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TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

ACCORDING to Reuter's telegrams, the railway strike in England has created a situation of unparalleled gravity and necessitated a return to war conditions such as food rationing. Over one million men have struck work, and big sympathetic strikes of tramway men, motor men, taxi-drivers, etc., are also apprehended. The telegraphic reports that have reached us so far are not only extremely meagre, but they are also conflicting. The Premier blames the railwaymen for breaking off negotiations. According to him, the men would not postpone it "even for one or two days," pending the decision of a conference between their spokesmen and his Government. But Mr. J. H. Thomas blames the Government and especially Sir Eric Geddes for breaking off the negotiations and plunging the country into a maelstrom of industrial unrest such as it has never seen before. We are not in a position to judge the merits of the dispute, as all facts and details are not yet to hand. But the attitude of the British press is significant. With the exception of the Labour organ, the *Daily Herald*, says Reuter, the entire British press has condemned the strike. It seems to us that the *Westminster Gazette* has clinched the argument when it says that what the railwaymen want is a thorough-going standardisation of war wages for all grades and ranks, or, in other words, they demand that their temporary war-allowances should be converted into a "permanent gain." We earnestly hope that a special parliamentary session will be held to consider this extremely delicate question and that it will arrive at a solution which will prove satisfactory to both sides, thus putting a speedy end to a crisis which, according to Mr. Lloyd George, is a near approach to anarchy.

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THE Council of the Deccan Sabha has approv-

ed the following draft resolutions relating to the Indemnity Bill and the Committee of Enquiry, which will be adopted at a general meeting of the Sabha to be held to-morrow (Thursday) :—

(1) "The Deccan Sabha, though unwilling to anticipate or forestall the findings of the Committee of Enquiry, thinks it its duty to record its emphatic protest against the passing of the Indemnity Bill at this stage and particularly against the official attitude displayed in the Indian Legislative Council towards the Hon'ble Fundit Madan Mohan Malaviya during the debates on the Bill."

(2) "The Sabha records its admiration of the courage, patience, industry and ability with which the Hon'ble Fundit Madan Mohan Malaviya prepared and represented the case for enquiry on behalf of the people of the Punjab and opposed the Indemnity Bill, and its sympathy with him in his ungenerous and unfair treatment by His Excellency the Viceroy and some members of the Government of India and the Punjab Government."

(3) "The Sabha appeals to His Majesty's Government and the British Parliament that the Committee of Enquiry be changed into a Royal Commission and be instructed to report their findings to the Secretary of State direct and not to, or through, the Government of India, who cannot possibly be expected to approach their task on the report with an open and unprejudiced mind, as was made manifest in His Excellency the Viceroy's speech of the 3rd September and the speeches and conduct of the members of His Excellency's Government during the September session of the Indian Legislative Council at Simla."

* * *

IN view of the passage of the Martial Law Indemnity Bill in the Imperial Council, it may be recalled that in Ceylon such a bill was never brought before the Legislative Council of that colony. An Order in Council giving indemnity to the officers who enforced martial law was secretly passed in England by the Colonial Secretary. It was not even published in the London Gazette and was withheld from the Government printers. The Order was issued simultaneously with the withdrawal of martial law. The Indian people may console themselves with the thought that they are better off in that respect than their brethren in Ceylon, for the authorities here cannot legislate for us by Orders in Council though the formality of passing the indemnity bill in the legislature brings us little substantial advantage. The agitation of the Ceylonese for securing redress could not bear fruit owing to the war and is now being renewed. The new Governor has reinstated the officers who were officially found guilty of atrocities, and the popular leaders of Ceylon are determined to bring these matters before the higher authorities and put

up a strenuous fight for redress. The disturbances took place in 1915, and yet the people there have to demand a public inquiry after full four years!

* * *

IN the Indian Legislative Council Mr. Thompson asserted with a flourish that Pundit Malaviya's casualty figures for Jallianwalah Bagh ought to be "taken with discretion," and that instead of 530 the correct number was 291, as shown by a list prepared by the Deputy Commissioner. In reply to this Pundit V. N. Tivary has published a letter in the Indian press, to which we invite attention. He explains how the people were all so terror-stricken (and we don't blame them) that, in spite of the Deputy Commissioner's assurances of non-harassment, very many did not dare to come forward with casualty figures of which they were in possession. The Seva Samiti, on the other hand, went from village to village, investigated carefully and compiled a list (530 killed and 200 wounded), "which is the result of weeks of hard and patient labour." We leave it to our readers to judge which figures are more likely to be correct. The clue, we think, lies in the fact that the Government list contains the names of people of Amritsar alone and does not include people from outside, who went to Jallianwala Bagh, thinking, perhaps, that there was a huge religious gathering and came to grief for their pains. The carefully compiled Seva Samiti list has taken these casualties also into consideration and is, therefore, nearer the truth than the Government returns, prepared by officials interested in minimising the results of their own blundering. In these circumstances, Mr. Thompson might have thought twice before challenging Punditji's figures. But, apparently, neither a forethought of discomfiture nor a scrupulous regard for accuracy is the officials' forte. If facts are not as they state them, then so much the worse for facts. They themselves will go merrily on.

* * *

OF Sir Havelock Hudson's speech in regard to the "hands and knees order" Mr. Gandhi writes: "I was totally unprepared for this defence from high quarters of acts of vengeance, unworthy of true soldiers. Surely there are nobler methods of ensuring protection for European women. Have their lives been in such danger in India as to require any special protection? Why should the life of a European woman be held more sacred than that of an Indian woman? Has she not the same sense of honour, the same feelings? What is the British flag worth if a British soldier wearing the King's uniform rises from his seat in the Viceregal Council and insults the people of India by language such as Lieut. General Sir Havelock Hudson has used?" It would seem, then, that subordinate officials acted in a spirit of "vengeance" and used excessive severity not exactly to restore order, but with the object of striking terror into the hearts of the people. Should it be so, one need feel no compunction in proceeding against the officers

concerned in a court of law. But clause 3 of the Indemnity Bill, throwing the burden of proving *mala fides* on the aggrieved persons, acts as an effective, if not an insurmountable, barrier in the way of justice. *Hinc illic lacrima.* The aggrieved person may, if he chooses, magnanimously refrain from bringing the offenders to trial, but the legislature must not deprive him of the legal remedy.

