

Indian Opinion

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THE NATAL INDIAN CONGRESS

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

SECRETARIES' REPORT AND ELECTION OF OFFICIALS

THE Annual General Meeting of the Natal Indian Congress was held at the Rawat's Bio Hall, Victoria Street, Durban, on Sunday the 31st October 1926 at 2.30 p.m. Mr. Amod Bayat presided and was supported by the vice-presidents and the officials of the Congress. The Rev. C. F. Andrews was also present. There were over three hundred members who took part in the meeting. After the formal business was over, the Secretary read the report for the past year, which was a very lengthy and interesting one. The Treasurer's statement showing a debit balance of £24 16s. 6d. due to the Secretaries was submitted and passed unanimously.

Mr. W. S. Abraham proposed a vote of thanks to the retiring officials which was duly seconded and supported.

The following officials were then keenly contested and elected for the ensuing year:—

President Mr. Amod Bayat; Vice-Presidents Messrs. V. Lawrence, Jas. W. Godfrey, A. H. Kazi, B. M. Singh, T. C. Moodley, I. M. Haffjee, Pundit Bhawani Dayal, S. Emmamally, B. M. Patel and C. Nulliah.

Secretaries—Messrs. V. S. C. Pather and Sorabjee Rustomjee.

Treasurers—Messrs. P. R. Pather and Shaik Himed.

Committee—Messrs. E. M. Alli, G. B. Chetty, M. M. Lockhat, M. Beethasee, M. A. Motala, A. Sookdeo, S. L. Singh, J. A. Essack, Satya Dev, A. I. Kajea, M. A. H. Moosa, M. M. Gandhi, P. S. Aiyar, M. B. Naik, Ajam Haffjee, R. K. Naidoo, S. W. Abraham, B. A. Magrajh, R. K. Kapitan, S. A. Pillay, M. B. Lazarus, S. M. Moodley, E. A. Jeewa, M. D. Barmania, P. G. Naicker, K. Baijnath, J. M. Francis, L. Panday, P. Devsbi and D. S. Chetty.

Auditor—S. Jivanji.

A vote of thanks to the chair terminated the proceedings.

Secretaries' Annual Report

Mr. President and Gentlemen,—We beg to submit herewith our report of work of your Congress since the last report submitted at the Annual General Meeting held on the 6th September 1925.

Asiatic Bill

When our year began we were in the throes of a great struggle and subject to a great deal of anxiety caused by the introduction of the Areas Reservation and Immigration and Registration (Farther Provision) Bill popularly known as the "Asiatic Bill," by Dr. Malan in the Union Parliament. As a preliminary step your Committee organised protest meetings throughout the length and breadth of Natal, the important centres being Ladysmith, Dundee, Newcastle, Dannhauser, Stanger, Tongaat and Clairwood. Propaganda was intensely carried on not only in Natal but in India and England. The Asiatic Bill and a cursory comment thereon were published by your Congress and broadcasted. Every mail to India and overseas carried all the information that was required by the leaders and the press to enable them to better realise the iniquity of the Bill. The South African Indian Congress met in Conference at Capetown, and in terms of our request at the protest meetings, arranged a deputation with the Minister of the Interior with a view to requesting the Government to agree to a Round Table Conference to discuss the whole of the Indian

Question and arrive at an honourable settlement once and for all.

You all know the refusal of the Minister to agree to any such step and as a result of this decision the South African Indian Congress had no alternative but to send a deputation to India to place before the Government and people of India the serious position created by the Bill. Your President Mr. Bayat, your Vice-Presidents Messrs. J. W. Godfrey and Pandit Bhawani Dayal, and your humble servants were elected by the Conference to represent Natal on the deputation which brought such pressure on the Government of India that the Viceroy, Lord Reading, had to admit that the Indian question in South Africa was not a domestic one, but that great Imperial issues were involved and that India was as much concerned as South Africa. We do not desire to remind you of the subsequent events that led to the Bill being postponed and a Round Table Conference of the two Governments, to be held in Capetown in December next, agreed to. We wish to mention in this connection that a Day of Humiliation and Prayer was arranged by the South African Indian Congress, and your Committee worked strenuously to make the day a success. The whole of the Indian business houses in Natal were closed for the day and meetings were held at practically every centre, at which prayers were offered to the Almighty God, for the postponement of the Bill and for the dispensation of justice by the Union Government. In so far as Durban was concerned a monster meeting was held at the Durban Town Hall for the purpose of offering prayers. The meeting was attended by some 7,000 Indians, and their spontaneous response to our request created a deep impression in the minds of the Europeans. In passing we desire to convey our thanks to the entire business houses of Natal, who so readily agreed to close their business places for the whole day, thereby making the Prayer Day a complete success.

