

# A PIONEER MOTHER

MY LIFE'S HISTORY  
BY SUSAN HELENA NORVAL.  
AGED 77 YEARS.

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THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF THE  
OLD PIONEERS.

*"For as was thy back bent for us were thy straight limbs and fingers deformed;  
thou wert our conscript on whom the lot fell. and fighting our battles wert so  
marred."*

<CARLYLE>

Susanna Helena Alexander was born 21<sup>st</sup> June 1849 on St Helena Island  
She was the 9<sup>th</sup> of 10 children of William Watkin Alexander (1805-1891) and Susanna Jacoba duPreez (1815-1891)

Her siblings were:

Frederick Augustus Alexander (1834-1864)

Johanna Elizabeth Alexander (1835-1909) married John Robb.

John Geysbert Alexander (1837-1910)

Elizabeth Susanna Alexander (1839-1840) age 1 year old

Louisa Jane Alexander (1841-1892) married John Benjamin and Henry Paxton

Charlotte Margaret Alexander (1843-1905) married William Stensdorff and Seth Paxton

William Watkin Alexander (1845-1938) married Maggie Norval

Elizabeth Grace Alexander (1847-1849) age 2 years old

George Henry Alexander (1852-1891)

She died 5<sup>th</sup> August 1932

She married James Norval (1840-1904) on 31 March 1870 and Adolf Reinhardt Radloff on circa 1909

Her children were:

Mary Susan Norval (1871-1951)

Edward John Norval (1873-?)

James Alexander Norval (1875-?)

William Watkin Norval (1876-1901)

Duncan Clifford Norval (1878-?)

Annie Elizabeth Norval (1880-?)

George Murray Norval (1884-?)

Agnes Ellen Norval 1885-1944

Fred Robb Norval (1888-1941)

Charles Robert Norval (1890-1949)

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# A Pioneer Mother

By Susan Helena (Alexander) Norval

## PREFACE

The materials for this book were partly retained in my memory and partly collected by me from childhood's days till now, when I have reached the advanced age of 77 years.

From the time when South Africa was a young country with a limited white population my memory carries me back to many strange and uncommon happenings. But, in the midst of what at times seemed to be almost overwhelming disasters and difficult problems, there was always some little sense of humour to leaven the blackness and help to brighten our lives. It was an aspect worth cultivating, and it helped to keep the spirit of youth strong within me. For if, in the troubles that at times assailed me I had brooded much on the things that had gone awry, I should not be alive today, afire with the spirit of adventure and a yearning travel and see more of this beautiful world.

Under the red glory of the Southern Cross my dear children were born and played each their separate part in life; and I, a Pioneer mother, have watched those dear wee ones who played at my knee, grow into sturdy men and women.

Perchance, if this book falls into the hands of South Africans far from these sunny skies, it may recall a memory of the veldt as I see it now with the marvellous recuperative-ness of the African veldt after summer rains -- carpeted with the richest grass, and spangled with a hundred varying species of delicate and vivid-hued wild, flowers. Or, maybe, Africa will send forth a welcome across the mighty, dividing seas a welcome that breathes courage, serene hope and high endeavour, as she stretches forth dark alluring arms to gather and hold her deserting sons in the witching languorous mystery of her embrace.

## CHAPTER I - NORVAL'S PONT

To those resident in the green, flourishing counties of England such a life as I have experienced would be difficult for them to imagine. One could not call mine a well sheltered life, not at the beginning, for each and every one had to set their hand to the plough, so to speak and do their level best. In the year 1872 an enormous amount of traffic was then on the way to the far-famed Diamond Fields of Kimberley, my children's Father and I struggled made great sacrifices and worked hard till we could float our Pont over the Orange River to take the traffic across. And many, who have since retired and are now living at their ease in Grahamstown and Cradock, made the wherewithal with which to do so by taking transport at this time. The railway may have been thought of but it was not in existence; and all goods, etc., of any and all description had to be transported by bullock-wagons.

Many a pleasant and even exciting trip have I made by Ox or Horse wagon to Kimberley or Hope Town when my heart yearned for my own dear parents, and nothing but a sight of their loved faces would ease the aching at my heart.

Laughter and love, kind-heartedness and sympathy abounded in that much-loved happy home and, at times react at leaving such a safe shelter has assailed me, but I would not pose, for all that, as a warning to the young against leaving the parent-nest, for Africa is calling with an insistent cry for young endeavour, high hope, and stalwart men and women to conquer the land, and how can one do that unless one sallies forth to answer the call?

I have met during my life many beautiful and capable women with only the responsibility of their own lives to weigh them down; and have pitied them for their idle useless hours.

I have never found my busy life a burden, and I could not exist without my dearly-loved children today; nevertheless I have always possessed an inward craving to travel and see more of this beautiful world, which cravings, had I been in a position to travel, would soon have been satisfied and maybe even satiated, though I doubt that. But my

responsibilities were at all times too great for me to indulge in any such inclination, even when opportunities were offered me, as happened occasionally. Duty with me was paramount and my desires, perforce, had to be relegated to the background, and made to lie dormant. However I am none the worse today for it; and I have had an experience that money could not buy.

The Pont over the River which my dear husband and I worked so hard to bring to fruition, paid well for all conditions of traffic, but it meant hard work and expense. We started with a small Pont worked by eight oars, eight native boys to row, and after, when the traffic became excessive we had a much larger Pont built on the spot by Messrs Campbell & Daly, (the well-known boat-building firm of that day).

The new Pont sufficed for all our requirements, and, in addition, my husband saw to it that the roads on either side were kept in good condition for many miles, and every care was taken in time of floods.

One incident I must relate. On a certain day a genial old gentleman arrived on the Free State side of the River, on either side of which, drawn up in strong array, were a considerable number of wagons.

"Who is the proprietor of this pont?," was the question he put to one of the men.

"Mr. Norval " the man replied pointing with his index finger at my husband. (The Pont was called Norval's Pont after my husband and the town which afterwards grew up around it is called Norval's Pont to this day) The old gentleman came forward with a request to be taken across the River. He was travelling to Cape Town, he said, together with his family, a couple of spring horse-wagons, and carts and he was anxious to depart quickly

My husband shook his head regretfully.

"I am the proprietor of the Pont he said "but I cannot establish a precedent by taking you across. In fact, it is more than I dare do, unless the owners of these wagons are agreeable to stand back in favour of you" He turned to the men and proffered an enquiry:

"Would one of them stand back and allow the newcomer to take their turn"

The men shook their heads sullenly. "They were as much hurried as the other" they said.

My husband solved a disagreeable problem and lightened a dreary period of waiting by suggesting that the old gentleman should bring his wife and family up to our house, where I would give them some refreshment he said, and would help to entertain them and so pass away a dull hour. And indeed I was charmed with their good and pleasant company, and the time of waiting passed all too quickly.

Later, when it was ascertained that the old gentleman was Mr. Brandt (later Sir John Brandt) President of the Free State, and this knowledge coming to the ears of the owners of the wagons, they felt heartily ashamed of themselves, coming forward in a group and begging him to take each or every turn, and cross the River. Which he did; after bidding us a grateful and kindly farewell.

Some time after this happening the other President, Mr. Reitz came across on our Pont, also on his way to Cape Town.

But an unpleasant incident occurred, when he reached our side. In some way or another, just as he was leaving the Pont he missed his footing and fell into the river. In less time than one would think we had fished him out and had him conveyed up to the house, where he was put into a nicely warmed bed with hot drinks every now and then to keep off a chill, while I saw to it that his soddened clothing was dried and pressed in readiness for his departure.

The larger Pont was worked by a thick and heavy cable on wire ropes pulled across by native boys, but it had to be well secured at night-time when a flood was threatening, lest it should be carried away by the mighty force of onrushing waters.

I well remember the day when a party of ladies, having crossed the river remarked: "How beautifully clear the water looks today; just a calm sea" And another asserted that "she would dearly like to see it in flood". To which I made answer:

"No no! I prefer it as it is. I have seen too much of the danger and horrors of floods"

Well, we must have tempted fate by our talk, for that very night Mr.

Johnson, the Pontman, came up to the house and called to me: "I have bad news for you", he said, "The river has come down in full flood and taken the Pont, boats, cable and all I along with it" My heart stopped beating for a second, then started pounding in great throbs, just like the heart of an engine throbbing its way to the outer world. I felt a damp sweat break out on my brow, and found difficulty in restraining my tears. Alas! I knew only too well that the news that had been brought to me practically meant ruin.

I went into my husband's room and woke him. He started up, and gazed in alarm at my grief stricken countenance "What is the matter?" He asked. "Why are you crying?" For by now the tears were falling down my cheeks in thick profusion.

"We have lost all we possess" I told him between my sobs. "The river is in flood and has carried everything away"

My startling news fully aroused my husband. He jumped out of bed, hastily donned some clothing, pulled a waterproof around me and likewise himself, then snatching at a couple of storm-lanterns, we hurried outside.

My word! What a sight! Shall I ever forget it? No, I don't think that I will; for it stands out clear in my memory, even now.

It was a dense black night; a thin crescent of moon occasionally peeping through the hurrying, scudding clouds. The river overflowed the banks, one huge mass of trees and wood was floating rapidly by.

"Phew--w" whistled my husband staring in consternation at the scene before him. The river's "down" as it has never been before. No wonder the Pont went.

We gazed at it for the space of a moment. On rushed its red turbid waters, swelled by the contributions of numerous confluent and the draining of the banks on either side, tearing foaming between the high banks, carrying down driftwood and huge trees in its swift pent-up course.

For several days and nights it had rained, with only an occasional stoppage, in which the sun would shine out, and the river become as calm as a mill-pond. Rain, rain, rain, till we had become accustomed to

the continuous fall upon the roof of our house, never heeding that the parched earth, now thoroughly soft and moistened, ran off the superfluous water in streams from every runnel and gully, which emptying themselves into the larger rivers these in their turn came down in such force as to swell our river, overflow its banks; doing much and serious damage.

The prospect before my husband and I, as we stood there swathed from head to foot in our long mackintoshes, was sufficient justification for our dull forebodings. The mighty stream rushed on its way with a dulling and ever deafening roar, rolling its huge red waves; curling, hissing splashing; now heaving up a great tree-stump which, tossing for a moment, and leaping half out like a live thing, disappeared again in the boiling depths or carrying along an accumulation of drift-wood and logs, which groaned and grated as the fierce current hurled itself continually upon the obstructing mass.

A pall of dark rain-cloud -- heavy, opaque, and without a break anywhere -- rested low down upon the sides of the far banks of the river. The rain came down in a steady downpour, straight, penetrating and incessant. It was useless fighting, the elements were supreme, man was nowhere.

Ah me! It looked too sad and was heart-breaking to almost beyond endurance. There was no sign of our Pont or our boats; they had gone with the rushing, swirling, waters down the River. But this was one of the lesser trials of the early days of the Pioneer men and women, we were fortunate to escape with our lives, and the realisation that our home was intact brought to us a small modicum of comfort.

So we set about making the best of things which is a sound attribute in such times of stress and storm; and made arrangements for other boats to be forwarded on to us from Port Elizabeth. These boats took a couple months to arrive, and by the time they reached us the river had gone down.

## CHAPTER II - I JOURNEY TO THE CAPE

After some little time we located our boat some miles away wedged in between great rocks and terribly battered about.

It cost a considerable sum of money to get it back to the river and extensive repairs were needed before it was fit for use The Pont itself ran us into about £600 for repairs after which it was practically new again.

Never before or since, to my recollection, had the river come down so rapidly and with so much force.

My dear old father had the shock of his life at this time. He had trekked to Bloemfontein from Hope Town by spring-wagon, horse-drawn, and happened to be at Rostall's Pont on the Orange River during the day-time when the great bank of rushing swirling waters was approaching, though, at the time many miles beyond us. Being a man of keen intellect, and also far-seeing he quickly and accurately gauged the sorrow and trouble it would bring near to our home and his state of mind was far from enviable.

Some years after this happening, a motion was put forward and passed that a railway bridge should be built over the river. But the Transvaalers opposed it with all their might and main, the old way of crossing by the Pont seemed the best way to them. They were not very progressive at that time, and more often than not one-idead. As a matter of fact, even their old President , "Oom Paul", was also against it. But such old-fashioned ideas had to give way to PROGRESS; the farmers owed their existence to the breeding of livestock, and by transport from one point to another. The Railway would minimise and accelerate the carrying of transport, and also would greatly reduce amount of labour required.

However, the Governor of Cape Town and old "President" Paul Kruger met for consultation and extensively discussed the building of a railway bridge. In my mind's eye I can still see "Oom Paul" with his flowing beard the inevitable pipe with its large well-coloured bowl, his nicotine-stained teeth and tall hat, - an article of wear he was rarely without - as he met the Governor -- Sir Harry Lock.

A satisfactory settlement was the pleasing result of this meeting and, after a while the railway was brought nearer to our home.

About this time my health broke down; (you must understand that I had been through a period of excessive worry and strain, a continuation of which will often affect even the strongest physique). It was plainly apparent that a change of some sort was necessary to restore my health and shattered nerves, so, with three of my children, I left for Cape Town leaving three of my sons with my husband, who was somewhat opposed to my going so far from home and, endeavoured to persuade me to choose a nearer place for a holiday - Durban, for preference.

But my heart was set on going the Cape. and to the Cape I would go. And as the old saying has it: "willful woman will have her way". My husband's anxiety was only natural, for, at all times I was "the apple of his eye" and I was very far from being in good health.

Finding remonstrance and persuasion was useless, my husband reluctantly consented to my formulated plan, and I started off by horse-wagon en route to Colesberg to catch the Cape train. To calm my husband's apprehensions, I carried with me an addressed envelope, in which was a blank sheet of paper and a pencil, for he, poor man, was fearful lest I should become worse on the journey and unable to communicate with him.

As we entered the station we happened to meet a lady friend whose condition was far worse than mine and this seemed to reconcile my husband to the thought of the long journey for me.

Ah! But the parting was bitter! And I was ill-fitted to bear it, being in such a weak state of health. When the whistle blew, and the train was about to steam out of the station my husband stood with one foot in the compartment and one on the platform, his eyes trained on my face with a world of yearning, intermixed with fear, in their gaze, and he seemed, if such a thing were possible, that he would tear himself in two, so reluctant was he to part from me.

But all things come to all end, even the saddest of partings and the heaviest rain of tears. With my eyes blinded by my grief, with a vain endeavour to stem my falling tears I leaned far out of the carriage

window waving a tear-drenched handkerchief, till my husband's form dwindled to a tiny spot in the far distance, and then faded from view.

As we proceeded on our journey, my spirits revived when we reached Naaupoort, I ordered some good, hot soup to be brought to us. We carried with us an abundance of good things to eat, for, at that time, most people, when travelling, carried the major part of their food with them. The hot soup revived us and I felt capable of taking an interest in my surrounding. Passing the carriage window was a Doctor whom I knew; on his way to a train returning the way from whence we had come. I called to him and asked him if he would take charge of a letter to my husband. Such an unexpected communication would, I knew, prove a great joy to him and reassure his loving heart.

The Doctor willingly assented, and I set to work to pen a good few lines.

In my letter I told my husband how much brighter and better I already felt, and that I felt assured that the change would fully restore my health. Later, after our arrival at the Cape a reply came in which my husband told me how my news had gladdened his heart and given to him renewed hope. He was so relieved, he wrote, to hear that I was enjoying the journey, and feeling no worse for it.

It was the time of the rains, and so, perforce a wet journey most of the way. But the country we passed through was green and delightful and the rain-washed air beautiful and invigorating. As the train wound round the Hex River Mountains I viewed again their majestic beauty with a feeling of awe at their lofty grandeur. Far, far away, on the extreme top, there was a crest of snow which the sun faintly flushed to a pale rose-pink. Then, as we neared the Cape, the train passed through plantations of lilies, growing wild, the perfume from which was almost overpowering. And the grape-vines - they seemed never-ending. Some verses I had read came into my mind:

"Do you know the land, the fairest land  
In the mystic realms of old?  
Where the earth and the air and the flowers rare  
All sleep 'neath a sun of gold?"

Who does not love Africa: "A land of wide spaces, of blue mountains which are purple in the dawn and rose red when swift southern evening is falling, a land of promise and fulfilment a land of clear skies of flower-strewn stretches of forest and open veld, green vineyards and rich orchards -- of grim grey rocks too. Of wild winds...

A faint cry from my baby-boy aroused me from my dreaming. He was peevish. and looked a little wan, and refused his food. The dampness had not agreed within him, that I could plainly see.

Cape Town at last, and, I breathed a sigh of relief as the train steamed into the station. It is no joke to be cooped up in a railway carriage day after day with three small children and no corridor in which one could take a little exercise to stretch one's limbs.

Leaving the major part of our luggage to be sent on, I hailed a cab, and, instructed the driver where to take us. But he, in his cunningness, thinking me a greenhorn from up-country and therefore fit prey to be rooked, drove us by long devious ways to our destination. I soon observed and understood his maneuvering and stopping the cab, in a direct, downright manner gave him to understand that I had no intention whatever of paying for a drive: he was to convey as at once to Long Street, for which I would pay him the legal fare and not a cent over.

With a scowling glance he turned the vehicle in the right direction, and in a fraction of time we arrived at the house at which I expected to stay. A comely Cape girl greeted us. "Tell your mistress I have arrived" I instructed her.

Just before this my eldest daughter had asked me if I had sent a wire to this place before leaving our home (I had arranged for accommodation beforehand). But in the sorrow of parting from my dear husband this had slipped my memory and no wire had been sent.

The lady of the home came to the door with a regretful look on her face. "I have not one vacant room", she informed me.

Had you wired I could have easily arranged for your accommodation. I am so sorry you omitted to wire, it is most unfortunate. She gave me a keen glance and noted my wan face and languid air. "It is not Cape

Town you want" she said, "sea-air is what you need" Turning to the driver she asked him if he knew a certain place out at Sea Point. When he answered in the affirmative she directed him to drive us there. (And the rascal got the big fare he was seeking after all).

