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DISARMING IS THE WORD for Part One of Herbert Hoover's "Memoirs" (Macmillan)—disarming, obviously sincere, and spiked with a sly, unexpected sense of humor. The ex-President never underplayed his hand (before he was forty, he admits, he was a multi-millionaire with "an aggregate income which probably exceeded that of any other American engineer"), but until he entered politics, at least, he obviously had no taste whatever for public acclaim. It was the outbreak of World War I, which thrust him into the position of guardian of American strays frantically trying to get home from Europe, that marked a complete turning point in his life. "I did not realize it at the moment," he says, "but on August 3, 1914, my engineering career was over forever. I was on the slippery road of public life."

Eleanor Roosevelt told me one day what the heady wine of public adulation did to a man's ego and way of life. Discussing Vice-President Garner's sudden flight from Washington and split with FDR, Mrs. Roosevelt excused him with, "Somebody wrote that Jack was Presidential timber. A man has to hear those magic words only once and he changes completely overnight. Nothing is ever the same to him again." (Then she added, "And I ought to know!") Herbert Hoover, it seems to me, actually lost stature—and a sense of complete contentment—when he stopped the work for which he had been trained and which he did superlatively well. As far as his memoirs go, it is his early days, when he was striving for the top, that are by far the most interesting. That's true of most autobiographies, don't you think? Once immersed in politics, Mr. Hoover became, outwardly at least, more and more stolid and inscrutable. Instinctively, he shies away from the limelight. When he attends a meeting of the Dutch Treat Club nowadays, for instance, he slips in so unobtrusively that few members are aware that the only living ex-President of the United States is in their midst. A voluble authoress once encountered him on Madison Avenue and engaged him in conversation for ten minutes before she suddenly realized that (1) he was Herbert Hoover and (2) that she never had met him in her life. Mr. Hoover obviously didn't know her from a hole in the ground, and furthermore he was toting an unwieldy box of American Beauty

roses, but, unfailingly polite and gracious, he stood bravely by until she nervously broke off the encounter.

ONE DAY AT THE DUTCH TREAT CLUB I was seated with the special guests at the head table. Mr. Hoover's place was directly in front of us. A quartette known as the "Revuers" provided the entertainment. They had won a quick reputation for their witty antics, as well they might, for one of them was Judy Holliday, and two others were Betty Comden and Adolph Green, co-

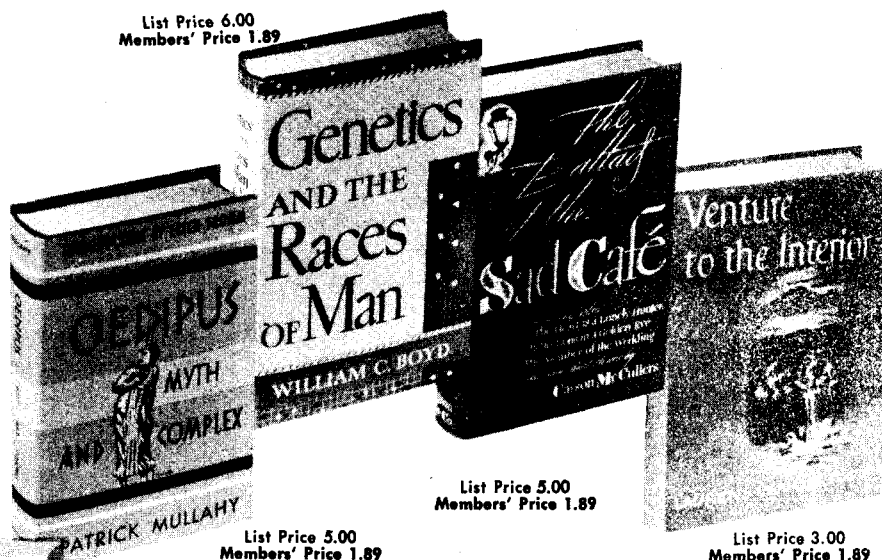


authors since of a half dozen musical comedy hits. One by one they arose to do their specialties. The audience was convulsed, everybody, that is, but Mr. Hoover, who stared at them with no expression whatever on his face. "I'm going to make him laugh if it's the last thing I do," vowed Judy Holliday, but she and her cohorts finally had to admit failure. Mr. Hoover never smiled once. When the meeting broke up, however, and the performers were slumped dejectedly in their seats, Mr. Hoover promptly came up and declared heartily, "I'd like to shake every one of you young people by the hand. You have the funniest, most original act I've seen in years. I don't remember when I enjoyed a comedy turn more!" The "Revuers," of course, were overcome. Judy whispered, "Talk about your poker faces . . .!"

