

THE ACHIEVEMENT OF AFRIKAANS

BY

T. J. HAARHOFF

AND

C. M. VAN DEN HEEVER

South Africa:

CENTRAL NEWS AGENCY, LIMITED.

39.36

HAA

THE ACHIEVEMENT OF AFRIKAANS



BY

T. J. HAARHOFF

(Professor of Classics, University of the Witwatersrand)

AND

C. M. VAN DEN HEEVER

(Professor of Afrikaans, University of the Witwatersrand)

WITH A FOREWORD

BY

THE HON. PATRICK DUNCAN

PRICE 4/- NETT.

South Africa:

CENTRAL NEWS AGENCY, LIMITED.

FOREWORD

BY

THE HON. PATRICK DUNCAN, K.C., M.P., C.M.G.

I am glad to contribute a word of introduction to this little volume. It has more than a literary interest. The appearance of the Afrikaans language on the world stage and its vigorous assertion of vitality and growth is, merely as a philological event, attracting the attention of the scholar. Its capabilities as an instrument for the expression of the whole scale of human thought and emotion in literary forms of abiding value will come as a discovery to many. The object of this volume is to encourage the English-speaking citizen to make that discovery. But beyond the interest of the scholar and the appeal of literature is the place of the language in our national life. Our success in bringing into life a spirit of national unity in South Africa depends to a great extent on the English and Afrikaans sections learning to know and use each other's language, to appreciate its literature and its appeal to those whose

mother tongue it is. Those who will read these pages will need no further proof that Afrikaans, though it has not the advantage of ages of tradition which lie behind and enrich our English language, has now definitely emerged from the stage of formless instability in which languages are born, and has been moulded into form and beauty.

I commend this book to the thoughtful attention of those South Africans to whom the Afrikaans language and culture are still an unfamiliar element in our national soul.

Patric Dunson

AUTHORS' NOTE.

The contents of this booklet embody to some extent the effort of the University of the Witwatersrand to enlist the interest of English-speaking South Africans in the cause of the Afrikaans language and literature. It also indicates the policy that the University has followed in this matter; and it is dedicated to the Spirit of Racial Understanding.

The first essay is reprinted, with modifications, for "Coming of Age." The rest were originally delivered as public lectures and appeared in the periodical "South African Libraries."

Owing to the diverse origin of these chapters there is a certain amount of repetition, but it was judged better to let them appear in their original form.

Our thanks are due to Messrs. Maskew Miller, the publishers of "Coming of Age," and to the editor of "South African Libraries" for permission to reprint.

It is hoped to strengthen the funds for the Voortrekker Monument out of such profits as may accrue.

T. J. H.
C. M. v. d. H.

CONTENTS.

1. Foreword, by the Hon. Patrick Duncan	...	iii
2. Authors' Note	v
3. Afrikaans in the National Life, by T. J. Haarhoff	1
4. Some Literary Tendencies in Afrikaans, by C. M. van den Heever	40
5. New Forms in Afrikaans Poetry, by T. J. Haarhoff	64
6. The Difficulties of a Johannesburger, by T. J. Haarhoff	87
7. A Short Bibliography of Afrikaans for English Readers	98

Afrikaans in the National Life

BY

T. J. HAARHOFF.

For historical reasons of various kinds, it is particularly true of South Africa that her problems tend to be regarded either exclusively from the inside, with understanding and experience of the people among whom those problems arose, or exclusively from the outside, from an Empire or a world point of view. These two ways of seeing the situation are not mutually exclusive, but in practice they tend to be sharply divided owing to such factors as race, language and lack of contact; and before we may hope for a full and fruitful co-operation of the two views in regard to the official languages we must acquire a common stock of ideas about them, ideas resting on a foundation of good-will and lit by imagination. This is important; for it is fair to say in regard to Afrikaans that there is nothing in South Africa at present the misunderstanding of which causes such deep cleavage or of which the sympathetic appreciation has so unifying a

power. And a right attitude to Afrikaans, on the part of South Africans, will inevitably produce a right attitude to English.

There are at least five classes of people worth considering in relation to Afrikaans:—

A.—Those who neither know nor care.

B.—Those who do not know, but criticize.

C.—Those who do not know, but would co-operate if they did.

D.—Those who know and care, but tend to care exclusively for Afrikaans.

E.—Those who know and care, but distinguish and co-operate.

A. represents a dwindling class, and all that need be said is that the future will take care of them. “While there’s death,” the Oxford don remarked, “there is hope”; but perhaps there remains a *sors tertia*—conversion.

B. Those who do not know, but criticize. These do an immense amount of harm; they haunt the city papers with jibes and worn-out tags; they parade a superiority that rests on half-truths. To them belongs particularly the

sort that says: " We know German: we can, therefore, understand Afrikaans "—a dangerous fallacy; for though a knowledge of German is an aid to Afrikaans and could easily be made effective with a little study, it is often misleading for syntax or vocabulary when used by itself, and can never in itself give an appreciation of Afrikaans literature. That this works the other way, too, was the discovery of the South African girl who, wanting cream with her tea in Berlin, asked for " room " and found herself presented with a small glass of rum. But this class embraces all kinds of people (including Hollanders) who view the matter from the outside. It is hard for the town-dweller, especially when fresh from Europe, to see any justification for Afrikaans; only in proportion as he enters into the past and the present of South Africa does he learn to see and sympathize.

In the meantime, even in this year of grace, we still hear people cry " Afrikaans has no grammar." All they really mean is that the grammar of Afrikaans is different from the High Dutch or the English Grammar they learnt at school, and therefore (as they un-

scientifically think) inferior. They seem to be unaware that the only arbiter in language is custom and that new forms evolve and are established (as Horace says),

‘ si volet usus,
‘ quem penes arbitrium est et ius et norma
loquendi.’

A law of language is not an immutable law of Nature. “ But,” they say, “ the spelling is unsettled.” Yet considering our wide distances, the rules drawn up by the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie have produced a remarkable degree of uniformity, and, if the Akademie has found a difference of opinion in regard to words of foreign origin, it is well to remember that there are many hundreds of words in English whose spelling is ambiguous, as anyone may see by reading the introduction to the Oxford English Dictionary. A, curiously simple objection to Afrikaans is that which boils down to a sentimental attachment to the Holland spelling; yet Holland itself has changed its spelling several times, and among the supporters of spelling reform in England may be mentioned the late Poet Laureate and Professor Gilbert Murray. Occasionally a person of this class will still be

heard to remark that Afrikaans is a low patois, that it is a kitchen language. So, doubtless, did the Anglo-Norman noble describe English in the year 1200; so said the Roman noble in the sixth-century Gaul when Latin was breaking up into French. Here ignorance of history is often a difficulty. And ignorance of literary Afrikaans impels some South Africans, who are familiar with the spoken form only (and perhaps some of the early rhymes) to frown on all artistic tendencies in Afrikaans. "Give us the bluff old Boer," they say, "and jolly rhymes about his doings." Thus a South African journal recently blew itself out with indignation because Leipoldt produced a play that stood in the tradition of Ibsen. "There ain't no such animal," they say, looking at literary Afrikaans. But there is also the person who listens to the conversation of servants or labourers in tram or train and measures Afrikaans by their standard; unable or unwilling to study the speech of educated Afrikaners. And every language has a right to be judged by the standard of its educated speakers.

Those who argue that Afrikaans has no range of vocabulary are often unaware of its

original resources, and forget that it is in this respect the legitimate heir of Holland Dutch as well as of Greek and Latin; that, like English, it has a right to borrow from any language, and that the real question is not what it borrows, but how—that is to say, whether it has enough inner life to adapt what it borrows to its own genius. There is all the difference in the world between the way in which our fathers *incorporated* English words in their speech without *adapting* them, and the way in which Afrikaans to-day stamps its character on what it borrows.

Afrikaans has shown adaptability in making foreign words its own, and by inventing words for new ideas. A vivid word like *vuurhoutjie*, fire-stick, for “match,” is quite unknown in Holland. As regards the total resources of the language it may be noted that Professor J. J. Smith, who is compiling the large Afrikaans dictionary, estimates that if compounds and derivatives are included, there are between 80,000 and 100,000 words in Afrikaans.

Misunderstanding often arises because an Afrikaans word resembles an English word.

Thus, not long ago, the Afrikaans word *prominent* was described by a newspaper as taken over from English; whereas, of course, it comes through Holland from a common Latin source, and the same applies to very many technical terms that exist in Holland Dutch, and are derived from a Greek or a Latin root, and again to very many words that passed from France to Holland and so to South Africa. These are elementary points, yet it is surprising how they confuse and prejudice people's minds.

Then there is the fear, often expressed by this class of person, that by learning Afrikaans they are linguistically isolating themselves. But, as Professor Drennan has pointed out, literature and citizenship apart, a boy trained in Afrikaans has far less difficulty in reading Old English than has an English boy, and it is within the experience of the writer of this essay that three weeks at a German University, coupled with a knowledge of Afrikaans, sufficed to make lectures intelligible. And again the whole literature of Holland is within the reach of the student of Afrikaans after a little practice and training—more particularly as

there is at present a marked tendency to draw Dutch and Afrikaans studies more closely together in our schools and in our Universities. It is sometimes forgotten, too, that Afrikaans is now recognised for Matriculation purposes practically throughout Great Britain, and that it has long been recognized by the Universities of Holland as a medium of Doctoral Theses. Recently a Chair of Afrikaans was established in Amsterdam.

Finally, we may refer to the objection: "You are encouraging a new and unnecessary language." The don who discussed the question at Oxford shuddered at the thought of yet another language, and from his external point of view we understand his shudder. For him and for his circle Afrikaans is a superfluity; for us a spiritual necessity. It is necessary not only as a medium of education—alas, for the desert spaces and the stunted growths that resulted from its denial!—but also as the only possible avenue to unhampered expression and to literary achievement. We who were debarred from spontaneous and intimate writing because English was unnatural and Dutch sounded stilted (even if we did not get lost in a forest of

conjugations and declensions) know how much the release has meant. As to the newness, the objector often confuses the recognition of Afrikaans with its historical inception, and forgets that there are respectable parallels for its development. On these it may be appropriate to dwell at this stage.

That Old English dropped its inflectional endings and developed into Middle and then into Modern English by philological laws similar to those that operated in the growth of Afrikaans, is well known, and is referred to in Professor Drennan's essay "Cockney English and Kitchen Dutch." The Danish philologist Jespersen has pointed out that the progressive Indo-European languages always develop in this way; and it is merely a false analogy to argue that because in the animal world higher organisms are more complex, therefore languages should have more intricate grammatical forms as they grow. Afrikaans has, therefore, developed on modern lines. It is worth noting, too, that though the supremacy of the standard West-Saxon literature was overthrown in England by the Danish invasion and by the Norman Conquest, though learned men

used Latin as a medium, and though there followed a strong wave of French influence, native English literature persisted and burst into renewed life with the poetry of Chaucer in the 14th Century. It was Chaucer and the founding of the English Universities that standardized the English of the South. In the same way Afrikaans draws strength from the soil and will be more and more standardized by University usage and the writers it produces.

But there is a more ancient parallel and less well known. When Latin broke up into the Romance languages, it was the language of the people that became the basis of the new literatures. Now popular speech, like poetry, tends to neglect strict grammar: it selects the vivid, the forceful, the objective word; it prefers the living and easily understood phrase. In the same way Afrikaans has deviated strongly from High Dutch grammar, and has formed easily understood words like *hierdie* and *daardie* for Nederlands *deze* and *die*, while for Nederlands *ik ga naar het station*, it has the more explicit *ek gaan na die stasie-toe*. So, too, when Latin passed into Romance, it selected the strong word *plorare* for weep, rather than *flere*,

lacrimare or *lamentare* (French: *pleurer*). *Plorare* is the regular word in Jerome's Vulgate. In Holland *weenen* has dropped out of ordinary speech and has made way, except in poetical writing, for the forceful and popular *huilen*; in German *weinen* tends to be superseded by *schreien* or *heulen*, and in Afrikaans *huil* has taken the place of *ween* in ordinary speech. And Afrikaans abounds in forceful expression like: *die boere het die pad mak gery* (the farmers have ridden the road tame), while *bek* in spoken Afrikaans applied to a person is parallel to *rostrum* used for *os* in the popular speech of Petronius and Plautus. Again, popular Latin had many diminutives, which appear also in the simple, pellucid lyrics of Catullus, and it was the diminutives that the Romance languages took over: thus *auricula* superseded *auris* and became French *oreille*, and it was not *pulcher* but the diminutive and popular form *bellus* from *duenos*, the root of *bonus* (found in Horace's Satires, but not in the Odes) that passed into all the Romance languages; and similarly, from the popular speech of Holland very many diminutives passed into Afrikaans ('n *koppie* koffie for Nederlands: 'n *kop* koffie). In late Latin the

h became everywhere silent (compare the *h* in Italian, French, and Spanish), and this has largely happened in Afrikaans with the *h* of an unstressed syllable in the middle of a word. Again, words like *filius* and *venio* became disyllables—just as in Afrikaans we have *Pretoors* for *Pretorious*, *Adoons* for *Adonis*, and many more drastic contractions. Further examples will be found in the Appendix to this chapter.

