Mr vd. Bruggen

ALAN PATON CENTRE UNP.

Observations on M's character.

Shibbie affair

Principalship.

PC1/1/7/18/4

Mr. V.D. BRUGGE JOHANNESBURG 2.8.52

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Mr. v.d. Brugge joined the University Staff as Registrar on 1st January, 1922. He said he considered the difficulties between Senate and Council were in large measure due to H.'s attitude towards the Stibbe affair and towards the Senate. There was resentment amongst members of the Senate because H. had been appointed Principal and also a certain amount of jealousy because of this. vdB's opinion was that H. asserted himself over the Stibbe affair in order to prove to Senate that he was master, and that herein made a grave mistake in attaching his cause to such a weak case.

vdB thought H. had great talents and also great drawbacks, and as far as being a great man he was not in the same class as Smuts. He formed the opinion that H. couldn't stand people being on the same plane as himself and was rather convinced of his own magnitude. He was carefully nursed for the position he held by Smuts who had his eye on H. even before 1920, and by his mother who idolised him and saw none of his faults. vdB thought that H's failure at Wits was partly due to the fact that he had no cultural background. He had a prodigious memory - relational as well as local. This enabled him to absorb a file of documents on a comparatively short time and grasp the essentials of same, and also enabled him to remember such things as telephone numbers. Once he gave vdB a telephone number and vdB wrote it down. H said, "Can't you remember a telephone number once you have used it?" to which vdB replied, "I don't see any point in doing so. That is why notebooks were invented." vdB said H. was annoyed and did not forget this.

H. was inclined to make too much of something unimportant. He liked doing everything himself because he thought no one else could do it as well. Because of his amazing memory it was easy for H to memorise his speeches quickly and so do without notes, but he was not a spontaneous speaker although he appeared to be one. Later in his career he had created so many cliches that he did not need to write out all his speeches beforehand.

vdB did not consider H a mean man. He said he was frugal and careful. He was exceedingly honest. He could have become very wealthy by following certain advice given him, but preferred to earn his money the hard way by hard work and careful living. H. was determined to be financially independent.

vdB thought H. had a contracted mind and lacked a sense of the poetical and imaginative - in fact he despised such things - and did not read poetry with conscious pleasure. He was devoid of an appreciation of Musike and this was another reason why vdB did not think him a great man because vdB held that no man devoid of this appreciation could ever become great. A great man must possess the imaginative faculty. Once when vdB was reading some poetry, H. said to him, "I do not understand how you can read a poem consciously and with pleasure." vdB thought H

* See Strauss, Dalton.

ALAN PATON CENTRE UNP

would have made a great scientist as his gifts were on the Science side more than on the Arts side. H. had very considerable insight and was more at home in dealing with things than with people, in fact he failed when it came to dealing with people. Later on he improved in this respect. He was not a creative genius.

H. was extremely suspicious of other people and always suspected an ulterior motive. He did not really trust people.

Re Stibbe affair vdB said Stibbe was a very ordinary type of person with a not very attractive wife. They wre often at loggerheads. S. was attracted by the typist who was an intelligent girl with more brains than Mrs. S. Had H. not rushed in where angels feared to tread, the whole thing would probably have fizzled out. At first there was only suspicion and not enough evidence to make an issue of it, but because of jealousy and resentment on part of Senate concerning H's appointment to Principalship, of which H was aware, H. saw in S. affair a chance to show the Senate he was a strong man. The Senate never forgave H. for this. The Council (who were really the Chamber of Mines) gave H their full support without understanding things properly. It was composed of some very stubborn men like Aitken, Evans, and Dalrymple. They were very impressed with H's powers of administration. H. would not shift his position in regard to the Senate, which he might have done had he had more knowledge of men. He created a lot of difficulties for himself. Dalton, Macmurray, and Drennan were the chief leaders of the Senate in the fight against H. At one time th e temper of the Senate was such that if H. had made the slightest concession, the Senate would have received him with open arms. But he made no such move and the fight continued.

vdB said Smuts was incapable of choosing the right men to whom to designate power, and H. had the same weakness, which is one reason why the UP today has no leaders. No one was ever trained for the job, and capable people who might have become leaders were ignored.

vdB did not hold the view that Smuts deliberately rescued H from a difficult situation when he made him Administrator. He thought H. was made Administrator, partly because ~~HS~~ was looking for a capable person for the post, and partly because he wanted to groom H. for a political life. Dalrymple discussed the University staff troubles with Smuts, but Smuts said he had enough difficulties of his own and wanted to be left out of University trouble.

vdB did not think H. would have changed had he reached the age of political discretion.