### CHAPTER III - A PLEASANT HOLIDAY

Oh! How glad I was and how relieved I felt when we at last reached our place of abode! As the cab came to a stand-still a lady emerged from the open door of the house with a smiling black maid in attendance. She gave us a very kindly greeting and volunteered the information that breakfast was ready and that we were to come right in to it without waiting to remove our hats; ordering the maid, meanwhile, to see that our luggage was brought safely in and placed in our rooms.

Our pleasant-faced hostess gathered my baby into her capable arms clasping him closely to her ample breast and fed him with warm, nourishing food. He sank to sleep as soon as his hunger was satisfied and the strained look disappeared from his little face.

Replete with comfort, after a most satisfying and well-prepared meal, we were shown into a spacious room, the windows of which afforded us a grand view of the sea, which lay shimmering beneath the hot morning sun. Our hostess turned to me: "Your state of health is clearly apparent" she said. "Now let me persuade you to have a hot bath and take a few hours rest in bed -- not on the bed. Turn in altogether."

To this procedure I willingly assented, for I was rather exhausted after the long train journey. Thinking a sea-bath would help to restore my jaded energy, I asked for the recuperative ablution, and then retired to bed, for a good long rest.

Just as I was slipping into the arms of Morpheus, my oldest daughter aroused me with a remark: "Mother" she said "I'm sure this is not the place were sent to. The name of the lady here is quite different to the one given to us" I answered her in a drowsy tone; I forget what I said I just could not rouse myself sufficiently to bother about whether we were in the right or wrong place.

Later, when our good hostess entered our room with kind enquiry as to our welfare I asked if her name was Mrs. Pearson, for that was the name of the person at whose house I had been directed to stay.

She looked quite alarmed and exclaimed: "Did Mrs. Mackie send you to Mrs. Pearson? The driver must have mistaken the direction. What will you do now?" "Remain in my comfortable quarters, I smilingly replied "I am here for my health's sake, and if the kindness and courtesy extended to me on my arrival are a forerunner of the attention that I shall receive here I shall consider the driver's mistake a fortunate occurrence for me - - for us all" She looked very pleased at my remark, and assured us her unfailing and assiduous attention.

I had been staying at this house for a few days when the dear old lady, at whose house I had been directed to stay, becoming cognisant of my address drove over to pay me a visit and begged me to spend a few days with her before returning to my home.

Ah! In those early days before the greed of gold and the craving for diamonds had made themselves manifest "kind hearts were more than coronets and simple faith than Norman blood". We were a simple folk with a simple faith, brothers and sisters united in one great purpose: to build up South Africa and to make it a living place for workers.

#### CHAPTER IV - THE HOME COMING

I returned, to my home ,and my dear husband, thoroughly recuperated, and feeling fit enough to face any burden or any trial.

The journey to Cape Town and back home again had been my first experience of railway travel. So you may guess how much I had to tell my husband and my sons, they seemed never to tire of listening to my narratives.

Came a time when the measuring of the land for the line drew near to our home and then commenced a busy time for me.

There were numbers employed on our ground for construction work and our Pont was in incessant demand ferrying across the river. Five pounds a day was the amount offered by the Engineers to my husband to take

some of their material across. He agreed to their proposal, but on condition he said that they did not work the Pont if the river came down in flood.

The Engineers laughed at this; and declared that "no water had defied them yet". They fixed another strong cable on wire ropes above ours, and considered themselves well-prepared.

Came an occasion when my husband had to go away on business, and naturally left his Pontman in charge with his men.

Soon after his departure the river rose rapidly and with extreme force. The Engineers persisted in working the Pont to bring their traffic across, and the Pontman came to me in great distress; with urgent enquiries as to the course he was to pursue.

"Obey your master's orders, of course" I advised him.

A short while elapsed and he returned with the information that no word of his had effect in stopping the working of the Pont. "What was he to do now?" he asked.

I ordered him to come away with the men and leave the responsibility of the Pont to the Engineers; He promised do as I said, and off he went again.

I had my suspicions, and doubtless they were correct -- that he had been offered a bribe and had accepted it; to put two of our native boys down to bale the water out from under the deck -- in those days we did not possess the contrivances so *en evidence* at the present day -- and I soon had reason to think that he was assisting to work the Pont.

They had made several crossings, taking wagon-loads of stuff over to the Free State, when suddenly the wire rope erected by the Engineers snapped with a sound as of a mighty cannon being discharged, and the force with which it parted broke our windlass and cables, and turned the Pont clean over. More than thirty men, a large bullock-wagon, and ten beautiful mules in full harness were precipitated into the rushing waters. I had heard the loud report and guessed what had happened. Then fell on my ears shrill cries of distress and hoarse shouting. I could hear all this quite plainly from where I was busy at work in my house.

The catastrophe happened at a busy hour for me, for the Engineers and

all the men had their meals up at our place, and it was nearing the lunch-hour.

With faces white and scared-looking, in a panic of fear the Engineers rushed up to the house with a hasty enquiry to whether the Postmaster had arrived for his lunch yet. They were anxious to telegraph across the river to ascertain whether any of the Engineers were on the Pont when it overturned (But they had been wise, and had taken good care not to be there).

Our Pontman - Roux; was drifted across the current together with the rest of the men and natives who were in the Pont; but, fortunately for him, he was able to keep afloat by swimming. He was on the point of giving up, his strength was practically exhausted; for all the time he was in the water he had been fighting against the swift onrush of the swirling torrent, when the Engineers took a boat of their own and rescued him. He was in such a state of exhaustion and so battered about that our doctor - Dr Manning - could hold out but little hope of his recovery.

The mules were drowned (oh! the poor animals sacrificed to the need of man) and most of the men. They were all strangers to me except for one man named Botha. His body was recovered a few days later.

Our Pontman was confined to his bed for a full month - his injuries had caused an abscess to form in his ear, and he seemed to grow worse instead of better. It was a fortunate circumstance that he occupied one of our cottages, and had a wife and daughter to give him the care that he needed for I had very little time to spare from my home duties.

My eldest daughter went over to them and assisted them in many ways, eager and ready to help, as she is to-day. My time was fully occupied with my own home affairs for at this time we had a full house to be provided for.

In the midst of a busy morning (I was baking bread and pastries) my daughter ran over to our house and begged for some quite boiling water. "I want to try your old remedy, mother" she said. "Mr. Roux is in an agony of pain and the doctor has just told me that he cannot reduce the inflammation. It is spreading to his head and is becoming a very serious matter" I gave her the water boiling hot; and warned her to be careful

lest the patient should upset it over himself and so add to his sufferings. My daughter told me to next morning how she fared. She padded the mug of boiling water, insisted, despite Mr. Roux's protests, on holding it herself, begged him to try and lie quiet, then placed his ear over the water, put pillows around him to sustain his weight, covered him up warmly, and remained by his side in careful watchfulness. Gradually the inflammation subsided, Roux became quiet, his restlessness departed and he fell asleep - the first real sleep he had had for many days. My daughter gently removed the mug, added more hot water and continued this treatment until his sleep was deep and profound.

Two hours passed, and then Roux awoke. The mug had been removed but the pillow on which his head was resting was still warm, He opened his eyes in wide surprise. "Why the pain has gone!" he exclaimed. "But why is my pillow so wet?" The reason was soon apparent. The abscess had broken.

They soon made him comfortable and cleared all traces of the discharge away, and fed him with some good hot coffee and Rusk's.

No-one was more surprised than the doctor when he returned to the cottage expecting to hear that the inflammation had reached the brain, and that the end was imminent. My husband met him on his way, and smiled inwardly as he offered to go on with him and have a last look at "poor Roux"! To the doctor's astonishment Roux was sitting up in bed, a broad smile on his face, a cup of coffee in one hand and a buttered Rusk in the other, and on the road to full recovery.

## CHAPTER V - I BECOME A SUCCESSFUL CATERER

To forward the completion of the railway line into the Free State and the Transvaal, many men were set to work. A temporary Pontoon bridge was erected across the river at the point where our Pont used to ferry the traffic across. About this time we were approached by responsible persons and asked to cater for all the passengers from all parts who were journeying to the Diamond Fields in Kimberley and the Gold Fields up on the Rand.

The Engineers gave as a very big shed in which to accommodate our visitors. We had thirteen tables, twelve feet long, with suitable seats (forms) that enabled us to seat five hundred people at one sitting; and we ordered and received from Port Elizabeth all that was needed for culinary purposes for their comfort.

The tables, when set ready for the first meal, "were a sight for sore eyes", as the saying goes; and would vie with some of the dining-tables set out in some of the so-called first-class hotels. Covered with snowy-white damask on which was placed gleaming cutlery and vases of beautifully arranged flowers of all hues and description, intersected at various points by vast arrays of different meats -- turkeys, ducks, fowls, lamb, hams, cheese, cakes, jellies, fruits and various kinds of vegetables, sufficient in quantity and quality to make the mouth of a gourmand water - you may imagine the labour and forethought expended on the preparing of these. We were compensated by the obvious fact that the visitors were delighted with the grand array, and the attention, courteous and assiduous, that was paid to them.

The train conveying the passengers to their various destinations stopped alongside the large open door leading into the shed. They had but to alight and cross the mud-baked platform and would have set before them as good a meal as could be procured anywhere. And wasn't I just thankful when the end of my hard-working day was in sight and I could tumble into bed, dog-tired, but supremely happy. For to give one's service in the tending of others, even though they be strangers, to feed the hungry and to comfort the sorrowing, is a great and a glorious task. You may guess that the superintending of all this meant real hard work for me as, in addition, I lead a large family of my own who needed care and attention. As time passed, however, things improved somewhat but the work increased, my family increased also, and their education became one of my perplexities.

I was determined, above all else, that the education of children should be my first and my foremost thought.

When the station was an accomplished fact, and sterling improvements were made, I very rarely had a free space in my home. Visitors were

frequent, in fact we were always, what I called, housefull.

Later, rumours of the Anglo-Boer War were set in motion and troubled thoughts assailed me. Though I never fully realised what awaited me till I was fairly in the midst of it. When rumour became very near fact and reality, I called Niels, a Dane, and a very faithful and reliable servant (we always had good white servants - men servants, in those days, of any and every nationality), and told him to make a big hole in the earth somewhere, and instructed him to bury all the stores from my home that he could possibly cram in. Our large loft was full from end to end with every description of crockery and other utensils used for the catering, with a large case of linen and another big case of home-made soap. (I always made my own candles, jams and canned fruits, in fact almost everything that was consumed in my home or used for house-purposes was made by me). In addition, I had all my best pictures, special china ornaments which I valued, and some little knick-nacks which I admired carefully packed and placed there for safety.

Niels appeared highly amused: "The Boers will not venture near here", he assured me; but I reckoned that prevention was better than cure, and told him that it was of no use locking the stable door after the steed was stolen.

Then my good husband suggested that an excavation beneath the shed where the sheep were shorn, if made, could be turned into a good-sized under-ground room. This proposal I agreed to. And I must say that Niels carried it out to perfection though the work had mostly to be done at night for fear lest some antagonistic person might be lurking around and so be spying on us.

My astonishment was supreme when I received, a stray message from Niels, worded so curiously that I failed to grasp its meaning. But he just wanted to surprise me, that was all. Greater still was my surprise and delight when, in answer to the message I viewed the room after its completion. Why, the Boers themselves often slept in the same shed, little dreaming of the stores so safely hidden beneath them. After Peace was declared I recovered all my stores and treasures, little the worse for their enforced storage.

We left two trustworthy and reliable men in charge in our place, and then moved to our farm a few miles away. Ah me! I passed through a strenuous time during the war, and not least of the heart-pangs I experienced was having to leave the place where, though I had known hard work, and long hours of incessant service, I had, at least been happy.

Came a day when I received an order for so many pounds of butter. My husband suggested that it would be a wise procedure if he took the butter to town in the early morning before the heat of the day made itself felt. He returned almost before I thought that he could possibly have reached the town, and I laughingly chaffed him on his speedy despatch, telling him that I wished his smartness would develop as quickly in other tasks that he undertook for me.

His eyes held a glint of humour. "I have brought the butter back" he said.

I looked astounded, as indeed I might for it was not like him to return before his business was completed, no matter if he took a week to do it.

The Boers have taken possession!" was his startling statement. "They have taken prisoners all the men at the station (Norval's Pont), and have given the remaining residents seven days grace to join them or leave the district".

The blood turned cold in my veins. What would happen to my sons who were assisting us on the farm? My dear boys who were our mainstay -- who managed the farm for us? And our son who had just returned home from Grahamstown fatigued and run down (an assistant magistrate) what of him? And our boy at school in Colesberg? The blood rose rapidly in my veins, I would have dared a thousand Boers, at the moment, had they stood before me, to come between me and my boys. My sons! Bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh! We consulted anxiously together, my husband and I, and he, dear man decided to apply for permits to get the boys removed from the danger zone. While my husband, in company with my dear son Watkin, went into Colesberg to get the permits, I began to prepare for the journey.

It was my husband's intention to remove our son from college while he

was in Colesberg, and when the principal of the school (Mr. Arthur Scott) realised the purport of his visit, he raised a strong objection to the removal of my son from the school, protesting regretfully against his withdrawal before his final exam: which was near at hand.

"And where will it take place? was my husband's quizzical rejoinder. "In the Boer Laager"? "No, no!" protested the principal. "The Boers have assured me of their protection if I continue with the school".

My husband, feeling assured that such would not be the case, removed my son George from the school, made his way to the Commandant in charge, received the promised permits, and returned home.

All was in readiness for their departure when they arrived; for each a rug and pillow, an extra suit and a change of underclothing; bottles of hot coffee and sufficient food for the journey as far as Cradock.

It was a grievous parting. Partings are hard at the best of times, but when there is war...? Ah me! My husband had given our sons special instructions, he knowing every inch of the ground that they were to follow. When the swift South African twilight had deepened into night they were to draw the cart into a big sluit that he told of, unhook the horses from the cart and hobble them, so they would not stray. Then they were to have their evening meal, and they were warned that on no account must they make a fire. They were to inspan and trek again at day-break.

## CHAPTER VI - WAR!!

Our son, Clifford, had to return to the magistrate's office at Grahamstown, there to resume his onerous duties. George to college – if it were safe for him to go. And Watkin had a speculation in cattle to engineer.

"Good-bye!"

Who among us has not uttered the mournful word? Not merely in airy, hollow fashion, but in deep sadness. As we look our last upon those from whom we are about to be divided by time or distance without

knowing maybe, whether we shall ever look on those loved faces again. The train rolls out of the station, handkerchiefs wave and voices no longer audible to each other still continue to articulate it maybe in accents of heart-sick pain, or through a forced and broken smile, or even in tones of genuine cheerfulness the saddest of all words - "Good-bye" You can imagine the grief we felt at parting from our boys little knowing whether we would ever meet again. I marked the date when I returned to the house -- it was the 19th of November, 1899.

Meanwhile the Boers had entered the town of Colesberg, taking prisoner dear Mr. Scott the principal of the college, the teachers, professors, doctors, the ministers of the Wesleyan Church, even Members of Parliament and every storekeeper in the district.

Fortunately my two daughters, Anne a teacher and Agnes a scholar, had at my request, been taken away by some good friend to a beautiful farm in the country, so my heart was at rest concerning them.

Then it came to my knowledge that a big fight was imminent, and this close to where my girls were staying, I also heard that the Boers had taken possession of the big mountain "Coleskop", and the farm "Acacia", which sheltered my daughters lay quite near to this place.

My poor heart grew sick with fear at the knowledge that my girls might be in danger. All the mother-love and the mother- hunger welled to the surface, and I felt that I could walk barefoot over burning sands and face unheard of horrors to fetch my dear ones to a place of safety.

Without more ado I calmly informed my husband that as he was unable to leave it was my intention to go myself and fetch our children home. I ordered our coachman to fix our light spring-wagon and inspan the horses. I filled the vehicle with an assortment of prime fruits and delicious farm butter, adding eggs and other welcome commodities. I packed a large quantity of these for I meant to leave a goodly portion with an invalid brother in town to whom I knew they would be very welcome.

We set out on our way, and when a few miles had been covered drew near to a substantial-looking farmhouse. In front, a sweep of smooth sward sloped down to a dam, in whose still surface a cluster of willows

lay mirrored as they drooped their boughs to the water's edge; around this lay enclosed and cultivated land, and a fruit garden bordered by high quince hedges. The house itself was a good specimen of the old-fashioned farming abode with a thatched roof and canvas ceilings, and was fairly roomy and comfortable. There standing on the stoep, which ran round two sides of the buildings was the owner of the farm, Mr. Alec Robertson, and his wife. They ran out to the gate when they saw me and seemed much perturbed at the idea of my driving about alone in such troublous times.

"So freely, and without fear, and in time of war" was Mrs. Robertson's amazed exclamation.

When I informed them of the reason for my journey, they were completely staggered, and Mr. Robertson vowed that I would never get through. "The Boers will commandeer your wagon, horses and driver, and will take all your stuff to their Laager Camp. You had best return, Mrs. Norval, he said. Indeed it is not safe for you to travel in these times.

I laughed at this. No turning back for me. The one thing that I had set out to do - rescue my daughters - I meant to do; and my mind was set upon doing it.

My fearless aspect and stern determination seemed to inspire Mrs. Robertson with a similar courage. She turned her husband: "If I could just go into town and see mother", she said longingly. "I would be quite safe with Mrs. Norval, and could return when she comes back along this way. Just to see mother once, Alec, she went on, "to kiss her once would make me so happy and she is so very sick" But her husband was deaf to all her blandishments. "Wait", said he, "wait and see if Mrs. Norval has the good fortune to return this way again."

