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TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

The Late Mrs. Ranade. INDIA has suffered an irreparable loss by the death of Mrs. Ramabai Ranade at the age of 62 on the night of Saturday last. Since the death of her husband, Mr. Justice Ranade, Vahinibai, as she was popularly called, had kept herself in active touch with a number of public institutions of which Mr. Ranade was the guiding spirit and had especially taken under her protective wings all the educational and social institutions of women in the Deccan, to which she devoted a great deal of her time and thought. Of these the Seva Sadan in Poona was largely her own creation, and both in its inception and in its present growth Mr. G. K. Devadhar derived the utmost help and guidance from her. A great part of the immense popularity which the Seva Sadan enjoys at present among the Maharashtra women was doubtless due to the fact that its activities were conducted under the close personal supervision of Mrs. Ranade. Indian womanhood always found in her a sage counsellor and a warm friend in all matters affecting its interests and her strong advocacy of women's right to the vote and to seats in the Legislatures is but a case in point. Her "Reminiscences" has become a classic in Marathi and it was a happy circumstance that just before she died a good Marathi biography of her husband had been finished, in the writing of which she helped considerably.

LAST Saturday Dr. Annie Besant, Mr. Srinivasa Sastri and Munshi Ishwar Saran left by S. S. Macedonia for London. They form the first batch of the deputation of the National Convention and the

Liberal Federation, who are to educate public opinion in England as to the imperative need for extending the present reforms on the lines to be laid down by the consensus of people's representatives. Such a deputation at the present juncture, when Labour is sympathetically casting about for the best line of approach, is of the utmost value; nor is its utility diminished in any way by the appointment by the Government of India of a Committee in India to inquire into the working of the reforms. It is not yet known whether on this Committee, which is to ascertain whether there is need for a comprehensive inquiry into any structural changes in the Reforms Act, unofficial members in the confidence of the people will be effectively associated; but whatever happens to this Committee and whatever measure of reforms it hammers out, there is immediate need for our convincing the British public that a mere tinkering of the present Act and the removal of practical difficulties experienced while working the Act will not be enough, but that the circumstances call for a substantial modification of the Act in a liberal sense. When the present deputation has thus prepared the way, there will be need subsequently for another deputation to thresh out in detail the Government's proposals in this behalf. The deputation has sailed none too soon.

White Empire Exhibition.

THE White Empire Exhibition was opened at Wembley with due pomp and circumstance. We wish India could have shared His Majesty's enthusiasm for the Empire when he said: "It represents to the world a graphic illustration of that spirit of free and tolerant co-operation which inspired the peoples of different races, creeds, institutions and ways of thought to unite in a single Commonwealth and contribute their varying national gifts to one great end." India cannot affirm the existence of a spirit of free and tolerant co-operation between the coloured peoples of the Empire and the whites. Some time ago she had great faith in the ideal of the Commonwealth, but the way in which her nationals are being treated in South Africa (despite the Gandhi-Smuts pact), Fiji and Kenya, and the manner in which the Imperial Conference resolution of 1921 has been violated in the case of Kenya, have rudely shaken that faith, and unless the Labour Party can fulfil their own promises of justice and fair treatment within a reasonable period of time, the faith of Indians in the Com-

monwealth ideal—a beautiful ideal, worthy of a great nation—will altogether disappear. India has participated to-day in the Exhibition, but without heart and out of official compulsion. The Indian pavillion is thronged, we are told, with visitors who admire her art, picturesqueness, resources, &c. But this admiration, so long as it is not accompanied by an active feeling of equality with the non-British members of the Empire, and not accompanied by a common citizenship, must be galling to self-respecting Indian visitors. India very naturally satisfies the Britisher's sense of pride in the Empire. That is why Mr. Sastri suggested the withdrawal of India from the Exhibition in order to make the Britisher understand how keenly India resents the creation of an inferior citizenship for her nationals even in a Crown Colony. From the present popularity of the Indian Section, you could well imagine what an impression the boycott would have created, if it could have been successfully organised. But alas! it was not to be.

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Barricading and after. THE Travancore police having barricaded the four streets round the temple at Vaikom, the Satyagrahis wanted Mr. Gandhi to permit them to adopt one of the following three courses: (1) to block the streets with volunteers, so that none could use them (2) to scale the barricades and dodge their way through the police and (3) start fasting again. Mr. Gandhi has very rightly disapproved of all the three courses and reminded the Satyagrahis that what is important is not the effectiveness of their action as its being right. He has rightly emphasised the need for patience on the part of the Satyagrahis. The streets cannot be barricaded for all time nor can a number of policemen always be kept there to guard them. As a matter of fact the authorities are already finding a solution. During his recent visit to Vaikom the officiating Dewan asked the Satyagrahis whether it would satisfy them if the Government opened shorter and better roads that would be open to all castes. If it means that the streets which are now in question would be permanently closed to the public, i.e. to Muhammadan, Christians and any others who may not enter the temple, and new roads only would be open for public traffic, then we think it would be a solution of the difficulty. For the question at present is not right of entry of the low castes into temples—that may come up later and then it will have to be solved—but the right of way to public roads, an ordinary civic right. If the streets in dispute are closed to the general public then the present civic disability, so far as those streets are concerned will be removed.

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Referendum. THAT however, would be a sort of compromise solution in the individual case of Vaikom, but not a general solution of the question. It would then crop up somewhere else. The best thing for the Travancore Durbar is to decide the question once for all by throwing open all

public roads to all castes. It was suggested to the officiating Dewan that a referendum should be taken on this question, but he said it was not practicable. We do not see how it is impracticable; but we think it is not necessary, since the majority of the public are clearly enough in favour of the streets being thrown open to all castes, and the State has only to enforce what it decreed nearly fifty years ago. Here is Mr. K. T. Paul's testimony to the same effect, who had recently an opportunity of examining the question on the spot:

"Looking at the controversy from a practical point of view I asked these two questions: Is it a conflict between two communities? Or is it between the State and certain individuals? The answer almost invariably was 'The latter.' The bulk of the public opinion of all castes, touchable and intouchable, seems to be in unqualified sympathy with the claims of the Satyagrahis. If a referendum were taken to-day, so far as I could judge, public opinion would be overwhelmingly in favour of throwing all public roads open to all communities. I got the impression that it is the State that is espousing the cause of a small minority of vested interests whose views are utterly antiquated and out-of-date."

