

¶One of the greatest souls in life.

THE SECRET OF MAHATMA GANDHI

MAHATMA GANDHI has reached the threshold of seventy. There is no single man in the whole world to-day who is so deeply and universally beloved as Gandhi. Even those who condemned him during the non-cooperation movement have recently changed their minds.

When I first met him in the year 1913, he was still in South Africa, struggling against almost insuperable odds in order to obtain justice for the poor labourers who had emigrated to that distant country from India. They had gone out to South Africa as indentured labourers. They were being cruelly driven back to India after the indenture was over, by means of an unjust poll-tax, and Mahatmaji had determined by passive resistance to get that tax removed. He made, what has been called by one writer, "the most remarkable march with a peaceful army which history has ever recorded." This "army" was composed of indentured labourers—men, women, and children. They had no weapons of war. Their one weapon was non-violence. They started from one of the central districts of Natal, and marched over the high Drakenberg

mountains until they came to the borders of Transvaal. I have been along that very road, by which they came over those high mountains. When they crossed these mountains it was so bitterly cold at night-time that two little children perished on the way.

The Indian merchants, who met this "raged army" at different towns on the route, brought them loaves of bread and other provisions; but it was very difficult indeed to feed so large a multitude and many had to go hungry. When they reached the borders of Transvaal, they all knew that if they crossed the border they would be put in prison: for that was the law of South Africa. Nevertheless, with extraordinary enthusiasm and joy in their faces, the whole army rushed across the frontier. They were then confronted at once by the mounted police, who called upon them to surrender. Since they were passive resisters, they gave themselves up to the police without a struggle, and were all of them imprisoned along with their great leader, Mahatma Gandhi, and his wife Kasturbai and their children.

When I reached South Africa

three months later, Mahatma Gandhi had been released, along with other leaders, named Mr. Polak and Mr. Kallenbach, because General Smuts, who was in command of the administration, had already determined to make peace and not to carry on the struggle any further. He therefore had summoned Mahatmaji to come to see him at Pretoria, which was the capital of the Transvaal. I was asked to accompany him and we travelled together by the train just before a very violent strike broke out, both on the railway and in the gold mines. The mail train, by which we were to reach Pretoria, was the very last that was allowed to make its journey for many days, while the strike continued.

I remember very well how at midnight, when the train stopped at one of the stations on the mountain-side, where a second engine had to be attached, we both of us thought that the strike had actually begun, and that we should be left stranded in the middle of our journey. But, after what seemed an almost interminable time, the train moved on again. The guard of the train came and told us that although the strike had been announced to begin at midnight, our train would be allowed to complete its journey to Pretoria.

When we reached the capital,

then, once again, there were almost insuperable difficulties. The telegraph lines were cut by the strikers, and we were then quite isolated from the rest of the world, for there was no "wireless" in those days.

The European strike leaders sent out tentative requests to Mr. Gandhi that he should join them in their own strike, and thus make certain of victory. But he refused to do so, because his own passive resistance struggle was altogether on a non-violent basis, while the European strike on the railway and in the mines was on a violent basis.

This fact, that Mahatmaji had refused to join in a violent strike, even when it seemed to be for his own interest to do so, made a great impression everywhere. It led on to General Smuts' offer of peace. Thus when he called Mahatmaji to see him at his office in Pretoria, he said with great deal of bluntness: "Now Gandhi, put all your cards on the table! Let me know exactly what you want, and I will try to get it for you."

Anyone else, who had received such a favourable offer, would have at once demanded the very maximum, but Mr. Gandhi, who is the soul of truth and uprightness in everything he does, asked instead of only for the minimum. His one

final demand was this, that the £3 poll-tax (which was the sign of slavery) should be entirely abolished. General Smuts agreed to this and signed a draft agreement.

This was the beginning of the last act in that great drama, whereby Mahatma Gandhi won his passive resistance struggle against overwhelming odds in South Africa. In the history of India and the world it marks a turning-point, which future historians will record, from violence to non-violence. I have told this amazing story in order to show how Mahatmaji has remained absolutely true to his great principle of non-violence during all these intervening years. He has never turned either to the righthand or to the left, but has marched straight forward all the while along the same path of non-violence.

Before me on the table there lies open a tiny booklet which he wrote in 1908, while he was on a sea voyage coming back from England. In this little book he has described his own belief in Non-violence as follows:

“To use brute-force, to use gun-powder, is contrary to passive resistance; for it means that we want our opponent to do by our use of force that which we desire, but he does not. And, if such a use of force is justifiable, surely he is entitled to do

the same by us. And so we should never come to an agreement. We may simply fancy, like the blind horse, moving in a circle round a mill, that we are making progress. Those who believe that they are not bound to obey laws which are repugnant to their conscience, have only the remedy of passive resistance open to them. Any other must lead to disaster.

“Passive resistance, that is, Soul-force is matchless. It is superior to the force of arms. How, then, can it be considered merely a weapon of the weak? Men who use physical force are strangers to the courage that is requisite in a passive resister. Do you believe that a *coward* can ever disobey a law that he dislikes? A passive resister will say he will not obey a law that is against his conscience, even though he may be blown to pieces at the mouth of a cannon.

“What do you think? Wherein is courage required—in blowing others to pieces from behind a cannon, or with a smiling face to approach a cannon and be blown to pieces? Who is the true warrior—he who keeps death always as a bosom-friend? Believe me, that a man devoid of courage and manhood can never be a passive resister.

“This, however, I will admit; that even a man, weak in

body, is capable of offering this passive resistance. One man can offer it just as well as millions. Both men and women can indulge in it. It does not require the training of any army; it needs no jiu-jitsu. Control over the mind is alone necessary, and when that is attained, man is free, like the king of the forest, and his very glance withers the enemy.

"Passive resistance is an all-sided sword; it can be used anyhow; it blesses him who uses it and him against whom it is used. Without drawing a drop of blood, it produces far-reaching results."

Now, in these declining years of his life, Mahatma Gandhi has laid even *more* emphasis than ever on this great method of fighting against evil which

has always been his principal weapon. Very few as yet understand its full implications as he does. But those who have been its wonderful effects in action (as I was greatly privileged to do in South Africa) have come to the conclusion, that it is the strongest force in all the world, and further that it is the *only* force that can overcome the hideous brutalities of modern war.

If an army could be trained for this *moral* resistance of Peace, just as armies are being trained for the *immoral* resistance of war, then the devilish violence of modern warfare might soon be ended. But have we the moral courage to offer such resistance?—C. F. Andrews, condensed from *The Modern Review*.

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Deposit Box

A MAN went to his banker and asked for a loan of \$5 for one year. As collateral he offered \$100,000 in government bonds. When the deal was closed and 30 cents in interest paid, the amazed banker asked his client why he had applied for such a loan. Said the man: "You see I put this up as collateral, pay 30 cents in interest and you keep the bonds. Otherwise I would have had to pay you \$3 for the rent of a safe deposit box."—*Opportunity*.