I laughed again. "I will" said I "I'll turn up again like the proverbial bad penny. I'm not at all faint-hearted". I wished them a cheery good-bye and set off again.

## CHAPTER VII - THROUGH THE DANGER ZONE

Half the charm of South Africa lies in its variety. One may pass in a few hours from modern city to Boer dorp, from homely farm to native kraal, may lose oneself in forests struggle through bush or risk one's neck in rocky fastnesses.

Our track lay away from the farm over a shoulder of mountain which soon hid all traces of the small settlement and wound through lands of Mealies and Kaffir corn wherein flowered scarlet gladioli like poppies amid English wheat.

Here and there nestled the brown thatched huts of natives, now lying silent and deserted. Then our way lay through rocky mountains, and, as we slowly pursued a tortuous path, an army of Boers armed to the teeth sprang up and surrounded us. As far as eye could see were Boers - nothing but Boers. Every crag, every rock and every stone disappeared from view, hidden by this vast concourse of men. How many there were I am unable to state exactly, but I should not be far from wrong if I said thousands.

I ordered my driver to pull up. Indeed he could do little else seeing that our way was barred. The Boers surrounded the wagon. I looked out at them calmly and greeted them in a cheery manner.

"Good-morning, good-morning to you all! I am glad to meet you" "Are you coming to our Laager one asked as they removed their slouch hats.

"No I am not" I replied with a smile. I am on my way to Colesberg and must deny myself that pleasure. Another time when I am not so hurried I shall be pleased to accept your hospitality" So this vast concourse of men parted in a like manner to the Red Sea when Moses passed through with his people all fleeing from the tyrant Pharaoh, and I went on my way without further let or hindrance. A similar repetition of this happening occurred on three occasions but I came through with flying colours, rattling through the streets of Colesberg at a great rate, causing the occupants thereof to gaze at me in astonishment as I passed. (At this time all the principal men were incarcerated in Colesberg gaol and the women were too scared to go about alone).

I saw the ready tears start to my dear brother Willie's eyes when after driving up to his house I turned the handle of the door and surprised him by my appearance. I was the last person that he expected to see and the big tears rolled down his sun-tanned but still thin cheeks "My sister!" he cried "my dear sister! However did you get here? Where are the Boers?" "God was with me through my perilous journey," was my devout reply. "Through His Divine Help I am enabled to come and see how you are faring and He will yet guide me safely on my way to fetch my dear girls" "You will never manage it", declared Willie "you will never get through to them. The whole of the districts you will have to pass through are thronged with Boers" "There could not be a greater number than what I have already passed through" was my reply, and, bidding Willie a loving farewell I bade Anthony, the coachman, a faithful old servant, drive to my house in town, outspan the horses, see that they were fed and thoroughly rubbed down, and given a good feed. This was done and after a hearty meal and a good rests we set off for Mr. Hobkirk's farm, which lay at the foot of the big mountain (Coleskop) Not a Boer was sighted during the whole of the journey, and, if there were any hidden on the way as we passed along I doubt whether they observed us.

I arrived at the farm with lamps aglow, for darkness had descended upon us before we reached there.

My daughters flew into my ready arms with surprised exclamations of wonder and, delight: "Oh, mother! How did you manage to get here"? "God was with me" I replied, "and by His loving me shall be enabled to take you back to our home."

Immediately after breakfast, on the next morning, we set off on the return journey, after bidding our friends a fond farewell.

"We'll not get back as easily as we came" my old coachman warned me. "The Boers are massed not far from here and belike waylay us" "As we were led here without ill befalling us, so the same protection will be accorded us on our homeward way" I rebuked.

All went well till we reached a place where the grass grew thick and high, and sure enough, as the driver had foretold we came upon a large

party of Boers. They rose from the ground as we neared them, and approached towards as holding their guns in a threatening manner. I bade the driver pull up, and, looking out, said, "Such cowards, to point a gun at defenseless females! I had complete mastery of their language, and in a few terse sentences I let them hear my opinion of their cowardly action. A number of them looked sheepish and ashamed, and they all grounded their rifles and commenced a conversation with me. In reply to a question as to how they were faring they boasted that not a hair of their heads was missing, let alone any of their men. One of them caught my eye. I called to him by his name (*possibly Frederick William Alexander*).

I had recognised him at once. (Years before this; just after my dear brother's death, who had been the father of this very same man, I had seen this recreant, then a tiny child, just beginning to toddle), He had had now grown to manhood and his features strongly resembled those of my brother's. He looked up in surprise. "You know me?" he queried.

"I do" was my stern reply. "I am your father's sister. You will live to regret your foolhardy action" I further declared.

Poor boy! I was unaware then that after residing in the Free State since babyhood he had been forced to join the Boers or suffer the ignominy of being shot as a traitor. After peace was declared we happened to meet again, and he related with tears in his eyes how bitter was his shame and humiliation when I discovered him joined up with the Boers; especially as he was unable at the time to let me know the reason for his so doing.

The Boers raised no demur at our proceeding on our way, and we eventually arrived safely at Colesberg. We drove up to my house, had a hot bath and a meal and lay down to rest for a while. Later in the day I went for a walk through the town to see how things were going. Passing the Dutch Reformed Church on my way a voice calling my name arrested my steps. It was the Reverend Mr. Scholtz, sunning himself on his stoep.

"Come in, come in!" he cried. "We were always friends. Won't you come in and have a chat?" I met his advances coldly.

"It is very hard these days to know who is really one's friend", I replied,

in a level and steady tone, and I fixed him with a searching glance. I had my doubts of him, for I had learned, during my walk, that he had invited the Boers into the town.

"Where is your Landrost, Mr. Colver" I enquired.

"Just wait one moment and you'll see him rounding the corner on a superb brown horse. He is taking all the young ladies about here for a ride, each in their turn".

Sure enough, in a very few moments, round the corner came the Landrost trotting slowly and surrounded by a bevy of fair young girls, to my disgust and sorrow for their instant attitude. I had just remarked sarcastically to the Reverend Dr.

Scholtz that the Landrost was lucky to be able to take life so easily, when so many on either side were giving their services their lives, their all, to the country they were fighting so hard to win.

Mr. Scholtz called to the Landrost "Here is a lady anxious to meet you" The Landrost turned with a gratified smile, which faded immediately he met my hostile gaze. He looked straight through me, as if I were a complete stranger. This aroused my ire and I impatiently exclaimed: "To you I am no stranger, neither is my name unknown. My desire to see you is because I have been informed that I cannot return the way I came without a permit. I believe I have to apply to you for such a thing" Thereupon he immediately showered upon me a heap of apologies. I turned to Mr. Scholtz and said: "Will you oblige me with a slip of paper and a pen and ink?" The Landrost put forth a hand: "Call at my office at nine o'clock tomorrow morning and I will see what I can do for you" A dry laugh left my lips.

"Tomorrow, about that time I hope to reach my destination. And", I paused and fixed him with a stern glance "I warn you that if any ill befalls me or my children I shall hold you responsible."

He gave me a sly glance.

"Send one of your sons to my office" he said. "Where is your son John?" I guessed his motive at once. In a sly, underhand manner he was endeavouring to trace the whereabouts of my sons.

I answered him coldly: I have no son John" I said.

"If you send a native boy to my office he will be taken prisoner" he warned me.

So I sent my little son in charge of one of his Sisters. But before I left the Landrost, I stated clearly my opinion of the Burghers and their wilful damage to property, useless and uncalled for; since they were called up to fight and not destroy.

This started a long argument, which ended only when he bade me good-bye and cantered away on the handsome brown horse. (Long after, I saw the Landrost again in the Court-house at Cradock at a time when he was the defendant in a charge of theft. My daughter and I had been requested to attend in order to claim various articles that had been stolen out of our house at Colesberg. After the case was concluded, the judge brought a flush of pride to my cheeks when he complimented me on the clear and concise manner in which I had given evidence, and I remember that I returned home feeling highly elated).

Well, I must continue with my story or I shall lose thread of it...

The permits in our possession, we set off for my home, where my anxious husband greeted me with many expressions of relief and loving welcome. Nothing material or worthy of reciting had happened at our home while I had been away, for which I was very thankful, I had been through sufficient excitement myself. The Boers -- after continual attempts to take my poor husband prisoner -- (you can imagine my state of mind and intense anxiety, and he, poor dear, trying to be exceptionally brave to re-assure us) -- often came in armed force to the farm. But my husband, being entirely neutral, friendly and loyal to both Dutch and English, passed unscathed through all that happened with a high courage, till one day, which I shall never forget. For the first time for many weeks we had saddled the riding horses, for though, being a great rider, and his chief and most attractive pastime being on horseback, somehow, since our sons had gone away, he had lost all inclination for it. But this day a sudden resolve, as it seemed, he set out on horseback together with our youngest boy to see if the ostriches in the camp were all right. I was making my way to the garden with one of

my daughters to gather some of the prime fruit for which we were famed, and which grew there in abundance. While busy at my self-imposed task I observed, two mounted police approaching, and wondered vaguely for what purpose they were calling at our house.

Alas! Enlightenment came quickly. They had followed my husband when he set out, arrested him and had brought him back to the farm. Annie, my daughter, whom I had left up at the house, called to me: "Mother! Come quickly! Father wants you". And I, appalled by a sudden thought, which like the poor, was always with me, felt a cold hand of fear clutch at my heart and gasped out: "My boys! My sons! Have they been shot?" Whereupon Annie made answer: "No, mother, come!" As I neared the house I saw my husband, not cringing or cowering, but with head held upright and shoulders squared, standing between the two policemen. He gave me a loving glance as I approached.

"My wife" he said calmly "I have been made a prisoner of war".

"By whom? I asked.

"By the Dutch" was his reply.

I turned to the two policemen: "On whose authority are you acting?" The taller of the two men drew forth a telegram. I took it from his hand and read the words it contained. It instructed the men to make my husband a prisoner at all costs - to let nothing deter them.

Oh! It was hard and bitter to bear, this cruel act of injustice, but what could we do? It was madness to resist; for resistance meant death. Had my husband attempted to escape he would have been shot down like a stray dog.

We all felt this sad blow terribly. But I strove to subdue my grief for the sake of my children. It was essential that I, at least should present a brave front. Isolated on a farm with my two youngest boys and the two girls for whom I had pursued such a hazardous journey to bring back in safety to their home, not now was the time to show the white feather of cowardice.

And yet there was always something to thank God for. My girls had been with me but three days when a great battle had taken place by the

farm they had left. Mr. and Mrs. Hobkirk escaped with a modicum of their stock and cattle, just a small section that they managed to get away. All else that they had left in their house was destroyed.

My! But it was heart-breaking! The beautiful and dainty trousseau of their daughter Mary, who was upon the eve of being married, this trousseau being already packed in readiness for her departure on her honeymoon, and a cleverly-executed oil painting, done by herself which her parents valued highly, were reduced to ashes.

General French was in command during the battle, and captured the big mountain, Coleskop, near to the farm, which mountain I had passed the foot of on my way to fetch my girls. A considerable number of men had been shot on the stoep of the farmhouse at which my daughters had stayed, and I inwardly breathed a fervent prayer of thanksgiving to the Almighty that I had got away with them before the trouble started.

Well, to continue my story of my husband's arrest. The Police allowed him to ride his horse, and consented to my giving him a couple of rugs, a pillow and a bottle of herbal medicine, made by myself to take with him. It about broke my heart to witness the distress of my poor children and my husband tried to ease the pain of the parting by bidding me come down

very early to the Camp and to bring the children with me. "Mayhap I should still find him there", he said.

Sleep was a coy visitor on that night. In fact I may say that it kept deliberately away. I realised that it was useless trying to rest in our then state of mind, so we rose from our uneasy couches, and busied ourselves in preparing a pile of sandwiches, hard-boiled eggs, bottles of milk some fruit and extra clothing, and set off the break of day to the Camp.

To my great delight I found my husband still there and looking out for me.

Our agitation was great; and when the excess of our emotion had subsided; he held my hands tightly in his and said quietly: "I have the best of news for you. I am to be taken Bloemfontein in preference to Colesberg" (where a great battle was still raging). "As we do not leave until this afternoon I think you had best take the children back home and

come again later on by yourself'.

He looked around as he spoke. I followed his glance.

As far as eye could see were encompassed about thousands of all sorts and condition of men. Rough and uncouth some of them, and clerks, schoolmasters, transport-drivers - men of all sorts were there. In the words of the old song: "From the Upper Ten to the Lower Five"

I objected to my husband's proposal. "No", I told him, I will stay here till you depart. I may hear something of what they intend to do with you".

Knowing well my determined spirit and that once I had made up my mind it was useless attempting to persuade me to do otherwise; my husband reconciled himself to my remaining, and attempted to make me comfortable as far as it lay in his power.

## CHAPTER VIII - MY HUSBAND IS TAKEN PRISONER

The hours passed, all too quickly for me for the passing of each hour drew the separation nearer. Towards the afternoon orders were given for my husband to be taken to the station. I got busy and managed to gain permission to take him into the waiting-room, and I sent old George Jeffrey (the old man whom I had left in charge of my home on the banks of the River whilst we were away on the farm) to fetch one of my mattresses, and with this I made my poor husband as comfortable as our surrounding allowed for he was sadly in need of rest Then I approached the station-master, and obtained permission to go into their kitchen and boil some water. With this I made a hot refreshing pot of tea. I had brought with me that was necessary for a meal and we breakfasted together. Not that I felt like eating, but I forced myself to eat in an endeavour to get my husband to partake of some food.

The time passed rapidly and as the train steamed into the station I aroused my husband. He had fallen into an uneasy slumber. We clung to each other with loving words and kisses, our children weeping by our side. The last farewell words were spoken, and a little later I and the children were alone - for how long God alone knew. Ah! But the parting

was bitter and my poor heart felt as heavy as lead.

Before I returned to the farm I made my way to the house of the Commandant and sent in a request for an interview. This was granted. I found the Commandant sitting at a table covered with official-looking papers in company with several other men. He rose as I entered. Standing erect before them, and bending on them a stern eye, I said: I have a few words to say to you concerning my husband. You have taken, without any cause for so doing, a great responsibility upon yourselves in making my husband a prisoner, and I shall hold you responsible if any ill comes to him. He is a man advanced in years, in very poor health, unable to assist fighting against South Africa instead of for her even if had the will to do so. He has always been a good and kind friend to the Dutch community and because of this, and because he is entirely neutral, I expect good and proper accommodation to be provided for him, This is essential, and this I demand, and also a good doctor to be in attendance on him during his stay in Bloemfontein. We are in a position to pay for all that is required if it is necessary to do so. And I must insist that at stated times I am to be permitted to write to him and send any clothing that he may need" The Commandant agreed to all that I suggested and demanded and also hinted that before very long my husband be with me again. He at the same time informed me that all letters sent by me to my husband and from him to me would be opened by an official and examined. I was aware of this; and knew exactly how to word any communication I addressed to my husband. Turning to the Landrost I spoke directly to him: "To you I look for protection while I am alone at my farm, with but my young children and native servants for company A public road passes my farm. Passers-by must keep to that road. I will allow no trespassers and no intermittent callers on my property" With that I left the room, and shook the dust of their house, theoretically speaking, from my feet.

## CHAPTER IX - THE BRIDGE IS BLOWN UP

Occasionally I would come to my old home on the banks of River, for the old man whom I had left in charge needed food and other commodities at intervals. But I was always glad at heart when I again reached our temporary home, for I somehow dreaded being away from my children.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> day of March we were sitting quietly in the living room occupied with several tasks, necessary to while away the dreary hours - hours that possessed their full measure of pain when our thoughts were allowed full sway - when a sound like terrific gun-fire caused me to start to my feet in alarm. The shock shook the house and caused all the windows to rattle.

"Mother!" exclaimed my children "just listen to that gun" "That is no gun-fire" I told them "the bridge across the River has been blown up" We hastened from the house, taking with us a field-glass and we all climbed to a hill from which one could see the Orange River ten miles distant. A dark cloud of smoke obscured everything for a mile around. Suddenly it cleared, and ... Dear God... the appalling sight. The Bridge, torn from its support lay shattered and broken in the River, like some mighty giant ousted in great battle.

My children cried aloud at the heart-rending spectacle - their fears centered at once upon their father, they were fearful lest the broken bridge should prevent his return to our home. I comforted them and assured them that a way across would be made for our dear one by the Almighty God who, though at times seems to cover His face from His children, yet has us always in His sight.

Early on the ensuing morning I ordered my carriage inspanned, meaning to go and see how things were progressing at my old home on the banks of the river, when the boy who usually drove my wagon intercepted me - "Missus" he exclaimed, "You can't take such a great risk. Just hear how the Boers are shelling the place. If some one must go, why not send a boy on horse-back?"

Deeming precaution the wisest procedure I agreed to his proposal. It

was my habit to write a pass for my native servants in Dutch but, calculating, and wrongly, that the English by now would be in possession of the territory the boy would have to pass through, I wrote the Pass in English, and handed it to the boy, giving him minute instructions as to how to behave should he be challenged on the way.

He set off and I awaited his return with a small modicum of patience, for I hoped to learn much from this venture. It was every late when the sound of approaching hoof-beats warned of his approach. I called to him immediately, and closely questioned him.

"There were a large gathering of Boers near to the place to which I had sent him" he said. Immediately they caught sight of him they surrounded him and asked for his Pass. When saw it was written in English they became very angry, took the horse, saddle and bridle from him, beat him severely, and were about to send him back with a message to me - the said message being that they were about to come and take me prisoner.

In the midst of this commotion the Commandant appeared on the scene and demanded to know the reason of the hullabaloo. The Boers crowded around accompanying their movement with much gesticulation and angry words, and accused me - the writer of sending English passes across to the opposing forces. The Commandant held out his hand for the pass. He glanced keenly over it, then handed it to the boy...

"Give him his horse", he rapped out. Turning to the boy he said: "Go to where your mistress sent you then return this way again. (He was a Commandant obviously well-acquainted with me).

