

I loved her from the first time I came here as a wandering tourist, in the days when a Women's College was hardly thought of, and my affection has never changed. I know that when the waste of seas divides me from her I shall often feel homesick for the clear Australian skies and the kindly Australian ways and the quick Australian wits—for the scent of the gum and the morning call of the magpies, and, above all, for the College which I saw built, and the friends I have made there.

Some weeks ago I heard a quaint story of an Australian Irishman, who met the children of a friend in the street, and, suddenly stopping them, exclaimed: "Good health and benediction to the family of Kelly." I should like to use his words in saying "good bye" to you: Good health and benediction to all my students. Indeed, I could wish you nothing better than a sound mind in a healthy body, and the blessing of God on all your works and ways.

Louisa Macdonald.

Women's College,
June, 1919.

THE WOMEN'S COLLEGE IN THE PIONEER DAYS.

Yeh've got to go right back to Dad,
To Gran'dad and the pioneers.
'Oo packed up all their bags ur tricks
An' come out 'ere in sixty-six,
An' battled thro' the years;
Our Gran'dads; and their women, too,
That 'ad the grit to face the new.

So writes Dennis in "Digger Smith," seeking to account for the exploits of the Anzacs. Opposite the lines is a picture of Gran'dad felling a great gumtree, and of Gran'ma toiling along with two heavy buckets of water—all honour to them! It is of Miss Macdonald as "Gran'ma," as a pioneer, that I wish to write. But inaccuracies must be forgiven. The memory-pictures of twenty-seven years ago are often vivid enough, but they can hardly have the accuracy of a pen-and-ink sketch on the spot. And the students of the early days, as at present, were too busy living their lives to keep any adequate record of their doings, much less of their impressions. To them "Life meant intensely, and meant good"—why analyse it further?

Seeking to recall the past, I looked up an old student's notebook. In it I find hardly any mention of the building of the Women's College, of the University examinations and their results, of the anguish of missing the coveted "first-class," of the ambitions and hopes of girlhood, but such interesting records as:—

- 1892.—April 23rd, my first Commem., Matric.
May 25th, University Dramatic Society, "Palace of Truth."
July 28th, Andrew's Ball, my first.
- 1893.—August 15th, Inter-Collegiate Boatrace. Paul's won.
- 1894.—March 27th, First Night at New College.
March 28th, first night of Professor Scott's lectures on Political Economy.
June 25th, Christmas Festivity at College—Ghost Stories.
July 23rd, At Home, U.L.L.T.C. got into a row for dancing in Great Hall.
August 14th, Our Women's College Dance (this was the first).
September 28th, to Mrs. Besant's lecture on Mahatmas.
November 24th, to Cricket Match, England v. N.S.W.
December 17th.—Last Night at College.

If the above record is representative I am afraid it shows how little the students realised the hard work, the struggles, the discouragements of the Principal in the early days of the College. But do the settler's children playing in the forest clearing, rejoicing in the sunshine, and in the new free open-air life that has come to them, realise the hardships their parents are undergoing for their sake, and for the sake of the generations to come?

Those who live in an age of women's suffrage, of equal educational advantages for men and women, of the cry for equal pay for equal work on the part of the sexes, can have little idea of the prejudice there was against the higher education of women, even so late as the year 1892. It was usually considered right that boys should be well educated, but the money spent on girls' education was often paid out grudgingly, as the head mistresses of girls' schools could testify, and if any need for economy arose, the girls' education was the first thing to suffer. So Miss Macdonald, with the English traditions of Newnham and Girton in her mind, and with her first-hand knowledge of University College, London, had not only to build the Women's College, but she also had to find the students to fill it, and so begin a new era of women's education in a new land. It is true that women had already been admitted to the University, the first two B.A.'s obtained their degrees in 1886, and women-

