

Indian Opinion

No. 36—Vol. XXIV.

Friday, September 3rd, 1926.

Registered at the G.P.O. as a Newspaper
Price Fourpence

NOTES AND NEWS

AS advertised elsewhere in this issue the fifth anniversary of the M. K. Gandhi Library and Parsee Rustomjee Hall will be celebrated on Thursday the 9th instant. This is perhaps the only institution in South Africa the Indian community can well be proud of, and thanks for it are due to the late Mr. Parsee Rustomjee. Parsees are by nature philanthropists and this fact has been proved to the hilt by Mr. Rustomjee for there are not more than a hundred or two Parsees in the whole of the Union and yet a Parsee is responsible for supplying a want of the whole community in general. If a single person can do so much for the community how much more can a body of a few in the position of Mr. Rustomjee not do? It is institutions such as these that will go to improve the status of our community in this country and Mr. Rustomjee has set a noble example for others blessed with wealth as he was to follow. Whenever the anniversary of this institution is celebrated one cannot help but praise the donor rather than the institution itself. The latter really requires no praise. It is like an ocean of knowledge wherefrom one can drink and drink to one's heart's content and yet it remains the same. Mr. Rustomjee has not only established this institution but has even provided for its maintenance and the community has only to take free advantage of it as much as it possibly could. While wishing the fifth anniversary of this useful institution, which stands as a monument to the life of Mr. Rustomjee and is a blessing to the Indian community of Durban in particular and of South Africa in general, every success we sincerely wish that it may live long to celebrate many such anniversaries.

The Union Government deputation on the Asiatic question sailed for India last Monday per the *s.s. Taktiwa*. Mr. O. S. Vermooten, M.L.A., for Dordrecht, has taken the place of Mr. M. O. Malan, M.L.A., for Heilbron who has not been able to accompany the deputation, and Mr. J. R. Hartshorne, the Principal Immigration Officer of the Transvaal who acted as secretary to the Government of India deputation has accompanied the present deputation as their secretary.

The deputation, it is understood, will proceed direct to Simla, the headquarters of the Indian Government, after which they will visit the north-west frontier province to view the army, and, thereafter, pay a visit to two of the sacred cities—Benares and Agra—and view the wonderful Taj Mahal in the latter place. The deputation is due to return on November 3, and the Conference with the Union Government will be held at Capetown some time in December on the Prime Minister's return from Europe.

During the absence of Mr. F. W. Beyers, the leader of the Union Government deputation to India, the portfolio of Minister of Mines and Industries

will be held by Colonel F. H. P. Creswell (Minister of Defence).

DECK PASSENGERS ON B.I.S.N. CO., BOATS

THERE is hardly a boat that arrives here from India when some complaint about the inconveniences suffered by the Indian deck passengers is not heard. Either it is of too many passengers crammed together in too little space, or it is about the insanitary condition of the lavatories, or of no bathing accommodation or of inadequate supply of water, or of the food being unclean or half-cooked or of some such or other thing. Some bitter complaints have been made to us by some passengers who arrived recently by the *s.s. Karapara*, that they were not supplied with sufficient quantity of sweet water; that the lavatories were on some occasions kept locked unnecessarily thereby causing a great deal of inconvenience to the passengers; that the food supplied by the Hindu caterers was unclean and very often insufficiently cooked; that one of the passengers who offered to pay for second class accommodation owing to the ill-health of his wife was refused that accommodation although there were second-class cabins vacant.

While we are ready to admit that there may be some exaggeration on the part of the passengers who make these complaints and that the passengers themselves may also be to blame in some respects we are not prepared to reject *in toto* all the complaints they have to make. There is no doubt that there is a certain amount of truth in them. It is true, for instance, that the deck passengers are not given the attention that they are entitled to. It is true that they are often harassed in connection with their supply of water, bathroom and lavatory arrangement. It is true also that either the Hindu or Mahomedan caterers now and then harass them in regard to the food they

supply them. The one motive underlying all this seems to be the extortion of money from these passengers. It is really a case of the poor suffering for the sins of the rich. There are some, or rather a selected few who, owing to their higher position than the rest, or owing to their being somewhat prominent and able to make their voices heard, are paid special attention to. There are others, again, who can afford to have special attention paid to them by giving liberal tips. And then at the end of the voyage testimonials are begged and are given by those who have received this favourable treatment. These testimonials act, as it were, as a licence to those responsible to be indifferent to the poorer class of passengers who cannot afford to pay more than the legitimate charges. Of course we do believe that these grievances can be redressed if the attention of the Captain were drawn to them. But very often these people are illiterate and are afraid of approaching the Captain and a mean advantage is taken by the subordinates of their illiteracy. On the other hand, of course, a searching inspection on the part of the Captain himself would certainly go a great deal to improve this situation. And above all the Shipping Company themselves should surely realise that they are carrying in the boats passengers and not cattle and that it is their duty to see that the passengers in all classes are properly and comfortably accommodated.

