What a Strange Thing is Memory

by

Lucy Lindley Mitchell Molteno

Introduction

'What a strange thing is memory'. This is Lucy Molteno's own title for this piece. And what a gem it is. It's a great pity that she only wrote down a few pages of her memories. She started them in 1957 when she was already 83 years old. Why she stopped almost in mid sentence, having just given us a tantalising historical tidbit that she had met the famous Fabian Society intellectuals, Beatrice and Sydney Webb, who 'had known several of the Molteno family', we will never know.

Lucy Molteno, on the occasion of her eldest daughter, also Lucy, being presented at Court, c. 1920s

Lucy Molteno's American family

What we do have, however, is quite a lot about Lucy's American family dating back to the days of the American Revolution in the 1770s. Lucy was an American and from a respected, upper class family whose roots in Virginia and South Carolina went back to the earliest days of settlement in the North American colonies. Lucy herself was born in 1874. This was scarcely ten years after the end of the American Civil War which had been fought over the issue of whether the enslavement of Black Americans should continue into the modern era.

South African connections

She also had South African connections. Her grandfather on her mother's side was the Rev. Daniel Lindley, an American Presbyterian minister. He arrived in Southern Africa with the first party of American missionaries as early as 1835. They trekked a thousand miles into the interior in order to set up a mission station beyond the Limpopo in country recently

Inanda, Zululand – the tree in whose shade Daniel Lindley, Lucy's grandfather, started regularly preaching in 1847

occupied by the Matabele. But the mission soon proved impossible as Voortrekkers in the vanguard of the Great Trek of 1836 arrived and immediately fought with the Matabele. The missionaries retreated several hundred miles southwards and settled in Natal. Daniel opened a school for Boer children in 1839 and in 1842 agreed to be the *predikant* (pastor) to the Boers, apparently 'believing that the aggressive Dutch needed Christianizing as much as the Zulus' [David M. Stowe, *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions,* W. B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1998)] . One of the young people he confirmed was Paul Kruger who later in life became President of the South African Republic. A few years later in 1847, Daniel switched his focus and set up a mission station at Inanda working with Zulus and trying to protect them from land-hungry white settlers. He eventually retired and moved back to the United States in 1873 where his daughter, Sarah, Lucy's mother had just got married to Clarence Green Mitchell.

Lucy visited South Africa by chance. Her father had been a sick man for many years. When he died, his three daughters were still teenagers. Sarah decided to take the three girls – Lucy, Carol and Nan – on a world tour for a few years to get over their father's death. And because she had been born in Natal and still had a brother, Bryant Lindley, living there, she routed the trip via South Africa.

Charlie Molteno and Lucy marry

During their visit in 1895, Lucy, now just 21 years old, met Charlie Molteno. He was unmarried, in his mid thirties, the eldest son of the first Prime Minister of the Cape Colony, and himself a prominent Member of Parliament in the Cape. Charlie fell in love with Lucy. In 1897, following her return from her family's world tour, he travelled by ship via England to the East Coast of the United States and there persuaded Lucy to marry him. The story is quite a dramatic one. Charlie, having firmly told his sister Caroline only a few weeks before in a letter from London that he would never marry someone not intimately acquainted with Cape life, in his next letter to her (dated 2 December 1897), he suddenly writes: 'I hardly know how to write and tell you the news of my engagement for you will think that I have been misleading you. The fact is that before the Mitchells left South Africa

Lucy Mitchell at the time of her marriage to Charlie Molteno, Lakewood, New Jersey, 1897

I wished to become engaged to Miss Mitchell. But as she didn't see things as I did & had written lines to say that my coming to America would be of no use, you will see that it was truly a sort of forlorn hope that brought me over here.... As marrying was the last thing I thought of when I left the Cape, I of course made no arrangements whatever for such an eventuality.' But he went to tell Caroline that 'Miss Mitchell's health is delicate; she can't stay in this part of America long, and so the marriage is to go ahead with as little delay as possible in the States.' Before the month was out, Charlie and Lucy were married in Lakewood, New Jersey, on the 27th of December.

Life in Cape Town around 1900

Lucy and Charlie then returned to Cape Town, where they made their home. Charlie bought a five acre 'plot' and commissioned an architect, Herbert Baker, to build a home for them (Baker later became renowned for the buildings he designed in South Africa, including the Union Buildings and the Rhodes Memorial, and was eventually knighted). This was Sandown House in Rondebosch. Only four or five miles from the city centre, this part of Cape Town was still regarded as a bit distant in the early 1900s. In fact, Lucy says in her memoirs that, despite the urgings of her friend, the famous South African feminist and writer, Olive Schreiner, to hold a regular salon, she decided against the idea because of 'our being rather far away from the town'!

Lucy and Charlie's marriage was a very happy one. Lucy settled into the social life of upper class Cape Town that her husband and his many brothers and sisters were already part of. In doing so, Lucy became friends with, and gives us delightful glimpses into the personalities and lives of, several prominent women in the Cape. Not only Olive Schreiner who became a lifelong friend, but

Mrs Koopmans de Wet, Miss Bolus the botanist, and Lady Rose-Innes – wife of Sir James Rose-Innes, a famous lawyer who in his old age led my father, Donald Molteno, in the first constitutional case (1937) to challenge taking away the right to vote from Black South Africans. She also knew many other eminent Cape families involved in politics – the Hofmeyrs, Sauers and Merrimans. Although by the time Lucy came to write her memories the era of these figures was almost half a century distant and Lucy's own interest in political affairs had largely faded, she does give us fascinating detail about the old Cape before and immediately after the Boer War (1899-1902).

John Charles ('Charlie') Molteno, about the time of his marriage to Lucy Mitchell, 1897

The circles Lucy moved in were privileged, at least in the first half of her long life. She had been born on 4 May 1874 on the Cote d'Azure in Nice where her parents were in the midst of a European tour. Her mother immediately placed her in the care of a wet nurse whom they employed to breastfeed her. Zabette actually returned with the family to the States and worked for them until she died some years later. Lucy grew up surrounded by servants. In Cape Town, although Charlie Molteno was not a very wealthy man, the staff he and Lucy employed at Sandown House sounds impressive! Her daughter, Carol, described the establishment years later. There was 'Henry [who] drove Mother in the perfectly sprung Cape cart [a two-wheeled, four-seater carriage] used by Cecil Rhodes, who had had it built by Cooper, the well-known carriage builder. Henry wore a livery we thought very grand. The blue broadcloth coat was made to measure by a tailor and had large silver buttons. A cockaded black top-hat, black leather top boots and smart gauntlet gloves were the final touch of elegance.' And in addition, there were three maids, Miss Moxham, Virginia's Norland nurse, the cowman and presumably several gardeners. And Carol recalls an incident when she, a single mother with three small children, was moving into a flat at Park Mansions in the late 1930s.. 'I remember with a smile how Mother asked what she could do and I replied: "Please sweep the floor." Her answer was: "I have never swept before and doubt I know how to hold the broom".'

Lucy lived an extraordinarily long life. She only died in 1967 at the age of 95. She had been widowed nearly half a century earlier. Charlie, who had gone into hospital for what should have been a routine prostate operation, caught pneumonia and died as a result. This was in 1924 and he was only 64 at the time.

Making friends with Rudyard Kipling

Lucy always stayed in touch with her American relations. And she visited them, with her children, several times in the early 1900s. The trips, despite the age of steam, took a considerable time because they travelled to the States via England and Europe. It was because of these periodic trans-Atlantic voyages from London to New York that Lucy met Rudyard Kipling. Kipling had a daughter in New York whom he used to visit. He also had an intense interest in South Africa, and had served as a newspaper editor in Bloemfontein during the Boer War. Despite him and Lucy and Charlie being on opposite sides over the War, they became friends. And Lucy describes the delightful way in which Kipling used to entertain Lucy and Carol, and the other children on board, with his stories.

