

10. Self-Government – Taking the lead (1854-1871)

Beaufort West where John and Maria Molteno made their first home

Beaufort West was founded in 1818. One of the two main villages of the Great Karoo (the other being Graaff Reinet nearly 200 miles to the east), it was still a tiny settlement when John and Maria made their home there at the end of 1851. It was not linked by telegraph until a quarter of a century later; horse and ox-wagon were the only means by which information, or anything else, could arrive.¹ As for the railway, it only reached the village in 1880, by which time John had long since moved to Cape Town.

Beaufort nestled on the flats below the Nieuwveld Mountains between two streams, the Gamka and the Kuils, which flowed only intermittently but had several strong springs. Until the 1880s the village depended on these and a handful of wells for its water. A furrow ran down each side of the two main streets, Donkin and Bird, from which householders led water for their vegetable gardens and the lemon, fig, almond and other fruit trees many of them planted. The two streets, uniquely in South Africa, were lined with pear trees which had been planted in the 1830s.² The Council encouraged tree planting and new streets gradually had an array of weeping willows, mulberry and Cape lilac trees.

Thick bush grew on the banks of the Gamka and were home to lions and leopards that preyed off the buck and zebras, as well as wild ostriches and baboons, that grazed on the surrounding flats. Throughout the 19th century Beaufort's inhabitants went out hunting for the pot.

In 1830 there were still only some 30 permanent houses, home to the 200 or so people who regarded themselves as Whites or Europeans. There were also a larger number of people of mixed Griqua, slave and Boer ancestry, who formed the Coloured community and were the skilled artisans of the village.³ By the time John and Maria settled there, the number of inhabitants had grown substantially owing to the rapidly growing wool industry and the prosperity it was bringing.

¹ J. Bond, *They were South Africans*, Oxford University Press, 1957, p. 114. Ox-wagons took three weeks to reach Beaufort from Cape Town; once Mitchells Pass was opened in 1848, horse-drawn vehicles took only 12 days.

² Most of this information is drawn from W. G. H. & S. Vivier, *Hooyvlakte: Die Verhaal van Beaufort-Wes, 1818-1968*, Cape Town, Nasionale Boekhandel, 1969.

³ A century later as the apartheid regime intensified racial segregation and discrimination after 1948, the Coloured community in Beaufort West suffered badly. On occasion they riposted with a bitter humour. When the government built a segregated 'location' called Rustdene, and forcibly moved them there, the inhabitants responded by saying they now lived in *Visblikkies* – sardine cans, a sarcastic reference, no doubt, to the tiny size of the rooms or the fact perhaps that their people were being thrown away like any other trash. And when Coloured and White people were prohibited by law from ever playing in the same football team, one Coloured team started to call themselves the All Whites, a joking reference to New Zealand's famous All Blacks. Vivier, *Hooyvlakte*, op. cit., p. 130.

Caroline Molteno's memories of her childhood in Beaufort West

Caroline, John and Maria's second daughter, was born in 1853. Blessed with a superb memory, her reminiscences provide a real feel for the time and place where she grew up.⁴

As I recall those early days at Beaufort and the few families that formed its simple society, each name bears a little group of associations.... There were Dr. and Mrs. Christie with whose children we most often played as they lived not far from us on the opposite side of the long straggling street. He was the only doctor in the *dorp* until Dr. Kitching, Beatrice Bisset's father,⁵ settled there for a time. A very great friend of Papa's was Mr. Rice whose father, Dr. Rice, was principal of the Blue Coat School in London and a distinguished scholar. Kind motherly Mrs. Rice was a Miss de Jager of Beaufort. Near us lived Mr. Dantje de Villiers, a man of great ability and character and who had a very large family. One of his daughters married Mr. W. Elliott who managed one of Papa's Nelspoort farms for many years and who is the father of Mabel and Emily Elliott. Then there were the Pritchards, Thwaites, Devenishes, Mustos, Kinnears and the Dutch clergyman Mr. Fraser and his family. The lonely old postmaster, Mr. Cardwell, was said to belong to a very good family in England and no one knew why he came to bury himself in this far-away solitude; but he was very kind to us children when we went to his post office which I think must have also been a little shop, and there was always a handful of small pink rose peppermints ready for us.

Mr. Madison, too, the manager of Uncle Alport's store, was always a kind friend with a pleasant word of welcome and often a little packet of sweets for us too. Many years after, when for the first time I revisited Beaufort, it was with the keenest interest that I sought, and did find, some of the old landmarks in my memory. As I walked down the street, still shaded by the familiar old pear trees, an old man rose from a *stoep* where he was sitting and, coming forward, shook me warmly by the hand. I found he was our old friend Mr. Madison. When I asked him how he could possibly recognise me when he had not seen me since I was seven years old, he said, 'Oh, I could never fail to recognise a Molteno face.' Then he began to talk of Papa and of how optimistic he was as to the possibilities of the district. He told me how once, when Mr. Rawson, the Colonial Secretary,⁶ was on a visit to Beaufort, Papa invited him to go with him to one of his Nelspoort farms where he said he could show him 40,000 sheep collected in one spot. This he did, to Mr. Rawson's complete amazement, for those were the days when the Karoo was looked upon as a worthless desert.

⁴ Caroline Murray (nee Molteno), *Reminiscences of the Old Cape*. For the full text, see <https://www.moltenofamily.net/diaries-and-reminiscences/diaries-and-reminiscences-of-the-molteno-murray-and-other-related-families/>

⁵ Beatrice was a cousin of Caroline; her grandmother, Betty Bisset, being a sister of Caroline's mother.

⁶ The Colonial Secretary was the Governor's top official heading the Colony's administration.

There was no kind of social life or amusement that I can remember in that serious little community but once, when Sir George Grey, the Governor, was expected, I recollect seeing with some wonder little white muslin frocks, with pink and blue ribbons, being made for Betty and me. The actual function has left no clear impression except that the Governor took me up in his arms and kissed me. Another time I again remember seeing Sir George was about two years later, when he called at Somerset House to see Papa just before we left for England.⁷ I remember sitting on his knee while he talked to Grandpapa [Jarvis] and Papa who both had a warm admiration and friendship for him.

Aunt Sophy and Uncle Alport

It wasn't just John and Maria who settled in Beaufort West. As we saw in the previous chapter, Percy Alport and his wife Sophy, who was Maria's elder sister, decided to join them and settle there too. Not having children of their own seemed only to strengthen how much they became part of the Molteno family circle. Caroline takes up the story again:

As my mind wanders back to those old days at Beaufort, dear Aunt Sophy and Uncle Alport seem linked with our lives almost as closely as our own parents. Their home was quite close to ours, our gardens meeting at the back.

How well I remember that garden – the vines with the irrigation *sloots* between – the peach and fig and apricot trees. Two other friendly trees, a walnut and a mulberry, which seemed to me of gigantic size, stood in front of our house.

Between our garden and the back of Aunt Sophy's house were the kennels, with a railed-in courtyard, where Uncle Alport kept his hunting dogs. These we regarded with the same terror as we would wild animals. I can still see Uncle Alport riding back from a hunt with the dogs dancing round his horse and [dead] hares and *corans*⁸ hanging from his saddle. His horses and dogs were to him like children in the tenderness with which he cared for them.

One could not think of Uncle Alport and Aunt Sophy apart from one another, their lives were so completely blended. In the beautifully ordered home that dear Aunt Sophy made wherever she went, one could feel the influence of her quiet, capable character while the sweetness of her unselfish nature made her a helpful refuge in every difficulty, and it was just this combination of gentleness and strength that gave her the courage to uncomplainingly endure a life of unusual suffering which finally reduced her to a completely helpless invalid. She told me that she had had a severe attack of rheumatic fever when a child of twelve and that since she was sixteen she had not known one day free from pain. Papa was deeply attached to her as well as to Uncle Alport. To Mama she took the place at Beaufort of a mother more than of a sister.

⁷ See later in this chapter for the details of the family's trip to England in 1861.

⁸ *Korhaan* or Karoo bustard.

Caroline added that 'Aunt Sophy seemed born with all the gifts of creating a home and understanding the care of little children although she never had any of her own.... To us they were like second parents. Our two families were inseparable to the end of their lives.'⁹

Uncle Alport was 'one of the kindest of men', his nephew Percy Molteno wrote, 'and very fond of animals of all kinds'. He was a keen improver of stock and, in order to improve the yield and quality of the wool produced on the Karoo farms, imported thoroughbred sheep – as well as thoroughbred pigs, fowls etc – from overseas.¹⁰ When he retired from business and settled in Cape Town next door to John's family at Claremont House, he established a stud for thoroughbred race horses although he never engaged in betting himself, it being something he didn't believe in. The only problem however, Percy remarked, was that 'he considered the period of six o'clock in the evening to the following morning too long a period for horses to go without food, and as his coachman did not live on the place, he himself used to go out to the stables and give them a feed at nine o'clock. Some of his horses very quickly got to know the time and, if he did not appear on the very stroke of the hour, they would break their halters ... taking advantage of his kindness in this way.' What's more, they 'were generally so well fed that they got beyond themselves and gave great trouble by running away and upsetting carriages and generally terrifying Mrs Alport who was of a somewhat nervous disposition.'

Maria

Maria created a very happy home for her growing family. She was only 20 when she and John arrived in Beaufort West. The two of them got on well. Years later, however, Caroline reflected on how the move from Cape Town may have struck her mother:

I wonder now as I think of what it must have meant to her, with her gay, sunny nature and attractive beauty, to be suddenly transported from her happy environment into the heart of the desolate, almost awesome, Karoo which in those days of long and comfortless ox or mule wagon journeys seemed like the very end of the world. No wonder that she and Aunt Sophy were almost overwhelmed by the terrific wilderness around them. But she had a wonderful power of sunshine within her, and life with Papa could never be dull.

And there were of course her children. In that Victorian age, there were neither easy methods of birth control, nor much idea of the downsides, in particular for mothers, of endless pregnancies and very large families. Certainly in Maria's case, her babies came thick and fast. The first, Betty, was born in September 1852, followed only 13 months later by Caroline in October 1853. John Charles came a year and a half later in April 1855, but died the following year, 1856. The third girl, Maria, was born on the last day of that same year, and was followed by Hercules Jarvis in July 1858. When another little boy was born in March 1860, he was also christened John, but came to be known as Charlie. The joy attendant on his birth was marred however, less than a year later, by the death of

⁹ Caroline Molteno, 'Early Recollections', TS.

¹⁰ Percy Molteno's research into the life, and his recollections, of Percy Alport.

his elder brother, Jarvis. Caroline never forgot how deeply this second death of one of the children affected her father:

When I was about seven years old there came upon us a crushing sorrow. Our little brother Jarvis, who was about two and a half years old, was taken from us after a very short illness, which we called 'white sore throat' [diphtheria]. He was a dear serious little fellow and I still have a picture in my memory of his little face and figure as he gravely walked about under the big walnut tree as if his mind were full of thoughts. Papa was passionately devoted to his only boy¹¹ and had made him his constant companion. The blow fell so suddenly that he was almost distracted with grief and the darkness of those days is still deeply shadowed in my memory. Papa could not bear to separate himself from the precious little earthly remains which were laid temporarily in a sacred spot in our garden to be removed to wherever we should eventually make our home. When, some years after, we had settled down at Claremont House and our little brother Alfred also died and was laid in St. Saviour's churchyard, the two older brothers¹² were laid with him in the same grave.

These deaths meant that Betty and Caroline grew up initially as the only children in the family and were a number of years older than their brothers – something that had significant consequences in later years.

John Charles Molteno and Maria Jarvis's Family¹³

Birth	Christian Names	Marriage	Spouse/Partner	Death
1852 – 24 Sept.	Elizabeth Maria Betty		Alice Greene	1927 – 25 Aug.
1853 – 22 Oct.	Caroline	1876	Charles Frederick Kennan Murray	1937 – 6 Dec.
1855 – 24 April	John Charles			1856
1856 – 31 Dec.	Maria	1879	Thomas Anderson	1903 – 17 Jul.
1858 – 23 July	Hercules Jarvis			1861 – Jan.
1860 – 4 March	John Charles Charlie	1897	Lucy Lindley Mitchell	1924

¹¹ Little Jarvis was the only boy in the family almost all his short life.

¹² John Charles (b. 24.4.1855, d. 1856), Hercules Jarvis (b.23.7.1858, d. January 1861), and Alfred Bower (b. 1.10.1867, d. 71.1873). Of the 14 children Maria bore, four died in childhood.

¹³ Source: 'Molteno Family Register', P. Brooke Simons, *Apples of the Sun*, op. cit., and TS, 'Sir John Molteno's Children by his 2nd marriage, Elizabeth Maria Jarvis'. The name by which each child came to be known is in Bold.

1861 – 12 Sept.	Percy Alport	1889	Elizabeth ‘Bessie’ Currie	1937 – 19 Sep.
1863 – 16 Feb.	Frank		Ella Mary Jones	1926 – 9 Jun.
1865 – 5 Jan.	James Tennant	1889	Clarissa Celia ‘Clare’ Holland-Pryor	1936 – 16 Sep.
1866 – 13 April	Victor Grey	1895	Mildred Jones	1926
1867 – 10 Jan.	Alfred Bower			1873 – 7 Jan.
1869 – 3 Dec.	William Wallace Dickson	1907 (CHECK)	Lilias Sandeman	1931 – 22 Nov.
1872 – 30 April	Vincent Barkly	1915	Ethel Robertson	1952
1874 – 22 March	Sophia Mary			1875 – 8 Feb.

As so often happened in that age, little information survives about what the mother of the family did and thought. Since Maria and John were seldom apart for long (except notably during his 8-month trip to Europe in 1871-2), there are very few letters in existence between them.¹⁴ John clearly greatly needed her love and attention even if his affection could sound over-demanding on occasion. ‘My dearest wife, I was much disappointed this day’, he wrote her from Beaufort West on 21 October 1862, ‘at not receiving a letter from you.... so shall not hear from you or know how you and the dear children are until I get home.’¹⁵ He concluded that she must have got back from Kalk Bay late on Thursday ‘which is the only way in which I can account for your not writing.’ And on another occasion Maria was writing to her daughter Caroline but cut her letter short, saying: ‘I must end... It is dull for Papa if I write too long!’

Maria kept in touch by letter with her mother-in-law, Caroline, in London, although she only met her during the short time she and John spent there on their 1861 trip. Caroline felt very affectionate towards her daughter-in-law: ‘Your letters are always delightful to me’, she wrote, signing herself, ‘Your affectionate Mother’.¹⁶ Maria and her sister-in-law, Mrs Nancy Bingle, in Richmond also wrote to each other, further keeping up a close connection between the family in England and at the Cape.

Maria’s parents, Hercules and Elizabeth Jarvis, always remained very important to her. She saw a lot of them throughout the 1850s during the Molteno family’s lengthy annual stays in Cape Town. Following his election to Parliament in 1854, John had to be there for the session. He usually rented

¹⁴ A small file of Maria’s letters exists. They are difficult to read and regrettably I have not done so.

¹⁵ John Charles Molteno to his wife, 21 Oct. 1862.

¹⁶ Caroline Molteno (nee Bower) to Mrs J. C. (Maria) Molteno (nee Jarvis), 4 Jan. 1864.

a house in Green Point near the sea. This was both convenient for him to attend Parliament and an easy walk across Green Point Common to the Jarvis home on Somerset Road. 'In the Spring', the Common 'was gaily carpeted with pink and yellow sorrel flowers, or *suring blommetjes*', and Betty and Caroline 'spent many happy hours of play' there. And when their mother walked them up to her parents' home really early in the day, Caroline never forgot 'the feeling of the fresh early morning air on the *stoep* before breakfast and the Malay 'fruit boys' coming to the steps with their tempting large round baskets suspended on a bamboo pole across their shoulders.'¹⁷ Living in the house also were their slightly older cousins, Bazett and Willie Blenkins, who were almost the only playmates Betty and Caroline had at this time. With 'reading always our greatest delight and resource', the two sisters read their cousins' books, 'mostly tales of schoolboy life and adventure'.

Sadly, this halcyon era ended with the death of Maria's mother in 1864 and her father's bankruptcy and the sale of the old family home in the same year.

Betty and Caroline at school in Beaufort West

John sometimes had to trek down from Beaufort to Cape Town on business. On one occasion he brought back with him his mother-in-law, Elizabeth Maria Jarvis, and all her family including her widowed daughter Annie Blenkins and Annie's children – a visit that turned into a year-long stay. Caroline takes up the story:

When the party returned to Cape Town, Aunt Annie with Bazett and Willie¹⁸ were left to stay with us until we went up the following year. This was immense happiness to Betty and myself who looked up to our cousins with the reverent devotion of little girls for their boy playfellows of a year or two older. I must then have been about four years old, but one of the impressions I can recall is of all four of us going to a school where, on arrival, we were placed in rows and made to hold out our hands for our nails to be examined. If the result was not satisfactory a rap of the cane on the knuckles was the punishment. But I have not unhappy memories of the school and the kind teacher, Miss Fraser, whose father was the minister of the Dutch Church which my mother attended. Besides, the pride of going to school would have compensated for much. I can just remember standing in a long row of children gazing up at a blackboard hanging on the wall and making out the letters N A M E.

Back to business – John Molteno and Percy Alport

¹⁷ Caroline Murray, *Reminiscences of the Old Cape*, op. cit.

¹⁸ Bazett and Willie Blenkins, Caroline and Betty's first cousins. Their mother, Aunt Annie (Jarvis), had married Major Blenkins and been widowed in India.

Although John had decided to live in Beaufort West and had placed his cousin, Arthur Jackson, and Mr Elliott in charge at Nelspoort, he remained closely involved in the farming operations. A year after settling in Beaufort, for example, he threw himself into the details of sending more than 1,000 sheep down to Cape Town – they had, of course, to walk the whole way, and have time to graze. In his usual meticulous fashion, he despatched a flood of letters to his agent telling him in what fine condition the sheep were when they left the farm, how good the grazing along the way was, and making the necessary arrangements for their reception and sale. He also wrote to the overseer in charge of the sheep inquiring how the trek was progressing and giving him instructions about linking up with his agent in Cape Town.

But it was new lines of business in Beaufort that John now spent most of his time developing. One was a transport business. He had at least four ox-wagons on the road and was in constant correspondence with his commercial contacts in Cape Town and the much smaller settlement at Port Elizabeth. This business was not just to do with marketing the wool and tallow from his own sheep; he was also bringing in goods like tea and coffee and marketing them in the Karoo. At one point, he even speculated in cargoes of wheat and complained of the troubles he had with weevils.

The most enduring business partnership he developed was with Percy Alport, his brother-in-law, who was also a close and trusted friend. Percy Alport recollected how he went up to Beaufort in 1853 ‘to take charge of some business and farming operations at Nelspoort’, but Mr Rice was just giving up his management of John’s Beaufort business. John put Percy in charge¹⁹ and the two of them started a company as partners called P. J. Alport & Co. which became one of the leading enterprises in the village. Its premises were at first in a single-storey building on Donkin Street opposite where the ox-wagons would outspan on arrival.²⁰ It was run primarily by Percy and handled everything under the sun, including firearms and ammunition, and with a huge bottle store at the back.

P. J. Alport & Co. also got involved in the wool and hide trade. Once farmers realized that washing their wool made it more marketable, Percy and John saw the opportunity and in 1868 rented five morgen of land from the Council just below the wall of the new Springfontein Dam. Here they opened the first wool washing plant which simply involved driving the sheep through the water flowing strongly out of the dam’s sluice gates. The water then swept on to power a grain mill which their Company also built. All this, however, was utterly destroyed the following year when the dam, situated at one end of the village, burst following a torrential downpour on 23 October 1869. For two and a half hours a raging torrent roared through the village. Several buildings were completely washed away, including John and Percy’s washing plant and grain mill, and the shop lost a further £1,500 worth of stock, a huge sum in those days. Luckily few lives were lost since most people had rushed up on to the dam wall, the part that hadn’t collapsed, in order to escape the disaster.

Percy and John’s enterprises thrived despite this setback. They opened branches of the shop in Prince Albert and Victoria West. They even started a dressmaking business. And in 1874 they built a

¹⁹ Frank Molteno’s handwritten note of what Percy Alport told him in 1894.

²⁰ W. G. H. & S. Vivier, *Hooyvlakte*, op. cit., pp. 26, 67-8.

new double-storey building opposite the original shop, and even installed plateglass windows. This housed the shop, the print works of the local newspaper, *The Courier*, and the office of Beaufort West's telegraph which reached the town the year after the new building was completed. Almost everything the Company sold had to be imported; in 1883 it even shipped in the Council's first fire engine from the United States. The business outlasted both John and Percy and was eventually taken over in 1916.

John spotted yet another market opportunity very early on. The absence of banking facilities on the Karoo prompted him in 1854 to draw on what he had learned 20 years before in Cape Town, and start his own bank. He persuaded eight local residents to join him as Directors.²¹ It was a private bank and for a time John issued his own notes, payable in the three main coastal towns of Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and Mossel Bay.²² The Beaufort West Municipality opened its account with John's Beaufort Bank on 27 September 1855. But it was a tiny 'one branch' affair without premises of its own; it just borrowed the schoolroom in Kerkstraat at the end of the school day. It also didn't have a proper safe, merely a big iron-bound wooden chest, bigger than a wagon chest, which now rests peacefully in the Beaufort Museum. Whether profitable or not during the short time of its independent existence, it was perhaps inevitable that the Standard Bank in Cape Town moved in and in classic fashion took over the little Bank in 1864.

John and politics in Beaufort

John, with his boundless energy, also decided to branch out in yet another direction. Businessmen often involve themselves in politics because their affairs are so greatly affected by what the authorities do by way of taxation, regulation, the provision (or not) of much needed infrastructure and so on. In 1853, he got elected a member of Beaufort West's Municipal Council and served on it for five years.²³

He also got involved in the wider affairs of the huge Beaufort West district. A big problem on the Karoo in the 1850s was the absence of any maintained roads, as opposed to the pitted tracks carved out by the wheels of wagons. When a Divisional Council was set up in 1856, John, along with the magistrate J. J. Meintjes and four other men, became its first members. It held its meetings in the same schoolroom the Bank used and for half a century employed no permanent staff.²⁴ One of its main responsibilities, however, was to begin building roads in the district and in 1858 it started construction of the first proper wagon trail from Beaufort West to Karoo Poort. Progress must have been slow because the work only had a foreman with six men to help him and the use of a

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

²² *Biographical Encyclopedia of South Africa*, p. 483.

²³ W. G. H. & S. Vivier, *Hooyvlakte*, op. cit., p. 218. A couple of generations later in the 1920s and 30s, a cousin, Julius Jackson, who had also become a farmer in the district, served on the Beaufort West Council and became Mayor.

²⁴ W. G. H. & S. Vivier, *Hooyvlakte*, op. cit., p. 103.

secondhand ox-wagon. But ten years later the first roads in the district were proclaimed and tolls levied in order to finance them.

These first steps into politics were very important for John.²⁵ He had to learn to speak in public; the first time there is any record of his doing so was a speech he made ‘with considerable diffidence’ in the market place at Beaufort, probably in 1849, opposing the Cape being turned into a penal settlement.²⁶ He also had to overcome his tendency to be quite a private, even shy, man and expand his acquaintance with the farmers in the district. His reputation as one of the area’s most prosperous farmers, having a wife who was half-Dutch, and being himself able to speak the language²⁷ as well as having fought in the 1846 Frontier War, must all have increased his standing in the community.

Life on the Nelspoort farms – a Spartan existence

Caroline described how her father often used to take the family with him on his visits to the Nelspoort farms. They would travel by ox-wagon. She was struck by how spartan life there was in the 1850s:

I can just recall the pleasurable excitement of change and travel as well as a certain feeling of disappointment when we reached the bare comfortless little farm houses with earth +floors and not a scrap of green or shade about them. The only thing that brought any life or interest to us was the bleating flocks that came in the evenings to the kraals. At this time the parents of the present generation of Elliotts and Jacksons²⁸ occupied the different Nelspoort farms. I wonder whether their descendants ever try to realize, in the contrast today of[pp]]theirluxurious homes and surroundings, the vision that comesn 4 to me of that stern struggling past, and especially of the heroic patient mothers upon whom the heaviest part of the burden fell. It is a memory that may well be treasured with reverent admiration, as well as with gratitude, for upon their endurance and sacrifices were slowly built up the comforts their children now enjoy.

²⁵ In telling the story of John Molteno’s personal life and his political engagement, I have drawn heavily on the family archives held by the University of Cape Town. I have not been able to examine the Cape newspapers; John Molteno’s own papers held in the South African National Library; or three potentially important sources – P. M. H. Calitz, *Die Molteno Administrasie aan die Kaap*, Ph.D., 1965 (University of Stellenbosch?); Phyllis Lewsen, *The First Crises in Responsible Government*, University of Witwatersrand, 1940, 208pp.; and A. L. Harrington, *Parliament of the Cape of Good Hope, with special reference to party politics 1872-1910*, Government Printer, 1973, 349pp.

²⁶ Mr Auret heard John speak and told Percy Molteno about it years later. Percy Molteno to Caroline Murray, 23 March 1887.

²⁷ *Biographical Encyclopedia of South Africa*, p. 497.

²⁸ The Jacksons were another set of Caroline’s cousins, but on her English grandmother, Caroline Bower’s, side of the family. See Chapter 8.

Travel by Ox-wagon – the family’s annual trek to Cape Town

Every year John took the family on the 350 mile trek from Beaufort West to Cape Town to spend time there. By the end of the 1850s the party included not only Betty and Caroline and their mother, but the two youngest children also – Maria who had been born in late 1856 and baby Jarvis born in July 1858. Although Caroline was only a little girl, she remembered these trips by ox-wagon, or *bolderwag*, as something she and Betty looked forward to eagerly, and she wrote a lovely description of what they involved:

Much preparation was necessary ..., as on the bare and lonely route there was no way of supplying anything that might be forgotten. The selection of mules or oxen, and of drivers, was a matter of the greatest consideration. Provisions, too, had to be thought of and were all packed into a large basket with a cover, called a *kos mandje*,²⁹ for hotels of any kind were then unknown and the few farms we passed were of the most primitive description. Inside the wagon was stretched a sort of cane framework called a *katel* upon which mattresses were laid, and there my mother and the children slept while the men slept on the ground.

When the eagerly looked for day at last arrived, the long tent wagon with its team of twelve to sixteen animals would be standing ready in the wide straggling street in front of our house, the drivers looking proud and smart with wild ostrich feathers stuck in their felt hats and in their hands the long bamboo-stick whips which they could crack with a sound like the report of a pistol. Papa himself would have seen to the important matter of packing which had to be done with scrupulous care and economy of space. This was seldom completed without some nervous strain, so that when at last the critical moment arrived and we were all ready to climb in and take our places, it would be an awful moment for everyone when Papa's eagle eye would fall upon some unfortunate individual trying to smuggle in some forgotten but necessary belonging.

It was a relief, like after a storm, when we heard the crack of the whip and the shout to the oxen as we slowly creaked and rumbled through the little village out into the lonely veldt. I used to long for some relief in the monotony of the limitless Karoo. Always the same bare level plains covered only with sparse low bush and plentiful stones stretching away to mountains on the horizon which seemed to promise some new thing, but which, when reached, brought only a higher plateau of the same featureless expanse. It was not scenery that would appeal to a child who longed for trees and flowers, but it created a memory that now no other scenery can stir with quite the same emotion.

The stages of our journey, or *outspans*, were determined by the important consideration of water. We had to take the rare chance of pools in a river bed for a wash, and often had to depend for drinking-water upon the *vaatje*, a sort of little flat cask which would be filled and have to last till the next water was reached. In the thirsty heat, when the stage between was long, this was often a severe trial. As to food, there was room for only the barest necessaries. Butter and milk were unknown luxuries in the Karoo then, and the smell of

²⁹ A hamper or food basket.

black coffee still brings before me flowered *commetjes*³⁰ handed round before the first *inspan* at the earliest gleam of daylight.

Yet, despite the hardships, these journeys were always a new delight and adventure. I can remember sometimes lying awake at night in the wagon, listening with a creepy feeling through the immense stillness to the weird cry of the jackals, while close to us, the friendly munching of our animals feeding at the *disselboom*³¹ to which they were tied, gave a welcome sense of some familiar companionship.

Sometimes we took the route through Bain's Kloof and Wellington, sometimes through Ceres and Mitchell's Pass, or through Montague Pass and George and thence from Mossel Bay by sea to Cape Town. On the latter route I remember we passed the little Inn of Messrs. Furney and Swain which, after the bareness of the Karoo, seemed an oasis of comfort, and the meal of bacon and eggs for which they were famous an unbelievable luxury....

I have never forgotten the delight that the beauty of the mountain passes gave me, nor, on the other hand, the anxiety with which we watched some other wagon coming to meet us on the narrow road overhanging deep precipices. When we had to take the outer side with our long unwieldy team of animals, it was a moment of real terror, having vividly on our minds the stories of disaster with their well-remembered landmarks.

At Wellington Grandpapa³² had a house with vineyards, and there we would have the great joy of looking out for him, with our cousin Bazett, coming to meet us with their carts and horses. From there the last stage of the journey became quite a caravan, headed by our wagon drawn by 16 animals, going through the streets of Cape Town and finally turning in at the gates of Grandpapa's house in Somerset Road.³³

Looking back to the conditions of those days, I wonder that our parents with so little fuss could have accomplished this journey from Beaufort West to Cape Town and back with their small children every year until I was seven years old. But I think that difficulties had quite an exhilarating effect upon Papa and certainly they never, for a moment, deterred him from any end he wished to attain.

1854 – John elected to the Cape's first Parliament

When representative government in the Cape Colony was agreed to by the British government in 1853 and the first elections organised early the next year, John made a big decision to stand in Beaufort West. He topped the poll and, now 40 years old, joined his father-in-law, Hercules Jarvis, as

³⁰ Little cups or basins.

³¹ Wagon shaft.

³² Hercules Jarvis.

³³ This last sentence is a slight adaptation of Caroline's text drawn from Anon., 'Caroline Murray', 6 pp.

one of the 46 members of the House of Assembly. He was to hold the seat for the next 24 years, only resigning it in 1878 in circumstances we will explore in a later chapter.

His election led to huge changes in his life and ultimately transformed the lives of several of the children too. Being an MP involved him in a whole new set of work and responsibilities, in addition to his farming and business activities. It greatly widened his horizons as he learned about the range of issues facing the Colony as a whole. And it necessitated the family making a lengthy stay in Cape Town every year so that he could attend the parliamentary session; this led after a few years to their moving home from Beaufort West to Cape Town permanently. All this resulted in the two eldest children, Betty and Caroline, developing a very warm relationship with their Jarvis grandparents in Somerset Road.

What did being an MP under the system of representative government mean? It was only a quite limited form of self-government. The Governor and his top officials were not responsible to the elected Cape Parliament for their actions, nor could Parliament remove them from office. The Governor remained an autocrat whose primary line of responsibility was to the Secretary of State for Colonies and whatever political party was in power in London. But he did have to get any laws he wanted passed by the Cape Parliament, and proposed taxes approved.

John carved out a parliamentary role for himself using his experience as a businessman to hold the government to account for any wasteful expenditure and projects. In doing this he had to learn about parliamentary procedure, become an active and attentive participant in debates and committee work, and master the detail of the budgets submitted. He soon developed a formidable reputation as a powerful speaker, a fearless critic of the government's actions, and an incorruptible advocate of those policies he argued would be in the best interests of the Colony's inhabitants. These proved valuable assets when he came to the conclusion that representative government was a hollow shell unless there were ministers in charge of the government's actions who were drawn from the Cape's own inhabitants, had won public support by being elected to Parliament, and could be removed from office if their leader, the Prime Minister, or a majority of their fellow MPs, lost confidence in them. It was this struggle for what was known as responsible government that he became the principal leader of during the 1860s.

A pen portrait of him as a young MP was written as early as the 1855 session of Parliament:

The representative of Beaufort is good-natured with everybody but the Government.... In the prime of life and a man of ample proportions; cultivates his beard, or rather allows it to cultivate itself; has an intellectual appearance, a bright mischievous and restless eye, is easily amused, and takes a very active share in the business of the House. His speeches are made off-hand, without much consideration or effort. A kind of ready-made oratory, full of practical remarks, penetration, inexperience and mistakes. He is a consistent denouncer of Government abuses... and never commits himself to an appearance of wishing to curry favour with the Government. He is very apt to be led away by excessive zeal for anti-

Government attacks.... Outspoken, vigilant, attentive, he is entitled to be considered, by comparison, a parliamentary star of some magnitude.³⁴

John grew into an intimidatingly formidable parliamentary figure. He came to be known popularly as the 'Lion of Beaufort' on account of his powerful voice and large build. When he was on his feet belabouring an opponent, it was said that his roar was apt to devastate the other party. Years later an observer of parliamentary proceedings described how: 'He conveyed to his audience a sense of the great power and force within him almost fierce in its volcanic energy of expression... his belligerent energy, when in reply to attacks, the Premier throws his body back, lifts his head, and snorts like a war horse... lashed to fury... the natural expression of a determined character which had grappled with great obstacles with an overwhelming energy... held an audience spellbound.'³⁵ His luxuriant beard and bald head added to the impressiveness of his appearance. Years later towards the end of his life, a magazine, *The Knobkerrie*, ran a cartoon in tribute to him – showing his head and beard, atop the body of a lion which was standing proudly on a great rock labelled Responsible Government.³⁶

He took up a variety of issues. One of the first arose in 1855 when the Governor wanted a bill passed giving him control over the commandos – the all-volunteer (and unpaid) burgher forces – including the purposes for which he could call them out, how long they could be made to serve, and where they could be sent both within the Colony and beyond its borders. The bill also allowed wealthy individuals to buy their way out of service – a provision flagrantly unfair to poorer burghers. Drawing on his experiences during the 1846 Frontier War, John was a strenuous critic of the bill.³⁷

He became an assiduous parliamentarian. In the 1863 session held in Grahamstown, he was described as 'marvellously patient and painstaking. He never leaves his seat from the moment the session opens til it closes.... He is looked up to by a good number of the elected members as their chief, and is consulted by the Attorney-General and the Colonial Secretary on almost every question that is before the House.... When visitors go there to listen and admire, they ask ... which is Mr Molteno; and when they are told that the gentleman with the bald head and heavy beard is the man they enquire after, they take his measure from top to toe, and regard him as one of the lights of the constitutional government age, one who must inevitably be a law-giver and administrator.'³⁸

As for his appearance, 'With flowing beard..., his typical big dusty black coat and his deep booming voice, the "Beaufort Boer" made for a commanding and memorable figure'. He 'had the rough

³⁴ Limner (*nom de plume* of R. W. Murray Snr, Editor of *The Argus*), reproduced in P. A. Molteno, *The Life & Times*, op cit., Vol 1, pp. 63-4.

³⁵ A description cited in Immelman, *Sir John C. Molteno*, op. cit., Ch 7.

³⁶ *The Knobkerrie*, 13 Nov. 1884.

³⁷ *Biographical Encyclopedia of South Africa*, p. 483. For more detail, see P. A. Molteno, *The Life and Times...*, op. cit., Vol. 1, p.64 ff.

³⁸ 'Limner' (R. W. Murray)'s description of him, cited in P. A. Molteno, *The Life and Times...*, op.cit., Vol. 1, p. 91.

words and appearance of a farmer', spoke Dutch³⁹ as well as English, and reportedly also with some fluency local (Southern) African languages, having learned them from his time in the Karoo and on the frontier.⁴⁰ And despite his growing eminence he always remained a man 'of most simple and unostentatious habits'.⁴¹

The Family's first visit to Europe – Papa decides they will go on a sailing ship, 1861

It may have been the death of his only son, Jarvis, in January 1861 that precipitated John's decision to take a real break and get his family to make their first visit to Europe. It was also ten years since his only previous visit and if his mother, Caroline, who was already nearly 70, was ever to see her South African grandchildren, the journey had to be made soon. We are lucky to have her granddaughter Caroline's memories of the 18 month long trip.⁴²

Visits to Europe were not then the common event they are today,⁴³ nor were they accomplished with the ease and speed and luxury to which we are now accustomed.

There was one mail steamer a month with a voyage averaging 35 days. With the small steamers, ill-ventilated and smelly from the whale oil lamps,⁴⁴ it was no wonder that there were always some 'bad sailors' to whom the entire voyage was a martyrdom. But just when we were ready to start there sailed into the Bay a large vessel from Australia called the *Westbourne*. It was a sailing ship.

Ships always fascinated Papa and he was immediately seized with the idea of our making the voyage in her. With all speed the arrangements were completed and our large party safely embarked – boats from the Jetty in Adderley Street, taking us to the ship. Our party consisted of Papa and Mama, the four children with our coloured nurse Meitje, (old Meme

³⁹ *Biographical Encyclopedia of Southern Africa*, 1965.

⁴⁰ Notes of an SABC broadcast (date n.a.).

⁴¹ Sydney Lee (ed.), *Dictionary of National Biography*, London, Elder Smith & Co., Vol. III, p. 182.

⁴² It is amazing to think that Caroline was only eight, going on nine, during this trip; her recollections are so detailed. She seems to have written two slightly different versions of her recollections, one called *Early Recollections* and the other *Reminiscences of the Old Cape*. The text here is the latter, but I have added some sentences from the former.

⁴³ In 1913, the year when Caroline wrote her *Reminiscences of the Old Cape*.

⁴⁴ Caroline had no idea her Uncle Frank Molteno was at this very time based in Hawaii and whaling in the Northern Pacific in order to supply the world with oil for its lamps.

Hannah and her husband Tat Simon's daughter),⁴⁵ and to our great joy, our dear Aunt Betty who was then a girl of seventeen.⁴⁶ Also we took a little white terrier named Punch.

Sir George Grey⁴⁷ came to bid my father goodbye; he was also a great friend of my grandfather [Hercules Jarvis].

Grandpapa and Grandmama came to see us off and brought us many toys for the long voyage. It must have been an anxious parting for them for it would probably be at least four months before they could get any news of us. Fortunately we made an exceptionally good passage of only seven weeks. Captain Bruce and his brother, who was first mate, did all they could to make us comfortable and we had splendid big stern cabins with big windows. But though Papa found inexhaustible interest in the navigation of the ship, I think that, to Mama and Aunt Betty, the voyage must have been rather monotonous for apparently they had little in common with the Australian passengers.

Although we sighted no land the whole way, yet we constantly saw ships and passed many within speaking distance (with the 'trumpet' as we called it). More than once boats came off to make some exchange of provisions. And crossing the Line was a great ceremony with Neptune coming on board the night before, and we children thoroughly excited and pleased with the soaking we got from his hose at the end of the day. It all gave us endless variety of interest and enjoyment.

I remember particularly the days when there was a dead calm and the sailors would all sit on the deck mending the sails while we sat and talked beside them.

Sometimes the sea would be covered, as far as the eye could reach, with the tiny white sails of the 'Portuguese men-of-war' and the sailors would give us tins, perforated with holes, with which to fish for them – painful experience had taught us to avoid, with great respect, their long blue tentacles.

Ship's fare, in those days, was not luxurious. It seemed, as far as I can remember, that, at the children's table, our daily dinner consisted of roast pork which we hated and preserved potatoes that were green in colour. How we welcomed the Sunday variation of tinned salmon and, after dinner, on deck, the steward filled our pinafores with the great treat of various nuts and raisins, which compensated for many shortcomings. There were lovely evenings on the silent deck, lit only by the stars or moon, when we would listen in thrilled delight to Aunt Betty's stories as we nestled round her as closely as we could.

⁴⁵ See Ch 9.

⁴⁶ Betty Jarvis, the second youngest of Hercules and Elizabeth Maria's children, was actually twenty. The following year she married James Bisset in Cape Town.

⁴⁷ Governor of the Cape Colony at this time.

Altogether there was, about that leisurely voyage, a feeling of peace and comradeship with our environment, and with the life of the great ocean, which can never be experienced in the luxury and bustle with which we now race across the great highway of the Atlantic.

Arriving in London – Meeting our English Grandmama

At last the long voyage was ended and it was thrilling to see the white cliffs of England and feel we were nearing the wonderful world that had seemed like an unreachable dream of all perfection. The first impression, at St. Katherine's Docks, was distinctly depressing, but was redeemed by the interest of meeting our English grandmother and Aunt Nancy, who were there to meet us with the warmest welcome.⁴⁸

London was a somewhat abrupt change for children who had led our roving and unconventional life and I think we felt cramped and disappointed in spite of much that was wonderful to us.... For the first time we saw railways, large shops, parks and sights like the Zoological Gardens and Madame Tussauds.

The only touch of the warmth of home was centred around Grandmama, who lavished upon us almost passionate affection. Though between 60 and 70 years old, she was still beautiful with a quite youthful figure and carriage – I can still remember her lovely complexion, perfect teeth and soft, golden-brown hair. She used to tell us many stories of Papa when he was a boy and of his harum-scarum brother Frank, who must have been a lovable character.

Then we all went to visit Aunt Nancy in her home at Richmond, where her husband, Mr. Bingle, was Principal of the College. There we first met his niece, Eliza Bingle, at that time a hard worked and much disciplined little student who awed us with her knowledge of Greek and Latin.⁴⁹ She seemed to us to have little of the freedom to which we were accustomed but she was then, as she has always been since, the kindest and most unselfish of friends.

Visiting Uncle Charles Dominic Molteno in Scotland

Dear Grandmama was very loth to part with us when we went to visit Papa's old Uncle Charles⁵⁰ who had married Mrs. Glass, an aunt of the well-known Dr. John Brown of Edinburgh, author of *Rab and his friends*. They, with the two daughters of Mrs. Charles Molteno, lived at a place in the country called Newton. I remember it was a pretty, bright

⁴⁸ Nancy was John Charles's only surviving sister. She had remained in England and married a schoolmaster, Mr Bingle.

⁴⁹ Eliza Bingle was a niece of Mr Bingle's and had grown up in his and Nancy's home. She became a devoted 'honorary' member of the Molteno family and came out to South Africa on at least one occasion.

⁵⁰ Charles Dominic Molteno was John's beloved uncle.

home with a large garden. They were all very kind to us and made much of us, and we corresponded for years afterwards.

Our headquarters were in Edinburgh and we were very happy there, and felt more at home than we had done in England. I have never seen Edinburgh since but I can quite well recall the old Palace of Holyrood, Arthur's Seat and Carlton Hill. Also I remember seeing Loch Leven Castle and Loch Lomond. Dear Aunt Betty filled all these places with romance for us through her fascinating stories about them. How we did love those walks and talks with her. But alas that joy came to a sudden end for her health began to give anxiety and the doctor advised that she should at once return to her native climate.⁵¹ It was a great blow to us all when she was sent back home under the care of Dr. and Mrs. Ebden, old friends of Papa. They, like all who met her, fell under the spell of her charm and I often afterwards heard Dr. Ebden speak of her with almost reverent admiration.

It was while we were staying in Edinburgh that Percy was born [September 12, 1861]. It was a Sunday and we were all seated at our midday dinner when Dr. Brown came into the room and, in his kindly way, told us that we had another little brother.

With what joy we always welcomed these events and crept, with tense excitement, into the sacred room for our first glimpse of the little newcomer in Papa's arms while Mama with a happy smile looked on....

The baby was scarcely a month old when we returned to England to meet Mr. and Mrs. de Jongh and Christina and Nancy,⁵² who had come over from the Cape, the latter was only sixteen and had just left school, while Christina was about nineteen. To Christina especially it was a bitter disappointment that Aunt Betty had to return home just as they arrived and were looking forward to a delightful time together, for they had been friends from childhood.

Travelling on the Continent

The happy plan was made that we should all travel, in one party, on the Continent, but it was hard for Grandmama to have so soon to part with us again, especially as there was now the additional attraction of the baby. To console her, we left with her our little dog Punch whom we had brought from the Cape and, from that time, he entered upon a life of luxury such as he had never known before and became her treasured companion till his death.

Travelling on the Continent was, by no means, the common and easy experience it is now. Our large party of thirteen, including five children and two nurses, used to astonish and puzzle all we met. The hotels were then much more distinctively national than they are now,

⁵¹ Betty Jarvis (later Betty Bisset) returned to the Cape and was not part of the family tour of the Continent.

⁵² Oom (Uncle) de Jongh was a prosperous Dutch wine merchant in Cape Town who had known John Molteno since his earliest days at the Cape. Christina and Nancy were his daughters. See Ch. 8.

and though that may not have made them so easy or comfortable for strangers, yet I think it made them more interesting.

In re-visiting since some of the places we stayed at, I have been interested to recognise the same hotels still in existence, though probably enlarged. The Hotel de l'Europe in Brussels, the Trois Rois at Basle, the Hotel de Hollande at Baden-Baden, and the Beau Rivage at Ouchy, are some that I can remember.

At the Trois Rois, Maria⁵³ caught some kind of fever which made Papa and Mama very anxious and which hung about her for a long time so that she became very weak. Mr. de Jongh, 'Om Dirk' as Papa called him, was devotedly fond of her and when we started on our train journeys he always insisted upon carrying her himself, wrapped in a green plaid shawl. With the two nurses carrying the babies⁵⁴ and all the rest following each with some share of luggage, we must have been rather a remarkable group of travellers, and I scarcely wonder that there was about Papa on these occasions something of the old feeling of tension like when we started on our 'treks' through the Karoo. Nothing, however, ever ruffled Mama who entered into her new experience with the keenest enjoyment.

Language was a great difficulty in those days, before English was so much spoken and the great stay of our party was Nancy who, having just left school, was expected to be able, at all times, to act as interpreter, while Papa and Mr. de Jongh looked on scarcely able to restrain their impatience to understand.

At Baden-Baden we made a long stay and much regret was experienced when our departure was announced. We were urged to remain to see a German Christmas, for which preparations were already being made, and when it was realized that our plans could not be altered, we were sent away with many regrets and presents of bouquets of flowers and boxes of candied fruits.

It was at the Beau Rivage Hotel at Ouchy that we spent our Christmas and never have I forgotten the glorious view from the tall windows of the deep blue lake with the snow peaks beyond glistening against the clear blue sky. Here we revelled in our first experience of snow and ice. Ouchy was then a very small country place with only a few scattered houses and gardens along the shore of the lake and the one big hotel which had just been finished. Few people were staying there in the winter and our large party was very welcome. We also spent some time at Geneva and in Paris, where I remember that we [children] complained of being sent off too often to walk the open space round the Madeleine.

Betty and I, nine and eight, were old enough to thoroughly enjoy this life of travel and adventure, as did our Coloured nurse, Meitje, who was always an object of curiosity – sometimes more than she liked – for Coloured people were then much more uncommon than they are now. Often people stopped to ask where we came from and, many a time, the

⁵³ Betty and Caroline's younger sister was only five at the time.

⁵⁴ Charlie was less than two and Percy a babe in arms.

remark which followed our reply, was, 'Oh, I thought only black people lived there.' Few seemed to know anything about our then far away corner of the world.

When John and Maria and their party got back to London at the end of their Continental trip, the decision was made that, rather than return to Beaufort West, they would move their home to Cape Town. One reason may have been what to do about schooling for Betty and Caroline, and for Charlie and Percy when they got old enough. Another was that John was by now very absorbed by his political work and established as a leading figure in the Cape Parliament. This required his more or less permanent presence in Cape Town.

They spent some time in London buying the furniture, plate, glass and china they needed for their new home, after which the family took the monthly steamship back to the Cape. John spent a lot of time playing serious games of chess with an old Cape friend he happened to meet on board, as well as some whist. On arrival in Table Bay in late 1862 – they had been away a year and a half (an indication of how prosperous John's farms and businesses had made him by this time), there to meet them were Hercules Jarvis and his grandson Bazett Blenkins rowing out from the jetty.

The family settled at first into a rented house at Wheatfield in Mowbray for 18 months, which is where the next boy, Frank Molteno, was born on 16 February 1863. He was a very fair-haired baby and his father called him *Witkop*.⁵⁵ Betty and Caroline became day students at the three Miss Hanbury sisters' school. They had not had many companions when living in Beaufort, or during their travels in Europe, it was therefore a big experience for them now to be surrounded by other girls of all ages.

Soon after the family's return from their European trip, Maria's sister, Betty, got married to James Bisset and Betty and Caroline were part of the bridal procession.⁵⁶ About the same time her elder sister Annie's stepdaughter, Margaret Blenkins, got ill. She had grown up as part of the Jarvis family ever since her mother had been widowed in 1852, and was only a couple of years younger than Betty Jarvis who was her especial companion. She grew weaker and weaker, and no treatment was effective. Someone heard of the wonderful air in a place called Kalk Bay, which was a cove on False Bay about 15 miles south of Cape Town, and Margaret was taken down there to a tiny thatched cottage. But to no avail, and she died on the very day that had been fixed for her wedding. It was in these very sad circumstances that the Moltenos first encountered Kalk Bay.⁵⁷

Kalk Bay

⁵⁵ Literally 'white head'. The phrase came to be used in the family for very blond children; my brother Patrick was called *Witkop* in the 1950s.

⁵⁶ See Ch. 9.

⁵⁷ Caroline Murray, *Reminiscences of the Old Cape*, op. cit.

For two generations Kalk Bay⁵⁸ became the favourite seaside holiday place where members of the family often spent many weeks in the summer, bathing in the sea, fishing off the rocks and walking on the mountain where a variety of wild game still roamed. Caroline described to her Aunt Nancy how they first experienced it: 'There are at the most 30 respectable houses – many very dilapidated and the furniture still worse. The rest are all fishermen's huts. We took all the habitable rooms in the hotel which consisted of only four.' This was Melville's Hotel. Despite its being so small, 'the poor people tried very hard to make us comfortable and erected a tent for the children on the beach.'⁵⁹

The family would get there by carriage. On one occasion, 'we left home at about half past two and the sending off of the boxes and the excitement of leaving put the children into capital spirits. We left, some in the large open carriage and some in the pony phaeton.... As we turned the corner at our gate [from Claremont House] the carriage got stuck and the horses, being young and fiery, refused to move. So we all had to get out and walk to the top of the hill [Wynberg Hill] where it overtook us and, being re-seated, we accomplished the rest of the journey in safety and good spirits... We were so lively on the road.'

Because there were no bathing boxes in which the girls could change ('the rocks were our only dressing rooms'), Betty and Caroline either went swimming at crack of dawn (as early as 5.15 am sometimes) or had to wait til the [fisher]men had moved away.'⁶⁰

A few years later in October 1870 their father bought a thatched cottage there. It was narrow, only one room deep, with a *stoep* along the front where one could sit and look out over the Bay. Downstairs were four rooms all in a row, one of them the kitchen. A steep staircase opposite the front door led up to four more rooms, which were all needed as the family got bigger. The cottage was right on the rough track that led along the coast towards Simonstown; and in those days there was no railway line stopping one from strolling the few yards onto the boulders and taking a dip. There were also no other buildings to obstruct the view 'or interfere with our privacy in any way'.⁶¹ On one side was a small rocky hill that belonged to the property, on the other a long stretch of bush and grass beyond which lay Melville's Hotel, while immediately behind rose Kalk Bay Mountain, part of the Cape Peninsula's 25 mile-long mountain spine.

Claremont House in Cape Town – the new family home

Another really big change in the family's circumstances took place a couple of years after their European trip. John, who was now almost fifty, at last discovered a place he was happy with as their permanent home. Claremont House was a large rambling affair about six miles from Cape Town. It

⁵⁸ *Kalk* means 'lime'. There was perhaps at one time a quarry in the mountain above Kalk Bay where lime was extracted.

⁵⁹ Caroline Molteno, *Journal*, 2 and 5 Jan. 1869.

⁶⁰ Caroline Molteno to Nancy Bingle, letter in 1868,

⁶¹ Caroline Molteno to Nancy Bingle, 4 Nov. 1870.

was situated on the Main Road, on either side of which was open country, punctuated by a few large estates and clusters of thatched cottages belonging to Malay and Coloured Capetonians. What made it so special was the 120 acre estate around it. This stretched in one direction from the Main Road to the suburban railway line which opened a few months after John bought the property, and in the other from today's Harfield Road to Station Road. The purchase went through in January 1864, and Caroline described what happened then.⁶²

Mama was at first not at all pleased with the contemplated change. Apart from the greater distance from Cape Town, she was not attracted by the old house, which seemed to her dark and depressing and too much shut in by trees, for she loved wide open breezy distances and all the light and sunshine possible. But gradually she became reconciled as, under Uncle Bisset's direction and Papa's, old passages disappeared and gave place to the wide entrance hall and large windows, while light [wall]papers and paint made a cheerful change. The beautiful drawing room was untouched, but a large bedroom was built to correspond with it at the other end, and a new *stoep* laid.

While the alterations were being made Papa used to enjoy spending whole days watching the workmen. And there we would find him when we sometimes drove over in the afternoon, seated happily under the deep shade of the oaks, in his light summer coat, his hat off, and a pile of newspapers and a water cooler beside him.

It was a low rambling house with many rooms. Caroline's daughter, Kathleen Murray, wrote this description a generation later: 'From the entrance hall one looked left into a large sitting room, then through a smaller room into the large drawing-room, from the far end of which opened a conservatory. On the right was a long dining-room and one passed from the entrance hall to a long passage going right and left. The last room on the right was my grandparents' bedroom, a huge room with very large sash windows almost to the ground.'⁶³

The house was surrounded by huge oak trees that had been planted a century and more before. From the *stoep*, there was a magnificent view of Table Mountain which reared precipitously 3,500 feet up, only a couple of miles away. Besides the garden, there were two tennis courts, a couple of rough fields where the Molteno boys played cricket with their five Bisset cousins (two of whom became very fine cricketers and played for their country), and some farm land. The greater part of the grounds, however, were covered with the Western Cape's unique vegetation – silver trees, proteas, ericas of every kind, and wild flowers.

Caroline told of how 'when at last we moved to Claremont we found endless enjoyment in the beautiful old garden, full of interesting trees and shrubs, the vineyard and orchards with their wealth of fruit of every variety, and the woods and wild growth that surrounded them on every side.' Her brothers, in particular, loved the place. Frank, who decades later bought the house and some of the

⁶² Caroline Murray, *Reminiscences of the Old Cape*, op. cit.

⁶³ Kathleen was Caroline and Dr. Murray's younger daughter; she became the great archivist of the family when she grew up.

land, has described the grounds in detail.⁶⁴ A spring supplied water to a small dam for the house and irrigation. There was also a well in the garden from where water for the swimming bath could be drawn. And various outbuildings, including a pig sty, cow shed for the five or six cows they had, stables for the horses, and attendant paddocks and lucerne field. The orchard contained a large variety of pears, as well as an almost dizzying range of other fruit – loquats, guavas, apples, apricots, peaches, plums and nectarines, as well as three fig trees that provided ‘most excellent’ fruit. Not to speak of the vineyard with 4,000 vines of ‘most excellent muscatel and *hanepoot* grapes’.

The whole establishment could only run because of a considerable number of employees. In the late 1870s Barkly, who was the youngest of John and Maria’s ten children, remembered the garden being managed by a white gardener and an elderly Malay called Moos, assisted by three or four Khoisan men. The horses – there were five or six riding horses (the eldest boys Charlie, Percy and Frank each had their own) and those for the carriage and the Cape cart – were looked after by two white grooms. In addition, there were the domestic servants whom Maria managed, who cooked, cleaned, and washed for the large family. All this had to be financed by John’s business and farming activities although it is worth remembering how self-sufficient the household must have been in terms of the meat, milk, eggs, fruit and vegetables produced on the estate. The ethnic diversity of those employed reflected the fact that the Cape at this time did not have the rigid coincidence of ethnicity and occupation that white racism and the law led to in South Africa in the 20th century.

John Molteno enters the fray – the struggle for full self-government in the 1860s

To understand why John became such a significant figure in Cape politics in the 1860s and during his premiership in the 1870s, it is essential to realize what the Cape model of politics and society he became such a staunch advocate of comprised.

The population of the Colony in 1854 was tiny compared to the present day – only about 350,000 people despite the huge area the Colony embraced. Nearly half, 140,000, regarded themselves as ‘whites’, and were Dutch or English-speaking. A larger number, over 200,000 people, comprised very diverse elements⁶⁵ – former African slaves and their descendants, the surviving remnants of the

⁶⁴ Frank Molteno, ‘The History of Claremont House’, *Chronicle of the Family*, Vol 1, No 3, December 1913.

⁶⁵ Ethnic terminology remains a political minefield. South Africans have still not come up with an agreed and stable set of terms to describe their country’s heterogeneous population. Does one speak of Dutch, Boers or Afrikaners? And describe them as Whites or Europeans when referring to those whose predominant genealogical and cultural origins stem from Europe and whose complexion allowed them to regard themselves as White? Other South Africans with similar but less exclusively European origins came to be called Coloured, but that term itself buries the huge diversity of South Africans of colour. As for those with the most ancient indigenous roots in the Cape, there is still uncertainty whether to call them San, Khoi-Khoi, or Khoi-san. And as for the majority of South Africans who speak one or other Bantu language, they have been variously called at different times Kaffirs, Natives, Africans, Bantu and more recently Blacks. This last term has itself changed whom it embraces – at the height of the anti-apartheid struggle in the 1980s, Blacks included all South Africans

Cape's original Khoisan population, a Malay community who were Muslim and had been brought from Java generations before, a small but growing number of Xhosa-speaking Africans who found themselves inside the Cape Colony as its boundary was moved eastwards, and a very large number of people of mixed indigenous and Dutch ancestry, called Coloured.⁶⁶ These heterogeneous elements all regarded themselves as permanent and legitimate members of the Colony's population, albeit to some extent with their own specific interests that needed to be respected. In cultural and linguistic terms, the biggest differences existed between those individuals who saw themselves in terms of their European ancestry and those who looked to their African tribal identity, although even in this regard, the spread of Western-style schooling was already gradually reducing the differences between them. The issue was how far all people in the Colony, regardless of which community they belonged to, could realistically expect their interests to be respected and advanced by the government.

The Cape, following the abolition of slavery in the 1830s, was a country where all individuals were now regarded as 'equal before the law', ie. having the same rights. These were enshrined in both English common law and the statutes passed by the Cape legislature. Neither body of law distinguished, let alone discriminated, between individuals on the basis of ethnicity. Nor was a person's ethnicity a formal criterion in who got what job; a fact that was reflected, to take just one example, in the official lists of casualties in the colonial forces on the Eastern Frontier. These listed men with British, Dutch and African names, each with their own rank, and in alphabetical order – so one list in 1881 included 'Private Ntsane, Loyal Basutos, East Griqualand Field Force, killed in action', 'Sergeant-Major Sapula, Amatembu Regiment, bullet wound of leg' etc.⁶⁷

What is more, the Cape Colony's courts were independent of the executive in conducting their proceedings. And where a criminal trial required a jury neither ignorance of English nor a person's particular ethnicity was a bar to service.⁶⁸

These were the legal principles and non-discriminatory practices on to which were grafted the political arrangements for representative government in 1854. Qualifications for the right to vote were set low enough to incorporate a wide swath of the male population.

John Molteno was deeply influenced by this colour-blind approach and, unlike what happened after his death,⁶⁹ he never departed from or betrayed these principles. He also became convinced quite

of colour (African, Coloured, Indian); today it tends to be confined to Bantu-speaking South Africans. In this book, I sometimes use the terms that were used at the time; more often I use words that convey clearly which section of the population is being referred to.

⁶⁶ Shula Marks, Introduction to 'Government Publications relating to the Cape of Good Hope, to 1910. Group II: Statistical Registers. Index to the Microfilm' (Microform Academic Publishers, Wakefield, UK, 1980), p. iv.

⁶⁷ Government Notice No. 1017, 1881 issued by J. C. Molteno, Colonial Secretary, in the *Gazette*. He was temporarily back in the Cabinet at this time.

⁶⁸ Charter of Justice, cited by Shula Marks' Introduction to Government Publications relating to the Cape of Good Hope, to 1910, op. cit.

⁶⁹ See Ch. XXXX. IT WILL PROBABLY BE CHAPTER ABOUT JAMES MOLTENO WHEN BECOMES AN MP.

soon after representative government was granted that it was nothing like a sufficient degree of self-government. He believed that government would only prioritise serving the interests of the Cape's population, as opposed to imperial concerns determined in London, once Britain agreed to full responsible government. This meant that, in addition to the colony's laws being made by its elected legislature, the executive arm of government – the Prime Minister and his Cabinet – must be drawn from the country's inhabitants, elected by them to Parliament, and be responsible for their policies and actions to, and removable by, Parliament acting on behalf of the people. And when he and others voiced this new demand, it came to be supported by all sections of the electorate, Dutch- and English-speaking, whites and those of mixed ancestry. The fact that 'Coloured' voters strongly supported it was used only by a senior *British* official, the Attorney-General William Griffith, to oppose conceding it!⁷⁰

A transition to full self-government in the Cape on the basis of these principles had the potential, he felt, to set a benchmark for good and just governance for the whole of South Africa. This was because the Cape was by far the most developed part of the region at the time and its territory was almost as large as the two Boer Republics and Natal put together. It contained some 80% of South Africa's white population and had much the largest economy and most established institutions, a situation that only changed a quarter of a century later with the discovery of gold in the South African Republic in 1886.

The issue of independence from British colonial control was a fundamental one. In every British colony it arose sooner or later. How long would the population, whether indigenous or immigrant, go on acquiescing in the imperial government in London controlling local policy? Could Whitehall even do it competently? The lesson John drew from the 1846 Frontier War was that it could not. And in whose interests would London determine policy – would it reflect the economic priorities of the business class in Britain or would the requirements of local economic development take precedence? John's answers to these questions were rooted in Britain's responsibility for the collapse of the Cape wine trade that he had witnessed in the early 1840s and its attempts subsequently to turn the Cape into a penal colony.

