

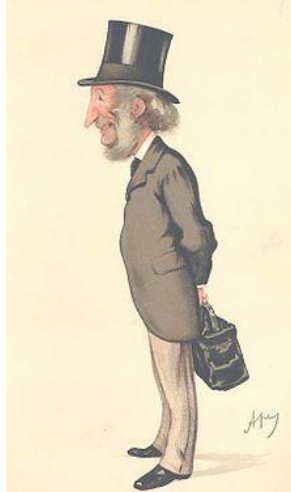
## Sir Donald Currie's Tour of South Africa, 1887-88

### Diary of Maria Wisely, his daughter

#### Introduction

#### Sir Donald Currie and Sir John Charles Molteno

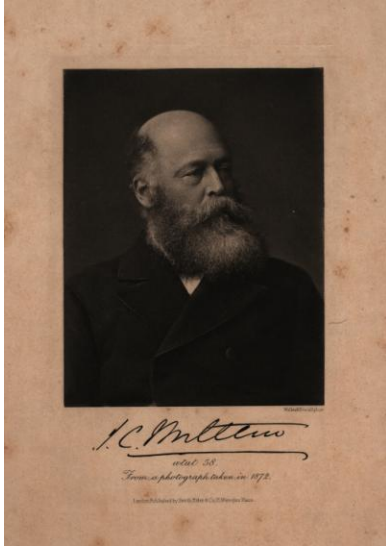
The link between the Currie and Molteno families is the result of the marriage in 1889 between Bessie, a younger daughter of Sir Donald Currie, a famous Victorian shipowner, and Percy, a son of Sir John Charles Molteno, first Prime Minister of the Cape Colony (1872-78). But this marriage would never have taken place, had not Sir Donald and Sir John established a relationship nearly two decades earlier. The connection between the two men had its origins in John Molteno's determination to kickstart a more regular and faster steamship service between the Cape and England in order to stimulate the Colony's economic development. And on the other side, Donald Currie was determined to become the dominant force in providing this service, given the economic boom which had started in the Cape in the wake of the discovery of diamonds in 1869.



Both men had had modest beginnings. Donald Currie had started out in Liverpool as a clerk with the Cunard Line in 1842. And John Molteno, eleven years older than Donald, had emigrated from London to the Cape in 1831, prompted by the sudden impoverishment of his family owing to the death of his father at a young age. Both were self-made men – John becoming a largescale and prosperous sheep farmer, and Donald one of the leading and very wealthy shipowners of Britain. Both also had liberal political inclinations. Donald Currie, not being a member of the Scottish or English upper classes, became a Liberal and was elected to Parliament as a member of Gladstone's party in 1880. John Molteno's liberalism led to his involvement in the long struggle for full self-government for the Cape Colony from his first election to the legislature as early as 1854. Both men's contributions were only recognised by the British Government when they were in their 60s – Donald in 1881 and John the following year. Even then, neither man was given a hereditary knighthood.

**Sir Donald Currie, drawing of,  
*Vanity Fair*, 21 June 1884**

The year 1871 marked the beginning of their friendship. In August John paid one of his infrequent visits to England. Donald had just been invited to start his Castle Line service to the Cape in competition with the Union Line. John, with his eldest son Charlie, travelled up to Scotland to stay with Donald at his new home at Cluny. So began their relationship. It was consolidated five years later in 1876 when John Molteno's government awarded Donald Currie's Castle Mail Packet Company a joint contract with the Union Line to operate the mail services. From then on, Donald



**John Charles Molteno,  
1872**

Currie welcomed into his home John Molteno's sons when they came over to England. In October 1881, for example, Percy, having just arrived to go up to Trinity College, Cambridge, visited the Currie family. And as we read in this Diary, six years later Percy and Frank Molteno, and their sisters Maria Anderson and Caroline Murray, reciprocated and made Sir Donald and his daughters, Maria and Bessie, welcome during their visit to South Africa in 1887.

### **Percy Molteno and his wife Bessie Currie's Scottish descendants**

Percy and Bessie's marriage is how the Scottish branch of Moltenos comes about. Bessie, of course, was herself Scottish (on both her father and her mother's sides). Her and Percy's son, Jervis Molteno, married Islay Bisset who, although born in Cape Town, was herself the granddaughter of a Scottish emigrant to the Cape, James Bisset (and her mother, Henrietta Tait, was also Scottish). Jervis inherited the Glen Lyon estate from his grandfather, Sir Donald Currie. And he and Islay made their home there throughout their lives (Jervis died in 1970 and Isla only in 1996). They had only one son, Ian Molteno, who was killed tragically in a tank engagement in the last weeks of the Second World War. Jervis and Islay also had five daughters. And it is through them that the Wintons, Riddells, Rackhams, Lorimers, Blaikies and Lewenhaupts have their Molteno ancestors and Scottish roots.

### **Maria's Diary**

Turning to Maria Wisely's diary of her father's trip round South Africa in 1887-88, it only turned up when her grandson, Findlay Ferguson, chanced upon it in Scotland over 60 years after her death. He donated it in 1988 to the Museum in Knysna (which Sir Donald's party had reached by the time the Diary comes to an end). It was presumably the Museum that got G.W. McDonald the following year to write the Foreword, Postscript and Endnotes which you will see below.

### **Travelogue**

The Diary makes interesting reading on several counts. First, as a travelogue. Sir Donald and his daughters, Maria and Bessie, spent two and a half months travelling round South Africa. For a man of 62, this 2,500 mile journey was quite a marathon. The first part was by rail, thanks to John Molteno's initiative in starting long distance railway construction. As a result, the Curries were able to travel the first 650 miles from Cape Town to Kimberley by rail – and in only a day and a half. But from then on, the little party had to travel entirely by cart and wagon. In the course of this, they

visited Bloemfontein, capital of the Boer Republic of the Orange Free State; then went several hundred miles north to Pretoria, the South African Republic's capital. There they visited the tiny settlement of Johannesburg which was just beginning to mushroom on the veld around the first goldmines. And then they trekked on down into Natal where they picked up a train at Ladysmith, about 150 miles from the coastal city of Durban. After a few days stay, the party then made its way back to Cape Town largely by sea, but with a big detour on land in the Eastern Cape in order to visit the famous Scottish Mission of Lovedale, and Grahamstown and Kingwilliams Town. As one reads Maria's Diary, one gets quite a graphic sense of the hugely diverse terrain they travelled through – a diversity which is one of the glories of South African scenery. And a sense, too, of an environment where Nature has not yet been trampled on by modern economic and technological forces, and a population today some ten times bigger than it was then.

### **A Strange Silence?**

There is another, less satisfactory (to my way of thinking), feature of Maria's account. Here she is meeting a succession of prominent South African figures – Colonial Governors, Prime Ministers (past and present), President Brand of the Orange Free State and President Paul Kruger of the South African Republic, prominent businessmen (including Cecil Rhodes), even an astronomer and botanist or two! But we learn nothing of their concerns and views. Maria asks no questions about the issues confronting the countries she travels through. She exhibits no knowledge of or curiosity about commercial questions. All this despite her father plunging himself into one high-level meeting after another with the leading men of South Africa.

One might conclude that she just is not interested. Or that her father never talked politics or commerce with his grown up daughters – both young women already in their thirties by this time. And both conclusions may well be right. At the same time, these gaping lacunae in the Diary reveal inadvertently, I suggest, something significant about late Victorian England. Women, even privileged women, were almost totally excluded from the political and commercial life of the nation. They simply were not participants. More than that, most of them were brought up not to want to be. Today, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we Westerners are disturbed by the gender segregation, legal subordination and exclusion of women from the public realm in many Muslim countries. But only a century ago a not dissimilar marginalization existed in Europe too.

Of course, it was not always the case. From what we know of John Molteno's family life, he loved to talk politics and intellectual ideas with his sons. And clearly his daughters were not excluded from this. Indeed Caroline and Betty Molteno grew up every bit as politically aware and involved as their brothers, Charlie, Percy and James – even if they could not vote, let alone hold political office!

### **Businessmen and Politicians – an old story**

Despite this gap, Maria's Diary does show us something that feels very modern about the interface between business and politics. Sir Donald has the red carpet rolled out for him everywhere. President Brand sends his personal carriage some way out of Bloemfontein to bring him in. The Governor of Natal sends his personal railway carriage from Durban for the same purpose. President Kruger holds a dinner to welcome Sir Donald. And so the list rolls on. Not so very different, one might think, from the way politicians fawn on big business in our own times!

For Sir Donald's part, he clearly felt a real involvement in South Africa. Although this is not the place to tell the story, he did play a constructive role in trying to repair relations between the British and Boer governments. He made some generous donations – including the Currie Cup, which is a sporting fixture that continues to this day. And while obviously driving a hard bargain with

successive Cape governments and making a great deal of money, he also made big investments to increase the frequency, speed and quality of the Britain-South Africa freight and passenger shipping service. The timing of his trip in 1887-88 was prompted no doubt by the discovery of gold on the Rand in the previous year. But he also spent much time inspecting his shipping operation on the ground, and meeting with his managers and captains.

### **The Invisibles**

One other thing struck me as I read this Diary. The whole trip was made possible by the labour of servants. Maria and Bessie took their personal maid, Sutherland, with them. There were their wagon and cart drivers, and other Black employees looking after the horses and mules. And presumably one or two people to pack and unpack each day, make the meals en route, clean up and so on. The late Victorian era was the age of the domestic servant *par excellence*. More people were employed in that occupation than any other. And, like countless other upper and middle class Britons, people in these roles were near invisible in Maria's mind. Sutherland, 'a very nice creature', is mentioned occasionally, and by name. A couple of South African servants are also referred to by name, but only their given names – for example, Stewart, Mary Cowper's Kroomen manservant from West Africa. But the men (some six of them) the Currie party travel with for so many weeks, and who look after the wagons and carts, are just 'Kaffirs' (with Mary slipping into the White South African jargon of the time) – this absence of individual names being the particular colonial gloss on the servant culture. And there is an equally significant counterpart to there being so many servants. Maria and Bessie, let alone their father, never have to prepare a meal, wash a dish, or do any of the countless little daily jobs almost everyone in our own times has to do. For affluent British women growing up a century and a half ago, ordinary life was truncated in two different directions – engagement in the business of earning a living and taking an interest in the world, as well as many of the humdrum activities of daily life. It is in these respects that Maria's Diary reveals how fundamentally our world has changed since her day.

**Robert Molteno**

**April 2013**

**Postscript:** Both Maria and G.W. McDonald make some mistakes, both of spelling and occasionally factual. I have corrected these. And where useful, have added to the Endnotes. My additions are differentiated by being in bold.

### **Foreword by G. W. McDonald**

A little more than a century ago, Sir Donald Currie K.C.M.G., M.P., the British shipping magnate whose company Donald Currie and Co. of London owned the Castle Line of steamships, arrived at Cape Town from his home country, Scotland, on a first visit to South Africa and for a planned tour of the country in order to meet as many as possible of its leading figures in commerce and government. He came with the reputation of having succoured South Africa in a time of economic distress and, in appreciation of his public spiritedness, he was to enjoy red carpet treatment throughout his travels and to be the honoured guest of State Presidents and Governors of the country's colonies and republics.

On the day of his arrival aboard the Castle line CRMS *Norham Castle* – 5 November 1887 – he was the guest of honour at a public dinner attended by 150 of Cape Town's leading townspeople, an event which earned much press publicity and leading articles in both of the two local newspapers. In paying tribute to Sir Donald, the newspaper editors stated, inter-alia:

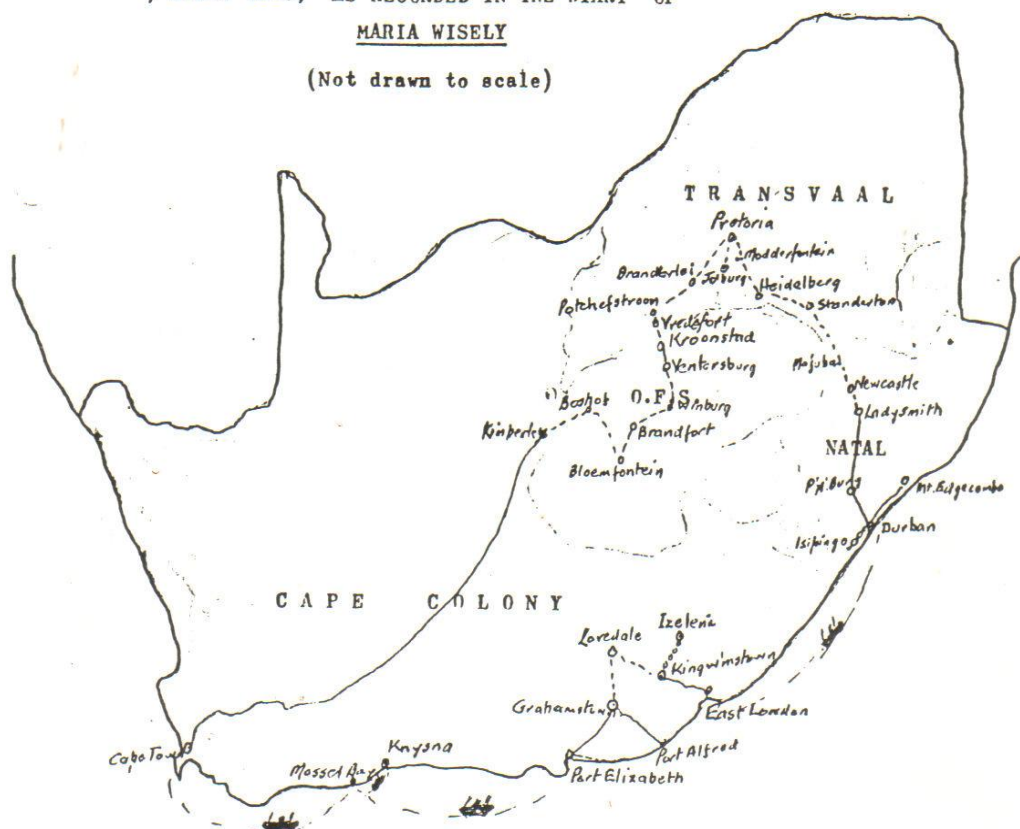
"We welcome him as a proved friend of South Africa who in foul weather as well as in fair weather has stood by us; and when the deepest gloom was upon us came forward with his helping at. Colonists are glad to see one whose name has been a household word amongst them, and if so Donald carries away with him any more substantial souvenir than the mere welcome of the returning prosperity of the country, we shall rejoice the more." (*Cape Times*).

"If anyone deserves to rise with the tide of envisaged prosperity, it is the public-spirited man to whom we now delight to do honour, and who attached himself only to our fortunes when the prospect was much more circumscribed than it happily is today." (*Cape Argus*).

Sir Donald Currie was the driving force in the merger, in 1900, of the two famous shipping lines serving South Africa – the Union and the Castle – to form the well-known Union Castle Mail Steamship Co. Ltd., whose magnificent vessels played so great a part in the country's maritime history. To the modern generation, however, Sir Donald is perhaps best remembered through his gifts of the coveted Currie Cup trophies to South African cricket and rugby.

On his visit Sir Donald was accompanied by his daughters Maria (married to Captain G. A. C. Wisely, R.E.) and Bessie. In a small notebook recently found in Scotland, Maria kept a day by day record of their travels. This diary ... is here reproduced.

(Not drawn to scale)



Railway.....                       
Horse-drawn wagon or coach.. - - - - -  
Horseback.....                       
Castle Line ship.....

## Diary of Maria Wisely

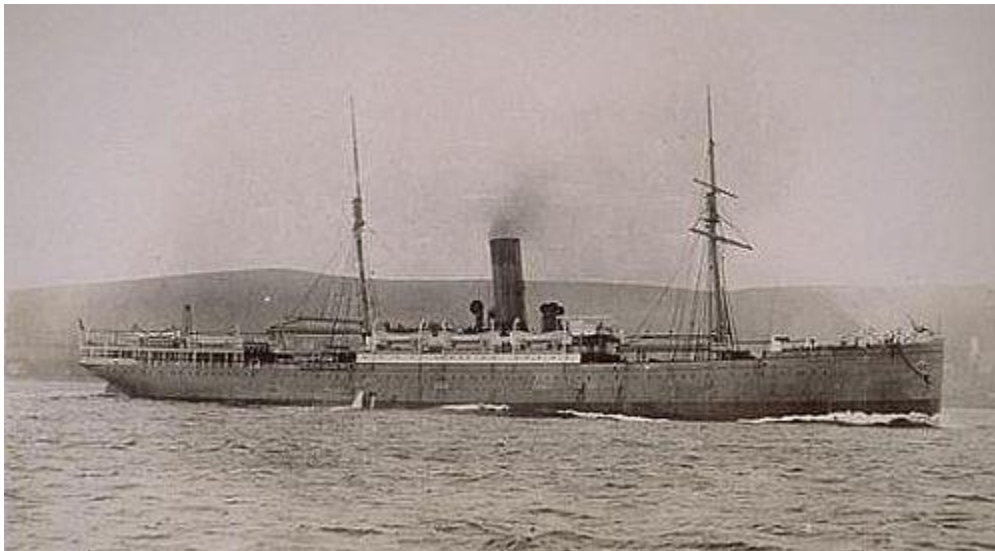
**South Africa: 4 November 1887 – 15 January 1888**

### **Thursday, 3 November 1887      Last night on board**

(At sea aboard C.R.M.S. *Norham Castle*). We rolled a good deal today and Captain Harrison said we could only get into Table Bay about 6.00 a.m. if it continued all night. Today was a fine day but cold and windy south-east. Our last afternoon tea was very jolly. I had eight gentlemen to it and three ladies, and we kept up our spirits very well!

