# MEMORIES

BY MRS. L. H. BARNES

## DOWN THE YEARS

THE years are passing and I am alone, your father to whom I was married when I was 17, has crossed the bar, and you my 6 children, are all married and in homes of your own. As I sit with my memories I feel I would like to record some of them.

Needless to say many changes have taken place since 1880 when I was married, many who were in the forefront of our world have passed away, and are only names, and yet to these men and women does South Africa owe its place in the world. To these pioneers of the sixties and seventies does the Transvaal owe its position, and the little town of Pretoria its proud name and place as administrative capital of South Africa, and we raise our hats to their memory.

To many of us has been handed down the feeling of independence that existed when long ago the Transvaal was a Republic, and the spirit often needs curbing. Education and experience has done much but, nevertheless, in the hearts and minds of the older men and women it still remains, and they can't quite forget what to them are the good old days which are pleasant to recall. Those days when men such as Sir Theophilis Shepstone, Lord Loch, Lanyon, and many others whose times here were all too short, but coming when we were at an impressionable age, left deep impressions on our minds and hearts; you my children will not have just these memories, although some of you were old enough to realize what life during the Boer War was like from a child's point of view. Since those days people have come and brought with them new ideas, such as we who came here when very young knew little of, and we now, when alone, think back and wonder how in our ignorance we managed to make the progress we did. The news of the death of one or the other of our childhood friends who now, like ourselves, are dreading the downward path, comes to us sometimes, and we feel that our time too will soon come when we shall leave only a name; and so my children, I will try to recall and chronicle some of the outstanding events of my life.

## EARLY PRETORIA.

When trying to recall and record events which took place years ago it is necessary to remember conditions prevailing in such times, and habits and customs of the country in which one lived and of which one is writing.

South Africa, especially the Transvaal, has ever been a country of ups and downs, of such see-saw movement, that one wonders how any

time of steadiness has been arrived at, but it was during one of the so-called quiet periods that my father was induced to come to the Transvaal and throw in his lot with the Government here; he was a very good linguist and translated many valuable documents for them.

Potchefstroom was then the capital of the Republic—as the Transvaal then was, but soon after this was changed to Pretoria which, as you know, still is the administrative capital. It was then a village with few houses, and a small population, and men were beginning to arrive from other parts to seek better fortune, as it was expected to become an important place in the near future, that this was correct, later events proved, and had death not claimed my father at the early age of 48, he, no doubt, would have helped to create history, as so many of his contemporaries did, perhaps more quickly than in any other part of the world. Pretoria was a charmingly rural village in 1872 with two or three hundred white inhabitants, many of whom had come up from the Cape Colony. Most of the houses were of the bungalow type with thatched roofs and each had its lovely garden—as they still have. The water used for all purposes ran down open furrows on either side of the streets in which grass grew and during the stormy season which lasted the whole of the 9 months of summer, the streets became veritable water courses as well as the furrows, and for hours people were unable to cross dry shod; some waded through barefooted. There were, of course, no lights in the streets, and the houses were lit with candles for the most part made with tallow; a few of the so-called richer people had oil lamps. Buildings were somewhat primitive —the churches, English and Dutch were built of brick, some unburnt, the latter in the centre of Church Square, the former at the west end of Church Street west. Of one of the young clergymen who preached in this an amusing story was told—I give it as I heard it—A younger son of one of England's foremost families was sent to Africa for the benefit of his health and morals, and after being in Pretoria for a few years, died. The curate who himself was not as well conducted as he should have been, wrote to his people telling them of his death, they in turn wrote thanking him and asked him to have a suitable tombstone erected for which they sent quite a fair sum of money. Unfortunately the young curate was rather addicted to the sundowner habit and used the money to procure more stimulating drinks than he otherwise would have been able to do, and by the time he had made all arrangements with the stone mason concerning the stone, there was no money left to pay for it, and for long after he was spoken of as "the man who swallowed the tombstone."

It was in December, 1872 that my father had a home ready for grandma and me. He had bought two erven at the corner of St. Andrews and Schoeman Street from an Englishman called Douthwait, paying him in French brandy, two bottles of which he had got from a man from Durban bringing goods to some shop here (Douthwait and one or two companions finished these two bottles in one evening, and after a year or

THE PRETORIA STATION

BIRDS-EYE VIEW OF PRETORIA

# FIFTY YEARS AGO

ST. ANDRIES STREET

ARCADIA BRIDGE

two my father sold the one erf for £25). He began to build a home for his wife and child then in Cape Town.