* * *

IN a well-reasoned and forceful representation to the Bombay Government, the Deccan Ryots' Association has pleaded for the adoption of special measures for the promotion of primary education among the backward classes of the Deccan, for which the Association speaks. The Bombay Government have recently undertaken a fairly large programme of educational expansion, but, as the Deccan Ryots' Association reminds them, it is not enough to open schools in all villages for a wide diffusion of education among classes of people who have remained illiterate for generations past. Such classes amongst the Hindus are far more backward than the Mussulman community, who are receiving special treatment for their backwardness. It is most unjust that, merely because the Hindu ryots are not making themselves politically as troublesome as Moslems or because they are not so influential, they should not be given the same treatment. The special measures needed by the Mahomedans are with much greater reason required by the agriculturist class in the Deccan. Those that have been tentatively suggested by the Deccan Ryots' Association seem to be eminently reasonable and quite feasible; and we heartily endorse the proposal of the Association for the appointment of a committee to explore all the means of rapidly spreading education among the backward communities, which stand all the more in need of it in virtue of their political enfranchisement. We hope the Bombay Government will appoint such a committee without any delay, with a personnel mainly drawn from these communities themselves. The problem of the depressed classes' education also requires a similar investigation.

* * *

THE Elections Committee of the Bombay Corporation which was asked to revise the municipal constitution so as to place it "on a thoroughly democratic basis" has done its work far from well. The present franchise is absurdly high, only 12,000 out of over one million inhabitants being enfranchised. The Government had proposed that, for tax-payers paying Rs. 30 or more and graduates, who now exercise the franchise, should be substituted occupiers paying a rent of Rs. 20 per mensem. The electoral roll would thereby be enlarged to nearly 50,000. The Corporation would still remain with this electorate a highly aristocratic body, and it is essential to carry the franchise much lower. It is curious to observe that some of the "popular leaders" on the Corporation have expressed satisfaction with this quite inadequate expansion of the voters' list, or have contented themselves with the saving clause, "I do-

not agree with some of the recommendations," without attacking the high franchise which is proposed. They certainly have belied the description which in popular imagination applies to them.

* * *

THE Committee's report, however, it is gratifying to observe, has evoked many dissenting minutes, and of them all Mr. N. M. Joshi's is the most radical. The Southborough Committee has proposed an extension of the franchise to tenants who pay a monthly rent of Rs. 10 for the election of Bombay City's representatives, who are to be only six in number, on the provincial legislature. The election of 80 representatives on the Corporation itself is, however, to be conducted on a franchise restricted to those who pay a rental of Rs. 20. Could absurdity go further? It is certainly not too much to ask for a lowering of the franchise so as to embrace all tenants who pay a rent of Rs. 5 and are, in addition, literate. This would double the size of the proposed electorate, enfranchising about 100,000 persons. Mr. Joshi would agree to such a compromise only for the first six years. As a matter of fact, there is no reason why all who occupy separate tenements and are literate should not immediately be given the vote. The proposal to have two separate electoral rolls, one for rent-payers and another for rate-payers, is distinctly retrograde.

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"It is very strange," writes the *Leader's* London correspondent, "that whilst a majority of the Moderate deputation here have been insisting upon an open, thorough inquiry, the Congress deputation has, I am informed, allowed Mr. Montagu to understand that it would be satisfied with a private inquiry coupled with an amnesty. The Moderate majority feel that the question of amnesty is one with which they need not concern themselves; for the all-important thing is that there should be a complete inquiry of a public character, from whose conclusions the public would be able to draw its own inferences, and the Government would be under an obligation to do what justice requires." The Congress deputation, in urging its view, without doubt, paid too much regard to the narrow expediencies of the moment, surrendering the great principle for which a fight ought to be made, for amnesty after all is forgiveness of sins, while what we want and must insist upon is strict justice. It is not the fault of the Congress deputation if its short-range view in regard to a private inquiry did not prevail in the event.

* * *

ST. NIHAL SINGH, in an article in the *Commonweal*, justly finds fault with the organisers of the Essex Hall meeting in relation to the Punjab for having studiously kept out of it all the members of the Liberal deputations, including Mr. Banerjea, Mrs. Besant, Mr. Ramaswami Aiyar and Mr. Jinnah. "In my eyes, at least," remarks Mr. Singh, "the success of the meeting was marred by its organisers giving the cold shoulder to so many of our dis-

tinguished countrymen now here. Even so keen a fighter for Punjabi liberties as Mr. C. Y. Chintamani was not asked in support of any resolution. One of our ablest men, he is rendering conspicuous service to our cause and extorting respect even from men who do not see eye to eye with him politically."

* * *

SUCH exclusiveness is emphatically to be condemned, whoever is responsible for it. We cannot understand, however, how Mr. Bhurgri can exculpate the Congress deputation from refusing co-operation with all the other deputations on the question of reforms. Co-operation in such a matter can only mean accepting nearly the same programme of reform. While Mrs. Besant, Mr. Jinnah, Mr. Banerjea and Mr. C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar agreed on this the Congress deputation remained obdurate. Mr. Tilak's casual suggestion of a reference to the All-India Congress Committee for the sake of a securing release from a hard and fast mandate was openly scouted by Mr. Patel, who went the length of questioning the authority of the All-India Committee itself. Mr. Bhurgri, who writes with an amount of unnecessary heat, does not deny these facts. Who, then, made co-operation impossible? If the Congress deputation were willing to adopt the plan of all the other Liberal deputations, who had already made common cause, why did they not submit a statement similar in tenor to those submitted by Mrs. Besant or Mr. Ramaswami Aiyer, Mr. Jinnah or Mr. Banerjea? They could have thus brought about unity, even without the active help of the other deputations, supposing the latter had in fact refused it.

