

Indian Opinion

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"A MARVELLOUS PERFORMANCE"

MRS. SAROJINI NAIDU ON THE INDIAN AGREEMENT

IT is a memorable and indeed a marvellous performance." In these words, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu hailed the South African Indian Agreement.

Mrs. Naidu, President of the South African Indian Congress and ex-President of the Indian National Congress, was interviewed by the Associated Press on the results of the Habibullah Deputation and expressed herself in the following terms:—"I have given time and anxious study to the terms of the South African Settlement. I am gratified to find that it endorses some of the conclusions I had reached and confirms some of the remedies I had suggested when in the spring of 1924 I pleaded with the Ministers and leaders of South Africa for a Round Table Conference which has now been so happily achieved. I rejoice in the complete withdrawal of the Class Areas Bill, which would have ensured the speedy economic and social doom of our compatriots overseas. I rejoice also in the undoubted benefits guaranteed to them in the more equitable conditions of trade and employment, more favourable opportunities of educational and social reform, as well as in their right to retain their colonial domicile through a definite period of voluntary and experimental sojourn in India.

LIVELIEST APPREHENSIONS

I cannot however disguise from myself the liveliest apprehensions in regard to other provisions of the Agreement, notably the scheme that tends to encourage emigration to other parts of the Empire, and in the unfettered liberty of executive action afforded to provincial Governments in their dealings with the Indian community without reference to any central authority. I foresee, in the implications of those provisions, the possibility of yet further detriment and humiliation to Indian interest and Indian sentiment, unless both are resolutely safeguarded with the most zealous and vigilant loyalty. I earnestly deprecate the use of the invidious phrase "Western standard of life." A definition, less provocative and less ambiguous, could well have been utilised to connote the desirability of a similar grade, though by no means of an identical formula, of decent and decorous standards of life, which I have always so strongly advocated and emphasised as necessary for the creation and maintenance of a high common ideal of colonial progress and civilisation.

PROVISIONAL COMPROMISE

Nevertheless, despite the inherent defects and insidious dangers of the Settlement, which Mahatma Gandhi has so lucidly analysed, I commend it as an adequate provisional compromise without prejudice to the more vital and far-reaching principles which await a fuller interpretation and wider application on behalf of our nationals in South Africa.

With my intimate knowledge of exceptionally difficult circumstances in which this agreement was arrived at I consider it a memorable and indeed a marvellous performance, which is in itself an eloquent tribute alike to the courageous and patriotic labours of the Indian Delegation and to the fair-minded and reasonable statesmanship of the South African Government. I accept it as an initial and urgent measure of amelioration of the intolerable conditions of distress and inter-racial conflict, which, if unchecked, would soon be fraught with the most tragic consequences.

BIRTHRIGHT OF INDIAN NATIONALS

I welcome it also as a symbol of the saner and sweeter atmosphere of goodwill and mutual recognition of the Indian rights, in which it will be possible to inaugurate larger and beneficent, social, economic and legislative adjustments, which I hold to be an essential state in the realisation of that equal and inalienable civic and political status, which is as much the birthright of Indian Nationals as of any other settled population of South Africa, whatever the race, colour, or creed. I eagerly anticipate the day when in co-operation and comradeship with their fellow citizens the Indian colonials will be in a position to make a rich and splendid original contribution to the creative history of their beautiful adopted Mother Country. But the fulfilment of that ultimate hope as well as the immediate success of the new experiment, on which the Governments of India and the Union of South Africa are about to embark, will be determined chiefly by the personality, talent, foresight, and imaginative sympathy of the intermediary to whom will be entrusted the delicate and difficult mission of fostering inter-racial amities and promoting international friendship between India and South Africa. I trust that the Indian Government, which committed a serious indiscretion in ratifying a document of such grave importance and significance without previous counsel or consent of the Central Legislature, will now have the grace and the wisdom to

consult Indian representatives of the Indian people as to their choice of an Ambassador to act as a messenger of the Indian people to the people of South Africa.