That Round Table Conference

Mr. M. K. Gandhi writes as follows in *Young India* dated July 22 :—

So it has been announced that the forthcoming Conference on the position of Indians in South Africa is to take place in Capetown and that a Commission from South Africa is likely to visit India in order to study Indian conditions. The Commission is to include Dr. Malan the present Secretary for the Interior and Mr. Duncan an ex-Secretary.

This is all to the good.

It is good that the Conference is to take place in South Africa. The Union Government being a wholly responsible government must have in all its undertakings the backing of public opinion in a sense in which the Indian Government has never felt itself under the necessity of having. Moreover no public opinion needs to be created in India in favour of the Indian claim. It is there already. In South Africa too much cannot be done to educate European opinion on the absolute justice of the Indian claim. If, therefore, the Union Government mean well and the selection of Indian representatives is wisely made, apart from the value of its deliberations, the Conference can be a means of directing European opinion in the right channel.

It is well also that a Commission from South Africa is to visit India. It will gather impressions which only a personal visit can make. No amount of reading literature or meeting representatives can possibly make

up for local inspection and seeing the people themselves face to face.

It is well also that the Commission is to include top men who are supposed to have studied the question. Our case is so just that the more it is studied, the better it is for us. We have nothing to lose by the closest examination and the widest publicity. The more South Africans visit us, the better for us. The greatest stumbling block in the way of a settlement is the ignorance, on the Indian question, of the best among South Africans. They merely know the demand of the interested White traders. They know little of the Indian side. If the Conference results in a serious study of the question, the bogey of an Indian invasion or even the competition of those Indians who are already settled there will disappear in a moment.

There is the other side to the picture. General Hertzog's speeches are disturbing. I do not conceive the possibility of justice being done to Indians, if none is rendered to the natives of the soil. The mentality is the same in respect of Indians as of the natives. Indeed it is much worse regarding Indians. Natives, it is said, have a claim upon the consideration of the Whites; Indians are mere interlopers. 'Of course, it is forgotten that Indians were enticed in the first instance to go to South Africa to labour for the Whites and that they were promised permanent settlement under advantageous terms. The point, however, just now is not what they were promised but what is the mentality of the Whites towards the Indian settlers. And it being one of greater hostility towards them, justice to them is not to be expected if injustice is done to the natives. To reduce it to the lowest terms, the wish to see justice done to the natives is based upon selfish considerations. If go a little deeper we shall discover that justice can never be purchased at the expense of another. When the seer prayed 'may all people be happy' he intuitively perceived a scientific truth'

Dean Palmer's Sympathy With Natives

In the Very Rev. W. A. Palmer, Dean of Johannesburg, the darker races of this country have a sincere friend. He is one who has unlike others spoken fearlessly on many an occasion on the inequitable treatment meted out to the Natives and Indians. At a large meeting at Grahamstown recently under the auspices of the Anglican missionary campaign the Dean is reported to have again spoken forcibly on some of the grievances of the natives.

One grievance, he said, was that the natives had precious little representation and opportunity of making themselves articulate, while they had to pay many taxes. At the same time they did not know where those taxes went, and, moreover, they felt those taxes were not expended on themselves.

Were the Europeans in the position of the natives, they would feel distinctly uncomfortable. The native thought he was a pawn in the political game. He felt that under the present system he had no security of tenure.

He would say nothing about the Native Bills the Prime Minister would introduce next session, said the speaker, beyond expressing the hope that the natives would benefit under them. In regard to these Bills, they could not be surprised that the native was suspicious and apprehensive. There was nothing to justify them in taking any other view.

The native smarted under a sense of injustice. He (the Dean) had seen European and native motor drivers fined £1 in the Johannesburg Magistrates' Court for committing similar offences. That was not equal justice, because £1 to a native was equal to a third of his month's wage.

The public must try and get more in contact with the native mind. The native must be Christianised and educated, and everyone who opposed that policy

went against the reports of the Commissions which sat in 1904 and 1914. If they wanted a United South Africa, consideration must not be confined to the two white races. The native races must be included.

OUR LONDON LETTER

[FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT]

5th August 1926.

In factories, workshops, mines, railroads; in contact with everyday problems of education, health, land-settlement, agriculture, transport or housing, it has been in on me that if civilisation is to go on it can only progress along a road of which the foundations have been laid by scientific thought and research. I have come to realise that the future solution of practically all the domestic and social difficulties with which we have to grapple will only be found by scientific methods. Science is only another name for knowledge, and any man who goes about the world with his eyes open cannot fail to acquire knowledge of some sort. Thus spoke the Prince of Wales in the course of his presidential address to the British Association at Oxford last night on Science and the State. And in a wide survey of the practical results achieved by science in everyday life he ranged from sunlight cures to frayed collars, and from Salmon fishing to clean milk. Vitamins, building, dyeing, industrial power and new wheats were among the subjects he touched. The address was well received and the Earl of Balfour who is the oldest living ex-president of the British Association thanked the Prince for his speech and said that he had listened to it with breathless interest.