* * *

THE London correspondent of the *Leader*, whose knowledge of South African matters is unique, observes: "I have reason to believe that among names that are likely to be favourably considered by Mr. Montagu, in the event of the Union Government's acceding to the Government of India's request for direct representation on the Commission (which the Union Government propose to appoint for inquiring into the grievances of Indians), are those of Sir C. E. Low and the Hon. Mr. Sastri. Should eventually the latter proceed to South Africa, he would most fittingly be following in the steps of his master, the late Mr. Gokhale, and he could be relied upon beyond question to maintain the rights of South African Indians, the honour of India and the work of Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Gokhale in South Africa. I venture meanwhile to express the hope that on your side all possible efforts will be made to strengthen the hands of the Government of India and the Secretary of State, for now I think is about to develop the crisis which will settle once and for all the future of the relations of India and the Dominions and the usefulness or otherwise of India's place in the counsels of the Empire, whether at the Imperial Conference, the Cabinet or elsewhere."

CURRENCY AND BANKING IN THE VICEREGAL COUNCIL.

SEVERAL questions of economic and financial interests came up for discussion before the Supreme Legislative Council at its recent session, and among them the present currency situation in India and the establishment of a State Bank in this country occupied an important place. For months past, the instability of exchange has been a subject of protests and representations made to Government by merchants and bankers, and appeals have been addressed to the Secretary of State urging him to fix the rising rupee. The authorities are waiting for the pronouncement of the Currency Committee and are, in the meanwhile, making tentative adjustments to relieve the embarrassing situation. Thus they started the sale of gold in this country to satisfy the legitimate popular demand for that metal and have raised their acquisition rate to bring it into line with the high price ruling in the market. These measures, though useful in themselves, do not effectively assist in the solution of the real problem, which is the stabilization of the rupee and an adequate supply of funds to finance trade. The control over the imports of gold has not been removed, and silver has continued to appreciate, now standing at 63d. per oz. All export trade is being handicapped by the instability of exchange, and with the approach of the busy season which is impending, the outlook is anything but cheerful. Government is not in a position to make any declaration of its policy that will prove reassuring to the public mind, and, consequently, the money market is in a state of extreme uncertainty and anxiety.

The Paper Currency Act Amending Bill, which was enacted into law in an expeditious manner in the Viceregal Council, and the speech the Hon'ble Mr. Howard made in support of that measure, only deepened the feeling of depression which prevailed in commercial and financial circles. The picture which the Finance Member drew of the Government's position was sombre to a degree. Treasury balances are very low, and the floating debt is large. The Controller of Currency is finding it extremely difficult to carry on and provide funds to meet inevitable obligations. Like a juggler, he has had to keep a number of plates in the air at the same time and to meet insistent claims coming from different sides. India's favourable balance of trade is large and can be met only with Council drafts. But the Government of India has no funds to release for the Councils, and the Secretary of State cannot remit gold and silver to this country in adequate quantities. The disbursements which our Government made during the time of war have resulted in the transfer of considerable Indian funds to London, and they cannot be remitted back to this country in the face of the large volume of the favourable trade balance and the sale of Councils on a high scale, which are necessary. The Secretary of State is making efforts to get hold of

what gold he can in the United States of America and remitting it to this country. The quantity thus sent cannot, however, be expected to go a long way in satisfying the needs of the situation, and the solution of the problem will have to be found in the unrestricted import of the precious metals.

The power which the Government has taken to issue currency notes against British treasury bills to an additional amount of 20 crores of rupees will go to strengthen its treasury balances and enable it to meet the Councils which the Secretary of State may sell for the satisfaction of the demands of trade. But it will inflate the note circulation still further. Mr. Howard stated that a high exchange was a kind of protection against a rise of prices, which in India are lower, on that account, than those prevailing in other countries. But he might have added that a high exchange rate also meant smaller gains for the exporter and the producer in India. The tone of the Finance Member's speech was apologetic throughout, and every sentence he uttered breathed a feeling of helplessness in the face of the exchange situation, which his Government did not know how to remedy. He closed his statement, indeed, with an optimistic note and contrasted the strong position of India with respect to the gold value of the rupee in foreign markets with the decline in the sovereign in Great Britain. The whole situation is curious to contemplate. With large funds accumulated in London, with active internal and external trade and with a high purchasing power commanded by the rupee, India is suffering. The sacrifices India made in the war are not yet ended. Their effects are reflected in our currency difficulties, the financial embarrassment of the Government and the impediments in the way of trade.

With regard to banking, the country was partially prepared to hear from the lips of Mr. Howard an account of the negotiations which have taken place between the Government and the Presidency Banks and which have taken the shape of a scheme for an amalgamation of these banks, now before the Secretary of State. We are grateful to the Hon'ble Mr. Sarma for having raised the question and drawn from Government a pronouncement with respect to their attitude towards a State Bank. The question has been agitated for years and has been discussed off and on by Government and those interested in the banking development of the country. Mr. Sarma put in a reasonable plea in favour of the establishment of a State Bank, and Mr. Howard had nothing to urge against the demand for banking reform. All that the Finance Member had to say was that the Presidency Banks, which were an important factor in the situation, had made certain proposals, and that it was better to make a start with their scheme than waste more time in formulating a new project. It is clear from his statement that the three Presidency Banks will be united into a central bank with the existing bodies as provincial branches, that they will receive from Government

the State funds in the reserve treasuries and that a number of branches will be started all over the country to extend banking facilities to the public. Obviously, it is going to be a tentative and experimental measure, and we may have to wait long for a State Bank, if one comes to be evolved at all out of the amalgamated Presidency Banks.

It was stated that Government had an open mind on the question and that the amalgamation scheme, even if it proved entirely successful, would not preclude further discussion and the ultimate establishment of a State Bank. Mr. Howard's elaborate defence of the Presidency Banks and his account of their services to Government and trade are not likely to satisfy the advocates of a State Bank, for the simple reason that an amalgamated private bank cannot be accepted as a substitute for a central banking institution, which will be intimately associated with Government and will command public confidence. The scheme which is now awaiting the approval of the Secretary of State does not contemplate the transference of some of the most important banking functions which Government now discharges in this country and in England. The only advance that is promised refers to the opening of branches in all districts and the utilization of larger State funds by the new bank. The skeleton of the scheme placed before the Council is not enough to enable the public to form an opinion as to the full scope of the proposals made by the Presidency Banks. Now that the question has been raised and the corners of the veil in which the scheme was enwrapped have been lifted, public curiosity has been whetted, and there is a universal desire that the proposals should be published. There is nothing to be lost and much to be gained if Government takes the people into its confidence. An ample opportunity must be given for an open discussion of the scheme, which ought not to be placed before the country as an accomplished fact. In any case, the shareholders of the Presidency Banks will have to express their approval; but in view of the fact that a wider public is interested in the disposal of the question, it is but fair that the scheme should be submitted for general discussion before it is finally accepted by Government.

CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY COMMISSION REPORT.—II.

THE MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION.

MILTON'S cynical remark that her one tongue was enough for woman is capable of a wider application. The fewer the languages one has to learn, the less time one has to devote to the mastery of what is only a tool for learning. In the conceivable situation of a world dominated by one nation, believing itself as the *elite* of the earth and its language as the only fitting one for universal culture, there might be the ukase going forth that all the various peoples ought to learn the single medium for the transaction of business

and for conveying thought to one another. If there should be enough dragooning and disciplining, mankind might go back to the unilingual stage preceding the Babylonian confusion. Whatever philologists might urge regarding the inherent tendencies of man to diversify his speech, rigorous education would go a great way towards preserving its unity. And for purposes of thought and intellectual advancement, this single-speech world would be more advantageously placed than the present polyglottic Babel. There would be less of the mere study of words and more of the study of things. Such a chance there was really for the world, but the Entente Powers most ignorantly interfered and defeated the consummation of educational reform in this direction, and there is to be for some time to come the continuance of the word-chopping education because of the diversity of tongues.

If, however, language is regarded as something more than a mere tool and as in some fashion enshrining the genius of the speaker, there is sure to be an eager desire to keep it alive and make it flourish exceedingly, rendering it more and more adequate for the needs of the growing spirit of man. This point of view will explain why Charles V. rejoiced on his mastery of new languages: it meant for him taking down the walls that separated him from the thoughts and the feelings, the hopes and desires of his fellow men. Mastery of one's own language means entering on the full inheritance of the spiritual past of his race or nation, and the mastery of another is annexing the like heritage of the stranger—the only annexation that does not leave any bitterness behind it. As things are, much of what is called education is, for the majority of those who get the benefit, the study of the mother tongue and, perhaps, of another language, and the final achievement an imperfect mastery of these. Perfect mastery is the result of native aptitude and painstaking culture. Language, as other artistic tools, can be satisfactorily handled after a great deal of preliminary training, and it is wielded with power and beauty only by the well-dowered few.

Any ambitious standard of language acquisition is, for the ruck of us, out of the question. There must be no difficulty with regard to the medium of instruction in the normal condition of things. The mother tongue is the only natural medium we can think of. That is the *pou sto* whence the world of knowledge has to be moved in. For the mass of men to whom the wherewithal to be clothed and the wherewithal to be fed are matters of pressing concern—and they form the majority everywhere—the language they hear from the lips of their mother is the only one to learn. If from gabbling brutishly, inarticulately and coarsely they learn to use words articulately and with refinement and in a way adequate to express their purposes, it is so much to the gain of humanity. If further they learn to interpret rightly the symbolism of the alphabet and use the symbols for read-

ing and writing, they make further progress in mental culture. With nothing more than a proper understanding of his mother tongue, with such opportunities as he had of oral instruction, the Athenian attained to a pretty enviable level of intellectual advancement. If the world should consist of a number of autonomous countries, with homogeneous peoples, in well-defined geographical areas, talking distinctive languages fairly equipped for purposes of civilised communication, there would be no problem to discuss as to which language must serve as the educational medium. If South India be composed, say, of two 'Tamila' and 'Telinga' provinces, their peoples speaking Tamil and Telugu, each a political entity with no more relation to the outside world than they might bear to each other, Tamil would be the medium as the language of instruction in Tamila, and Telugu in Telinga. Similar statements may be made of other parts of India like Bengal and the Maharashtra and the Punjab. It may be conceded at once that Sir Rabindranath Tagore's logic is irrefutable (Vol. I p. 227 of the Commission's Report). The deepest and the most intimate things of the heart are learnt through the mother tongue; language study as such is a costly acquisition and leaves less energy to spare for the study of things that really matter.

Coming to the question as a matter of practical politics, for the elementary grade of education terminating for the ordinary pupil at about 12, the medium must be the mother tongue of the pupil. There can be no difference of opinion on this point. There is, however, another on which we may not be agreed. What exactly is the function of education in the lowest grade? Who are to benefit by it? Is it for the exclusive benefit of those who, under the present arrangement of things, are to be hewers of wood and drawers of water, doing the rough work of the world? Are the elementary schools to be the counterpart of the *volks schulen* of Germany with no chance for the better endowed pupils to work their way up to the higher grades? Are the grades to be isolated pyramids or are they to be different parts of a ladder? The idea most in favour seems to be that the better type of students should be given scholarships and exhibitions and thus enabled to pursue higher courses of studies. In South India educational authorities favoured the 'pyramid' theory at one time, but there has been some relaxation since, and pupils may pass on from the elementary schools to the middle and high schools. In order that such advancement in studies be not hindered, we would suggest that the vernacular language should be studied under teachers trained in up-to-date methods of language instruction. The pupils must be carefully drilled in phonetics with special reference to the mother tongue. A knowledge of the phonetic value of the International Alphabet can be easily made a part of the acquisition in connection with the phonetic drill. An elementary knowledge of spoken English would form part of the course, or it might be made optional from the

second or third year. A much better type of the elementary grade teacher and a much better paid one alone can do justice to the work assigned to him. The training schools must equip him with the needed knowledge of phonetics with reference to his vernacular and 'spoken' English. And what Mr. Wyld says with regard to the training of the primary teacher in England may be applied *with the necessary changes* to the teacher's special language:

"I feel that the mother tongue should be the chief subject of his training. Not the niceties of English Grammar and Analysis, nor the more specialised refinements of English Philology, but a broad and humane study of English as a means of expression. The primary teacher does not read enough, does not write enough, does not speak enough. It would be well for him if he were soaked in English literature from Chaucer to Stevenson and Kipling."