SOME MISUNDERSTANDINGS

RIGHTED

(BY C. F. ANDREWS)

THERE are certain very serious criticisms of the Indian Agreement, which the South African Indian Congress has pointed out. But there are criticisms which have constantly appeared in the Press, in India, not really due to the Agreement itself, but only to a misunderstanding of its meaning. These should be at once cleared up. I hope to do this week by week.

One, to which Sarojini Devi refers, may be corrected in the present issue. *There is not the slightest wish on the part of the Union Government to open up assisted immigration to Fiji or British Guiana.* I have this on the strictest authority. That part, therefore, of the criticism from India should be corrected without any delay. No one also will be asked or invited to go direct either to Ceylon or Malaya. If they wish to go there after having resided in India, they will not be prevented from doing so, or prevented from returning to South Africa from those places, before the three years are over. This again is authoritative.

Why then, it may be asked, were the words 'or other country' inserted? The Department of the Interior has assured me, that they were originally inserted to deal specially with Mauritian-born Indians who wished to return and take their bonus to Mauritius. There was no provision for doing this under the Indian Relief Act and therefore it was a hardship.

One definite and solemn obligation entered into with the Indian Government may set our minds at rest on this point. *In no case will any Indian be assisted to any other country without the consent of the Indian Government.*

The Indian Government has its own Standing Committee of the Legislature to deal with Emigration. This Standing Committee would finally decide such a subject. On that Committee, there are a majority of non-official representatives of the Indian people.

At present, I can only remember two names, —Mr. N. M. Joshi, and Mr. G. A. Natesan,—but those two names ought to satisfy anyone in South Africa, that the Indian Government, through its Emigration Standing Committee, will be very careful indeed before they allow any new country to be opened for such Indian assisted emigration from Natal.

Notes and News

WE are pleased to inform our readers that Mr. and Mrs. Manilal M. Gandhi will arrive in Durban on Wednesday the 20th April per s.s. *Khandalla*.

A Press message from Ahmedabad dated 10th ult. states that Sm. Sushila Devi, the new daughter-in-law of Mahatma Gandhi, arrived here on the 8th March immediately after her wedding at Akola. There was no pomp at the wedding, which was celebrated at Akola. All social customs were eschewed, the marriage ceremony being confined solely to religious rites. Only friends were invited to the wedding and the bride and bridegroom were in their normal dress which was of Khaddar. Simple and inspiring were the presents which she received from Mahatma Gandhi, a Gita, a book of Ashram prayers, a takli and two beautiful rosaries of yarn spun by himself. S. J. Manilal Gandhi, son of Mahatma Gandhi, accompanied by Sm. Sushila Devi Gandhi leaves Ahmedabad on the 14th instant for Bombay. After a few days stay there, they will leave for Akola. They will stay there for some days and return to Bombay from where S. J. Manilal Gandhi will sail for South Africa on the 20th instant accompanied by his wife.

In a communication addressed to the Department of Commerce, Government of India, the Indian Merchants' Chamber, Bombay, has expressed its painful surprise and deep disappointment at the attitude of the Government of India in not taking any action up to now to carry out the main recommendation of the Indian Mercantile Marine Committee, namely, the reservation of the coasting trade of India to Indian shipping for which there has been a universal national demand in this country. Although more than three years have elapsed since the Committee reported, the Government, has not taken any action on a question which vitally affects the economic interests of India, and in view of the reply which Earl Winterton gave in the House of Commons the other day stating that the Government of India is opposed to this recommendation of the Committee, the Government owes it to itself to issue a statement as to whether it proposes to take any steps or not in the matter. The Chamber, while welcoming the proposed training ship at Karachi for training deck officers, urges upon the Government of India to give legislative effect to the recommendations of the Mercantile Marine Committee making it obligatory on the ships plying on the coast not only to accept, for training, Indians as apprentices from the training ship but to employ those cadets who pass out of the training ship and obtain the necessary certificate of competency as officers to the extent of at least 50 per cent. of the total number of officers employed by those ships. Otherwise, as the Chamber points out, it is doubtful whether the object for which the training ship is to be established will ever be achieved. The Chamber also draws the attention of the Government to the need for the provision of facilities for the training of Indians as Marine Engineers.

