

Indian Opinion

No. 29—Vol. XXV.

Friday, July 22nd, 1927.

Registered at the G.P.O. as a Newspaper.
PRICE FOURPENCE.

DURBAN'S WELCOME TO MR. SASTRI THE TOWN HALL RECEPTION.

A welcome reception in honour of the Rt. Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri was given by the Natal Indian Congress at the Town Hall, Durban, on Saturday, the 16th instant, Councillor Mrs. A. M. Siedle (Deputy Mayor) presiding. The Hall was fully packed with Indians and there was present also a large number of Europeans. A beautiful selection of organ recital was given by Mr. Arthur Owen just before and during the function.

The Deputy Mayor's Speech

After prayers conducted by Mr. Amod Bayat, Mrs. Siedle (Deputy Mayor) in the course of her remarks said:

"Mr. Sastri's name is so well and widely known, and so highly appreciated all over the British Empire, and, indeed, so far afield as Washington and Geneva, that for me to introduce him to you would be superfluous," said Mrs. Siedle. "This evening we meet Mr. Sastri as the accredited representative of the Government of India in the Union of South Africa. The choice and selection was that of the Government of India. May I say on behalf of Durban, that we realise that India has given of its best, and that in its acceptance Mr. Sastri has given another signal proof of his disinterested services to the Government of our Empire King.

The Gentleman's Agreement

"The 'Gentleman's Agreement' is now symbolised in Mr. Sastri's appointment. Its origin, if I may say so, arose out of a resolution adopted by the Durban Town Council, which urged upon the Governments of the Union and of India, that they should seek common counsel in a round-table conference. The recommendation of the Durban Town Council was subsequently found acceptable, in principle, by the two Governments, and although neither Government can yet say that it is well out of the wood, yet each can accept the position that the primrose path has been prepared for the common good.

"I am sure Durban realises that as many communal problems connected with Durban and Greater Durban are inseparably allied with the Indian question in our midst, the members of the local Government of our area will, at all times, be willing to listen sympathetically, attentively and considerately to representations which may be made by the representative of the Government of India—Mr. Sastri.

"The Indian community must realise that, with the terms of the 'Gentleman's Agreement,' so freely accepted by the two Governments, as the result of the round-table conference, obligations of no little importance are placed upon them.

Durban's Attitude

"There is a great work to be undertaken. We—I speak for Durban—will see that the 'Gentleman's Agreement' will be given loyal effect to. So far as

the side of the Indian community is concerned, I am satisfied that Durban will, as it should, trust to the eminent statesmanlike qualities of our guest Mr. Sastri, qualities which have been acclaimed not only in his country, but also throughout the British Dominions.

"We cannot get success all of a sudden. Success comes slowly, but if the will is there it will be yours ultimately. 'Try, try and try again' is a useful motto for all of us. It is, I think, certain that, with a little forbearance, little tolerance, a little give and take and wise guidance it will come about. We welcome Mr. Sastri's appointment, because, even apart from the personal issue, it is an earnest indication of the sincerity of the Government of India and equally of the Government of the Union, in their desire to draw together in a common cause, upon which so much depends for the future advancement of this country and peace and quietness in our great Empire.

"In conclusion, on behalf of the burgesses of Durban, I have great pleasure in again offering Mr. Sastri a cordial welcome to our town, coupled with the sincere wish that his efforts will be crowned with that success for which we all hope and pray."

Messages of Welcome

Messages of welcome were then read by Mr. S. Rustomjee. The following are a few of the many that were received from all parts of the Union:

The Mayor

In the course of a letter addressed to the Secretary, Natal Indian Congress the Mayor of Durban, Mr. H. L. Buzzard wrote:

"I am very sorry that owing to other engagements made some time ago, I am unable to preside at the public meeting on Saturday night to welcome Mr. Sastri on behalf of Durban.