My servant's errand completed he was allowed to pass without let or hindrance and when he arrived back at the farm, gave me the welcome information that the old man was all right, the way clear, and that I could come down if I wished.

He also said that the Commandant seemed surprised to discover so many Boers hidden away among the rocks and that he was quite unaware that the bridge was gone; and somewhat put out about it. It had been his intention to cross by the bridge and join the main body of his men.

A few days after this occurrence a fairly large Commando, Boer Commando, of course, came to my place late one evening and several of the leaders informed me that they had surrounded my place.

Thereupon I decided to play a "game of bluff" - as the Yankees have it. I met the men with a pleased look. "I am more than thankful to see you" I told them "and shall be glad to avail myself of your protection. (My children and servants were almost frantic with fear for my safety; so it behooved me to show a bold front).

One of the men, speaking in a sharp, abrupt manner, demanded to know who was sounding a whistle on the farm - a whistle so clear that it could almost be likened to a Flute.

My neighbour gazed quizzically at me, nodded his head and then cantered away.

He called at my home on his return journey.

"I have something good for you" he said waving a white envelope aloft. "A letter from Bloemfontein - from your husband" My! Wasn't I just delighted? I had been consumed with anxiety about my poor man, knowing his bad state of health, and I eagerly devoured the closely-covered pages. Then I turned to my neighbour.

"What about the message I gave you?" My neighbour laughed.

"It had some stirring effect" he said. The "Vrederegtter" (Justice of the Peace) told me to say: "In God's name come!" I took the J.P. at his word, and set off early the next morning. The old Hollander who had carried the message to me that I was to stay on my farm was on the stoep of the J.P.'S house when I arrived and looked up with a start of surprise when he noted my presence.

I spoke to him in Dutch: "You see? I am here. Show me in to the "Vrederegtter" The Vrederegtter greeted me in a pleasant manner and when I remarked upon his worn and wan appearance, attributed it to a severe headache.

"You are in a state of constant anxiety" I told him "and it is preying on your health".

"Ah! If only it were all over!" he cried, All the fighting and the trouble", and then went on to tell me that the reason such a peremptory message

had been sent to me was because I being the only woman to whom the privilege of travelling to my several farms had been extended he had been advised to restrict that privilege, as some of the Boers entertained the idea that my husband and I were in communication with the British. I scoffed at this, but perforce, had to give a promise that I would restrict my movements, and so parted with the Vrederegtter amicably.

Oh! What a confusion and a hustle and a bustle there was at the station when I arrived. Thousands of Boers seemed to be about passing and repassing; packing and repacking. I chaffed them in a mild manner, accusing them of running away instead of remaining to greet the "Rooineks" as the British "Tommies" were thus termed by the Boers.

A few looked annoyed; the remainder laughed, and told me that they had been recalled. Gradually they disappeared, and not without cause, for hardly had the last man left the station when a convoy of British soldiers appeared.

I managed to get my post for which I had come, and which the obliging station-master had kept safe and intact for me, otherwise it might never have reached my hands. With a laughing remark to the "Tommies", I set off for my home.

A few days later I had my carriage inspanned and, in company with my daughter, drove to my old home on the banks of the River. As we neared a neighbour's house I heard my daughter give a gasp of delight.

"Mother!" she cried "We are safe. Look the Lancers!" Just then two uniformed men rode up to me and saluted.

"Madam" one asked "in which direction are you going?" I told him and he answered: I have a message for you from Colonel Clements. (They had been making enquiries as to my whereabouts having discovered that my husband had been taken prisoner). "He is fully cognisant of your precarious position. Just a little longer to wait, a little patience to be exercised, then, when it is safe to do so, we will send a party of men to escort you back to your home".

I thanked him in a becoming manner.

My horses became very restless. Shells were whizzing above us and the dull boom of heavy guns sounded alarmingly near. I did not, for the

moment, realise a sense of actual danger. Men, fully armed, were quietly surrounding my neighbour's house obviously intent on investigating and in search of hostile Boers. As we drove up not a sign of life appeared. All was still and abnormally silent. I called out. My neighbour's scared face peeped out from the lifted corner of a drawn blind. There was an obvious look of fear on her face. (Ah! yes! Mrs. H- could be very brave when no danger threatened, but, when it did, she would scuttle away like a rat to its hole). It was an old habit of mine to tease her whenever the opportunity occurred and I adopted the same tactics when she appeared; which she eventually did.

"They have come to fetch you" I warned her, "this is what comes of fussing with the Boers".

The officer who had escorted me rode softly up, and heard my remark.

"Yes, I have indeed come for you", he said, and her sudden start caused me to break into a hearty laugh, and the look of fear on her face was palpable to us all.

"No!" she ejaculated, in horrified tones.

The officer drew a book from an inner pocket and murmured a name.

"Oh" said Mrs. H-"you gave me quite a start She sighed with relief "You mean that old b---- over there" and she pointed her index finger at an adjacent house. "That's the man you're seeking.

On hospitality bent, Mrs H-- bade the officer enter, and partake of some refreshment, giving me at the same time a scowling look for the trick that I had played upon her. But the officers were immune from her blandishments, and rode off to an adjoining house.

Mrs H-- often used to rally me, and even scold me, for my lack of hospitality towards the Boers. She, herself would entertain them whenever possible, and, likewise, the English. But, as I told her, she had herself to please. For me - I had my own idea of all that honour and loyalty to the British Empire signified, and I meant to abide by it.

"Now we'll see some fun", cried Mrs H--, as, less than half a mile away, she saw the soldiers surrounding a house.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself ", I rebuked her. Such an old man to be arrested; no matter what his nationality. You can never tell what

may await you before your own door".

Ah! I have no patience with such women. I felt really glad that I had scared her into thinking that the British had come for her, and indeed, I could reveal some surprising truths concerning her, if I wished, but "live and let live" has always been my motto, though many of the things that could tell about her are very well-known about the town.

Came a day, about a week later, when I received news that brought a glow to my poor heart news that caused the sun to shine more brightly - the birds to sing more sweetly their trilling roundelay; news that lightened the black cloud of depression which, though I at all times tried to think hopefully, o'er shadowed my usually bright spirits. Two of my dear sons, who had joined up to do their bit, had returned. In a very little while they were with me, and my eyes feasted on their loved faces.

They escorted me, their proud and happy mother, back to our old home, and shortly after my dear husband also returned to us from Bloemfontein, and life for me had never a care, for my service to my loved ones was the service of Love, which is ever-sweet. In fact had it not been for my anxiety concerning a son who had joined the City Volunteers at Grahamstown, even the proverbial crumpled roseleaf would have been missing from my bed of down.

As time passed; and no news came through, I had bad fits of worry, for my son had been in several heavy battles; the greatest of which being with General French at Paardeberg. But, thanks to the Almighty, who is ever watchful and protecting, my boy is alive today to tell of the great fights he was in.

There are many interesting details concerning these stirring times which I could record here, but it would need the more retentive memory of my children to assist me. Later, perhaps, I may write a sequel to this book with graphic descriptions of all that I passed through at this time.

Well, as I was about to relate, we all came back to the old homestead on the banks of the River, and it seemed to me as if we were in the midst of a vast military encampment. There were thousands of troops stationed around; intermixed with military hospitals, Concentration Camps;

doctors and nurses in abundance; and schools. A Pontoon had been erected across the river; our own Pont had never been recovered; and the bridge itself was under repair.

And so life went on; plenty of hard work but what did that matter when my loved ones were with me.

## CHAPTER XI - DEATH, WITH ITS GRIM TOUCH, VISITS MY HOME

In 1901 I had a terrible trouble. One of my sons, who had been at the Front in the thickest of the heavy fighting, met with a serious accident. There was little hope from the first; but ah me! The agony of grief I experienced while I watched beside him.

For the space of one short month he lingered, never regaining consciousness; and then God called him Home. I cannot bear to speak of his loss, even now.

Ten days later, on a day when the sky was softly over-clouded, and the rain fell with a cooling touch we lay a much-loved son-in-law beside my dear boy. They loved each other well in life - in death they were not divided.

Well, as you may suppose, this seemed to break up the happy tenure of our lives, and, in a way, completely altered it. We took our two youngest boys to Grahamstown to the college there, and remained a while in the town to reconcile them to the separation and also in the hope that my dear husband might benefit by the change. The many troubles and vicissitudes through which he had passed had brought about a complete break-down.

Just a year later, on the 17<sup>th</sup> of February, 1904, he looked his last on my face and, with a fond, loving word of endearment on his lips, commending me to the care of his Maker, passed to his Eternal Rest.

Trouble after trouble! Ah me! .....

My health collapsed under the strain, and I became seriously ill. Complications set in; but, under the sedulous care of an excellent doctor, and with the blessing of our Almighty Father, in a couple of months I was about again. About this time another of my sons was taken seriously ill, but, thanks be to God, under careful attention he fully recovered, and was spared to me.

My health was gradually improving and, having visited a friend at a Sanatorium near the Town, I was so taken with the institution that I decided to stay there for a while, much to the surprise of my youngest daughter, who accompanied me, for she well knew my abhorrence to restriction of any kind, and in such an institution one cannot be entirely free.

Nevertheless, there I stayed, and enjoyed to the full the treatment meted out to me, returning to my home and to my children much benefited thereby.

## CHAPTER XII - WE TREK TO KIMBERLEY BY DONKEY-WAGON

The state of my son's health began to cause me considerable anxiety. To my suggestion that he should enter the sanatorium and perhaps benefit by the excellent treatment one received there, he turned a deaf ear, alleging as an excuse that he could not spare the time from his work. So I set my wits to work and sprang a bombshell on him...

"I want to pay a visit to Kimberley," I told him "Not by rail, (this for his well-being), but by Spring-wagon. Get it in order. I shall need you with me on the journey. And it is my intention to travel with Donkeys, not horses. It will lengthen the journey, and the air will do me good".

Oh, my poor boy! Even now I can see the amazed, horrified look with which he regarded me. He little dreamed that it was for him that I needed the healthful, life-giving air.

Our luggage went on by train, and I fitted up the wagon with sufficient comfortable bedding, and a pile of good things to eat on the way.

We set out one afternoon and crossed the Orange River, then went on to the old farmhouse at Roodepoort in the Free State, where we outspanned and put up for the night.

After a cup of excellent coffee and some crisp rusks, brought to us by a dusky servitor early on the next morning, I ordered the native to go and get the donkeys ready for instancing. The boy - Jacob - returned, with a droll look of surprise on his black shining face.

"Miss " he exclaimed, "The skelms (donkeys) have run away. I can't see them anywhere".

"Call the Baas", I ordered, without more ado.

My son came in to me laughing.

"Well, mother, our picnic has indeed started. Now what are we to do?"

And the rest of the residents at the farm joined in his laughter, all being highly amused at my electing to travel with a donkey team.

However, my son jumped on to a horse, and set out in search of the missing quadrupeds, which he found calmly crossing the river on their way back to the farm. We soon had them inspanned, and then set out, rejoicing and singing as we went cracking many jokes and relating many humorous incidents, for I was determined to cast away all troublous thoughts, and endeavoured to get my son to do likewise. We had an abundance with which to assuage our hunger and our thirst and we didn't forget to feed and rest our gallant little steeds and, as we progressed on our journey so our health improved.

As we passed different rivers we halted the animals and had a delicious, cool plunge. (I think that I have omitted, to mention that my two youngest daughters and Sylvia, my first grandchild, a mere baby, travelled. with us.)

It took us six days and. nights to reach Kimberley, a long trek even in those days.

As we approached Alexandersfontein - a suburb of Kimberley, and a noted place for picnics, also a very charming spot, with beautiful scenery around, Agnes, my daughter, and I left wagon and boarded a tram (in those days a new innovation) and surprised our friends by arriving long before the remainder of our party.

We spent a happy time at this place, adding to our mutual enjoyment by taking our friends for long drives in the wagon drawn by the team of donkeys. When I was satisfied that my son's health had improved to the degree at which I wished to see it, I proposed that we should return home, which we did, parting with regret from our kind friends, and all feeling much benefited by the change.

### CHAPTER XIII - A PARTING

So life went on, with the inevitable changes; various members of my family marrying and leaving the home-nest, and settling down in homes of their own. A section of my children felt the urge for other and newer scenes; and began to make preparations for trekking to a far distance. Again a dread parting ensued. However, all mothers are born, I think to have their heart-strings wrung, and I, like many other mothers, had to make the best of things - to "grin and bear it".

My children bought a series of large Bullock-wagons, similar to those used by the old Voortrekkers; fitted them up very comfortably and, taking everything that was necessary with them for their future use and comfort, together with their servants, sheep, horses, donkeys and most things needed for a new start in a new country.

It was a difficult and a hard journey. Owing to the newness of the country they lost most of their animals during the trek.

They had much to contend with and to fight against, in addition to being on short rations most of the time. It was an arduous trek; more so when fly or tick reduced the team of oxen, or when heavy rains turned into quagmires the tracks that served as roads. At such times the ponderous wagons sank to the bed-planks, and every few yards had to be dug out and buoyed with logs; and the willing labouring oxen, bred in some quiet pasture struggled till they sank worn out or broken-hearted. Nights of sleeplessness and worry for my children followed long days of toil and suffering, and after weeks of this, when the journey was at last at an end, most of the bulk of the team had perished. During the trek mealie meal only was procurable. At times, Kaffirs would approach the wagons

and bargain with mealies and pumpkins for a little salt. This, at the time, was a rare commodity, costing my children 2/6- a bag, the same size bag as we, at the present time, in the Union of South Africa, pay 2/6 a bag for. The natives crave for salt, which they are rarely able to obtain, and they will practically bargain all they possess for a portion of this rare and expensive commodity.

When my children arrived at the spot where they intended to settle, the nearby natives showed a friendly spirit. They pointed out the most arable land, indicated the different kinds of wild fruit and shrubs that were not poisonous; and hired out to my children boys (natives) to assist them in the work of stumping and cutting cut roots and trees to enable them to plough and cultivate their lands and set the seeds for the first harvest. There were plenty of fish in the rivers, and meat in abundance, together with all kinds of game and very big buck from which they obtained some magnify cent skins and horns.

When, in answer to their urgent entreaties, I went up to Rhodesia on a visit to my dear ones, the country was still in a very rough state, and the weather of tropical heat. But I think that this was due to the innumerable koppies which surrounded their homestead and sketched away into the dim blue haze of the distant horizon. Clothed in verdure of vivid green, for the rains had scarcely ended, with wild, flowers of every hue and description covering them like a magnificent flowered carpet, their loveliness was indescribable, and caused me to lie my heart in a prayer of thanksgiving to the Almighty God that He should clothe the earth with such exquisiteness.

Then again there were the mighty trees of inspiring grandeur, the dense thick bush, the grass that grew as high as one's head and higher, and caused me to wonder at times how on earth the game could force a passage through with their large out-spreading horns.

One had always to carry one or more loaded guns when one ventured into the fields or open spaces for, in the space of a moment, a leopard or a lion would be liable to appear on the scene, ready to attack one, or a crowd of elephant's would stampede past, or a bevy of wild ostriches. Ah! Those were the exciting times, today seems very tame after it all.

## CHAPTER XIV - THE BIG FOREST FIRE IN RHODESIA

Came a day when we were out with the wagons, and a big forest fire broke out some distance from us. The Angua River lay between; but often in the dry season, these rivers have only pools and do not flow, but have here and there springs.

We saw, to our great alarm, the huge rolling clouds of smoke and the darting tongues of flames drawing nearer, so we made quick despatch back to our home. We found the men and the boys busy at work ploughing the fields, and, as soon as we told them our news, they hastened off carrying with them branches of trees to make fire-lines; for the tall grass was in danger of catching alight from the conflagration, and would spread the devastating fire from tree to tree.

We assisted the men and the boys to put all the inflammable stuff into a place of safety, and oh! The terrible sight that met our eyes! We all turned and gazed in horror-struck silence...

Great clouds of black smoke were belching forth suffocating fumes, broken at intervals by huge rolling tongues of flames flashing high into the air. The sky was coloured to a deep red hue - it looked just like a sea of blood, Lions, leopards, elephants, buck and all manner of wild beasts, even snakes and large, passed in a read flight without heeding us or the other animals around them - all intent upon evading their common enemy. It was a sight that, even if one lived for a thousand years, one could never forget.

Earlier in the day we had sent a native runner, (a kaffir boy), to fetch our post and several articles of food from an adjacent so-called town, Sinoa, I saw a gentleman, a Mr. Macaulay, approaching the house, on horseback and went up to him. "Have you come to share our fate?" Was my enquiry. "Incineration and an ashy tomb are imminent".

He gazed down at me quizzically.

"I have been through a similar occurrence on three occasions, he told me, "I was burnt out of house, home and farm and narrowly escaped with my life, not to speak of my whiskers" and he stroked his long beard

lovingly.

I could not refrain from smiling. Then I remembered the post-boy, and again questioned our visitor.

"Have you come across our runner? We sent him for our post earlier in the day".

"He is just about through", Mr. Macaulay told me. I saw him a while back fighting his way through clouds of smoke and practically out of the danger zone".

Sure enough a few minutes later I saw the runner, his face blistered with the intense heat, his clothes charred and smouldering, but carrying the waterproof packet of letters apparently intact and safe from the fire.

I snatched at the letters eagerly, and tore them apart. The last I shall ever receive, I thought, as I saw the flames roaring their savage way towards us, leaping the streams and pools of water put to bar their way, like a living thing.

But oh! The ways of the Almighty are mysterious and wonderful to view! One may think that one has been forgotten by God, yet all the time His eye is on His loved ones, He careth for them and in His own good time He comes to their aid.

In the twinkling of an eye the high wind veered, changed its course, swept the rushing mighty tornado of flame away from us and... We were saved! We sank to our knees and offered up a prayer of thanksgiving to Almighty God.

