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P.O. ANERLEY,
South Coast,
Natal.

11th March, 1952.



Dear Ronald,

I have heard several times now of Mr. Donaldson from various sources. He is certainly very thorough and painstaking, though how he can write Hoffie's Life at that distance rather baffles me, even in spite of the fact that he has access to "this considerable volume of printed matter", by which he must mean surely the British Museum.

I am very grateful to you for feeling that you were under some kind of obligation to me, but all I can say is that I do not think you are under any obligation whatsoever.

I am reaching the last lap of this work and wish I could discuss with you all the new matter and problems that have come up since last I saw you. I might do so yet. There is one thing that to me is finally clear and that is that this book cannot be published while Mrs. Hofmeyr is alive. I wrote a very simple article about Hoffie for the SACS appeal fund and sent a copy to the old lady, thinking she would approve of its warmth, but that she never mentioned at all. Instead she rebuked me amongst other things for saying, (1) that the family was left poor, (2) for tracing Hoffie's brilliant career as a speaker from its diffident beginnings, (3) for mentioning the rebellion and General Beyers, who, as you may know, was a relative, (4) for saying that things were always easier for him than men. I wrote and told her that I had removed all these things but I could hardly add, "because you are alive." I am afraid therefore that Mr. Donaldson will beat me to the post. While my reason tells me that he cannot possibly give any kind of picture of the man, yet I have certain misgivings. I am astonished, for example, that he has just stumbled on the fact of Hoffie's "reticence". It was not reticence at all. It was a basic diffidence about himself due to the fact that he was denied the normal life of a boy (though please don't give all my material away).

You may remember that you were a bit shocked about what I told you about Hoffie's last day. I understood your reaction and respected it, but I do not think the last word has been said. I met a young man in Capetown who made a great impression on me, and he told me, quite of his own accord, that the last day was very extraordinary. It seems to show that she lost two things on that day -

one, a beloved son, the other, an instrument of power. Do you not realise that the story rises to some kind of tragic height? This certainly poses difficult problems for a biographer.

I am going to England this week to do the Oxford chapter. You already know about Secretan and Underhill. I am also going to look for Lord Lindsay and Kenneth Bell, who were at Balliol; also Moffatt, the translator, and Victor Murray, who were at Mansfield; also Pickard-Cambridge, Principal of Sheffield; engine-driver King, who was a boy at the Boys' Club.

I shall try to find what I can but this must be the end, I think. If you have any ideas at all, please write to me c/o Jonathan Cape, 30 Bedford Square, London, W.C.1. You must admit that it is a very tricky proposition, and I repeat to you I have only one wish, and that is to write a true book, but I believe with all my heart that Hoffie will emerge from it a most courageous man.

We send our warmest regards to you and Mrs. Currey.

Yours ever,