Thus we see the speech of the people pushing its way upwards and developing in Dutch and in Latin on similar psychological and philological principles. A study of Seneca and Petronius alone, makes it clear that written Latin was moving further and further from the living, spoken language, which literature disregards at its peril. By the time we come to the Fourth Century A.D. we have many examples of the sterility and artificiality into which the written word had fallen; and it was because the Church Fathers used, largely, the language of the people that fresh inspiration broke through the conventions of writing and paved the way for the national literatures of Europe. Literature cannot do without sincerity and

directness. As Harnack points out, it was the writings of the Fathers that became everywhere (as in Syria, in Armenia and among the Goths) a basis for the literary labours of the future. So it is with us. While we tried to write in High Dutch our thoughts were cast in rigid moulds; the wind of inspiration could not blow where it listed; and the result was often second-hand rhetoric. Now, at any rate, we can clothe our thoughts in native form spontaneously and sincerely. The gain is immense.

But here we meet a danger. The leaders of the Church themselves shrank at times from the new style, and Jerome and Augustine realized painfully its tendency towards formlessness. They did their best (though with misgivings) to save some of the models of Classical style from the more violent champions of "rusticitas," and, when calmer counsels prevailed, Vergil and Plato were admitted into the Christian schools—an incalculable boon. Later other Latin writers were added, and with the Renaissance came the immense quickening influence of Greece re-born, and the spell of the great Classical writers has been potent perennially in the literatures of Europe. Formlessness

is a danger against which Afrikaans writers, in their eagerness to be individual, will have to guard, and contact with the ever new inspiration of Classical literature is much to be desired. Those who look forward must at least be aware of the great things in the past; there are things in human effort that may be ancient but can never be antiquated, and that rise above time and place. It is the practice of many modern writers to give a twist to an established literary practice and to call it originality. Nothing so shallow will help us—*non tali auxilio*. A young literature will do well to follow Horace's advice and study the models that time has tested—

vos exemplaria Graeca

nocturna versate manu, versate diurna

—and re-think them in modern terms. And it may be suggested that for those who find the Classics beyond their reach the literature of Holland, with its natural "gravitas," might, broadly speaking, take the place of Latin, and English literature the place of Greek.

C. But it is time that we considered the case of the third type, the man who would care if he knew. He is a hopeful sort; it is for his

sake that this essay is chiefly written, and for him we must sketch, however briefly, the development of Afrikaans.

Here are some significant dates:—

I. Early Growth of Afrikaans :

(a) 1652-1800 (from Van Riebeeck to the publication of the first newspaper at the Cape). Gradual development as a spoken language, which seems to be definitely distinguishable by 1750.

(b) 1800-1860 (to first conscious use of written Afrikaans). Afrikaans gains a footing as a spoken language; scattered words and phrases used in writing.

(c) 1860-1875 (to foundation of Du Toit's organisation for promotion of Afrikaans). Occasional use in writing. Well established as a spoken language.

II. The First Period of the Afrikaans Movement :

1875-1900. The struggle for recognition.

III. The Second Period :

1900-1919. Renewed promotion of Afrikaans. The first real poets.

IV. The Third Period :

1919- Consolidation and development. Widening of range.

From journals of travel and periodicals of various kinds, it may be seen that Afrikaans existed on the platteland by about 1750. The Cape in 1820, after it had been taken by the British, was a colony in which seven-eighths of the white population nominally spoke the Dutch of Holland ; but in reality it was Afrikaans that was becoming their mother-tongue. By the middle of the 19th century we find Afrikaans used in a comedy by C. E. Boniface, and in 1860 Louis Meurant writes his " Zamenspraak tusschen Klaas Waarzegger en Jan Twijfelaar " on the question of the separation of the Eastern Province from the Cape, in strongly Netherlandish but indubitable Afrikaans. It is this production, welcomed on the platteland and eagerly read, that led directly to the first organised movement for Afrikaans known as " Die Eerste Afrikaanse Taal Beweging " in 1875.

The efforts of the early pioneers who grouped themselves round the genius of S. J. du Toit have been described by the late Dr. Lydia van Niekerk. Those who think that Afrikaans was artificially fed and pampered, or who imagine that it gained too easy a recognition, should read the story of those years. Amid the contempt and active hostility not only of the English but also of very many Afrikaans-speaking South Africans (there are people even to-day who speak Afrikaans and think that they are speaking High Dutch), these men saw that the only possible development for them was to gain recognition for Afrikaans as a written language. It is related that an elder of the Church at Paarl, referring to one of Du Toit's helpers who wrote under the name of Oom Lokomotief, exclaimed in the height of his indignation, "If I knew who that Lokomotief was, I would shoot him dead with my own hand!" And there were cases of teachers being dismissed because they used Afrikaans in school. But withal, this little band, the Voortrekkers of the Language, stood its ground; and in reading their writings one is struck by their love of the soil, their patient attitude to those who jeered at their literary efforts ("a

poor virgin and ill-favoured," one of them might have conceded, "but mine own"), their calm faith in the future ("Let Time judge," said S. J. du Toit), their moderation and their belief in Providence.

Of course, their literary efforts did not amount to much—the atmosphere was too polemical, the writers inexperienced, and the air thick with politics. "Oom Lokomotief" steamed ahead with vigour, but his verses were often as jerky as the puffs of his engine. The themes are mostly didactic (Northern "gravitas" strongly tinged by religion), or else realistically descriptive. Yet even thus early we detect that racy humour and that capacity for forceful phrase and epigram which is so typical of Afrikaans. The biting *Italum acetum*, the Italian vinegar, which Horace finds in the Roman, is evident also in our country districts, whose inhabitants possess more than one early Roman characteristic; it appears in literary form, and very strikingly, in the poems of the late A. G. Visser. Nothing could be more distinct, in genius and in rhythm, from High Dutch.

Du Toit's men had hoped for an Afrikaans version of the Bible;* but they found the Church (as history might have taught them to expect) far too conservative. They therefore turned to politics, and 1879 saw the founding of the Afrikaner Bond, which was partly due to the difficulties of the Transvaalers with the Imperial Government. Then came Majuba (1881) and the independence of the Transvaal, and a great wave of national sentiment swept from North to South.

“ Waar Tafelberg begin tot ver in die
Transvaal

Woon een verenig volk, een algemene
taal ”

was a typical sentiment. And much of the writing of the period reflects the bitterness that was felt over the annexation of the Transvaal and the joy at its recovery.

On the other hand, prayers are offered up for the Queen and, after the disaster of

* This hope was finally fulfilled in 1933. Immediately on its appearance the Afrikaans Bible became a best seller. From a literary point of view it is a great achievement.

Isandhlwana, Oom Jan (C. P. Hoogenhout) writes :

“ Engeland, hier is ons hand
 . . . maar gee ons land! ”

S. J. du Toit had said : “ As regards English we say frankly : there are two languages in the country. We recognize the English : let them also recognize us ”—a sentiment similar to that which Jan Celliers later expressed to “ Neef Brit.”

As compared with this, it is interesting to notice traces of a certain hostility to High Dutch, though these are extremely rare. Thus A. J. Heroldt wrote :

“ Werk Hollands maar uit,
Stuur weg met die skuit! ”

and again

“ Die Hollands moet uit
Dit is ons besluit! ”

And this in spite of the fact that several of Du Toit's chief helpers were Hollanders.

Important for the psychological position is the sense of persecution and suffering that the verses of this period reveal. The utterance of Oom Jan is typical :

“ ’n volk voorheen miskend,
 ’n Taal voorheen gesmoord ”

and

“ Ons ruil hom vir g’n taal, al is die nog so
 skoon

Daarvoor het ons gely veragting, smaad
 en hoon.”

Thus the roots of the first Movement are nationality and religion. These supply most of the themes, and are varied by anecdotes and animal stories, ghost yarns and tales of rural life. There are also translations from Burns, Byron, Scott, Longfellow, Heine, the fables of La Fontaine, Goethe, Bürger, Ramler, Goldsmith, Campbell and others. Nor was the output read merely by a circle of cranks. Du Toit's paper *Di Patriot* began with 50 subscribers in 1875, and by 1881 there were 3,000. In 1877 he published an Afrikaans Almanack, typically designated “Burgelik en kerkelik,” of which the first edition of 1,000 was succeeded in 1880 by 5,000, a figure which represents a minimum for the following years. Of the spelling and reading book for Afrikaans children by Oom Willem in 1878, 1,000 copies were sold and a second edition printed; of Oom Jan's

Prenteboek the first edition of 1,500 copies was followed by a second in a few years' time; while the paper entitled *Ons Klyntji* began in 1896 with 750 subscribers and had 2,718 before the year was out.

In 1896 Du Toit lost his political influence with most of the Afrikaans-speaking South Africans, and his paper *Di Patriot*, which lasted, however, till 1904, began to decline. Without his wise and energetic support, and because of one or two tactical errors, the movement dwindled; its enemies rejoiced: "Patterjots" became a term of abuse.

Then came the war of 1899. Suffering drove the Boer back on his spiritual springs, and out of the darkness appeared a new and genuinely beautiful lyric. Naturally, there was much bitterness: how could it be otherwise? Few hearts were left unwounded. The suffering of the past seemed crowned with a final sorrow. A second wave of national feeling swept from North to South, and under its influence the work of Du Toit was renewed.

Strangers who read the early works of this period are often offended by their passionate

feeling. Thinking in terms of the Great War, they speak of the South African War as a picnic, as if the sense of individual suffering is lessened by the scale of operations. They seem to forget that the loss of a man's home is felt no less deeply because it happens to be a humble home. It is well to realize how deep were the feelings aroused by the burning of the farms and the enormously disproportionate losses in the concentration camps. You must show that you understand before you can win the confidence of the Afrikaner. On the other hand, we of Afrikaans origin should ask ourselves what we should have done if we had been running an Empire, and we should be able to state the case of the Britisher. On the basis of perfect frankness, supported by goodwill, we may learn to build a really harmonious fabric.

To return to the Second Period. No estimate of its literary value can here be attempted. But we might note that (as always) poetry, with the exception of Preller, developed before prose, and that this poetry contains a real revelation of beauty. Leipoldt, Totius, and Celliers have all done first-rate work. Lyric, sometimes passing into an epic strain, Drama,

Satire (in which the name of Langenhoven stands pre-eminent), Didactic writing and the Novel are all represented in this period. Van Bruggen's "*Ampie*" is a masterpiece of portrayal: few will easily forget the picture of Ampie and his donkey. The characters are well and firmly drawn, and the plot efficiently constructed. Excellent, too, is A. A. Pienaar's *Uit Oerwoud en Vlakte*, which may be read in English as *The Adventures of a Lion Family*; and with this should be compared the superb tales of the Hobson brothers. In these, as in Marie Linde's *Onder Bevoorregte Mense*, we have moved away from the war atmosphere of earlier books, like D. F. Malherbe's *Vergeet Nie*; and, just as Leipoldt passed from the war poems of *Oom Gert Vertel* to other interests in *Uit Drie Werelddele* (poems relating to Europe, the East Indies and South Africa) so Malherbe passed to *Die Meulenaar* and the seaside life of *Hans die Skipper*.*

* Since this was written the work of C. M. van den Heever has gained a place in the front rank of Afrikaans literature. No appreciation of his work is attempted here; but it is generally admitted that his *Droogte* is the finest description we have of farm life in time of drought and that he is the most promising of our younger writers, not only as a novelist, but also as a poet and critic.