## THE START OF A LONG LONG JOURNEY.

IT was a charming little cottage with a thatched roof—ground floors—and was placed in the centre of the ground with a garden laid out all round—it was very simply furnished—and was comfortable and arranged with taste. When ready he arranged for my mother and I to join him. Needless to say this was no easy matter as in those days travelling was a matter of serious undertaking, and the distance between Cape Town and Pretoria seemed considerably greater than from the Cape to England now does. My mother, then a very handsome young woman in the early thirties, quite unused to travel, having been born at Cape Town of Scotch and Irish parents, nervous and full of sorrow at parting from her mother and sisters, with whom she had been living while my father was in Pretoria, had to use all the determination she fortunately had a goodly store of, and with a sinking heart, but keeping a smiling face and stiff upper lip, made all arrangements for our journey and for leaving her birth place, her dear ones and friends, to join her husband in a new world.

It was, I think, in October, 1872, that we set out on our journey. My uncle John McGregor and my aunts accompanied us to the railway station, and watched the train move slowly out, and even his face showed some sorrow, he was a hard man, and one to whom money meant everything, and I think he thought mother foolish to wish to join my father, and undertake such a long journey alone, or with a small child. Naturally I felt only interest and excitement in all I saw, and I often wondered at the sadness my mother showed as Table Mountain faded out of sight. That I was impressed by it proved itself so for even now I can still see in my mind's eye the tall stately figure standing at the carriage window, and I can recall the feeling of fear and wonder that came over me as I watched her and began to conjure up all kinds of reasons for her sadness and strained appearance, and after a while to feel very ill, fear and the movement of the train contributing towards this. The first night we spent at a small boarding house at Wellington—the terminus of the new line being built to connect Kimberley, the newly opened diamond field, with the coast. We spent a most trying night in an uncomfortable bed, and I fear there was little sleep for my poor mother. We rose early and taking our suitcases (then called portmanteaux) we went into the dining room where we had breakfast. This finished we were told that the coach we were to travel to Kimberley in was wating to start, this proved to be a wagonette drawn by eight horses and mules, and could seat 12 people. I suppose it had springs, but even I, a mere baby, felt bruised and badly knocked about after a few hours driving.

This coach was one of a fleet of Cobbs & Co. built by this firm to take mails and passengers up country, passing through many small towns

and villages otherwise quite isolated with no regular postal service. The teams drawing these coaches were changed every two or three hours and these minutes gave the passengers time to stretch their weary limbs. The fleet was called *The Red Star Line* and were considered very up to date and comfortable mode of locomotion.