Lucy's involvement in the first wave of feminism

Betty Molteno and Alice Greene, c. the First World War

The first wave of feminism had become a significant political current in Britain and many other countries towards the end of the 19th century. The immediate issue was the demand that women should have the vote on the same basis as men. Lucy was a part of a tiny circle of women in the Cape who were part of this movement. They included Olive Schreiner who wrote a book, *Women and Labour,* that two generations later became a classic of the women's movement when it stood up again in the last quarter of the 20th century. Another active participant was Lucy's sister-in-law, Betty Molteno, who was a lifelong feminist and activist, and whom both Charlie and Lucy greatly admired, despite their totally different ways of life. Lucy became one of the founders of the Alexandra Club in Cape Town. This was a riposte to the fact that affluent men in the city had set up the exclusive Civil Service Club which, like the famous West End clubs on Pall Mall it modelled itself on, refused to admit women. In old age, Lucy often lived at the Alexandra Club, when not staying with her daughter, Carol. She also, following Charlie's death, threw herself into the work of the National Council of Women and became President of the Cape Town branch.

A fearless woman

She was always a fearless woman. This was a characteristic that she passed on to her children. Her youngest daughter, Virginia, in particular, rejoiced in being an independent professional woman, earning her own living and making her own decisions. And Virginia's brother, John, took his mother's fearlessness to a new level. He hated the brief time he spent at Cambridge University. He

threw it up and went to fight in Morocco during the prolonged rebellion which led to the setting up of the Rif Republic during a sustained and widespread rebellion in Morocco again opposition to Spanish and French colonial rule (on which side John fought has to be guessed at!). After an abortive time trying to settle down working for a bank in Cape Town, John took off again. This time he went big game hunting and prospecting for gold in East Africa. Then during the Second World War, while serving with the British Army pushing Mussolini's forces out of Abyssinia (Ethiopia), he exhibited exceptional bravery in one engagement and was awarded the Military Cross.

Prospecting in Namaqualand

Lucy's fearlessness and willingness to endure hardship, if need be, was one factor that made it possible for her to take up prospecting in the long years after Charlie's death. She chose to do this in some of the most remote and wildest parts of the country – namely the largely trackless wastes of Namaqualand south of the Orange River. Lucy does not describe her adventures in these memoirs. But we are lucky to have one account of her exploits. Lucy usually took a male driver with when she was exploring where to peg her claims. Sometimes this was a member of the family. On one occasion in the 1950s my elder brother, Wallace Molteno, acted as her driver. And on another, in 1953, Lucy got young Peter Gibbs to help her. He was a brother-in-law of Lucy's granddaughter, Margaret Gibbs (nee Williamson). Peter wrote an account of his trip with Lucy, and this will be put on this website in due course.

Unfortunately, Lucy seems to have stopped writing down her recollections before she got to her children. She and Charlie had five – Lucy, born in 1899 and Carol, born in 1901; followed by two boys, John Charles (1905) and 'Peter' (1907). The youngest, Virginia, was born in 1911. I do not know how close, or otherwise, Lucy was to her children. Two of her daughters, however – Lucy and Virginia – settled and married in England. There were therefore not around in South Africa to develop a grown-up relationship with their mother, let alone to support her through her long old age. Their mother trusted neither of them to display good sense in financial matters. Virginia told me how their mother put their portions of her estate in a trust run by an old friend of hers in order to prevent either Lucy's husband relieving her of the money, or Virginia just blowing it!

Lucy Molteno at a family gathering in the 1960s, only a decade or so after she stopped prospecting

Finally, I must thank Margaret Gibbs, who is a second cousin of mine, for pointing me to both her grandmother Lucy Molteno's memories which are reproduced here, and to Peter Gibbs' account of accompanying her on one of her prospecting trips to the Orange River and beyond. I am most grateful.

Robert Molteno
June 2013

Sarah Lindley Mitchell (nee Lindley), the Rev. Daniel Lindley's daughter and mother of Lucy Molteno

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The Blue Ridge Mountains, North Carolina

I woke this morning, November 3rd 1957, with a vivid picture in my mind of Great Aunt Jane. She came to visit us when we were living in the Blue Ridge Mountains, North Carolina, in Ashville. Wonderful forests around us with wild azalias .... and wild jasmine in the woods, and lovely pink and also white dogwood, that most appealing flowering shrub or tree – the romance of wild roses but without thorns, a wealth of beauty. All who know dogwood love it, I think, and yet I have never seen it in any country since my girlhood days in the Blue Ridge Mountains. I delighted to ride in lovely paths and byeways, but followed at a discreet distance by a groom, in case we stumbled onto moonshiners who lived and plied their trade in the forests.

Great Aunt Jane

But now to go back to Great Aunt Jane.[1] She came from further South and was an aunt on my mother's side, I imagine from Virginia, as my mother's people came from there, and my father's from South Carolina. I can see her vividly in my mind – tall and stately with soft brown eyes, bewitching side curls framing her pale patrician face and a queenly and elegant carriage. I loved to listen to her talk – and her wise remarks on life. But I especially remember her advice when she said she wished she had followed the rule to read something instructive and worthwhile every day, and to keep a diary. I have tried to follow her advice about the reading, but the diary has been neglected through my natural indolence. But now I have also remembered my granddaughter Margaret (Carol's child)[2] asking me to write something about my early life as she said, 'we know so little about when you were young'. So now I begin.

Clarence Blair Mitchell

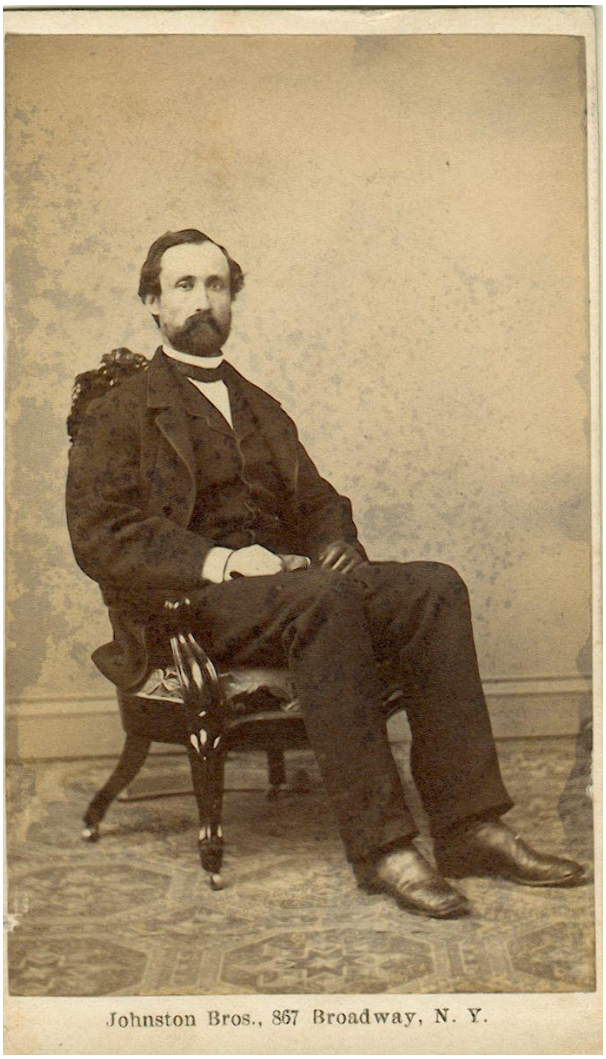
On the banks of the Mediterranean, the Cote d'Azure, many many long years ago, just 83 years and 6 months tomorrow, a girl baby was born to Clarence Green Mitchell and Sarah Lindley Mitchell in the town of Nice. My mother was my father's second wife, and by his first wife, Aurelia Blair, he had a son called Clarence Blair Mitchell. Aurelia had died when her second child was coming before it was born, and my father was left with his small son Clarence, I think then about two years old. He and his boy went to live with his sister, a very beautiful woman of whom a portrait was painted. She had my father's brown eyes, and most lovely face and figure, painted with a crimson or soft red evening cloak trimmed with fur about her. She and her husband (I don't remember his first name) van Schaick had no children

[1] Great Aunt Jane was probably a daughter of the Rev. Daniel Lindley, an American missionary to the Boers, and later the Zulus, in Inanda, Zululand. For more about Daniel Lindley, see below.

[2] Margaret Gibbs (nee Williamson).

of their own and were devoted to my father's boy to whom his uncle eventually left at his death their beautiful place, Lawnshore – green lawns sweeping down to the Sound,[3] great spreading trees and flower garden and farm. The big white pillared house was cool and inviting.

My father and his forebears



Clarence Green Mitchell, Lucy's father, New York, 1880

During his sister's life, before he married my mother, my father who was a lawyer used to go to his work in New York by ferry. Quite a group of men living on the Sound travelled to New York by ferry every day, and I was told heated political discussions took place. My father had strong convictions and high principles, but I imagine that both he and his father's opinions veered towards the South from where the family had come. His father, also his grandfather and I think his greatgrandfather, had all lived in Charleston, South Carolina. And my father and, I think, his three sisters – Anna van Schaick, Mary Parsons and Elizabeth Crane (she married Col. Crane) – were all born in Charleston. But his father married a Northerner, Caroline Green.... and as she was not happy to have slaves, of whom there were many. The only duty of one young slave in their house was to take care of the salt cellars for the table (I imagine the heavy silver in use in those days needed much polishing). And my father told me he had a young slave to carry his books for him to school. But my grandmother did not like having slaves, and to please her, my grandfather with their children moved to New York. I have heard that my grandfather had considerable ability as a lawyer and quickly established himself in the law. His father, my father's grandfather, must also have been able as he qualified so young that he was too young legally to plead in Court – he already had a case, so the Court obligingly put off the date of sitting until his birthday had occurred and he was legally old enough to plead.

There are also tales of my father's greatgrandfather as a young man in Charleston. In the early days of the American Revolution he and his only brother, coming or going from school, thought they would watch a battle which was going on. They were hiding behind a wall or pile of some kind, when the brother looked over and was hit and killed and he was the only child left. He grew older. But before he reached manhood, a British man of war disembarked at Charleston. I don't know quite how but the

[3] Long Island Sound.

Commander acted unjustly towards a slave belonging to a friend of young Mitchell – my father's forebear – who was incensed for his friend's sake and swore that when he grew up and met the Commander again he would avenge his friend. When eventually he grew up – his father had died and his mother remarried – his father's friend, who had been made executor as was customary at that time, sent young Mitchell to England with plenty of funds to make the Grand Tour. His father had been very well off and he was in no lack of money. Soon after he arrived in England, at one of the parties, whom should he see but the culprit Commander whom he immediately challenged to a duel. However the Commander was elderly by that time and he was persuaded against the duel which was stopped.

The Grand Tour must have been interesting and he met people socially and became engaged to marry a daughter of the inventor Watt. During his engagement he received news from Charleston that his stepfather had proved a rascal and had cheated him of his fortune. He felt that he must in honour bound break his engagement – although the story goes that his fiance was unwilling and immediately put funds at his disposal at the Bank. But that he felt his honour was at stake. He immediately returned to Charleston and of course to his mother. His fiance died of a broken heart. The story goes that in later life she appeared to him on his marriage night. He married a widow, I think. His own death took place when the Governor of a Northern State – I think New York – asked him to escort his daughter who was in the South up by sea to New York. She had either been recently married or was about to be married, I am not sure which, and was carrying with her much silver and valuables. The ship was never heard of again. But some years later a sailor in hospital or … confessed that he was one of the crew on this vessel, and that the crew had mutinied. They shot my forebear. But Theodosia, the Governor's daughter, was so beautiful, they could not bear to shoot her and instead made her walk the Plank into the sea.

Now to go on many years to my father, living with his sister and her husband,and going by ferry to his business. I was told that, nearing New York harbor, a woman fell into the sea and my father, not physically a very strong man, instantly jumped in and rescued her. One of his companions, with whom he had disagreed politically, said that a man who had acted as my father had done had the right to his own opinions.

Soon after my father had married my mother (I was told that she was the most beautiful of her good-looking sisters), my father had a serious carriage accident – he was fond of driving very spirited horses, which alarmed my mother. This serious accident caused the beginning of general paralysis, a slow progressive illness, which continued for the rest of his life until his death at the age of about 65. A wonderful character, and a wonderful life, notwithstanding the handicap of illness. He was extremely generous and kind, and very broadminded. And from an early age I always felt he was especially my care. I think he loved us, his children, all equally, but in different ways, as he said, and he was always especially close to me and confided in me. He loved poetry as I did, and championed my crude efforts when the other members of the family (excepting my brother) were distinctly discouraging.

My Emotions

Lucy Mitchell with her French nurse, Zabette, 1875

Almost every big thing in life has come to me suddenly; the first onset of almost every emotion has been sudden. But to go back to the Cote d'Azure where I was born on May the 4th 1874. My mother evidently did not nurse me for I had what they called a wet nurse. Zabette my parents took back with them when they returned to America, and she was a devoted nurse with us until she died about four years later. My sister Caroline (named after my father's mother) Green Mitchell, but always called Carol, was born eleven months after my birth. She was a most loving golden-haired laughing cherub. But my mother said I was always Zabette's favourite, as her first charge. I dimly remember being taken out of my bed one night and carried to Zabette's room, and I remember hardly understanding her telling me most earnestly that one day she would come and take me to go to Heaven. I fancy she must have known she was dying and wanted me to know that she would not forget me. I can also just remember my sister Carol and I walking one each side of my very tall grandfather to church one morning very proudly, one of us carrying his prayer book and the other his cane.

Lucy Mitchell and her younger sister, Carol, New York, 1878

One very big impression occurred when I was four years old. As my sister Carol was fair and golden-haired, she was always given sky blue accessories as sashes and shoes, while I with darker hair and grey eyes was unquestionably given pink. There was a wedding reception at our house, a high double-storied house in New York. And Carol, who by nature was foremost and took the lead, was walking ahead of me up the stairs. Suddenly all tiredness was forgotten. My eyes fell on my sister's sash. A sudden glory and light filled my heart and the blue of the sash like the sky filled me with rapture. It lasted until we entered the drawing room which was full of people in dark clothes – I have no doubt most fashionably dressed –and a cloud fell on my spirits. I appreciate now the effect of colour on a child's mind. One winter when I was five or six years old, we went to South Carolina (Columbia I think it was). I remember the scent of the Maraschel (?) roses especially and their rich creamy gold colour climbing over the piazza as it was called. It was there I heard my first lie. A darkie, one of the servants I

imagine, thinking it a fairytale for a child, said: 'look down the street and you will see a little cart with a goat being driven' – an idle lie, but I looked, saw nothing, and was profoundly shocked. Another shock – my first proposal – I was up in a tree (I loved climbing trees) when a boy companion, one of our neighbour's children, also climbed the tree and tried to make me promise that I would marry him when I grew up. I was furious as he kept on and on asking me to promise. Trying to force a promise made me so angry I dashed down from the tree and fled in a fury to his mother.

About this age another kind of emotion was delicious. Without saying anything to anyone, I crept out of bed in the very early morning. The freshness of the early dawn, with the dew still in the fields, and the stillness and solitude were wonderful and I felt an inexpressible peace. Carol asked later why I had not called her to come too if it was so lovely as I said, but I couldn't hurt her feelings and explain that being quite alone was part of the magic. Always through life solitude has had a magic of its own.

When I was thirteen we were living in Lakewood, New Jersey where we had a wonderful garden. We were near the lake on the edge of the extensive pine woods. Besides my mother's thoroughbred riding horse (a big black spirited horse lent by her sister Clare), we had less restive carriage-cum-riding horses which we were allowed to ride with a leading rein held by a mounted groom. Our constant companion was however a .... bought from the South. We sometimes piled, two or even three at a time, on to the patient …., and I horrified by mother one day by standing upright on the saddle to reach into the high branches of a tree. The woods and the lake were fairly like and fired my imagination, and I searched for moss and dreamed of grottos with phosphorescent walls in hidden hollows where fairies might live.

