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Topics of the Week.

Plausible.

THE question of the release of Mr. Subhas Bose was raised in the House of Lords on a recent date and was dropped after a reply from Lord Zetland, whose frankness, we are obligingly informed by Reuter, was acknowledged by the questioner. We for our part fail to see how the compliment was merited by the Secretary of State, for his reply can in no way be said to take our knowledge of Mr. Bose's case even one step further. Lord Kinnoul who put the question wanted to know how much longer it was intended to keep Mr. Bose under detention without trial. His curiosity could not be satisfied by the information—or lack of information—contained in Lord Zetland's answer. All that he said in reply was merely to give expression to his inability to say exactly when Mr. Bose's detention would come to an end.

HOW about his participation in the coming elections? Lord Kinnoul, we believe, used this as a peg on which to hang his request for Mr. Bose being set at liberty. But the Secretary of State was more than a match for him. It is not necessary, he said in effect, to remove the restraints and set Mr. Bose free merely in order to enable him to offer himself for election. He can stand for election even though in internment. Did not his own brother stand for election in identical circumstances? Let Mr. Bose stand as an absentee candidate in the same way as his brother and let us hear nothing more about his release being necessary for electioneering purposes.

LORD KINNOUL was successfully silenced by this specious answer on the part of the Secretary of State. But the point is not of Mr. Bose's theoretical

right to figure as a candidate in the forthcoming elections, but of his constituency securing effective representation. This would unquestionably be impossible so long as he continues to be an internee. Lord Zetland's plausible reasoning might succeed in deceiving a person like Lord Kinnoul. But Indian opinion can never be taken in by it.

Need for Inquiry.

THE recent suicides in the detention camps which have stirred public opinion to its depths have left the Government unmoved. In their eyes the phenomenon apparently calls for no special notice. In the last session of the Bengal Legislative Council which concluded a few days ago the desirability of an independent inquiry into the causes of these tragic occurrences was pressed on their attention by popular representatives but without result. We cannot help saying that their attitude towards this aspect of the detainee problem betrays a callous disregard of human life which calls for severe condemnation.

TO them it is nothing short of presumption that public opinion should demand an open inquiry when a departmental one had already been held, at any rate in respect of the particular suicide referred to in the Council. But it is worthy of note that the Government were unwilling to lift the veil of secrecy even from this report, poor substitute though it was for a public and independent inquiry. How mechanically the departmental inquiry was conducted can be seen from its results. The official committee came to the conclusion that the suicide was due to hanging. Who ever wanted a committee to find out how a particular detainee put an end to his life? The means to that end are a matter of common knowledge and the public is naturally interested more in the why than the how of these sad happenings.

WHY the Government should consistently burke such an investigation is more than one can say. But if it is believed by them that their refusal to fall in with public wishes in this behalf will in any way lessen public interest in the well-being of those detained without trial for unspecified periods only on suspicion, we may tell them that they were never more mistaken. How is it that they do not see that by refusing to hold an unofficial inquiry as asked for by public opinion they are taking on themselves a needlessly heavy burden of responsibility which might well be shared with others and that they are helping to create public suspicion about the methods of administering these camps?

Lucknow Divisional Liberal Conference.

THE Lucknow Divisional Liberal Conference had a successful session at Rae Bareilly on Sunday under the presidency of Babu Gauri Shankar Prasad, a

leading member of the Benares bar. But, for a wonder Indian news agencies have, for reasons best known to themselves, failed to make any reference to its work. A considerable part of the presidential address was devoted to showing how the Congress professions of wrecking the new constitution could not be taken seriously, even supposing they were meant seriously. For one thing, the president was doubtful if Congress would have a decisive majority in any province. And for another, even if Congress desired to bring the constitutional machinery to a stop with the co-operation of other elements, Mr. Prasad was not sure that such co-operation would always be forthcoming. The Muslims like the Liberals were committed to utilising the reforms, such as they were, for public good. Where are the other sections of opinion whose support the Congress intends to rely on? Thus it was not clear to Mr. Prasad how it would be possible for the Congress to achieve its purpose of preventing the constitution from functioning. Moreover, he was careful to add, whatever views individual Congressmen might express on the subject of working the reforms, the Congress as a body has yet to make up its mind on the point. The need of the hour seemed to him to be political unity and he expressed the hope that different political parties would bend their energies to that supreme task in a spirit of undaunted optimism.

THE resolution on the reforms adopted by the Conference made it clear that though the Liberals regarded the new constitution with feelings of abhorrence, there was no alternative before the country, circumstanced as it was at present, but to work it. The Reforms Act no doubt abounds in "features unsound in principle and mischievous in effect." If the working of so bad a constitution could possibly have been effectively prevented, the Liberals would have wished for nothing better. As this is obviously impossible the conclusion is irresistible that the constitution has to be worked, as a matter of national duty and with a view to extracting from it the utmost public good it can be made to yield. To this end the Conference warned the voters against returning "reactionaries and upholders of narrow, sectional and communal interests" to the legislatures. We hope the warning will attract the attention its importance deserves.

Indians and Land in Fiji.

IN the course of a press article Mr. C. F. Andrews, the untiring champion of Indians overseas, gives the Indian public some idea of the difficulties against which our countrymen in Fiji have to contend in the matter of the acquisition of agricultural land. The fundamental fact to note is that 80 per cent. of the land in Fiji is held as tribal land by the natives and the balance of 20 per cent. by the Colonial Sugar Refinery Co. as crown grants or free hold property. Only a very few exceptionally lucky Indians have obtained some of this free-hold land, but Mr. Andrews says it is not more than a fraction of the whole.

THE Sugar Company will not obviously allow any portion of the land at present held by it to slip out of its hand so that the Indians desiring to engage themselves in agricultural pursuits have no alternative but to cast longing glances at the tribal land. Under existing rules, no alienations of this land are possible without the permission of the Government, which, we suppose, is withheld as a rule, but Fijians are free to lease it out for periods not exceeding thirty years. But, to use Mr. Andrews' expressive phraseology, every renewal of a lease presents an almost insurmountable difficulty.

LET Mr. Andrews in his own words give a description of the difficulties attendant on such a transaction.

The first approach in renewing a lease is made by the Indian. He has to deposit £10 or more for the survey. After that, the whole trouble begins. The Indian attends a meeting of the tribe, and is called upon to supply tobacco and a feast. A long process of blackmail of the Indian often ensues, until life becomes hardly worth living. In the end, the Indian who is fearful of losing the renewal of his lease is almost bled white. Many pitfalls exist and further bribery is needed. So the wretched round of misery goes on.

MR. ANDREWS' remedy is the transfer of the leasing function from the members of the native tribe to "some authority whose integrity cannot possibly be questioned". This, he suggests, should only be a temporary arrangement say for ten years, at the end of which period its working should automatically come under review. It is not improbable, believes Mr. Andrews, that the proposed arrangement would prove immediately beneficial to the native community. But this by itself would, in his opinion, not be enough. He pleads not only for longer leases being allowed to Indians but for their being permitted to purchase land from the Fijians. Seeing that the Fijians would never be able to utilise all the land now collectively owned by them, the effectuation of Mr. Andrews' suggestion should involve no unfairness to the natives.

Depressed Classes' Grievances in Madras.