## DEAR, DEAR FRIEND.

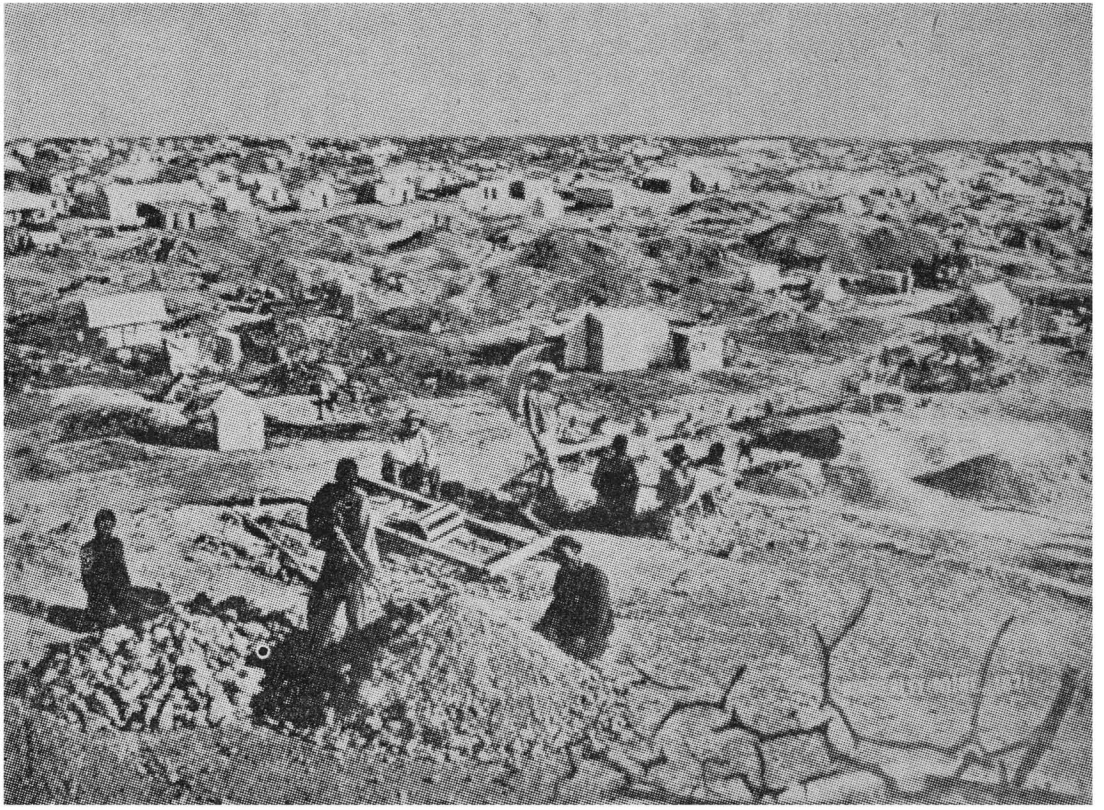
We found our fellow passengers congregated outside, all eager to begin the day's journey, and saw that they were varied, men, women and children. A family of father, mother and five children, an old gentleman whom the driver spoke to calling him "Dr.", several younger men, and ourselves. Shall I ever forget that hour! Mother looking weary and strained. After a sleepless night Mr. and Mrs. Taylor, the parents of the five children, very worried trying to dispose of their family, the younger of whom were fighting with each other, the elder ones quite indifferent giving no help to their over-wrought parents. My own feelings were a mixture of excitement and fear, both unexpressed (for I had been trained to "be seen and not heard"), but both head and heart were throbbing almost to bursting point.

The expressions of annoyance on the faces of the young men showed what their feelings were. I am sure their fingers itched to soundly slap the children who were to travel so many miles in close company with them. To my great joy and to my mother's relief the dignified old gentleman quietly took his seat next to me and in a fatherly manner comforted me, and gave confidence to mother, the more so when he introduced himself as Dr. Samson—a name reverenced by rich and poor both then and for years after in Kimberley and Johannesburg where he lived in strict accordance with the Bible commands, leaving father and mother, wife and children and home to help the poor and so follow Christ. Fortunately we had the front seat in the coach, and so were able to a small extent to separate ourselves from the rest of the passengers by drawing a curtain between the front and back seats. During the first day I began to feel very ill, feverish and heavy,as the heat of the day increased my fever did also, and after a while the old gentleman next to me lifted me on to his knee saying "I am afraid this little girl is ill, my name is Samson, Dr. Samson people call me, may I be of some assistance to you?" Poor mother, the innate reserve of her nature had kept her from saying anything to him until then, and she had just hugged me to her wiping my face from time to time with eau-de-cologne and whispering to me to be brave, asking if I felt ill, her own heart aching and her fears as to my condition growing greater and graver every minute. Dr. Samson took my temperature which proved to be very high and giving me his watch to play with or hold I suppose took my pulse, he then looked into my mouth and told mother he feared I had a sore throat—this proved to be the case—and after an hour or two he again examined my throat and pronounced the condition

to be that of quincy; needless to say poor mother grew more and more worried as the day went on, the more so as she could only get tepid water from a bag hanging at the side of the coach to moisten my fast swelling lips and throat. Fortunately Dr. Samson had a small case of homopathic medicines with him and was able to give some relief. At sunset we reached the town we were to spend the night at and the Dr. carried me in to the room arranged for us, and after a little while brought a large poultice which he put on to my throat. This gave me much relief, and after some time I fell asleep. Of course mother sat with me all night, giving me my medicine, and the Dr. came in two or three times to give further advice, and to give her confidence and courage.

