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From childhood I have been greatly interested in my family connexions, and as a very young child I must have been quite a trial. On one occasion through slicer vexation or boredom my busy father put off my persistent questioning by a remark he never thought I would remember. Little did he foresee the acute embarrassment his loquacious small daughter would cause him when some time later in his presence at a Scottish family party the discussion turned on my relationship to those present and in a flash I piped out in a clear high voice 'Oh, no, you can't be related to me—my father told me that second and third cousins don't count'.

All the information I could collect about the Duncan and Alexander families I stored up for the day when our children and grandchildren would ask questions and show an interest in their forbears. Years later I investigated the Rissik and Leibbrandt families. The latter was so complicated that I wrote it out to enable Grandpa's mother to assist me. This inspired me to compile a Leibbrandt family tree, which was followed in due course by Duncan, Alexander, Rissik and Altmann trees. It was a great and lengthy labour requiring much patience and perseverance, and almost endless correspondence. Letter after letter often remained unanswered, probably through lack of interest, and I had to send numerous further questionnaires before I got results. My constant inquiries brought me into touch with numerous members of the various families, many of whom, such as Grandpa's cousins, the late Wellesley Lawton in Cape Town, Gerard Rissink in Holland, and others I name in my *Letters*, helped me with valuable information.

When we planned an overseas holiday in 1957 we decided to visit Germany and see the homes of Grandpa's ancestors there. Grandpa wrote in advance to the State Archivist in Stuttgart, who kindly recommended him to a charming old gentleman, Herr Leopold von Kalitsch in Ludwigsburg, a member of the Wurttemberg Society for the Study of Genealogy and Heraldry, who set about his task armed with the names and dates of the earliest known Leibbrandts in South Africa. By dint of delving into old records and visiting the very homes the family had lived in he was able to trace the South African Leibbrandts back to 1540 in Wurttemberg and fired our enthusiasm by taking us to see for ourselves the actual farmhouses occupied by the earliest Leibbrandts.

A few weeks later we visited Elbrinxen in Lippe, Germany, to see the old Rissikhaus. As Herr von Kalitsch had been so successful in our Leibbrandt quest we asked him to trace the Rissik family back beyond our records. This his genealogical skill and experience also achieved as you will see in my *Letter 44 Elbrinxen* and in the Rissik family tree. I am very grateful to Monica Marshall for translating his lengthy German report.

After learning of the earliest Leibbrandt and Rissik ancestors I discovered further information of the Alexanders and De Vaals as you will see from my *Letters 1 The Alexanders*, and *57 The Des Pres (Dupre, Du Preez) and De Vaals*

Having collected this mass of family information I was confronted with the task of setting it out clearly and lucidly. Instead of following the conventional method I arranged the five family trees by placing the successive

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generations in concentric .semicircles with the original ancestor in the centre at the top and his descendants radiating to each semicircle. In this way I was able to cope with our multitudinous forbears and relations.

Bernys very nobly undertook the exacting and laborious task of drawing all the family trees and the many complete revisions of each caused by fresh discoveries. My deep gratitude goes out to her for the endless hours she spent in spacing and printing out with such meticulous accuracy the hundreds of names and dates. Her beautiful work has given the greatest pleasure to the entire family and to many others and has made each of the five trees a veritable masterpiece of perfection as you will see in examining them in the *Supplement containing five Family Trees* which accompanies these *Letters*.

This absorbing task completed, I was unsettled by the recurring thought of writing a series of letters to you grandchildren telling you all I know about these interesting relations. In the end the idea compelled me to get busy and write these *Letters*. The various ancestors seemed to come to life as I thought about them and I hope I have portrayed them in a way that makes each of you grandchildren feel that they really lived.

I acknowledge with thanks the kind permission given by Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd. to quote from *The Cape of Adventure* by Ian Colvin (London, 1912), by Victor Gollancz, Ltd. to quote from *St. Helena* by Octave Aubry (authorized translation by Arthur Livingstone, 1937), by Mrs. Katherine Metelerkamp to quote from *George Rex of Knysna* by Sanni Metelerkamp, and by A. A. Balkema to quote from *Early Nineteenth Century Architecture in South Africa* by Ronald Lewcock (Cape Town, 1963).

A big thank-you goes to Margaret for her ability and patience in deciphering and typing my rough notes and making time to do so in the midst of her busy household duties. I record my keen appreciation of Mrs. A.F. G. Williams's excellent final retype of these Letters for the printers, The Rustica Press (Ply.) Ltd. and my gratitude to Mr. Hubert Ellfers, the Director of that company, for his non-stop interest, advice and help. I thank Mr. Frank Bands for his admirable reproductions of hundreds of family pictures, many very old, from albums, miniatures, lockets, snapshots, groups, prints &c., and of numerous early family trees. I also thank Grandpa for his invaluable assistance in revising my *Letters*, compiling the index and having copies of family trees printed and distributed to many relatives. In my *Letters* I have also acknowledged much help received and hope I may be forgiven for any omissions.

Finally Grandpa has asked me to say that by the cross-references in the index between Christian names, nicknames, surnames, maiden names and married names he hopes it may be easy to establish the identity of everyone I mention in the *Letters*.

AGNES Rissik

Linschoten  
30 Fifth Street,  
Lower Houghton,  
Johannesburg.

Frederick Augustus Alexander was my great-great-grandfather. According to family tradition he came from Scotland to the island of St. Helena, where he found the climate and life so pleasant that he decided to make his home there as did many of his relations. We had practically no information about him so, on the recommendation of Mr. I. Mitford-Barborton, Grandpa wrote to Mr. Anthony J. Camp, B.A, Director of Research at the Society of Genealogists, London, who consulted the registers of St. Helena in the India Office Library, now at the Commonwealth Relations Office Library, London. This proved most instructive and disclosed the following information about Frederick Augustus Alexander and a copy of his will dated 11 March 1820. He was a planter who owned a number of estates. He married Eliza Greentree of St. Helena on 24 August 1803. They had five Sons, the eldest being William Watkin Alexander, born 27 January 1805, to be followed by Frederick Augustus, born 1806, John Blazett, baptized 4 August 1811, George Henry, born 24 July 1814 and Thomas Greentree, born 4 July 1816

Sad to relate my great-great-grandfather was buried on 16 March 1820, five days after he signed his will, leaving Eliza to bring up his Sons, the youngest not yet four. This is a copy of his will:

1820

At a Consultation held on Monday the 20th March 1820 at the Castle.

Present

Sir H. Lowe, K.C.B. Governor

Thomas H. Brooke Esquire

Thomas Greentree Esquire.

This day the Will of Mr. Frederick Alexander was presented to be proved and done upon the Oaths of the Witnesses thereto.

IN THE NAME OF GOD AMEN.

I, Frederick Alexander of the Island of St. Helena being of sound mind memory and understanding Blessed be to God Do hereby make, ordain and publish this my last Will and Testament—Firstly and principally I commend my Soul into the hands of Almighty God my Creator, and my Body to the Earth to be decently interred—With regard to my Worldly Property I dispose thereof in manner and form following.

I will and direct that all my just Debts be fully satisfied as soon after my decease as possible.

It is my Will and meaning that my Estates be kept together for the benefit of my family until the periods hereafter mentioned.

I give and bequeath to my beloved Wife Liza one third part of my personal property exclusive of Lease hold Lands and the Legacies hereafter bequeathed.

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I give unto my Son William Watkin Alexander the whole of my Estate called Powel's Valley in Leases Nos. 117, 118 and 119 containing altogether One Hundred and Eighteen Acres and three quarters more or less—also my Lands called Lemon Tree pasture containing Eleven acres Free and Three of Lease more or less, subject to the Conditions hereafter specified.

I give unto my Son Frederick Augustus Alexander the whole of my Estate called Taglate in Leases No. 112 including Nos. 113 and 114 also No. 115 and 116 containing Sixty Acres and an half more or less—also my Lands called Long Ground containing Twenty One and an half Acres Free and Eight Acres of Lease more or less, subject to the Conditions hereafter mentioned.

I give to my Son John Blazett Alexander my Estate called Coles containing Forty two Acres and an half of Lease more or less also my Lands called Purgatory containing Twelve Acres Free, subject to the conditions undermentioned.

It is my Will and meaning that the Estates bequeathed to my two eldest Sons shall be valued to them on taking possession, but this valuation not to take place or their being put in possession until they arrive at the age of Twenty One years. With respect to the Estate bequeathed my Son John called Coles, it is to be under the same conditions in regard to valuation as my other Sons, but my Widow is to have her residence there during the period she may remain as my Widow. My Son John is not to take possession until he attains the age of Twenty One years.

To my Wife Eliza I give my Slave Molly and her three children, Tom, John Junr. and Hygate also my Black Mare Jessy.

To my Children the undermentioned Slaves as Legacies, to be given my three Sons when they take possession of their Estates and to my two youngest Sons when they attain the age of Twenty One years.

To William W. Alexander my Man Alley and a Boy named John Senr.

„ Frederick A. Alexander my Man Richard and a Boy named Henry

„ John B. Alexander my a Boys named George and James

„ George H. Alexander my Boy named William

„ Thomas G. Alexander my Boy named Charles.

It is my further Will and meaning that my Sons shall share and share alike of my Property (except the Legacies of Slaves already bequeathed) and further that on being put in possession of their Estates a certain portion of the Stock may be offered them at the discretion of my Executors and Executrix.

It is likewise my Will and meaning that in the event of the death of either or any of my Sons before they attain the age of Twenty One years their share or shares to revert for the benefit of the surviving Child or Children at the death of my Widow and my youngest Son attain the age of Twenty One years, my remaining property may be equally divided between my Surviving Sons.

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I do hereby nominate, constitute and appoint my beloved Wife Eliza Executrix and my good Friends Mr. Richard Barker, Captain Francis Scale, Mr. G. W. Alexander, Mr. Alfred Isaacke and my eldest Sons W. W. Alexander and Fred<sup>k</sup>. A. Alexander when they attain the age of Twenty One years respectively to be my Executors. Declaring and Confirming this my last Will and Testament. In Witness whereof I have hereunto set my Hand and Seal this Eleventh day of March in the year of our Lord 1820.

Signed, Sealed &	
delivered in the	Fred <sup>k</sup> . Alexander
presence of us as	
Witnesses—	
Sig. C. Scott	Mr. D. Burke
H. Alexander	
B. A. Wright	Tho <sup>s</sup> Greentree
Ex <sup>d</sup> & Cop <sup>d</sup> J. B. Knipe	

How we wish we knew more about those early days, for my great-great- grandfather and his family lived through the most romantic period of history on the island of St. Helena during the captivity of Napoleon It is probably the most famous island in the world and was of such importance to shipping that I think I ought to tell you some details of interest. For these I am indebted to Philip Gosse, the author of *St. Helena 1502-1938* (Cassell & Co. Ltd., 1938).

A Portuguese, Joao da Nova Castella, discovered the island on 21 May 1502, the anniversary of Saint Helena, after whom he named it. There were no inhabitants. In 1515 a ship stopped at the island for fresh water and a Portuguese officer and gentleman named Dom Fernando Lopez, who had been terribly mutilated for desertion, escaped ashore and hid in the woods until the ship sailed. He spent close on thirty years there, during which time fruit-trees, vegetable-seeds, game and other foods were periodically left there, so that he could cultivate them for use of ships calling to water and help restore the scurvy-stricken seamen back to health. On 12 May 1589 Jan Huyghen van Linschoten, the famous Dutch traveller and explorer, stopped there. On 4 June 1659 the English East India Company took over the island and appointed Captain Tern Dutton the first Governor.

It is one of the most isolated islands in the vast Atlantic Ocean - 1750 miles from Cape Town and 700 miles from Ascension Island. Only 10 miles long by 6 miles broad, with great rocky heads and precipices rising straight from the sea due to volcanic eruptions, it presents a terrifying if beautiful appearance with purple brown, bluish grey colourings, and peaks rising to great heights. Prior to the opening of the Suez Canal many vessels on their way to the Far East or to the Indies called at the island for water and supplies. After the occupation of the island by the English East India Company the population gradually grew, with soldiers, white people, black slaves, Chinese, Hindus and Malays. In 1815 there were 3,395 persons living there and in 1820, the fifth year of Napoleon's captivity, the population had reached 7,998.

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Jamestown is the only port and town on the island and is situated in a long ascending valley, with sheer rocky precipices rising on either side. Near the seashore the valley opens out to where the Castle, built under Governor Dutton's supervision, guards the entrance to the town. At one time as many as fifty vessels were known to anchor in the little harbor or roadstead. Those were the prosperous years for the inhabitants and many well-to-do families lived there. My mother spoke of Sir William Alexander, a first cousin of her great-grandfather, who was there during Napoleon's time and said to have had a county seat in Scotland and to have lived frequently at Madeira. There were other relatives, Colonel W. W. Knappe and H. R. Janisch, Mrs. Maggie Cole and Mrs. Scale, but apart from their names I cannot give you any other particulars. After 1870 the number of vessels calling at St. Helena was greatly reduced and the days of prosperity were over. The interior of the island has good farming areas, beautiful vegetation and some magnificent views. The climate is moderate.

Grandpa has an old book called *Tracts Relative to the Island of St. Helena*, which was written by Major-General Alexander Beatson during his residence of five years as Governor of the island, printed on hand-made paper and published in London in 1816 by G. and W. Nicol. It contains six fine engravings by Mr. William Daniell done from drawings of Samuel Davis Esq.

It deals mostly with botanical and agricultural surveys of the island, but there is an episode which will interest you. The Governor discovered that food and liquor were being flagrantly wasted, especially in garrison quarters, and when he curtailed their supplies, two hundred soldiers mutinied. There are several accounts of how the mutineers planned to kidnap the Governor and tried in vain to reach Plantation House on 25 December 1811. William Watkin Alexander was a little boy, nearly 6 years old, so you can picture his excitement as he listened to the various stories and how impressed he was to hear later than seven of the ring-leaders were hanged on the barrack square.

When William was a lad he often heard his father talk about the great French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte, how he rose to power, raised huge armies and conquered country after country. He was feared and obeyed by all. Then his star, which had risen to such brilliance, began to wane and he met his final great defeat at the Battle of Waterloo on 18 June 1815. Napoleon surrendered to the British, who thought the safest place to keep their illustrious prisoner, and from where he could not escape, would be the lonely island of St. Helena. After nine and a half weeks at sea on board the British ship *Northumberland* Napoleon arrived at St. Helena on 15 October 1815. How curious William must have been to catch a glimpse of this great man. However, during the next six years he often saw Napoleon out walking, riding or working in his garden, for we were told William's home was quite near to Longwood where Napoleon lived in captivity surrounded by a few of his loyal friends. William loved to tell my mother about his boyhood days, and one of the things he told her was that when ever he saluted Napoleon his salute was always returned. How my mother regretted that she did not at the time write down all her grandfather's interesting stories.

Napoleon died on 5 May 1821. William was already 16 and must have joined the crowds of people who filed past the camp-bed on which Napoleon lay in state in his simple room in Longwood. He was dressed in the

uniform of a colonel of the Chasseurs of the Imperial Guard, gold epaulettes, boots, spurs, a sword, a tricorne hat and medals. An immense crowd of people continued to file past for three days. They moved in deepest silence. Several brought white arums, moon-flowers and hibiscuses which they laid on the floor in front of the bed. The procession filing through Napoleon's room did not halt until late at night. They were deeply moved that 'the great captive had at last escaped from his prison'. He was buried on 9 May in the Vale of the Geraniums, a spot he dearly loved, in the Sane Valley. The entire garrison of the island, about 3,000 strong, with arms reversed and their bands at intervals playing solemn music, lined the route. A gun boomed every two minutes and a battery of fifteen guns replied. William, no doubt, would have attended the funeral. From the Governor down to the simplest peasant the entire population of the island watched the solemn and imposing funeral.

## 2

### *Exhumation of Napoleon's Body*

Numerous books have been written about St. Helena and Napoleon's exile there. We have one called *St. Helena* written by a Frenchman Octave Aubry, translated into English by Arthur Livingston and published in London in 1937 by Victor Gollancz Ltd. I found it fascinating, especially the end describing the French Government's request to the British, which was granted in 1840, to remove Napoleon's body from St. Helena.