South African Indian Conference

The Fifth Session of the South African Indian Conference was held in Capetown on the 9th, 10th and 11th November 1925, at which your Congress was fully represented. Your delegates took a very active part in the debates and were successful in getting the Conference to agree to the Headquarters of the South African Indian Congress being in Durban for the current year.

Resolutions passed at the Fourth Session of the Conference were reaffirmed. The Asiatic Bill was fully discussed and it was resolved that a deputation interview Dr. Malan, and a further deputation was appointed to proceed to India and lay our case before the Government and people of India, in case of failure to get the Government to agree to a Round Table Conference, the result of which we have already dealt with.

Congress Properties

Soon after your Committee took office, the question of setting aside the interdict on the Congress officials, who were in office 12 years ago, and re-investing the immovable properties in the names of the new Trustees to be appointed, was taken up to the Supreme Court of Natal. Mr. H. J. Stuart made the necessary application for a *rule nisi*, but the Court refused the application as

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THE PERSONAL TAX

THE question that is at present engaging the attention of the Indian community of Natal is the payment of the Personal Tax. No doubt the attention of every educated Indian is being focussed towards the coming Round Table Conference, but it can be safely assumed that the immediate matter that concerns the majority of the Indians is the payment of the Personal Tax. Of the various communities of South Africa, no section is more poverty-stricken than the Indians. The recent Small Pox Epidemic revealed a deplorable state of affairs in the homes of the poorer class of Indians. The majority earn no more than forty shillings a month. It was indeed a revelation to many that these Indians in many cases had to support a family of eight with these princely wages. These Indians who are employed by the Durban Corporation and European magnates do not know that there is such a thing as a "rise in wages." Their wages are invariably stationary and the fact that they may have been in the service for years constitutes no reason for any increase in their wages. And it is therefore not surprising that the homes of these poor Indians reveal deplorable conditions.

This section of the Indian community, we are afraid, will be greatly affected by this Personal Tax. It needs no argument that it is utterly impossible for an Indian who receives forty shillings a month and who has a family of four to support, to pay this Personal Tax.

Under clause 12 of the Ordinance, the Receiver of Revenue has the prerogative to exempt any person who is either indigent or is unable to pay the Tax. In drawing the attention of the Indians to this clause, we feel sure that every poor Indian who is not in a position to pay will avail himself of this exemption clause.

We are pleased to hear that the Natal Indian Congress has taken this matter earnestly and we are informed that interviews were sought with the Receivers of Revenue of Durban and Maritzburg. Both the interviews have been favourable and the Indian community of Natal need have no fear that they will be unjustly taxed.

It needs a little propaganda work to apprise the poorer Indians of the exemption clause and we feel sure that the Natal Indian Congress will do the needful and that every Indian will assist the poor in this cause.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN INDIAN CONFERENCE

THE South African Indian Congress will meet in Emergency Conference at Durban on the 6th of December next.

The Conference will be a momentous one and grave issues that are at present troubling the minds of the Indians will come up for discussion. The Executive of the South African Indian Congress have taken the proper course in deciding upon Durban as the venue of the Conference. For, the problem wholly lies in the Province of Natal. The Government of India Deputation should be apprised of the true position as it obtains in South Africa, and though they may be furnished with all materials by the Paddison Deputation, we feel sure that the former cannot be said to be in possession of all the facts. The Paddison

Deputation was in South Africa for a very short period and only carried on their investigations for about six weeks. It is humanly impossible for any Deputation to obtain a true perspective within that short period. And it is therefore necessary for the Habibullah Deputation to seek the assistance of the South African Indian Congress.

