



has been holding himself in, into a series of involuntary and sometimes uncontrollable giggles, after which he would pull himself together, wipe his eyes, and look at one as if to say "well, you got under my guard, but I defy you to do it again". If the eulogy had tonight become too fulsome, he would have subjected it to a silent and devastating disapproval, for he passed nothing that was counterfeit; real praise he valued, but he despised flattery and flatterers and could see through them in a second. All these things indicate that the man was, behind the armour with which he protected himself, a real, true simple, human being. These things were hidden under an armour as complex as ever concealed simplicity; but the man under them was a man who when he said "Yes", meant "Yes"; when he said "I will", he meant "I will"; when he said "I cannot" he meant "I cannot".

If and when his life comes to be written, it will be necessary to assemble a host of evidences. I am in no sense able to do anything like this; there are chapters of his life unknown to me; and in the chapters that I knew there are pages missing. He was not a man easy to know; there were moments in which he would reveal himself, and moments in which he would withdraw. That was easy for him to do, for he was a great man in a great position, and if he chose to withdraw, how many were there to question it? I have in fact only three qualifications to speak about him at all; one is that, on and off, I saw a great deal of him and was admitted to a Hofmeyrian intimacy; the second is that I loved him with

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an affection that grew purer and less and less dependent on the fact of his fame and power; the third is that I wrote three sketches of him, all of which he approved in downright terms, though he made certain important objections.

I might here disclose something that throws a great deal of light on to an enigmatic man. In my first sketch I expressed the opinion that he was in no sense an artist, that his appreciation of the Greeks was moral and not aesthetic; that in his attitude to a work of art he was like a small boy in his attitude to an orange - he made a hole in it and sucked out the juice, but the roundness, the wholeness, the fragrance, the smoothness eluded him. At the time he objected to this statement, and in the second sketch I excluded it. But he afterwards wrote to me and told me it was true. I take this to be an example of his humility, and of his honesty; and an important indication of the nature of the most important chapter of his life, the last heroic, self-discovering, tragic chapter.

You must therefore understand that I am here as a friend and a follower, and not as an authority. There will be many of you here who can add to and subtract from this picture. But what is done is done in affection. And what is done is mine alone. And of one thing I am sure, that not one thing I shall say would have hurt or offended him.

To my mind there were three great factors in Jan Hofmeyr's life which must be understood if we are to understand the man; one is his

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abnormal boyhood, his supernormal intellectual equipment, his profound attachment to his mother; these three hand together. The second is the fact that his public life was lived in its entirety in the shadow of a great personality; the third is that he was born and lived in South Africa.

His school career was quite extraordinary; he took his degree when most boys are at school. In his day there was no recognition of the need for special methods of educating supernormally intelligent children, nor of the existence of the profound psychological problems confronting such children. I need hardly dilate here on the great problems of adaptation that confront a child who is mentally but not emotionally nor physically the equal of boys four and five years his senior. One's intellectual pre-eminence is recognised; hardly a day passes but what it is mentioned, perhaps made much of. But one's natural hunger for other kinds of recognition is rarely satisfied. And J.H. Hofmeyr, while fully aware of his intellectual pre-eminence, desired, as all human creatures do, to be recognised for himself; but he was always to be known as a genius, as the boy who passed his matric when other small boys were winning honours at their preparatory schools. He heard often, and grew to value less and less, tributes to his gigantic intellectual ~~powers~~ powers, to his prodigious memory, to his ability to size up a new situation and to grasp its details and its significance in a short space of time. The world hurt him, as it must hurt most prodigies; and the small boy found in his mother the one perfect