* * *

Protection for Steel. THERE will be no difficulty in giving legislative effect to the recommendations of the Tariff Board in regard to the steel industry, which appear to have met with general approval. No Indian legislature will make any difficulty about the principle of protection, nor will the Government of India. Representatives of European Chambers of commerce will no doubt object to protection, but it is only to be expected, as they are more concerned with their import trade than with the interests of India. The loss of revenue that will result from the adoption of protection will be cheerfully faced both by Government and the unofficial legislators in view of the advantages to be gained in the long run. The main question before the Assembly next month will therefore be whether in making their recommendations, the Tariff Board have paid due consideration to the interests of the consumer. That they seem to have done, so far as we can judge from the Associated Press summary. For instance, the representatives of the Tatas asked for a protection of 33½ per cent., pointing out that foreign rolled steel could be made available in India at Rs. 150 per ton, while their own steel could not be put on the market at less than Rs. 200. The Tariff Board, however, have carefully examined the cost of production and the scope for economy that exists in the management of the Tatas, and come to the conclusion that at Rs. 180 per ton there would be a fair return on the capital. The recommendations of the Board thus seem to be deserving of public support.

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Policy of sabotage Modified. WHAT we were interested to know about the Swarajist gathering in Bombay last week was whether they were still determined to keep up their policy of uniform opposition to all Government measures or were going to modify it. And, though the Swarajists

are observing as much secrecy about their decision as the Government of India about its inquiry into the working of reforms, the reassuring news has leaked out that the Swarajists will no longer feel bound, by their principle of "non-co-operation from within," to refrain from making any proposals in the Councils on their own account as was their original programme, nor will they offer opposition to every proposal coming from Government—which means that they have learnt by bitter experience considerably to water down the policy of "political sabotage," to which they pledged themselves before the election. Swarajists are now empowered to bring in resolutions or Bills regarding e. g., local self-government, the release of political prisoners etc. This is a very great climb-down for the Swarajists, who till now conceived their one function in the Legislature to be to put a spoke in the Government's plans and who thought all constructive politics to be taboo for them. The immediate question they had to consider was as to their attitude to the Government of India's proposals regarding protection to the steel industry. No definite conclusion has yet been arrived at, but we know that the Swarajists are too much under capitalistic influence to make it at all possible that they would oppose these proposals. It is immaterial whether they support them by speech or by withholding their opposition, for the result in either case would be just the same. And it is hoped that this support of what they regard as good measures would be the rule rather than the exception.

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THE social conference of the Non-Brahmins of Berar, which met last week at Morshi under the presidency of the Hon. Mr. Jadhav, Education minister of Bombay, was really a political conference the presidential address being mainly devoted to an attack of the Swarajist policy in the C. P. It is of course characteristic of the Non-Brahmin party, whether in Madras or the Deccan, to hold only Brahmins responsible for the non-co-operation movement or the Swarajist policy of wrecking councils, ignoring that Messrs. Gandhi, Das, Patel and many other leaders are non-Brahmins. With some of the resolutions passed at the conference, however, we are in full sympathy. They urged that the remuneration of patels in Berar should be increased in proportion to the increments granted to Government servants that the minimum pay of Mahars be fixed at Rs. 10, that free and compulsory education be introduced in every village with a population of 500 and that gymnastic institutions be started for non-Brahmins. The object of the last resolution was euphemistically mentioned to be 'to avoid occasions of clash with the Muhammadans and to defend the Hindu Society,' but we welcome it as it will promote the physical efficiency of the nation. An important resolution adopted at the conference was that Berar be not restored to the Nizam. Curiously enough, the president is reported to have commended Mr. Mahomed Ali's much-explained foolish and fanciful remark that a degraded Muhammadan was better than Mahatma Gandhi, and to have asked the non-Brahmins to regard that a Non-Brahmin fool was better than a learned Brahmin. After this, we should think it excessive self-abnegation on the part of the conference and its president that they should have demanded only 50 per cent of the posts in Government service.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF KENYA.

PEOPLE ask why any serious politicians in India should knock their heads against the stone wall of the white policy in the Dominions and the Colonies. A British Cabinet by their recent decision with regard to Kenya have shown that if the white people in any colony desire to relegate Indians to an inferior citizenship, they would find a good deal of sympathy and support in high quarters. In South Africa an attempt is made to accentuate the colour bar and to aggravate the hardships of the Indian community with the obvious desire of making their continued residence more and more difficult. The Government of India have done and are doing what they can by means of earnest and outspoken dispatches to ameliorate the condition of Indians overseas. The India Office has not been equally assiduous in championing the Indian cause but their moral support has been constant. It is true that at the last Imperial Conference Prime Ministers of three Dominions, namely Canada, Australia and New Zealand, promised to take into early consideration the question of giving effect, through legislation, to the Resolution of 1921, which recommended the political as well as the municipal franchise to domiciled Indians. No corresponding action, however, has been taken. The position in South and East Africa meanwhile has not only deteriorated but become a danger to the Empire.

One of the grounds on which the aggression of the white population is often defended is that politically India is not yet a dominion and her people, so far from governing themselves, are in political subordination in their own country and cannot reasonably complain if they are not better treated abroad than at home. This taunt, repeated in different forms by high and low, has its own effect in embittering the feelings of young India. In many men's minds there is some necessary connection between our status abroad and our status at home, and the appeal to work for an improvement of the former before touching the latter meets with very little response. The acute political distemper of the day helps the spread of this attitude. In reality, however, the Indian patriot must regard the disabilities of his countrymen, whether here or outside, as different aspects of the same phenomenon and take up the quarrel in either sphere as it is forced upon him. He may encounter more ill-success as against the Dominions and Colonies than against the Britisher here. The stubbornness of self-governing people situated far away and dealing with very small communities naturally has more of the irritating quality, of arrogance and scorn than the resistance of a small knot of privileged men confronted with elected legislatures representing many millions.