The Emergency Conference, we need hardly emphasise, must be attended by the full number of delegates from the constituent bodies and though the Delegates from the Cape and Transvaal will sacrifice a little, we feel sure that they will do their duty in this hour of crisis.

We are extremely fortunate in having in our midst the Rev. C. F. Andrews whose sane and sound advice will greatly help the Delegates attending the forthcoming Conference.

In selecting the Delegates to attend the Conference, we would impress upon the constituent bodies to elect men who have studied the Indian question a little. Serious questions will arise during the deliberations at the Conference and unless the Delegates have a knowledge of the Indian question, they will not be of any help to one another.

In wishing the Conference every success, we have every hope that the constituent bodies will send their full quota of Delegates.

Notes and News

IN the House of Commons replying to Mr. J. Scurr (Labour member for Mile End); Lord Winterton (Under Secretary for India), said that he understood that the Government of India had informed the South African Indian Congress that it was unable to grant the latter's request for representation on the Indian delegation at the forthcoming Round Table Conference at Capetown, inasmuch as the Conference was between the two Governments, but expressed its willingness to receive any views and suggestions. Mr. Amery, the Secretary for Dominion Affairs, replying to a further question by Mr. Scurr, said that he understood that an announcement in regard to the personnel of the Union delegation for the Capetown Conference would shortly be made in South Africa.

Important decisions were reached by the Durban Public Health Committee at a special meeting held this week to consider the housing of municipal employees, in the light of the recent inspections. It was decided to call for tenders at once for additional accommodation and improvements at the Magazine Barracks. Additional bathroom and lavatory accommodation at the Tramway Shed Barracks was authorised, and instructions were given that immediately on the completion of the additional building, which is now in course of erection, the tin shanties, which had been very adversely reported upon, should be immediately demolished. Additional ventilation was also ordered for some of the other buildings on this site. The Committee further decided to recommend

to the Council the purchase of ground outside the Borough for the housing of Municipal Indian employees and Indians generally at present living in the town.

We trust the Indian leaders will seriously consider the recommendations of the above committee.

Mr. Manilal M. Gandhi sailed for India per *s.s. Karoa* last Monday.

At the meeting of the Durban Town Council, Councillor T. Burman moved the following resolution which was unanimously adopted:—

"The members of the Durban Town Council hereby record their sense of the loss which the general life of the town will sustain by the departure of the Venerable Archdeacon Morris O. Hodson, to take up work in England, and wish him all success and happiness in his new sphere of activity."

The Mayor associated himself with Mr. Burman's remarks. He said, Venerable Archdeacon Hodson's departure would be a distinct loss not only to Durban, but to South Africa.

(Continued from front page)

it had not the power to grant same, in view of the fact that the original members were non-existent on account of their having failed to pay their subscription and that the only way was to bring a Bill before Parliament for the re-investing of the properties in the names of the new Trustees.

Government of India Deputation

Your Committee assisted the officials of the South African Indian Congress in the welcome accorded to the Government of India Deputation who came to South Africa on the 16th December 1925, to study the Indian question and advise the Government of India on the Asiatic Bill. Members of your Committee accompanied them to the districts where the Indians work on the fields and live and also supplied them with all the information that they required. The thanks of the Congress are due to Messrs. B. M. Singh, A. I. Rajee, V. Lawrence, E. M. Ally, M. A. H. Moosa, and the members of the Majmal Ahbab Club, for the assistance rendered by them in making the stay of the members of the deputation as pleasant as possible. Your Committee in conjunction with the South African Indian Congress, rendered valuable assistance to the deputation in enabling them to gather all the information that was necessary.

Mr. Andrews' Visit

The Rev. C. F. Andrews arrived in Durban on Nov. 25th 1925, and was made as comfortable as possible. Every assistance was given him in his selfless and arduous work to bring about a better feeling between the European and Indian communities in regard to the Asiatic Bill. We have to record our most grateful and sincere thanks to Mr. C. F. Andrews, for his services in our cause, for his interviews with almost every European of note in this country, which have been to a great extent responsible for the turning point in our affair. We fervently wish that he may long be spared to continue his good work in the cause of justice and fairplay.

