

STOKES, FREED FROM BRITISH JAIL, RENEWS FIGHT TO FREE INDIA FROM WHITE RACE DOMINATION

Germantown Man Left Wayne Avenue Home to Live and Labor With Lepers. Took Native Woman as Bride and Served Term for Sedition as Follower of Gandhi

FOUNDED A BROTHERHOOD TO ALLEVIATE SUFFERING OF COUNTLESS MILLIONS

Gave Up American Citizenship to Battle Against Caste Injustice and Enforced Labor System—Is Considered "Holy One" by Those He Has Struggled For

IF YOU know your Kipling, you have the atmosphere of this story. If you know your New Testament, you have its lesson by heart. For there is woven into it the romance of far lands and the humility of a lofty soul. It is a page of the past, set down in the book of the present.

And it is the story of Samuel E. Stokes, native of Philadelphia, a Quaker by ancestry, an Indian by adoption, a disciple of Mahatma Gandhi by allegiance.

Gandhi, man of the hour in India, traitor or teacher of truth, revolutionist or apostle of peace—according to the point of view—is serving a sentence in prison. The British Government said he incited to insurrection. And Stokes, the American once, a British subject now, was imprisoned along with him. He was sentenced for sedition, though he is free now, having completed his term.

There was nothing to be done about it. They would not have it otherwise. They were willing to go to jail. They were satisfied with their lot. For they believed what they preached, and preached what they believed, as some men ever have done. And they will accept what comes before they will surrender their convictions. Martyrs? Well, it all depends on the viewpoint. A cynic would call them something else. You may reach your own conclusions.

Samuel E. Stokes is now a little past forty years old. He was born in Philadelphia, and went out to India as a Christian missionary in an independent capacity, and at his own expense, soon after the beginning of the present century—about 1903 or 1904.

His family was comparatively wealthy, and though born in comfort himself he inherited from his mother, who has been the greatest formative influence in his life, a passionate devotion to the poor. He comes originally from an old British stock, which had settled in America in the early days of British colonization. He has always been proud of his British ancestry. His reading of history, which has been a favorite subject with him, has been inspired by the thought that the history of Great Britain is the life story of the people from which his own family had sprung.

Jail Sentence Brought Him Into Public Gaze

Though he has lived in India for almost twenty years, with the exception of a two years' holiday spent in Philadelphia, when he brought his active bride to this country to study in American schools, Mr. Stokes' life for the most part has been spent in the retirement of the hills, away from the busy centers of Indian population and trade.

Only in very recent times has he come fully into the public gaze. His name and work went to the four quarters of the earth when he was arrested, convicted and sentenced for sedition. His term in jail was in Lahore, where Kipling's father was curator of the museum, where Kipling himself edited a newspaper and wrote his most famous stories. And curiously Stokes, who writes as well as he teaches, was an associate editor of the same paper over whose destinies Kipling once presided. His teachings led to his imprisonment.

Word comes from India that he would gladly have gone to prison on a charge of civil disobedience. But he feels keenly what he calls the falsity of the accusation of stirring up hatred and contempt for British rule among the Indian natives. That was the charge against him, and under Indian law, as administered by British authority, it is sedition to criticize the Government, because, as the law holds, criticism tends to promote race hatred and prejudice. Stokes was arrested in December. At his trial he admitted having criticized the Government. There was nothing to do but imprison him.

Ideals Not Shattered by Term in Prison

When he was released he went back to his life work, to pursue the same course. Perhaps he will be imprisoned again. It will not prevent him from talking.

In January some of Stokes' friends in this country considered a possible appeal to the State Department in his behalf. Stokes sent word of his disapproval. He was a British subject. He had served in the British Army. He was sentenced under British law. He had no basis for complaint to the United States Government. The law had to take its course. And so the plan was dropped.

And now Mr. Stokes is at his Indian home again, with his family, his six long months of imprisonment over. "He need not have been imprisoned," said his mother. "Any time he agreed to sign a paper pledging his word not to have anything more to do with national questions he would have been free. But he could not do that. He

they found him there seated in meditation. When they came back in the evening they found him still seated in silence. Then the headman of the village went to him asking his forgiveness. He said they all now understood that he was a man of God. Then Mr. Stokes told them quite simply that all men were his own brothers because all men alike were children of God.

