

For the first two years at St John's College delicate health and aborted pregnancies had kept Caroline largely confined to bed or sofa. She became practised at writing while flat on her back and fretted at being frequently told that 'those laid aside may still help in praying for those who work'.¹⁸ Later in 1852 her physical strength was to return; in May, Mary Martin wrote,

You will rejoice to hear that Cary Abraham is getting quite strong and well. The Bath Chair arrived just as she had grown too well and saucy to use it Sasa and I quiz Cary that she is getting down from her aesthetic heights to our level of divine drudgery. She teaches black boys their A.B.C.—little dull girls to read, and has a mind ever alive to the best way of making a stew or boiling bones to jelly to feed hungry lads.¹⁹

Caroline always tried to find satisfaction in the 'simple all-sufficient employment of daily duties—however poor & circumscribed that daily duty seems'.²⁰ Like many women of her social class she indulged in watercolour painting, but from time to time she suffered 'deep gashes of memory', yearning for past voices and faces, for walks with friends in the English countryside, for the daily services of an English cathedral.

Considering the extent of the upset it is strange that her letters contain no mention at all²¹ of the 'sad cloud of calamity, the passing tempest of moral evil' which overtook St John's College, of which her husband was the effective head, in the summer of 1852.²² Or perhaps Sophia Marriott considered the subject of such letters unedifying and simply removed them. 'The evil', J. F. Lloyd wrote, 'originated altogether with the English and had been in existence almost from the commencement of the college . . . & fearing that the evil might spread also amongst those who were still free from it, it was thought best to dissolve the whole institution.'²³ The last meeting of the College Council held on 7 June 1853 decided 'that the existing buildings of St John's College be devoted to the purposes of an English Collegiate Institution' and that 'Archdeacon Abraham²⁴ be authorised to take measures to organise that Institution'.²⁵

Caroline's letters are sparse for the remaining years at St John's but fortunately Vicesimus Lush was a regular visitor. In February 1854 he was surprised at finding a 'slight increase to that for some time most desolate place—viz. four pupils, the beginning of the College after the English model'.²⁶ Charles Abraham wrote to Edward Coleridge that he was 'at the old trade of Latin Grammar etc' and 'adopting rather a private tutor system, so as to mould their character in a more gentlemanly fashion than is ordinary here'.²⁷ The passing years had not modified Caroline's earlier view of colonial society: