Kathleen Murray, Elgin fruit farmer

by

Marion Cran

Introduction

The Gardens of Good Hope[1] by Marion Cran was published nearly a century ago in 1927. It contains several inimitable descriptions of Moltenos and Murrays, notably Kathleen Murray. The book only became known to me by a most lucky chance. In 1985 a couple of friends of one of my cousins – Margaret Gibbs (her mother was Carol Williamson, who was born a Molteno) – chanced upon it in an antiquarian bookseller's at Hay on Wye. They gave it to Margaret, and Margaret years later lent it to me.

Kathleen Murray in the 1960s

Marion Cran visited South Africa in 1926. She was already a well-known author in England of gardening books and articles for popular magazines like *Queen* and *Good Housekeeping*. Two of her earliest books, *The Story of My Ruin* and *The Garden of Ignorance,* were based on her experience of buying a 14th century 'ruin' in Surrey and turning the house and garden into a beautiful home. She then got the idea of travelling to South Africa, where she had been born, and describing the very different kinds of garden there.

She writes with a light, engaging tone. She has a sharp descriptive eye and is occasionally excruciatingly funny. She is also a strong-minded, if over-sentimental, admirer of other independent women and their achievements. Her attitudes however, although vigorously expressed, are often very dated. For example, her derogatory remarks about Afrikaans as 'a peculiar patois, without history and without a future'! Or her unhesitating lauding of British settlers as 'the Pilgrim Fathers of Africa'.

But what is lovely for us in the family is that she went to stay with Kathleen Murray, who

was Dr Charles and Caroline Murray's youngest daughter, on the farm she had been busy developing in Elgin for the previous ten years or so. Kathleen was that rare phenomenon in both Britain and 'white' South Africa – the single woman farmer. The two women hit it off together and Marion devotes a whole chapter to describing Kathleen's farm as it was in the mid 1920s. What follows here is a large part of Chapter V, 'Among the Peaches at Elgin', a further extract (pp. 99-104) about Kathleen's uncles Ted and Harry Molteno, as well as Sir James Molteno, and the concluding page of Marion Cran's book when she meets Kathleen the evening before her return to England and they visit the Rhodes Memorial.

Robert Molteno

June 2013

Technical Note: The subheadings are not Marion Cran's, but have been inserted by me to break up the text. The photos, with one exception, also do not exist in the original.

Kathleen Murray, Elgin farmer

One day I received a letter from a Miss Murray asking me to come and stay awhile among the peach orchards at Elgin[2] in Cape Province.

It is very difficult to know how to spend only a few months in a great country to the utmost advantage, when one is anxious to tell the true tale of that land to a public thousands of miles away. I wanted to see all I could before I must hurry back to the Chelsea Flower Show in England and all the mass of garden work waiting there; I had seen a little of the peach and nectarine orchards at Banhoek and wondered if I had not better save time to see something of Natal. I consulted my counsellor and friend Miss Metlerkamp. She said I was by no means to miss meeting Miss Murray, and seeing her fine commercial orchards. So I wrote back accepting her invitation, and owe to a sister of the pen this new, delightful friend.

When I came that night to the house of the young fruit farmer at Elgin, and met her frank and sweet glance of welcome, I knew that I might have brought the little cat with me [a little cat she had found at the top of Sir Lowry's Pass on her way to Elgin]. Somewhere, on the Sir Lowry Pass, is a lean little kitten with eyes of jade ....

The next morning I stood with Miss Murray among her peach orchards, while she told me the tale of the fruit farm; a handsome girl, tall and strong, with the sun in her eyes, and the blue hills behind her.

Kathleen Murray at work in her young apple orchards, probably in the 1920s

Backed by a forest of gums[3] stood the tall windmill which is, nowadays, almost a part of African scenery, pumping water from the borehole up to the house and lands.

It was an exciting morning for her, the end of a series of adventures, because the old well had proved inadequate so the services of a diviner[4] had been enlisted some months before to find a better supply. He found water. When, after much patient waiting, the engineer arrived to bore at the directed place, he had hotly disputed the possibility of finding water so near the river. There was a nice, expensive position in which to find herself— two experts at variance in a vital matter! She ultimately decided to bank on the diviner, and so, the first morning of my arrival, after breakfast we went down to the outfit to see who was right. Then, in a frame of mind deeply content, we walked over her farm to study the trees in peace; conscious of a strong stream of precious water pumping up steadily, to the great discomfiture of the bore-merchant.

It was the time of ripe peaches; they hung, velvet-skinned and richly coloured, among the bright green of young trees, a beguiling sight in the blazing summer sun, and beyond them stretched acres of almond, pear, apple and plum trees.

Kathleen Murray standing in her young orchard, Palmiet River farm, c. 1927

I laboured along over the tilled ground, new to this hot, dry air, from the damp and fog of an English winter; but the girl strode strongly, keen on the tale of her tilth. Even more than the beauty of the scene I liked her brave personality, unconsciously divulged in the story of the way she had learned how to run commercial orchards in a young country which is still feeling its way to the business of growing fruit for export and the home markets.

