

men on the moon then it should be able to find the means by which man can live on earth in harmony with his fellow-man. In this respect South Africa is a microcosm of the world, with its variety of peoples and cultures, and it should set itself the task of finding a *modus vivendi* which is acceptable to all without the suppression and maltreatment of the have-nots by the haves. This is what is happening here in ever increasing measure,

though it seems to be utterly impossible to get this fact across to the public, for it is only personal contact and personal knowledge which brings it home with a devastating impact which words alone apparently fail to convey.

People would be devastated if they knew the facts, wouldn't they? They must at least be given the benefit of the doubt or there can be no future for anyone.

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## A Reminiscence – Jessie Hertslet

PATTIE PRICE

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**IT WAS TWELVE OR MORE YEARS AGO** — but I remember the occasion clearly. One of those days indelibly imprinted on the memory.

I had called in to see my old friend — old in friendship — I never thought of age as anything to do with her. Such a visit was always an occasion to me. For I never left the little farm at Diep River without a feeling of having had a re-fill.

There was a sort of spiritual overflow that affected anyone who came into her ambit. A re-awakening of the importance of those things that matter in life. What is happening to our fellowmen. Are we sitting back and letting it happen?

Discussions with a lively mind on books and plays. And, of course, refreshing memories and reminiscences of a life as the wife of a medical missionary in Zululand. Those twenty years had given her a deep understanding, and love of the African people. The Zulu women had called her 'Nompilo' (Mother of Health).

This particular afternoon she surprised me by saying she was retiring from the battle. She was opting out of the hurly-burly of political strife.

"I feel I've had enough. I've tried to keep my end up, but I'm eighty now and some of the younger ones must take over. I have such a craving for a little peace. Time to write what I want to write. Stories for children. Stories about the Zulu people. I can do that."

The news that she was 'Eighty now' came to me as a shock. I hadn't realised that she

had reached that august age. I would have given her seventy — if I had thought about it at all which I didn't. Nobody did.

I wasn't surprised at her longing for peace. With a couple of decades to spare I was beginning to have the same longing for a little 'time of my own'. But I knew she had earned it, although I sighed at the thought of how we would have to get used to being without the support of that fertile mind, that fearless and forceful pen.

As I came away I had the shattering thought that this might be a presentiment on her part that she was nearing the end — not merely of her capability of taking part in the 'hurly-burly' of life — but of life itself. And I prayed that she would be spared to enjoy some peace, and the leisure to write what she had wanted to write for so long.

Three days after she phoned me again. She wanted to see me. Would I come along?

"Today?" I asked.

"Today. This afternoon if you can." I went of course. She was waiting for me.

"I'm so glad you could come," she said. "You remember what I said?"

"About retiring from the 'hurly-burly'?"

"Yes. But I've changed my mind." Her voice was alive, vibrant.

"Pattie — I've had a call. It came across in a dream. I had been thinking so much about the separation of the African man from his family. This 'migrant labour' means the whole break-up of family life, and the ruin of the children. No one seems to have really realised what this can mean to the African.

I've decided I'm not opting out. I'm going to get my teeth into this. I'm going to write to every paper that will publish me, and I'll go out and talk on every platform that will have me. The women's associations should take this up. You can help me there. Help me to get to the people. Once I begin others will realise this must be exposed. Exposed and fought. I will get in touch with the National Council of Women at once."

And of course she did. Her vivid message, from platform and from press reached out across the Republic and was echoed by every

liberal-minded institution in the country. It even reached the soul of the Cape Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church, who condemned the practice of migrant labour as 'a cancer in the life of African population.'

'Richard' (as I call her) is now 94 years young. I saw her the other day and reminded her of her proposed 'retirement' at eighty. She laughed. 'Fancy you recalling that! I didn't know anyone had remembered how it all started.'

Oh yes, we remember, 'Richard — Coeur de Lion!

# Harvard Buildings — Tuesday Morning

## OR HOW HEADQUARTERS WORKS

R. M. JOHNSTON

(*Bobbie Johnston is National Secretary of the Black Sash*).

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| <p>8.15 a.m. Arrive — sort mail — read mail — start to answer mail.</p> <p>8.20 a.m. Regular mysterious telephone caller wants to know if I am the Railways.</p> <p>8.25 a.m. Office Secretary arrives — discuss day's work.</p> <p>8.30 a.m. National President arrives — says she is <i>furious</i> with <i>them</i>, have you seen in the paper what <i>they</i> have done <i>now</i>.</p> <p>8.35 a.m. Chairman arrives — with two children.</p> <p>8.36 a.m. Housewife telephones to say her servant has been told to leave Jonesburg. Talks for 10 minutes and ends "Mind you, I don't hold with these natives but this is a <i>good Girl</i>. Interpreter brings tea.</p> <p>8.50 a.m. Chairman agrees that we must <i>do something</i> about latest outrage— National President says she has <i>got an idea</i> — all groan.</p> <p>8.52 a.m. Telephone caller wants to know if we have let the barber shop.</p> <p>8.55 a.m. Decide to send out notice to all members — Office Secretary says she has <i>no money</i> for stamps and anyway we have used far too much petty cash this month.</p> | <p>9.00 a.m. Advice Office Worker wants to know what she can do about 70 year old man who has been fined for not taking work offered — and he has T.B. as well.</p> <p>9.05 a.m. Housewife telephones to say her servant has been endorsed out of town, talks for 15 minutes and ends "Of course I don't need these natives, but this is a <i>Nice Girl</i>'..</p> <p>9.10 a.m. National President says should we write to the Minister. All agree— N.P. says she has half-finished a draft letter — realise we should always agree.</p> <p>9.20 a.m. Publicity Chairman arrives — breathless and late as always — says why write to Ministers — statement should go to press. Chairman says should go to both and <i>will you please be quiet?</i> Discover she is talking to children.</p> <p>9.25 a.m. African telephones to <b>ask how</b> does he get to Advice Office — try to tell him, have to call Interpreter who shouts.</p> <p>9.26 a.m. Ask what about <i>Agenda</i> for tomorrow. National President asks have we sent circular to other regions and how far ahead is Advice Office Report. Chairman says we must talk about Fund Raising and Office Secretary says there is no money in Petty Cash.</p> |
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