THE occasion of the consideration of the Public Accounts Committee's report was utilised in the Madras Legislative Council for urging on the Government the urgency of the problem of house sites for the depressed classes. It has to be admitted in fairness to the Madras Government that their record of work in this direction is much more creditable than that of most provincial Governments. Even so it cannot be denied that the provision of house-sites for Harijans on their part leaves much to be desired. For example, the complaint was made in the Madras Council that the areas chosen for depressed class settlements were so situated that in case of heavy rains or cyclones they were the first to suffer and also suffered most. They consequently become water-logged and unfit for human habitation.

ANOTHER grievance voiced related to the lapsing of the Government grants for house-sites for these people. The amounts cannot, in the nature of circumstances, be adequate. A surrender of their unspent balances, which is necessary under the rules, has thus the effect of adding to their inadequacy and needs, if possible, to be avoided. The amendment of rules governing such grants so as to make such surrender unnecessary was, therefore, suggested as a way out of the difficulty.

IN some cases hardship was also caused owing to the fact that the valuation of land proposed for colonisation was subsequently enhanced. This involves, as a corollary, the payment on the part of the settlers of bigger instalments. The only alternative to non-payment of these increased dues is to leave the land. This, as can be easily imagined, results in serious hardships to the parties concerned. Experience has also shown that owing to the heavy burden of duties on deputy collectors the details of these housing schemes often fail to receive at their hands proper and prompt attention. To the extent to which these complaints are well founded we hope they will be set right by the local Government.

Elective Indian Representation in Mombasa.

WE observe from the *Kenya Daily Mail* to hand by last mail that at a recent meeting of the Mombasa municipality a letter from the Commissioner for Local Government was read in which the Government's decision to adopt election in place of nomination as the method of representation of Indian was read to the meeting. At present the board in a wholly nominated body consisting of 21 members, 9 of whom appear to be Indians, 2 being Muslims. The Indian community is to be congratulated on their demand for election having been granted by Government.

"Our Debt to Ramasamy."

Under the above caption, the *Singapore Free Press* wrote an article in a recent issue, acknowledging Malaya's debt to India and condemning any discrimination against Indians by the Malay Government. Said the paper:

But above all, India is the main source of labour for the rubber industry. The Tamil coolie, therefore, has become a vital necessity to Malaya, but to appreciate the regard in which this essential cog is held, only a few years ago the F. M. S. Government, cowardly running away from an unemployment problem—from which it is still running—repatriated thousands of unemployed Indians, many of them recruited for work in Malaya. The reward for years of useful work at a wage which, if sufficient, was by no means large, was to be thrust out of the country into a homeland where unemployment was, if anything, worse and the standard of living much lower.

Madras Vigilance Association.

THE Madras Vigilance Association's report for 1935-36 is an interesting document. The principal object of the Association is the suppression of the traffic in women and girls. But more particularly the Association aims at the protection of girls under 18. And its efforts during 1935-36 as during previous years were directed towards the fulfilment of the above aim. The nature of its activities is such that the active co-operation of Government is a *sine qua non* for their success. We gladly observe from the report that this is available to the Association.

IN May 1935 a deputation of the Association urged three requests on the Governor: (1) appointment of at least one welfare worker, (2) provision of at least one Central Home and (3) stipends for the maintenance of girls coming under the law intended for the suppression of immoral traffic, pending the completion of the Central Home. It is gratifying to learn that the appointment of a woman welfare worker with European experience is already sanctioned by Government. The other two suggestions have not yet been acted upon. But there is reason to hope that the establishment of a Central Home will actively engage the Government's attention during the next financial year. However, the absence of a Home was in no way allowed to interfere with the Association's work for the stoppage of immoral traffic. To

this end it provided a woman worker and stipends for rescued girls as before.

IN the Shelter and "Recognised Home" which was under the efficient supervision of Mrs. Jinarajadasa 48 girls and women were dealt with. Any women or girls of any age standing in need of protection are received into this Home at all hours of the day and night. And the authorities of the Home try their best to restore these unfortunate girls or women to their relatives. In 1935-36 as many as 29 out of the 48 cases handled by the Home were sent back to their friends and relatives, 2 married and 6 left of their own accord. The work in which the Association is engaged is of great social value and deserves the unstinted support as much of the public as of the Government.

Educational Wastage and Stagnation.

THE contemplated amendment of the rules governing grants by Government to new primary schools opened by private agencies in Madras is intended to remedy the evils of stagnation and wastage in primary education. The extent of these evils can be vividly appreciated by certain facts mentioned by the Minister of Education in the course of a recent debate in the Madras Legislative Council on the subject of teaching grants. Out of 42,000 elementary schools only 7,160 were complete schools teaching up to the fifth standard. As many as 8,300 schools had only the first three standards and the number of schools managed by a single teacher was 18,600 while in as many as 12,000, the enrolment, to say nothing of attendance, was less than thirty!

IT was a surprising fact that in 1931-32, out of nearly 11¼ lakhs of pupils in the first standard, only 1,100 emerged from the fifth standard. Pupils numbering 70,000 did not survive even one summer vacation and failed to reach the second standard. The proportion of over-age pupils was also very heavy, their number running into several thousands.

THE proposed amendments provide for no teaching grant to schools with an average total attendance of less than 25 pupils and the grant will be calculated at the rate of one teacher for every 25 pupils in average attendance. Provision is also made for reduction in the assessed grants in cases in which the strength of pupils in different standards does not bear a stated proportion. Thus a school, the strength of whose fifth standard is less than 25 per cent of that in the first, will be liable to have its teaching grant reduced by 10 per cent. The reduction will be 15 per cent where the strength in the fourth standard is less than 25 per cent of that in the first and 25 per cent where the strength in each of the fourth and fifth standards is less than 25 per cent in the first standard. The working of these rules will be anxiously watched all over the country, the problems which they are designed to tackle being in no way confined to Madras.

SCALING DOWN DEBTS.

THE Government of Cochin announced on 27th November an important decision on the Debt Conciliation Bill moved by a private member in the State's Legislative Council. This Bill is almost a replica of the Debt Conciliation Act of the Madras Presidency, which itself is modelled, not on the more recent Punjab and Bengal Acts, but on the earlier one of the Central Provinces. Under the Central

Provinces and Madras Acts conciliation of agriculturists' debts takes effect only if agreement is reached between the debtor and his creditors in respect of a certain proportion of the debts—40% in the Central Provinces and 50% in the Madras Presidency. If no agreement is possible with regard to such a large portion of the debts, nothing happens. The Punjab Act makes clear at any rate that a voluntary agree-

ment as to any part of the debts, however small, can be brought into force immediately, irrespective of disagreement as to the other part. But the common feature of all these Acts is that the penalty sections to be applied to creditors who do not consent to the conciliation of debts shall not come into operation unless creditors to whom a stated percentage of the debts are owing agree. The penalty sections consist in the prohibition of the costs of suits and of interest of more than 6 per cent. and the postponement of recovery of the unsecured loans of the non-consenting creditors till the loans of the consenting creditors are realised.

