

MAHATMA GANDHI

5. 1962

By

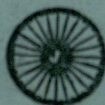
H. S. L. POLAK, H. N. BRAILSFORD
LORD PETHICK-LAWRENCE.

With a Foreword and Appreciation by

HER EXCELLENCY

SAROJINI NAIDU

GOVERNOR OF THE UNITED PROVINCES



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By courtesy of the High Commissioner for India in London
MAHATMA GANDHI
the V. R. Rao portrait in India House, London.

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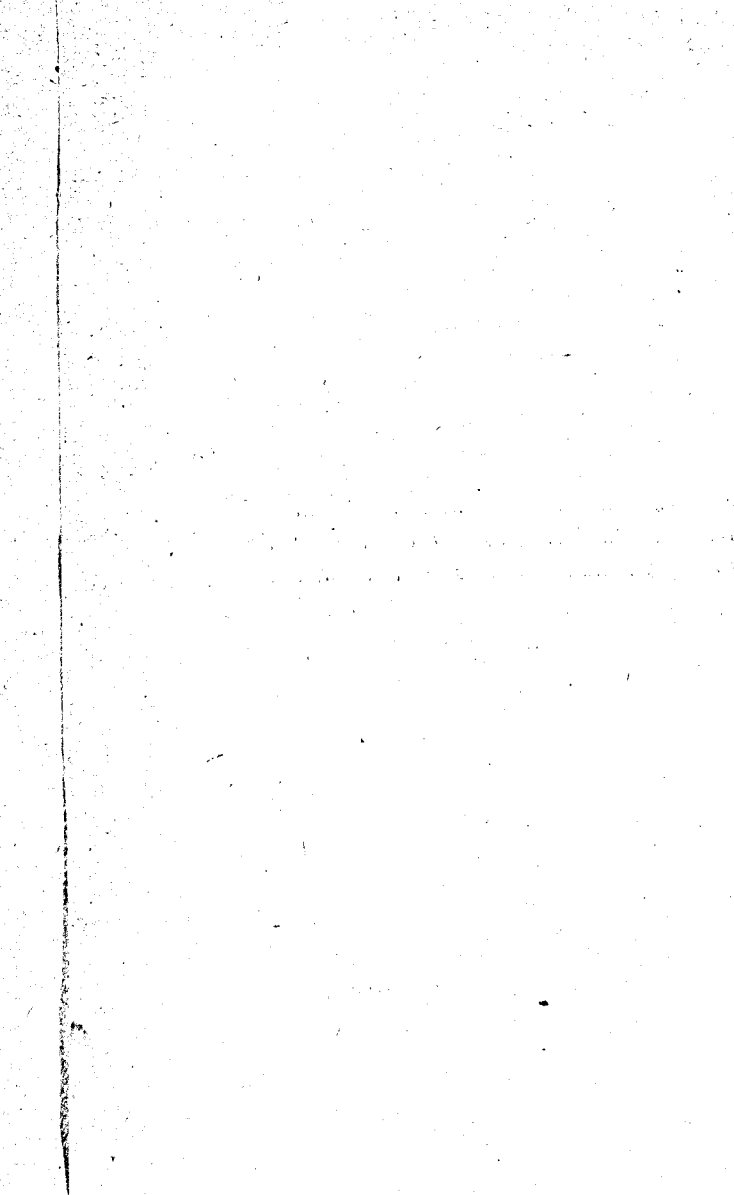
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*The only virtue I want to Claim is
truth and non-violence. I lay no claim
to superhuman powers : I want none.*

GANDHI



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THE FATHER OF MODERN INDIA

An appreciation by

HER EXCELLENCY SAROJINI NAIDU

Mrs. Sarojini Naidu—poetess, orator, politician and Indian women's leader—was for thirty years one of Gandhi's closest friends and disciples. Born in 1879, she was educated in Hyderabad, at King's College, London, and at Girton, Cambridge. In 1898 she married Dr. M.G. Naidu, Principal Medical Officer to the Nazim of Hyderabad, and has two sons and two daughters. She became one of the most prominent leaders of Congress, and was elected President in 1925. Mrs. Naidu accompanied Gandhi to the Round Table Conference in London, 1931, and in 1947 was appointed Governor of the United Provinces.

THE FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS is at hand, but this year neither the clay lamps of our villages nor the silver lamps of our cities will be kindled in honour of Dipavali,¹ because the heart of the nation still deeply mourns the death of Mahatma Gandhi, who redeemed it from centuries of bondage and gave to India her freedom and her flag.

