

Indian Opinion

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NOTES AND NEWS

THE Durban Indians were called together last Sunday for the purpose of arranging a welcome for Mr. Srinivasa Sastri who was to have accompanied Sir Benjamin Robertson to South Africa to appear before the Asiatic Commission. After the notices calling the meeting had been issued the news arrived that Mr. Sastri was unable to leave India at the present time owing to the political situation there which demanded his personal attention, he being a prominent leader of the Moderate Party.

The arrival of Sir Benjamin and Lady Robertson from India last week was somewhat unexpected, although it was known that Sir Benjamin was to represent the Government of India before the Asiatic Commission appointed by the Union Government. He is accompanied by Mr. Corbett, an official of the Department of Emigration, in the Government of India, and Mr. Sen, who has made himself acquainted with the South African question by being connected with the Department of Commerce and Industry.

During their brief stay in Durban, all three gentlemen have come into personal contact with the Indian community and have taken part in informal discussions with the leaders on the question of the Commission.

On Wednesday afternoon last an "At Home" was held in Miankhan's Hall, arranged by the Andrews Reception Committee, to welcome Sir Benjamin and Lady Robertson. About 200 Indians and Europeans, including several ladies, were present. Sir Benjamin and Lady Robertson chatted freely with quite a large number of people and seemed to enjoy the afternoon. Garlands were bestowed upon them as is usual on such occasions.

Sir Benjamin in a few brief remarks, said that he had come at the direction of the Government of India to represent India before the Commission. He promised them that he would endeavour to assist the Indian community of South Africa to the best of his ability. He thanked the company present for their kind reception to Lady Robertson and himself.

The presence of Mr. C. F. Andrews in Durban during the past few weeks has been of great assistance to the community. He has shown wonderful tact and not a little patience in dealing with the difficult work of arranging the plan of action to be adopted in regard to the Commission. It has been decided to engage senior and junior counsel to present the Indian case before the Commission. It is hoped to obtain the services of a well-known European K.C., and an able Indian Attorney.

Mr. Andrews, amid a multiplicity of engagements and interviews, has still found time to write a series of articles on the broad aspect of the Indian question outside India. These will appear in the *Natal Advertiser* after the general election, which demands so much

attention at present. Later the articles will be re-printed in pamphlet form and distributed in South Africa, India and England.

The first four of these articles we have had the privilege of reading in the manuscript, and we can promise a treat in store. They will, we feel sure, appeal to all reasonable and thinking people as a most useful contribution to a most difficult problem. In the writing of this series of articles, Mr. Andrews is doing an immense service to both Europeans and Indians.

Capt. W. C. Halford, Unionist candidate for the Greyville Division, addressing a meeting in the Inanda Hall recently is reported to have said in regard to the Asiatic question that he was not prepared to recommend the repatriation of Indians who were born in this country, but he was against further immigration. (A voice: "That is already stopped.") "I know that, but I am the man to see it is 'stopped-stopped!'"

Several questions were put to Capt. Halford after his speech. In reply to one question regarding Asiatics he said he was in favour of the cessation of Asiatic encroachment, provided it was done with justice. He wanted to see justice done to every section in the country. (Applause.)

To another question put to him if he was in favour of equal political rights to workers of all colours, Capt. Halford said: "I do not want to see any extension of the Native franchise, or the extension of the vote to aliens in this country who were not prepared to become British." But he did not mention a word about the Indians who were already "British."

Times of India writes as follows on the South African situation:—

"As we predicted from the general tenor of General Smuts' and Mr. Burton's more recent electioneering speeches, the forthcoming Asiatic Commission in South Africa is not to be confined to Transvaal affairs, but, as our South African correspondent has telegraphed it will enquire into questions in "regard to the Union generally." Our correspondent does not specify what precisely are the questions to be dealt with by the Commission, but according to the latest mail news from South Africa they are to be trading rights and land ownership. In effect, the position has taken a decided change for the better since October last, when we protested against the narrow scope which General Smuts then proposed to give to the Commission. At that time it was proposed that the powers of the Commission should be restricted to enquiring into trading rights, and trading rights only, in the Transvaal and nowhere else. Now the enquiry is to take in land ownership as well and is to extend to the whole of the Union. When we say that this is a change for the better, we are well aware that the increasing strength of anti-Asiatic feeling in the Transvaal imports an element of danger into the situation; but we are convinced that if the Commission is com-

posed of up-right and impartial men, and if the Indian case is fully and rightly presented, Indians have nothing to fear, and much to expect, from the finding of the Commission. In saying this we rely upon the justice of the Indian case, upon the repeated promises of due and proper treatment uttered by General Smuts and by Mr. Burton, particularly at the 1917 and 1918 Imperial Conferences, and upon the South African's well-known love of fair play."