Medals were specially struck for this historic occasion, showing the head of King Louis-Philippe I of France on the one side and details of Napoleon's exhumation on the obverse side. All the Alexanders know the family tradition that a Frederick Augustus Alexander, a brother of William Watkin, assisted in some capacity at the exhumation, for he was presented with a silver medal which we saw when we visited his grandson, Frazer Alexander. Frazer's son Raymond, who was head of the Onderstepoort Research Institute near Pretoria, very kindly gave me permission to have the medal photographed. A copy of this photograph showing its exact size is in our museum cupboard.

Louis-Philippe I, King of France, sent His Royal Highness the Prince de Joinville, his third son, to the island of St. Helena to recover the mortal remains of Emperor Napoleon. The Prince and his entourage arrived in the harbour on 8 October 1840. They landed next day and were received by the Governor at Plantation House, where the final arrangements for the exhumation were concluded. What excitement this visit caused on the quiet peaceful island. The inhabitants and the old-established families, like the Alexanders, whose existence must have been rather uneventful, would have found this most thrilling.

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In Aubry's account he mentions a certain Captain Alexander in charge of the exhumation. Many of the Alexander family have thought that he was the father of William Watkin Alexander. This is not so, for William Watkin's father was buried on 6 March 1820, the year before Napoleon died. After extensive research through various channels we discovered that this Captain Alexander's initials were CC. and that he was chief of the Royal Engineers at St. Helena who had come from India and was later killed in the Crimean War. Captain C. C. Alexander was appointed British Commissioner and had the full responsibility of all details connected with the exhumation. Prince de Joinville presented him with a gold snuff-box with a portrait of Louis-Philippe engraved on it.

On the cold wet evening of 14 October 1840 British soldiers began to prise the heavy slabs loose from the cement over Napoleon's tomb and worked throughout the night. It was daylight when the mahogany coffin came into view and was raised from the deep grave and carried into a tent. There the four coffins were opened before the Governor, the French representatives, the four military men who shared Napoleon's exile on the island and various officials and people who twenty years before had attended his funeral. When the last coffin was opened Aubry says, 'The top lid of tin was lifted and a vague form came into view..... Napoleon seemed to be sleeping. The French had been afraid that they would find nothing but a skeleton or shapeless dust. The Emperor was returning to the light of the world as though he had been placed in his tomb the day before. . . . The clothes had withstood time and damp. The red bordering and facings seemed to be as good as new, and so did the cordon of the Legion of Honour on the vest. The gold epaulettes and the crosses had blackened.' The various coffins were closed and lowered into the ebony casket that had come from France. "When the French coffin had been closed, Captain Alexander handed the key to the King's commissioner. The rain fell relentlessly. It took forty-three men to carry that crushing weight—a ton and a half—to the hearse. There it was covered with the magnificent pall that had been brought from France—a violet velvet sprinkled with gold bees and edged with ermine. The corners embroidered with crowned N's were held by Bertrand, Gourgard, Las Cases and Marchand.

'The steep road up the valley wall was a mass of oozing mud. The horses slipped and stumbled. They were helped by twenty gunners who pushed from behind and pulled at the spokes of the wheels. But at last the procession reached the Alarm Hill road and moved slowly on towards James town, between two files of soldiers and militia and followed by the entire population of St. Helena clad in mourning. . . . In the straggling village the shops were closed and the street deserted. The inhabitants were all at their windows or under the verandahs, saluting. The guns of the fort on High Knoll, in the port batteries, and on the French and English vessels, boomed incessantly. The rain had ceased meanwhile. It was half past five when the long procession arrived at the wharf. The Prince de Joinville surrounded by his staff was waiting there. He took the aspersorium from Father Coquercau's hands and sprinkled the sarcophagus with holy water. The French vessels (the frigate *Belle Poule* and the corvette *La Favorite*) had been painted black. Their rigging was draped in mourning. All their flags were flying. With a few courteous words General Middlemore transferred the body of Napoleon to the son of Louis-Philippe.

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'A French longboat with a mast came alongside the stone stairway. The Emperor's coffin was lowered into it. The gunwales sank low under the weight. A broad tricolor flag was flying at the mast of the barge. It was the gift of the young girls of Jamestown, who had cut and sewn it. At six o'clock, with night falling fast, the French sailors, at a command from Joinville, dipped their oars. Napoleon left St. Helena at the very hour when he had arrived there twenty-five years before on the *Northumberland*. A shaft of sunlight, the only one that had shone on that diluvian day, spread out horizontally across the sea. The cannon were rumbling incessantly like a terrific thunder storm. On the *Belle Poule* the crew were on the yards. The staffs of the three French ships were drawn up in parade formation, with bared swords. The coffin was hoisted on deck. The drums beat a general roulade. The bands played a funeral march. I was now black night'

On the morning of 15 October 1840 the *Belle Poule* set sail for France. The body of Napoleon started its return journey from the little island of St. Helena in the South Atlantic to find a resting place in the crypt of l'Hotel des Invalides in Paris.

My parents, Dorothy and I went to France and Switzerland in January 1910 for winter sports and spent a few days in Paris *en route*. During our sightseeing we visited l'Hotel des Invalides with its immense dome, which is one of the many landmarks of that city. It was here that in 1861 Napoleon's coffin was laid to rest under the giant dome in a crypt specially sunk to receive it. The circular crypt measures 36 feet in diameter and is 20 feet deep. The walls are of polished granite. A wreath of laurels is inlaid in mosaics on the floor and from its centre rises the porphyry sarcophagus containing Napoleon's remains. The whole interior is bathed in a golden light. Spectators walk round the gallery and I remember how in 1913 my mother and I stood gazing down upon the tomb while we talked about the Alexander family who had actually seen and greeted that illustrious man during the years of his captivity on the island. Permission can be obtained to walk below and round the tomb itself, whose large bronze doors with the keyhole fashioned in the shape of an 'N' are opened by a key of the same design.

During this 1913 visit to Paris I went the long drive to the palace of Fontainebleau with its famous horseshoe stairs from which Napoleon made his farewell speech to France after his abdication. At the palace I bought 'Le Petit Chapeau de Napoleon I' a perfect little model of the black felt hat he always wore. A tricolor rosette is attached to the top of the wide turned back brim. I have treasured it all these years and if you so desire you can see it in our museum beside a small white bust of Napoleon wearing a similarly shaped hat. And talking of our museum you may be interested to see a penholder skilfully carved by a Boer prisoner in temporary exile on St. Helena during the Boer War. Carved upon the open Spiral can be read 'P.O.W. St. Helena 1901'. We also have three pieces of china decorated with the island's crest and the dates 1659-1995 to commemorate the tercentenary of the British occupation of the island.

On 21 July 1949 I again visited Napoleon's tomb, this time with Grandpa, Monica, Bernys and Margaret. We noticed that there was a special exhibition of Napoleon's personal belongings and furniture etc. being held in the galleries of l'Hotel des Invalides almost next door. How fortunate we were to have this unique opportunity of seeing such treasures. We were impressed by the magnificent display of Napoleon's pictures, furniture,

Sèvres china, his swords, medals, elaborately embroidered coats, hats, souvenirs, etc. But our interest was focused mostly on the portion allotted to his belongings and furniture he used while in captivity on St. Helena. Among them we noted the grey overcoat used in some of his campaigns and which he constantly wore on the island, his straw hat with a black silk ribbon used for gardening at Longwood, a white pique jacket and trousers, and the walking-stick which he took on his walks. As we stood gazing at them we realized that William and his father and family must often have seen these in use during the six years 1815-21 of Napoleon's captivity on St. Helena. Also there was the very bed on which Napoleon died in Longwood, with its original green and white curtaining and a sheet. This William and his family would undoubtedly have observed when they filed past to pay their last respects to the island's distinguished captive. Needless to say we were fascinated.

### 3

### A Wish Fulfilled

In 1963 Grandpa suggested another visit to England, and as he began to make plans I suddenly realized that if we went by ship we might be able to visit the island of St. Helena. He became equally enthusiastic, with the result that one of my great desires was gratified and here I am on board the Union-Castle mailship Pretoria Castle waiting to tell you about the few precious hours we spent ashore.

On Tuesday 2 July we went on deck about 6.30 a.m. to see the mountainous northern coast. In the grey light it looked most forbidding. As the sun rose we saw the ravines and caves and the deep blue water beating against the precipitous walls of rock. White specks on the far mountains became buildings, and gradually we made out the spire of St. James Church peeping over the unfolding hillside then quite suddenly Jamestown came into view and I was gazing up that narrow valley which the Alexander family knew so well.

Our ship anchored some distance from shore and in no time the small boats began to race across the blue water towards us. Grandpa and I did not delay for breakfast but clambered down the ship's long ladder into a motor boat which drew up at the same stone landing-steps used by William Watkin Alexander and in fact by everyone arriving at St. Helena.

When we crossed the Castle moat we stepped into an old world atmosphere where quaint buildings with intriguing cellars and houses jammed close together gave a most picturesque effect. Some of the houses were so narrow that they looked as if they had been squeezed into position between their imposing neighbours. Some had large sash windows, others were long and elegant while others not so large framed many inquisitive faces gazing down at us. I noticed old metal balcony railings and supports and many uneven worn stone steps leading to front doors. The colouring of the buildings and the variety of architecture were most pleasing. The

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old post office stones are built into the moat wall and on our left over the Castle entrance I saw the coat of arms of the English East India Company.

At 9 o'clock we called upon old Mr. Robert Frazer Broadway, who lives in a large double-storey house close to the Castle. I was impressed by the broad teak-panelled front door with its quaintly designed brass handle and door-knocker and I wondered how often my ancestors had rapped upon that door using the knocker I held in my hand.

The house, in excellent repair, was built over 175 years ago. The doors and floors are all made of teak. I commented upon and was shown some most attractive antiques and fancied that I might have been sitting on a chair used by members of my Alexander family. William's brother, Frederick Augustus, married a daughter of Captain Harry Broadway of the East India Service. This brother and his family came to live in South Africa in 1853.

After our interesting conversation with Mr. Broadway we set off by car to see as much of the historical island as possible. We marvelled at the well-engineered road which wound higher and higher, clinging to the steep mountain-side. Quite recently the main roads were tarred. How thankful the islanders must have been. Entrancing views came and went as we swept from one hill to another. We saw Jamestown framed by the receding hills as we climbed and far below our good ship the *Pretoria Castle* with its red and black topped funnel lay at anchor in the deep blue water, looking for all the world like a child's toy boat.

The hills are covered with semi-tropical plants and shrubs and we drove through many avenues of kaffirboom trees. We gazed across the valley at the picturesque heart-shaped waterfall spilling over on its long delicate descent. We passed the Briars and saw the pavilion where Napoleon spent the first two months after his arrival while additions were being made at Longwood prior to his occupation. The Briars is now owned by France and the 1804 pavilion with its Adam decorations has been restored.

The country was delightfully green. The further we drove the more picturesque it became with its many hills and valleys, its high peaks and glimpses of blue sea. The car drew up at we were told that the tomb where Napoleon's body lay for nearly twenty years was down at the end of that green peaceful valley. Continuous rain had soaked the island and it fell again to add more rivulets and mud to the road as we slipped and splashed our way down. I was told that no road existed at the time of Napoleon's death. When his will was read, in which he expressed the wish to be buried in Geranium Valley, the Governor ordered the present road to be made. It took a regiment of soldiers four days to complete it. In a way I was quite pleased that we had to walk in the rain for I recalled so vividly all I had read about the exhumation taking place under similar conditions. I could picture the slowly moving bier as it was pulled yard by yard up the vale and down the winding muddy road to Jamestown over the moat and along the narrow embankment. I marvel how the soldiers manipulated that terrific weight without accident down those high stone steps at the water's edge and placed it safely in the French longboat.

Eighteen years after Napoleon's body was taken from the island Louis- Philippe of France asked the British Government to allow France to buy the land and buildings of Longwood and the tomb. Queen Victoria agreed

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to the request and the French flag now flies over the property, which is kept in perfect order. During the last ten years the French Government has spent £120 000 on its Sr. Helena possessions. The grounds and gardens around Longwood are gay with beautiful roses, flowering shrubs, formal hedges and lawns.

What a thrill it was to enter Longwood, to wander from room to room and to recall some of the events which took place in that historical house: the frustration, bitterness, suspicion and boredom which caused Napoleon and his entourage such irritations, the petty jealousies and quarrels between themselves in that confined area and the tragic decline in Napoleon's health terminating in his death.

The rooms are not very large and some are rather dark. White ants had ruined the woodwork in the house and even destroyed the beams built into the walls. The rooms were broken down piece by piece and carefully replaced after fumigation. The floors throughout the house were removed and replaced by teak, which is harder than the local timber previously used. These renovations cost the French Government £40 000.

The house is now a museum containing many fascinating pieces and, where the originals are unprocurable, replicas have sometimes been made. There were twenty-seven sofas in the house when Napoleon lived there and only seven of the original ones have been found. Wherever an article formerly belonging to Longwood is located the owner immediately asks an exorbitant price. In the billiard-room I saw one of Napoleon's house shoes which was bought for £500. When Napoleon died in May 1821 the Governor of St. Helena, Sir Hudson Lowe, for an appraised value of £352 15s 0d obtained from Longwood eleven cases of furniture and other articles for his own use. Other things not taken to France were sold. According to family tradition our Alexander ancestors brought a Longwood sofa to South Africa.

A great number of pictures and museum pieces have been given back to Longwood by generous donors, especially royal families. We found we had time only to glance here and there, for time went all too fast and one should spend hours, nay weeks, in such an interesting house. We saw among various things the quaint copper bath used by Napoleon, as well as the camp-beds, on one of which he died, and on the other of which he lay in state, the billiard-table, the two globes he often handled and a large mirror.

After leaving Longwood, before we had to speed on, there was time only to stop for Grandpa to take a photograph of Plantation House surrounded by its hundred acres of parkland. This is the Governor's House, built in 1792. In imagination I could see my ancestors walking over the lovely lawns and entering the front door. How frustrating our race against time—every now and again we saw the *Pretoria Castle* waiting for us to return before one o'clock, failing which we would have an enforced stay of months, as so few ships visit the island.

Our return route to the landing stage took us to the opposite side of the Jamestown valley through a rather barren area coveted by hateful prickly pear, such a sad contrast to the lush interior. We snatched a few minutes to stand at the top of Jacob's Ladder to look down the six hundred and ninety-nine steps, each eleven inches high and making a total length of nine hundred and thirty-three feet. Earlier that morning I saw boys sliding down, neck on one side rail and heels on the other. I heard that these boys become so skilled that they can race up and slide down in eight minutes. The ladder was built by army engineers in 1830 to enable

ammunition and stores to be raised from Jamestown to the large fort above. William therefore saw the ladder completed before he left for South Africa the following year.

The women of the island make exquisite lace, and Grandpa gave me two beautifully made table sets which will be a constant reminder of our brief visit.

During the entire morning I kept telling myself that my ancestors had actually seen the lovely scenery and places I was gazing at and I feel deeply satisfied that I was privileged to visit the fascinating island of St. Helena.

## 4

### William at the Cape of Good Hope

In 1331 William Watkin Alexander was a fine strapping young man of 26 engaged to be married to a colonel's daughter. Preparations for their wedding were well under way and at last the happy day dawned. William, his family and friends were wending their way to the church when the bride, arrayed in her wedding dress, suddenly had a heart attack and died. William was deeply stricken by this tragedy and decided to leave St. Helena for Australia. He sailed on 22 November 1831 and was entrusted with specie from the Governor of the Island to the Governor of the Cape, Sir Lowry Cole, his cousin and host in Cape Town.

He was met on board by government officials, and old Sir Josiah Cloete took him in his carriage to Government House and later drove him around the country-side. He was probably taken over the newly constructed mountain road called Sit Lowry's Pass after the Governor. William was so impressed by all he saw that he decided to remain at the Cape and bought a farm in the Swellendam district.