Trained by such teachers, the pupils would begin the secondary course in a more advantageous manner than now. Those that might go out into the world for practical training in the rough work of the world would be a manlier, a womanlier set.

What should be the medium of instruction in the secondary course? What is the rôle to be played by the mother tongue of the pupil and by English? And is there to be any basis for further language acquisition in the high school classes? If in European countries there are the claims of the modern languages and the classical, here in India there are those of English and Sanskrit and Arabic. In the secondary course we deem it necessary for all pupils to carry on the study of two languages, and when the more ambitious parents require it of three. The first in importance will be the mother tongue. And the student may be expected to make sufficient progress in it and be qualified at the end of the high school course to appreciate the best available modern literature as also the great poets of the earlier period. He will be able to express his ideas in intelligible and correct modern speech, a happy mean between the pedantic and the vulgar. With regard to the proficiency in English, the start the pupil has had in oral English must be continued, and specially trained men—adequately paid as a matter of course—must be made to teach English according to the direct method which has been adopted by all earnest teachers of the modern or classical languages.* It would be an advantage if the work of the earlier English course gets to be regarded as the more responsible and dignified work and the later work in the higher classes be assigned to comparatively fresh accessions to the profession. The instruction in 'information' subjects would go on in the language of the pupil. Mathematics and science, geography and history would be taught and in due correlation and in the best up-to-date manner, and teachers would use when convenient English technical terms and not go in search of vernacular periphrases as difficult as their English equivalents. With regard to the additional third language, it is

* Adams's "New Teaching". Chapters ii, iii and iv.

a question for the pupil concerned either to treat it as an alternative for something he gives up or an "extra" outside the regular curriculum.

Those who wish to discontinue their studies after the school course may go on with science and allied subjects, the instruction and text-books being in the vernacular languages throughout that stage: as a corollary the same languages must be allowed for the purposes of examinations. With regard to other students there would be from the fourth form a difference in the course of studies. Composition and the study of a language and literature would form the items of the vernacular language course common to the whole school. Other subjects will be studied by those proceeding to the University with the help of books in English and the instruction will be in English. A three years' carefully laid out course in the 'direct' teaching of English must enable the fourth form boy to read books, in easy English, on Indian and English History and Science, books of the kind now in use among pupils of his standing. Considering the enormous value set on proficiency in English, very few students would prefer to study their subjects with the help of their mother tongue, once they feel they are well enough equipped to use English books. At any rate there may be two parallel courses of instruction through two different media in history, geography, science and mathematics, with two final tests. Those that desire to matriculate for the University studies will take their papers in 'English' in subjects other than the mother tongue or their third language.

The scheme suggested above seems the best adapted not only to secure the advantages of education being imparted through the pupil's mother tongue, but also to avoid the inconvenience of postponing the acquisition of English to a very late stage and thus leading to the imperfect mastering of the language that is to figure so largely in the University course. The bases of permanent acquisitions that have to serve through life are best laid between 8 and 14. Much exaggeration is indulged in with regard to the overtasking of the pupil's energy in the preliminary task of the language acquisition. What Quintilian said of the youth of his days is still true of the young Indian pupil:

"The temper of boys is better able to bear labour than that of men. For, as neither the falls of children when thrown on the ground, nor their crawling on hands and knees, nor, soon after, constant play, and running all day hither and thither, inconvenience their bodies so much as those of adults, because they are of little weight and no burden to themselves, so their minds likewise I conceive suffer less from fatigue, because they exert themselves with less effort and do not apply to study by putting any force on themselves, but merely yield themselves to others to be formed."

With proper teaching the High School boy must show at the end of his course advanced enough proficiency in his mother tongue corresponding to that shown by the American High School student in English. Further studies in the

language must be more or less self-directed under the guidance of University teachers in cases where the student matriculates for higher studies. As regards English, he must speak and write in clear and fairly correct English; he must be able to read and understand modern English writers of average difficulty. This is not too high an attainment for the student who has been pursuing his studies in the High School. He must be able to pursue his University studies, following with intelligence the lecturers on the several subjects.

The ordinary Indian student, beginning his school education at 6, will have completed the primary grade of education at 12. And his High School course may be expected to occupy him till his 18th year. A further interposition of 2 years for the Intermediate course will be unnecessary. An additional year at a 'Collegiate' school, as in Mysore, will do if the High School certificate cannot be accepted as proof of intellectual maturity.

Much of the dead set made against English critics of education in India is due to a kind of Chauvinism, that consciously or unconsciously sways the Indian and the Englishman alike. The Indian naturally echoes the patriotic indignation of the Chronicler of the Conquest:

Iween that there be in all the world countries none
That hold not to their own speech save England alone.

The ascendancy of the English language irritates the Indian as much as the marriage ring seems to irritate the new woman, symbolising as it does submission to the dominant partner in life. This hypnotic surrender to the Western cult there has been enough of. He must get out of the cage, out of the magic circle of the prime enchantress. The ingress to the new land of freedom for the spirit is through his own mother tongue.

On the other side, the English man is nettled at the novel spectacle of the multitude of Indian pupils made to study Shakespeare and Milton, to spout Shelly's lyrics and Byron's dithyrambs, to maunder over 'Maud,' to subtilise over 'Saul.' Is there any reality behind it all, or, what is more likely, do they play parrots? He is half amused, half indignant, much as the Pandits, tolerant perforce, might witness the spectacle of a class of Bilgrami's chanting the Vedas and the Upanishads. Is there not a great deal of labour wasted? Mere sowing of the wind yielding by and bye a crop of whirlwind! Don't we see already the pernicious effect of this unnatural method of education in politics? Caliban has learnt the 'lingo,' and he is voluble in imprecations.

Both these classes of critics from totally different motives deprecate any intensive culture in English. Let there be no nonsense, no pretence about the proficiency of the Indian in English. Let it be plainly understood that a working knowledge of English, something higher than the butler's, something lower than the Madras clerk's is the thing to secure.