1893 was the year of the bank smashes, involving commercial ruin to many. Incidentally, those disasters may have proved the value of women's education, since so many women felt the strain and injustice of being compelled to earn a living when untrained and unequipped. But the immediate effect was that money melted away like snow. Various means were devised to augment the College funds; dramatic entertainments were given, and an exhibition of loan pictures was held. Truly, it was a hard struggle. And it was well for us that the Principal and members of the Council were men and women of the larger vision, and with a prophetic insight into the future. Foster Frazer speaks of the prevalent Australian phrase, "That's good enough." It is said that an Australian bushman can do anything with a kerosene tin and a piece of wire, and is quite content to go on doing it! But Miss Macdonald was not one to put up with makeshifts; her students, pioneers in a great movement, must have the best possible—the surroundings suitable for the work they had to do, the beauty that "makes the wings of the soul expand." And as soon as the foundations of the new building showed above the surface of the ground, the grounds themselves were laid out, and prominent citizens interested in the cause of women's education were invited to a tree-planting ceremony, and each planted a tree. So that by the time the new College was ready for the students to take possession, they found the building no longer surrounded by unsightly rubbish heaps of upturned earth or of broken bricks and mortar, but by grassy lawns and slopes and flower beds, while the baby-trees were showing signs of vigorous growth.

Then came the triumphant opening day, when the students were able to proudly display all the conveniences and beauties of their new home. Even then there were carping critics who could not see the necessity for building a college to hold 27 students when there were at present only five resident students on the roll. And one critic even objected to the scheme of furnishing as too luxurious. "I don't see why you want carpets like this; bare boards are good enough for a handful of schoolgirls!"

Fate has widely scattered the eleven students who for shorter or longer periods of time lived at the College during the three pioneer years of its existence. Four are married and are the mothers of families, three are the heads of flourishing girls' schools, doing a great work for the com-

munity, two have been busy with social and war work in England. Yet the friendships formed during the College life together have held good, as Miss Macdonald hoped they would. Letters keep one in touch with another, and it is easy and natural to pick up the threads of friendship again, when one has much in common—as the following extracts prove. The writer of the first letter was the first student to enter the Women's College:—

I was most interested in your letter with details about the family. . . . I am still being worked to a thread as E. (her husband) was forced to keep on the mayoralty (of Hereford) for another year. Of course the food supply needs a lot more thought and care than before, and my work is increased enormously by various returns I have to make to the Central Red Cross. . . . The Filling Factory gives me a lot of work, too, as there are thousands of girls there, and it means much work for the Welfare Committee. . . . I have had the honour of being "mentioned in despatches for conspicuous services to the War Office." . . . Write another nice long letter soon with all your news.

The next writer entered the College during our second year at "Strathmore." Her letter is written from "Area Depot, W.R., A.F., Coventry, 4/4/19," and runs:—

. . . . It is lovely to think that if I saw you to-morrow I might pick up the threads as if we had met the day before. . . . I have not had an uneventful life just lately, as I have been at two stations within two months. First I was sent to Lincoln, because they had had ructions there and it was a difficult place to manage. I had a fight the whole time I was there. . . . I moved the girls up into a new hostel, arranged it all, and had 'flu, and then was moved off again. The job I am in now is a very big one. It is the Area Depot for the Midlands; that is, all recruits come here, and all girls are drafted out from here to their different camps and units. We have an average of 200 girls always in, and now that we are sending girls to overseas, it means an immense amount of work. . . . I have a very excellent company commander, and she drills the girls just as well as a sergeant-major. We went off to church parade in a company of a hundred to-day, all in uniform but one, and looking fine.

It is quaint to think that the writer of that letter and I together planted a tree in the grounds of the women's College in the year 1894, and with the pedantry of youth christened it *Spes in Amicitia*. I believe the tree died—possibly the name killed it—but the friendship endured.

It was said to me lately of the Women's College: "It is rather a remarkable thing that it has produced no exceptionally brilliant student, no scholar of world-wide reputation." Why should it? We cannot all be Joans of Arc or Florence