

# WOMEN'S LEAGUE

OF THE

## UNITED SYNAGOGUE

### TWELFTH ANNUAL REPORT

HOTEL ASTOR, NEW YORK

*Convention, May 19-20-21, 1929*

# THE WORK OF THE WOMEN'S LEAGUE

By MRS. SAMUEL SPIEGEL

In one of our best-beloved childhood books, "Alice in Wonderland," there is a fine bit of philosophy which is only appreciated in adult life, and that is when Alice complains that she is running so quickly and yet always finds herself in the same place, and she is answered, "Yes, that is true, because in order to keep our same place we must keep on moving at the greatest possible speed." That this is far more true in real life than in the fairy tale is only realized as we grow older in life's experiences.

The Women's League of the United Synagogue, in order to keep its place in American-Jewish life, in order to be of real value to Jewish womanhood in America, has moved and must continue to move more rapidly than ever in order to be of true service to the principles for which it stands.

A backward glance at the past year reveals that our Sisterhoods are constantly taking a keener interest in Jewish educational work for themselves and their children. This affords us the greatest amount of satisfaction as we modestly know that we have done our share to stimulate this increased interest. Our office records show that numerous study circles in religious observance and practice, in Jewish history and literature have come into being during the past year among our Sisterhoods. No longer does a Sisterhood feel that it has done enough for itself and members if it is active in philanthropy or in the running of a Purim ball or a bridge party. Such an activity is now the result of the Sisterhood's great desire for the spiritual and religious success of school and synagogue, which they know must be



maintained financially, rather than the desire for the success of the activity itself.

The numerous calls upon our Speakers' Bureau, which has during the past year been more successful than in all previous years, is another indication of the increased interest in Jewish cultural work. The Speakers' Bureau has added to its list many new speakers and many subjects which the Sisterhoods themselves have asked for.

May I digress a moment to say that in order not to offend any faithful worker by omitting to mention her name, I will mention no names at all in this report, and therefore in connection with the Speakers' Bureau as with all our other hard-working chairmen, I will only say that the greater success of this bureau is due entirely to the broad vision of the new chairman and her band of women who have trudged to and from trains in the deepest snows, in the greatest downpours, at all hours of the night or day to be of service when called. And yet if you could hear their reports you would know that it gave them as much happiness to be with you as it gave you to have them.

Our monthly radio papers, sent to all Sisterhoods throughout the year, have grown increasingly popular because of their instructiveness, often taking the place of a speaker on an afternoon program. I wish there were time to enumerate the cordial letters of thanks which come to our office from Sisterhoods and also to give you examples of the letters which come as a result of our weekly radio talks from Station WEAf. And no wonder! Consider, if you please, some of the subjects treated, "New Dreams on Old Soil," "Children's Rights," "Character Building," "Pre-Passover Joys," "The Woman in Drama," and innumerable others dealing with legal and Jewish holidays, with religious and secular education, etc., etc. Need I say that the great success of our radio work is due to the untiring efforts of the chairman and her committee, and to the

many women who have given of their precious time to write papers that have been of such high standard and calibre that they pass the most careful scrutiny of WEAf and the National Broadcasting Company, to whom all papers have to be submitted before they can be broadcast? Thanks, too, are due to the great body of artists who have given unstintingly of their talent. It may interest you to know that they, too, have to go through a most careful test at the broadcasting station before they can be placed on our programs.

For another evidence of the deep interest manifested by our Sisterhoods in Jewish knowledge and culture we have only to turn to the fine piece of work accomplished by our Book Committee during the past year. Our book, "The Three Pillars," published two short years ago, dealing with Thought, Practice and Worship for the Jewish woman, is about to be made ready for a second edition. We are entirely clear of debt for it because our women have realized its great worth. Will you continue to do your share to see to it that every one of your friends owns a copy? Are you giving it to your newly-married daughters and their friends? A friend of mine had it on her bookshelf; a colored woman working for her before Christmas timidly asked her for a copy as a Christmas gift, and promised that she would prize it as her dearest possession. This is not a fairy-tale. It is an earnest truth. If this colored woman, a seventh-day adventist, could so highly appreciate this book, how much more should we Jewish women appreciate it as a Chanukah, a Purim, a Shevuoth, or a Rosh Hashona gift? We have done well with it thus far, but we should now be going into a third or fourth edition, instead of a second one. Grateful thanks are due to the chairman and members of this committee and to the author for having made this book possible, and so useful.

But we have other publications too, as you well know,



the Friday Night Stories, the Prayer Cards for children, and the various Blessing Cards. These, too, have gone through numerous editions and have had, and are still having, a most widespread sale.

That you have appreciated our Leagrams, our office records also show. Will you continue to use them as the "bond of friendship" which exists between you and us, between yourselves and your friends? May they continue to carry your holiday greetings, your messages of congratulations and love and good wishes, and if God so decrees it, your messages of condolence.

But there is really so much which the Women's League has been doing during the past year besides the things I have so far enumerated! It would take hours to tell of the various activities conducted by the branches of the Women's League. Take the Midwest Branch—striving, straining, working hard through cultural programs, through Speakers' Bureau, through talks by Rabbis, through religious classes, doing all in its power as a great arm of the national organization to contribute its share to safeguard Traditional Judaism.

Then there is the Toronto Branch. They, too, do all they can by way of lectures, conferences and holiday celebrations for women and children to perpetuate Traditional Judaism in their part of the country.