Yesterday in the House of Commons Mr. Churchill made the important announcement that the Government intend to prevent Civil Service Trade Unions from being connected with the Trade Union Council or any political body. This is one of the consequences of the general strike when the trade unionists in the Civil Service were urged to express their sympathy with the strikers by means of contributions. The proposed legislation when passed will cut off a number of trade unions, numbering over 126,000 members, from membership not only of the Trade Union Congress but also of the Socialist Party. The statement which Mr. Churchill made in answer to a question was as follows: "The Government have come definitely to the conclusion that it is contrary to the public interest that associations of Civil Servants should be affiliated to outside industrial and political organisations and intend in due course to introduce legislation to deal with the matter."

The coal strike continues. And Parliament rises for the Summer vacation within the next few days. A settlement of the strike appears as far off as ever. A miners' deputation headed by Miss Wilkinson M.P., is leaving for America to collect funds for the wives and children of the miners on strike.

Reports of rumours from India are appearing in the papers here regarding the affairs in the State of Hyderabad. It is stated that though there is no official confirmation of it the Government of India has sent to Nizam who is the Premier Indian Prince an ultimatum expiring on the 20th inst. The ultimatum alleges corruption in the State with consequent lowering of efficiency in administration, and demands among other things the appointment of British officials to important administrative posts in order that the whole administration may be overhauled. Intense excitement is said to prevail in the city of Hyderabad and throughout the State. The Nizam of Hyderabad represents a Royal House which has been a loyal ally of the British from the time of the Indian Mutiny, and in the time of the Mutiny itself Lord Ephinstone the then Governor of Bombay telegraphed that "If the Nizam goes, all is lost." But the then Nizam didn't, he supported the British. Recently the present Nizam raised the question of the

permanent lease of the Province of Berar a district extending over 18,000 square miles—an area larger than Denmark or Switzerland—and containing 8,506,000 people which was once part of Hyderabad. It was, at first, for long assigned to the British Government, or held in trust by them to meet certain obligations of the Hyderabad Government; and, then, in 1902 the late Lord Curzon as Viceroy is said to have induced the late Nizam to lease the Province permanently for certain payments. Lord Reading as Viceroy in reply to the Nizam, refused to open the question and rebuked the Nizam for claiming to treat with the British Government on equality on any question.

The Story of My Experiments With Truth

[BY M. K. GANDHI]

XI. Preparation for England

I passed the Matriculation Examination in 1887. It used to be held at two centres, *viz.*, Ahmedabad and Bombay, and the general poverty of the country naturally led Kathiawad students to prefer the nearer and the cheaper centre. The poverty of my family likewise dictated to me the same choice. This was my first journey from Rajkot to Ahmedabad and that too without a companion.

My elders wanted me to pursue my studies at college after the Matriculation. There was a college in Bhavnagar as well as in Bombay, and as the former was cheaper, I decided to go there and join the Samaldas College. I went, but found myself entirely at sea. Everything was difficult. I could not follow, let alone take an interest in the professors' lectures. It was no fault of theirs. The professors in that College were regarded as first-rate. Only I was so raw. At the end of the first term, I returned home.

We had in Mavji Dave,—a shrewd and learned Brahmin, an old friend and adviser of the family. He had kept up his connection with the family even after my father's death. He happened to visit us during my vacation. In conversation with my mother and elder brother, he enquired about my studies. Learning that I was at Samaldas College, he said: "The times are changed. And none of you can expect to succeed to your father's *gadi* without having had a proper education. Now as this boy is still pursuing his studies, you should all look to him as the *gadi*. It will take him four or five years to get his B.A. degree, which will at best qualify him for a sixty rupees' job, not for a Dewan-ship. If, like my son, he went in for law, it would take him still longer, by which time there would be a host of lawyers aspiring for a Dewan's post. I would far rather that you sent him to England. My son Kevalram says it is very easy to be a barrister. In three years' time he would return. Also expenses would not exceed four to five thousand. Think of that barrister who has just come back from England. How stylishly he lives! I would strongly advise you to send Mohandas to England this very year. Kevalram has numerous friends in England. He will give notes of introduction to them and Mohandas will have an easy time of it there."

Joshiji—that is how we used to call old Mavji Dave—turned to me with complete assurance and asked: "Would you not rather go to England than study here?" Nothing could be more welcome to me. I jumped at the proposal and said that the sooner I was sent the better. It was no easy business to pass examinations quickly. Could I not be sent to qualify for the medical profession?

