

I SPEAK OF AFRICA

*BY THE SAME AUTHOR:*

**TURBOTT WOLFE**

*For reviews see end of book.*

# I SPEAK OF AFRICA

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## PREFACE

OF these pieces, one has appeared in an anthology, and several in periodicals, to whose editors I make the customary acknowledgments. Others are now seen for the first time. But with regard to "Portraits in the Nude," the circumstances of its first printing oblige me to display certain facts.

In 1926 I began, together with my friend Mr. Roy Campbell, the first literary movement in South Africa. The reader may find it strange that we should have thought it worth while to pay any respect to culture in that colony (our native land) over which a small white population is spread like a blight. Naturally our action came more out of sympathy with the oppressed native races than out of enthusiasm for the somewhat monotonous scenery of the veld, that blasted heath, and for its uncivilised white owners.

In June we started a monthly review, *Voorslag*, and in spite of continual interference we were

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able to produce two tolerable numbers in which the interests of business men, party politicians, paint fanciers, half-dyed blue-stockings, and half-witted catchpenny ink-sprayers were reduced to a minimum; and in which life, art, and letters were judged by international and æsthetic rather than by parochial or patriotic standards. Before the appearance of the third number, however, we were asked to put ourselves in submission to a "business editor."

We consequently resigned, abandoning *Voorslag* to this commercial dignitary, a genial and respectable trades-person, to whom I conceded the right of publishing the conclusion of "Portraits in the Nude" (most of which had come out in the first two numbers), in order to preserve for readers of the paper the integrity of the story. For this concession I was rewarded by seeing my work printed in a form differing from that in which I wrote it. Colonial squeamishness had demanded in the last scene not only a fig-leaf but an illegal operation. The deliberate and inexcusable mutilation of a MS. is typical of the colonial attitude to culture, an attitude which might be compared, not unjustly, with that of a dog to a lamp-post. However, that artists cannot live in South Africa

## PREFACE

is a fact that has been fully demonstrated by the lives of Thomas Pringle, Olive Schreiner, and others.

“Portraits in the Nude” is here printed for the first time as it was written. The book as a whole may be more fully understood if read in conjunction with Mr. Campbell’s forthcoming poems, which were mostly written at the same time, in the same place, and, to a great extent, in community of thought.

W. P.

TOKYO, 1927.

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