It was too windy to play quoits<sup>1</sup> on the upper deck, so Ms Hainsworth, myself and Mr Norman had to give that fun up, much to our grief. It rolled too much for the dancing. It was a lively dinner and everyone was most jolly. Speeches were made and toasts drunk in Papa's honour as well as in ours and the others.

After dinner I sat up on deck talking to Mr Norman and Maurice Greite, and when the latter went to bed I went on chatting to Mr Norman until 11 o'clock. The stars and moonlight were glorious. Lots of the people walked about on deck it was such a lovely night. I did the same and Mr Norman smoked like a chimney! He is a nice gentlemanly young fellow, and he and I are great friends now. (Had a Philippine<sup>2</sup> with Mr Nitch) The cargo and luggage were got out during dinnertime and covered by the tarpaulin. A rat was found under the cover of the donkey engine.



**SS Norham Castle, passenger cargo vessel – just over 4,000 tons -- built in 1883 for D. Currie & Co.**

### **Friday, 4 November 1887      Our first day in Cape Town**

Last night was much nicer and quieter. We reached Table Bay about 6 a.m. and got into the docks about 8. Had our last meal at 8 on board and were quite jolly over it! We all got to see the Bay. Cape Town, Table Mountain and all the other hills looked lovely in the early morning light. The ships were gaily dressed with their bunting in our honour, especially the *Melrose* and *Venice*.<sup>3</sup>



After a little while all the passengers landed and went their various ways. But Papa, Bessie, myself and Mr Smith<sup>4</sup> went on shore first. Mr Andrews<sup>5</sup> and Mr Vintcent<sup>6</sup> met us. Mr Smith had a carriage for us at the docks, so in we jumped and were taken to the office in Cape Town. Percy Molteno<sup>7</sup> met us there.

I was quite sorry to say goodbye to Ms Hainsworth; Mr Norman and the Greites etc. We had such a jolly time on board, and I tried to make myself agreeable. What a queer world this is! Ahem!

Some of the passengers came to the same hotel – Coghills,<sup>8</sup> Wynberg – as we stayed at. We got to Wynberg before lunch. Mr Cowper gave us lunch at his house. Papa went into town and Bessie and I walked back to the hotel. Mr Norman was there, so I asked him to have tea with us and go for a drive with Bessie, Mr Molteno and myself in the Cape Cart. It's covered and on two wheels and the Malay drivers drive so fast and recklessly.



Cogill's Hotel, Main Road, Wynberg.  
A photograph taken in the 1870's.

Wynberg is only about half an hour's ride by train from Cape Town and is such a pretty place. The flowers were lovely all along the line and the roses looked beautiful. The hedges in some places were roses – little small pink Banksia ones and a large sort of pink monthly ones. The white arum lilies or pig lilies are splendid, and the fields and woods are one mass of them; only they are nearly over now. I never saw such an abundance of those beautiful flowers. The bottlebrush tree, and flower just like a crimson bottlebrush, is a beautiful thing. I'm quite mad at all these lovely flowers and bushes etc we can see.

At a 3.45 we four had tea and then at 4 went off in the cart through the woods along Newlands Avenue to Claremont, Rondebosch etc, then back to the hotel in time for Mr Norman to catch his train back to

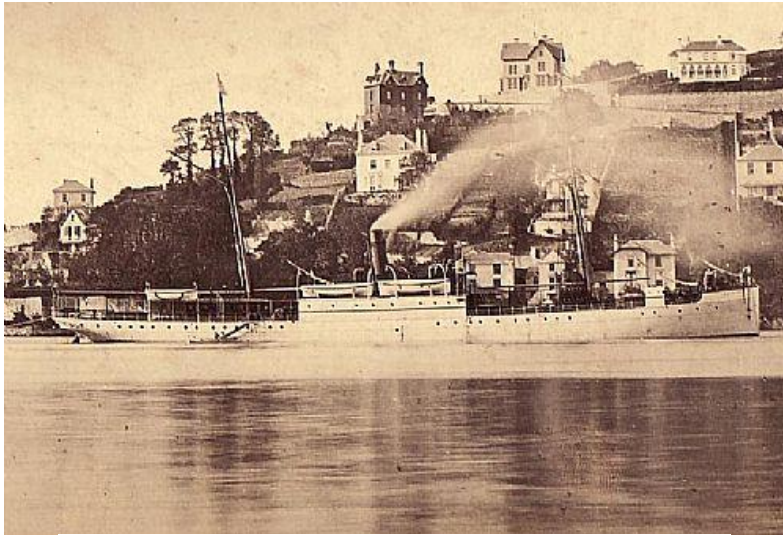


the ship. The Avenue is lined with such fine oaks. We had a most lovely drive and had great fun. Bessie and I walked to Mary Cowper's to have a quiet dinner with her, as Papa was dining out at a grand dinner given by the Chamber of Commerce. "Stewart", Mary's Kroomen<sup>9</sup> manservant, saw us home to the hotel with a lantern. It is not safe to walk about alone in the evenings and even in broad daylight. Papa made a speech at the dinner.

### **Saturday, 5 November 1887                      A busy time**

(I had won my "Philippine" from Mr Nitch yesterday morning as we were entering the docks. He was taken unawares!) We had early breakfast this morning, then Papa and I went into town. I wished to get the holland skirts and call also on the Bennets. Mr Cowper took me to the shop and up the hill in a hansom to the Bennets' house. I don't like Cape Town, it is so hot. Mr Williams – Sir Gordon Sprigg's<sup>10</sup> Private Secretary – gave me such delicious strawberries at Mr Cowper's office. After that Mr Cowper and I drove down to the docks to meet Papa on board the *Melrose*, but we got there first and I had a nice chat with Miss Hainsworth and Mr Norman.

The former was charmed with her bouquet of roses and Mr Norman seemed delighted with the buttonhole I presented to him. They both seemed glad to see me. The *Melrose* was just starting for Durban. Papa soon came and we said our goodbyes, au revairs etc, and the little boat steamed away so gracefully.



**SS Melrose, passenger cargo vessel, built for D. Currie & Co. in 1877. Only 839 tons.**

We went on board the *Norham* to see her leave and wave to the travellers until they quite disappeared from view. I felt quite sorry to see them leave Cape Town. After being a few minutes on board the *Norham* (I had a nice wee chat with Jane), Papa and we all drove to the office where he had lots to do, poor dear.

I wrote one or two notes and did some copying for Mr Smith, and then Papa and I etc went back by train to Wynberg. We were all very hungry and were glad to get something to eat, late as it was. We had coffee and cold tongue and it was most

refreshing. After that callers came pouring in until 6.30 nearly and we could not get our drive, so Papa, Mr Smith and Mr Maclean,<sup>11</sup> Mr Andrews and myself went off for a few minutes' walk before dinner and then went early to bed. A hot day, but very pleasant.

### **Sunday, 6 November 1887                      A Prime Minister and the Governor in one day!**

We missed the train for church and had to gallop in the Cape cart to Cape Town as fast as possible. Our driver was dark with a fez and he drove the ponies well. As we got near the Scotch Church<sup>12</sup> we met the Cape Volunteers marching to church, and the bagpipes were playing as well as the band. The men looked very well in their kilts. The sermon was a fair one. When we got out of church Mr Maclean told us the Volunteers had marched to the station to meet us and be a guard of honour to the church; but of

course we had missed all that honour and grandeur which was a great pity. It could not be helped however. But it was nice of the people wishing to receive Papa like that.

We went by train with Sir Gordon Sprigg and Lady and Miss Sprigg to their house at Rondebosch for dinner; remained there until 4 and then drove to The Grange,<sup>13</sup> the Governor's summer residence where we had tea and remained a little while wandering about the delightful garden. Sir Hercules and Lady Robinson<sup>14</sup> were very kind to us. His A.D.C., Captain Dawkins, is married to his daughter. She seems a nice young creature, but I don't care for the husband. He is such a 'la-di-da' young man.

Lady Robinson is very fond of animals and has five Madagascar cats (with ringed black-and-white tails), a Bechuana monkey-blue kind, and three others and two kinds of crane – Jack and Abraham. They were most amusing – one had a queer tuft on its head.

After Papa had talked to the Governor and we had seen The Glen,<sup>15</sup> a place where splendid blue hydrangeas are growing, we drove home to the hotel by Newlands Avenue. The blue hydrangeas were in masses but not out yet. Mary and Mr Cowper came in to high tea with us.

### **Monday, 7 November 1887**

### **Meeting the Moltenos at Claremont House**

A lovely morning. Papa went early into town but Bessie and I went by the 11.25 train and lunched at the Castle with Colonel and Mrs Moorsom. Colonel Curtis and the two Miss Walters were there also. It was awfully hot in town. Oh dear! Bessie and I tore down to the station from the Castle in about five minutes and just caught the train for Claremont, only we had to get our tickets when we got out. Percy Molteno went with us to his sister, Mrs Anderson,<sup>16</sup> where we had tea and splendid cream and strawberries. The season for the latter is only just beginning now. Papa, the two Miss Walters, Bess and myself went for a drive through the woods home from Claremont. We all first went with the Moltenos to their house at



**Claremont House, the Molteno family home in Cape Town**

Claremont<sup>17</sup> and saw over the garden. We saw the cinnamon tree, the gardenia tree with its lovely white scented flowers and curious large grey-greenish fruit; the bottlebrush tree; double pomegranate which does not bear; banana tree, loquats; maize or mielies growing; lots of strawberries, custard apples; guavas etc. We drove home a lovely way and had dinner at seven. Afterwards Papa, Bess, Mr Molteno, and Mr Smith went over to Mary Cowper's. I stayed behind to write letters.

The red iron sand is horrid and ruins all one's clothes and boots. It is the colour which looks very well when the sun shines upon it in the evening. There is also the white sand which looks painfully glaring in the bright sun, but I don't feel my eyes sore here.

### **Tuesday, 8 November 1887      Riding on the Cape Flats**

A lovely day, and not oppressively hot. Bess and I went to town with Papa and after doing our shopping and going to say adieu to Jane on the *Hawarden Castle*, we returned to Wynberg in time for our lunch. Wrote letters until 4 o'clock and then Bess and I, Mr Walters and Mr Molteno went for a ride. The hotel horses were capital and so quiet, but delightful to ride.

We used our own saddles and bridles. We rode about 19 miles altogether, I should think. Over the Constantia Flats,<sup>18</sup> the veld and by a Constantia wine farm through nice narrow lanes. It was just lovely and we all rode along like mad all over across country. The heaths and wild flowers were glorious, but I did not get many.<sup>19</sup> We went so fast. Mr Walters and I rode behind the other two and had great fun. I only wished George<sup>20</sup> had been tearing along beside me. I don't think I have ever ridden in such a mad way before. The desert ride at Suez was something like it!

We got in just in time to dress for going out to Mrs Murray's<sup>21</sup> high tea. It was quite different to our Scotch 'high teas' at home. We had a very nice evening. Mr Abercrombie Smith, the botanist,<sup>22</sup> was there also; a very nice man – Scotch. We got home to the hotel at 11.

### **Wednesday, 9 November 1887      'A grand dinner party'**

We wrote letters. A wet morning, south-easterly with rain. The South East winds always bring rain here.<sup>23</sup> We both rested quietly until time for dressing to go to lunch at the Observatory with Mr and Mrs Gill.<sup>24</sup> Mr and Mrs Lindley also went. Papa and Mr Smith came there from town. Admiral Hunt-Grubbe<sup>25</sup> was there also. He seems a very nice jolly man with greyish hair.

After lunch some of us went over the Observatory. The heliometer is a beautiful instrument and the one Mr Gill has is the finest in the world. The lenses are all made by an American. The instrument is from Hamburg. We drove into town for Papa and then got back to the hotel in time to dress. We were to dine with the Vintcent's. It was a grand dinner party of 18. Sir Thomas and Lady Upington,<sup>26</sup> Sir Thomas and Lady Scanlen,<sup>27</sup> Captain and Mrs Dawkins, Mr and Mrs Fuller<sup>28</sup> etc.

### **Thursday, 10 November 1887      More VIPs**

We were late back last night, about 10.30. This is a lovely day. Percy Molteno came across on horseback to see if we could go for a ride with him but we had no time. I did packing all the morning at least. I put out the things for Sutherland<sup>29</sup> to do. She is a very nice creature. Bessie has had bouquets and baskets of flowers every day and sometimes twice a day.<sup>30</sup> I come in for them which is very jolly. Sir Thomas Scanlen took me in to dinner last night. It was a very nice party and good dinner and lots of fruit, such thick cream and fine strawberries.





**Bessie Currie, now Percy Molteno's wife,  
with their 3 children, 1896 (eight years  
after her travels around South Africa with  
her sister, Maria, and their father, Sir  
Donald Currie)**

We lunched with Sir Henry and Lady de Villiers.<sup>31</sup> Met Mr Henriksen, cousin of Mrs Greite<sup>32</sup>, Mr Baring-Gould and Mr Ross. We went all over the nice garden and they gave us cones of the silver tree. The female ones are the most beautiful. I got the male ones.

We drove to the Governor's, had tea and then got back in time to the hotel for dressing for going out to the Premier's dinner. One of Lady Robinson's monkeys, Dam, got loose and Bessie caught him. Mr Bodley (the 'Masber')<sup>33</sup> called at Lady Robinson's. He actually spoke to me! I was very gracious to him.

A lovely basket of flowers came from the Misses van der Byl<sup>34</sup> for Bess. Drove to Rondebosch to Lady Spriggs to dine there. Sir Thomas and Lady Upington, Col. and Mrs Schermbrucker,<sup>35</sup> and ourselves were there. Col. Schermbrucker took me in. He and I had a long chat about our different travels about the world. He seems a gay old man! We got back about 11.45.

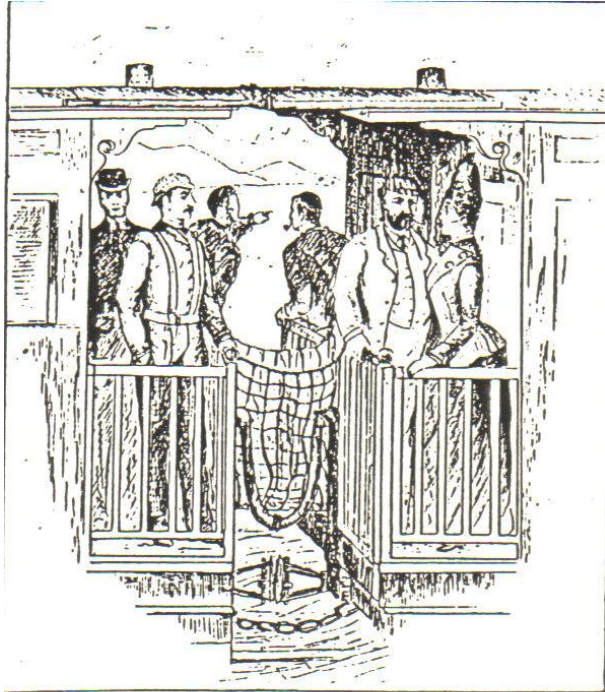
#### **Friday, 11 November 1887**

#### **By train to Kimberley**

A fine lovely day with a sweet breeze blowing, so that our journey would be nice. Mr Maclean is coming with us, Mr Smith of course also (there will be six of us in the party).<sup>36</sup> We left Wynberg at 10.25 and went to the office where we rested until time to go to the station for our 1.15 mail train to Kimberley.<sup>37</sup> All the Ministry were there to see us off and lots of our friends also. A crowd of people were also there to see such swells off! We felt quite royal!

The 'Howell' carriage is very comfortable. Each compartment has four berths and a table in each place. The dining saloon and kitchen are different to the American cars. We all five of us dined at Papa's table but ours we used for our own books, flowers, papers etc. A lovely basket of flowers was brought to us for the journey and it was most delightful. Lots of fruit was also sent to us, so we were well off.

