

CURRENT

COMMUNAL

By "Hamabit"

COMMENT

Bloch

I ENJOYED listening to the "Hebraic Rhapsody" of Ernest Bloch on Tuesday evening over the Johannesburg radio. This is the first time that this fine composition has been heard in this country as the orchestral score only reached here lately.

Bloch, who is sixty-one years of age, retains his position as the foremost Jewish composer of the day. The "Hebraic Rhapsody" for 'cello and orchestra, which the composer has named "Shelomo," was first performed in New York in 1916 by Hans Kindler, the famous 'cellist, and has since been included in the repertoire of the leading 'cellists of the world.

Those who heard the able performance on Tuesday evening of Miss Betty Pack, our own talented young 'cellist, could not help but feel that the music sprang from the composer's own deep-felt emotion and fine imagination for it is not really based on traditional Jewish music as we have known it hitherto. There is no doubt that Bloch has created something new in the way of Jewish contribution to classical music. It is not surprising that Bloch's compositions are finding their place in the programmes of famous orchestras in almost every part of the world.

London's Great Synagogues

AS one who spent his boyhood and early youth in London, I was distressed to hear of the complete destruction by Nazi bombs of the Great Synagogue in Dukes Place. It was an imposing structure and undoubtedly one of the most beautiful synagogues in the world. Here it was that as a lad I listened to sermons delivered by the late Chief Rabbi Dr. Herman Adler, and here it was that I attended a service at which the revered Theodor Herzl was present. This was during the Fifth Zionist Congress, held at the Queens Hall in London, and the occasion drew a large concourse of worshippers and was most impressive.

It was at the Great Synagogue that most of the present and former Anglo-Jewish ministers delivered their first sermons after they had graduated from the famous Jews' College. No visitor to London who had the slightest feeling for Judaism would miss attending a Service in this beautiful synagogue. The veneration felt for the Great Synagogue can only be likened to that felt by Christian worshippers for St. Paul's Cathedral, which has also suffered from bombing. As a matter of fact,

the house of worship at Dukes Place was known throughout the British Empire as the Cathedral Synagogue.

This war has indeed dealt us many blows, and not least severe is the bombing of a house of worship so much beloved by London synagogue worshippers. Another fine place which has suffered a similar fate is the famous Central Synagogue situated in the heart of the West End of London.

Geneva

A REFUGEE who passed through Geneva gave some interesting details regarding the beautiful League of Nations building, which not so long ago was a beehive of diplomatic activity. To-day, the magnificent Palace of Nations stands almost empty and is strongly guarded against sabotage by the Swiss police. The officials have all relinquished their posts. In this connection it is curious to note that all the civil servants of this great international institution were given the choice of relinquishing their jobs and accepting a monetary compensation for so doing, or taking unpaid leave with the right to return to the post when the League is revived. All the Jewish officials have chosen the second alternative. They believe in the future of the League.

Even more symbolic is the fact that the old building of the League, the "Palais Wilson," is still being used. It has become the centre of Jewish world organisations! Here one finds the offices of the Zionist Organisation headed by R. Lichtheim, the offices of the Jewish World Congress, the European offices of the Jewish Relief Organisation, the refugee centres, the Immigration Department of the Jewish Agency and the Joint Distribution Committee.

The "spirit of Geneva," it is said in Switzerland, is kept alive by the Jews in the "Palais Wilson."

Horses

IT is not generally known that at Givat Haim, a Jewish settlement in Emek Hefer, there is a stud farm which is proving highly successful. It has proved possible to rear the horses because the problem of all-the-year-round pasture has been solved. The farmers have learned their horse love from the Arabs of Trans-Jordan who say that their pupils are apt and amazing in their devotion to their young charges.

This new branch of farming is remunerative though it is now only in

the early stages. A tribute to the excellent condition of the stock has been paid by a high military officer who has placed his own prize-winning mount in the care of the farm. He brought it with him from England and regularly visits the "pensioner" with whose fitness he is quite satisfied.

Arabia, a neighbour of Palestine's, has of course been famous for centuries as the home of fine steeds. Who knows but in the years to come Palestine may also earn a high reputation for its horses, now that so successful a beginning to horse-breeding in that country has been made at Givat Haim's stud farm.

A Major-General

I WAS interested at the announcement made recently in London of the promotion to a Command with the acting rank of Major-General, of Brigadier E. F. Lawson, D.S.O., M.C. This recalls to mind some interesting modern Anglo-Jewish history.

The Major-General, who is the son and heir of the present Lord Burnham, is a Director of the "Daily Telegraph." His grandfather was Joseph Moses Levy who founded that famous London daily newspaper in the last century. The name "Lawson" was added by Joseph Moses Levy's son, the first Lord Burnham, under the will of an uncle.

The first Lord Burnham, who was born in London in 1862, succeeded his father as proprietor of the "Daily Telegraph." He took a leading part in English public life. South Africans will recall that at one time he visited this country in his capacity as Chairman of the Imperial Press Conference.

I also learn that a daughter of Joseph Moses Levy married Sir Owen Lanyon, whose name will be remembered in connection with the first British occupation of the Transvaal during the last century.

A Wonder

A JEWISH soldier, who had been wounded in the arm, asked his doctor: "When my arm heals, will I be able to play the piano?"

"I don't see why not," replied the doctor.

"That would be a miracle," commented the soldier, "as before I was hurt, I could never play a note!"

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