It grows more and more difficult for me to speak or write about him. I almost repent my rash and hasty promise to contribute a brief foreword to this book, the story of Gandhiji's life (which I have not yet had the pleasure of reading), written by three distinguished British friends and admirers of the Mahatma, as I fear it might be a little irrelevant and alien to the objective approach and context of their writing. All three have

1. Festival in honour of Lakshmi, Goddess of Prosperity.

been animated with a due sense of their high privilege and responsibility, and have fulfilled their self-chosen task with deep sincerity, notable skill and discrimination, worthy of a theme so noble. But for me, as for many of us who were so intimately associated with Mahatma Gandhi in his great campaigns of liberation for India, who marched with him to many prisons under his banner, who time and again kept vigil and shared the anguish of his epic fasts for the sins of those whom he loved or those who hated him, it becomes almost an act of vivisection to attempt to analyse or interpret the unique personality, the mind and the spirit of this rare, this unrivalled, being, who was not only our leader, our friend, our father, but literally an integral part of life itself.

Curiously enough, my first meeting with Mahatma Gandhi took place in London on the eve of the great European War of 1914, when he arrived fresh from his triumphs in South Africa, where he had initiated his principle of passive resistance and won a victory for his countrymen, who were at that time chiefly indentured labourers, over the redoubtable General Smuts. I had not been able to meet his ship on his arrival, but the next afternoon I went wandering round in search of his lodging in an obscure part of Kensington and climbed the steep stairs of an old, unfashionable house, to find an open door framing a living picture of a little man with a shaven head, seated on the floor on a black prison blanket and eating a messy meal of squashed tomatoes and olive oil out of a wooden prison bowl. Around him were ranged some battered tins of parched groundnuts and tasteless biscuits of dried plantain flour. I burst instinctively into happy laughter at this amusing and unexpected vision of a famous leader, whose name had already become a household word in our country. He lifted his eyes and laughed back at me, saying: "Ah, you must be Mrs. Naidu!" Who else dare be so irreverent? "Come in," said he, "and share my meal." "No, thanks," I replied, sniffing; "what an abominable mess

it is!" In this way and at that instant commenced our friendship, which flowered into real comradeship, and bore fruit in a long loving, loyal discipleship, which never wavered for a single hour through more than thirty years of common service in the cause of India's freedom.

How, and in what lexicons of the world's tongues, shall I find words of adequate beauty and power that might serve, even approximately, to portray the rare and exquisite courtesy and compassion, courage, wisdom, humour and humanity of this unique man, who was assuredly a lineal descendant of all the great teachers who taught the gospel of Love, Truth and Peace for the salvation of humanity, and who was essentially akin to all the saints and prophets, religious reformers and spiritual revolutionaries of all times and lands? Like Gautama Buddha, he was a lord of infinite compassion; he exemplified in his daily life Christ's Sermon from the mount of Olives; both by precept and practice he realized the Prophet Mahomet's beautiful message of democratic brotherhood and equality of all mankind. He was—though it sounds obsolete and almost paradoxical to use such a phrase—literally a man of God, in all the depth, fullness and richness of its implications, who, especially in the later years of his own life, was regarded by millions of his fellow men as himself a living symbol of Godhead. But while this man of God inspired in us awe and veneration because of his supreme greatness, he endeared himself to us and evoked our warmest love by the very faults and follies which he shared with our frail humanity.

I love to remember him as a playmate of little children as the giver of solace to the sorrowful, the oppressed and the fallen. I love to recall the picture of him at his evening prayers, facing a multitude of worshippers, with the full moon slowly rising above a silver sea, the very spirit of immemorial India; and, with but a brief interval to find him seated with bent brows, giving counsel to statesmen responsible for the policies and programmes of political India, the very spirit of renascent India demand-

ing her equal place among the world nations. But perhaps the most poignant and memorable of all is the last picture of him walking to his prayers at the sunset hour on 30 January, 1948, translated in a tragic instant of martyrdom from mortality to immortality.

SAROJINI NAIDU

Lucknow

Dipavali,
October, 1948

EARLY YEARS

1869-1914

By H. S. L. POLAK

H. S. L. Polak was born at Dover, England, in 1882, educated in London and articled as a solicitor to M. K. Gandhi in Johannesburg, 1905-08. In 1904 he launched Gandhi on the "simple-life" practice which he maintained until his death, and was a pioneer member of Gandhi's earliest settlement at Phoenix, Natal. He edited Indian Opinion for many years. In 1919 he founded the Indians Overseas Association in London. He is an author, has been London correspondent to several Indian journals, and is a practising solicitor. From 1904-14 he was Gandhi's closest colleague and confidant, and his lieutenant in his long Passive Resistance struggle in South Africa. He was a pioneer of Gandhi's movement to end indentured-labour emigration from India.

CHAPTER I

PREPARING FOR LIFE

MOHANDAS KARAMCHAND GANDHI, the youngest child of his parents, Karamchand and Putlibai, was born at Porbandar, Kathiawar, Western India, on 2 October, 1869. Being State-born he was not a British, but a British-protected, subject.