The annual report of the Chief Inspector of Mines on the working of the Indian Mines Act during 1925, which was recently published, shows that, during the year, the daily average number of persons employed in the Mines was 253,857, a decrease of 4,360 persons as compared with the preceding year. Of these persons 169,554 worked underground and 84,303 on the surface, 165,479 were adult males, 84,243 adult females, and 4,135 children. The number of persons employed in coal mines was 173,140, or 13,948 less than the number

employed in 1924. In the coal mines 39,618 women worked underground and 18,913 on the surface, the corresponding figures for 1924 being 41,616, and 21,994. The public have been agitating for the complete prevention of woman labour underground as it is fraught with the greatest danger to the health and safety of women. But the Government have done almost next to nothing in the matter. The fact that such a large number of women are working underground certainly does not redound to the credit of a civilised administration. During the year there were 200 fatal accidents, involving the loss of 233 lives. It is satisfactory to note that the death rate from accidents during the year was 92 per 100,000 persons employed, which is the lowest rate recorded for many years. Increased attention is said to be given by owners of mines to welfare work and "safety first" propaganda amongst the labour force, and several large groups of collieries in the Jharia coalfield have taken steps for guiding and advising the resident labour on health matters.

Indian Licencés

Seven Councillors do not Attend Meeting

Last Thursday afternoon the Maritzburg City Council, sitting as a Licensing Appeal Board, on the motion of Mr. G. O. Jolliffe, seconded by Mr. T. C. Linscott, reversed the decision of the Licensing Officer, Mr. Phil Stride, and granted cobblers' licences to two Indians. At a former meeting of the Council a licence was granted to an Indian in respect of a second-hand clothes shop, and the Licensing Officer's decision reversed. On that occasion Mr. J. S. Clark and Mr. H. M. Doull left the meeting, and broke the quorum, and the Council was not in a position to deal with appeals by two Indian cobblers. These appeals came up yesterday. The Mayor presided.

There were present Messrs. O. C. Jolliffe, J. S. Clark, H. Brown, J. H. Sutherland, A. H. Cross, H. M. Doull, A. E. Harwin and T. C. Linscott.

Dayaram Kara, Indian cobbler, sought a licence in respect to premises at 5, Railway Street.

In his appeal, Mr. J. D. Stalker, who represented the applicant, pointed out that no objection had been lodged against Kara's application for a cobbler's licence; the premises were suitable, and business had been carried on for 21 years there without objection; there was no other trade or occupation from which Kara could make a living, and Kara had a vested right in the premises, in view of the time he had been carrying on the business.

The Licensing Officer refused the licence on the grounds that the locality of the premises was not one in which it was desirable that cobbling should be carried on. He also said that the Council had upheld decisions refusing to grant cobblers', hairdressers' and clothing repairing shop licences for premises in the upper and central portions of the City.

Mr. Stalker said the same reasons applied to Pema Mitha, who had carried on business for 30 years, and who applied for a cobbler's licence for 141, West Street. "Don't," he urged, "take the business away from these applicants, who know no other trade. They have done work for Europeans and their work must be satisfactory."

Mr. J. H. Sutherland asked what Pema Mitha's age was?

Pema Mitha said he was nearly 60. He worked near the Mohammedan Mosque.

Mr. J. S. Clark: Are the applicants aware that there are free passages to India for immigrants who have difficulty in carrying on their occupation here?

The Council went into Committee.

After nearly 45 minutes' discussion, the doors were again opened.

On the motion to grant the licences those in favour

were: The Mayor (Mr. J. Hardy) and Messrs. Jolliffe, Cross, Harwin and Linscott.

Against: Messrs. Clark, Brown, Doull and Sutherland. Mr. A. E. Harwin wished the Council to place on record its protest against certain members who consistently and apparently purposely abstained from attending licence appeal meetings. They should make it their business to attend the meetings.