My brother interrupted me : "Father never liked it. He had you in mind when he said that we Vaishnavas should have nothing to do with dissection of dead bodies. Father intended you for the bar."

Joshiji chimed in "I am not opposed to the medical profession like Gandhiji (my father). Our shastras are not against it. But a medical degree will not make a Dewan of you and I want you to be Dewan, or if possible something better. Only in that way could you take under your protecting wings your large family. The times are fast changing and getting harder every day. It is the wisest therefore to become a barrister." Turning to my mother, he said, "Now, I must leave. Pray ponder over what I have said. When I come here next I shall expect to hear of preparations for England. Be sure to let me know if I can assist in any way."

Joshiji went. And I began building castles in the air. My elder brother was greatly exercised in his mind. How to find the wherewithal to send me? And was it proper to trust a young man like me to go abroad alone?

My mother was sorely perplexed. She did not like the idea of parting from me. And this is how she tried to put me off: "Uncle is now the eldest member of the family. He should first be consulted, if he consents we shall consider the matter."

My brother had another idea. "We have a certain claim on the Porbandar State. Mr. Lely is the Administrator. He thinks highly of our family and Uncle is in his good books. It is just possible that he might recommend you for some State help for your education in England." I liked all this. I got ready to start off for Porbandar. There was no railway in those days. It was a five days' bullock-cart journey. I have already admitted that I was a coward. But at that moment my cowardice vanished before the desire to go to England which completely possessed me. I hired a bullock-cart as far as Dhoraji, and from Dhoraji I took a camel in order to get to Porbandar a day quicker. This was my first camel ride.

I arrived at last. I did obeisance to Uncle, and told him everything. He thought it over and said: "I am not sure whether it is possible for one to stay in England without prejudice to one's religion. From all I have heard, I have my doubts. When I meet these big barristers, I see no difference between their life and that of Europeans. They know no scruples regarding food. Cigars are never out of their mouths.

They dress as shamelessly as Englishmen. All that would not be in keeping with our family tradition. But I do not want to stand in your way. I am shortly going on a pilgrimage. I have not many years to live. At the threshold of death, how dare I give you permission to go to England, to cross the seas? But I will not stand in your way. It is your mother's permission which really matters. If she permits you, then Godspeed! Tell her I will not interfere. You will go with my blessings."

"I could expect nothing more from you," said I, "I shall now try to win Mother over. But would you not recommend me to Mr. Lely?"

"How can I do that?" said he. "But the Sahib is a good man. You ask for appointment telling him how you are connected. He will certainly give you one and may even help you."

I cannot say why my uncle did not give me a note of recommendation. I have a faint idea that he hesitated to co-operate directly in what was in his opinion an irreligious act, *viz.*, my going to England.

I wrote to Mr. Lely, who asked me to see him at his residence. He saw me as he was ascending the staircase; and saying curtly "Pass your B.A. first and then see me. No help can be given you now," he hurried upstairs. I had made elaborate preparations to meet the Sahib, I had carefully learnt up a few

sentences, and I had bowed low and saluted him with both the hands. But all to no purpose!

I thought of my wife's ornaments. I thought of my elder brother in whom I had the utmost faith. He was generous to a fault, and he loved me as his own son.

I returned to Rajkot from Porbandar and told them all that had happened. I consulted Joshiji who of course advised even incurring a debt, if necessary. I suggested the disposal of my wife's ornaments, which could fetch about two or three thousand rupees. My brother promised to find the money somehow.

My mother was however yet unwilling. She had begun making minute inquiries. Some one had told her that young men got lost in England. Another had said that they took to meat and yet another that they could not live there without liquor. "How about of this?" she asked me. I said: "Will you not trust me? I shall not lie to you. I swear that I shall not touch any of those things. If there were any such danger, would Joshiji let me go?"

"I can trust you," she said. "But how can I trust you in a distant land? I am dazed and know not what to do. I shall ask Becharji Swami."

Becharji Swami was originally a Modh Bania, but had become a Jain monk. He too was a family adviser like Joshiji. He came to my help, and said: "I shall get the boy solemnly to take three vows, and then he can be allowed to go." He administered the oath and I vowed not to touch wine, woman and meat. This done, my mother gave her permission.

The High School had a send-off in my honour. It was an uncommon thing for young man of Rajkot to go to England. I had written out a few words of thanks. But I could scarcely stammer them out. I remember how my head reeled and how my whole frame shook as I stood up to read there.

With the blessings of my elders I started for Bombay. This was my first journey from Rajkot to Bombay. My brother accompanied me. But there is many a slip twixt the cup and the lip. There were difficulties to be faced in Bombay.

For Neat Printing of

All Description

at

Moderate Prices

TRY

"INDIAN OPINION" Office

P. O. PHŒNIX,

Natal.