Many foreigners, recalling Mahatma Gandhi's spiritual leadership of the Indian nationalist movement for so many

would enable him to relieve his brother's finances. "In April, 1893, I set forth full of zeal to try my luck in South Africa." After firmly resisting the many temptations at the ports of call, Gandhi arrived at Durban a month later. So began a period fraught with happenings which helped to mould one of the greatest personalities of our times.

CHAPTER II

WHAT GANDHI FOUND IN SOUTH AFRICA

THE INTRODUCTION of Indians into Natal, whence, in course of time, a few thousands drifted into the other parts of what is now the Union of South Africa, was originally the work of the white colonists, who at that time numbered some seven thousand. Finding native Africans unsuited to the work of sugar estates and other agricultural projects then under development, and thus faced with bankruptcy, they had approached the British Government to get more dependable labour from India. The Government of India, aware that when Natal became part of Cape Colony in 1844 it had been laid down that "there shall not be in the eye of the Law any distinction or disqualification whatever founded on mere distinction of colour, origin, language, or creed, but the protection of the Law in letter and in substance shall be extended impartially to all alike," had given their consent, and the introduction of indentured labour began in 1860.

In 1869, the Government of India stopped recruitment as a result of the unsatisfactory conditions which obtained in the Colony. Under economic pressure, the Natal Government renewed their request, and an agreement was reached between the two governments whereby Indian

CHAPTER III

STORM AND STRESS

UPON THE pretext of the outbreak of plague in Bombay, the Natal port authorities held the ships in quarantine for some days. The true reason was that the white colonists were agitating for the repatriation of Gandhi and his fellow-passengers, whom he was falsely accused of having brought with him as part of a plot to swamp the Europeans. In fact, until the voyage began, he had known none of them, except a couple of relatives who had travelled with him and his family. Most of the passengers, in any case, were proceeding to the Transvaal and not remaining in Natal. Another accusation was that, while in India, he had indulged in wild accusations against the white colonists; whereas, in fact, he had spoken and written in India more guardedly in condemnation of Natal's anti-Indian policy than he had done in the Colony itself. He was warned of the danger awaiting him and the other passengers if they did not return at once to India, but they were determined not to yield to threats of violence. Gandhi's view was that his white opponents were ignorant and narrow in their hostility, but they were sincere, and he could not, therefore, be angry with them. At last he and his companions received an ultimatum to submit, if they would escape with their lives. In reply, they maintained their right to land in Natal at any risk. Orders were thereupon issued permitting them to land.

The Prime Minister sent a private warning to Gandhi that, in view of the anger of the whites and of the danger to his life, he and his family should land after dark. The shipping company's lawyer came aboard and offered to escort Gandhi ashore, while his family went ahead to their Indian host, Parsee Rustomjee. It would, he said,

and his deed are two distinct things. . . . 'Hate the sin and not the sinner' is a precept which, though easy enough to understand, is rarely practised, and that is why the poison of hatred spreads in the world. . . ."

CHAPTER IV

NEW CHALLENGES

UNDER PRESSURE of his professional work and public activities, Gandhi began to experience certain needs. First was competent secretarial help. This he obtained from two European ladies in succession. They braved current racial prejudice and gave him and the Indian community the most loyal and generous service. One was a Scots woman, now living in Canada, who left him after her marriage a couple of years later. The other figured nobly throughout the remainder of his stay in South Africa. She was Sonja Schlesin, who still lives in Johannesburg. Among all Gandhi's associates and helpers, both he and Gokhale gave her first place for sacrifice, purity of purpose and fearlessness. Gandhi also needed further professional assistance. He accordingly invited L. W. Ritch, an old Theosophical friend, to serve articles under him. This arrangement did not last long, as Ritch decided after some time to go to London to study for the Bar. The greatest need of all was an organ to publicize in South Africa the Indian viewpoint and cultural background. At about this time he was approached by Madanjit, who already had a printing press in Durban. A weekly paper, *Indian Opinion*, was accordingly launched in 1904, with M. H. Nazar as editor. Gandhi not only financed the paper heavily, but also constantly contributed editorials and special technical articles.

"imperial" feeling that swept over England at the time, and to the united efforts of Selborne, Botha and Sir Richard Solomon, now Transvaal Agent-General in London, Lord Elgin agreed, after much hesitation, to advise the Royal assent, and the Act became law. Doubtless, a principal consideration in that decision was the probability of the resignation of the Botha Government and the refusal of any other party to take office if the measure were again disallowed.

