

## Charges.

**O**VERCHARGING on the part of certain congregations for the carrying out of sacred rites, is apparently becoming a custom in this country. I have recently heard of a case in a small community where a young Jewish couple, having been presented with a son, discovered they could not engage the local *mohel* privately, as this gentleman was also the minister of the congregation. Owing to the fact that the young people were not members of the congregation, they were asked to pay an exorbitant sum before permission would be given to the minister to carry out the ceremony.

This procedure annoyed the grandparents of the newly-born child and as a result arrangements were made whereby the mother and infant travelled a few weeks later to Johannesburg in order that the rite upon the child should be duly carried out. Before leaving to take the journey to Johannesburg, the congregation "climbed down" and reduced the cost for the sacred privilege by half. This bargaining disgusted the young parents and they would not have any further dealings with the representatives of the congregation. The incident has aroused considerable feeling locally and indicates the unhealthy state of affairs in connection with excessive charges made by congregations to people who are strangers or who do not happen to be members.

Such words as "blackmail" and "extortion" were used at the recent Congress of the S.A. Jewish Board of Deputies with reference to the excessive charges made on the part of congregations for the burial of a Jewish person, who happens to die in a locality in which he is not known. It was finally voted that the matter had little to do with the "Deputies." At the same time, the procedure of charging excessively for the carrying out of the sacred rites of our religion is a *Chillul Hashem* and brings discredit upon our communal life.

## Broadcasting.

Once a month for the last four years a lecturette of Jewish interest has been broadcast over the Johannesburg broadcasting station. The series was inaugurated some four years ago by Mr. A. Couzin, who has made this work a special hobby. Almost every aspect of Jewish life and thought has been dealt with in these short addresses by a varied number of speakers and there can be no doubt of the good work accomplished.

It is only a pity that the work is left upon the shoulders of a private individual—conscientious as he may be. The opportunity given by the African Board-

## Current Communal Comments

By  
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casting Company should undoubtedly be taken advantage of by such an organisation as the Jewish Historical Society or some other cultural body. The facilities of broadcasting could be made extremely valuable in our cultural progress. In other countries the wireless is used considerably by Jewish communities and messages are listened to in thousands of Jewish homes. The wireless has become in these places a vital force in the direction of assisting communal and religious progress. Cannot a similar process be effected here.

## Bridge.

A great change has taken place with reference to card playing. It was not so long ago that one arose from a game with a guilty look—as if one had done something not quite in keeping with gentility. All this has changed to-day and it is quite rare—for instance—to discover a person who does not play the game of bridge.

It is interesting to record that Sidney Lenz—one of the greatest bridge players in the world—is a co-religionist. He is at present playing with Oswald Jacoby against two others in a big bridge contest in New York. The winning team gets six thousand dollars in prize money. The money, however, does not enter the game at all, as it will go to charity. The fight is to decide upon the merits of the Lenz system against the Culbertson system, advocated by Mr. and Mrs. Culbertson, who are the other two playing in the present bridge contest. Whoever wins will probably add many thousands of dollars to his bank roll as a result of the added prestige. For whatever depression there may be existing throughout the world, there is no depression in the bridge-playing world.

Sidney Lenz is reputed to be turning down offers of a thousand dollars for a single lesson in bridge. Students come to him in bulk and recently he delivered a course of lectures to five hundred teachers who came to learn advanced bridge. An interesting sidelight of the development of the game is the fact that Lasker, who was the chess champion of the world, is to-day a leading bridge player and writes for bridge publications. It is said that all of Lasker's bread and butter worries are now eliminated.

Sidney Lenz is rather a fine type. While he makes money in writing and the teaching of bridge, he will never play a game for money except amongst his own intimate friends. Lenz submits the theory that bridge is originally of Hindu origin. He is not active in Jewish affairs and his favourite assumption is that prejudice and opposition to the Jew has helped the Jew.

## A Song-Film.

I was interested to learn that the Bureau of Jewish Education in New York has prepared a song-film dealing with the story of Chanukah. It is meant for exhibition before pupils in Hebrew schools. The film contains all the traditional and modern Chanukah songs that are usually associated with the festival. The words of the songs are given very distinctly in Hebrew and English characters. A careful index to the music score and instructions are provided for the teacher. In cases where the song is not to be found in some standard music collection, especially prepared manuscript sheets are provided with the film gratis.

The song-film is intended to serve as an aid to teachers both in telling the story of Chanukah to Jewish children and in popularising the songs of the festival. In this manner group-singing on the part of assembled children of any school is encouraged and a *yom tov* spirit is aroused.

I strongly advise the S.A. Board of Jewish Education to make a point of importing a negative of the film to this country. This would enable children attending the Talmud Torahs here to have the benefit of the excellent work inaugurated by an educational body so many miles away.

## Difficult

A recently-arrived immigrant to South Africa from Lithuania was making valiant efforts to overcome the intricacies of the English language. For this purpose he arranged to stay at a non-Jewish boarding house in Johannesburg.

One evening he was conversing in a friendly way with the inmates of the establishment and complained that, "English was a hard language."

A dear lady who sympathised with the immigrant's struggle with the language pointed out to him in kindly fashion that it would be preferable if he would say, "English was a difficult language."

The immigrant was very grateful for this information and took intense notice of the correction. Next morning when asked what he wished to have for breakfast, he said: "Two difficult eggs."