Kathleen's story of how she built up her farm

The greatest adventure had been with her apples. They were the first trees she planted commercially, as they command a ready sale in South African markets, being a rare fruit in that country; only possible to grow in localities which are sure of a certain degree of frost. To us in the northern hemisphere both apples and cherries are common enough; we value more the peaches and oranges of the south. But to the South African, crisp cherries and sharp-sweet apples are most attractive. A New Zealand variety called Ohenimura,[5] a large, round, pale apple faintly flushed with red, was the one which she ordered for the first planting. No one knew in those early days exactly which was the best apple to grow in Africa or how to plant it to secure the best returns. She was advised that the Ohenimura did not need another variety for pollination, that it was self-fertile; and she ordered three hundred and fifty trees. By chance there came with them fifty Warner's King. This was her first orchard; the beginning that stands for so much.

Farm worker on Kathleen Murray's farm (date not known)

She planted and cultivated her young trees, learning for herself as she went, in the manner of your real orchardist. The trees grew magnificently; she found that they did better with less artificial manure than was recommended by the Government experts, and altered the menu accordingly. She gave them nitrates in their youth, and later guano and basic slag. She found, and preserved, her own method of pruning.

When it came to the bearing time of her strong, clean, splendidly-grown apple trees, only those near the Warner's King bore fruit! She wrote to the man who had ill-advised her in the first instance that Ohenimura was self-fertile, and heard that he had by now found the same thing out for himself; but precious years had gone to the learning and more had to go to remedying the mistake.

We stood together now in that first orchard of so much hope and learning and I looked round upon the marks of her story; the pioneer story; the story of experiment, of failure, of determined courage which is written on the land wherever the trail is blazed in new countries by the early planters; by those who make the way easy for the feet of them that follow.

Among the wide, upstanding apple trees, models of form and health in bark and leaf, stood beheaded trunks, where the proud Ohenimura heads had been sawn off; out of this leanness showed small twigs of green; strange skeletons among the other heavy growth. That is where she is now grafting other varieties whose bloom will, when grown, fertilise the bloom of the exasperating Ohenimura. Some of the grafts are the faithful Warner's King, but that apple does not exactly chime in time of blooming, and

is not, therefore, enough to fertilise the whole orchard, so Young Delicious and White Winter Pearmain are used as well. In a few more years the first orchard will bear tremendously; and meanwhile the young pear, peach, and plum orchards are yielding profit.

‘Fresh dried fruits’

We loitered along, past the brilliant pointed Satsuma plums, the unripe pears; and I learned for the first time what almonds can taste like, unfolded from their green velvet jackets and eaten fresh.

They are quite different from the dried brown-skinned almonds we buy from the grocer in England and scald in boiling water before we skin them for cakes and candies. They taste, and they look, so unlike that they might well be another nut.

Imported foods, dry and emasculated, are what millions of Britons believe to be the correct thing. They never know any better. The first cake I tasted in South Africa reminded me by its delicious flavour that the dried fruits in it were still full of the sun. The raisins and sultanas, candied peel, lemon and so on had not been packed in crates, sweated through the tropics, travelled thousands of miles by sea and land – passed through scores of hands and at last found their way from the grocer’s scales into the cakes of Britain. These were fresh dried fruits!

Those who have never seen it can hardly imagine this lotus land of sun and blue hills, where all the fruits of the earth grow in richest flavour and perfume. Remembering the adulterated foods expensively served in the shops and restaurants of crowded Europe, one finds a mighty refreshment in the wholesome quality of the African fare. They make the most beautiful cakes in that country; many South African families such as this one have inherited marvelous recipes from clever Dutch ancestors and they take pride in their excellent cooking.

Fitz-Billies – the forgotten story of Cambridge University’s student cakes

Miss Murray told me how to make a Fitz-Billy, and I wrote down the recipe as I watched her make it; so as to pass it on to other good housewives. The recipe was inherited by her mother, who was a Molteno, from a Dutch great-grandmother at the Cape, and she in her turn gave it in 1902 to a porter at a Cambridge college to make cakes for her undergraduate relations. They became famous, for the man made them well; and to this day every undergraduate orders them for a tea-party. The shop where they are sold is opposite the Fitz-William Museum, hence their irreverent name of "Fitz-Billies," and most people think that they are made from an ancient Cambridge recipe; but they are the old Cape cakes made from Mrs. Murray’s inherited family recipe.