Still the issues are vital and reach down to the hard rock of natural justice and common humanity. It is remarkable that those who would curtail our freedom in India are loud in condemning the denial of our rights abroad by their fellow-whites. Similarly these latter, remembering

their own hard struggle for emancipation from British leading strings, are only too ready to sympathise with what they regard as a legitimate movement for Dominion status for India. Besides while it is true that in South Africa and Kenya the cloud hangs thick and heavy over our fellow-countrymen, the situation elsewhere in the Empire is not without a gleam of hope. A statement made by Lord Peel at the last Imperial Conference that the position of Indians had definitely improved in large areas under the Union Jack has some foundation in fact. The struggle, therefore, though it is against tremendous odds, has to be maintained on all points as it develops from year to year. That we are nowhere aggressors should make us the more determined in defending our position.

Another way in which the same criticism is advanced is equally fallacious. Those interested in the problem of Indians overseas have often been told that they are guilty of a complete lack of the sense of proportion in devoting their energies to the interests of one lakh or two of Indians, while several hundreds of lakhs of our countrymen at home receive little or no attention at their hands. The answer to this criticism is that the cause of thousands of Indians overseas is not only their cause but that of the population of India. Our countrymen are slighted because of their race, colour and land of birth. Other countries will not hesitate to use all their influence to protect from insult or injury a single missionary, merchant, traveller or student. In fact the aggressive Western powers have made trivial incidents happening to their individual nationals the pretext for the acquisition of vast privileges or of territorial extension. Ours is an attempt of a very different category, having every justification and, rising to the dimensions and importance of duty that may not be neglected except at the cost of national degradation. The right of immigration, moreover, is a right belonging to a whole nation and we may quote again the oft-quoted opinion of the Aga Khan that no compromise will be legitimate with regard to it, as the right belongs more to posterity than to us.

Another charge brought against those aggrieved about Kenya is that besides affecting a comparatively small number of people, the grievance is neither sudden nor startling and cannot by itself change the attitude of an Indian towards the Empire or his political outlook or method. Mr. Sastri is held particularly open to this charge, after having at one time entertained great faith in the British Empire and its mission. The answer is both clear and conclusive. Our country was unanimous in declaring that on account of our peculiar relations with Kenya, that Colony supplied the acid test of the Empire. When Mr. Sastri said "Kenya lost, everything lost", he was believed to have hit upon the mind of the nation. The British Cabinet for the first time instituted a colour bar and two grades of citizenships, one for the white and one for the coloured subjects of His

Majesty, thus repudiating the idea of equality of of races within the Commonwealth. Besides pledges and promises of great authority, the Cabinet professed to have regard to the principle embodied in the Resolution of 1921 to which the Prime Minister of the day, the Colonial Secretary, the Indian Secretary and other Cabinet Ministers were party. The decision went against Indians in nearly all important particulars. Although it was notorious that the whole of the disgraceful proceeding was due to fear of a rebellion in Kenya, no allusion was made to it in the long statement issued under the authority of the Cabinet. Not a word was said to palliate this betrayal of India and of the ideals of the Empire. No hope was held out that similar actions would not be perpetrated again. On the other hand Indians were exhorted to submit to the decision as on the whole just and considerate, thus shutting the door on the future as well as on the present. During this struggle the India Office, after having brought the Indian delegation down to agree to terms of the Wood-Winterton agreement, feebly surrendered even that position and advised them to submit. The British Press, too, with a few honourable exceptions, has upheld the plea of white domination and fallen far below its own standard of impartial and chivalrous advocacy. If the contentment of the Indian Liberal remains unaffected by these circumstances, we do not envy him. If his outlook and methods of work remain unchanged, we do envy him. If his desire to further Imperial interests and join Imperial enterprises continue as strong as before, we do not envy him. To those Moderates who say that none of those happenings surprised them and that they always knew the character of the British Empire and British Government, we will only say that we thought better and still think better of the mission of the Empire.

LABOUR CONDITIONS IN ASSAM.

BY N. M. JOSHI.

THE question of securing full freedom for the labourers working on the tea-gardens in Assam is one of the most serious and urgent labour problems in India. The history of indentured labour in Assam is very sad, of which thinking Englishmen will always feel ashamed. The plantation of tea for commercial purposes began about 60 years ago. There was and still is ample uncultivated land available: in fact, the Assamese can get land for cultivation merely for the asking; but sufficient labour was never forthcoming. Tea-gardens from the beginning had to bring in labour from outside and the labourers generally belong to the uncivilized tribes. In the initial stage a suggestion was made even for imposing heavy taxes on land with a view to compelling the Assamese to go to tea-gardens for work, but the Government could not be persuaded to accept this preposterous plan. The importation of labour from out-

side is costly; the planters have to incur an expenditure of between Rs. 100 and Rs. 150 per head to bring each labourer to the garden. Naturally the planters desired to keep a firm hold on such labour as they obtained and for that purpose they asked for legislation punishing desertion and refusal to work as a criminal offence. The planters were mostly British and the Government also being British, the desired legislation could easily be obtained. The labourers were almost without any protection and scandals of the worst type were in existence for a long time. A part of this legislation has now either been repealed or abrogated by executive notifications or reformed, and some of the worst scandals regarding the conditions of life and work have been removed. But the laws which are still on the Statute Book are highly objectionable and inconsistent with the British spirit of freedom. The whole system on which the plantations have been established is such as to help the restriction of freedom still further.

ECONOMIC CONDITION.

Before describing the present legislation and the system mentioned above, it will be convenient to place before the readers a few facts regarding the situation. The total area of Assam is 61,000 sq. miles and the population 79,00,000 giving an average of 130 persons per sq. mile. There are about 880 tea-gardens with a total area of 14,00,000 acres of land, of which about 4,00,000 acres are at present under tea. The total annual production of manufactured tea is about 23 crores of pounds, yielding to the planters an annual income of about Rs. 8 crores. The total population on the tea-gardens is 9,16,000, out of whom 6,51,000 are actual workers and 2,65,000 are dependents. Of the people on the tea gardens 3,30,000 persons were born in Assam. Most of them live on the gardens; only about half a per cent. do not live on the gardens. As regards the economic condition of the labouring population exact figures of the average wages for the province are not available. But the average maximum wage may be estimated at between Rs. 8 and Rs. 10 per month for an adult male, between Rs. 6 and Rs. 8 for an adult woman and about Rs. 4 for a working child. Concessions in the form of free housing, cheap rice, free medical treatment, land for private rice cultivation may be estimated to give each family an additional average monthly income of about Re. 1 or about four annas per head per month. The average annual cost of housing a family, say, of four persons is estimated at between Rs. 10 and Rs. 20. In leisure time each family on an average cultivates two-fifths of an acre of rice-land giving an annual income of Rs. 12 or Re. 1 per family per month or 4 annas per month for each working member. The labourers also do not pay for grazing their cattle if they have any and also for fuel which they themselves gather in the leisure time from the garden forest. But the aggregate total value of these concessions cannot exceed the figure given above.