Holidaying in the Adirondacks

One summer we all moved to a holiday camp in the Adirondacks. Separate birch bark huts and bigger and wider lakes. My great delight was rowing in birch bark canoes, and across the lake on the other side from our camp was a deep primeval forest. We all loved rowing but I seemed the only one who wanted to go to the forest with the urge to explore where I hoped that no one had ever stepped before. I was allowed to paddle a canoe alone across the lake and to explore the forest with the strict injunction that I was never for a moment to lose sight of the lake or in the dim and shadowed forest I might be lost. It was dense with great trees and moss-covered logs. For my childish imagination moss always held a mystery.

I remember that summer I was taken in the special 'buck cart' of that region for a drive inland towards the high mountain, and the sudden awakening for me as the blue mountains came into view, a sudden sense of wonder and mystery and beauty – a wonder that held me speechless for the rest of the drive.

Governesses and Tutors

The years went by and I became absorbed with the love of poetry. We had governesses and tutors. A tutor for arithmetic only whom I disliked. Poor youth. He came by the day and was obviously shy teaching three girls, and I thought him crude with gauche manners. The governess was highly educated, but my mother always attracted people who needed her help. Miss Alan was rather delicate in health. She had studied too hard, she said. But she had, with all the learning she had acquired, an intellectual culture and a love of literature and life which was inspiring. She gave me a real appreciation of the lives and writings of the J .... Encyclopaedists - and goddesses (?) of that time. With my father I spent many

hours reading aloud poetry and mythology and Greek and Roman history, which subjects he considered essential and with which I was always fascinated, especially ancient history and Egyptology of which we had a book and pictures as he was a subscriber to the Egyptian Exploration Fund.

The Blair family

About this time my only brother, Clarence, about 8 or 10 years older than I, was married to my mother's niece, a pretty sparkling and fascinating slight brunette. They had been engaged for several years when they were both very young. Clarence had gone to Princeton which had been well endowed by his

Clarence Mitchell (centre) (Lucy Molteno's half brother) and his wife, at 'The Brick House', date unknown.

millionaire grandfather Blair. This enterprising and vigorous old man some years later at the age of 96 became so ill that his family were sent for in haste. He had long been a widower, with one son Clinton Blair, whom we always called Uncle Clinton although not really our uncle, and two sons in law, the husbands of his two daughters who had died leaving families behind them. Old Mr. Blair, instead of dying as expected, was so vigorous that he recovered next day and walked down to his business. He had invested largely in railways where he made his millions. And where his railways in the West went, he named the towns along the route with his family's name Aurelia. My brother's mother's name was one of these towns, Aurelia. The other daughter married Mr. Scribner of *Scribner's Magazine*. I remember the Scribner sons, and especially the wife of one of them, who to my childish imagination I thought most attractive – slim, pretty and graceful. I remember when I was very young hearing her say that she always

attended to the lamps herself (it was the days of gas and no electric light) as she *would* have clear bright lamps I suppose to read *Scribner's Magazine*!

Uncle Clinton had two sons – one, Ledyard (?), my brother's intimate and college mate, and a younger son Inslay (?). His wife had two young nieces who always lived with them, although the one niece soon married I think a clergyman. His wife's cousin, Aunt Annie, was a great friend of my mother, so I knew her quite well. Until her death we kept in touch and years later after my father's death when my mother and two sisters and I went abroad, her niece Sadie travelled with us.[4]

The Stokes family

Among my mother's greatest friends were Miss Olivia and Miss Carrie Stokes who always came to visit us for a month every year. My parents kept open house – my mother was a born hostess and raconteur. My sister Carol was very like her in this and always charmed both men and women. She finally married Anson Phelps Stokes, a favourite nephew of Miss Olivia and Miss Carrie, who himself was most sociable and a great talker and raconteur of anecdotes. Another friend of my mother who visited us was Mrs. Alexander ('Bree' to my mother), the widow of General Alexander, whose bridesmaid my mother had been. She came from a very beautiful family. She was herself handsome and stately and I remember used to recite poetry with great feeling, mostly religious. Her 3 nieces were very good looking, especially Mabel Brumester (?) who was a noted beauty.

During my life in North Carolina in my early teens I had a serious illness, typhoid fever, and had not yet recovered when my brother was married in the North, I think from my mother's sister's house. She went up to the wedding taking my sister Carol with her, who was a bridesmaid in her early teens but already an extremely pretty girl with green eyes and golden curls and a most fascinating person. All her boy cousins adored her and she had already begun to attract admiring suitors.

My sister, Nan

My sister Nan, four years younger than I, was very delicate and retiring by nature, but with a charming gentle beauty notwithstanding her big flashing brown eyes – a wonderful character, and I remember my brother once saying 'the best brains of the family'.[5]

[4] This is the round the world trip in the mid 1890s when Lucy met her husband-to-be, Charlie Molteno, eldest son of Sir John Charles Molteno who had already died about ten years before Lucy and Charlie met.

[5] When the United States of America eventually entered the First World War in 1917, Nan Mitchell came over to France and worked in a mobile canteen for American troops on the Western Front. She was caught up in the dramatic breakthrough by German troops in mid 1918 and wrote a dramatic account of what happened. This was published in the Molteno family's *Chronicle of the Family* and is being reproduced on this website.

Nan Mitchell, younger sister of Lucy Molteno

My other sister, Carol

The only one of us who really studied hard, Carol, intuitively seemed to know things or, if ignorant, adroitly hid her ignorance. She once remarked, 'I say a great deal that does not mean anything, and Lucy means a great deal that she does not say.' Carol certainly had the gift of eloquence and an unusually sympathetic nature. She took life joyously and loved everyone and was loved by everyone in return. As one of her girlfriends said, 'If there is any responsibility about, Carol will take it up.' She was eminently social and always a great social success, she craved to be liked and loved and received what she wanted.

What I was like

I was interested in people more in the abstract, what their thoughts and feelings were and what made their actions – a most uncomfortable nuisance of a child I must have been. I remember as a child deciding that for a whole day I would follow a cousin about – a pretty girl about 18 I think – who was living with us at the time. She was many years older than I and held the mystery and attraction of a 'grown up' for my childish years. I must have been a real nuisance watching all her actions and words for one whole day, but for me it was a disillusionment. I never thought her so wonderful again; in fact, I found her very dull. She talked a great deal about herself and her admirers, which seemed to me only silly. I was always eager to explore and years later, when I had had admirers of my own, I decided to find out what was the power that attracted men. I decided during a voyage we were embarking on I would put forth this force of attraction just to find out what it was – which I did – and found it a very simple form of exerting attraction: a form of concentration with a tinge of mesmeric thought control. My sister Carol was surprised, and my mother too I think, at my sudden popularity. But I left it alone after that voyage for I really thought it not worthwhile and perhaps a little insincere.

As a small child I loved to listen to grown up talk, and during the years in Lakewood when my mother gave dinner parties I was allowed to stay up later on those nights and sit in the library, a room adjoining the dining room with an open door and listen to the grown up talk. My mother especially appreciated what she called good conversation, which she cultivated – and to me it seemed a fairyland to listen to until I became too sleepy to hear any more. The library also held a great attraction – a big cool room with soft easy chairs with restful green colouring and I loved the smell of books and leather.

My father's death

Clarence Green Mitchell, Lucy Molteno's father, c. 1880

It was when we were in North Carolina years later that my father's illness became much worse and I realized that he might die very soon. I was then about 17 or 18 and he had been my most constant companion – I didn't care very much for young companionship – and we were together many hours every day. He was no longer able to go for long drives and we sat together in the big cool library (adjoining his suite of rooms) reading together. I read aloud to him or just sat quietly by the fire. I felt I must be with him when he died. And one night we were told it was near. We were all gathered in his room, I sitting close beside his bed. When the time came, after a deep breath his eyes suddenly opened. Looking straight at me, all the mist cleared (he had until then been unconscious) and a brilliant light came into them. His whole face was illuminated with wonder and radiance and we all felt a curtain had been drawn back – and that we also felt something of the reflected glory. Even the commonplace trained nurse was impressed.