This is the way to make a "Fitz-Billy ":

You take one pound of white granulated sugar, seven ounces of flour, eight eggs, one dessertspoonful of naartje powder. The ingredients are simple enough, but the secret is all in the making. Naartje is the Cape name for a tangerine orange; to make the powder you dry naartje peel in the oven and roll it into powder after it is brittle, putting it away in tins till it is needed. The old dry flavouring is always better than fresh; it improves by keeping. Pour the whites of egg into one basin; the yolks into another. Beat the whites till they rise stiffly to a point on the end of a fork; then pour the sugar slowly into the other

basin and beat it hard with the yolks. The longer the yellow yolks are beaten with the sugar the more perceptibly the mixture pales. This beating is very important. It makes a great difference to the lightness of the cake.

Now you take the flour and naartje powder, and sprinkle it slowly from a folded paper on to the smooth daffodil cream of the beaten yolks and sugar; throw in also lumps of the beaten white; it should be so stiff that it throws from the spoon; the flour and the whites are folded into the yellow. You do not beat much in the mixing; the beating has been done before, separately; you tangle as much air as you can into the cake. This that you are doing now is a folding and a tangling.

There are lumps of air, like Gruyére cheese-holes, in the mixture; it looks clear and fine. Sprinkle a well-greased tin with sugar and ground rice to make a frosty coating on the cake. Put in the mixture, and bake in a moderately hot oven. The tin must not be more than half full, to allow for rising; and it must bake slowly for an hour in an even temperature.

A farm before the monoculture of today

Lurking at the back of every woman's mind is a desire to be slim. It has lurked, very ineffectively, at the back of mine ever since I can remember. South African hospitality does not pander to this desire in the least. The house at Elgin kept its own pigs, cows, geese, and fowls. The hams are home-cured, the butter and bread home-made; cream and butter-milk are lavishly served with eggs, fruit and honey from the farm.

One day Miss Murray took me down to the packing-shed, where the work of packing peaches for export was in full blast, and her watchful eye was needed to superintend this last important phase of commercial fruit-growing. All the labour of cultivation and the expense of planting and growing is wasted unless the fruit reaches the far-off market in perfect condition. This is the last act of care one can bestow; from thence on the harvest is handled by other people, who do not feel for it as the grower does.

We walked on and on, past the old orange trees, the piggeries, and the fowls; there are tall grey- green Baileyana trees there; they were planted by the poultry-runs for the fowls to eat the seeds which drop from them. In spring the Baileyanas fill the air of the country-side with the rich scent of their yellow sprays. And wattle, too, they plant. It is the flower we call mimosa in England which bears sweetly-scented, fluffy yellow balls.

I have always loved mimosa, from the first day I saw it many years ago when I was quite young. I met a flower-woman peddling spring's own self in Piccadilly – boughs of ferny grey-green leaf set with little fluffy yellow balls of a most delicious fragrance. I stood shivering before the woman's basket; it was a blue-nosed day, when the sap is at its lowest ebb before the turn; when flesh shudders under the lash of our bleak east winds.

Mimosas and a Riviera interlude

"Where does it come from? " I asked as I bought a spray, wondering as I did so how it looked in the gardens where it grew.

"From France, miss; the Reveery . . . ."

The word meant nothing to me, like most of the words we learn in our youth: Economics, Algebra, Astronomy, Biology, Babylon and Tyre – what were they in my careless ears but words devised to steal freedom and the wide sky from me under the label of lessons.

The Riviera, what was that? The name of a place in geography lessons; something to lip glibly and forget. Something tiresome, like all the other tiresome things that were intruded by grown-ups upon the proper business of life, which was play.

But the years pockmark our saucy little hides with dents of knowledge whether we will or no; in time the Riviera became familiar to me as the name of a place to which rich relations and friends, the superior ones, irrupted periodically in a splutter of luggage and pomp, at the time when chilblains and influenza scourge the lesser fry, tied by bond of circumstance to the island home. Whence one surmised it was a warm place.

And learned from sophisticated folk that it was. Very warm. And very expensive.

Ardent youth, gobbling at the dish of life, regarded the Riviera, on this advice, as unattainable and therefore dull. Something to be pushed aside among the litter of things which did not touch me personally.

But magic still hung about the place – because of the gleam of golden scented balls which came every year to our fog-bound London. Every year I bought some; and wondered again how mimosa looked in the "Reveery" where it grew. I built for it a dream-garden in my mind, a place of hills sloping to the sea, where mimosa sprang up in fountains of golden spray set with delicate silver leaves; a place lit by "the light that never was on land and sea"; a place where trod the quiet feet of friends and the heart dreamed on inviolate in the unshattered peace of imagination. Someday, I told myself, I would go and find the place where mimosa grew. And I found it at last – not in the artificial airs, the mammon towns of the Mediterranean seaboard, but in Africa. In the space and the silence and the beauty of Africa I found mimosa growing; nothing common or tawdry has ever touched that flower for me.

As we walked together, Miss Murray and I, down to see the peaches packed, I thought again of all this old story of mimosa; and realised with renewed gratitude the gift life held in store for me when she saved me from seeing it till I was led to this enchanted land. This strange, compelling land. Where beauty remains yet.