THREE LAWS WHICH MAKE FOR SERFDOM.

Although I have given the above figure regarding the income of labourers on the tea-gardens it is not my object to discuss at length their economic condition in this article. My immediate and main purpose is to point out how little freedom the labourer possesses and to suggest measures for restoring it to him. There are three legislative measures on the Statute Book which can compel a workman to work for an employer with whom he has made an agreement for service and which in case of his refusal to serve can punish him with imprisonment as a criminal offender. The Assam Emigration Act (VI of 1901 as amended later) is one of such legislative measures. Some sections of this Act, notably the section giving power to the planter to arrest a labourer, have been withdrawn by executive notification. The operation of the Act as well as of some of its sections is also restricted to certain areas. Unfortunately these notifications are so numerous that it is very difficult to say what the exact position of this particular law is. It is true that at present very few agreements are signed under its provisions, and in practice it is only used to give the Local Government power to inspect the gardens. But the Act still remains on the Statute Book and it is still within the power of the Government to cancel the notifications and revive the most objectionable features of the Act without the sanction of the Legislature.

The second piece of legislation of a similar nature is the Workmen's Breach of Contract Act (XIII of 1859 as amended in 1920). Under this Act the agreement for service can specifically be enforced by sending a labourer to jail if he has taken an advance of money. This advance is given and is always allowed to remain with the labourer in order to keep him under the operation of this Act. Concerning the true nature of the advance a judicial officer has stated: "The cases that have come before me were always cases where the employer had given an advance with the object of reducing him (the employee) to a state of slavery." As the Government of India have now admitted that this Act is against the modern spirit and agreed to repeal it before 1926, nothing further is necessary to be said about it.

The third legislative measure which serves the purpose of maintaining the hold of the employer on the employee is section 492 of the Indian Penal Code. This section is not yet used on the tea-gardens, but the danger is that if the Workmen's Breach of Contract Act is repealed, this section of the Penal Code may be put in force. From my talk with some lawyers in Assam who have some experience of the cases of tea-garden labourers I may say that this danger may prove to be real.

EMPLOYERS' DEVICES AND OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES.

This threefold legislation is clearly intended to keep the labourer under control. At present

only Act XIII of 1859 is mainly relied upon in Assam. The fear of criminal prosecution and imprisonment binds the labourer to the garden. No doubt the labourer can plead ill-treatment or some other excuse. But he is too illiterate and poor to take advantage of this plea and get proper legal assistance. Moreover, the Assam Labour Enquiry Committee has found that this legislation has tended to keep down the wages as well as to make recruitment of new labourers difficult. This legal restriction upon the freedom of the labourer on the tea-gardens is also strengthened by various other devices and circumstances. Chief among these is the agreement among the members of the Planters' Association. By the first article of this agreement all labourers living within the area of a garden are to be considered coolies of that garden. The remaining articles prohibit the employment of labourers of one garden by another and penalties are provided for a breach of this agreement and compensation for the recruitment expenses can be claimed. The joint operation of the Act and this agreement among the planters practically places the labourer at the mercy of the employer and reduces him to a state of slavery. Even if the labourer of one garden wants to marry a girl working on another garden he cannot do so unless he provides a labourer as a substitute for his intending wife, the substitute generally being found in his sister or some other relative. The necessity for providing a substitute is sometimes avoided by the managers of the tea-gardens themselves coming to some agreement for the interchange of labourers.

Besides this agreement there are other circumstances which tend to restrict the freedom of the labourer. One of them is that the labourers have generally to live on the garden estates which are generally very large, sometimes extending to more than 5,000 acres. In the first place the labourer cannot easily leave the garden without his master knowing of it. Every garden has its own chowkidars (guards) who are not above using their power (though illegally used) to prevent the labourer from leaving the garden estate. But the worst effect of the labourers living on these vast estates is that the labourers are prevented from coming into contact with any outside influence. No outsider, however well intentioned he may be, can easily approach the labourer without making himself liable for prosecution for trespass, with the result that no agency for social, religious or educational work can start its activities among the labourers without the permission of the managers of the gardens. No one can think of organising unions. Most of the roads leading to the gardens and especially the residential quarters of the labourers are private. This want of contact with the outside world prevents the labourers from coming under civilising influences. They have to spend their life amongst people of the same status and condition. Managers of the tea-gardens under these circumstances can exer-

cise an almost unlimited power and influence over the labourers and all the evils of the old feudal system are introduced into a new tract of country.

Another circumstance which to some extent, though much smaller, restricts the freedom of the labourer is the fact that the labourer's home is at a great distance and the journey back is costly. Some of the labourers go to Assam from the Madras Presidency, some from Central Provinces and United Provinces. Few can afford to find money to pay for the railway fare.

GIVE THE LABOURER HIS FREEDOM.

All these circumstances together completely reduce the labourer to a state of practical slavery. Unfortunately he has no means of freeing himself from his serfdom. He has no education to be self-reliant. There are very few schools on the tea-gardens. Out of nearly 10,00,000 labourers on the tea-gardens only 5000 are literate, the percentage of literary being thus only '5. They have no organisation and cannot have any under the present circumstances. The employers generally regard any improvement in the condition of the labourers as regards education and organisation as being against their interests. The Government and the Legislatures are, to say the least, indifferent. The Government of Assam have nominated the manager of a large garden as a labour representative on the Assam Legislative Council. This gentleman is, I know, a very sympathetic employer; but it will certainly be a very hard task for him to reconcile his position as a member of the Planters' Association with the position which he has accepted as a representative of labourer.