Mr. Sastri has been appointed as the agent in South Africa of the Government of India, as a result of the conference recently held in Cape Town, and I believe I am expressing the feelings of all of us when I say that a better choice could not have been made. He is a man of wonderful personality, superior education, and high principles, and I have every hope that under his wise guidance he will be able to provide a solution for many of the problems which at present confront the Indian situation here.

It now remains for all sections of the community to give Mr. Sastri their full support, to extend to him their co-operation in his work, and to help him in every possible way to carry out the mission he has undertaken, so that such mission will result in a better understanding between all sections of the community, and will help forward the advance of this great country, not only in industry and commerce but also in a high level of intellectual and moral progress.

"May the Great Almighty give Mr. Sastri renewed health to carry out the great work he has undertaken."

Mrs. Sarojini Naidu

The following message was received from Mrs. Sarojini Naidu:—

"Cordially join you in welcoming our great ambassador whose mission is to establish equitable interracial friendship."

Very Rev. Dean Palmer

".....Hope and believe influence of Mr. Sastri will lead to co-operation born of increased understanding between our races."

Mr. Morris Alexander M.L.A.

"Regret unavoidable absence to-night's reception in honour of our very distinguished guest Sastri. His great gifts of mind and heart should make the agreement a living force in the interests of all sections of the people. South Africa needs above all things unity and peace from racial strife and the uplift of every section irrespective of race, colour or creed is not only necessary to satisfy the demands of justice but is in the best and truest interest of our land and people."

Mr. Amod Bayat's Speech

Mr. Amod Bayat, President, Natal Indian Congress said it gave him very great pleasure indeed to extend, on behalf of the Indians of Durban, a most cordial and warm welcome to their distinguished countryman.

"We have closely followed the brilliant career of our illustrious friend, and we are confident that his advent to South Africa is fraught with great possibilities and that his presence alone will suffice to bring about that good feeling which is so essential for the European and non-European communities to live in peace and harmony in this their land of our birth or adoption.

"We gratefully recognise that our Motherland has, at a great sacrifice to herself, given us one of her patriotic and noble sons, and we realise also that he has, notwithstanding his failing health, and at a great personal sacrifice responded to the call of duty. Our undying gratitude will go to him for his magnanimity in accepting the new office in the cause of his countrymen in this part of the British Commonwealth."

The President extended cordial welcomes to Mr. Tyson, chief secretary to Mr. Sastri, and to Mr. P. Kodanda Rao, M.A., who is acting as private secretary to Mr. Sastri.

In conclusion the speaker congratulated Mr. H. N. Venn on his appointment as Commissioner for Asiatic Affairs, and said he trusted that the utmost harmony and cordiality would always prevail between the Agent of the Government of India, the Indian community and the Department over which Mr. Venn has control.

Presentations

Mr. Sastri was then presented with a beautiful address engraved on a silver salver, and little tokens were also presented to Mr. J. D. Tyson, Mr. Kodanda Rao and Mr. Ricketts.

Other Speeches

Mr. J. W. Godfrey, Deputy President of the South African Indian Congress, said the burden and the responsibilities of putting into effect the provisions of the "Gentleman's Agreement" could not have fallen on better shoulders than those of Mr. Sastri. If it had not been for the predominant influence of Mr. Sastri at the round table conference, such satisfactory conclusions would not have been arrived at.

Senator Sir Charles Smith

Senator Sir Charles G. Smith, K.C.M.G., said that he felt that the Indian community had conferred a great honour upon him in asking him to speak in honour of Mr. Sastri. He thought it was because of his

associations with the Indians of the Province. He could remember them when they first came to the country, and when subsequent shipments arrived he was associated with them. Natal owed a debt of gratitude to the Indians, and so also did the Indians owe a debt of gratitude to Natal.

Opprobrious epithets had been flung at Natal, continued Sir Charles Smith. It had been termed an "Indian Colony," and it had been said that it thought of nothing but bringing further Indians into the country. The Indians had been very well treated in Natal.