I got my letters from home yesterday. A nice one from George; also two from Mother. I was glad to get them and to hear from Keith. We had lunch in the train and it was very comfortable indeed. Our conductor was from Glasgow. He was most attentive to us. The engineer was from Greenock and was the same man who had taken Papa in the train at the Greenock election.<sup>38</sup> A queer coincidence. At the end of the carriages you can sit or stand outside and see the scenery – such as it is! We sat down until time for coffee and it was funny drinking it outside the carriage. We passed fine mountains and pretty



THE PLATFORM OF THE MAIL TRAIN  
(CAPE GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS).

Dutch homesteads and farms and the country really looked very pretty and green. At 6 we had dinner and at 7.30 we four, except Bessie,<sup>39</sup> rode outside the engine in the very front of it. There was a sort of steel rail in front so we could not fall. Each engine has a cowcatcher. We stayed there for an hour I should think until we had gone up the valley.

It was funny to steam through the two tunnels which we passed through. I quite enjoyed my ride on the engine and it was delightful when we went down hill full speed and round those wonderful curves. When we went up hill we had to go very slowly. It was queer work going over the bridges over the *kloofs*, or deep gorges, and seeing the water below us. The wind was very bracing when we went fast. The chairs and a kaross were most acceptable the whole time. It was cold tearing through the night air. It was quite dark. After an hour's ride, we got off the engine and returned to our compartment. There we enjoyed our fruit and then turned in. We all slept very well considering.

### Saturday, 12 November 1887      The Karoo

We got up and found ourselves passing through the extraordinary Karoo plain or desert or flats. It is a queer place with very high mountains to right and left,<sup>40</sup> and all of them such queer shapes – knobbly, or flat like Table Mountain, or jagged and peaked. Part of the time during our journey they reminded me of the Cuillin Hills or Skye Hills. They were very fine with the evening's rosy light upon them.

The Karoo is covered with a sweet succulent bush like a Hottentot's head, and there were other bushes and plants and pretty wildflowers here and there. After rain the plain is one mass of wild flowers. I saw a snake but am not certain if it was dead or not, an ostrich near a farm striding through the veld, enormous herds of goats, merino sheep, cattle and some horses.

The day was lovely and not at all hot, and a nice breeze blowing. We slept, read and sat outside and admired the Karoo and enjoyed our trip very much. The stars were lovely and the Southern Cross was perfectly exquisite. There was a good deal of lightning all about.

After 9.30 we reached Kimberley where in the station we found a crowd of people awaiting the train's arrival. As we all went to the carriages, the people gave vent to a mild cheer. They stared at us as if we were wild beasts. It was quite amusing. Met Dr Clarke in the Queen's Hotel in Kimberley. After supper as we were going to our beds, news was brought me my trunk was missing and could be found nowhere.

Papa went to the police station and railway station about it and Mr Smith and Mr Maclean went all over the place about it. We did not sleep much and I got up at 7 next morning.

### **Sunday, 13 November 1887**

### **Sunday in Kimberley**

A glorious day and not too hot. Before breakfast we walked to peep over [into] the Kimberley mine.<sup>41</sup> Such a queer place it is and of an enormous extent and diameter. No news as yet of my trunk. Telegrams are being sent hither and thither about it.

At 11 o'clock we all went with Mr Newberry to the Presbyterian Church and enjoyed the service. The harmonium was a very powerful one and the choir sang so well. After service we walked back to the hotel. My trunk was brought back to me in a few minutes by the detective. It had been all the time at the station. I was very glad to see it! Mr Despard drove Bessie and myself out to his ranch bungalow at the water works six miles from Kimberley where we three and Sutherland were to stay until Wednesday. It is a dear little one-storey house of wood and iron roofing. All the windows and verandah are lined with wire netting to keep the mosquitoes etc out. The garden and trees are quite wonderful. Mr Despard is the head of the Kimberley Waterworks Company and seems so kind and jolly. He planted everything two years ago and they are thriving so well. It's so funny staying in a house where there is no lady at the head, but his housekeeper, an Irish woman, seems quite equal to her place.

Had our tea and then Mr Despard showed us the machinery, garden, stables etc. Our lunch today was truly sumptuous and we had a very merry lunch.

We met a train yesterday with some convicts and two warders with them. I saw hundreds and hundreds of anthills upon the plain of the Karoo. It was delightful being in comfortable beds instead of berths. The sunset was exquisite and the veld looked quite picturesque before and after the sun set.

### **Monday, 14 November 1887**

### **Cecil Rhodes gives Bessie and Maria each a diamond**

A lovely morning and a sweet little breeze blowing. We wrote all morning and then after our lunch at the bungalow, Bessie and I were driven by James, the Coloured man, in Mr Despard's nice Cape cart and four horses. They were very nice goers and we soon got over the six miles into Kimberley. It was horrid and dusty and the wind was so disagreeable. We went to see the 'wash up' at the De Beers mine and we were both allowed to look for diamonds. I found about six and Mr Cecil Rhodes presented us with one each. They were of a good size. He had left word that we were to get them. We got back to Mr Despard's in time for dinner. It was a fine dinner.

### **Tuesday, 14 November 1887**

### **A Quiet Day**

A lovely day – not too hot. We made some calls in the afternoon after seeing the wash up' at the Central Mine. Papa, Mr McDonald and Mr Despard drove to the Vaal River 12 miles from the waterworks to the main waterworks. They went in the Cape cart with four horses in one hour and five minutes, and came back in one hour and ten minutes. It's uphill coming back. They left about 7 and returned in time for breakfast with us at 10.15. They had gone in the steam launch up the Vaal River. We all went to lunch with Mr Curry who was so kind. Had cherries for dessert! A lovely sunset again. We dined, i.e. Bessie and myself alone, as the three gentlemen were dining at the Club. Mr Baring-Gould and Mr Cecil Rhodes gave the dinner. The three gentlemen stayed in town all night.





**Kimberley – the Big Hole before it filled with water  
(so more as Maria and Bessie Currie saw it)**

**Wednesday, 15 November 1887**

A lovely day and not too hot. We went into town before lunch in the Victoria with two nice grey horses and lunched with Mr Currie after seeing the blasting at Bultfontein Mine. Saw Du Toitspan Mine also. Papa went earlier to see the mines and he went down the Central. We went to see the flower show at the hospital after lunch and then returned in time for dinner with Mr McDonald. Papa and Mr Despard came out after us. New moon and it was so wonderful to see it so distinctly with the dark part light as well.

**Thursday 17 November 1887**

**Setting off for Bloemfontein; trouble with the horses**

A fine day. We all got up early and drove into Kimberley, but it was so horribly dusty there. We sat first in the hotel and then in the Waterworks office until Papa was ready to start off in the wagons for Bloemfontein.<sup>42</sup> We had three conveyances – one was a cart for the lunch and some luggage drawn by two mules. The other two were very nice. Bessie, Sutherland and I drove in the nice spring sort of American wagonette with capital springs and six horses, with a black man to drive the horses and Mr Poole to whip them. Papa, Mr Smith and Mr Maclean drove in the other covered wagon – six horses with two men – and the rest of the luggage and some food and wine.

We started from the Market Square and there was quite a small crowd of friends to see us off. We started rather late from Kimberley – about 12.30. Our carts looked capital. Papa gave us nice karosses. About 3 or 4 o'clock we got to a place called Frankfurt, where we 'outspanned' – i.e. the horses were taken out and unharnessed and they had good rolls in the sand, then forage and water given them while we had our lunch and tea. A tremendous thunderstorm came on with lightning and heavy rain.<sup>43</sup>

We at last got the horses in (oh! the Kaffirs are slow) and we all started off. But after our cart had gone up the hill a little, we found out the other wagon was not following. So we stopped and sent down one of our men to see what was the matter. It turned out their horses had got chilled and would not start. And they got stuck again up the hill, so two of our horses were taken out and harnessed to their wagon. Not a bit of it – the horses would not budge. A mule was tried; they changed horses; no, that did not do,

and we were all kept waiting on the veld for those bothersome horses. Bye and bye up came six bullock wagons on their way to Bloemfontein. Mr Poole asked the Boers to help us whip the horses on, and that lesson was satisfactory! But what was our horror when our horses [ie. those pulling Maria and Bess's wagonnette] refused to go on. A black man whipped them up and off we at last got, much to our relief. It delayed us, however, very much and we found the road dreadfully heavy for the poor horses. We got along very slowly and it was 11 o'clock before we reached our destination that night – Boshof.

The lightning all evening was tremendous and came so often and at times was so vivid as to light up our wagons. It was forked lightning, but fortunately was not near enough to do any damage. It was such a relief to hear the sound of dogs barking as we neared Boshof in the pitch dark. Mr Poole, Mr Smith and Mr Maclean had to walk all through the 'Slough of Despond' – the one to find out the road and the other two to help push the heavy wagon. It was too funny to see them tumbling and floundering through the mud. They did not find it funny however – the poor things. We lost Papa and his wagon in Boshof, so waited near the Dutch Reformed Church until one of our men asked the way to the hotel. It was shut up as they had given us up long before. But we found it at last and got in and had supper and then turned in. We had to stay at a private house and were so glad to be safe and sound!

### **Friday, 18 November 1887                      The Modderrivier**

A lovely morning, so we started from Boshof at 10 and intended to stop the night at the Modder River<sup>44</sup> with Mr Ottele. We had our lunch on the way at a funny Dutch farmer's house. He was German really and kept a store. One of the women had come out in the Union boat, *Athenian*.<sup>45</sup> It was so funny eating our lunch in their room. During our journey to Boshof we saw lots of springbok, cranes, a secretary bird and meerkats on the veld. The latter were brownish colour or grey and looked like our squirrels when they sat up, so old-fashioned, on the veld. I hear they can be tamed and kept to catch mice etc. We saw a tame little springbok at Mr Fullerton's – it is an elegant little creature with lovely large eyes. Mr Fullerton gave me some Kaffir bracelets.

We had a chat with a Basuto lad who was with his Boer master and oxen and wagons. He had two wives, but when we asked if he would like six, he laughed and said 'Oh, six would kill me!' T Papa gave him a piece of money which delighted him very much. We drove on until 6 o'clock when we reached Mr Ottele's farmhouse called River Villa at the Modder River (or Muddy River). It was a nice bungalow and they all gave us their own private rooms. The President<sup>46</sup> had asked him to be kind to us and so he was indeed, very. Mr Ottele is a farmer and has about 60,000 acres of land, cattle, 60 ostriches and young horses. He preserves the game as much as possible. Papa gave Miss Ottele a Scotch brooch.

We were taken for a row down the river before our dinner – it was very nice and sweet there to see the sun setting and then the new moon rise. We saw weaver birds' nests in the sedges, hawks, a kind of eagle, and heard guinea fowl, but did not see them. We saw wild ducks also. After dinner we all sat on the verandah and then Bess and I retired early. Papa and the gentlemen went out to shoot hares by lantern light, but they did not catch anything.

### **Saturday, 19 November 1887                      President Brand welcomes them to Bloemfontein**

A lovely sunny bright day. We all got up at 6.30, had some breakfast, and then started off in our wagons for Bloemfontein. But before that, Miss Ottele showed Bess and me the ostriches – dun and black and white. They are most treacherous animals. The female ostriches are grey and the male birds have black feathers.

It was a hot sultry day on the veld for Bess but I did not feel very wearied. We saw lots of springbok. At about 1 we got to a Dutch farm where the horses were outspanned and they had a roll in the sand. A bad rainstorm came on, so we shut up the wagon curtains and took our lunch cosily inside. The chocolates were much appreciated. We had great fun over the box of sweets with Mr Maclean.

It was very dusty until the rain came. At about 3.30 we were met by the President, Sir John Brand,<sup>47</sup> a dear old gentleman, his Secretary and Members of the Volksraad in their carriages – four or five of them



**President Jan Brand in old age (he died 8 months after Sir Donald Currie's visit)**

I think – who came to welcome us all to the Orange Free State. They met us a little way out from Bloemfontein. We made quite a procession going in to the town. We three were driven in the President's carriage to the house – the Presidency. We had tea on arrival. Lady Brand and her daughters (Mrs Gates, Kitty and Betty) welcomed us most heartily and we felt soon quite at home. Had dinner at 7. Slept very well. It rained a little during the night.

#### **Sunday, 20 November 1887**

#### **A quiet Sunday**

A sultry day. Looked as if it would rain and be thunder and lightning. We all went to the Wesleyan Church. Mr Scott preached very nicely. After dinner we rested. One or two callers came in and then we went out for a few minutes walk. Had supper before we went to the Cathedral English Church. Lightning during the service and lightning and heavy rain during the night.

#### **Monday, 21 November 1887**

#### **Being entertained**

A fine day but a little fresher and windy. Before lunch we went over the Town Hall, Government Offices and Museum. After lunch drove out to the Williams' farm – at Tempe – to see the orange and lemon groves. Had coffee and oranges and a delicious kind of fruit like a lemon and orange, a kind of citron. The oranges were goluptious. We got back to town after enjoying our drive and visit very much. I told Mr Maclean after dinner how much I had enjoyed the Museum and that he ought to have been there with us, quite forgetting he had been there all the time! I got teased by him for that. There was a dinner party at in the evening at Lady Brand's – very nice evening we had.

#### **Tuesday, 22 November 1887**

#### **Sir Donald receives an address of welcome**

A lovely day. Papa received the Deputation and Address of Welcome from the Bloemfontein inhabitants. We were all present. After that nearly all of us drove out in two 'spiders' to the Chatfield's farm at Quaggafontein.<sup>48</sup> Lunch was most sumptuous – Devonshire junket and sour cream, and also delicious oranges from Tempe. Had tea and coffee after lunch and wandered about. Had swings and saw over the farm and then drove back to town. Had a quiet evening.

#### **Wednesday, 23 November 1887**

A fine day. At about 9.30 we had to make calls and were out until quarter to two. Wrote letters home after lunch and then went to a tennis party at Mrs Fischer's. Played one game of tennis and then had our tea under a lovely spreading willow tree. Went at 8 to the conversazione given in our honour at the Town Hall.

They were most kind in their reception of us. There was singing at first. All the Scotch people then stood in the middle of the room and sang 'Auld Lang Syne', and the dear old President went on the platform and made a nice speech. Papa had to answer it. He also made a nice one. After that, an impromptu dance was got up – two waltzes and a schottische<sup>49</sup> were danced. I danced all three. Papa delighted everyone by dancing with Mrs Brill! Got back about 11.30 from the Town Hall.

**Thursday, 24 November 1887      Wagon and cart – setting off for Pretoria**

A lovely day, but hot. We left Bloemfontein at 10 o'clock. Outspanned for two hours in the veld by the Modder River under some mimosa trees. We lighted a fire and the men cooked chops which all enjoyed. We enjoyed our lunch. I found and ate some gum off the mimosa tree.

We reached Brandfort, a little village, at 5 o'clock. Went walking up to the Boer fort and then had a very good dinner at 7. We were five hours travelling. Met Mr Groll at Brandfort. A limpid stream there!



**The Highveld – this gives some idea of the terrain Sir Donald Currie and his daughters were trekking through**

**Friday, 24 November 1887      Slow going**

A fine day. We left Brandfort which we found comfortable at 9 o'clock and reached Winburg, a neat little village with nice green trees about, at 6. We enjoyed our cold lunch today at a *spruit*<sup>50</sup> and rested two



hours there. (Five hours on the road not including the two hours outspan.) Passed a good many small rivers.

### **Saturday, 26 November 1887**

### **Accident at Ventersburg**

A very fine day. We left Winburg at 8.45. Outspanned for a little at a *spruit*, went for a walk and then we again drove on and outspanned for our lunch at a nice green place near a river for two hours, but it was very hot. Arrived at Ventersburg at 6 o'clock. We had to get a new horse as second leader to our wagon. As we were nearing Ventersburg – a very small place – and had got over the nasty *spruit* there, one of our men, Abraham, a kaffir, was thrown out by the concussion as we were being bumped over the river and one of the wheels went over his leg above the ankle, but luckily it was only bruised. One of the traces or swingle bars broke off the wheelers as we went tearing up the hill full speed and we had to draw up. The horses turned to the right and we were all afraid they would run off. Mr Smith ran for brandy for the poor man and he went and bathed his leg in the water. They helped him up on the box again and we soon got to Ventersburg. The little hotel was decorated with flags, the German one black,



**The kind of covered wagon the Curries travelled in – and possible problems encountered!**

white and red, and even Papa's own flag with 'C' in the centre.

We had a very good dinner of springbok etc. (The man at the hotel charged extra for flags, but Mr

Maclean deducted that off!)

