



Companions of the Peace: Diaries and Letters of Monica Storrs, 1931-1939

Monica Storrs

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In 1929 a cultured English gentlewoman arrived in the barely settled wilderness of northern British Columbia as an Anglican missionary, intending to assuage her sense of duty by staying for one year. She stayed for twenty-one. The years covered by Monica Storrs' journal entries (1931 - 1939) were at times unbearably hard, the depression compounding what was already a demanding existence. She and the group of women she lived with, the Companions of the Peace, were sent out as 'missionaries of empire.' As the journals progress, Storrs' droll British wit persists but her imperialistic attitude softens as her work draws her into the lives around her. Expanding on the initial mandate to start Sunday schools, foster contact with women, and perform church services, she became involved in assembling libraries, lending money for seed grain, financing medical assistance, and organizing theatrical performances and poetry contests. After her death even the non-British inhabitants of the Peace River district described her as 'one of us.'

Helped by the judicious editing of historian Vera Fast, these penetrating journal entries make for an unusually absorbing read, with rare details for scholars of British imperialism, Canadian pioneering, and women's life writing, but with enough story and humour to engage any reader.

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