110 Field Street

The premises occupied by the late Mr. Parsee Rustomjee in Field Street, were advertised for sale by the Durban Corporation, with a proviso that only Europeans would be permitted to buy. The premises, as you all know, were a landmark in the history of Indians of South Africa. The late Mr. Rustomjee had not only lived there nearly all his life, but the community has been using the premises as a meeting place for all purposes, and it was here where the late Mr. Rustomjee had enter-

tained the late Hon. Mr. Gokhale, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, and other distinguished persons. Mr. M. K. Gandhi (now Mahatmaji) also used these premises for meetings of the late Natal Indian Association. The famous demonstrations on the arrival of Mr. Gandhi from India in the year 1897 took place in front of these premises. Your Committee put up a strenuous fight against the Town Council to have the anti-Asiatic proviso removed from the conditions of sale, with a view to the Parsee Rustomjee Trust purchasing same, but without success. It is indeed regrettable that the Durban Corporation was not able to agree to the community possessing this important and historical place.

Boroughs Ordinance

When the time came for the enrolment of Burgesses for the Municipal year 1927 the Electoral Officer for the Borough of Durban refused to enrol new names on the Burgess Roll. As anticipated and as reflected in the report submitted to you last year, your Congress instructed Advocate Mr. Janion to test the legality of the disfranchising clause of the Boroughs Ordinance and the case of Mr. W. S. Abrahams, who is a renter and whose application for enrolment was refused, is being taken to appeal. The Judges in the Supreme Court, Natal, have dismissed the appeal on the ground that the Municipality is a local self-Government and as such, has the right to say who shall and who shall not form the element which constitutes its government. The matter is now taken to the Appellate Court and leave to appeal will be heard on the 18th instant.

Provincial Ordinances

TOWNSHIPS AMENDMENT ORDINANCE

This Ordinance deprives the Indians in Townships of their Township Franchise and is on all fours with the Boroughs Ordinance. Strong objections were taken by your Congress and evidence was led before the Select Committee. Notwithstanding our protests it has now received the assent of the Governor-General-in-Council. The decision in the matter of the test appeal on the on the Boroughs Ordinance will apply equally to this Ordinance.

MOTOR ORDINANCE

Your Committee tendered evidence before the Select Committee and pointed out that there would be hardship in the event of the Indian Motor Buses being compelled to insure against third party risks as no insurance company will accept them. As a result of our representations the Select Committee recommended to the Provincial Council that the insurance clause be eliminated. Notwithstanding this, the Provincial Council has retained the insurance clause so far as the buses are concerned and reduced the amount of insurance from £10,000 to £1,000. The Ordinance has received the Royal assent and will operate as and from the 1st January next.

EDUCATION ORDINANCE

This Ordinance sought to interfere with the present system of education so far as the Indians are concerned inasmuch as all schools, which have more than 10 pupils and aided by Government, had to be registered with the Government and before a certificate of registration is obtained, the Government must be satisfied that the premises are in a sanitary condition, proper provision exists for lavatory purposes, teachers are competent and the school authorities are to follow approved courses of instructions; and non-aided schools by whomsoever they may be owned or controlled having five or more pupils shall also register under similar conditions. Grants in aid were subject to withdrawal on six months' notice on very flimsy grounds, and the admission of any child may be refused at any school, if there is another school within the prescribed distance of the child's domicile. The other clauses of the Ordinance were of far-reaching importance to the Indian community as they sought to restrict and destroy and not to encourage Indian Educational aspirations. The danger lies not so much in the provisions of the Ordinance as in the regulations, which the Administrator is empowered from time to time to make and alter without any reference to any Legislative authority. Your Congress submitted a strongly worded

petition to the Provincial Council, but as the Select Committee did not report within the prescribed time, the Ordinance is shelved for the time being.

ORDINANCE TO IMPOSE A PERSONAL TAX

This Ordinance which has received Royal Assent last month imposes a Tax of £1 per head on those who are not subject to the Union Income Tax, besides a Tax on a percentage basis on those who pay Income Tax. Provisions are made in the Ordinance for exemption of indigent persons, and as a great amount of indigency prevails amongst Indians the incoming Committee should enlist the help of the various district Committees with a view to bringing deserving cases to the notice of the Receivers of Revenue in those districts and obtain the necessary exemptions.

