

An Annual Reception

I LIKE the idea of the members of the Chevra Kadisha committee being entertained once a year by the two leading Hebrew Congregations in Johannesburg. The recent Succoth receptions were most interesting and the discussions on our congregational and communal problems were illuminating.

I still miss, however, the annual *Zayin Adar* reception given in the old days by the Chevra Kadisha itself.

The heads of all local charitable and congregational endeavour used to attend and matters of communal interest were discussed from all angles. The function was, in a way, an annual stocktaking of the communal position and the atmosphere was a cordial one in which the spirit of Yomtov prevailed. Many ideas of communal importance first saw the light at these pleasant functions. It is a pity that they have fallen into disuse. The custom should certainly be revived and I hope to hear that such revival will be effected next year.

A Chalutzah

THE first South African girl to pass her matriculation examination at the Reali school in Haifa, was Nechamah Genussow—daughter of those two valiant Jewish Nationalists, Mr. and Mrs. M. L. Genussow. Owing to her general knowledge and to the fact that she speaks several languages, this young lady could easily have secured a good post with the Palestine Government. Instead she became a chalutzah and was among the first of the pioneers to reclaim the region of Beth Schaan—a very neglected part of the Yishuv with no Jewish settlers.

Nechamah joined in all the hardships and privations of the members of the Kibutz Tel-Amal. Quite a number of the young pioneers got ill and one of them—a young man 24 years old—died. This did not deter the rest in any way; they were determined to overcome all dangers in order to open up a new region for Jewish settlement.

The young South African is still loyally co-operating with her colleagues in their self-imposed task of fighting malaria and making a desert blossom. Jewry in this country may be well proud of a Nechamah Genussow. The example of her devotion should be an inspiration to our Zionist youth.

South African Fortunes

FROM time to time a spell of excitement is created in the East Side of New York or in the Jewish quarters of Warsaw and Lodz by the announcement that some poor Jew is about to inherit a large fortune from a forgotten "uncle" in a distant land. Almost invariably nothing comes of these fortunes, excepting grave sorrow and disillusionment to the poor "heir."

Curiously enough most of these fortunes hail from South African "uncles." Some years ago a sensation was created in Poland over a few millions left by a South African Jew named Epstein. As there are many Epsteins in Poland, they formed a league with a president and secretary and spent a pretty penny on lawyers and cables. In the end they were informed that no Epstein had ever died intestate in this country.

The latest family fortune — six million

Current Communal Comments

By
"Hamabit"

dollars—hails from a Capetown uncle called Hershel Kuzlik. The money was supposed to have been left to Abraham Store, a poor blacksmith in the East Side of New York. For several weeks Store was the hero of the day. He was featured in the Jewish newspapers; postmen brought him bags of begging letters; reporters and cameramen besieged his home. Then came the great disillusionment and now he stands at the bellows of his smithy and curses South Africa for all it is worth.

But this is not yet the end of the Kuzlik millions. They have again appeared—this time in the poor cottage of a Warsaw Jew. He remembers his uncle well and he is quite confident that he is coming into a fortune.

It would be interesting to learn how this kind of news begins to circulate!

Hats On

I NOTICED at a communal meeting the other day, at which there was an audience mainly of men, that quite a few of them remained throughout the proceedings with their hats on. These represent the ultra-orthodox type who consider it incorrect to appear in any public place without a hat.

Covering of the head has always been customary in Israel at religious functions. The priests had to wear mitres or head-dress while officiating (Exodus 28: 36-38). At the beginning of the Common Era, the covering of the head began to be practised not only for religious acts but at all times. This habit was considered symbolic of the fear of God. Especially during meals, to which a religious meaning was attached, nobody would uncover his head.

This custom, however, is not a Jewish one exclusively. The Mohammedans, too, observe it religiously. The Reform Jews in America and Germany do not observe it and sit during religious worship without any headgear.

There is really no necessity for any Jew to keep his hat on when not attending a religious service. The custom of doing so, however, is practised by many thousands of orthodox Jews all over the world.

A Radio Rabbi

JUST as there is a radio priest for American broadcasting, so there appears to be a radio rabbi. He is Rabbi Edgar F. Magnin, known as the radio sermoniser. It was he who taught Norma Shearer the tenets of Judaism and married her to Irvin Thalberg.

A friend of mine in America tells me that the common sense philosophy possessed by the radio rabbi is greatly appreciated. Rabbi Magnin recently spoke over the radio, asking his fellow-Jews not to become hysterical in believing that every Gentile is a Jew-hater.

"The average non-Jew is a kindly, human being," he declared. "Jews shouldn't get so hysterical that they believe all Gentiles are Jew-haters. I dare say more Christians like us than hate us. And even in dealing with those bigoted, twisted persons who think that every Jew is a horned devil, hysteria won't help us.

"We Jews can't afford to get hysterical about our problems. That's one thing to remember.

"The other is: We've got to know who we are and what we are. Then we will carry ourselves with dignity. Then we won't even notice every little slur by little men. The glories of the Torah, the mystery and romance of the Bible, the nobility of the Ten Commandments — all these things that the Jew has given to the world are to-day, alas, too little known by Jews, themselves.

"Teaching Judaism to Jews—that's the problem we should be facing to-day—not anti-Semitism, about which we can do mighty little anyhow."

With all of which sentiments there are many of us who will be inclined to agree.

A Conductor

OUR local press had cable reference recently to the passing away at the age of eighty-three, in his home in London, of Sir Frederic Hyman Cowen. He was a famous composer and conductor. I now hear that a memorial service was held at the West London Synagogue.

Sir Frederic was born at Kingston, Jamaica, in January, 1852, and was taken to England at the age of four. His father was treasurer to Her Majesty's and Drury Lane Theatres, and the young musician was brought into contact at a very early age with the greatest artists of the time. At the age of eight he had composed the music of an operetta entitled "Garibaldi" and at the age of twelve he had won the Mendelssohn scholarship. An overture of his was performed at Covent Garden when he was fourteen. Among his more popular early works were the cantata "The Rose Maiden," "The Language of Flowers" and the "Scandinavian Symphony." His chief fame, however, Cowen won as a conductor of the most famous British orchestras, including the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the Liverpool Orchestra, and the Scottish Orchestra.

I heard him conduct the famous Halle Orchestra in Manchester some years ago. He wielded the baton in distinguished manner, getting the very best out of that wonderful musical combination. It was in 1900 that Cambridge University conferred upon Frederic Cowen the honorary degree of Musical Doctor, and in 1911 he was knighted.

Popularity

CHAYIM: "Berel, you must find debt-collecting a thankless job. Nobody wants to see you, do they?"

Berel: "On the contrary, Chayim, they all ask me to call again."