John moved his first resolution in Parliament asserting the necessity of establishing responsible government in 1860 and for the next 12 years led those MPs in favour of it with the slogan 'Responsible Government before everything'.⁷¹ In 1863 after a general election in which he was returned unopposed, he again introduced a motion to this effect and was thanked at a public banquet in Cape Town for the fight he was putting up. During Parliament's session held in Grahamstown that year – something of a sop to those in the eastern districts of the Cape who felt marginalized by Cape Town's dominance, an observer described how significant a figure John had become: 'He is looked up to by a good number of elected members as their chief, and is consulted by the Attorney-General and Colonial Secretary on almost every question that is before the House.

⁷⁰ William Downs Griffith, Wikipedia entry, citing G. M. Theal, *History of South Africa since September 1795*, Cambridge University Press, 2010 edn., p. 118.

⁷¹ A more detailed account can be read in Percy Molteno's huge 2-volume account of his father's life, *The Life and Times....*, Vol. 1, Chs V through VIII.

... When visitors go to listen, they ask ... 'which is Mr Molteno?' and when they are told that the gentleman with the bald head and the heavy beard is the man they enquire after, they take his measure from top to toe, and regard him ... as one who must inevitably be a law-giver and administrator.... He is marvellously patient and painstaking. He never leaves his seat from the moment the session opens till it closes.... He seldom speaks without saying something ... about responsible government.⁷²

He tried again with yet another motion in 1867. All these attempts were defeated, partly because MPs representing the Eastern districts of the Colony feared domination by the more numerous and long established Western district's inhabitants, and partly because of the obdurate hostility to self-government of the Governor, Sir Philip Wodehouse, who had taken up office in 1862. John got into a protracted conflict with Sir Philip, initially because of what he regarded as the administration's wasteful expenditure, and later as a result of Sir Philip's attempts to alter the Cape's constitution and reduce even the limited powers the Cape Parliament had vis-a-vis the Governor.

Strange as it might appear, his decade-long fight for full self-government that John took such a prominent lead in was a forerunner of both Afrikaner nationalists' determination to have a fully sovereign, republican South Africa after 1910 and the goal of independence that African nationalists in all parts of Africa struggled for in the mid 20th century. All three political struggles believed the only way to reflect the interests of a colony's inhabitants was to transfer imperial power to sovereign, locally controlled new states.

Things only changed with the appointment of a new Secretary of State for the Colonies, the prominent Liberal, Lord Kimberley, in mid 1870. He recalled Sir Philip Wodehouse and appointed Sir Henry Barkly, who favoured colonial self-government, in his stead. In this new situation John and his allies, among them both Dutch supporters like Jan (John) Brand and Henry de Villiers⁷³ and English-speaking colleagues like William Porter and Saul Solomon, now succeeded in persuading the Cape Parliament to approve the idea of responsible government. But even then only on condition that a Commission be set up to consider whether the Colony should move to a federal system with separate Western and Eastern provinces.⁷⁴ Following this concession, John introduced yet another resolution in favour of responsible government: 'That the time had arrived when the system of parliamentary government in this Colony should be carried to its legitimate consequence, by rendering the Executive responsible through the medium of its principal officers [Ministers] to the Legislature.'⁷⁵ The debate opened on 1 June 1871 and went on for seven days before being passed

⁷² Limner, cited by P. A. Molteno, *The Life and Times...*, op.cit., p. 91.

⁷³ Brand later became President of the Free State; de Villiers was made the first South African-born Chief Justice of the Cape by John Molteno in December 1873.

⁷⁴ *Biographical Encyclopedia of South Africa*, p. 483..

⁷⁵ P. A. Molteno, *The Life and Times of Sir John Charles Molteno*, op. cit., Vol. 1., p. 163.

by a narrow majority of 32 to 25 votes,⁷⁶ but accompanied by ‘the most enthusiastic cheering by the [majority and the] public in the gallery’.

The following Monday, the new Governor, Sir Henry Barkly, announced he would introduce a Bill to give effect to the resolution. But then a rather extraordinary hiccup occurred. The Attorney-General, William Griffith, the Colony’s senior law officer and a carryover from the autocratic Sir Philip Wodehouse’s administration, was so hostile to the idea of responsible government that he refused to draft the Bill. William Porter, a former Attorney General who had been elected to Parliament after his retirement in 1865, stepped into the breach. An Irishman with an ‘unspeakable hatred of oppression of every kind’, he had become a much respected political colleague of John’s during the most recent stages in the struggle for responsible government.

An even more extraordinary act of disrespect, not to say disobedience, towards the Governor now took place. The top civil servant, the Colonial Secretary, refused to introduce Porter’s Constitution Amendment Bill in Parliament. He joined the other Executive officers in bypassing the Governor and petitioning the Secretary of State in London, asserting that the Colony was utterly unfit for responsible government.

Barkly transmitted their protest, but did not halt the introduction of the Bill, a process that John, because of the Colonial Secretary’s refusal, now had to take charge of on 30 July 1871.⁷⁷ In the Committee stage, John made one more important intervention. It was noticed that there was still a clause allowing the Governor to select ministers who were not elected Members of Parliament! John successfully persuaded his colleagues to delete it.

It is worth noting that, in pressing for full self-government similar to Britain’s Canadian, Australian and New Zealand colonies, John and his colleagues had not organised a political movement in the country at large. They did not whip up mass demonstrations of the kind that had taken place during the Anti-Penal Colony struggle 20 years earlier. Instead their strategy was to be unrelenting in showing up the autocratic practices, wasteful administration and high taxes that rule by Westminster had led to in the Colony. These provided the ammunition which persuaded more and more people, both in the western and eastern districts, of the advantages of full self-government. It was a strategy built on the assumption that this change in public opinion would eventually become irresistible. And when the Bill was eventually carried, it was in fact supported by almost half the Eastern Members of Parliament as well as nearly two-thirds of the Western Members. On the day of the vote, there were crowds waiting outside to hear the outcome and they cheered enthusiastically as John Molteno, William Porter and the other leaders in favour of self-government arrived.

John’s leadership on this issue, as well as his unrelenting criticism of Governor Wodehouse’s proposals to abolish the upper house of Parliament and increase taxes during the recession of the 1866-68,⁷⁸ resulted in frequent and virulent attacks on him in Parliament by the Attorney General

⁷⁶ *The Times*, 22 July 1871.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ P. A. Molteno, *The Life and Times ...*, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 114ff. Also ‘John Molteno, Founder of the South African Railways’, SABC broadcast, 14 Aug. 1954.

and the Colonial Secretary (both officials, not elected Members), and in the press. Political cartoons were just starting to be published and he frequently found himself on the receiving end. Not all of them were savagely critical. During his efforts to prevent Sir Philip Wodehouse undermining representative government (in John's words, 'to destroy the Constitution')⁷⁹, a lovely cartoon appeared. It's Guy Fawkes Night and the Governor is crouching in the cellars below the House of Assembly with a lighted match labelled 'Autocracy', about to blow Parliament up. And who is catching him in the act and forestalling disaster? Police Constable John Molteno – wielding his truncheon labelled 'Responsible Government'.

[REPRODUCE CARTOON *Fifth of November – our colonial Guy Fawkes*]

John was also the butt on occasion of satirical verse. When he attacked Wodehouse for refusing to cut expenditure and intending to raise taxation instead, *The Squib* published the following cartoon accompanied by a ditty.

[REPRODUCE CARTOON]

The Battle of the House

Our Leader's come to whip us
Armed with his forty votes,
And in his right hand fiercely grasps
Five foolscap sheets of notes.

'Now, all my men, stand firm today,
And let those beggars see
That we can cut off 5 per cent
From every salary....

Cheer me whene'er I make a hit,
E'en though rude I seem,
And let your party's watchword be:
'Molteno's Little Scheme.'

John was a strong-minded man and never lacking in courage. Whenever he was under attack in Parliament, he always gave as good as he got. Not for nothing had he come to be known as the Lion of Beaufort.⁸⁰ But he also brought to bear a more powerful ingredient when making his position clear. He 'convinced his audience,' his son Percy Molteno wrote, 'because he was convinced himself;

⁷⁹ A letter to his constituents during the 1869 general election. Percy Molteno, *The Life and Times ...*, op. cit., p. 125.

⁸⁰ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, entry for Molteno, Sir John Charles (1814-1886) by J. B. Atlay, rev. Christopher Saunders.

his transparent honesty and rectitude of purpose were plain, and he conveyed to them a sense of the great power and force within him almost fierce in its volcanic energy of expression.⁸¹

Home life and Caroline's experience of adolescence

Life at Claremont House in the 1860s was full of much coming and going of relatives and friends. Betty and Caroline went every day to Miss Hull's school, as well as reading a lot and making music at home. They also had letters to write; Caroline being in frequent touch with Aunt Nancy Bingle in Richmond just outside London and young Eliza Bingle who had so impressed them with learning not just French, but Latin and German too.⁸² They also accompanied their mother on visits to friends, and they and the younger children explored the area around Claremont House, went on picnics, and down to the sea at Kalk Bay.

The two girls increasingly joined in the adult conversation, arguing for instance with Uncle Alport about the literal truth, or otherwise, of the Bible. And as their father grew more prominent, they attended official functions like the Governor's speech at Government House in June 1869 and were present when President and Mrs Brand from the Free State called one morning at Claremont House for a discussion with John.

On Sundays they went to church. The girls and their young brothers attended the local Anglican church of St Saviour's just a few hundred yards from Claremont House, while their mother continued to worship at her local Dutch Reformed church on the hill in Wynberg.⁸³ When the time came for Betty and Caroline to be confirmed, both felt confused; their mother wanted it to be in the Dutch Church, but Caroline did not 'for we never attend that Church, nor do we understand Dutch' – which is puzzling, given that they had spent their childhood in Beaufort West and heard Dutch whenever they were in their Jarvis grandparents house.⁸⁴

By the late 1860s Betty and Caroline were almost grown up. The age gap between them and their much younger brothers meant that the relationship between the two sisters was particularly close. They were only a year apart in age. Both were intelligent; both voracious readers – Caroline in her teens was reading Trollope, the Bronte sisters' novels, and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Both had a warm relationship with their father, although Betty later looked back on it as more shadowed. When Caroline turned fifteen, he wrote her the first letter she received from him and she was thrilled, and he began to teach her how to drive a horse and cart. At sixteen, she was being convinced by his arguments in favour of the disestablishment of the Church (the Anglican Church that is) in Ireland! And she wrote in her Journal: 'We ought to grow politicians here, Papa is so full of politics. He is very

⁸¹ P. A. Molteno, *The Life and Times....*, op.cit., Vol. 1, p. 233.

⁸² This section depends almost wholly on Caroline Molteno's Journals that she started in 1868 at the age of sixteen. Dr R. F. M. Immelman had them typed and added explanatory notes.

⁸³ R. F. M. Immelman's Note 27 to his typescript of Caroline Molteno's Journal, Ch. V.

⁸⁴ Caroline Molteno, Journal, 25 Jan. 1869.

busy now, the Party seems to consider him as their leader in everything'⁸⁵ (this was 1869). But there was still time for 'desperate games of chess' between him and the girls.

Caroline and Betty also felt intense interest in, and a sense of responsibility for, their young brothers. Caroline was reading to them one day and finding Percy (only eight years old) very obstinate; 'it is his great fault!' 'How I wish I could influence them for good.... It is such a serious thing training the minds of children.'⁸⁶ As for Betty, 'she is taking such trouble with the boys, reading to them and interesting herself in all their pursuits.'⁸⁷

Caroline felt very close to her mother. She helped Maria with needlework and making jams. She climbed into bed with her on her 15th birthday. But a year later she found herself on occasion answering her sulkily and then feeling remorseful. 'I was very disrespectful to Mamma at dinner. I don't know what makes me so foolish. Though I knew she was speaking to me, I did not answer her until Percy replied to her questions. I know it is very wrong and I always feel miserable for it afterwards. Mamma so seldom scolds either me or Betty.'⁸⁸

Their Jarvis aunts were another important presence in Caroline's life – Aunt Sophy Alport in Beaufort West in the 1850s, Aunt Betty who had travelled to London with them in 1861 before her marriage to James Bisset, and Aunt Annie Blenkins, Bazett and Willie's mother. But it was Emmie, the youngest Jarvis sister and only five years older than Caroline, whom she was closest to – 'so unselfish, pious, cheerful and sympathising, and though she is clever, she thinks so little of herself and is never too proud to learn from anyone.' And when Caroline hears Emmie has become quite a bluestocking and interested also in politics while in England where she had gone with her father in 1868, she looks forward excitedly to seeing her on her return: 'Oh, won't I have fierce disputes with her!'

