

Indian Opinion

No. 38—Vol. XXV. Friday, September 23rd, 1927.

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

NOTES AND NEWS

THE Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Sastri celebrated his fifty-eighth birthday yesterday (Thursday). This is the first birthday he has celebrated amongst Indians in South Africa and a very happy coincidence is that on his very birthday Mr. Sastri has had the satisfaction of seeing the first practical step taken towards the fulfilment of the Capetown Agreement. That is the decision of the Natal Administration to appoint a Commission in accordance with the terms of the Agreement to inquire into the conditions of Indian education. In view of the strong opposition of Natal against the Agreement this step seemed to be unsurmountable and its success just on his birthday was the best gift that Mr. Sastri could have wished for.

Mr. Sastri's brilliant career is known throughout the British Empire. India can ill-afford to lose any of the comparatively few great leaders she possesses in her struggle for freedom and amongst them Mr. Sastri holds a prominent place. We have no doubt that Indians throughout South Africa will join us whole-heartedly in wishing our Ambassador long life and health to continue his noble services.

We extend a hearty welcome to the Metropolitan of Calcutta who has arrived in the Union on his way to India from London. It will be remembered that the Metropolitan had taken a leading part in the famous Unity Conference when Mahatma Gandhi was undergoing a twentyone days' fast over the Hindu-Moslem disunity in India. The Metropolitan has been taking deep interest in the Indian question of South Africa.

The following is an instance of how Europeans in the Transvaal are conducting their propaganda after relegating the Indian to locations miles out of town, to completely eliminate him.

Johannesburg, Sept. 15.—General satisfaction is felt among the Benoni commercial community at the firm and sympathetic attitude taken up by the Benoni Chamber of Commerce in connection with the menace presented to European traders by Asiatic hawkers in Benoni and districts. Hope is expressed that some definite action will be adopted in the matter at the Congress of the Associated Chambers of Commerce with a view to eliminating the evil. One of the most prominent traders stated that the amount of trade which Asiatic hawkers were securing locally amounted to many thousands of pounds annually. "In view of the heavy taxation which European storekeepers have to bear nowadays," he said, "while our shopping hours have been reduced on the best shopping day of the week, we do wish to see the Asiatic menace reduced to an absolute minimum."

At a meeting of the S.A.P. held at Mtunzini, Mr. Nicholls said:

With regard to the Indian question, the present Government had come to an agreement with the Indian Government regarding the Indians in our midst, which is not a satisfactory arrangement. A

great deal of discussion had taken place with the present Government, and the conclusion come to was to offer Indian males a bonus of £20, and males under age of 16, £10, to return to India. Should they return within three years they had to refund the bonus money. Indians settled here find they are on a very good wicket under these conditions. All they have to do is to apply for a bonus of £20, to go over to India to raise what capital they will require to buy land, and return to South Africa. When the present Government took over the reins of office they were going to drive all the Indians into the sea, and this is the way they have done it!

In the course of his speech at Hoopstad Col Mentz (S.A.P.) ex-Minister of Defence, dwelt on the Asiatic question and pointed out that as the law stood to-day an Asiatic could go to India with his family at Government expense, and should he return within three years he need only pay the actual cost of his return to India without paying interest. The S.A.P. was against this, wanting the law to be so altered that once an Asiatic left he should not be allowed to return.

Dr. G. H. Gunn, the Assistant Medical Officer of Health for the Borough of Durban, will lecture to the members of the Indian Social Service Committee, at 5.30. p.m. Tuesday, 27th, instant, in the M. K. Gandhi Library, 140 Queen Street, on the "Civic aspects of health." Members of the public and particularly of the Indian Child Welfare Society are cordially invited to attend.

At the Diocesan Synod of Johannesburg The Dean tabled the following motion on behalf of the Rev. Mr. Sigamoney:—

"That this Synod of the Diocese of Johannesburg welcomes the agreement arrived at between the Indian Government and the Union Government, and considers it the beginning of a better understanding and better treatment of Indian subjects of the Empire resident in South Africa. This Synod further resolves to do everything possible for the betterment of the Indian population by creating an atmosphere of goodwill."

A Reuter's message of the 19th September from Simla, states that:

Mr. James Crerar (Home Secretary to the Indian Government) in the Assembly stated that Saklatvala's passport to India was cancelled largely on account of his own conduct during his last visit to India. The Secretary of States and Government of India completely agree with this. It will be remembered that the Foreign Office, early this month, cancelled the validity of the passport for India granted to Saklatvala in December last.