Until midnight, the men, assisted by the boys, (natives) worked unceasingly at clearing the lines, and then, dead tired to the point of exhaustion, they came in to supper and to bed for a couple of hours. Still tired when we woke them, they set off again, and we woman inspanned the wagon, filled it with good hot food, plenty of ready-made coffee, and set out in search of them.

As we passed by the charred lands, and saw the woeful destruction caused by the devastating flames, the scene just wrung our hearts. Prone upon the ground lay the mighty trees, like stricken giants in their fallen majesty. Huge patches of still smouldering shrubs, grass and other incinerated growth made their appearance here and there, and about a

mile or so across there rose into the air a huge pall of smoke, hovering in the distance like some threatening black shadow, and rising as high as some 1000 feet above us. It was a never-to-be-forgotten sight; but I would not like to go through a similar experience again.

## CHAPTER XIX - CHILDHOOD'S DAYS

It is somewhat unusual to commence on the beginning of one's life at almost the end of one's book but then I am an unusual person, and have thought back, so to speak, while writing this book. Though I always have said that the end of life here is merely the beginning of our real life - the step we call Death is but the crossing of a Boundary between two worlds. Even our greatest scientists have been unable to prove further, so why should we? Thinking back many of the episodes that occurred during my earlier days are brought to my mind, and may prove of interest to my readers.

I remember, when quite a small child, putting a question to my eldest sister: "How did our parents live when you were a little girl?" And the answer: "Exactly as they live today".

I had a happy childhood, though my health was not all that one could wish. Though I was considered delicate, I was not confined to the house, nor was I compelled through my indifferent health to remain away from Sunday school, which I loved, for my fond mother would prepare my little brother and I in readiness for the kindly escort of our superintendent, Mr. Parnell who passed our door on the way to the school, and would call for us. Ah! He was a thorough Christian.

Always, to us he would put kind enquiries as to our parent's well-being; and I never omitted, when we met to put forth my small hand for his manly grip, as my mother had taught me to do.

My tickets for early attendance at the Sunday school were measured by me as rare mementoes, also the tickets for accurate knowledge of our Sunday verse, which had on them a Scripture text.

Our school possessed an excellent library and we were allowed to borrow any book we cared to read; and, if we wished to retain the book

permission was given to us to buy it, a certain amount of the red tickets given to us for accurate knowledge of our Sunday verse being taken in exchange.

My brother and I each had a separate nurse, who had been in my parents' service for a considerable number of years, and were responsible to them for our safety and well-being.

How I loved to brush my mother's hair in those dear old days! It was so fine and long and silky. When I returned from Sunday school on Sundays my mother would attend to my hair with her own capable hands, and, as a special treat, would allow me to brush her long tresses for a brief while. Then she would pile her hair high on her head, and would don a pretty frock - for mother believed in personal adornment for the eyes of her husband and her children.

Truth - absolute truth; was always instilled into us. I remember how one afternoon I saw a nice ripe peach on the sideboard in our dining room. I took it - unnoticed by my mother, and ate it after I had quitted the room. Later my mother called to me, and asked if I had taken the peach. I immediately replied in the affirmative. She gave me a grieved look.

"I am so sorry", she said, "I intended you to have half of the peach, the other half I wished for myself, for my mouth is feeling very parched and dry".

I grieved intensely over this; and left the room, sobs preventing me voicing my sorrow. In my childish grief I went into the garden, going from tree to tree, and begging the Lord Jesus to help me to find just one peach (the fruit season was over) to give to my dear mother. I made an intensive search of each tree and, just as I was about to give up in despair, I noticed a protuberance among the leaves of one tree, parted the foliage, and there, to my intense relief and delight, I discovered a peach, in appearance exactly similar to the one I had taken.

Fleet steps carried me back to the house.

"Mother, mother!" I cried as I bent over her and kissed her, "here is a peach for you, one for which I asked Jesus.

My mother took the peach and kissed me, and how glad I felt then that I had real proof of instant response to earnest prayer.

I must have been about nine, I think when my parents decided to leave Uitenhage. They were anxious to join my eldest brothers, who had already gone up-country, and, before we left, the father of my girlfriend, Nellie, took my photograph, waiting while I ran to fetch a big doll, almost my own size which I treasured, and then photographed us both together.

It was about this time that I lost Ellen - my nurse, who had been a devoted and kind attendant to me since my babyhood.

Her father brought the sad news to my mother that his wife was dead, and that he was anxious to have Ellen with him to keep house for him. The loss of her mother caused Ellen to grieve intensely, and she was equally as sad at the thought of leaving us - she had lived with us for so long; and had become attached to us all.

I was in poor health at the time, and my dear mother agreed to my departure with my nurse for Algoa Bay the air of which was the very best doctor that I could have had.

My health re-established, I returned to my home, and we started on the journey up-country', an event which sent my youngest brother into a state of wild excitement. My sisters seemed rather averse to the long lonely journey by Bullock- wagon, unlike my brother and myself, who anticipated the journey with keen delight.

Trekking by bullock-wagon is not all honey, especially when it has been raining for days, and the road or track is one big mud-hole, into which your wagons stick wheel-deep, and no sooner do you dig them out than in goes another wagon, wheel-deep. And cold at times, too! Rain for a week on end, and never a dry stitch on one, when the rain wouldn't allow us to even light a fire.

Then again when there has not been rain for months and the veld is as bare as the skull of a bald-headed man. To crawl along, choking with dust, mile after mile, day after day, the brazen sun scorching one's eyes until the veld seems one red glare, the endless blue of the sky, and the red-brown of the veld, the poor wretched oxen, staggering along with their tongues out - scarce able to keep their balance or to drag their heavy load, makes trekking - more often than not - a hardship second to

none.

Our wagons were sent on ahead, and, with a host of friends, who gathered round us and drove us for a considerable distance, the sorrow at leaving our home was lessened, and when we caught up with the wagons, we were comparatively cheerful. I know we children thought it all delightful, and grieved not at all at leaving our home.

I had been somewhat grieved at being unable to see my Sunday school teacher before leaving, (she was absent on holiday) but I left a kind message for her with a little girl-friend, bidding her good-bye and God-speed.

In due time we reached Graaf Reinet. A cosy home awaited us - prepared by my dear father, and here we remained till the arrangements for our forward journey were completed. Even in the short time we were at Graaf Reinet we made many friends. On our first day out from Graaf Reinet my father, before out-spanning, sent a message to a farm requesting permission to do so. It was his intention to travel through the night and rest during the day. The messenger returned with the required permission, and an invitation to my parents to go over to the Homestead. This they did; telling us to have our breakfast while they were away. Before we set to on the meal a second message arrived; we were to go to the Homestead for our breakfast, which we did, afterwards spending a very pleasant day with our kind friends.

A little worry of my mother's was settled at our hostess's suggestion while we were at the Homestead. The worry was caused through my having to return at a later date to school at Algoa Bay. "Why not send your little girl to Graaf Reinet"? Said our hostess, "my children were educated there, and I was perfectly satisfied.

My mother thought this a good proposition, and it was left at that - that I should return later for this purpose, and no farther than Graaf Reinet. We continued our trek and reached Hanover, where we replenished our stores, and again went on our way. As we passed through the country we saw game of all description - springbok, wild birds in full flight, their glittering plumage making a riot of colour as they flashed past and wild beasts, which slunk away at the approach of strange human beings.

The heat became more and more intense as we journeyed further north, and a mirage appeared in the far distance, reflecting clearly a large lake or river, with game running to and fro on the bank. So clear was the water, and so apparently real the mirage, that one could almost imagine that one could see ships sailing by.

After some months of slow trekking we reached our destination, "Hope Town" a small town with a corrugated iron post office - extremely primitive, a Dutch Reformed Church, and a few nice residential houses. Gardens were conspicuous by their absence, and vegetables - my word! They were almost unobtainable. One cabbage commanded the extortionate price of three shillings and sixpence. Coming from a home where fruit and vegetables abounded, we sadly felt the loss of these useful commodities.

However, my father soon set to work. and in a remarkably short while soon had extensively cultivated lands. In less than three years we had a bountiful supply of fruit of all kinds and vegetables, grown from the seeds which my father had brought with him. Our garden was a picture of neatness as was my mother's home - a good example to many of the house-wives of to-day. In all they endeavoured to do my parents lived, and acted as true Christians and tried to inculcate in us a like principle. Then, as the years passed, we, like many others, had our troubles. Long droughts at intervals, locusts which destroyed our garden and consumed all our vegetables, till in despair, father dug everything up, buried them and so starved out the locusts, who, when they found their source of sustenance lacking, mustered their armies and fled. New seed was put into the ground, and in a short time it came through; and we were still using the vegetables that father had buried beneath the soil.

The water at Hope Town was brackish and bitter to the taste but we were consoled by the Orange River, about two miles away, and many a happy day we spent on it and on its banks. (When I went on a visit to a married sister at Richmond, I greatly missed the fascinating little town). Hope Town derived its name from a vessel wrecked in Algoa Bay. It was called Hope, or Good Hope, the anchor of which was placed on the first homestead by a Mr Sibert, the original owner of the farm and the

surrounding lands before it became a village. For a resident medical man a Hollander, (a quack doctor) was the only available person who supplied us with homeopathic remedies; but, a few months after we arrived at Hope Town a Dr Enson - a friend of my father's - wrote to him asking if there was a likely opening for a medical man in the town. My father answering in the affirmative, he decided to join us, and on his arrival he handed me a parcel. I opened it, and found within a beautiful Bible with my name inscribed and a note written on pink-bordered paper from my late Sunday school teacher Miss Appleby at Uitenhage, who had sent me the Bible for regular attendance and good behaviour. My Teacher had marked in my Bible the sixth chapter of Numbers and verses 24, 25, and 26 for me to read and study. The Bible was unfortunately destroyed by fire together with many other valuable books belonging to my father during the Boer War I 899- 1900.

The appearance in the heavens of a large Comet\*\* with a very long tail, about this time (this was in 1862 during my parents residence Hope Town.) filled us with dire forebodings. The tail of the Comet was so long that it appeared to touch the earth, and as, at the time, we were experiencing the most severe drought within living memory, we all thought that it would end in complete ruin, and some of the more ignorant people entertained the idea that the earth would be burnt to a cinder and that the end of world was inevitable.

The Orange River had ceased to flow; except for small pools of water here and there it was comparatively dry, and hundreds of carcasses of dead animals lay rotting beneath a sky like molten brass. Not a blade of grass or a green thing was to be seen, the earth was dry and sun-baked cracking into deep fissures in parts; and the few springbok still living crept into the town in search of water with which to assuage their burning thirst.

My father worked and toiled through this strenuous time to keep his garden alive; adding new ground, breaking up the large stones and refilling with soil which had to be carted from the river banks with the necessary manure. and so he

worked and toiled on to make a beautiful garden out of what was originally a barren piece of veld. When the work at his office left him free; then would my father discard his coat, turn up his sleeves and set to work on his beloved garden - this resulted in our always having a superfluity of fruit and vegetables - sure token of his earnest labour.

When I attained the age of thirteen years my parents sent me to Graaf Reined to school. In those days a journey had to be arranged by bullock-wagon, or post-cart, the latter passing our way with the mail once in every week- A trader from the Interior - fortunately, for me - happened to be passing through Hope Town with his wife. and offered very kindly to take me with them and see me safely to my destination. (The trader and his wife made a good living by going to the interior to shoot and catch wild game, returning with wagons laden with skins, Ivory - for which they bartered with the friendly natives - ostrich feathers and native curios - all of which they found a ready market for at Algoa Bay). The parting was bitter. I clung to my dear parents as if I thought that I would never see them again, and it almost broke my young heart to leave them. You lucky children of today can never realise what we Pioneer children had to undergo; You are able to travel in comfort to your various schools, and reach them within a few days. whilst we had to trek for months at a time before we reached our objective. Always remember that we - the early Pioneers - made the way smooth for you and helped to accelerate your mode of progress. I envy the children of today when I see how many advantages they possess that we lacked and long to be a child again.

The chief comfort of my life while at school was the receipt of letters from home, alas few and far between on account of the difficulty in transit. How I treasured them and read them over and over again.

Our examination over, we were taken to Gill College to see the distribution of prizes for the boys. I remember how I looked on at these proceedings with envy, and wished that the prizes were mine for some very fine and interesting books were given as a reward. I knew many of the boys there - Andries Maarsdorp's four brothers, Advocate Frank Brown - as he now is - among many others. Firm in my memory is the

thin, bowed form of the Reverend Mr. Stebler, who taught as arithmetic; and also took us in the confirmation class. He was indeed a strict man but perhaps we needed such strictness.

After a few months he wrote to my father and asked him if he would consent to my confirmation; as Archbishop Cottrell was coming to officiate; and father wrote accepting adding at the same time that he would be honoured by so noble a man and a Christian to accept me as a candidate and a Member of the Church. (The Archbishop was a staunch and devoted friend of my father's).

The ready tears filled my eyes and threatened to overflow when I received my father's letter. I was but a child, and failed to realise the solemnity of a confirmation, the real meaning of such and also, I did not wish to join the Church, being fearful that in after life some other denomination might possess greater attraction for me.

However there was no withdrawal. My confirmation took place; I was received into the Church and became a Member.

It was a solemn and impressive ceremony, and when the good Bishop had given me his blessings there was scarce a dry eye in the Church. As the Bishop examined my certificate he caught me by the hand.

"Are you a daughter of Captain William Alexander?" he asked. I told him yes, and his surprise almost overcame him.

From then on, at any social function in the Hall which my teacher (who was my guardian) and I attended the good Bishop would cross the room to us and would beg permission for me to sit with him and his wife, (Lady Cottrell) and then he would place my hand lightly within his arm and so escort me to his lady, where we would sit together, and I would answer many questions concerning my parents, for whom they both had a great liking and esteem.

I had a grievous blow about this time my eldest brother died at Fauresmith, and I remained in my room consumed with grief and unable to battle with my sore pain. While I was there a girl called to me telling me that a lady was waiting in the hall, and was anxious to see me. I demurred at the thought of seeing a visitor in my then state of mind, so they brought the visitor to me, and with tears in her eyes, she asked if I

remembered her.

My answer was in the negative, for I had not the slightest recollection of her face. Then she told me..

“I am Ellen Flinn... who used to be your nurse... who nursed you from babyhood!” In answer to an enquiry I put, as to how she had discovered my whereabouts she put another question: "Did you never miss your photo taken with your big doll some years ago"? I nodded my head. I had missed it, but had forgotten it. It was Ellen who had taken the photo, prized because it had pictured my face, which she so loved. She had married a man - a tailor by trade, and they had travelled about quite a lot in the pursuit of his business. In every fresh town that they had visited, she had exhibited the photos with urgent enquiries of all who saw it as to whether they had ever come across a little girl who resembled the picture. By a strange coincidence she had shown the photo to the trader who had escorted me to the school, and he had been able to delight her loving heart by telling her where to find me.

Not long afterwards I went to pay her a visit, and she showed me the photo of myself and the big doll, but I could not persuade her to part with it. She had a very fine little daughter, to whom she had given my names, begging me to forgive her if it displeased me - which it did not. One does not get angry at such a token of love.

School life was diversified by visits to various friends who would send me pressing invitations to stay with them during the holidays, so, therefore I was happier, after the first agony of grief at leaving my parents had somewhat dulled, than I had expected to be.

But all things come to an end - as did my school-days in their turn.

And the Home-coming? I felt that I could never tire of looking at my dear mother's face, and of clasping my dear father's hand. And both were equally overjoyed to have me with them again.

When things had adjusted themselves, and we became more normal it was decided that I was to be an assistant to my eldest sister - who was at that time a teacher in Hope Town. The plan materialised; and the experience I gained thereby was of infinite benefit to me in the higher subjects that I was still studying, which was a source of great

satisfaction to me, who craved for more learning always, During the holidays we went to Fauresmith - where my eldest brother died and had a very pleasant stay with a Dr and Mrs. Robertson. Florence and Ada, their daughters, had been at school with me, and may a happy hour we spent at their house, riding, driving, with music, laughter and song in the evening to complete a happy day.

Then - like a bolt from the blue - our holiday came to a sudden end. The Basuto's rose and made a raid on the Free State; and the farmers (all Burghers of the state) were called up to assist in driving them back to their kraal. The Chief of the Basuto's - Moshesh, remained in their stronghold; but, owing to the drought prevalent at that time, their cattle broke loose, maddened by thirst, and stampeded in search of water. The Burghers rounded up all within reach, facing many dangers to effect this; and captured many hundreds of them. Distraught and thirst-driven; the remainder of the cattle scaled high rocks in search of the life-giving fluid and, the majority of the animals being weakened by scarcity of food and drink missed their footing and fell in mangled heaps to the rough, rocky ground below.

Bereft of their cattle, suffering themselves through deprivation of their chief sustenance, the Basuto's were driven back and thoroughly beaten, and in the end had to cede a large portion of their territory to the Free State - now commonly down as "conquered territory".

The Burghers were rewarded for their bravery in coming forward to fight by being allotted farms in this particular area.

Each one was granted so many morgen upon application for such to the state. Farms were granted at very low rates, subject only to one condition - that the applicant should at once occupy the farm.

After this came my sister's marriage. Oh! What a jewel of a woman - lucky man her husband was to win such a happy soul, one whose face wore always the sweetest smile.

Our magistrate at this time was a Mr. Burton - father of our present Member of Parliament - Sir Harry Burton; and he - the father - conducted Divine services in the Court-house, where Mrs. Burton presided at the organ. (I often remarked that in appearance Mr. Burton

resembled a minister rather than a magistrate, probably he would have preferred such a career to his role of magistrate.)

At times I visited their home and assisted their two boys with their lessons, and helped them in their studies. Mrs. Burton suffered much from bad health and, eventually, they came to our place and stayed with us till my parents left the town.