A copy of an original diagram states that W. W. Alexander, by Deed of Grant dated 1 November 1832, acquired two pieces of land containing together 3,370 morgen situate in the district of Swellendam, field cornetcy of Vette Rivier including the loan-place Karnemelk Rivier. The annual quitrent was £3 0s 0d. His lands were in the area known as Grootvadersbosch. No wonder William was impressed by that part of the country, for one reads that there was lush pasturage, unlimited water and timber. His farm lay along the foothills in the undulating countryside below the majestic peaks of the Langeberg Mountains, a truly lovely part about twenty to thirty miles from Swellendam.

When Grandpa and I drove along the gravel road and passed through the Grootvadersbosch in April 1966 I could easily picture William Watkin riding or driving along the same road to visit the neighbours or on his way to or from the town. The farm Karnemelk Rivier was owned ninety-two years before by Philippe du Preez with the adjoining farm Melkhoutkraal. When William settled in the area Melkhoutkraal was being farmed by Philippe's great-grandson Jan Gysbert du Preez, who also farmed at Krombek Rivier. Here William met and fell

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in love with Susanna Jacoba, daughter of Jan Gysbert du Preez. She was a fascinating 17 when they married on 25 March 1833, William being 28.

In 1947 Grandpa, Bernys and I spent a night in Swellendam. As we walked or drove around the scattered town we thought and spoke of William and Susanna. We stood at the door of a picturesque old church in which they might have worshipped, and who knows William and Susanna might have been married in that very old charming building. We could easily picture them on various occasions walking up those neatly patterned dompie brick steps to bow and exchange greetings with their friends before and after the service. The old Dutch Reformed Church was built in 1802. All that now remains is the plain wooden gate and the lovely little arched gateway. Dr. Lewis Robertson told me that his great-grand father, the Rev. W. Robertson, was pastor in this church from 1833. Perhaps he conducted the wedding service for William and Susanna.

I was able to visit Swellendam again when Grandpa and I stayed there on 14 April 1966. We did enjoy being back and seeing the many interesting places, especially the beautiful old- Drostdy which William and Susanna must have seen every time they went to town but which was then a much smaller building.

Susanna could trace her ancestry back to Hercules des Pres who came from Courtrai, Flanders, with other French Huguenot refugees. Let me tell you why these people were called refugees. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 destroyed freedom of worship. All Protestant churches throughout France were demolished and thousands of fugitives sought asylum in various parts of Europe where they were free from religious persecution and could openly confess their faith. The Dutch East India Company seized the opportunity to send out some of the refugees willing to settle at the Cape. They had free passages in the Company's ships and were expected to earn their living at the Cape by agriculture, trade or any other industries. As farmers they were to be given as much land in ownership as they could till with such implements and cattle as they might require, but the price of these was to be refunded to the Company in corn or otherwise and they had to remain for five years.

In all 164 French refugees came out, including men, women and children. The marriage certificate of Hercules des Pres and his wife Cecilia Datijns is dated 1667. They and their five children sailed in the *Schelde*. To go 6,000 miles from their homes to meet hidden dangers by land and sea would even in these days make a stout heart fearful. The ships then were small, living and sleeping space was limited and the lack of fresh food and vegetables and a meagre supply of water caused scurvy. The *Schelde* was 140 feet long and had twenty three French Huguenots, men, women and children, on board. After seven or eight days out at sea a terrible storm raged and the skipper was compelled to put into St. Jago, a town on the Cape Verde Islands now spelt Sas Tiago. Another storm drove her to safety at Porto Prayo, now Praia on the same island. When the captain was told that the day before a pirate ship had captured three vessels, the *Schelde* sailed almost immediately.

Four of the French refugees died during the voyage, which probably took four to six months. Five days out from the Cape the *Schelde* ran into another storm, but arrived safely in Cape Town on 5 June 1688. Table Mountain can be seen from a great distance away. You can picture the intense enthusiasm among the passengers, who had been longing to see land after those weary weeks on board. As they sailed along the

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coast they would see the Twelve Apostles with Lion's Head and Signal Hill sweeping down to the water's edge. Robben Island would be on their left shortly before the Schelde swung round into Table Bay and then they would see Cape Town, its few houses and buildings sprawled out before them on the strip of land between the shore and the slopes of massive Table Mountain and Devil's Peak. It is always a beautiful scene. To those on board it would mean a long voyage safely over and a wonderful future opening up before them. Their arrival would cause great excitement in the little settlement. In those days few ships called at the Cape and the inhabitants would be eager to welcome the new settlers and keen to hear any overseas news. The Huguenots would be equally curious to meet the people and to hear about local conditions.

In 1687 the Governor had had the land surveyed and the farms were allotted to families in different parts near the Berg River and further afield. Six wagons were sent to the shore to take the various families and their few belongings, including farming implements and seeds, to their new homes. The wagons contained, by order of the Governor Simon van der Stel, building boards, agricultural seeds, some furniture and food to last them for a few months and two canvas tents in which the Des Pres lived until Hercules and his sons built their temporary home.

The Des Pres family found their farm of sixty morgen with a 300 yard frontage along the Berg River just below Paarl Mountain. This mountain is topped by two enormous granite boulders which resemble pearls, hence the name Paarl. Here he cleared and ploughed the land, commenced to grow their food and plant out vineyards. The farmers were allowed grazing concessions which were later added to their original farms. Hercules did not receive title deeds to his land until 1692. He built a small house. The foundations of his original homestead were recently discovered and measured. The house was thirty feet long, comprising two small rooms with a larger one between. The foundations were filled in with round river stones, and the walls were a mixture of clay and river reeds. The roof was probably thatched with river reeds which grew in the vicinity. They called their home Den Soeten Inval which means A Kindly Welcome. Many years later his second son Hercules built a substantial house on the farm, but that has long since disappeared. There is an old house called by that name not far from the main railway station in Paarl but it has no family association. The farm must have been divided and subdivided many times. The old original foundations of Hercules des Pres's house are on a property now called Firwoods. This we were shown by Eden du Preez of Paarl, who told us that a plaque and monument were to be erected next to the entrance gates on Firwoods to commemorate the arrival of Hercules des Pres's family in 1688

In this picturesque valley those early settlers had to face great difficulties and perils. Their stock was easily plundered by raiding Hottentots or killed by wild beasts. Life must have been extremely difficult until the farm started to produce enough food for the family requirements. Privations, difficulties, disasters and successful years all lay ahead of those early settlers. They worked hard and made good and their descendants are scattered all over South Africa and further north. It is recorded that on 18 or 19 April 1690 Hercules received help from the Consistory of Batavia of £35 8s. 4d. for himself, his wife and five children. Hercules died on 22 November 1696. You can see his signature on a document now preserved in the Tulbagh Museum. Cecilia, his wife, died on 15 November 1720. One day Grandpa and I climbed to the top of Paarl Mountain, from where

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we gazed at distant Table Mountain and over the tranquil valley below and spoke of those early days and the heroism and courage of our ancestors who, as you will see from my Des Pres letter no. 57, were also Grandpa's and who helped to open up and make this fair land of ours so beautiful.

A few months after the Huguenots had settled down they requested the Governor to give them a schoolmaster to teach their children. On 8 November 1688 the Company took Paul Roux into its service as parish clerk and schoolmaster to the French community at Drakenstein. He was given a salary of 25s per month and 12s 6d ration allowance. He was chosen for the post 'on account of his good conduct and proof of ability'. He filled the post for thirty-five years. Later schoolmasters were appointed, who understood both French and Dutch, to instruct the French children to read and understand the Dutch language so that they might more readily be assimilated into the Dutch nation. Thirteen years after the Du Preez family settled in Paarl the directors of the Dutch East India Company forbade the minister to preach in French in their church 'in order that in course of time the French language may die out'. But for twenty years the French held themselves aloof from their Dutch neighbours.

Hercules's eldest son Philippe, who may have been in his early thirties, was married in 1698 to Elizabeth, daughter of Charles Prevot and his wife Marie le Febre. Elizabeth was born in 1683 at Marq near Calais France, and could not have been more than 15 at the time of her marriage. She and her parents had also been passengers aboard the *Schelde*. On 28 February 1699 Philippe, an agriculturist, was granted the farm Klipvallei in the Wagenmaker's Vallei, now Wellington. Some of the streets of Wellington are on the original farm.

All males between the ages of 16 and 60 had to enroll themselves in the burgher militia and to report annually for a certain number of days of training. In 1707 Philippe was appointed ensign to the Drakenstein force (Paarl and Wellington). On 4 August 1714 Philippe was granted the farm Artois and another farm De Hoop, both in the Land Van Waveren near Wolseley in the district later named Tulbagh about eighty miles from Cape Town. In the previous year he had purchased the 'opstal' (homestead) on which there was a mill.

Philippe's sixth child Jacob was born on 27 September 1711. He married Susanna Maria Theron on 28 May 1741. He farmed at Tulbagh, where many years later a portion of the ground was sold for the building of the picturesque old Drostdy which we saw and admired when we visited there in 1947. Jacob was an elder in the congregation of the Roode Sand near Tulbagh. This is a particularly beautiful part of the Western Province. We have an old coloured engraving of the Roode Sand Pass by Henry Salt, dated 1 May 1809, hanging in our hall. When you look at it do think of your ancestors gazing upon this very scene. We also visited the Tulbagh Church built in 1743, now a museum. We were shown the old church register in which the baptism of Jacob's second child Elisabeth on 16 September 1743 was the fourth entry. No doubt Jacob's fifth child Pierce was also baptized there on 22 December 1748.

When the Governor, Willem Adriaan van der Stel, lifted the official barriers to the Colony's expansion many farmers set off to look for new lands in the Overberg Colonization, among them Philippe du Preez. In 1740 he was granted land on a third portion of Grootvadersbosch on the upper reaches of the Buffeljagt River twenty-five miles from Swellendam. Its western boundary was the Grootvadersbosch situated over the Klip River, the

present Goedenhoop Farm. Next to his farm he also worked the loan-place Karnemelk Rivier and another loan-place farm, Melkhoutkraal.

Philippe's grandson Pieter, the fifth child of Jacob, came to live in Swellendam or the district and on 21 October 1770, aged 22, he married Johanna, the daughter of Pieter de Bruyn and Margareta de Villiers. Pieter became a member of the Heemraad or Governing Council in Swellendam and assisted Hermanus Steyn to establish the Republic of Swellendam in 1795. Pieter's fifth child, Jan Gysbert, was baptized in Swellendam on 19 April 1783. He married Johanna Elisabeth Meijer on 6 October 1805 and their fourth child, Susanna Jacoba, baptized on 4 May 1815, was my great grandmother.

In August 1962 Mr. J. W. du Preez, a retired schoolmaster published his *Du Preez Gedenkboek* for which he enthusiastically collected information from various descendants of Hercules des Pres, including Grandpa and myself and in which he included our articles in English accompanied by our photographs.

## 5

## William on Military Service

William and Susanna settled down happily on their farm in the Swellendam district where a few days before their first wedding anniversary a little son was born and called after William's father. Life must have been more or less well regulated and peaceful, but alas this happy state was not to continue. On 1 January 1835 Colonel Harry Smith left Cape Town to ride to Grahamstown, a distance of 600 miles, which he accomplished in the amazing time of six days. Grahamstown was then a small frontier town about twenty-three years old and only protected by a small military force. There had been a widespread and terrible native uprising in the vicinity, which had wiped out one settlement after another. Colonel (later Sir) Harry Smith may have stopped at William's farm en route and persuaded him to join the forces to quell this insurrection of plunder, fire and murder. Later in that year William set off with the rank of captain to fight in the Sixth Kaffir War of 1835.

Susanna and her baby son were probably left behind. Whether William rode alone or in company with other officers and men I do not know, but he had a long, dusty, hot ride and, quite apart from the physical strain, there was always the danger of encountering belligerent Natives as he passed through the lonely countryside. On his arrival in the trouble area he joined the Beaufort Levy to ride out with his men in search of warring fugitive Natives. He must have been appalled by the utter destruction of lands and crops and the charred homesteads of settlers who had been killed by or fled from the bloodthirsty savages who attacked their isolated farms and drove all their animals away.

George McCall Theal, the eminent historian on South African affairs, in his book *The Kaffir War 1835* (published for the South African Government in 1912) quotes from letters written about the campaign which

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took place around the Amatola Mountains and Chumie Hoek. A letter, dated Saturday 15 August 1835, written from Fort Willshire by Lt. Williams, Royal Engineers, to Benjamin D'Urban mentions William Watkin Alexander—'Major Cox set out yesterday morning at four o'clock with a patrol consisting of upwards of two hundred people of the Kat River locations under Captain Alexander... On page 329 there is this long letter written by William to Captain Armstrong:

'Fort Armstrong  
17<sup>th</sup> August 1835

Sir,

I have the honour to report in pursuance of your instructions. I marched from Fort Armstrong the night of the 9th instant, with 160 of the Kat River People and 25 of the Beaufort Levy and halted the same night at Chumie. Having sent out a party of observation and having ascertained that there were many fires of the enemy in the direction of Chumie Hoek and Amatola, I divided my force, directing Field Cornet Piet Campher to proceed by Elands River. With the other half of my patrol I entered the following morning at a.m. Chumie Hoek where I joined Piet Campher's patrol; we killed one kaffir, captured a few goats, one horse, and burnt many huts.

This day I was joined by 70 Fingoes whom you had ordered to my assistance from Bloch Drift; I then made a similar division of my force and entered the Amatola Bush in 2 directions at 3 a.m. on the morning of the 11th instant. We found the enemy in large bodies, but on our approach they fled rapidly with their cattle, and on being pursued they stabbed a considerable number of them, at least 80 head. In consequence of the intricacy of the bush and the craftiness of the enemy I found great difficulty in coming within musket shot of them.

Having driven the enemy before me in every direction and having concentrated my force, I sent on a decoy party of the Fingoes and a few of the Kat River people; they were immediately attacked by a strong force of the enemy, and Macomo with a strong body made a disposition to surround them; the main body of my force were at this time concealed, and I had given orders to the decoy party when attacked to make a precipitate retreat, which they did; by this means the enemy were deceived, they followed the Fingoes vigorously and there were at least 150 of the enemy with firearms; they kept up a heavy fire, but fortunately none of them took effect. Macomo was distinctly seen mounted on a white horse. Having got the enemy out of the bush and upon an open plain I rushed upon them with my whole force and on this occasion killed 20 besides wounding a very considerable number; they again fled in every direction.

Major Cox having heard our firing, sent an express to order me to join him, which I did on the following morning the 12th instant; my men being fatigued, I was obliged to halt the 13th instant at Fort Cox. On the 14th at 7 a.m. I marched with my whole force and by Major Cox's orders again entered the Amatola at 3a.m. I came upon the fires of the enemy and killed eleven of them, besides wounding several; they again made a speedy retreat into the Yemaka, and I was so fortunate as completely to hem in an immense body of the enemy in such a position from the nature of a precipitous range of rocky ledge that they could not retreat farther. The situation of the enemy was hopeless and they appeared totally dismayed; a kaffir was sent to me to endeavor to hold a parley with me; I ceased hostilities having been instructed by Major Cox to listen to any

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overture on the part of the enemy and having confronted the kaffir messenger was happy to find he was instructed by the kaffir chiefs to sue for mercy and peace.

The messenger was one of Chake's Heemraden. I brought him to Major Cox's encampment and having I trust performed my duty to the satisfaction of Major Cox and yourself, I returned to Fort Armstrong the morning of the 16th instant.

I captured altogether 50 head of cattle, 16 horses, 60 goats, and a firelock belonging to the 75th Regiment fell into my hands.

I have, etc.

(Signed) W. Alexander

Cpt. Beaufort Levy.'

I have a very worn letter in my possession. It is a certified copy of the letter written by Sir Benjamin D'Urban to Colonel Somerset, Commandant of Caffraria, on 21 August 1835 in which he refers to Captain Alexander's letter. One part taken over on page 342 of Theal's above book reads:

'It is impossible to read this plain and unostentatious account of a most brilliant and successful series of operations, without feeling warm approbation for the vigour, gallantry and judgment of the officer who conducted it and the troop whom he commanded; and I request you will convey the expression of this feeling together with my thanks to Captain Alexander, of whom Major Cox also speaks very highly, whose exemplary conduct shall not fail to be duly recorded in General Orders.' On page 368 Theal refers to a letter from the Governor Sir Benjamin D'Urban written from Grahamstown on a September 1835 to Col. Harry Smith, giving instructions to the officers in the trouble area. In it the Governor writes: 'I told you in my letter of 28 August that I had warned Armstrong to hold in readiness all the Beaufort Levy and Kat Rivet contingent under Captain Alexander.'