Caroline enjoyed going to Miss Hull's school, catching the train to get there each day. The curriculum sounds a rich and varied one – history, geography, grammar, French, astronomy, as well as music, painting and dancing. Music, in particular, took up a lot of her time and she loved both playing and singing. In June 1869 her and Betty's schooling came to end – Caroline had not yet turned sixteen – though one of their teachers, Mr Smith, became a tutor to the boys and continued to give Betty and Caroline an hour a day, introducing them to Geometry and Physics.

Caroline was tall for her age and 'people always take me for much older than I am.'⁸⁹ She was certainly mature beyond her years. She started writing her Journal in September 1868 when she was still only fifteen and kept it up til 1870; she resumed it for several years after returning from her and Betty's trip with their father to Europe in 1871-72. When starting the Journal, she felt that she had

⁸⁵ Ibid., 10 Aug. 1869.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 22 Mar. 1869.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 12 Sept. 1868.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 19 Jan. 1869.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 18 Feb. 1869.

changed. 'As a child, I was so passionate and lively and excitable.' Now 'my character [is] for steadiness and demureness' and 'I seldom talk much at dinner table.'⁹⁰ Strong-willed, she had various run-ins with her mother, including sometimes refusing to do what Maria asked her to, which, as she commented to herself, she could not quite understand. And when the children's governess, Miss Logie, chastised the younger children, Maria and Charlie, Caroline was furious: 'Oh it was hateful to me.... The feeling of being forced to obey a person I could not respect was insupportable.'⁹¹

She was also torn on occasion between her instincts and social convention. When her cousin Bazett Blenkins disappointed his mother, Annie, Caroline wanted to write and give him some straight from the shoulder advice. But she thought her father would disapprove and restrained herself: but 'if I were to follow my own convictions, I would be frank with him at once.'⁹²

In December 1869 when she was only sixteen, she was taken totally by surprise by the Dutch minister in Beaufort West, Dominee de Villiers, wanting to marry her. Betty, by contrast, was at the time getting into long arguments with the same minister about the rights of women and the position of wives and husbands.⁹³

The two girls had to take on responsibility as they got older for the household because their mother was so frequently either pregnant or with a new baby. 'I don't mind it for a while, but it is a great trouble,' said Caroline.⁹⁴

Betty's crisis

Betty had a much rougher ride through adolescence than Caroline. She eventually turned into one of the most remarkable, and without doubt the most radical, member of the family, and figures prominently in the rest of this book. But she undoubtedly found life on the threshold of adulthood very difficult. Things first came to a crisis in late 1868 when she was sixteen.⁹⁵ Instead of continuing as a day pupil at Miss Hull's school, she left home for reasons we don't know and became a temporary 'parlour-boarder' there. Her father could 'not get reconciled to her absence', and while away on a journey in October, became very worried and 'said he could not wait til today to see her,

⁹⁰ Ibid., 9 Oct. 1868.

⁹¹ Ibid., 29 Dec. 1868.

⁹² Ibid., March 1869.

⁹³ Ibid., 21 Jan. 1870.

⁹⁴ Caroline Molteno, letter, 3 Dec. 1869.

⁹⁵ The account that follows depends entirely on Caroline Molteno's Journal entries.

he missed her [so]. So that evening he came home. Miss Hull was very kind and let her come at once.⁹⁶

It was this incident that catapulted Caroline into starting her private journal. In it she was able to express freely her feeling that she was losing the sister she had for years been so close to. The first entry reveals her depressed and puzzled at Betty's 'delicate health and low spirits. Her character is very strange and sometimes I wonder how, if she really loves and trusts in God, she is not more happy and cheerful.'⁹⁷

During the year that followed, things did not improve. In June 1869, just as their formal schooling at Miss Hull's was coming to an end, Caroline wrote how: 'I feel so miserable this evening. Last night Betty told me that she was sure she ought to tell Papa that she would have to go back to Miss Hull's. She owns that it is a strange fancy, but says that if Papa and Mamma knew what wild thoughts or fancies she has sometimes, they would be only too glad to think that she was with someone who could in some sort control them.' Caroline went on to record what 'a bitter disappointment' this determination of Betty's to stay on at Miss Hull's was to her, and how much it would disappoint their parents who had been constantly talking about Betty's imminent return home and making plans for it. 'And yet Betty can't help it. I wish we could both speak to Dr Ebden, but what are we to say? He could hardly, nor Papa or Mamma, understand such a fancy. I am sure it is a consequence of ill-health. Oh! I wish she were as strong as I am.... If Betty would only enter into all my plans about the children, reading, working, visiting, I think we could both be so happy.'⁹⁸

The next thing that happened is that Betty openly transferred her affections to Miss Hull. Caroline once again felt 'the want of a sister's love and confidence, and doubly so having once felt it. It seems so hard that now, just when we should begin to appreciate one another, she should transfer her confidence to another.'⁹⁹

Betty behaved in typical depressive fashion. 'She does not try to make herself happy here; she does nothing; I ask her to read with me; she refuses to walk, she won't go; she does not care for riding; in fact, she does not interest herself in anything.' 'No wonder,' Caroline adds, 'I feel depressed; I would give a great deal to have her as my own sister again.'

A couple of days later – it was now late August – Betty refused to leave Miss Hull's and return home. Her mother went to bring her back. Her father then spoke to her in the spare room, but Caroline observed, 'I think he found harshness as useless as persuasion; I think he made a mistake this evening for Betty was prepared to give him her confidence. This nervousness is a family

⁹⁶ Ibid., 29 Oct. 1868.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 22 Sept. 1868.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 12 June 1869.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 23 Aug. 1869.

complaint.¹⁰⁰ Oh, how thankful I shall feel when she has got over it.' This reference of Caroline's to 'nervousness' is intriguing. Was she observing how tense her father could get on occasion? Were there other members of the family who suffered similarly from tension or depression? It certainly seems to be an early instance of the variety of psychological difficulties that several members of the family have suffered from in subsequent generations.

Next morning, 'shortly after breakfast, I found Betty still in bed. I had hardly entered when Papa came in with Mamma; he told Betty to get up, she would not; Papa got vexed and spoke very angrily. I was very much afraid for her for I knew Papa did not understand her and that she was dreadfully sensitive.... Somehow I summed up courage, followed Papa out of the room and told him I thought he was making a great mistake in speaking so to her.... That it was not undutiful conduct on her part, she could not help acting as she did. Shortly after, he again went into the room and ... I overheard his opening remark which seemed half-persuasive, half apologetic; so I felt a little comforted.' Betty then 'sobbed and moaned and threw her arms about in such a wild way'. 'Papa took her for a walk in the plantation and afterward for a long drive. When she came home, she slept.' Miss Hull then came to see her and had a long talk with Mamma.

The next day John had a very bad headache and did not get up til 12. For her part, Betty went outside and Caroline searched for her. 'At last I found her in the wood lying down.... I offered to read to her. She would not let me and got so angry with me that she ran outside without her boots on. Presently, she returned and told me to go out of the room, but I ... steadily refused til Papa sent for her to come to him.' He then took both girls off to Somerset West for a few days and Betty apparently got better.

But her moodiness continued the following year to some degree. In June Caroline complained that Betty 'often casts a gloom over me.... She won't tell me what is the matter nor let me do anything for her. She is just the same ... to Mamma.'¹⁰¹

Betty's nervous breakdown probably revolved in part at least around her dawning awareness of her particular sexual identity although this only became clear to the family a decade or so later when she went teaching in Graaff Reinet.

The 1969 election and John Molteno gets seriously ill

John, who was 56, now himself became seriously ill. In April 1870 he was incapacitated by excruciating pain for several months. The cause may have simply been a question of poor posture. But more likely reasons were the strain of Betty's condition, the 1869 general election, and his

¹⁰⁰ Caroline's observation of how tense on occasion her father could get, and this 'nervousness' of Betty's being 'a family complaint' are early instances of the variety of psychological difficulties that several members of the family have suffered from down the generations.

¹⁰¹ Caroline Molteno, Journal, 21 June 1870.

having taken the lead in the prolonged fight against Sir Philip Wodehouse's attempts to undermine with the Cape's elected Parliament.

In the run up to the election, John was widely praised for the stand he had taken. He received addresses from various parts of the country thanking him. The *Port Elizabeth Telegraph* reported that 'it is contemplated to thank the leader of the Assembly, Mr Molteno, for his services during the session' and state 'Such a tribute will be worthy of the man and the occasion.' In Cape Town 500 voters signed a request that he allow them to put him forward for a parliamentary seat there, but he said Beaufort West where he had been elected unopposed in the previous 1863 election had a prior claim on him.

A key issue in the election was whether the Cape should now demand full responsible government. So high did feelings run that a candidate for the district of Worcester which had long supported the demand, a Mr Meiring, promised to resign his seat if John Molteno was not re-elected in Beaufort West. Several other MPs followed suit and offered to make way for him if that happened.

When nomination day came, a strong attempt was made to defeat John by those opposed to his position. Each seat elected two Members of Parliament; John and his friend Vincent Rice stood on a common platform. Their opponents, Dr Christie and Mr Thwaites, branded themselves Conservatives and opposed to Responsible Government. On the day an excited crowd gathered and the show of hands was strongly in favour of Christie and Thwaites. It was then discovered that the hundred or so Coloured men present had been specially brought in with instructions how to act, and on a signal from their leader had raised their hands in vociferous support of Christie and Thwaites. John and Vincent Rice demanded that a poll be held. Further excitement ensued on polling day when they won only a minority of votes in the town itself. This news was at once telegraphed to Cape Town and caused great rejoicing among the Conservative faction. But it was short-lived, for the results from the rural parts of the constituency were strongly in favour of John and Mr Rice; and they were returned by a majority of two to one over their opponents.¹⁰²

The strain of this election must have played some part in precipitating John's health crisis. The form the illness took was extreme sciatica, with the pain starting in one leg but ending up almost totally crippling him. The doctors drugged him with opiates to soothe the pain, but were unable to come up with any treatment that actually worked – something that has not much changed in relation to pinched nerves to this day. An operation was considered. Imagine it in those days – no anaesthetics; no antibiotics! Betty now rallied round and helped nurse him and felt he appreciated her efforts.¹⁰³ Things reached a crisis point in June. He got delirious and thought he would die. 'When he talked about death from agony,' Caroline 'could scarcely bear it' and had to leave the room because she could not control herself any longer. As for Maria, 'Mamma clung to him and begged him not to despair'.¹⁰⁴ On several occasions, his two brothers in law, Percy Alport and James Bisset, took turns in sitting up through the night with him.

¹⁰² Percy Molteno, *The Life and Times....*, op.cit., pp. 142, 152.

¹⁰³ Betty Molteno, Journal, 25 Sept. 1925.

¹⁰⁴ Caroline Molteno, Journal, 16 May 1870.

In desperation, John decided at last, as Betty tells the story, ‘to take matters into his own hands though the body was now so crippled that little physical movement was possible. He decided to go to the hot sulphur baths of Caledon.... He had to be carried [out of the house] on a mattress and put into the wagon.... Mother and Baby Wallace [and Nurse] went with him, and the black boy who had attended him so faithfully.’ It is difficult to imagine the agony he must have endured being jolted over 75 miles of wagon track and across two mountain passes to reach the Caledon Baths. Betty and Caroline were left behind at Claremont House to run the household and be responsible for all the younger children during the many weeks their parents were away. Eventually by the end of July ‘the fine, bracing air of the highlands, and the health-giving properties of the Caledon waters renewed and vitalised his body. And, thank God, sciatica never again took hold of him.’¹⁰⁵

1871-72 – Betty and Caroline’s second trip to Europe with their father

The catalyst for John deciding the following year to visit England again was in part to consolidate his recovery. But there was another reason. He had finally succeeded in early August 1871 in persuading the Cape House of Assembly to approve the Constitution Amendment Bill. Parliament was then prorogued and ‘Mr Molteno was there, as joyous and jaunty as if the weight of coming responsibilities were not on his shoulders at all.’¹⁰⁶ Now he was determined to see for himself whether the new constitution would win the approval of the British Parliament. It was, after all, the issue he had spent so much energy fighting for during the previous decade.