My dear father had a strong liking for Mr. Burton, and many an interesting discussion did they have together.

My father's previous career had a strong attraction for Mr. Burton, and he would never tire at hearing about the experiences of those early days. I listened often to these recitals, and because of this am able to give accurate information concerning much of them in this - my book. My father was a Captain in the British Army, was stationed at St Helena, was attached to Napoleon's stay and was there on that lonely Island during the time that Napoleon was incarcerated there. Many a conversation and discussion did my father hold with the lonely Frenchman, whose eyes ever turned towards his beloved France - whose heart ever yearned for his own native land. Several letters passed between my father and Napoleon. These I preserved for many years, but they were unfortunately destroyed during the Boer War.

After my father arrived in South Africa he bought a farm from Sir Benjamin D'Urban, but, owing to the extreme unrest among the native tribes and the resultant wars, he was ordered to Grahamstown, and so was forced to relinquish it. (It was in Grahamstown, in the Drostdy, that we were sheltered and hidden for safety's sake.)

It was about this time that my father was offered the Governorship of Natal, which he refused, as I have stated elsewhere, out of consideration for my dear mother.

Before I close this chapter, I must relate an experience which we had while on our trek from Uitenhage to Hope Town.

We stopped on our way at a Boer house, and a quaint, wrinkled old woman who lived there made her appearance before us. Nothing would suffice but that we should stay there and sleep for that night, in preference to the wagons, where all was arranged for our comfort.

Eventually, we were forced to agree to this proposal, for the oxen strayed, and my father had to go in search of them. We were shown to a small room which contained only one small bed, and I being the younger, was told to sleep in the middle. I protested against this, and, taking a big ox-hide, I spread my blanket upon it, and settled myself on the floor.

It was early morning when I awoke, and the sound of my sisters' voices talking in low, hushed tones aroused my curiosity. I sat up, and asked them what was wrong, for their voices sounded unusual to me. They told me that they had heard someone in the room during the night, and had not cared to wake me, I was sleeping so soundly. Whoever it was had walked all round the hard skin on which I lay, they had heard the steps quite plainly, and my sisters had become very nervous and scared. Outside the door of the room was a clock this they could hear ticking quite plainly, and judged by this that someone had entered by the door and had left it open.

Later on in the morning, my sisters put potent enquiries to the old Boer woman who evaded their questioning, speaking deliberate untruths, as we could plainly see.

I myself, during the ensuing hour, asked the Boer woman's little daughter: "Where is your father"? "He is dead", came the reply. "He shot himself with the big old gun in the room where you slept". And she went on to say that they were all afraid to sleep in that room because his spook (ghost) walked there at night and that her mother persuaded passers-by to sleep there whenever she could.

This story I related to my sisters, and vowed that I would not sleep in that room again.

We enjoyed a hearty laugh at the idea of sharing a room with a spook and just then my father returned with the missing oxen so we had no occasion to take up our quarters in this house again.

We all went over to an adjacent farm and bought some delicious fruit, a large quantity, which we took with us and thoroughly appreciated during our trek.

The farm at which we bought the fruit is today a small township, called

"Pietersville".

## CHAPTER XV - UP THE ZAMBEZI TO VICTORIA FALLS.

During my stay in Rhodesia I visited the Great Zambesi River with its magnificent Falls - the Victoria Falls; as they are called. Their beauty is almost indescribable; and for a lover of Nature; as I was and still am; the River for me was full of interest.

The course lay long and lonely as we penetrated the upper reaches. The shadows lengthened as our canoe crept along the waters lay unruffled, and in the silent woods no leaf stirred. But over the water came the throbbing of some distant drum where a Barotse festival was afoot; and in the kraals the evening beer-drink pended. It was for this the warriors had rested all day and as we got nearer the dust of long-pent energy, and the din of honest rejoicing rose on the tropic air and ruffled the calm of the river.

And thus as a preparation for the great and final charm of the Falls themselves, we drifted on idly from island to island seeing continuously something picturesque or unusual, until the time for returning arrived.

Then the canoe was turned and before us lay the loveliest sight imaginable - the Zambesi at sunset. The Falls themselves eclipsed all that went before. They are really superb. One cannot but be fascinated by a sheet of water, a mile and a quarter wide, falling four hundred feet in a splendour of life, light and sparkle. As this spectacle, this glorious cascade tumbling in cool white purity, is presented with a tropical environment with never a chimney or house or other work of man in sight. I know that I stood in awe and wonder before one of the mightiest works of God's hand. We crossed to Dr Livingstone's island, and thought of Livingstone, that great and noble man and explorer, and stood on the spot from which point he first saw the falls. The great churned waters descended in ineffable beauty to the intense gloom of the shadows below. Crocodiles swarmed the river and sent our hearts to our mouths, lest they should upset the canoe and make a feast-day of our bodies.

The natives pointed out to us a huge tree, on which Dr Livingstone had cut his name deeply - it is still to be seen there to this day. From this point we had a magnificent view of the Falls with its wonderful spray, tinted with all the colours of the rainbow, and rising high into the air. Then we went further along river, through the Rain Forest - a wood in which day and night rain falls almost continuously, so that for this part of our trip one had to wear a mackintosh. It is a light warm rain, the spray from the opposite falls, which descends gently thorough the brilliant sunshine into bright airy glades, where it burnished every leaf, moistens every trunk, refreshes the banks of moss and ferns, dew-gemming all, till from the sun and moisture rainbows rise, and tremble over the forest in a glory of delicate beauty.

From the Rain Forest we were able to obtain an extensive view of the mighty Falls flowing into what is called the Boiling Pot, resounding therein with a mighty crash.

After a rest and some refreshment we boarded the train, passing over several bridges, marvellous feats of engineering work, and so went onto Livingstone. We found much during the journey which proved of great interest.

We had now come into the winter months, and this being my first visit, while Rhodesia, at the time, had but a scanty white population, the country around was in an unavoidably wild and uncultivated state.

I paid a second visit some years later, and was agreeably surprised to note how rapidly improvements had been pushed forward. All the rough edges were taken off, so to speak, and an air of civilisation pervaded all. Even the Kaffirs had been polished, and the erstwhile savages had been turned into admirable cook-boys, laundry-boys, house-boys and gardeners; many of them proving trustworthy and reliable. They seemed to take an eager pleasure in presenting me with magnificent bunches of beautiful wild flowers, for which I had a penchant, and they grew near to the house in extreme profusion.

My children took me about at first in an ox-wagon| sometimes to pay a visit to a neighbouring farm some 30 or 50 miles away; but we thought nothing of such a distance in those days. (Now, at the time of writing,

when I pay a visit to Rhodesia our mode of transit is far more rapid. A comfortable and easy running motor-car has taken the place of the ox-wagon; which testifies to the progress my children have made. Nevertheless I have enjoyed both modes of transport immensely being accustomed to adapt myself to any circumstances.

Often when trekking to the nearby farms, fifty miles away, we passed through forests of magnificent trees, wonderful shrubs, ferns and palms, the latter towering some ten feet in the humid air and meeting with innumerable wild animals on our way.

Small wonder that Rhodesia gives with both her capable hands, gives lavishly to those who love her rich and loamy soil. Cotton, mealies, tobacco, vegetables of all kinds, and a plenitude of citrus trees, with oranges twice and three times the size to the dwarfed fruit I have so often met with in the Transvaal. Of this magnificent fruit I partook lavishly, to which I attribute my escape from the fever which, as a rule, makes its appearance and attacks almost every person when the rains come.

Then again, I practically lived in the open air, and slept in it at night, being devoid of fear, and trusting only to the good God for my safety.

I remember that on one occasion while on a visit to my children (Rhodesia), we trekked to a neighbouring farm to pay some friends a call. The miles that we traversed for this purpose necessitated remaining at the farm over-night; and resuming our return trek on the following day.

I being a lover of fresh air, elected to sleep on the stoep of the farmhouse, much to the alarm and distress of our friends.

In vain they reasoned with me, and demanded to know if I wished, to be eaten up by lions. I heeded not their expostulations, and bade them leave me, for my eyes were heavy with sleep. And in a few moments I was in a deep and profound sleep. It seemed to me but a moment later that I was awakened by the sound of loud shouting and the flashing of lights. I sat up in bed and looked round in amazement.

My friends surrounded me. It seemed that they had been watching over me, and at the same time keeping a keen look-out for the arrival of three

lions, who were in the habit of ambling by the house every night. We followed their spoor. The lions had passed right by the corner of the steep, within a few yards of my head, and near enough for them to have carried me they so desired. I soon realised what a narrow escape I had indeed had of being, as my friends termed it, eaten alive.

It was no unusual occurrence in these days to hear savage roar of the lions and other wild beast cries continually throughout the night. But one soon grew accustomed to sleeping heeding but little such night sounds.

There was an abundance of good and sustaining food to be had, and game... well! One had only to express a wish for such, and my sons would sally forth with their guns, and return in a very short while with a large buck, a guinea fowl or a wild pig. Several of the pigs that they captured alive were kept in clean sties till they grew tame, and my sons then bred from them profusely. Fifteen at a litter is no exaggeration. From these pigs they made delicious hams and bacon, all prepared and smoked in large ovens made out of giant ant-heaps. These heaps I imagined at first to be kopjies, i.e. small hills. Although the ants are a great pest yet they have their uses. The ant-heaps make splendid ovens, and when one sees the interior, and notes the long corridors and off-chambers - all so wonderfully arranged; the work of these tiny creatures, one remembers the familiar Bible-text "go to the ant, thou sluggard, and learn of them to be wise", and perhaps one profits thereby.

The return journey from Rhodesia was exciting at times, and not devoid of merriment. We had sometimes to face extreme difficulties when crossing the various rivers and, to accelerate such, the Kaffirs would cross their hands, forming a firm if not a very comfortable seat and so would carry one across. They stood like rocks in the rushing stream and, in spite of my fear of an unwanted bath; I reached the opposite shore in safety. Then we came to boggy places where the car stuck deep in the mud, and which necessitated a full span of oxen to drag it out. Later, we reached a very fine bridge, across the Hunyani, a wide and magnificent river. We walked across this bridge, and stood for a while admiring the glorious scenery.

My children were forced to cut down huge branches from the trees to assist us in crossing the Angua River. When the rains really set in, one has to turn to Nature's aids for help in crossing the swamps and the rivers, and what is better than the help God put on this earth for our service? Arrived at Salisbury, we experienced the same difficulty in getting through the saturated and boggy country. There was a time when I thought the rails would surely sink beneath the heavy weight of the locomotive. Just as we thought the difficulty had been surmounted, several of the carriages were derailed; whereupon all the men on the train, assisted by a host of Kaffirs, who appeared from goodness knows where, set to work on the over-turned carriages, soon had us going again, and off we set to Bulawayo.

My friends were there awaiting my coming. The Rev. Mr. Greenfield (a dear old friend) was there at the station to meet me, and I enjoyed to the full the lovely drive to their beautifully situated home on the Granite Hill side. I spent a perfect time during my stay there. It was then that I paid my second visit to the Victoria Falls, in company with Mrs. Greenfield, and it was all extremely beautiful and interesting; though I experienced a distinct feeling of disappointment when we walked towards the bridge crossing the Zambesi River. It looked so different to when I saw it during the winter months.

The river was flooded to almost its fullest extent now, causing the spray to lose its airy lightness and become more dense, so hiding the view of the Falls. We left the bridge, and made our way to the hotel, with an excellent appetite for a very good breakfast. The cuisine was good, the attendance and general appointments at the hotel quite in accordance with the best traditions. This is claiming much. It is however worth mentioning because it helps to make the trip the pleasant experience it is, as after a day of sight-seeing one is glad to return to the baths, the electric fans, the ice and the many solid comforts of the hotel. Glad, in the dusk, thankfully to enjoy the cooling breezes on the spacious verandahs, glad that all this has been made possible and congenial in what till recently was a corner of Darkest Africa.

Then through the Rain Forest again, to obtain another thorough soaking,

but one does not mind this in the least for one is so entranced by the wondrous view that one heeds all the drenching spray. Then on to the Devil's Cataract with its rumbling noise as of heavy thunder, as the vast volume of water rushes madly into the Boiling Pot. Above this the river runs smooth and quiet, like a babe at rest, and one can cross by Steam Launch, or canoe, on to the different islands, and so on to Livingston.

I paid a long-looked for visit to the Matopos. Through magnificent scenery, forests lined with mighty trees, for which Rhodesia is noted, by the great Dam of water at the foot of the hills, where the training or Agricultural Colleges are erected, then through the Park up to the foot of the Matopos, and then for a mile climb up the Granite Hills to the top of the "World's Great View", so called by our most able and devoted Pioneer, "Cecil John Rhodes". There, in supreme majesty, among the boulders, lies the body of the statesman whose power, endurance and forethought helped to make Rhodesia one of the foremost and most written-of places of the world.

A few paces apart from this honoured and well-remembered spot lies Dr Jamieson and to the left is erected the monument testifying to the bravery of that great warrior "Allan Wilson" and his comrades, who fell in the great fight out of which not one man survived to "tell the tale".

"Into the darkness whence they came, they passed, Their work they did, their work is done, We know like men they fought and fell For love of country, King and God"...

## CHAPTER XVI - I CONTINUE MY TRAVELS ALONE

From Salisbury we went by motor car to the Mazowe Valley, to the great Weir across the river one hundred feet high, where the water is regulated and used for irrigating the different estates and orchards of citrus trees, the extensive lands of wheats, barley, oats, and Lucerne, (a fodder used for cattle, mules and horses), right on to the Shamva Mines. Then our way lay past Bindura, a railway station and a terminus. Near it rich minerals lie in the ground, adjacent to the Trio Mine, the reef of which has been struck there, and yielded great profit. It was while

viewing the mine that a nugget of gold, taken from the ground in my presence, was presented to me by the owner. I also managed to get samples of gold, copper, chromium, manganese, and mica from the mine fields near the Hunyani River in the Lomgundi District, near to where my children are living. It is a very fertile and rich country with extensive lands and fields of cotton, tobacco, mealies, and citrus fruit, which my children cultivate assiduously. Hard work is almost compulsory in such times. There are many, many wagon-loads of wood and coal to be made and conveyed to the Eldorado Mines weekly. During the rainy season it is some task to cross the rivers and the sodden vleis.

The heavily-laden wagons get stuck in the thick greasy mud, and the striving and the struggling of the poor animals straining their utmost to get them out is painful to witness, Then there are the breakages and repairs to supervise, almost superhuman difficulties to overcome, so you see that such work needs a stout heart, willing hands and patient endeavour, and it behoves one to cultivate such, and to take courage and overcome all obstacles to success.

## CHAPTER XVII - EARLIER REMINISCENCES

I have, in my time, experienced many hardships, and some narrow escapes from danger on the Orange River - that noted place, Norval's Pont, where Sir Harry Smith crossed with his troops during "Boom Plaats Rebellion". One very narrow escape I had was when I rushed into the River, fully clothed, to rescue my daughter and a little maid from drowning.

Alas! I failed to save the maid, and my daughter Mary and I were at the point of utter exhaustion - I from my frantic exertions to rescue her, and Mary from long immersion in the water. It was indeed a sad and pitiable accident. My daughter and the little maid were playing in the shallow water, and slipped, the river engulfing them before they had time to recover their footing. Alas! The little maid was drowned! We rescued her body - she was such a faithful little maid - and gave her a fitting

burial; visiting her grave at times for long afterwards.

Another time my husband and I were crossing the drift in a horse-drawn carts a habitual procedure, and the river had washed most of the soil away. The horses slipped, and fell under the water, and the cart stood on one wheel. Fortunately for us, we had brought with us a boy on horseback I called to him to bring the horse near to me. I jumped on its back and rode out to the river-bank then sent the boy back with the horse to fetch my husband and Charlie. My son, Watkin, who happened to be on the opposite side of the river on horseback saw the catastrophe, rode his horse into the water, and cut the traces of our struggling animals, just in the nick of time, for the poor creatures were in danger of drowning. We continued on our journey, nothing daunted, returning later in the evening, when the moon was at the full, without any further mishap occurring. Yes, in those early days accidents were unavoidable, and escape from danger or death too marvellous for belief. Much of the Free State resembles the Karoo, but most of it is prairie-like - great grassy plains hundreds of square miles in area. They are diversified in places by solitary kopjes, low ridges, or even wooded valleys as at Ficksburg, Parys Kroonstad and Senekal; in the main however the plains are flat and featureless, almost devoid even of trees. Yet there is about these plains a moving fascination felt everywhere on the South African veld by those who sojourn awhile in its by-ways and do not merely hurry through by train.

I am just reminded of a visit we paid to Mossel Bay. At this charming seaport there is no artificiality, no straining after effect at the expense of true art. Here we come to grips with natural beauty. And here it is recognised that to enjoy a holiday to the full, one must have untrammelled freedom. Then again, which is an important factor when one is on a holiday, Mossel Bay knows no violent mercurial changes, and frost in the town is equally a stranger. There is about the locality a charm that is peculiarly soothing to tired bodies and brains, and lost energies are restored, and pure blood is sent coursing through the veins, by the bracing air and health-giving surroundings.

While staying at this delightful place we received an invitation from a

Mr and Mrs Gereker - very dear friends of ours - to spend a few days with them at "Fore Bay". Such glorious bathes we had in the sea, and a beach with a pleasant walk - not too far so as to tire one, proved to us a great pleasure. Ah! But it was what may be termed "perfect peace" and restfulness during the time that we stayed there.

On two other occasions we went to Mossel Bay, and had a small cottage quite to ourselves. It was situated on the banks of a river which ran into the sea, with heaps of fish therein. The owner of the cottage often came to the river to fish, and, at all times, after a good catch, presented us with some fish - real beauties, which we cooked ourselves, and thoroughly enjoyed.

It was a splendid holiday, and our dear kind friends, with their never-failing courtesy and attention, made it just ideal.