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companionship. But the small boy did not run away from the world that hurt him, as he could have done, as he was tempted to do. He went out into it, and chose, eventually, the life of a man of affair. This courage was to be the dominant characteristic of his life; I have no hesitation in saying that courage was his great quality. A study of Hofmeyr should be called, not a Study of Genius, or a Study of Enigma, but a Study in Courage. Ambition played its part no doubt; but the small boy was prepared, in spite of his emotional and physical disabilities, to go out into the world. This courage derived of course from his faith, and from his great admiration for his <sup>Senior Cousin</sup> great-uncle, Onze Jan. Hofmeyr was a Christian of the simplest kind; he did not use his great intellect to wrestle with the problems of God, creation, of pain and evil. He never indulged himself in a questioning of the validity of his deep moral and religious convictions. The world was God's, and man's highest duty and purpose was to serve God and please Him, and to do His will. As a young boy he preached on the sands, and was a faithful and devoted member of the Students' Christian Association. He learned young the great lesson of responsibility for human society and human beings, and it was never forgotten. At Oxford, in spite of his own studies, he assumed extra duties at the <sup>Bullio!</sup> Boys' Club at ~~Bermondsey~~, so that the loss of man-power due to the War could be made good. He told me that it was one of the most arduous periods of his life.

And so of course he widened his knowledge of the world; he never went into it like most young men do, taking its good and its

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bad in his stride. With him, knowledge of the world and its ways was painfully acquired; the man was growing up, coming to terms with the world because he must, but the small boy was there too, retreating from it into his own private world of books, friends, and his mother. The grown man, even when he was a Cabinet Minister, would come home, open the front door, and go calling "Ma, Ma," through the house until he found her.

His pattern of life was now decided; the sensitive boy was to go out to win the great prizes of public life, but his sensitiveness was never to leave him, nor his desire to be recognised for something more than a colossal intellect. He was to win the great prizes, but recognition was to be denied him. He left Oxford to come back to South Africa, to a life of affairs in which he was determined to succeed, but for which he was in great measure unfitted. His progress from one great position to another was not the brilliant and easy progress it appeared to be; the great intellect flitted from peak to peak, but the man had to set his teeth and fight each inch of the way.

His return to South Africa, his Principalship of the University of the Witwatersrand, his Administratorship of the Transvaal, revealed administrative gifts as great as the intellectual. He was now well in the public eye, and so began to grow the Hofmeyr legend which was to persist until today, the legend that he was not a man's man, that he was not approachable by ordinary men, that he frightened them and they frightened him; he did not drink, smoke, gamble, &

to races, swear, tell bawdy stories. Men would relate, with a queer kind of pride, tales of his phenomenal powers. But they persisted in regarding him as a kind of Sunday School giant. The truth was that he was not understood, and that he was the last man to interpret himself. But that was nothing new; it had been so all the time. Yet the number of those who trusted and honoured him was growing; some knew, some sensed, the quality of greatness that was hidden by a hundred irrelevances, the quality of greatness that he himself hid because it was hardly the kind of thing to show anyway. It revealed itself in one important way, in his speeches; for he had a gift of speaking of an order no less than his other gifts. It was in fact his method of self-interpretation; but it revealed his greatness rather than his humanity. The loftiness of his ideals was a little forbidding to the ordinary man. But the humanity was there, simple and unassuming; it was something of a tragedy that it could not be easily revealed. For it might have made a great difference to his life, and I believe a great difference to the history of South Africa.

Was it ever revealed? Indeed yes, and in abundance. For when the S.C.A. commenced its Camps for school-boys in Natal, the Administrator, and later the Cabinet Minister, made the Camps his holiday occupation. This is very significant, for the important public figure might well have pleaded his need for a quieter and more comfortable holiday. But it was not all duty; for Hofmeyr the man became Hofmeyr the boy, and his enjoyment of these Camps was real and spontaneous. He wore a canvas hat of uncertain shape and great antiquity

