

Cantors

AND now we have another Union in our communal life! This time it is the *chazonim* and choirmasters who have established themselves into an organisation, not only for the protection of their own interests but, it is claimed, in the interests of the community as a whole.

I notice that one of the aims of the new organisation is to create better relations between the *chazan* and the congregation. This is all to the good. I never knew, though, that existing relations were bad. That may be due to my ignorance of such matters.

I do feel, however, that a Cantors' Union should be useful in developing a higher standard of Jewish liturgical music in this country and in encouraging the production of the home-born cantor. The position of Reader in a large synagogue in this country to-day is highly remunerative. There should be no reason why the career should not be entertained by Jewish parents in connection with their sons. The day will come when the imported *chazan* will be a diminishing factor with our congregations and the home-made product prevail.

In any case, the new combination of Jewish singers and musical directors should afford us more opportunities of hearing excerpts of Hebrew and Jewish music—an all too rare occurrence these days.

"Sir Herbert"

I READ with great interest the air-mailed account of the address delivered by Sir Herbert Samuel in London. A friend of mine in the great metropolis who was present at the lecture tells me that there was a distinguished audience present, who listened with the closest attention to the great statesman's illuminating account of happenings behind the scene prior to the issuance of the famous Balfour Declaration.

Sir Herbert is, by the way, the most prominent Jew to have been unseated in the recent elections in Great Britain. On the last occasion when he was rejected for Parliament, he was solaced by his appointment as the first High Commissioner for Palestine. During his occupancy of this high office, he carried out a memorable and historic task.

Sir Herbert is to-day still energetic and is probably at the height of his political and administrative powers. What is he going to do?

I wonder if the idea has not occurred to him to throw in his lot closely with his own people, who are suffering so greatly from disunity in all parts of the world. Since his return from Palestine, Sir Herbert has kept aloof from Jewish affairs. Is it not now time for him to entertain the idea of ascending the rostrum of Jewish leadership, instead of still heading the diminishing group of die-hards of a decaying Liberal Party in Great Britain.

The entry into Jewish leadership of a man of the type of Sir Herbert Samuel would be welcomed with acclamation by millions of Jews throughout the world.

An Exile

"A MIDSUMMER Night's Dream" is being produced in Philadelphia by Max

Current Communal Comments

By
"Hamabit"

Reinhardt—who has been exiled from Germany. It will be recollected that Mendelssohn wrote delightful music to this most charming of Shakespeare's works. In this way will Philadelphians have the opportunity of witnessing a rare artistic creation. At the same time they will be made to realise the tragic circumstances which were instrumental in bringing Max Reinhardt to America. Despite his tremendous popularity in Germany, resulting from an appreciation of his artistic worth, his Jewish origin made living in Germany impossible.

I am afraid I find it difficult to become acclimatised to the idea that in the present stage of civilisation, a man of the type of Reinhardt can be harassed and hounded for the only sin of having been born a Jew. It is, therefore, good to feel that in an enlightened country like America, a great artist of the theatre can find expression for his genius. The banquet in New York in honour of Reinhardt was a brilliant affair, and attended by the most notable cultural personalities in the land.

In the welcome extended to the art of Reinhardt and in the appreciation of Mendelssohn's glorious music by the Philadelphians, there is accompanied a renewed indignation against those who have condemned a community of six hundred thousand loyal citizens of a State to all the evils of prejudice, persecution, and unashamed discrimination of the most ignoble character.

White Collars

I NOTICE that Elmer Rice, the well-known Jewish playwright and author of "The Adding Machine," has been put in charge of the New York "Theatre Project" which is part of a scheme undertaken by the American Government to provide for twenty-five thousand unemployed actors, writers, painters and other white-collared workers. The object of the project is to produce plays which will be financed by the Government and presented under its auspices.

I was interested to learn that amongst the various companies formed under the scheme there are two Jewish units consisting of unemployed Jewish actors, headed by Harry Tomashefski. These companies are presenting Jewish plays in English under the auspices of the United States Government. Their repertoire consists of old favourites such as Dimov's "The Eternal Wanderer," Jacob Gordin's "The Jewish King Lear," etc.

So far these plays have been presented to Y.M.H.A. clubs, synagogue organisations, aged homes and orphanages and have been favourably received. The companies are

said to contain some well-known Jewish stars, who in order not to harm their prestige, prefer to hide their identity.

This is not the first occasion that a Government has financed Jewish theatres. In Continental countries, where it is customary for governments to take an interest in the stage, there have been several such instances. The Habimah theatre was for many years subsidised by the Soviet Government and to-day there is a fine Yiddish Art theatre in Moscow. Before the advent of the semi-Fascist regime in Latvia, there was also a State-aided Jewish theatre in Riga.

Names

I HOPE that one day a Jewish scholar will write a detailed and exhaustive treatise on the origin of Jewish names and surnames. A study of this sort should prove fascinating. From time to time articles on the subject appear in various magazines and some years ago a fine essay on the origin of Jewish names appeared in the "Zukunft," of New York. This was written by Mrs. M. D. Hersch, a well-known Johannesburg personality.

There are many curious customs attached to Jewish names. In South Africa, for instance, I have seldom come upon a Jew bearing the name of his living father. In some circles it would be considered sheer blasphemy if there were a Zorach junior and a Zorach senior. Yet the prohibition of a Jew bearing the name of a living relative has no foundation in the Jewish law. In Talmud there is the case of Rabbi Nathan, who relates how he had offered medical advice to two young mothers and in appreciation they named their children after him. If there is a prohibition to name children after living parents, it must be of a post-Talmudic origin.

I am told that in Holland, where Jews are very orthodox, it is customary that a child must be named after his living grandparent. In Eastern Europe, again, this is never done. The variance of custom seems to be puzzling and I should be interested to hear from my readers of their experiences in this matter.

Samples

THERE is a story told that many years ago a Russian Grand Duke, who was a member of the late Czar's family, visited London and was honoured with a dinner by the Lord Mayor of that great metropolis.

Among the invited guests was the late Sir Moses Montefiore, the famous millionaire philanthropist. The latter, who was strictly orthodox, did not partake of the meal and only ate some fruit which was specially served for him.

The other guests were being served with roast pork, which led the Grand Duke to remark facetiously that he had just been on a visit to Japan. "It's a unique country," he declared, "for there are neither Jews nor pigs there."

Sir Moses, calmly cutting a juicy orange, said: "Your Excellency, we must both go there and Japan will then have a sample of each."