Finance

During the year under review, finance played a most important part for the propaganda work carried on by the Congress, and as this required a great deal of money, a Special Fund was opened under the authority of the South African Indian Congress, and it fell to the lot of Messrs. R. K. Khan, E. M. Ally, A. M. Lockhat, A. H. Kazi, Shaik Himed, M. B. Naik and I. M. Haffjee to collect the requisite amount. But for the valuable assistance rendered by these gentlemen our fight against the Asiatic Bill could never have been successful. The Mercantile community of Natal are to be congratulated for subscribing so liberally towards this fund, as quite eighty per cent. of the amount was given by them. At the last Annual General Meeting, your Committee took over a deficit of £776 19s. 2d., as owing to the Secretaries. There were further monies advanced by them in carrying further the propaganda work on the Asiatic Bill. Fortunately for the Congress while the Secretaries were in India as members of the deputation they made representations to Mrs. Sarojini Naidu the President of the South African Congress, who managed to obtain certain funds from the Imperial Citizenship Association, for work in India and South Africa, out of which she paid the Secretaries the sum of £1,000 to wipe off the above deficit. A further sum of £800 was received from the Special Fund above referred to. The amounts are reflected in the statement to be submitted by the Treasurers.

Mahatma Gandhi's Birthday

Your Congress as usual, in conjunction with the Kathiawar Arya Mandal, celebrated Mahatma's fifty-seventh birthday last October, and also celebrated his fifty-seventh birthday on the 2nd instant, and on both occasions cabled him their congratulations on his having attained the age of 56 and 57 respectively.

Formation of District Branches

Your Committee has on the application of the district members formed branches of the Congress at Stanger, Clairwood and Ladysmith, and with the other branches already in existence are doing good work in the various districts concerned. Both the Ladysmith and Maritzburg branches brought to the notice of the headquarters the action of the Railways Administration in centralising their Indian employees to Durban and those who refused to be transferred were dismissed from the service. Representations were made to the Assistant General Manager, Durban, who has afforded some relief and stayed transfer in the cases of those who are of long service and of old age. Further representations were made in the case of those who have been dismissed and have no means of a livelihood, but little or no consideration has been received from the Railway authorities in these cases. It is the policy of the Government that will have to be tackled and not the Department.

Durban North Bridge

The owners of the bridge across the Umgeni River which is now under construction have obtained a servitude from the Durban Corporation on conditions which may be prejudicial to the Indian community. Your Congress protested to the Town Council against the granting of this servitude but it appears that the servitude has been granted on conditions that the Bridge

owners shall have the right of restricting such vehicular and pedestrian traffic as they may deem fit. This is also another matter for the incoming Committee to tackle.

Bhayla's Licensing Appeal

Mrs. Bhayla of Estcourt whose licence was refused by the Estcourt Local Board for failure to pay her rates took the matter on appeal to the Supreme Court and failed on the ground that the Court cannot interfere with the discretion of the Licensing Officer no matter how arbitrary or capricious it may be. Your Congress interested itself in this matter and discussed the position fully with Mr. Janion the Counsel for the appellant. In fact he was asked to take the matter to the Appellate Court but owing to the delay in obtaining funds the appellant with the assistance of Messrs. Haffjee Peerbhoy and others of Estcourt has taken the matter into her own hands, collected funds in Durban, Maritzburg and Estcourt and has proceeded with the matter. Leave to appeal was heard last month in Bloemfontein, and the Judges refused the application on the ground that they cannot assume an Appellate jurisdiction which they do not possess in view of Act 18 of 1897 which only allows appeals up to the Provincial Division of the Supreme Court. The Judges further remarked that the Appellate Authority placed in the Provincial Division enables it to do more than it might have done without such authority. In other words the court below has the power to interfere with the decision of the Licensing Officer or the Town Council or Divisional Board based on the grounds of discretion or otherwise and order that the renewal be granted or not granted or may remit the matter for rehearing. This judgment will alter the position in future appeals.