Another well-known historian, Professor G. E. (later Sir George) Cory, M.A., of Rhodes University, on page 205 of volume III of his book, *The Rise of South Africa*, refers to the same encounter which William described in his letter.

In *George Rex of Knysna* by Sanni Metelerkamp (Howard Timmins, Cape Town, undated) on pages 190-1 is a copy of a letter by Frederick Rex, the fourth son of George Rex, to his sister Anne, dated King William's Town 18 August 1835. He was fighting in the Kaffir War and mentions my great-grandfather William as follows: '. . . Major Cox had sent out a party under Capt. Heddle to bring in Capt. Alexander from Fort Armstrong with the Kat River Legion and some of the Beaufort Levy, in all 500, who also were to march in the night to Fort Cox. Here we stayed two days to rest, keeping the strength of the place quite secret from rite enemy, who had got into the habit of attacking and causing to retreat such small parties as Fort Cox could afford to spare without leaving too few to defend the Fort.

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'On Friday morning at two we left Fort Cox in three columns ... and Captain Alexander brought up the left through the Amatoli. We all (about 600) met at twelve o'clock about 4 miles from Mount Victoria on the upper Keiskamma, where we halted for breakfast. By the time we had finished a great number of Kaffirs showed themselves at the edge of the bush. A flag of truce was instantly sent to try and get a parley. The answer was that they were all young men but would go for a Heemraad (Councillor) who, through the exertions of Captain Alexander, came into the camp in the evening.....the Captain Alexander I speak of is the one who married Miss du Preez of Krombeks River; he is as nice a fellow as ever I met...'

When this particular outbreak was subdued it did not mean that the troubles were over. Marauding Natives plundered and stole whenever they could, so it became necessary to keep a larger military force in Grahamstown and William was asked to remain on in the army. To digress for a moment, I think you will be interested to hear something about the military buildings in Grahamstown at that time. In Ronald Lewcock's authoritative and beautifully illustrated work, *Early Nineteenth Century Architecture in South Africa* (A. A. Balkema, Cape Town, 1963) on page 275 the author writes: 'The ground between this fort- and the High Street, including that on which the Drostdy stood, was sequestered by the military on the Governor's instructions early in 1335. The Commanding Royal Engineer, Major Selwyn, was instructed to prepare a design for new military barracks adjacent to the Drostdy, which were begun before July 1835, but not completed until 1838. The Drostdy house was converted to serve as officers' quarters, also on the Governor's instructions, and an arched loggia was built linking it to the new barrack buildings. The latter, which are still standing, are neat, unpretentious stone buildings, two storeys high, with finely proportioned windows and doors. They have roofs of imported Welsh slate, which must be among the earliest used in the Eastern Cape, after that of the Bathurst Drostdy. Later an impressive gateway was built between the military parade ground in front of the Drostdy, and in the High Street, and was completed c. 1842. The gateway incorporated military guardrooms, sentry posts and later a fine wrought-iron lantern. Well proportioned, and probably another work by Major Selwyn, who may have designed all the military buildings in this group, it has survived intact. In 1836-38 the Military Provost, or prison, was built ....At a slightly later date the Military Hospital was erected.

With William's decision to remain in the army Susanna with her babies -- for a daughter was born in September 1835 -- and all their worldly possessions had to make that tedious, long, uncomfortable journey to Grahamstown by ox-wagon. What a wrench to leave her home amid the lovely Langeberg Mountains, her kith and kin and set out to live in those military surroundings. Life could not have been too easy for Susanna aged 20. She and the other military wives had their anxious moments when raiding Natives came to the outskirts of the town. They had good cause for anxiety, having heard the grim stories told by the 1820 Settlers and their wives how their homes and all their possessions had been burnt, their crops ruined and their stock stolen by savage Natives.

Susanna was always distressed when William went to fight against the native hordes. She resented the constant call to arms and was so fearful of the Natives that when William was offered the governorship of Natal she persuaded him to refuse the position. Durban, with only thirty-five inhabitants, was established as a town in 1835 and called after Sir Benjamin D'Urban, who was at that time Governor of the Cape.

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While William was on military service his farm Karnemelk Rivier may have been neglected; and he had been unable to afford the mounting expenses of keeping his fifty slaves and their families. On the abolition of slavery on 1 December 1838 most of the slaves deserted their masters and he found it impossible to farm on such a large scale without their assistance. The British Government paid the owners only one-third of the assessed and not the actual value of the slave as compensation, and made this payable only in London, thereby forcing the owners to employ agents, and reducing still further the niggardly compensation. William met with considerable financial difficulties and like innumerable other farmers at that time became insolvent. His property was sold for £1150 0s. 0d. and transferred on 30 July 1841. How distressed William must have been to give up this lovely farm which had been in his wife's family for over a hundred years.

Thus Grahamstown became William and Susanna's home for about sixteen or seventeen years, and when not out on military operations he was in the Civil Service. With the receding threat of further large-scale native uprisings living conditions in Grahamstown became easier. Nevertheless William in his military capacity and Susanna were still in residence in the Drostdy when their third child, my grandfather, John Gysbert, called after Susanna's father, was born there on 25 July 1837.

The children must have enjoyed all the attention and petting lavished upon them by the military personnel and soldiers. How enthralled the little boys must have been to watch the parades and drilling in front of the Drostdy and to see the progress made on the building of the Provost Military Prison, which still exists. John was 5 when the building of the Drostdy gateway was completed in 1842. He must have passed through that archway times without number to go down High Street into town. To refer again to *Early Nineteenth Century Architecture in South Africa* by Ronald Lewcock, on page 200 you will see a coloured reproduction of the painting by T. Baines of the High Street, Grahamstown - much the same I should imagine as when John was a lad, but how different it appeared to us when in April 1966 Grandpa and I wandered down through the University gardens to pass beneath the same gateway and arch built over one hundred years ago.

John was 15 when his parents decided to move to Uitenhage.

## 6

## William's Declining Years

Only once did William return to the island of St. Helena. This was in 1851, accompanied by his son Frederick Augustus, then aged 17. What a welcome awaited them. I can picture William's excitement as the ship sailed nearer and nearer to the island - it was twenty years since he saw those formidable rocky crags rising out of the sea and well remembered Jamestown spreading up the narrow valley between the steep hills. His pulse must have quickened as he and his son were rowed ashore, there to be greeted by members of his family - how they would talk. Frederick would be taken to all the old familiar spots, the days would pass all too rapidly

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and soon their farewells would be said. William would grieve to leave his beloved family circle waving from the landing stage, but his thoughts would soon fly to Susanna and the children and their joyful reunion.

He and Susanna had a family of ten—two died in infancy. As I have already mentioned Frederick Augustus was the eldest (born 2.3.1834), then came Johanna Elizabeth (23.9.1835—10.11.1909) then my grandfather, John Gysbert. Two sisters followed—Louisa Jane (born 14.5.1841) and Charlotte Margaret (born 17.5. 1843). A son called after his father, William Watkin (14.6.1845—1938), followed, and four years later another daughter, Suzanna Helena ( 21.6.1849—1932). The youngest son, George Henry (14.8.1852-28.8.1943) was born in Uitenhage where the family had gone to live.

Their house in that town was in St. John's Street, and from a very poor photograph I can tell you that it was double-storeyed with a veranda across the front, its roof supported by four pillars and closed in at both ends. Upstairs three large sash windows faced the street. Recently a friend of mine who knew the old house agreed to have a better photograph made by a professional photographer, but when she arrived there she found the old home had been demolished.

It was while William was living in Uitenhage that he had a letter from his cousin, Colonel W. W. Knappe, which I think will interest you. It was written on 3 December 1858 and describes his visit to Osborne in the Isle of Wight when he went to present to Her Majesty the address of congratulations from the inhabitants of St. Helena upon the marriage of the Princess Royal. 'I had an interview with Her Majesty of about twenty minutes, no one present at the time but His Royal Highness, the Prince Consort, and Mr. Walpole the Home Secretary. Her Majesty asked me a great many questions about the Island..... I had the honour of lunching with Her Majesty and was introduced to the whole of the Privy Council.'

Earlier in his letter he regrets that he and his wife could not visit William and says: 'I wrote yesterday to the Admiral for a passage in one of the men-of-war now lying in Simonsbay, the *Sansparit*, as I am now on the look out for the first opportunity of returning to the island of St. Helena,'

As far as I can make out, William was in charge of the military forces in and around Uitenhage, for in 1860 he was called upon to go to Port Elizabeth, a distance of about twenty miles, to take command of, or assist with, the guard of honour to welcome Prince Alfred, Queen Victoria's second son who had been to Cape Town to inaugurate the breakwater on 17 September 1860. During a social function the Prince admired a very pretty girl and asked William to present her—who should she be but William's own daughter, Louisa Jane, aged 19. Aunt May Alexander told me that Louisa Jane never forgot the thrill of that romantic moment. She was Flossie Huggett's mother and Jack Huggett's grandmother.

I was given a booklet, *The History of Uitenhage* and among some of the interesting items I found these references: 'Mr. W. W. Alexander is made town clerk of Uitenhage. His salary £100 per annum.' And another: 'In 1861 Mr. Alexander resigned his position as town clerk and market master after seven years' service when he left to live in Hopetown.'

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At the age of 56 he, Susanna and family set out to make a new home in Hopetown to be near John and his family. My mother's cousin, Frazer Alexander, born on St. Helena told her that as a small boy he lost his hat travelling from Cape Town to Kimberley and when they passed through Hopetown he remembers his mother taking him to buy a new hat at Uncle William's store. From this I surmise that John was instrumental in getting his father into Lilienfeld's Store.

Ultimately William and Susanna went to live in Kimberley with their youngest son and his wife. All their children were married with large happy families and several of them had settled there, so that life continued pleasantly for them in their declining years. One day Susanna had a housewifely urge to spring clean and tidy her possessions and burned all the papers which she found cluttering up different places in the house. You may judge her dismay when William discovered she had destroyed all his valuable family documents and correspondence. My mother says he was inconsolable for days over his loss and today we wish most heartily that we could have had access to them, as we cannot trace the family further back than their St. Helena days.

My mother-in-law, Mimmie Rissik, had an old friend, Mrs. Proctor, who had lived in Kimberley and knew my great-grandparents well. She never tired of telling me how fine they were and how everyone admired them, for they were such a handsome old couple and had such gracious dignified manners. She said they maintained a high religious standard and set such a good example.

William was a tall, finely built man. Unfortunately the only photographs we have of him were taken when he was in his late seventies or early eighties. With his snow-white hair and long well-trimmed white beard he looks most venerable. He died in Kimberley on 15 November 1891 in his eighty-seventh year and was buried in the old portion of Gladstone Cemetery. His granddaughter, Flossie Huggett, gave me a copy of a poem by Robert Churchill Hamilton in memory of William Watkin Alexander, which the author sent to console her mother in her sorrow. I quote a few verses only as it is too long to give it in full.

'Oh! for the vanished witchery of thy smile,  
The laughing eye that mocked the lips' sedateness,  
The voice that erst, by you lone Ocean Isle,  
Cheered Fallen Greatness.

The heart untainted that alike withstood '  
The venom'd shafts of rancour and of parley,  
The love that only recognized the good  
In Buonaparte!

For him—the memory of a thousand crimes,  
The guilty glamour of a spurious glory!  
For thee—more meet—to build in kindred climes  
The Country's story.

For him—the mystery of the dread unknown  
Cast crownless shivering at the shadowy portal,  
For thee, who never knew an earthly throne,  
The Crown Immorta1.'

Susanna survived William by two years and was aged 78 at the time of her death in 1893. My mother told me that throughout her grandmother's life she always sat erect upon a straight-backed chair. The only photograph I have of Susanna shows her as a frail little old lady in the seventies with a rather wistful expression. Her velvet dress buttons down the front and a large bow of ribbon is below her neck band, which is ruched with white. Her long sleeves are banded by ribbon and fancy braid and also finished off with white ruching, as is her neat little net and beribboned cap.

## 7

## Unproved Family Tradition

To return to my statement that the family cannot be traced further back than the St. Helena days. The Alexanders of each generation firmly believe that they are connected through some branch of the Scottish Alexander family, who were farmers and landowners in and around the village of Menstrie four and a half miles from the town of Stirling. The most outstanding member of this family was William Alexander, born in 1567 at Menstrie House. He was a poet and much travelled man and received many titles before he was created an Earl in 1633, when he assumed the title of Earl of Stirling. He died in 1640. The family was not, as some imagined, in any way connected with Stirling Castle, which was and still is the property of the Crown. The history of the Earls of Stirling makes fascinating reading. One branch of the family went to Canada to start a colony which they called Nova Scotia after their homeland.

Dorothy Ward and other enthusiastic Alexanders have tried to follow up all possible clues, but the stumbling block is always the lack of dates. All of us are only too ready to blame Susanna for destroying all evidence when she unthinkingly burned William's valuable papers. No wonder he grieved about it. In 1949 Grandpa and I went to the office of the Scots Ancestry Research Society in Edinburgh, which investigates family connexions and crests. I gave them all the information I could and was hopeful they could link us up with one of the branches of the family, but they regretted that owing to the lack of earlier dates this was not possible. In August 1964 Grandpa inquired from the New York Public Library whether its History and Genealogy Division could trace any connexion between Frederick Augustus Alexander of St. Helena and the American William

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Alexander whom an Edinburgh jury had in 1759 declared to be the heir of the last Earl of Stirling. The Library's reply showed there was no such connexion.

Many years ago a dignified visitor to Johannesburg named Alexander met dear old Peter Alexander, my mother's cousin, in the Rand Club. The resemblance to each other was so amazing that they introduced themselves and in the course of conversation they discovered they both had the identical crest, a crowing cock standing on a sheaf of wheat with the motto 'While I live I crow'. Apparently they could not connect up their families. I do wish this and similar contacts had been properly investigated at the time. On 29 January 1968 the Windsor Herald of Arms of the College of Arms, London, wrote to Grandpa that this crest was in 1634 granted to William Allexander, barrister-at-law, in heraldic language-

'On a garb fesswise gold a cock argent beaked wattled and jalloped gules'

but that there was no later record of the crest and no record of the motto. Various members of the Alexander family including my mother and myself and Grandpa and your mothers, Aunt May Alexander and Phyllis and others have visited Stirling and environs at different times to search for any family names on old tombstones. Aunt May told me that when they were being shown round the ancient church in Stirling, which was formerly two separate churches, the custodian pointed out a pew used by the Alexander family since 1803 and which still bears the name.

My last visit to this magnetic part of Scotland was on Saturday afternoon, to October 1964, when Grandpa, David, Monica and I collected Antony and Christopher from Fettes College, Edinburgh, to drive across the recently opened Forth Bridge towards Stirling to visit the little town of Menstrie. There we found Menstrie Castle amid the fields and soft rolling hills near the Menstrie Burn that flows into the river Devon which joins the river Forth a mile beyond. The stone buildings tone in with the grey stone ruins of the original house, of which only the ground floor and right side corner with its quaint turrets remain. The building is now a large quadrangle of four sets of flats enclosing a well-kept lawn.

Although so far there is no proof to support the family belief that it is descended from the Earl of Stirling I have included this account because of its family interest.

At the age of 22 my grandfather, John Gysbert Alexander, married Elsie Sophia Coetzee, who was born in Graaff-Reinet on 31 December 1836. She was the second daughter of Stephanus Petrus Coetzee and Agatha Catharina Wilhelmina Naude. Elsie had two brothers and five sisters. The wedding took place at Graaff-Reinet on 14 October 859, the ceremony being performed by the Rev. Andrew Murray, Senior, a Presbyterian

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minister who came to this country in 1822. He had spent ten months at Utrecht University, Holland, to learn High Dutch and on his arrival in Graaff-Reinet he was appointed Dutch Reformed minister and held that office for forty years. At one time the old Drostdy became the parsonage until a new one was built in 1866.

