

CURRENT COMMUNAL COMMENT

By "Hamabit"

The Witkins

MY MEDICAL friends inform me that a rare honour and distinction has recently been conferred on Dr. Morris Witkin, the well-known Johannesburg child specialist, in his election as a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh. Dr. Witkin, I am told, is the only Jewish doctor in South Africa to hold this distinction.

He is not the only brilliant member of the family. His brother, "Afrique" is probably one of the world's greatest impersonators and delighted with his genius thousands of theatre lovers during his recent South African tour.

Dr. Witkin was one of the founders of the Young Israel Society in Johannesburg in 1914 and has always taken a keen interest in Zionist and communal activity. The two brothers are members of a well-known pioneer family on the Rand. Both lads began life in a humble way and have worked their way up to the top in their respective spheres. South Africa generally, and the Jewish community in particular, can well be proud of the fine achievement of the Witkin brothers in the face of hardships and difficulties.

Lessing

I SEE that Mrs. J. L. Gray (wife of the Professor of Social Studies at the Witwatersrand University) is shortly to produce "Nathan the Wise," the classic work of Gottfried Ephraim Lessing. The production is being looked forward to with a great deal of interest and it is being sponsored by our local Society of Jews and Christians.

It is interesting to remember that early reference to "Nathan the Wise" in South African literature is to be found in the pages of that delightful travel book of Dr. Henry Lichtenstein's. The latter, who toured the Cape in the first decade of the last century, was a scientist of distinction. It was whilst he was exploring a good deal of this country that he constantly perused Lessing's great work, among other equally interesting volumes. It is illuminating, too, to note that only the other day a well-known Johannesburg weekly published a version of "Nathan the Wise" in Afrikaans.

Lessing, who lived in the eighteenth century, is an honoured name in world literature. An outstanding figure in the German life and letters of his age, he was, it will be recalled, an intimate friend of Moses Mendelssohn, the Jewish Socrates and father of the Haskalah movement. In his play, Lessing expounded his ideas about religious and social toleration. It is particularly appropriate that the work should be made more generally known today in view of the prevailing inhumanity of man to man.

A Choirmaster!

THE finest Choirmaster to be found in any Synagogue in the world is Arno Nadel, of the Berlin Jewish community, whose sixtieth anniversary is now being celebrated by German Jewry. Born in Vienna, he came to Germany at the age of twenty and soon achieved fame in many directions. As a painter his works have been displayed at prominent galleries and have achieved great success. As a poet he has written numerous books of which his ambitious poem "Der Ton" is probably the most outstanding and has earned him the name of the "God-seeker of Vilna."

Combining as he does the Jewish upbringing of Eastern Europe and the culture of the West, Nadel has probed deeply into the Jewish soul and has drawn upon the treasured sources of our past. He is the author of a number of Biblical dramas and has painted Biblical themes.

The fact that a man of Nadel's accomplishments has been put in charge of Berlin's synagogue choirs is a compliment to the imagination of German congregational leaders. Since the death of A. Z. Idelsohn, Nadel is probably the greatest authority on Jewish music to-day. In addition to his own compositions he has devoted many years to the collection of traditional Jewish music. His main musical work "Compendium Hallelujah", as well as his "Shirei Zimro" are authoritative works on the sources of Hebrew music.

Nadel is to-day at the height of his career. He still writes poetry, wields the brush on canvas and studies, collects and composes Jewish music. The recently published "Musica Hebraica" contained a brilliant article from his pen.

Research

WHEN he gets a spare moment from political preoccupations, Dr. Chaim Weizmann, President of the World Zionist Organisation, retires to his laboratory and works on his chemical researches. He has fully-equipped laboratories at his homes in London and Palestine.

The latest piece of research completed by Dr. Weizmann, in collaboration with Dr. Ernst David Bergmann, who is his chief assistant at the Daniel Sieff Research Institute in Palestine, is a study of "Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons."

Their paper on this subject is published in a new scientific journal, "Scripta Academica Hierosolyminarum," or "Papers of the Academy of Jerusalem." The publishers point out that during the years 1921-23 a series of volumes was published which preceded the establishment of

the present flourishing Hebrew University in Jerusalem. The new Scripta are intended to pave the way for an Academy of Science in Jerusalem.

Dr. Weizmann and Dr. Bergmann, the latter a distinguished chemist who left Germany shortly after the Nazi advent in 1933, have for long been working on their original research which is now the subject of a paper. One of the objects of the Sieff Research Institute, which is situated in the Jewish orange-growing colony of Rehovoth, south of Tel Aviv, and of which the Director is the Zionist President himself, is to find a commercial use for orange-rind and peeling.

A Readership

I HEAR from England that Mr. Harry Sacher, the well-known Zionist, and a group of his friends, have provided a sum of £500 per year, for an experimental period of seven years, for the maintenance of a Readership in Post-Biblical Jewish Studies at Oxford. At the University a decree was put forward in Congregation accepting the offer. The Reader, whose stipend will be £500 a year, is due to lecture and give instruction in the literature, history and social life of the Jews and to promote generally the study of such subjects.

I learn that the new Readership will be devoted chiefly to studies of post-Biblical character, with particular emphasis on more modern history and its sociological implications. It is not intended that its scope should in any way overlap that covered by the Lectureship in Jewish studies at Cambridge University.

The action of Mr. Sacher and his friends in making this temporary endowment which enables the famous University to institute such a useful Readership, is to be admired. It is a type of public-spirited action which could be well emulated in this country. Are there not some wealthy men in South Africa, who are prepared to contribute towards the maintenance of a Readership in Jewish studies at one of our own Universities?

Cheating

MAISHKE AND ZORACH are walking along the village street, when they see a weighing machine and decide to weigh themselves.

"Nu!" claims Maishke proudly, "I weigh three pounds more than you."

"Nu, nu," retorts Zorach unconcernedly, "You have your hands in your pockets!"

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