

WILL BUILD A TEMPLE.

Reformed Hebrews Preparing to Erect a Synagogue.

GROWING CONGREGATION.

The Sunday School Increasing in Numbers and Other Modern Societies Organized for Church Work — Rabbi Schweizer's Earnest Labors.

A few days ago the JOURNAL announced the organization of a new Jewish congregation, to be known as the Congregation Beth El. It appears that this new religious organization is the direct outcome of a division in the B'nai Ephraim congregation, which has been worshipping for about half a year in the edifice once occupied by the people of St. Mark's Catholic Episcopal Church, at Grove and Montgomery streets. The people of B'nai Ephraim are looked upon as the representatives of reformed Jewish faith, and they have maintained an organization in this city for nearly twenty years. During the past few months, several of the more orthodox members of the congregation have been inclined to regard with displeasure the methods adopted by the majority of the members who are observers of the reformed Jewish ritual. The result has been the formation of a new reformed congregation, whose great object will be the erection of an imposing synagogue on York Street, between Varlick and Monmouth streets. Two lots have been purchased, and over \$7,000 has already been subscribed for the purpose. It is the intention of this new congregation of reformed Hebrews to rear in this city a synagogue that shall bear the same relation to Jersey City as the grand Temple Emanuel, on Fifth Avenue, bears to New York. The orthodox members of B'nai Ephraim will be left to maintain their own organization as they may see fit. There will be no trouble over the division of property, because the frame structure now occupied by B'nai Ephraim is not owned by that congregation, but merely rented. Rabbi J. Schweizer will be the head of Beth El.

The history of the new movement is interesting because it furnishes the public with a glimpse of the extensive changes now going on in the customs, creed and ritual of a large portion of the Jews of this vicinity. Rabbi Schweizer may be regarded as one of the leaders in this important movement, and his efforts in behalf of a more liberal interpretation of the Jewish faith have already won for him a conspicuous place in local religious circles.

When he began his ministry in this city last fall B'nai Ephraim congregation numbered about fifty. It included such well-known merchants and business men as Chas. S. Furst, Justice of the Peace J. C. Lowy, Joseph Fox, Charles Marks, Rinaldo, the hatter, Philip Morris, Louis Newman, J. Praeger, Mr. Kind, Marks Ernst, Solomon Unger, David Bauman, Mr. Ernst and Mr. Berg. Rabbi Schweizer numbers all these among his followers. He immediately started to build up a strong flock, and in this attempt the rabbi found himself warmly seconded by the majority of the members. The congregation had for years worshipped above a store on Montgomery Street. When the rabbi took his post at the helm the congregation took possession of the edifice at Grove and Montgomery streets, and the attendance increased immediately. It was agreed to hold services Friday evenings, beginning at a quarter past 8 o'clock, and on Saturday mornings at 10 o'clock. Sunday from ten to twelve o'clock was set apart for a Sunday school, which began to flourish as soon as Rabbi Schweizer took hold of affairs. At present the school boasts of an average attendance of something like 150. The little lecture room adjoining the synagogue is crowded every Sunday, and the synagogue itself is partly filled by the children. Rabbi Schweizer is superintendent, and Miss Levy is principal. The teachers are Miss Levy, Miss Nettie Cohen, Miss Koenigsby, Miss Fox, Miss Bauman and Miss Marks. Last Sunday the school decided to raise funds in aid of the hospital.

But the Sunday school has not been the only feature of Rabbi Schweizer's reign. He has organized a Young People's Hebrew Association which already has a membership of over seventy. Its chief object is to assist the needy in this city. The association does much to build up the congregation of which it is the natural child, but it intends to help Christian charitable institutions throughout the city as well. Mr. Charles Fox, Jr., was elected president when the association was organized, and Mr. Friedman and Mr. Bauman are among the many other young men who have taken a kindly interest in the work.

Rabbi Schweizer also established a Helping Hand Society, composed of young people between 12 and 18 years. This association has likewise begun a career that is studded with charitable deeds. It meets twice a month, and extends help in specific cases as fast as they are reported by the members. Jew and Gentile, alike, enjoy its blessed influence.

These were all regarded as somewhat new features by a few of the more orthodox Jews in Rabbi Schweizer's flock. They shrugged their shoulders when they saw how their new rabbi was trying to break down the great barrier of religious prejudice and sectarian differences, and they made remarks when they noticed how their minister was becoming popular, even among the Gentiles, who had learned to honor and love the congregation. The orthodox members objected decidedly when they realized that their rabbi was determined to dispense with the Jewish services at sundown on Friday evenings, and to substitute services at 8:15 o'clock Friday nights. The rabbi maintained that the old Hebrew custom of holding the services at sundown, could not be observed in this nineteenth century, when the larger part of the people are at business at that hour. He believed that he could not secure a large attendance at the services if they were held at four or five o'clock on the Friday evenings in winter, and he claimed that if they were put down for eight o'clock the men as well as the women would be able to attend in large numbers. Rabbi Schweizer also discarded the Hebrew during the services. He reads very little in the Hebrew language, and his sermons, or lectures, as they are called, are almost invariably in English. He argues that English is the language with which his congregation is most familiar, and he intends to so conduct the services, that even the stranger within the gate may understand him. Finally Rabbi Schweizer also introduced an organ and a choir.

These innovations only added to the displeasure of the orthodox Jews, and in order to avert serious trouble Rabbi Schweizer and his army of followers thereupon decided to build a new synagogue where they could worship God without offending the tastes of their more orthodox brethren. There will be an organ choir, a Sunday school, auxiliary societies and a large attendance in the new synagogue on York Street when it is completed.