

1863 – The Family moves in Caroline Murray (nee Molteno)'s first impressions

Source: extract from her *Reminiscences*.

All this time Papa was looking out for a permanent home, and at last he got the offer of Claremont House¹ and decided to purchase it from Mr. Logie. Mama was at first not at all pleased with the contemplated change. Apart from the greater distance from Cape Town, she was not attracted by the old house, which seemed to her dark and depressing and too much shut in by trees, for she loved wide, open breezy distances and all the light and sunshine possible, but gradually she became reconciled, as, under Uncle Bisset's direction and Papa's, old passages disappeared and gave place to the wide entrance hall and large windows, while light papers and paint made a cheerful change. The beautiful drawing room was untouched, but the large bedroom was built to correspond with it at the other end, and a new stoep was laid. The quaint old house had two oval windows in front, one of which is now below the roof and over the window at the end of the drawing room.



The drawing room at Claremont House

While the alterations were being made Papa used to enjoy spending whole days watching the workmen, and there we would find him, when we sometimes drove over in the afternoon, seated happily under the deep shade of the oaks, in his light summer coat, his hat off, and a pile of newspapers and a water cooler beside him. Old Mr. Logie, who also owned Greenfield House, had moved there with his wife and four grown-up daughters. We often found him with Papa; he was a dour old Scotchman, and took a sort of grim pleasure in showing us over the garden and grounds and watching our delighted enthusiasm.



**John Charles Molteno's
granddaughter, May Murray, in
the garden at Claremont House
with Devil's Peak in the
background, 1880s**

When at last we moved over to Claremont we found endless enjoyment in the beautiful old garden, full of interesting trees and shrubs, the vineyard and orchards with their wealth of fruit of every variety, and the woods and wild growth that surrounded them on every side. But Betty and I, then eleven and ten, thirsted for plenty of life and outlet, and we missed the companionship which school life had given us, for now we were obliged to have a governess, and one of the Miss Logies had offered to take that place. She was a conscientious gentle lady, whom we learnt in later years to appreciate, but we seemed then to belong to different worlds which could not assimilate, and we felt cramped and more dependent than ever upon every variety of book we could get hold of.

Editor's Notes

ⁱ Claremont House became *the* centre of family life for some 60 years until what remained of the estate had to be sold in November 1929 and the old house was demolished.