### **Sunday, 27 November 1887**

### **Kroonstad**

The beds were very hard last night. We were up at 6 o'clock to be away by 7, but we never left until 7.30 – the swingle bar had to be mended. We outspanned near a Dutch farm to make some coffee and have some ham and tongue. We all enjoyed our second breakfast. We went on until the middle of the day when we outspanned again and the horses had a good feed of grass. Some of us slept.

We reached Kroonstad – a clean-looking place, flat and iron-roofed houses and all white. In the centre of the square is a white sundial and nearby a disused well: also a queer black long platform with a large bell at one end near the steps. We conclude it is for auctions.

It was at Ventersburg we saw all the people coming in to church; some on horseback and the others in their 'spiders', carts and wagons.<sup>51</sup> Before entering Kroonstad we had to drive through the Valsch River. It's quite wide and there is a dam to keep back the water. Had nice tea and cake, then dinner at 6, and at 7.30 we all, except Bess and Mr Groll, went to the church. Wesleyan. The young man preached very nicely indeed. I wrote my diary after coming back, and a letter, and then retired early; but I got up with a little headache. It soon went off. Close night, and lots of forked lightning.

### **Monday, 28 November 1887**

### **A long day's journey; reaching the Transvaal at last**

We all had to get up early at 5, as today was the longest day's journey. We had a light repast and left at 6.30 for Vredefort, our next resting place for the night. After driving a little we stopped and outspanned for breakfast on the veld. We had a fire lit and eggs were cooked and we had a most sumptuous breakfast. We all lay down to rest a little while the horses were eating. Went on again and then had our lunch late out in the veld.

We got to Vredefort, a very small place, at about 6; but it seemed a neat clean little place. The people presented Papa with an Address of Welcome and he returned it in a suitable manner by making a nice little speech. The hotel people, Stuttafords, made us very comfortable – Mrs Stuttaford gave me a beautiful bluebird – only the skin. We started from Vredefort on Tuesday morning (29 November) after 8.30 [heading] for Potchefstroom in the Transvaal. Had breakfast before we started and, at Mr Botha's farm near Vredefort, we outspanned for a little while and the people gave us tea and cake. It was hot up there but the tea was most refreshing, only it had a peculiar aroma and taste. I believe it was grown on the farm. I saw tobacco there also. Saw gold quartz there near the front door. Gold to be found all over the place. Certainly the formation of the hills indicates the presence of gold. Went on after inspanning



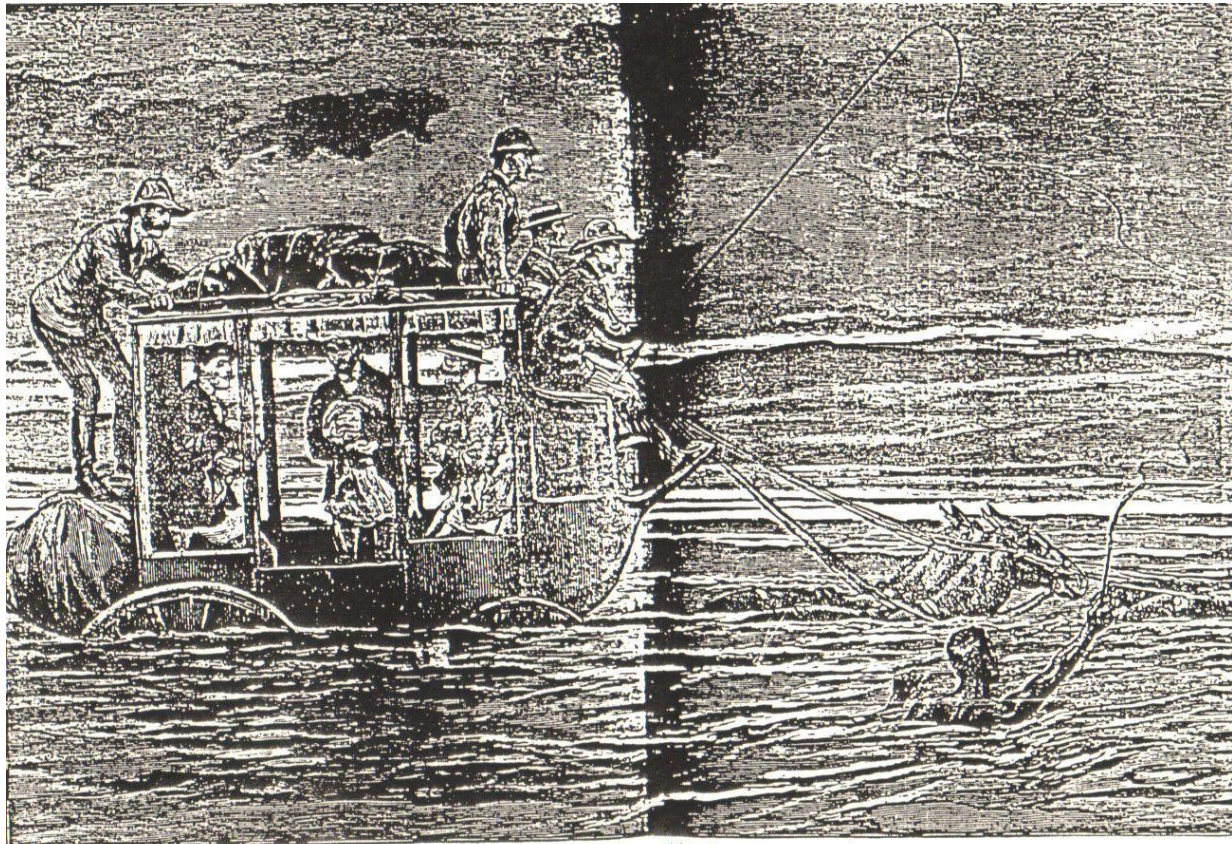
and  
had  
lunch  
after  
passing  
over  
the  
Vaal  
River in  
the  
bridge  
boat.  
We  
lunched  
on the  
veld  
near  
mimosa  
trees  
about 2  
o'clock.

**Wagons crossing the Vaal River on a pont in the 1890s**

When we got into the Transvaal country, the scenery was very different – so green and the mimosa trees coming into bloom looked so nice. The scent from them was delicious.



We were nearing Potchefstroom and the Mooi River when a Boer farmer stopped us and told us it was too deep to be crossed, so we turned and went across the veld to the other road to Potchefstroom.



COACHING IN SOUTH AFRICA.  
"Crossing a River after a Storm."

Two gentlemen rode out in their 'spiders' to meet us and take us the easiest way. We came to a little wooden bridge, but the young horse shied and our back wheel went into the ditch. But we were not pitched out, only the swingle bar again broke but luckily the horses did not run away.

We soon got to the Royal Hotel and found our friends Mr Despard, Mr McDonald and Mr Frank Molteno<sup>52</sup> at the front door to receive us. We had tea, then dinner, speeches, and then took a little walk in the town. Potchefstroom would make a very pretty place if it were well looked after.

### **Wednesday, 30 November 1887      A Highveld summer storm**

St Andrews Day. Lovely day. I went a ride with Mr Molteno and Mr Maclean to see the Mooi River which we should have crossed yesterday. It was very deep and we saw an ox wagon going over; the men were obliged to strip. I had a 'Philippine' with Mr Maclean yesterday but did not gain it – we were both too sharp for each other. I enjoyed my ride very much. Mr Bantje's little grey Cape horse carried me capitally, and according to Frank Molteno's idea, seemed proud of his lady rider. He arched his neck but I say it was an account of the curb bit. I tore across the veld much to Mr Maclean's dismay – I think he thought I was being run away with.



**Frank Molteno, Percy's  
younger brother**

After lunch a bad hailstorm came on, and such vivid lightning and the thunder was awful in every sense of the word. The hailstones were as large as pigeons' eggs and I hear one was measured and was over an inch across. The streets were soon running with rivers and we were much amused at seeing people crossing the streets. I never saw anything like the chain lightning. It lit up the whole street. One peal of thunder was quite close and I thought for one moment one of the outhouses in the yard had come down, it seemed as near as that. (I was resting on my bed at the time.) Mr Maclean and Mr Frank Molteno had to be carried across the street by men three times when they went out after the fury of the storm was over and spent. We none of us had ever witnessed such a hailstorm before.

We had a bad dinner and badly served (supra refused by everyone, ahem!) and then there were about 15 speeches, I think. The circus band came and played outside and Papa gave them some refreshment. They played us some Scotch, Irish and English tunes

and finally wound up with 'Auld Lang Syne' in the public room. Papa went out and gave the people a speech. We both afterwards retired. I had a very bad headache with the storm. Slept badly. Thunder and rain during the night.

#### **Thursday, 1 December 1887**

A fine morning but the roads were too dirty for us to go a ride so we went a drive in Mr Duthwaite's carriage instead. Mr Frank Molteno, Mr Maclean, Bessie and myself saw Mr Ayre's collection of beetles, butterflies and some birds. Mr Maclean gave us some of the stuffed birds. The roads were awful, but the wind had dried them up a little.

At 2 o'clock our carts and Mr Maclean and the luggage went off two hours away from here and we would start early next day and meet them at 8 o'clock. After they had gone we had a long drive all over the veld. Frank Molteno drove us. Made two calls. We all dined with Mr and Mrs Bantje, and Papa intended taking us all to the circus but as we were finishing supper a little squall of wind came on with lightning, so we did not venture out. Mr Molteno walked across to see if the performance was going on and came back saying the circus had been blown down again for the second time. He also said a man had been on horseback at the time the tent collapsed.

We then had music, singing and a little dancing. After that we returned to the hotel and had a good sleep for our start was to be early. Mr Bantje sent his 'spider' and four horses at 6.15 a.m. to take us to where our wagons were.



**Friday, 2 December 1887**

**A store counter for a bed?**

A lovely day. We got up early and went off at 6.15. The wind and roads were very bad, but our driver drove splendidly and we got to the place two hours from Potchefstroom at 8 o'clock in splendid time for our breakfast. But Mr Maclean and Mr Poole never expected us to be so punctual, so the repast was not ready at once on our arrival. However it was soon ready and we enjoyed the chops and eggs.

We started from there after breakfast for Brandvlei where we were to spend the night. Saw two wagons with women and children and men who were bound for Johannesburg. They had slept all night at the place where we breakfasted and on the veld too, poor things, and next morning found themselves lying in a pool of water. I saw the very pool!



**SMART TRAVELLING TO THE RAND, BY GEO. HEYS & CO'S MAIL COACHES.**

We lunched at a Dutch farmer's house. Reached Brandvlei at 7 a.m. Found a store place and only one bedroom with three beds. Bess and I slept in one, Sutherland in the other and Papa had the third bed put in the little parlour. Mr Mclean and Mr Smith slept in our 'spider' all night. They found it much more comfortable than sleeping on the store counter! We did not sleep much all night and were awakened by Mr Maclean at 5. (50 miles driven today – Friday – a long day.)

**Saturday, 3 December 1887**

**Arrival in Pretoria; guests of the State**

Had a cup of tea and bread and butter and left at about 5.45. (Yesterday saw the Wonderfontein Cave with stalactite and stalagmite pillars. Floor of dried bats dung. A wonderful place.) Today was a lovely morning; so nice and fresh. There was a heavy dew upon the ground, it was quite white like in our own country. We got to the Crocodile River, and across it all right before a shower of rain came on, and we had a capital and most comfortable breakfast at the little tidy inn kept by Mr and Mrs Clarke on the

other side. Remained for a little while there to rest the horses and then went on again. We outspanned again in the afternoon two hours from Pretoria where we had our dinner – a light repast – and reached the capital about 7 o'clock. Mr Bok, the State Secretary, met us and drove into town with us. It was amusing to see how everyone rushed to their doors to see us pass. Pretoria is a pretty little place with all the trees,<sup>53</sup> but the buildings are not wonderful. We were taken to a little cottage next to the Club as we were to be the guests of the State while in Pretoria. Hurrah! Mr Maclean was happy not to have to draw upon the exchequer! The cottage had only four rooms on the ground floor – parlour, dining room, Bessie's and my room, and Papa's. The gentlemen and maid slept in rooms outside from us.

### **Sunday, 4 December 1887**

A cloudy day, but pleasant. We all went in the morning to the Wesleyan Church and in the evening to the Cathedral. Bishop Bousfield was not preaching; but the curate gave us a clever sermon. I did not care for the service – bad singing. We had tea with Mr and Mrs Williams in the afternoon. He is the British Officer at Pretoria and both seem very nice. I had had neuralgia after supper. It was very painful for a little, but a glass of port wine and a good sleep soon took it away.

### **Monday, 5 December 1887**

#### **Dinner with President Paul Kruger**

A lovely day. I won my "Philippine" with Mr Maclean. We three had our breakfast alone as Papa was at the President's<sup>54</sup> for three hours.



**President Paul Kruger and his official Residence – painting reproduced in an advertisement**

After breakfast we went to see the gold quartz at Mr Merriman's office<sup>55</sup> and then we took a little walkabout; saw over the flour mills (steam) and over Mr Beckett's stores (he is the Whiteley of South Africa!).<sup>56</sup> Went for a drive with Mrs Beckett and baby in the afternoon. Papa, Bessie and I dined at the President's but the dinner was never served up until 8.30, and we had been asked for 7.30! Judge Esselin took me in. It was a queer affair altogether and Bess and I nearly died with laughter. Papa nearly fainted with having to wait so long for the dinner.

A horse walked through our house out onto the *stoep* and off today!

### **Tuesday, 6 December 1887**

#### **The men inspect the gold mines**

A lovely day. Our gentlemen drove off in the 'spider' at 6.45 to the goldfields at Johannesburg. We remained behind in Pretoria by ourselves. I read and rested all the morning and after lunch the Bishop and his daughter Miss Bousfield called. At about 4 o'clock we two drove out with Mr and Mrs Lippert<sup>57</sup> and Mr and Mrs Merriman to see the *Wonderboom*, a very large tree whose branches they say have grown down into the ground and become trees again separate from the parent tree. It is certainly most wonderful and well worth seeing. We had a fire lit and our tea cakes and preserved peaches there, and then drove home in time to dine at the hotel with Mr and Mrs Merriman and the other two. As we

neared Pretoria, there were tremendous dust clouds flying into the air – which meant a bad storm. Heavy rain came down during the night.

**Wednesday, 7 December 1887      Brandy – key ingredient of the gold rush?**

A very lovely day. The English mail came in, much to our delight. I wrote and read letters and read all the papers. At 2 o'clock Mrs Lewis came in her 'spider' to take us a drive out to see the Distillery. It was a nice hour and a half drive from Pretoria. Mr and Mrs Stoakes have a nice house and garden (he is the manager). She gave us tea after we had seen over the place. Saw one vault with 6,000 gallons of brandy in large vats. The Jubilee vat was very large and capable of holding 6,000 gallons all at once. He presented us each with a bottle of eau-de-cologne made on the premises. He showed us his preserved snakes in spirits done by himself. We got back to Pretoria about 7 o'clock.

**Thursday, 8 December 1887      Sir Donald Currie unwell**

A fine day. Rain and heavy thunderstorm in afternoon. We wrote letters before lunch, and after the storm was over, went out calling in Mrs Lewis' nice 'Victoria'. On our arrival home we found Papa and the others had got back, but Papa was quite poorly and had been so all the time at Johannesburg. It was with the changes of temperature etc. The doctor came and made him remain in bed. He said it was nothing serious, but that he must have suffered a great deal coming from Johannesburg.

**Friday, 9 December 1887**

Bessie and I went calling, escorted by our gallant cavalier, Mr Maclean. Fine morning. Papa better.<sup>58</sup>

**Saturday, 10 December 1887**

A cold day and I was glad to put on my warmer dress. Adeline, Bessie, myself and Mr Maclean drove in our own 'spider' and six to have tea at the Fountain. We had great fun and it was a very pretty place and the drive out there was delightful. Papa better today and getting on nicely. We were changed over this morning to the Fountain Hotel for Dr Kay said the Cottage was so bad and airless for Papa, so rooms were taken at the hotel. The poor State will have to pay double!

**Sunday, 11 December 1887**

Not such a lovely day. We went to church twice. I walked to the cemetery to see the soldiers' graves with Mr Maclean. Windy and gusty during evening service.

**Monday, 12 December 1887      Business for Sir Donald**

A lovely morning. After lunching at Adeline's, Bessie and I went calling on Mrs Kruger, Mrs Bok and Mrs Williams. Papa getting on nicely still. A very hot day indeed. Lots of men called on Papa and bothered him about business. We sat out chatting on the stoep.

**Tuesday, 13 December 1887**

A lovely morning. Bessie and I called on Mrs Greite and Mrs Clarke at the horrid European Hotel. We rested all the afternoon as it was too hot to be out. We went a walk later on in the cool of the evening with Mr Maclean and had ices. The Williams, Merrimans and Lipperts dined with us upstairs. Mr Ely gave us a capital dinner. We sat and talked in the little room.

