



# The Governesses: Letters from the colonies 1862-1882

*Patricia Clarke*

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'For anyone with a taste for social history and perhaps some feeling for the contrast between the romantic triumphs of fictional governesses and the fate of the living species self-portrayed here, this valuable book should be a special pleasure' - Tess van Sommers, *Sydney Morning Herald*

'It is a rare pleasure to read a book that is excellent in every way: research, writing, balance, interpretation... this is not a book to read about, but to read' - Nancy Kessing, *The Australian*

In the second half of the nineteenth century a number of women, sponsored by the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, left Britain to seek a better life in the colonies. Unmarried and unemployed, they were among the many educated genteel women who were endeavouring to find work as governesses, then one of the few occupations open to them.

In letters back to the Society these women reported on life as they saw it in the colonies during the years 1862-1882. They tell of their travails; of their adjustments to strange and often hostile environments; of their loneliness, their failures and their successes.

Most importantly, they give fresh and disarming views on colonials and colonial society, touching on aspects of pioneering experience and of life in the towns of seven countries during a fascinating period in history.

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