CHAPTER V

THE BIRTH OF "SATYAGRAHA"

THE ACT was to take effect from 1 July, 1907, and Indians were required to register under it by 31 July. Since the pledge of non-submission had been taken by them against the original Ordinance and was, therefore, technically no longer binding, mass meetings were held throughout the Transvaal to take it against the new Registration Act. The Passive Resistance Association was brought into existence, partly for the protection of the existing organizations and partly for speedier and more efficient action now that the blow had fallen. It received generous financial support from all sections of the Indian community throughout the struggle. Registration offices were opened and duly picketed by Indian volunteers, who had been warned not to threaten nor to use violence, nor to resist the police should they intervene. The volunteers circulated literature to individual members of the community, who, insufficiently aware of the legal consequences of registration, might be tempted from weakness or ignorance into completing the forms. With the exception of a few weaklings, the community kept to its pledge. In the

CHAPTER VI

THE CAMPAIGN EXTENDS

MEANWHILE, a movement had been developing for some time towards a closer union of the four South African Colonies. Gandhi had shown little interest in it, first, because it had not yet crystallized, and secondly, because of his intense concentration upon the *satyagraha* movement and the need to encourage the Transvaal Indians at a time when some of the lukewarm members of the community were falling away owing to "war-weariness" or defeatism. As regards South African Union, Indians were not consulted; for, with a few exceptions in Natal and Cape Colony, they did not enjoy the political franchise, and their views, they being one of the non-white communities, were disregarded.

Having at length reached general agreement upon a draft Union constitution (which retained the separate franchise qualifications and immigration restriction laws of the four colonies), deputations of British and Boer leaders went to England to secure Parliamentary support for it.

The Indian leaders, realizing that active steps must be taken immediately to meet a situation which might be full of danger to the South African Indians, decided to send a small deputation to London. It consisted of Gandhi and a Muslim colleague who, though generally sympathetic to the *satyagraha* movement, was unwilling for business reasons to join it actively. At the time Lord Crewe was Secretary of State for the Colonies and Lord Morley Secretary of State for India. Contacts were at once made with them, as well as with Members of Parliament of both the major parties, with other prominent persons in British public life and with the Press

the South spontaneously left their work. The Government, now fearful of the consequences of their action and irrespective of the inherent right of workers to strike, especially against legislation directly affecting them, decided to take strong measures to compel the estate-labourers to return to work. The military police were called in and if the labourers attempted to resist they were fired upon, many being wounded and some killed. But again the strikers refused to be cowed down before this abuse of authority.

CHAPTER VII

THE TRIUMPH OF CONSCIENCE

BY THIS TIME the movement had gained the sympathy of many Europeans, some of whom shared imprisonment with the Natal *satyagrahis*, whilst others energetically criticized the Government for mishandling a situation which could have been avoided by wiser statesmanship. One of the most prominent critics was Patrick Duncan, later the first South African to be appointed Governor-General of the Union, and who, as Colonial Secretary of the Transvaal Crown Colony Administration, had been responsible for the 1906 ordinance. In England, the Press showed increasing sympathy with the Indian cause, *The Times* declaring that the march of the Indian labourers must live in memory as one of the most remarkable manifestations in history of the spirit of passive resistance. As the news from South Africa spread in India, it aroused in all quarters bitter condemnation of the Union Government. After the internment of the principal leaders, Gokhale had been kept apprised of events almost daily by cable. He sent C. F. Andrews and William Pearson to

THE MIDDLE YEARS

1915-1939

By H. N. BRAILSFORD

H. N. Brailsford is a Yorkshireman, born in 1873, and educated at Glasgow University, where he was assistant to the Professor of Logic. It has conferred on him the Degree of LL.D. In 1897 he fought as a volunteer in the Greek Foreign Legion. He served as leader-writer successively on the Manchester Guardian, Daily News, Nation and New Statesman, and edited the New Leader (1922-26). His books include The War of Steel and Gold ; Property or Peace ? ; Shelley, Godwin and their Circle ; Voltaire ; Rebel India and Subject India. A Socialist and an Internationalist, he has been for many years an advocate of India's independence. On visits to India and during the Round Table Conference in London he got to know Gandhi.

CHAPTER VIII

THE RETURN TO INDIA

ON 9 January, 1915, after a short stay in London, Gandhi landed in Bombay. Round the arch of the Apollo Bunder a crowd of old friends and new admirers welcomed him to India with garlands of flowers, and an imposing reception was held to do him honour. His coming was an event. His name was already a household word, and

ancient culture, and her introduction of European standards of efficiency in organization.

The Muslim League, meanwhile, had since 1913, as a friendly gesture, held its annual gathering in the same city as Congress ; the two were now parallel organizations. Between them they had worked out a pact, which both organizations adopted at Lucknow. Congress conceded the Muslim claim for separate communal electorates, and a compromise was reached, which fixed in percentages the share of representation each community should enjoy in the central and provincial legislatures of the future. The pact included a rather vague sketch of the next instalment of self-government which the two organizations were agreed in demanding ; it meant a big step forward, but it was, none the less, a moderate scheme, which did not differ fundamentally from the coming Montagu-Chelmsford reforms. India, in the mood that prevailed at Lucknow, midway in the war, could have been reconciled to the Commonwealth by wise British statesmanship with the greatest ease.

CHAPTER IX

HIS WAY OF LIFE

IN ASIA, the chief gift to mankind of every teacher, Hindu, Buddhist or Confucian, was always a "path," a "way of life." As his disciples gathered round him, they followed it in his *ashram* and went out to carry it to the world. Gandhiji lost no time in creating his own community. He fixed it in his own home country of Gujerat, whose peasants he could address in their own language. In May, 1915, he settled at a place called Kocharb. A year later he moved to a more suitable site on the banks

pain of losing caste, to cross "the dark waters," Indian culture was frozen and sterilized. Progress springs from the interaction and intermarriage of cultural traditions. If in Gandhi's generation many Indians turned their backs on western culture with an affectation of contempt, this was an inevitable reaction against ideas and institutions that came to them inseparably linked with the humiliations of their subject status.

These, then, were the vows on which the teaching at the Sabarmati *ashram* was based. One may reject their theological foundation, as I do, but this way of life remains, none the less, a noble experiment that commands our admiration and respect. In this community, where work was prayer and prayer was love, Gandhiji's personality was incarnated. This man, as Edward Thompson truly said of him, was the greatest Indian since the days of the Buddha. And was he not, since Francis of Assisi, the greatest of the saints?

CHAPTER X

THE WORKING MASSES

SOON AFTER his return to India, Gandhiji found a congenial task in service to the oppressed. The summons came to him at the session of Congress in Lucknow, which adopted, rather casually, a resolution of sympathy with the peasants on the indigo plantations of Champaran, a remote district of Bihar, at the foot of the Himalayas. A simple villager from this district, who attended the Congress, attached himself to Gandhi and implored him to visit it and study the oppression under which its peasantry suffered. After following Gandhi on his journeys all over India, his importunity was rewarded,

CHAPTER XI

THE LOYALIST TURNS REBEL

WE ARE NOW at the turning point in Gandhi's career. In the two years that followed the First World War, Gandhi evolved from the loyalist who went recruiting for the British Empire, into the uncompromising rebel who played a decisive part in winning India's independence. To understand this development we must relive a forgotten chapter of history. The Home Government was impressed by India's loyalty during the long struggle, and it had taken the decision which did, in fact, govern British policy, though with many vacillations and delays, through the next quarter of a century. Its aim was now, according to the declaration of 1917, "the granting of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire." But it was pre-occupied with matters that seemed to it more urgent—the peace settlement, the Irish crisis, the Russian revolution, the Turkish question. Impatient over the delay, Indians were ripe for revolt before the gift from Downing Street could reach them.

Indians had suffered many things under the wartime administration, and peace brought no alleviation. Prices had risen steeply while wages lagged behind them, and there had been no attempt to check profiteering or to ration necessities. The influenza epidemic of 1918, with its total of thirteen million deaths, revealed the depressed physical condition of the people. Though recruiting for the army had been in theory voluntary, in fact severe means of pressure had been used. The same thing was true of the immense sums subscribed to the war loans. The resentment was especially strong in

CHAPTER XII

THE FIRST STRUGGLE

THERE NOW began for India, with Gandhi as its general, a period of revolutionary struggle and transformation. Indians relied on themselves to win their freedom. "Even God," as the Mahatma put it, "cannot grant *swaraj*; we must earn it ourselves." But to achieve this miracle, they must first alter their whole way of life, their values and their thinking. "Ours is a religious movement designed to purge Indian political life of corruption, deceit, terrorism and the incubus of white superiority." The ferment was at work in every grade of society. It began at the top, where wealthy lawyers followed Motilal Nehru and C. R. Das in abandoning their work in the Law Courts. It reached the peasant, who would walk distances of twenty miles to catch a glimpse of Gandhi as he journeyed from one end of the Peninsula to the other. Sometimes he travelled with one of the Ali brothers, their burly, genial persons contrasting with his frail, emaciated figure; together they roused, by their fraternity, the hopes of Hindus and Muslims alike. The crowds of worshippers, pitiless in their enthusiasm, thronged Gandhi by day and robbed him of his sleep by night. To his disgust they would venerate him as a saint; he had even to rebuke an idolator who painted a portrait of him in the guise of the Lord Krishna. He was "literally sick," he wrote, "of the adoration of the unthinking multitude." A few, but only a few, of the intellectuals agreed with Tagore, who, on his return from a long stay in Europe, found this atmosphere stifling and uttered his warning against the narrow intolerance of the new cult.

Visibly, all India was turning Gandhian. Once-

clouded. He was still their leader and their hero. The Government, by putting him on trial, made a mistake which it never repeated. After this experience it always imprisoned him untried.

