



the Radio

THE other evening, being somewhat irritated by the nature of the local programme on my all-wave radio, I switched on to Lenon and was lucky enough to hear a most interesting programme of Yiddish and Hebrew folk music rendered by a very fine interpreter. I have often thought it strange that whilst London give its Jewish listeners a welcome treat now and then, we in South Africa rarely have the pleasure of listening to an item of specifically Jewish music, yet it is well-known that there is a large percentage of Jewish listeners here.

I am, therefore, rather glad to learn that on Tuesday evening next, there will be broadcast from Johannesburg a programme of special interest to Jewish listeners. Traditional Jewish melodies and folk songs will be rendered by the A. Z. Idelson Group, who have made a special study of this type of music.

It is to be hoped that this is but the beginning of a movement of broadcasting Jewish music occasionally on the South African radio. I am sure that quite a number of non-Jews would also appreciate so unique an addition to the present programmes.

The Future

An eminent French writer, M. Marcel Thiebaut, recently wrote an essay on Jewish idealism for the "Revue de Paris," and his conclusions are deeply interesting. Thiebaut says that the social philosophy of Israel is essentially directed into the future, while it is to the past that Jews "to fill their reservoirs of sorrow."

This passionate concern with the future and deep attachment to the past is responsible for a remoteness from the uncertain present, and this makes Jewry particularly capable of producing great thinkers and idealists, because ideas and ideals are essentially outside of the present and concern the future, while they have their foundations in the past. "Perhaps Bergson would never have conceived his philosophy of time if he had not been a Jew," M. Thiebaut declares. "And perhaps Proust would have been the greatest romancer of the time gone past if he had not been half Jewish." Jewish thinkers, like the French writer, achieve greatness of dealing with the past and men in symbolic images, which project them much further than those who make a boast of confining themselves to material things.

The substantiation of this belief that Jews are more concerned than others with a better future for the world, I quote the late Israel Zangwill who said: "Take from me the belief that I can change the future, and I should go mad."

Names  
Austrian Jewish newspapers have recently commemorated an

# Current Communal Comments

By "Hamabit"

interesting jubilee. It is now one hundred and fifty years since Kaiser Joseph the Second ordered that all Jewish citizens must assume surnames. Before that date, the vast number of Jews in the Austrian Empire were known by their first names only. The religious people regarded the new decree as an incentive to assimilation. They disliked being known by their surnames and displayed a great deal of indifference towards the work of the special commission which the Kaiser appointed for the purpose of fixing surnames for the "nameless."

For this reason, the "commissionaires" were often arbitrary in choosing names. They drew, for instance, upon the animal world—Tiger, Leibsohn, Wolfsohn, Fishman, Katz, Vogel, etc. When the animal list was exhausted, they took to botany—Kornfeld, Weingarten, Apfelbaum, Blum, Kirsch, Rosenblum, Rosenbaum, Rosenfeld.

Particularly great was the predicament of the "commissionaires" when they were ordered to avoid, as much as possible, repetition of names. It was then that they resorted to most ingenious designations. Anything that entered their minds was used as names; people were described by colours, by the hue of their eyes; by their occupations, viz.: Weiss, Green, Schwarz, Melamed, Kinderlehrer, Schuster, Schneider, etc.

Rather interesting, is it not?

## Minsky

THOSE of my co-religionists who have been brought up on Russian literature, will be sorry to hear of the death of N. M. Minsky. This unique personality was converted to Christianity at a very young age and devoted himself to mysticism. He considered himself to be a sincere convert to Christianity and was treated with respect by all who knew him.

Minsky became famous for his translation of the Iliad into Russian, which was considered the best of its kind. He has also written a drama entitled "The Siege of Tutshin." In this he gave a powerful description of Jewish heroism during the pogroms of Bogdan Chmielnicki in the 17th century. The drama gives full expression to the spirit of "kiddush hashem" and has been translated into Yiddish and Hebrew. Minsky spent his last days in Paris amongst the exiled Russian emigres.

## An Old Journal

ONE of the brighter features of German-Jewish life to-day is the remarkable growth of the Jewish press in that country. German Jewry is served by several excellent weeklies which give a most thorough review of Jewish life throughout the world. They are, however, handicapped by the Government's strict supervision over the press.

The life of German Jews themselves occupy little space in the German-Jewish weeklies, and this perhaps is the reason why the centenary of the establishment of the "Algemeine Zeitung des Judentums" was passed over almost in silence.

The first number of this paper appeared on May 2, 1837. It was edited by Dr. Ludwig Filipson, a man who, for over 50 years had exercised the greatest influence on German Jewry. He started the journal at a stormy period in the life of German Jews. Emancipation was the most discussed topic of the time, and Reform Judaism was having a great struggle against the orthodox. Filipson disliked the extreme orthodox and the radical reformers alike and looked for constructive tendencies in Jewish life. After his death, the paper was taken over by Professor Geiger, who was an extreme assimilationist. He was succeeded by Albert Katz, who tried to revive the old tradition of Filipson.

The inflation period of 1922 brought about the ruin of the paper, and it then ceased publication. The "Algemeine Zeitung" is considered the most important source for material on the history of Western Jewry during the last hundred years. Its files give a full picture of Jewish emancipation, the development of Judaism, the spread of anti-Semitism, the rise of the Jewish national movement and many other aspects of Jewish life.

## Fame

I HEAR from a friend in America of an unique project now being inaugurated there. All Jewish survivors of the wars in which the United States has fought will be invited to serve as members of a master jury to select the names of the 150 greatest Jewish patriots of American history from 1789 to 1939.

The figure 150 was selected because that would provide one celebrity for each of the 150 years of American history since the inauguration of George Washington as the first President of the United States, an event which the World Fair is intended to commemorate.

## A Rumour

AN elderly Jew died at the ripe age of 90. His loving life-companion sat moaning at his bed-side.

"Ah!" she murmured. "He was a good man throughout his life—a real tzadik—but a klog Tzu mir, I was told at the wedding that he was a sickly man."

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