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a khaki shirt and shorts, and tackies. He subjected himself in every detail to the discipline and programme of the Camp. He played every camp game. His short stocky body was immensely powerful, and to collide with him was to undergo a profound physical experience. One of his favourite games was Ouma; a boy would bend down, and others would flick his hindquarters with their fingers. If he guessed rightly, the flicker would have to take his place. To be flicked by Hoffie was painful, because he had powerful fingers. To flick him was also painful, because his hindquarters seemed made of concrete. At any idle moment boys would gather round him and call for Ouma. They all called him Hoffie; I never heard him called Mr. Hofmeyr. In the evenings we would all gather in the Tin Temple, and one of the main events of the evening was the daily reading of the Camp newspaper, the Indomba Indaba. A great part of this scurrilous and merciless production was devoted to Hoffie; innumerable poems were written about him; needless to say, words like "coffee" and "teffee" were used in an infinite series of combinations. If the poem was bad, Hoffie would snort; if it was good, he would grunt and giggle; but at times it was very good, and Hoffie would be seized by fits of uncontrollable laughter, the tears would stream from his eyes, and he would clutch helplessly at his neighbours.

It has been said that Hoffie lacked gifts of personality; that is not true. But it is true to say that he often felt constrained with his fellows, and that they never saw the real personality. But with boys he felt no such constraint. At these Camps he was

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the most important, the most colourful, the most zestful, the most loved, personality. This attitude was not confined to the boys; for the young men who staffed the Camps came to feel for him a deep trust and abiding affection. He had this gift and no biographer dare overlook it, of inspiring this deep trust and affection; but it was a gift exercised only in unusual and special surroundings. And the world of affairs was quite otherwise.

Many of these boys and young men wrote to Hoffie; for all his cares he regarded their letters as important. He had at one time a habit of carrying all unanswered letters in his inside pocket; this he said made him certain to answer them. But his correspondence was heavy, and sometimes his jacket would bulge with letters unanswered. Old Campers called on him in Capetown and Pretoria; and I never knew of one who was ~~XXXXXX~~ not seen, not made to feel that his visit was important.

I am glad to be able to give you this picture. For it is the true man. I believe that these companionships were unique in the hard and heavy life. But the War of 1939, that changed so many things, was for one thing to bring the Camps to an end, was for another to lay such burdens on Smuts' great lieutenant, that he was to withdraw more and more.

Before one deals with the years of the War, one should glance briefly at the political career. In 1933 Hofmeyr was one of the architects of the Hertzog-Smuts coalition; in 1936 he angered his chief by his speech on the Native Bills. This must be regarded as one of the great turning-points of his life. For long he had been

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pondering over the racial problems of South Africa. It would be fair to say that the Afrikaner-English problem was for him no personal problem at all, and that to some extent this impaired his understanding of it. I think it fair to say that he was so little emotionally involved that he never fully appreciated the viewpoint of those who were. This is not to say that he was indifferent to the status of the languages; he considered that the United Party, for example, took Afrikaans too much for granted, and that in this respect the Nationalists set a truer South African example. I think it fair to say that he was not by inclination a Monarchist, but that he could not accept the emotional wrappings of Republicanism. He came as near as a man could come to being by pure intellectual conviction a believer in the British Commonwealth. But in respect of South Africa's other racial problems, he was deeply involved emotionally; for he was a Liberal and a Christian; and he could not be indifferent to the doctrines of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. In this respect he did not suffer from the malady of the age that has divorced reason from emotion; although embarrassed by emotion, although he concealed his own, he trusted what he felt, and he trusted most of all what he felt most of all. This emotion he revealed only, and only in his own restrained way, in some of his more impassioned and lofty speeches; in ordinary speech he would state his case calmly and dispassionately. He realised, and was to come to realise with considerable suffering, that the way he felt he must follow was hard and lonely and

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dangerous. He longed to convince men of the importance and rightness of his cause; but the fact remains that he could attempt this only from the platform, in great, moving, brilliant speeches. He could not do it amongst men. He would feel unable to put the whole, clear, logical case; therefore he withdrew.

