

CURRENT COMMUNAL

By "Hamabit"

COMMENT

A "Mitzvah"

AT last a valiant attempt is being made to organise regular visits to the Jewish sick in hospitals and institutions. The newly-formed Bikkur Cholim Society, which was called into being for this purpose, reports that its work is going well, and that arrangements have been made for representatives of the Society to visit the Jewish patients at the Johannesburg Hospital, the Transvaal Provincial Home, the Sprinkell Sanatorium, and eight nursing homes in the Johannesburg area.

It is due to the initiative of that well-known communal worker, Mr. B. P. Marks, that the Bikkur Cholim Society has been established. He is indefatigable in his labours and has secured the co-operation of the S.A. Jewish Board of Deputies, the Chevra Kadisha and other of our important institutions. Not only are the patients visited regularly now, but newspapers and books of Jewish interest are passed on to them and they are generally made to feel that during their period of illness they are not being neglected by the community to which they belong.

I hear that many more "visitors" are needed for this good work and it is hoped that others will volunteer. There is certainly no finer "mitzvah" in Judaism than visiting the sick.

The "Joint"

THOSE who recall the gigantic relief activities carried out by the Joint Distribution Committee during the last war will be interested to learn that this organisation is again doing good work for the relief of suffering amongst our co-religionists in Europe.

Very little, alas, can be done now for the Jews of Poland, and it is reported that in many big Jewish communities there were no matzos for Pesach. Last year the "Joint" did a great deal of Passover relief. This year, too, efforts were made to supply matzos to the ghettos, but apparently these efforts were not very successful.

Outside of Nazi occupied territories, considerable relief activity is being carried out by the "Joint." Five million dollars have been budgeted for the first six months of 1942. The programme of relief includes five hundred thousand Jewish refugees in Soviet Russia and according to American papers that have just

reached this country, arrangements were being made to provide them with Passover food.

The report of the Joint Distribution Committee refers also to emigration. Despite the fact that all important frontiers are now closed, men and women manage to escape, and they have to be looked after. Incidentally, the report mentions that during the bombardment of Rangoon, in Burma, fifty-six Polish Jews were stranded there, in transit to Palestine.

A New Singer

BEFORE long we shall hear a great deal of Jean Pearce, the latest success in the singing world. Pearce has just recently taken New York by storm, where, appearing for the first time, he made his debut on the stage of the Metropolitan Opera in the role of "Alfredo" from "Traviata." Music critics are full of praise for him, and believe that he will eclipse many famous names in the singing world.

On the East Side of New York Jean Pearce is known to many. He began his musical career at the age of thirteen in the choir of the Bialystoker Synagogue. Then his name was Joshua Pinkas Perlmutter, and not Jean Pearce. He had a very sweet alto. Gradually the voice changed, and so did the name. From Pinkas Perlmutter he became Pinkie Perl, a member of a jazz orchestra, who played the violin and sang popular hits. All this he did in the evenings. In the daytime Pinkie Perl attended the Columbia College and completed a medical course. What is more he found time to go to cheder and Yeshivah, too, and even to-day his father boasts that "the boy can read a *blatt* of the "Talmud."

From his jazz orchestra the boy passed on to the wireless studio. His name did not accompany him, and he appeared as Jean Pearce in a repertoire of French and Italian operas. Music critics predicted at once a great future for him, and many leading newspapers asked plainly why he did not appear in the Metropolitan Opera.

His debut was a great success, and not the least of his admirers amongst the great audience was his father, Levi Perlmutter, who very clearly had good reason for "naches"; a son, a doctor, a Talmudist, a musician and the first voice in the world's first opera! What else can you want in life?

Synagogue Architecture

SHORTLY before the war, Dr. Breier, a non-Jew from Vienna and an expert architect, became interested in the architecture of old synagogues in Poland. He travelled through the remotest districts of Poland and Galicia and collected an interesting series of photographs and plans of Jewish houses of worship which he sorted and classified. He arrived at the conclusion that the wooden structures dating back to the 17th and 18th centuries display remarkable originality, and are quite independent of the Christian Church architecture. He was particularly struck by the Jewish wood-carvings, both in the interior and the exterior of the synagogues.

By a stroke of luck his valuable collection, which included also wooden gravures, was taken to Palestine just before Hitler invaded Vienna. Recently the Tel-Aviv Municipal Museum, founded by the late Mr. Dizengoff, arranged an exhibition of this collection under the title, "The Wooden Synagogues of Poland." There were 118 exhibits of wooden carvings displaying synagogues as well as arks, bimahs and other furniture.

The exhibition has aroused much interest in Palestine. Particularly to-day, when so many Jewish Houses of Worship have been destroyed by the Nazi hordes, it is good to know that efforts are being made to collect at least replicas of Jewish historical structures in dark Europe.

Indiscreet!

MISCHA ELMAN, the famous violinist, met a feminine acquaintance at a concert not long ago. During the course of their conversation she said to him:

"I hear you have a son who is quite brilliant—that he's a remarkable musician, even for one so young—and that he plays the violin beautifully. . . ."

"Yes, that's true," said Elman, who was the first of the violin prodigies in America. "Yes, that's all true."

" . . . Tell me frankly, Mr. Elman," asked the lady, "do you think your boy is another Menuhin?"

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