Sir Charles said it had been a great pleasure to him to meet Mr. Sastri. His object was to ensure that the Indians of this country should obtain a square deal.

The Rev. J. L. Dube

The Rev. John Dube said it was a happy idea of the members of the Natal Indian Congress to permit a Native of the country to associate with them in welcoming their distinguished countryman. He felt that Mr. Sastri was a man who would not only help the Indians, but who would also help the Natives, who had much in common with the Indians. Mr. Sastri took the middle course: he was a Moderate, and such a policy was much desired in South Africa, which was a land of extreme measures. A man like Mr. Sastri could do much to neutralise this condition of affairs.

"What I feel," continued the speaker, "is that the Native should not be a sealed book to the European. They are not a sealed book in regard to the cheapness of their labour, but apart from that, Europeans know little about them. We want a man like Bishop Colenso, men who understand us and are willing to help us."

Mr. Sastri's Speech

Mr. Sastri who was greeted with vociferous cheers on rising to speak made the following eloquent speech:

"Madame President, ladies and gentlemen, the size and distinction of this gathering, the flattering—too flattering—things that have been read and spoken to-day, the expectations which have been aroused by those flattering words, all combine to make my task exceptionally difficult to-night. I will however ask you to accept my most grateful thanks for the munificence and cordiality of this reception. It has made me think how little I deserve so much kindness at your hands. If in the future you feel that a part of what you have so lavishly bestowed is deserved I shall count myself blessed. My task in this country is defined by the designation that my office bears. I am here as the agent of the Government of India and my orders are to help the Government of this country in carrying out the Capetown agreement, described in the beautiful words of the Deputy Mayor as "a gentleman's agreement" (applause). Whatever my character may be as a political agitator of some standing in my own country (laughter) believe me that while I am among you, clothed with the authority of the Government of India, I will endeavour faithfully to confine my vision to the four corners of the agreement. I mean that in anything I may say or do, in my representations to the Government of the Union I do not intend to ask for anything not provided for in the agreement. That should establish my good faith sufficiently; but I know that no political agitator finds it always possible by a clear enunciation of the position to get it fully understood and recognised. The minds of people on such occasions travel a little beyond the words spoken, they try to discover hidden meanings, and motives and desires which are not there. Believe me, ladies and gentlemen, you will find that, if you trust those words of mine that I do not look beyond the terms

(Continued on page 204.)

Notes

MR. C. F. Andrews who had been to Rhodesia a few days ago has returned with very satisfactory results. He will give an account of his visit in the INDIAN OPINION next week. Mr. Andrews will spend the earlier part of next week with Mr. Sastri at Phoenix. A farewell reception was given in honour of Mr. Andrews last Thursday by the Natal Indian Congress (maritzburg Branch).

The Immigration and Indian Relief (Further Provision) Act, 1927 is now in force. Section 4 (b) of the Act provides that "no child who is not accompanied by the mother shall be admitted unless its mother is already resident in the Union or is deceased, or the Minister in any special case authorizes the admission of such child." No Indian could, therefore, expect to bring his child after the passing of this Act without complying with the above provision. In order not to be too severe, however, the Minister of the Interior has decided that all children who leave India up to and including the 20th of July and in regard to whom forms D.I. 91 have been properly completed may be admitted on arrival and those children arriving without D.I. 91 forms being properly completed should be placed on temporary permit pending the decision of their cases. Indians to whom forms D.I. 91 have been issued for admission of children have accordingly been advised by the Immigration Department that unless such children embark for the Union by the 20th of July admission will be subject to the compliance of the new law. This leniency on the part of the Government will do doubt be gratefully regarded by the Indian community as a proof of their desire not to administer the law harshly.