LET US WORK WITH PEACE AND AMITY

OUR leading article of the week before last on the subject "will the pin-prick policy never end" seems to have caused some misunderstanding. Those whose avowed object is to find fault will always seek or even invent some means to do so. Our object, however, is to clear any misunderstanding that may have arisen. Our article was based on the advice of Mr. Andrews for eternal vigilance. No matter what agreement we may have arrived at, so long as there was not an entire change of heart not only between the Governments but also between the peoples it was absolutely essential for the party concerned to be eternally vigilant. Our apathy, carelessness or callousness, at such a time, even though we may have amongst us the most influential leader, would only bring about our doom rather than salvation. Has not the 1914 Settlement taught us a lesson? Can we truly say that we were vigilant in keeping that settlement. If we were we would not have reached the stage we have. It was for this reason that we sounded a note of warning that "neither the agreement nor the mere presence of the Agent of the Government of India was going to bring salvation to us," but that eternal vigilance on our part was also necessary. We were prompted to sound that note, further, because, to our deepest regret, we find prevailing amongst some of our people eternal squabbling instead of eternal vigilance. They seem to be doing nothing else but finding fault with the Congress, criticising the Agent in the most unbecoming manner and criticising the Agreement. Those who could better serve the cause of the community have most unfortunately allowed themselves to be sold to irresponsible men who have not a single record to show to their credit for having in any way served the community at any time. Their criticism would be justified, however, if they came forward with some concrete proposals that could be considered in place of the Agreement and that could have saved us from the evil effects of the Areas Reservation Bill. But that they have not been able to do. Nor are they willing to give the Agreement a chance to work. After all, we all know that the Agreement is not one that we should have liked it to be, but that it is the best that could be arrived at in the cir-

cumstances. It has been arrived at honourably between the two Governments and has been accepted by the people of India and of South Africa with the clear understanding that it should be given an opportunity to work, and with the reservation that if it were found unworkable by either party it would have the right to withdraw from it. To ensure the proper working of the Agreement the Union Government have allowed an Agent of the Government of India to be present in the country. Now, before finding fault with the Agreement how far have we helped to work the Agreement? Is it unreasonable to ask the community to fulfil its own responsibilities in regard to the Agreement and to see what response we get from the other side? Should we find, after having done that, that an adequate response is not coming forth, that the Agreement is unworkable, there will still be ample time and even more justification to reject the Agreement and seek another course. It is for this reason that we have said that "neither the Agreement nor the mere presence of the Agent of the Government of India is going to bring salvation to us" unless we ourselves are active, not in squabbles at a time when we are in constant danger of being robbed but in uniting our forces and in setting about earnestly with the work that lies immediately before us with peace and amity.

INDIAN EDUCATION COMMISSION

IT is with great pleasure and gratification that we learn that the Natal Administration has decided in accordance with the terms of the Capetown Agreement to appoint a Commission to enquire into the condition of Indian education in Natal, which the Agreement had described to be "grave." We had no doubt that the Union Government, having been party to the Agreement, would stay by it and do their part loyally and in good faith. But in this particular matter, the goodwill of the Natal Administration was essential, for the Union Government could only, constitutionally speaking, recommend the appointment of such a Commission and it was for the Natal Government to actually appoint one. Before the arrival in this country of Mr. Sastri this goodwill was a doubtful commodity. The provincial Council had nearly turned down the Agreement and the prospect of the upliftment section being implemented

was remote. We have no hesitation in saying that the welcome change in the attitude of the Natal Administration is very largely due to the personality and the good work of Mr. Sastri. Natal has now given proof that she will loyally accept the Agreement and carry out the obligations consequent thereon. For this we are indeed grateful to the Natal Administration and we have every hope that the lead given by it will be accepted by the people in Natal and the spirit of the Agreement will come into greater evidence as days pass on.

We are very pleased to learn that the terms of reference will be comprehensive and the sittings will be public, and that the Commission will have the assistance of an expert from India. There is however one element about it that seems extraordinary as Commissions go. The personnel is to consist of the members of Executive with two other members from the Provincial Council. Such Commissions are generally composed of experts. That procedure might well have been followed in this case also. However the decision is there and we must make the best of it. We hope that the Commission will tour round the country and afford all possible facilities for evidence to be led before it. We hope also that the Indian community will realise the opportunity now placed before it and will rise equal to it, and take full advantage of it. On the recommendations of this Commission depends the future of the Indian population in this country to a large extent.

We learn that the good news about the Commission was announced yesterday, which was Mr. Sastri's fifty-eighth birthday, and we congratulate him on the happy coincidence,

Who is to Blame for Insanitation Among Indians?

Mahatma Gandhi writes in *Young India* dated Aug. 11 under the heading "Indian Settlers In South Africa."

