

CORRESPONDENCE

SOUTH AFRICAN LETTER.

(The following are extracts from several letters received recently from Miss McLeod. Though none were written for publication, we print portions of them, because many who were interested in previous letters have been asking for more):

I caught a chameleon the other day—a very pretty one. But as a small boy was after the same one, and though he would never have caught it, for he was afraid to take it in his hands, I thought it better to give it to him. I will, probably, find another some day. Have I told you how plentiful snakes are? We haven't had any come into the house here, but they did at Miss Johnson's. I saw one between four and five feet long the other day. They don't frighten me much, though there are some kinds—the puff-adder, for instance, that are very poisonous. . . . I wish you all could be here and have some of the peaches and cream we have been revelling in the past week. They almost atone for having no strawberries. . . .

The weather continues very warm, and dryer, it is said, than any season for forty years. As a result there is a great deal of fever, especially in Zeerust and other low places. Here we are particularly free from fever. . . . I had a chameleon, a beauty, given me this week, but unfortunately I soon lost it. They are such sly things. As long as any one is in sight they stay quite still, but the minute one's back is turned they disappear. Lizards have been plentiful in school. At first I used to catch them and put them out to save their lives; but I have learned that some varieties are poisonous, so I leave them alone. We have this week killed two snakes in the yard; one that was prowling about escaped us.

You speak of our many holidays. As a matter of fact, we do not get nearly so many in the course of the year as at home, but they come oftener. Our five weeks Christmas vacation takes the place of our long summer vacation in Canada. . . . I found my lost chameleon. He got very tame, and I liked him so much. But now he is gone again. I fear the cat got him this time, though he may turn up again. . . . Things are rather looking up here. Another representation of a big mining syndicate has arrived, and they say things will boom shortly. They have already begun to sink a shaft.

We are having Easter holidays. I have done a lot of travelling this week, or, at least, have spent a lot of time at it, and expect to do more before the week ends. Tuesday morning at seven we left Malmain (Otto's Hoop) with the cart and mules sent by the Repatriation officials, and reached Miss Johnston's abode, at Rhenosterfontein, shortly before noon. We went by a new route

which took us through a very sparsely settled district. We passed only two farms all this way, until we got into the settlement which furnishes Miss J. with pupils. We saw some deer, plenty of game birds, partridge and guinea fowl, and a whole family of baboons. We had a warm welcome at Rhenosterfontein, of course. We remained till next day, and then took up our journey again. We were a good part of the day getting to Frichenburg. We drove on for hours without seeing anything but veldt, and were somewhat weary when we reached our destination. Miss Smith gave us such a hearty welcome that we soon forgot weariness. In the evening we went out to some friends of theirs. There were about a dozen guests, some of whom were Dutch, but well-educated and English-speaking, and we had a very pleasant time. Tonight, at ten o'clock, we are starting on a picnic by ox-wagon. I will tell you about that when we come back. . . . Perhaps, before closing this, I should tell you something about Trichtenburg. Although the road coming here is so dreary the town is really pretty. The houses are much scattered, and all are surrounded by large gardens, and there are many trees. When one remarks to any of the citizens on the beauty of the place, the answer invariably is,—“You ought to have seen it before the war; now most of our trees are destroyed.” The place did play a large part in the history of the war. It was taken by the British, then by the Dutch, and then by the British again. Gen. de la Rey has his home here. All the inhabitants are Dutch—it is a real Dutch dorp. There is not any English family in the town, except that, of course, the Repatriation and other officials are English. . . .

When I wrote last I think we were about to start on a picnic trek. Thursday at 11 p. m., we assembled. There were about fifteen in the party. The ox-wagon was a covered one, like a huge gypsy wagon. I must have some time sent you a photo of one like it. It was drawn by sixteen oxen, each one of which had a name and recognized it when spoken. It was a glorious moonlight night. We started off jauntily enough. There was singing and story-telling till we were tired. At 2 a. m. we outspanned, built a fire and made coffee. Most of the men were vividly reminded of the life “in column,” and recounted their experiences. After a brief tarry on we trekked again. When the moon went down it was dark for only a little, for soon there was the dawn of the morning, and presently the sun rose very majestically. We were then at about our destination—the Wonder Hole (I translate, for the Dutch would convey no idea). It was a pretty spot, and we spent the day very pleasantly, just a very little of the time being devoted to sleep. We ate supper by the light of the moon,

and started on the backward trek about 8 p. m. The night was a repetition of the previous one. We arrived at Trichtenburg about 4 a. m., and were quickly asleep. When I next opened my eyes I saw Miss Smith dressing. “You are surely not going to breakfast?” I said. “My dear,” was her answer, “it is now half-past twelve.” So I had had a pretty good sleep. Although I enjoyed it, I think once in a life is enough for that sort of a picnic. Tomorrow will be just one year since I left home. . . .

Next week the Zeerust Agricultural show is to come off. We have three holidays. Zeerust is quite excited, as I suppose any small town would be over its first exhibition. Lord Milner and Gov. Lawley are expected, and the whole district will be well represented. We have to exhibit school work. . . .

We have just returned from a four days' trek to Zeerust exhibition. We left here Monday afternoon in a big tent wagon, drawn by the ever-faithful oxen. About sun-down we outspanned, built a fire, got supper, and made arrangements for the night. We had mattresses and plenty of blankets, and were able to make ourselves very comfortable. In the morning we journeyed on through Jacobsdale, where we picked up Miss Ellis. Early in the afternoon we reached Zeerust. The show was very like every other one I have seen, the patch-work quilt and the huge cabbage being very much in evidence. In this case, however, the people were very much puffed up over it all, as exhibitions are a novelty in the Transvaal. . . . We were four nights in our house on wheels, and although the ground was white with frost in the mornings we never thought of being cold. And the middle of the days were positively scorching, so that muslin dresses were in order. The contrast between the night and the day at this time of year is very striking. . . . On our way home we visited the Wilsenach homestead farm. The oranges and lemons are just ripe, and everything is looking beautiful. Every farm here has some orange trees, just as at home they all have apple trees. . . .

There was a snow storm in Johannesburg a week or so ago (about May 20th), the first in ten years. There was never any in this district. . . . The mining goes on here, though they are having lots of quarrels and difficulties. They had to turn off one manager on account of drink, and he

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