The room we had was at best a very poor one, with mud floors, no ceiling, rough furniture, and a most uncomfortable bed, and at daybreak two cockerels sat on the window ledge outside our window and crowed lustily. At six o'clock we made a start again after taking several doses of Dr. Samson's medicine and having the poultice removed my throat seemed somewhat easier, and on having a hot bath in a basin I felt fresher and more alive, and although still feverish I was not worse. The day passed much as the previous one had and another troubled night when all kinds of strange noises kept us awake. The flapping of the canvas ceiling was distinctly eery, and the barking of an endless variety of dogs always found at outspans was disturbing and nerve racking. The Dr. paid us an early visit, advised mother to wrap me up in a rug and give me a drink of hot milk after having which he carried me to the now waiting coach and we began our third day's journey. We had by this time learnt what it meant to travel with a family of young children, not too well mannered and certainly uncontrolled by parents or older brothers and sisters. One of the boys had taken the nail brush from his mother's dressing case and was busy lustily scrubbing the mud floor of the bedroom they had occupied, while one of the little girls was using the toothpaste to clean her shoes. One of the elder girls was curling her fringe with a hairpin heated in the candle burning in a bottle, and the eldest girl (who subsequently became a fine singer) kept us all alive by screaming at her saying the smell made her nose and throat smart, and singing at the top of her rather loud and high pitched voice. I believe this voice helped to keep the family alive in the early days of the concert life of Kimberley.

Being an only child and very strictly trained, all this seemed very strange to me, and I can still feel the disgust it brought to my mind. I have met these people again and again in afteryears, and have seen the rise and fall of at least the sons, and read of the death of several. The sons and daughters of some are now heads of families,and so the years come and go. Through the care and attention of Dr. Samson and the nursing of my mother, my throat got better by degrees, and when 7 days after we left Cape Town we reached Kimberley after bumping over roads not worthy



KIMBERLEY IN 1871

of the name, sleeping in hovels, eating wretched food, not fit for strong healthy men, let alone nurtured women and children, I was at last able to sit up and take a little interest in things happening and life in general.

## KIMBERLEY.

IN the days I am writing of, Kimberley was a town of canvas tents of all shapes and sizes dumped down anyway, anywhere, no idea as to uniformity or regularity, no attempts had been made to arrange streets, and each person had a claim near their tent, making it indeed a place of danger after dark.

Some kind friends of my father's had offered hospitality to my mother and self and were at the office of the coaching company to meet us, they took us to the group of tents belonging to them, one of which they had set apart for our use. It was known as a bell tent, made of single canvas with a pole in the centre, and had a small furrow dug round it to keep the rain from running into it. Storms were very prevalent and rain fell very heavily, often washing clothes and small parcels out into the so-called streets. This tent had been put outside the reed fence surrounding the actual group of tents and the tents belonging to our friends so seemed to be some distance from them, though really quite near, only a matter of a few feet. The furniture consisted of two narrow camp beds, a packing case with a white cloth over it as dressing table, another as a washing stand with an enamel jug and basin, a small camp stool, a grass mat, a candle stick with a tallow candle, and a small mirror hanging from a rail on the pole. Father's friends (for they really were strangers to us) bid us goodnight after a frugal but plain supper and mother and I retired to our tent to pass the strangest night of many strange ones. In later years I have often wondered what my poor mother's feelings were, she was a silent sufferer for she smiled when her heart must have been very heavy, and she was nervous in the strange surroundings—we had indeed come to a new world—even houses were not plentiful, just a few were built then, and those were small and simple, and to my mind canvas was very little protection from sun, rain and hail, and when early in the mornings stray goats used to wander round and even try to climb on to the tent, I grew terrified, and almost hysterical thinking that strange men were trying to get in. I was unused to seeing nude or nearly nude natives, and I had seen many during the evening passing the little camp, and was sure they had returned. My mother was, as I have said, a tall stately beautiful woman, and soon made friends of our host and hostess, but she found it difficult to accustom herself to the conditions then pertaining on the diamond fields and, poor thing, she was not at all happy there I fear. Camp fever was raging at the time and through bad water, lack of sanitary regulations, many children were stricken with this scourge, many dying and both mother and I, child though I was, looked forward eagerly to the

day when the oxwagons would arrive that were to take us to Pretoria, to Dad and to home.