But the present position cannot be allowed to last any longer. The Government of India as well as the Assam Government must move along and introduce into their administration a greater spirit of freedom and justice not only for the educated and higher classes, but even in the treatment of the most ignorant and the poorest of the poor. The members of the Indian Legislature as well as of the Assam Provincial Legislature will be failing in their duty if they allow the labourers on the tea-gardens of Assam to continue any longer in their present condition of bondage. Political freedom will have no value to the working classes of the country if it is not to be used for freeing them from the fetters which are forged to keep them in a state of serfdom. The Labour Party in England has also a duty to perform in this matter. The British Government and the British Planters are solely responsible for depriving the labourers on the tea-gardens of their freedom and the British Labour Party ought to help in giving it back to them. Even the League of Nations cannot escape from its responsibility in this matter. If it desires, as it ought, to remove the slightest vestige of slavery from the nations which are its constituent members. Is it not much to hope that the joint effect of the co-operation of all these forces will result in immediately restoring to freedom the poor and helpless labourers on the tea-gardens of Assam?

HOW CAN FREEDOM BE RESTORED.

If this object is to be achieved, the first thing necessary to be done is the simultaneous repeal of the threefold legislation mentioned above. The repeal of only the Workmen's Breach of Contract Act contemplated by the Government of India will still make it possible for the evil to revive. Along with the repeal of this law it will be necessary to enact legislation on the lines of the Indian Factories Act to regulate the conditions of life and work on the tea-gardens and enable Government to inspect these conditions. The Assam Labour Enquiry Committee has emphasised the need for better inspection.

Legislation may also be necessary to declare the agreements signed by the members of the Planters' Association and putting restrictions upon the employment of labourers, as being illegal on the ground of public interests and public morals. As long as the agreement exists labourers on the tea-gardens cannot be really free.

It is also necessary to declare all residential areas on the tea-gardens and the roads leading thereto to be open to the public in order that the labourers on the gardens may be freely approached by people unconnected with the gardens and may thus be brought into real contact with outside civilising influences and their organization may become possible.

Moreover, it is necessary to put a stop to the system of allowing large estates to be placed under single proprietorship. The present estates must be divided into small allotments to be owned by the labourers themselves who should be free to sell the leaves to any factory which gives the best price, for manufacturing them into tea. The best plan will be to place these factories into the hands of Co-operative Societies of the labourers themselves. These Societies may even be encouraged to own the gardens themselves.

Even when the above-mentioned proposals are adopted, the condition of the labourers will not be really improved unless vigorous steps are taken for their education. A small cess may be levied on the tea-gardens for the creation of the Labourers' Welfare and Education Fund in order that the necessary financial resources be made available. The industry, being well-established, can easily bear the imposition of such a cess.

It is also necessary to give the labourers a larger representation on the Legislatures, the representatives being elected by the labourers themselves through their organizations, which also must be brought into existence without delay. It must be admitted that the present state of ignorance of the workers makes such organization difficult, but the representation of labourers through their own organizations even when the latter are not solid, will be better than the present method by which even an employer could be nominated to represent the employees. Steps must also be taken to fix the minimum wage from

time to time and to make, by legislation, adequate provision against old age, sickness and unemployment. The present peculiar position of the labourers on the tea-gardens as immigrants into a new province makes the adoption of these measures in their case more urgent than in the case of the workers in the country as a whole. The Assam Labour Enquiry Committee has fully endorsed the need for better provision in this matter. Sympathetic planters have even now taken some steps in this direction, but what is wanted is a system made applicable to all by legislation.

Lastly, it is necessary to stop the system of recruitment by individual planters. The work of recruitment should hereafter be undertaken by Government agency in order to enable the emigrant to return without difficulty to his home if he finds the conditions on the gardens unsuitable for him. He should at the time of recruitment be provided with a pass to travel back to his home free. The tea industry as a whole should be asked to contribute toward the expenses of recruitment.

EDUCATION IN KENYA.

THE education of the different sections of the population, like everything else in Kenya, is conducted on a strictly communal basis, there being separate schools for white, brown and black children. To a certain extent such a racial division no doubt becomes unavoidable in that country, as the medium of instruction of each of these races is different and requires a separate school. But what is ordinarily a matter of convenience is, made a matter of principle in Kenya and the communal system of education is followed there with a rigidity which no longer becomes justifiable. If an Indian lad who knew English well enough to follow the instruction imparted in a European school desired to go through the latter's course of studies (as several Goan children did), he would still obtain no admission into a European school and would have to go to an Indian school, solely because of the colour of his skin. An impression prevails among the officials of Kenya that there is in our own country a racial segregation in the matter of education similar to what obtains in Kenya: they do not know that the so-called European schools in India are not meant exclusively for Europeans but are open to a percentage of Indian students, and the ground of differentiation in this case is not the nationality of the scholar, but the curriculum which he wishes to follow.

The educational facilities which the different classes enjoy in Kenya are very nearly in an inverse proportion to what they contribute to the public revenues. The native of the country is of course the largest taxpayer, and his education is almost wholly neglected. The Indian, whose contribution comes second, is better treated than the native, but receives much less generous treatment as re-

gards education than the European, whose quota is the least of all. The European population is to the Indian population as 3 is to 7. But the expenditure on European schools was in 1922 to that on Indian schools almost as 7 is to 3; i. e. to European schools was devoted 421,254 shillings and to Indian schools only 193,261 shillings. European schools are in every way preferentially treated. School buildings are far superior; the teaching staff is much better paid and more competent; all the appliances are more generously supplied; efficient medical inspection is provided; the course of instruction is more advanced. In all these respects Indian schools receive scurv treatment. They are housed in unsuitable buildings; accommodation is insufficient; the staff is untrained; medical inspection is unknown; and the standard of instruction is low. The European schools at Nairobi and Nakuru prepare candidates for the Cambridge Junior Local and London Matriculation examinations, but Indian schools rarely go beyond what corresponds to the English third standard in India. There are only two Government Schools for Indian boys. The Nairobi school had on its books 321 scholars in 1922 and the Mombasa school 205. The education of girls is provided wholly by private institutions. Even the education of Europeans is comparatively backward, for it was found in 1917 that of the 1062 children of school-age only 358 were on the rolls of Government and private schools; since then the number of scholars on school registers has increased to 477; which means that more than half of the European children go without education. But the education of the Indian children is far more backward. For a population of 22,000 there are only 1278 children in attendance at schools!