The Town Clerk said there was also another important consideration: Out of 16 Councillors, the vote of five members had granted licences. He considered the whole Council should be present to deal with licensing matters.—*Natal Witness*.

[This question will be dealt with editorially in our next week's issue. Ed. I. O.]

The South African Agreement

(BY G. A. NATESAN)

Sir Muhamad Habibullah and his colleagues on the Indian deputation to South Africa deserve the gratitude of the public for bringing about a satisfactory agreement on a question which was till lately the despair of all: and we have no doubt that the bulk of our countrymen in South Africa will welcome the settlement with a sigh of relief. It may be that we have not achieved all that we wanted, but considering the past attitude of the Union Government, the bitterness of the struggle and the desperate remedies which our countrymen had sought from time to time, the compromise arrived at is one which should satisfy all reasonable people. In appraising the results of the Delegation's efforts at a compromise, we ought not to forget that even the Smuts-Gandhi Agreement, the terms of which were settled in consultation with Gokhale did not press for "the right of unrestricted immigration." The present arrangement has some distinctive features. The dropping of the obnoxious Class Areas Reservation Bill, the Union Government's recognition of the Indian community as an integral part of their population and of their responsibility to provide educational and other facilities to Indians; the promise to alter the law relating to trading licences and above all their request to the Government of India to appoint an Agent "to secure continuous and effective co-operation between the two countries" are sufficiently indicative of a new spirit of friendliness and goodwill. If repatriation in some form had to be accepted it cannot be denied that the new scheme of "aided emigration" is an improvement in some respects on the old.

But what is of even greater importance than the exact terms of the agreement is the prospect of the growing friendship and cordiality between India and South Africa. Already we notice the remarkable transformation of the atmosphere from one of "remorseless hostility to Indians to that of a generous toleration." We find Dr. Malen speaking about this agreement in the Union Assembly proclaiming that "the most important feature of all was that no stigma of racial inferiority was implied," that the agreement had been reached "in the entire absence of a spirit of bargaining" and "it had been a whole-hearted settlement." According to him it "indicated a lasting friendship and goodwill between the great nations concerned."

Our success in this settlement is due to the vigilance with which the public in India have watched and helped the struggle of our countrymen in South Africa and the whole-hearted manner in which the Government of India, from the time of Lord Hardinge has been identifying itself with

the public opinion of the country. Nor can we forget the political advantage achieved by direct negotiations between the Government of India and the Union Government.

We have no doubt that the Indian Legislature will approve of the action of the Government of India in ratifying the agreement and will feel grateful for the labours of the delegation led by Sir Mohammad Habibullah, the Paddison deputation which prepared the ground for the Round Table Conference and above all to that ever-watchful friend of India, Mr. Andrews. Mahatma Gandhi's description of the agreement as an "honourable compromise" and as "the best that was possible" ought to serve as an effective answer to any ill-considered or irresponsible criticism that may be made in regard to this very delicate and difficult question.—*Indian Review*.

A Changed Atmosphere

Mahatma Gandhi never uttered a truer word than when he said in his article in *Young India* on the South African Agreement, that the most important feature of that agreement was the complete transformation of the atmosphere in South Africa in regard to the Indian settlers, to which it bore testimony. Further evidence of this change is afforded by the fine speech made by Mr. Malan in the South African Assembly in announcing the terms of the agreement. Every word in the speech was carefully weighed and nothing was said that was in the least degree calculated to give offence. The keynote of the South African Government's present attitude was struck in one single sentence. "The agreement," said the Minister, "indicated lasting friendship and goodwill between the two great nations concerned." If these words reflect the temper of the South African people, there is no reason to despair of the future.—*Tribune*.

The Story of My Experiments With Truth

[BY M. K. GANDHI]

PART II.

Chapter XX

BALASUNDARAM

Heart's earliest and pure desire is always fulfilled. In my own experiences, I have often seen this rule being verified. Service of the poor has been my heart's desire and it has always thrown me amongst the poor and enabled me to identify myself with them.