SIR BENJAMIN ROBERTSON

WE welcome Sir Benjamin Robertson to South Africa. He comes as the official representative of the Government of India to appear and give evidence before the Asiatic Commission which commences its sittings, we are informed, at Capetown in the course of a few days. Sir Benjamin, we should imagine, is a man who takes a practical view of things, and has not the sentimental side largely developed. His record as an administrator is a good one. At any rate he has not distinguish himself as a harsh ruler as some high officials have done. He comes to South Africa, as an official, to present the official view before the Commission. And we have no doubt that, with the able assistance of Mr. Corbett and Mr. Sen, he will do so in a convincing manner. Since Sir Benjamin's last visit to the Union there have been important changes in the affairs of nations and it is anticipated that India will be in a position to protect her people in the Dominions by direct methods rather than the old and worn-out procedure of referring all matters through the Secretary of State for India to the Colonial Secretary who would, in turn, make representations to the Dominion concerned. The resolutions of the Imperial Conference in regard to reciprocity have considerably strengthened the hands of India, and removed her from the position of a subject nation to that of a sister dominion of the British Commonwealth. The formation of the League of Nations, of which India is a member, still further confirms her enhanced status. It only remains, therefore, for the consummation of the India Reforms Act to complete the work. Sir Benjamin will appear before the Commission with full knowledge of India's new position. He will, no doubt, tell the Commission that the treatment of Indians in South Africa is not the purely domestic affair that many people imagine, and that India will not sit quietly whilst Indians' rights as citizens are filched away. Whilst it is the work of South African Indians to show to the Commission that the Indian trader and land owner are not the parasites they are sometimes said to be, it will be the function of Sir Benjamin Robertson, as the representative of the Government of India, to deal with the question as one of "high politics" and one concerning the stability of the British Empire. We feel sure that Sir Benjamin is fully capable of his duties and will speak with no uncertain voice on a matter of so great importance.

A DISAPPOINTMENT

THERE is not the least doubt whatever the Indian people of South Africa are genuinely disappointed that the Hon. Mr. Srinivasa Sastri has not been able to come to appear before the Asiatic Commission on land and trading. When the news of his coming was made known great satisfaction was felt that one of the first Indians in public life—one who in

many respects is the equal of the late Mr. Gokhale—was to visit the country. His presence as a direct unofficial representative of the Indian nation would inspire confidence. Now these hopes have been dashed to the ground. There is a feeling—justifiable, we think—that the Government of India, and our own people in India, have shown indifference towards us to some extent; and we are not going to hide our feelings in the matter. The opportunity thus offered of sending a first rate Indian political leader to South Africa was a very fine one which should have been seized upon. The appointment of the Hon. Mr. Sastri was unique, and was an indication of the change of status of India in the Empire. What a pity the significance of the event was apparently lost sight of!

MASS MEETING AT DURBAN

A mass meeting of Durban Indians was held last Sunday, in the Rawats' Bio Hall, in response to the invitation of the South African Indian Congress Durban Committee. Mr. O. H. Jhaveri presided, and was supported by Messrs. C. F. Andrews, E. M. Paruk, Parsee Rustomjee, Rooknoodeen, B. L. E. Sigamoney, M. B. Naik, V. S. G. Pather, C. V. Pillay, R. B. Chetty, Bethasee Maharaj, J. M. Francis, H. I. Joshi, A. Christopher, The Secretary, Mr. L. Gabriel and the treasurer—Mr. V. Lawrence. The Hall was packed the audience numbering over 2,000.

The object of the meeting was to arrange a Committee to receive the Hon. Mr. Srinivasa Sastri, member of the Viceregal Council, and first member of the Servants of India Society, who had been appointed as a non-official member to accompany Sir Benjamin Robertson to represent India at the Asiatic Commission appointed by the Union Government of South Africa.