Alas this was not soon to be, and our dreary waiting began. In those days transport of goods and people was mostly made by oxwagon, one or two men would join in buying one or more wagons tented and open, and would undertake to bring families and goods from the coast or elsewhere. These wagons were built without springs and were not very comfortable nor roomy, and travelling in them over unmade roads or tracks and through river drifts was not an ideal mode of locomotion, but much indulged in, and congratulations were freely given to all those who accomplished these journeys in safety and comfort through country unpopulated, roads unmade and rivers unbridged. Dusty, sunburnt and tired after being held up by full rivers and heavy rains, lack of water for oxen, and humans, they reached their homes. After two or three weeks spent in dust and dread, growing more weary of our surroundings, I was taken ill and after some days of high temperature and sickness the Dr. whom mother called in (our friend Dr. Samson) decided that I had an attack of the dreaded camp fever. Oh how we suffered, poor mother, I can see her now, strained and wan up day and night dreading the nights and yet wishing for the cool air only then possible. The friends with whom we were staying were kind according to their lights( but the strange surroundings, the howling of dogs and natives, the heat, impossible to describe, the unbearable nights, pain in every limb, a thirst unquenchable, nothing cool just canvas between the sun and my throbbing head, white and glaring, flies black and sticking to my skin—no comforts—the only change that of my temperature rising and falling, and the difference between delirium and sanity when imagination held me in its clutches. Dr. Samson, as I say, her only real true friend, I can see her now in my mind's eye sitting on an up-turned box, waving a paper fan over my face trying to keep the temperature of the tent a little cooler by hanging a wet bag over the part of it nearest to my head. She was indeed a beautiful picture of grief, and as the days passed and I improved a little, I often wondered why she should have had such suffering.

After some weeks I once again was able to be taken out a little and we met some of the Kimberley ladies and gentlemen who called on mother. Among these were Mr. Denis Muir, the manager of the De Beer's Mine, he very kindly offered to take me down the mine, and one day did so. He carried me on his shoulder and got into the large bucket which was taken down empty and brought up filled with soil in which diamonds were found. As we went down he promised to give me the first diamond found while I was in the mine and did so, it was very tiny, too small to have cut so my father kept it till I was 16 then had it put into a ring and gave it to me to wear. . . . Everything was very primitive but I was very proud to have been down the mine, and then after weeks and weeks of waiting one morning two men arrived who said they had come for us; they proved

to be a Mr. Meintjies and a Mr. Waldeck, the joint owners of a number of wagons, and brought a letter from my father to my mother.

