronounced anti-Semites.

The whole problem of fighting anti-Semitic propaganda is a difficult one. The world is being swamped with an avalanche of mis-statements against and libels of the Jew. It is a superhuman task to attempt to stem this onslaught. The only light upon the horizon is the Jewish philosophy which feels that ultimately the terrific storm will subside and that the civilised world will gradually come to its senses again.

Faiths

SOME time ago there was formed a World Fellowship of Faiths. This is a kind of parliament of religions. One of the chief organisers is Kedernath Das Gupta of India, an enlightened liberal leader. The "invocation" of this movement is, "Teach us, O Lord, to see Thy life in all men and in all the people of Thine earth."

It will be seen that the basic idea is to show that the central point of all known world religions amongst civilised people is similarly idealistic. Here are a few examples:

BUDDHIST—All praise be to the Lord, the Holy One, Perfect in Wisdom. I go to the Law for refuge, I go to the Brotherhood for refuge.

CHRISTIAN—Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

CONFUCIAN—Oh, revere! Oh, revere! God is glorious. Help me to bear this burden on my shoulders, And show me the glorious virtue and conduct.

HINDU—Let us meditate upon the adorable light of the Divine Vivifier, May He direct our minds.

JEWISH—Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One. Blessed be His Name whose glorious Kingdom is forever and ever.

MOHAMMEDAN—There is no Deity but God. All praise be to God, the Lord of all the worlds, The Merciful, the Compassionate, The Master of the Day of Judgment.

SHINTO—All ye men who dwell under heaven! Regard all beings as your brothers and sisters. You will then enjoy this divine country, Free from hate and sorrow.

The "benediction" of the World Fellowship is as follows:—"From unreality lead

us to truth, From darkness lead us to light, From death lead us to immortality."

The trouble, of course, is that very few worshippers of any of the world religions carry out any of the basic principles of the faiths to which they belong.

A "Problem."

THERE are many more important things to worry about at the present juncture. Some years ago, however, I remember being worried as to why it was that Jews began the celebration of their holidays with the night before. In fact that celebration of the night before is the most important part of the holiday. This is true with the exception of Purim when the "Sudeh" takes place on the day following the night before.

And why is it that Christians do not begin their holidays the night before with the exception of Christmas?

Someone has lately given me a solution of this "problem." The Purim "sudeh" takes place at the end of the Festival, because the celebration was inspired by the action of a non-Jew. Christmas is ushered in on the previous night, because the celebration was inspired by a Jew.

I shall leave it to those of my readers who are sufficiently interested to decide whether they are satisfied with this particular solution.

A Judgment

A WEALTHY miser lost his purse. He posted a notice in the synagogue announcing his loss and promising a generous reward to the finder. A poor man found the purse.

When the miser had finished counting the money, he feigned indignation and claimed that the purse had contained 500 roubles, of which only 300 had been returned. Hence he could not reward the finder. The poor man complained to the rabbi, who sent for the avaricious wealthy individual.

"How much money did your purse contain?" demanded the rabbi.

"Five hundred roubles."

"And how much money was contained in the purse that was found?"

"Three hundred roubles," was the reply.

"Then," declared the rabbi, "the purse found by this poor man is not yours. You will please return the purse to him and he will keep it until the rightful owner appears."

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