Elsie Sophia's home was the farm Klipfontein, now known as Clifton, in the Pretorius Kloof area and situated on the Sundays River about ten miles north-east of Graaff-Reinet. I was told that the original house was burnt out in 1932 and that only its walls now remain in the present home stead. On this old farm nestling at the foot of a koppie Elsie was brought up and learnt the necessary feminine arts of needlework, medical care and everything in the culinary line, all so essential when she came to look after her own household.

John took his wife to live in Hopetown, where he worked in the office of a large store owned by Lilienfeld Brothers. This solid old store built in 1854 does not appear to have been altered throughout the years. It was easy to visualize John's comings and goings through the old-fashioned doors. However the name was altered to A. Rosen, when some years ago it changed ownership. My first visit to Hopetown took place on Wednesday, 6 October 1965, when Bernys, Barbara, Elspeth and I drove around looking at the very old houses and speculating as to which the Alexander family had owned. Six months later Grandpa and I were on our way to Cape Town and drove around the little tow-n before proceeding on our long journey south.

John and Elsie had a family of eight, all born in Hopetown. Imagine the difficulties in those days which the women had to overcome. Water was not laid on, the river was several miles away and often did not flow when there was a drought. The good lady of the house had to make her own soap and butter, know how to preserve the meat when a large quantity was available, know how to cure hams or dry biltong, etc. She had to be skilled in dressmaking and tailoring, for clothing a large family meant endless sewing.

My mother gave me a charming three-legged sewing-table used by her mother, Elsie Sophia. There are two small drawers; one is partitioned for cottons, thimbles, pins, etc. I love to think how useful this little table was in its day, how of an afternoon my grandmother would catty it out on to the stoep or under a shady tree so that she could watch the children at their play while she mended rents, patched and darned. This little table may well be over a hundred years old Now it stands in our lounge to give me pleasure and be admired by the connoisseur,

You in South Africa probably all know the story of how the first diamond in South Africa was discovered in '866, but for those of you living overseas here it is. The Schalk van Niekerk family lived on a farm De Kalk near the Orange River in the Hopetown district. One day their small son was seen playing with an unusually brilliant stone, which his father decided to have identified. So off he set with the diamond and on his way through Hopetown he stopped at Lilienfeld's Store where he told the story and produced the diamond for inspection. My grandfather John recalled the incident clearly. When the stone was proved to be a diamond, diamond diggings were proclaimed along the river, claims were pegged and diggers came from far and near to try their luck. Diamond fever is most contagious, fortunes might be made by a few lucky ones, but more often than not a digger packs up after weeks or months of bitter disappointment and leaves his claims a poorer and wiser man.

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Hopetown became a busy little town as orders from the diggings poured into Lilienfeld's, so that John worked harder than ever before. The countryside soon became marred by hundreds upon hundreds of mounds of earth hastily thrown up in search of the diamondiferous soil and these can be seen at various places on the veld to this day. Then in 1872 the new Diamond Rush began in Kimberley. Perhaps John was sorely tempted to join in this frantic stampede, but with his large family to support he could not leave a steady income for an uncertain future. However some years later when the business prospects of Hopetown began to wane he decided to set off for Kimberley to make his fortune. Who knows he might have succeeded, but sheer bad luck ended his mining venture. He staked claims in the Kimberley mine which promised a rosy future. One day he was offered a small fortune for these claims but refused to sell. Alas the next day there was a disastrous fall of rock in the mine, his claims were carried away or flooded and what was left he sold out at a low figure. It certainly was a dreadful blow. Those were the early days in Kimberley, days of high hopes when fortunes could be made or lost overnight. Desperate men committed suicide, others squandered their money in the gaming dens or bars. You carried a revolver in your pocket, often shots rang out and terrific fights took place between drunken or insulted men in the bars or unlighted sandy streets. They were exciting but dangerous times.

The Alexander family was in the midst of all that frantic excitement. How interesting it would have been if only one of them had kept a diary during those hectic days. Life was very difficult; water was so scarce it sold at 4S. 6d. a small bucket, vegetables were unobtainable. Houses were hastily put together with corrugated iron lined with canvas or wood. My mother told me that when her family went to join her father in Kimberley in 1880 they lived in tents until a house was built and the cooking was done in the open and in earth ovens. During heavy thunderstorms their belongings were often swept out of their tents by flood water. Living under such conditions must have required much ingenuity and patience. Ultimately they moved into their rambling house off Victoria Crescent, which I can only vaguely remember, as it was sold when I was a very small child.

My mother, her sisters and brothers had a wonderfully happy childhood in that simple but hospitable home. Friends were always welcome and being such a large lively family an extra place could always be found around the table. I was told my grandmother cooked or supervised the most appetizing meals. Several members of the family took music and singing lessons and some sang in choirs, with the result that the piano was seldom silent. The family had two faithful bulldogs called Bull and Grip, most appropriate names, for when roused they became terrific fighters and once having a hold on an opponent they would not let go. Every known method was tried, until it was found that the only way to make them loosen their grip was to practically suffocate them and as soon as they let go to breathe they were quickly pulled apart and became quite docile.

The family adored their parents, in fact my own mother's love was so strong for her mother that her honeymoon was actually cut short because of a disturbing dream she had about her; over which she worried and fretted so much that my father took her back earlier only to find his mother-in-law in excellent health! He and my mother when newly married gave Elsie Sophia a large Bible on 31 December 1889 with this message and text written in my father's clear handwriting. 'To dear Mother with much love and best wishes from Sophie and Denoon. But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in Glory by Christ Jesus. Phil. 4—19.'

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After my grandmother's death this Bible went to her youngest daughter Annie and quite recently Aunt Annie's daughter, Dorothy Ward, handed it to me.

One day my parents arranged for my eldest brother Gordon, who was just toddling around, to spend the morning with my grandmother. My father deposited him at their house while they were still at the breakfast table and left him playing around. Suddenly my grandmother missed him.

They all jumped up to search the usual places, but he could not be found. In a flash my grandmother thought of the submerged tank into which the bath water ran. Out she rushed to see the sole of one little shoe. He had fallen in head first and was quite blue when she pulled him out. In despair they tried to restore his breathing. A doctor was sent for, but in those days there was no telephone and no motor-car, so the doctor could not reach them at once. My grandmother acted quickly. She forced Gordon's mouth open and released his tongue which had gone back with the rush of water he swallowed. Out poured a flood of water, and gradually he began to breathe normally and regain his colour. She had saved his life. The shock was so great that my grandmother, who had been ill with influenza, developed pneumonia and died soon after on 29 February 1892. She was buried in the Gladstone Cemetery, Kimberley, a handsome stone marking her resting place on the right side of the central drive. I found a long newspaper account of her death and funeral among my father's papers.

From photographs my grandmother appears a very handsome woman. She and my grandfather both had good features and were unusually fine looking. Fortunately their family inherited their good looks. We have two old group-photographs, one taken about 1888 in which the entire family appears. In this photograph my grandmother wears a brooch which has an oval-shaped photograph of her beloved husband as a young man framed by entwined and engraved gold cords. It is a heavy piece of jewellery, but no doubt was most fashionable in its day. The other group was taken about 1906 when my grandfather was in his sixty-ninth year and shows him with his six surviving children. The brooch I mentioned and a silver card-case also owned by my grandmother are now in the small display cabinet in our lounge. My mother loved using her mother's card-case. In those days etiquette required the lady of the house to return her calls promptly and to pay a thank-you call after a dinner party or any special social function. The caller usually placed two of her husband's cards and one of hers on the silver or brass tray in the hall before leaving or if the lady of the house was out. There were special 'At Home Days', when all friends were welcome and lavish teas prepared. You were certain to meet friends and acquaintances and it was an excellent opportunity to introduce a newcomer or guest to your circle of friends.

My brothers, sister and I adored our grandpa, or Gramp as we affectionately called him. We always looked forward to his Sunday midday visits, usually so happily spent, but on one occasion the visit was sadly marred by a most unfortunate accident. Rain had poured down all morning and having nothing very much to do we went to play in an outside room which had a doth ceiling and occupied our time by building a structure with odd stored furniture and poles. We stuck them up into the ceiling and were thrilled at the weird effect. Flushed with excitement we dragged Gramp into the room to see our architectural achievement and as he

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stepped inside the door one of the long six-foot metal bed supports fell upon his head and gashed it open. We were horrified to see the blood pouring over his face and on to his Sunday suit. He was rushed to the hospital to have it stitched, and I recall our old black cookie Margaret lecturing our subdued group on the back veranda.

A few years before Gramp died he accompanied us on one of our summer holidays to the sea, on this occasion to Muizenberg where we rented Patrick Duncan's beach house Sandhills—Patrick Duncan was the first South African Governor-General of the Union. Gramp announced one evening that he was off to bed early to read a book that had captured his imagination and in order to save himself the trouble of getting up later to switch off the light he lit a candle, perched it on his chest and settled down to enjoy his book. Hours later Mother, always a little solicitous about her father, thought she would peep in to see if all was well with him. Softly she opened the door and for a moment stood rooted to the spot—he lay fast asleep, the book had slipped from his fingers and the candle, still burning, was slipping nearer and nearer to his lovely white beard and the blankets.

Gramp was meticulous about his appearance and I seem to remember he always wore a morning suit, a high stiff collar, and a bowler hat. One day we were eating delicious peaches from a tree in our garden and suggested that he should take a few home with him. How could he carry them? What about the large pocket in the tail of his coat. It appeared an excellent idea, but not quite so good when he forgot they were there and sat down heavily upon them. That juicy pocket required much sponging!

Upon his retirement from business he decided to use some of his gratuity to make a leisurely trip to the Cape, visiting en route some of the towns he had loved in his youth. He was most enthusiastic about Grahamstown, the City of Saints, and was greatly impressed by the many changes he found since his boyhood. Grahamstown is well known for the University and the many excellent schools and large number of churches. Gramp had a thoroughly enjoyable time wandering around the town. He recognized some of the old places, which brought back long-forgotten memories. He went to see the old Drostdy, his birth-place. It was still there then. Later with the changing years the site was purchased and the old building demolished—all but the Drostdy Barracks, which was incorporated into Rhodes University and now looks quite venerable and grey. To me the most important event to take place in this old town was the birth of John Gysbert Alexander in 1837.

For eight years or more Gramp lived with his youngest son Henry and his wife May, then for the last two years of his life we had the privilege of having him in our home. He died on 9 December 19 aged 73 and was buried in the same grave as his dear wife Elsie Sophia.

I like to remember Gramp as he was when he reached his seventies, he looked so distinguished with his lovely blue eyes, his snow-white hair and well-groomed beard. He had such gentle manners and yet when he was young he was full of drive and courage. Once he tackled a thief so vigorously that he injured his right hand, and had stiff bent fingers for the rest of his life. My mother often said she could never recall him using any coarse language. I love the photograph I have of Gramp. On the back of it my mother wrote the tribute paid to

him by my father who said: 'He was an outstanding example of an English gentleman, an ardent Christian, courteous, upright and a devoted father.' What praise and respect from a son-in-law.

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*My Mothers Family (Coetzee-Naude- Taillefert)*

Now I shall give you a resume of Elsie Sophia's family connexions, starting with Dirk Coetzee. He was baptized in 1655 and arrived at the Cape in 1679, nine years before the Huguenots. He lived four years at the Cape and thereafter until 1729 at Stellenbosch. From 1685 he was in the service of the church as a deacon and then an elder and after 1687 he was a member of the College of Heemraden. In 1706 he became a captain of the Stellenbosch Infantry. In 1682 he applied for and obtained from Governor Simon van der Stel a farm later named Coetsenberg, situated near Stellenbosch. He also had a small piece of land in Jan Jonkers Hoek under the large mountain called Assezaaibosch. Most of the Coetzee family lived in or around Stellenbosch. We are told, however, that one member, Dirk Coetzee (baptized 1721), a grandson of the first Dirk Coetzee, owned the farm Graaff-Reinet until 1786 when the authorities wanted the land for the new village of Graaff-Reinet. An exchange was arranged by which Dirk Coetzee was granted two farms in the Pearston district and was paid £530.Os.Od. That took place when his son Johannes was 35 years of age. Johannes's son, also named Dirk (baptized 25 July 1784), was the father of Stephanus Petrus and the grandfather of Elsie Sophia.

Now we turn to the Naude family from which Elsie Sophia's mother was descended. Philippe Naude and his wife Anna Isnard of French origin were living in Berlin, Germany, when their son Jacob was born in 1696. Jacob came to the Cape in 1710 aboard the ship *Abbekerk*. When he joined the Drakenstein Church in 1718 he brought a certificate of church membership from Hanover. He married Susanne Taillefert in 1722. In 1739 Jacob was appointed sexton for the Parish of Drakenstein, in place of Jan Melchior Frieq, who had recently died. This appointment he held for six years until 1745.

Jacob and Susanne Naude had a son Jacob (baptized 1 August 1723), who was a burgher of Stellenbosch. His son was Stephanus, who had a son, Stephanus Petrus, who had a daughter, Agatha Catharina Wilhelmina Naude (baptized 1805). She married Stephanus Petrus Coetzee on 3 February 1829 and was Elsie Sophia's mother.

And now to link up with Elsie Sophia's great-great-great-grandmother, Susanne Taillefert, whose grandfather, Jean Taillefert, was an apothecary and an elder of the church at Monneaux, France. His wife's name was Ester Jordin and they had five children. Their son Isaac married Susanne Briet of the Valley of Essomes and through her he possessed some vineyards at Monneaux. He established himself as a master hatmaker and agriculturist at Chateau Thierry in the Province of Brie. Isaac, his

wife and children were Protestants and had to flee for their lives during the Huguenot persecution in France. They embarked on board the Dutch East India Company's ship *Oosterlandt* bound for the Cape. They left Middelburg, Holland, on 29 January 1688 and reached Table Bay on 26 April after a very short and successful voyage. The family Taillefert appears to have died out in South Africa. The famous traveller Francois Leguat mentions Isaac Taillefert and speaks of him as one of the refugees, an honourable competent man who had a beautiful garden in which nothing was lacking; an inner yard in which aviaries containing all kinds of birds were to be seen and a large kraal with many cattle, sheep and horses which in accordance with the customs of the country grazed throughout the year and were so well fed that they did not need any fodder in the winter time; this hospitable man received anyone who took the trouble to visit him and was well known on account of his wine, which was just as excellent as the wine Leguat knew in Champagne.

On 1 August 1691 Isaac Taillefert was granted land upon which the farms Normandie between Paarl and French Hoek and Picardie near Den Soeten Inval were established. On 28 February 1699 he was granted the farm Leeuwen Vallei in the Wagenmakersvallei, north of Paarl, He died in 1699 or 1700. Isaac Taillefert's daughter Susanne was baptized in Hogentel near Chateau Thierry, France, and was apparently 2½ years old when her father arrived in Cape Town in 1688. She married Jean Garde, by whom she had two children and was a widow in 1704. She married Pierre Cronier, who died in 1718. In 1722 she married Jacob Naude and had the abovenamed son Jacob, baptized 1.8.1723. She died 13.2.1724. The inventory of her estate contains a document in French recording that her funeral expenses included '3 rix dollars for service in the church in the French language'.

The wedding bells are ringing and as you probably have guessed at this stage they are ringing for the wedding of my father and mother. Thus the two great-hearted families, the Duncans and the Alexanders, were united. This marriage proved to be unusually happy and harmonious. They kept their love, respect and deep admiration for each other throughout the forty-five long years they were married. I cannot recall a single matrimonial incident between them to mar this long companionship.

But I must return you to the day when Sophia Elizabeth signed her surname Alexander for the last time and gladly became Mrs .James Denoon Duncan - a name she bore with much pride and to which she contributed much honour and elegance.

The Kimberley Advertiser, Thursday, 28 November 1889, gives the following account: 'A marriage which attracted more than the usual amount of friendly interest in Kimberley was solemnised yesterday

## *Letters to my Grandchildren*

afternoon in Trinity Church between Mr J. Denoon Duncan and Miss Sophie Alexander, daughter of Mr. J.G. Alexander. Mr. Duncan is a gentleman who enjoys the friendship and esteem of a large number of Kimberley residents. Both in his professional capacity as an attorney whose advice is really worth having and in private circles he has proved a man of sterling merit.