As things turned out, in March 1872 on his very last day in London before going down to Southampton to catch the boat home, a man arrived to say that a debate on the introduction of Responsible Government at the Cape was coming on in the House of Lords that very evening. John wrote at once to the Colonial Secretary, Lord Kimberley, to ask for tickets and he, and Betty and Caroline who had accompanied him on this European trip, met Lord Kimberley at the House that very night where they got seats to hear the debate. Caroline told Aunt Nancy how all three of them ‘of course ... were very much interested in the subject.’¹⁰⁷

Maria had not able to go with John on this trip because she was pregnant again, this time with Barkly who was born at the end of April 1872. The older boys were now at school or, in the case of Wallace (only 18 months old), too young to travel without their mother. So John, who always wanted his family around him, took the two oldest girls, Betty and Caroline, now 18 and 17 respectively, with him instead.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Betty Molteno, Journal, 25 Sept. 1925.

¹⁰⁶ A *Cape Times* journalist, quoted in F. W. Hirst’s unpublished biography of Percy Molteno.

¹⁰⁷ Caroline Molteno to Nancy Bingle, 10 March 1872.

¹⁰⁸ The source for what happened on this trip are the ‘Letters of Betty and Caroline Molteno written during their Travels to Europe and Egypt, together with their father, August 1871-April 1872’, The letters, mainly to their mother and some to their younger sister Maria, total 125 single-spaced typed pages.

The three of them had a good voyage, but only after getting soaked right at the start when the little rowing boat taking them out to the 'screw steamer', *SS Roman*, in Table Bay was nearly swamped. They travelled first class, and the voyage took no more than a month, arriving in England in late September. There were only 30 passengers on board, it being mainly a freight vessel. The cargo it carried reflected the rapidly changing character of the Cape economy – over £9,000 worth of diamonds (the first discoveries had only been made a couple of years before), £2,400 of ostrich feathers (a new export item catering to the latest fashion in women's hats), 2,000 huge bales of wool (which had long since become the Colony's main export), 500 bags of wheat, bundles of hides and skins, and just seven casks of wine (the export of which had completely collapsed in the '60s).¹⁰⁹

John played whist, read a lot and, as usual, enjoyed the whole trip. Caroline was invited to sit next to Captain Vyvyan at meals, played chess with him, and beat him. She and Betty also read a lot, something they had been accustomed to do from early childhood. And the Captain clearly fell for Caroline and tried to keep in touch with them after they had reached England.

Once in London, they did the rounds of the family. The girls, in particular, took the train out to Richmond several times to see Aunt Nancy and Uncle Bingle as well as Eliza; a very warm relationship developed and Betty and Caroline maintained an active correspondence with Aunt Nancy and Eliza from then on. In February they and their father went to Nunhead Cemetery to see where John's mother, Caroline, had been buried following her death four years earlier. In the same month John went up to Scotland to see his Uncle Charles Molteno one last time.¹¹⁰ And there are glancing references in the letters they wrote during the trip to their being in touch with more distant relations, including a Miss Bristow and seeing Mrs and the Miss Cookes.¹¹¹

Betty and Caroline also did the usual touristy things like visiting the Tower of London, taking in a West End play, going to the International Exhibition and lots of shopping. 'Stays, crinolines, boots, gloves, all kinds of things have to be got... Caroline's [hat] is trimmed with black velvet and lace and a scarlet feather', wrote Betty. And such was their father's reputation already as one of the Cape's leading political figures they got invited to some very grand houses, including one event that turned out to be 'a full dress affair'. The highlight was being allocated places at a Service of Thanksgiving at St Paul's for the recovery of the Prince of Wales. There they saw Queen Victoria and the Prime Minister, Mr Disraeli. And afterwards Sir Sidney and Lady Waterlow drove them to the Mansion House for a banquet given by the Lord Mayor.

John also spent time on business matters, making numerous visits to the City while they were in London. But he was clearly revelling in the pleasures of a long holiday with the girls. On 6 October he had an amusing run-in with London's emerging public transport system. The three of them had gone down to Richmond to be with the Bingles. Betty described what happened on the way back:

¹⁰⁹ *The Times*, 23 Sept. 1871.

¹¹⁰ Charles Dominic Molteno died two years later in 1874.

¹¹¹ See earlier chapters for how they were related to John Molteno.

We went in one of the penny steamboats as far as Battersea. We got out there. Papa had struck up an acquaintance with a young woman who seemed a lady's maid or nursery governess and who volunteered to show us the way to the Railway Station. She said "it was just across the Park", but it turned out a pretty [long] way and took us about three quarters of an hour. This long walk rather put Papa out (Caroline and I liked it) and he was not pleased when he got to the Station to find a long tunnel into which you went.¹¹² Now and then you came to an opening in the side and the way to so and so written up. About the fourth passage, he found Richmond written up. We mounted ever so many steps and got on to the platform. Papa said to a Guard, "where do we take tickets for Richmond?" "Oh", says he, "you must go down to No. 5." Down went Papa. Caroline and I sat down. Presently Papa's head appears up the steps, "Why don't you come?" he calls to us, and the people on the platform look amused. We were in the right place and Papa had only to get tickets at No. 5; so down he had to go again, grumbling at the Guard for not explaining.

What seems to have happened, apart from John not understanding where to buy the railway tickets, is that, having walked the three-quarters of a mile across Battersea Park, they had missed the nearby Battersea Park Station. They had gone on instead another mile and a half to Vauxhall, by which time John must have been really exhausted. This station still today has its long tunnel under all the railway lines and the same old steep staircases up to each platform!

John decided the three of them should take a tour on the Continent. He wanted to see Italy, the land of his grandfather. They went to Venice and Rome, and spent three days in Milan and Como, although Betty and Caroline's letters make no reference to their Molteno family origins there.

The Suez Canal had just been opened and for the first time in history ships bound for India and East Asia no longer had to make the lengthy trip round the Cape. John was determined to see this already famous feat of engineering.

He set a hectic pace on their trip around Europe and on to Egypt, as Betty described:

Few could keep pace with him as a traveller, but we young girls were equal to this perpetual movement, and thrived under his regime. A good breakfast, but nothing again until the evening, and the lovely *bonbons* of Italy and France passed by. Did not we tuck into those evening *tables d'hote* and go through the menu from beginning to end.... And what did we not see in the way of cathedrals, churches, town halls, picture galleries, marvellous statuary, and gardens filled with flowers of exquisite beauty.... The artistic side of me was waking up and finding that abundant food and stimulation for which early youth so craves. We travelled too fast for much analysis, and the surface life was a perpetual joy. It was Egypt that sent me back into the world of problems. And Naples, Vesuvius, and Pompeii continued the work. And the headaches a bit came back.¹¹³

¹¹² Battersea Park is three-quarters of a mile long! And they seem to have missed Battersea Park Station and gone on quite a long way to Vauxhall which to this day has the same old steep staircases to each platform.

¹¹³ Betty Molteno, *Journal*, op. cit.

It was the poverty which shocked Betty in both Italy and Egypt. From Alexandria, she wrote: 'The number of beggars, blind, sick and deformed people, I was afraid of looking about for fear of seeing one of them.... I don't know how people who live in Alexandria get on.'

When the three of them reached Trieste, John took it into his head to visit the famous caves of Postojnska jama in Slovenia where they each signed the Visitors Book on 10 November 1871.¹¹⁴ To get there, they travelled inland from the Adriatic Coast through the mountains by railway and it suddenly struck John that engineers were now fully capable of building new railways through mountainous terrain. This meant that his and Hercules Jarvis's dream of extending the Cape Town-Wellington line through the mountains on to the African plateau was now possible, and he wrote off in much excitement to the Governor at the Cape, Sir Henry Barkly, about what he had learned: 'Of all the railways I have yet seen, that from Vienna to Trieste is the most difficult, and is acknowledged to exhibit the greatest amount of engineering boldness and skill, and the similarity of some of the mountain gorges and other difficulties which will have to be overcome if railways extend very much at the Cape, would rend it very desirable that the engineers who have to plan and construct these should visit this line'.¹¹⁵

This lengthy letter of John's illustrated how much he had matured as a political leader. He covered a wide range of issues from railways to irrigation and the future of the 'native population' – the growing number of Xhosa-speaking Africans being incorporated into the Colony. He looked forward to what needed to be done for the country's future economic development. And his lucid and detailed command of the facts was complemented by practical policy proposals.

This whole trip to Europe did John an immense amount of good. He threw himself into everything. He climbed right to the top of the Cathedral spire in Brussels. At breakfast he would often tuck into a beefsteak while the girls got by on boiled eggs!

They had a couple of serious scares. They were caught in a severe storm when travelling the length of the Italian coast from Venice to Brindisi. The loose cargo on deck had to be thrown overboard in order to let the huge amount of water being shipped run off freely. Even John who never got seasick 'came down looking rather seedy' and the steward asked Caroline if she was frightened. Caroline's reply, according to Betty: 'Decidedly not'. Then a few weeks later, while sailing back from Egypt past Sicily, they were caught in an even more tempestuous winter storm and nearly wrecked. Things got so bad John began lashing Betty and Caroline to a wooden table so that they might have some chance of floating safely to the shore if the ship went down. The Captain however brought the little craft safely into a tiny harbour on Sicily's southern coast. They were taken to a simple inn, then put on a coach for Syracuse on a journey that 'took them 14 hours and through very wild country infested with brigands', and having to be accompanied by an armed escort on horseback.

¹¹⁴ Trevor Shaw, *Foreign Travellers in the Slovene Karst, 1486-1900*, Ljubljana, 2008, p. 262-3; Stephen A. Craven, 'Postojnska Jama in Slovenia, the Sudbahn and the visit of John Charles Molteno: Their Influence on the development of Railways in South Africa', *Acta Carsologica*, 35/1, Ljubljana, 2006.

¹¹⁵ J. C. Molteno (writing from Suez in Egypt) to Sir Henry Barkly, 8 Dec. 1871. Reproduced in P. A. Molteno, *The Life and Times...*, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 176-8.

Despite these mishaps, the trip seems to have been a supremely happy time for all three of them.

Caroline on the threshold of adulthood

The letters written during the trip give a wonderful picture of Caroline. Just eighteen, she is intelligent and, unlike Betty, socially confident, and with a wide range of accomplishments – playing the piano, singing, a command of French, good at chess, and possessing a superb ability in describing all that she sees. Fearless, too, as shown by how cool she remained during the storm they had to endure off Italy. But she was still a girl and with a sense of fun. When crossing the Line during their voyage to London, she organised a series of practical jokes aimed at a poor young medical student who got hosed down by her at one point!

She had also become a poised and beautiful young woman. Not only had Captain Vyvyan been smitten by her on the outward journey, but a few months later when they were about to return to the Cape, a family friend sprang a totally unexpected surprise on them. Caroline related what happened. ‘Last Sunday evening on our return from Richmond, Papa found a note from Mr Chomley asking him to see him at his hotel either that evening or next morning. Papa rather wondered what he could want and went over at once. A little while after, he returned and, fancy our surprise, when he told us that Mr Chomley had proposed for me. I could scarcely believe it for he had never in any way given me the smallest reason to suspect that he was in love with me. I always thought he talked more to Betty.’

Betty’s sensibilities and empathy towards others

Having their father to themselves for eight months, and free of his usual business and parliamentary preoccupations, was a most important bonding experience for both girls, perhaps for Betty especially. Years later, she reflected how the trip had made possible for her ‘a better knowledge and understanding of my Father, and the finding of new points of contact with him.... Great was the privilege of this intimate companionship’.¹¹⁶

We also see the seeds of her radical outlook on the world. Shocked by the poverty she saw in Egypt. Upset by ‘the blood-stained fields of Belgium and France’ when they toured the battlefields of the 1870 Franco-Prussian War which had only just come to an end. And her burgeoning empathy with all people, ending one letter to her mother, ‘Give my best love to everyone, the servants included’.

Interestingly, towards the end of her life, she still had ‘vivid memories of the early Victorian days that [were] mine’; but ‘it was not a world that I understood or felt at home in. Many of its conventions seemed to me so meaningless.’¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Betty Molteno, *Journal*, 25 Sept. 1925.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Once Betty and Caroline were back in Cape Town in April 1872, there were the joys of reunion with their mother, seeing their new baby brother Barkly, and catching up with their sister Maria and all their other brothers and members of the wider family.

For their father, the introduction of responsible government now looked almost certain. But who would take office as the Cape's first Prime Minister? Would it be offered to him? And if he accepted it, what would he do with the power that for the first time now lay in the hands of the Colony's inhabitants? And his family – how would their lives be changed by his becoming First Citizen of the Cape?