I PARTICULARLY LIKED MR. HOOVER'S reminiscence of the time he was manager of the Stanford baseball club, and former President Benjamin Harrison tried to get into a game without a ticket. He didn't get by Herbert Hoover! In fact, he ended up by buying another ticket in advance for the next week's game. "That," recalls Mr. Hoover, "was my first contact with a great public man." He acted with similar dispatch and decisiveness when he found himself shepherding hundreds of stranded Americans in London in 1914. One heedless debutante from Lansing, Michigan, went right on collecting a \$5,000 trousseau despite the crisis, and since she no longer trusted any foreigners, had

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every parcel delivered in care of the Hoovers at the Savoy Hotel. Just as promptly as a package arrived, the hastily assembled Hoover committee turned it over to some unfortunate whose entire baggage had been lost in the confusion. The debutante's father cabled he would sue for damages. Mr. Hoover invited him by a collect return cable to come and try it.

Another casualty of those hectic August 1914 days was a twelve-year-old American kid who was sent alone to visit his grandparents in Croatia, and when war broke out was stranded, helpless, in Hamburg. By great good fortune, however, he ran into the fully accoutred members of a Wild West show, and promptly attached himself to the troupe. By the time they reached London, the kid was determined that his future lay in show business. His father cabled Mr. Hoover to make sure he was in good hands and bound for home. "Stop worrying," advised Mr. Hoover. "Your boy is headed for America under the excellent charge of Chief White Feather, of Pawhuska, Oklahoma."

READING THE MEMOIRS OF A MAN like Herbert Hoover, or other outstanding figures of our era, one is often surprised to note how commonplace and down-to-earth is the off-the-record conversation of great diplomats. Gone are the flourishes and gaudy metaphors that distinguish their pronouncements in public. A private conversation between Clemenceau and Lloyd George, for instance, was not very different from a discussion of the book business by, say, a sales manager and a visiting buyer. The intimate chit-chat of great authors is scarcely more enlightening. In his uninhibited and engrossing autobiography, William Carlos Williams (whose life story could not possibly contrast more strikingly with the career of Herbert Hoover) gives the following report of the first time Marcel Proust met James Joyce:

Rabid partisans had placed two chairs side by side in the middle of the room. There the two heroes seated themselves, and everybody waited for the wits to sparkle and flash. Joyce

said, "I have headaches every day. My eyes are terrible." Proust replied, "With me, it's my poor stomach. What am I going to do? It's killing me. In fact, I must leave at once." "I'm in the same situation," declared Joyce, rising, "if I can find someone to take me by the arm and get me out of here. Goodbye." Proust's exit line was "Charmé. Oh, my stomach, my stomach!"

DR. WILLIAMS (besides being a distinguished writer, this extraordinary man is one of the busiest small-town physicians in New Jersey) gives an illuminating picture of a poetess in his description of an encounter with the then-youthful Hilda Doolittle. She was astounded when Dr. Williams told her he could write best when his desk



was neat with everything in its place. In her case, said H. D., it helped her no end to deliberately splash ink all over her dress. It gave her a feeling of freedom and indifference toward the mere means of writing. While they were talking, a flash thunderstorm broke. Dr. Williams was all for running to cover, but Miss Doolittle plumped right down in the grass and let herself get soaked. "Come, beautiful rain, and welcome," she crooned, holding out her arms. Dr. Williams adds, "And let me tell you it rained plenty. It didn't improve her beauty or my opinion of her—but I had to admire her if that's what she wanted."

