

Literary Activity

IT was with great interest that I read the newly revised version of Mrs. Sarah Gertrude Millin's "The South Africans," which is one of her most notable books. I note that in the revised version she has added further sections, one of much importance concerning the latest position of Jews in this country, especially in so far as the Grey Shirt movement is concerned. She attaches no importance to this movement and thinks it will fizzle out. It is good to have such a statement on record, and, coming from Mrs. Millin, it should have a wide and beneficent effect.

At the same time, I am glad to see that other members of South African Jewry are also keen to make their mark in the wider world of letters. Among them, I note, is Dr. Louis Herrman, of Capetown, who has already achieved merit as the author of a valuable "History of the Jews in South Africa," and who is, too, a brilliant essayist. Dr. Herrman is about to publish a volume entitled "In The Sealed Cave". The book is a scientific phantasy, and concerns a clan of Neanderthal men who, some hundreds, thousands or millions of years ago, were cut off from the rest of the world and developed a culture of their own. A Jewish artist, Mr. H. V. Meyerowitz, of Capetown, is illustrating this work, which will be issued by Williams and Norgate, of London.

Another new book (which will be of importance in view of this country's recent political and legal development) will be "The Law and Custom of the South African Constitution," by Adv. H. J. Schlosberg, who is a well-known member of local Jewry.

Loyalty Sunday

I NOTE that in America there was recently solemnised a special religious day called Loyalty Sunday. This was arranged by a national committee composed of 54 bishops, 35 pastors, priests and rabbis, 25 college presidents and educators, 101 officers of church benevolent boards and 62 representative laymen of the Catholic, Protestant and Jewish persuasions. The purpose of Loyalty Sunday was to rekindle again the deep interest of men in the moral and spiritual values on which civilisation depends.

I suppose it is a sign of our troubled times that there should be this revival effort in America, for I note some of the leading Jewish papers complain that scarcely half of the Jews in any community of considerable size belong to a religious organisation and that scarcely half the children of religious school age receive any religious instruction. The innumerable business men's clubs and other social organisations are usually favoured with almost a full attendance of members, whereas most American synagogues are as often as not more than half empty of worshippers.

I suppose that to a lesser extent some such condition also holds in this country. It is a great pity that the beautiful religious customs of our people seem to be thus observed more in the breach than in the practise, and perhaps a similar incentive to religious revival would not be out of place here.

Current Communal Comments

By
"Hamabit"

Moses Montefiore

THE 105th anniversary of the birth of Sir Moses Montefiore occurred at the end of last month. Sir Moses Montefiore was probably the most famous and most representative Jew of the nineteenth century, and those who remember his life and work will recall that he was regarded by many non-Jews as the symbol of his people during his time and his life work as representative of Jewish striving and tendencies. His life covers the whole of the period of Jewish emancipation.

Sir Moses Montefiore was one of the few Jewish centenarians of modern times. He died in July of 1885 at the age of 100 years and nine months.

His seven journeys to Palestine, the last of them made when he was 91 years old, have become almost legend among the Jewish people. On each journey he did enormous good, endowing hospitals and almshouses, building synagogues and orphanages, and establishing diverse agricultural enterprises. Not only did he give munificently of his own means, but he also administered gratuitously many private and public funds, among them one bequeathed by Judah Tuoro, of New Orleans, who left 50,000 dollars, to be applied as Sir Moses thought fit for the benefit of Jews in Palestine.

Sir Moses was buried at Ramsgate, England, near the synagogue he had founded (the centenary was celebrated last year) side by side with his wife in the mausoleum which he had erected for the purpose, a reproduction of the Tomb of Rachel on the Bethlehem Road. His body was wrapped in the Talith in which he had been married and sprinkled with earth he had brought from the Holy Land. By his will (proved at £370,000) he directed the continuance of many and various charities, and among others added to the endowment of the Montefiore College and Library, Ramsgate, which he had first established in memory of his wife. The college is now devoted to a few learned men who spend their days in the study of the Law.

Stephen Wise

THERE has been a great deal of comment recently in the Jewish world on the subject of the Jewish World Congress. The dominating figure in the Congress was, of course, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, well-known for his leadership of the American Jewish Congress.

Rabbi Wise is a man of outstanding personality, and there is a delightful story told about him which is illustrative to a certain extent of his character. The tale has it, that he came one day before the Gates of Paradise, and the Guardian Angel bade him be seated, while the routine of checking his credentials was observed.

This process seemed very long and involved to Rabbi Wise and he offered criticism of it, concluding with the words: "What you need most is system."

The Guardian Angel considered the point. "Perhaps that is so," he said, "and perhaps you could prepare a plan for us. Go back to the earth, and hold a meeting of your Congress, and then show us the plan you devise."

This Rabbi Wise did and duly reappeared with his plan for introducing a sound system into Paradise. The Guardian Angel submitted the plan to the Heavenly Council. After they had given their decision, he returned and gave the plan back to the Rabbi, expressing his regret that they were not able to accept it.

"Why?" asked Rabbi Wise. "Isn't it a good plan?"

"Indeed it is," the Guardian Angel hastened to reply. "It is a very good plan, and we would have adopted it, but for the fact we don't think it would be right for God to serve as vice-president."

The Nelson Trio

I AM looking forward with interest to the first concert in this country by the Nelson Sisters. This will take place at the Johannesburg City Hall on Tuesday evening next. The Nelson Sisters are three young Jewish musicians who present many similarities to the well-known Cherniavsky Trio—under whose aegis, incidentally, they are visiting this country.

In Australia, from which land they are coming here, they have been very successful indeed and have won the affection of Jewish people all over the Continent—so much so that in quite a number of towns the Jewish organisations held various receptions in their honour. The three sisters are a very gifted trio, and have been praised by some of the most eminent critics for their fine combination. They are equally adept at solo or trio numbers, and thus they are able to present a full evening's entertainment on their own, varied in nature and full of interest. Their playing is a beautiful achievement which I have no doubt that music lovers here will enjoy to the full.

The Dot

A WELL-KNOWN and learned rabbi was on a visit to a large city in Europe. As he stood at the railway station awaiting a train, two emancipated Jewish "moderns" saw fit to have some fun with the patriarchal gentleman. They showed him a huge map and informed him that it was a map of the world.

"Is Palestine here, too?" asked the rabbi.

"Yes," was the reply.

"And Jerusalem?"

"Yes, here it is!"

"And can you see the Temple there?"

"The Temple is right here where the dot is."

The patriarch seemed to be deeply interested at this information.

After a while, he said: "Will you please go inside and tell the *shammass* I want to see him!"