

THEY were sitting together on the boat that took them every day across the harbour to Wellington. Joe was about sixty, Bill approaching thirty, and both were deep in the morning paper.

"This Fellow Gandhi"

Bill spoke first. "This fellow Gandhi has made a mess of things."

Without looking up Joe said, "For us or for India?"

"For both, of course. You surely don't think he's helping to win the war?"

"No, I don't," Joe said, dropping his paper on his knee. "But I don't suppose he is trying to win the war."

"Well isn't that making a mess of things?"

"Of course it is for us. But Gandhi is an Indian. He has been at war with us for forty years. We can't suppose that he doesn't know what he's doing."

"He knows what he is doing all right. But I think we know what he is doing too. The show-down has come at last."

"In what way?"

"Well he has been arrested and locked up. We should have done it years ago."

"We did. We have been doing it off and on ever since he was 30. But we have always had to let him out again."

"You mean before he has served his time? What for?"

"Because he is about the toughest adversary our law has ever come up against. He is of course a lawyer himself, or was until he became a saint and an agitator."

"You're not suggesting that he's both, are you?"

"I'm afraid I am. That's the great difficulty. A rogue could be put in gaol and kept there. It's not so easy with a saint."

"If saints stab their friends in the back and sell them to their enemies I'm glad we don't produce them. You mean, I suppose, that he calls himself a holy man and gets the rabble to believe him?"

"No, I wish I did. But it's not nearly so simple as that. I have read his Life and I can't help feeling that his piety is genuine. It is strange, something that I don't much like or fully understand, but I can't just sweep it away."

"You honestly believe that he is a religious man, as we understand religion?"

"I do."

"In spite of the fact that he is willing to make peace with Japan and, if he can't make peace, stop fighting just the same?"

"I don't like his methods any more than you do. They sound half-mad and wholly dangerous. If I read in the paper to-morrow morning that he too had died in gaol—I notice that one of his secretaries has—I could not pretend to be sorry, unless of course he died fasting, a trick of which he is quite capable. He would then of course be a martyr and more dangerous still. But the question we were discussing was his piety. Queer fish thought he is—and tricky fish too—his holiness seems genuine. You ought to read his Life."

"No, thank you. I have better things to do. But since you have wasted time over him, tell me what you know about him."

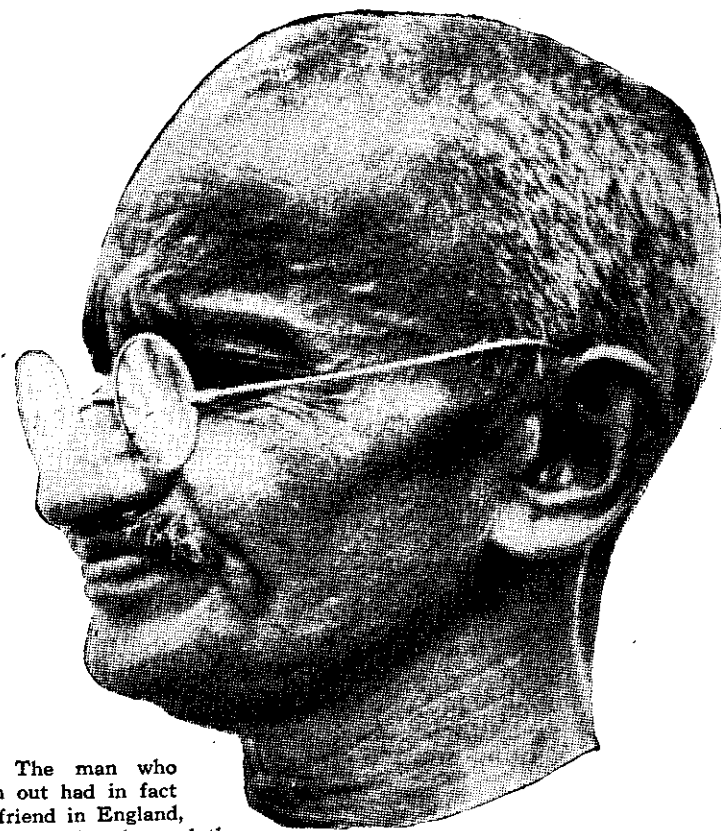
"Well it would be easier than telling what I think about him. But he is seventy-three, and you can't expect me to remember everything that has happened since he first got it into his head that his job in life was to free India from the British."

"When was that?"

"I would not like to name a day or a year. All members of subject races must drink in some hostility with their mother's milk. But I am inclined to think that Gandhi first hated us—he would not himself admit the word—the day a British agent refused to hear a complaint from him—a very ill-based complaint, certainly—and when he persisted with it had him thrown bodily outside."

"How old would he be then?"

"In his mid-twenties, I think, but you can't use ages in India as we use them here. He was married at 13, a father at 16 or 17, and long before that incident with the Political Agent he had lived in London and been admitted to the Eng-



lish Bar. The man who threw him out had in fact been his friend in England, and it was this thought, and the feeling that he must either swallow it sweetly or be jeopardised in his professional career, that made him leave India a second time."

"Where did he go?"

"This time to South Africa, and it was from South Africa that the world first heard of him."

"In what way?"

"Well, it's a long story; far too long to tell before we reach Wellington, but the outline is something like this. He went to Durban to watch the interests of an Indian firm who had a law case pending in the Courts. But at the preliminary hearing the Magistrate ordered him to take off his turban. Mohammedans could wear their turbans, but Hindus had to uncover. Gandhi refused to be slighted and left the Court. On the way to Pretoria he was insulted and even physically assaulted, though he was a member of the English Bar, because he claimed the right to travel first-class. In Pretoria he was pushed and finally kicked into the street by a policeman for walking on the footpath in front of the house of President Kruger. The only white people who would have anything at all to do with him were a handful of Christians connected with a Mission who tried, unsuccessfully, to convert him. But it was several years later than all this, when he was 37 or 38, before his name sounded round the world. And in the meantime he had returned to India and then gone back to South Africa a second time."

"Deliberately to agitate, I suppose?"

"Yes, this time I think you are right. He was invited by the Indians living in Natal to return to fight for them against the Union Government, and it is probable that the next ten or twelve years were the most important in his whole career. They were certainly stormy years, and from our point of view they were lunatic years, but the Gandhi we

know to-day was created between his second return to India in 1896 and his second visit to London in 1914. I have told you that I can't go into details, even the few details that I remember; but during those years he conducted a successful non-violent campaign against the poll-tax on indentured Indian workers who wished to remain in Natal; he fought an invasion of plague; he organised ambulance units which served first behind the lines and then under fire in the Boer War, and again in the Zulu rising that followed the war; he conducted a newspaper and two "settlements"—both semi-religious—and he half thought out and half blundered on the great political technique of his career—*Satyagraha* or non-violent resistance. He has put it on record that he learnt a great deal during this period from Ruskin and Tolstoy; also from Thoreau and the New Testament. But I think myself that his technique was his own."

"Is that the game he is up to now?"

"It is the method of warfare he is using against us, and that he says he will use if necessary against Japan."

"Just plain pacifism."

"Pacifism certainly, but not plain pacifism. There is no exact word for it in English, because it is not quite the same thing as some people find in the Sermon on the Mount. It is more political than that but equally charged with self-effacement. Christ was not a politician, Gandhi is. *Satyagraha* is not merely a method but a weapon carefully designed, patiently polished and worked on, for use in political warfare. Not to see that is to be fooled all the way, as the Halifaxes and other trusting Englishmen have been fooled again and

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GANDHI as a law-student in London, aged about 20



GANDHI as a barrister in Durban, aged about 34