Turning back to the East we have the Philadelphia Branch, men and women jointly doing most active work, particularly for Jewish students. The Philadelphia Branch is the proud possessor of two Students' Houses, one on the campus of the University of Pennsylvania and one on the campus of Temple University. The men of the Philadelphia Branch have been working hard, I know, but am I too bold when I claim for the women that it is their management and their earnestness which makes the Philadelphia Branch the success it is today?

A recently organized Women's League Branch, but a strong and lusty youngster, giving promise of a fine future, is the New Jersey Branch. Already they have had a most successful Conference and have planned a most useful program of work for the coming year.

The New England States also are formed into a Women's League Branch with a most active president and officers. During the past winter they had a great share in bringing about and taking part in a most outstanding Conference on Jewish Education in New England.

The New York State Branch, under the very able leadership of its president, is doing pioneer work in the neighboring cities of its headquarters, Syracuse. Not only does its president institute Conferences on Jewish Education, but she has personally organized religious schools in cities in her vicinity and has often guided and aided many women in the writing of papers for Jewish organizations because these women had not the correct and necessary knowledge to write them without her aid.

Last, but not least, we turn to the New York City Branch, oldest of Women's League Branches. A Students' House, with far greater demands upon it than it can satisfy, religious classes, in almost every nook and corner of this great city, cultural programs for its Sisterhoods, summer outings for its religious classes, Bible classes for young women already in high school and college—these are some of the most successful and useful undertakings of the New York Branch during the past few years. I call New York City an experimental station for the Women's League. May their experiments continue to succeed and may its faithful band of workers be given health and strength to "carry on."

The time for this report is limited, and yet I must proceed in order to give you at least a slight account of the



many other activities of the Women's League during the past year.

The Committee on Co-operation with Other Organizations has succeeded in passing resolutions which greatly redound to our credit. These resolutions, passed at the Annual Conference of Jewish Women's Organizations, held in Chicago last year, have been mailed to our Sisterhoods last September, and we again earnestly beg you to use your influence everywhere to enforce these resolutions: (1) The observance of the Jewish dietary laws at all dinners and public functions. (2) That the Jewish Sabbath be strictly adhered to in all public institutions maintained by and for the Jewish community. (3) That religious work for the benefit of any religious group shall be in accordance with the viewpoint of that particular group.

Thank God that the time is rapidly approaching when Jewish women's organizations representing various shades of Jewry are learning to co-operate and respect the religious opinions of one another. But the activities of the Committee on Co-operation have not been confined to America only. It has kept in constant touch with countries abroad. Outstanding Jewish women in England, Germany, Australia, South Africa, and in Palestine have written us of their activities and have sent us their representatives. We have shown many courtesies to these strangers who have come to visit us from abroad. I know that much good will come to us and to them through these contacts. If you have read the last two issues of the UNITED SYNAGOGUE RECORDER, particularly the Women's Page, you will find articles and extracts of activities in other lands which our foreign correspondents have sent us because they knew that we, too, would be interested.

And while mentioning the RECORDER, may I say that the reason the Women's Field of the last two issues has been so exceedingly fine is because it has been under the super-

vision of two of the most outstanding women of the Women's League, who very modestly insist that their names be withheld from publication.

This report would be entirely incomplete were I not to mention the active interest the Women's League is taking in the campaign which is now in process under the direction of the United Synagogue. In many cities the women have worked hard and faithfully jointly with the men of the United Synagogue to do their share toward filling the quotas assigned them. In other cities they have worked separately to do their share. However, in spite of the hard work that the campaign committee has already done, so very, very much still remains to be accomplished if Judaism, the only type of Judaism which we think will survive in America, is to continue. Won't you do your share? Do not let it be said of the Jewish woman who is heart and soul in every type of philanthropy and good work that any little is enough for Jewish education.

That great, tragic world war coined many phrases, one of them being "Give until it hurts." May I say, "Give until you are absolutely happy that you have done your very best, and give not only in money, but give of yourself and teach your children to give, too, so that Judaism may continue to live."

And now I have finished the Twelfth Annual Report of the Women's League of the United Synagogue of America, founded by that greatest of all modern Jewish women, the late Mathilde Schechter, whose memory we love and revere. May I now thank most heartily all chairmen and committees for their kindly co-operation during the past year, and may I add that it was a rare privilege to work together with the high-minded and noble women who form our Executive Board? May I tell you, too, that the guiding spirit behind all our activities is our own dear and honorary president, Mrs. Charles I. Hoffman.



Often when my spirit was perturbed because we were not getting the publicity that our excellent work merited, her soothing voice would gently say, "Let us be content to be the steady stream flowing onward. We know that we are doing good, what else matters?" And truly, she is right! Deep canyons, great waterfalls, may attract the tourists from far and wide, but it is the steady, majestic river upon which great and useful vessels sail. Let our lot, therefore, be the steady and majestic river upon which will forever sail the holy ship of Judaism. For Mrs. Hoffman's kindly help and inspiration I now offer thanks. To her, to the Executive Board, and to each and every one of you, may I close by saying:

*"May the Giver of Gifts give unto you,  
All that is good and all that is true;  
The Will to help and the Courage to do,  
A Heart that can sing the whole day through,  
Whether the skies be gray or blue,  
May the Giver of Gifts give these to you."*

## The Women's League of the United Synagogue

531 West 123rd Street

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*The undersigned desires to be enrolled as a*

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