

. "The CEGEPs have gained maturity but in the view of many observers they have grown old too quickly."

. "The single most damaging feature of the Canadian college movement has been the tendency for its members and others to evaluate these institutions on bases appropriate to other kinds of institutions."

One senses that the authors have tried to cover too much ground in their understandable efforts to be comprehensive. The book suffers to a certain degree from a relatively sparse use of examples. Also, although a handful of people are mentioned as being critical to the establishment of the colleges in the various provinces, few practitioners are singled out as having been instrumental in the development of the college movement, giving the work a certain arid and impersonal tone. They may have been simply reflecting the standard Canadian reluctance to identify heroic figures, which Americans tend to do with so much more panache, even when undeserved.

**One weakness:** One might have expected to have found here some discussion or outline of the variety of program characteristics or mix of colleges, variations between the systems, comparative breakdowns of Board composition, etc. Such data would have been more useful for the discerning reader to find among the Appendices than a map of college locations in Canada. The book, however, is immensely useful and calls out for early comments and response from Canadian practitioners to the many issues raised. Although blemished by some sweeping generalizations, it is otherwise encyclopaedic; it should become *must* reading. The book makes a major contribution to understanding the Canadian college movement, only now beginning to mature. Let us hope that it will not be another fifteen years before a definitive response is forthcoming.

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**Margaret Gillett.**

**DEAR GRACE: A ROMANCE OF HISTORY.**

Montreal, Quebec: Eden Press, 1986.

246 pp. \$24.95.

*Dear Grace* may be viewed as a book of discovery mainly about the life of William Clow Ritchie, a Canadian doctor who graduated from the School of Medicine, Queen's University in 1889 and, after taking post-graduate studies in Edinburgh, emigrated to Australia. The central part of the book consists of a collection of twenty-seven letters written by Little from Scotland and Australia between 1889 and 1894 to Grace Octavia Ritchie.

The two had known each other for about a year at Queen's where they had both been medical students. Grace Ritchie, who had previously been among the first women graduates in Arts from McGill University in 1888, spent a year at Queen's, then completed her medical studies at Bishop's University in 1891, when she became the first female to graduate as a doctor in Quebec. The author provides helpful background information about the families and lives of both of the principal characters before the correspondence began, and traces, as well, the succeeding events in their lives after the correspondence appeared to have ceased.

Only rarely do authors of historical biographical writing ever share with their readers the odyssey of the intellectual adventure involved in the conceptualization of their task, their search for data and the process by which those data are carefully pieced together to determine the necessary chronology and to provide the biographical descriptions that are eventually published. We are fortunate that in *Dear Grace*, Margaret Gillett shares that process with us at the very beginning of the book, taking the reader from the first probings in Quebec and Ontario, then on two journeys to Australia where, on each occasion, there are unexpectedly rewarding revelations and new evidence. The evidence found consisted of archival sources in both countries, including official records and newspaper items, as well as a personal diary, the recollections of descendant relatives and acquaintances, and valuable local historical sources. The result is that upon reaching the letters themselves the reader is challenged to continue the mental process of discovery already begun.

In going through these letters, readers will likely ask themselves what motivated this man's life as a doctor in Australia? Was it healing the sick and injured? the desire to make more money than was then possible in Canada? the opportunity to gain prestige and power in a small community? the sense of freedom and pioneering in a remote frontier town? or some combination of these motives? How did the relationship between William Little and Grace Ritchie develop over the years when this correspondence took place? Was the outcome of that relationship influenced by a growing congruence or incongruence in their values? What other powerful influences from more localized circles concurrently may have shaped and transformed their lives? The letters themselves provide rich material for reflecting upon these and other questions.

Some readers may yearn for more symmetry to the contents of the book than has been given. Here are the letters of Dr. Little, often fondly reminiscent of shared experiences and of friends and relatives in Canada and tinged with romanticism, but usually also filled with details of professional practice, frequently descriptive of local people and events, sometimes introspective. But where are the letters from Grace Ritchie to William Little? Alas, they have never been found. One wonders whether the author

of this book might have reconstructed Grace's letters from the contents of William's, as well as from contemporary developments in Canada, and from the accumulated knowledge of Grace Ritchie as a person, to provide that symmetry. The author decided not to sacrifice historical authenticity for speculation and drama.

However, there is perhaps one respect in which more symmetry may have been provided to advantage. While considerable information is provided by the author about William Little's new home in Warracknabeal and surroundings, including several excellent photographic illustrations of the social and economic life of that part of Australia, there is only very limited information about Lachute, Montreal, Kingston, Toronto and other such centres that are referred to in William Little's letters. It would surely be helpful to Canadian readers – and especially to Australian readers – to have more knowledge of the historical period in which Grace Ritchie lived. Such information might help them better to understand how Grace Ritchie received and interpreted the letters in the 1890s, and to judge whether William Little really became out-of-touch with the personal development of Grace Ritchie and the world in which she lived.

*Dear Grace* is a unique book in that it examines the parallel lives of two people. William Little has a career that at first surges forward, that then seems to slow with the onset of illness, that declines in personal and professional fulfillment and ends in premature death. By contrast, Grace Ritchie's is increasingly ascendant both in medical practice and national politics. She is blessed with good health and longevity, becoming a person of national prominence. Seen in that perspective, this book is an unfolding adventure where two lives touch each other like two flames that burn brightly together, then separate, one eventually flickering and extinguished, the other blazing on.

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