The Indian must be reminded that everything distinctive of the renovated India of to-day and of its legitimate ambitions is directly traceable to the inspiration derived from that literature whose influence is so decried at present, that we have not come to the end of our schooling in Western arts and sciences, that wholesome appreciative contact with English literature has a suppling, reinvigorating effect on our literatures, that when sound political tissues are forming out of the heterogeneous elements it is suicidal folly to cut off that spiritual circulation so essential for healthy development, that unalloyed good would result from an adequate provision for the spread of the requisite knowledge of English in the different grades of school and college education and for the assimilation of the best spirit of its literature among the peoples of India, that in the curriculum of studies the position of the mother tongue has been properly recognised and that there is ample scope for the most intensive and extensive study of vernacular literatures. The other class of critics will see that it is too late in the day to begrudge a gift that can be kept without so much as 'by or with your leave,' that the only chance of keeping back the infectious spirit of English literature was to have Brahman-like made a mystery of what is now as common as the vivifying breath of heaven, that there is plenty of good sense in what Sir Francis Younghusband, no flabby sentimentalist, says about the ultimate goal of India as the promotion—among peoples fusing into unity under the general warmth of the new forces—of a life of vital affection and the enjoyment of beauty in nature and art, a life of "staunch comradeship, ardent friendship and tender home-loves,"* that nothing will so materially contribute towards making the goal attainable as keeping the channels of thought and intelligent sympathy between England and India open and free from choking weeds that are only too sure to gather.

There is one thing to which a brief reference must be made. The Commissioners give an accurate account of the position assigned to the vernacular languages from the earliest days of educational reform. The choice was between English and Sanskrit or Arabic as the medium of instruction. The vernacular languages, everybody agreed, had not sufficiently developed to serve as proper vehicles of instruction. Except Brian Hodgson, there was no serious advocate of the claims of the living languages as media of education. Macaulay threw the overwhelming weight of his advocacy in favour of English, and in the circumstances he was perfectly right. Adoption of Sanskrit or Arabic as the medium would not have resulted in the vernacularisation of knowledge which alone—in Hodgson's words—would liberate men's minds.

From the first there was no faltering as to the position of the living languages of India. Even

*"Our Aim in India," February, 1918: a valuable contribution to Indian politics.

Trevelyan admits that the instruction of the mass of the people through the medium of their own language was the object to be kept in view. The Public Instruction Committee records on the 7th March, 1836: "We conceive the formation of a vernacular literature to be the ultimate object to which all our efforts must be directed." Since then consistent attempts have been made by Government to improve the position of the vernacular languages, and with heartier co-operation from the professed admirers of our own culture, there must be better results to show.

After all, it is not the distressing case of the embarrassed lover who cries,

How happy he would be with either,
If t' other charmer were away.

The lady-languages have absolutely no jealousy. And the lady with modester pretensions gains immensely by association with the clear-eyed experience and ripe wisdom of the other.

K. B. RAMANATHAN.

THE PRINCIPLE OF FREE LABOUR.

THE traffic in human labour from India to the colonies may be classified under two systems, the indentured and free. The former is now a thing of the past and it remains to consider the principles of free labour. Like the Holy Roman Empire of the middle Ages, which was neither holy, nor Roman, nor empire, the free labour system now prevailing in Ceylon and Federated Malay States is a misnomer. The agitation for the abolition of indenture and the consequent stoppage of all labour to the distant colonies brought the disabilities of the emigrant coolies to Ceylon and Federated Malay States into bold relief. Although the system in vogue in these two places is generally termed 'free', in essence the system is anything but free. There are striking differences in the constitution and administration of their labour laws. Without entering into the details of the question, we shall set about by examining the general principles underlying the laws of the labour contract.

PENAL PROVISIONS.

After the abolition of slavery, it was found necessary to make some regulations by which the supply of labour might be kept running, and, therefore, the legislators, who are European colonists, had recourse to modern labour laws, combining with them penal provisions which tend to assimilate the position of the so-called free labourer to that of a slave. This is the most objectionable feature of these laws, and it is no less true of free labour than it was of the indenture. A general idea seems to be prevalent among the Westerners that the natives of Africa and Asia and other 'uncivilised' countries are habitually idle and lazy and that some strong measures must be adopted to make them hard-working and industrious in the interests of humanity. How else could it be done except by providing penalties? The various ordinances and regulations published by the colonial Governments

made ample provision against what they called "idlers," so that every labourer might be compelled to work regularly. Under such pretexts penalties were imposed for desertion, unlawful absence or vagrancy, the cue for such legislation being taken from the English Vagrancy Act. Such an attempt at imposing on the workmen by legislation habits of regularity and industry, leaving aside the natural capacity and inclination of the labourer for work, led, as may be expected, to very serious conflicts between the employers and the employees. The underlying idea of the European capitalists that the native of the East is a habitual idler and that unless he is forced by penal pressure he cannot be induced to work is a mischievously perverse study of human nature. Those who have had long experience in planting, especially, the planters of good old coffee days, think that imprisonment for labour offences is quite antiquated and that most of them could manage their estate labour without going near a court. All disputes, if any, between the employers and the employed could be decided under the village banyan tree by a Panchayat. This is the opinion given to the writer by an experienced planter of over 30 years' standing. Where, then, is the necessity for a penal clause? It is intended for the benefit of a small section of raw recruit European assistants who are ignorant of the language of the labourers, their social structure and the methods of controlling labour and of others who are, by temperament and mistaken ideas of self-interest, unsympathetic to labour. The entire discredit of the system of labour recruitment for colonial plantations lies in the fact that a large number of adults who are accustomed to free, simple and honest lives in their own country are brought, under artificial regulations, to a strange country and made to live more or less under strict conditions of surveillance and bondage and finally reduced to the condition of habitual criminals. It is, therefore, of primary importance that penal clauses should be done away with in any system of contract labour. Inasmuch as this contract is an institution based on civil law, the remedy for non-performance of contract should be only civil damages for either party. It is greatly disappointing that the new draft of the "Ceylon Labour Ordinance" of 1919 which professes to provide for the "well-being of the immigrant labourers" should still contain this obnoxious provision. Sec. 36 of the draft states that "all the provisions, regulations, pains, penalties, forfeitures and abatements enacted in Ordinance No. 11 of 1865, so far as they are applicable to monthly servants or their employers, shall extend, and be construed, deemed and adjudged to extend to immigrant labourers and employers under this Ordinance," a section against which all self-respecting Indians should protest.