The fair bride is a lady who besides being all that is charming in the social sphere has rendered most valuable services as a member of the choir of Trinity Church, and we may venture to express a hope that it will frequently in the future be the pleasure of Kimberley audiences to listen to her sweet singing voice as Mrs. Duncan. The church yesterday was filled to overflowing, the congregation being principally composed of the friends of the bride and bridegroom. The marriage ceremony was performed by the Rev. W. Wynne, who was assisted by the Rev. W. H. Aspden.

The bridegroom was attended by Mr. T. Selwyn Brown who made almost as efficient a groomsman as Mr. Duncan himself had frequently proved himself to be in the past. Mr. Advocate Geurin was Mr. Brown's gallant colleague.

The bridesmaids were Miss Susie Alexander, Miss Annie Alexander and Miss Norval<sup>1</sup>; and there were some pretty flower girls and a handsome page.

Mr. A. H. Day, the organist of Trinity Church, conducted the musical portion of the ceremony, and played the wedding march in a masterly style. At the conclusion of the service the wedding party and their friends adjourned to the residence of the bride's father in Selby Street where the customary toasts were heartily proposed and appropriately replied to.

Mr. and Mrs. Duncan left for the Colony by the evening train to spend their honeymoon, and it is needless to say that a large crowd bade them an enthusiastic farewell at the station.

A lady correspondent informs us that the bride's dress was made of ivory satin. The front of the bodice and skirt were exquisitely and tastefully trimmed with indian silk crepe, inter-mixed with sprays of orange blossoms gracefully looped at the side with moire ribbon all to match. A rich full train gracefully fell from the waist, and the customary wreath of orange blossoms was not absent, together with a long bridal veil, which completed the charming attire of the young and lovely bride. The bride wore a handsome diamond and pearl bracelet and diamond brooch, gifts from the bridegroom and bestman.

The bridesmaids were attired in primrose silk, tastefully trimmed with moss green ponge and loops of ribbon of the same colour, falling gracefully at the side and giving the young ladies a charming and elegant appearance. Their hats were made of arophone, prettily trimmed with wreaths of ivy and figure primrose ribbon. The flower girls wore india muslin draped with valenciennes lace, and very pretty drawn ponge silk

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<sup>1</sup> Most likely Mary Susan Norval, daughter of Susanna Elizabeth (Alexander) Norval, the author of "A Pioneer Mother" (Clive)

## *Letters to my Grandchildren*

hats, trimmed with lace to match. They carried baskets of lovely flowers. The page was attired in myrtle green plush.'

Then followed a long list of guests and another long list of valuable presents, many of which I know to be in use to this day.

Picture the bridesmaids waiting for the Kimberley Advertiser to be delivered the next morning, their squeals of amusement and joy as they read this long account, and their, 'Please Papa, don't forget to buy a few extra copies to send away and please post one off to Sophie and Denoon the moment you reach town'. I know that one copy found its way to Scotland for I found it pasted into an old scrap- book. The Greenock Telegraph had an abbreviated account. That I have just quoted was in an old book which belonged to father.

Mother often met her page-boy, Ernest Edkins, who retired some years ago as a bank manager and died in 1966. When I read that he wore a myrtle green plush suit on a sweltering November afternoon in Kimberley I nearly swooned at the thought of his discomfort-the gallant little fellow! I guess he pulled the jacket off as soon as the ceremony was over. His sister Florence was one of the little flower-girl aged 5 ½ . I was given a delightful photograph of these two taken shortly after the wedding. She was a most beautiful child. Many years later I met this little flower-girl, then Mrs. Knox-Davies, tall and graceful. One is immediately impressed by her serenity; her sweet charm and the ready smile which lights up her very blue eyes. It was entrancing to hear her describe little incidents which happened at the wedding-how 'my father picked her up to kiss her in the vestry and how troublesome her small brother, aged 4, was during the service when he insisted upon taking off his shoes.

I regret that there is no wedding group, as it is always so amusing to see the quaint old fashions. Do you realize that the long account makes no mention of what the bride's mother wore? Dearie me, having been the mother of the bride myself on four different occasions I know the importance of appearing in a becoming ensemble!

My parents started their married life in a small house in Park Road overlooking the large park. In those days houses were lit by paraffin lamps. I remember my mother telling me that one night she was alone at home and went off to bed early. Knowing that father was due back soon she did not extinguish the lamp hanging over the dining-room table and thoughtlessly she pushed another lighted paraffin lamp immediately below the suspended one. Hearing a peculiar noise she ran into the dining-room to see flames reaching to the ceiling. As there was no one to come to her immediate aid she had to act quickly. Clad only in her nightie and without hesitation she jumped on to the table, pulled the lamp down and flung it into the garden. The neighbours heard her call and a great fuss was made, and a paragraph applauding her brave act and giving a vivid description of the incident without mentioning her name appeared in the daily newspaper.

The birth of their first baby, Gordon, on 10 September 1890 gave them great joy. He was a beautiful baby, very fair with large blue eyes. He was photographed at six months lying on a kaross. Another photograph taken at the same time shows him being held by his lovely mother. His next photograph is with his proud papa, and according to the fashion of those days the wee laddie is in an embroidered dress trimmed with bows of ribbon on each

## *Letters to my Grandchildren*

shoulder and around his waist!

In the next photograph Gordon is wearing a velvet coat with lace collar, his fair curls brushed high on his head, and beside him his little fair-haired sister, Agnes Sophia, your own granny, aged about 9 months. A year later we were again photographed together, and here Gordon, whose curls had been cut, wears a Fauntleroy suit, then considered the height of fashion and created through the popular story *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, The suit was of black velvet with lace collar and cuffs, a wide red sash and steel buckles on his shoes. I am wearing a madeira embroidered dress, the shoulders tied up with ribbon and a wide sash and my hair brushed into a curly mass on top of my head. On the same day another photograph was taken of me lying on a grass mat in the most uncomfortable position. The photographer was so delighted with his production that he enlarged it for my parents free of charge. I'll show it to you one day. At the seaside someone took a photograph of me standing on a madeira chair and holding a small rubber horse. I must have been about 2 and evidently did not like the photographer or the chair for I look exceedingly cross. The small brown shoe which I wore as a tiny child is now in our museum. My brother Douglas delayed his arrival for a whole month and then made a sudden appearance, weighing ten pounds. He had dark hair and grey-green eyes like mine. His earliest photograph was taken at about 9 months lying in the nude in one of mother's knitted shawls called a 'fascinator'. Years after he and his family had many a laugh when this photograph was produced. Horace was a picture baby with his brown curly hair and rosy cheeks. He was born on 3 November 1894 and had two photographs taken when he was about 2 years old: one in a silk dress with a lacy collar and his hair brushed up into a beautiful curl, the other in a fluffy white coat with a cape attached and a matching tammy finished off by a jaunty quill. During these years my parents moved into a larger house situated in The Crescent. Mother told me that one day she noticed an excited crowd at the side of the house, gazing intently at one of the windows. In answer to her inquiry she was told that a large baboon had escaped from the circus and had entered the house. His keeper appeared just then and captured him in our nursery. Mother was so thankful that a few minutes before she had sent all of us out for a walk with our nurse.

On 29 October 1893 when father was in England he wrote a rather homesick letter to mother. Two years later he went again, taking her and the babies. This was mother's first voyage. What excitement, but how frustrating to have the care and responsibility of her four tiny children. However she had an excellent nannie for us named Lizzie Thorn from the island of St. Helena. Her colour drew attention to us when she took us out for walks. Mother said that often Lizzie would return beaming with pride to tell her that several people had stopped to speak to us and were amazed to hear that we fair-skinned children came all the way from South Africa. Mother first met father's parents and sister Isabel on this visit. I can imagine father's pride when he presented his darling wife and children to them and how gratified he would be to see the instant bond of affection between them. Aunt Isabel was eager to entertain the young South Africans and once rashly took us into a toy-shop to choose gifts. Naturally we desired the most expensive toys, much to her embarrassment, and with the greatest difficulty were persuaded to accept cheaper substitutes. During this visit, driving through an industrial smoky area, Douglas turned to mother and said, 'Mulla, can OO mel a make' ?

Back home to Kimberley where father bought Greenock House, 11 Spencer Lane, Belgravia. How we loved that rambling old house, a veranda along the front and side with another at the back. Sometimes at night cats

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scrambled on to the veranda roof where they fought, and we'd hear their bloodcurdling cries as they chased each other, then quite suddenly there was silence as, unable to stop, they shot off the end of the roof into the garden below. This was large and had lovely shady trees. A tennis court ran down the side of the house and beside it a summer-house with table and deck-chairs. The yard had a coach-house stable and servants' quarters, some fruit trees and large gum trees. My brothers and I slept in a room next to our parents. One night something disturbed us and mother, candle in hand, came barefooted into our nursery but, seeing no reason for our alarm, told us to go off to sleep. Next morning Horace ran into the nursery to fetch his jacket, which had fallen behind a large toy-box. As he pulled it out a huge snake fell from its folds. On several occasions snakes were killed in our garden and mother killed one in our entrance hall.

There is a photograph taken when I was 6, wearing a long dress, accordion pleated from the yoke to the ground, with wide sleeves gathered into a band at the elbow. There are little bows on the yoke. My large hat looks as if it were made of taffeta and has two white ostrich feathers peeping over the brim, showing my ringlets. I am wearing white gloves and may have been a little flower-girl. Unfortunately I have no recollection of the wedding. With me in the photograph are Gordon, wearing a smart straw hat, and large lace collar over his jacket and lace cuffs with buttons at the knees of his knickerbockers on the outer sides, and Douglas, about 4 years old, resplendent in Scottish dress, a tartan kilt and dark jacket and waistcoat with large sporran. His plaid over his shoulder is fastened with a silver brooch and he wears a stiff white collar. There is a feather on his bonnet, which is perched jauntily on his head. His shoes have steel buckles.

A charming family photograph was taken in the garden when I was about 7 years old. We were all grouped near a well-laid tea-table, father and mother holding their tea-cups and saucers, our nurse Mary Ralph ready to pour the tea and our little black cookie, Margaret, ready to pass the sandwiches, with Douglas and me beside father and Gordon and Horace on either side of mother. It was into this happy family circle that our little baby sister, Dorothy Isabel, was born on 26 May 1899. In an old letter I saw what took place early that cold May morning when our nurse Mary wakened me, wrapped me in an eiderdown and carried me into the spare room where father and the three boys were sitting up in bed. On my arrival father told us the happy news. Later that morning, wearing fresh pinafores, we were allowed to peep at the new baby. The letter went on to say how proud I was to accompany our nurse Mary when she took Dorothy out for her first walk. Dorothy was christened in our drawing-room by a saintly white-haired old minister, Mr. Scott. When Dorothy was about 9 months old I was wheeling her pram on the tennis court. She laughed so happily when I jerked or ran her around that I became too venturesome. To my horror, I upset the pram and poor little Dorothy had a badly bruised mouth. You can imagine my remorse when she refused her food. To this day my sense of guilt has made me recall this unfortunate incident. The earliest photograph we have of her was taken when she was 7 months old, sitting on a kaross in a large armchair. She was a lovely baby with her big blue eyes, rounded cheeks and dimpled hands, her muslin dress spread out and bows on her shoulders. The next photograph of her was taken with her arms round mother's neck when she was 3 years old - a beautiful little girl, her brown curls held in place with an Alice ribbon and bow. In this picture I am on mother's other side, my fair wavy hair down to my shoulders. I can remember the red dress I wore with the white collar and bib

embroidered with red anchors and finished off with a red taffeta bow. Mother, with her hair dressed high, looks serene and beautiful. I have a photograph of father with Dorothy and me and another with his three sons. Now you will be weary of hearing about old photographs, but how else can I bring to life all the people I have to describe? Oh, I must not forget to tell you that Dorothy and I had very curly hair and to facilitate matters a curling stick was made out of wood, tapering at one end, a long smooth affair. Nurse parted a portion of hair, dampened the brush and the hair was brushed around the stick, which was then pulled down and out. Our curls were most elegant! One day when clearing out some old things I came across the curling stick and suddenly recalled its use. It is now displayed in our museum.

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### *Father's early Public Life*

Mother often spoke of the early days when father was so civic minded that he seemed to be always attending meetings. She said that at times he rushed in for hurried meals and was gone; one meeting followed another. They were exhilarating days and he had the energy and ability to undertake the responsibilities they brought. He put his heart and soul into everything he did and he was so scrupulously honest that on occasions it proved detrimental to his own self-advancement. His word was never doubted. His aim was justice and the betterment of everyone irrespective of the colour of their skins. He worked hard, never sparing himself and often taxing his health to accomplish what had to be done. He was very ambitious and most courageous. Aged 30 he was a member of the committee of the Chamber of Commerce. In 1893 aged 32 he joined the Kimberley School Board on which he served for fifteen years. During the last two and a half years he acted as vice-chairman on many occasions. When he resigned in November 1908 the board's letter of appreciation stated: 'He had always the keenest interest in the success of the scholastic institutions under its management, and whose opinion has always carried great weight with the board in deciding the many difficult questions which have from time to time arisen.' He was a member of the Kimberley Club and the Civil Service Club in Cape Town and was always interested in the McGregor Museum in Kimberley. He was a Trustee and Chairman of the Rutherford Harris Fund which helped deserving scholars.

Father was practically a foundation member of the Kimberley Public Library, which was started in 1882. He worked hard to build it up to the excellent institution it now is, and was on occasion chairman. When he resigned to live at the Cape he received the following appreciation written on 10 March 1925 by the chairman, Kimberley Public Library:

'It was unanimously resolved that as a special expression of the committee's very high appreciation of your valuable services to this institution in the past thirty-two years, you be now appointed an honorary member of the Kimberley Public Library. It is the first distinction of the kind that has been conferred by the library, and the committee trusts it will meet with your acceptance.

I am, dear Mr. Duncan, Sincerely yours, D. Wark, Chairman

## *Letters to my Grandchildren*

Father associated much with legal men and politicians during his life and from the lowliest to the highest he gave of himself in work and in kindly counsel.

Father once had a most trying experience. He arranged to go by train to a small town near Kimberley called Belmont, to be collected at the station by an old client for whom he had made a will which his client was to sign. The week-end was to be spent on the client's farm shooting game. Sure enough Mr. Cook met father's train and off they drove in a smart Cape cart with two fresh horses. The native boy sat in the back seat, father in front next to Mr. Cook. The sun began to set as they jogged along in the cool of the evening, chatting happily, when suddenly the horses shied at a snake, bolted and capsized the cart, throwing all out. Father, who was unhurt, went to Mr. Cook and was shocked and dismayed to find him lying dead. They were a very long way from the farm and darkness fell almost immediately. The Native also was not injured and was sent by father with a scribbled note to the eldest son at the house to come to his assistance. Father then sat down beside his old friend to await help. The night was pitch-dark and the howling of jackals and other wild animal noises reached him as he kept vigil. After what seemed an eternity he heard the sound of horses hoofs and saw a light approaching. You can imagine the sorrow and dismay when they eventually reached that lonely farm.

Father thoroughly enjoyed his game of bowls. As President of the bowling green club he made a lengthy speech in August 1907 at the annual banquet and presentation of prizes. He played a good game and later when at the Cape enjoyed playing on the Muizenberg Green. I found this letter from the Kimberley Bowling Green Club written on 19 July 1926: 'It was with much regret that your resignation was accepted. At the same time there was a unanimous feeling that you had always rendered such yeoman service and had ever the interests of the old club at heart, that I am requested to ask you if you will become an honorary member. We wish you good luck wherever you may go and that the grand old game of bowls will always be a source of pleasure to you.' Father once bought a magnificent feather-weight bicycle on which he literally flew around, often shooting off much to his grief and pain. Mother also rode a cycle and they enjoyed the fashionable bicycling parties of the day. The tennis court at Greenock House, Spencer Lane, was a wonderful asset, and many were the delightful parties given there. Father however loved his golf best and although he was never a brilliant player he thoroughly enjoyed playing on various links. The boys and I loved going round and trying to beat him, and father and I had some happy games on Scottish courses.

He was vitally interested in politics but of course his legal work came first and that necessarily tied him down to his office and prevented him on many occasions launching out into the political arena.