Meeting Uncle Bryant and Aunt Nenie's family at the Cape

After my father's death we stayed on at our home for a few months while I suppose the estate was settled and then in the following November my mother, my two sisters and I went abroad. Aunt Annie Blair's niece, Sadie, also accompanied us for the first part of our wanderings and we continued travelling through Europe, then came to South Africa after three years. My mother, a daughter of the missionary Daniel Lindley, had been born in Natal and wanted to see South Africa again and also visit her brother Bryant Lindley who was at the Cape. His wife, Aunt Nenie Lindley, had become very religious. She and my mother were great friends as well as sisters-in-law. In her early married life she had lived a very social life and dressed fashionably – I heard she got her dresses from Worth. But after she came to South Africa, she met some very religious people and became so strongly and deeply influenced that she would no longer wear fashionable or expensive clothes, but lived for charity of many kinds. My mother's brother, Bryant Lindley, was devoted to his wife, but did [not] share all her opinions. He was a charming man, with the Lindley gift of eloquence, also handsome and a social asset wherever he went, and much appreciated for his personal as well as very social qualities. I remember his saying more than

Bryant Lindley, Lucy Molteno's uncle in South Africa, 1910

once, in speaking of my father, that 'he was the most perfect gentleman' Uncle Bryant had ever met – which, coming from his critical social sense, was a great compliment.

Uncle Bryant and Aunt Nenie's family consisted of three daughters, all delightful and beautiful girls, and much later in life their only son called Bobs – a brilliant and talented boy – was born. When he grew up, he went into the Air Force in the Great War and tragically was shot down. The three Lindley daughters have outlived their parents and my family knows them all as dear and cherished cousins. Inanda tried to be a missionary in Japan but her health gave out and she came back. Living at home again, she refused an admiring suitor and instead gave her life first to the care of her ageing parents, then her invalid family governess and friend, and after her death devoted herself to charity. Elsie – who married Douglas Buchanan, Judge Buchanan's son – had five sons and one daughter. One son, young Douglas – a very promising boy – went into the Air Force in the Second World War and, like his Uncle Bobs in the First World War, was also shot down in the fighting. Elsie is now a widow, having lately lost the husband of her very happy marriage. She now lives with, and for, her two sons' and her daughter's children to whom she is devoted.

My own very happy marriage

My visit to South Africa with my mother at 21 years of age[6] resulted in my own very happy marriage when my husband followed us back to America and I became engaged and married. The Molteno family have all been dear to me and I have found them intimate and valued friends as well as close in family relationship.

[6] This was in 1895, two years before she married.

Rudyard Kipling (with moustache), with Lucy and Carol Molteno sitting on the elephant, on the boat to New York, 1906

Becoming friends with Rudyard Kipling and his wife

We made several voyages again to America and my mother was charmed with her grandchildren.[7] On each voyage from England we found ourselves fellow passengers with the Rudyard Kiplings, and on one voyage his father was there as well. I have since regretted that I did not go to the fancy dress ball on board for the sake of wearing a costume as Hypatia as the elder Kipling asked me to do and for which he offered to paint the costume for me in black and white – he was a contributor to the magazine, *Black and White* or the *Graphic*, I forget which. Rudyard Kipling's wife being also an American, we were mutually drawn to each other. I had many interesting talks with Rudyard Kipling who was greatly interested in children. To allow my nurse to make up for her sometimes disturbed nights with our youngest child John, then little more than a year old, I always took my five children after lunch and Kipling often joined me in helping to entertain them. He drew pictures for them on his visiting cards (which I still have) and used to tell the two elder girls, Lucy and Carol, aged seven and about four or five, lovely stories, and when the stories got very interesting a larger and larger group of children would gather round. He used to say it was good practice for his writing. On one of my later voyages we were again on the same ship. He was most interested in psychicism and spiritualism. He had by then lost his

[7] Lucy kept up with her American family and took the children, accompanied by her husband Charlie when his parliamentary work and farming enterprise allowed, to visit them on several occasions in the early 1900s.

eldest little girl who had died in New York at a time when he himself was critically ill with pneumonia. It was a terrible grief to him. He believed firmly in spiritualism and referred me to his book, *They*, in which he pictures his little daughter coming back to him. But he also warned me against the dangers. He said that 'for us who wore the skins of dead animals on our hands and feet, it was dangerous', but for Indians who had been brought up to it for generations he seemed to think it was much safer.

The tragedy of Montague White

The time was not very long after the Anglo-Boer War and feelings were running high. The first voyage after I was married, the tension was already there. Our representative for South Africa, or for the Cape,[8] Mr. Montague White, was on our ship returning to Cape Town. He was an old friend of my husband's and of many of his family. He was a very gifted person, taking up music at first, combined with his diplomatic career. He then had a hobby of collecting china and later, I think, antique furniture, of which he was a good judge, having educated himself as he said on both subjects. When I first met him I think it was miniatures which interested him most. But he also played amazingly well on the piano. While he was staying with us once and waiting for us to come down to dinner, he filled the drawing room with lovely music. He never married but had a widowed sister with two daughters who lived with him and to whom he was devoted. He finally went to live in George when he retired and made his home, Jean(?) Court, into a show place with its gardens. He had always been an epicure; I remember a delectable dinner party he gave on board ship. But this taste [for good food] ended in tragedy. He and his sister and a Mr. and Mrs. Vincent, friends of his sister's who were visiting, all ate mushrooms for supper one night. He was positive that they were good although I think the cook demurred. All of them were taken violently ill. When he heard that his beloved sister, a gentle charming person with a madonna-like face, and Mrs. Vincent had both died, he did not wish to live (he was not too ill to recover it was said) and just died.

On this early or perhaps first voyage back to the Cape after my marriage, besides Mr. Montague White, Mr. Hayes Hammond also sat at our table, both most agreeable companions. Mr. Hayes Hammond, a well known American mining engineer, was a friend of my uncle Bryant Lindley's. But I chiefly remember him as a good talker. And also his private store of caviar. He said he never had enough caviar. So he supplied himself for the voyage and sent me down a gift to my cabin where I had retired in the Bay of Biscay feeling ill.

Boer War tensions

I felt very strongly about the Boer cause and at first refused to meet Lord Milner[9] at a special drive and picnic Montague wanted to arrange, although I did meet him later on. But I refused to be drawn into the Government House circle and would not join in a charity play the attractive wife of his secretary, who acted as his hostess, had arranged. I soon got to know the large social circle of the Molteno family and although returning calls was a lengthy process I made many charming friends.

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[8] Lucy seems to be saying that Montague White was some kind of United States representative at the Cape, possibly a consul.

[9] Sir Alfred, later Lord, Milner was British High Commissioner in Southern Africa and one of the key architects of Britain's decision to go to war against the Boer Republics. Lucy's huband, Charlie Molteno, and most of his family were deeply critical of this war and actively involved in opposing it.

Mrs Koopmans de Wet

Mrs Koopmans de Wet (at a younger age than Lucy Molteno knew her)

One of the most interesting personalities at the Cape was Mrs. Koopmans de Wet [who hosted] the only true salon ever held at the Cape. She had married Mr. Koopmans when she was so young – as she told me – that she was sucking her thumb behind the door while Mr. Koopmans was asking her father's permission to propose. Her father, Mr. de Wet, was well off financially with a big town house [where he lived] with his only two children, Mimi (Mrs. Koopmans de Wet) and her young sister, as she always spoke of her, who never married. Mr. Koopmans was not rich and the young couple consulted together (as Mrs K told me) how they should manage. He said he would give up his club – his home would now be his club, and she announced that she would cut up an old pair of his trousers and now make all his trousers for him – which she did and which he wore!

She would not call on Government House,[10] and was the only case in which, in order to make her acquaintance, the Governor's wife called first. She had a great deal of political influence and entertained many politicians. She always had a very good luncheon and many influential people came. She had the reputation of being a witty talker and a political power – and when they wanted to pull down old Government House (with its history and associations), it was she who stopped it. She also gave delightful evening parties and theatricals at which she gathered the prettiest girls of the Cape. Her parties were most popular I heard – but this was all before I came to the Cape.

Koopmans de Wet House, as Lucy Molteno would have known it, early 1900s

When I first met her, she was saddened by the Boer War[11] and devoted herself to working for and helping the Boer women and children who were being driven from their homes into concentration camps, their homes being burnt and their belongings looted by the British soldiers. I heard of one General or Commander among the British who personally brought back from the soldiers the sewing machines to give the women their own sewing machines back.