MR. SASTRI'S TASK

THE Right Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri began his real task from the day he set his foot in Durban. Within the last few days Mr. Sastri has interviewed many prominent members of both the Indian and European communities and has delivered several important speeches. There are indications so far to show that Mr. Sastri will receive the help and the fullest support of many Europeans even in the town of Durban which is supposed to be one of the most antagonistic.

The most important speech of Mr. Sastri was the one he delivered on last Saturday night at the Town Hall function and the impression created was so great, that many prominent members of even the European community expressed their keen disappointment at the apathy shown by the local European Press by not giving publicity to so important a speech. The Assurance given by Mr. Sastri in that speech that the question of franchise was not embodied in the agreement and that it was his intention to confine himself rigidly to the four corners of the agreement ought to go far to remove the fear from the minds of many Europeans that Mr. Sastri had come to acquire complete liberty for the Indians. At the same time the assurance given by the Deputy Mayor on behalf of the burgesses that Durban would observe faithfully the Capetown Agreement was also a fact to be noted with the greatest satisfaction for that will go a

great deal to render the task of the Agent of the Government of India all the easier.

The more important part of Mr. Sastri's speech was, however, his exhortation to his own countrymen. Mr. Sastri desires to deal with every part of the agreement separately and he thinks, and rightly too, that the most important part is that dealing with education. Mr. Sastri's words in this connection should go home to every Indian in this country. Here are his own words :—

"Many among you have prospered and amassed wealth. Some there are who have much more than is required for your individual needs. You have magnificent equipages, noble mansions take them and enjoy them by all means. Pledged as I am to a poor and humble mode of life I will not venture to reproach you for these ways of spending what God has given you. But when you have taken the necessary satisfaction, I ask for a portion of what each of you has left over for the benefit of your own children. Build Schools, endow them, Appoint good teachers, and then reap the reward and you will find it is like nothing on earth. No honour, no joy can equal what will come to each of you if you can say "I reared this promising generation. I helped to make them honest citizens. If you can say that to yourself, if you are able to feel something of the joy, believe me you will have spent your money most usefully and most nobly, and thousands of young hearts will bless you for having made money and known how to use it in your time"

We cannot do better than to quote the above words of Mr. Sastri to awaken our brethren to their duty to their children. It has been our complaint that the Government have not provided for the education of Indians as they should do but that does not release the community from their own responsibility. It is the sense of self help that Mr. Sastri wishes to awaken in us, and it is by self help only that we can expect help to come from outside.

As in the matter of education so also in the matter of sanitation it is desirable that we should not only complain of the negligence of the authorities but also help ourselves as much as we can. The formation of a committee that would make it its business to move among our illiterate brethren to assist them in the observance of the rules of sanitation is under contemplation by the Natal Indian Congress and it is to be hoped that volunteers for this purpose will not be found wanting. It hardly needs to be stated that it is by taking these and other responsibilities on our own shoulders that we will be able to render the heavy task of Mr. Sastri somewhat easier.

The following are some of the items of Mr. Sastri's programme :—

SATURDAY JULY 23 :— Indian Women's Reception at the M. K. Gandhi Library Durban at 4 p.m.

SUNDAY JULY 24 :— Tongaat-meeting at 10 a.m. Lunch at Stanger-meeting at 3. 30. p.m.

MONDAY AND TUESDAY—at Phoenix

TUESDAY :— Lecture on "Social Service" at the M. K. Gandhi Library at 7. 30. p.m.

(Continued from page 202.)

of the agreement, you will not be mistaken. Moreover in so far as I have any influence with my own countrymen, I shall use it for securing the the same observance by them of the limitations of the agreement. But I cannot speak for young and ambitious hearts. For once in my life I find myself to-day very much at home.