At two large crowded public meetings in the Town Hall, Kimberley, on 9 December 1890 and 27 May 1891 father proposed votes of no confidence in Mr. Barney Barnato, senior Member of Parliament for Kimberley, which on both occasions were carried by overwhelming majorities. Excitement ran high. A staunch admirer, who was a competent boxer, appointed himself bodyguard to father and never left his side. When the meeting broke up in uproar and fighting began, he and father left by a stage-door to avoid the crowds. Father's prestige rose high after his courageous speech. In Grandpa's study you will find a coloured caricature done by 'Spy' of Barney Barnato wearing striped trousers, a morning-coat with buttonhole, gold cuff-links and watch-chain. Father was asked to contest seats in Kimberley, Barkly West and Fort Beaufort, and did, on one

occasion, fight a gruelling election in Namaqualand. From the beginning there was little prospect of success, but Dr. Jameson, the Prime Minister, said if it could be won father was the candidate to pull it off. His campaign was a strenuous one. He travelled miles and miles over parched and sandy country, but he met most hospitable people who became good friends. Need I add that the election was lost, but he made a great name for himself as a true fighter. The *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, Kimberley, on Monday, 6 April 1908, has this to say: 'Mr. Denoon Duncan at Dr. Jameson's special request and in the interest of the party, undertook what he quite clearly saw to be almost a forlorn hope. Mr. Duncan's powers on the platform stood him in excellent stead, and he appears to have made an extremely favourable impression wherever he went. We trust that at no very distant date Mr. Duncan will find a place in the ranks of a fighting opposition.' Father's keen political enthusiasm carried him from one conference to another. We see him sitting practically in the centre of the front row in most of the large photographic groups taken at these important meetings. He organized, he presided at meetings or on committees, he drew up the articles, the laws, the amendments, he advised and he encouraged. He travelled from one large centre to another, wrote innumerable letters and had his finger right on the parliamentary pulse .

Some printed pamphlets and booklets record a few of his speeches. He was a member of the Empire Parliamentary Association, and Vice- President of the South African Imperial Union for federation of the South African Colonies in which the South African League and South African Progressive association were incorporated. At a large congress of representatives of the S.A. Imperial Union on 21,22 and 23 November 1906 in Grahamstown he was chairman and made a lengthy speech and his name appears throughout the proceedings. In 1907 he was chairman of the Kimberley branch.

On Thursday, 17 September 1908, at a very large meeting in Kimberley, father delivered an address on closer union. It was so well prepared and so highly appreciated that special additional copies were printed. I saw one of these in the library of the House of Assembly' in Cape Town. Father was on the executive of the association of Closer Union Societies. I saw a sheaf of letters from Lionel Curtis, who edited *The Round Table*, which promoted a movement in which father was most interested. In passing let me tell you that Lionel Curtis became the leading authority on the organization of the British Commonwealth of Nations. He died a few years ago at Kidlington, near Oxford. His attractive house, Hales Croft, with its lovely garden bordering the River Cherwell, was bought in 1956 by Harry and Monica Marshall, whom we visited there in 1957. When they first saw the house a round table was in the hall on which were inscribed the names of all members of the movement. The table was given to Chatham House by Mrs. Lionel Curtis. Lionel Curtis was also a great enthusiast in forming the closer union of the four colonies in South Africa. He wrote to father from Johannesburg to urge him to come up and talk at a meeting being convened there on 20 February 1909. 'I can get you put up in a luxuriously comfortable home close to where I live. The Hon. Hugh Wyndham would be your host.' Father accepted, and enjoyed his visit immensely. He made a lengthy speech at the conference. Other speakers were General Smuts, Sir George Farrar and Patrick Duncan, who subsequently became our first South African Governor-General. Ultimately Union came about on 31 May 1910. Then father joined the newly organized Unionist Party.

You will know about the Anglo-Boer War in your history lessons and will learn what caused this sad, unnecessary and prolonged war. I do not intend to go into a long explanation nor to write an account of it here, but I wish to tell you about the siege of Kimberley because we were vitally concerned in it and actually lived through it, and because my father played a very prominent part in the defence of Kimberley.

Let me quickly outline the essential happenings. War was declared between the British and the Boers on 10 October 1899 and four days later Kimberley was surrounded and remained besieged for four months, through the hottest time of the year. Lieutenant-Colonel Robert George Kekewich was in command of Griqualand West and Bechuanaland and was sent to take charge of Kimberley. He proclaimed martial law on 15 October and a special court of summary jurisdiction was established the same day. A list of appointments was drawn up and I find my father's name heads the list. He was appointed Crown Prosecutor and legal adviser to the military but he took no military rank and gave his services entirely free. The court sat daily, which involved a great deal of work for father, who was always on call by the military authorities. For instance, I see a message from Colonel Kekewich saying 'Kindly call at the Club either at .five or seven o'clock'. Father had an intensely interesting if exhausting .time for he was in the inner circle as it were and had the full confidence of Colonel Kekewich. Father was issued with several military passes:

'Pass Mr. Duncan at any time into the market or town hall',

'Permission is granted to Mr J Duncan to keep a light burning in his house after 9pm"

'Permission is granted to Mr. J. Denoon Duncan to be absent from his premises between the hours of 9 p.m. and 6 a.m.',

'No searching. Pass Mr. Duncan through all barriers at any time',

'Pass Mr. Duncan and party on tour of Wesselton or Cape Town Barriers. No searching.'

Father knew the password, which was changed every night, and would hear the 'Pass Friend' which allowed him to continue on his way. Because of all his interviews and consultations he often was out until all hours, so it was no wonder that he required the special passes issued to him.

On the table beside me as I write I have a large scrap -book in which father wrote: 'Proclamations and Notices. This book belongs to J. Denoon Duncan, Prosecutor, Summary Court.' He must have had it in his office, and into this book he pasted all the proclamations and notices which were issued during the siege and which he had drawn up for Colonel Kekewich and his staff. You wonder how I know that he drew them up? Well, here - is the answer. I have beside me an enormous pile of foolscap papers in father's handwriting, showing his rough drafts and his typed copies, some paragraphs scored out and others added to before being sent off to the printers. The first proclamation declaring martial law ends:

'Given under my hand at Kimberley at noon on this 15th day of October in the year of our Lord 1899-

God Save the Queen

R. G. Kekewich Lieutenant-Colonel

Commanding the Forces in Griqualand West and Bechuanaland.'

All proclamations ended with similar wording. To tell you in detail of the many proclamations and notices would be quite impossible, but let me give you a quick resume. Water was strictly rationed, sales of liquor severely controlled, all fire-arms were called in, horses and mules were requisitioned, farmers had to account for any cattle, poultry or other edible animals; bakers, butchers, wood and coal merchants, and grocers had to fill in forms and sell at controlled prices. Permits were issued to householders, hotel and boarding-house keepers, etc., and in this way supplies were controlled and even when some commodities ran out no one starved.

On 22 February 1900 after the siege had ended a resident wrote a lengthy letter to the editor of the Diamond Fields Advertiser in praise of Colonel Kekewich's prompt action in 'fixing the necessities of life'. 'What would have been the condition of the people but for this thoughtful act? For this alone Kimberley owes a deep debt of gratitude to Colonel Kekewich.' The letter goes on: 'He was overburdened with work and responsibility, knocked up by want of rest, worried by a hundred petty and unreasonable complaints, and hampered beyond our conception by the necessity for making the civil aspect of the case subordinate to the military, knowing that a departure from this course might result in upsetting the whole plan of campaign and the loss of thousands of our gallant soldiers' lives. Yet, notwithstanding these troubles, he was invariably courteous, kind and thoughtful. By his foresight and kindly consideration, he happily succeeded in greatly reducing our hardships during the four months of the Siege.'

It gives me great pleasure to know that father by his loyalty, his consideration and ability was able to be of such assistance to this commander on whose shoulders rested such gigantic responsibility. Colonel Kekewich and his officers often came to our house and I remember meeting him in London on two occasions. For many, many years father and the colonel, later a general, corresponded regularly, and father and mother spent a delightful few days at his lovely home, Peamore, Exeter, Devonshire.

I hope I have given you some idea of the terrific responsibilities and work the siege entailed. In my next letter I should like you to read of the more personal side, and am copying letters written by my father and mother. here is a letter written by father during the siege which is most enlightening.

'Kimberley,

24 Nov. 1899.

My Dear Father and Sister,

We are expecting the arrival of a relief column in a few days now so I am writing to you in order that this letter may go forward as soon as postal communication is restored. I wrote you a short letter about a fortnight ago and got the military authorities to send it by a despatch rider, but the letter was brought back to Kimberley some 7 days afterwards as the rider was unable to get through the Boer lines. The letter was again sent off and I hope it reached you.

Last Saturday evening I was at the club and a gentleman informed me he was leaving that night to endeavour to pass the lines of the enemy and get to Orange River where the English camp was. I hurriedly wrote you a

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few lines and asked him to take the letter. I was unable to go into any details in these letters as they had to be approved of by the military censor and if they contained any information likely to be of use to the enemy the letters would not be passed as it was always possible they might get into the hands of the enemy.

You will be pleased to learn that we are all well. During the siege Mrs. Wedderburn's children were ill with chicken pox and our Horace and little baby also contracted the disease. It was a source of inconvenience, but fortunately they are all now quite recovered, Otherwise we have and still enjoy excellent health.

This is the 41st day of the Siege and we are becoming very tired of it. Since the 1st of Nov. we have had no general news save a short telegram dated the 4th November with reference to the progress of affairs in Natal. There will be great excitement when news comes to hand. About three weeks ago we were told that relief might arrive about this date and we were daily on the outlook. Fortunately we have been plentifully supplied with foodstuffs and provisions, but we have only been allowed to use water for domestic purposes and as a consequence our garden has suffered considerably. We have much for which to be thankful. Notwithstanding the stage of siege which has existed we have, with slight exception, been able to live much as previously to communication being interrupted, Of course there has been a good deal of anxiety from time to time for the Boers have surrounded the town and occupied the ridges with guns. A good deal of bombardment has taken place-several hundreds of shells having fallen into the town. The Advertiser has made light of the shelling but this was done because it was known that the newspaper was sent out to the enemies and we did not want them to know where the shells actually fell. Fortunately our house was situated at a part of the town where few shells fell but in other parts the inhabitants ran great risk and many of them found it necessary to vacate their houses and go to other parts of the town.

A woman was killed by a shell in our principal street Du Toits Pan Road, near the club, right in the centre of the town. A horse was killed in a cab, and a man was wounded in his bed. There have been many narrow escapes. Mr. Alexander was standing on his verandah when a shell fell opposite his house about fifteen yards distant. He jumped behind a tree and the pieces of the shell fell on the roof of his house but did no damage. It is truly marvellous that so little damage has been done. One reason appears to be that the shells-at least many of them-do not explode properly. I have obtained one, only a portion of it having been blown away.

The experiences we have gone through have been of a most unique kind. Fancy being wakened at five o'clock by the booming of big guns, hearing the whir of the shells and then the crash and thud as they strike.

After a time we became a little accustomed to the sensation, and would go out to see where the shells were falling. On one occasion Mr. Oliver and I went to the outskirts of the town and had an excellent view of a short engagement between the guns of the Boers and one of our batteries. One shell fell a short distance from where we were and the experience was such as is not likely to be soon forgotten.

The Boers are evidently afraid to attack Kimberley and rest content with doing damage with shelling, cutting off the water supply and stealing our cattle.

On Thursday the 5th Oct. at 1 a.m. while we were in bed the alarm sounded, the mine hooters and whistles all sounding the call to arms in a most weird manner. An attack was anticipated and the defence forces were kept under arms all night in a state of readiness. No attack was made but the alarm caused a great sensation in town. On Thursday the 12th of Oct. communication with the town of Mafeking was cut off and the armoured

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train was wrecked at Kraaipan. The state of affairs began to look serious. We discussed the advisability of Sophie and the children proceeding to Capetown on several occasions but eventually Sophie decided that she would remain in Kimberley with me and not break up the home, no matter what might happen. It was a most difficult thing to decide but we are very thankful now that we are all together for Kimberley being in a state of siege so long, if Sophie had gone away her anxiety would have been intense, and as it happens we have gone thus far safely through. On the 15th October Sunday the siege of Kimberley began, communication with Capetown and the South having been cut off during Saturday night. Sunday was a day we will never forget: The alarm was sounded at 11. 15 in the morning and an attack by the enemy was fully expected, as they were seen to be massing in strong force to the west of Kimberley. The Olivers all came to our house for the day and we were all on the alert but fortunately the Boers did not see fit to venture an attack. Martial law was then declared and the control of the town taken over by the military authorities, a special court of summary jurisdiction being established to try all prisoners charged with doing anything in any way calculated to be detrimental to the interests of the Queen. To this court I was appointed prosecutor by Lieut. Col. Kekewich the officer commanding the troops. The court has sat nearly every day since then and my time has consequently been fully occupied. You will be able to read particulars of the work of the court in the copies of the Advertiser sent to you by this post. I am sending you the weekly editions of the Advertiser published during the siege. You will gather from a perusal of these, what has been happening here. I had a strange experience a few nights back. I went up to the club to hear the latest news. While there someone stated that he had seen General Buller's electric searchlight. Great excitement ensued. Colonel Harris of the Town Guard said that he would go to the reservoir camp (one of the highest parts of Kimberley) and ascertain what could be seen from there. I accompanied him. The night was very dark and as we went we were repeatedly challenged by the sentries to give the countersign. The reservoir is specially guarded and a large force of soldiers are stationed there. On our arrival the captain of the guard escorted us to a high erection of sandbags etc. from which the surrounding country can be seen for miles in the daytime. We gazed for a long time into the night but after a time came to the conclusion that the light supposed to be that of General Buller's column was in reality only a reflection from one of the Kimberley searchlights. Great was our disappointment. The officers in charge of the forces in Kimberley are an extremely nice set of gentlemen. They are doing all in their power to relieve the pressure of the siege.

As far as we are concerned we have fared exceedingly well. We have been without any butter for over a week, our supply of tin butter also being exhausted and the supplies in town having been exhausted. Otherwise we have been very fortunate.

The poor people are having a hard time but relief works have been started.'

'Sunday 3rd Dec.

We are still without relief although news has come in that the relief column has arrived at Modder River and should reach Kimberley in about 7 days time. This is the 10th day of the siege and everything is going along famously. We are now accustomed to this kind of life except that we are longing for news of the outside world. The Boers are massing in grand force at Spytfontein, a station about 10 miles from here and a great battle is expected to take place there on Tuesday or Wednesday next. We will hear the sound of the big guns

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from here. There are still large numbers of Boers around Kimberley but we do not think they will attack us. On Tuesday last week a heavy engagement took place about 3 miles from here. Our forces were successful in capturing 150 shells, wagons etc. from the enemy but our loss was severe 22 killed and 30 wounded. The funeral next day was most impressive and a scene never to be forgotten. Alas for the many brave men who have fallen.

I fear the war is going to be a long business and that it will be months before it is over.

We are all in good health and eagerly looking forward to receiving news from you. I hope you have not been very anxious about us. How keenly father will read the newspapers and gather the latest war news. Just fancy you folks 7000 miles away know more of the progress of the war than we do. But we will soon be in receipt of news now.

Baby is growing rapidly and is a very great favourite with everyone. The boys never tire of playing at soldiers. They construct forts with paraffin tins and boxes and then attack and knock everything over. Remember us very kindly to enquiring friends and accept united love from Sophie and myself.

Your affect Brother  
Denoon.

I am sure you know a great deal more about the siege having read this absorbing account.

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### *Still Besieged*

We were small children in the siege of Kimberley and naturally did not realize the danger, nor did we understand what a ghastly strain it was for our parents. Strangely enough I can remember various incidents, probably because I heard them discussed on so many occasions and also having refreshed my memory by reading printed accounts and old letters. The piece of shell mother refers to in her letter, which was still hot when father picked it up, is now in our schoolroom museum bearing a silver plate engraved 'Kimberley Siege

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1900'. We also have in the museum two brooches father sent to Aunt Isabel and which she gave to me. One is made from a narrow band of copper engraved 'Siege of Kimberley 1899- 1900' and from the centre hangs a heart-shaped piece of Boer shell. The other brooch is a small heavy piece of shell with a similar plate which dear Little Auntie could never have worn but which must have given her and our Scottish relatives a great thrill to see and to handle. There is also a Boer bullet about 11 inches long which mother managed to keep all these years and-wonder of wonders -a china mug, miraculously reserved without even a crack, and which shows a coloured picture of Earl Roberts in the centre of a Union Jack shield surmounted by a crowned lion supported on either side by a Tommy Atkins with turned-up hat and a volunteer in helmet. This must be quite a treasure.

