

Honouring a City

I WAS interested to learn that the fine city of Cardiff in Wales recently had itself inscribed in the Golden Book of the Jewish National Fund. It is rather a unique idea and the project appears to have "caught on." Much enthusiasm prevailed when the Lord Mayor presided at a function at which the event was celebrated.

It has occurred to me that the action of Cardiff might well be emulated in this country. And which city should be first if not Johannesburg, in inscribing itself in the Golden Book?

I consider that quite a generous sum could be raised by our lady Zionist workers for the object of so inscribing and honouring the Municipality of Johannesburg. I throw out this suggestion and trust it will be taken up at an early and convenient moment.

Cantors

CANTOR Israel Alter came to Johannesburg for a few days and has left for his synagogue in Hanover (Germany), where he holds a life position. Whether he has "conquered" here is not yet known. A meeting is to be held of the members of the United Hebrew Congregation to take action upon the recommendation of the committee.

I understand that Cantor Alter is eager to secure a life appointment in Johannesburg, but that the suggestion is not being welcomed. In my opinion it is wrong not to consider the appointment of an important synagogue official as one meant for life. That is the custom in many of the important communities in Europe. It is because of such long tenures of office that a tradition is created and that eminent rabbis and eminent *chazonim* and other loyal and capable communal officials are produced, and give competent service to the communities they serve.

The habit among congregations in this country to employ a rabbi or cantor for a short period and thereafter make a change every few years, is an unhealthy one and subversive to the creation of any real congregational tradition. It would appear as if no synagogue official in South Africa—but for a few exceptions—is secure in his post. This arouses a feeling of uncertainty and creates an atmosphere of unhealthy dependence upon the whims and idiosyncrasies of synagogue committees.

Once a congregation would recognise that the appointment of a spiritual leader or a synagogue reader is meant for life, it is likely to take greater care in making such appointments and would pay greater respect to the man who is destined to live and work amongst them for years to come.

A Scholar Passes

A QUIET and unobtrusive personality was Rabbi Menkin, who passed away recently in Durban. He was a man of wide learning and great wisdom; a Talmudical scholar of the old school—a type of which few are left in South Africa.

The deceased scholar, whom I remember meeting some years ago, was a grandson of a great Vilna Gaon. He was a worthy descen-

Current Communal Comments

By
"Hamabit"

dent of a family of great rabbonim and was much admired by the late Dr. Adler, Chief Rabbi of Great Britain.

Rabbi Menkin was an unselfish and saintly personality. It seems strange that he was so little known among the general body of South African Jewry. His knowledge of the Talmud was deep and he was a master of several languages, including Hebrew, Babylonian, Latin, English, French, German, Russian and Arabic. Menkin was a man who disliked publicity and did not seek the public eye. To the few friends who knew him, his death has caused the realisation that a humble scholar and a great son of Israel has passed away.

"A Rose by Any Other Name . . ."

IT was Shakespeare who asked: "What's in a name?" It is the new settlers in Palestine who will tell you that there is a great deal in one. Many of them on arrival discard their diaspora nomenclature. Thus the Fingerbergs, Silverbergs, and Rosensteins secure for themselves more melodious Hebrew counterparts.

Yet there is one name which is common to many, though they be Sephardi or Ashkenazi or Yeminite or Kurd, and that is Cohen. There is usually a distinction between Sephardi and Ashkenazi nomenclature; "Mizrachi," which is the synonym for Jones, Smith or Brown, is general among the Sephardim or other Oriental communities, but you would not find a Sephardi bearing cognomens of Teutonic origin, such as Idelsohn or Silberstein or Rabinowitz. But Jews of all sects cling to Cohen or Levy, for, after all, they represent the highest degrees in Israel's inherited class-life.

What might in other lands be taken as a fad for changing names, or a business or personal motive, is in Palestine a patriotic and national obligation. Silbermann becomes Caspi, and Hirschson becomes Ben-Zvi, Yudelewitz is Ben-Yehuda, and Goldberg is Even-Zahav. But many take new names utterly divorced from the meanings of their original surnames. "Artzi" means "my country," and is popular; Ben-Shabbat (son of the Sabbath) has a distinctly religious connotation; and "Tamar" means date-palm. There are many Ben-Ammis and Yerushalmis and the like.

I understand that to peruse the telephone book in Palestine or a directory, is to steep one's self in the lore of personal nomenclature developing along new trends in modern Hebrew life. The "steins" and "skis" and "vitzes" and "bergs" are gradually disappearing to be replaced by the more euphonious interpretations. A rose by any other name would smell as sweet, but these translations sound a great deal sweeter than their originals.

A Hebrew Talkie

LOVERS of the Hebrew word in South Africa will be interested in the production of the first Hebrew talkie. The film was produced by Mr. B. Agadati, who is himself an actor and an interpreter of folk-dancing. The name of the film is "Fifty Years of Eretz Israel." It shows the Jewish achievements in Palestine since Jews first began to settle there, and lasts for over an hour and a

half. It includes songs and modern Palestine music.

The Mayor of Tel-Aviv, Mr. M. Dizen-goff, is one of the characters in the film, and appears in it playing his part of the founder of the first all-Jewish city twenty-five years ago as a moustached and bearded middle-aged man, and then as his natural self at the present day as the clean-shaven Mayor.

The film is due to be shown in London shortly. I hope that an effort will be made to bring it to South Africa. There can be no finer agency for the encouragement of the speaking of Hebrew than an early showing in this country of the first Hebrew talkie.

"Culture"

IT would appear as if there are people still left in Germany, who have the courage to make a crack at the present attempt to "culturalise" education along certain definite lines.

The story I have to relate is supposed to have happened in a school-room in which the pupils are being cross-examined.

"What happened in 1888?" asks the teacher.

"Adolf Hitler was born," answers the pupil.

"And what happened in 1892?" continues the teacher.

"In the year 1892, Adolf Hitler was four years old," replies the pupil.

The pupil is highly complimented before the whole class by the enthusiastic teacher.

SOUTH AFRICAN AIRWAYS (S.A.R. & H.)

On and from 1st August a bi-weekly service will operate between the RAND and CAPE TOWN via Durban, and weekly service between the RAND and CAPE TOWN via Kimberley and Beaufort West. The days of departure from the Rand Airport will be as under: Tuesdays and Fridays (Via Durban), at 7.00 a.m.

Tuesdays (Via Kimberley), at 7.15 a.m.

S.A.R. Headquarters,
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T. A. Watermeyer,
General Manager.