

Jan Christian Smuts: "New Man" Out of Africa



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By JOHN DICKINSON SHERMAN.

SOMETHING new is always coming out of Africa.—Old Latin proverb. Various writers in the public press seem to think that this proverb is as true now as it was 2,000 years ago and that the "new thing" of these latter days is a "new man" in international statesmanship—Jan Christian Smuts, minister of defense of the Union of South Africa. Of course, the phrase "new man" has a special meaning as they apply it to "Slim Jannie" Smuts, for he has been a growing world-figure for several years. By "new man" they mean "new leader." For Oom Paul Krueger's fighting general of twenty years ago is being discussed pretty much all over the world as a possible leader of that new British empire which Smuts himself thus outlines:

"The old prewar British empire is gone. In the sense of colonies or subordinate nations clustering around one master nation. The British empire is developing into a real league of nations, a group of partner peoples."

Smuts is looked upon by many, says Sir Philip Gibbs, the noted British correspondent, in the Springfield Republican, as "the new leader England has been waiting for" and the proper successor to Lloyd George. Says Sir Philip:

"Why not make Smuts our next prime minister? A Boer, educated at Cambridge and against us in South Africa, is hardly adapted to be prime minister of England, but stranger things have happened in England." Sir Philip calls Smuts "a man who never looks back for regret or vengeance, but always forward with free and courageous vision," and concludes with this statement: "There are men in England today in high places as well as low who say he is the man we are looking for."

The Evening World of New York argues at length that the British empire must be transformed into an association of nations and declares Smuts to be the logical head of the new and greater empire. The Christian Science Monitor of Boston says he has always served high ideals and served them "in a way which has ever inspired a strange confidence that he was not closing his eyes to mistakes, where mistakes were made, and that his devotion was inspired by a much larger concept of things than that involved in the generally accepted meaning of the word patriotism."

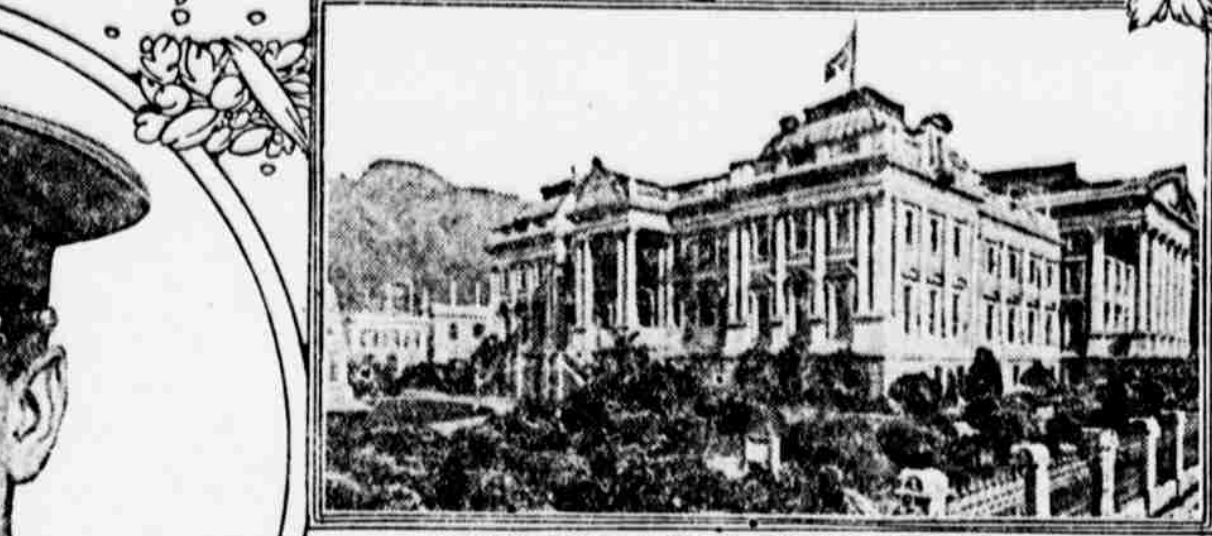
In short, practically the entire press of the United States has been throwing bouquets to this Boer farmer's boy of the veld. The consensus of opinion seems to be that he must be given a place among the world's greatest living statesmen and a front rank among the leaders of the British empire.

