

# Current Communal Comments

By "HAMABIT."

## Women Lodges.

There is a growing feeling amongst the wives and daughters of the members of the Hebrew Order of David that they should be allowed to form themselves into women lodges of the Order. In some of the larger fraternal Jewish organisations in other countries, such lodges have been formed and the ladies carry out certain specific duties.

At present the H.O.D. is composed mainly of a male membership and the idea of inaugurating women lodges is not looked upon with favour. At a debate on the subject, held recently in Johannesburg, the motion to establish women lodges was lost by a small margin. This subject is on a line with a general movement amongst Jewish women in this country to be allowed to take a more active part in communal life.

I see no objection to the establishment of women lodges and can only visualise the real good to be derived from such activity. The basic idea of the Hebrew Order of David is to inculcate a pride in our race and in our national achievements. Surely it is right that this idea should also prevail amongst the women of our community and especially is it important for the younger women, who are to become mothers of the future generation.

It is true that the men of the order have definite and earnest duties to perform, but such work can be complemented and considerably enhanced by the co-operation of Jewish women—especially on the social and hospitality sides of this growing fraternal movement.

## Hans Herzl.

The news of the suicide of Hans Herzl, only son of the founder of modern Zionism, was received in South Africa with somewhat of a shock, especially as it also contained the tidings that this act had been engendered owing to the death of Madame Pauline Hift-Herzl, the elder daughter of the late Dr. Theodor Herzl. Thus have two of Herzl's children been taken simultaneously by the hand of death.

Talking the other day to a South African, who had studied at Cambridge when Hans Herzl was there, I heard that the latter was considered even at that time to be "odd." He did not fit into university life, and appeared to be of a morbid and unhappy disposition.

In spite of his conversion to Christianity, the late Hans Herzl was passionately loyal to the memory of his father, of whom he always spoke with glowing enthusiasm. As a matter of fact, he translated his father's diaries into English, and always had a large portrait of him in his room.

In 1924 Hans Herzl wrote a story of his life, which appeared in a Catholic newspaper in London. He described his early youth, and stated that his father inculcated in the children a sense of pride in being Jews. After his death, however, his mother informed Hans that when they were small children, Dr. Herzl had at times considered having them baptised. That must date back to a period before the inception of the Zionist movement, and in any case, may have no foundation in fact.

In recent years Hans Herzl would occasionally attend the services of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue in London, and appeared to have an admiration for Claude Montefiore, the leader of that movement. He even expressed a wish to become a member of the congregation, but was informed that this was not possible. Altogether a strangely troubled soul was Hans Herzl, and his passing appears in the light of a happy release for himself. He could not face life with fortitude or understanding, and the death of his dearly beloved sister smashed an apparently weak hold upon life.

## The "Book."

A wonderful book is the Bible, yet how many people do you meet who have read it right through? I remember listening to Dr. Olsvanger lecturing to a non-Jewish audience in Johannesburg during his last visit here. In the course of his address he said: "As a Christian audience. I am sure you all know the Old Testament"—and the few Jewish members of the audience realised that the lecturer was of the opinion that he could not say the same of a definitely Jewish audience. Yet the Bible is the glory of Jewry's contribution to the world.

During the year twelve new versions of the "Book" have been printed—two for Asiatic, two for Oceanic, and eight for African peoples. This I learn from the annual report of the British and Foreign Bible Society issued recently in London. It is of interest to know that that Society's list of versions now reaches a total of 630. The number of copies disseminated surpasses all previous records. The total, 12,175,292 comprises over a million complete Bibles and 9,795,000 copies of portions of the Bible.

Russia, which remains closed to the Bible, appears to be the one grim exception that throws into relief the encouragement which the Society derives from its work throughout the world. In the Baltic Republics, among a population of less than 9,000,000, the Society is now selling nearly a third of the number of books sold in Russia before the Revolution.

## A Pole.

I see that in connection with the coming to South Africa of Ignaz Friedman, the great world pianist has already been described in the local press as the colossal Polish *virtuoso*. Stress is being made upon the fact that he was born in Podgorze, near Cracow, Poland, and I suppose this gifted pianist will be duly advertised all over the country as the great Pole.

This all seems rather a pity, especially as it is a well-known fact that the recent Chenkin concerts here were enormously patronised by Jewish audiences and Benno Moiseiwitch received his main support from Jewish music lovers.

With all due respect to the Poles, who are a great musical nation, I consider that announcements of Friedman, as the *Jewish* pianist would not only be a truthful designation, but would also prove eminently attractive in securing large audiences. The average concert patron is well aware that some of the greatest world interpreters of the piano are Jews. A striking indication of this is the fact that the three leading lady pianists of international reputation are Jewesses—namely, Miss Irene Scharer, Miss Henrietta Cohn and Miss Myra Hess.

## "Silent Prayer."

Tremendous crowds sought to secure admission into the great synagogue in Wolmarans Street, to listen to the first services conducted during the Holy Festivals by the "flying" cantor. The management of the synagogue had wisely forestalled the rush by the employment of a number of uniformed commissionaires.

A rather good story is going round town in connection with a certain incident alleged to have occurred during the crowding of aisles of the synagogue by eager non-seat-holders. One of these became most persistent with the commissionaire.

"Do let me go in there," he urged.

"But you have no ticket," complained the commissionaire, for the umpteenth time.

"But I just want to go in there for a minute to see my cousin Abraham."

"All right," replied the over-tired commissionaire. "go in, but if I catch you praying, then the Lord help you!"

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