The Chairman, in opening the proceedings, said that information had just been received that the Hon. Srinivasa Sastri was not coming to South Africa, and said that it was a matter of extreme disappointment and regret. The Secretary of State for India had made a pronouncement in London that two members representative of India would sit on the Asiatic Commission. The Prime Minister (General Smuts), on his return from Europe, in receiving a deputation of local Indians, had in effect confirmed the statement of the Secretary of State for India. He then said that India would be represented on the Commission, and it was not until quite recently they had heard that one official and one non-official member from the Government of India would act in an advisory capacity to the Commission. They had received news from India that Sir Benjamin Robertson and the Hon. V. Srinivasa Sastri would be members of the deputation. Sir Benjamin Robertson has come, but without the Hon. Srinivasa Sastri. From the local newspaper it would appear that he comes to give evidence before the Commission. They were in a haze; they did not know what changes might take place. As in the case of Indian representation, so in the case of the terms of reference, there had already been changes before they were gazetted. The then Acting Prime Minister (the Hon. Mr. Malan) had promised, in deference to the demands of the Anti-Asiatics in Parliament when the Asiatic Bill in regard to Transvaal Indians was before the House, that a Commission would be appointed to inquire into the whole question. Subsequently the Government decided to limit the reference to the trading question, but later on extended it to include the rights of ownership of land, and the scope of the inquiry was to cover the whole of South Africa on these two questions. Under the circumstances, and in view of the fact that the Commission, so far as concerned Natal Indians, was uncalled for,

especially in regard to the land question, though they had some grievances in the trading question, they felt that proper consideration was not given by the authorities to the rights of Indians in Natal. They always had a feeling that as a community they were knocked from pillar to post, for they were disturbed to hear that Indians born in Natal had been prohibited from entering Natal from the Transvaal, though they were in possession of Colonial-born certificates of Natal. They would be asked to consider what was to be done in the absence of the Hon. Srinivasa Sastri.

Mr. C. F. Andrews explained to the meeting that he had been informed that, owing to the new political conditions in India, the Hon. Mr. Sastri had found it impossible to come, as he had to organise the Moderate Party as its leader for the coming election in India.

Mr. Christopher proposed: "That this mass meeting of Indians held in Durban learns with great regret, disappointment, and alarm that the Hon. Srinivasa Sastri is not coming to South Africa, and urges on the authorities the appointment of Sir C. Sankara Nair, of the India Office, or that some representative of India be sent in the place of the Hon. Mr. Srinivasa Sastri."

This was seconded by Mr. M. Beethase Maharaj, supported by Mr. Rookrodeen, and carried.

Other speakers followed, among them Messrs. B. L. E. Sigamoney and M. H. Naik, and particularly Mr. Andrews, who dealt exhaustively with the rice question, and it was resolved that cables be sent to the authorities on this urgent question, as also on the subject of India's representation on the Commission.

Mr. V. S. C. Pather interpreted the speeches of Mr. Andrews in Tamil.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

POET, MUSICIAN AND TEACHER

We take the following interesting article from the *Rand Daily Mail* dated the 10th instant:—

Professor C. F. Andrews, who is in the Union investigating Indian questions, has been for many years associated with Sir Rabindranath Tagore. This Indian poet was considered a fit recipient of the Noble prize for literature, which may be regarded as a sufficient testimonial to the character of his work.

Any insight to the life of a genius is of interest—to a section of the public at least—and Professor Andrews is able to supply much information concerning the poet, that has never been put in print.

Rabindranath Tagore, he said, has a most wonderful personality, while I think he is the greatest intellect I have ever met in the world. As a fellow of Pembroke College, Cambridge, for some years, as well as student, I have had the opportunity of meeting intellectual people from time to time, but I have never met the equal of Tagore.

For sheer immensity of intellect, extraordinary grasp and catholicity of knowledge he is beyond any man I have come across. I regard him as having something of the quality of Goethe in that way.

At the same time Tagore is as simple as a child. He never seems to realise his greatness—which is of course another sign of it.

The family history of the poet is curious and interesting. He is a pure Brahmin by caste, but has given up his claims of caste altogether. He has certain principles of his own in that respect; believes in brotherhood and considers caste as undermining it. His father was a great "Maharshi"—that is a saint. He lived to the age of ninety, and was renowned as an extraordinarily saintly character. The whole of his life had been spent in a sort of retirement and holy meditation, and Rabindranath was the child of his old age.