Unrepentant Moderate

The speakers before me have spoken forcibly—almost heroically—of the virtue of moderation. In my own country moderates in politics are despised (laughter) but I have always belonged to the party described as moderate—I am an unrepentant hardy moderate. Nevertheless it is an experience of the most pleasurable kind to me to hear moderation preached and, for a wonder, listened to with so much patience. I do hope that my countrymen will realise that there is much in this agreement which can be made good only by patient effort. For many long days they will find their endeavours fully met by the requirements of the agreement. Further than that it will not be necessary for them now to contemplate.

No Franchise in Agreement

I have heard it said that they have often asked for the franchise, which has caused alarm in the minds of those now in political power. Ladies and gentlemen, I have read the agreement very carefully—I took some part in the preparation of it, and all I need say is that I do not find the franchise in that agreement. That should reassure you of the length to which I am prepared to go. But to you who represent the ruling power in this country may I say one word in this connection which may not be inappropriate? Our country India, is marching forward towards that dominion status, the final consummation of which has lately been reached by your country (Applause). Do you then think it unnatural that my countrymen should feel inspired by that achievement? They had the parliamentary franchise here until the law took it away a generation ago. It was only two years ago that the Municipal franchise was taken away. Do you think it possible for them to forget it so soon? I cannot control their ambitions and all you can ask is that we confine our resolutions rigidly to the four corners of the agreement. I would ask you therefore, if now and again you hear words about the franchise, to exercise a little patience and forbearance and remember that our hearts are the same as your hearts and if we occasionally dare, it is only human for us to do so. You have set the position so clearly before us, Madam President, that I dare not say another word.

Much Rests with Natal

"You have said clearly that this City will observe faithfully the Capetown agreement. So be it. For there is in the agreement much that will rest with the people of Natal, and especially the people of Durban to carry out, much that will try your patience, much that will engage your thoughts, much that will seem to you in excess of the requirements of the situation. It is therefore with feelings of great hope and encouragement that I heard the words uttered by your Deputy Mayor to-night. Some of you may imagine that this agreement is divided into sections, some of which may be adopted at once and others of which may be held over until some more favourable time; but we have already heard this agreement described as a "gentleman's agreement." Each side is bound faithfully to carry out its part and to help and sustain the other side in its observance of its part. There is every reason to hope that when the

appeal is made to the people of Natal they will understand the requirements of the situation and not hold back on any particular part of the agreement. What a wonderful change has occurred in the political atmosphere! Shall it be said that Natal has not experienced it? Far be it from me to entertain anything like that proposition but I seem to have heard accounts of protest meetings held in your Province against the agreement.

Just Fell Short of Repudiation

I have heard of one meeting at which resolutions were passed which went a long way towards, but just fell short of, repudiation of the agreement. I recognise the fact that they did fall short, most greatly. The gentlemen who spoke on that occasion left themselves some opening by which they may travel from repudiation to tolerance and so on to complete consent. That is my hope; for you cannot accept one part of the agreement without labouring to fulfil the other part of it. It has been brought home to the authorities in the history of this matter that the utmost good faith and good will are necessary on both sides even if this system of assisted emigration is to bear fruit. There is one promising clause in the second part of the agreement and that is a part I must emphasise. It is the education of Indian children in this Province.