The Bengal Act goes farther than the Acts of these three Provinces, in that even if no creditor agrees to the terms offered by the debtor, which in the opinion of the conciliation board are fair, the board can give a certificate to the debtor and the penalty provisions come into effect. The Dewan of Cochin as President of the Council announced the intention of his Government to move an amendment which will place the Cochin Bill on all fours with the Bengal Act in this respect. He said: "The Government want that the board should be empowered to issue certificates even if not a single creditor has agreed." This will surely make the Cochin Act much more effective in affording the much needed relief to agriculturists than the C. P. Act is or the Punjab and Madras Acts will be. The Punjab Government confessedly does not set much store by the debt conciliation sections of its Relief of Indebtedness Act; it places its chief reliance on reduction of interest and a simplified insolvency procedure applicable to small farmers in this Act and on the provisions of its Land Alienation Act. Cochin State, depending principally upon debt conciliation, does well to strengthen its legislation in regard to this matter and to introduce a larger measure of compulsion in the composition of debts than the Punjab has done.

It would perhaps be useful if we stated here what the Bengal Act does in reducing the debts of agriculturists. First, a debt can be conciliated whenever a debtor and a creditor come to an agreement, however small or large such a debt may be. Secondly, a debt owing to a non-consenting creditor can be certified when 40% of the total debts are conciliated by the consent of the creditors to whom they are due, and it shall be certified to a figure which must give at least as much relief to the debtor as the conciliated debt. But by this means the debt owing to a non-consenting creditor cannot be reduced to less than the principal, and this principal is the principal of the original loan arrived at after "excluding any amount of interest on such loan which may at any time have been included as principal." Thirdly, it will be open to the board to certify a debt owing to a non-consenting creditor to a figure less than the principal, understood in the above sense, if agreement is arrived at between the debtor and the creditors to whom is owing 60% of the total debts. When a certificate is issued the penalty sections of the Act, similar to those in the Central Provinces, Punjab and Madras

Acts come into operation. But, in addition to these provisions, there is another in the Bengal Act (sec. 21) which is of very great importance. Even if no agreement is reached between a debtor and his creditors in regard to the settlement of any portion of the debts, the board, if it receives what it considers to be a fair offer from the debtor, can use its power of certification in regard to that offer, and the penalty sections will become effective. Such a provision is rendered necessary because it may happen, and it does frequently happen, that an agriculturist has only one creditor, and he does not agree to an offer which is fair. Then the penalty provisions would not apply to him, in the absence of sec. 21, although they should apply. The requirement of consent on the part of creditors to the conciliation of 40% of the debts is thought necessary in the normal state of things because of the possibility of fraudulent collusion on the part of the debtors. While that must be guarded against, obvious recalcitrancy on part of the creditors must also be checked, and for this purpose a provision like sec. 21 of the Bengal Act is essential. How is the offer of a debtor who has borrowed only from one creditor adjudged to be fair by the board? If the board finds that creditors in the same place or in the neighbourhood have been willing to accept a composition of their loans of the same description, and a particular creditor has a similar offer made to him, the board can rightly regard the offer as fair and, if the creditor refuses it, certify the debt. The penalty attaching to a certificated debt when there is only one creditor is that, besides losing costs if he sues the debtor and interest of more than 6 per cent., he is debarred from executing a decree for the recovery of his loan for a period which may extend to ten years.

There is another difference, worthy of note, between the Bengal Act and the Acts of other provinces. These latter place the non-consenting secured creditors on a pedestal of their own. The only penalties that can be imposed upon such creditors under the C. P., Punjab and Madras Acts are that if they sue for the recovery of their loans which are certified by the conciliation board they will not be allowed costs in such suits, nor any interest in excess of 6 per cent. But they cannot be subjected to delays in the recovery of their loans as non-consenting unsecured creditors are. The C. P. and Punjab Acts are plain enough on the point; but the Madras Act makes it still plainer, because it says in so many words that "when a secured creditor does not agree to the settlement, such settlement shall not affect his rights to proceed against the secured property." The Bengal Act, however, makes no distinction in this respect between secured and unsecured debts; the consenting creditors will have the first claim on the repayment of the loans made by them and the non-consenting creditors will come next, whether they hold a mortgage or charge on the property of the debtor or not. The relevant section in the Act says, with reference to a certificated debt, that "no decree for the recovery of such debt shall be executed until all amounts payable under an award in respect of other debts of the debtor have been paid." The secured and unsecured

creditors stand on the same footing in this respect. It will thus be seen that in the British Indian provinces the stringency of debt conciliation measures is gradually being raised until it is the greatest at present in Bengal, though in Madras the process is reversed, and the legislation there is the least advanced. It should be remembered in the case of Bengal that the Board of Economic Inquiry, on whose report its Agricultural Debtors Act is based, had recommended almost wholesale compulsion. It said, referring to its draft bill: "If for any reason no settlement is made under section 12, but the (conciliation) board is of opinion that the debtor or any of the creditors has made a fair offer, it may frame an award covering all the debts of such debtor following the principles of fair offers made by certain creditors as regards the dues of the remaining creditors." Compared to the kind of compulsion the Board of Economic Inquiry recommended, the element of compulsion that has found its way into the Bengal Act is very small indeed.

An insolvency proceeding, simpler and more liberal than that provided in the Provincial Insolvency Act, 1920, is an essential counterpart of any measure which aims at the redemption of agriculturists from their debts, a proceeding similar to that of the Dekkhan Agriculturists' Relief Act. The Bengal Agricultural Debtors Act has made adequate provision for it. The general scheme of the Act is this: Every debtor is to be freed from debt within a period of twenty years at the most. If, after conciliation, the board finds that the debtor is unable to pay off even the reduced debt within this time it may declare him an insolvent and then proceed to reduce the debt still further until it arrives at a point where, in the board's opinion, it will be within the capacity of the debtor to repay within twenty years. The board must see that the sum to be paid each year by the debtor towards the settlement of his debt is

fixed "at an amount which, in its estimation, is likely in a year of normal harvest, to leave to the insolvent as provision towards his maintenance one-half of the surplus which remains from the value of the produce of his land after paying to the landlord the current rent due for such land." This will be the normal course that will be followed for the liquidation of an insolvent's debts. But if in any particular case the board thinks that the adoption of this course is undesirable, it may as an exceptional measure direct that his property be sold and the proceeds utilised towards the payment of his debts. From such a sale of his property, however, must be "set aside, as provision towards his maintenance, not more than one-third of the land held by him in his direct possession exclusive of the land occupied by his dwelling house," provided that in every case an acre of land and his dwelling house are left to him when sale is effected. It is a necessary part of an insolvency law that when an insolvent's property is sold or his income is hypothecated for the discharge of his debts, he should be left enough to enable him to maintain himself and his family, and the Bengal Act lays down this standard of what is required for his maintenance in Bengal: one-half of the surplus left after paying his rent, or one acre of land and his dwelling house. It will be remembered that the Dekkhan Agriculturists' Relief Act, which provides for the temporary alienation of the debtors' property, excludes from such alienation "any houses or other buildings belonging to and occupied by an agriculturist" and that portion of his immovable property "which, in the opinion of the Collector, is not required for the support of the insolvent and the members of his family dependent on him."

The Bengal Act should of all the Acts in force in British India prove of the greatest help in relieving agriculturists of their indebtedness.

THE SOVIET CONSTITUTION.