India's first Ambassador has not allowed the grass to grow under his feet. He is busily sowing seeds of true union by seasonable word now addressed to the Europeans and now to the Indian settlers, and he seems to be having fair success with both. Europeans gracefully acknowledge his splendid worth and exquisite impartiality. Indians gratefully recognise the immense strength of character which backs every word that this great son of India utters.

He has now appealed to them to produce an army of social workers in the cause of public health and sanitation. Let us hope that his appeal will not fall upon deaf ears, and that well-to-do and educated Indians will respond as zealously as they did when C. F. Andrews appealed to them for assistance for the scavenging work he did during the outbreak of small-pox in Durban some months ago. Agent though he is of the Government, if Reuter's report is correct, Mr. Sastri did not spare it over its criminal indifference about the sanitary and social welfare of the indentured Indians. For the neglect of sanitation amongst the indentured Indians, three parties

are really responsible,—the Government of India, the employers, and the Local Government. If the Government of India had insisted upon a minimum standard, and if the employers had taken a human interest in the employes and the Local Government had considered the indentured Indians as future citizens of South Africa, they would have learnt, during their five years' indenture, habits of modern sanitation. For during the five years of indenture they had to live like soldiers in barracks and they could have been made to conform to any reasonable sanitary regulations that might have been framed, even as they were made to conform to labour regulations which were often even harsh and severe. But this is past history. There is no more indentured emigration now.

The question is how to make of the existing Indian population model citizens, and if the Government and the Indian settlers co-operate, it is not at all impossible to set a better tone, and create a healthy Indian public opinion that would not tolerate any insanitation or ugliness. Let the Indian settlers do their part by forming sanitation brigades, cleaning up latrines and streets and instructing ignorant people in the elementary laws of sanitation, even as they did in 1897 in Durban. Mr. Sastri's work will be fruitless unless he is willingly, intelligently and whole-heartedly helped by the Indian settlers. They must conform to the wholesome maxim of law that those who seek justice or equity must come with clean hands. Let the settlers be clean in body, mind and soul, and thus make the best use of the golden opportunity they have of having an ambassador who has got the ability to serve them and who has in a remarkable measure the ear of the European inhabitants of South Africa.

Husbands Prohibited From Bringing Their Wives in the Transkei

Ejection Order Upheld On Appeal

Bloemfontein, Sept. 17.—At the Appellate Court the case of Rex v. Barmania was heard to-day.

Appellant was the wife of an Indian born in Griqualand East, and now resident at Umzimkulu. She had been charged before the Magistrate of Umzimkulu with contravention of Proclamation 264, of 1904, in that she entered the Transkei Territory without a special permit. She was convicted and sentenced to pay a fine of 5s., or four days' imprisonment, and ordered to leave the Transkei. An appeal to the Eastern Districts' Supreme Court had been dismissed.

Her petition for leave to appeal against the latter decision stated that applicant was born in Mauritius and married her husband in 1910. Applicant landed in Durban on Sept. 8, 1926, and had her passport vised by the Immigration Officer of Natal. She was accompanied by a female child of eight years, said to be the issue of the marriage.

On Nov. 28, 1926, a police sergeant called upon her at Umzimkulu and ascertained that she had no permit to enter the Transkei. She was then prosecuted and convicted.

For applicant it was contended that Proclamation 264, of 1904, under which applicant had been convicted, was ultra vires, because though discriminating between Europeans and Asiatics, it had not received the Royal Assent; alternatively, counsel contended that the Proclamation had been superseded through the application of the Cape Immigration Act of 1906 to the Transkei, and thereafter by the Union Immigration Act of 1913, which repealed the Act of 1906.

Mr. Baxter, Solicitor General of the Cape Eastern districts, contended, in reply to the first contention

that there was no need for the Proclamation to have the Royal Assent, as the Governor acted as agent for the Crown in promulgating the Proclamation. On the second point, counsel contended that the Proclamation dealt in effect with the Pass Laws, and did not prohibit immigration as did the Immigration Acts.

The Chief Justice intimated that the court was satisfied that the leave to appeal should not be granted, but that, in view of the importance of the case the reasons would be given at a later date.—(Reuter).

Health Boards and Indians

Protest Against Excessive Rates

Under the auspices of the Cato Manor and District Indian Farmers' Association a mass meeting of Indians was held at Temple Premises, Cato Manor on Sunday morning when a resolution was unanimously passed protesting against the rates charged by the Mayville Health Board.

It is estimated that there were over 1,000 people present.

