

New Cantors.

I have heard that the new *Beth Hamidrash Hagodel* in Johannesburg has arranged for an overseas *Chazan* to come here in order to conduct the services during the forthcoming High Festivals. This action has aroused a certain amount of comment amongst the *Chazonim* in South Africa, quite a number of whom are without posts. The particular *Chazan* who has been engaged for the new synagogue has no world-wide reputation, and it is claimed that he is merely a good cantor, and that many such are already residing in this country.

It is further held to be a bad habit on the part of certain South African congregations to pay a heavy price for the engagement of an overseas *Chazan* and thus "attract" worshippers. Against this, the *Chazonim* in this country are protesting, and a rumour has reached me that some conjoint action is being contemplated.

It is known that some time ago cantors in Great Britain made a successful protest to the immigration authorities, and as a result the entry of any "star" *Chazan* into that country has been made very difficult. It has also been pointed out that some excellent synagogue readers in South Africa, who have gifted and sweet voices, have lately had to submit to a reduction in salary due to economic necessity. The paying, therefore, of high prices for the importation of new *Chazonim* is especially resented at this stage.

Leaders.

I was glad to hear that Mr. Kaumheimer had stepped into the vacancy caused by the withdrawal of Mr. Hillman as President of the Jewish Orphanage in Johannesburg. The holding of this position is a responsible one indeed, and it is good to know that there are still men who are not afraid of undertaking important tasks of this nature.

I regret to note that the United Talmud Torahs of Johannesburg is still without a President. It appears to be difficult to secure a man suitable for this particular post, and it is evident that in the direction of education there is a sparsity of workers.

An important post is to become vacant when the Annual Congress of the S.A. Board of Deputies is to be held. Under the constitution of this body, no President can occupy the position for more than a given period of years, and a successor must soon be elected. It is an onerous and responsible position.

Current Communal Comments

By
'Hamabit'

With the present dearth of workers there is likely to be considerable difficulty in filling the post.

In any case, the permanent delegates to the Board should put on their thinking caps well in advance, so that a suitable personality is finally elected to guide the future destinies of this most important Jewish organisation.

Expensive.

According to a report of a missionary organisation in Montreal three Jews were converted to Christianity in that city last year. To accomplish this result, the mission spent some 50,000 dollars. It is small wonder, therefore, that the *Meshumed* is rather dear to the Christian.

The claim has been made that approximately 2,000 Jews have been converted by Presbyterian churches in America. This claim is denounced by the leading rabbis of that country. Some time ago a leading newspaper in London commented on the fact that it cost a lot of money to make a bad Jew into a worse Christian.

It seems strange that in this enlightened era Christians still believe in the eternal damnation of the Jew. On the other hand, the Jewish belief has it that there is a place in heaven for a good Christian.

Much money is being spent in missionary work amongst the Jews throughout the world, yet it was Bernard Shaw who said but a few years ago that "the best Christian to-day is the Jew." Instead of trying to convert the Jew, the money spent in this direction should be devoted to a better understanding of him on the part of the Gentile.

The trouble about missionary work is that much money has been left by some dear old ladies for this special purpose. Such legacies become trust funds with interest accruing, and have to be spent in the specific manner indicated.

I am convinced, however, that to the really enlightened Christian the idea of missionary work amongst Jews is not genuinely welcomed.

Supermen.

It has been pleasant to read the pronouncement of Sir Arthur Keith, the eminent British biologist, who recently declared that the Jews have contributed a much greater percentage of persons with superior intellectual qualities than any other people.

"The Jewish race," he said, "can claim more than its share of genius in mathematics, philosophy and in other forms of art."

This achievement is attributed to the self-imposed isolation for at least one hundred generations, whereby we have been able to strengthen certain desirable qualities and aptitudes. Sir Arthur Keith further asserts that the Jews would have developed into a race of supermen if they had not allowed their emotions to run away with them. It is their love and sympathy for the weak that has prevented the Jews from becoming a race of supermen.

I am sure we are all grateful for the compliment paid to us. I hardly think, however, that we shall strive to be supermen if the consummation of that ideal can only be accomplished by the sacrifice of the human soul. Generosity to the weak has always been sacred to the Jew, even greater than any ambition for intellectual superiority and high mental excellence.

Deaf?

A certain Jewish storekeeper in Johannesburg who had done very well for himself, was on the whole quite a generous-minded man. He had, however, a convenient habit of being deaf when necessary. One day a creditor in Bloemfontein was desperately in need of money and finally communicated with the Jewish storekeeper on a trunk line.

"I need £200 immediately," he said, "Please send it to me at once."

"There is a bad connection here," was the reply, "Something is wrong with the wire. I cannot hear a word."

"I said," pleaded the voice from Bloemfontein, "that I want you to send me £200 at once."

"I am sorry," said the storekeeper, "but I don't hear a word."

It was at this point that the telephone operator intervened.

"That is peculiar," she said, "I can hear every word that is being said from Bloemfontein."

"Very well," said the storekeeper from Johannesburg, "if you are so smart and you can hear, will you send him the £200."