

## Services

THIS evening the synagogues throughout South Africa will be filled with overflowing congregations to usher in the solemn festival of the New Year. Besides public worship in synagogue edifices, there will be services held in specially engaged halls to meet the needs in the larger centres.

I have been told by synagogue officials that the "bookings" this year have been particularly heavy. Besides catering for its own members, every synagogue has a large number of seats reserved for the "High Festival Jews"—the men and women who only attend synagogue services during this period.

When one visits, during the year, any synagogue of this country, a feeling of desolation is aroused at the great emptiness. I am not speaking, of course, of special occasions which bring crowds of worshippers, nor do I refer to week-day services; but the ordinary Sabbath service is so badly attended.

It is during Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur, however, when the synagogues are crowded with thousands of earnest worshippers, that one realises the hold which orthodox Judaism still has upon the bulk of Jews in this country.

## Victor Hugo

I THINK it is natural that we should take cognizance of the commemoration this month of the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Victor Hugo.

Jews will always be grateful for Victor Hugo's friendship to our people and the part he played in condemning persecutions generally. Not only was his name among those who signed the protest against the pogroms that occurred in Czarist Russia in 1882, but he presided, on May 31, 1882, at a protest meeting in Paris, and he was joined by outstanding men of letters and science, eminent statesmen and spokesmen for the Catholic and Protestant Churches in condemning the outrages.

His passionate plea for justice, as embodied in "Les Miserables," is merely an indication of the attitude this great man adopted towards all persecutions and oppressions.

Not only is it important that we should recall his friendship on the occasion of this anniversary, but it is fitting that a French-Jewish writer, Pierre Paraf, son-in-law of the late Zionist leader, Max Nordau, should have written a new work about Victor Hugo, published on the occasion of the present anniversary.

We look keenly upon the horizon today, but do not see any Victor Hugo!

## A Comedian

AND so the man who created laughter for millions among his musical hall audiences for many years, has now taken his last "call." Julian Rose passed away in London a few days ago. His impersonation of the Jew on the stage was droll and even crude, but never unkind. He taught people not to laugh at the Jew but with him.

The talented Jewish comedian made several visits to South Africa. On one of these I met him and was charmed by his kindly

# Current Communal Comments

By

"Hamabit"

personality. He was asked to visit a Jewish orphanage during a Sunday afternoon and he went readily. Soon he had the young boys and girls rocking with laughter at his humorous stories. Afterwards I saw a few tears in the eyes of Julian Rose, and he whispered to a few of us standing near him: "You know, I was a Jewish Orphanage boy myself."

The late Julian Rose was American-born, but became really famous when on a visit to England. He then stayed in that country for the rest of his life. He will be greatly missed by the millions of honest-to-goodness patrons of the still existing vaudeville houses in Great Britain.

## A Lady Doctor

AN interesting personality was Madame Dr. Lydia Rabinowitsch-Kempner, who passed away recently in Germany at the age of sixty-four. This talented scientist was for many years Director of the Bacteriological Institute of the City Hospital in Berlin. She was one of the leading research workers in tuberculosis in Germany and was famous throughout the world. She was compulsorily retired from her professorship last December. On taking a visit subsequently to Italy, she was invited to a private audience in Rome with Signor Mussolini. A strange aspect of this particular interview was the fact that in extending courtesy to Madame Rabinowitsch-Kempner, the leader of the Italian people meant to pay a compliment not only to a gifted research worker but to Germany itself.

Professor Rabinowitsch-Kempner was born in Kovno in 1871. Throughout her life she took an active interest in work of women medical students. With her husband, Dr. Walter Kempner, she carried out many important experiments. These have been of enormous value in the advancement of medical science in Germany.

## A Master

AMONG the many brilliant men who were forced out of Germany by the Nazi Regime was Leo Blech, who then held the post of music conductor at the Berlin Opera House.

I hear that this brilliant musician has now been appointed by King Gustaf V. of Sweden as Master of the King's Music at Stockholm. At present Blech is the guest conductor at the Royal Opera House at Stockholm.

The new Master of the King's Music in Sweden is the composer of a number of musical works, including two operas and several operettas. Thus again do we see the hand of welcome extended to a man of talent whom Nazi "Kultur" has seen fit to eject.

## A Hero

IN the maelstrom of hate and persecution now proceeding in Germany, there comes now and then a little flash of light on a darkening horizon.

The Hamburg Press appears to be full of praise for a Jewish hero, Johann Tunes, aged 25, who jumped into the sea during a storm and saved the life of a drowning German. None of the Aryan onlookers attempted to rescue him.

Nu!

## At the White House

IT has been an old political custom in the United States of America for the occupant of the Governorship of New York State to be nominated for the Presidency. Herbert H. Lehman is the first Jewish Governor in the history of New York and was re-elected last year by a large majority.

Some years ago a book was written by an author whose name is hardly remembered to-day. The work, which was entitled "The Impeachment of President Israels," related the story of a Jewish President in America and his difficulties whilst in office. The story was looked upon as fantastic. To-day, however, the idea of a Jewish President is actually being spoken of as an occurrence within the realms of possibility.

The drawback in connection with the probability of Governor Lehman's nomination for Presidency is the fact that in 1936 President Roosevelt will most likely be a candidate to succeed himself and there is no likelihood that Lehman will stay in office until 1940. He has already enjoyed three consecutive terms of office and it would be unusual for him to be re-elected for the fourth term. In any case, Lehman, who is a protégé of Roosevelt's, would not be prepared to be an opponent of his own chief in any Presidential election.

The test, however, may come sooner than one expects. A few years ago the very idea of a Jewish Governor of an American state was almost unthinkable. To-day there are four Jewish Governors in office. One can never tell what may happen in these swift moving times.

To have a Jew in the White House at Washington! An idea of this kind came to the mind of a forgotten fiction writer, yet there are no constitutional or other legitimate barriers against such an eventuality.

## Not True

A VISITOR called on a renowned rabbi and talked continuously throughout the evening. When the rabbi wished to say something, the stranger immediately interrupted him. Finally the visitor declared that he had heard something unusually interesting from a famous scholar.

"That can't be true," declared the rabbi.

The stranger gasped in surprise: "Rabbi, how can you say that when you have not yet heard what I have to tell you?"

"It cannot be true," insisted the rabbi, "for how can you possibly hear anything from anybody when you give no one a chance to say anything in your presence?"