PRECOCIOUS CHILD

Born when his father was fifty years old, he was from

the beginning an extraordinarily precocious child. He showed musical genius as well as poetic when very young, and although it is not known very much abroad, his music is quite as good as his poetry. He has completely revolutionised Bengali music, and his works are known in every village. His songs are the folk-songs of the country to-day.

The whole family is one of genius. Two of Rabindranath's nephews are the greatest living painters in India to-day. His sister is a famous novelist in her own country, and one of his brothers is a philosopher renowned and revered throughout Bengal.

I often go to call on the old philosopher when in India. He is 84 now, while Tagore himself is 60. People often fancy from his writings that he is quite a youth. The philosopher meditates the whole day long, and rarely speaks to anyone, unless to a personal friend who has his full confidence.

These people lead a curious and simple life from the European view. Rabindranath, for instance, rises at about three o'clock in the morning. He then meditates until seven, and much of his work is composed then.

His writings, however, are not his life's work at all. They are merely a side issue. Rabindranath Tagore's great work is given to his school. Over twenty years ago he began on this great scheme of founding a school and university on lines that should be absolutely modern, yet at the same time keep the traditions of Indian life.

BEST OF TWO WORLDS

What he felt was that the Indian schools in his country were simply modern in giving the Western Education of Europe. His ideal was to combine the best of the educations of the two worlds.

The old Indian culture of thousands of years standing was in danger of being lost, so he founded the present school, which is to-day becoming a University in the real sense of the term.

Placed near Shanti-Niketan, at Bolpur, in Bengal, as an educational experiment it has been pre-eminently successful. Sir Michael Sadler, who was sent out to revise the Indian educational system, was delighted with the place, and said it offered the real teaching that was needed.

Now, this is a point that shows the extraordinary sincerity of Tagore's purpose. He does not touch a penny of Government money in the way of subsidy for his school. It is entirely his own creation, and he maintains it. All the money made out of his writing goes to the school. He has no money of his own, and has even sold the copyrights of his work to have more funds.

His Nobel Prize for Literature was worth about £8,000, and he threw every penny of that into his University at once. His books produce a good deal in Europe to-day but it all goes to the furtherance of his ideal.

The system of Tagore's teaching is somewhat similar to that of Dr. Montessori. It is an attempt to find out what natural bent a child has, and to show him how best to follow it. He is essentially an individualist in the way of getting to the character of his student, and he trains his teachers to follow the same course.

PLATONIC LINES

Another thing that I think so refreshing and which will prove a gift to the future is that he spends an infinite amount of time with his students on music, drama and literature. This is somewhat on the platonic line. A great deal of attention is given up to the writing and playing of little dramas. These are often written by the children, or else by Tagore himself. Some of his best work was done for them and has since become famous.

Indeed, there are something like *sine* magazines published in the college, not to mention a daily paper.

Even the children of eight have their own paper—and great claims they make for it too.

I first went to India as a missionary. Before that, at Cambridge, I had studied race and social problems and history, and lectured on them for years. When I went out to India, an educationist and student both by profession and inclination, I met Rabindranath Tagore. He was unknown in Europe then—indeed, it was only in 1912 that his books began to be published in England.

I was enormously struck by his genius, and we became intimate personal friends. I have worked in his university for a long time now and have seen it grow. It is progressing steadily according to Tagore's ideal—which is that you must start education from the beginning and build it up. Thus there are from children of eight to grown-up youths. We are building up a university which will be built as were Oxford and Cambridge.

"And these people," concluded Mr. Andrews, "are the same as the ones the good folk out here call coolies."

THE DANGER IN EAST AFRICA

[By C. F. ANDREWS.]

I

ECONOMIC COMMISSION REPORT

(Continued from page 60)

But these conclusions, embodied in the actual Report itself, were not all that has been said about Indians in this volume. A further chapter, dealing with the 'Indian Question in German East Africa,' was drafted and completed. It was only omitted from the body of the Report at the last meeting—probably because it was thought to go beyond the limits of the actual terms of reference, not certainly on account of any misgiving about its contents. One of the members of the Commission, Mr. Powys Cobb, was allowed to print it in full in a Note, or Appendix, and to add it to the whole Report. Thus it obtained a place at the end of the Report itself. I will quote this drafted chapter in full, together with Mr. Powys Cobb's opening words. They run as follows:—

To my mind the question, which towers above all others, casting its shadow across the whole Economic future of Central (or Middle) Africa, and vitally affecting the developments of this Protectorate, is that of the political grouping of the British Territories lying between the Limpopo and the Juba Rivers, and particularly the fate of the Conquered Territory of the German East Africa.