In mentioning these works, we have entered what has been called the Third Movement, though the name has not yet won official recognition—the period which sees developing an attention to all sides of life and to universal literature. Just as the Roman burgher-farmer had no time for literary studies while his existence was at stake in Italy, but grew later to an active interest in art at home and abroad, so the writer of Afrikaans has developed through a period when his language and his national identity were at stake, to further interests and widening horizons. It is significant that a recent novel, *Bodemvas*, by Mrs. Bruwer, which deals with extreme racial antagonisms between English and Dutch, ends on a note of reconciliation.

The short story has developed in recent years in a most promising fashion, and a book on the technique of the short story by Dr. F. E. J. Malherbe has appeared. There is, indeed, very great activity in many directions, and much of it is work that will last. Leipoldt's last novel, *Galgsalmander*, gives an interesting sketch of life in the nineteenth century, with a fine character study of two old chess-playing farmers.

As far as the recognition of Afrikaans in South Africa is concerned, we need only note the activities of the "Afrikaanse Taalgenootskap" for the Transvaal and the Free State (founded 1905); the foundation of the A.T.V. (Afrikaanse Taal-Vereniging) in 1906; the founding of the S.A. Akademie in 1909, which definitely adopted Afrikaans; the recognition of it by the Provincial Councils in 1914, which meant its introduction into the schools; and its acceptance by the Church between 1916 and 1919; and by Parliament in 1925.

Meantime a very considerable literature had grown up on the linguistic side: the origin of Afrikaans was debated from various angles, and its syntax, its phonetics, and its proverbs were investigated. Work has also been done on Afrikaans folklore.

This hasty sketch must suffice. Enough, we trust, has been said to show that it is not merely a question of blatantly insisting on legal rights or of pursuing a barren political profit. Things like these are by-products and do not touch the heart of the matter. However strange it may appear to an outsider, however many *a priori* arguments may be urged against it,

Afrikaans is rooted in the soil and in the hearts of the people. It is something that is worth practical acquaintance because it is genuine; and it is big with promise for the future because it is actuated by strong life and a love no less strong.

D. Let us turn now to our fourth class—those who are aggressive and exclusive, fierce and unhelpful. Their genesis is fairly clear by this time. They are often assertive, as a child is that hears its mother slighted: they love the soil of South Africa and they frequently (though less frequently than before) meet people who despise or affect to despise it, like the Colonel in Lady Barnard's Letters who was eloquent in praise of the wine while he thought it European, but who, when it was discovered to be Cape, at once "found fifty faults in it." While the English South African looks back to a long cultural tradition, our aggressive friends have only the short tradition of South Africa (for in most cases they feel no living connection with Holland, in spite of recent attempts to foster that connection). They therefore guard fiercely their tradition, unenriched as yet by a storied past like that of Europe. They realize

that between the Scylla of English and the Charybdis of Dutch opposition, Afrikaans has steered a perilous course, and has only recently reached seas of safety. And even now there are sneers and hostility; for the fact that Afrikaans has been taught in the schools only since 1914 means that nobody over the age of thirty-two, or thereabout, ever received any instruction in Afrikaans at all, though he may have spoken it; and therefore there are still many Afrikaans-speaking people, especially in the towns, who oppose Afrikaans from sheer ignorance—sometimes because they are under the impression that they are speaking what they call “decent Dutch,” by which they mean High Dutch. It is a fact worth stressing that many Afrikaners to-day are completely ignorant of the development of Afrikaans.

Then there is the factor of suppression in the past: in 1825 came the Somerset Enactment that all official documents must be in English, in 1828 the language of the law courts became exclusively English, from 1865 English only was to be taught after the first school-year. This last law was abolished in 1882, but that made little difference to the practice in the

schools. Dutch was recognised in the schools after the South African War, but phrases like "Crush Afrikanerdom" were still in the air. The writer of this paper was taught at school to be ashamed of his own language, which was dealt with in a perfunctory way and inspected by a man who could not pronounce it. Children of the previous generation were punished for speaking Afrikaans on the school premises, and Olive Schreiner relates how she was severely chastised for using a single word of Afrikaans. It is true that many parents wanted their children to learn English only, but that was because they had been misled, chiefly by the Educational Authorities, into thinking that that was educationally the proper way. Some of the children who suffered thus are under forty years of age to-day, and, now that reaction has come, it is hardly to be wondered at that the pendulum has not yet ceased to swing to the opposite extreme. That extreme, the avoidance of English, is, of course, equally regrettable; but there are signs of improvement. The importance of English is being recognized, though it is doubtless true that Afrikaans children know less English than they used to

know. There is a price to be paid for bilingual education.

Here it is frequently pointed out that the Dutch suppressed French at the Cape, though with certain concessions and palliatives. Judged by the standards of our time this policy was certainly wrong. In fairness, however, it should be viewed in the light of that period, and the colonial policy of the time. Moreover, it should be remembered that the Huguenots were sent out under contract by the Dutch East India Company and that their number was small. All told, the men, together with their families, who came out in 1688 and the next few years, amounted to something under two hundred, which represented about one-sixth of the free burgher population of the Cape; whereas in 1820 the Dutch population stood to the English in the ratio of eight to one.

It is often fear that lies at the root of the aggressive person's attitude: given an atmosphere of interest and goodwill (and there are places where such an atmosphere exists) fear and aggressiveness will disappear.

E. And so we come to our final category: those who distinguish and co-operate. These

are they who feel deeply but are not swept away by emotion. They admit defects and limitations in Afrikaans: they do not exaggerate the claims of its literature. They know that there are many gaps to fill and rough places to make smooth. They try to understand the Englishman's difficulties in seeing the point of Afrikaans and in acquiring the language; they try to make things easy for him and avoid hurting his feelings. But they expect from him a genuine regard for South Africa and her problems, and an active interest in Afrikaans as the chief key to understanding between the white races. Their view is the positive one: they look upon Afrikaans as a precious heritage, hardly won, and think of it as a contribution to the national life.

It is a contribution, first of all on the linguistic side. The rapid growth of Afrikaans, in circumstances of peculiar interest, the problems raised in connection with its origin, its power of adaptation to new environments, its relation to European and to indigenous languages and the development of its phonetic system, are all of great importance to philologists, as may be seen from the works not only

of South African, but also of Dutch and German scholars.

Nor is its literary contribution to be despised. Among its lyric poems some are equal to the best of modern times, and they show an inner vitality that holds a bright promise for the future.* Great advances have been made in drama, the epigram has been developed and given literary polish, novel-writing has passed far beyond the initial attempts, the short story has grown remarkably, the presentation of humour and satire has improved. Of the translation of the Bible the Rev. Adam Fox writes: "This Afrikaans undertaking ought to be tremendously interesting to the Classical scholar. For the original Greek was written in a bilingual, if not trilingual, environment, in a language which had no classical tradition behind it . . . in an idiom which belonged to the spoken rather than to the written word. . . The New Testament in Afrikaans, if the work is done with a pure heart, may easily be a masterpiece" (Proceedings, Class. Ass. of S.A. 1929). Reviewing translations from the

* Roy Campbell's commendation of Afrikaans poetry in his latest volume *The Broken Record*.

Classics recently, a critic in *De Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* wrote approvingly of the claim made by the translator that Afrikaans, because of its many natural dactyls, was an excellent medium for translating the Classical hexameter, and commented on the dignity and the musical flow of the versions from Callimachus and Homer. Thus there are unsuspected possibilities for the literary development of Afrikaans.

A new quarterly for art and literature—*Die Nuwe Brandwag**—has been extraordinarily successful and bears witness to quickened artistic interest throughout the country. This paper is easily the best of its kind in South Africa, and it illustrates the widening range of the cultured Afrikaner. In it the literatures of all European countries receive attention (A. E. Housman is cheek by jowl with Anatole France, and Yugo-Slavian literature and the Hebrew stories of Frischman appear along with Greek and Latin classics), while there are beautiful reproductions of South African paintings and sculptures. More popular in its aim is *Die Huisgenoot*, a weekly under the able editorship

* This paper has unfortunately perished in the depression.

of J. M. H. Viljoen : and the single consideration that this paper, with its 40,000 subscribers, is read by approximately 100,000 people, many of whom would otherwise be reading nothing, and the fact that general knowledge, art, science and literature are absorbed from it, should reconcile many a die-hard to Afrikaans. But the important thing for future development is the amount of talent and energy that these papers represent.

Moreover, the development of Afrikaans has made an immense contribution to the purity of the language. A generation ago, when people were taught to despise their own speech, Dutch prefixes and suffixes were freely tacked on to English words, and contempt bred contemptibleness. The results of this process are still with us ; but educated Africaners have for the most part acquired a pride in their language and are ashamed to abuse it by indiscriminate admixture. The gain in euphony is very great.

We have already referred to the release of spirit and the new freedom that Afrikaans has brought to the Afrikaner ; but to the English-speaking South African also it has a contribution to make. Not only does it provide a means

of intercourse with his fellow citizens, which High Dutch fails to give, but to English South African writers it supplies the key to much of the platteland. It seems a very great pity that a portrayer of country life in South Africa should be debarred by an ignorance of Afrikaans from *Ampie*, which breathes the very soul of the veld and to which no translation could quite do justice.* Again, things like Leipoldt's poem *Dingaansdag* help us, far more than formal history, to understand the feelings of the Voortrekkers and their love of the soil. It makes a contribution to sound citizenship and to mutual understanding. And there is humour. You often see genuinely humorous and interesting Afrikaners fall into commonplace formalism in the company of Englishmen. But when you really understand a man's sense of humour and can laugh with him in his own language, you have gone a long way in co-operation. You will then no longer be misled by headlines or those generalisations that are so convenient and so untrue, but will take a man

* One realises more and more how difficult it is to translate works like v. d. Heever's *Droogte*; and as for *Toiings*, a recent novel describing the pathos and the humour of the coloured people and using their peculiar speech, translation would be quite impossible.

on his merit as a South African, and neither breed suspicion in him nor be poisoned with suspicions yourself.

Then perhaps the day will come when we shall value and foster each other's literature, when the English South African will look on the Afrikaans tradition as his own and be proud of it as a contribution that his country makes; then the Afrikaner will cherish English South African literature as being part of his own tradition; and each, because he is South African, will claim the cultural heritage both of England and of Holland; and so we may come to understand and share whatever each holds dear by sentiment and experience. But that result will only be possible on the basis of nationality, and it has been shown how intimately the threads of language, literature and nationality have been intertwined in South Africa. Whatever may be the value of the holistic view in science, the holistic or, as the Greeks said, the synoptic view (which, according to Greek thought, is that of the really educated man) should be cultivated by all good South Africans; and the habit of looking at things as a whole does not

mean ignoring the individuality of the parts. In this way two races, both hard-headed, both inclined to be unimaginative and therefore apt to exaggerate their differences, may learn at last to understand, and, inspired by a common love of South Africa, to help forward the common task.

APPENDIX.

In the colloquial speech of classical Latin *n* before *s* produced a faintly nasalised vowel or not pronounced at all: compare the nasalised vowel in Afrikaans *ons*, *mens*, with the Netherlands pronunciation, where the *n* is pronounced as in English. Even Classical Latin had shed its endings (*legonti* had become *legont*), and the process was continued in the transition to Romance—*donatus* becomes French *donné* as Netherlands *gegeven* becomes Afrikaans *gegee*; and we find in late Latin only one oblique case: instead of *pater*, *patrem*, *patris*, *patri*, *patre* we have only *pater*, *patre*; so instead of the archaic Netherlands *des vaders*, *den vader*, Afrikaans simply uses prepositions with the single article *die*. Thus in Late Latin when

homine was the only oblique case, the prepositions were more extensively used to make the meaning clear :

J'ai donné a l'homme is a later stage of *ad (ello) homine*.

So Afrikaans uses at least one preposition where Nederlands does not : " slaan vir hom " for Nederlands " sla hem." Syncope, also played a large part. Latin *calidus* early became *caldus*, which passed into Romance, while French *froid* and Italian *freddo* presuppose a form *frigdus* from *frigidus*. In Afrikaans syncope usually takes place with intervocalic *g* (Nederlands *wegen* Afrikaans *weë*), while we find violent cases of syncope with certain proper nouns, Blignault rhyming with English *wain* (cf. English St. Aldgate's often pronounced to rhyme with *wolds*). Vulgar Latin dispenses with anomalous forms : *posse*, *velle*, *esse* become in Late Latin *potere*, *volere*, *essere*, just as Nederlands *gegeten* is Afrikaans *geëet*; and the fourth and fifth declensions disappear, like many Nederlands declined forms in Afrikaans.

