

# OBITUARY

## Mr. NATHAN F. SPIELVOGEL

With the passing of Nathan Spielvogel Australia has lost one who has been graphically described as "an Australian Zangwill," and in truth he had much of Zangwill's humour and understanding of the foreign-born immigrant.

He died on Monday at his home in Exeter Street, Ballarat, at the age of 84.

For fifty years Nathan Spielvogel was a school-teacher in Ballarat. He must have been a kindly one too as he did not believe in the strap and at the end of each year would cut his to shreds and present each boy with a piece.

As a writer and historian he wrote stories which captured the Australia of his youth and his verse, like that of Wordsworth, showed his strong love of Nature and the countryside. His devotion to his country showed itself in his historical works.

But it is as a stalwart of Orthodox Judaism that Nathan Spielvogel will best be remembered by Australian Jewry. It was his delight as an author to create characters who were either the saintly, Orthodox Jew who found true spiritual happiness at the Seder table, or the worldly "sinner" who, after renouncing his faith for materialistic gain, returns to the fold. In this way Spielvogel showed his abiding faith in Judaism as a living moral code.

Not only did he write about Judaism, he lived it in Ballarat, that outpost of staunch Judaism which has never boasted a large Jewish population. At the age of six he sang the "Haftorah" in the Ballarat Synagogue and in later years acted as minister to a handful of Jews remaining in the city.

Although he passed away before Yom Kippur Spielvogel will be remembered among his many other works for his sketch of another Yom Kippur — the

sketch of another Yom Kippur — the Kol Nidrei that saw the birth of the Ballarat Hebrew Congregation, when twenty miners and traders gathered in Harris' pub to answer the call to prayer. "They wrap their cloth talleisim around their shoulders and listen with bowed heads to the poignant words of

the Kol Nidrei. The cantor, clad in the red shirt and the high boots of the digger, solemnly and tunefully chants the old and melancholy dirge . . . The revellers in the bar pause with their glasses in their hands when they hear that strange, mournful wail. They do not guess that it comes from a remnant of Israel, remembering that it is Kol Nidrei night."

Nathan Spielvogel always remembered, and for this he too will be remembered.