As fuller information concerning the Conquered Territory becomes available, and as indications are given by men living in other units of the suggested Federation as to how the idea might be received by their community, the probability grows that the young states of Central Africa are about to recognise the presence of forces which make for federation, and I would urge that the suggestion should be put before them and their wishes ascertained.

Until the last meeting of the Commission, it had been agreed to devote a special chapter to this subject and I quote and adopt the chapter which had been drafted and had been discussed at several previous meetings.

POLITICAL FUTURE OF MIDDLE AFRICA

"The East Africa Protectorate is an artificially defined territory without natural frontiers (except on its seaboard). It constitutes one of the group of territories under the British Crown comprising (in addition to British East Africa) Uganda, the conquered territory of German East Africa, Nyasaland, and the Rhodesias. The territories of this group, which in this chapter will be referred to as Middle Africa, are to a very large extent homogeneous in character, forming together one

predominantly agricultural domain of boundless richness and fertility. Middle Africa is, in fact, one of the world's great unopened storehouses.

"The acquisition of the Conquered Territory, which formerly split Middle Africa into two sections, has now made practicable the consolidation of the countries composing it into one federated Dominion.

"Federation is required as a preliminary to standardising policies on several of the main questions which confront all the territories of the group. Hitherto each has gone its own way, with the result that there has been no community of counsel and purpose. East Africa and Uganda have in apparently analogous, if not identical, circumstances, arrived at and carried into execution widely divergent conclusions on such important questions as native tenure of land, and native policy generally. Had they arrived at identical conclusions, it could only have been by accident. Such a state of affairs appears to us indefensible. The wastefulness, and where the interests of subject races are concerned the harmfulness of it, hardly call for demonstration.

"The following are among the matters in respect of which federation would lead to greatly increased efficiency of public services in all the territories affected:—Defence: finance: customs: policing: communications: immigration: native policy: education: and scientific and industrial research. This appears to us so obvious that we refrain from enlarging on any of these matters except the first two.

"A consolidated Middle Africa would constitute in British hands a permanent strategical barrier to any possible scheme for dominating Africa by means of a 'Mittel Africa' scheme of aggression such as Germany had in contemplation. It would be the bulwark of Africa against militarism. Few will be so optimistic as to imagine that no such bulwark can be required when the present war is ended; but it will not be afforded to the full extent possible by a number of detached Protectorates.

"The strategical advantages attending unification of control and administration of the various territories of Middle Africa would be of inestimable value in the event of Great Britain again being involved in warfare there. The defensive strength of such a combination should be sufficient to render any hostile designs futile.

"The advantages of federation in the sphere of finance would be of scarcely less importance. A Dominion approximately equal in area to the sister Dominion of South Africa, and certainly not inferior to it in natural resources, would be able to command support for the financing of large scale railway and other projects necessary for development, where a number of minor states, incapable of acting in concert, would be unable to find accommodation.

"Apart from such material advantages, the union of the British territories of Middle Africa would powerfully promote the spreading of the British ideal, which we are convinced is what the best interests of the people of Africa demand.

"We therefore recommend that the countries specified should unite in forming the Dominion of Middle Africa, each however retaining intact such local autonomy as it now possesses; and that a Governor-General be appointed for the Dominion, who should be assisted and advised by a Federal Council, consisting of the Lieutenant-Governors and popular representatives of its component units. We have assumed the readiness of each of the units to attach themselves to this rather than to any other contiguous federation.

"It will be noted that the conquered territory formerly known as German East Africa is an integral and essential portion of the proposed Dominion. The scheme above outlined therefore conflicts with the scheme recently propounded in the London press for making over the conquered territory to India for colonisation. The latter scheme necessitates driving a wedge between the northern and southern parts of the Middle African Dominion, and is therefore strategically

objectionable in the last degree. If further argument is necessary, it may be suggested that on military and sanitary grounds alike, the occupation of any part of Africa by Indians without European support and guidance would be a dangerous experiment.

"Besides, we regard it as highly important that advantage should be taken of the opportunity offered to reunite and consolidate native peoples such as the Coast Arabs and Swahilis, and the Masai tribe, which have hitherto been divided into sections disjoined from each other, much to their mutual disadvantage, by purely artificial frontiers.