Came a night when it started to rain heavily and, being, as one might suppose, accustomed to the sound of rushing water, we retired to rest as usual, though the weather was exceedingly rough, and thought nothing of it.

Somewhere near two o'clock - I was in a sound sleep - I was aroused by a loud knocking at my door. I called out: "Who is it"? A voice answered me: "It is Cecil. My father has sent me to warn you of the danger threatening you. The river is coming down fast; you had better prepare to quit your quarters and gain a place of safety.

I recognised the voice. The youth was the son of a farmer at whose beautiful house and superb farm we had whiled many a pleasant hour away. The boy had trudged thorough a mile of mud and water to warn us.

Thereupon I began to protest: "I simply can't get up - I am so sleepy!" I bade our young friend open the door and come in, and then asked him to hold a storm-lantern on the edge of the river so that I might see how near it was to the cottage.

Then I assured him, if the water came into the cottage, we would jump out of the back window, which abutted on to the sand hills.

However, till day-break we were not disturbed. But. . . when I opened the cottage door, what a sight it was that met our eyes! Towering at

times high in the air, and anon rushing on, almost one might say, like cataracts of water, with mighty force went the great on-rush of water, rushing by to the sea. And by God's mercy we had escaped; for our cottage only just evaded the danger zone.

From Mossel Bay we went on to Heidelberg and spent a happy time with some delightful friends who had taken up their abode there. Then to Swellendam, with its glorious scenery, where we went for many beautiful drives, by immense tracks of mealie-fields, through shady tree-lined roads, and across streams of clear running water.

On another occasion we went for a delightful holiday through the Garden Route, George, the Wilderness, and Knysna, and the further ranges of mountains overlooking Knysna and Plettenberg Bay, green to their imposing summits, girdled for mile upon mile with dark belts of forest.

The variety of the diverse scenes constitutes the fascination of this land. The towering peak known as Cradock Peak 4,500 feet above the sea, like a mighty sentinel, watches over the beautiful oak-lined city of George nestling at its feet.

Old memories were recalled to me by these scenes. When my dear father came to the Cape in company with Sir Harry Smith and Sir Benjamin D'Urban he brought up ground, and was the Surveyor-in-charge of all the roads in those early days.

Travelling at that time was an ordeal rather than a pleasure, especially to Knysna and through the Montagu Pass, the transport roads of which are still in existence and, in some parts are under the railway line one passes over.

Some years ago I travelled by train over these very roads, and a feeling of pride mounted within me as I thought of my dear father's bravery and strenuous endeavour to run a transport road under such almost overwhelming difficulties and in troublous and unsafe times; right through from George to Oudtshoorn, Graaf Reinet through the Zuurberg, Grahamstown, Algoa Bay and Uitenhage and regretted again that my dear parent had refused the offer made to him to take a prominent position under the Government in Natal. But he and my dear

mother, then both quite young people, started their life's journey together at a time when the natives were a barbarous race - savages who delighted in the wholesale slaughter of the white peoples and, more often than not roasting and eating them also. It sounds dreadful as I relate it but history also records such terrible happenings. My dear mother, being young and timid, dreaded the native race, and, because of this, my father would not accept a post whose onerous duties would doubtless at times result in an enforced stay away from his young wife and growing family.

Durban in Natal, when I went there, even at that time was a beautifully situated and civilised town, with extensive and profitable sugar refineries and factories near at hand. We went by boat to the Point and Bluff, and took a tremendous interest in the Whaling station. On a day when my daughter Agnes and I were present an immense whale, so heavy that its weight smashed up the rails, was brought in.

I recall a time, while at Knysna, when we went for a motor drive to Kaerbooms River, where in one of the loveliest wayside cottages that I have ever seen, we rested for a while, some delicious tea and fresh homemade bread and butter, served to us by two dear old people, whose faces shone with delight when they learned that we had come from Barkly, where their daughter was a schoolteacher. (Ah! There is nothing to equal a parents level) From this point we went on to the famous Plettenberg Monument, erected in the eighteenth century ( 1776), and saw the little church at that time over a century old, and went in and experienced that sense of Holy peace which somehow seems to permeate most old churches. From there we went to the offices containing the different flags and the registries, and saw some quaint old documents, then on to the whaling stations where we saw many steel tanks of whale oil ready for shipment. Nearby were a number of fences on which hundreds of fish had been hung to dry in the heat of the sun. The poor whites around this part depend mostly upon this fish for their sustenance, meat being a scarcity with them on account of its prohibitive price. Sheep-farming is not popular about here, nor is it profitable, and it grieved me to see the sorry condition of the cattle in comparison to our

fine sturdy sheep and cattle in the "Karoo Veldt". There is, in our part of the county a low-growing shrub which flourishes with out water or irrigation, and on this the cattle seem to thrive and wax fat.

Travelling through Natal brought to my mind the terrible experiences the early Pioneers - the Voortrekkers - went through when they trekked with their large tented ox-wagons through Zululand into Dingaan's Kraal, (the Zulu Chief whose name remains blood-stained to this day) to discuss certain matters with his council and with him. The Zulus at that time were a powerful, blood-thirsty, and cruel savage race, and it was this party of Voortrekkers, men, old and young, women and children, who were massacred by the savage chief 's orders. Bulala! (Kill !) The word went forth; the earth ran red with blood; and out of that gallant little band not one was left to tell the tale! So it was little wonder that my poor mother lived in a state of fear. I have often heard her relate episodes of that time; of the anxiety they endured during the Kaffir Wars, in which my father was made Captain of a Rough-riders Corps, and of how they were put into the Drostdy for safety and immunity from harm. The Drostdy still stands to-day; and is now called "Rhodes College". Some of my own sons were educated there; in much later days, of course.

"Dingaan's Day" - so-called to keep the memory of the treacherous chief 's crime fresh in the minds of the people is in each consecutive year. It is now a public holiday, and is made use commemorated on the 16th day of every December of by the Dutch for a time of Prayer and Praise. I spent such an occasion one year on a Dutch farm and enjoyed it immensely. Boers, in their hundreds, with their wives and children, congregated together in one spot usually trekking in large bullock-wagons, Cape-carts, and on horseback. Tents, large and small, are erected by a large dam or pond of clear water, usually surrounded by willow trees. Vast heaps of fuel is gathered, and a fire is set going, burning practically day and night until the festivities are at an end. Each family provides for its own members, and many delicacies appear. I enjoyed this brief space spent in the open air, among this simple, kindly people, especially the sleeping out-of-doors, and the calling and the

twittering of the birds to each other in the early morning, the dull boom of the salutes as they were fired; the hymns of praise that soared up to the heavens from lusty throats, women's sweet low voices, and the shrill treble of the children. In the largest Marquee an organ was placed, each person bringing his or her own seat. Then, during the day a Predicant (minister) would address the throng who listened in reverent silence, broken only by a fervent Amen, and then followed songs and recitations, and a similar programme ensued till I left.

Farming is an interesting and indeed, an enthralling occupation, for both men and women. I have visited many beautiful farms in my time, and have taken a delight in watching the owners at their various tasks. It was all familiar to me - with my several farms, all of which I have managed at various times, besides bringing up a large family, and having more often than not, constant visitors either coming or going.

One soon becomes accustomed to the routine of farm life, even if one has to grow sufficient for one's needs, and one soon learns to dispense with phone calls to the butcher, baker, grocer, etc., and soon learns to manage quite well without these superfluties. My dear mother was a born house-wife, and endeavoured to inculcate into us the majority of her knowledge; "as well learn to do everything, she would say "And learn to do it well". There may come a time when such knowledge will not only be useful, but necessary. My thanks are due to my mother today for all she taught me, and many a time before her dear soul left this earth have I given her every token of my loving appreciation of her tender and thoughtful care for me and my future. And her advice and influence still lives, and will live in my heart till God calls me Home.

My children have often heard me say that I wish that I had a penny for every loaf of bread that I have made, to say nothing of the cakes, pastry, bottled fruits and jam of all kinds, preparing for big dinners etc. And then there were the boxes of soap that I made, the candles and butter, and dried fruit of all description. Yes, I worked hard from morn till night for many a long year, and the sight of my stores gave people the surprise of their life when the Military entered the town, and took possession.

## CHAPTER XVIII - NAPOLEON BUONAPARTE AND OTHERS

My father was British Commissioner at St Helena during the time Napoleon Buonaparte was incarcerated there.

Napoleon's death took place - at the age of 52 - on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May during the last year that my father was in office. The burial took place on the 21<sup>st</sup> day of the same month. (I omitted to state that my father was born at St Helena on the 27<sup>th</sup> of January, 1805, and was married to my mother at Caledon by Dr Robertson during the year 1833). My father returned twice to St Helena before I was born.

After Napoleon's death, all the late household of the deposed Emperor left the Island, and sailed for England in the S.S. Carnel.

My father was present when the three coffins confining Napoleon's body were opened. The body - which was in a state of perfect preservation, was formally handed over to the Head of the French Delegation. During the opening, the satin lining of the innermost coffin became detached, and fell over the body. Napoleon appeared so life-like that it looked almost as though he were asleep.

His old comrades, who stood around burst into tears as they recognised the face of their chief and leader whom they so loved.

Lord Kitchener - the Victor of Omdurman, and the greatest loved man in the British Army, was a prominent figure during the Boer War. Commander-in-Chief in India in 1902, he brought about two great reforms - one, the reorganisation and redistribution of the Indian Army; the other, the abolition of the dual control under which the Commander-in-Chief's plans had to be sanctioned by the Military Member of the Viceroy's Council.

Lord Kitchener and General French both visited our house at Norval's Pont during the Boer War. I remembered the keen interest I took in the martial appearance of these two soldiers.

My daughter Mary was in the siege of Kimberley when Colonel Kekewich commanded, and General French, with whom was my son Clifford, entered the town. The siege was raised on the 15<sup>th</sup> of February, 1900, and my daughter, who had suffered great privation, was so weak that she cried through sheer relief all through that day and night.

Lord Kitchener, at one time, resided at Broome Hall, where my mother-in-law was born. This helped to increase my interest in this great man, and I had some conversation with him concerning it. He spoke well; but in short, sharp accents, every word clearly articulated, and to some purpose.

## CHAPTER XX - MY FIRST TRIP TO ENGLAND

After extensive travel through most of the dorps and towns, and visiting the farms also in the Eastern and Western Province and touring through Rhodesia, Natal, the Free State and the Transvaal, I felt an inward urge for other climes, to travel and see more of the world that what is to be seen in Africa, and so decided to cross the mighty ocean which divides Africa from that little island - England. It had long been in my mind to venture thus far, for I have often regretted the many opportunities for so doing that I have let pass me by, but still better late than never; even if I was 75 years of age when I took my first long sea voyage. I had been round the coast, and had experienced a severe bout of sea-sickness, but even this did not deter me, for I remembered how well I had felt after it had passed off.

So here was I on board the SS DUNLUCE CASTLE, en route for England, and eager to see all there was to see; and to experience all there was to experience.

I travelled alone; and my friends and children exclaimed: "Just imagine it! At your age"! As if one's age mattered when ones heart is young! I enjoyed the sports immensely; the happy-go-lucky companionship on board - so many were kind to me; and many admired what they called my temerity in travelling so far alone, and at my age.

And the first meal in the dining-saloon, with my friends around me - a farewell lunch, as we termed it, with laughter in our eyes and a sad feeling at our hearts, because of the parting words that must inevitably ensue... I shall forever remember it.

I had imagined that this lunch would be my first and my last meal on the boat for I fully expected a recurrence of the sea-sickness, and was agreeably surprised when, as we progressed on the voyage, it failed, to

put in an appearance.

Coloured ribbons united us to our friends on the dock then the gangway was lifted, farewells were waved, and off we went - the great ship sailing majestically out of the harbour, so smoothly did she glide, that I was surprised when I saw Table Mountain receding into the distance, and finally merge into the dimness of the horizon.

Just imagine it! I appeared at every meal, and did full justice to it also. I entered thoroughly into the fun of the sports as an onlooker of course, though; tell it not I made one or two mild ventures - such as chalking the pig's eye, thread the needle race, and a mild flutter in a whist drive. I made friends with some nice old ladies like myself; we chatted and read, enjoying each other's companionship; and so passed many an hour away.

The sea was calm and beautiful for a full fortnight, scarce a ripple on it. Once we ran into a shoal of porpoises, then came a cloud of flying-fish, and then we saw a whale in the far distance, spouting water in a mighty volume. The weather turned a trifle warm when we crossed the equator, but nothing to mention. When we reached the Bay of Biscay the rough weather I was anticipating was conspicuous only by its absence. I felt a trifle giddy while we were in the Bay, but remained on deck and felt better for it. I had a wireless when we had been a week at sea, the only one on board thus favoured.

At the end of the third week we arrived at King George V Dock and prepared to disembark. Much to my surprise we were ordered to line up and produce our Passports. The day was sultry, and the heat suffocating - very unlike our clear, even if hot, South African air. Some of the poor souls around me began to turn faint, and yet were afraid to leave their places in the crowded line.

I called to my bedroom steward as he passed, and bade him bring me a chair, telling him to place it in a shady spot, and where I could watch the shipping around me. This he did and I grew very interested in watching the various sights around.

Breaking into my deep enthrallment came a gentleman friend, a passenger on the same boat, bound for England to pay a visit to his old

mother. He seemed surprised to see me sitting there, and asked me if I had got through the useless bother of the passport examination. No, I told him, nor do I intend to until the crush has lessened; I prefer to stay here.

However, he took my passport and managed the business for me, and that business passed off all right. I was able to pass through the Customs clearing department before those poor souls who were still waiting, where I engaged one of Cook's agents to take my luggage to the London address which I gave him. Giving me a searching glance he demanded to know whether my luggage contained tobacco, spirits, wine, or other dutiable articles.

I fixed him with my eyes, uncertain at first whether he was making game of me. "Now, do I look like a woman who smokes a pipe, carries a whisky bottle as a nursing mother carries her babies feeding bottle", I challenged him and he turned from me to hide a broad smile. Then he gave me the receipt for my luggage, and I left in high feather, quite pleased with the way in which I had "taken him down", as the saying goes.

Oh, the delight of being once more on "terra firm"! The first thing that I did was to send a cable to my children in South Africa, notifying them of my safe arrival. But I must tell you of some of my experiences in London, and of all that I saw, during the all too short time that I spent there.

In the first place I took the front seat on the top of every bus that I boarded, for a London Bus driver has a fund of dry humour exquisite to listen to and remember, and I would chat to the drivers, who most obligingly pointed out to me every place of interest historical and otherwise, and I thoroughly enjoyed listening to their quaint Cockney accent.

Westminster Abbey raised in me a feeling of awe and wonder when I entered the sacred building. A guide instructed me as I walked around; and took me down into the Crypts where the Kings and Queens of England, and all our great poets, lie in their last long sleep. Then to the Houses of Parliament, a stones throw from the Abbey, into a part of

which they allowed me to enter. I heard Big Ben strike more than once, and listened to its dull reverberation with keen enjoyment.

Then across the Tower Bridge and on to the Tower of London, where I saw the Beef-eaters, and the room where the two little Princes were smothered, and the cell where the Lady Jane Grey wept her heart away. I walked along the Thames Embankment by Westminster Bridge and gazed up at the Monument called "Cleopatra's Needle". I did not essay to mount the spiral staircase to the top; that must come my way another time.

Later on I did the City, as this part of London is called and went through Billingsgate Fish Market, listening with amusement to the jokes and laughter that passed from one salesman to another.

Then Smithfield Market - the Meat Market astounded me by size. It took quite a while to walk through it. The sheep and prime beef hung up for inspection would make the mouth of a gourmand water. In great amusement I watched a housewife in a large coarse apron bargain with a butcher for a plate of giblets. It ended in them tossing for the succulent morsels, and the housewife won, the butcher handing her the giblets with a broad smile on his face.

Passing out of the Meat Market, and making our way towards Little Britain, a narrow road leading to one of the main arteries of the City - we passed a little church, half hidden among a row of shops, called St Bartholomew the Great. I was told that this church has stood since the time of the early Crusaders. The walls were of rough brick both inside and out and the galleries of the church had been bricked up for safety. In the small graveyard attached to the church were some dozen or so crumbling headstones, on which one could still faintly decipher the date 1600, and the quaint epitaphs in old English lettering. We paid a visit to the City Temple, and then on to St Paul's Cathedral, where we joined in the service, and climbed the 600 stairs leading to the Library and the Whispering Gallery. I was much taken with the tameness of the pigeons that thronged about the steps of the Cathedral, and the careful way in which the public and the children avoided harming them as they passed through them.

I had been staying with some friends that I had made on the boat during this period, we had gone by car across the Ferry, and on to Bexley Heath. They sometimes accompanied me on my rambles.

On another occasion we boarded a Bus at Victoria station, and so went through the West end of London, through Arlington past Finsbury Park and through New Southgate, on to High Barnet and Hadley Woods. The woods wore their summer foliage, and were tender and green. Violets nestled among the mossy roots, and blackberries grew in profusion.

Before I left London I went to Highgate, and stood on Highgate Archway and looked down on the vast City of London, with its myriads of chimneys, its numerous spires and steeples. I walked down the steep, hilly road, and saw the stone on which Dick Whittington sat with his cat, - his is on it to this day - while he listened to the story the bells had to tell: "Turn again Whittington, Lord Mayor of London! " By this time I had begun to feel smothered by the thousands of chimneys that surrounded me, and my rest was disturbed at night by the incessant noise of passing traffic. Amid all the towering buildings around me I began to feel suffocated, the only time that I felt that I could breathe was when I went to Hyde Park and the crossing from there to Edgware Road was some problem, I can tell you.

We went to the Wembley Exhibition, where every exhibit was easy to approach. They had an excellent method of carrying people to the various places they were in search of, railway was at hand everywhere.