DRIFT constitutions of two important countries—Russia and China—were to be ratified last month. We know that the draft of the Soviet constitution completed by a commission under the chairmanship of M. Stalin in May and approved by the All-Union Central Executive Committee in June was ratified with certain emendations, the details of which have not reached this country, by the All-Union Congress of Soviets on 25th November. No report has yet come about the ratification of the proposed Chinese constitution, but there is no doubt that this constitution will prove a very interesting study. The good points in the new constitution of Soviet Russia will be heavily discounted, particularly because the trials connected with the Trotsky plots came soon after the publication of the draft, and one cannot but entertain serious doubts whether, for all the show that it makes of the introduction of a democratic regime, the dictatorship of the party in power will, in the actual working out of the constitution, be

appreciably lessened. The letter of the constitution too gives grounds for misgivings.

The new Soviet constitution does not merely concern itself with methods of government as other constitutions do, but it bases itself on a particular theory, viz. the doctrine of Marxist socialism. The direction of political action of the State is, therefore, in a large measure pre-determined. The democracies that we know of are not thus founded on any particular philosophy; the complexion of the government is determined by the force of public opinion, and public opinion is free to adopt what philosophy it for the time being thinks best. But in Russia, even under the new constitution, whatever free expression is allowed can be used only in so far as it does not conflict violently with the basic purpose of the State, "building socialism." Article 4 of the constitution says: "The economic foundation of the U.S.S.R. consists in the socialist system of economy and socialist ownership of the implements and means of pro-

duction, firmly established as a result of the liquidation of the capitalist system of economy, the abolition of private ownership of the instruments and means of production, and the abolition of exploitation of man by man." It may be said that western democracies are similarly based on capitalism, though they do not put it in the forefront of their constitutions. But anti-capitalistic activity is permitted under democracies or at any rate ought to be permitted, while in Russia anti-communistic activity is forbidden by the constitution. It does not lessen the force of this objection to state that socialism is qualified in later articles; e. g. article 9: "Alongside the socialist system of economy which is the dominant form of economy in the U.S.S.R., the law allows small private economy of individual peasants and handicraftsmen based on individual labour"; article 10: "The personal ownership by citizens of their income from work and savings, home and auxiliary household economy, of objects of household and domestic economy as well as objects of personal use and comfort are protected by law"; and particularly article 12: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his work"; again article 118, which guarantees to all citizens "work with payment for their work in accordance with its quantity and quality."

Nor is this all. The constitution itself declares (article 126) that the Communist Party "is the vanguard of the toilers in their struggle for strengthening and developing the socialist system," and "represents the leading nucleus of all organisations of the toilers, both public and state." Which means that the existing dictatorship of the official Communist Party will be continued under the new constitution, and that in fact Russia will remain, as heretofore, a totalitarian one-party State. The new constitution extends the right of franchise and improves the method of election. These are great reforms, but they are to a large extent nullified by the provision in the constitution about the choice of candidates for election. By article 141 "the right to put forward candidates is granted to social organisations and societies of the toilers: Communist Party organisations, trade unions, co-operatives, youth organisations and cultural societies." All these organisations are controlled by the Communist Party, and all or most of the candidates will necessarily be the nominees of the bosses of this Party. Thus, as a journal has put it, "All voting will be done within the confines of the Communist Party, so that the newly enfranchised voters may elect either communists or other communists." Even granting the communist philosophy and the dogma of the dictatorship of the proletariat, one finds here, enthroned in the constitution, what one observer has called dictatorship over the proletariat by the Communist Party. Such a sympathetic critic of Soviet Russia as Mr. Sidney Hook, referring to "certain 'horrendous excrescences' which interfere with the functioning of workers' democracy within the soviets," says:

These can be directly traced to the undemocratic domination of the undemocratic Communist Party over the entire fabric of social life. The Communist Party, in accordance with its own theory, constitutes only a small

minority of the working class. Its leadership is supposed to be won by the voluntary acceptance of its programme by the working masses and not by the forceful imposition of its rule. In any conflict between the soviets and the Communist Party, after the discussion is over, it is the collective decision of the soviets, among whom the communists are a minority, which should prevail and not the line worked out by the party leadership. Orthodox Communist Party members refuse to regard it as even conceivable that their policy should ever be disapproved by a majority in the elective bodies of the working class. This is an unconscious testimony on their part of the boss control they have established over the soviets and their expectation of enjoying it in perpetuity. Where they are forced to admit the possibility of an issue between themselves and the soviet majority, they defend the imposition of their policy on the ground that as the enlightened vanguard of the proletariat they are in a better position to determine what the objective interest of the working masses are than the masses themselves. This old argument for benevolent despotism is contrary to the spirit of Marxism and socialism. The masses themselves in the last analysis are the best, because only qualified, judges of what they really desire. To question this is to reveal as a brazen hypocritical pretension any claim that in a Soviet State political equality prevails among its citizen-workers; and that affairs are administered and laws promulgated in accordance with the desires of the working-class majority.

If the dictatorial domination of the Communist Party is to continue hereafter in virtue of the constitution itself, it is obvious that there will be little political liberty under the constitution. The Soviet State is not only to work out a certain theory, but the theory is also to be worked out by a minority party. This is not what is meant by democratic freedom.

So far as the franchise and the method of election are concerned, the constitution leaves nothing to be desired. All the classes which under the present constitution are disfranchised will hereafter enjoy the right of voting and the disparity of the voting power between the industrial worker and the peasant will be removed. Under the present constitution the industrial workers elect one deputy for every 25,000 voters and the peasants elect one for every 125,000 voters. Under the new constitution all eighteen-year old citizens will have the right to vote, regardless of their sex, race, nationality, social origin, religion, past activity, educational qualifications and property status. The election will be direct instead of indirect and by closed secret ballot instead of by show of hands as at present. All these provisions could not be more democratic. But we must repeat that the provision concerning the nomination of candidates almost neutralises their effect. In Germany too there is universal, equal and direct suffrage and secret ballot is employed, but because the voters cannot vote for any but National Socialist candidates election there is a farce and the ruling class is always returned in an overwhelming majority in the Hitlerian regime. So it must be in all one-party states, and in Russia it is feared that the democratic forms adopted will only achieve the permanent government of the Communist Party. The Russian constitution allows the fullest civil liberties to citizens, but here again, because the direction of State action is determined beforehand, these liberties will in practice be very much circumscribed. "Freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and meetings

and freedom of street processions and demonstrations" are guaranteed in article 125; but they are guaranteed, as the article itself says, "for the purpose of strengthening the socialist system." It is obvious that anti-socialist propaganda will not be permitted and is not meant to be permitted under the new constitution. The question again arises how the citizens are to exercise freedom of the press, since private possession of printing presses is not allowed. The article answers the question: "The rights of the citizens are ensured by placing at the disposal of the toilers and their organisations printing presses, supplies of paper, public buildings, streets, means of communication and other material conditions necessary for their realisation." Is it to be seriously believed that the Soviet Government will give a printing press to a non-communist and leave him free to criticise its policies not only in details but in fundamentals? It is also claimed that the constitution guarantees religious freedom. At present parents are forbidden to instruct their children in religion; religious associations are prohibited; ministers are debarred from carrying on any activity outside their own places of worship. Will these things be changed hereafter? No. Article 124 runs thus: "To ensure to citizens freedom of conscience the Church in the U.S.S.R. is separated from the State and the school from the Church. Freedom to perform religious rites and freedom of anti-religious propaganda is recognised for all citizens." This is as much as to say that no propaganda in favour of religion will be admitted. The comment that is made on this in an American weekly is very cogent: "The reason is simple. Propaganda can be undertaken only by an organisation. All organisations in the Soviet Union, under the new charter as well as hitherto, are controlled by the Communist Party. This party, of course, is not concerned with the propaganda in favour of religion. It fights religion, according to the principle that religion is opium for the people. . . . The younger generation will go on being subject to anti-religious propaganda, but cannot be influenced efficiently in favour of religion. All this means practically that religious faith in the Soviet Union does not have any adequate constitutional protection."