Although the members of the Natal Indian Congress included the Colonial-born Indians and the clerical class, the unskilled wage-earners, the indentured labours were still outside its pale. The Congress was not yet theirs. They were not able to belong to it by paying its subscription and becoming its members. The Congress could win their attachment only by serving them. An opportunity offered itself, when neither the Congress nor I was really ready for it. I had put in scarcely three or four months' practice and the Congress also was still in its infancy, when a Tamil man in tattered clothes, head-gear in hand, two front teeth broken and his mouth bleeding, stood before me trembling and weeping. He had been heavily belaboured by his master. I learnt all about him from my clerk who was a Tamilian. Balasundaram—as that was the

visitor's name—was serving his indenture under a well-known European resident of Durban. The master getting angry with him had lost self-control and had beaten Balasundaram severely, breaking two of his teeth.

I sent him to a Doctor. In those days only white doctors were available. I wanted a certificate from the doctor about the nature of the injury Balasundaram had sustained. I secured the certificate and straightway took the injured man to the magistrate to whom I submitted his affidavit. The magistrate was indignant when he read it and issued a summons against the employer.

It was far from my desire to get the employer punished. I simply wanted Balasundaram to be released from him. I read the law about indentured labour. If an ordinary servant left service without giving notice, he was liable to be sued by his master in a civil court. With the indentured labourer the case was entirely different. He was liable, under similar circumstances, to be proceeded against in a criminal court and to be imprisoned on conviction. That is why Sir William Hunter called the indenture system almost as bad as slavery. Like the slave the indentured labourer was the property of his master.

There were only two ways of releasing Balasundaram: either to get the Protector of Indentured Labourers to cancel his indenture or transfer him to some one else; or to get Balasundaram's employer to release him. I called on the latter and said to him: 'I do not want to proceed against you and get you punished. I think you realise that you have severely beaten the man. I shall be satisfied if you will transfer the indenture to some one else.' To this he readily agreed. I next saw the Protector. He also agreed, on condition that I found a new employer.

So I went off in search of an employer. He had to be an European, as no Indians could employ indentured labour. At that time I knew very few Europeans. I met one of them. He very kindly agreed to take on Balasundaram. I gratefully acknowledged his kindness. The magistrate convicted Balasundaram's employer and recorded that he had undertaken to transfer the indenture to some one else.

Balasundaram's case reached the ears of every indentured labourer and I came to be regarded as their friend. I hailed this connection with delight. A regular stream of indentured labourers began to pour into my office and I got the best opportunity of learning their joys and sorrows.

The echoes of Balasundaram's case were heard in far-off Madras. Labourers from different parts of the province who went to Natal on indenture came to know of this case through their indentured brethren.

There was nothing extra-ordinary in the case itself, but the fact that there was some one in Natal to espouse their cause and publicly work for them, gave the indentured labourers a joyful surprise and inspired them with hope.

I have said that Balasundaram entered my office, headgear in hand. There was a peculiar pathos about the circumstance, which also showed our humiliation. I have already narrated the incident when I was asked to take off my turban. A practice had been forced upon every indentured labourer and every Indian stranger to take off his headgear when visiting a European—whether the headgear were a cap, a turban or a scarf wrapped round the head. A salute even with both hands was not sufficient. Balasundaram thought that he should follow the practice even with me; this was the first case in my experience. I felt humiliated and asked him to tie up his scarf. He did so, not without a certain hesitation, but I could perceive the pleasure on his face.

It has always been a mystery to me how men can feel themselves honoured by the humiliation of their fellow-beings.

Gandhi and Tagore

The programme at Dhulia was heavy, but every thing was so ordered and quiet that Gandhiji could address 6 meetings during the day, spinning on his Charka throughout the speeches! 'You will not,' he said, 'regard me impertinent if I go on spinning whilst I address you. I do so because of the wonderful stillness here, and because I think I can best respond to your affection by giving you an object lesson in the thing I most believe in. When Rabindranath Tagore came to our Ashram some years ago, I asked him, after the morning prayers were over, to address a few words to our boys. He said nothing, spoke nothing by way of apology, but sang one of his sweetest songs in his sweetest way and was quiet. That to my mind was the acme of his courtesy. He satisfied us with the best that his soul could give. I am simply following him in turning my wheel before you, which is my only lyre.'—*Bombay Chronicle*.