CHAPTER XIII

RETREAT AND RALLY

PRISON MEANT for Gandhiji a long rest after an intolerable strain. He escaped from the crowds; the perplexities of strategy were at an end, and the crushing responsibilities of leadership. "I am as happy as a bird"—so he wrote to Andrews a few days after his arrest. Yeravda Prison, in which he was confined, is a gloomy and forbidding pile but the air of Poona, in the highlands of the Mahratta country, is refreshing. The more distinguished guests with whom His Majesty had had a difference of political opinion fared not too ill. Prisoners were rarely kept in solitary confinement; they could read and they could write. Gandhi, whose notions of rest were strenuous, could now spend the long days in systematic study. "I used to sit down to my books," he wrote in retrospect, "with the delight of a young man of twenty-four, and forget my four-and-fifty years and my poor health." He studied over again the Hindu classics, the Koran and the Bible. He learned the unfamiliar Dravidian language, Tamil. He read Walter Scott and Ben Jonson, his old favourites Tolstoy and Ruskin, Emerson and Thoreau and for the first time, the German mystic, Jakob Boehme.

As he regained his mental energy, he dictated in Gujerati to a fellow-prisoner his lengthy autobiography, which Mahadev Desai translated into English under the

withdrawn—as its president. The business before it was simple, and under Gandhi's guidance it was all but unanimous in carrying it through. Its main resolution declared that the offer to accept a dominion constitution had lapsed; its goal was now complete independence for India. It declined "in the existing circumstances" to be represented at the Round Table Conference. It called on all congressmen to resign their seats in the legislatures. Finally, it authorized the All-India Congress Committee "whenever it deems fit, to launch upon a programme of civil disobedience, including non-payment of taxes, whether in selected areas or otherwise."

At midnight on the last day of 1929, after adopting this declaration of war, Congress gathered round the flag-staff in its grounds and hoisted the ensign of Independent India.

CHAPTER XIV

THE SECOND STRUGGLE

WHEN IT FELL to Gandhi to lead the second struggle for India's independence in 1930, he was 61 years of age. Mind and body were in full vigour. His outlook on life had not changed since his personality reached maturity through action and reflection in South Africa. He was still the mystic who trusted in God's guidance through an Inner Voice. His faith in non-violence and in victory through suffering grew only firmer, if that were possible, as he grew older. If any change could be noted in him since he led the first struggle, it was that he was even nearer than before to the people of the villages, and a little further from the "educated Indians" of the towns. As the years went on, he became himself a villager of

the rest, the people in their thousands had moved across the frontier of British India into the territory of Baroda. There, close to the boundary, with their beloved cattle, they camped in shelters of matting and palm leaves, the ground cumbered with their chests and their beds, their churns, their ploughs and the great clay-coated baskets that hold their grain. In some of these shelters there hung pictures of the gods, and everywhere, at intervals, the presiding genius of this camp, a photograph of Mahatma Gandhi. I asked a group of these villagers why they faced these hardships and losses. The women, as usual, answered first and voiced their feeling of personal loyalty to their leaders. "We'll pay no taxes," they said, "till Mahatmaji and Vallabhbhai tell us to pay." Then the men, slowly collecting their thoughts, voiced their economic grievance: "We won't pay because the tax is unjust," and they went on to explain that at the prevailing prices they made, as owner-cultivators, less than a day-labourer's wage. Finally they added: "We're doing it to win *swaraj*."

CHAPTER XV

THE TRUCE AND THE CONFERENCE

IN LONDON the first session of the Round Table Conference had come to an end, and the outline of the new constitution was already discernible. In his closing speech MacDonald expressed the hope that Congress would be represented at the next session. On this hint the Viceroy acted promptly. He unconditionally released Gandhi and all members of the Working Committee. They left their prisons on 26 January, 1931, the anniversary of Independence Day. This gesture of conciliation

him, in which he was made not only to say that he was about to restart civil disobedience, but to dwell with offensive malice on the injury he would inflict on the British people. The thing was an impudent fabrication; he had given no interview whatever in Rome. Published after he had sailed from Brindisi, he could not contradict it adequately until he reached Aden. It had then done irreparable harm. The fact was that, though he feared he might have to resume civil disobedience, he had not yet made up his mind.

CHAPTER XVI

THE HARIJANS

BOMBAY STAGED a magnificent welcome for Gandhiji when he landed on 28 December, 1931. On the boat he had written a surprisingly cheerful account of the Round Table Conference, from which he was "returning. . . with hope enriched." Now, as he met his colleagues of the Working Committee, it was a grim outlook he had to face. Lord Willingdon had already taken the initiative in a campaign of repression against Congress. Jawaharlal Nehru and the two Khan brothers were in prison. Three provinces had been subjected to special ordinances which suspended all the usual civil liberties.

