

However, her own relationships with men were anything but happy. She had refused a proposal from her doctor, Bryan Donkin, but he was irritatingly persistent in his suit of her. To make matters worse, despite her reservations about Karl Pearson and her intentions just to remain his friend, she soon conceived an attraction for him. He did not reciprocate her feelings, preferring Elizabeth Cobb. In 1886, she left England for the Continent under something of a cloud, travelling between Switzerland, France and Italy before returning to England. During this time, she was tremendously productive, working on *From Man to Man* and publishing numerous allegories. She also worked on an introduction to Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*.

Return to South Africa

Given the situation in England, it is perhaps not surprising that Schreiner chose to return to South Africa, sailing back to Cape Town in 1889. The return home was unsettling for her – she felt extremely alienated from the people around her, but at the same time experienced a great affinity for the land itself. In an attempt to reconnect with her surroundings, she became increasingly involved in (local) politics and produced a series of articles on the land and people around her, published posthumously as *Thoughts on South Africa*. Through her work with local politics she became intimate friends with Emily Hobhouse and Elizabeth Maria Molteno, influential women activists with similar opinions on civil and women's rights.

Her involvement with Cape politics led her into an association with Cecil John Rhodes, with whom she would soon become disillusioned and about whom she would write her bitterly satirical allegory *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland*. This disillusionment began with his support of the "strop bill" that would allow black and coloured servants to be flogged for relatively small offences.

Her opposition to the "strop bill" also brought her into contact with Samuel Cronwright, a politically active farmer. They were of the same mind on the "Native Question" and on Rhodes, and Schreiner soon fell in love with him. During a brief visit to England in 1893, she discussed with her friends the possibility of marrying him, although she was concerned that she would find marriage restrictive. She put aside these doubts, however, and they were married in 1894, after which they settled at Cronwright's farm.

The next few years were difficult and unsettled ones for them. Schreiner's worsening health forced the couple to move constantly, while her first and only child, a daughter, died within a day. This loss was worsened by the fact that all her other pregnancies would end in miscarriages. However, she found solace in work, publishing a pamphlet with her husband on the political situation in 1896 and *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland* the next year. Both of these isolated her from her family and the people around her, and she experienced long spells of loneliness during this period of her life.

In 1898, the couple moved to Johannesburg for health reasons. In the aftermath of the Jameson Raid, they were seen as the champions of the Republican cause in the face of the inevitable war between Boer and British. Schreiner tried to persuade South African officials to turn away from the path of war, and, when that failed, wrote *The South African Question by an English South African* in an attempt to open the English public's eyes to the reality of the situation. That was equally unsuccessful, but Schreiner was undaunted. Throughout the war, she continued to defend Boer interests and argue for peace, as did her brother William Philip Schreiner, even though she was suffering physically and psychologically and all her efforts only met with ridicule. As a means of distraction, she began reworking the "sex book" she had started in England into *Woman and Labour*, which is the best expression of her characteristic concerns with socialism and gender equality. Driven by her prophetic vision of a non-racist, non-sexist South Africa, during the Boer War Schreiner lived in the tiny hamlet of Hanover, virtually a British army camp.