It was in 1936 that he made his great speech on the Native Bills. He was keyed up. His mouth was dry, his hands sticky and swollen. He sat down exhausted. But he did not resign. He was to resign later on an issue comparatively unimportant. I do not think this was very significant. I think he was realising more and more clearly the road he must take. Smuts was not indifferent, but Hofmeyr had reached the stage when he felt that he must decide for himself. I regard this as the first stage in his weaning from a deep dependence on a great world figure who had done much for him. I am not at liberty to discuss this fully, but if we do not understand it, we do not understand Hofmeyr. All through my life I have met boys that I taught when I was not much more than a boy myself; and though we were now men together, they still regarded me with a respect and a deference that they would never have accorded to any man with whom they had not been related in the peculiar psychological relationship of pupil and teacher. But the Smuts-Hofmeyr relationship was even more striking; Smuts had been a high officer of the State and a ~~great~~ general while Hofmeyr was a child not yet at school. Smuts had shaped the future of South Africa while Hofmeyr was a boy. He became a world figure when

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Hofmeyr was at Oxford. Hofmeyr was never to outgrow this relationship; he was to take steps that Smuts disapproved, but the relationship was to remain. It took all his courage to take these steps this study is a Study in Courage. His speech in 1936 on the Native Bills was such a step. His speech in 1938 on the Fourie appointment was another. Hofmeyr was never very willing to discuss his eventual succession to the Prime Ministership, but in 1938, after his resignation, he wrote to me that now for the first time he felt he would one day become Prime Minister.

He entered what was for him a restful period. But he took on several important duties, notably in connection with the Y. M. C. A. and Toc H. He referred to himself as "unemployed". Most important of all, he accepted (and shortly after September 1939 assumed) chairmanship of the "Forum". To the end of his life this meant a weekly consultation with his editorial staff. This too was an example of the limited but growing freedom that he was beginning to allow himself, a clear pointer to the fact, that while he was loyal to his party, he intended to exercise within that party the fundamental rights of a citizen to speak, write, criticise, and persuade. These rights, as you might expect, he also allowed to his staff, and was prepared to ~~exercise the~~ defend their exercise of them, as he found cause to do on more than one occasion.

But his rest was not to be long. War broke out and Smuts recalled him to the Cabinet. I do not think that full justice had ever been done to the great tasks that he performed during this

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period. I think it fair to say that he freed his Prime Minister from every responsibility and duty that would enable the General to give his full attention to the greatest task of all, the winning of the War. If there was ever an example of shining loyalty, this was it. Hofmeyr was not a soldier; but had he joined the Army he would soon have been a General, using his great administrative and executive gifts to free the real Generals for the task of waging war. He would have done this with unparalleled energy and supreme devotion and great humility; but in his heart he would have longed to be a real General. Yet he was not a man to cherish impossible dreams. He was beginning to know himself for what he was, and life for what it was. He was beginning to realise the inexorable limits that character and temperament and endowment set to achievement. I place this final stage of self-discovery as contemporaneous with the years of the War. But it was painful; it was painful to learn that the youthful decision to enter the world of affairs had not turned out as it might have done. Yet it rarely happens that any human being realises his dreams; the young man, full of energy and enthusiasm, rarely knows what life holds for him.

This time of self-discovery was also a time of withdrawal; this disturbed and distressed many of his friends. He undertook fewer outside tasks, and used his leisure more and more for rest and relaxation, reading, and the companionship of his mother. The Hofmeyr legend, which like all legends was partly true and partly not, persisted and was added to. After the General, he was the most

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discussed man in South Africa. Men naturally asked what would happen when Smuts went. What was Hofmeyr doing besides carrying tremendous burdens in relative obscurity, and besides withdrawing into the restful peace of his home? Well, he was thinking about South Africa. That is what he was doing. Who could suppose that J.H. Hofmeyr of all men could throw all his energies into the successful prosecution of a war, and not ask why the war should be won?