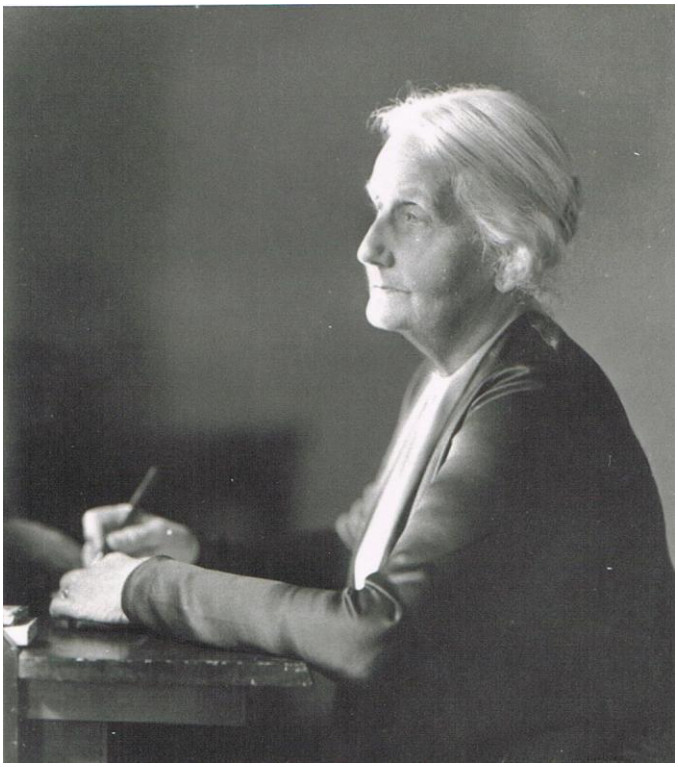
Lessons from the packing shed

The packing-shed at Elgin was once an old Dutch farm-house. It is a beautiful, simple building, placed under the grateful shade of enormous oak trees, and smells warmly of ripe peaches in the hot noon sunshine. This was her old home, the playground of childish summer holidays. They have built a new house up on the hill now, where she lives with her mother and father; it is thatched with silver-grey river-reeds, and preserves the features of Cape architecture with the added modern comforts of hot and cold baths and electric light. All round it is a wide veranda, with creepers to climb the pillars, and there one can sleep all night "under the stars."

The shed smelt very attractive; I stood beside the tall girl, watching her packing peaches that will appear miraculously in early spring upon British dessert plates. She lifted each peach in the soft cushion of the palm without touching it with her finger-tips; there is a craft in packing this delicate fruit; it must not receive the impress of the fingers, or it will bruise in transport. There are weeks of sea-travel ahead, and the rough handling of porters, wholesalers, and retailers, before it reaches the consumer's table.

Every gesture with which the orchardist approaches her fruit has its meaning. There is a rhythm of movement which has been thought out very carefully in experimental years before it has reached this method, which is now the routine of peach-packing in all the orchards of South Africa – a movement to pick up the peach in the soft of the palm, another to place the paper wrapper (each one of which is printed with the name and address and trademark of the grower), a twist and a wrap-over, so quick and neat that it looks as easy as smiling; and then the sensitive dainty side of the wrapped peach is placed carefully where it gets least pressure in the box, among the wood wool with which each box is lined. The first four peaches are placed with their little behinds against the end; but all the rest, as they follow in their symmetrical rows, face them. Each one, as it takes its place, is carefully fitted round with wisps of wood wool, piles of which stand beside the boxes, ready rolled into little thin sausages. Some of it is rolled into balls, which are wedged into the corners, and any angular spaces, to prevent movement.

Miss Murray worked smoothly and swiftly, mistress of her technique; long practice has made her hands quick with a packing sense; she talked as she worked, and I watched her, fascinated, while her organised staff of helpers pursued their appointed tasks. The whole packing-shed, wide to the sun, hummed with a gentle life. In one room the peaches were being graded to size; a native boy passed to and fro carrying the lined boxes to her table, and trays of the graded peaches were placed beside them. People were packing; three or four, trained and expert, alongside her.



Kathleen Murray's mother, Caroline Murray, in the late 1920s or early 1930s

In another room her mother[6] and a friend were busy making the little thin sausages and rolling the balls of wood wool. I watched them, thinking of the youth of that mother: of how the young Irish naval doctor[7] came with his ship to the Cape and met the lovely Miss Molteno; of his singing voice which won him friends wherever he went; of the way he left the Old Country and flung himself into the new to win his beautiful bride; and of how now, in the sunset of days, they must be proud of their children . . . this clever girl beside me has some of the Celtic music in the notes of her speaking voice . . . . it must be nice to grow old among nice children. The work went on while I dreamed in this warm place of sweet peach smells.