In the Frontier Province it was charged against Abdul Ghaffar Khan that he was preaching complete independence, and that his Red Shirts were openly preparing for the resumption of civil disobedience. In the United Provinces, where the impoverished tenantry were unable to pay their rents and taxes, the Government had conceded reductions which the local Congress regarded as insufficient. It instructed the tenants in four districts not to pay,

but by physical shrinking. India honours Gandhiji today chiefly because he led the fight for independence. Humanity owes him an even heavier debt because he opened the road of the Untouchables to freedom.

CHAPTER XVII

VILLAGE LIFE

GANDHI'S TOUR for the Untouchables deepened his interest in village life. He believed, he said in *Hind Swaraj*, that "towns favour vice," and he admired the wisdom of the ancestors "who were satisfied with small villages." He was convinced that India's conservative civilization "is not to be beaten in the world. . . . India remains immovable, and that is her glory." But he realized that some adaptations were essential if the old pattern was to be saved from the onrush of industrialization. To this work of reform in village life he wished to devote the rest of his days. Obviously, though he never said so, he was weary of politics. What mattered to him, now and always, were not legislative councils and constitutions, but non-violence and the spinning wheel. The three organizations which he had created for the encouragement of hand-spinning and village industries and the uplift of the *harijans* absorbed so much of his time that he had little to spare for the internal politics of Congress. As he had withdrawn from the active work of Congress after the first campaign of civil disobedience, he now resigned from it.

In this mood it is not surprising that he wished to "bury himself in a village." For a time he was content to use as his headquarters the *satyagraha ashram* near Wardha. This little country town claimed to be the geographical centre point of the Indian Peninsula, and it

LAST YEARS

1939-1948

By Lord PETHICK-LAWRENCE

Frederick William, Baron Pethick-Lawrence of Peaslake has had a long life of varied public service culminating in Cabinet rank and a peerage, when, in 1945, he became Secretary of State for India. Born in 1871, he was educated at Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge, of which he was made a Fellow in 1897. He was President of the Cambridge Union in 1896, and was called to the Bar (Inner Temple) in 1900. With his wife he took an active part in the Suffragette campaign. Labour M.P. for West Leicester, 1923-31, and for East Edinburgh, 1935-45, he was Financial Secretary to the Treasury, 1929-31. He has paid several visits to India and sat on the Indian Round Table Conference in London, 1931. As Secretary of State he led the Cabinet Mission to India in 1946, from which ultimately emerged the Dominions of India and Pakistan. His friendship with Gandhi extended over many years.

CHAPTER XVIII

INDIA AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR

IN THE summer of 1939 the war clouds were gathering in Europe. In Asia, war was already in progress between China and Japan. As Gandhi, now in his seventieth year, looked out upon the world from his Indian viewpoint

CHAPTER XIX

THE CRIPPS OFFER AND ITS SEQUEL

AT THE opening of the year 1942 almost the whole world was at war. It had spread to every continent except South America, and to every ocean except the Antarctic. In many countries it had become the principal concern of the inhabitants, invading their civil occupations and threatening their daily necessities of life. While in Europe the Axis Powers were being held in check, in Asia the Japanese were sweeping forward through the western Pacific, with the American fleet crippled and six thousand miles away. Singapore, Malaya, Indonesia, Indo-China and Burma were falling and war had come so close to India by land, by sea and by air that it seemed quite likely that in a matter of a few weeks the front line of battle might run across Indian soil. How would India react? Would she stand or would she panic and collapse?

She certainly did not panic, and outside high political circles her reaction was emphatic and almost unanimous. Princely India threw in its lot with Britain, and throughout the length and breadth of British India lakhs¹ of volunteers came forward to join the armed forces and to promote the defence of India in a multitude of civilian activities. Political India hesitated. The Muslim League would not cooperate as a body, but it did not stand in the way of cooperation by its members. They were free to fight, to assist defence, to engage in war industries and even to take part in the political administration of the provinces. Congress threw no obstacle in the way of recruiting of Indians outside its own ranks. Its members could, if they wished, work in factories producing for the

¹A lakh is 100,000.

CHAPTER XX

THE CABINET MISSION OF 1946

IDEAS AND EVENTS are the twin poles around which all cosmic existence turns. To ignore either is to misinterpret history and to fail to prepare for the future. Throughout the world during Gandhi's life ideas evolved and events occurred of far-reaching consequence to mankind. To both, he made notable contributions.