If Indian and European education is backward native education is almost altogether neglected. The native population is some 2,500,000, while the number of natives who receive education, whether in Government or assisted mission schools, is only about 1600! The standard of education in these schools too is very elementary. Some 250 passed the vernacular examination based on standard IV of the Protestant Alliance Code in 1922 and 75 the English leaving certification examination based on standard VII of the same Code. Both the white settlers and the Government are very averse to giving literary education of a higher order to natives. They generally draft such of them as do not leave off their education altogether after the elementary stage into technical education, though the vital need of the natives at the present moment is advanced literary education which will provide them with real leaders. The education policy of the Government, however, has had the result that there is not a single native who may be said to have received a broad and liberal education and just a handful have received a middle school education. It is difficult to ascertain the number of native children attending unaided mission schools; but a rough idea of the extent of primary

education among the natives may be gained from the fact that the total number of children on rolls in all primary schools appears to have been in 1916 under 13,000; and if from this the number of European and Indian schools is deducted, perhaps some 10,000 scholars may be held to be receiving education of however rudimentary a character in the schools of Kenya and this is in all conscience a very low proportion of the diffusion of an exceedingly low standard of education. The Government spends on native education only about 433,000 shgs. which is about the same as it spends on European education. That is to say, the Kenya Government devotes to the education of a tiny community of 9000 whites the same amount that it devotes to 2½ million natives; that is, it spends on one white what it spends on 275 natives!

There is no immediate prospect of an improvement taking place in native education. Mr. Thomas told the House of Commons that plans were being laid for a great expansion of educational facilities for the natives, but one does not see any signs of it in Kenya, and indeed the estimates for 1924 do not provide for anything more than the normal growth of expenditure. If any one expects much of the Phelps-Stokes Commission which is now conducting its inquiries there, he seems to be in for a severe disappointment, as a forecast of this purely non-official Commission's report, which has been published in the Kenya papers, shows that the Commission has given way almost wholly to the white settlers. For it says that "too much stress has been placed (both in Kenya and Uganda) on literary education." No one of course objects to giving a practical bias to education and introducing mechanical training and agricultural training so that education would be adapted to life. But what is needed above all is that a proportion of promising lads should be given at State expense the best literary education and that a higher standard in such education be reached for the average, but the Government discourages all such plans for placing higher education within the reach of the natives. Indeed, in Uganda instances have happened of Government practically forbidding sons of chiefs, etc., to go out to England for completing education at their own expense. And the Phelps-Stokes Commission does not seem inclined to administer a rebuke to the Government for such an attitude, but rather to lend its countenance to it. So far as the average settler is concerned, the only kind of native education which he can understand is the one that comes from labour, either voluntary or forced, on white men's farms. Every other kind of education, in his opinion, only serves to turn the head of the native. For a mission boy he has utter contempt. And, strange as it may seem, the Phelps-Stokes Commission also seems to have imbibed this general prejudice. A farmer, speaking the other day, said: "As far as what he had heard from them (the Commission), they appeared to

have an accurate conception of the need to educate the Africans through their hands (what an expressive phrase!) and an appreciation of the value of the European farmers of this Colony as the medium for this class of training and education." A none too cheery prospect for the natives!

In administrative matters the Kenya Government follows the policy of letting well alone: it gives almost perfect freedom to the private bodies whom it assists by grants-in-aid to introduce what curriculum they may like. In Indian schools conducted by the Government the Punjab and Bombay codes are followed, and the owners of private schools may vary those codes in any particular and may give any kind of denominational religious instruction. The Missionary Societies teach Christianity compulsorily to all their pupils, without any objection on the part of Government, and the violence that the latter does to the principle of religious neutrality is not confined to giving grants to bodies which refuse the advantage of secular instruction to all who object to attending the Bible class, but extends much further. There is evidence to show that the Government regards itself as a Christian State and fosters Christian teaching by direct means. This in fact creates a most perilous situation for non-Christian citizens of Kenya that the Government should identify itself with ministers of one particular religion and should entrust into their hands the fashioning of the natives' destiny. It is not clear that the Kenya Indians are sufficiently alive to this danger, but those who realize it are bound to lodge a most emphatic protest against a flagrant violation of a principle to which the British Government is committed.

S. G. VAZE.

A LETTER FROM LONDON.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

LONDON, APRIL 10.

SCENES IN THE COMMONS.

AMONG those who witnessed the House of Commons scene on Monday night, when the Government were defeated by nine votes, were the members of the Indian Colonies Committee. Mr. Rangaohari remarked afterwards that he had no recollection of such an absence of self-restraint in the Indian Legislative Assembly. I have not yet heard his private comment upon the exhibition that occurred last night, just before the House rose. There had been a question about evictions in Woolwich, and some of the Glasgow members had been speaking of hardships incurred by the unfortunate evicted persons, some of the members giving painful details, which seemed to annoy and irritate several of the superior people on the other side of the House. Then rose Mr. Amery, the ex-First Lord of the Admiralty, who protested against the Labour members importing so much of the "sob-stuff" into their speeches. It was a tactless and ungracious remark, and one that was bound to annoy the Clydeside members,

tired after a long day's Parliamentary duties. One of them, Mr. Jack Buchanan, a very good fellow when left alone, but very aggressive when upset, at once spat out some terms of abuse against Mr. Amery, for which the Speaker called him to order. Shortly afterwards the House rose, and Messrs. Buchanan and Marton crossed the House towards Mr. Amery, who demanded whether the former had used the terms of abuse. Mr. Buchanan admitted the fact, when Mr. Amery promptly shot out an offensive fist and struck the Labour member on the jaw, several other members either attempting to join in the scuffle or endeavouring to prevent its going further. I daresay that all those concerned are privately somewhat ashamed of themselves this morning. Most people will think that Mr. Amery was unnecessarily provocative and that the Clydeside member was too thin-skinned and too ready with expressions of contempt. As for the bout of fisticuffs, Mr. Amery certainly did not show that superiority of class for which he and his colleagues affect to stand. Still, one hears a little too much of abusive language from the Clydeside members, who really ought to remember that Glasgow is not the whole of the country. Several of these energetic members deem it their first duty to annoy their opponents and their second to ginger up their own Government. They sometimes succeed in the latter attempt. In the former, they are as often countered by the young and impudent Tories. These young bloods on both sides must be a source of anxiety to their Party leaders.

