

The Right Spirit.

I was glad to note that a medical man has been appointed President of the United Talmud Torahs of Johannesburg. My pleasure is not aroused simply because the new incumbent of this important office happens to be a doctor, but because it means that a professional man—and not a merchant—has undertaken communal office.

It has become almost a practice for communal leadership to be concentrated amongst the merchant section of our population. I have often wondered why the professional class—made up of doctors, lawyers, dentists, advocates, etc.,—appear to be shy of accepting office in communal organisations.

Some years ago, Dr. Bernard Friedman very ably carried out the presidential duties at the Jewish Guild, but he has not been followed by a member of his profession. The action, therefore, of Dr. Max Greenberg in undertaking the heavy task of steering the ship of the United Talmud Torahs upon its tempestuous journey over financial waves, is to be highly commended.

I can only hope that his example will be emulated shortly by other Jewish professional men.

Heifetz.

I was pleased to hear that Jascha Heifetz was given a most enthusiastic reception at his concert a few weeks ago in Jerusalem. The news is particularly interesting to us in view of the fact that he has definitely accepted an invitation to come to South Africa and is due to give concerts in this country in June next.

Heifetz first visited Palestine in 1926. He scored a tremendous triumph and all the proceeds of the five concerts which he gave in Palestine were devoted to the establishment of a concert hall in Jerusalem as part of the projected Jewish Conservatoire of Music. It was the idea of Heifetz that such a Conservatoire should be built on a site adjoining the Hebrew University to serve as a centre for Oriental musical culture. Prominent Jewish teachers of music in Europe and America would teach at the conservatoire and would promote the study of both Jewish and Oriental music and also of world music. The conservatoire would accept students in the Orient as well as from Europe and America.

It is pleasant to feel that Heifetz is coming to this country at the height of his fame. He is probably only second to one other violin player and that is Fritz Kreisler. It is interesting to observe

Current Communal Comments

By
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that both these splendid and gifted interpreters are Jews. Kriesler, too, is a composer of no inconsiderable merit.

Marian Philips.

It was strange to read that Dr. Marian Philips, who died a few weeks ago in England, was given a Christian burial. She was one of the great women leaders in the British Labour movement and devoted her whole life to the working classes. Recently she instituted a great Labour Crusade to obtain a million members in the London area. The death of Marian Philips is a very serious loss to the Labour Party because she was by education, special training and experience, the best equipped of all the ladies in the Party.

It is not generally known that Marian Philips was born in Australia of Jewish parents and she was brought up as a Jewess in her early youth. She was, therefore, the first Jewish woman member of Parliament. Once away from her parents, however, she drifted from Judaism and never appeared to have regained her interest in her own people.

Thus it is that owing to the crushing assimilating influences about us, we keep on losing some of the finest of our own talent and personalities.

In China.

The present difficulties in China has caused me to wonder about the Jews in that country, and whether there is not any tangible Jewish communal life there.

As a matter of fact, there are two classes of Jews, as widely divergent as the sharply contracted civilisations which form their environment. There is the native Chinese Jew, whose ancestors, it is recorded, settled in China some two thousand years ago, and again there is the Western Jew, whose residence in the country is less than a century. It is the Western Jew who by far outnumbers the native Jew of China. Of these native Jews, there remain but several hundred families to-day, so completely assimilated that they are hardly distinguishable from Mongolians. They look like Mongolians, speak Chinese, live like Chinese. They

know they are Jews, but know nothing about Judaism.

The Western Jewish populace in China is estimated at 12,000, the largest number of them being settled in Shanghai, the present front of the Sino-Japanese conflict. Whereas the ancient Jewish community in China was recruited largely from Persia and India, the modern Jewish community represents Jews from Russia and such western lands as England.

Shanghai.

In these modern Jewish groups one finds in miniature form, all the paraphernalia of Jewish life in Western countries where Jews are more thickly congregated. In Shanghai, for example, there is a branch of the Anglo-Jewish Association, a Zionist organisation, as well as Jewish religious and philanthropic institutions.

Judaism flourished in ancient China. The Jews had their own temple, and until the seventeenth century, were able to read and write Hebrew. Of that, however, little trace remains. In an effort to revive knowledge of Judaism and modern Jewish life, the Jewish community of Shanghai has recently undertaken to bring several native Jewish youths from the centre of China to Shanghai, where they are receiving an orthodox Jewish training.

The first Jewish settler in Shanghai was Elihu D. Sassoon, who came from Bombay in 1850, to establish a branch of his father's firm. The nucleus of the present-day community was formed by the clerks brought over by the Sassoon family. Their number was increased by Russian Jews fleeing from Czaristic pogroms. The largest Jewish influx followed the World War. In 1875, Shanghai's first synagogue was built.

Present-day Chinese Jews, like their predecessors, are engaged in business. At no time in the history of Jewish residence there, have the Jews experienced any strictures because of anti-Semitism. This friendly attitude of China is a heritage that dates back hundreds of years. In the fourteenth century, the records show, representatives of the Jews of China were invited to Peking to discuss Jewish service in China's army.

Why Worry?

There were two Jewish travellers on a large passenger boat trailing over the Pacific Ocean. It became stormy one evening and there was much anxiety amongst the passengers as to the safety of the vessel.

Cohen was worrying tremendously and this rather annoyed Goldstein.

"What are you worrying about?" asked the latter.

"The boat may go under!" replied Cohen.

"Why worry," said Goldstein, "the boat's not ours."