The plural *gaudia* is mistaken for a singular, whence French *la joie*, Italian *gioia*,

etc., just as Nederlands *varken* is mistaken for a plural, whence Afrikaans *vark*. Late Latin develops a double comparative *magis beatior* (cf. Shakespeare's *more happier, most unkindest*) and in spoken, though not in written, Afrikaans (except with humorous import) we have *meer beterder*, and even *meer beterste*.



Some Literary Tendencies in Afrikaans †

BY

C. M. VAN DEN HEEVER.

Because Afrikaans literature is as yet in so young a stage of its development and because so many mistaken ideas about the language itself yet exist in our country, I welcome this opportunity to give you some indication of the modern advancement in Afrikaans poetry and prose; for the best work in Afrikaans dates back only to the beginning of the present century.

Looking back on English literature we find that it has developed step by step from the Anglo-Saxon background. This development coincides with the cultural development of the English people. In the same way Afrikaans has evolved in a modified form from a Dutch origin and Afrikaans literature has many points of resemblance with Dutch.

† Public lecture delivered at the University of the Witwatersrand, Oct. 5th, 1933.

Literature is a mirror of social conditions and the evolution of the mind. Every literature reflects the character of the particular nation to which it belongs, and every period in the life of a literature marks the tempo of the period it depicts. Literature reflects the inner experience of the author, his "mental hinterland," as H. G. Wells calls it, and through him the life of his people. Very aptly Professor Greig some time ago defined literature as "the expression of experience through the medium of words. Experience is the widest term we can choose. It includes, and is intended to include, all elements or kinds of human behaviour—sensation, emotion, memory and thought."*

So we find in Afrikaans literature, even though it does not yet offer a complete interpretation, an expression of the inner life and thought of the Afrikaans-speaking people. This expression may be appreciated by non-Afrikaans-speaking people, for although human experience varies, although we use different languages to express that experience, the nations meet on the common ground of humanity.

* *What is literature?* Presidential address, Johannesburg Branch of the English Association; August 17th, 1933.

Language is of primary importance to the author, because every author worthy of the name must be a master of words; and he is usually a master in the language of his childhood. Of particular importance to him is the emotional value of words. "For language, in literature, must always be symbolic. Literature communicates experience; but experience does not happen in language. The author's experience must be translated into such symbolic equivalents in language that the symbol may be translated back again by the reader into a similar experience: in both cases the experience being imagined. Now this symbolic medium, language, is a limited medium. But there is no limit to the possibilities of imaginative experience. The art of literature, then, is the art of using a limited medium as the symbol of unlimited possibilities."*

This we call suggestiveness in language and this suggestiveness depends to a great extent upon an author's subtle appreciation of the emotional expressiveness of the magical arrangement of words in rhythmic periods. To

* *Principles of literary criticism*, by Lascelles Abercrombie, in *An outline of modern knowledge*. Gollancz, 1931: 868-69.

regard language solely as a vehicle of thought and ideas is a misconception. Language is inner experience, in whatever form, translated into words. For this reason a scientist is not handicapped in using a foreign language, because he requires no more than a medium of logical and intellectual expression; while a writer must have recourse to his own language, even though it may be of lesser importance in the order of languages. The exceptions to this rule, like Conrad and Maeterlinck, are few indeed.

The artistic expression of our inner experience is a thing apart from market value. It is unselfish, spontaneous honesty. One can, therefore, readily understand why Afrikaans-speaking writers of the last century broke with Dutch as a medium and turned to their own tongue as a means of expression. Afrikaans had developed, from Dutch, a medium more suited to the particular needs of the country. In the same way, Latin, the universal language of the Middle Ages, was dislodged, at the Renaissance, by languages such as English, German, French, the media of an awakening national consciousness.

The first literary products of Afrikaans, written towards the end of last century, were distinctly propagandist. Afrikaans, which was abused and decried as a Hottentot language, was defended in verse. Religion and politics were similarly dealt with in this time of stress. Prose was generally limited to plain narrative, no attempt being made to explore this medium for beauty and depth of feeling. Out of this period three books are worthy of mention :

1. *Die Koningin van Skeba*, by S. J. Du Toit, a historical novel based on an excellent idea. His expressiveness, however, is poor; the narrative is the main thing.
2. *Sewe duiwels en wat hulle gedoen het*, by Ou Oom Jan [Jan Lion Cachet]: a definitely didactic effort. National evils are illustrated by means of characters who are solely the embodiment of certain vices.
3. *Jacob Platjie*, by G. R. von Wielligh, who relates in a light style the career of a coloured man.

The prose of this period clearly indicates a gift for entertaining narrative, a talent developed through an adventurous mode of life.

The Anglo-Boer war marks a turning-point in the evolution of Afrikaans literature. It brought about a deepening and widening of national experience. Suffering imbued the veld with a new meaning, as is clearly noticeable in the treatment of nature which, till then, had been stereotyped and commonplace. Post-war poets were deeply moved, also, to the perception of the deeper significance of literary form. In addition, the influence of overseas poets becomes more clearly marked. The same questions were asked again and again: "Why were we called upon to sacrifice our independence? Why all this sorrow? What does the future hold?"

Let us consider for a moment the work of the post-war poets. Jan F. E. Celliers deals particularly with the struggle itself. He rings in the new poetry with the grandly inspiring piece *Die Vlakte*. In this poem, with its bold metaphor, he portrays the immeasurable majesty of the veld at sunrise, in times of

drought, after a hailstorm; and concludes with the magnificent lines:—

“ Waar wêrelde gaan op hul stille baan
tot die einde van ruimte en tyd.

So, groots en klaar, staan Gods tempel daar
wyd, in sy majesteit.”

—a poem, indeed, worthy (we may claim without exaggeration) of its place among the world's finest.

Celliers worships the idyllic peace of nature, the calm of lonely nights under the silent canopy of stars. We hear the simplicity of contentment in *Eensaamheid*:

“ Ek weet daar's fees vanaand
in menig verligte saal,
maar geeneen wat my mis
by die dans en die dis —
'n balling vergeet en verdwaal.”

“ Maar al is ek, ver van die skaar,
in eensaamheidswoning getrede,
ek voel my soos een
met die Heer alleen —
'n kind aan Sy boesem, tevrede.”

Celliers has a keen eye for the miracles of nature. He observes the patient ox resolutely

drawing the wagon across the plain; hears the wailing of the winter wind; pictures the peaceful town on a Sunday, with the peal of the bell calling the people to church. But he also portrays the burger taking leave of wife and family as he sets off on commando. He mourns for the fallen, and the laying-waste of the homestead is immortally described in his poem *Die Murasie*.

In his later work we find Celliers' appreciation of the home. He is a seeker of life's hidden meaning, the poet filled with reverence for the Wonder which works in Nature, and in us, that Wonder which we call Life.

What strikes one in Celliers' writings is his Calvinistic creed, one of the most powerfully moulding influences of his people. Dean Inge has called this creed "baptised Stoicism."* It finds its finest and most beautiful expression in the work of Totius, the pen-name of the Rev. J. D. Du Toit, one of the chief translators of the Bible into Afrikaans. His work bears a clearly Biblical imprint. In his narrative lyrics he delves into the past. He admires the

* See Haarhoff: *Vergil in the Experience of South Africa*. (Blackwell).

trekker Potgieter, who established a republic. He admires the inherent religiousness of the Afrikaner of a bygone day. He mourns the moral and economic ruin which has followed the war. As a true Calvinist, he is conservative. He wants to shape the future out of the past. He disapproves of modern tendencies. He seeks succour in solitude, where he can penetrate into the deeper meaning of things. He sees nature, in the words of Spinoza, "sub specie aeternitatis"—in the light of eternity.

The great advance made by Celliers and Totius, compared with pre-war poets, is their interpretation as distinct from the description of nature.† Two volumes of Totius are outstanding:—

1. *Wilgerboombogies*: lyrics of his personal sorrows. The volume contains some of the best lyrical work in Afrikaans. They are intimately tender in a symbolic sphere. What we particularly admire in his lyrics is his depth of feeling, his power of penetration into the very heart of things.

† "In certain states of the soul," Baudelaire wrote, "the profound significance of life is revealed completely in the spectacle, however commonplace, that is before one's eyes: it becomes the symbol of this significance."

2. *Rachel*. In this work, with its profound philosophy, he portrays the Biblical mother Rachel, with the sufferings of the Afrikaner as a parallel. It is symbolical of every mother's sacrifice for her children. As in all his other works, there is an undertone of melancholy. Nevertheless *Rachel* culminates in a spirit of hopefulness. In one of the most striking poems in the volume, *Trane*, he writes :

“ Dank die Saaier wat ons voed.
Dank vir vrysyn — heldebloed.
Maar ek dank die moedertrane,
Sade van nu-opgestane
Nasie . . .
Ek sien haar trane lag
In die glans van nuwe dag.”

In an entirely different class stands the poet C. Louis Leipoldt. He is much more complex, a poet with the spiritual conflicts of the modern. His *Oom Gert vertel en ander gedigte* raised a storm. “Most of these poems,” Leipoldt tells us, “were written while I was still half dazed with the shock of the war, with the thundering of British cannon still echoing in my ears. Perhaps I was too deeply stirred.”

Celliers and Totius wrote their best work only after they had gained a proper perspective through the passage of time. Leipoldt was still writhing from his wounds when he wrote this volume. He is vivid and spontaneous. No wonder that Albert Verwey, the famous Dutch critic and poet, when he had read this volume, wrote a glowing defence of Afrikaans, praising Leipoldt as a first-rate poet. In the longest poem Oom Gert relates how his daughter's fiancé was condemned as a rebel in the Cape Province and hanged. The story is written without any poetic embellishment but glows with an intensity of feeling and dramatic force, staggering the reader with its powerful reality.

There are other unforgettable poems in the volume. There is no submission to the inevitability of Fate but a bitter rebelliousness. Possibly, besides the sufferings of his nation, Leipoldt was seared at this time by personal loss. The main theme of the work is: "You, faithful hearts, died for your country. Unto eternity we will remember you!"

Leipoldt's later works show a complete change. His bitterness has disappeared. He writes no more of war. He understands that

suffering tends to elevate a nation to a higher spiritual level.

“ En ons? Ons wil ’n nasie wees!
 Ook agter ons lê vuur en bloed;
 ook ons het vir ons land gestort
 ’n see van trane; ja, dis goed!”

“ Maar verder—wat? ’n Nasie word
 nie somar soos die koring groot:
 dit moet deur werk, deur vlyt, deur smart,
 deur lewe ook word voortgestoot.”

He turns to nature. He exults in its beauty. Listen to the melody and the wonderfully picturesque in this verse:—

“ Die mirte pers met hul bessie-oes; die
 waboomheuning soet;
 die klossies bont in hul kleureprag soos
 nuut-geplaste bloed.
 Die wilde sering en die bergjasmyn; die
 katjiepiering-bos,
 die suringblommetjies by die wal in goud
 en geel gedos;
 die wit vleilelie, wat sierlik staan en geur
 soos ryp kaneel;
 die doringrosies by die dam wat van die
 sonlig steel.”

Or listen to his joy in life :—

“ Hoog oor die water skommel die vinkies,
vol van die vreug van die somersdag;
bly die gekwetter van die klein tink-
tinkies,

blyer die son wat goudgeel lag.

Algar wat lewe, algar tevrede,

hoog op die heuwel en laag oor die vlei;

so was dit gister, en so is dit hede—

somer en son en saffier vir my!

Heer, wat die hemel oor my sprei,

dit is my eerste en laaste bede!

Somer en son en saffier vir my!”

Leipoldt is one of the most prolific Afrikaans writers. He is poet, novelist, and dramatist. His poetry reveals the strongly developed aesthetic sense of one who is predestined for that very reason to suffer much. In the background we see his doubtings, his anguish and desperate loneliness. He is a romanticist, but possesses an incisive intellect. Hence his spiritual complexity. Leipoldt is without doubt a great poet.

D. F. Malherbe requires mention especially for his moulding of Afrikaans as a language. He, also, is poet, novelist, and dramatist.