Exhortation To Indians

I once before spoke upon this subject at this very place but the subject is so important that I cannot refer to it too frequently. To my countrymen I will read a little exhortation. Many among you have prospered and amassed wealth. Some there are who have much more than is required for your individual needs. You have magnificent equipages, noble mansions; take them and enjoy them by all means. Pledged as I am to a poor and humble mode of life, I will not venture to reproach you for these ways of spending what God has given you. But when you have taken the necessary satisfactions I ask for a portion of what each of you has left over for the benefit of your own children. Build schools, endow them, appoint good teachers, and then reap the reward and you will find it is like nothing on earth. No honour, no joy can equal what will come to each of you if you can say 'I reared this promising generation, I helped to make them honest citizens' If you can say that to yourself, if you are able to feel something of the joy, believe me you will have spent your money most usefully and most nobly, and thousands of young hearts will bless you for having made money and known how to use it in your time. But there are, I regret to say, many who have enjoyed the benefits of a good education, but do not think that other people need it. They consider that there are certain lower orders of society, which are better without education and whom it is dangerous to bring up in the way of civilisation, in the way of refinement, of culture, of citizenship. I tell you, ladies and gentlemen, history teaches us that no community can be interested in the illiteracy of another community, but on the other hand all human experience points to this fact that existence of a backward community is a menace to civilisation. Therefore, ladies and gentlemen, you must make up your minds in regard to the education of the Indian community, you cannot overlook this danger to the public weal. It is not right to leave any part of the community in ignorance and I am happy to say that that fact has been nobly and eloquently recognised in the agreement. I feel sure that when the Government of Union have pledged their word that they will regard the Indian community with the same benignant eye as they regard any other section of the community, I cannot bring myself to believe that there will be any serious opposition to any scheme that may be put forward for the amelioration of the

condition of the Indian. How is it possible? The Government of the Union desire before embarking upon any programme of expenditure to have the ground surveyed and that is why a commission to go into Indian education has been suggested. Could such a proposal meet with opposition from the men and women of Natal? How could I credit those adverse resolutions of the Provincial Council? I would sooner disbelieve my senses than think that they represented the considered and mature judgment of the Province.

Principles Underlying The British Flag

I trust rather to the character of this Province, the most British of all the provinces of South Africa (applause), to maintain the high and honourable traditions of the British race. I know with what valour, with what passion and devotion you fought for the inclusion of the Union Jack in the National flag. Shall it be said that when you honour and revere the British flag, you do so only for the political gains and advantages it brings and that you do not remember what it also stands for in the way of chivalry and fair play, the guarantee of freedom it conveys to the peoples who come under it? I look to you in whom I strike a note of sympathy not to remain silent when the battle rages, not to fold your hands and say "there goes a wrong turn." Let your voices be heard and let your noble thoughts be expressed. Do not be ashamed of them, do not be afraid of them, but let them be sounded to the world as a call to duty and you will find that when truth raises her voice injustice must flee. Let us all march forward like brothers in honourable and peaceful citizenship to fulfil the noble destiny of the British commonwealth of nations. You who are in political power and we who have it not, you who can give help and we who need it,—we shall all march forward, brothers unashamed of each other, sharing in common tasks of high endeavour and high hope." (Applause). ✓

Vote of Thanks

After a vote of thanks proposed by Mr. V. Lawrence to the chair and the European guests the function terminated with the singing of the National Anthem and with three cheers to Mr. Sastri.

Mr. Sastri Honoured In East-Africa

On his way, to South Africa the Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Sastri was presented by Indians at Mombasa with the following Address:—

"TO THE RT. HONOURABLE V. SRINIVASA SASTRI, P.C.

"Sir,—We, the Kenya Indians most heartily welcome your one day's sojourn in the Gateway of Kenya en route to South Africa. Sir, your lifelong public and effective services for the welfare of Indians abroad are well known to the world. Your present appointment as Agent General to the Indian Government to look after the Interests of Indians domiciled in South Africa is the culminating point of your successful efforts in the attainment of citizen's rights for the Indians in the overseas colonies within the British Empire.

"We cannot express adequately our feelings of gratitude and indebtedness to you for the bold and courageous way you fought our cause in England during 1923 when you were the chairman of the deputation of the unofficial members of the Indian Legislature to England. Our case was placed by you before the British Public more ably, clearly and bravely, in 1924;

Sir, the Kenya Indians have found one of the best champions of their cause.

"The results of your labours in your well-deserved sphere will be of special interest and consequence to Indians in Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika. We are quite confident that your world-wide experience, tact and keen political foresight will never fail to produce its everlasting beneficial effects on the status of our countrymen abroad.—We beg to remain, Sir, Your admiring Countrymen, (sgd.) A. M. Jivanjee, J. B. Pandya, R. S. Nehra, A. B. Patel, G. U. Patel, Abdulhusen Nurmahomed, H. A. A. Visram, K. R. Paroo."