When Gandhi was born, three dominations of long standing shackled the freedom of humanity. They were in the realms of class, sex and race. Evidence of the first was to be found in every country where society was divided sharply into the rich and the poor. The industrial revolution, with its potentiality of plenty, had not obliterated this separation. On the contrary, it had exaggerated the contrast between the "haves" and the "have nots" and had increased the subservience of the proletariat to their masters. Only a few advanced thinkers in all classes recognized how fundamentally wrong this was. But the idea was to grow, and the struggle for emancipation was to be maintained until men came to speak of the twentieth as the "century of the common man". Both in propagating the idea and in direct support to the workers in their fight in India to better their lot, Gandhi had taken an active, and often a decisive, part.

The "Subjection of Women" had been the theme of one of the most famous of the books of John Stuart Mill, and when, some forty years ago, the campaign for votes for women took a militant form in Great Britain, Gandhi had followed it with intense interest. Through his influence and that of others who shared his views, women secured, from the first, equal voting rights with men in

CHAPTER XXI

THE COMING OF INDEPENDENCE

AFTER THE DEPARTURE of the Cabinet Mission events moved forward uneasily in India. Gandhi attended the All-India Congress Committee held at Bombay on 6 July to consider the Working Committee's resolution on the mission's proposals. He recalled that he had said at Delhi that "he saw darkness all around him," but in spite of his misgivings he had not opposed the decision of the Working Committee to endorse their resolution. The scheme, he said, no doubt contained many defects, but it was in their power either to improve it or to bury it. Other Congress leaders also counselled acceptance, saying that it involved nothing but an agreement to enter the Constituent Assembly, which would be a sovereign body. In the end the decision of the Working Committee to accept was upheld by two hundred and four votes to fifty-one.

The Council of the Muslim League met on 27 July, and Jinnah in his address claimed that they were the only party which had come out of the affair with clean hands. Congress had never genuinely accepted the mission's proposals, and both in this matter and in that of the interim government the mission and the Viceroy had gone back on their undertakings to the Muslim League in an effort to conciliate the Congress. The Council ultimately decided to withdraw their previous acceptance of the mission's proposals and to prepare a programme of direct action to be launched as and when necessary. These were grave decisions.

Meanwhile, the elections to the Constituent Assembly had been held. The Sikhs boycotted them, but both the Congress and the Muslim League had taken part and had tried

adopted and that order would be enforced by the army and the police. Nevertheless, because the settlement had been accepted by his colleagues he acquiesced in it, and when he was asked whether he would undertake a fast against it he gave a negative reply. In spite of the fact that he had reached an advanced age, at which most men claim for themselves release from arduous work, he was already contemplating a renewed pilgrimage and, if necessary, a "fast unto death" to induce his compatriots in the disaffected areas to forget their differences and behave one to the other with brotherly love. Such was the heroic stuff of which was made this great leader of his countrymen and teacher of mankind.

CHAPTER XXII

THE MAHATMA'S LAST SACRIFICE

THE FIFTEENTH OF AUGUST, 1947, had come and gone. British rule had been withdrawn from India. Independence had become an accomplished fact. A heavy price for it had been paid in the partition of the Peninsula and of two its leading provinces. Now the consequences and the inherent dangers must be faced.

Gandhi had been one of the last of the statesmen to acquiesce in the settlement ; he was now to be in the forefront of the struggle to enable it to function without disaster. He left to the politicians the task of creating the apparatus of government in the new Dominions and of devising and conducting their internal and external policy, including their relationships to one another and to the Indian states. He set himself the task of steadying the psychological reaction of the mass of the people.

It was not surprising that their minds were disturbed.

vigour and enthusiasm, on "the constructive work which Gandhiji has left unfulfilled, but which I am confident he would have liked us to pursue with single-minded devotion and undivided attention."

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The last rites were performed on the afternoon of 12 February, when the ceremony of immersion of Gandhi's ashes in the holy rivers of India was carried out. The place chosen was Allahabad, at the confluence of the Ganges, the Jumna and the Saraswati, where the ashes of his wife Kasturba had been immersed. A vast concourse of people were present, and as the boat bearing the sacred urn glided into the water thousands of people swam across, while aeroplanes overhead showered flowers on the urn and sacred hymns from the scriptures were chanted. The concluding words of one of these has been translated as follows :

"Holy soul, may sun, air and fire be auspicious unto thee. Thy dear ones on this earth do not bewail their lot at thy departure, for they know that thou art gone to the radiant regions of the blessed. May the waters of all rivers and oceans be helpful unto thee, and serve thee ever in thy good deeds for the welfare of all beings; may allspace and its four quarters be open unto thee for thy good deeds."

CHAPTER XXIII

GANDHI'S ROLE IN WORLD HISTORY

NO ONE TRULY understands the life and thought of Mahatma Gandhi who imagines that the emancipation of India from foreign rule was the main purpose of his life, or that its attainment was his greatest contribution to the land of his birth. For his kingdom, like that of the Christ or the Buddha, was not of this world; and it was the moral emancipation of his countrymen and country-

AN IMMORTAL BIOGRAPHY

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