

and Mr. Phillips is unusually well qualified in every respect to handle this challenging assignment.

The Society records its appreciation of the work done by willing individuals who assist the executive at all times. Special mention is made of Mrs. Phoebe Davis who brought the cash books up to date, and Mrs. M. H. Kellerman for her assistance to the Secretary and Editor as typist and reader.

It was strongly recommended at the last Committee Meeting, that a positive approach should be made to such members of the Community who are deemed to be qualified, to write Histories of the various organisations and institutions throughout Australia.

It was suggested that Rabbi Porush might consider compiling a history of the Beth Din in Australia; Rabbi Fabian, a monograph on the first Jewish Chaplain (Rabbi Danglow?). Other organisations to be considered are the Montefiore Home, the Welfare Society, the Help in Need Society, and B'nai B'rith.

Mention was made of biographies of such religious and lay leaders as Rabbi Danglow, Mr. H. B. Newman, Rabbi L. A. Falk, the Reverend A. B. Davis, the Reverend M. Rintel, Mr. M. Ashkanasy, Mr. D. J. Benjamin.

The Treasurer's Report indicates:—

Balance in Bank \$2,224.26.

Value of Bond held by Commonwealth Bank,
\$1,000; total \$3,224.26.

Liabilities, Nil.

The Society records its appreciation of the co-operation given by the Great Synagogue and the Printer, D. S. Ford, represented by Mr. Keith Ford and his staff.

BOOK REVIEWS

ISAAC ISAACS, Zelman Cowen, Oxford University Press
1967, pp. viii 272. \$6.00.

Legal biographies are not noted as best-sellers except perhaps occasionally when the author, often a journalist with a flair for the law, has selected a popular lawyer who has featured in sensational trials. Until more recent times, little was attempted in the field of Australian legal biography, and in most instances these writings have been of a politico-historical character. In the case of such an eminent Australian as Sir Isaac Isaacs there are many

facets of a life, albeit lacking popular appeal, which contributed in large measure to the formation and later development of the Australian Commonwealth and its Constitution. Now, more than three decades after Isaacs retired from active public life, Professor Zelman Cowen, formerly Dean of the Faculty of Law in the University of Melbourne and at present Vice-Chancellor of the University of New England, has produced a work of mature research and scholarship. This will enable the reader to assess, in true and proper perspective, the life and worth of Sir Isaac Isaacs, a founding father of the Australian Federation, a jurist of the highest eminence, and Australia's first native born Governor-General. He was withal a man whose life demands study by the specialist and general reader alike.

This biography of Isaacs, a nonagenarian, is remarkably well balanced in its scope and treatment, and the author, himself qualified as a noted student of the law and legal theory, including Australian constitutional problems, has been more than careful to avoid too detailed and tedious account of the Federal Convention Debates and of the numerous and important decisions in which Isaacs played a leading role as a member of the High Court Bench. Zelman Cowen furnishes ample material illustrating the range and depth of Isaacs' learning but it is clear enough that there also was much dogmatism and pedantry which earned dislike. Indeed, there was no stage of Isaacs' long career when this man of such extraordinary learning and talents did not exhibit an inability to cooperate with others who did not share the same legal subtlety and uncompromising zeal for a cause or a theory.

The author traces Isaacs' participation in the Convention Debates (1897-1898), and his later part as a Judge in the interpretation of the Constitution is explained in a lucid and penetrating Chapter from which a lawyer and also the layman will gain a valuable introduction to the complexities of the earlier development of the Federal Constitution. The picture clearly emerges of Isaacs as a champion of the national welfare, urging and himself broadening the supremacy of Federal law and powers. His lasting contribution was in the field of Constitutional Law, and although it may be too soon to reach a final conclusion regarding the significance and permanence of his views and theories, there can be no doubt that no Judge and no student can ever ignore the influence of Isaac Isaacs upon the development of the Australian Constitution.

All Australians, and not least those of the Jewish faith, will be fascinated by the meteoric rise of this son of insignificant Jewish immigrants who reached these shores with the influx which followed the Victorian gold rushes in the 'fifties of the last century. Max Gordon, of the Victorian Branch of the Australian Jewish Historical Society, has already published a biography in which are given details of Isaacs' antecedents and of his early life as a native of Melbourne, and later as a schoolboy at Yackandandah. The present author has succeeded in discovering more details of Isaacs' parents and his early life. He has had access to papers and family source material which hitherto remained undisclosed but, as the recorded material is so sparse, the overall early picture is still shadowy. It is now established, however, that Isaacs as a child, as a young man, and even, to an extent, in his later life, was dominated by the formidable figure of his mother, Rebeccah. As Zelman Cowen indicates, Rebeccah Isaacs was a highly intellectual woman whose character and personality were reproduced in the early brilliance and ambition of her son. It is amazing to read the terms of some of the letters passing between mother and son, and it is from a perusal of a few of such letters that much light is shed upon the complex nature of the character of Isaac Isaacs.

Most readers will find much interest in the new material which evidence the tangled events which finally secured for Isaacs the appointment as Governor-General of the Commonwealth. The action of the Scullin Labor Government, in 1931, in pressing the British Government to appoint an Australian born Governor-General was unprecedented and the forces of conservatism in Buckingham Palace and elsewhere, including some Australian circles, almost succeeded in preventing the appointment. The Australian Government could not have hoped for a more distinguished and suitable appointee, but it is not without irony that the honour was conferred on Isaac Isaacs, in many respects very conservative and a life long supporter of the British Empire.

There is little to be said of Isaacs as an Australian Jew. In his earlier life he appears to have taken some interest in the affairs of the Jewish Community. He was apparently very familiar with Jewish religious literature, and in his retirement he wrote and contributed some crudite articles on some aspects of Jewish theology. His hold on active Jewish life, outside of the immediate confines of his family, was very tenuous. In his old age he

wrote a lengthy series of diatribes against the Zionist cause at a time when refugees were clamouring for entry to the Jewish National Home in Palestine. The Jewish State was then in its birth throes, and it is sad, indeed, that Isaac Isaacs, the elder statesman, embarked upon a sterile controversy with the local Zionist protagonist, Professor Julius Stone.

Professor Cowen's book is a landmark in Australian biography. The writer's literary style, unlike that of many lawyers, is admirable. It is a timely effort which does full justice to the life and work of a very great Australian. The book is delightfully printed and the illustrations are well chosen. It will be widely read and it may well be succeeded by further editions. It is the kind of book which will circulate in many quarters, and in due course the Oxford University Press may consider the publication of a paper-back edition. It remains only to congratulate the author upon the choice of so worthy a subject and upon his completion of this meritorious and readable biography.

M. Z. FORBES.

ZION IN OUR TIME, Max Freilich, Morgan Publications, 1967, pp. xx 252.

The author, who came to Australia forty years ago after a very short period of residence in New Zealand, later assumed the leadership of the Zionist Organisation in this State and throughout the Commonwealth. Indeed, he achieved an international reputation as an ardent worker for the Zionist movement, and for the advancement of the Jewish National Home in Palestine. He participated in some of the events which helped to bring the State of Israel into being, and he now continues to direct his efforts towards the growth and development of the Jewish State. He was urged to write this personal biography by the late Horace B. Newman, and these Memoirs are now available to all who would wish to learn of the life and work of one whose name is so well known within the Jewish communities of this land and beyond.

Those who read this book will appreciate how much personal effort was devoted by Max Freilich and his colleagues to the cause which has consumed so much of their energies. Their work centred around the creation of a very strong Zionist body in this country, they attended and directed numerous meetings and functions both at home and overseas, they planned and conducted many Appeals