EVICTED TENANTS.

It was mainly owing to this ginging up process that Mr. Ramsay MacDonald permitted Mr. Wheatley to introduce his ill-fated Rents Bill. On the first occasion, Mr. Pringle, to the great relief of all parties, talked out the second reading of the Bill. When, on Monday, it was re-introduced, after the usual and a number of unusual manoeuvres behind the scenes, it had been expected that the official amendment would be supported by the Liberals. It was the Prime Minister himself, singularly unfortunate in his handling of a delicate situation, that successfully killed his Bill, for he spoke so evasively of the nature of the public fund from which rents of unemployed persons were to come, so that the loss might not fall upon the landlords, many of them workmen themselves, that Mr. Asquith, after consultation with his Front Bench colleagues before the whole House, at once got up and made it clear that the Liberal Party could not support the amendment. Liberals were, accordingly, left to deal as they chose with the situation. The leaders almost unitedly refrained from voting. Of the remainder, a minority voted against the Government, whilst the majority voted for the amendment. The result, as has been already mentioned, was a defeat of the Government by nine votes. When the figures were announced, great excitement was evident, and some alarm was expressed that as a

consequence, the Government might resign, than which nothing is further from the desire of the two parties. Neither is anxious to assume the reins of office, for in existing conditions neither could hold office and power together. The alarm was soon set at rest when it was known that the Government did not regard the episode as one of supreme importance. The fact is, the Labour Party has itself not been united as to the right method to adopt to protect the unemployed tenant from being thrown upon the streets for non-payment of rent.

EAST AFRICAN FEDERATION

On Tuesday night an interesting debate after dinner took place in the Commons on a resolution by Sir Sydney Henn to the effect that "in view of the desirability of unity of policy both in administration and development of the territories of Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, Zanzibar, Nyasaland, and North-Eastern Rhodesia, and the necessity for a comprehensive scheme of transport development throughout East Africa, this House urges the Secretary of State for the Colonies to send out to East Africa this year a special commission to report to him on the practicability of co-ordinating policy and services throughout the territories, and advise on the programme of future economic development, especially cotton-growing and railway development." Mr. Ormsby-Gore seconded. Sir Sydney Henn seems specially keen that no trace of Indian economic claims in East Africa should remain in evidence, and he therefore, among other things, advocated the abolition of the rupee currency in Zanzibar. It was practically impossible to refer to the Indian question during this debate, though Mr. Hope Simpson managed to enter a caveat that Indian interests should be specially considered in the setting up of any inquiry. In the end, the Secretary of State agreed to the commission and the setting up of a Committee for the guidance of the Colonial Office, whose object in the main should be the development of the policy of native trusteeship and its application throughout these East African territories. Sir Robert Hamilton threw out the somewhat dangerous suggestion, which Mr. Thomas fortunately turned down, that the Highlands of Kenya might be converted into a self-governing area. The author of this plan is Sir Frederick Lugard, who carries much weight, but is known to be anti-Indian, as is manifest from his book, "The Dual Mandate in Africa."

INDIAN PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE.

Last night Mr. Rangachari addressed the members of what had until then been described as the Indian Parliamentary Committee on the present situation in India, with a view to provide members of Parliament with material, in the light of next Wednesday's after-dinner debate on Viscount Curzon's resolution. He is also to address the Empire Parliamentary Committee within the next few days. The name of the Indian Parliamentary Committee is not a new one and the composition of the Committee of members and non-members of Parliament has a precedent in the Egyptian Parliamentary Committee, which was of an even more

controversial character. It appears, however, that the Liberal members feel they may be compromised by the activities of a Committee which is not, in the strict sense of the term, Parliamentary, though it meets at the House of Commons, in one of the Committee rooms. As a result, they have resigned, except Commander Kenworthy. The Committee last night agreed to a change of name, leaving it to the Secretary to make suggestions; but it is doubtful whether, once having resigned from a Committee upon which they are in a minority, the Liberal members will return, especially since they have their own Party Committee on Indian Affairs of which Mr. Hope Simpson is Chairman and Col. Meyler is Secretary. The personnel of the Joint Standing Committee of Parliament has not yet been decided upon, probably because of some difficulty in the selection of the Liberal members. I believe that Mr. Hope Simpson and Col. Meyler are certainties, and that the third candidate will be either Sir Robert Hamilton or Sir Edward Grigg, or else Mr. Fisher. The Labour members will be Mr. John Scurr, Mr. Harry Snell, and Mr. Wallhead.

FIRING AT CAWNPORE.

I think that your industrialists will be well advised to remember that the Labour Party is very anxiously watching industrial disputes such as those in Bombay and Cawnpore, which have, for reasons yet insufficiently known, resulted in loss of life. The feeling in Labour circles is that too little consideration is given in India to industrial liberty and sanctity of the lives of the workers, and I should not be at all surprised to find a movement developing among the industrial organizations both here and abroad to refuse to handle goods and machinery intended for the Indian factories in the affected areas until a more humane relationship has been established between employer and worker. A word of warning will not come amiss, and I give it for what it is worth.

MISCELLANEA.

DEPUTATION TO ENGLAND.

MR. SASTRI'S SPEECH.

THE following report of Mr. Sastri's speech at the U. P. Liberal Conference is taken from the *Leader* :—

The Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Sastri was received with continued applause when he rose to speak and there were cries of 'No' when he said that in view of the preceding speeches his remarks would be brief. The thought, he said, which was then uppermost in his mind was the attempt which he had made to understand the Swarajist party at close quarters, to observe their methods of work and if possible to co-operate with them in the demand for Swaraj. For some months he had felt that the chief political aim of all parties in India should be the speedy attainment of self-government and in order to achieve that and it appeared to him that all parties having that aim should forget their own differences and unite in the furtherance of that object. For his part he had made it his business, if possible, to offer that co-operation. Mr. Sastri continued that the Swarajist party had worked in Delhi for two months and a little over and he might say generally that there were some respects in which he believed that their example might be followed by the Liberals. They had first of all a great organization. They had put forth a mighty effort. They seemed to understand their own minds and, though their efforts had been comparatively misguided, he could say from their conduct at the recent session of the Assembly that they had achieved what no other party in India had achieved ever before—the capacity to recognize a leader and to follow him.