As for the legislature, it will be bi-cameral. The lower chamber will consist of about 600 members elected by direct, universal and secret suffrage on a geographical basis, one member to each 300,000 of the population. The upper chamber will be composed of about 300 members who will not be popularly elected but will be appointed by the governments of the constituent members of the Soviet Union. This method of selection was decided upon for the Senate in order to give adequate protection to the different racial groups. The two chambers will be absolutely equal in authority. For acts to be passed the consent of both is necessary. When the two chambers disagree a conciliation commission tries to frame compromise proposals which, however, to be effective, must be accepted by both chambers. If no compromise is arrived at the two chambers consider the question which is the subject of disagreement a second time, and if even then no agreement is reached Parliament is to be dissolved

and new elections are to be held. Provision is made for a referendum on the initiative either of Parliament or on that of any of the constituent members of the Union. "Every deputy is obliged to render an account to the electors of his work and the work of the soviet of toilers' deputies, and he may at any time be recalled in the manner established by law upon the decision of a majority of the electors" (article 842). The right of interpellation is granted to deputies, and their interpellations must be answered within three days. No deputy can be prosecuted or arrested without the consent of Parliament. The Parliament of the Soviet Union, however, is not a mere legislature; it is something more than that. It is "the supreme organ of State power;" it directs all the functions of government. As in other countries, the Government of the Soviet will not assume leadership. It will be much more passive and will only execute the policies that Parliament (rightly called the Supreme Council of the Union) will lay down. Parliament itself will sit twice a year for two-month sessions and when it is not in session a Presidium of 37 members selected from Parliament will perform the functions of Parliament. This body apparently will gather in its hands all the effective power of the Union and will count for more than the Government, or Council of People's Commissars as it is called, which is elected jointly by both chambers of Parliament, and is responsible to them. Parliament will also elect the President of the Union.

The Supreme Court of the U.S.S.R. is the highest judicial organ and is elected by Parliament for five years. Article 112 declares that "judges are independent and subject only to the law." "Highest supervision of the exact observance of the laws . . . is vested in the Prosecutor of the U.S.S.R." (article 113), who is appointed by Parliament for a period of seven years. The Prosecutor enjoys vast powers. He is charged with the duty of safeguarding civil rights. For instance, the inviolability of the person is ensured in article 127, which goes on to say that "no one may be subjected to arrest except upon the decision of a court or with the sanction of the Prosecutor." Since the passing of the Ogpu, which formerly tried persons accused by the secret police, there has been an extension of civil liberties in Russia. But recent events have again shaken the belief that the Soviet Union has finally done with violent methods of suppression. Anyhow the new constitution guarantees the inviolability of the person and also, by article 128, the inviolability of the homes of citizens and the secrecy of correspondence. There is, however, no question that the constitution guarantees social rights without which political freedom is an empty shell; e. g. the right to paid employment, leisure, material security in old age, sickness and unemployment, free education, sex equality, equal rights for all nationalities, &c. As the articles dealing with these rights suggest that such social freedom is not a distant goal in Russia but to a large extent an actual achievement, few will doubt the capacity of the Soviet Union in the near future to give an adequate content to all these social rights.

RAILWAY FINANCE.

THE position of the railways in India has been a source of great anxiety to the Government and the people alike for quite a considerable time. Ever since 1930, when the effects of the world depression made themselves felt, the railways in India have been running under a recurring deficit averaging to about 6 crores a year. Uptil now, the railways have borrowed in all 32 crores of rupees from the Depreciation Fund to meet their usual interest charges. But this itself does not give us a correct idea as to how far the railways are in debt at present. Before 1930, the railways were paying annually about 6 crores to the central exchequer as their contribution to the general revenues. This contribution has been suspended for the last six years. If the accumulated amount of the suspended contributions be taken into account, then the total liability for the Railways will come to about 68 crores. Nor is the present position of the railways any better. According to the Budget estimates for 1936-37, the railways will have a deficit amounting to 3.44 crores and this deficit will be met by borrowings from the Depreciation Fund. The position of the railways, therefore, is "frankly disquieting," in the words of Sir Otto Niemeyer. Some way must be found out by which they can be freed from their recurring deficits. But this alone will not solve the problem. If the recommendations of Sir Otto Niemeyer are to be carried into effect, the railways must pay an annual contribution of 6 crores to the Centre. For on the renewal of this contribution will depend the distribution of half of the income-tax among the various provinces. In short, the railways must so improve their position as to add annually 10 crores to their present earnings. Otherwise, there is no hope of the Niemeyer recommendations being put into effect. The recommendations of Sir Otto Niemeyer have caused a flutter in the dove-cotes of the high Government officers. A committee has been appointed very recently under Sir Ralph Wedgwood to enquire into the conditions of railway finance and to suggest measures for its rehabilitation. The Indian Railway Conference under the presidency of Mr. H. N. Colam also directed its efforts in the same direction.

Among the factors prominently responsible for the present deplorable state of railway finance, there are some which are beyond the control of the Indian railways. Economic depression and the general collapse of commodity prices and the striving after self-sufficiency by almost every country including India, are factors of such world-wide application that the Indian railways cannot do anything to check their operation. Their discussion, therefore, is not germane to our immediate problem. There are, however, other factors of a peculiarly Indian character over which the Indian railways as also the Indian Government can well exercise control. They are: (1) The high administrative cost of the Indian railways, (2) The debiting of loss on the strategic lines to the Railway Budget, (3) The problem of Rail-Road competition and (4) The problem of ticketless travel. As regard the high cost of the railway administration, it has been

