

CURRENT COMMUNAL COMMENT

By "Hamabit"

A Great Mitzvah

A FRIEND of mine who recently spent a few weeks as a patient in one of our larger nursing homes tells me that during the whole period of his stay there, neither he nor any of the other patients in the institution were visited by a communal or congregational representative.

The complaint made by my friend is of interest as I hear that no less an organisation than the Board of Deputies is shortly calling a conference of representatives of local communal and congregational organisations for the purpose of establishing a *Bikur Cholim* Society—the purpose of which will be to organise systematically the proper visiting of the sick in our hospitals, nursing homes and institutions.

It is somewhat strange that the community in the Golden City, with over fifty years' consistent philanthropic work behind it, has not yet seen fit to organise such an activity. The reason, I think, lies in the fact that the Chevra Kadisha is responsible for the Kosher Kitchen at the General Hospital and has intermittently throughout the years also arranged for Jewish patients to be visited. This has never proved a satisfactory arrangement. As a matter of fact many an invalid has taken umbrage at being visited by a representative of what is, after all, the Jewish Burial Society.

From time to time, Jewish Ministers have visited patients and still do so, but only haphazardly. I am glad to hear that the Board of Deputies has finally moved in the matter and I hope that the long needed *Bikur Cholim* Society will see the light of day very shortly.

A Heifetz Story

WHETHER it is true or not, a Heifetz story is "going the rounds" at present among music lovers in America. It is reported that during a recent tour by the celebrated violinist in the Middle West, his manager learnt that train connections would keep Heifetz in a small town for a few hours. The manager, therefore, arranged to hold a concert there to while away the time.

When Heifetz got off the train, he discovered that owing to a severe storm few had turned up for the concert. He then found out that his manager had blundered and that there was actually an earlier train Heifetz could take out of the village. He hurried to the concert hall to ar-

range for the cancellation so that he could catch the train. The president of the local council was one of the small group present. He heard Heifetz's story, nodded sympathetically and said, "It would be a blow to our town's prestige if we cancelled your concert, Mr. Heifetz. You must make an appearance. But I'll tell you what—just go on and SING a couple of your numbers and then catch your train."

Litvinov.

THE news that the new Russian Ambassador to the United States is to be M. Maxim Litvinov has aroused considerable interest. From Moscow now comes the news that M. Litvinov has been appointed to the additional post of Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs. He formerly held the position of Commissar of Foreign Affairs and was the Soviet delegate to the League of Nations Disarmament Conference.

It will be recollected that it was in March, 1938, that Litvinov aroused the interest of the political world by proposing a conference of the powers on German aggression. His proposal, however, was rejected.

The reason for Litvinov's temporary disappearance from the limelight was never made public, but shortly after the outbreak of the present war, M. Molotov became the Foreign Commissar and still retains that important position. Since, however, Germany attacked Russia, Litvinov appears to have returned to grace and his appointment as Soviet Ambassador to America is an indication of Stalin's favour. Litvinov's courageous attitude on world affairs has earned for him the respect, and even the affection, of the countries he visited from time to time on behalf of Russia.

This statesman was born in Bialystok in 1875 and received a thorough Jewish education. (His brother was for many years an orthodox rabbi in Warsaw). There is no doubt that Litvinov, who is a master of many languages — including incidentally English and Yiddish—will prove a popular choice for the important Washington post.

A Yeshivah

THE old idea that a Yeshivah must be housed in a dilapidated building, and situated in the narrow alleys of a gloomy Ghetto is undergoing a change in Palestine. I have just seen the architectural sketch of a building for a Palestine Yeshivah which won the prize in a special

competition, and I was greatly impressed by the grandeur of the plan. The buildings will cost no less than £15,000 pounds and will consist of study rooms, dining halls, libraries and dwelling houses for the teachers, surrounded by a park belt of ornamental trees. The Yeshivah will be connected with a Mizrahi agricultural settlement. Torah and manual labour will thus go hand in hand in this new centre.

The Yeshivah will be called "Kerem D'Yavneh" (the Vineyard of Yavneh), and will be situated on the site of the famous historical college of Yavneh, where Rabbi Jochanan Ben Zakkai saved Judaism from the clutches of Rome. The funds are provided from the famous legacy of Raphael Gotz, the old Russian philanthropist. The site was only recently acquired by the Jewish National Fund, and I am pleased to note that the Hebrew Schools of South Africa have through the "Mile of Pennies" contributed towards the redemption of this important piece of land.

Verbosity

THE proud young father in Johannesburg wired to his parents in Capetown: "Wife gave birth son—Julius."

His wife's grandfather—an orthodox old gentleman—in spite of his own joy at the happy occasion remonstrated with the father on his extravagance in sending a message to his parents.

"A telegram," he said, "should not have an unnecessary word. There is no need for you to wire 'Julius' as your parents have only one married son in Johannesburg. Then you state, 'wife'—who else would bear a son? And the words 'gave birth'—was that necessary? They know that a child does not fall from the sky. Finally, you put in 'son.' Who ever heard of a young Jewish father wiring that his wife had given birth to a daughter?"

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