In South Africa white men have always had to struggle in their political thinking to effect some kind of compromise between the rival demands of white survival and Christian justice. At the one extreme are those who think and say that considerations of justice must not be allowed to interfere with the ensuring of survival; at the other are those who would not allow the ensuring of survival to interfere with the doing of justice. Hofmeyr could not accept any policy of survival that would shut off, now and for ever, any black man from opportunity to advance, to use his gifts, to increase his income, to pursue his happiness. He believed and said that the key word was "development"; he did not believe in immediate equality and enfranchisement; but he did believe in the upliftment of the black people. He believed that each white generation must solve its own problems, and that no one generation had a right to legislate for the complete stoppage of black development. He believed that a Christian civilisation dare not attempt to ensure its survival by denying the truths that made it Christian and made it a civilisation. *If he could have got nothing better, he would* ~~He would if need be~~ have accepted a thousand years

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for this development, but he <sup>would have insisted upon</sup> ~~wanted to see~~ a one per cent instalment every ten years. <sup>In other words, he wanted to start something here & now</sup> He was further convinced that any attempt to ensure a complete stoppage would cause such a growth of black Nationalism as would lead to a conclusion that no one dared contemplate. He was convinced that the rest of the world, and the rest of Africa itself, would make the position of South Africa eventually intolerable. But how could so complex a case be presented? He presented pieces of it but he could not present it all; this was not only because it was complex, but because he held a responsible position in a Government that was not committed to his views. He had always to be guarded.

This was a painful position for him; he was attacked from all sides. The Nationalist extremists saw quite clearly the implications of his speeches, and it was easy for them to ask a question which would force him, honest as he was, to reveal the implications. Many of his own party denied forthrightly that Hofmeyr expressed the views of the United Party. And the liberals attacked him too, and accused him of uttering great moral sentiments that had no immediate practical issue. He was forced often, this great and honourable man, to explain himself, to fall back on the defensive. He was unable to be the open, frank, honest man that he by nature was.

Why did he not free himself from this bondage by leaving the United Party? One great reason is the obvious reason that he himself gave, that during the War the most important thing to do was to win the War. Another he also gave himself, that he ~~thinks~~ thought it a matter of the greatest importance that Liberals should stay in

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a great party and help to influence its politics. But a third reason was surely the Smuts-Hofmeyr relationship, the fact that he had lived his life under the shadow of a very great man. It is not proper to discuss it here; but I want to say that it fettered him. It was not in him to lead a revolt against Smuts; under any ordinary circumstances it would have been for him a psychological impossibility; he would have gone only if he had been told to go.

If he had gone <sup>out of the Party</sup>, who would have followed him? Quite a number of the most brilliant, the most courageous, the most devoted South Africans would have followed him. I do not think there can be any doubt about that. But no sign whatever came from him. J.H. Hofmeyr never put his hands on other men's lives; and whatever reasons there may have been for this, there was always the obvious reason that he was an honourable man loyal to his chief.

This part of history is so recent that judgment must be left to the future, as the Editor of the "Forum" said in his memorial article. It is a great tribute to J.H. Hofmeyr's humility and honesty that the "Forum" should have carried such articles at all; he had no time for unceritcal admiration.

I should not forget to state that during the war years Hofmeyr revised his views in regard to the Prime Ministership. By that time the true nature of his position had revealed itself to him, and in addition to that, and because of that perhaps, he decided not only that he would not be Prime Minister, but that it would not be the right thing for him to be Prime Minister, that

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the Prime Ministership would make it impossible for him to discharge certain important duties that he felt it was his most urgent responsibility to discharge. We can, I think, guess easily what these were. When the War was over real appreciation of his unparalleled contribution came from his friends; it was true that he was made a Privy Councillor; but the great honour was his Oxford degree, and the letters of his friends, some of which moved him to unusual tears.

I have mentioned the attacks made upon him. He felt them deeply. But he reminded himself, and this was a <sup>source</sup> ~~cause~~ of comfort and strength to him, that he was the servant of God, and must do His Will. He made his speech on the Indian Bills; he did not like them, he made that clear. This time his mouth was not dry, nor his hands sticky and swollen. I regard this less tense and less emotional crisis as the most important of all; for the first time his feet suddenly struck the road on which he had always meant to set them. Much peace came into him, a kind of grave humility and sweetness. Ambition he laid down, ~~Ambition he laid down~~, and contented himself with duty. Life and the world had turned out quite differently, but he reproached neither of them. That for him would have been a reproach of God. It would also have been a piece of childishness. It would have been beneath him to have said, "I was born at the wrong time", or to have said "Life gave me a raw deal" or to have said "If only this had happened, if only this had not happened". I may say that he judged severely any who whined about their life and lot. Greatness was for him not something you showed when Life broke

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lucky; it was something you showed whichever way Life broke at all.

