

# CURRENT

# COMMUNAL

By "Hamabit"

# COMMENT

## In Sierra Leone

I HEAR that a lecture on a Jewish theme was recently given to a West African audience by a young British Jew, Mr. Shabtai Rowson, who is now serving with H.M. Forces. Mr. Rowson, who is well-known in London Jewish circles, spoke to the Fourah Bay College Union Society, in Freetown, Sierra Leone, West Africa, on some aspects of Jewish history, and was probably the first Jew to give a lecture of this kind in that part of the world. He found his audience a most intelligent one, I learn, and his chairman, an African, is one of the few men in West Africa who has a knowledge of Hebrew.

It is doubtful if any of Mr. Rowson's listeners had ever seen a Jew before, though most of them knew something about the persecution of Jewry in Europe and had heard of Jewish efforts in Palestine. They were most interested, I am told, in this interpretation of Jewish history by a Jew, and they not only asked many questions about the Jewish outlook, customs and religious observances, but also expressed a sincere sympathy with the Jewish people in their sufferings.

Mr. Rowson, by the way, is not the only Jew who has had associations with West Africa. Apart from a Montefiore, who was intimately concerned with the ill-fated expedition to Bulama at the close of the 18th century, I recall the pioneer effort of that intrepid explorer of Natal, Nathaniel Isaacs, to promote trade along the West African coast about the middle of the last century.

## The Libel Suit

MY sympathies are with the British judge in Palestine who was recently called upon to decide in a typically Jewish libel suit. The case was reported in the Palestine press.

Complainant maintained that the defendant had called him "Amalek." Now "Amalek" is a very bad word indeed. It is the name of the very inhospitable enemy who attacked the Jews whilst in the desert, and would not let them pass through his territory. The judge thought a good case for libel had been made out, and awarded damages to the complainant.

Some time afterwards when the slanderer met his rival he just quoted to him a sentence from the Bible: "Remember what Amalek has done unto thee." He was again sued, brought before the court and again had to pay damages to the defendant. The judge found that even a

quotation from the Bible might constitute libel.

Soon afterwards the obstinate slanderer again met his enemy, and this time he merely uttered the word "Zachor" ("Remember") which is the first word of the quotation. Again he had to pay damages for libel but would not be beaten. When he next met the complainant he decided that words were too dangerous, and just chanted the intonation which the Reader in the Synagogue uses for the words: "Remember what Amalek has done to you."

This time the judge lost his patience and ruled that a tune alone cannot constitute libel! Thus the defendant triumphed at long last.

## Leon Simon

I WAS interested to hear that my old friend, Leon Simon, recently celebrated his 60th birthday. One of the most notable members of Anglo-Jewry, he has been in the inner councils of the Zionist movement for the last 30 years, and is probably the one man who, by his gifts and intimate knowledge of the subject, could write the classic history of Zionism during that period.

Among Leon Simon's many claims to fame is his brilliant translation into English of Achad Ha'am's Hebrew works. Simon became a disciple of Achad Ha'am when the latter came to live in London some 30 years ago, and was responsible for arousing among the English-reading public an admiration for the writings and teachings of one of the greatest Jewish thinkers of modern times. Apart from the excellence of the translations in themselves, Simon's own literary style, as well as his numerous essays on the philosophy and outlook of Achad Ha'am, attracted considerable attention. Simon has also translated some of Plato's Dialogues into Hebrew, and John Stuart Mills' famous "Liberty."

His admiration for Achad Ha'am led Simon to associate himself with the revival of Hebrew among the young intellectuals in England, with which he had more to do than any other man. He it was, too, who encouraged the introduction of Zionism into the English Universities, a step which gave the movement men like Brodetsky, Leonard Stein, Norman Bentwich and our own Jack Alexander, the Secretary of the S.A. Zionist Federation.

Leon Simon, by the way, is himself a product of Balliol College, Oxford, where he had a brilliant aca-

demical career. He has held many important posts in the English Civil Service. Since 1935 he has been the Director of Savings at the General Post Office in London, and in 1928 he headed a commission of enquiry to America to study telegraph methods.

I have it on good authority that Leon Simon has kept a diary of his intimate association with the early days of the Zionist movement in England. This work, when published, should prove extremely interesting.

## Paderewski

OVERSEAS Jewish newspapers which have just reached me do not seem to be in complete agreement in their obituary notices on Paderewski's attitude towards Jews. It was well known, for instance, that the great pianist had many friends amongst Jewish notables in America. It is impossible indeed to be a great musician and not associate with Jews. Paderewski's wife was of Jewish descent. She belonged to the family of Jan Rosen, a famous Polish painter, who was a "Meshumad." This is not likely to have inspired Paderewski with great love for Jewish people since "meshumadim" in Poland were notorious anti-Semites.

Paderewski was known to have financed the "Dwa Grosze," a violent anti-Jewish newspaper organ, but his friends say that he was not responsible for its Jewish policy. Advocate Hartglass, a former deputy of the Polish Sejm, believed that for Paderewski Jews did not exist at all. He entirely ignored the fact that 10 per cent. of the Polish population were Jews, and did not consider them of any importance. He was not an anti-Semite but he held aloof from the Jewish question.

Some of my readers may have come in contact with the great Polish pianist during his visit to South Africa many years ago, and I wonder if they could throw some light on this interesting subject.

## Scarcity

A BALABOS in a small village in old Lithuania had a Talmudical student as a guest for Friday evening supper. As the student was handed a plate of *lockshen* soup, he put his ear down to the plate.

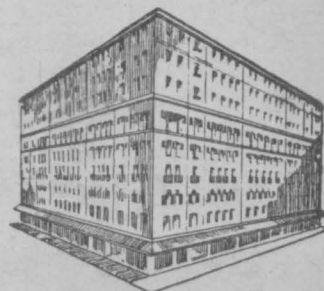
"Why do you do that?" asked his host in kindly fashion.

"I listen to the *lockshen* talking," was the reply.

"And what do they say?"

"One of the *lockshen* is saying to the other: 'Where are you?'"

450 ROOMS



You get more for  
your money at the

# CARLTON HOTEL

Johannesburg

"ROOM ONLY" SYSTEM, with  
prices of rooms beginning as  
low as 10s. 6d. PER DAY.  
You do not pay for meals  
not taken in the Hotel.  
(Inclusive terms if preferred)

RESTAURANT, GRILL ROOM,  
PALM COURT, BALLROOM,  
DRAWING ROOM, WRITING  
ROOM, TRAVEL BUREAU,  
FLOWER STALL, HAIR-  
DRESSING SALOONS, VALET  
SERVICE, Etc.

## —ROOF PAINT— FADELESS RED ROOF

We stock the popular

"RESISTO" Brand.

Cheapest in the long run.

34 OTHER SHADES FOR GENERAL  
USE ALSO AVAILABLE.

'Phone or call

F. J. WILKINSON

('Phone 45-1627).

278 Louis Botha Avenue, Orange Grove,

## YOUR CHEMISTS

We Assure You of Courteous  
Attention

Frequent Deliveries to All  
Suburbs

Approved Monthly Accounts Opened

"CROW PHARMACY,"

Cor. Pretorius & Paul Kruger Sts.,  
PRETORIA.

Phones: 2-8647, 2-5947.