From this exhibition I sent several post-cards to my children and friends across the ocean, and it would need an abler pen than mine to describe the various exhibits that I saw there. South Africa, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and India were well to the fore, and there was a marvellous model of our bonny Prince of Wales made entirely out of butter. At Wembley we managed to procure a very fine lunch and some excellent tea, returning home thoroughly tired but happy.

And the shops, up west - the West End of London! They contain all that one would wish to buy. It was indeed a pretty sight when we went up in the lift at Harrods' - a large store on the way to Putney, on the Brixton Road; and noted the departments as we ascended, they looked like fairy-

land, with their exquisite contents. And once I took the lift at Selfridges - another immense West End store, and went to the roof-garden at the extreme top of the building, and could hardly believe as I stood and looked at the many green spaces and trees around, that I was in London.

## CHAPTER XXI - A VISIT TO THE KING'S HUNTING BOX

Accustomed as I was to the wide spaces and the great silences of South Africa, I felt that for a time, in spite of the strong attraction that London possessed for me, I must get away. So I took the train to Beaconsfield, in Buckinghamshire, and went there on a visit to a very dear and kind friend. A beautiful room was placed at my disposal, with all in it that one required for one's use. It had a window from which one could see the garden with its lovely hedges of flowering sweet peas, and rose bushes sending forth their exquisite perfume. Giant hollyhocks, mignonette, stocks, and sweet Williams were there in thick profusion. Surely in such a place of peace I should be able to sleep, was my inward cogitation.

Early on the following morning my kind, friend brought in to me a dainty breakfast service, a large pot of tea being in readiness for my use. She asked if I had had a good night.

Much to her surprise I answered in the negative.

"But why?" she exclaimed, looking extremely distressed, "there was nothing to disturb you". "That's just it I answered, "I missed the noise of London". We had a hearty laugh over this, for I had told her on my arrival how the night noises of the metropolis had disturbed me.

I soon smartened up my bump of locality, and began to find my way about. My friend, who had her home to attend to, was often too busy to accompany me.

I went down to the Severn, and sat busy with my correspondence under a wide-spreading tree, surrounded by beautiful flowers. Later I took a stroll and sat opposite the Cathedral, then rose and entered the building, and viewed its interior with deep interest. On the next day I ventured a little farther alone, and noticed a most beautiful place set in the midst of lovely grounds. The building itself was all of magnificent carved wood.

Curiosity mastered me, and I rang a bell at the side of the porch, eager to know if I would be able to view the interior.

A dear old lady came in answer to my ring. I proffered my request, and, when I told her that this was my first visit to England, and that I came from South Africa, she begged me to enter, showed me the greatest courtesy, and, pointed out to me everything of interest in the magnificent house.

Then I thought to ask her the name of the building. To my utter surprise she told me that it was the King's Hunting Box. So you see! My direct way of going straight to the point when I want to do or to see anything gained for me an experience I might otherwise not have had.

Came a day when I thought that I would take a bus ride. The conductor of the first bus that I essayed to enter told me that it was only going as far as Slough, and that I would have to change there. So I waited for the next bus, and this took me as far as Windsor. With the help of a guide-book, an excellent guide and some visitors, I was shown the State Rooms and many other things too numerous to mention. One could spend a week there, and yet not see all that is to be seen.

On two occasions I went for a drive through the Long Walk and into the Frogmore country, and saw the "Queen's Tomb" opened only to public view on Queen Victoria's birthday.

I returned to London, and on three occasions I went to Kensington Palace - the birthplace of our noble Queen, and saw the beautiful gardens in which she played as a child. Only once I saw the massive bank of England, the old lady of Threadneedle Street - as it is called.

I spent a delightful time at Bournemouth - that seaside resort so well-known to visitors from all parts of the world. The Park and the flowers were in the zenith of their beauty when I was there, and I strolled along by the river Bourne, and inhaled the sweet fresh air - it seemed like a breath of Africa to me.

#### A VISIT TO BOURNEMOUTH (Continued)

During my visit to Bournemouth I sat on the Pier listening to a most excellent Band playing a tune that I loved. I was surrounded by ladies

that had been born in England, and therefore in a position to know it's most popular tunes. They remarked on the beauty of the refrain that the band was playing, to which I replied: "Yes, I have always loved that tune".

"Do you know the name?" one asked.

I gazed at her in surprise, suspicious of banter, but her look of enquiry set my mind at rest.

"What is it called?" came quickly from another.

"God Bless the Prince of Wales." was my reply, and they gazed in open-mouthed astonishment.

Just imagine it! I a South African, from 6,000 miles away, and they born in England, who should or ought to have been in a position to recognise what is now practically as well known a tune as "God Save the King" was able to tell them the name of a Royal song that all the world has heard.

I stayed at a beautiful home on the banks of the River Bourne. The house was owned by Colonel Digby, uncle to the man that my daughter Mary had married. While there, we went through the Museum in which I saw the furniture used by Napoleon Buonaparte during his incarceration on the Island of St Helena, and a thought crossed my mind, as to whether my father had sat at one of the tables that I saw there before me. The museum was presented to the town by an old gentleman whose name I cannot at the moment recall.

The name of the seaside resort - Bournemouth, is derived from the River Bourne, which passes right through the Park amid surroundings of the most beautiful flowers, of any and all description, and we walked by the River amid these beautiful flowers until we reached the beach, which lay at the outlet to the park. The town starts from the mouth of the river, from which one can look across to the Isle of Wight. Small steamers are in readiness to convey passengers across for a nominal sum.

We used to go on to the Pier by the Cliff lift, which is worked by hydraulic power, alternately; and it was during one of these excursions that the episode of the tune to which the English ladies could not put a name, occurred. I can hardly realise it even now; that such a beloved

Prince as the Prince of Wales should have what is considered now as a National hymn, and that any of his subjects should fail to recognise it.

## CHAPTER XXII - A HOLIDAY IN SCOTLAND WITH MY SON

My children in South Africa grew impatient for my return, so, at long last, as they saw no prospect of my immediate return, my son came all the way from Rhodesia to fetch me. Of course I was overjoyed to see him again, but I did not relish returning to Africa's sunny shores until I had seen a little more of the world. So, in answer to my urgent entreaties, he agreed to a trip up to Scotland.

After his arrival in London, we stayed at the St Pancras Hotel. This was in the Euston Road, almost opposite King's Cross Station. The hotel was a vast building, built in the Gothic style, with an excellent cuisine, and hundreds of rooms to choose from. It had one of the largest staffs that I have ever known an hotel to employ, but, being such a large hotel, I guess they were all needed. The traffic that flashed by the hotel was marvellous; it was amazing to see how the pedestrians escaped injury.

We went to King's Cross Station, and travelled by the Flying Dutchman up to Scotland. Through Edinburgh to Dundee; from Dundee to Glasgow.

We had a very genial doctor in our carriage, and I enjoyed a little discussion with him concerning the Boer War. He had heard of certain charges made against the Concentration Camps during the Boer War. And I stated my opinion very plainly. I told him that people did not know what they were talking about when they made such charges, rather, they should offer up thanks to God that it was England with whom they were at War; for no other antagonistic nation would have adopted the humane methods that were adopted in the ease of those people who went to the Concentration Camps during the war.

As the train passed along, and I gazed from the window at the country we were simply flying through, my son grew anxious for my health and begged me to lie down and rest.

Listen, old lady", he said, "you are overdoing it. Just now you'll crack

up".

"Not I" I retorted, "I want to see all there is to see; and I must see it".

The genial doctor looked at me with a merry twinkle in his eye. "Never did I see an old lady like you crave so much for the sights of England and Scotland", he said. "Now, won't you let me persuade you to lie down for a few moments, indeed, you will fully appreciate the benefit you will derive from so doing".

"No" I protested, "I shall lose everything"! "No" he assured me, "I will see to it that you do not sleep very long.

I lay down to pacify them, and, imagine it! I slept for a full twenty minutes. I woke with a great start, then sat up abruptly and looked at my son protestingly.

"There! You've let me sleep too long". Now I've really missed all the sights"! "No you've not!" exclaimed the doctor, "You are just in time to see the Holy Isle"! The scenery in Scotland, in some parts, resembles somewhat parts of South Africa. I mean the Scottish cliffs and mountains. The people are hospitable and kind and I thoroughly appreciated their scrupulous cleanliness. It was my intention to pay a visit to Stirling Castle - now a Military Barracks - during my stay in Scotland. But time was limited, and I was unable to follow this procedure.

Stirling Castle belonged to my father's people - many years ago, but litigation over a lawsuit ensued, and it ended in the Castle being thrown into Chancery, and in the end being taken by the Government for military uses.

I had an amusing experience at a church in Glasgow. I rose early, and slipped off to the first service. Descending some steps I found myself in the aisle of a Presbyterian Church. Being rather deaf I essayed to find a seat near the pulpit. An old gentleman accompanied by two ladies, took me by the arm and ushered me into a nice padded seat right beneath the preacher. He and the ladies sat beside me. It was a splendid sermon, and I thoroughly enjoyed it. After a while I felt the old gentleman's hand pushing against mine.

I looked round. He was cramming into my hand a number of delicious

sweets. I nodded towards the old ladies. He signified that they were already supplied, and started munching at the sweets himself . Therefore, I did likewise.

When I left the church, I asked these new friends if they knew anyone in Glasgow who answered to the name of Norval.

The answer came in the affirmative but unfortunately the only Norval in Glasgow - an old lady of eighty, was away at the time.

I paid a visit to the Grampian Hills by car, taking a thermos flask of hot tea, and a parcel of cakes. I sat by the river at Loch Lomond, and thought of the old song "On the Bonny, Bonny Banks of Loch Lomond", and they were indeed bonny.

By the river we had our tea, and enjoyed the cakes that we had brought with us. Going to Loch Lomond and returning we took different routes, and ended by crossing the river by the Ferry.

From Glasgow I returned to Dundee, viewing with interest an old Castle now used as a Military Barracks.

I crossed over the two largest bridges in the world about this time - the Tay Bridge while going to Glasgow, and the Forth Bridge while going to Edinburgh. The rivers themselves are reported to be the two longest rivers in the world.

From the house at which I was staying in Dundee I could look down on the River Tay emptying itself into the sea. It was indeed an experience to me.

We travelled from Dundee all along the North Sea to Aberdeen by train. Aberdeen is the cleanest and the most beautiful City of all that I have seen. Union Street, one of the principal streets in Aberdeen vied with Prince's Street in Edinburgh for beauty and cleanliness. The houses in this smart little City were built of grey granite, and I was struck with the exquisite cleanliness and uniformity appertaining to all.

While at Aberdeen I crossed over the bridge built by the Normans and stood awhile and pondered over that gallant nation of men, and their effort, which still stood.

From Aberdeen we went to Balmoral to see the King and Queen for thousands had flocked there for this purpose. The King and his Guard of

Honour were dressed in the typical Scottish attire - Kilts. A pavilion had been erected - composed only of heather, beneath which stood the King and Queen. We managed to get quite near, and a lady with a car just outside the cordon drawn around the pavilion, kindly offered me a position in her car from where, she told me I would get a good view of the Royal couple. But even this did not satisfy me. crept under the cordon a doorway at the back of the pavilion through which I saw a maid pass. It was an impromptu kitchen, and several maids were busy at work making tea. I spoke to one of them: "How I should like to get as near as possible to the Queen" said, "just to have a good look at her"! As the words left my lips a hand caught me by the shoulder.

Madam you are trespassing!" and a burly policeman barred the way "What? ...Trespassing! ... And I an old lady of 76 years come 6,000 miles from South Africa to have a good look at the Queen!"

In the end the constable guided me to a spot where I had a splendid view of the King and the Queen on their way to Balmoral, where they were in "Residence" at the time, and which place we passed both in coming and going.

From Aberdeen my son and I went on to Edinburgh, and then my son left me while he went to pay a visit a little distance outside the town.

Of course I went on a voyage of discovery by myself for there was not a soul in the town that I knew. It was while I was in search of various places of interest that I came across a deaf and dumb Church, or rather, a Church used for the purpose of communicating the Word of God to those without speech or hearing.

I entered the Holy building. A man came up to me with his finger on his lips. It was evidently an enquiry as to whether I was dumb. I shook my head, and pointed to my ears, intimating that I was only deaf. A seat near the preacher was offered to me, and I sat and listened to the orator, who read slowly, the sermon in turn being interpreted by a layman who stood beside him on his fingers to the deaf and dumb congregation who followed every movement with apparently intense interest. These in their turn interpreted the sermon they had read on the layman's fingers

on their own, to intimate to him that they had grasped it correctly. It was so sad and solemn, even weird, that it oppressed me and this deeply, so much so that I felt that I would not care to venture there again. And, when the preacher asked me what I thought of the sermon, and how I liked it, I told him frankly, not at all; frankness being one of my chief attributes.

Relating my day's experiences to the Proprietress of my hotel on my return to where I was domiciled, I heard with amazement her acknowledgement that this was the first she had heard of a deaf and dumb institution of any kind being near, and the church that I was speaking of lay but a few streets away from the hotel. Truly, it takes a South African to discover all that is of interest in the countries overseas. Prince's Street I discovered while on my daily wanderings. What a beautiful street! Just like a garden in its green and charming beauty. Then I made my way to Holyrood Castle, and made a thorough and interesting survey of its surroundings. I also went to the Museum where I saw John Knox's pulpit from which he used to preach. The beautiful floral clock with the history of which almost every one is familiar is at the foot of Sir Walter Scott's monument and I saw John Knox's monument far away on the hill. Then I went into the old Houses of Parliament and these I went all through and saw all that was to be seen, which I hope to fully relate at some future time. In fact I went all over the Castle, and wished that I had had the time to take a more extensive survey.

From Edinburgh I went on to South Shields, and spent a little time there with a friend - the Reverend Pagan's widow. I had known the Reverend Pagan for many years, and esteemed and honoured his wife.

From South Shields I went to Gloucestershire, to Houghton Manor Farm which belonged to old Mr Knight, a dear old gentleman with a house-full of daughters.

The farmhouse was built to resemble a Castle, with its turrets, gables, and loop-holes. The rooms were so numerous and the corridors so long and winding, that one could quite easily lose their way amid the many twistings and turnings.

But, indeed, it was beautifully arranged. The bedrooms were sumptuous, and replete with comfort each bedroom having a small dressing-room leading out of it for the comfort and convenience of the occupants.

I visited many churches at this time, and went for many lovely drives. A Fete or a bazaar was one of the chief attractions that entranced me, where many pretty and useful things commanded a fancy price. I visited the various farms around, and saw the Aberdeen Angus breed of cattle, and soon realised that my children's Aberdeen Angus breed in Rhodesia was quite equal to those that I saw in Scotland and England. And the sheep! The beauties! Their wool was so fleecy and white as they lay in the paddocks, on beds of clover, that one might indeed say that they were "living in clover".

I must not forget to relate one thing. While in Aberdeen I stayed with Mr Murray my son-in-law's father, a dear old gentleman, and the first Postmaster of the General Post once there. He is now retired. He was exceedingly kind, and took me to many places, and showed me many items of interest. He was as active as I am myself and was about a year younger than me.

I learned that he had been married three times, and his third wife was just like a mother to me, with her kindly and courteous attention.

I expressed a wish at one time to go to a dance at a large Hall in the town, and see for myself whether the new-fangled dances were as easy to learn as people declared that they were. Mrs Murray took me with every expression of delight and we sat on a balcony, from where we had a good view of the dancers, a proceeding which I thoroughly enjoyed.

I well remember my 76th birthday, which I spent in London. It happened to fall on a Sunday, and a friend of mine asked me to dine with her, and then took me to the Albert Hall during the afternoon, where I sat entranced, listening to the grand strains issuing from the band of the Royal Horse-Guards. Later, we took a walk up West, and went that evening to the City Temple, where I listened to one of the most beautiful choral services that I have ever heard.

I left Scotland feeling rather dissatisfied because I did not have more time to go all out for I did not see one hundredth part of all there was to

be seen. I felt that I could emulate that great and noble Pioneer, Cecil John Rhodes, when he exclaimed: "So much to do, so little done". Ah! That truly great man grieved because his allotted span came to its finish before his work was completed. We all have within us some talent or other, given to us by our Creator to make use of in a right and proper manner, and it behoves one to watch oneself and see that the gifts given to us are made use of in a right and proper manner.

Well, here am I at my journey's end and back in South Africa, and, while I have been recalling the time I spent overseas, have felt just sick with longing to go again and repeat my experiences.

I returned on a steamer all one class, and I must say that I prefer it to the Union Castle Line. Table Mountain wore its brightest aspect when we landed and the sun shone out in golden splendour. I had made many friends on the boat, and spent a happy hour with them before we parted. No! ... I did not see enough while I was overseas. So much I had to miss because there was not sufficient time. But I am going again. Even at eighty years of age - if God spares me, and the opportunity comes my way, I mean to cross the seas and see all that I missed seeing during the two years that I spent in England.

"Oh to be in England, now that April's there".

FINIS.

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**\*\*1862:** American astronomer Lewis Swift discovered the presence of a large comet that was soon to bear his name. Three days later, another American astronomer, Horace Tuttle, makes the same sighting. So this heavenly body comes down to us as the Comet Swift-Tuttle.

Based on their observations, and those of other astronomers who began tracking the comet's highly elongated orbit, it was calculated that Swift-Tuttle would make its next appearance during the 1980s. They were close. Japanese astronomer Tsuruhiko Kiuchi rediscovered the comet in 1992. Aside from its unusual orbit, Swift-Tuttle is also significant as the host body of the Perseids meteor shower, one of the most prominent in the northern sky. Oh, and there's one more thing. Comets come and go, literally, but Swift-Tuttle's orbit is of particular interest to us earthlings since astronomers calculate that it is very likely to strike either the Earth or the moon on its next pass. They've even zeroed in on a date: Aug. 14, 2126. We'll just have to wait and see.