

Reflections

I THINK that Rosh Hashonah which is ushered in to-night breathes the spirit of optimism. The brevity and uncertainty of life should only fill us with the determination to crowd an infinity of good work into it. The aching sense of days that too speedily are whirled away by the torrents of time should act as a challenge to us to make the most of our lives. The question should not be: "Is life worthwhile?" but: "What am I doing with this marvellous gift that has been entrusted to me for an uncertain period?"

I believe it would be a pity if we really failed to understand the significance of our New Year celebrations. True happiness is not really the concomitant of gaiety and dissipation, of jazz and night clubs, nor does a big balance at the bank always indicate true bliss. I know many a man bereft of the so-called amenities of life who is perfectly happy.

Judaism does not expect us to do uncommon things, but rather to do common things uncommonly well. Each one of us can fashion our humble clay into an unbreakable vessel of beauty. It may be remembered that the English philosopher, Hume, once said: "In the sight of the Universe, man is of no more account than an oyster." Our religion has a nobler opinion of man's possibilities and urges him to achieve perfection and ultimately enter the ranks of the immortal dead. It is no exaggeration to say that Judaism warns us not to think meanly of ourselves; for we are apt to act meanly if we do. When men regard themselves as descendants of anthropoid apes, they are apt to act as such. A truly Jewish conception of life can sweeten the bitter waters of existence and remove the Himalayas of difficulties and the Atlantics of doubts and make us emerge triumphant from the struggle of existence.

I do not quite know how the present ugly onslaughts upon the honour of our race all over the world are reacting on most of us. I feel somehow that to most Jews, these attacks have had the effect of straightening our backs and making us feel even more proud of the great ethical heritage we have given to civilisation.

Toscanini

THE latest overseas newspapers are full of reports of the Salzburg Festival. Musical critics shower great praise on Toscanini, the seventy-year-old Italian musician, who conducted "Fidelio" and "Die Meistersingers" at the festival.

German newspapers, however, make little mention of Toscanini. They are annoyed with him. For the second time the old man has shown the Nazi "kultur-mongers" that he would not tolerate the barbaric treatment of Jewish musicians in Germany. Some two years ago Toscanini indignantly refused an invitation to Germany, stating that as long as musicians are ostracised in that country, solely because of their Jewish origin, he would refuse to appear before German audiences.

This time Toscanini's action was even more courageous. He refused to permit the broadcast of his Salzburg concerts to Germany. Some time before the festival, the German broadcasting company arranged with Austria to broadcast all the Salzburg concerts by special transmission to Ger-

Current Communal Comments

By
"Hamabit"

many. They stipulated, however, that Bruno Walter, who is a Jew, should not be included in the transmission. When Toscanini heard of it, he wrote to Salzburg saying that he would not appear unless his concerts are also omitted from the transmission.

Music-lovers all over the world will applaud the dignified and humanitarian action of this great Italian conductor.

Our Children

THE following two incidents, gleaned from Jewish newspapers overseas, illustrate the part played by our children in the turmoil of present-day Jewish existence. They require no comment:

From *Unzer Express* (Warsaw): The Dayan of Deliatyn, Rabbi A. M. Safrin, went with his little boy to the station. As they crossed the railway line a group of young Polish hooligans accosted them and began to throw stones and mud at the Rabbi. They were so engrossed in the holy work of stone-slinging that they did not notice the express train arriving from Stanislavov. The rabbi's son, however, turned back, as soon as he saw the train, and dragged out a young hooligan almost from under the wheels of the train.

From the *Davar* (Tel-Aviv): The little boy who discovered a bomb on the beach of Tel-Aviv and threw it into the sea was interrogated by the police. The police had fished out the bomb from the sea. It appeared to be full of most dangerous explosives. The youngster stated that he was playing on the beach when he noticed in the sand a curiously wrapped parcel with hot coals on top. He realised at once that it must be a bomb. He then seized and threw it in the water. The police official asked him: "Were you not afraid to touch the parcel? Did you not realise that it might kill you?"

"I knew," replied the youngster, "that if the bomb exploded it would kill very many people. . . So I thought: Let one person be killed rather than many . . ."

A Benefactor

A CURIOUS type of pre-war Russian Jew was A. M. Ginsburg, who died in Paris recently at the age of 85. He was known in Russia as the "Port-Arthur Ginsburg"—in contrast to the well-known Baron Ginsburg.

The "Port-Arthur Ginsburg" was born in a little town in Volhynia. During the Russo-Japanese war he managed to become the leading contractor of the Russian Navy. The Tsarist Admiralty found that, amidst all the corruption that was prevailing at the time, Ginsburg was one of the few men who could be entrusted with the provisioning of the navy. At the conclusion of the war, the Volhynian Jew was presented to the Tsar who personally thanked him for his achievements.

Ginsburg amassed a great fortune, a small part of which he saved after his escape overseas during the revolution. He was known as a liberal contributor to charities, but he seldom contributed to Jewish institutions. Whilst in Paris he supported munificently the Greek Orthodox Churches and the exiled Russian sailors to whom he was especially attached since the Port-Arthur days. After his death the heads of the Greek Orthodox Church in Paris published

long "hespedim" in the emigre Russian newspapers. They stated that Ginsburg once said: "The Jewish refugees from Russia have their own co-religionists to go to, but to whom should the Russian emigrees turn? That is why I must help them."

"Unknown" Poets

RECENTLY German-Jewish newspapers celebrated the seventieth anniversary of Richard Beer Hofman, the famous Austrian poet. Hofman still adorns the front rank of German poetry. His *lieder* are sung and recited wherever German is spoken. Two of his dramatic Biblical poems—"Jacob's Dream" and "King David"—were translated into Hebrew and presented on the Palestine stage by the Habimah. His popularity in Germany is enormous. Even the purgatorial Nazi editors could not bring themselves to omit his songs from their poetry-anthologies.

Just recently there appeared in Berlin a book of collected German folk-songs. It was widely advertised by Goebbels as "completely purged of Jewish authorship." Critics abroad noticed that there was really some good poetry in the book. But most of the good poems were proved to be written by Jewish authors. In such cases the name of the author was not given. It was simply and shamelessly stated: "Deutsches Lied. Verfasser unbekannt." (German song: Author unknown).

This cynical treatment was meted out not only to the old classics, like Heine's "Lorelei," which was known and sung by every German schoolboy, but even to modern writers, who are still alive. One of the latter is Hofman, whose "Miriam's Lullaby" is sung by millions of German mothers. The song is prominently reproduced in the Nazi book and here too the author is stated to be unknown.

Another poem, entitled "Der Reiter," which is published in the book bears the legend: "German, Aryan soldier-song. Author unknown." In other words, the compilers know that the author is Aryan, but forgot his name! The full name of the writer is Hugo Zukerman, an Austrian Jewish soldier who fell in the great war. His march-song is still sung by German soldiers.

Impossible

CHAYIM: "It is impossible to make a woman happy."

Sarah: "Nonsense, just give her all the money she can spend."

Chayim: "Did not I just say it was impossible?"