HOAGY CARMICHAEL TELLS ABOUT a hunting trip he made with an egomaniac who wouldn't admit that a downpour



of rain could have the slightest effect on his marksmanship. Sloshing homeward in a miniature flood, the intrepid hunter heard the whirr of a bird's wings overhead, whipped his gun out of the case, took hasty aim, and fired. The bird sailed on undisturbed toward the murky horizon. The hunter watched it in dazed silence for a moment, then dashed his gun to the ground, and cried out, "Fly on, you blankety blank fool bird! Fly on with your gol-durned heart shot out!"

—BENNETT CERF.

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Knowledge: The World's Greatest Resource

A UNESCO Progress Report

ALBERT I. PRINCE

EDITOR'S NOTE: As this issue appears, some two thousand delegates are gathering in New York City for the opening, on January 27, of the Third National Conference convened by the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO. At this time, when the affairs of UNESCO are occupying the minds of so many distinguished American scholars and educators, the opportunity seems ripe for an assessment of this important international agency, now in its seventh year of operation. Albert I. Prince, an editorial writer on The Hartford Times, reports here on UNESCO's present accomplishments and plans.

UNESCO never promised to accomplish what some well-wishers expected of it. Today it is blamed for not achieving the impossible. Many people need a target when they deplore the present state of the world, and UNESCO finds itself right in the line of fire merely because it has not created round the globe a firm will for peace.

If today's critic would read the fine print in the UNESCO Constitution he would find that, through his nation's contribution, he was buying, in the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, an effort to advance "through the educational and scientific and cultural relations of the peoples of the world the objectives of international peace and of the common welfare of mankind." More specifically, its constitution requires it to collaborate in advancing knowledge and understanding through mass communication, to give fresh impulse to popular education, and to maintain, increase, and diffuse knowledge.

That is a splendid program, well worth supporting. But it is a long-range affair, and no one should think for a moment that by putting \$8,000,000 or \$9,000,000 a year into such an enterprise that we would speedily eliminate thought of war from the

mind of man. Looking at UNESCO in proper perspective, one finds a six-year accomplishment more than justifying the moderate expenditure made by UNESCO's member governments. Admittedly, this accomplishment is still on a small scale; but it carries the germ of wide-ranging future results.

One basic, overriding factor prevents UNESCO from making more progress in persuading the peoples of the earth to support a philosophy of peace. There are hundreds of millions to whom UNESCO, because of the barrier of illiteracy, cannot tell its story.

Statistics are not available for many countries, but there are some census reports that suggest how tremendous is the task of fundamental education. In Egypt more than 85 per cent of the population is listed as illiterate, and this figure does not take into account the nomadic population. There is no estimate for the blacks of Africa, but it is, in any case, depressingly high. Four countries of North America have percentages of illiteracy ranging from 51 to 72. Brazil, Peru, and Venezuela reported more than 56 per cent illiteracy. For India, one of the

few Asian countries to provide statistics, the illiteracy figure reaches 90.9 per cent. These dismal percentages help to measure the task confronting those who see in education and the exchange of ideas the greatest hope for world peace.

"If we want to live in a united world," says Jaime Torres Bodet, Director-General of UNESCO, "we cannot allow this most unjust of all frontiers to go on existing—the frontier that divides those who can read from those who cannot." UNESCO considers the problem of advancing education in the world's underdeveloped regions (it uses the term "fundamental education") to be its major challenge. Now, UNESCO cannot, with its limited budget, attempt to supply this fundamental education on a world-wide scale. But it can organize isolated projects which will serve as guideposts and examples.

In May of last year UNESCO opened its first teacher training center at Patzcuaro, Mexico. Here fifty-two

students from nine Latin-American countries are studying under UNESCO auspices to become teachers of fundamental education in their own lands. They will leave Patzcuaro to teach to other teachers the techniques of combating mass illiteracy. In Patzcuaro, too, are being developed the tools—prim-

ers that meet the needs of adults, educational films, mobile libraries—necessary for carrying out the task of fundamental education in Latin America. This is the first of six such centers that UNESCO plans to put in operation. A second will begin work this