**Wednesday, 14 December 1887      Starting for Natal**

Fine morning. We left Pretoria at 1 o'clock. Papa had been for a long interview with the President and he left later than us with Mr Beckett and Mr Smith. Bessie, myself, Dr Kay and Mr Maclean left Pretoria



before him and reached our destination at 6. Found it clean enough. Store close to. They were to have a race next morning, so the young man told us. Fifty or sixty Boers to join in. Had a good dinner and splendid plum pudding. We three slept in one room – three little beds. Door had no glass but only red curtains! Dr Kay knew lots of R.E.s, he had served with them at Chatham as doctor, so I understood.

**Thursday, 15 December 1887      Travelling in the rainy season**

A fine morning when we left<sup>59</sup> Mooifontein ('mooi' – 'miss' or 'girl' – means pretty), but as we neared Heidelberg, rain came on pretty heavily. We got there in lots of rain and mud. We left Mooifontein at 8 o'clock this morning. Passed lots of ox wagons and lots of Kaffir huts about. We reached Heidelberg at



**Drawing of an African village in the South African Republic, late 19<sup>th</sup> century**

2.30 in pelting rain. It was quite funny to see us trying to find out the hotel and we had to pass the Waverley Hotel. They would have liked to have kept us at it! After lunch and a rest at the hotel (Mr Graham was proprietor of it – a Scotch man and a man who dislikes women!), we went a short walk and then came in to 7 o'clock dinner. Funny insects flying about all evening.

**Friday, 16 December 1887      More goldfields for Sir Donald to inspect**

Raining heavily all night. Very wet morning. Mrs Pagan, wife of agent, called on us and sent us Scotch bun. Rain is so heavy, doubtful if we could leave, but Papa insisted on going away. He went out early in the 'spider' to see some gold fields near town. We left Heidelberg about 12 after early lunch. Roads were very heavy. We reached Witpoort at 7.

**Saturday, 17 December 1887      'The Laird of Garth' continues to rough it**

A fine day and warm. We left Witpoort, Messrs Johnson and Garrard's store, at 8.15. Lovely fresh milk we had this morning. Such lots of flying beetles Papa killed last night! Bess and I had such a funny wee



room with two wee beds in it. Room so small I went into Sutherland's room to get my hair done! I nearly died with laughter at seeing the Laird of Garth sitting on his chair last evening with his legs and knees tucked up to escape from the beetles. He killed a good many brace. Snake (black) killed by Abraham with long whip.

We enjoyed the Heidelberg raspberry jam at breakfast this morning. Kaffir wagon passed by store and Papa got some necklets etc off the women. At outspan at lunch this day, Mr Maclean shot a lovely little kingfisher. He and Bessie cleaned it for me at Standerton (the Blue Peter Hotel). We got to the latter place at 4 o'clock, a small place. We walked about after tea and then dined at 7. We all sat out on the *stoep* afterwards and talked nonsense! And very lovely moonlight night.

Mr Maclean came into our 'spider'. Crossed two rivers.

### **Sunday, 18 December 1887                      An early start**

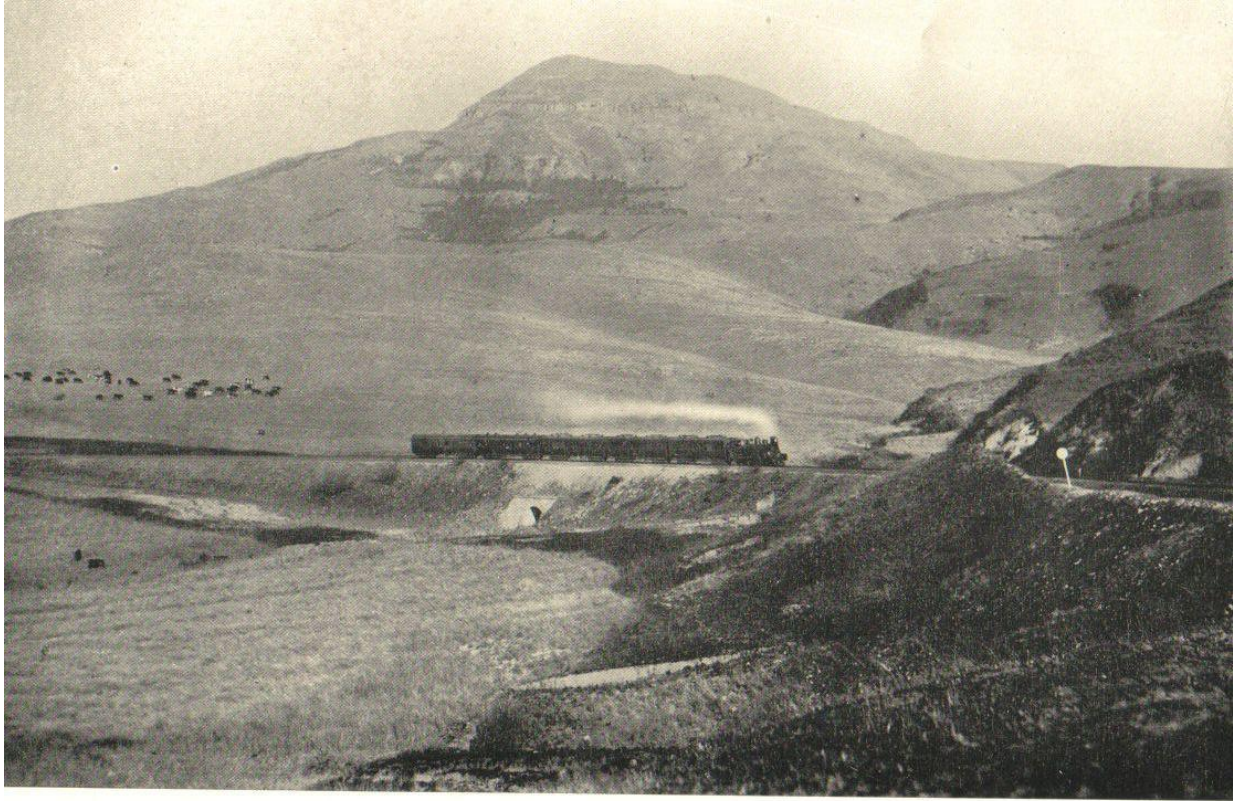
A lovely day. Got up at 4 today. Left Standerton at 5 o'clock. Had some coffee and tea and bread-and-butter before starting. Shall arrive at 7 we hope! Saw about 100 secretary birds, also African cranes. 97 in one flock. I mean 97 secretary birds. They are fine at killing snakes. We saw one killing a snake the other day. Saw three snakes today. At 2.30 we outspanned and had lunch at a horrid Boer store, but we lunched in our wagons.

Saw a witch doctress (Zulu) dressed in a kilt of cloth embroidered with beads of all colours. On her shoulders a strip of tiger skin worked with beads, bead necklaces round her neck, a strip of snake skin round her head and a sixpence hanging on her forehead, a bunch of dried bladders on the top of the head and anklets of bladders. They rattled as she walked. We saw her perform her incantations while looking for a sixpence under a piece of rag but she was unsuccessful, poor thing! She went through a sort of dance singing and asking the other Zulus questions. We drove on again and outspanned at a river. Made our tea at 4 and enjoyed it extremely as we were very tired! At 7 o'clock we reached Coldstream. A very miserable place. The night was very hot – horrid rooms we all had. I was frightened by Sutherland coming into our room. Fleas just awful. I hardly slept at all.

### **Monday, 19 December 1887                      Majuba – inspecting the battlefield**

We left Coldstream at 7. Misty and dewy. After some breakfast of coffee and tea, we started for Newcastle, but at the foot of Majuba Hill on Laing's Nek we outspanned and Mr Bousfield took us up to the top of the Hill.<sup>60</sup> I rode up on a man's saddle.<sup>61</sup> Bess and Sutherland remained below. We were away 2 ½ hours. Mr Maclean, Mr Smith, Papa and I went up. We saw into Natal. The gorge with the Buffalo River is splendid and the views of hills glorious. I saw lovely flowers and trees. Lost our way going up. Papa and I rested while Mr Bousfield and Mr Smith went on again to see if Mr Maclean and the small guide were in front. Such lovely crags above where we were resting. Fancy our poor Highlanders tumbling over them!<sup>62</sup>

We finally reached the top after finding the true path up there (we walked the later part). There is a cairn on the top and I stepped up on the very top one of all. Then just below is a kind of hollow or crater and a graveyard of our poor soldiers is there. The Hon. Cornwallis Maude<sup>63</sup> is buried up there and lots of men. His gravestone and another one are outside the walled in graveyard. It was all in good order but what shocked us were the names of those horrid cads who had written actually upon the stones of the graves. It was sacrilege I think. Found lots of white and pink everlastings and small ice plants on top. Also small arum lilies, all wild.



JOHANNESBURG MAIL TRAIN AT THE FOOT OF MAJUBA

**Majuba – this photo was taken in the 1890s, a few years after the  
Curries went past in their wagons and carts**

We were shown the farmhouse to where the wounded were carried and where the Peace Convention was signed by Sir E. Wood and Joubert. It is a little way off below Majuba Hill. I saw Sir P. Colley's grave in the distance. Saw also the graveyard of the 58th on Laings Nek. After breakfasting on coming down from the Hill (lovely view from top), we drove for four hours, then lunched, but could not eat much; it was too soon after breakfast. Accident coming down the steep hill on Laings Nek.

Well it was like this – Papa, Bessie and I had got safely down the hill and over the little *spruit* at its foot when we all happened to look behind to see if the other wagon with Sutherland and the two gentlemen were all right when – alas and horrors! – we beheld their horses tearing down the hill full speed – then in a moment of time saw their wagon lying on one side of the road. We stopped and Jephthah, our driver, Bess and I flew along the road to see if they were hurt or killed. Found them all right, thank God, only bruised, but one of the poor horses had come down into the deep *sloot* and broken its hind leg. Oh! It was sad to see it trying to get up, poor thing, and at last it did and stood on three legs for a little while. But its misery was soon put an end to when our luggage cart came up, and Mr Poole got Mr Maclean's gun and shot it. Only the top of the wagon was a little broken and the neck of the whisky bottle carried clean off! Mr Smith was only bruised slightly, Sutherland's wrist cut, and Maclean bruised also. Mr Poole got a black eye. The rings of the collars of the pole horses had snapped in two from the pole, and that was the whole nature of the accident. The brakes had been of no use. Poor Mr Maclean was nearly killed by holding on to the brake. He could not hold on any longer, then the spill came. We saw the whole thing happen. Some farmers saw it and came to our aid and we got another horse. The Kaffirs

came also. If the poor horse had not fallen, they must certainly have been all killed. The wagon was soon lifted up again. The Zulus requested leave to have the horse's skin.

The accident made us all nervous and we always got out at any bad hill after that and walked down. We came to a horridly steep hill with a river at the bottom. We walked down the hill. We were much delayed by the accident and so did not get into Newcastle until 8 o'clock. Had dinner and then Papa went to receive Address [of Welcome] and Deputation at Town Hall. We both went with him. We were so glad to come to the bridge across the river. It is a very deep and wide river.<sup>64</sup> All the Natal rivers have bridges we are glad to hear. The Salisbury Hotel was very clean and comfortable. Mr Davidson is the proprietor. It was nice getting to bed after our long day of frights and exertion.

### **Tuesday, 20 December 1887**

### **More summer storms**

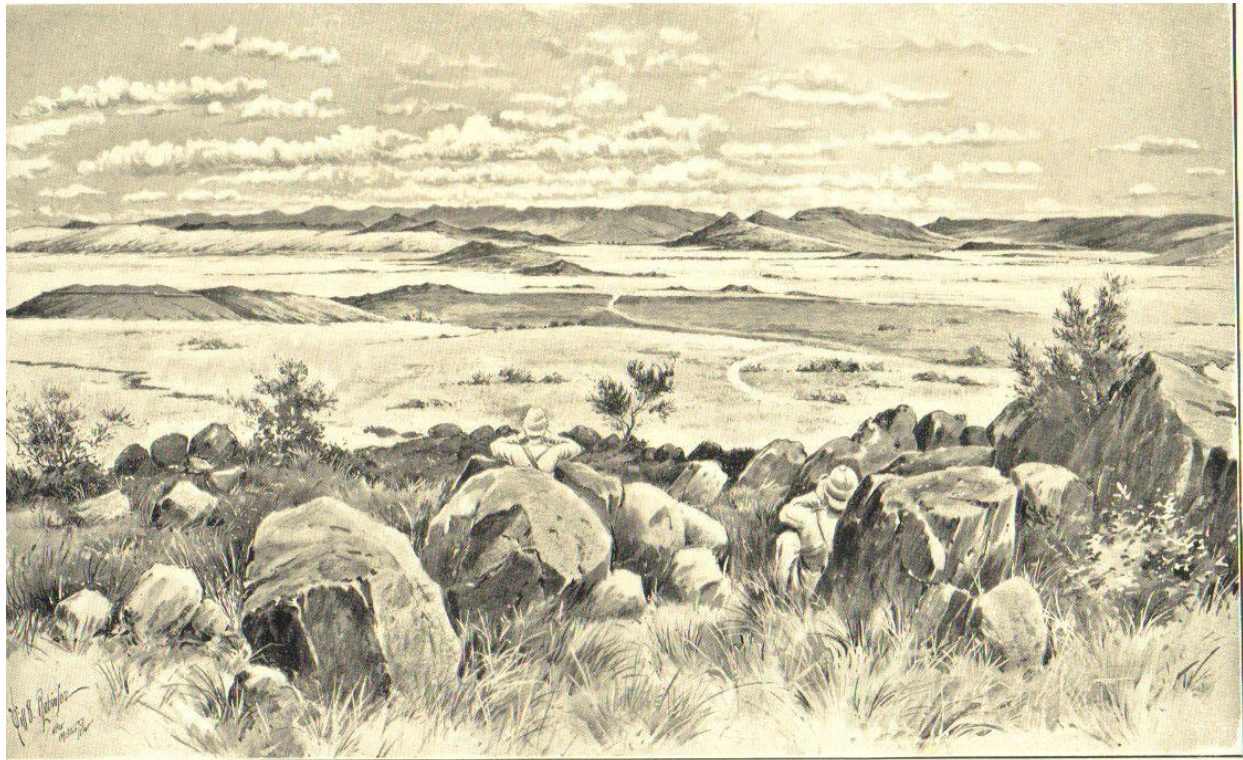
We did not leave Newcastle until 10.30. Papa was busy all morning and then drove out to see the Kilbarchan coal mine. At 1 o'clock we outspanned at a place called Ben Lomond, there is a hill behind which is a little like Ben Lomond. We lunched there and then drove on until 4.30, we stopped again and made tea on the veld. Afterwards we did not enjoy the drive, it was so rough and stony, and a bad thunderstorm came on about 6. We did not get to the Biggarsberg Hotel until 8 o'clock. The other wagon arrived later. The lightning was horrid, but it helped to let us see the road which was a horrid bad one! So stony and rough and full of ruts and lots of little *spruits*.<sup>65</sup>

It was quite dark when we reached the funny little hotel kept by Allan, an Irishman. I was quite poorly and wretched with the thunderstorm, and was obliged to get whisky and water at suppertime. We have to leave tomorrow. It's our last day of driving we're glad to say, and at Ladysmith we join the train. It was very hot all today. The rain was very heavy this evening, and we sat under the *stoep* and watched the lightning. It was just something terrific.



### **Wednesday, 21 December 1887      The railhead at Ladysmith at last**

We left Biggarsberg at 7 this morning. The road was very bad – stony and so muddy after the rain; worse than any we have yet come over, I think. The hotel at Ladysmith is nice and clean. We got to Ladysmith at 3 o'clock. Mr Allan met us with the letters and it was nice to get them. We each got a small room, so were very well off. After changing everything and getting our tea, we went a walk to the station and saw the Governor's saloon carriage which he has sent up for our use. Mr Hunter,<sup>66</sup> manager of the railway, is to dine with us and he will travel to Pietermaritzburg with us. We are to leave early by train tomorrow. We all sat on the balcony while the gentlemen smoked. Mr Allan kept us in fits of laughter.



IN BELEAGUERED LADYSMITH—WATCHING FOR BULLER FROM OBSERVATION HILL.

From a Sketch by Melton Prior.