Tells of an Adventure Experienced in Mountains

"I can remember vividly how one evening, as the sun was setting over the distant snows and night was coming on with all its train of stars, Mr. Stokes told me the story of an adventure in the mountains. He had been traveling all through one day in a lonely part and a snowstorm had over-

taken him and he had lost his way. His strength at last failed him and he had fallen to the ground exhausted, thinking that death was near. At that time of utter human weakness he had seen before his eyes a waking vision of Christ upon the Cross comforting him. All his own suffering vanished, and he had the inner power given to him of an infinite peace. Strength returned, and he was able to reach the hut of a mountaineer, where he was tenderly nursed back to health.

"During one bitterly cold winter at Lahore there was an epidemic of smallpox. The smallpox camp was outside, on a lower piece of ground, isolated from all human habitation and neglected, except for a daily visit of the doctor. It consisted of mere sheds made of matting. At nighttime the cold was piercing. The place was almost deserted, except by paid servants and sweepers, who were kept to do the work. But Mr. Stokes had taken up his abode there. Night and day he was nursing a young Hindu student of the Forman Christian College.

"Little by little Mr. Stokes brought healing and comfort to this neglected lad by his very presence. Every evening the Sikh students of the neighborhood used to bring their offering of food and sit with Mr. Stokes and ask for some message from God. Often I met them there, and they would come to my path. Once I heard them ask him, 'What is this sakti that sustains you?' And I heard him speak to them about the vision of the Christ that he had seen upon the mountains.

Lived in Leper Colony After Reaching India

Soon after he reached India Stokes went to live in a leper colony. He was housed with the lepers themselves. He had cast aside all the paraphernalia of the European missionary and had become, in the very first days, a frankly Indian in his dress and habits and manner of life. He worked among the lepers with devoted care. He would nurse them with his own hands, embracing them in his fraternal love, as St. Francis of Assisi did of old, and balm up their sores.

Though immune from leprosy, by some gift of body or spirit, he was attacked by typhoid fever while in the midst of this activity. The illness proved almost fatal. For weeks he hovered between life and death. Finally the crisis passed, and he began a long convalescence.

After that he spent the hot weather of each succeeding year at Kotgarh, which is fifty miles beyond Simla along the Hindustani-Tibet road. He used to take with him an adopted family of little children. One was quite blind, but always jolly and cheerful; two were the sons of leper parents; one was a cripple. They grew up as one family with him, and he shared everything with them in common. During this period of his life he always slept upon the bare ground, cooked his own and the children's food, and lived much in meditation in a cave on the mountainside.

In the succeeding years he formed a fast friendship with an Englishman, C. F. Andrews, first with him as principal of the Delhi School. The former knew Stokes intimately during those years of his life, and has followed his movements since. In a biography written as a preface to a book called "The Awakening India," which Mr. Stokes has written and which is being published abroad, Mr. Andrews thus describes his life and character from personal observation:

"Year by year, each summer, I used to meet him and his family of boys and also to stay with him. I could not share the austere life of his life—they were too hard for me. I could only wonder at the remarkable powers of endurance and the strength of his inner spirit.

"In the cold weather Mr. Stokes would leave his boys at some school with friends and go wandering about the Punjab, as a sanyasi, following strictly and literally the precepts of Jesus in the gospels, where it is written, 'Take neither purse nor staff, nor shoes, nor sandals, nor money for your journey.'

"If the villagers gave him food and shelter he gratefully received it. If they refused he would take shelter under some tree and go without food altogether. But they usually welcomed him gladly.

"There is one incident which is well worth relating. Mr. Stokes had gone on his wanderings to a group of huts, which were occupied by the lower castes and had been received by them with a warm affection. He had then gone on to the high-caste people of the village, who were living apart. At first, they were angry with him because he had lived with the low-caste and had been eating and drinking with them. They even refused to receive him. So he sat down and slept all that night, without taking food, upon a tree close to the village. As day broke they went out to their fields and in the morn-



Samuel Evans Stokes, his Indian wife and son Prem Chand

accumulating to himself, by a life of celibacy, a huge store of merit in order to win salvation.

"The second of the two difficulties would also be removed, because, in intermarriage, he could show, in the most direct way, that there is no 'race' or 'caste' within the Christian Church, if the Church were only true to its Founder, Jesus Christ.