Indian Life in Fiji

(By NISHI BUSHAN MITTER IN 'THE MODERN REVIEW')

The Fiji Islands are situated between Australia and South America—the shortest distance from the Australian shores to Fiji is about 1,450 miles. Fiji Group contains two large islands, viz., Viti Levu and Vanua Levu, which are the most important ones, and also a few other smaller islands. Viti Levu, which is more important than Vanua Levu is 87 miles long by 54 broad, containing 4,112 sq. miles of surface. Suva, a sea-port, is the capital of the Fiji Group. Fiji is a hilly country with plenty of flat land for cultivation purposes. Vanua Levu, the second in size and importance, lies north-east of Viti Levu; the shortest distance from Viti Levu is 39 miles by sea. The length of Vanua Levu is 114 miles and the breadth is 20 miles, comprising 2,128 sq. miles. The natives of Fiji are known as Fijians or Kai Vities, who are supposed to belong to the African Negro race.

Although there is no direct proof as to the origin of the Fijian race, yet according to Fijian tradition, it is evident that they came by sea and landed in the islands a long time ago. No historical records of the Fijians are available prior to the arrival of the Europeans. The only clue that can be found as to the origin of this race, is gathered from their national songs, which show that they had sailed from a distant country in the Far West under the guidance of two chiefs named Latmasombasomba and Ndengei. After travelling through the sea for a long time by canoes, they were at last driven to the Fiji shores by a big hurricane. Since then they began to thrive in these islands. They were savages and cannibals prior to the advent of the Europeans. Abel Tasman, a famous Dutch sailor, discovered the islands in the year 1643. The next European visitor was Captain Cook, who passed the islands in the year 1769 and touched at Vatoa. In 1789, Captain Bligh passed Gasawa group and in 1792, he again visited the islands. Captain Wilson narrowly escaped from being wrecked off Taveuni coast in the year 1797. There was no settled government in Fiji before the arrival of the Europeans. Each clan had its own chief to whom it paid homage. These chiefs were at constant war with one another. In the year 1750, there rose two more powerful states than the rest, viz., Verata and Rewa, and each of them tried in vain for a long time to reign supreme over the other, when a third state, Mban, made its appearance. Later on, Mban became the most powerful state in Viti Levu. The last King of this state was Thakomban. A few Europeans had already settled in the islands and in the year 1835 the Missionaries of the Wesleyan Methodist Church began to preach Christianity amongst the Fijians. A certain Missionary, Mr. Baker, was baked and eaten up by the Fijians while working for his Mission. King Thakomban was opposed to Christianity for a long time, but afterwards in the year

1854 he embraced Christianity and to-day the whole Fijian race is Christian.