Most people know vaguely that this same British empire is so vast that the sun never sets on its flag. In fact, it is so vast that to catalogue its possessions is difficult. There is a hint of its extent in the title of the British sovereign: "George V of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and of the British Dominions Beyond the Seas, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India." These "Dominions Beyond the Seas" extend to every continent and consist of self-governing dominions, crown colonies and protectorates and other dependencies.

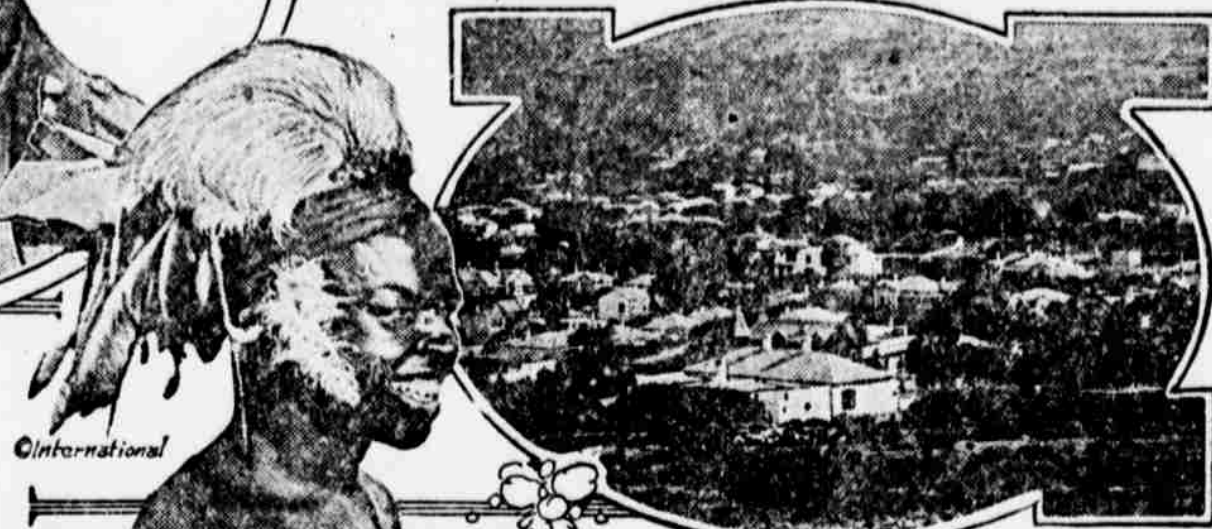
As everyone knows, the United Kingdom consists of England and Wales, Scotland, Ireland and the channel islands. In Europe there are Gibraltar, Malta, Cyprus, etc. India, Burma, Ceylon and a score of other possessions lie in Asia. In Africa its flag waves over more than 2,000,000 square miles, including Egypt and the South African Union. In Australasia are Australia, Tasmania, Papua, New Zealand and Pacific Islands. On the Western Hemisphere its vast holdings include Canada, New Foundland and Labrador, British Guinea and various West Indian islands. Altogether the British empire contains about 12,000,000 square miles and 450,000,000 people.

So the British empire is strongly suggestive of a league of nations. Moreover, the World war produced a noteworthy effect. There were those who predicted that the British empire would go to pieces under the strain of that titanic conflict. On the contrary, England's needs brought out wonderful proof of loyalty from her colonies. The ties were made stronger. Yet in the end the net result was that the British empire came out of the World war rather, as Smuts puts it, "a group of partner peoples" than "subordinate nations clustering around one master nation."