It may, however, be urged by the planters that, without these penal clauses, there will be no incentive for labourers to do good and honest work and that it would be rather hard to maintain dis-

cipline in a large labour force. In reply to this, it may be safely asserted that much depends upon the planters themselves. It is the penny-wise policy which the planters have adopted all along to make the labourers realise their duty which has led to conditions making life a great burden to the latter. Nowhere in the world has such a narrow and short-sighted policy ever produced permanent satisfactory results or has been found economically profitable. It is certainly not the best method of solving the labour problem for plantation work. On the other hand, where the labourers interests are well safeguarded by the employers devoting some attention to the ordinary conveniences and comforts which labour needs everywhere, *viz.*, good wages, good housing, good treatment, much better results, with immeasurably greater satisfaction to both parties, could be and have been obtained. In Hawaii Islands, for instance, the purchase system has been substituted for contract labour and the results obtained therefrom have been very satisfactory. The principle is this. A body of labourers are given a lease of land; the planter supplies them with seed, implements and all other requisites for cultivation. They cultivate the fields and are paid according to the yield. The men work together in a communistic fashion and share the proceeds together. The result has been that they take the greatest care of the lands, supply them with manure and do everything necessary for increasing the output, which is shared equally between the landlord and the workmen.

Will the employers of plantation labour and the colonial Governments concerned consider this proposition?

CREDIT BONDAGE.

Another aspect of the so-called free labour which is so common in Ceylon is the system of credit bondage, familiarly known as the Tunda system. Advances are made to labourers by employers at the time of hiring them, and they are to work off the debt by degrees. It is easy to see how, by the time the first debt is worked off, they usually become indebted anew, with the result that they are forced into a position of absolute dependence. This system prevails to a certain extent in the upper Amazons and Mexico. The adoption of such a system is due to the difficulty in securing labourers without some such inducement. This is clearly admitted by the Ceylon Committee when they say that "this is undoubtedly the worst feature of the immigrants' life in Ceylon," and the Committee are also convinced that it is absolutely essential that, before trying to improve the conditions and prospects of future immigrants, immediate steps should be taken to "free the agricultural labourers now in the Island from this volume of debt." It is estimated that several millions of rupees have thus been wasted through the inadvertency of the planters, and the chances of recovering this amount are highly problematical. The sooner the debts are completely cancelled the

better it will be; because it is impossible to say who is responsible for this awful waste.

FREE PASSAGES.

There are also concessions by which labourers are induced to immigrate to the colonies: e. g., free passage, as in Malaya, which is largely availed of by labourers. The right of immigrants to return home free of charge is, however, not recognised in Ceylon, as this would tend to deplete the labour force of the colony. Some provision, however, must be made for the return of the immigrants after a period of 2 or 3 years' work, unless chances are offered for their colonisation in the locality.

MINIMUM WAGES.

One great factor ignored by all employers of labour is the question of adequate wages. Neither in Ceylon nor in Federated Malay States does a satisfactory system of wages prevail. The way in which wages, hours of labour and conditions of employment are regulated in some of the advanced countries of the world is by a system of Wages Board and Arbitration Acts. It cannot be denied that the introduction of these Acts has resulted in enhanced wages and improved the general conditions of labour. But the fact is often overlooked by capitalists that a good wage system is an index of efficient work. In his "Principles of Political Economy," Mr. M'Culloch points out that "whenever wages of labour are so low as to render it impossible for an ordinary increase of exertion to make any material visible addition to their comforts and conveniences, the labourers invariably sink into a state of idleness and of sluggish and stupid indifference." Proceeding further, he asks: "Have the low wages of the peoples of Ireland, Poland and Hindustan made them industrious, or the high wages of Americans, the English and the Hollanders made them lazy, riotous, and profligate? Just the contrary. The former are as notoriously and proverbially indolent as the latter are laborious, active, and enterprising. The experience of all ages and nations proves that high wages are at once the keenest spur, the most powerful stimulus to unremitting and assiduous exertion and the best means of attaching the people to the institution under which they live." The question is often asked, what is a high wage? It is a wage which will keep a family (husband, wife and three children) in decency and comfort. Very often the average wage is the starvation wage, and it does not sufficiently compensate for the trouble the labourer takes in leaving his home and family to a distant land. Organised as all the planters are, they are able to keep down wages as low as possible. It is no wonder that there are so many deserters and absconders. So long as the low wages enable the labourer not to live but only to exist, this is inevitable; and any amount of punishment by the operation of the penal clauses cannot improve the situation and may conceivably make it worse. On the matter of wages, the new Ceylon Ordinance says (Section 43): "The employer shall pay to each immigrant labourer wages at the

agreed rate." The agreed rate is in most cases, very vague indeed. We would therefore urge for a minimum wage determined by a Wages Board (consisting of employers and labourers) and calculated to maintain the labourers' family with decency and self-respect.

MINOR MATTERS.

There are several minor matters such as discharge tickets, one month's notice, etc., in the working of which there are practical difficulties in the way. However, in conclusion it may be stated that any labour system which professes to be free should place no restriction whatever on the personal liberty of the labourer in choosing his employer, the place of residence, the nature of work he is to do, or in accepting wages and in the matter of food and shelter. It has been abundantly proved that the existing form of free labour, which is nothing short of a thinly disguised system of forced labour, has been a decided failure. The net result of all these restrictions in the way of the labourer is a serious discouragement to the immigration of a perfectly free labour, which would render the cost of recruitment and importation much less than at present. The present costly and complicated system of supervision and management peculiar to this artificial form of labour supply has been much criticised by the planters themselves, nor is it one which will be agreeable to the labourers.

To secure the ends in view, attempts are first being made to replace this forced labour either by a system of colonisation or by the purchase system described above. The public would be glad to hear that a deputation of Indians from British Guiana waited recently on the Secretary of State for the Colonies for the adoption of a scheme for the free colonisation of British Guiana by Indians. A similar scheme is also set afoot by the Federated Malay States Government, and it will be an accomplished fact very soon. We trust other colonial Governments would follow suit.