So by their sacrifice, effort, organization and discipline they had set them a valuable example. But Mr. Sastri

asserted all those virtues, eminent as they were for the conduct of public work, could only lead to poor results if they were not yoked to reason and to practical good sense. That sovereign element of success, however, had been wanting, it seemed to Mr. Sastri, in Swarajist programmes. They (Liberals) differed from them in many ways. There were some who maintained that between the Swarajists and Liberals in the country, as between the extremists and the moderates, there was hardly any difference. It was possible to say so as regards the ideal. But the moment they came down to the practical considerations they would find how vague they were in the meaning which they attached to that synthesis. The Swarajists for example, maintained that the reforms were no good, that the Government of India Act was a sham and fraud and that if they tore up that Act and reduced India to a state of anarchy they would be doing a great service to the country. They (Liberals) held exactly the opposite view. They believed that the Government of India Act was on the whole well conceived, though susceptible of great improvement. They believed also that if they worked the reforms they could rise to greater and to higher things.

As regards the amount of co-operation to be given to Government, Mr. Sastri asserted, he was one of those who believed that the Liberal Party had come to grief at the polls, mostly because it was associated in the popular mind with the Government. But he did not regret that they did co-operate, and co-operated to good purpose, with the Government. That was a time when the maintenance of a strong Government was necessary in the land in order to combat the forces of non-co-operation. They took that side deliberately. They knew that they were going in for unpopularity, for defeat at the polls. Nevertheless they thought that greater than the success of their party was the safety of the nation and they went therefore, with the clear programme that they would, whenever they thought it proper, co-operate with the Government. Apparently they had done good work, but if good work was not appreciated the moderate men had to pay the penalty for their good sense and foresight. Mr. Sastri remembered how during a critical period in the land of Japan two great statesmen who held the balance equally between the powers of the past and the forces of the future, men who stood out for co-operation with everything that promised well for that country—how two men standing out above the nation for their courage, foresight and patriotism were struck down by the hand of an assassin prompted by extremist forces. Japan would never cease to regret the fate that overtook those two souls. In this country as well far-sighted, courageous, selfless work might lead them to what they might consider to be somewhat a deplorable fate. It might be unpopularity, it might be loss of position, it might be even worse, but he asked the audience to remember that good work would not have been done in vain. The brave example would not be lost sight of by the future generations. Although for the moment they might have to fur down the flag, the time would not be far when it would be raised up again by their more fortunate successors. He would also say that a part of their ill-success was due to the forgetfulness of the Government, but he would not make a complaint of it.

The present Government of India Act, thought it still left them without anything like strong powers of independence, gave them still something. He knew great many people in England who thought well of India, who wanted to do justice and help them, but they were never in a majority. Even in the Labour Government they did not seem to be in a majority. Before they could convince even the Indian Government that they were in earnest about anything they had to make use of those powers which the Act gave them.

No doubt, their Swarajist friends had made a promise to their constituents that they would refuse supplies and break up the constitution. He was glad that they respected their promise, but he asserted that when they made that promise to their constituents the state of things in England was such that it was quite in keeping with the non-co-operation principle. But before they assumed their position in the Assembly

change had come over the Government of England or which they were bound to take note. In so far as they had failed to recognize that there was a radical change in the Government, Mr. Sastri thought that the Swarajists took a false step in refusing supplies when the Labour Government was in power. He was one of those who thought that when driven to a corner the Indian politician would be perfectly justified even in refusing supplies to Government, but at the same time he was obliged much against his will to condemn his Swarajist friends for having used those undoubted powers upon occasions when the circumstances did not justify it at all. The Labour Government was composed of persons a great many of whom were on terms of great intimacy with the Swarajist leaders, and he believed the Swarajist leaders, had thrown away a great opportunity in not acceding to the request of their friends in England. If Mr. Sastri had been in the place of Pandit Motilal Nehru he would have said that their friends in England were their undoubted friends. They must be given time to think. Above all they themselves asked for a little time. Therefore, telling the Government that they had in their power to adopt a general policy of obstruction and to refuse supplies, they would give the time they required and till then they would only formulate their demands. That would have been admirable tactics but it had been thrown away.

The work for their deputation now would be to make things understood in England so that their Labour friends and Liberal friends in England alike might understand that in India there was still a party friendly to British connection—a party quite willing to stand by the Government and to give them every chance of recognizing Indians' rights with great patience. Referring to the deputation under contemplation he commended the work done and sacrifices made by Mrs. Besant in the interest of India and was full of hope in the success of the deputation on account of the leadership of Mrs. Besant.

CORRESPONDENCE.

RETROCESSION OF BERAR.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SERVANT OF INDIA.

SIR,—You must be aware of the fact by this time that the Berar Provincial Congress Committee has decided to remain indifferent for the present on the question of the retrocession of Berar. The extremist papers in Berar and the Central Provinces also seem to share this view. The editorial comment in the *Kessari* of Poona dated 23rd April approves of this attitude. From this it is clear that the extremists in the Deccan as well as in the Central Provinces and Berar intend to remain neutral on this question. *These people know very well that the masses in Berar are unwilling to go back to H. E. H. the Nizam under any conditions.* This attitude of the educated and the so-called leaders is sure to mislead the masses and prevent them from giving expression to their real opinion on this vital question. While Sir Ali Imam and others are trying their level best in England on behalf of H. E. H. the Nizam, it is the bounden duty of the Beraris to clearly speak out their mind and declare once for all their unwillingness to go back under H. E. H. the Nizam. They should not now accept the lead of these extremist friends of theirs, who, I am afraid, have adopted this suicidal policy because they do not want to displease their Mahomedan friends, who, however, are carrying on a vigorous propaganda in favour of the retrocession. Under these circumstances it is the clear duty of every Berari not to be misled by the extremists. The Beraris must now emphatically declare themselves against this retrocession, passing resolutions on the question in general meetings and forwarding copies of the same to the authorities concerned. I appeal therefore through your columns to all the inhabitants of Berar, especially to those who are educated, that they should now wake up and carry on a vigorous propaganda against the retrocession of Berar to H. E. H. the Nizam.

Yours, etc.,

T. B. GADRE.

POONA, 23 April.

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