"But we have already stated in Chapter VII. what we submit are final reasons against the betrayal to the Asiatic of any section of the African peoples the responsibility for whose destinies has fallen into our hands. Short of the retrocession of the territory in question to Germany, we can conceive of no transaction more immoral, or more certain ultimately to recoil in ruin upon our own heads, than to buy off Indian discontent at the expense of the native of Africa. Such generosity at the cost of others, and those our own dependents, would be neither honourable nor politic."

"If India requires an outlet, there are vast empty spaces in Asia awaiting development to which it might now be practicable for her to apply her energies without the certainty of such evil results as must attend the exploitation of the African by the Asiatic."

I will keep over till next week's article my own comments on these two extracts from the Final Report of the Economic Commission. The gravity of the conclusion will be clearly seen. Never before, I believe, in the history of the growth of race hatred against the Indians in Africa, has this terribly unjust and brutally false charge of moral depravity and vice been brought against the Indian community. That was the charge which made me determine to stay in East Africa and not to come South till I had been able finally to refute it.

(To be Continued)

RICE QUESTION

SERIOUS POSITION

Mr. Bernard L. Sigamoney writes:—The shortage of rice in Durban is being taken advantage of by some of the merchants, who are cornering the commodity, and are refusing to sell unless they get their own price for it. The cry the Indian merchants set up is that the price fixed is below that which it actually costs the merchant. Now, sir, I want to show that the statement is not correct. The late Chief Magistrate, Mr. Percy Binns, had a meeting of the Indian merchants who deal in rice, at the Court-house. He invited Mr. V. S. C. Pather and myself to that meeting, and he very strongly condemned the action of the Indian merchants in not selling the rice. It was Mr. Amod Bayat who made a statement about the rate of exchange being high. Mr. Percy Binns then stated that all the rice in the country came in before the rate of exchange went up, and that they had no right to speculate with people's food, or wait for good prices. The rice ordered under the new rate of exchange has not left India yet, and I have no doubt that if the rice imported under adverse conditions cost more to land here, the Committee would be bound to raise the price. It is all camouflage that the rice costs more to land. Just the other day, Messrs. B. Ebrahim, Ismail & Co., the Indian merchants, of Commercial Road sold rice at £3 per bag, and made sufficient profit. I went to Mr. B. Ebrahim Ismail, and inquired of him how he managed to sell rice at £3 per bag, when others say they cannot do it. He told me that it was possible to sell rice at £3 per bag and make enough profit. The trouble is that the middleman buys rice below £3, sometimes from the wholesaler, and re-sells it to the retailer at £3 10s. or £4, and so the retailer in turn sells at an exorbitant price. Thousands of people came to this firm's place

last Tuesday, and, as this firm only had a few hundred bags, they disposed of them quite easily.

A telegram was received from Mr. Owen Smith, Food Controller, stating that there were 7,000 bags in Natal. One would like to know which of the Indian merchants are holding this rice, as they are mainly doing it for the purpose of getting better prices. This rice from Rangoon will not do much to alleviate the suffering of the Indian, but no doubt will lessen it. The suffering is too great to put it down in black and white, and a poor man who gets an average wage of, say, £5 per month, has to pay £6 or £7 a bag for rice. The Government's duty should be to take over all the rice from these rice profiteers, as there will be serious disturbances if these merchants have rice stacked in their bond stores and yet refuse to sell. If any saw the huge crowd at Mr. B. Ebrahim Ismail's place on Thursday, then they will be convinced, without a doubt, the suffering that exists amongst the working-class Indian. Eight Indian policemen and a couple of European policemen were sent to supervise the selling of rice. My object in writing to the Press is twofold—first, to show the terrible privations the Indian worker is suffering; and, secondly, to show that there are some Indian merchants, and may be European who are holding up stocks of rice, and that they are refusing to sell. Before I conclude, I wish to emphasise the fact that Mr. James McBride, in his speech at the Chamber of Commerce, touched on the rice question, which goes to show that rice could be sold at £3 per bag. Will the Government take the matter in hand, or will they simply allow matters to drift?—*Natal Mercury.*

INDIANS IN BRITISH EAST AFRICA

The *Hindu* has devoted in its issue of the 5th January, 1920, a leading article on the East African situation. In the course of its article the paper says: "It is a cruel irony of fate that when it is the Indian community there that, by reason of the great colonising work it has accomplished is entitled to claim the province as its own, the European immigrants should now put forward proposals for practical extinction."