Burgess Roll

Your Committee has assisted those whose names appeared in the Burgess Roll of Durban last year and struck off this year, and had them put on again by the Revision Court this year. Some 200 names were thus added.

Delville Wood Memorial

The Non-European Auxiliary of the British Empire Service League applied to the Government for an Indian to represent the Indian Bearer Corps at the unveiling ceremony of the Delville Wood Memorial in France this month, and their application was turned down. Your Congress took up the matter, and was informed by the Department of Defence that representations were being made to the National Council of England, for the appointment of Mr. Albert Christopher, D.C.M. to represent the Bearer Corps and the Indian community on this auspicious occasion.

Presentation to Mr. Amod Bayat

The Committee felt that on the occasion of the marriage of the daughter of our President Mr. Amod Bayat on the 3rd instant, a better opportunity will not present itself for the community to express gratitude for the great sacrifice made and services unselfishly rendered by the President for and on behalf of the Indians of Natal for a period of over twenty years, and as a token of the respect and esteem in which he is being held by the community, your Congress presented him with an illuminated address and a gold watch and chain.

Meetings

During the period under review there were 9 Executive meetings, 19 Committee meetings, and 1 Special General Meeting.

Thanks

The Committee desires to place on record its sincerest thanks to the Joint Secretaries for the valuable services rendered by them during the year under review, and to Mr. P. R. Pather, who acted as Secretary during the absence of the Secretaries in India. It also records its thanks to its Chairman Mr. J. W. Godfrey for his tact and impartiality in the conduct of the meetings of the Committee. The Congress has had a strenuous time during the absence of the Secretaries in India, their absence synchronising with the visit of the Rev. Mr. Andrews, and Government of India Deputation. During

this trying period the following gentlemen have rendered valuable assistance viz :—

Messrs. S. R. Naidoo, E. M. Ally, M. Beethase, B. A. Meghrajh, M. M. Lockhat, A. H. Kazi, A. I. Kajee, V. Lawrence, and B. M. Singh. Our thanks are also due to Mr. P. S. Aiyar for his kind assistance, and to the Maritzburg Branch for their help from time to time.

A vote of thanks was passed by the meeting to Mr. Shapurji Jivanji for acting as auditor and he was again elected as auditor for the ensuing year.

(Sgd.) V. S. C. PATHER.

" NORAJEE RUSTOMJEE.

Joint Hon. Secretaries.

31st Oct. 1926.
Durban.

The Story of My Experiments With Truth

[BY M. K. GANDHI] •

PART II.

Chapter V

PREPARING FOR SOUTH AFRICA

I was no doubt at fault in having gone to that officer. But this impatience and overbearing anger were out of all proportion to my mistake. It did not warrant expulsion. I could scarcely have taken up more than five minutes of his time. But he simply could not endure my talking. He could have politely asked me to go, but power had intoxicated him to an inordinate extent. Later I came to know that patience was not one of the virtues of this officer. It was usual for him to insult his visitors. The slightest unpleasantness was sure to put the sahib out.

Now most of my work would naturally be in his court. It was beyond me to conciliate him. I had no desire to curry favour with him. Indeed having once threatened to proceed against him I did not like to remain silent.

Meanwhile I began to learn something of the petty politics of the country. Kathiawad, being a conglomeration of small States, naturally had its rich crop of politicals. Petty intrigues between States and intrigues of officers for power, were the order of the day. Princes were always at the mercy of others and ready to lend their ears to sycophants. Even the sahib's peon had to be cajoled and the sahib's Seristadar was more than his master, as he was his eyes, ears and his interpreter. The Seristadar's will was law, and his income was always reputed to be more than the sahib's. This may have been an exaggeration, but he certainly lived beyond his salary.

This atmosphere appeared to me to be poisonous and how to remain unscathed was a perpetual problem for me.

I was thoroughly depressed and my brother clearly saw it. We both felt that if I could secure a job somewhere I should be free from this atmosphere of intrigue. But without intrigue a minister-ship or judgeship was out of the question. And the quarrel with the sahib stood in the way of my practice.