Pretoria Tamil Community's Welcome To Mr. Sastri.

A correspondent from Pretoria writes:—

A warm reception was given to the Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Sastri by the Pretorial Tamil Community on Sunday July 3, at the Tamil Vedic School. Mr. Sastri was accompanied by prominent Tamilians from the Grand Hotel at 12-45 p.m. When the motor drove near the Boom Street bridge they were met by a large crowd. The procession of Swaraj volunteers carrying flags marched before the motor with a band heading the crowd. On their arrival at the school which was profusely decorated with flags and buntings Mr. Sastri was received amid enthusiastic cheers and garlanded by Mr. Vaithilinga Pillay, chairman of the reception committee. After taking lunch at 1.30 p.m. Mr. Sastri and his private Secretary went to the football ground where they were received by Mr. R. N. Mulloo.

At 4 o'clock Mr. Sastri was entertained to tea at the Tamil Vedic School. After prayers and singing of the National Anthem, the function terminated. Mr. Sastri was presented with an illuminated address by the Tamil community.

Bombay University Women's Settlement

(FROM A CORRESPONDENT)

"When I went to Bombay nineteen years ago, I admit I was suspicious of the Women's Settlement," confessed the Bishop of Bombay, presiding at the annual lunch meeting of the Bombay Missionary Settlement for University Women, at the Forum Club on Monday (June 20), "but now I think it is the most interesting and one of the best missionary agencies in India to day. The British women engaged in this work among educated Indian women are 'being' rather than 'doing', and this is what is wanted at a time when there is too much institutional work in the world."

Miss E. C. Gedge, the warden of the Settlement, with which she has been connected since 1902, six years after its foundation by Miss de Selincourt, said that one of her many women friends had recently described the settlement and its work to her as a "small League of Nations for women." The settlement is starting co-operation with the Wilson College, and many more British women graduates and those with social service qualifications are needed.

Sir Stanley Reed, for many years editor of the *Times of India* who is treasurer of the Settlement, said the reform movement in India had made the work of the Settlement of transcendental importance. The workers there were real missionaries of Empire, an empire based on a commonwealth of Nations, in which each unit found fuller expression than before.

Among those present were Lady Sydenham, Lady Marshall Reid, Mrs Crichton Miller, (Chairman), and Miss M. Sorabji. The Archbishop of Canterbury was prevented from attending on the last moment.

The Story of My Experiments With Truth

[BY M. K. GANDHI]

Part III.

Chapter II.

THE STORM

We have seen that the two ships cast anchor in the port of Durban on or about the 18th of December. No passengers are allowed to land at any of the South African ports before being subjected to a thorough medical examination. If the ship has any passenger suffering from a contagious disease, she has to undergo a period of quarantine. As there had been plague in Bombay when we set sail we feared lest we might have to go through a brief quarantine. Before the examination every ship has to fly a yellow flag, which is lowered only when the doctor has certified her to be healthy. Relatives and friends of passengers are allowed to come on board only after the yellow flag has been lowered.

Accordingly our ship was flying the yellow flag when the doctor came and examined us. He ordered a five days' quarantine because in his opinion, plague germs took twenty-three days at the most to develop. Our ship was therefore ordered to be put under quarantine until the twenty-third day of our sailing from Bombay. But this quarantine order had more than health reasons behind it.