Referring to the resolution passed at the Imperial Conference in 1918 that:—"It is an inherent function of the Government of the several communities of the British Commonwealth including India that each should enjoy complete control over the composition of its own population by means of restriction of immigration from any other communities," the paper says, that it is a handy weapon that has taken hold of by them. "Supposing that this principle applies to parts of the Empire other than the Dominions and India, it is clear that it is not the European immigrants that should call for its application, but the Indian colonists, who have made British East Africa what it is." "In the circumstances" (continues our contemporary), "it is most infamous proceeding on the part of these people to demand the right of self-determination as they call it, and no claims can be more improper unrighteous or revolting than those pressed by these people to deny Indians franchise, prevent them from acquiring land except in townships on short leases, cease their employment in Government service and restrict Asiatic immigration. There can, in fact, be no blacker record in Colonial history than this barefaced attempt to oust the Indians from a position which they have built up for themselves at great sacrifice and with commendable enterprise and ability."

Our contemporary goes on further to say:—

"The underlying motive behind this persecution is of course, pure selfishness and the desire to monopolise the trade. The amount of jealousy that has been created by the success of Indians has induced the Europeans to embark on this unholy campaign which it would be a disaster for the Empire to encourage. The unclean methods pursued by them cannot but send

a thrill of indignation throughout this country. In the first place, they want the world to believe that their sole object in this agitation is inspired by the high purpose of protecting the native from the Indian, for were they not trustees of the Africans? They exclaim: "We can conceive, short of the retrocession of the territory to Germany, of no transaction more immoral and more certain to recoil on our heads than the betrayal to the Asiatic of a section of the African peoples whose destinies have fallen into our hands and who at present are unable to protect themselves." The world knows to its cost what base motives have been behind many of the so-called 'civilising missions,' and this new move on the part of Europeans in British East Africa is nothing but a cloak to wrest the fruits of success from Indians. The part which Indians have played in introducing civilisation in that part of South Africa is a historical fact which has been borne out by indisputable evidence. The Uganda Railway was built by Indians and Mr. E. H. Sadler, as is recalled in *Young India*, writing in 1912 in the "Journal of the African Society," said as follows about Indian merchants: "In the Company days these intrepid traders pushed out feelers into the heart of Africa and established agencies far away in the interior. These traders introduced and are still maintaining a great civilising influence among the primitive savages." Further, it is acknowledged in the report of the Economic Commission report, that the Indian has played and still plays an useful part in opening up trade, etc. It is disgraceful, in the face of these facts, to argue that Indians are not fitted, equally with Europeans, to spread civilisation among the natives. But this Economic Commission has gone clean mad in its consuming zeal to discredit the Indian community by throwing doubts as to their moral character. A shameful outrage has been committed by this Commission by indicting the following paragraph: "The moral depravity of the Indian is equally damaging to the African, who in his natural state is at least innocent of the worst vices of the East. The Indian is the inciter to crime as well as vice, since it is the opportunity afforded by the ever-ready Indian receiver which makes thieving easy. If the Indian were eliminated, the number of offences against property, now high would be reduced to manageable proportions." It was the Indian who first unfurled the banner of civilisation and it is inexplicable how he could have been guilty of introducing crimes from which he has admittedly saved the natives. Mr. C. F. Andrews has in his message to the Congress characterised this charge as being absolutely without foundation and it is unnecessary to say more upon this point than to point out that this accusation has been the last refuge of the Europeans in British East Africa who, finding themselves driven from pillar to post, have invented this discreditable weapon to besmirch their rivals whom they could not vanquish otherwise. It is a problem for Imperial statesmen to ponder over in anxious thought that at the very hour when impassioned appeals have been made in regard to Imperial unity and solemn words have been uttered about the value and sanctity of Imperial Citizenship, some of the Europeans in the remote corners of the Empire should be so active in sowing seeds of dissension and discord and repudiate, as if were, those noble sentiments by reprehensible acts inspired by race hatred and commercial jealousy.

Hamidia Masjid Society

Public Meeting of the above Society will be held on Sunday, 29th February, 1920 at 3 p.m., in Hamidia Masjid, at Newtown, Johannesburg, to Elect the new Governing Body or Trustees according to Articles of Association of the said Society.

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