pointed out times without number that the salaries of the higher railway staff are excessive. One simple illustration will bring home to the mind of the reader the truth of this point. The Minister of Transport in England gets a salary of Rs. 2,000 a month whereas the Railway Member in India gets a salary of Rs. 6,000 a month, and the Railway Agents get a salary of Rs. 3,500 a month. Now what valid reasons can there be for paying more to the Railway Agents in India than is paid to the Minister of Transport in England? Is it because, the Railway Agents have a greater burden to shoulder than the Minister of Transport? Or because the cost of living is higher in India than it is in England? Or because the Indians as a class are generally richer than the Englishmen and therefore can afford to pay more than the English people? Judging from any of these points of view, the salaries of the higher railway staff in India seem to be exorbitant. At a time when the Indian railways are in a state of bankruptcy, when they have a liability amounting to 68 crores, is it not proper that prompt efforts should be made to carry out a drastic reduction in the salaries of the high-paid officers? Yet, it is the very thing which the Railway Department is unwilling to do. When the question of the railways was being discussed in the Public Accounts Committee in 1936, Mr. B. Das raised the point that whereas between 1913-14 and 1933-34, the railway staff had remained almost stationary, being 633 thousands and 667 thousands respectively, the cost of the railway staff had increased by 150%. In 1913-14, the amount spent on the railway staff was 14 crores. By 1933-34 it had risen to the excessive sum of 34.61 crores. In 1913-14, the staff salary amounted to 43% of the working expenses. In 1933-34 it rose to 53.8% of the working expenses. "Will any business thrive," asked Mr. Das, "where the staff salary amounts to 53.8% of the working expenses?" To this Mr. P. R. Rau gave a very non-committal answer. He said: "Just after the War rates of pay for all Government servants were considerably increased and that was permanently done in the belief that the high prices would continue. We did not follow the British practice of having a temporary cost of living allowance. And when we are reducing the scales of pay, we are reducing them only for the future entrants." A very good reply indeed! In every case the Indian Government looks up to the British Government for inspiration and guidance. But in case of salaries alone they do not think it proper to adopt the excellent British practice. For, had they done so, how could they have provided such fabulous salaries to the railway servants? On this answer coming from Mr. P. R. Rau, Mr. Satyamurti asked: "Why not reduce the rates on the cost of living basis in the case of everybody?" To this Mr. Rau gave a very surprising answer. He said: "Government thought that it was a question of vested rights and that the staff should remain on the scales they were in receipt of, but it is a question of Government policy as a whole and I could not possibly say anything on this." So, it is for the maintenance of the vested rights that the salaries bill is not to be

...touched! Then why talk about the rehabilitation of railway finance? Government knows full well that the railways cannot be worked on economic lines unless the excessive salary bill is drastically cut down. But it is unwilling to do this most vital thing. Is it not, therefore, a sheer waste of money to appoint so many committees and commissions when the first essential condition is not to be carried out?

The argument is often advanced that it would be iniquitous to cut down the salaries of people who joined their services long before the depression. They joined their services with certain expectations and you cannot at present reduce those expectations without at the same time being unfair to them. Granting for the time being the validity of this argument, can it not be argued that it is iniquitous for people to clamour in the same breath for increase of their salaries because the prices have gone up or because the War had made living dearer? When they joined their services, they knew what they would get. Then why did they clamour for an increase of pay and why did our Government appoint commission after commission in post-haste and increase their pay to nearly double the pre-war figure? It is indeed a queer equity which provides only for an increase of pay and under no circumstances provides for its reduction. Nobody wants the railway servants to sacrifice their salaries without any reason. Conditions have enormously changed since the days when their salaries were fixed after the War. There has been a catastrophic fall in the general prices. If 1925 be taken as the basic year (near about which time the salaries of the railway servants were permanently increased, according to the admission of Mr. P. R. Rau), then the index number of prices, assuming it was 100 at the time, has fallen to 53 in 1935. This means that if the salaries of the railway staff be reduced on the cost of living basis as they ought to be, then the salaries bill which amounts to 34 crores at present will come down to the figure of 20 crores at once. There will be a saving of 14 crores on the salaries alone. It is needless to mention that this method of salary-reduction will mean no hardship to the railway staff. They are getting a wind-fall at present because of the enormous fall of general prices. The salary-cut will only prevent them from enjoying this wind-fall which they in no way deserve. But it might be argued that, however sound the above reasoning may be in theory, it will be very difficult to put it into practice. It is one thing to increase the salary, but another to reduce it. Secondly, there are many low-paid people in the railway service and no civilised Government should reduce their salaries, if it wants them to have a decent living. Even the worst critics of the Government realise the force of this argument. In fact, whoever spoke in the Assembly for a drastic cut of salaries made it clear at the outset that he was not for reducing the salaries of the low-paid staff. Railway servants getting a salary of less than Rs. 100 a month should have no cut imposed on their salaries at all. This was agreed to by all sections of the Assembly. But what about the people who get more than Rs. 100 a month? In a poor country like

India where the average income is only Rs. 8 a month, they cannot be said to be under-paid people. Then why not reduce their salaries to the extent warranted by the index number of prices? Or have a graded cut in salaries of people getting more than Rs. 100 a month? It is difficult to make exact calculations. According to the Railway Member, 12 crores are spent on people who get a salary of Rs. 100 or more. If this amount be reduced according to the index number of prices, then the savings will come to 5½ crores a year. This will wipe out the present railway deficit and yield an annual surplus of nearly 1½ crores. Will the Government follow this very sound policy, stressed by all sections of the Assembly? If it does not do so, it cannot reasonably expect any sympathy and co-operation from the non-official public in its difficult task of rehabilitating railway finance. Nobody can reconcile himself to a system under which the Indian Railway Member gets three times as much as the British Minister of Transport.

Coming to the question of the strategic railways, it must be pointed out that the loss due to the strategic railways must be debited to the military budget. Similarly, a crore of rupees which the army absorbs at present through transport concessions should also be debited to the military budget. The strategic lines are expressly maintained for military purposes. They were never meant to be a business proposition. Then, why should the railways be made to bear the loss and thus shield the Military Department from criticism? The transport concessions are also in the nature of a subsidy given by the railways. One wonders how the railways can subsidise any other department, when their own house is not in order. The Military Department is making the railways the scape-goat of its extravagance. It is neither fair to the railways nor to the country to include under railway items of expense which in all propriety belong to the Military Department. We hope the railways will insist upon this mistake being rectified and thus get three crores for meeting their deficits. If salary-cuts be imposed as mentioned above and if loss on strategic lines and transport concessions be transferred to the Military Budget, then the railways will have a surplus of 4½ crores, even under the present conditions of world-trade and commerce. Thus it cannot be said that the railways will always remain a source of anxiety. Even under the present circumstances, their financial position can be improved to a very great extent only if the Government is keen on getting it done. But if the Government will shut its eyes to obvious facts, then no committees and commissions can make the railways solvent. Their position will remain as bad as ever.

As regards the question of Rail-Road competition, both the Government and the people are keen on co-ordinating Rail-Road transport. They sincerely wish, in the words of the Railway Member, "that the roads should be made complementary to the railways, not competitive to them." But however sincere the wish might be, the problem bristles with such difficulties that an immediate solution of it cannot be expected at present. The railways are the charge of

the Central Government and the roads are under the provincial Governments. Thus, a proper co-ordination of Rail-Road transport involves joint action of both the central and the provincial Governments. The Niemeyer recommendations have sought to interest the provinces in railway finance, by making their acquisition of income-tax dependent on railway surplus. It is hoped, therefore, that the provinces will follow a policy with regard to road-development which will not hinder the development of the railways. But it is very difficult to say how far the railways will profit materially from this policy. It is acknowledged on all hands that with regard to passenger and goods traffic for smaller distances, motor-buses are more economical than the railways. So they will always attract a certain amount of traffic which the railways were getting in their absence. Thus, even the successful co-ordination of Rail-Road transport does not hold out the hope of immediate gain for the railways in the near future.

