



Kashruth

I HAVE every sympathy with the small band of orthodox leaders who work so indefatigably for the improvement and advancement of *kashruth* in Johannesburg. It must be a hard struggle to maintain the least control over *kashruth* under South African conditions. I fully appreciate the motives which have induced some of the orthodox leaders to ask for legislation in the control of *kashruth*. I am sure that they are right in stating that the word *kosher* is much abused in this country by various individuals. But I am afraid that State-legislation would be of little help in the matter.

In America there has been legislation in the matter of *kashruth* for many years past and far from helping the Rabbis in the exercise of their duty, it only introduced confusion in communal life. In addition it has also brought a great deal of *chilul hashem* to the Jewish community. Last month a big and involved case was tried in New York before the Supreme Court. The spectacle of a non-Jewish judge listening to contradictory evidence and *pilpulim* from old bearded Rabbis has aroused a great deal of indignation and shame amongst enlightened Jews. Newspapermen spotted a good story and for days the yellow dailies bore heavy headlines such as "Rabbis Evidence Shatters Kosher Racket."

It seems, therefore, that we must not expect the State to regulate such internal affairs as ritual food. It is for us to settle the problem within our own camp.

De Haan

THE other day I chanced to peruse a little book of Afrikaans poesy entitled "Stryd" penned by one of the younger Afrikaans literateurs—I. D. Du Plessis. In his book Du Plessis gratefully refers to the pleasure he derived from reading the poetical works of a well-known Netherlands-Jewish author, Jacob Israel De Haan.

It will be recalled that this Jacob Israel De Haan was a well-known poet and leader of orthodox Jewry who was murdered in Jerusalem in 1924. De Haan, who was born in Holland in 1881 was in his youth quite far removed from Judaism, but afterwards became intensely orthodox. Later in life he moved to Jerusalem, where he was appointed professor of law at the Hebrew University. At that time he was an outspoken opponent of all non-religious attitudes and a severe critic of the then Zionist Organisation. Owing to his conduct, De Haan made many enemies. Among his better known poetical works is his protest against the workaday world, entitled "God, Nature, Love and Wine."

De Haan, who had a striking personality, attracted much attention on the literary scene. Some years ago Arnold Zweig, famous author and playwright, wrote a novel based on De Haan's life called "De Vriendt Goes Home." It may be remembered that the murderer of De Haan was never discovered.

Current Communal Comments

By "Hamabit"

A Labourite

LITTLE notice has been taken in this country of a new star who is rising on the British political horizon. I refer to Emanuel Shinwell, a Labour Parliamentarian, who in the recent British elections completely eclipsed Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, the former Prime Minister. Yet Shinwell—who is a member of an East End Jewish family—was Minister of Mines under Mr. MacDonald in 1924 when the first Labour Cabinet came into existence in Britain. The recent election was a landslide in favour of Shinwell, whose balloted majority was in the neighbourhood of 20,000.

Throughout his life, Shinwell has been a loyal worker in the cause of British Labour. In 1912, when he was 28 years of age, he was elected president of the Glasgow Trades Council. Later he became the national organiser for the Amalgamated Iron Workers. In the second Labour Government he served as Financial Secretary to the War Office.

I understand that London political observers are keeping their eyes on Mr. Shinwell. He is one of the most aggressive fighters in the Labour movement and now that he is back in Parliament, he is likely to be noticed.

Meyerbeer

I NOTICE that there has been some controversy in German musical circles regarding the diaries and unpublished musical works of the composer Meyerbeer.

It appears that the descendants of Meyerbeer have decided to postpone again the publication of his diaries until 1955. No reasons are given for this step. It is suggested that the descendants, many of whom have drifted away from Judaism, are anxious not to publish the composer's diaries at the present time, because they contain a great deal of material showing his attachment to Judaism and the love he sustained for his people to his dying day. They think that disclosures of this nature might be harmful.

This anxiety on the part of the relatives to seek shelter behind the closed book of Meyerbeer's life is rightly resented by German Jews. Lovers of Meyerbeer have written to the newspapers urging that the descendants had no moral right to withhold from the general public any material bearing on the life of the great composer.

Meyerbeer was a steadfast Jew all his life. Before his death, which took place in Paris, he asked to be buried in the Jewish cemetery of Berlin. During his life-time he had suffered for his Judaism and in his diaries there must be many an intimate detail of the vicissitudes of a Jewish composer in the none-too-friendly Europe of the nineteenth century.

A Broken Heart

I NOTICE that French newspapers report a tragic story in connection with the death of Sylvain Levy, head of the Alliance Universelle Israelite, which took place in Paris recently. This savant was one of the most interesting personalities in France. He was a famous Orientalist and a specialist in Hindu and Chinese dialects. For a long time he was the head of the French-Japanese institute in Tokio. He lectured at the University of Rabindranath Tagore in India.

Amongst the Jewish masses, however, he did not enjoy a great deal of popularity. He belonged to the assimilationist-school of public workers. It was he who appeared at the Peace Conference at Versailles; he spoke against Zionism and against the treaties for the protection of the Jewish minority.

A few days before his death he sent out invitations to members of the "Alliance", asking them to attend the meeting with the object of discussing the terrible position of Jewish scholars in Germany. He collected all the material and prepared a lecture on the plight of the German-Jewish professors. At the appointed time he began to read his lecture he broke into tears and collapsed. The Jewish heart of this staunch assimilationist broke under the strain of the terrible plight of his co-religionists in Germany.

Odds and Ends

RECENT visitors to the Tomb of Rachel in Palestine were surprised to find that picture postcards, showing the inside of the tomb offered for sale, were made in Germany.

The Nazis are destroying hundreds of thousands of cards showing a little blonde Aryan boy posing with Hitler. This boy was selected as the finest specimen of Aryan childhood. The child afterwards turned out to be the grandson of a Dusseldorf Rabbi.

The recently-reported death of a man from a sneeze recalls that the "zum leben" of the Jews was based on the legend that one died from a sneeze.

The American forces which broke through the German lines at the battle at the Argonne, were under the famous Jewish general, Sir John Monash, who commanded the Australian Army Corps.

When Louis Napoleon took the Throne of Holland in 1806 he organised a battalion of 803 men and 60 officers—all Jews—in order to accustom them to military service.

A Check

A JEW was being taunted by the accusation that his ancestors had robbed the Egyptians of their jewellery which had been loaned to them.

"But they were paid for it," came the reply.

"When?"

"My ancestors gave the Egyptians a substantial check on the bank of the Red Sea."