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Manuscript: This Is My Story by Eleanor Roosevelt (book review)

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"THIS IS MY STORY"

Eleanor Roosevelt's "This Is My Story" might very well be called "An Escape from Regimentation." It is an honest, straightforward and a bit pathetic chronicle of the pain and bewilderment that honest-minded youth must suffer under autocratic leadership.

Here was a sober little girl born with a large, very large, sense of duty and a deep craving for affection. Her natural sources of affection were cut off early by the death of father and mother. She fell into the hands of a devoted grandmother determined to make her correct according to the rules set by her class.

Whatever seeds of revolt were in the child lay dormant through youth, girlhood, wifehood and young motherhood. Always she did to the full what the leaders of her class and her family demanded. The hearest to revolt she comes under this prescribed system is when she says of herself she shut up like a clam. She speaks reproachfully of this habit, but one is thankful for even this silent protest against always doing what "they" expected of her.
If her life was prescribed it was full. Her associates were everywhere of the elite. Her husband's career provided exciting situations and relations which she took with full seriousness. She became a fine example of what her class may produce in the way of making a useful woman. And then life took her in hand, broke down class rule, forced her on her own, set her to working out an independent system where she must do her own deciding according to her own judgments.

Generally speaking life is a pretty hard schoolmaster, but accepted as Eleanor Roosevelt accepted it with a highly developed sense of duty, a large experience in doing what was demanded whether you liked it or not you get results. When a pupil does not respond it is because the soul and mind have become too hide-bound under regimentation. Eleanor Roosevelt had not.

This book then is a story of a woman's escape from the rule of others, the achievement of freedom. It is a brave, frank story, but a sequel should follow - the story of what she has done with the freedom which life thrust upon her.