As the boxes were filled they were taken away, and the regulation pretty-coloured cleets were hammered on the ends. Her trade-mark, a honey-bee, her name, Kathleen Murray, and the name of the fruit

Kathleen's father, Dr Charles Murray, 1920s

were pasted on; a rubber stamp gave the grade of the fruit, and steadily at one end of the room grew pile after pile of the consignment, ready for the night train for Cape Town; whence it would be taken to the cold-storage depot, and a percentage of the boxes examined by the Government expert before they are allowed to take ship to England. The credit of South African fruit is jealously guarded by the Government, which works to assist its fruit farmers by keeping up the standard of the wares.

. . . .

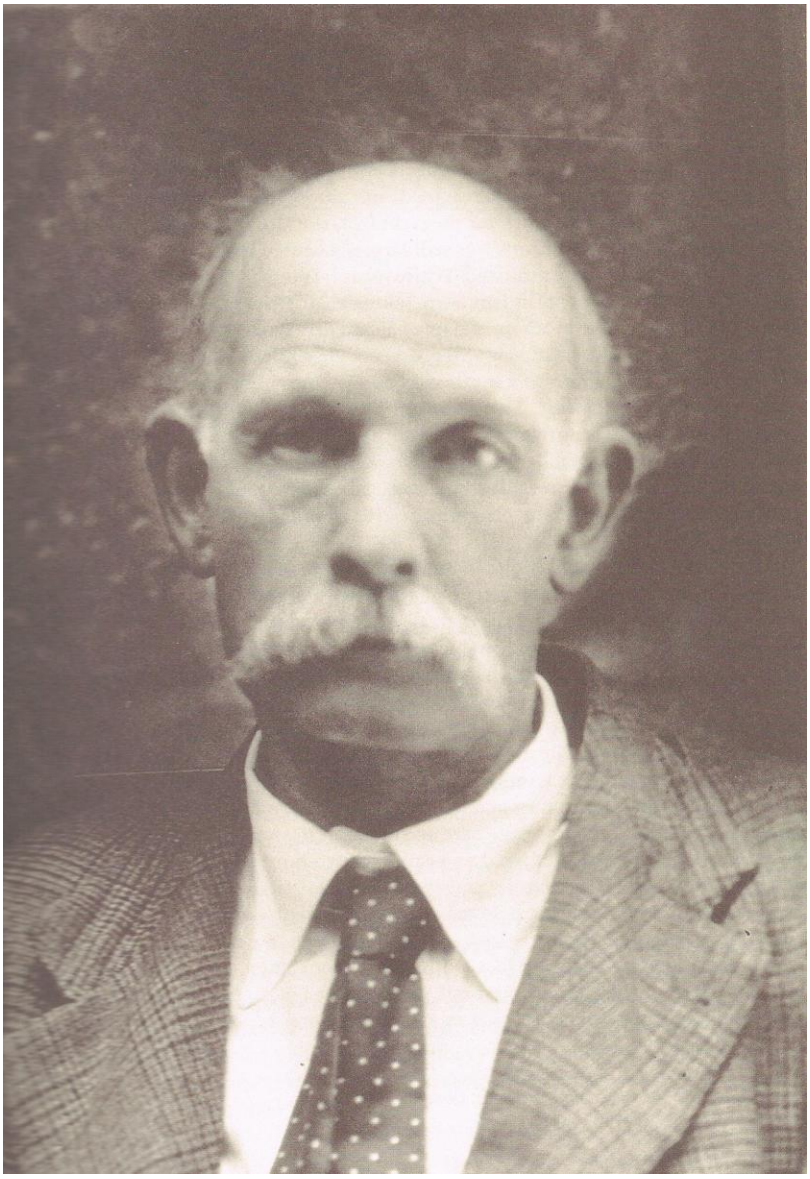
The 'Molteno brothers' join the picnic

One day we went for a picnic through the Houwhoek Pass to Palmiet Rivermouth. It was a wonderful day of long drives and long swims in the lagoon under the sun. It was on this occasion that I first realised the family quality of the Moltenos. I had felt already that there was a strong personality in Kathleen Murray, but I had imagined it was just the gift to her of her immediate parentage – clever Dr. Murray and gentle Mrs. Murray. I began to see, however, that that land-sense, that vision and that courage, were rooted deeply in the blood from which her mother sprang.

On that picnic day we drove for a long time with two cars packed with hampers, surf-boards and laughing people until we drew up at a certain place to meet somebody. "The Moltenos," I was told, "are going to join us."[8]

Two good-looking, bronzed men presently arrived in another car; and from that moment we were dominated by a new force. They made us all get out to look for sites, town-building sites for seaside houses. The elder one walked on in front rapidly, hunching his shoulders and radiating such a stubborn intensity of self-absorption that I had to forget the sky and sea and flowers to watch him. He seemed all one bitter will; an iron creature, with nothing but the will to win in his spare, determined frame. He wanted the best site, the highest, the most commanding – and it was already sold. So we all went back to the cars. Nothing but the best suited *him*.

