

Topsy-Turvy

I NOTICE that a new chazan has arrived in Johannesburg on what is undoubtedly a most unique mission. Hearing that there was a vacancy in an important local congregation, the cantor decided upon his initiative and at his own expense, to travel all the way from Europe and make a bid for the post. I can only hope that his voice is as fine as his courage and that he will be appointed to the vacancy which, incidentally, carries the handsome salary of £600 a year.

In this latter connection, it is of interest to observe that recently a Hebrew congregation in Johannesburg advertised in the overseas press for a minister and the annual remuneration was £400. This is a poor stipend for a spiritual leader of an important congregation. But such is the way of congregational affairs these days that chazonim command considerably higher salaries than do ministers and rabbis.

The position to-day is that an able cantor is a good investment for a congregation. A sweet singer exercising his vocal powers on a bimah attracts seat-holders and increases membership. A good minister does not appear to be so good a "business investment." It is all rather topsy-turvy, for after all the basis of the life of the synagogue should be the spiritual leader and his work, with the singing of the cantor coming in but as a good second.

Heine

IT is not very widely known that Heinrich Heine, immortal German-Jewish poet, predicted with unflinching accuracy the advent of Hitlerism and its attendant evils. Even at the time he lived, he was already able to see where the exaggerated Teutonism of the Germans was leading, how by the unscrupulous use of patriotic demagoguery, the rabid nationalists were turning Germany back to the dark ages. In the fourth volume dealing with Ludwig Börne and the Germany of his time, Heine expressed the following opinions as to the probable future of Germany:

"On the Wartburg there predominated that narrow Teutonism which prated a good deal about love and faith, but whose love was nothing but hatred for foreigners and whose belief and faith consisted only in unreason and which, in its ignorance, could devise nothing better than the burning of books!

"That self-same person who first proposed the burning of the books on the Wartburg was the most ignorant creature who had ever walked about on the earth and published all-German texts . . . Where does the German begin? Where does he leave off? . . . In the beer-cellars at Göttingen I once had to wonder at the thoroughness with which my Pan-German friends prepared the proscription lists for the day on which they would attain power. Whoever was descended from a Frenchman, Jew or Slav even to the seventh generation was condemned to exile."

Heine further says: "Furthermore, they (the Pan-Germans) have at their command those powerful formulas whereby the crass populace is conjured with: the words Fatherland, Germany, the faith of the

Current Communal Comments

By
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fathers, etc., electrify the uncertain masses of the people much more surely than the words humanity, world-citizenship, reason and truth!"

Heine wrote these sentences one hundred years ago—sentences which reveal so much truth and which breathe so much prophetic spirit. Heinrich Heine lives to-day by virtue of the vision and insight that was his!

A Judge

I WAS sorry to hear of the death of Otto Rozalski, Judge of the Court of General Sessions of New York. Rozalski occupied his distinguished post for over thirty years and throughout his career, was regarded as one of the leading men in the judicial life of America.

In 1906 Rozalski was first elected by a large majority to the position of Judge for fourteen years. Since then two elections were to take place in his district, but on both occasions his seat was not contested. The Judge was the first son of immigrant Jews to be elected to such a high position and the event evoked a great deal of joy in the East Side of New York.

Although his parents were Lithuanian Jews, Rozalski was in appearance and manner a typical Yankee. He knew the American mentality and was popular amongst the masses of the people. In the execution of his office he was, however, very strict. Criminals feared him and he was no less severe when the accused was a co-religionist of his. "Nobody knows"—he once remarked—"how broken-hearted I feel when I have before me a Jewish criminal. Our youth can only be saved through more Jewishness and through a better Jewish education."

Rozalski was an observant, orthodox Jew. He took a keen interest in all Jewish affairs and was particularly absorbed in work for the Talmud Torahs and Yeshivoth. In the Jewish Educational Association, of which he was President, he was not just a figurehead, but an active and devotedly hard worker. Some years ago, when on a visit to New York, I met Judge Rozalski and he made an indelible impression upon me. He was undoubtedly one of the finest of Jewish-Americans of his time.

Judaica

AMONGST many of our co-religionists there is a deplorable tendency to speak of the German Jews as the standard-bearers of assimilation and self-annihilation. In private conversations I even heard it said that the "German Jew deserves his fate" because he turned away from his people.

These critics must have but a vague notion of German Jewry. It is true that a

large number of Prussian Jews looked upon themselves as Germans of the Jewish persuasion and disclaimed any association with their brethren living in other countries. But there were many more who possessed a distinct pride of race, a love of Jewish tradition and literature which gave them the right to class themselves as the most cultured section of modern Jewry.

In addition to their achievements in the field of charity, German Jews have built the modern science of Judaica. Their institution for the training of modern rabbis, their colleges for the "Wissenschaft der Judentums" were amongst the best in the world, and in the field of literature one must read German in order to be acquainted with the latest research in Biblical science.

What will happen now to Jewish learning in the German language?

The "Juedische Rundschau" has, I notice, issued recently a questionnaire on the subject to leading scholars in and outside of Germany. Many interesting recommendations have been made by these scholars. They all seem to feel that Jewry is gradually becoming estranged from the German language. It is suggested that the German-Jewish scientific institutions should be centralised and English publishers be found for the publication of a complete translation of the Judaica published in the German language.

Dexterity

SITTING in a cinema the other evening I was interested in observing some clever juggling by a famous athletic couple. A friend of mine who was with me and is somewhat of a Talmudical scholar, pointed out that many of the Talmudical rabbis possessed great dexterity.

It is related that the Rabbi Abbaye could juggle with eight eggs without breaking one. Rabbi Levi, a well-known preacher, used to perform the same juggling trick with eight knives without cutting himself. Rabbi Simeon ben Gamliel, good at juggling and sleight of hand, could take eight burning candles or torches, throw them aloft one after another with one hand and catch them back in the other hand, without letting them touch one another or burning himself.

The above information sounded interesting. I began to realise that a Talmudical atmosphere was not always ruthlessly serious, and that there was light as well as shade. This reminds me that one of the rabbis of the Talmud advised: "If a man sees a girl that he likes he should marry her at once lest she be snatched up by another." Rather modern advice, this!

Logic

A JEWISH husband in a Lithuanian town wrote to his wife, who was residing some distance away in a smaller Lithuanian village.

"Rivka, my dear,

Will you please send me your shoes. I ask you to send me your shoes because if I said my shoes, you'd think I meant your shoes and what I really want is my shoes, so I say to you send me your shoes."

She sent her shoes.