As regards the question of ticketless travel, it is estimated that the railways lose through this half a crore every year. Last year a Bill was brought forward by the Railway Member, making ticketless travel a cognisable offence. The Bill was received in the Assembly with a storm of protest. The Assembly members thought that making ticketless travel a cognisable offence will lead to the molestation of innocent passengers. The railway staff behave as if they are the masters of the passengers. In his speech to the Indian Railway Conference in 1936 the Railway Member admitted this fact when he said: "Complaints, in many cases well-founded and justified, continue to reach Government of lack of consideration, want of courtesy and absence of helpfulness on the part of the railway staff towards passengers. On some systems there have been slight improvements in this respect, but much still remains to be done." It is no wonder, therefore, that the representatives of the people were extremely reluctant to grant more powers to the railway staff who, on the admission of the Railway Member, are already abusing their power. In any case, the pending measure is not going to help much. It cannot stop ticketless travel altogether. In some cases, the railway servants themselves connive at ticketless travel with a view to getting some illicit gain. Secondly, making ticketless travel a cognisable offence will discourage many people from travelling by train. Thirdly, no civilised country has made ticketless travel a cognisable offence and India must follow in the footsteps of the civilised countries. These three considerations point to the abandonment of the proposed measure. The measure is not expected to bring in much and even if it brings in something that something should be sacrificed in deference to public opinion. Any other measures for checking ticketless travel which are not open to these objections may be adopted.

Apart from the questions discussed above, there are some other important and controversial matters which need close and careful consideration. But till now they do not seem to have attracted that

much notice which their importance deserves. Mr. Jamnadas Mehta, the present Mayor of Bombay, has been harping on the fact that the present allocation to the Depreciation Fund is excessive and should be reduced. Nor is he alone in holding this opinion. Mr. Ziauddin Ahmed, M. L. A., put forth the same suggestion in his criticisms of the Railway Budget. According to him, 9 crores a year would be enough for the present Depreciation charges. On the other hand, the Public Accounts Committee, which reported on Railway Accounts for 1933-34, expressed the view that "ideally the Depreciation Fund ought to be turned into a reserve for renewals and minor improvements and a definite provision for amortisation should be made out of revenue." They calculate that this would add about 5 crores to the present Depreciation charges. The adequacy of the Depreciation Fund was questioned again by no less an authority than Sir Arthur Dickinson. He found that the principles applied at present do not allow for the factor of obsolescence. He wanted provision to be made for that, which would mean an addition of 2 crores to the Depreciation Fund. The question, therefore, is highly controversial and it is time that the issues were made perfectly clear. This is essentially a matter for expert investigation and decision. We hope, therefore, that the Wedgwood Committee will give to this matter its very close attention.

Similar in nature is the demand for a reduction in the present interest charges. The railways pay an interest of 3.75% on their capital. In these days, when the bank rate of interest is only 3% it is very hard for the railways to pay nearly 1% more. If fresh money can be borrowed or new debentures can be issued at a lower rate of interest, then the interest charges on the railways can be substantially reduced. In this connection, it is pertinent to mention that the railways gained nearly half a crore in the last year, because of the conversion of railway loans. Whether such a policy of conversion can be adopted on a wide scale or not it is for the Railway authorities to decide. Meanwhile, the rapidity with which Government loans are being subscribed leads one to think that a substantial portion of the railway loan can be converted at present. Anyway it appears that the railways can save two crores by the adoption of this method.

Third comes the question of railway amalgamation. In India at present we have a number of railways, thoroughly disconnected. This leads to the multiplication of overhead charges. If the railways of India can be brought under a smaller number of departments, there will be a substantial saving in over-head charges. In India, we have got 14 first class railways, 13 second class and 24 third class. Every railway has its Agent, 2 Deputy Agents, one Chief Engineer, three Deputy Chief Engineers and so on. An amalgamation of railways will reduce this over-head expenditure. By the Railway Act of 1922, the British Railway companies are already amalgamated into four units only. Before the Act, there were 112 different Railway Companies in England, 27 principal and 85 subsidiary. When the British Government has taken the lead, there is no reason

why India should not follow in its footsteps. It is very difficult to say as to how much will be saved by the policy of amalgamation. But savings by this policy seem to be obvious and the Wedgwood Committee may try to find out its exact amount. Thus from an all-round consideration of railway finance, the conclusion is inevitable that, after all, the position of the railways is not so gloomy, as it is oftentimes made out to be. Even now, provided the necessary economy measures are adopted, the railways can show a substantial surplus. They can even make an annual contribution of six crores to the Centre and play the most important role in Indian finance. But for all this, one important condition is absolutely necessary. The railway authorities must have an open mind. They should not shrink from adopting those measures which promise to better the railway finance. They should not be swayed by petty considerations when bigger issues appear before them. It is only then that the railways can have a better future.

SHYAM SUNDAR MISRA.

Reviews.

DHONDO KESHAV KARVE.

LOOKING BACK. By DHONDO KESHAV KARVE. (Secretary, Hindu Widows' Home Association, Hingne Budruk, Poona 4.) 1936. 20 cm. 199 p.

THIS short autobiography consists of forty chapters. The first nine chapters give an account of Prof. Karve's ancestry and important events in his early life from his birth to his joining the Deccan Education Society. The next twelve chapters are devoted to the history and development of the Hindu Widows' Home and other public activities of Prof. Karve except the Indian Women's University. The remaining chapters except the last three trace the history and development of the Indian Women's University. Mr. F. J. Gould of the Rationalist Press Association has written a Preface to this book.

The book has been written in simple, easy English and the style used makes the book interesting reading. Prof. Karve's life is so inter-woven with the institutions he started and conducted and so mingled with them that his life becomes a veritable history of these institutions. All the institutions except the last one, started by Prof. Karve are for the education and uplift of Indian women. The last one is for the education of the rural population and naturally includes both men and women.

Prof. Karve had not all smooth sailing in his work as a social worker. He had to overcome several difficulties and although the institutions which he started are unquestionably for the good of society, hot controversies were raised and publicly discussed at different times. The most important of these ranged round (1) Widow remarriage and the Hindu Widows' Home, (2) Nishkama Karma Math, (3) A Separate University for Women, and (4) Whether separate courses of education were necessary for men and women. Prof. Karve kept himself quite cool even in the face of grave provocation, explained his position clearly through speeches and newspaper articles and then allowed the controversies to die a natural death. Prof. Karve has thus disarmed opposition, and it is a matter for gratification that there is no section in society today that is in opposition to his institutions. His selflessness, devotion to duty and hard work have endeared him to the public.

The autobiography is an abridged English edition of the Marathi autobiography. His Marathi book is an admirable addition to the Marathi literature and his English version of the same is valuable inasmuch as the history of his important progressive institutions is now made available to people all over India and even outside India wherever English is understood and read. We may close this short notice by quoting Mr. F. J. Gould :

Prof. Karve seems to have been born free of sectarian tendencies. He is humanist, and wherever he hears humanity's sigh, there his religion takes him as a servant of India, as a brother of Mercy. The sigh that touched his heart most was the sigh of Hindu Womanhood. . . India and civilisation whisper blessings on this aged hero's name.

D. L. SAHASBABUDDHE.

EUROPE THROUGH INDIAN EYES.

A PEEP AT EUROPE. By MRS. C. KUTTAN NAIR. (The Scholar Press, Palghat.) 20cm. 175p.