During that day, that happy, care-free day among pleasant people, I kept trying to forget the Molteno brothers. I would watch the shapely lass, my hostess, fighting the race of the tide in the river mouth; Mademoiselle Genequand in a shady place among the rocks looking out to the blue sea with thoughtful eyes; Colonel and Mrs. Cunningham with their active little daughter – and the talk of the north still with



Ted Molteno in the late 1940s

them, for they had only been settled in Africa two years; Mrs. Boucher and her son, out five years; and all the rest of the merry party. But presently the Moltenos would come into the picture again – we must go out and surf – then we must have lunch, and they made tables and seats for us of the surf-boards; one could not possess the day at all without feeling these dominant men like a strong cord through every moment.

Now they were all wonderful; clever and kind; missing none of the fun of talk; playing with the children; giving out all the time character, personality. Gnarled knots of character; difficult, determined bachelors, two brothers living alone. They spoke of Greece and the classic mould of thought; of line in art. Like reborn Greeks complete, themselves, they looked to me, with their fine profiles cut hard against the sun; no embellishment of mind, person or practice lacking. Later on I learned more. They own enormous tracts of land; they farm fruit with savage intensity and success. They have used more brain, vision and forethought than any in the neighbourhood, and are the most successful there. Sometimes disliked, as is usual with strong folk, for they will not yield one inch to anyone and others will not give ground to them. So there are often deadlocks. Useful to a young nation, types like this; the fights are nothing; they pass. The work they accomplish remains.

Encountering Sir James Molteno – and deciding *not* to have an argument

After that day all Moltenos became interesting; and I realised that Miss Murray's gift for husbandry was a heritage. One day I met Sir James Molteno.[9] He came down the drive with a box of magnificent Peregrine peaches and sat in the shade of the stoep with me, urging me to partake. Nor was I loath. Really to appreciate a sun-ripe peach one needs to have sojourned under the sun. One's very skin seems to thirst for the cool juices of the fruit.[10] After this pleasant feast Sir James became very conversational about the general awfulness of women, but, filled with his good peaches, I refused to joust.

Falling asleep can be embarrassing – taking a trip with Mrs Victor Molteno

The name of Molteno contains for me another memory; a mortifying one. For while I was in Cape Town Mrs. Victor Molteno[11] invited me one broiling morn to drive round the Peninsula. It is a long drive; a famous and beautiful one. I started out very festive and sociable – watching the great panorama of mountain, sky and sea unfold itself. And presently I went to sleep. The warm air is very soporific and the bright sunshine was new to my English eyes, used to our cool grey skies. But these excuses have never made me forgive myself – though I am sure they were urged on my behalf by my entertainer. I awoke at her gate to discover my shame; and was taken in, much confused, to lunch. And she had such a sweet-faced daughter, too, who loves gardens!

Kathleen's report progress in developing her garden at Elgin

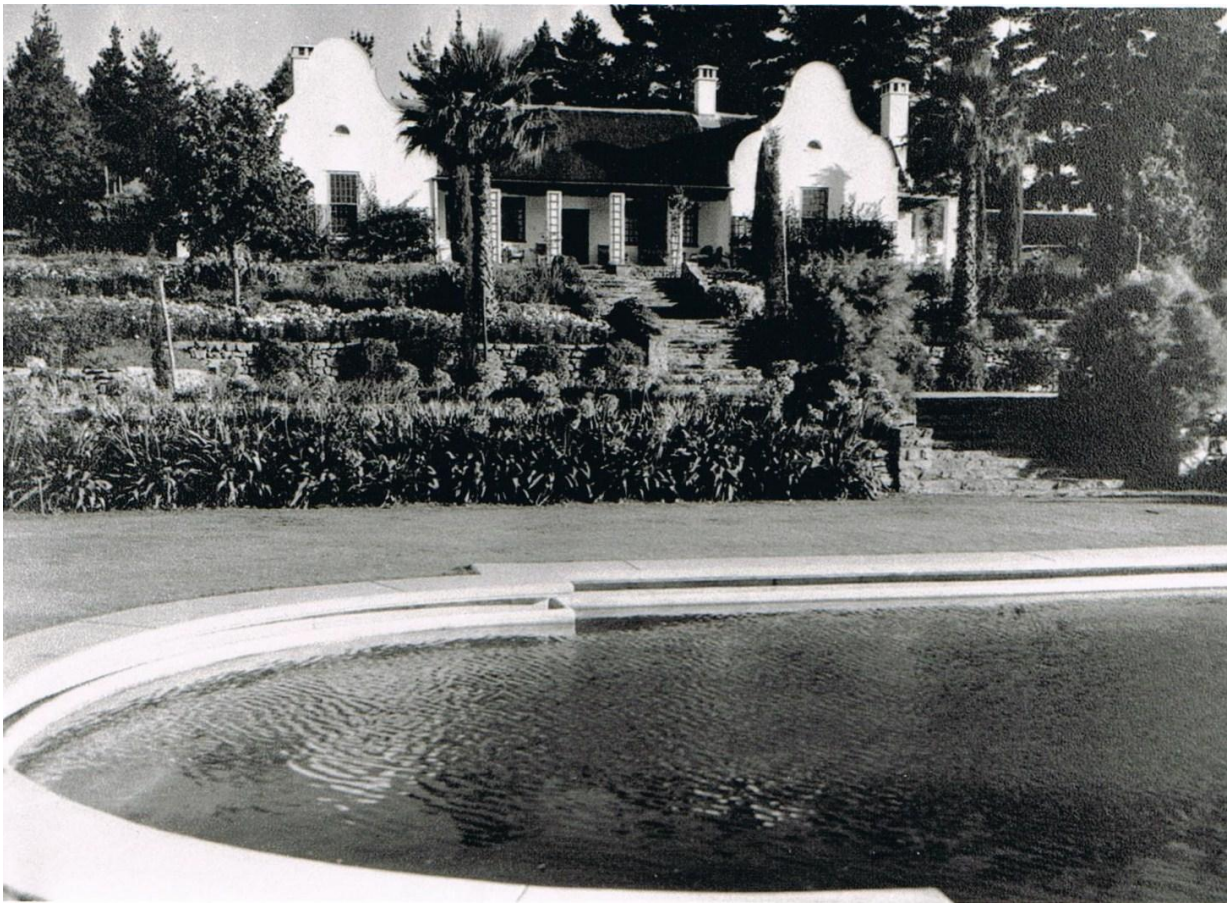
During my visits to Elgin, for I went again on my way back to England, Miss Murray and I would roam her garden, and discuss the plans for its future development.[12] To-day, as I sat down to write of it, I received a letter from her which tells me of its progress:

