

Broadcasts

I WAS interested to learn that a company has recently been formed in London to introduce a Jewish radio station. Attempts to establish stations to broadcast matters of Jewish interest have been made from time to time in various parts of Europe. So far the difficulties in the way have not been overcome.

Quite a few countries are endeavouring to meet the needs of the Jewish listener by devoting an hour a week to Jewish religious services, cultural lectures and Jewish recitals.

It may not be generally known to South African listeners that French radio stations introduce from time to time a regular Jewish programme lasting one hour. This is given on a Friday afternoon.

In America quite a number of stations are sending out Jewish programmes, even the latest Jewish news is carried over the wireless. Synagogue services are broadcast practically over every station in that country and Jews in isolated districts are able to participate in religious worship.

Practical difficulties so far in England have made it impossible for a Jewish radio to be instituted. The present venture may overcome these difficulties.

The contemplated erection of a powerful Palestine station should be of great interest to Jewish listeners in South Africa and throughout the world. I hope the wavelength of the Palestine station will be so adjusted as to enable the listeners here to enjoy the Palestine programme, as well as that of the special Jewish station which is likely to materialise in England.

Isa Kremer

I WAS delighted to hear that a brilliant entertainer is shortly to come to this country. The artistry of Isa Kremer will charm audiences here as it has done in many countries throughout the globe. She has been compared with Ruth Draper, but her art is of a different calibre. Isa is more than a mimic; she is the folk singer *par excellence*. I have heard her give a wonderful evening of Jewish folk songs, arousing her audience to a pitch of intense enthusiasm. On the next evening, she appeared before an entirely new audience and has given a programme of English, Scotch, Irish and Welsh folk songs. These she performed to perfection.

Isa Kremer was born in Russia. When she was seventeen she went to Italy to study in Milan with Professor Ronzi. Four years later she made her debut as Mimi in La Boheme. Then she went back to Russia, singing more operas and gaining her share of renown. In 1916, at the apogee of her success, she abandoned the operatic for the concert field. She left Russia in 1919, sang in many European capitals and went to America in 1922. In the latter country, Isa Kremer created a furore.

I last heard her at the magnificent Colosseum theatre in London some five years ago. She was the feature of the programme. Her wonderful interpretations of old English folk songs were a revelation of the artistic ability of this gifted Jewess.

Current Communal Comments

By
"Hamabit"

The Sephardim

I NOTICE that recently for the first time in their romantic history representative Sephardic communities throughout the world met in conference in London. That particular conference has attracted more than ordinary attention for it certainly helped to consolidate, at any rate, the spiritual aspirations of the Sephardim.

There are a few Sephardim in South Africa, although the bulk of our communities here belong to the Ashkenazic *minhag*. The Sephardim here are not an organised community, and many of them belong to congregations built on Ashkenazic traditions.

There are many Sephardim in Rhodesia as well as in the Belgian Congo, but they are not organised. The only time when Sephardim in this country were an organised group was some thirty odd years ago when, for a very short while, a small Sephardic congregation existed in Johannesburg. Some of my older readers may remember that occasion.

Agunah

THE position of the Jewish woman, who is deserted by her husband, has always aroused the deepest sympathy. Under Jewish law she must remain forever deserted for she can secure no divorce. I was interested in the decision reached by a conference of Orthodox rabbis in New York to the effect that the reform of Jewish law regarding deserted wives was essential. It is interesting to learn that this decision has now been confirmed by one hundred and fifty rabbis of Liberal Jewish congregations. The latter, however, went further than the Orthodox rabbis. They decided that in future marriages should be declared void if a husband deserted his wife for more than three years without communicating with her.

The decision of Orthodox rabbis to grant the Jewish divorce, under certain conditions, is rather weakened by the fact that such a decision has been made by one section of one community. The problem of the agunah is one for solution by Jewry all the world over.

I believe that the time is arriving when a Rabbinical Assembly, representative of the whole of Jewry, will be called. It is only such a body that can effect any solution in the legal hardship against Jewish women. The calling together of such an Assembly is a momentous task indeed, and the question will then arise as to what authority even such an important gathering can have in changing any fundamental tenet of Judaism.

A Pedlar

THERE recently passed away in Texas an octogenarian Jewish pedlar, who was once a millionaire mine owner in South Africa. His name was Solomon Stern and for the past twenty-three years he sold knick knacks throughout the small villages in America. It is said of him that he originally arrived in South Africa in 1880 and accumulated a fortune through gold mining. It was he who gave a job to ex-President Hoover, who was then adventuring as a young man in this country.

Stern is reputed to have lost his fortune during the Boer War and went to America where he was unable to make good and spent the rest of his life as a pedlar. Mr. Hoover was one of the pall bearers at the funeral of the old man at the Jewish cemetery.

Is there any old South African pioneer who remembers Solomon Stern?

More Zangwilliana

I APPEND some further sayings of the late Israel Zangwill, which have lately been collected by Rabbi Zlotnick:

The vices of Israel are on the surface, his virtues lie deep.

To the paternal power of the orthodox code, the heterodox Jewish celebrities were indebted for their health, their head and their heart.

There is no country in the world in which it is not a disadvantage to be a Jew.

There is more in Judaism akin to the modern spirit than there is in any other religion.

Judaism does not despise the world, it accepts it, and it says grace, not only for food, but for the sight of forest and ocean.

To the Gentile, the true Jewish problem should rather be how to keep the Jew in his midst—this rare one per cent. of mankind.

A *Luftmensch* is an airman without a machine.

A Christian lady put it before her social class: "Shylock is the only Jew most of us know personally."

The Jewish race discovered the secret of immortality, if also of perpetual motion.

"Auf Shabbos"

A JEW who could not make a living, and was constantly asking his friends for help "Auf Shabbos" decided on a drastic step. He thought that if he became converted his luck might change. He went through with the ordeal and became a Christian.

Several months later a friend met him, and saw that he looked as down-at-heel as ever. When asked why his position had not improved, he explained:

"Before I became converted I never had any food 'auf Shabbos.' Now I have nothing 'auf Zuntik.'"