### **Ladysmith – sketch of the veld (at the time of its siege during the Boer War, 1900)**

### **Thursday, 22 December 1887      Travelling in style – The Governor's own train carriage**

Left Ladysmith at 8.15 in the saloon carriage. There was another carriage for our use next door. Ours was most comfortable. After leaving Ladysmith the view of the Tugela River and Valley is very nice indeed. The line is wonderful and curves all the way and the different gradients are most astonishing. We wound about those hills like a snake. Had our lunch in the train and heaps of granadillas (fruit of the passion flowers), pines [pineapples] and apricots. The line is downhill to Maritzburg part of the time, but you go up and down hill all the journey.

We reached Pietermaritzburg at 4.30. Lots of people waiting to see us arrive. We enjoyed the journey very much but it was very hot. Had our tea comfortably on the way at a station in our carriage. We dined (Papa, Bessie and I) at the Governor's, Sir Arthur and Lady Havelock, and met a good many people there. Mr Galway, the Attorney General, took me in and Mr Gerald Brown, the nice good-looking young Private

Secretary, was on my right. Opposite were Mr Hunter and Col. Stabb in uniform. He stared at me a good deal. Admiration I suppose, ahem! Sir John and Lady Ackerman<sup>67</sup> were there also. Mr Maclean sent us each the most exquisite bouquets. We each had nice large bedrooms. Mosquitoes bit me last night, so I looked lovely!

### **Friday, 23 December 1887**

### **The official 'round' in Natal**

The party last evening was awfully stiff. We remained in all this morning. Fearfully hot day, heat was terrific. We only sit still, gasp and eat fruit and drink 'splits'. Miss Hainworth came to call on us after breakfast. We lunched at the Colonial Secretary's, Mr Haden, and then went to call on and have tea with Lady Ackerman. After leaving Papa at the hotel, Bessie and I drove to Lady Havelock's 'At Home', but it was very quiet. The band of the Inniskillens played very well. We went back and Mr Maclean remained and dined with us two. The others went to the Mayor's dinner. 4 p.m. Temperature 108 in the shade this afternoon. We sat out after dinner on the verandah and chatted away.

### **Saturday, 24 December 1887**

### **Fruit galore!**

We rose at 5 in the morning intending to drive out to see the Howick Falls two hours from here, but alas the rain came down like mad and we had to give up our little trip. We four walked over at 7.30 to see the marketplace to make up for our disappointment and we got lots of fruit. The pines were sixpence each. We got four. And two dozen peaches were one shilling. The fruit and vegetables are so nicely put out on tables all about the hall and centre of it, and at 9 a.m. it is all sold by auction. It all looked so nice and fresh. The coolies are the gardeners about Pietermaritzburg. After seeing that, we returned for breakfast at the hotel and then saw the shops where we bought some Kaffir curios. After lunch Bessie retired. I slept before my lunch and then at 5 we went another little walk. At 7.45 we went to dine at Col. and Mrs Stabbs. Sir Henry Connor<sup>68</sup> took me in. He was heavy and prosy, but clever. Col. Stabb was on my right.

### **Sunday, 25 December 1887**

### **Christmas Day in the sub-tropical heat**

It does not seem at all like Christmas Day. At 11 we went to the Scotch Church, but it was very good. The decorations were very pretty – arum lilies, roses, geraniums and wild asparagus. The day was cloudy. We lunched at 3 at Mr Galway's and then returned to the hotel, had our tea, and the three gentlemen, Bessie and myself went a walk in the Park. It's very pretty there, walking by the muddy little stream. Papa had meanwhile gone to Lady Shepstone's etc. Some of us went to church in the evening, the rest of us remained in.

### **Monday, 26 December 1887**

### **Durban – a crowd to welcome us**

This morning Bessie and I went to say goodbye to Miss Hainworth and call on Mrs Stabb, then at 1.45 we all left for Durban in the saloon carriage. Special train Papa had. The scenery is splendid the whole way nearly. One place was a deep gorge spanned by an iron bridge<sup>69</sup> – a most paltry affair and we had to go over it so cautiously. Passed fields of mielies, pineapples, bananas, pawpaws and mangoes etc. Also sugar and coffee. At one station we got our tea. The scenery was magnificent and our first glimpse of the sea was delightful. Such curious creepers were climbing all over the trees. The tree ferns made my mouth water. They were wild in the fields like the... regalis in Ireland. I never saw anything like it. The bamboo looked splendid. Pinetown long ago was the military station and such a pretty little place. We passed it. Mr Noble got into our carriage there. At Bellairs a tray with tea and another with tumblers of cream and strawberries were brought to us by two Kaffirs in all their necklaces etc from Mr and Mrs Jameson. It was awfully kind of them.

At Durban such a crowd was there to see us arrive. Mr Hitchins and his brother met us. He told us the people were quite surprised at what we ladies are done and gone through. We drove up in a large landau with Mr Charles Hitchins to his house on the Berea, as we were to be his guests there while at Durban. Durban is a fine town with white buildings and a fine large Town Hall and splendid wide streets.

After leaving the town, the road to Berea two miles gets prettier and prettier. We saw such splendid bougainvillea trees and I saw the flamboyant or flame tree for the first time, I think. It is a species of acacia with a very large green leaf and magnificent scarlet flowers, and it certainly looks perfect against the brilliant blue South African sky.

Part of the road is planted on each side with bamboos or whipsticks (ie. what the long cast whips are made of), and they make such a graceful hedge – like ostrich feathers. We saw splendid palms etc and each side of the road there are such nice little houses like Indian bungalows, only with iron roofing which is horrid I think.

We soon got up to the house which is most comfortable and large with a nice verandah round it below, and upstairs there is also one and you can get from the passage upstairs out on to it from your bedrooms. We each had a large bedroom which was delightful luxury. The scenery from the house is splendid, looking down upon the rolling woodland. The little rounded hills all over the place are covered with dense bush. Opposite the drawing-room window of Mr Hitchins' house is a splendid camellia tree; and it is covered with blossoms later on, Mr Hitchins tells us. We dined at 8 o'clock quietly and after dinner enjoy the quiet evening. Mr and Mrs John Hitchin also came in to dine.

#### **Tuesday, 27 December 1887      Exploring the countryside around Durban**

Was a very nice day – not too hot. Bessie and I wrote letters etc until 11 o'clock when Mrs Hitchins, Bessie and I went for a drive until lunchtime by the Berea to the Umgeni River across the bridge there, and home again a different way. It was a lovely drive and the Berea is beautiful – such thick bush. Saw the Euphorbia tree – like a giant cactus. Before going out, Bessie and I each had a pineapple and we ate it in the orthodox fashion, scooping the inside out with a spoon. After eating it, I felt I could go on eating any amount; they are really so small eating them in that way. After lunch I wrote my diary (Bessie was resting) and at 4 we were to ride with Mr Allan and Mr Mclean, but we never got off until long after 4, owing to some bungling about Mr Allan's horse. We all had our tea and then started off and had a most charming ride up to a view from a place called Sydenham Hill when we looked down upon the sea and Durban on one hand, and on the other upon the Umgeni River, valleys and hills in Zululand, Pondoland etc. It was certainly a magnificent vista of hills, rolling woodland, upland river etc. We rode through such lovely lanes with dense bush on each side. The roads are of deep sand. We got back from our ride about 6.45, having had a fine ride. Mr and Mrs Mathers dined at the Hitchins.

#### **Wednesday, 28 December 1887      Inspecting a sugar plantation**

A lovely morning. The trees in the town of Durban have a very large leaf and bear a red and yellow flower on each tree.<sup>70</sup> I suppose they are the male and female on one tree. Such lovely creepers we saw climbing up the trees in the bush! At 9.30 this morning, we all went into town by carriage to the station and got into our old friend, the saloon carriage. The train was a special. And then we ran out into the country (Victoria County) to see a sugar plantation and refinery at Mount Edgecombe. We passed through sugarcane plantations, fields of pines, mielie fields, coffee fields etc. We saw them bringing in the sugarcane in trucks; then it went into the crushing mill; came out in a state of pulp; was then carried into a large place into cylinders etc and the pulp crushed until the juice was extracted; the juice was carried and put into tanks where you saw the Indian coolies wading among that rich sweet yellow



molasses (Ugh! It looked horrid!). And then in the same room they carried it and threw it into the centrifugal force mill where it was sent round at a fearful pace until it came out pure white sugar. They put it in the mills four times before it comes out pure white, I believe. After seeing all over the place and eating some raw sugarcane, Mr Dumat, one of the managers, took us up to his bungalow for some coffee, cake and fruit. We had some delicious muscatel grapes there. After our refreshment, we all returned to the station, got into the saloon, and steamed back to Durban at 1.30, where we lunched with Mr Noble and Mr Maclean at the hotel.

I met Mr Poole there. We were waited upon by Indian waiters who looked so nice in their cool turbans and white dresses (cotton). After lunch we did some shopping; then drove back to the Berea; we had our tea and dressed for our ride at 4.30. Mr Acutt, a young gentleman friend Mr Maclean knows, rode with us and took us a nice ride until about 7. All the gentlemen dined with us at the Hitchins. Mr Allan got a lot of oysters, and we had a splendid supper of oysters at about 10 o'clock or perhaps later. Before that Mr Allan gave us a lot of recitations out on the verandah. Saw some grass fires which lit up the landscape well. The Durban oysters are awfully small.

#### **Thursday, 29 December 1887                      The Botanical Gardens**

A lovely morning, but hot. At 9.30 after breakfast, Mr Charles Hitchins drove in with Bessie and myself to Durban and we picked up Mr Maclean at the office and then we all went to the Botanical Gardens. Saw the Banyan tree; also the Traveller's tree which contains water – the poisonous tree which, if you eat one berry, in a moment you are dead. Saw the nutmeg, cinnamon allspice, and camphor tree with all their different leaves all smelling quite differently.

After seeing all over the place we drove back to the Berea; had lunch; and we both rested until 4 o'clock when we went a jolly ride with Mr Hitchins and Mr Maclean. At the Botanical Gardens today I saw the amaranthus, a lovely red-leaved plant. Saw the soap tree and got berries. Mr Hitchins took us to Bellairs, at least near to it. We had a splendid ride through such lovely sandy lanes and dense bush and trees and creepers on each side of us. I heard queer birds crying. Banquet for Papa in town tonight at 7.30. We three ladies dined quietly at home.

#### **Friday, 30 December 1887                      Watching a Zulu war dance at Isipingo**

After breakfast Bessie, myself and Hitchins drove early into town. Mr Maclean took us to the museum. Saw Cetewayo's pots etc there. It was a small museum, but very interesting. Today is cloudy but nice and cool. At 1 o'clock we lunched at the Berea and at 2 started for Isipingo – a sugar plantation 12 miles away where we were to see a Zulu war dance. Mr Maydon<sup>71</sup> got a friend there to get it up for us specially. Papa, the two Miss Hitchins and Mr Allan drove there and back in a wagonette with four grey horses; while Bessie and I, Mr Maclean, Captain Hitchins, Mr Hitchins and Mr Maydon rode out. We were capitally mounted. Mine was a jolly little iron grey; while Bessie's was a very nice tall strapping animal. We set off to take it easy through the woods until we came upon the high road and saw the carriage in front. The heat was a little trying at first as there were no trees along the high road. At 3.30 we reached the hotel at Isipingo very thirsty and hot – had some lemonade etc and fruit on our horses at the door and then rode two more miles to Mr Brooke's house where the dance was to be held, as the authorities considered it unsafe to allow the Zulus to have the war dance in Isipingo itself.<sup>72</sup> Mr Allan was put upon Mr Maydon's horse and was run away with. I got a fright at seeing him tearing along. Arrived at the house and found the 100 to 200 Zulu men and women all assembled and they began when we arrived. It was a wonderful site and a very curious one also. They had to get women to swell the ranks as they had not enough men owing to the short notice. Some of the warriors were in their warpaint – three streaks of red ochre down their faces, a sporran or kilt of skin, white kneelets of hair

round below the knees and also armlets of the same thing. One man had a hideous mask on. Lots of them wore curious head-dresses; and they were splendid looking fellows. One or two were more than six-foot, for sure!

They went through the whole performance of war dance throwing out to left and right the 'horn', charged up the hill, jumped about, sent out scouts, threw or kicked up the dust before assegai'ing their foes etc. At last a bullock was brought and they stabbed it, but Mr Maydon shot it on humane principles!

We had coffee, tea, cake and fruit and then left before they ate the bullock. There were two families out of one kraal; but they were not allowed to fight each other as the gentlemen said they would really fight and draw blood and kill to the last man. They were not allowed assegais, only knobkierries. At 5.30 we left after a most enjoyable time there. Mr Maclean drove home and Mr Allan rode back on his horse. We stopped at the hotel for tea and fruit and ate it on horseback – the gentlemen attending on us! Ate peaches during the ride home. Had a grand time going fast! We rode altogether 28 miles; very good for us. Arrived after 7 at the Berea and had late dinner. I hardly slept at all after my long ride and with the heat.

#### **Saturday, 31 December 1887                      On board the *Venice* – Return journey by sea**

Fine day. We both (Bessie and I) made a call on the Berea and then stayed quiet until 3 o'clock. Then we drove to the office and then off to the Point where the *Venice* was lying. We embarked at 4 and soon after started for St Johns River which we hope to reach tomorrow. The *Venice* rolled about a good deal and I collapsed at once, but kept quiet on deck. Mr Smith and Sutherland also collapsed. Bessie did not look happy! Not a very happy last night for 1887.

#### **Sunday, 1 January 1888                      Port St Johns, Pondoland**

New Year's Day. Not a happy New Year for me this! I felt rather seedy, but got better later on after breakfast. We had service at 11 on the upper deck. We managed to get through some hymns. Afterwards we had granadillas and pines. We got to St Johns River – Pondoland – after lunch, but did not land on account of the heavy swell and bar.<sup>73</sup> Mr Mathers and Mr Hitchins had to get back to Natal in the *Lion*. Poor Papa was awfully disappointed at not getting on shore; so were we. But it could not be helped. The scenery was splendid all along the coast and reminded us all of Skye, the West Coast [of Scotland] etc.

St John's Gates looked grand and we were sorry we could not get up the river. The scenery is so fine; and ferns etc are lovely. Left about 6 after wasting four hours bobbing about and sending off the people on land. Lovely moonlit night and stars also fine. We all sat up on deck and talked away. Had not a very bad night at all. The *Venice* rolled in the morning getting into East London.

#### **Monday, 2 January 1888                      Going ashore at East London**

My birthday today. Dear, dear, I am getting old. Papa said I was getting younger – a nice compliment. We got into the dock over the bar before 8 o'clock. The boat tumbled about a good deal turning in. Captain Winder was very glad we got in as the *Dolphin* was so uncomfortable. Had breakfast about 8.30 and then went on shore afterwards to Mr Georgeson's house on the hill. Mrs Georgeson is a motherly Scotch woman and speaks very broad Scotch! I sat upstairs writing my diary; and they all thought I was resting. Then I went downstairs and Mrs Noble, Bessie and I walked down to the beach. Saw tents all about belonging to farmers etc who come from upcountry to East London for a change and sea bathing. After lunch I walked with Mr Noble, Mr Maclean and Mr Smith to the *Venice* while the others drove

down to the wharf. We got on board her first and as we got into the small boat, off flew my Solar Topee into the water! But it floated near me and Mr Noble and I got it out. Of course, it had to be dried. We unpacked and repacked our trunks, had tea and then returned home. Had a quiet family dinner and Mr Noble proposed my health which was drunk by all very heartily. Another Philippine on with Mr Maclean! I wonder who will win! My face ache is very horrid and I've had it for some time. It tires one out so much and I don't get much sleep at present. The dentist in Durban said I was cutting a wisdom tooth.

### **Tuesday, 3 January 1888**

### **Rowing up the Buffalo River**

A cloudy morning but at 10 o'clock we managed to get a row up the river with two gentlemen to Green Point. It is the Buffalo River and is very pretty. Saw lots of coneys (of Scripture) or rock rabbits.<sup>74</sup> Such queer little things – like guinea pigs and rabbits combined. We saw some families of them – the mother, father and often eight little things. Saw a wild duck. After rowing up a little way, about three miles, we landed and walked into the bush and passed the picnic places, but soon had to return owing to the damp grass and paths. Heard but did not see the baboons. Heard the Anvil Bird which has a curious metallic note like the anvil of a forge. Saw yellow wood [trees]; plumbago, a blue flowering bush; and sparaxis like a pale large blue campanula. We had to be at one o'clock lunch at Mrs Georgeson's and after lunch we both rested as at 4 we were going for a ride with Mr Maclean, Mr Noble and Mr Andrews – the customs officer. But it came on to rain, so we had to give it up – much to our disappointment. Mr Maclean walked up to tea later on. We all got our invite to the big picnic to be given by Sir Gordon Sprigg up the river. We hope it won't rain! Big dinner for Sir Gordon Sprigg and Papa at 8 this evening. We ladies spent a quiet time by ourselves.