Was Ready to Go Forward at Headlong Speed

"At first, in his direct and downright way, Mr. Stokes was ready to go forward at an almost headlong speed. The idea had so got hold of him as a principle that the person whom he married seemed to him of secondary importance. It was at this point that I urged him as a friend and elder brother not to be too precipitate.

"In the end all went well. The marriage that he made at last has been a uniquely happy one. A family of sons has been given to him of whom any father and mother might be proud.

"The bride whom he chose at last and who accepted him as her husband was a Rajputani whose family was greatly respected in all the Hill District round. While brought up in every way as a devout Indian-Christian girl, she had maintained unbroken, as far as possible, her own touch with her kinsmen and relations. In her dress and manner of life she had remained exactly the same as her own Hindu ancestors. Even today, after her long stay in America, she has not changed in the slightest degree her manners and customs.

"It is a further interesting point to notice that the grandfather of Mr. Stokes' chosen bride was of Chinese origin. He had come over from China for tea-planting in the Kotgarh Hills and had married, as a Christian, a Rajputani woman, who had become a

Arrogance of White Race Stirred Deep Anxieties

"But there was another thing that went far deeper and affected both of our minds very directly at this time.

"The arrogance of the 'white race' and the bigoted 'white race' supremacy in every continent of the world stirred in both of our minds the deepest anxieties and fears.

"An article which I wrote raised a storm. I went to the full length and frankly advocated intermarriage between the races, as one of the effective ways of breaking down the growing world racial wall.

"Then slowly the idea formed itself in Mr. Stokes' mind that he could make his own Christian faith perfectly plain by marrying within the Indian race by marrying with an Indian girl, and itself and giving up his citizenship.

"The former of his two difficulties would be removed, because he could no longer receive a kind of racial reverence—a reverence which really obscured the sacrifice of self demanded by the Christian faith. He would no longer be regarded as one who was on

heralded down from above. The two students kept the crowd back for a few moments and thus saved his life.

His Thoughts All for Boy While He Was in Delirium

"For some days his life was in great danger. In his delirium, his thoughts were all concerning the boy whom he had brought back from Ambala.

"When his senses returned and he understood what had occurred, his one supreme determination was to save the villagers who had done the deed from the hands of the police. No power on earth could stop him from going in a rickshaw into Simla in order to plead with all his heart for those who had tried to murder him. In the end, he won the victory of love and forgiveness. The villagers were pardoned.

"It was this event which more than anything else hitherto bound up the life of Mr. Stokes with the people of the Kotgarh Hills.

"It will easily be understood that Mr. Stokes' mother in Philadelphia, whose heart was devoted night and day after her husband's death to her son in India, was eagerly longing to see her daughter-in-law and to welcome her into her home. So it was arranged that her son should take his wife to America. There, in Philadelphia, two of the happiest years of his life were spent with his mother and his young wife. Afterward he took his mother back with him on a short visit to India.

"Mr. Stokes' wife, as I have said, re-

turned to take the boy back to Kotgarh and to place him among his own people. But the villagers could not understand, and their minds had been worked up into a state of wild excitement. Mr. Stokes had telegraphed to the time of his marriage and made his heart with the Hill people in a remarkable manner.

"One of the Hill lads, who had come under Mr. Stokes' personal influence, had become a Christian down in the plains at Ambala. The villagers supposed at the time that Mr. Stokes, by this matter had deceived them. They were entirely wrong and he tried his utmost to disabuse their minds. In order to do so more completely he

remained throughout the same Rajputani lady of the Hills that she had ever been. Indeed she went back to them with an infinite relief on her return. For her greatest happiness is in her own home among the mountains. She lived there alone while her husband was in prison. From there she wrote to me a letter from which I may quote the following:

"I know it well that when my husband is in jail with many other sons of India suffering for the sake of righteousness he is sure to be happy. I am quite confident that Almighty God will hear the cry of the oppressed and deliver His judgment."

Stokes' Idealism Raised as German Crushed Belgium

"When the great war broke out Mr. Stokes' idealism was roused by the German invasion of Belgium. It was this that 'brought him into the war.' Long before America had entered the war he had asked permission of the British Government to become naturalized as a British subject and thus be in a position to recruit villagers in the Simla Hills. His work was so well done that he received special commendation and rapid promotion.