A POLITICAL MISSION

Porbander was then under administration and I had some work there in the shape of securing more powers for the prince. Also I had to see the Administrator in respect of the heavy *riyoti* (rent) exacted from the Mera. This officer though an Indian was, I found, one better than the sahib in arrogance. He was able; but the *riyots* appeared to me to be none the better off for his ability. I en-

but hardly any relief for the Mera. It struck me that their cause was not even carefully gone into.

So even in this mission I was comparatively disappointed. I thought justice was not done to the clients and I had not the means to secure it. At the most I could have appealed to the Political Agent or to the Governor who would have dismissed the appeal saying 'we decline to interfere.' If there had been any rule or regulation governing such decisions, it would have been something; but here the sahib's will was law.

I was exasperated.

Meantime a Memon firm from Porbander wrote to my brother making the following offer: 'We have business in South Africa. Ours is a big firm, and we have a big case there in the Court our claim being £40,000. It has been going on for a long time. We have the services of the best Vakils and barristers. If you send your brother there he would be useful to us and also to himself. He would be able to explain our case better to our counsel. He would have the advantage of seeing a new part of the world and of making new acquaintances.'

AN OFFER

My brother discussed the proposition with me. I could not clearly make out whether I had simply to explain the case to the counsel or to appear in Court. But I was tempted.

My brother introduced me to the late Seth Abdul Kareem Jhaveri, a partner of Dada Abdulla and Co., the firm in question. "It won't be a difficult job," the Seth assured me. "We have big Europeans as our friends, whose acquaintance you will make. You can be useful to us in our shop. Much of our correspondence is in English and you can help us in that too. You will of course be our guest and hence will have no expense whatever."

How long do you require my services? I asked. "And what will be the payment?"

"Not more than a year. We will pay you a first class return fare and a sum of £105 all found."

This was hardly going there as a barrister. It was going as a servant of the firm. But I wanted somehow to leave India. There was as well the temptation of seeing a new country and of having new experience. Also I would send £105 to my brother and help in the expenses of the household. I closed with the offer, without any higgling and got ready to go to South Africa.

Chapter VI

ARRIVAL IN NATAL

When starting for South Africa I did not feel the wrench of separation which I had experienced when leaving for England. My mother was now no more. I had gained some knowledge of the world and of travel abroad, and going from Rajkot to Bombay was no unusual affair.

This time I only felt the pang of parting from my wife. Another baby had been born to us since my return from England. Our love could not yet be called free from lust, but it was getting gradually purer. Since my return from Europe, we had lived very little together; and as I had now become her teacher, however indifferent, and helped her to make certain reforms, we both felt the necessity of being more together, if only to continue the reforms. But the attraction of South Africa rendered the separation bearable. "We are bound to meet again in a year," I said to her by way of consolation, and left Rajkot for Bombay.

Here I was to get my passage through the Agent of Dada Abdulla & Co. But no berth was available on the boat, and if I did not sail then I should be stranded in Bombay. "We have tried our best," said the Agent, "to secure a first class passage, but in vain—unless you are prepared to get on deck. Your meals can be arranged for in the saloon."

how could a barrister travel as a deck passenger? So I refused the offer. I suspected the Agent's veracity, for I could not believe that a first class passage was not available. With the Agent's consent I set about securing it myself. I went on board the boat and met the chief officer. He said to me quite frankly, "We do not usually have such a rush. But as the Governor-General of Mozambique is going by this boat, all the births are engaged."

"Could you not possibly squeeze me in," I said. He surveyed me from top to toe and smiled. "There is an extra berth in my cabin, which is usually not available for passengers. But I am prepared to give it to you." I thanked him and got the Agent to purchase the passage. In April, 1893, I set forth full of zest to try my luck in South Africa.

GAME OF CHESS

The first port of call was Lamu which we reached in about thirteen days. The Captain and I had become great friends by this time. He was fond of playing chess, but as he was quite a novice, he wanted one still more of a beginner for his partner, and so he invited me. I had heard a lot about the game, but I had never tried my hand at it. Players used to say that this was a game in which there was plenty of scope for the exercise of one's intelligence. The Captain offered to teach it to me, and he found me a good pupil as I had unlimited patience. Every time I was the loser and that made him all the more eager to teach. I liked the game, but never carried my liking beyond the boat or my knowledge beyond the moves of the pieces.