The White residents of Durban had been agitating for our repatriation, and the agitation was one of the reasons for the order. Dada Abdulla and Co. kept us regularly informed about the daily happening in the town. The Whites were holding monster meetings every day. They were addressing all kinds of threats and at times offering even inducements to Dada Abdulla and Co. They were ready to indemnify the Company if both the ships should be sent back. But Dada Abdulla and Co. were not the people to be afraid of threats. Seth Abdul Kareem Haji Adam was then the managing partner of the firm. He was determined to move the ships at the wharf and disembark the passengers at any cost. He was daily sending detailed letters. Fortunately the late Mr. Mansukhlal Nazir was then in Durban having gone there to meet me. He was capable and fearless and guided the Indian community. Their advocate, Mr. Lughton, was an equally fearless man. He condemned the conduct of the White residents and advised the community not merely as their paid advocate, but also as their true friend.

Thus Durban had become the scene of unequal duel. On one side were a handful of poor Indians and few of their English friends, and on the other were ranged the White men, strong in arms, in numbers, in education and in wealth. They had also the backing of the State, for the Natal Government openly helped them. Mr. Harry Escombe who was the most influential of the members of the Cabinet, openly took part in their meetings.

The real object of the quarantine was thus to coerce the passengers into returning to India by somehow intimidating them or the Agent Company. For now threats began to be addressed to us also. "If you do not go back, you will surely be drowned. But if you consent to return you may even get your passage money." I constantly moved amongst my fellow passengers cheering them up. I also sent messages of comfort to the passengers of the *S.S. Nadar*. All of them kept calm and courageous.

We arranged all sorts of games on the ship for the entertainment of the passengers. On Christmas Day the captain invited the saloon passengers to dinner. The principal among these were I and my family. In the speeches after dinner I spoke on Western civilisation. I knew that this was not

an occasion for a serious speech. But mine could not be otherwise. I took part in the merriment, but my heart was in the combat that was going on in Durban. For I was the real target. There were two charges against me:

1. That whilst in India I had indulged in unmerited condemnation of the Natal Whites.
2. That with a view to swamping Natal with Indians I had specially brought the two shiploads of passengers to settle there.

I was conscious of my responsibility. I knew that Dada Abdulla and Company had incurred grave risks on my account, the lives of the passengers were in danger and by bringing my family with me I had put them likewise in jeopardy.

But I was absolutely innocent. I had induced no one to go to Natal. I did not know the passengers when they embarked. And with the exception of a couple of relatives, I did not know the name and address of even one of the hundreds of passengers on board. Neither had I said, whilst in India, a word about the Whites in Natal that I had not already said in Natal itself. And I had ample evidence in support of all that I had said.

I therefore deplored the civilisation of which the Natal Whites were the fruit, and which they represented and championed. This civilisation had all along been on my mind and I therefore offered my views concerning it in my speech before that little meeting. The captain and other friends gave me patient hearing and receiving my speech in the spirit in which it was delivered. I do not know that it in any way changed the course of their lives, but afterwards I had long talks with the captain and other officers regarding the civilisation of the West. I had in my speech described Western civilisation as being unlike the Eastern, predominantly based on force. The questioners pinned me to faith and one of them (the captain so far as I can recollect) said to me: "Supposing the Whites carry out their threats how will you stand by your principles of non-violence?" To which I replied: "I hope God will give me the courage and the sense to forgive them and refrain from bringing them to law. I have no anger towards them. I am only sorry for their ignorance and the narrowness. I know that they sincerely believe that what they are doing to-day is right and proper. I have no reason therefore to be angry with them."

The questioner smiled, possibly distrustfully. Thus the days dragged on their weary way. The termination of quarantine was still indefinite. The Quarantine Officer said that the matter had passed out of his hands, and that as soon as he had orders from the Government he would permit us to land.

At last ultimatums were served on the passengers and me. We were told to submit if we would escape with our lives. In our reply the passengers and I both maintained our right to land at Port Natal and intimated our determination to enter Natal at any risk.

At the end of twenty-three days the ships were permitted to enter the harbour and orders permitting the passengers to land were passed.

બોધ એ છે

રુક સાર અંગ્રેજ તથા ગુજરાતી મજાની કોઈ એવા
એક માણસની જરૂર છે.

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