An exceptional feature of all the writers I have mentioned is their melancholy. A. G. Visser's joyfulness is consequently a sharp contrast. Visser writes in a light and melodious vein. The inspiring quality of his verse makes him one of the most popular of Afrikaans poets. Of the older poets may also be mentioned Eugène Marais, a man of subtle moods; and Langenhoven, essentially a prose writer, but whose *Stem van Suid-Afrika* is a remarkable anthem:—

“ Uit die blou van onse hemel, uit die
diepte van ons see,
oor ons ewige gebergtes waar die kranse
antwoord gee;
deur ons ver verlate vlaktes, met die kreun
van ossewa—
ruis die stem van ons geliefde, van ons
land Suid-Afrika.”

This love of the South African soil is characteristic of almost every Afrikaans poet. The national events which so deeply stirred an older generation are receding further into the background. This is illustrated by later volumes, in which the personal lyrical note predominates.

A new generation of poets has arisen and among them we mention only Toon van den Heever, Wassenaar; J. R. L. van Bruggen, Keet, and later the important figure of Haarhoff, especially for his valuable interpretations of the Classics. Notable features of the work of some of these poets are their doubtings in regard to religion, which was formerly a sheet-anchor, and a proclivity for the individualistic lyricism of the sonnet. Here also the love lyric achieves greater importance. A. G. Visser started this literary fashion. Among the younger generation the outstanding figure is undoubtedly Toon van den Heever, now a judge in South-West Africa. He has published only one volume of verse, but it is filled with concentrated beauty. What strikes one among the younger poets is their appreciation of spiritual values, their introspection. This is aptly expressed by Wassenaar in a sonnet, which has been translated as follows :—*

* Herman, Julius. *The music of South African life*. Cape Town: Juta [19?] p. 76.

NIGHT.

“ The small bright eyes of the big black
night
seem to be looking deep into my soul,
seem to be smiling with a kindly light,
as if they would discern my life's great
goal.

I know myself at one with that great God
before whose majestic presence chaos
grew mild
an all-pervading spirit at whose nod
creation trembled like a little child.”

“ How sad and dreary life would be for
him
who knew no spirit but his little self,
who knew no law but egotistic whim,
whose highest ideal were the search for
pelf.

He only knows true happiness and bliss,
who sees his soul in all, and all in his.”

It is difficult to forecast the future of Afrikaans lyricism. The post-war period brought a new lyricism to Europe: free verse. This meant a dissolution of the metrical form, a passion for uncontrolled freedom in thought and expression. This form has not manifested itself in Afrikaans up to the present.

Afrikaans lyrical poetry has already—even though there is a slowing-down in the pace to-day—given lasting expression to the Afrikaner's spiritual experience. With this spiritual experience coincides a more accentuated appreciation of the refinements of language.

Afrikaans lyrical verse compares favourably, in point of intensity of feeling, with the best this century has produced in bigger countries. Roy Campbell, the now famous South African poet, on becoming acquainted with some of this work expressed surprise at its peculiar beauty, which, unfortunately, is a closed book to many of our English-speaking friends.

Afrikaans prose made rapid headway, especially after 1920. Many of the novels of the years succeeding the Anglo-Boer war deal with the war itself, racial relations, but in a superficial manner. They are narratives with a romantic setting, after the pattern of the 19th century. About 1920 honest realism begins to assert itself. This attitude is in better accord with the Afrikaner's mental make-up. Just like the Hollander the Afrikaans author shows

a preference for every-day types. His realism bears a refined stamp. This remarkable development from romanticism to realism is exemplified by the work of Jochem van Bruggen. His *Teleurgestel*, which was later recast, is a typically romantic novel, with hero and villain. But he aspires to ever greater realism. Works such as *Op Veld en Rante* and *Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte* are merely preliminaries to his later fine realistic effort *Ampie* (in two volumes). Here he gives a masterly delineation of the poor white, his difficulty in adapting himself to the intricacies of the new social order. Literature has been called "an escape from reality." But this is only partly true, as van Bruggen proves. He gives us reality, living characters, but in a way which unites truth with beauty. In his latest works, such as *Booia*, *In die Gramadoelas*, and *Die Sprinkaambeampte van Sluis* van Bruggen proceeds along this path, portraying the under-dog in a fine, humorous style. And may we not, according to Meredith, call "sensitivity to the comic laugh" a step in civilisation?

While van Bruggen plays the limelight upon his characters, Malherbe is perhaps more con-

cerned with the setting. In his *Meulenaar* he gives a picture of a Western Province wine farm; in *Hans-die-Skipper* the sea, which is a new theme in Afrikaans literature. In his latest work, *Die Hart van Moab*, he re-tells the Biblical story of Ruth in a highly romantic style.

The works of C. J. Langenhoven, characterised by his ironical style which is typical of Afrikaans humour, are worthy of mention.

It goes without saying that in a country like South Africa animal stories occupy a prominent place. Sangiro introduced this type of story with his *Uit Oerwoud en Vlakte*, which has already been translated into English, French and German. Sangiro depicts the struggle of the animal against man. His prose is mobile and rhythmic. The counterpart of this theme, the struggle between beasts of prey, is found in the work of the Hobson brothers. They picture the fierce struggle for existence on the lonely flats of the Kalahari, whereas Sangiro uses the East African jungle as his background. The Hobsons excel in close observation and an intuitive knowledge of animals.

The works I have mentioned indicate that Afrikaans prose has set up a high standard for style. The entry of women writers has widened the scope. Their theme is more particularly the home and city life, and they submerge style in entertainment.

In recent years the Afrikaans novel and short story have forged rapidly ahead. Abraham Jonker's *Plaasverdeling* and *Bande*, Van Melle's *Dawid Booysen* and Kamp's *Matteo en Leonardo* are very promising.

Afrikaans prose mirrors social life. The criticism has been made, and with justice, that too great stress is laid upon the submerged section, the poor white, and that city life has not been convincingly drawn. But our prose is still youthful, and in the near future a more comprehensive canvas presenting all aspects of social existence may be expected. Afrikaans journalism and our well-developed literary criticism have done much to enable Afrikaans to explore its power of giving expression to all possible shades of inner experience.

The fact that a language is small does not detract from its powers of expression. When languages are brought into competition extra-

neous factors are of great importance. "It would not be unreasonable to suppose," the great philologist Jespersen * says, "as is sometimes done, that the cause of the enormous propagation of the English language is to be sought in intrinsic merits. When two languages compete, the victory does not fall to the most perfect language as such." A small language, however, has many handicaps, and the most capable writers achieve recognition in the outside world with difficulty. Snobbishness plays a remarkable rôle in language and literature and it is a curious feature that those who know least about what Jespersen calls "progress in language" are the most vociferous. Even English, two or three centuries ago, had to suffer much through prejudice. "Only two or three centuries ago," says Jespersen, "English was spoken by so few people that no one could dream of its ever becoming a world language."

In 1582 Richard Mulcaster wrote: "The English tongue is of small reach, stretching no further than this island of ours, nay, not there over all." In one of Florio's Anglo-

* *Growth and Structure of the English Language*, p. 227—228. (Oxford, 1930).

Italian dialogues, an Italian in England, asked to give his opinion of the language, replied that it was worthless beyond Dover. Ancillon regretted that the English authors chose to write in English since no one abroad could read them. Even such as learned English by necessity speedily forgot it. As late as 1718 le Clerc deplored the small number of scholars on the Continent able to read English. Compare what Portia replied to Nerissa's question about Falconbridge, the young baron of England: "You know, I say nothing to him, for he understands not me nor I him: he hath neither Latin, French, nor Italian, and you will come into the court and swear that I have a poor pennyworth in the English. He is a proper man's picture, but, alas, who can converse with a dumbshow!"

Let us remember, that artists worthy of the name, whatever language they use, serve and reveal the finer human feelings. They build up a universal culture, free from prejudice. In their literary products, however, the national traits of the people to whom they belong are apparent. This affords change and variety. In the Afrikaans literature of late years a decided attempt has been made to produce style,

which points clearly to spiritual development, for, as J. Middleton Murry says: "absolute style is the complete realisation of a universal significance in a personal and particular expression."*

The foregoing must be regarded as only a surface summary of the development of Afrikaans poetry and prose during this century. Upon many things I have merely touched with a view to attracting attention to future possibilities. To seek in Afrikaans lyrics and prose the quantity, quality and variety to be found in older countries would hardly be fair. Yet our literature is characterised by the unmistakable freshness and bloom of youth, and it shows a bright promise for the future. Owing to the fact that the spoken and written forms of the language are as yet close together, the Afrikaans language has a remarkable wealth of metaphor and power of expression, which may go to form the very essence of fine style. The Afrikaans writers will have to set themselves the task of striving after concentrated beauty in style, for style "is perfect when the communication of the thought or emotion is

* J. Middleton Murry. *The problem of style*, Oxford, 1922: 8.

exactly accomplished; its position in the scale of absolute greatness, however, will depend upon the comprehensiveness of the system of emotions and thoughts to which reference is perceptible.”*

To hope, however, that language, finely sculptured and expressive though it may be, can adequately express life to its very depths is to expect the impossible. The finest poets have complained of this insufficiency of words, even though they wrote in a world language.

“ For words, like Nature, half reveal
And half conceal the soul within.”



* *Ibid.* p. 71.

New Forms in Afrikaans Poetry*

BY

T. J. HAARHOFF.

The title of this paper requires a word of explanation. By new forms I mean new metrical forms; and the newest, as in the case of the "new" pronunciation of Latin, is often the oldest. "Antiquitas saeculi," said Bacon, reminding us of the opposite truth, "iuventus mundi": what is called antiquity in our time, is the youth of the world. And so the most recent metrical experiments in Afrikaans come from the Classical World.

But before we do that, let us note in passing how Afrikaans is beginning to find pastures new in the older literatures of Europe. De Bussy is publishing a series of the short stories of different countries under the editorship of Dr. Dekker; and so far the following literatures have each been represented by a separate volume—French, Scandinavian, Dutch, English, Afrikaans, Hebrew. There has been a good deal of translation from Guy de Maupassant

* Public lecture delivered at the University of the Witwatersrand on Oct. 12, 1933.

and other French writers in the periodical literature; and the delightful version of Villon's *Ou sont les neiges d'antan*, which recently appeared in *Die Huisgenoot*, is significant of an expanding interest. It is so good that I quote it in full. The author is Uys Krige, who for some time has been associated with Roy Campbell in the South of Europe.

O sê my waar, in watter ver kontréi,
is Flora die mooi Romein; in watter land
is Thaïs en Archipiada, sy
wat eens haar niggie was aan moeder-
skant;

Echo, wat roep as ver oor meer of strand
giewiek ons stemme deur die stilte vaar,
o skoon, te skoon vir menslike verstand!
Maar waar's die sneeu van voorverlede
jaar?

En waar die vroom, die slanke Heloïse,
om wie se skoonheid eers moes sug, toe ly,
die monnik Abelard by Sint Denis?
Hul liefde het tot diepe smart gedy.
Waar ook die vorsvrou sonder medely
wat wreed beveel 't dat Buridan moes vaar
vas in 'n sak waar die Seine-waters gly?
Maar waar's die sneeu van voorverlede
jaar?

Die prinses Blanche, deur ieder vors
begeer—

soet was haar stem soos dié van 'n sireen;
en Håremburg, wat oor die Maine regeer,
Grootvoet-Berta, en Beatrys, Heleen,
Johanna lief vir wie ons eens moes ween,
verbrand deur Engelse by Rouaan daar.
Waar is hul almal, waar is iedereen?
Maar waar's die sneeu van voorverlede
jaar?

ENVOI.

Vra nog vanjaar, nog hierdie dag wat
kwyn,
o Prins, waar hul mag wees, die skone
skaar.

Nog altyd skryn slegs hierdie soet refrein :
Maar waar's die sneeu van voorverlede
jaar?

When Hellenism first swept Italy in the 3rd century, B.C., Ennius made bold to discard the five-century old indigenous metre—the Saturnian—and to adapt the Greek Dactylic Hexameter—“ stateliest measure ever moulded by the lips of man,” said Tennyson. It was no easy task. Not only was the genius of the two languages different, Greek having a musical and Latin a stress accent, but some of the commonest Latin words refused to fit into the hexa-

meter-scheme. Yet in Ennius, far-off but clear, we hear the organ-notes of Lucretius. In Lucretius the harmonisation advances, until we find the perfect balance between the Greek metrical scheme and the Latin language fully established. But note, Vergil's hexameter is Roman in character: his use of the strong caesura and the spondee reflects Roman *gravitas* and distinguish him from Homer. He has remained a child of his native soil.