### **Wednesday, 4 January 1888**

### **By 'trolley' to King Williams Town**

It was a wet morning and we were both sorry when Sutherland came into our room to say so at 6 o'clock for we had arranged to go a nice ride with Mr Noble, Mr Maclean and Mr Andrews. It was a great disappointment, but we got some extra sleep! We all got notes saying the grand picnic was 'postponed until tomorrow' on account of the bad weather. At 3.30 we all started in the 'trolley', a sort of saloon carriage attached to the engine, for King Williams Town. The Traffic Manager also travelled with us, so we were six in the queer little trolley. You can stand or sit outside the car as you please and see the scenery as you are taken along. Sutherland, Atkins and our very heavy baggage had gone on to King Williams Town in the usual train before us. I only kept my shawl out. At one point the trolley stopped a few minutes and the gentlemen all got out to see a very fine view down into a gorge by the river. It was too wet for Bessie and I to get down among the long grass. We had great fun and Mr Maclean kept us amused as usual!

The country was very pretty with mimosas all about and the hills looked fine far away. Passed one or two ostrich farms but the mist of rain prevented us seeing much of the scenery. At 5.39 we reached King Williams Town. Mr Irvine met us at the station and drove us up in a Cape cart to his house where we were to stay.

Mrs Irvine was a Miss Ray of Birkenhead and her sister was staying with her (Aunt Maria knows the Birkenhead Rays). The house at King Williams Town is very nicely done up, and aesthetically furnished. It is situated a short distance from the town.

### **Thursday, 5 January 1888**

### **A hospital visit, horse ride and missing the banquet**

Very fine morning and hot. We drove with Mrs Ray and Mr Noble to see over the Grey's Hospital. It is not very tidily kept and Dr Fitzgerald, the Superintendent, is 80 years of age and too ancient now for the

place. I tasted *amasi* from a calabash. It is the Kaffirs' sour milk and I like it rather. It reminds me of buttermilk. There are no white nurses in the hospital except one old Irishwoman. The dentist is black. After our lunch at the Irvines, we got ready for our ride to Izeleni<sup>75</sup> eight miles from King Williams Town. Mr Irvine, myself, Bessie, Miss Ray, Mrs Irvine rode while Papa, Mr Smith and another gentleman drove out. Mr Maclean and Mr Hay rode after us later on. There was a nice little dinner party of 18 at the Irvines last night; and it was very nice. Miss Ray played on her violincello once or twice very nicely; Bessie played and Mr Maclean sang; I also sang twice.

The ride to Izeleni was very pretty and we passed through a Kaffir location or village. All the dogs flew out, and the people also, to see us tearing along on horseback. At the small Izeleni hotel we dismounted and our horses were put up until we had had our tea. Soon the rest of our party drove and rode up and we all sat down to a delightful cosy tea. We were greatly refreshed by it. We had great fun the whole time. My horse was a nice tall big grey and was very quiet. Bessie's was black, but she rode back on Mrs Irvine's pony. It was so funny to see the women churning the butter immediately we ordered the tea to be got ready for us; so the butter was quite fresh. It amused us all very much. At 6 o'clock we left and reached home at 7. We went back much faster. The gentlemen all went to the banquet in honour of Papa; and we ladies spent a quiet evening and were rather stiff with our ride, so retired early.

#### **Friday, 6 January 1888**

#### **Lovedale Mission at Alice**

A very lovely morning and at 9 we left King for Lovedale<sup>76</sup> in a large covered wagonette with comfortable seats and springs and six horses. The light luggage and Sutherland were in the Cape cart drawn by four very nice little mules – well bred they were. The heavy luggage with Atkins went by post cart to Grahamstown. Mr Cummings drove us. He is manager of Mr Irvine's farm and was a very nice man; and drove so splendidly. I learned from him today how to drive six horses.

We drove through lovely country and the scenery was very pretty. Mr Noble came with us and was such a delightful travelling companion. He knows so much about the Cape and flowers, trees etc. We reached Lovedale at 7. Alice, the town nearby, is very clean and thriving; and the mielie fields looked splendid. The country under cultivation struck us all very much. As you near Alice and Lovedale the scenery is just lovely.

We drove up to Dr Stewart's house where he met us and his eldest and two younger daughters met us on the doorstep. Dr Stewart is a most charming man. Unfortunately Mrs Stewart was away at the Katberg with the younger children; but Dr Stewart and his daughters made us so comfortable and quite at home. It being holiday time, only about 50 of the students were at the institution. They were all drawn up in line opposite the door to welcome Papa, and Dr Stewart made a little speech to which the Laird replied very nicely. It was nice hearing how those young natives could cheer and they all had most intelligent faces. We were shown all over the institution and saw the young men having their supper of mielie porridge and milk etc. The natives are taught trades such as bookbinding, carpentry, printing etc. We had a comfortable dinner at 7.30, and we all felt so much at home. It was so nice being at evening prayers again and Dr Stewart read them so nicely. We were glad to get to our downy couches!

#### **Saturday, 7 January 1888**

#### **62 miles today – spekboom, ostriches and Pluto's Vale**

A very lovely morning and the day turned out terrifically hot. We got up very early at 4 o'clock and left at 5 as we had 62 miles to do. Oh dear! The heat was awful and poor Papa was quite poorly. We made him lie down in the wagonette and Mr Smith sat beside me part of the day on the dicky, and Mr Noble went for a little while on the Cape cart, but not for long. The scenery was perfect and the mountains looked glorious. We drove through such forests and bush of wonderful kinds of trees. The tree or bush



called 'Elephants' Food'<sup>77</sup> is a queer tree with a fleshy or succulent bright green leaf, sour like a sorrel, and I liked the taste of it. The ostriches, elephants etc feed on it. We had three breakfasts that morning; but were glad to let Papa lie down twice and sleep. We saw at one farm where we outspanned Mr Knott's ostriches and all the young ones, about 30, which had been hatched by incubators. He showed us the incubating apparatus and presented us with an ostrich egg each. So we hope to carry them all right to old England and have omelettes from them. The young ostriches are queer things like porcupines with their large heads and ugly beetle crushers of feet with two claws. We saw the dairy and where Mr Knott does all his carpentry, joining etc and bootmaking and tanning etc! Saw Kaffir women pounding mielies.

After our lunch or breakfast (Ahem!) we sat outside and once I collapsed under my armchair much to the amusement of Mr Maclean and Bessie. I had to laugh myself! Just in the hottest time of the day almost, we got to Pluto's Vale<sup>78</sup> – so called because of it being such a hot place and dark with trees and bush. But it certainly was a very lovely place and, upon the right-hand side, before we drove up the awfully steep hill of Pluto's Vale, we saw a dozen large baboons and one or two small monkeys sitting and clambering over the rocks over our heads. They were as large as men and ugly looking brutes too. We could also hear them barking. As we drove through the defile, the air was awfully hot and scorching and the place well deserved its name of Pluto's Vale. Oh! It was hot. I walked up the steep hill with Mr Maclean and Mr Smith. It was rather hot work.

We saw lots of queer bulbs and trees etc. The Euphorbia grows very luxuriantly all about the country. We met Atkins and the luggage and the post cart people at the.... where we rested at 1 o'clock and he reached Grahamstown a few minutes in advance of us. We kept close behind the post cart and I drove our six horses again for a little today, but the leaders went up a bank owing to my stupidity. That was all!

We drove into Grahamstown at 7, all very glad to have done our journey. Papa was quite poorly and the doctor saw him and said he must be kept quite quiet. The doctor who was in the house is a Dr Hartley and seems very nice indeed. He was serving through one of the wars and escaped being at Isandhlwana<sup>79</sup> as he had had sunstroke during that time and was invalided. He told me the whole of the story at dinner time.

We drove first to the hotel, left the three gentlemen and then went on to Bishop Webb's house, Bishopsbourne, where we were invited to stay. The house is a dear little place up on the West Hill across the bridge out of the town a wee bit and we felt quite at home at once. Papa was sent straight to bed. There is a chapel attached to the house, and Bessie and I went to prayers there. We did not know they were High Church. There were lamps and candles and flowers on the altar; and verses all about and crosses and pictures of Our Lord.

### **Sunday, 8 January 1888**

### **High Church and Low Church in Grahamstown**

We all slept well last night and Papa seemed easier, we were thankful to see. It was a hot morning. Papa did not go to church; but we went to the cathedral at 11. Very splendid singing and music, but I did not like the High Service.

My Lord Bishop looked grand in his vestments and ring etc and cap or mitre. The sermon was awfully poor from some curate. The Diocesan Synod was going on during our stay in Grahamstown so the church was full of clergymen, and they all marched in preceded by the choristers of boys and men. It was an extraordinary sight – all in their vestments. Saw Canon Woodruffe among them. After lunch we wrote letters as the mail was to leave tomorrow (Monday). Asked Mr Noble, Mr Maclean and Mr Smith

to meet us at the Scotch Church in the evening. The two latter came to enquire for Papa and call on Mrs Webb. She is a very sweet woman and they have both gone through trouble; they lost their little child very young. We got a large budget of home letters and Christmas and New Year cards. We never thought we would get those! At 7 we drove to the Scotch Church and were met by our gentlemen. The sermon was very good; quite different to the morning one. The hymns and service were so nice. Mr Smith and Mr Maclean returned to supper with us and there was a large supper party of 24 at the Bishop's that evening. After the supper a lady sang two songs and there were hymns at the last.

### **Monday, 9 January 1888**

#### **The Mayor and the Royal Scots put on a show**

A lovely day. Bessie and I drove with Mr Noble and Mr Maclean to the Exhibition and enjoyed it very much. It was small but nice. We chose a lot of Kaffir and Zulu curios which we hope to get. Afterwards we left and enquired for Dr Chalmers, the Scotch Minister, who is very ill. Then we went to see an old lady of 92 – Mrs Ayliff<sup>80</sup> -- and her daughters gave us such lovely figs and apricots to refresh ourselves. Papa visited the Exhibition and lunched with Mrs Ayliff. He was a little better. Then we went to Mrs Ayliff who knows Mrs James MacArthur where we lunched. All our party were also there – 14 or 16 people at lunch. The bougainvillea growing over the arbour overhanging the tennis ground was splendid. It was one mass of blossom and after lunch we four drove to see the Botanical Garden and were presented by the curator with bouquets of roses. The gardens are very pretty indeed. After seeing all over that, we took a drive and then got back to Bishopsbourne in time to dress for early dinner as we were all to be present at the concert at the Exhibition given in our honour by the Royal Scots and seven pipers were to play for us. The Mayor met us at the door and escorted us to our seats below the gallery where the band was. Bishop Webb took me in. The band at once struck up the moment we entered the long room. It was splendid and the program was jolly.

The seven pipers played before entering the room and then came marching in and played close up to us. One of them danced the sword dance for us especially and they also did a reel. We all enjoyed it awfully. Hearing the music made Mr and Mrs MacArthur long to have reels etc. We left at 10. The people were delighted with the pipers; but some of the Sassenachs etc don't understand. Young Lieutenant Daniel who came down with the band and pipers from Cape Town seems a nice young man and is so awfully enthusiastic over the pipes and pipe music. The chief piper is Donald Stewart McDonald and was the Duke of Buccleuch's piper on his yacht. We went away at 10 after they had played two extras and 'God Save the Queen' and we had some slight refreshment at the Bishop's before going to bed.

### **Tuesday, 10 January 1888**

#### **By train to Port Alfred**

We got up at 6; breakfasted at 7; and went off at 8 by train to Port Alfred and the Kowie River. The railway is a wretched construction and it won't pay. But the bridge over the Blaauupoort is extraordinary and spidery and was built by an Austrian engineer. The scenery from it looking up the gorge is glorious with the river deep down below. The height was terrific indeed. We all got out of our carriages to see the river from both sides of the bridge. I went [down] to the Kowie in the same truck as Mrs Solomon etc. Mr Daniel, Mr Smith, Mr Maclean etc went also with us. It was an open truck like for cattle or sheep with canvas awning on top hanging down and with seats inside. Oh! how it did shake and oscillate! I never experienced such shaking before. But we all had great fun! The train went very slowly along and took four hours to do the 30 miles.

There were about 80 people altogether doing the trip up the river, and as soon as we reached Port Alfred we got into a tug and steamed up the Kowie River. Oh! it was very lovely scenery. First the tug *Buffalo* took us to the mouth of the harbour. And as she was not under control, the Captain could not turn her properly; she had to wait until the breakers came to do so. It was very badly managed. We

steamed up the Kowie River about three miles and then turned after having had our lunch on board going up. But it was quite a scramble for our lunch! Going down the river, one of the young ladies on the bridge and lost her sailor hat. It was blown away by the wind. We had tea at the station before leaving and at 2.30 we got into the train – all in ordinary carriages. In ours were Dr Atherstone, a queer old man whom we all took off quietly, Mr Smith, Miss Barrie a pretty girl, myself, Mr Maclean, the young lady who lost her hat, Miss Webb the Bishop's sister, and Mr.... We played games all the way back to Grahamstown and the weary journey passed very quickly. We had such fun.

We reached Grahamstown at 6.30. After finishing our packing we had dinner and then drove to the station in time for the train to Port Elizabeth. We had sleeping carriages for us all. Met Dr Stewart who came to say goodbye to us. We are to get to Port Elizabeth at 5 in the morning. Nice late hour!

**Wednesday, 11 January 1888**

**Port Elizabeth**



ALGOA BAY AND PORT ELIZABETH, FROM THE LIGHTHOUSE

Photo by Wilson Abardson

We got there at 5.15 Mr Ford met us with carriage, also young Mr Savage, and we drove up to Mr Savage's. We were to stay at his father's house. Found old Mr Savage awaiting our arrival. Jane Humphrey was also there; and the cook and two stewards from the *Roslin Castle*. The house is most comfortable and everything was done for our comfort and happiness. We had eggs, coffee and tea etc for our breakfast and then went to bed again we were so tired. Papa saw the doctor who said he must really take life easily. It was so nice to see Jane again; and she gave me the parcel from Keith with diaries and little books. She had come round in the *Venice* from Cape Town and will go back with us when we go home. After a good rest Bess and I got up and had breakfast again at 10, and then we did some writing. Papa got up in time for lunch at the Town Hall. He is not yet himself quite and is to dine up in his room. It is impossible to keep him quiet. The air at Mr Savage's house is very nice; but the town is not very pretty. Coming into it, I was reminded of Margate. There are few trees and flowers about.

**Thursday, 12 January 1888****Yet another banquet for Sir Donald**

A fine hot lovely day. We were taken by Mr Noble, Mr Maclean and Mr Ford to see the Botanical Gardens which were not very wonderful. The glasshouses are full of very fine ferns and flowers however; and we enjoyed our visit there. The flowers don't do well outside; the soil is not deep or good enough. After seeing through the hospital the same morning, we went to buy photographs of various places. The hospital wards are nice and tidy and they were a good many patients. There was one dear little baby boy with hip disease. I went up and spoke to him, the poor wee man.

After lunch we five drove to the gymkhana or sports given by the Cape Mounted Rifles at the cricket ground. There was lemon cutting, tent pegging, tilting at the ring etc. They did it very well. One thing they did was to dismount and mount a gun and fire it off. It was all done in 52 seconds one time they did it. We had tea and fruit in the room behind the stand and then we left at 5.30. We had been there since 3. Met Col. Keogh there.

We returned to Mr Savage's house and Papa and all dined at the banquet at the Club except Mr Maclean who preferred dining quietly with us. We had a most lively dinner by ourselves and afterwards he and I had a schottische while Bess played for us. At 9 he went to hear the speeches and we retired to bed.

**Friday, 13 January 1888**

A lovely but hot day. Before 10 Mr Noble and Mr Maclean came with a carriage to take us to the photographers Battenhaussen, as we four intended to be taken. We were there until 12.30 and we all hope that they will turn out good as we had to be kept so long there. After 12 we all went to lunch at a Mr Jones, one of the wealthiest men in Port Elizabeth; then we saw over Mr Savage's store. There we were weighed. Bessie was 8 stone 10 pounds and I was 7 stone 7 pounds. Mr Maclean was 15 stone! Mr Savage had some people in to dinner, about 19 people sat down to it. Dr Stewart of Lovedale was also dining with us. Mr Maclean dined at the Simpsons.

**Saturday, 14 January 1888****A Choice of boats for Cape Town**

The day did not look promising on account of the wind. The dust kept swirling about and later on the white horses appeared out at sea and we could not see it for whirlwinds of dust. So we all debated what was to be done about our going in the *Venice*. After breakfast, it being not bad until later on, Mr Noble took Bessie and me to see the Town Hall. It is very pretty and the Council Chamber is very nice indeed. It is all lined with woodwork. The library and reading room looks very comfortable and nice books.

