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## Books in brief

Great men should never write autobiographies. Charm and mystery disappear before the confession of the weaknesses of mortality. This is, of course, only true of the really great—those who are big enough to admit errors or changes of opinion. *Gandhi's Autobiography* (Public Affairs Press, \$5.00), is the case in point. Gandhi's efforts for his people, his sacrifices and personal suffering for his "cause," are within our own time. To the average reader he appeared something between a religious zealot and a leader of the masses. Here in his own words is the record of his very humanness.

And here is the price of self-revelation. As a boy he endured the usual routine of life for the Indian: a pre-arranged marriage, consummated at the age of 13. Gandhi pulls no punches, either at himself or at others. The tale of his marital life, strung through the book, is at times painfully descriptive.

Born in Porbandar on October 2, 1869, in a family that boasted several prime ministers of Indian States, Gandhi was educated at primary and high schools, although he does not seem to have overworked as a student. The pages of his youth include incidents, awakenings, and surprises not uncommon to youth generally. Gandhi's temptations and minor sins are all too frequently the lot of the young.

At 18 he was sent to England to prepare for the law. There he also learned something about Englishmen and religions other than his own. He learned to resist suggestions that he eat meat and drink wine, both prohibited by his early teachings. About four years later he passed his bar examinations and returned to India.

From then on, absorbed by the plight of his people, he grew more and more ascetic, devoting all his efforts to movements to further his cause. In Indian cities, in South Africa, wherever he went, he was greeted as a leader.

Punishment or jail had to be endured. The pages of his reminiscences of these trials, written in the same humble strain, bear witness to singleness of purpose and an entire lack of self-interest. These are inspiring, a necessary offset to some of the chapters in which he relates his views on diet or other personal matters, more naïve than important. In his travels from place to place he endured some of the indignities meted out to the natives, but fought steadily against them.

Strangely enough, despite this, in the Boer War, Gandhi and many other Indians volunteered to help the British, although they soon realized that the same rules of caste held in war as in peace. Gandhi was more successful in persuading the white rulers to take better care of his people when the black plague broke out in Johannesburg. Removal of the native population and the burning of their "ghetto" showed results.

One of the more descriptive chapters covers the story of the acceptance of an "untouchable" family at a settlement where Gandhi was promulgating his beliefs. It was a sign of the times, and in spite of obstacles, eventually worked out.

Most of the book is devoted to the cause for which Gandhi lived—the betterment of his people. Free from guile and with little interest in his own or his family's welfare, he went wherever need arose. As he grew in importance the need was everywhere. What he accomplished seemed to have been done without politics or compromise. In that, the subtitle of the book, "The Story of My Experiments with Truth," is well borne out, because Gandhi's usual approach to problems was to seek the truth and to convince others.

It is in the revelations of a simple soul that interest will be greatest. The earlier portion dealing with the foibles of youth comes from a man who has nothing to conceal. There is also the disadvantage of language. This being

a translation from the original Gujarati, it is hardly smooth reading, although this is partly compensated for by the simplicity of the style. However, as the frank outpourings of one who

lived to be a great leader and liberator, the book offers plenty of the bread and salt of life among a people who have suffered for centuries both from internal and external causes.

### BRIEFER COMMENT

#### POLITICS

Alexander Meiklejohn, famous American educator, discusses the implications of the First Amendment to the Constitution in *Free Speech and its Relation to Self-Government* (Harpers, \$2.00). In particular, the author attacks Holmes' doctrine of "clear and present danger" as the test of the right to free speech, and his argument is a cogent one. The essays are pointed toward our new "loyalty tests" and F.B.I. investigations and were originally presented as lectures at the University of Chicago.

A book which might be said to deal with freedom of thought in reverse is *Persuade or Perish*, by Wallace Carroll (Houghton Mifflin, \$4.00). A thoughtful defense of psychological warfare, the book does not make propaganda more palatable to the democrat, necessary though "thought control" may be.

Using the historical method of political science, Professor James Hart analyzes *The American Presidency in Action, 1789* (Macmillan, \$4.00). The constitutional position of the American President is clarified in this scholarly presentation of George Washington's administration. Abundant use of source material, both familiar and rare, distinguishes the work. Professor Hart plans to make a series of studies of the early constitutional position of the President, and thoughtful Americans will follow them with interest.

An interesting view of Russia through many eyes, *As We Saw Russia* (Dutton, \$3.75), was written by 25 members of the Overseas Press Club of America. Divided into four parts, the composite study is well-written and informative, though there is nothing very new about its revelations. This is the second volume by members of the Overseas Press Club. A sound idea and a sound book for those who want a general summary of conditions in the U.S.S.R.

*Joseph Goebbels*, by Curt Riess (Doubleday, \$3.95), is a briskly-written biography of

"the Devil's Advocate," chief propagandist for Nazi Germany. Author Riess writes non-fiction with fictional intensity, and the research he did for this book lends it an authentic flavor.

Organized agriculture is the subject of *The Farm Bureau through Three Decades*, by Orville Merton Kile (Waverly Press, \$3.50). Written for farm bureau members by a former member, this is a glowing account of the farm lobby in action—"the thrilling story of the long crusade for parity." A frankly biased, simply written history of a great pressure group.

#### INDUSTRY

"Although this book is primarily intended to tell the story of Westinghouse, it is, in a larger sense, the battle narrative of all American industry." Thus opens *Battlefronts of Industry*, by David O. Woodbury (Wiley, \$3.50). A detailed description is given of the role of Westinghouse in World War II. Practical problems and their solutions as well as scientific progress are recorded here. Interesting side bits of information are thrown in—the G.I.'s used the Freon gas in bug bombs to refrigerate their beer!

Also dealing with the industrial front is *America's Fifty Foremost Business Leaders* edited by B. C. Forbes (B.C. Forbes, \$5.00). Here is the story of the "climb to the top" with some facts and figures for background. Not for general reading.

#### FICTION

*Forum* readers, who have always wanted more of Robert Francis than can be had in "Country Comment," the occasional essay, or page of poetry we publish, will be delighted with *We Fly Away* (The Swallow Press and William Morrow and Co., Inc., \$2.50).

This is Mr. Francis' first novel; his three previous books (*Stand With Me Here*, 1936; *Valhalla and Other Poems*, 1938; *The Sound I Listened For*, 1944) are volumes of poetry.