At Lamu the ship remained at anchor for some three to four hours and I landed to see the port. The Captain had also gone ashore, but he had warned me that the harbour was treacherous and that I should return in good time.

It was a very small place. I went to the Post Office and was delighted to see the Indian clerks there, and had a talk with them. I also saw the Africans and tried to acquaint myself with their ways of life which interested me very much. This took up some time. There were some deck passengers with whom I had made acquaintance, and who had landed with a view to cooking their food on shore and having a quiet meal. I now found them preparing to return to the steamer, so we all got into the same boat. The tide was high in the harbour and our boat had more than its proper load. The current was so strong that it was impossible to hold the boat to the ladder of the steamer. It would just touch the ladder and be drawn away again by the current. The first whistle to start had already gone. I was worried. The Captain was witnessing our plight from the bridge. He ordered the steamer to wait an extra five minutes. There was another boat near the ship which a friend hired for me for ten rupees. This boat picked me up from the overloaded one. The ladder had already been raised. I had therefore to be drawn up by means of a rope and the steamer started immediately. The other passengers were left behind. I now appreciated the Captain's warning.

After Lamu the next port was Mombasa and then Zanzibar. The halt here was a long one—eight or ten days—and we then changed to another boat.

A TRIAL

The Captain liked me much, but the liking took an undesirable turn. He invited an English friend and me to accompany him, on an outing, and we all went ashore in his boat. I had not the least notion of what the outing meant. And little did the Captain know what an ignorant I was in such matters. We were taken to some Negro women's quarters, by a boat. We were each shown into a room. I simply stood there dumb with shame. Heaven only knows what the poor woman must have thought of me. When the Captain called me I came out just as I had gone in. He saw my innocence. At first I felt

very much ashamed, but as I could not think of the thing except with horror, the sense of shame wore away and I thanked God that the sight of the woman did not move me in the least. I was disgusted at my weakness and pitied myself for not having had the courage to refuse to go into the room.

This in my life was the third trial of its kind. Many a youth, innocent at first, must have been drawn into sin by a false sense of shame. I could claim no credit for having come out unscathed. I could have credit if I had refused to enter that room. I must entirely thank the All-Merciful for having saved me. The incident increased my faith in God and taught me, to a certain extent, to cast off false shame.

As we had to remain in this port for a week, I took rooms in the town and saw much by wandering about the neighbourhood. Only Malabar can give any idea of the luxuriant vegetation of Zanzibar. I was amazed at the gigantic trees and the size of the fruits.

The next call was at Mozambique and thence we reached Natal towards the close of May.

Delville Wood

Mr. Polak has sent the following letter to the *Times*:
Sir,—Whilst cordially supporting the appeal of my friend, Sir C. G. Ghose, for the erection of an Indian War Memorial in France, I would venture to correct a small but important error in his letter. He believes that he and Lady Ghose were the only Indians present on the occasion of the unveiling of the South African War Memorial at Delville Wood.

Mr. Albert Christopher, who participated in the solemn ceremonial as a guest of the South African War Memorial Committee, is a Natal-born Indian, and was deputed to represent the Natal Indian Congress and the South African Indian Bearer Corps. The Corps, numbering about 760 men, came into being at the outbreak of the war, when the South African Indian community offered to the Union Government all its resources and the services of its members in any capacity. The offer was partially accepted, and the Bearer Corps, recruited mainly among South African-born Indians, was sent to the East African war zone, under the command of Major Briscoe, D.S.O., M.G. The Bearer Corps was constantly under fire, and many of its members were killed or wounded in action; whilst others died of disease or were invalidated out. Mr. Christopher was given the rank of Sergeant Major (a rank that he alone, among South African Indians, shares with Mr. Gandhi), and was virtually in command of one company during a large part of the campaign. He received the D.C.M., the Mons Star, and the usual medals, being twice mentioned in dispatches, once by General Smuts and the other time by General Van Deventer. Eventually he was discharged as totally incapacitated. He is now, in middle life, completing his legal studies in this country, and is now awaiting his call to the Bar.

Yours faithfully,

H. S. L. POLAK.

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