Recently Grandpa bought a long-playing record of the old-time favourites and we were surprised to hear recorded a song called 'Goodbye Dolly Gray'. It was composed during the Boer War and has a most lilting refrain which the tommies sang with great gusto in those far off days:

'Goodbye Dolly, I must leave you,  
Tho' it breaks my heart to go  
Something tells me I am needed  
At the front to fight the foe,  
See the soldier boys are marching,  
And I can no longer stay  
Hark! I hear the bugle calling,  
Goodbye Dolly Gray!'

I must not forget to mention the brass oblong tin of chocolates given to men under British command in 1900. The lid is red with a blue band running round the edge and in the centre a brass medallion of old Queen Victoria wearing a small crown with 'V.R.I.' entwined on one side and 'South Africa 1900' on the other. Below is a facsimile of the old queen's handwriting 'I wish you a happy New Year-Victoria. IR.' In my mother's letter she refers to a funeral at eight o'clock one night. That was for Mr. Labrarn, an American engineer who was killed by a direct hit on the Grand Hotel where he lived. He designed and constructed in the De Beers workshops a 20-pounder gun called 'Long Cecil'. Today this gun, surrounded by some of its shells, stands on one of the platforms of the Honoured Dead Memorial erected in memory of citizens killed during the siege. Built from pink and white stone brought from the Matopo Mountain in Rhodesia, the memorial occupies an excellent central position with several radiating roads.

Did I tell you that we lived almost opposite the hospital entrance gates and therefore had an excellent view of the funerals winding their way through the gardens? Father knew about this particular one and allowed us to stand on the pavement that evening, but we were hustled off immediately the shelling commenced and had all to squeeze into the dug-out shelter built inside our coach-house. It was a stiflingly hot summer night. We felt suffocated when a sheet of iron was fixed across the low entrance. We lay on mattresses on the ground and a dim lantern gave us light. Sandbags, reinforced by whatever corrugated or sheet iron father had managed to procure, enclosed our small shelter. The whining and bursting of shells continued late into the

night. On another occasion-I see the date was 28 November 1899-there was an attack at Carter's Ridge, a few miles outside the town, where twenty-two were killed and many wounded. For some reason their funeral started from the hospital during the day. We found it most spectacular. The gun carriages, bearing the coffins of the two officers, and wagons, carrying those of the twenty men, were preceded and followed by troops with reversed guns. The accompanying band with muffled instruments played the *Dead March*. It was the largest and most impressive funeral we saw. Horse flesh was served for the first time on 8 January 1900. We heard that about that date Colonel Kekewich gave a dinner in the club. Two bowls, one small and one large, of stew were brought in and placed before him. He rose to serve them as meat had to be most carefully rationed. Before doing so he made a short speech, something like this: 'Gentlemen, I regret to tell you that through lack of sufficient farming stock we have been reduced to killing horses in order to cope with the meat shortage. I have before me in the small bowl a stew made of beef cuttings and in the larger one a stew made of horse flesh. Which would you prefer? To set you a good example I shall serve myself from this bowl', indicating the horse flesh in the larger bowl. Squeamishly most chose the beef stew. Dinner over, Colonel Kekewich asked the gentlemen who had eaten from the larger bowl how they liked the horse flesh and found all of them agreed that they could not tell the difference. He agreed with them, and then addressing those who had chosen the small bowl he announced that he had purposely played a joke upon them by giving them the horse flesh! I think we ate it once or twice, no doubt quite thankful to have the meat, and here I must add that in spite of the scarcity of meat the price was 1s. per lb for beef and 9d per lb for horse flesh.

A happy event took place during the siege-the birth of our cousin, Mavis Oliver, on 25 January 1900. It caused great civic interest, her father being mayor of the town. I remember a photograph of Mavis, taken when she was only a month or two old, sitting propped up between great shells. I saw a picture of a group of siege children aged about 3 at the Big Hole Museum with Mavis seated in the centre. My uncle, Harry Oliver, was Mayor of Kimberley during the siege. Shortly after it ended, the inhabitants of Kimberley presented him and Aunt Aggie with a magnificent silver ornament quite three feet high. From a large base it tapers up to be finished off with a little swinging cradle. Around the lower tiers are the Kimberley City Coat of Arms and, an inscribed plate among beautifully wrought decorations. Who has it now? It belonged to the siege baby, later the charming wife of J. E. de Villiers, Judge President of the Cape, and was at her home at Charante, Eyton Road, Claremont. On her death it went to her daughter Nicolette, who still has it.

Here is a very interesting letter written by father while relaxing at the seaside after his continuous and exacting labours during the siege of Kimberley:

'Gordons Bay,  
20 March 1900

My dear Sister,

We are all here at the seaside enjoying a holiday after the trials of the siege. The children are enjoying the outdoor life immensely and Sophie and I are wonderfully benefited by the change. I expect we shall return to Kimberley in about 10 days time.

As regards the War it would appear as if the Boers in the Free State have had enough of fighting and were anxious to have done with it. Yet I think it will be several months before the war is over for there can be but little doubt that the Transvaal Boers will still make a stand. It is a great relief to us to know that we will not be troubled in our part of the country with any more fighting. It is to be hoped that peace will speedily be brought about by the Republic surrendering unconditionally. Colonials will only accept one settlement, the blotting out of the Republics and a United South Africa under the British flag. We are greatly pleased to read of the hostile way in which the English people are receiving the so called peace demonstrations, and we sincerely trust that you will all work for and urge the necessity of the United South Africa under the British flag.

We hope that father and you are both well. What joy it must have been to you to read of the relief of Kimberley. The papers to hand by this weeks post are full of the good news. I am posting you tonight a short account of the siege entitled 'How Kimberley was held for England'. It is by no means a full account but it will give some information of what happened to us. Later on a history of the siege will be published and if it is a good record I will send you a copy. I don't know whether I informed you that Mr. Oliver is mayor of Kimberley. He is having a grand time, quite an exceptional year. Receptions to Lord Roberts, Lord Kitchener and others. The Olivers and Wedderburns are all in good health. They are remaining in Kimberley for the present.

How is Aunt Betty? I am still hoping to see her again. Give her my love as also all other enquiring friends. It is possible I may be able to visit England next year if affairs in this country would only right shortly and give us an opportunity of making a little money to make up in some little degree for the heavy losses sustained. Baby is growing a big girl and is a great favourite with everyone. She is very fond of me and recognises my voice a long way off.

I paid a visit to the battlefields at Magersfontein a few days before I left Kimberley and went over the spot where the Highland Brigade suffered. It was dreadful to think of it. We spent many hours in the vicinity examining the kopjes formerly occupied by the Boers. The place was very strongly fortified and entrenched. The Boers' manner of living must have been very dirty and anything but comfortable. Apparently they were content to spread a sail across some branches and sleep on the ground underneath. All around were signs of disorder-cooking pots and utensils lying about in all directions-boxes and trunks and clothing. They evidently

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left in great haste when the news reached them of French's flanking movement. I was fortunate in finding a large 4ft 7 shell (evidently fired from one of our naval guns) on the battlefield. It is a great trophy and will be retained by us as a relic. Pieces of lydite shells were found among the boulders in the rocky kopjes and there were signs of much damage having been done by the shelling, the balls from the shrapnel shells being found in all sorts of places.

Travelling from Kimberley we noticed such a marked contrast to previous journeys. A temporary bridge had been constructed through the bed of Modder River. Each station was guarded by soldiers and all along the line were signs of military life.

Table Bay is a busy spot at present there being such a large number of steamers and vessels waiting to discharge cargoes.

Much love to father and yourself,  
Ever your devoted son and brother,  
Denoon.'

Father's letter refers to a visit to Magersfontein. I found among his papers a pass giving authority to proceed there and back. It reads: 'Mr. Duncan, Dr. and Mrs. Mackenzie, Mr. Oliver and Mr. Advocate Mackenzie have permission to visit Spytfontein and Magersfontein and return to Kimberley. R. V. Ross. Capt. Asst. Provo Marshal. Kimberley. 8.3.1900

A monument was erected at Magersfontein in honour of the men of the Highland Brigade who fell there. The unveiling ceremony took place on 11 December 1902 on the third anniversary of the battle. Special trains were run from Kimberley to a siding. Cape carts took the passengers to the foot of the koppie, from where they climbed up an easy path to the monument on top. Lord Milner performed the unveiling and was conducted and introduced by father, as president of the Scottish Association, who recalled the battle fought on 11 December 1899 when the sound of the guns was audible in Kimberley. Father and Lord Milner both wore grey suits and hats with black bands and looked so alike that spectators who did not know father asked those around to tell them which was Lord Milner. A photograph shows the latter followed by father walking up the path. Another shows my smiling mother and beside her a piece of Gordon's hat, Douglas's suit and my dress.

Father's assistance was sought and willingly given in aid of the Soldiers' Graves' Fund to preserve and maintain the burial places, including Magersfontein, of the fallen during the war, a task of great magnitude as many men were buried in desolate spots, which entailed much investigation, long journeys and extensive organization.

The siege and defence of Kimberley were described in a full-page account in *The Times*, London, Wednesday 9 May 1900. This began with a dispatch by Field-Marshal Lord Roberts, VC., Commander-In-Chief, South Africa, in which he stated: 'I am of opinion that the greatest credit is due to Lieutenant-Colonel Kekewich for the able dispositions which he made for the defence of Kimberley, an unwallied town spread over a wide area; for his

rapid organization of an auxiliary force which, in conjunction with the regular troops, enabled him to keep the enemy in check; and for the tact, judgment, and resolution which he displayed throughout the siege. I confidently recommend this officer to the favourable consideration of Her Majesty's Government.' Then follows a lengthy report from Colonel Kekewich, dated Kimberley 15 February 1900, recording his arrival in Kimberley, the mobilization of the local forces, the enemy gun positions and the various sorties, skirmishes, operations and attacks around the town, which then contained 40,000 inhabitants, including 570 imperial and 630 colonial troops. His report lists the names of soldiers and civilians who were outstanding in their co-operation. 'The Right Hon. C. J. Rhodes F.C., M.L.A., Hon. Colonel, Kimberley Light Horse, took a special interest in the raising of the Kimberley Light Horse and mounted troops etc. etc. His Worship the mayor of Kimberley Mr. H. A. Oliver has rendered excellent services, of which I cannot speak too highly. He has shown real courage, and to him is due much credit for keeping up the spirits of the inhabitants of Kimberley during the most trying period of the siege.' Colonel Kekewich's report continues: 'Of Mr. J Denoon Duncan I cannot speak too highly of his services which were most valuable and responsible and were rendered gratuitously.' Lt.-Col. W. A J O'Meara, C.M.G., Chief Staff Officer in Kimberley during the siege, writes in his book, *Kekewich in Kimberley* (London Medici Society, 1926), 'Denoon Duncan, a leading attorney in Kimberley, acted as Legal Adviser to the commandant throughout the siege and rendered most valuable services'. On 6 April 1901 the English periodical *South Africa* contained a long article on father in its series 'Men you know', accompanied by an excellent photograph. It starts off by recording the services of Mr. J. Denoon Duncan, J.P. of Kimberley, during the siege and his valuable work for which he was mentioned in dispatches and states that for many years prior to the stirring events of 1899-1900 he achieved a high reputation on the Diamond Fields as a sound business man, withal public spirited, a practical and able lawyer and a member of the Borough Council and various civic and sporting bodies. The article continued: 'After the Jameson raid there were rumours that an attempt would be made by the Boers on Kimberley. Mr. Duncan came to the front and took an active part in the representations made to the High Commissioner as to the unpreparedness of the town for defence of any sort. When these representations were neglected Mr. Duncan, his brother-in-law the present mayor, Mr. H. A. Oliver and others formed a kind of informal committee to consult with Colonel Harris and other military men as to the best way in which the inhabitants of the Diamond Fields could best defend themselves in the absence of any government help. It is not our intention here to go further into this period of the history of Kimberley. We mention the incident to show that all the best qualities of the citizens, who are British to the core, and of whom the subject of this sketch was one, were brought out when danger threatened their town. When, three years later, the peril became real, Mr. Duncan at once placed his services at the disposal of the officer commanding, and he was appointed crown prosecutor and legal adviser to the military authorities, positions he held throughout the siege. Mr. Duncan not only prepared and conducted the prosecutions before the court, but did a great deal of gratuitous work behind the scenes in connection with the general administration of affairs. During the existence of the special court of summary jurisdiction 416 cases came before it, involving 988 persons, of whom 680 were convicted and 308 discharged. The charges ranged from serious accusations of aiding and abetting, communicating with or signalling to the Queen's enemies, to infringements of the proclamations and notices regarding food supplies, etc. In addition to the cases which

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actually came before the court, a large number were dealt with by the public prosecutor, in which the information forthcoming was not sufficient to justify further proceedings. Sittings of the court were held every week day, with few exceptions, during the siege, and were continued notwithstanding the heavy bombardment during the last days before the relief. On 13 February 1900 the court sat from 11 a.m. to 12.15, during the whole of which time the Boers were firing their 100-pounder shells in the direction of the court. One of the shells fell in Ward Street, behind the court-house, and fragments from the explosion struck the court-house roof, but the court continued its proceedings as if nothing unusual had happened. It will readily be seen, therefore, that Mr. Duncan's position during the siege was hardly less hazardous and entailed infinitely harder work than fell to the lot of

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that in this matter and in the formation of Cadet Corps the Colonies are setting a splendid example to the mother country.

It is very satisfactory to me to hear that the work of the National Service League is appreciated by Cape Colonists, and I am sure that by working together, and by freely interchanging ideas we shall arrive at a solution of this most important question of Imperial Defence.

Believe me,  
Yours very truly,  
Roberts.'

J. Denoon Duncan Esq.

There are numerous letters to father from other leading men such as Lord Kitchener, Lord Gladstone, and Lord Methuen who took over from Colonel Kekewich after the siege and with whom father came into close contact. In one letter, 22 July 1902, Lord Methuen invites father to stay with them in their home, Corsham Court, Wiltshire. There are many letters from Lord Selborne, Governor of the Transvaal, including invitations to dine on 18 September 1905, 14 May, 18 May, and Thursday, 3 December 1907, and one saying: 'Could you come to meet and see Lord Selborne in his train at 6.30 p.m. tomorrow, Sunday 7 April 1906? He would like to see you there,' Others I have in father's correspondence are from Lord Milner, Colonel W. O'Meara, Lionel Curtis, Sir Starr Jameson, Sir Alfred Lyttelton, Abe Bailey and R.V. Ross, who had been an officer in the siege of Kimberley and was a brigadier in the 1914-18 War and who in one letter wrote: I often think of your kindness and the great assistance and help you gave me in the old Kimberley days.'

And what of his friends and many acquaintances? Through his many and varied activities he met most of the influential men of the day. I may have already mentioned a number. Here are others I call to mind: Cecil Rhodes, Lionel Phillips, Ernest Oppenheimer, Sir David Harris, Percy FitzPatrick, Jan Hofmeyr, Dan Retief of Wellington and very many Parliamentarians including General Smuts, Dr. D. F. Malan and Mr. Van Zyl, later to

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become Governor-General of South Africa. Father greatly admired my dear father-in-law, Johann Rissik. The many judges he knew included real friends such as A. J. McGregor, B. A. Tindall, J. G. Kotze, J. S. Curlewis, A. W. Mason, R. Gregorowski, H. M. Louwrens and others. And yet with all these men of merit he had some of his staunchest friends among those lesser known, for he loved the homely, simple joys of life.

You will find father's photograph and articles on him on page 118 of *Prominent Men at Cape Colony South Africa*, published in 1902, and also in *Anglo-African Who's Who* by W. H. Mills, 1907, on page 86.