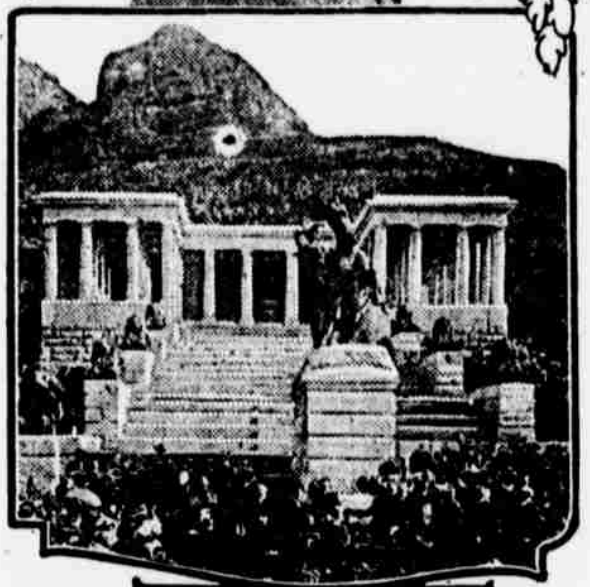
Whatever may be the future of Smuts, his past is interesting. He was born a little more than fifty years ago in the Transvaal, on a farm in the western province in the Karroo country. His Boer father and grandfather were farmers. He got his early education in the Transvaal and then



PARLIAMENT HOUSE AT CAPE TOWN



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VEREKER MONUMENT TO CECIL RHODES

went to Cambridge for a university education in law. Back again in South Africa, he practiced law and politics. Then he became Paul Krueger's secretary of state. Probably his state letters to London had more than a little to do with bringing on the Boer-British war of 1899-1902. Into that hard-fought little conflict he went as a private.

It was about this time that Sir Alfred Milner and Smuts had their famous encounter, which is thus described by Stephen Bonsal in the New York Times:

"Milner is reported to have pleaded with his young and promising antagonist much in these words: "Stop, look where you are going, Smuts. You are digging your political grave without knowing it, I think. England will never forgive or forget this—and you a Cambridge man—one of our own."

"Yes! I thought I was almost an Englishman, too," Smuts is said to have answered. "But the Jameson raid proved to me that I wasn't. I'm going with Oom Paul Krueger, not because I'm a Dutchman or a South-African, but because he is right and I want to be right. Perhaps some day England will see who were her real friends and who were her real foes, but in the meantime I shall do my duty as I see it—very clearly."

How interesting the meeting between these two men as colleagues on the British delegation to the Paris peace conference! That war lasted four years. The British enlistments totaled 450,000 and those of the Boers 100,000. The British casualties were 24,000 and those of the Boers 4,000, with 40,000 prisoners. The main cause of the war was the discontent of the "outlanders." The terms of peace were that the Boers gave allegiance to Great Britain and were granted full amnesty and the return of their property.

Smuts emerged from the war a general. If he had considerable share in bringing on the war, he probably had more to do with bringing about peace. For he was one of the Boer peace commissioners who met General Kitchener and Lord Milner. Incidentally, Smuts' safe-conduct pass bore the signature, "D. Haig, Colonel." Yes; this is the same Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, with whom Gen. Jan Christian Smuts stood shoulder to shoulder against the Germans. Of the part played by Smuts in bringing about peace in 1902 Edwin C. Hill writes in the New York Herald:

"It was as one of the Boer peace commissioners who met General Kitchener and Sir Alfred Milner that Smuts rose to the rank of a statesman. The commissioners had been unable to agree and the Boers returned to their convention of national delegates to obtain new instructions about surrendering unconditionally. For days the convention was at loggerheads. The delegates refused to legislate the republics out of existence. At length Smuts gained a hearing. He told them the truth about the situation. He said that it was impossible to fight longer, that they could expect no help from Europe and America, and that further resistance meant useless bloodshed.