THE authoress was one of the party of Indian ladies who visited Europe in 1935 under the guidance of Mrs. Datta. At the invitation of Mr. Devades Gandhi she wrote in the *Hindustan Times* about the interesting things she saw or experienced in the tour. Her articles were translated in several Malayalam newspapers. At the suggestion of friends, European and Indian, they have now been reprinted in book form. A Malayam edition has preceded the English one. It is dedicated to Mrs. Kamala Nehru who travelled by the same boat as the authoress and party, on what was to be her last voyage.

The book is simply charming. The style is easy and graceful and the matter quite interesting. One goes through it at a sitting. We read in it of the amusing attempts made by the members of the party to be understood in the different countries without a knowledge of their languages, of the well-meaning crowds which the coloured sarees of the Indian ladies attracted everywhere (at Prague the crowd had to be dispersed by the police), of the uniform kindness and hospitality they received, of the universal interest in Mahatma Gandhi, of the ignorance of India even among the educated, of the growing intensity of nationalism, of the pilgrimage which the authoress made to M. Romain Rolland, etc. There are two short chapters of reflections, one of which is general and the other relates to the position of women. In the former, speaking of the generally better teeth of Indians she says with characteristic humour :

The Indian woman is proverbial for her heavy ornaments. But I can state that most of the inhabitants of western countries, men and women, rich and poor, we have met, especially in central and eastern Europe, carried about them much more gold than any of our party did. For, many of them, when they opened their mouths, made us feel that we were face to face with what appeared to be veritable mines of gold.

The chapter on the position of women contains an interesting comparison between the east and the west.

In spite of the evils of the purdah, child marriage etc., woman at home occupies a place that is seldom hers in any other country. She gets devotion from her sons and daughters almost unparalleled anywhere else in the world.

Speaking of Nair women, she says,

It is doubtful whether, barring perhaps Soviet Russia, which is more oriental than occidental, our sisters in the West have even today after so much of hard fight the same amount of real freedom as Nair women of Kerala.

English books by Indian women are very rare and this book has also a rare quality.

V. VENKATASUBBAIYA.

INTERNATIONAL LAW.

THE CATHOLIC TRADITION OF THE LAW OF NATIONS. By JOHN EPPSTEIN. (The Catholic Association for International Peace, Washington.) 1935. 22cm. 525p. \$3.50.

THE book is mainly intended for those who are interested in the study of the history of ideas and is consequently rather heavy matter for the ordinary reader. In between the various portions of the text, occur long and somewhat dull quotations and the style pays more attention to accuracy of statement than to grace of expression.

To those, however, who have the patience to go through the subject matter, the book provides a veritable mine of information, regarding the growth of the International Law and ideas of international co-operation and peace. It is rather remarkable to find that this imposing structure is made to base itself upon the very few direct utterances of Christ that have reached us through the Gospels. Great divines like St. Paul and St. Augustine have supplemented the slender foundations thus provided.

Nevertheless, it seems to be a far cry from the simple words of Christ to the full-fledged and carefully worked out structure of the Law of Nations. Canons of interpretation have been taxed, words and phrases have been squeezed, human ingenuity and even imagination is pressed hard into service, in order to secure from the few and simple directions of Jesus—which are more concerned with private conduct and the 'kingdom to come, than with any matters of practical politics—a much wider and sometimes even unsuspected meaning suited to the needs of the problems of the day. The Canon "what is not specifically prohibited is permitted" is so comprehensive as to cover all that is dictated by common sense.

Christian Tradition is thus successively proved to be supporting abhorrence of all war, passive obedience of soldiers to their commanders, defensive war, crusades against Islam, and lastly colonial and imperial wars of the two last centuries.

That does not mean that there is no humanitarian basis for Christian thought. The exhortations of Jesus in support of "peace and good-will to all mankind" are only too clear and saintly followers of the Christian way of life can honestly support the latest progressive thought in favour of international co-operation and peace.

One thing must, however, be remembered in connection with this Catholic Tradition. The positive aspects of it are mainly the work of independent thinkers. The papacy has been unable to contribute much in spite of its clever diplomacy and masterly inactivity. Awkward problems like the recent Abyssinian affairs (and the present savagery in Spain) it has managed to sidetrack while it has not lost any opportunity to place itself in the limelight whenever a favourable opportunity to advertise "the Church" presents itself even though it may not be of its own making.

One doubts very much whether the Tradition would be of any great use in practical politics, for the power of the Vatican to move men to sacrifice and action has never been very noticeable in modern times.

All the same one cannot but be thankful to the Catholic thinkers for keeping the flame alight at considerable sacrifice even in times when things looked dark indeed. The author's attempt in giving a connected account of it is therefore worthy of praise and has an important place in the history of thought.

R. H. KELKAR.

POST-WAR IRAQ.

IRAQ. FROM MANDATE TO INDEPENDENCE. By ERNEST MAIN. (Allen & Unwin.) 1935. 24cm. 267p. 16/-

THE story of post-war Iraq is a proud episode both in the history of the British Empire and in that of the League of Nations. The rapid conversion of a Mandate into an independent kingdom is an achievement to which subject nations will look up as a welcome precedent.

That does not mean, however, that the political experiment has been an unqualified success nor that there are no rocks and shoals ahead for the Iraqi leaders of the present and the future.

Mr. Main has a sympathetic outlook and a wide and direct experience of the problem of Iraq. He has studied every aspect of it from the British Imperial communications and the work of the Royal Air Force in developing among the people of Iraq a sense of security and an appreciation of the worth of a stable government, to the questions of the industrial and commercial prospects and of irrigation, archaeology and marriage customs.

The problem of problems for the Iraqis, however, is the amalgamation of the Sunni and the Shiahs, the Kurds, the Christians, and the Jews into a united nation and the task has unfortunately fallen upon the weak shoulders of a growing but small class of westernised educated 'Effendi' who are not only out of touch with the masses and particularly with the desert tribes, but also are addicted to a standard of life too high for the financial resources of Iraq.

The British military officers who started the modern administrative machine in place of the rotten autocracy of the Turks, wanted to make out of Iraq a typical British protectorate with a top-heavy administration and found it very difficult to adjust themselves to the ideology of President Wilson. Though General Smuts came to the rescue with his theory of the Mandates, Wilson's idealism together with the romantic dreams of that remarkable personality 'Lawrence of Arabia' for a full-fledged Arab nation, led the Iraqi nationalists to demand and almost forced Britain to agree to a pace of progress beyond the capacities for adjustment of an average Iraqi.

The potential resources of Iraq, especially of its immense oil-fields, are an asset that has for the present failed to save Iraq from the world-wide economic blizzard; the spread of education is fairly rapid but the standards attainable at the moment are far below the mark; and the deep-seated Turkish habit of graft is not yet eradicated and the outlook is not very bright. King Faisal Ibn Hussein, who by his astute diplomacy and commanding personality had maintained the balance of the ship of State, has passed away leaving no one to shoulder his task.

It will be, therefore, very interesting to watch the Iraqi statesmen finding their way out of their very peculiar difficulties, which the author has done well to emphasize. The author has erred on the side of over-cautiousness but he has not failed to point to the hopeful features of the situation. The book on the whole is a safe and almost complete guide-book to Iraq with all its hoary antiquity and its promising future.

R. H. KELKAR.