However, it is not intended to go into all these details of the Fijian race. Details are given just to show how the administration of this country came into the hands of the British and how Indians were introduced to these Islands. After embracing Christianity, King Thakomban found that his influence was gradually declining—war broke out with Rewa, who was joined by all heathens of the South-East of Viti Levu, and during the many battles that followed Thakomban's power was shaken, when unfortunately the house of the American Consul was burnt and pillaged. Thereupon, the Government of the United States sent a bill to Thakomban for 30,000 dollars (£6,250) for damages. He could not pay this money. So when he was anticipating war with the United States, Maafu, the Tongan chief (Tonga is an Island in the Pacific) landed at Rakiraki, with the intention of attacking him by marching overland to Mban. To escape these dangers from both hands he offered to cede the Islands to the British. So the then British Consul, Mr. Pritchard, prevented any war for the time being. In 1860, England sent Colonel Smythe to the Islands to explore. He made an unfavourable report the next year. So the British Government refused Thakomban's offer. So at last he made an offer to the United States in utter despair, but no definite reply was forthcoming on account of that country's being engaged in civil war at the time. Meanwhile the European population increased in the islands, most of them being engaged in cotton plantation. These European planters did all they could to prevent war in the interest of their own industry. But things went from bad to worse for Thakomban—his debts increased to £85,000 and there was so much disorder everywhere that in 1873 he made a fresh offer to Great Britain for cession of the Group. This time, the Colonies urged on Great Britain the annexation of the Fiji Islands to the Empire. In 1874 Sir Hercules Robinson, the Governor of New South Wales, was sent to Fiji to settle terms with Thakomban. On October 10, 1874, Thakomban and several other influential chiefs signed the deed of cession. The administration of the Fiji Group passed into the hands of the British and Fiji became a British Crown Colony. After the annexation, the British Government found that the labour question was the most important and difficult one for the opening up of the country. The Native Fijian would not suit the purpose, as he only works when he pleases. So it was found necessary to import labour from elsewhere. The first experiment in this direction was made from the Solomon Islands, but shortly afterwards, the Government of that country stopped further importation as it wanted to keep its own labourers. All schemes for the importation of foreign labour failed until it was arranged with the Government of India to supply a sufficient number of labourers from India annually and thus the abominable indenture system came into existence.

The horrors of the indenture system—oppression of the Indians—the Coolie Lines system—the demoralisation, etc., are only too well-known for repetition. When the author went to Fiji in the year 1914 in the post of Supreme Court Interpreter, he found the greatest of all constructive needs was the need of education amongst the Indians and felt strongly in his heart that only true education could give them relief in their sufferings. But the greatest drawback was want of proper leaders to guide them. As a Government servant he could not do much to help them. But however in 1914, Messrs. C. F. Andrews and the late W. W. Pearson went to Fiji to inquire into the condition of the Indians under the Indenture System. It is well-known with what indomitable courage, sacrifice and heroic labour these two great souls and true friends of India and of the poor, at last succeeded in having the abominable indenture system abolished. To-day, it is a thing of the past and our gratitude is due to these two heroes.

Messrs. Andrews and Pearson left the Islands. The indenture system was abolished, but the call of education

work came to the writer during the three subsequent years. During the time he had the satisfaction of being able to have a bad humiliating railway law repealed. He had to do this at the risk of losing his Government post, which, however, did not occur. The law was that none but Europeans should be eligible to travel in the first class and that Indians, Fijians and all other races must travel in the second class (there being only two classes). This was the author's first important work in Fiji while in the Government service. Since then up to the present day everybody has been allowed to travel in the first class compartments irrespective of colour or race.

In the year 1917, Mr. Andrews paid a second visit to Fiji. This time he went to open schools for the education of the Indian children. The forged-for call came now and the writer had to sacrifice his Government post with its prospects and pension, etc., to keep his promise to Mr. Andrews to take up educational work as his life-work. Two schools were started and the author took charge of one of them as Headmaster and continued until three years later, when he was compelled to resign for want of funds. During this time he started the "Indian Association of Fiji" and the "Indian Labour Federation of Fiji." These organisations were the first of their kind and the author was the President-founder of both the organisations. He got Government recognition for both of them and applied to the New Zealand Labour Federation for affiliation with their organisation, to which they gladly consented.

The Indian Association and the Fiji Indian Labour Federation did splendid work to better the conditions of the Indians there. The author received substantial help in his work for the Indian Association from many quarters—and he wishes to mention some of them with gratitude: Indian Overseas Association, England; Labour Federation, New Zealand; New Zealand Women's Association, and Women's Service Guild, Australia; the Imperial Indian Citizenship Association, Bombay; and many others.

From what has been known of Fiji and the condition of the Indians prevailing there up to the present time, one will at once ask the question, whether Fiji will remain the home of the emigrated Indians and will form in the future a part of Greater India or be wiped clean of the emigrated Indians at some future date. If it is the latter, there is an end of the question—the Indians there can safely be left to themselves to take care of their own affairs until that time arrives. But if the former, then there is some food for serious thought. From the author's own experience he feels at heart that Fiji will never wipe out the Indians and therefore will remain the home of the emigrated Indians and will form in the future a part of Greater India. He, therefore, wishes to discuss the problem of Fiji as briefly as possible. The problems of Fiji are:—

(I) It has an Indian population of about 60,000, mostly ex-indentured Indian immigrants and their children. Considering its climatic and other conditions, it makes a splendid home for the Indians.