"Brethren," he declared, in what is regarded among South-Africans as one of the most eloquent and certainly one of the most momentous speeches ever made in that country, "we have vowed to stand fast to the bitter end. Let us be men and acknowledge that that end has now come and that it is more bitter than ever we thought it could be.

For death itself would be sweet compared with the step which we must now take. But let us bow before the will of God.

"The future is dark, indeed, but we will not give up courage nor hope and trust in God. No one shall convince me that this unparalleled sacrifice which the African nation has laid upon the altar of freedom will be in vain. It has been a war for freedom—and not only for the freedom of the Boers, but for the freedom of all the nations of South Africa. Its results we leave in God's hands. Perhaps it is His will to lead our nation through defeat, through abasement, yes, and even through the valley of the shadow of death, to the glory of a nobler future, to the light of a brighter day."

Smuts prevailed. And his "brighter day" came quickly. Death had removed Cecil Rhodes, for quarter of a century the dominating personality on the imperial side in South African politics, the man "morally culpable" in the famous "Jameson raid," the diamond king who left by will practically his whole fortune of \$30,000,000 to the public service. Within a few years after the war, under the leadership of Botha and Smuts, the Boer nation arose out of the wreck of the Boer republics. In 1910 Cape Colony, Natal, Orange Free State and the Transvaal became the Union of South Africa, with the consent and approval of the British government. It contains 473,000 square miles and 6,000,000 people. It is practically a self-governing nation. It has a liberal constitution and a parliament and the Boers are in the majority. Both the English and Dutch languages are official.

Smuts was still engaged on the task of holding together these confederated colonies when the World war called him again into the field. This time he went in as the head of an army and took German East Africa from the Germans.

The necessities of the British empire then called Smuts to England for counsel. The war, Smuts took a major place at the peace conference through sheer moral force and intellect. He had much to do with forming the League of Nations. He helped construct the treaty and he signed it. But he filed a memorandum of protest and explanations as to terms forced into it against his will. That protest, his admirers say, marks him as a prophet as well as statesman.

Smuts has been called an "able compromiser," an "opportunist in politics" and "all things to all men." And his nickname in his own country among the old-time trekkers is "Slim Jannie," "Slim" meaning tricky, slick, evasive.

The career of Smuts, however, seems to support the view of his admirers that in matters of principle he has always stood steadfast as bedrock. His admirers put it this way: "He has a way of overlooking unessential details which smaller men stumble over." They assert that he is an all-around man of firm will, determined character, great experience and hard common sense. They also speak with admiration for his tact. It is this tact that earned for him the "Slim" of the old-time Boers. He has an easy tact which makes for amiability and smooths over disagreeable situations. Also, he is just about the best whist player in South Africa and the old Boers thought he was very wicked because he played cards!

In the old Boer household, such as Smuts came from, says Mr. Hill, the coffee-pot is always boiling. With a cup of coffee and a piece of biltong (dried meat) the Boer can fight or trek all day long. Smuts' only bad habit, if it can be called a bad habit, is addiction to coffee. He neither drinks liquor of any kind nor smokes, and he eats sparingly.

He is essentially an out-of-doors man and his body is wiry and rangy. He has the stride of a man familiar with long marches and the natural swing of one who is at home in the saddle. He speaks with vigor and sometimes with emotion. The Boer is not a demonstrative or emotional person, and Smuts has much of the racial reserve. At times he is an inspired orator, and something of his place in the world is due to his eloquent tongue. He seems to lack the tricks of the spell-binder's trade. He is forceful, convincing and persuasive.

There is a strong religious trend in the character of General Smuts. He comes of a strain of men who went into battle with supplications to God upon their lips, a stock that held in ridicule and contempt the godless ways of other people.

IMPROVED UNIFORM INTERNATIONAL

Sunday School Lesson

(By REV. P. B. FITZWATER, D. D., Teacher of English Bible in the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.) Copyright, 1921, Western Newspaper Union

LESSON FOR NOVEMBER 20

PAUL BEFORE THE KING.