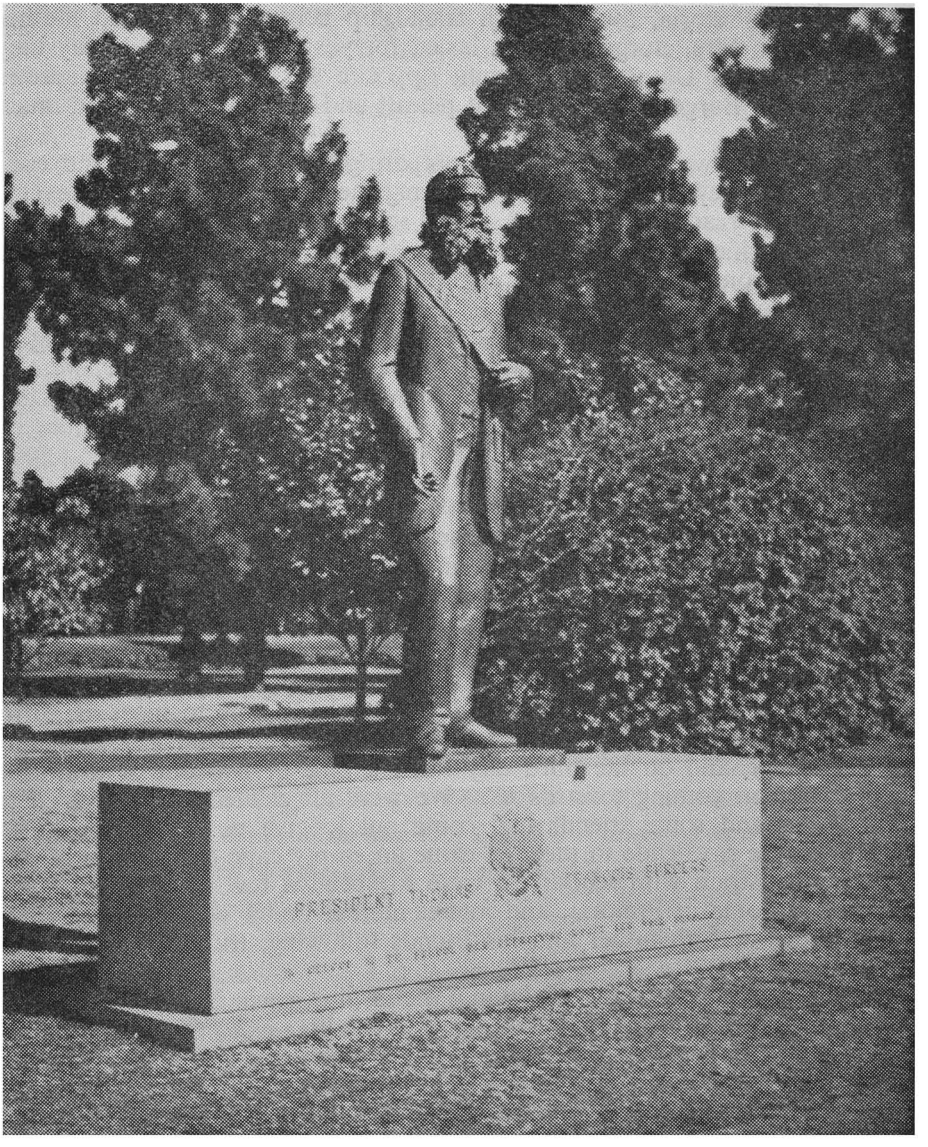
## AN HISTORIC MEETING.

In a few days they were ready to start and mother and I bid a glad farewell to those whom we had met, and set out on our long journey of three weeks or more to sleep and live in a covered oxwagon with its high tented roof, to sit on our bed all day, to lie in it all night, to have our meals round the camp fire at nights,all these happenings were a great joy to me, a wonder and delight. Our conductors were friendly men, sons of old Pretorians, and their one object seemed to be to make us as comfortable as they could do, and so we started out, as I have said, to the land of our adoption, to meet my father and see our new home.

Wild animals abounded in these regions at this time, and again and again one of our kind conductors would lift me in his arms and we would stroll slowly among the outspanned oxen where wildebeest and koedoe were grazing with them. Springboks came along in hundreds looking lovely with their glossy brown skins and small white tufts on their tails. These charming creatures would leap across the road and rush off at the slightest noise; they are indeed most graceful animals with their little heads held high and limbs poised.

Many were the interesting stories Mr. Waldeck and Mr. Meintjies told me at these times, especially when outspanned after sunset we sat around the camp fire waiting for the moon to rise when we began our night trek. The native drivers would squat round their porridge pot and chat of fights of long ago, battles lost and won. They showed great respect for the beautiful lady and her little girl calling me "nonnie" and spoke of us as having come from the land of the big water, i.e. the sea, and often made and presented me with little figures of children and oxen made of mud and whips of small branches of the wild trees we found shade under at midday.

At last, after two weeks, we reached the Vaal River to find it in flood, the water of a dirty brown colour rushing down in waves, bringing branches of trees, tins, stones and garbage of all kinds, making it absolutely impossible for our wagons to cross by the drift. This meant a wait of days —so our wagons were drawn into a circle, in the centre of which ours was placed so as to protect us from attack of any kind of animal or human, and in this way we set out to make ourselves comfortable till such time, probably three or four days, as the river subsided. During the first day we noticed a cavalcade of horsemen followed by a wagonette drawn by six horses approaching and when it stopped near to our camp we found it contained Mr. Burgers with several others, all bound for Pretoria, where Mr. Burgers was to be elected President of the Transvaal. The men alighted and raising their hats to my mother, joined us at tea. After chatting a while they continued their journey crossing the drift by the pont



*Statue of President T. F. Burgers in Burgers Park, Pretoria*

(ferry) which was large enough to take the wagonette, but not the wagons of our camp. These days were full of history, it was being made daily. This incident (the meeting of Mr. Burgers) gave us the opportunity of meeting and speaking to the President elect before anyone else in Potchefstroom and Pretoria, and began a friendship between father and mother and Mr. and Mrs. Burgers, which lasted for years, for strange to say they came to live in Ulundi House right opposite our home in St. Andrews Street. Mrs. Burgers was a brilliant pianist and she and mother had much in common.