Mrs. Koopmans was not too much occupied to see people when they called and I often dropped in to listen to her reminiscences of other days. After her husband died, she went with her young sister to see her husband's people in Holland from where he had come. I imagine she must also have lost her parents by then. Her husband's people told her, she said, that she should not let her own

[10] The British Governor's official residence in Cape Town.

[11] The Boer War broke out within two years of Lucy's arrival at the Cape and continued for nearly three years (1899-1902).

grief sadden her sister's life, and from then on – although she wore widow's weeds to the end of her life – she began her social career of entertaining 'for my sister'. When I knew them, they were neither of them young – Mrs. Koopmans stately in her widows weeds and gracious manner and her sister, Miss de Wet, whom I always saw wearing a becoming auburn wig and dressed in brown velvet. She developed a taste for collecting precious stones, while Mrs. Koopmans collected old Cape furniture and silver and glass. This was the beginning of the Koopmans de Wet Museum [which was subsequently] housed in their old home in Strand Street. At her death she left the house to the nation and Dr. Purcell raised further funds from her personal friends to create the collection. Describing Mrs. Koopmans her sister Miss de Wet once said to me, 'Mimi doesn't need to study – she just looks down a page and she knows it all.' But she appreciated knowledge and had herself taught both French and German in her youth. They did me the honour of calling on me several times, when I unfortunately was not at home. But I heard they arrived in great style in a big carriage with a footman at the back. They left visiting cards for me which I still have. Mrs. Koopmans' cards all black with silver lettering, Miss de Wet's lavender-coloured also with silver lettering. During the hot summer months they always hired a house in the suburbs where they stayed for the cooler air and travelled the five or ten miles to [Cape Town]in state in their big carriage. But they remarked it was a bother to go back to fetch something they had forgotten. They had a most faithful old retainer, a trustworthy upper servant or housekeeper, who always appeared with tea which she brought to the . . . . room on a silver tray for every caller. The one drawback to my visits was the tea was very strong and in those days I didn't like strong tea. I have made up for it since as I now live on tea, strong but freshly brewed! Tea, honey and … are my standbys and support.

The Moltenos and my husband, Charlie

The Molteno family had a wide circle of friends. Their mother's father[12] had been much interested in politics and was a member of the [Legislative Assembly], the governing body of his day. Their father[13] had become the first Prime Minister and had brought in Responsible Government at the Cape. My husband [Charlie Molteno], his eldest son, had acted as his private secretary, so had much political interest and knowledge and became a Cape Member of Parliament. The second son Percy, [who] did brilliantly at Cambridge, married a Scotch girl, Sir Donald Currie's daughter. They lived in England where Percy became a member of the British Parliament and a supporter of Campbell Bannerman.[14] Another son, James, later Sir James, was Speaker of the Cape House of Assembly and when Union took place the first Speaker of the Union Parliament.

The 7 Molteno brothers – Frank, James, Victor, Charlie, Percy, Barkly and Wallace, at Westbrooke, Cape Town, 1892

[12] Hercules Jarvis, first Mayor of Cape Town. See elsewhere on the Molteno Family website for Dr Immelman's biography of him.

[13] John (later Sir John) Charles Molteno (1814-1886).

[14] Leader of the Liberal Party. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman routed the Conservative Party in the general election of 1906 and set about trying to repair Britain's relations with the Boer War generals.

My husband deeply regretted that he, unlike [his brothers] Percy, Victor and James, Ted, Harry and Clifford, missed the advantage of a University education. As his father relied on him so much, he felt he could not do without his help. After his father's death he managed the family estate[15] and was a staunch adviser and help to all the family. When Olive Schreiner met him, she was much struck with his ability and mind and told Betty Molteno, his sister and her great friend, that he ought to have been made Prime Minister, the position which Olive's brother W.P. Schreiner later held. Olive said Charlie had a most interesting mind, much more interesting she thought than his much admired brilliant brother Percy. She felt that too much school and university training was harmful intellectually and tended to take away individuality. She gave an instance of a family of boys – the youngest boy (was) far more clever and original and she only later found that, because of his delicate health, he was the only one of the three who had never been sent to school. Her own education she told me had never cost her parents a penny. At first in her early years her father had taught her and later when she wanted to know any subject or science she just took a book and studied – as she did with algebra or chemistry – I forget which.

Olive Schreiner, my great friend

Olive Schreiner, about the time Lucy Molteno first got to know her

I first met Olive[16] when my eldest child Lucy was a baby of a few months.[17] I was busy bathing her early one evening when Betty came into the room bringing Olive with her. Olive always loved children and her smile was illuminated with joy and interest. She never got over the death of her only child, a baby girl, who died a few days after birth. She once showed me a photograph of her dead baby, first asking me if it made me sad to look at pictures of the dead. Olive loved all her friends' children and made friends with them, even the very young. She was greatly attracted by my small son, John, when she made us one of her visits – he was then about three years old – and later she grew very fond of Lucy then in her teens. She told me that, greatly as she had looked forward to having her baby, for whom she had planned to do everything even to washing the nappies, it was to the companionship of a growing daughter which she had looked forward to most. She once said that the very sweetest little child she had ever known was her niece Dot, her brother W. P. Schreiner's child. Her actual name was Ursula but to her intimates she was Dot. A brilliant vivacious girl, she had qualified as a barrister at the same time she was leading a gay debutante's life. She only appeared in court for the necessary first occasion and never practised law. Dot's father, Olive told me, had had an especial gift for International Law, and was urged to practise in

[15] Mainly the sheep farms that his father had built up around Nelspoort on the Karoo.

[16] There are several biographies of the famous South African author and feminist. See also http://www.oliveschreiner.org/ where all her surviving letters have been transcribed, edited and made available. There are 164 letters on-line exchanged between Olive and Lucy from 1900 up to Olive's death in 1920.

[17] In 1899.

England. But he returned to the Cape to marry, most happily, ex-President Reitz' s daughter, one of the sweetest and kindest women in the world whose happy vivid blue eyes always seemed to hold a welcome.

The theatre and especially drama held a great attraction for Olive and I have heard that she had wanted to become an actress. She once told me that she had made two mistakes in her life. One was that she should have become a doctor; she was silent about the other mistake. She loved intensely, and I remember the fire which lit up her face when she spoke of reading Gilbert Murray's translation of Euripedes' *The Trojan Women* which had been recently published.

The world knows Olive's gift as a writer but comparatively few people realize her supreme gift as a talker. Her conversation was so enthralling that time passed in a flash. Once when she was staying with a friend and my husband and I drove over to see her, when we left the house we were both amazed at the lateness of the hour. Also one evening while she was making us a visit (she stayed with us fairly frequently but would never stay with any friend for very long – I think a week was about her limit), my daughter Lucy said, 'Don't you think we are keeping Mrs. Schreiner up too long' – both of us imagining the time to be about 10 o'clock – and we discovered to our surprise that it was many hours beyond that time. Olive seemed magnetically to draw her circle of close friends together, not only their closeness to her but, as one of her friends remarked to me, she also drew them closer to each other. Anna Purcell, that fine intellectual woman who loved and wrote poetry and was the soul of kindness and who had a gift for friendship second only to Olive's, was also Olive's friend. (Anna's husband was a notable scientist, the greatest authority in the world on spiders). I met Olive one evening – she had just returned from spending the afternoon with the Purcells. She was looking radiant and said, 'I have just come from my lovely friends'.

Others of Olive's inner circle of friends were my sister in law Betty [Molteno) who was a little like Olive in the intensity of her living, and Miss Greene her friend. They lived together and were almost like inseparable sisters. Lady Rose-Innes whose husband was the Attorney General at the time – Olive loved her, she told me, for her good heart and generous nature. Then Mrs. Etienne de Villiers, a clever woman whose husband was a brilliant barrister. Mrs. Etienne was the first woman in the Union of South Africa to pass as an advocate, and incidentally studied law in the Cape and passed all the examinations. Her husband was very musical. He had a sensitive nature and after his wife's death could not face life without her and retired into obscurity and gave himself up to living in her memory.