LESSON TEXT—Acts 25:1-26:32. GOLDEN TEXT—Now in Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.—1 Cor. 15:20. REFERENCE MATERIAL—1 Cor. 15. PRIMARY TOPIC—Paul Tells How He Came to Christ Jesus. JUNIOR TOPIC—Paul Before King Agrippa. INTERMEDIATE AND SENIOR TOPIC—An Appeal to Caesar. YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULT TOPIC—Paul's Courageous Testimony Before a King.

I. Paul Before Festus (25:1-12).

As soon as Festus, the new governor, goes to Jerusalem, he is besieged with accusers against Paul, and they desire that he be brought to Jerusalem for trial, intending to lie in wait and kill him on the way. Festus refused their request, but agreed to give them an opportunity to accuse Paul if they would go down to Caesarea. They go, but are unable to prove anything against him. Festus, willing to please the Jews, proposes to send him to Jerusalem for trial. For this Paul issues a rebuke to Festus by asserting that he very well knew that he was innocent. Seeing that it was impossible to get justice before Festus, Paul makes use of his right as a Roman citizen, and appeals to Caesar. Paul well knew that to go to Jerusalem meant death, and since Festus was too much of a thrasher to release him when he knew that he was innocent, he makes use of the radical step of appealing to Rome as the last resort. Festus seems to have been taken by surprise. His failure to release an innocent man had placed him in an awkward position, for he could give no explanation as to why an innocent man should go to Rome for trial. For a man to appear before Caesar would cast reflection upon Festus. He now consulted his council as to what to do, but since the Roman law gave every man the right of appeal to the emperor, there was nothing left for him to do but to grant his request.

II. Paul Before Agrippa (25:13-26:27).

1. The occasion (25:13-27). This was the visit of Agrippa and Bernice to Festus. Upon their arrival they expressed a desire to hear Paul, whereupon Festus told them of his perplexity; so it was arranged that Paul be brought before them for examination.

2. The defense (25:13-27). (1) The introduction (vv. 1-3). In this he expressed his delight that he now could speak and tell his case to one who was able to follow his line of argument, for Agrippa was an expert in questions concerning the Jews; but most of all he was now happy in that he could witness to him of the Savior and perhaps lead him into the light of God. (2) In his manner of life (vv. 4-12). This he showed had been in strictest accord with the most rigid sect of the Jews. He possessed the same hope—that of a coming Deliverer—and reminded them of the fact that formerly he was most bitterly opposed to Christ, as his zeal changed from a persecutor to an ardent advocate of the more remarkable. (3) His supernatural conversion (vv. 13-15). Jesus Christ appeared to him on the way to Damascus and revealed himself to him. (4) Jesus Christ commissioned him for his work (vv. 16-18). He was sent into the Gentiles (a) to open their eyes, so awfully blinded; (b) to perform the blessed work of turning them from darkness to light; (c) to turn them from the power of Satan unto God; (d) that they might receive forgiveness of sins; (e) and that they might obtain an inheritance among the saints. (5) His consecration (vv. 19-23). As soon as he received his commission he obeyed. The very vigorous prosecution of his work brought him into conflict with the Jews, for which they sought to kill him. (6) The interruption by Festus (v. 24). Seeing how thoroughly in earnest Paul was, he attempted to account for it by calling him a crank, attributing it to the ravings of an unbalanced mind. (7) Paul's appeal to Agrippa (vv. 25-27). Still maintaining his courtesy, he appealed to his knowledge of the work of Jesus and of the prophets, for they have an intimate connection.

III. Agrippa Almost Persuaded (26:28-32).

Whether this answer is a contemptuous sneer or not, it is evident that his soul was unwilling to yield. Paul took Agrippa seriously. Paul's heart longed that Agrippa and all concerned would accept Christ and be saved.

"God is Love."

We never know through what divine mystery of compensation the great Father of the universe may be carrying out His sublime plans; but those three words, "God is Love," ought to contain, to every doubting heart, the solution of all things.—Selected.

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