Mr. Naidoo who occupied the chair, spoke briefly on the work that had been done by the Public Health since its formation, which, he said, had resulted in no betterment whatever in the sanitation of the district. The money collected, he said, was merely spent in routine administration, and he asked if it were not high time that Indian ratepayers should make an appeal to the Provincial authorities in order that matters might be remedied.

Other speakers urged that it was very necessary that an improved state of sanitation be brought about, but this, it was said, would never be achieved without the co-operation of the Indian ratepayers.

The following resolutions were adopted unanimously, in addition to several other resolutions:—

"This mass meeting of the ratepayers held under the auspices of the Cato Manor and District Indian Farmers' and Residents Association, hereby resolves to place on record a protest against excessive rates and interest charged by the Mayville Health Board, and further resolves that having regard to the fact that since the formation of Health Boards the activity of these institutions has not resulted in improved sanitary condition of the suburbs, and in view of the fact that the payment of excessive rates and interest thereon in return for no service whatsoever, is causing considerable hardships to the ratepayers, this mass meeting resolves to send a deputation consisting of representative delegates from every area where there is a Health Board to his Honour the Administrator in order to state their grievances and to urge on the Provincial authorities the necessity for radical reforms in the constitution and function of the Health Boards, so as to render them a really useful factor in the advancement of the public health of the community."

"This mass meeting further hereby resolves that the attention of Mr. V. S. Sastri, Agent to the Government of India, be drawn to the grievances arising out of public health boards, which are proving instruments of oppression and a contributory factor to an indirect pressure on the Indians for voluntary repatriation, and therefore this meeting is of the opinion that the aforesaid deputation shall, in consultation with Mr. V. S. Sastri, take such steps as they may deem expedient to seek remedial measures in order to carry out the objects of resolution 1."

The following were appointed to comprise the delegation: B. Naidoo, A. M. Naidoo, Boji Naidoo, R. B. Singh and Carim Khan.

Taxation Inquiry Commission

The above Commission which is composed of Messrs. F. C. Hollander, M. P. C., O. J. Johnson, M. P. C., J. A. Lidgett, M. P. C., and T. M. Wadley, M. P. C., will consider in particular whether the existing taxation is fair and equitable, and what alteration is desirable, and also whether the Government grants now made to the Province are fair and equitable, and, if not, what steps should be taken to secure grants commensurate with the reasonable requirements of the Province.

The Indian community will also lay their case before the Commission. Mr. S. R. Naidoo, Secretary, Natal Indian Congress (Maritzburg Branch) interviewed by *Witness*, said, that the Indian got no adequate return for what he paid. He instanced the educational vote, which, he stated, was reduced and kept to the minimum when it concerned the educational needs of the Indians. In other departments, such as, "Roads" or even "Hospitals," no adequate return was made in proportion to what the Indians contributed to the Provincial funds towards income tax, and entertainment tax.

"In addition to these taxes," stated Mr. Naidoo, "the Union Government derives an enormous revenue from licences and Customs on Indian food-stuffs, as rice, ghee, lentils, spices, condiments, etc., a part of which," he considered, "should be put to the requirements of the Province."

Discussing the subject further, Mr. Naidoo said that the Amended Personal Tax would secure a return from a fair percentage of the Indians, and the majority, while admittedly they would escape this liability, belonged to the labouring class and were not in a position to pay.

Concluding, Mr. Naidoo stated that the Indian Congress would consider laying its viewpoint, on the terms of reference, before the committee.

Mr. Lakhi's Gift To Greytown Municipality

The Greytown Municipality have accepted the care of the piece of ground on which are situated the foundations of the house in which the late General Botha was born. The ground is to be converted into a garden that will be a fitting memorial to the memory of the dead statesman.

The ground came into the possession of Mr. M. E. Lakhi, of Greytown, and he, taking advantage of Mr. Sastri's visit to the town, wrote to the Agent-General asking him, in view of Mr. Sastri's deep interest in the late General Botha, to accept the ground as an expression of Mr. Lakhi's heartfelt appreciation of the freedom he and his family enjoyed under the Imperial Crown. It was Mr. Lakhi's wish that the ground should be placed under the care of the Greytown Town Council, and in handing the acre plot over to the Corporation Mr. Sastri paid a tribute to General Botha.

Mr. J. C. Bekker, the Mayor of the town, accepted the charge and promised to make worthy of the dead statesman's memory.

Mr. Sastri planted a tree on the plot. Mrs. Hansmeyer, a sister of General Botha, was present during the ceremony.