The question arises: can the hexameter be made at home in the speech of the Afrikaans farmer, as it was in the speech of the Roman farmer? Nobody who knows the artistic variation of Vergil's hexameter, the effect of quantity, of the coincidence or clash of prose and verse accent, of the variation of dactyls and spondees and of the caesura, will envisage in a modern language, where quantity is so much at the mercy of accent, anything more than an approximation to the complexities of classic beauty. Yet, granted that we can only imitate the fall of the verse-accent and the rhythmical pause known as the main caesura, there is surely something to be said for exploiting such rhythms as Hawtrey's:

Clearly the rest I behold | of the dark-
eyed sons of Achaia,

or of Kingsley's :

As when an osprey aloft, | dark-eye-
browed, royally-crested.

But there are certain difficulties about the hexameter in English. Professor J. A. Scott has pointed out that there are few natural dactyls in English, and too often the mistake of beginning the line with a weak syllable or of neglecting the caesura has been made by writers like Matthew Arnold :

For that day will come | my soul is assured
of its coming,

which stands for the first part of the following verse (listen to the original even if it *is* Greek to you) :

essetai ēmar hot an pot | olōlē Ilios hirē.

Now I find that Afrikaans (so far as I have been able to make a comparative test) possesses more natural dactyls than English. I also believe that as compared with Dutch and German, Afrikaans has more open syllables, more light and unaccented words, and is less apt to be weighted down with consonants. It is, therefore, more possible in Afrikaans to get the dactylic effect without artificiality and to

imitate the lightness of the Greek particles and of the open Latin syllables. For even Latin, though heavier than Greek, is far lighter than any Northern language by reason of many open syllables and more sonorous because of its full vowel sounds.

Let us take some examples. The line quoted above occurs in the famous farewell of Hector and Andromache, which in Homer has the characteristic abundance of dactyls and the usual weak caesura :

eu gar ego tode oida | kata phrena kai
kata thumon.

But what does Matthew Arnold do? He substitutes spondees for the dactyls (and very weak spondees at that); he makes the caesura strong; and he begins as often as not with a weak syllable :

It will come when sacred Troy shall go to
destruction,
Troy and warlike Priam, too, and the
people of Priam,
And yet not that grief, which then will be
of the Trojans
Moves me so much . . .

Does he do this because English has comparatively few natural dactyls? Or because he believes in attempting spondaic effects? I say attempting, because real spondees are rare in English: *beef-steak* is said to be one of the few! In any case the result is quite unlike Homer.

But listen how naturally in Afrikaans you can avoid these un-Homeric qualities:

Kom sal die dag wanneer Troje | die
heilige, val en verniel word

(*essetai ēmar hot an pot | olōlē Ilios hirē*)

Priamos ook en die burgers | van Priamos
es-speer-gewapen

(*Kai Priamos kai laos | eūmelio Priamoio*)

My egter raak nie so seer nie | die leed
van die Trojers hiernamaals . . .

Nee, nog die leed van my moeder | of ook
van my vader, die Koning,

Ai, maar dis jy en jou leed wat my tref . . .

I suggest that here you find the Homeric character more clearly—the weak caesura, the predominance of dactylic feet and the avoidance of the weak syllable at the beginning of the line.

Take another passage : that in which Homer describes the watch-fires of the Trojans. Listen to Cowper's " stiff Miltonic manner " :

So numerous seemed those fires the bank
between

Of Xanthus, blazing, and the fleet of
Greece

In prospect of all Troy . . .

and to Pope's " ornate and artificial " style, most un-Homeric :

So many flames before proud Ilion blaze
And brighten glimmering Xanthus with
their rays,

and to Arnold's hexameters :

So shone forth in front | of Troy by the
bed of Xanthus,

Between that and the ships | and the
Trojans numerous fires,

In the plain there were kindled | a thou-
sand fires : by each one . . .

where ' front of,' ' bed of,' ' between,' ' in the ' have to pass as spondees, where initial weak syllables emasculate the lines and do not correspond to the Greek, and where the caesura is predominantly strong.

Here is an example of my Afrikaans version that has found it easy to avoid these unfaithfulnesses. (It is the passage, you will remember, that Tennyson translated :

So Hector spake, the Trojans roared
 applause
 And loosed their sweating horses from
 the yoke).

So was die woorde van Hektor | en toe-
 stemming dreun die Trojane,
 Los maak hul nou van die juk | 'n ieder
 sy swetende perde . . .
 Soos in die hemel die sterre | daar rondom
 die maan in haar ligvloed
 Helder verskyn, en die bo-lug | ook winde-
 loos bly sonder asem,
 Skerp word nou al die hoogtes | gesien en
 die rofspunte almal . . .
 Kloue ook : hoog van die hemel | stroom
 eindlose lig na benede,
 Sterre is almal nou sigbaar : | die herder
 se gees sing 'n loflied
 Soveel brand toe die vure | van Trojers
 op Troje se vlakke,
 Halfweg tussen die skepe | en tussen die
 strome van Xanthos.

Let us turn to the Latin hexameter, which is generally characterised by the heavier effect of the strong caesura. You remember Dido :

At rēgīna gravi | iamdūdum saucia cura
 Ai, maar die Koningin diep | reeds lank
 deurwond van die liefde—

a different rhythm, you will grant, from those to which you have been listening. Let us compare the well-known hexameter translation of the *Aeneid* by the Hollander Terwen with what is possible in Afrikaans. Terwen, yielding perhaps to the natural heaviness of Nederlands, favours the use of spondees. Now it is true that the Latin hexameter inclines to spondees, but Terwen goes too far. For Vergil's :

Posthabita coluisse Samo : | hic illius
 arma

(Dearer, 'tis said, than Samos, here her
 arms—*Richards*)

he has :

Samos kwam na haar. | Hier had die
 godin haar rusting,

which has *one* dactyl where Vergil has *four*. Surely it goes better in Afrikaans :

Minder was Samos vir haar, | beweer hul,
 en hier was haar wapens,

which retains the strong caesura, but has a lighter rhythm, more comparable to the original.

For the invocation to the Muse at the beginning of the *Aeneid* :

Tell, Muse, the cause : what insult to her
will
Heaven's Queen resented that she drove a
prince
Foremost in goodness thro' that round of
woes,
To front those toils? Can hearts divine
so hate? (*Richards*)

Terwen has :

Muze vermeld waarom, | om wat voor
zonde of om wat
Grieve, der Goden Vorstin | aan den
braafsten der helden beschoor zoo'n
Jammerenreeks te bestaan, | zulk naam-
loos leed te verduren;
Zetelt er zooveel wrok | in de harten der
hemelbewoners?

My Afrikaans version (written before the publication of Terwen) has :

Muse vertel my waarom, | vir watter
 skending van godheid,
 Waaroor gegrief, het die Gode | se Konin-
 gin alte aanhoudend
 So'n voorbeeldige held | deur gevare
 gesleep en so baie
 Smarte laat smaak? Kan ook hul | in die
 hemel so vreeslik verwoed wees?

In comparing these versions with the original, we find that, as usual, Latin is superior in having more open syllables (making for sonorousness or lightness according as they are long or short) and fewer consonants—which helps the smoothness of the line. But in comparing the Nederlands and the Afrikaans versions we find that the Nederlands tends to be heavier. In the second line quoted, for instance, the Nederlands version has thirty-four consonants as compared with Afrikaans twenty-two and Latin twenty-one. This is in itself not a conclusive test, for the *quality* as well as the *quantity* of the consonants plays a part. But when we find that the Afrikaans version has seven open syllables compared with Nederlands four and Latin nine; that it has more *short* open syllables like *se*, *te*, *ge*; and

finally that it preserves the somewhat unusual weak caesura of the Latin (*quidve dolens regina | deum tot volvere casus*), we have some ground for concluding that it comes nearer to the Latin than Nederlands :

Waarom gegrief, het die gode | se konin-
gin alte aanhoudend.

Terwen's version is also handicapped by the thrice-repeated *om* in the first line, followed up by yet another *om* in the third line quoted.

I give, without comment, two other passages. Vergil's description of the Gates of Sleep :

Sunt geminae Somni portae | quarum
altera fertur . . . ,

(through the gate of horn pass true
dreams, false ones through the ivory
portal . . .)

is rendered by Terwen :

Slaap heeft tweetal poorten, | de eene,
gelijk men verhaalt, van

Hoorn, waar d'uitgang vinden | gemak-
kelijk beelden der waarheid;

De andere schitterend wit, | zendt op tot
den hemel het Nachtrijk.

Let us try it in Afrikaans :

Tweeling die poorte van Slaap, | die een,
 soos hul sê, is van horing :
 Ligtelik hier gaan die Geeste | wat waar
 is uit, en die ander
 Skyn met die skitterende glans | van ivoor
 wat kunstig bewerk is :
 Daardeer egter kom op | uit die Doderyk
 drome verleidend.

And the ghost of Creusa that flees “ like to the
 light breezes and most like winged sleep ” :

Terwen :

Driewerf trachtte ik daar | om den hals
 haar d’armen te strenglen,
 Driewerf vlood me de schim | uit de
 vruchteloos grijpende handen,
 Luchtigen winden gelijk, | als ’t beeld
 des gevleugelden sluimers.

Afrikaans :

Driemaal het ek probeer om | haar hals te
 omsluit in omhelsing,
 Driemaal vrugteloos vat ek | en driemaal
 vlug die verskyning
 Ligtelik weg soos die lug | en snel soos
 gevleuelde drome.

Scholars in Holland have expressed approval of the suitability of Afrikaans for rendering the hexameter.* Thus Fuldauer wrote in *De Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*: "Place other translations of Homer beside this specimen:

' Wat, groot-hart Diomédes, wat vra jy
nog na my afkoms? '

Would not Vosmaer, our learned writer on aesthetic appreciation, have acquiesced with a sigh in what the most recent translator wrote: 'Owing to its abundance of natural dactyls, Afrikaans is well suited to the Greek type of hexameter?' " Others have expressed surprise that Afrikaans "with its astonishing deflection" should be suitable for the translation of the highly inflected classical languages. But it is exactly because inflected endings have worn away in Afrikaans that light endings and open syllables have increased. Terwen names certain words that must always be regarded as long in quantity—'zijn' (verb), 'toen,' 'voor,' 'naar'—and for all of these Afrikaans possesses lighter forms. If we dispense, as Afri-

* *The Classical Review* (Feb. 1933) a journal that tends to be both conservative and severe in its judgments, quoted with approval my Afrikaans hexameter rendering of the *Aeneid*.

kaans does, with ' der ' (genitive), ' des,' ' den,' ' het ' (article), ' dat ' (pronoun), and say, for instance, ' stasie-toe,' a dactylic rhythm, instead of ' naar het station,' and drop out intervocalic ' d ' and ' g ' (' paaie ' for ' paden,' ' weë ' for ' wegen '), we are moving in the direction of lightness of diction and approximating more closely to Latin. Take a final example from de Koning's excellent translation of Vergil's *Eclogues* :

D'Aarde verdraagt niet d'egge meer
sinds | niet het snoeimes de wyngaard

where the closed syllables ' draagt,' ' niet,' ' het ' give a certain heaviness to the line (Afr. ' dra,' ' nie,' ' die ') and compare Afrikaans :—

Nòg verdra nou die aarde | die eg of die
wingerd die snoeimes,

and the Latin :

Non rastros patietur | humus, non vinea
falce.

The Latin has twenty-one consonants (excluding aspirates), Afrikaans twenty-four, and Nederlands thirty-two; The Latin has seven open syllables, Afrikaans seven, Nederlands three.

The whole question needs further investigation, and these examples, based on my total impression, are incomplete, but I think Afrikaans can fairly claim for itself a place among those languages that attempt to transmute the glory of the ancient hexameter into modern phrase. And I do not hold (as Arnold and Terwen seem to hold for English and Nederlands respectively) that we should concentrate on spondaic effects: dactyls suit the genius of Afrikaans much better. It is a curious thing, this insistence on spondees. Voss' famous German translation of Homer I have not tested as a whole, but it seems to show the same tendency.

