

**"Speaking Against . . ."**

I OFTEN wonder why it is that so much criticism is heard in communal affairs these days. After all, we have accomplished wonders in this country in the establishment of fine communal institutions and Jewish life is proceeding apace in a healthy and vigorous fashion. Yet, at some of the annual meetings of institutions I have lately attended, I found an unwillingness on the part of the general public to put in a word of praise for the loyalty shown by honorary officers and hard-working committees.

It would appear that this attitude of being "agin' the Government" is not a new thing in Jewish life and is certainly not a specific product of South Africa. In the United States of America, where there are large Jewish communities, this type of "complainant" is counted in the thousands. I recently heard of a meeting which took place in one of the cities "over there" at which a speaker was announced as follows:

"Our guest," said the chairman, "will criticise the Jewish Congress programme and I can assure you that there is no more forceful speaker *against* any Jewish movement in this country."

"Speaking against . . ." is becoming a habit at many important communal meetings here. This is rather a pity, as contributions to the discussion made by such speakers are really of little practical or constructive value.

**Culture ?**

A FEW Sunday evenings ago it was announced that a lecture on the "Jew in Sport" would be delivered at the Jewish Guild. The lecturer was an expert in his subject and it was anticipated that this function would draw a considerable audience. What really happened was that some twenty people turned up and in spite of the chairman's appeal, the lecturer refused to deliver his carefully prepared address unless he had a larger audience.

Whilst admitting that the attitude of the lecturer was perhaps an ungracious one, and that he need not have penalised the people who *did* come to listen to him, it is really deplorably difficult to secure an adequate audience for a cultural function amongst our people in Johannesburg. On the other hand, it is easy enough to fill a hall when a musical entertainment, theatrical performance or a dance is announced.

When will our young people begin to realise that we have cultural treasures of which they should be proud, and that a lecture can be genuinely enjoyable?

**Hebrew Spirituals**

I HEAR from a friend in London that South Africa is shortly to be visited by a gifted Jewish artiste in the person of Chayele Grober. She will appear in a programme of "Bible, Hebrew Prayers, and Spirituals." The artiste will be accompanied to this country by her husband, Mr. Vladimir Grossman, the well-known Yiddish journalist.

Chayele Grober comes here with a re-

# Current Communal Comments

By

"Hamabit"

putation as a versatile artiste of high merit. She hits off the foibles of the Jewish temperament with admirable humour, and has been described as the Ruth Draper of the Jewish stage. Her gift of "make-believe" enables her to fill the platform with imaginary people and objects in a most convincing way. The artiste recently gave twenty-two concerts in London.

The Spirituals are really Chassidic melodies, which have been created by traditional folk-cantors in humble synagogues where pious Jews have prayed for centuries. Altogether the arrival of Chayele Grober in South Africa should arouse considerable interest.

**Another Centenary**

I HAVE already here in these columns referred to the impending commemoration of the eight hundredth birthday of Maimonides. But few of us are aware of the fact that this year too has a contact with one of Maimonides' best-known disciples—David Kimchi (*ReDak*), who died in 1235. I regret to note that so far the Jewish press elsewhere has not recorded this event.

David Kimchi, who was the most famous member of the famous Kimchi family, was born at Narbonne in 1160. Grammarian, Biblical commentator and philologist, he compiled outstanding works in a lucid style. His grammar, "Michlol" (Compendium), popularly-written and originally-presented, was also regarded as a text-book by many Christian scholars who studied Hebrew in the Middle Ages. So far had his influence gone as a savant that his name and achievements are to be found in connection with the period of the rise of Hebrew learning among non-Jewish sources centuries after his decease.

He wrote, inter alia, many authoritative commentaries to the books of the Bible. Particularly, he created a fine impression with his commentary to the Book of Psalms because therein he entered into vigorous polemics against Christianity. Later, the latter work was issued under a separate title, "Teshuboth Lanotzerim" (Replies to the Nazarenes). Even to this day his books are consulted by students of Hebraica, and, for instance, there is many a reference to him in that modern worthwhile set known as the "International Critical Commentary on the Bible." Although he approached his interpretations from a religious angle, yet in method and viewpoint he followed the rationalism of Maimonides. When controversy arose around Maimonides' thoughts during Kimchi's lifetime it was *ReDak* who worthily proved himself the champion of *Rambam's* opinions.

**In Chile**

THERE is in Santiago, a Jewish Dramatic Society. The strange fact is that not one of the members of the organisation is Jewish; they are all of the Catholic faith. The reader will ask, how is it that non-Jews come to have formed a Jewish Dramatic Society?

Well, it appears that the members are young people who sought to make a good beginning of life. They felt that prejudice should die

with their elders. As their Dramatic Society needed a name, considered these young people, what better way to put prejudice to shame than to call themselves the Jewish Dramatic Society? Besides, the title seemed fitting to a dramatic society; for it was the name of a people that had finely acted one of the grandest of human dramas.

The Jewish Dramatic Society gave out a statement: "We, a group of Chilean youths, free of all prejudice, wish to honour the Jewish colony of Chile, and have therefore unanimously chosen for the name of our society that of a sound and noble people."

Really, an interesting and unique gesture!

**"Tragi-Comedy"**

EVENTS which are lately happening in Naziland are almost in the nature of "tragi-comedy." A report has come to hand of a new Esperanto organisation, which has been founded in Germany under the name of the "Neue Deutsche Esperanto-Bewegung," which expressly forbids Jewish membership.

Shades of Dr. Zamenhoff! Each applicant of the Teuton linguists who form this group must state that neither he nor his wife is a non-Aryan. That would have barred the genial founder of Esperanto, just as the founder of Christendom would be persona non grata in Hitlerland to-day.

It would appear that even the animal kingdom cannot escape the dispensations of Nazi fanaticism. A decree was recently issued that horses be fed three parts potatoes and one part oats in their daily rations. Strange, but the horses balked; they found the mixture as unpalatable as we find Nazi propaganda.

The self-created problems of the German political leaders must be a heavy burden indeed.

**Reversing It**

SPEAKING of Hebrew stories, I heard a new Palestinian one. This deals with a young settler in Palestine, who was approached by a Shadchan.

"I have a fine match for you," said the Shadchan. "The girl is somewhat old, it is true, but she has a young Pardess (orange grove)."

"Nothing doing," said the settler. "I want a young girl with an old Pardess."