A Reuter's message from Simla states that:

The Assembly passed the first reading of a Government bill prohibiting attacks on the founders of religions. The operative clause of the Bill lays down a penalty of two years' imprisonment, plus a fine, for deliberate insults, whether spoken or otherwise, against the religion of any other class of His Majesty's subjects.

Viceroy's Reply To East African Indian Deputation

Simla, Sept. 18.—Replying to a deputation from the Indian Legislature regarding Indians in East Africa, Lord Irwin, the Viceroy, said the Government would do its best to give effect to the view that Indian interests should be represented by Indians, but the final decision regarding the personnel rested with the British Government. The suggestion that the Government should send a small deputation to East Africa was engaging the attention of the Government, which would do its utmost adequately to protect legitimate Indian interests in Kenya.

Lord Irwin added that he could not help feeling that questions in East Africa should not be unaffected by the recent developments in the relations of India with South Africa, for which he paid a tribute to the Habibullah deputation, Mr. Sastri, and the Rev. O. F. Andrews.

His excellency said he trusted that the spirit in South Africa would not be without its influence beyond the territories of the Union: at any rate, the atmosphere to-day was more favourable than that which prevailed even a few years ago.

The Story of My Experiments With Truth

[BY M. K. GANDHI]

Part III.

Chapter IX.

SIMPLE LIFE

I had indeed started on a life of ease and comfort but the experiment was short-lived. I had furnished the house with care but it failed to hold me. So no sooner had I started on that life than I began to cut down the expenses. The washerman's bill was pretty heavy and he was by no means noted for his punctuality and even two to three dozen shirts and collars were found insufficient for me. Collars had to be changed daily and shirts every alternate day, if not daily. This meant a double expense. This appeared to me unnecessary. So I equipped myself with washing outfit to save it. I read a book on the art of washing and learnt it and taught it to my wife. This added no doubt to my work, but its novelty made it a pleasure.

I can never forget the first collar that I washed myself. I had used more starch than necessary and the iron was not made hot enough and for fear of burning the collar I had not pressed it enough. The result was that though the collar was fairly stiff the superfluous starch continually dropped off it. I went to court with the collar on and invited the ridicule of brother barristers. Even in those days I could be impervious to ridicule.

'Well,' said I, 'this is my first experiment at washing my collar myself and hence the loose starch. But that is no trouble to me and there is the additional advantage of providing you so much fun.'

'But surely there is no lack of laundries here?' asked a friend.

'The laundry bill is very heavy' said I. 'The charge for washing a collar is almost as much as its price and even then there is the eternal dependence on the washerman. I would far rather prefer to wash my things myself.'

I could not make my friends appreciate the beauty of self-help. I may add that in course of time I became an expert washerman so far as my own work went, and my washing was by no means inferior to laundry washing. My collars were no less stiff or shiny than others.

When Gokhale came to South Africa he had with him a scarf which was a gift from Mahadev Govind Ranade. He treasured the memento with the utmost care and used it only on special occasions. One such occasion was the banquet given in his honour by the Johannesburg Indians. The scarf was creasy and wanted ironing. It was not possible to send it to the laundry and get it back immediately. I offered to try my art. 'I can trust to your capacity as a laywer, but not as a washerman,' said Gokhale. 'What if you should spoil it? Do you know what it means to me?'

With this he narrated to me with much joy the story of the gift. I still insisted and guaranteed good work and got his permission to iron it, and won his certificate. Now I did not mind if the whole world refused me its certificate.

And just as I freed myself from the slavery of the washerman, even so I threw off the dependence on the barber. All people going to England learn there at least the art of shaving, but none to my knowledge cut his own hair. I had to learn that too. I once went to an English hair-cutter in Pretoria. He contemptuously refused to cut my hair; I certainly felt hurt, but immediately purchased a pair of clippers and cut my hair before the mirror. I succeeded more or less in cutting the front hair; but I spoiled the back. The friends in the court shook with laughter.

'What's wrong with your hair, Gandhi? Rats have been at it?'

'No. The white barber would not condescend to touch my black hair. So I preferred to cut it myself, no matter how badly.'

The reply did not surprise the friends. The barber was not at fault in having refused to cut my hair. There was every chance of his losing his customers, if he cut black men's hair. We do not allow our barbers to serve our untouchable brethren. I got the reward of it in South Africa, not once, but many a time, and the conviction that it is the punishment for our own sins has saved me from being angry.

The extreme forms in which my passion for self-help and simplicity ultimately expressed itself will be described in their proper place. But the seed had been long sown. It only needed water to take root and flower and fructify, and the watering came in due course.

For Neat Printing

of

All Description

at

Moderate Prices

TRY

"INDIAN OPINION" Office

P. O. PHOENIX,

Natal.