(II) It has a Government which is merely an instrument in the hands of the mighty capitalistic monarch the C. S. R. Co. for all practical purposes.

(III) The native Fijians being the owners of almost all agricultural lands, the Government cannot provide land to the Indians. Lease of land is granted by them to the Indians on payment of heavy bribes—the Government cannot control the situation. Owing to the difficulty in procuring suitable land for agricultural purposes, the Indians are compelled to swallow the C. S. R. Co.'s bait by accepting land from them at the cost of their freedom. The argument that is usually made between the C. S. R. Co. and the Indian tenant is nothing but a little improved form of the contract that existed in the indentured days. By this contract the Indian tenant binds himself to work for the Company whenever he is

asked to do so. Since the abolition of the indenture system the C. S. R. Co. has gradually pursued this course to meet its labour demand and this practice alone has helped it to preserve its existence. On the other hand, the Indians that accept land from the Company on such terms, cannot thrive well, but always remain poor depending on the C. S. R. Co.'s employment. This offer of land to the Indians is so nicely and cleverly done in its outward appearance that it dazzled even our friend Mr. MacMillan who was sent to Fiji about two years ago by the Y. M. O. A. of New Zealand to work amongst the Indians there for their upliftment. He was so much touched with the assumed magnanimity of the C. S. R. Co. on account of this offer that he spoke and gave publication to his appreciation of the offer in laudatory terms and also advised the Indians to help in removing hindrances to fresh emigration. This is an instance to show how cleverly the C. S. R. Co. does its business.

(IV) Want of educational facilities—The Government has provided only one Government School for the Indians, which was only about eight years ago, and it grants aid to a few private schools. There are Christian Mission Schools where Indian scholars are admitted but the educational system there as well as in the Government School is so defective that a drastic change is vitally necessary. The need for more extended facilities is so great that one is inclined to call it the greatest need of all. The education that is given to-day to the Fiji-born Indian children is fundamentally wrong. The evil effect of such education is quite apparent in the present day Fiji-born youths, who are considered even by their parents as worthless for any useful purposes. These youths are quite unfit and unable to help their parents in their agricultural business, and at the same time, no kind of office work is available to them. The present-day educational makes curriculum them such creatures that they cannot earn their own livelihood and do not come to be of any use to anybody. The Board of Education of the Fiji Government has quite overlooked the fact that the Indian population of Fiji is entirely an agricultural community. So it committed the greatest blunder in thinking that the curriculum for the European Schools was quite suitable for the Indian Schools as well. It was owing to the controversy regarding this question between the Minister of Education and the author, while acting as Headmaster of Andrews School, Nadi, that he refrained from accepting any grant from the Government for over twelve months when the same was offered to him at £50 per annum. At last when at the end of that period, he was allowed to have his own curriculum he accepted it. Of course, this was only a temporary measure and it lasted as long as he was in the school. It is very strange indeed that although the Minister of Education admitted that the author was right in his views in respect of this question and said that the old curriculum was drawn up at a time when there was no question of Indian education in the Colony and that he would see that a suitable curriculum was prepared for the Indian Schools as soon as opportunity would present itself; still nothing has been done yet—though a long period of eight or nine years has elapsed since then. It is in matters like this, that a little effort can achieve substantial and invaluable results. It could have been possible to make such effort if the Indians were represented in the Legislative Council or in the Board of Education, or if there were sufficient educated Indian leaders amongst the community who could bring pressure on the Board or the Government. But unfortunately they do not exist. It is, therefore, strongly recommended that the prevailing system of Indian education should be drastically changed and in its place, a suitable curriculum should be prepared providing necessary technical courses, in view of the fact that the Indians of Fiji are entirely agriculturists.

(To be Continued)