Eventually we found ourselves preparing to cross the river and continue our journey. After eagerly watching the water slowly recede, everything was in readiness and with much screaming of drivers, cracking of whips a terrified little girl holding on to her mother, who both were seated high on the bed in the wagon which took premier place in the row that slowly wound its way, first down into the bed of the river, then slowly crossed through and up the high bank and steep side arriving at last on the other side which meant they, wagons, oxen and people, were in the Transvaal after 19 days and nights travelling.

## ALL OUR TO-MORROWS.

HOW my mother's heart must have rejoiced. She was at last about to meet her husband, my father, after several years and to begin again a new life in new conditions, in a new country, to meet people she had never seen. After a day or two we had settled down again and soon found evidences of a changed climate, different air, more rain, and on approaching Potchefstroom we were charmed to find a river with glorious willow trees on either side. Now in the old capital the President elect had been feted a few days before, and my father had come to meet us. Mr. Burgers had given him the note he had kindly taken from mother telling of our safety, and on the third day when a mile or two out of town, we saw horsemen coming towards us. We were all excited and delighted to find father and some friends had come out to give us a welcome.

With the cavalcade to meet us came an empty cape cart, this belonged to the Magistrate with whom we were to spend a few days before going on to our home in Pretoria, and into it mother and I were proudly taken into the town, with father and his friends following, truly a royal procession.

These were the days of loving friendship—each friend gave to the other freely of all they had if one were in trouble—your friend and neighbour came to your assistance, had you a sick child your friend helped you nurse it, had you any joy or celebration in your home, your friend again came to share it, happiness and sorrow, all was shared. There was nothing of service paid for; all was lovingly given, full measure and overflowing.

Our arrival was watched for by almost the whole population of the little town, and our welcome was just wonderful. Mother was at once taken to the hearts of the friends with whom we were to stay and when father led her away to the room prepared for their use I am sure no prouder man lived than he. I well remember the words spoken by our host to his wife as they left the room. They ran something like this: "There goes a fine woman, one who will be a real helpmate to her husband in this new land, may they begin life again in happiness and comfort, and be a blessing to each other."

The room set apart for mother and father they called the "Bridal Chamber" and I am afraid from that moment I began to feel the loneliness I always attribute to an only child, although when I was fed and bathed and put into the cot prepared for me in a corner, I soon found my father's arms around me and his loving goodnight kisses cheered me and gave me a feeling of importance. I now really had a Dad like other children — it had seemed a dream before, now it had become a reality.

As I have said before, we spent a few days in pretty Potchefstroom enjoying the hospitality of father's friends, many of whom gave tea parties in mother's honour and eventually started off, this time in a cape cart and four horses for our own home in Pretoria. Needless to say we were more than delighted to be getting near our journey's end.

*To be continued.*

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# Wisseltrofee vir Laerskole

**AS bydrae tot die eeufees van Pretoria het die Genootskap Oud-Pretoria besluit om 'n skild jaarliks as wisseltrofee uit te loof aan die Pretoriase laerskool wat met die mooiste tuin kan spog. Om onregverdige mededinging uit te sluit is besluit om hoërskole wat gewoonlik oor meer fondse en beter fasiliteite beskik, buite rekening te laat.**

Die belangrikste oogmerk met die hele skema is om die aankweek van en liefde vir plantegroei inheems aan Pretoria en omgewing, aan te moedig, of blomme en plante wat vroeër verteenwoordigend van Pretoria was — soos die outydse rankroos uit die dae toe Pretoria as die stad van rose bekend was. Op hierdie aspekte sal spesiaal gelet word by beoordeling.

Die skild sal van witstinkhout wees met 'n pragtige reliëf van silwer waarop verskillende inheemse plante- en blomsoorte afgebeeld is.