

PC/11/7/10/1



EXTRACTS FROM JHH'S LETTERS TO SARAH GERTRUDE

9.3.36

"I have had a bad time, (his sickness) but the trouble is, I think over. Strictly entre nous, The General and I do not see eye to eye on the so-called 'compromise' Native Bill. I have specifically retained my freedom all along, and I told him on the very day before I took ill that I was going to speak and vote against the second reading. He was very much disturbed."

No Date (probably before (1))

It looks as if we are going to have a real Homeric struggle over the Native Bills - the issue still uncertain as between (a) the Franchise Bill being pushed forward as it now stands and getting the two-thirds majority. (b) The Malanites doing Hertzog a shot in the eye and preventing him getting it. (c) the Bill being amended on the lines of the compromise, either with or without consent..... I am not enthusiastic about the compromise, save as a compromise, and I am not quite sure if I could for my part justify it.

21.4.36

Your letter about Germany (from England) gives a different picture from that which we get in the Press. Frankly I have not been happy since Hitler violated the Locarno Agreement about what has seemed the British policy, supported by Smuts, of taking his protestations for the future at face value. He is going to give the world a lot of trouble.What a sight for the gods - van Ribbentrop doing homage to you! *
*(This happened at the house of Lord Londonderry's son. I had not realised who he was, and the lady who introduced me apologised for having done so.)

1.12.36

You do act as a gadfly in making me face up to things! I appreciate what you say about my having become rhetorical. I recognise it as correctI realise that I have allowed rhetoric to run away with me.....I still have my doubts as to my capacity to fill the role you marked out for me - and yet I will say that I have become conscious of growing strength of late. I have a feeling too that the time for independent action will come, but I cannot yet see when it is going to come. You adjure me (somewhat rhetorically) to show myself* but you are not very precise in giving your ideas as to what you regard as the immediate action that I should take. After all, if one is to take a strong independent line, it must be on some really big issue, and one must be able to take one's stand with all one's heart and soul, and with the most absolute conviction. So it is not



just caution and timidity that make one choose one's ground carefully.

*(This has reference to where in the Psalms, the Lord is told "Show thyself.")

25.11.36

Your letter of 21st has caused me a good deal of searching of the heart. Am I uncertain and timid? Or are you overestimating my powers? It may be that I have a gift of speech, but is it not of the kind that appeals only to intellectuals, and does not really stir the masses? I wish I could see myself leading people away from the devil - but when I realise the strength of the forces arrayed against whosoever essays that task, I can, at best, only foresee a more or less splendid failure. Not that I am afraid of failure. I am quite ready to go down politically - provided I go down with flags flying and with something on the flags. But I fear I see no other alternative to that save filling a role like that of John Bright - leading a Liberal wing, and stimulating the promptings of the still small voice of conscience in the minds of men. That of course would be a very worthy role, but a good deal short of what you are thinking of. If the other thing were really possible, if there were a chance of leading SA from the devil, I would readily spend myself in the process - but is it? Or is it possibly that there is some thing lacking in my make-up?

16.6.35

About Smuts: his dilatoriness - the tendency to let things develop.....He shows a tendency to put off doing things which are a little unpleasant.....combined with his dynamic energy he has today a kind of occasional indolence of mind which makes him tend to shirk issues which.....seem to him unimportant.....I am puzzled by the obvious conflict going on between the old Boer attitude and the British Liberal attitude. You describe him as essentially the old Boer in this regard - you may be right.....But last year when he returned from England.....it was clear that the whole idea of any additional colour bar was hateful to him. And yet I feel it in my bones that, although he has stood out for the Cape native franchise so far, he will let it go without a struggle next year

1936 contd:

I am dangerously near contenting myself with the fatalistic Greek apothegm - what must come will come. And yet one has the (I suppose) very natural human quality of liking approbation.....And yet as I think I told you once I am at heart something of a mystic - and I am not sure that it is not along these lines that the deepest satisfaction is to be found.



8.3.37

(concerning Judge Millin's being passed over for a judgeship) I had wondered why I had not heard from you. Now I am reproaching myself for not having written to you. I knew nothing of the judicial appointments until they were made..... I spoke to Smuts, but the only result was to show me how 'weak' (he had been in this matter in lying down to anti-Semitism. I am ashamed of the Government of which I am a member. Smuts was just as weak over me, just as ready to let the wicked triumph and the forces of reaction prevail..... I am writing this in the House with a debate proceeding...

18.9.38

Your letter, following on your telegram, gave me much pleasure. It revealed that truly sympathetic and understanding insight which one expects from you. Of course the step which I have taken has not been an easy one. But I feel well content that I took it. I am sure that the results will be good for the country which seems to have wakened up with a gasp of astonishment to the fact that there is still some regard for principle in our public life. That will be good for the Government and Party - they needed shaking up badly..... From the personal point of view, I feel I have been given a stature in the country such as I never had before. Moreover I am much more conscious than before of what might be called a sense of vocation in our political life. At last I really think I am going to be Prime Minister! I am sorry for Smuts. He has been sorely humiliated. To a large extent it is his own fault. He is really no match for the PM in simple directness and in straightforwardness of purpose. He is now Hertzog's prisoner in the Cabinet. He must do whatever he is told to do. His only possible escape is through the outbreak of war and the almost inevitable Cabinet split which will result. At the moment our relations are somewhat strained, mainly, I think, because, knowing that he has let me down badly, he is sensitive about the whole business..... I know that he would like to find a way of getting me back into the Cabinet, but how can he possibly expect to get Hertzog to agree to what might must inevitably my terms?...

PERSONAL 1941

28.9.41

He prefers THE NIGHT IS LONG to my Rhodes and Smuts calls it unique" and adds:- Reading it, I have recalled our friendship extending so long - with the memory of your brother "Sarah" as the first link between us. I have valued our association ever since." (My brother, killed in 1918, was called "Sarah" because we were never apart. He was a contemporary of Jan's.)

EXAMPLES OF PERSIFLAGE

I think think about March, 1936.

"I shall be there to see you off provided you don't embrace me on the deck."



Examples of persiflage contd.

2.2.36

"Even my mid-Victorian prudity wilts before the picture of you as matron of a boarding-school. And yet I have no doubt that you would fill that role also admirably, if only from the point of view of teaching your charges how to write letters