> 'It is exactly a year ago that you took me to the Chelsea Show, and I can never forget the wonder and joy of it. The delphinium seeds I ordered that day have supplied us with quantities of plants ready for planting out any time now. One is blooming and is the most exquisite thing imaginable, with pink tints and a dark eye. I do believe I am going to make a beautiful garden. I have the long narrow bed edging the front terrace planted with a hedge of pink monthly roses on the edge, and the bed itself is catmint only.
>
> The latter was brought out from England in February, and flourished so that it could be divided into eighty-two plants. As you leave this top terrace and come to the side of the house, the garden drops in four terraces and I will continue the wide path in grass instead of gravel as at present. The first terrace will be Ophelia roses, the second a deeper pink, the third Red-Letter Day, and the fourth, which shapes itself into two divisions, will be two shades of yellow and copper-coloured roses.
>
> The long terraces below the big central steps, at present planted with roses, are to be all my mixed things carefully grouped – delphiniums, lupins, pink cannas, iris, Michaelmas daisies, and my wonderful Cape daisies. The series of terraces going down from the dining-room door are not planned yet, partly because we are heeling-in everything there, and partly because we are going to build a white wall with square pillars at intervals with wooden rail linking them, to be a kind of pergola for creepers, and cut the back off from the front, and then be returned at right angles down the terraces so as to enclose the garden and form a background of creepers.
>
> I have already made 60,000 bricks for the building, as we are going to build a garage, two servants' rooms, an outside spare room, and garden-room for tools, etc.
>
> I am in the thick of a lot of work, and, as you know, to do a job successfully in this country it is not sufficient to decide to spend a certain amount and just give one's orders. One has to struggle through with it, and almost watch every brick laid and check every yard.
>
> Why I am beginning to make a real start with the garden is because we are putting up a new large windmill. It will have a I4 ft. wheel, will lift the water 136 feet and carry it 1,200 feet in 3 inch pipes, and we shall get 850 gallons per hour in a steady wind. I tell you all the details as you were interested in

windmills. I have built a large concrete tank, partly below the ground level, to hold 24,000 gallons of water, so we should in future be very well off.

I am preparing the land for another orchard of 700 peach, nectarine and plum trees, which will be on the land just above the house. I hope to start a small nursery this winter, and propagate some of the cuttings Mr. Laxton gave me of his "Laxton's Superb." I kept them in cold store for the voyage and grafted them (a fortnight after arrival) with great success. They were taken from me by the Customs people, and I feared they would not survive.'

That reference to the Chelsea Show reminded me of a very happy day; Miss Murray came over to England on a visit to her relations – more Moltenos – and we went to the greatest Flower Show in the world together: whereat much mutual content.



The house that Kathleen Murray had built sometime before Marion Cran's visit to her farm in 1926

Marion Cran and Kathleen Murray meet one last time
[Extract from the last pages of Marion's book]

[At Cape Town] I gathered myself to say good-bye to South Africa with what courage I might, conscious of a message waiting yet.

When it came to the last night I did not find it possible to dine and laugh on board with the jolly crowd, or to crack jokes in the hotel at Cape Town. In a clean silence – alone – I must shake hands with Africa; meet her eyes; learn what she says to her lovers.