T. S. SWAMINATHAN,

Editor, *Indian Emigrant*

FUN AND FACT.

THE great speech of the venerable Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya against the Indemnity Bill reminded me of the immortal Mr. Isaac Butt's performances in the House of Commons. On one occasion, the Irish leader had spoken for some hours at a stretch, when the speaker of the House interrupted him with the remark: "I cannot hear anything that the Hon. gentleman says." If the speaker had hoped to cut short Mr. Butt's speech in this way, he was sadly mistaken. "Quite right, Mr. Speaker, Sir," the latter cheerfully assented, "the acoustic properties of this house are something abominable," and with that he crossed over to the speaker's side and began the whole speech over again for the speaker's benefit. The bureaucrats who lost their patience with the Pandit's four hours' speech and who displayed their impatience in a manner unworthy of a legislative council would be well-advised to refresh their memories with a reading of the parliamentary debates of those times, for that will instil in them the much-needed virtue of parliamentary patience.

I DO not know why they call it the Indemnity Act. It would be far more correct to call it an Impunity Act, after the fashion of the high authority on constitutional law whose opinion I quoted on a previous occasion. It was only to be expected that it would be passed, considering how its distant progenitor, the Rowlatt Act, was passed in the teeth of the opposition of the whole peninsula from the Himalayas to the Cape. Every Legislative Council in India is a tragedy and a farce. The Supreme Legislative Council is supremely so. The supremacy of law is often a meaningless phrase in this country, if, as Lieber says, "a law is a law only when it is the translation of the people's will into statute." Goodness knows how many laws on our statute book deserve to be designated by the time-honoured appellation of "lawless laws," coined by Aristotle over two thousand years ago. Napoleon in St. Helena, twitted with having been a despot all his life, pathetically exclaimed, "I a despot! I who have always acted according to Law!" The great man forgot that his laws were simply his own arbitrary decrees.

APROPOS of this, my readers will be interested to know that executive officers in so-called despotic countries do not enjoy the same immunity from the consequences of illegal acts sanctioned or carried out by them as they do under the so-called democratic constitutions. The blows with the bamboo stick which in China go down from the superior officers, through many grades, to the inferior, are an instance in point. (I would recommend this form of punishment, in order to meet the requirements of poetic justice, for those who sanctioned and carried out the public flogging of respected citizens.) Before the Japanese ports were thrown open to Europeans, a European vessel was wrecked near one of them. The Governor of the city at once committed *hari kari* by ripping open his belly, and the Viceroy in whose province the mishap had occurred was imprisoned for hundred days, though he was miles away when it happened and knew absolutely nothing about it. An American navigator of those days has left on record the following anecdote: "We inquired of the Japanese how their officers were to be distinguished, whether they wore any badges besides the ever-famous two sabres; their answer was, 'If you see a man come on board who trembles very much he is a Mandarin.'" Far be it from me to suggest that our Viceroy or the late Lt. Governor of the Punjab should rip open his belly, but we who pride ourselves on our Christianity, our enlightenment, our culture, democracy and what not, will do well to remember these customs "of the heathen Chinese" and the despotic Japanese, whom we are in the habit of despising and looking down upon from our hypothetically superior altitude.

WHAT was really at the bottom of the Punjab Reign of Terror and why Martial Law was ever proclaimed in a province the bulk of whose population were at all times ideally loyal, according to Sir Michael O'Dwyer himself, is one of those mysteries which in all probability will remain unanswered to the end of Time. But Dame Rumour has her answer ready to this as well as to all other questions, under the sun. According to her, Sir Michael's desire to pay off old scores was only a secondary *motif*; his primary object was to nip the growing political life of the Punjab in the bud before it assumed uncontrollable proportions. Dame Rumour would have it that the Government of India fully sympathised with and sup-

ported this policy. But why should they who tolerate political activity in all other parts of India be so anxious to destroy it root and branch in the Punjab alone? Well, Dame Rumour is not to be put off so easily. The Punjabis are a martial race. If they become keen politicians like, say, the Bengalis, the land of Runjit Singh may prove an exceptionally hard administrative nut; that is why the bureaucracy are eager to keep the Punjab in a state of innocence. I do not know how far Dame Rumour is right. I hope she is wrong. I will be glad to be assured by some high authority that she is wrong; but supposing she is right, will Mrs. Partington succeed this time?

"THE attempt to govern whole populations by the political use of Fear," says Graham Wallas, who is one of the richest minds of the age, in his "Great Society": "is not yet abandoned. But evidence is accumulating that measures adopted with that purpose, torture, flogging, massacres, pillage, public execution, blowing from guns, etc." (and he might have also added dropping bombs from aeroplanes and making the population crawl on their hands and knees in order "to strike the imagination") "are apt to produce, not only widespread Fear, but dogged obstinacy among some of the older members of the population concerned, and a positive delight in danger among some of the younger; while the blind panic which prevents efficient action may at any moment strike the ruling minority instead of the subject majority. In the past, indeed, the Governments which used such means have fallen or have adopted a new policy of conciliation."

DEAR old Anglo-India will perhaps be delighted to know that Graham Wallas pays her the compliment of regarding her as the greatest upholder in the world of this exploded doctrine of government by Fear at the present day. In support of this, he quotes Sir Henry Maine who says in his work on "Popular Government": "The stern discharge of their chief duty by States has created habits and sentiments of obedience," and that high priest of the Military Boot and poet laureate of jingoistic Imperialism, Rudyard Kipling, who says: "To an English soldier east of the Suez there ain't no ten commandments" and also Lt. Colonel George Barrow who declared in 1912 before the United Service Institution of India (I wonder whether this body is still alive or has been swallowed up by the various I. C. S. Associations): "Fear is an elemental, perhaps the most elemental, of the factors which go to make up our moral nature." "The form of this philosophy", remarks our author, rather unkindly, "may be due to Hobbes' eloquence filtered through eight generations of smoking-room talk." It will be useful to note here that Lt. Colonel G. Barrow, now General Sir George Barrow, member of the India Council, has been appropriately appointed a member of the Indian Army Reorganisation Committee along with Sir M. O'Dwyer. But I like the allusion to the smoking-room.

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