

## CURRENT

## Cohens

I WAS perusing the other day the latest issue of the Transvaal Telephone Directory, and discovered, among other things, that the Smiths still lead the Cohens — numerically speaking.

I often think that a study of the careers of those who bear the honoured patronymics of Cohen and Levy would prove worth while. The notable Cohens who have enriched human culture seem to flourish especially in Germany and Holland, while the Lévy's, Lévis and Halévys thrive in France and Italy. England appears to have produced few Cohens of eminence as compared with the Cahens, Cahens, Kahns, Köhns and Cahuns elsewhere.

On the other hand, some Cohens, who have changed their original priestly name, have also immortalised themselves in the history of civilisation. Among others, I include Sir Francis T. Palgrave (compiler of the "Golden Treasury" and Professor of Poetry at Oxford University); Georg Brandes, the great Danish literary critic; Moriz Kaposi, the best-known Hungarian dermatologist; and Emil Ludwig, one of the leading contemporary biographers of our age. All these folk were born with the name of Cohen.

It is of interest to remember that one of the first Jewish scientists to visit South Africa shortly before the discovery of gold, was a certain Dr.

## COMMUNAL

Emil Cohen—at that time a renowned German geologist.

## "Beste S'Chorah"

THERE is a popular Jewish folk song refrain which says that "Torah is die beste S'chorah." It really means that those who teach, study and observe the Torah will be best paid in the end in this and in the next world.

There are many amongst orthodox Jewry in Eastern Europe who to-day listen with a bitter smile to the song — especially amongst the Jewish clergy, for their economic position is far from being the best paid—in this world anyway. Many of these folk live in pitiful squalor. They can hardly maintain themselves and their families on the miserable salaries which half the time they do not even receive regularly.

In this connection it may be worth mentioning that there exists in Poland what might be described as a *Yiddishkeit* industry (for the supply of Scrolls of the Law, tephillim, mezuzoth and tallisim), which is also undergoing a severe crisis. This is due to the diminished orders from America and to a growing indifference to orthodoxy amongst Jews. The demand for religious articles has decreased, with the result that many Jewish villages in the Eastern Provinces of Poland have become impoverished through lack of employment.

It would appear as if things of the Torah may no longer be the best *S'chorah* until there is a revival of orthodox observance amongst Jews in many parts of the world.

## Inter-Marriage

THERE is a young lady among my social acquaintances who feels bitter at the moment about the religion of her forefathers. She is interested rather deeply in an educated and refined Gentile, and has gone so far as to approach the local rabbinate with the idea of having him converted to Judaism. The young man is fond of her and is ready to submit to conversion in order to marry her, although he has no interest in the Jewish faith as such.

Cases of this kind are often occurring these days. It may, therefore, be worth while to explain the Jewish attitude towards inter-marriage.

Judaism believes that the family, in order to be successful must be founded on the meeting of the minds of the husband and wife in regard to the fundamentals of life, the most important of which is, of course, religion. It, therefore, opposes marriage between Jews and persons of other religions. It also opposes conversion from another religion to Judaism for the sake of marriage, holding that religion is too fundamental a purpose of life to be shaken off even to marry a particular person. According to Jewish law, it is not permitted to ac-

## COMMENTS

cept proselytes who wish to become Jews only in order to marry members of the Jewish faith. If, however, a person accepts the Jewish faith out of conviction of its truth, he becomes the equal of any Jew and is permitted to marry with any Jew or Jewess.

## No Chimney Sweep!

I READ recently of an interesting experiment conducted in the Jewish schools of Germany. Children were asked to write essays on what they would like to do when they grow up. These were afterwards analysed with a view to ascertaining the mind of the young generation.

Amongst most of the children, the movement towards occupational reconstruction — *umschichtung* (as the Germans call it) — has struck deep roots. A Frankfurt boy wrote: "I intend to be a merchant, although I am a Jew and have the destiny of a Jew to bear, I will face it." Another child said that he had wanted to take up an intellectual profession, but "times have changed considerably and I have also changed. I have been shaken by recent events and I recognise that it is not right to stand far removed from productive occupations. My wish is to become a mechanic."

The most "tragic" case was that of a young Berlin scholar. "Three years ago," he wrote, "my heart's desire was to become a chimney sweep. I like the balancing of oneself. The hovering in danger also attracts me. It was, therefore, all settled for me then; I was to become a chimney sweep. Three years later an old system was overthrown and with it my hopes. To become a chimney sweep is now for me an idle dream, for I am a *non-Aryan*. The earnestness of life has come upon me with all its bitterness. The pain it is for me to give up this calling is only known to my bitter heart."

## Typewriters

I CAME across an old fellow the other day who remembers the time when there were no such things as typewriters in offices. Letters had to be written by hand and merchants kept extensive bound books in which, through a certain process, the inked communications were copied on sheets of yellow tissue paper.

To-day one can get a typewriter in almost any alphabet; in Greek, Russian, Arabic—not to mention Persian and Siamese. The Hebrew typewriter goes back almost to the beginning of the history of the machine. The first one I remember—at least the first one in England—was made to the order of Dr. Moses Gaster, who, I think, also designed the key-

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board. By the way, Dr. Gaster is in possession of the first and only typewriter with Samaritan script.

With the spread of Zionism, the demand for Hebrew typewriters increased. I remember a journalistic friend telling me that during the great Peace Conference at the end of the War, he saw Hebrew typewriters in the shop windows of Paris and the members of the Zionist Delegation were able to purchase those which they required on the spot.

In Palestine to-day there is, of course, a large number of Hebrew machines being used in many offices. It is only a wonder that a special Hebrew typewriter factory has not already been established in Tel-Aviv.

## Wisdom

BERL: "Whenever a piece of bread and butter drops to the ground, it *must* be with the butter down."

Shmerl: "But I have seen bread and butter dropped with the buttered side up."

Berl: "Then, my friend, the bread must have been buttered on the wrong side."

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