Mr and Mrs Bolus

I remember well the day when Olive first met Mrs. Bolus. She had been entertained to luncheon and a drive by Lady Rose-Innes. I saw her later in the day and she cried out joyously, 'I have just made a beautiful new friend'. Mrs. Bolus, a young friend of Betty Molteno's, had been a cherished teacher in the school that Betty ran at one stage in her life as Head Mistress[18] and ... Bolus was a rare and beautiful nature, full of the joy of life and a great interest in literature – she remembered pages and pages of poetry. But her greatest interest was Botany. She married her cousin, also named Bolus, whose father

[18] Bettty Molteno was Headmistress of the Collegiate School for Girls in Port Elizabeth in the 1890s.

Dr Harriet Margaret Louisa Bolus (1877-1970), famous South African botanist

donated or left a herbarium to the University [of Cape Town]. She was the curator and became a well-known botanist and devoted her life to her husband and Botany. Mr. Bolus was an invalid when I knew him, greatly interested in birds on which he had written and published a book. Mrs. Bolus once said to me that she was so grateful to be in the stream of life that she did not question the future after death.

Mrs. Henry Burton was another friend of us all. Her husband was in the cabinet – I think the Minister of Finance – and in the large circle of our political friends.

Olive urged me once to hold a salon – which I felt very flattering – as she was sure I would be successful. But our being rather far away from the town, and before the days of many cars, I thought would make it difficult, and [in any case] my husband and I had plenty of social life and appreciated the peace and leisure of our quiet evenings together.

Olive Schreiner's death

It was years later. My husband was away from home – politics and the family farm sometimes took him on trips up country. Olive had recently been staying with us, but had left to settle into a private hotel or boarding house at Plumstead. Lucy and I were sitting one evening in our drawing room having a cosy talk together, when I suddenly felt the urge to phone Olive. I had received a letter from her but I felt strongly I must not wait to write, but must ring her up at once. Lucy urged me to wait – we were having such a pleasant time together – and not to interrupt our talk. But I got up and hurried to the study to phone. I got Olive who was just on her way to her room and we had a little talk. She said she was so glad I had rung her and then talked about her friends and the children, who had not been well – for often children were in her thoughts. We said goodnight, and no one ever saw or spoke to her after that. The next morning she was found dead in her bed, holding a mapping pen in her hand. I had woken suddenly that very night with a strong thought of death in my mind. I thought it was my own death and that I was being warned by premonition and I took the warning to heart. Olive once said to me that sunshine and happiness helped her. Some people needed sorrow and shadow for development, but for her it was sunshine, and kindness, that helped her most.

Bess Reitz, daughter of President Reitz

One of the people whom Olive most appreciated and loved was Bess Reitz, the daughter of ex-President Reitz. She went to Holland and qualified as a doctor— a fine and charming woman. I remember someone remarking in Olive's presence what a pity Bess did not marry and Olive's reply: 'No one in this country is good enough for "My Bess" to marry.' Her mother was the President's second wife who married him when he was already a widower with many sons, I think seven of them.

As he was the President of the Free State at the time, the reception was at his official home. When they returned from the church, what was the President's horror to find his young sons had nearly demolished the wedding cake! He, of course, was very angry with them but kind Mrs. Reitz befriended her stepsons and won their devotion. Bess was her only daughter, but her mother also had a few more sons who all [brothers and half-brothers] lived harmoniously and happily together until they took their places in the world.

The Sauers

Bess later in life married Judge van Zyl. His first wife, Dorothy Sauer, we had all known, as had Bess. And Mary Sauer was one of Olive's intimate friends. Her husband was in the Cabinet, and a close friend and colleague of John X. Merriman. Mary was a very charming woman and unusually broadminded. After her husband's death she and her sister, Connie Cloete, lived on their beautiful farm, both of them ardent and successful gardeners. The only son Paul, now the Minister of …,[19] and the daughter Magda came home for holidays. The farm was eventually sold. Then after Mary Sauer's death the house in Claremont [was sold too]. But now all that life has passed and Connie Cloete (who never married) lives alone, an invalid, in her attractive cottage with her beloved garden and shaded trees at Constantia. Paul Sauer is married and busy with politics. And his sister Magda embarked on an architect's career in which she has been successful and proved her good taste. She has one daughter, but divorced her husband and has taken back her own name Sauer.

'Onze Jan' Hofmeyr

Perhaps the greatest power in the political sphere at the Cape in those early days was 'Onze Jan' Hofmeyr. He had the reputation of being the power behind the scenes, but he never took office. He was a very able man. By the time I first came out [to the Cape], his first wife had died and he wanted to marry his deceased wife's sister. This was illegal. So he brought in a bill and changed the law. But he neglected to make the law act both ways so, although it was legal to marry the deceased wife's sister, one could not marry one's deceased husband's brother. That remained to be altered later by Percy Molteno's only daughter. Margaret had married her first cousin, Caroline Murray's son George. He was early killed in the First World War and Margaret became a widow.[20] She later wished to marry George's brother, Lenox, who was farming at the Cape. So she came out from England and got her cousin, Murray Bisset (later Chief Justice of Rhodesia and acting Governor for a time), to bring in a bill, and with the help of influential members of the South African Parliament whom she and the family knew, the bill was passed.

'Onze Jan's' wife (I only knew his second wife) was a gently quiet woman, but they were very happy together and I think admirably suited. He had built a house in Cape Town with a turret to which he

[19] Paul Sauer moved away from his father's politics and became a prominent member of the Nationalist Party which embodied Afrikaner nationalism and, once in power after 1948, institutionalized apartheid. Sauer was a Cabinet Minister under Prime Minister Verwoerd in the late 1950s.

[20] The tragic story of how George Murray died on the Western Front within weeks of his marriage to Margaret Molteno will be told elsewhere on this website.

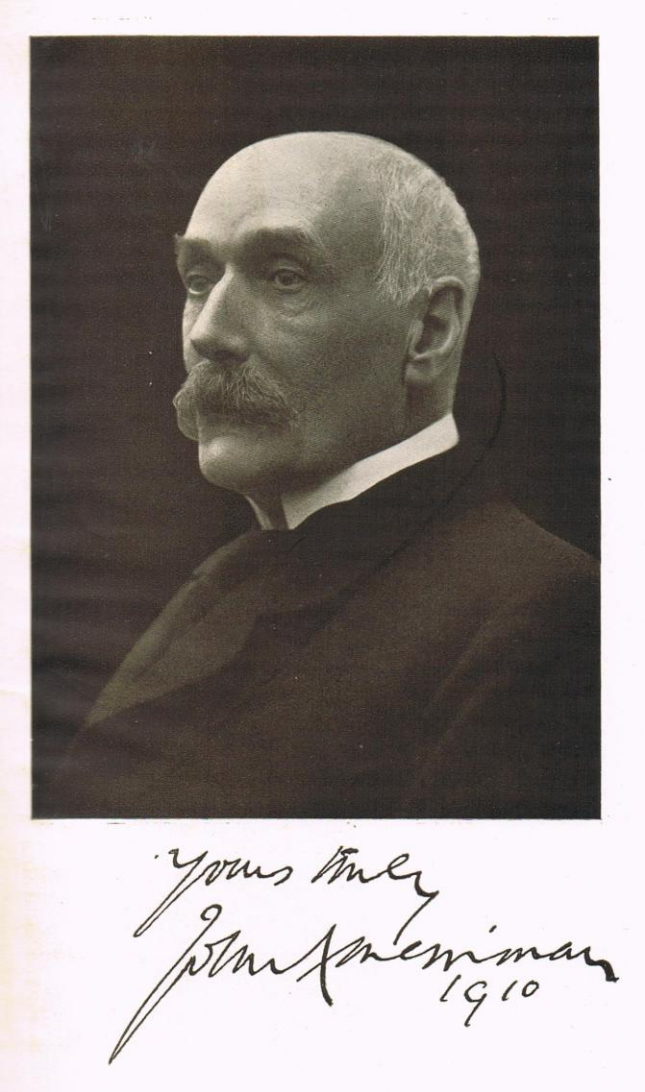
retired to escape the noise of the wind, which he disliked. They had luncheons and he used to ask friends to 'come and discuss things over a bowl of soup'. He had a great admiration for my husband, Charlie, and quite often he and his wife came to see us. I knew very little about politics in those early days and I was flattered that he talked politics to me as an equal and not down to my level. I had always considered myself rather the ugly duckling of the family, both in looks and brains, so I was especially flattered when [my sister in law] Caroline told me he had praised me as 'his ideal of beauty'. On second thoughts I realized he meant the quiet non-flashy type and also that he wished to please my husband! I think he realized that, with my husband, principle always came first, and he could really trust him amid the uncertainty of much political life. He also recognized my husband's gift for public speaking. Mr. Merriman once told me that my husband had a more natural gift for speaking than he himself who had to cultivate and train himself to speak. My husband also had a beautiful voice with rich full vibrant tones. He often read aloud to me in the evenings, and read beautifully.[21] Unfortunately he inherited his mother's lack of ear for music.