After that we drove to the office where Papa and we all and the three captains – Captain Harris of the *Duart Castle*, Captain Winder of the *Venice* and the captain of the *Roslin Castle*, Captain Solomon – had a consultation about our going out in the little *Venice* to Mossel Bay or Knysna. Captain Robinson was out calling on us, having gone to steal a march on us, so the other Captains said, and trying to get us in his boat. It was quite amusing to hear how each Captain puffed up his own vessel. Papa came in soon and we at last left them to discuss what was the best plan. I hope it will be the *Roslin Castle*.

We returned to Mavis Lodge. Papa came in and we all lunched together and he told us we were going in the *Roslin Castle* to Knysna, there to transship to the *Venice* as she could go over the bar, and then back in her to Mossel Bay where we would get the *Duart*. We are to be in Cape Town Wednesday next.

At 5.30 we had our dinner and at 6.30 we left the house and drove down to the quay, got into the tug there, and went off to the *Roslin*. Found our large cabins all nicely arranged for us by Sutherland and



Jane. We left Port Elizabeth at 10.30. The *Venice* had left a few hours before us. Also the *Melrose* and *Duart Castle*. There had been quite a Castle fleet in Port Elizabeth while we were there. Mr Noble and Bessie walked about the deck; while Mr Maclean and I sat down and chatted away until he wished his beloved cigar; then I offered to walk with him. We stayed up until after 10; then we retired. Lovely stars. Southern Cross.

### **Sunday, 15 January 1888**

### **Rolling in to Knysna**

The boat rolled a good deal, well deserving her name the *Rolling Castle*. The night was a quiet one and I found the berth such a nice wide one. A fine morning. The coast looks fine with jagged cliffs and caves here and there. As we got nearer to Knysna, the trees got more frequent and the country.....

### **Postscript by G. W. McDonald**

Regrettably, at this point the diary ends with the manuscript filling the end cover of the notebook. Searches have failed to find its continuation.

It is known, however, that Sir Donald Currie and his two daughters duly arrived at Knysna. In 1988 the Museum received photographs of the party's visit there, these having been being presented to it by Mr Findlay Fergusson, the diarist's grandson, when on a visit from Scotland.

Year after their father's death in 1909, Maria and her two sisters donated £25,000 to the University of the Cape of Good Hope. An impressive bronze plaque in the entrance hall of the building in Queen Victoria Street, which now houses the State Archives, records the gift. Maria Wisely (the diarist) died on 15 November 1924 and she and husband lie buried at Fortingall in Perthshire, as does Sir Donald Currie.

The foregoing conclusion, together with the foreword, references and illustrations supplementing the diary are supplied by G. W. McDonald of Claremont.

November 1989

### **Endnotes**

Endnotes in bold have been added by Robert Molteno, who has built the Molteno family website.

<sup>1</sup> **A traditional shipboard game that lasted in ocean-going travel at least until the 1960s.**

<sup>2</sup> 'Philippine' – a game popular at the turn of the century where a person sharing with another in the eating of a freak double-banana would compete in being the first on the following day, after engaging the other in conversation, to exclaim 'philippine', thereby winning a forfeit.

<sup>3</sup> Royal Mail Steamers of the Castle Line: *Norham Castle* (4,155 tonnage), *Melrose* (840 tonnage), *Venice Castle* (511 tonnage), *Hawarden Castle* (4,164 tonnage and named in honour of Sir Donald Currie's friend, Mr Gladstone, M.P.)

<sup>4</sup> Cathcart Smith, Sir Donald Currie's secretary and a passenger on the *Norham Castle*.

<sup>5</sup> Duncan Campbell Andrews, Joint General Manager (with L. MacLean) of the Castle Mail Packet Co., Cape Town.

<sup>6</sup> L. A. Vintcent. Member of the Legislative Assembly.

<sup>7</sup> Percy A. Molteno, second son of Sir John Charles Molteno, first Premier of the Cape Colony. Percy was later to marry Bessie, daughter of Sir Donald Currie. **In fact, Percy dashed back to England in early 1888, possibly on the same boat as Bessie. Once there, the two of them got engaged. Percy then returned to Cape Town to wind up**

his affairs (he had been trying, not very successfully, to set up as a barrister). He and Bessie got married the following year (1889) and, although Percy remained involved in South African affairs until after the Boer War and he and Bessie visited the Cape frequently, they made their home in England.

<sup>8</sup> Coghills Hotel. A famous Cape hostelry, once described as the best hotel in South Africa. Situated on a large site at the corner of Piers Road and Main Road, Wynberg, now occupied by the buildings of the Grand Bazaars and others. Built c. 1870 and demolished a century later. **I well remember the hotel standing at the entrance to Wynberg in the 1950s, although it was by that time much diminished in stature and had already lost most of its grounds. (Robert Molteno)**

<sup>9</sup> **A West African community, many of whom served on Royal Navy and other ships in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A number of them settled in Cape Town.**

<sup>10</sup> Sir John Gordon Sprigg, K.C.M.G., politician, Member of Parliament, and Cape Premier, 1878-81.

<sup>11</sup> L. Maclean, Joint General Manager (with Duncan Campbell Andrews) of the Castle Line in Cape Town.

<sup>12</sup> The Scotch Church was St Andrews Presbyterian Church in St. Andrews Square, off Strand Street, Cape Town.

<sup>13</sup> More usually known as de Schuur (or Groote Schuur). Acquired in 1879 by Hester Ann van der Byl who renamed it 'The Grange'. In 1890 she sold the property to Cecil John Rhodes who engaged Sir Herbert Baker to redesign the building after the original was damaged by fire. Rhodes re-christened the property Groote Schuur and it is now the Cape Town residence of South Africa's Presidents.

<sup>14</sup> Sir Hercules Robinson, High Commissioner and Governor of the Cape Colony, 1881.

<sup>15</sup> The Glen – a popular picnic site which still survives in Kloof Nek valley at Camps Bay, and famed for its hydrangeas.

<sup>16</sup> **Percy's sister, Maria, was four years older than him. In 1879, at the age of 23, she had married a Cape Town businessman, Thomas Anderson, who was a widower and 12 years older than her. By the time of Sir Donald Currie's visit to the Cape, Tom and Maria already had three small children.**

<sup>17</sup> Claremont House (<http://www.moltenofamily.net/people-and-places/important-places/claremont-house/>), the home of Sir John Charles Molteno, **who had died the year before Sir Donald Currie's trip**, and from which the Cape Town suburb of Claremont takes its name. **Click on the link to see more photos and fascinating detail about Claremont House which was the centre of Molteno family life from the 1860s to the 1920s.**

<sup>18</sup> **The Cape Flats stretch over 20 miles between the mountains of the Cape Peninsula where Cape Town is situated, and the Hottentots Holland Mountains where the rise up to the African plateau starts. To north and south, the Flats are bounded by the sea – Table Bay and False Bay. Indeed the Flats were under the ocean not too long ago. As a result, they remained barren, often shifting, sand dunes until an Australian import, the Port Jackson bush, was introduced and began to bind the soil. Even then, and despite the high water table and consequent vleis (little lakes) that dot the landscape, the Flats are not suitable for agriculture unless the land is patiently built up with manure and compost.**

<sup>19</sup> **Eighty years later (in the 1950s), I remember well how my mother took me riding here (at first in wicker basket fastened to the horse's withers, later on my Shetland pony Billy, and finally on a real horse, Amigo!) when I was growing up on Little Princess Vlei in Heathfield. In one direction, we were immediately on the Cape Flats – almost devoid of people in those days except for one poverty-stricken slum called Blouville -- and we often rode past Ronde Vlei and Zeekoei Vlei down to the sea. And in the other direction, we would head for Constantia where amid pine woods and vineyards – this was before the urban vandalism that allowed so many of the farms on the slopes of Constantia Berg to be built over. The riding was almost as enchanting as Maria and Bessie experienced it in 1887.**

<sup>20</sup> Captain G. A. C. Wisely, Royal Engineers, husband of Maria, the diarist.

<sup>21</sup> Mrs Murray, the wife of W. H. Murray, the Scottish missionary. **I suspect Mr McDonald, who transcribed this diary, is in error here. 'Mrs Murray' is more than likely Percy Molteno's elder sister, Caroline. In 1871 she had accompanied her father, John Charles Molteno, on a long trip to Europe, and had stayed with Sir Donald Currie and his family in Britain at that time. By 1887, she was married to Dr C F K Murray and was living in Cape Town.**

<sup>22</sup> Sir Charles Abercrombie Smith. Botanist and politician. Commissioner of Crown Lands and Public Works and a former member of John Charles Molteno's Cabinet.

<sup>23</sup> **Maria is not correct. The Southeaster tends to blow in the summer months and cools the Cape Peninsula down, but without usually bringing rain.**

<sup>24</sup> Sir David Gill, K.C.B., famous astronomer, appointed Astronomer Royal at the Cape Town Observatory on 19 February 1879.

<sup>25</sup> Admiral Sir Walter J. Hunt-Grubbe K.C.B., Commander-in-Chief, the Africa Station.

<sup>26</sup> Sir Thomas Upington K.C.M.G. Lawyer, Attorney-General and Supreme Court judge. Former Cape Prime Minister (1886). The town of Upington is named after him.

<sup>27</sup> Sir Thomas C. Scanlen K.C.M.G. Succeeded Sir Gordon Sprigg as Prime Minister. He was the first South African born Premier of a self-governing Cape Colony.

<sup>28</sup> Mr and Mrs Fuller (nee Elizabeth Mann). Mr Fuller represented Cape Town for 23 years in the Cape Parliament and was a former Editor of the *Cape Argus*. General Manager of the rival Union Steamship Line. Knighted in 1904.

<sup>29</sup> Sutherland was personal maid and companion to Maria and Bessie on this trip.

<sup>30</sup> **The daily baskets of flowers must be Percy Molteno's doing! See Note 7 above.**

<sup>31</sup> Sir Henry de Villiers. Subsequently Lord de Villiers, first baron of Wynberg, judge and Cape politician.

<sup>32</sup> Maurice Greite had been a passenger on the *Norham Castle*.

<sup>33</sup> Unidentified.

<sup>34</sup> The van der Byls were then the occupants of the historic property, later renamed *Groote Schuur*.

<sup>35</sup> Colonel, the Hon. F. X. Schermbrucker. Famous soldier, journalist and Cape politician. Commissioner of Crown Lands.

<sup>36</sup> **ie. Sir Donald and his two daughters Maria and Bess, Sutherland their maid, Mr Maclean the Castle Line's Joint General Manager in South Africa, and Mr Smith, Sir Donald's Private Secretary.**

<sup>37</sup> The railway from Cape Town to Kimberley had been opened two years earlier. **This was, of course, the railway that Sir Donald Currie's friend, John Charles Molteno, had initiated the building of when he was Prime Minister of the Cape (1872-78). The line had only reached Kimberley, a distance of some 650 miles, in 1885, more than a decade after it had been first conceived.**

<sup>38</sup> Sir Donald Currie had been elected to the British Parliament in 1880.

<sup>39</sup> Bessie Currie was severely lame in one leg all her life, the result of a family accident when, as a little child, she had been tossed in the air and not caught properly as she came down.

<sup>40</sup> They were probably beyond Touws River by this time and about to get up on to the Great Karoo proper.

<sup>41</sup> This is the Kimberley Big Hole. Dug entirely by hand in pursuit of the gigantic diamond 'pipe' located here, the hole eventually became quarter of a mile across and some 800 feet deep.

<sup>42</sup> The railway at this date, as noted, went no further and the little party now switched to light wagons and a cart as they headed east towards the Boer Republic of the Orange Free State and its little capital, Bloemfontein.

<sup>43</sup> They are travelling in summer, the rainy season on the Highveld.

<sup>44</sup> Modder Rivier (Mud or Brown River).

<sup>45</sup> The Union Line was the main rival to Sir Donald Currie's Castle Line on the Cape route.

<sup>46</sup> J.H. Brand. President of the Orange Free State Republic.

<sup>47</sup> **More accurately, Johannes Henricus Brand, President of the Orange Free State Republic. He had been given a knighthood by the British – presumably as a conciliatory gesture towards this Boer Republic whose regained independence Britain had recently conceded.**

<sup>48</sup> 'Zebra fountain'.

<sup>49</sup> A country dance, possibly originating in Bohemia, and popular in the Victorian era.

<sup>50</sup> *Spruit* -- stream.

<sup>51</sup> This was for Nagmaal. Boer farmers would come in periodically to the nearest Dutch Reformed Church when a predikant (a minister) was available to conduct the communion service. It also provided a rare occasion for the white community to gather and see one another.

<sup>52</sup> **Frank Molteno, aged 24, was a slightly younger brother of Percy. A land surveyor by training, he spent a short time in the South African Republic immediately following the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand. But he was already engaged to Ella Jones (April 1887) – an engagement some of his family disapproved of! – and he soon returned to the Cape where he lived for the rest of his life. He died at the age of 63 in the tragic Salt River train crash of 1926.**

<sup>53</sup> **Pretoria has always been famous for its jacaranda trees with their spectacular mauve blossom.**

<sup>54</sup> Paul Kruger. President of the South African Republic.

<sup>55</sup> John X. Merriman, Member of the Legislative Assembly (Cape Colony) and Treasurer-General in the Rhodes Ministry.

<sup>56</sup> Becketts, the still flourishing tea and coffee manufacturing business, T.W. Beckett & Co. Ltd., Pretoria.

<sup>57</sup> Edward A. Lippert. Transvaal financier.

<sup>58</sup> **Sir Donald Currie was 62 when he made this arduous trip around South Africa.**

<sup>59</sup> **Sir Donald's party was now setting off from Pretoria heading for the coastal town of Durban in the colony of Natal several hundred miles to the Southeast. The railway from Durban only reached Johannesburg towards the end of the next decade.**

<sup>60</sup> **Majuba was the site of one of the most significant British defeats at the hands of Boer forces. Afrikaner historians came to call this short war in 1880-81 the First War of Independence (the Boer War of 1899-1902 being the Second). It forced Britain to recognise again the independence of the South African Republic and the Orange Free State.**

<sup>61</sup> **ie. Not side-saddle which at that time was still the way most women rode.**

<sup>62</sup> **The Battle of Majuba Hill had taken place in February 1881, only six years before the Curries' visit.**

<sup>63</sup> Hon. Cornwallis Maude. Captain, General Colley's staff officer, killed at the battle of Majuba, 1881.

<sup>64</sup> Incando [?] River, a tributary of the Buffalo River.

<sup>65</sup> **Maria's use of the word 'roads' must not conjure up anything we would recognize today. The Curries were travelling some decades before the age of modern graders which level gravel roads, let alone tarmac.**

<sup>66</sup> D. Hunter (later Sir David Hunter). Scottish-born first General Manager of the Natal Government Railways and subsequently first General Manager of the South African Railways. Subsequently a politician.

<sup>67</sup> Sir John William Ackerman. Natal businessman, politician and Speaker of the Natal Colonial Parliament.

<sup>68</sup> Sir Henry Connor. Natal Supreme Court judge.

<sup>69</sup> The Nchanga Viaduct – a iron girder bridge 567 feet span, 90 feet above the Sterkspruit River, completed March 1880 and dismantled in 1897 because of its insecurity.

<sup>70</sup> A Durban street tree, *Hibiscus tiliaceus*.

<sup>71</sup> J.G. Maydon. Natal businessman and politician, having a special interest in the development of Durban Bay Harbour (hence the naming of Maydon Channel and Wharf).

<sup>72</sup> **The final breaking of Zulu military power had taken place only eight years earlier.**

<sup>73</sup> **Many South African rivers have a sand bar at their mouth, which makes navigation by ocean-going ships, even if small, impossible.**

<sup>74</sup> **The South African term is *dassies*.**

<sup>75</sup> Izeleni. A small settlement on the King Williams Town—Stutterheim road.

<sup>76</sup> Lovedale. The place of the still functioning Presbyterian Mission, Press, Hospital complex, and Educational Centre founded in 1841 by the Glasgow Missionary Society.

<sup>77</sup> 'Elephants' Food'. A shrub or small tree known as spekboom (*portulacaria afra*), widespread in Karroid vegetation and the natural staple diet of the elephants in the Addo National Park.

<sup>78</sup> Pluto's Vale – a pass over the Kapriviersberg mountains on the old wagon road from King Williams Town to Grahamstown. It rises 533 metres at a gradient of 1:11.

<sup>79</sup> Isandlwana. The site in Zululand of a tragic reversal suffered by the Imperial forces at the hands of the Zulu army, January 1879.



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<sup>80</sup> Mrs Ayliff. Probably Susannah, widow of Jonathan Ayliff and daughter of George Wood, businessman and Member of the Legislative Council.