Ehrfurchtsvoll vor Zeus ferntreffendem
Sohn Apollo—

five spondees where the Greek has one, and thirty consonants against fifteen in Homer (counting 'z' as a double consonant).

Hazomenoi Dios Huios Hekēbolon Apollōna
is more like :

Eerbied het hul vir Apollo | se seun wat
daar skiet uit die verte.

Further, we should, as a rule, aim at the strong caesura for Latin :

At regīna gravi | iamdūdum saucia cura
 Ai, maar die Koningin diep | reeds lank
 deurwond van die liefde,

and at the weak caesura for Greek :

Hektor, atar su moi essi | patēr kai potnia
 meter :

Hektor, jy egter is my | en Vader en edele
 Moeder—

Hos hot en ouranō astra | phaeinēn amph
 selēnēn :

Soos in die hemel die sterre | daar rondom
 die maan in haar ligvloed.

As to the suitability of the Afrikaans vocabulary for translating, may I remind you that Rouse (Introduction to Arnold's *On translating Homer*) regards as the ideal translator of Homer one who can "refine the racy colloquial of the English peasant." And we may find in Afrikaans the freshness and the directness that are needed for Homeric translation.

There is no time to discuss other metres like the Elegiac Pentameter, or the Hendeca-

syllables of Catullus. But perhaps I may give you a version of Callimachus' Heraclitus of which you all know Cory's beautiful but un-Greek translation:—

They told me, Heraclitus, they told me
you were dead . . .

and you may recall the Scots version of our own Charles Murray.

Here it is in Afrikaans :

Iemand vertel van jou dood, | en beweeg
my hart om met trane
Weeklag te maak, te onthou, | hoe ons
gesels het, ou maat,
Dikwels totdat die sonlig | moes daal,
maar nou is jy êrens,
Vriend van die Kariëse kus, | lankal tot
asstof verteer.
Ja, maar jou nagtegaal-stemme | die lewe,
en nooit sal die Dood nie,
Rower van alles wat leef, | hul in sy kloue
vervoer.

Perhaps, too, I might add Catullus' Sirmio (you remember Tennyson's reference to "Sweet

Catullus' all-but-island, olive-silvery Sirmio ") so that you may compare the choliambic of Catullus with Afrikaans iambs :

O Sirmio, van al die eilande
 En byna-eilande in see of meer,
 Die pêrel : O, hoe gretig sien ek weer
 Jou lieflikeid : die warme weilande
 Van ryk Bithynië—ja, kan dit wees
 Dat hul verby is, dat ek veilig nou
 Kan rus in al die lieflikeid van jou ?
 Hoe salig as die knoop van sorg of vrees
 Ontbind word, en die las word neergelê,
 En, moeg van arbeid in die vreemde, jy
 Jou tuiste vind, jou somaar neer kan vly
 Op daardie bed so lank vaarwel gesê !
 Dit, dit alleen kan ooit vergelding word
 Vir al die swoeg. O, Sirmio, sy gegroet !
 Verwelkom tans jou heer, O Sirmio soet !
 En, O, jul golfies op die meervlak, stort
 Jul vreugde uit, en skaterlag 'n skaar
 Van laggies—almal wat jul tuis bewaar.

And an example of the satirical epigram in which A. G. Visser shows some affinity to the caustic wit, the "Italian vinegar" of the Roman. This is from my "Catullus" :

Met niemand sê my Lesbia sal sy trou
nie—

Met my alleen, al vra 'n god vir haar.
Sy sê; maar watter dinge sal 'n vrou nie
Vertel aan minnaars wat wil glo hul's
waar!

Beloftes om bewonderaars te laat droom,
—Loop, skryf hul in die wind en
waterstroom.

The transmutation of ancient beauty into modern words is a quest that is endless. All high poetry being infinite, you are constantly finding new depths in your Vergil and perpetually revising with renewed discontent your feeble versions. Yet it is beauty that lasts: the quest is worth-while.

Do you remember Alfred Noyes on Horace's Lalage, with her lovely laugh and pretty talk:

Dulce ridentem Lalagen amabo
Dulce loquentem?

Let me give you the lines in Afrikaans:

Dulce ridentem—sy lag deur al die eeue,
Dulce loquentem—O, fraaier vèr, vir my,
Soeter as die wysheid van al sy goue snare
Rimpel-lag Horatius se skalkse Lálage.

Dulce loquentem—ons hoor dit—lig en
ligter . . .

Dulce ridentem—maar musikaal en sag;
'Sterker is my lied as brons,' so sing die
digter,

Maar, wis hy, sterker nog sou wees sy
Lálage se lag?

Dulce ridentem—en waarom sou sy bewe?
Helder klink haar laggie, oor die plaas se
werf,

Lálagen amabo—'n lied kan ewig lewe,
Dulce loquentem—maar Lálage moet
sterf.

And you know how William Watson pro-
claimed: "The Poet doth remain":

Captains and conquerors leave a little
dust,

And kings a dubious legend of their
reign . . .

Veldhere en heersers laat 'n klompie stof,
En koningsname moet met skimme stry;
En Caesar sien sy roem verroes en dof;
Die digter bly.

But by this time you may be saying with
Vergil:

At nos immensum spatiis confecimus
aequor
et iam tempus equom fumantia solvere
colla—

But we have crossed a boundless breadth of
plain and 'tis time to loosen the smoking necks
of the steeds.

If you *are* saying this, say it, at any rate, in
Afrikaans :

Vèr het ons egter gereis | oor 'n grenslose
ruimte van vlakke;
Tyd word dit nou om te los | van hul tuie
die dampende perde.



The Difficulties of a Johannesburger

BY

T. J. HAARHOFF.

Nowhere, perhaps, in the Union does the English-speaking South African find it so difficult to see the point of the Afrikaans Movement as in Johannesburg. For not only is the city on the Ridge of White Waters, by far the most cosmopolitan place in the Union (and therefore, to some extent, unappreciative of the specific South African point of view), but it is economically, to a large extent, out of contact with the rural areas and, socially, there is a wide gulf between the commercial and professional community, which is predominantly English, and the poorer classes who are largely Afrikaans—the result of the drift of the impoverished farmer to the towns that in Rome created the *plebs urbana*. The settled Afrikaans-Dutch tradition of the Cape is lacking here.

In attempting to convince the Johannesburger that Afrikaans is not only essential for

complete citizenship in South Africa (just as English must be for the platteland), but that it is also making a literary contribution to the country, the University of the Witwatersrand has stood for a policy that, in these days of slogans, might be condensed as: "*Bekeer, en nie forseer nie*": "Use resource, not force": almost, one might say: "Convert 'em, don't pervert 'em," for nothing perverts like violence.

It is partly because of our local actions and reactions that we find Afrikaans being recognised by people in Great Britain, while it is ignored or despised in our midst. When Sir Thomas Holland, the distinguished head of the University of Edinburgh, visited South Africa in 1929 as President of the British Association, he was dissuaded from learning Afrikaans by several people on the ground that it was not worth while. He did learn it, however, and became so interested in it after his return, that he translated into English A. A. Pienaar's book on wild life in East Africa, *Uit Oerwoud en Vlakke*—a sufficiently difficult task, as anybody who knows the book will testify. This was a labour of love, a completely disinterested tribute to Afrikaans; a tribute that Sir Thomas further

emphasised by dilating on the freshness, the directness and the literary possibilities of the language.* Even though Sir Thomas learned afterwards that an English translation had already appeared (entitled *The Adventures of a Lion Family*) he was perfectly satisfied with the interest he had derived from the work.

Broadly speaking, it is not so much goodwill that is needed, but imagination and knowledge. Why else do we still find our writers describing Afrikaans as a debased patois of Holland and lamenting the days when President Reitz turned Bobbie Burns into Afrikaans rhymes? What other reason can explain the fact that novel writers (some of them South African born) still interlard their tales with scraps of "the Taal," as they call it, so atrocious as to establish at once a wide gulf between them and their Afrikaans readers? Any conglomeration of High Dutch or German, anything that looks like mangled Germanic, must pass for Afrikaans. And yet it would be quite simple to ask the advice of a competent authority.

* This statement was not made in public, but I feel sure that Sir Thomas will not mind my quoting it here.

It needs imagination to realise how great was the release that some of us felt when we first saw Afrikaans expressing our thoughts spontaneously and when we first penned an intimate letter with complete freedom. No ordinary Englishman writes to his mother in French: yet we had to choose between English that sounded foreign and inflected High Dutch that sounded stiff. All the books of our childhood inverted the seasons and invested Christmas with glaring unrealities. What a comfort, then, to read in Leipoldt that October was the fairest of months and May a chilly season; and to have a description of the Karroo by one who had felt its life. How we responded to the description of our hot days with their compensating evening coolness:

*Al was die dag soos yster lank in die vuur
gesteek,*

*Die varings al die pad langs deur hitte
geel verbleek,*

*Tog as die son daar onder agter die berge
gaan,*

*Dan word oor heel die wêreld die rykste
geur geslaan . . .*

And how we thrilled to the description of our typical colours and birds and beasts in:

*Die trotsige alwyne deftig geblaar
 wat waak oor die vlakte, die vlakte
 . . . die moepel waarin die boomsingertjies
 tjank,
 hul waak oor die vlakte, die vlakte;*

or in

*Ver agter, teen 'n bleek saffier-gordyn,
 Rys die bruin bulte, nat met môredou
 En bont met skadukolle wat verflou,
 As van die gras die spinrakdons verdwyn,
 En die vlak panne blink van sonneskyn.
 Die voëlbevolkte waterspieël behou
 Sy bruinvaal kleur gevelek met frisser blou,
 Met ruigte-oorgroeide poele rooi soos wyn;
 En tussen bult en panne lê die vlak
 Verbruinde veld nog winter-moedloos
 moeg,
 Met vygies sonder blom en bosse in blaar;
 En voor, waar geel sandduine see toe sak,
 Lê nuwe grond waarin die strandmol
 ploeg,
 Waar suringbol en lelie prag bewaar.*

And to the Afrikaner came the realisation that literature was now for the first time a possibility; a realisation that stirred many ambitions, caused many disappointments,

created a *cacoethes scribendi*, but nevertheless formed the enduring basis of a great and rapidly developing artistic promise.

It requires imagination to realise our early struggles, not least against the conservatism of our own people; to understand the ignorance concerning Afrikaans of a certain class of people who have pride for their Dutch descent on their lips but abhorrence for the Afrikaans tradition in their hearts; to see why a fear complex, with its counterpart, aggressiveness, developed in the Afrikaner—these are questions that require imagination, but imagination supplemented by information.

Information, for example, is needed to dispel a curiously persistent idea that it is more "correct," more respectable, to use a High Dutch word wherever possible. A good example occurred during the recent popularity of the "Rand Leases," and the shares that were associated with the name of "Vogelstruisfontein." Now "Vogelstruisfontein," Ostrich Fountain, is a word that has no genuine existence; for the Afrikaans is "volstruis" and the Dutch is "struisvogel;" but rather than use the right

Afrikaans form, certain people have attempted to change it into a respectable Dutch word and made nonsense of it. That is typical.

To information and imagination a modicum of goodwill should be added in order to overcome that fruitful source of trouble, the superior attitude. Now the Afrikaner should see (for he, too, must use imagination) that this attitude is historically explicable. It is characteristic of a time when an older and more complex culture is thrown up against a vigorous younger brother. So, doubtless, the artistic Minoan at first despised the rude but forceful Achaean, so the Greek in the Southern Italian cities looked down on the 4th Century Roman, so the Norman noble disregarded the English farmer. The Afrikaner, too, should realise that it is sometimes more a question of manner than of feeling that makes the Englishman seem contemptuous. Yet, when all is said, the attitude persists in some quarters and it is important that it should go, because the counterpart of it is aggressiveness in the Afrikaner: an aggressiveness that has on occasion produced a genuine sense of grievance in our English fellow-citizens.

Olive Schreiner has an illuminating passage on the character of the Boers. "Virile, resolute, passionate—with a passion hid far below the surface, they are at once the gentlest and most determined of peoples. Under the rough exterior of the up-country Boer, lies a nature strangely sensitive and conscious of a personal dignity; a people who never forget a kindness and do not easily forget a wrong."