His health was causing anxiety at this time; this showed openly, but his inner pain he concealed. During the election campaign of 1948 he learned the true width and depth of the country's fear of him and of the hate that fear inspired. But he went into the countryside nevertheless, with noble courage. Some of the stories circulated about him were incredible; he had to explain them, contradict them, modify them. He was not made for this kind of thing; he could fight back, courageously and brilliantly, but the never-ending struggle between the sensitive man and the hard cruel life of the politician taxed his strength beyond its limits. When the elections were lost it was the general judgment that he had lost them. At first he would not concede it, and who can hear that without deep pity? He pointed with pride to the results in his own ~~sanctified~~ constituency, but of course in his constituency he was known and trusted. In his own private worlds, in the Camps, on the cricket field, he was always loved and trusted. It was the larger world that he could never conquer, the larger world to which he could never interpret himself. Members of his own party reproached him, not to his face, but indirectly and often publicly. He received ovations, but the hurt was too deep for any ovation to heal. The great heart, that had pumped blood for every emergency, that had pumped blood to send him to the countryside, that had pumped blood to send him to Party Congresses not quite knowing what would happen to him, that had pumped blood to keep the sensitive brilliant studious boy making the great ascents necessary to his chosen journey, the great heart had nearly reached

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the end of its pumping. It pumped blood to send him to Bloemfontein when he was ill; some say he should not have gone; yet how could he not have gone? At this time he found time to write to me about my novel; "I rejoice" he wrote "That life has given this to you". Although ill, he went to a Y.M.C.A. cricket match in Johannesburg; he could not play but had decided to receive the first ball, but even that he could not do. He shook hands with the teams, but could not make his way back to his seat, and had to be helped. He was taken back to Pretoria, this time gravely ill. I wrote to him hoping that the severity of his illness was not comparable with the devotion that had brought it about. But indeed it was, and on December 3, 1948, he died.

I think it was that when we knew that he had gone that we realised the depth of our affection, the magnitude of our loss. It is true that he never came out and led us openly; but he had his own reasons for that, and when he was dying, he said "tell my friends to carry on". To those who knew him and the circumstances in which his life had been lived, sorrow was made more sorrowful by pitiful understanding; for his life ended in tragedy. The country which had been his life was to be the death of him also. The great goals were never attained, the great gifts never fully used. He was reviled and rejected of men. Who can doubt but that his heart was broken?

In death he was given the praise so often withheld in life. I was moved to write some ironic verse, which I read to you & now:-

~~Strike...~~  
J.H. Hofmeyr

But one cannot end a tribute to J.H. Hofmeyr on an ironic note, though it is permissible to strike it. For he, though he himself was a master of irony, lived rather amongst the simplicities. Life never corrupted him; and he retained to the end the simple ideals that had guided him. It is on this simple note that I should like to end; it is the well-known quotation from Newbolt's "Ditai Lampada". Its boyish idealism is Hofmeyrian in its essence, and I have heard him close more than one speech with it. It says nothing of the complex armour with which he protected himself; it says everything of the simplicity beneath it.

"There's a breathless hush in the Close tonight  
Ten to make and the match to win  
A bumping pitch and a blinding light  
An hour to play and the last man in.  
And it's not for the sake of a ribboned coat,  
Or the selfish hope of a season's fame,  
But his Captain's hand on his shoulder smote  
Play up! Play up! and play the game!"

This will tell you something more about the man, for it reveals the simple kind of ideal that inspired him, and the simple and straightforward kind of verse that he liked.

Well, his game is played. It is left for us, his friends, to carry on. Do not for one moment believe that Hofmeyrism is destroyed how indeed can it be, for it is but another name for justice and honour? And the name of Jan Hendrik Hofmeyr will be remembered long after those of his destroyers are forgotten.