

CURRENT COMMUNAL COMMENT

By "Hamabit"

"Green Fields"

THERE are many, no doubt, who still remember the unobtrusive arrival in this country some years ago of Peretz Hirschbein and his charming young wife. The eminent Yiddish writer and dramatist was on a world tour and came here from Australia.

I remember there was some consternation when a cable reached Capetown from someone in the Commonwealth stating that "Peretz" was on a ship which would reach South Africa in a few days time. Peretz, the great Yiddish writer, had passed away some years previously and no one could quite make out the exact meaning of the cabled information. The mystery, however, was solved on the arrival of the boat in question, when Peretz Hirschbein and his wife stepped off.

Their stay in this country was a memorable one. Hirschbein lectured to large audiences and was well received in Jewish circles. Later, he included South Africa in the well-written impressions of his world tour.

I am reminded of Hirschbein owing to the fact that the talkie version of his remarkable drama, "Green Fields," will be shown at the Standard Theatre from Monday evening. The film has made a deep impression upon millions of Jews who have seen it in America and in other countries, and it should arouse considerable interest here. I am glad that the better class of Yiddish talkie film is now beginning to reach South Africa.

Denmark

NOTICE from a report from Copenhagen that the Gestapo is now getting busy in Denmark. The first tragic victims will no doubt be the lively little Jewish community of some six thousand souls which is so deeply rooted in that country and has a fine tradition.

It is not generally known that there were Jews in Denmark in the early seventeenth century. With the development of the assimilationist spirit in Germany, Danish Jews came under its influence and there was considerable drifting from the community as a result of inter-marriages, which at one time were equal in number to purely Jewish marriages.

Georg Brandes, perhaps the greatest European authority on literature, was a member of the Danish Jewish community. During the past twenty years Danish Jewry was strengthened by the infiltration of Russian and German Jews. The Chief Rabbi of Copenhagen is Dr. Max Friediger,

who is also editor of a bright Jewish weekly entitled, "Juédische Familieblad." In addition to Brandes, Danish Jewry has produced another great authority on literature, in the person of the late Professor Simensohn. He was, it may be remembered, the owner of one of the richest private libraries in the world. This library would by now have fallen into the hands of the Nazi looters, but fortunately it was handed over to the Jewish National Library in Jerusalem some years ago.

Norway

OSLO, Bergen and Trondheim, which are prominent in the news at present, are the homes of small Hebrew congregations. Altogether, there are some two thousand Jews in Norway. The synagogue in Trondheim is a somewhat unusual structure, having been built out of an old railway station. The Crown Prince of Norway and many other high officials were present at the opening ceremony.

About a half of the number of Jews in Norway live in Oslo, which was one of the first centres to be invaded by the Nazis. The town has two congregations, Orthodox and Reform. Most Norwegian Jews hail from Lithuania, especially from the village of Zager. I believe there are quite a number of Zager "landsleit" in this country, too.

The beginnings of Jewish settlement in Norway date from the middle of the nineteenth century when Henrik Wergeland, the famous Norwegian poet, obtained permission for Jews to enter the country. The Jews have erected a monument on his grave and on the anniversary of his death they cover it with flowers.

Sweden

SWEDEN has the biggest Jewish community in Scandinavia—fifteen thousand souls. The largest number are in Stockholm, where their affairs are presided over by Chief Rabbi Dr. Mordecai Ehrenpreis, one of the greatest Hebrew scholars of our time, who has distinguished himself as a litterateur not only in the Hebrew, but also in the Swedish language. His work, "The Soul of the East," has earned for him a reputation as one of the greatest stylists in the Swedish language.

Sweden has its own anti-Semitic newspaper, published on the model of "Der Stuermer." To-day the Scandinavian people know the true face of their anti-Semitic saviours, whose treachery has wrought so much havoc in Norway.

Next to Stockholm, there are communities in Gothenberg, Malmo and Lund. Lund is the most religious community and has a large number of Jewish institutions. Jews are well represented in Sweden's trade and industry. A number of German Jews, who have settled in the country in recent years, have received a warm welcome from the population.

Herzl's Grandson?

SOME time ago I referred in these columns to the claim of a young Jewish refugee in Chicago that he was the grandson of Dr. Herzl. I ventured to state that the validity of this claim was rather doubtful and required investigation.

I now learn that Herzl biographers in Palestine are busy inquiring into the matter. Dr. A. Bain, who is to-day considered the leading authority on Herzl and whose biography of the Zionist leader is due to be published in English shortly by the Jewish Publication Society of America, has stated to a representative of "Davar" that up till now he had not been aware of the existence of a grandson. Dr. Wolfson, who looked after the children of Herzl, had told him distinctly that Paulina Herzl had no children at all. She had been married to a Mr. Hift in April, 1911, and the couple were divorced at the beginning of 1913. Paulina Herzl died in 1930.

A Singer

I AM sorry to hear that Emma Redell has died recently in America. I met her a few years ago in Johannesburg when she was visiting relatives in the city. She sang at a private gathering and one soon understood why she had been acclaimed by critics as one of the great singers of America.

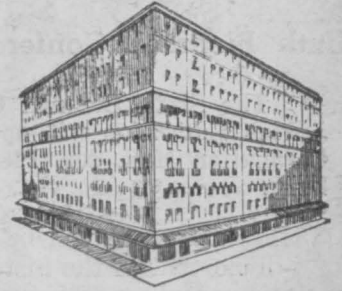
Madame Redell had arranged to appear on the concert platform in South Africa, having promised to sing in aid of a number of philanthropic projects. Unfortunately, she was called away suddenly to America through the illness of her husband, and music-lovers in this country were robbed of a rare opportunity of listening to a gifted singer.

Why?

AT a producers' meeting in Hollywood, Samuel Goldwyn—the eminent movie personality—interrupted the proceedings to say:

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