The Boer feels deeply; and one of the things he feels most deeply about at the present time is his language. But the point to be emphasised here is that the Boer is, on the whole, responsive and that if you can capture his emotions he will be generously responsive. We hear much of the traditional and illiberal attitude of the Afrikaner to the Native and the question can not be discussed here; but there is this point to be borne in mind. If you release the Afrikaner at the present time from his defensive attitude, his preoccupation with "kultuur," you have at least a chance that you will set the younger generation free for liberal and generous views on other matters. This is already happening in theology: it *may* happen in politics. And much can be contributed to that result by a com-

pletely generous attitude to Afrikaans on the part of English South Africans. The language, with all its implications, is the soul of the people.

Those of us who are Afrikaners by race, but who have learned to appreciate the cultural gifts of England, are anxious that the Afrikaners of the present generation should not miss that experience. There is a real danger of that; and we look to our English-speaking friends to help us. We freely admit that there has been ungraciousness and we must face the fact that full cultural harmony has not yet been achieved. But we remember that in many ways we are still suffering from the swing of the pendulum and we take heart from an ancient story.

In the 4th Century, B.C., there lived on the Tiber a race of farmers. Uncouth, conservative, careful; strong, and grave, they were good fighters, great family men and natural orators, who tended to formalism in religion and to didacticism in literature. Both in surroundings and in character they were not unlike the Boer of the early 19th Century—points of resemblance have been noted at various times by

J. A. Froude, H. G. Wells, and the historian Ferrero. There is more than a common rural likeness, particularly in the typical religious outlook of either—Stoicism and Calvinism; for Stoicism ranks in fact as a religion at Rome.

Both were faced, though in different circumstances, by the problem of adjustment to an older and more complex culture. In both the first reaction was fear. Naevius, fearing the intrusion of Hellenism, wrote that after him people would forget how to speak Latin at Rome. Ennius opened the flood-gates of Greek influence: culture came to be identified with Hellenism. (So, at the Cape a generation ago, culture was, in fact, identified with the English language and culture). Then came the reaction: fear returned and Cato raged. (No need to recall the re-action that came in South Africa). But the race is to the thinking people, the liberals, as it was in the case of the Church Fathers in their fear of pagan books. Gradually, fear dispelled, the two cultures were harmonised, until complete co-operation was reached at Rome in Vergil.

The point is that the Roman was not a *complete* Roman citizen, until brilliance of

Greece was added to the stability of Rome: only then did you have the best type of Roman, a Cicero, a Vergil, a Quintilian. And the significance for us is that two cultural streams (to pursue a metaphor that has become historical) have learned to flow, in proportions varying with circumstances, *in the same person*—to flow with fructifying and enriching results.

And so, kindling to the bright hope of a complete South Africanism (and we confine ourselves to an English-Afrikaans South Africanism in this paper), let us propose to ourselves this question as a test of our citizenship:—

“ How far are you, John Africander, letting the other cultural stream into your life? And, you, Jan Afrikaner, how far are you doing likewise? ”

Mere tolerance is not enough.



A Short Bibliography of Afrikaans for English Readers

[*This list in no way claims completeness
or infallibility of judgment*].

1. WORKS ON THE AFRIKAANS LANGUAGE.

- S. P. E. BOSHOFF: Volk en Taal van Suid-Afrika.
 D. B. BOSMAN: Oor die Ontstaan van Afrikaans.
 D. C. HESSELING: Het Afrikaansch.
 J. J. LE ROUX: Oor die Afrikaanse Sintaksis.
 J. J. SMITH: The Recognition and Evolution of
 the Afrikaans Language (Union Year Book,
 No. 8).
 D. F. MALHERBE: Afrikaanse Spreekwoorde en
 Verwante Vorme.
 T. H. LE ROUX EN P. DE V. PIENAAR: Afrikaanse
 Fonetiek.

2. AIDS FOR THE ACQUISITION OF AFRIKAANS.

(a) *Grammar*—

- BOUMAN EN PIENAAR: Afrikaanse Spraakkuns.
 BOTHA EN BURGER: Afrikaanse Grammatika
 (Obtainable in English).
 LANGENHOVEN: A First Guide to Afrikaans.
 POTGIETER EN GELDENHUYS: Afrikaans for English-
 speaking Students.
 VAN OOSTRUM EN RADEMEYER: Afrikaanse klank-
 en sinverwante woorde.

(b) *Dictionaries*—

- D. B. BOSMAN: Tweetalige Woordeboek (English—Afrikaans).
- KRITZINGER EN STEYN: Woordeboek (Afrikaans—English, English—Afrikaans).
- MALHERBE: Vakwoordeboek. (A Dictionary of Scientific and Technical Terms).
- VAN ZYL STEYN EN BEYERS: A Legal Dictionary (Eng.-Afr.).
- WINTER: Mediese Terme.
- ARNDT AND OTHERS: An Economic and Legal Dictionary (Eng.-Afr.).

3. WORKS ON AFRIKAANS LITERATURE.

- LYDIA VAN NIEKERK: Die Eerste Afrikaanse Taalbeweging.
- GEDENKBOEK VAN DIE GENOOTSAP VAN REGTE AFRIKANERS, 1925 (contains a complete list of Afrikaans works up to 1925).
- E. C. PIENAAR: Taal en Poësie van die Tweede Afrikaanse Taalbeweging. (Fourth Edition).
- P. C. SCHOONEES: Die Prosa van die Tweede Afrikaanse Beweging. (Second Edition).
- F. E. J. MALHERBE: Humor in die algemeen en sy uiting in die Afrikaanse Letterkunde. (Second Edition).
Die Kortverhaal as Kunsvorm.
- G. NIENABER: Die Afrikaanse Beweging. (A Synopsis).
- C. LOUIS LEIPOLDT: On the Literature of South Africa (in the forthcoming volume of the Cambridge History of the British Empire).
- F. C. L. BOSMAN: Drama en Toneel in Suid-Afrika.
- C. M. VAN DEN HEEVER: Die digter Totius: sy betekenis vir die Afrikaanse Letterkunde.
- M. S. B. KRITZINGER: Oor Afrikaanse Skrywers.
Letterkundige Kragte.

4. AFRIKAANS POETRY.

(a) *Anthologies*—

- E. C. PIENAAR: Digtters uit Suid-Afrika.
 D. F. MALHERBE: Afrikaanse Bloemlesing.
 KRITZINGER EN BOT: Letterkundige Leesboek.

(b) *Individual Poets*—

- J. F. E. CELLIERS:
 Die Vlakte en ander Gedigte.
 Martjie.
 Die Saaier en ander Gedigte.
 Die Lewenstuin en ander Gedigte.
- TOTIUS (J. D. DU TOIT):
 Wilgerboombogies.
 Rachel.
 Trekkerswee.
 Passieblomme.
- C. L. LEIPOLDT:
 Oom Gert Vertel en ander Gedigte.
 Dingaansdag.
 Uit Drie Wêrelddele.
 Skoonheidstroos.
- D. F. MALHERBE:
 Die Timmerman.
 Rivier en Veld.
 Somerdae.
- A. G. VISSER:
 Gedigte.
 Rose van Herinnering.
 Die Purper Iris.
- EUGÈNE MARAIS: Gedigte.
- A. D. KEET: Gedigte.
- TH. WASSENAAR: Gedigte.
- TOON VAN DEN HEEVER: Gedigte.
- J. R. L. VAN BRUGGEN: Gedigte.

- C. M. VAN DEN HEEVER:
Die Nuwe Boord.
Deining.
- T. J. HAARHOFF:
Tria Corda.
Die Liefde van Catullus.
- EITEMAL (W. DU P. ERLANK): Phaeton en ander
Gedigte.
- I. D. DU PLESSIS: Die Lied van Ali.
- IGNATIUS MOCKE: Gedigte.
- W. LOUW: Die Ryke Dwaas.

5. NOVELS.

- JOCHEM VAN BRUGGEN:
Die Burgemeester van Slaplaagte.
Ampie I. and II.
Booia. (A Novel of Native Life).
Die Sprinkaanbeampte van Sluis.
- D. F. MALHERBE:
Vergeet Nie.
Die Meulenaar.
Hans-die-Skipper.
Die Hart van Moab. (An Adaptation of the
Story of Ruth).
- C. L. LEIPOLDT:
Galgsalmander.
Die Moord op Muizenberg. (A Detective
Story).
- MARIE LINDE (E. BOSMAN):
Onder Bevoorregte Mense.
Bettie Maritz.
- C. M. VAN DEN HEEVER:
Langs die Grootpad.
Droogte.
Groei.
- A. JONKER: Die Plaasverdeling.
- ANNA DE VILLIERS: Sterker as die Noodlot.

“ MIKRO ”: Toiings. (A Study of the Cape Coloured People).

J. VAN MELLE: Dawid Booyen.

P. DE V. PIENAAR: Skakels van die Ketting.

E. B. GROSSKOPF: Patrys-hulle.

DIRK MOSTERT: Die Pataljes van Oom Bart.

S. BRUWER: Bodemvas.

T. C. PIENAAR: Die Duister Sluier.

EVA WALTER: Eensaamheid.

6. SHORT STORIES.

JOCHEM VAN BRUGGEN:

Op Veld en Rante.

In die Gramadoelas.

LEON MARÉ:

Die Nuwejaarsfees op Palmietfontein.

Ou Malkop en ander Sketse en Verhale.

SANGIRO: Diamantkoors en Twee Fortuinsoekers.

LEIPOLDT:

Rooi Rotte en ander Verhale.

Wat Agterlê.

Waar Spoke Speel. (Ghost Stories).

MARIE LINDE: Die Goue Roos en ander Verhale.

A. JONKER: Bande.

C. M. VAN DEN HEEVER:

Simson en ander verhale.

Vuurvlieg en sterre.

E. SERFONTEIN: Los-hande en ander verhale.

W. KAMP: Matteo en Leonardo.

E. B. GROSSKOPF: Swart slang en ander verhale.

EUGÈNE MARAIS:

Die Huis van die Vier Winde.

Natuurkundige en Wetenskaplike Studies.

G. S. PRELLER: Oorlogsoormag en ander verhale.

M. E. ROTHMAN: Onweershoogte en ander verhale.
 E. DE ROUBAX: Boesmanlandse Sketse en verhale.
 DE BUSSY is publishing a series of best short stories of various countries. The following have appeared: English, Dutch, Scandinavian, French, Afrikaans, Hebrew.

7. STORIES OF ANIMAL LIFE.

SANGIRO: Uit Oerwoud en Vlakte.

G. S. EN S. B. HOBSON:

Kees.

Skankwan van die Duine.

Buks.

W. S. CHADWICK: Op die Spoor van ons Grootwild.

P. J. SCHOEMAN: Die Swerwerjagter.

C. J. GROVÉ: Jakhals se Strooptogte.

8. TRAVEL AND TREK.

SANGIRO: Op Safari.

"TANNIE": Daar ver oor die See.

C. L. LEIPOLDT: Uit my Oosterse Dagboek.

9. SOUTH AFRICA AND THE CLASSICS.

T. J. HAARHOFF:

Die Romeinse Boer.

Die Klassieke in South Africa.

Primi Gradus.

(*In English*)—

Vergil in the Experience of South Africa.

10. DRAMA.

C. L. LEIPOLDT:

Die Heks.

Die Laaste Aand.

Die Kwaksalwer.

Afgode.

Die Vergissing.

- D. F. MALHERBE:
Koringboere.
Meester.
Op die Trekpad.
- J. C. B. VAN NIEKERK:
Van Riet van Rietfontein.
Slagoffers.
- J. F. E. CELLIERS: Reg bo Reg.
- H. A. FAGAN:
Lenie.
Op Sand Gebou.
- J. F. W. GROSSKOPF:
'n Esau.
Drie Een-bedrywe.
- EUGÈNE MARAIS: Die Swart Verraad.
- E. SCHLENGEMANN:
Die Drie Van der Walts.
In die Gewoel.
- P. W. S. SCHUMANN: Hantie kom Huistoe.
- SANNIE METELERKAMP: Uit die Dae van Van Riebeeck.

11. GENERAL.

A complete edition of all the works of Langenhoven, consisting of 12 volumes, has been published by the Nasionale Pers, in Cape Town. Langenhoven was the most prolific Afrikaans writer, and it is not a simple matter to classify his works. But it should be said the influence of his discursive genius was (and is) immense.

In the „Plate-atlas by die Afrikaanse Letterkunde,” Dr. M. S. B. Kritzinger gives a collection of photos of Afrikaans writers, and facsimiles of rare documents with explanatory notes.