'Onze Jan' Hofmeyr suffered a stroke some years later which resulted in his face twitching. He sadly said one day that his speaking days were over, a successful speech must be extempore and he could no longer do that. But he still held on to his political power and told me, 'There is life in the old dog yet'. Mrs. Hofmeyr once said to me, 'We have a queer little nephew. He sits on the floor and we think that he cannot understand what we are saying but we find he has taken it all in.' In later years the younger Hofmeyr became famous as a speaker of eloquence. He had a phenomenal career in academic achievement, passing exams at an extraordinarily early age. As a Minister he held several cabinet portfolios at the same time and literally worked himself to death. He never married. His mother kept house for him and tried unsuccessfully to keep him from working so hard – a case of the willing horse and, I imagine, the urge of a brilliant and active brain. Besides his political work he was in great demand at public meetings as he was an eloquent speaker.

My husband on one occasion during election time went up to help a candidate at Port Elizabeth and I was told made a great impression by his speech. There had never been such a crowded and enthusiastic meeting in the town before and his speech had carried the day. Sometime later an economic conference was held at Bloemfontein, I think, and he was elected a delegate. It was his vote that carried the issue of 'preferential tariff' – on which opinion was divided and which personally I thought it a mistake. As he was responsible for its passing, he conscientiously paid the extra customs duty on my clothes which he liked me to get from America and sometimes Paris.

[21] Several Molteno men had fine voices and loved to read aloud. Charlie's brother, James, and their father, John Charles Molteno, were also reputed to be fine public speakers, as was my father, Donald Molteno, in the next generation.

John X. Merriman



Mr. Merriman was a delightful person.[22] He read enormously and his speeches were eloquent with many apt quotations. His wife was very charming in mind, manner and beauty. She was much younger than he. But as a young girl was too attracted to him that, as she told me, her elder sister threatened to fine her if she mentioned his name again. They were a most devoted and happy couple. They had no children and I always thought that his reputed dislike of children was put on for his wife's sake. They came to us for a long visit during the Boer War and she was always anxious if he were long away. He was very outspoken in his convictions and she always feared some harm might come to him. He received repeated and urgent letters from the Commandant, by the name of Potts, to return to his farm at Stellenbosch. But Merriman felt that, if he returned, some excuse would be made to banish him to his farm and he did not want to risk restrictions on his movements.

They were both delightful guests. My husband had warned me that Mr. Merriman didn't like children and that I must not let Lucy, our two or three year old girl, bother him. So what was my surprise when I found him in the drawing room making fast friends with her on his knee.

He was devoted to his wife….

An imperious, rather stern man he made enemies for he always spoke out his ideas and criticisms. But as Mr. …, the head of the Forestry Department, said, Merriman was sometimes rude but when he came and put his hand on your shoulder and spoke kindly to you in his beautiful voice, you forgave his rudeness. He and his wife both expected that as the Prime Minister of the Cape, the Senior Responsible Government, he would be the first Prime Minister of the Union. But rumour has it that the King influenced the decision and personally urged that Botha should be the first.

[22] One of the leading Cape liberal politicians. As a young man he had served in John Charles Molteno's Cabinet in the 1870s. Like James, Charlie and Percy Molteno, and their sisters Betty and Caroline, Merriman also opposed the Boer War. He became Prime Minister of the Cape only after the end of the War.

They were both very happy living on their beautiful farm. Once as a young surveyor Merriman, riding past this particular farm, said that this was where he would like to live. Later the farm came into the market and Merriman realized his dream. It was on this farm that many years later the great tragedy of his life occurred. He was in his study one day and Mrs. Merriman was resting in the big cool lounge. He came in for something and to his horror found his wife had quietly died in her sleep – her heart I think.

They at one time had travelled in the East and had bought some Persian rugs. I well remember the harmonious and lovely effect, draped on the backs of sofas and on the floor. They gave the room an Eastern glamour.

They had a capable young manager for their farm and so did not have the drudgery which farming often means. He was like their own son, they said, and in Mr. Merriman's will he left the farm to him. But extraordinarily for such a clever man, he neglected to sign each page of his will and so the farm passed to the next of kin.

I have said that they were delightful guests but perhaps did not emphasize the pleasure of Mr. Merriman's conversation. He was the only person I have known who was interesting and entertaining at the breakfast table – not the French dejeuner but the ordinary 8 or 8.30 meal. On his farm he was an early riser and used to work before breakfast in his sweet pea bed.

Mr. Merriman – or John as he was known – was old-fashioned in many of his views and strongly anti-suffragette. I was strongly an advocate(?) of women's rights of every kind and we had many arguments, but always in a bantering unheated manner as I realized that both his and also my husband's opposition to women's suffrage was really caused by their chivalrous feeling that women were above the turmoil and strife of life and held a unique and honoured role which they did not wish to see besmirched by the dust of political life. As someone said to Lucy, so she told me, they could not understand that her father, who worshipped his own wife, was an anti-suffragette. But to me it seemed quite clear – as he once said to me, he was glad that I did not have much knowledge of finance and that that was [at least] one subject which he knew more of than I did. In the case of many anti-suffragette men, they craved to have something to give their wives and that this care and work and responsibility was something of theirs to give in peace time – as was their right to protect them in war and peace.

John Merriman never recovered from his wife's death. She always reminded one of a lovely flower, so perfect in sweetness and kindness with never a rough thought or act. She was the meaning of his life and yet he so autocratic in his ways with Mary.

Suburban gardens and children's clothes

I have often wondered whether other children react so strongly to colour as I did. One of my strongest dislikes was to see a suburban garden well trimmed and kept with paths. It brought to my imagination the many hours of dreary labour it entailed, and especially with a stereotyped hard (?) brick house and set in contrast red geraniums against the brick. The ... gave me a feeling of dreary unharmony and irritation, whereas the golden sunlight of late afternoon shining through green grass and trees filled my imagination with a joyous elation and seemed to light the whole world. In later life I realized something of the bravery and self-sacrifice of dull working lives, but the elation of the afternoon golden sunlight through living green has never failed to lift my heart.

My husband and I both believed in dressing our children simply. I only realized how desirable dainty clothes may seem to a child – especially for a party – when Lucy remarked, 'if you are so fond of brown Holland, I will dress you in brown Holland when you are an old lady'.

During my first visit to England[23] after my marriage, I travelled on the Continent with my [American] family and my year old baby, Lucy. My mother and sisters had joined me and we all visited my brother in Brittany where he had taken a house at Dinan for the summer, a charming old French house with a delightful garden. I especially remember the fresh strawberries for breakfast and the English gooseberries – the first I had tasted. From there we went to Switzerland where we had a chalet. Then my sister Nan and I had a wonderful visit together to Munich for the opera, and finally my husband joined us all in Paris. And he, the baby, the baby's Scotch nurse and I sailed back to the Cape. While in London I met the Webbs – Beatrice Webb had known several of the Molteno family – and her conversation was stimulating .

[The journal ends here.]

Charlie and Lucy Molteno's five children – Carol, Virginia, John, Peter and Lucy, c. 1912

[23] In 1900.