"I was away in Fiji during the greater part of this period, and it was difficult for us to keep in touch with him. It was even a surprise to me to find that he was on his way back to Kotgarh. He had been in the Indian army, though I never questioned his choice; and I knew what a sacrifice it meant; but I had imagined that his Quaker family tradition, which was so strong in him, would have made the thought of warfare impossible.

"During the time of the martial law in the Punjab in 1919 Mr. Stokes wrote me many letters. His heart was torn with anxiety in the confines of a mountain and he wrote a very noble protest to Sir Michael O'Dwyer himself. It was not until 1920 that Mr.

Stokes at last, when the time was fully ripe, came out fully before the Indian public. His letter concerning the 'forced labor' which was employed by the Hill States on the Viceroy's shooting tour in the Simla Hills came like a thunderbolt when it suddenly appeared in the public press. There was no doubt that it caused very serious displeasure in official quarters. But no denial of the fact was possible because the facts were true. Immediately after this letter he asked me to stay with him in Kotgarh. He was still co-operating in every way with the Government and we met Mr. Langley, the deputy commissioner, and a provisional settlement was reached which was of great importance in the future struggle for the abolition of forced labor. For it at once put heart into those who had been struggling against this evil in other provinces.

"Mr. Stokes' carried on his struggle for the abolition of forced labor even for that time onward without ceasing. It has been mainly due to his efforts that it has been abolished in the Simla Hills and in other parts of the Punjab. The center of the struggle in the future is likely to be the Rajputana States.

"Impossible for Indians to Show Their Loyalty"

"When once Mr. Stokes had been convinced of the danger to humanity which was present in the popular and

colonial view of the British Empire, he expressed his conviction with all the force he could command. It was impossible, he declared, for Indians to show any 'loyalty' to a 'White Empire.' Let there be real and fundamental equality of status and then things would be different, then there could be heartfelt loyalty to the Emperor.

"It was his experience in dealing with the question of 'forced labor' which drove Mr. Stokes at last to take an active part in the Congress politics and to accept the principle of non-co-operation. In his earlier efforts he had urged an entry into the Reform Councils and an attempt to work through them, toward steady national regeneration. But it grew upon him more and more that the vested interests were too strong, and that the Government was bound up with those vested interests in matters affecting the poor and the oppressed, the Government would almost inevitably be found on the side of the vested interests of capital and wealth and power. Such was his growing conviction, after a tour, at the company of Mahatma Gandhi, completed the process. He joined in the fullest manner possible the Non-Co-operation political party and it was as such that he was brought to trial in Lahore.

"As for the trial itself, his own statement speaks for itself. How far earth any magistrate could find fault with Mr. Stokes' theory of 'conditional loyalty,' which Mr. Gandhi himself enunciated long ago as the only possible loyalty for Indians, I cannot imagine. The same position has been taken up a thousand times, and I can not see as yet how a rational and thoughtful Indian can adopt any other position. General Smuts, I suppose, would be regarded by every British imperialist as loyal; but he threatened only a short time ago, that South Africa would leave the Empire if her self-respect as an independent nation was injured. The theory of Indian loyalty so it appears to me, is worked out by Mr. Stokes with great lucidity. It is a theory which every Government ought to remember. When he asks me my own opinion concerning this matter, after his arrest, I told him that his theory of loyalty was unexceptionable.

Wanted to Be With Friends Even in Jail

"The last request which Mr. Stokes made to me in the Lahore Jail was characteristic. He implored me again and again to use every influence I had to get him removed to the ward where his Indian friends, Late Lalpat Rai and many others, were quartered.

"I have married an Indian," he said. "I am a samindar, having property in Indian soil; I have brought in my sons as Indians. India is now a country, as it is theirs. I have adopted the Indian national cause, the Indian national mode of life, the Indian national dress. Why then should I be compelled to live as a European? Why cannot I associate, in jail, with my Indian fellow countrymen? I have played the game straight with the authorities. I have been open and honest in every thing I have done. I have not even thought of trying to play the game with them."



Stokes (in center) at Indian missionary station



Gandhi, Indian Nationalist leader, in Occidental garb

The Stokes family home at 5419 Wayne avenue, Germantown

of the world, and their minds had been worked up into a state of wild excitement. Mr. Stokes had telegraphed to the time of his marriage and made his heart with the Hill people in a remarkable manner.

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