

## Decorum

I THINK it was timely on the part of Dr. Landau to make an appeal, as he did last week, to the lady members of our community not to attend wedding functions with bare arms and shoulders. Such a custom is considered not to be in accordance with the dignity of the occasion.

I consider there are many who will be rather inclined to agree with the learned rabbi. There is, after all, a certain decorum associated with a sacred function like that of a wedding ceremony and the wearing of backless dresses is definitely not appropriate.

It is all a question of "Derech Eretz"—the name which Jews give for proper conduct and seemly behaviour. The original Hebrew words literally mean "a way of the land." It is to-day applied to those niceties of conduct which do not come under the category of laws, but which are of extreme importance to the individual, as well as in the communal life.

I find also that there is a lack of reverence at the receptions held subsequent to marriage ceremonies. Whilst it is true that a wedding is an occasion for joy, the manner in which wedding guests sit restlessly through the few felicitous speeches, all eagerly bent on dancing and distributing themselves over the hall, is deeply to be deplored.

There is a similar non-reverent attitude at most barmitzvah celebrations. One often notices offences against good taste on these occasions. The holding of small bridge and poker parties on these occasions is an old complaint. Appreciation of the true significance of the celebration to the confirmand is entirely lost sight of by the crowds of people who have come to enjoy a feast of "eats and cards."

## The Book

I NOTE that a strong effort is being made to rebuild the present old and inadequate premises of the Bible Society in Johannesburg. It is just four hundred years ago since the Book of Books was first printed in the English language. As a matter of fact I hear that the American Bible Society is arranging to celebrate suitably this unique anniversary.

Writing on the subject recently Professor William Lyon Phelps stressed the incontrovertible fact that "all our modern Anglo-Saxon civilisation is founded on the English Bible; and it would be difficult to say whether its influence has been stronger in the formation of character or in literary art. It is the very life blood of the English-speaking race." The distinguished professor also expressed the hope that the 400th anniversary may help to direct attention "to the unspeakable debt which we owe to the Bible."

The learned writer might have gone a step further and added the rather significant fact, so often lost sight of, that the Bible is the gift of the Jewish people to all mankind. I think that at no time has this emphasis been more necessary and at no time could be it be more appreciated.

In this connection, I have been rather amazed at the fact that despite the great

# Current Communal Comments

By

"Hamabit"

popularity of the Bible in the world, there are a large number of Jewish homes in this country in which there is no English translation of the great volume. Some years ago the Jewish Publication Society of America made a special English translation, which is well worth cherishing. It is a volume which should find its way into every Jewish home in English-speaking countries.

The occasion of the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the printing of the English Bible should be made the means of also emphasising the part the Bible has played in the life of the Jewish people, not alone in the past four hundred years, but throughout the ages.

## Music

A FEW days ago a celebration of significance took place. I refer to the fifty-fifth birthday of Ernst Bloch, who might be described as the most Jewish of Jewish composers of our time. His ambition is the creation of national Jewish music out of the spirit of his race. Bloch is not so much interested in resuscitating old racial or folk melodies as to create a new music expressing the Hebrew spirit of to-day and the future.

It is twenty-two years since Ernst Bloch published his "Trois Poèmes Juifs," which made him famous throughout the musical world. In these compositions was found the very spirit of the "holy race."

It may be said that the "Jewishness" of Bloch's compositions do not in any way diminish their pure musical qualities. As a result much of the music of this modern composer finds itself on the programmes of non-Jewish musical combinations. The performances are accepted as masterly interpretations of the spiritual strivings of the modern Jew.

## "A Luncheon"

IT may not be known to many that the strains of the Hatikvah have never been heard at Government House in Jerusalem since the British obtained the Mandate over Palestine. At least the strains of the Jewish National anthem were not heard there until a few weeks ago when the High Commissioner, Sir Arthur Wachope, was giving a luncheon party to 150 outstanding Jewish leaders and representatives of the Jewish colonies and agricultural institutions in Palestine.

The function was a return courtesy for the honours showered on the High Commissioner by the Jewish settlements during his recent visits to them. The Hatikvah was played at the close of the luncheon by the Military Band after it had concluded the British Anthem. Another interesting

feature of the luncheon was that it was prepared in accordance with the Jewish dietary laws.

I hear from a friend in Palestine that the function was a most unique affair, the guests representing a cross-section of the agricultural life of the country including Mr. Leibovitz, the oldest settler in Gedera to which he came more than fifty years ago. Another guest was Shulamath Arlosoroff, the sixteen-year-old daughter of the late Dr. Chaim

Arlosoroff, who is studying at the Children's Village in Ben Shemen.

It is functions of this unique character which make one regret not to be living permanently in Eretz Israel.

## Confession

A NON-JEWISH reader of this journal has written me an interesting letter in the course of which he asks whether Jews believe in confession as part of the ritual of their religion.

Whilst it is true that confession is not practised as part of the Judaic faith, it must be admitted that it is often prescribed in the Old Testament. The Jewish prophets frequently exhorted the people to confess their backsliding and promised remission of sins as reward. In Talmudical literature, confession is described as the "entering wedge to the wide gates of God's mercy." The Jew is encouraged to make a confession on his death bed. It can be made before a rabbi, a pious elder, or before God alone. A personal intermediary is not considered essential for confession.

## Portraits

THOSE of us who have been to London will remember visits to the National Portrait Gallery. On the walls of that institution are to be seen the photographs of the greatest men in the unfolding of English history.

I hear that a group of people in London are shortly issuing an interesting catalogue of "Anglo-Jewish Portraits." These will include more than five hundred portraits of Anglo-Jewish interest, all of which were engraved prior to 1837.

The catalogue will stress not only the influence which Jews have had on the life of England, but also that exerted by Englishmen upon the Jews.

Among the non-Jews of whom there will be many different portraits are Lord George Gordon, who ended a tumultuous, hectic life as a convert to Judaism, and Richard Brothers, self-styled "Prince of the Hebrews and Nephew of the Almighty," who died in a lunatic asylum before being revealed as new ruler of the world. Brothers was the first to proclaim the theory that the English are the descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes—a theory greatly subscribed to to-day in many classes of British society.

## A Buzzing

ZORACH'S wife went to Dr. Kahanowitz. She said: "My husband suffers from a buzzing noise in his ears."

"He should go to Muizenberg for a month," advised the doctor.

"But he is a 'shamos' in a shool and cannot leave his work."

"Then you had better go."