

PICKING UP MONEY PRAYING FOR DEAD

Kaddish Saying a Profession That Offers a Livelihood to Beggar Students.

The Ghetto has many queer trades and professions. One of them is the calling of Kaddish saying.

The Kaddish is the prayer which the Jews offer for the repose of the souls of their dead. It is recited by the sons or other near kindred of the departed in the morning, afternoon and evening prayer services. It should be said every day for a year after the death of the person prayed for, and thereafter on every anniversary of the death so long as there are any sons or other male kindred of the deceased surviving.

The Kaddish must always be recited in a congregation of worshippers, at least in a body of a "minyan" of persons praying. The "minyan" consisting of 10 men. For this reason it is necessary to go to the synagogue to say the Kaddish or to call together a gathering of worshippers for the purpose, says the New York Sun.

According to the statute in Israel, when a man dies his sons, and in default of his sons his father, must recite the Kaddish for the repose of his soul. But what if a man has left behind him neither parent nor male issue? Suppose he left only daughters, who are not permitted to enter the male apartment of the synagogue to repeat the Kaddish—what then?

This case is provided for by a regular corps of professional Kaddish sayers found in almost all large synagogues, whose occupation it is to repeat the Kaddish for the souls of the departed for due remuneration. Kaddish saying for the souls of those who have left no male children nor parent behind them has thus become a profession.

Often people who have not been blessed with "a Kaddish of their own," feeling that they are near death make all necessary provisions to have the Kaddish recited for them, and arrange things with the Kaddish sayer up to the smallest details. Sometimes a relative or friend is constituted as Kaddish sayer, and in that case he is usually remembered in the will.

"To have a Kaddish"—that is the wish of every Jewish mother and every Jewish father. One of the real tragedies of Jewish life in Russia is that so many of the Jewish sons, reared and cherished and brought up with tender care and loving kindness, afterward depart for America and "there in that Godless country," as many of the parents view it, the children usually forget to recite the Kaddish after the parents left behind pass away.

Death Makes Business Good.

The professional Kaddish sayers of New York's ghetto are mostly "batlonim," or beggar students of the Torah,

plous young men who spend their days and their nights in the synagogues, engaged in the study of Talmud and its endless commentaries. Some of these indigent and dilapidated students of the Jewish law study with the object of becoming rabbis, or Jewish judges, or official slaughterers of cattle; but others simply study for the sake of "the dear bride," which is the law, and these have no easy time.

The pay for saying the Kaddish, says an observer of things in the ghetto, is not very high, and in slack time, when folks evince a spiteful tendency to cling to life or are bent on giving up the ghost only after they have begotten male descendants, the professionals are apt to be somewhat ragged in aspect and in distress generally. "Still, when the Lord in his infinite mercies grants good business, and people die often and without sons, Kaddish saying may not be the meanest or least remunerative of trades."

Sampson J. J. J. J., a Jewish writer who is well acquainted with their modes of existence has written a story dealing with the life of the Jewish batlonim, or beggar students, especially those who eke out a living by reciting the Kaddish for the dead. The scene of the story is the Beth Hamidrash Hagodal, or the great synagogue on Norfolk street.

The batlonim and Kaddish sayers are introduced to us at a time when much mental anxiety prevails among them, and they are confronted by a calamity. The new president of the synagogue has discovered that in order to say the Kaddish for the souls of a number of dead the hired Kaddish sayer must recite the general Jewish prayers morning, afternoon and evening many times every day, and this is contrary to the law which forbids a man to repeat the prayers more than a limited number of times, for every time a superfluous prayer is recited the name of God is pronounced in vain.

Helping the Gone Soul.

"Reh Dovid Yudel," said Moyshele the batlon, "the times are evil, the edict is a hard one, and may the Lord confound him," this about the new president.

But it was the president himself, who diving into the depths of Talmud, found a clause which made praying several times a day a virtue rather than a transgression, and thus saved the day. But until that happened the batlonim and Kaddish sayers were terribly wrought up and enraged. The writer describes one of the leading Kaddish sayers:

"Dovid Yudel is a prominent Kaddish sayer, perfectly well known to all pious Jews who offer daily a trio of prayers in the Beth Hamidrash Hagodal Dovid Yudel—excuse me—Reb. Dovid Yudel, I ought to say—is recognized as the chief and head of all Kaddish sayers in the Beth Hamidrash.

"Personally he is of astounding obesity, being literally as thick and fat as three other fat men. Reb. Dovid Yudel has also some pretensions to Talmudic learning, and this he coins into good cash.

"For when loyal relations wait not

merely to discharge perfunctorily their obligation toward the dead but really have a mind to see him in a decent station in Paradise they get Reb Dovid Yudel to study Mishna, which as it understood among those that know the lore of "grace" is apt to do much good to the gone soul. Reb Dovid Yudel is none of your green-horns, none of your recently arrived immigrants for whom you eternally make provision.

"He (Dovid Yudel) has been here these five and twenty years if he has been here a day, and all this time he has honorably supported himself by Yaddish saying. He is a witty, jovial sage, fond of sitting with a friend or two near the entrance of the synagogue and reviling the rich members as they pass to their dignified pews."