It was a night of full moon. Kathleen Murray, child of the land, was beside me. There were others, too, like ghosts, I do not know who. But she and I shared the sacred hour. We had some dinner, and then taking the car, she drove to the Rhodes Memorial, scattering buck before her headlights, up the long avenue to the Place of Pillars where the dreamer broods.[13]

The Rhodes Memorial on the slopes of Table Mountain, 1920s

As one goes to an altar I went up the long, long flight of steps – alone, most mercifully left alone, up and up with fear in my heart . . . fear of the thing I must hear. There would come, I knew, the still small voice.

Up and up – world-scarred, battered, full of the little busy-nesses that crowd the heart like sin – shedding the dross of the world, up in the silence, up and still up. Till I reached the face of the man who loved Africa, and turned to look with him upon the two oceans and the lights of Cape Town – under the moon and the stars.

A wind came down from the mountain – splendid and dreadful. It began far off, a sudden voice in the night. Brooding eternally, in that empty place of pillars – disembodied – clean of the flesh, his spirit walks – alone – that lonely soul. The noise of the wind in the pines came down like thunder, menacing, terrible.

Flesh, friends, brothers, children, house and land, life itself are nothing when Africa calls . . . .

As it reached the mighty granite loggia the awful sound was changed to a music – clanging like bells in the pillared void.

Sweet and strong came the voice of the dreamer; asking the vows . . . .

THE END

Endnotes

[1] Marion Cran, *The Gardens of Good Hope,* London: Herbert Jenkins Ltd., 1927.

[2] Elgin is a large upland bowl, about 1,500 feet in altitude, and encircled by mountains. It lies about 35 miles from Cape Town just beyond the Hottentot Holland Mountains. This is where Kathleen Murray and her cousins, Ted and Harry Molteno, pioneered the largescale growing and export of deciduous fruit. Today Elgin and neighbouring areas are still South Africa's main apple and deciduous fruit-growing districts, although viticulture has also become a major agricultural industry there in recent decades.

[3] Gum trees. A very common tree in South Africa and admirably suited to the hot dry climate, but an exotic, of course, imported originally from Australia.

[4] Water divining was a common practice in South Africa for generations. My own grandfather, Wallace Molteno, much perhaps to his own surprise, had this facility and made it available to his neighbouring farmers on the Karoo. Given the desert-like conditions there and the paucity of underground streams, a water diviner had to up to the mark if he was to be helpful in suggesting sites for the numerous windmills needed in order to provide water for the sheep in their huge runs.

[5] Commonly regarded as only a cooking apple, these large apples in fact have an unbelievably delicious, tart flavour . They also have the most beautiful shiny yellow and red skins of any variety I have ever seen.

[6] Caroline Murray, Kathleen's mother, was by this time in her mid seventies.

[7] Marion Cran is referring to Kathleen's father, Dr Charles Murray. He was of Irish Protestant extraction, had joined the Royal Navy as a surgeon, and seen action in West Africa in the 1870s before settling into private medical practice in Cape Town and marrying Caroline Molteno. Some of his recollections are reproduced elsewhere on this website. And I intend to tell the story of how he and Caroline fell in love and eventually got married, as related by Caroline in her journal at the time.

[8] Ted Molteno and his younger brother, Harry. They were Kathleen Murray's half-uncles, but in fact not more than a dozen years or so older than her. Ted and Harry had started farming in Elgin around 1903. Over the years, they built up the largest fruit farms in the region.

[9] Another of Kathleen Murray's uncles. Sir James Molteno, retired by this time, had been Speaker both of the Cape Parliament and, after 1910, first Speaker of the Union of South Africa Parliament. He wrote two volumes of reminiscences that are now available on-line.

[10] How well I remember those fresh-picked, sun-warmed Peregrine peaches when I was a boy in the 1950s. Grown on my uncles and cousins' farms, there was nothing to touch them!

[11] Dr Victor Molteno, yet another of Kathleen Murray's numerous uncles. Victor and James were brothers, and like his brother in law, Dr Charles Murray, he was also a doctor in general practice in Cape Town. His wife was Mildred.

[12] Kathleen Murray was a talented and artistic gardener, in addition to her skills as a farmer. Her garden, dropping down in a series of terraces from her beautiful home at Elgin, was a wonderful creation.

[13] The Rhodes Memorial is a Roman-style pillared temple high up on the slopes of Devil's Peak and looking out over the Cape Flats to Africa. In unapologetic terms, it commemorates Cecil John Rhodes. He was the ardent British imperialist who used his immense wealth from the diamond mine at Kimberley to become Prime Minister of the Cape and to expand the British Empire in Southern and Central Africa. He is the 'dreamer' Marion Cran refers to here.

Marion Cran – Introduction to the Extracts

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Where to go on Website: Under *Kathleen Murray* entry in *Who's who.*

STILL TO DO; Insert PHOTOS.