

The Reverend R. Cary Montague was born at Chelsea, Massachusetts, August 10, 1877. His parents moved to White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, before he was a year old. In early childhood it was discovered that he and his sister, Margaret Prescott Montague, had serious trouble with their eyes, a disease called retinitis pigmentosa. The best doctors of that day said that the disease was of progressive type, and the probability was that both children would be totally blind by the time they were twenty years old. Consequently it seemed hopeless for their parents to plan their education along normal lines, so their early studies began through the medium of the old raised line type used in schools for the blind. As they grew up, however, the disease did not seem to progress as it had been predicted, so they could use their eyes for studying in the normal way.

They were most fortunate in that their parents were highly educated; the father, Ronald W. Montague was a graduate of Harvard University, and the mother, Harriet Ann Cary Montague, was a woman of unusual ability-Practically all of the education Cary and Margaret was given by their parents in the home.

At the age of twenty-one, Cary Montague began teaching in the West Virginia public schools, and was quite active in educational work throughout the state, instructing numerous county institutes during summer vacations- He was also active in politics, having been elected a justice of the peace at the age of twenty-two and a member of the Legislature at twenty-four.

In 1906 he gave up teaching and studied in law at West Virginia University from October to January. He passed the state bar examination and practiced law at Lewisburg, in Greenbrier County.

On May 6, 1908, he married Miss Margretta McGuire, a daughter of Dr. Hunter Holmes McGuire, who was surgeon general in Stonewall Jackson brigade in the Confederate army.

In 1910, he was appointed by Governor William E. Glasscock as Superintendent of the West Virginia Schools for the Deaf and the Blind-The previous Superintendent James T. Rucker, had had a stormy administration, and was the object of a great criticism. Mr. Montague came to the institution with instructions from the Governor not to allow the former Superintendent to remain in the institution overnight after his arrival. Mrs. Montague became the head matron of the school.

A strong friendship developed between Mr. Montague and H.H. Hollister, head of the blind department, and they spent many hours playing chess, as both were unusually good chess players. The mistakes made by Mr. and Mrs. Montague in their efforts to learn sign language afforded the deaf teachers and pupils a great deal of amusement. Many of the difficulties and amusing incidents of the deaf and the blind pupils living together and of the life of the officers of the school have been incorporated into a book of seven short stories entitled Closed Doors written by Montague's sister, Margaret Prescott Montague. Miss Montague lived at the school much of the time while her brother was Superintendent.

In the deaf department Mr. Montague's efforts were directed toward the further use of the method of teaching speech and lip-reading to the deaf. There was a prejudice against this system of writing, and during his administration Montague urged the adoption in Braille, which has since become the universal type for the blind. In the first year of Montague's administration he prepared three of the senior blind boys for the examination for public school teachers held at the time in various counties. All three of them passed with sufficiently high grade to obtain teacher's certificates. He also organized a literacy society at the School of the Blind, naming it "The Columbia Literacy Society", for the one to which he had belonged while in the West Virginia University.

During his administration Mr. Montague kept the school entirely free from political influences. Because of this independence of action, he was not reappointed to the position when a new governor came into power.

He had been brought up in the Episcopal Church and had always taken an active part in the affairs of the denomination. He anticipated trouble with the politicians, and so began his studies for the Episcopal ministry for two years before the expiration of his four-years term at the schools. Immediately upon leaving the superintendence of the schools, January 1, 1914, Bishop Peterkin of the Diocese of West Virginia placed Montague in charge of the Grace Episcopal Church, Elkins, as a lay reader. He was ordinal deacon in June 1914, and priest in September 1915. In November 1917 he went to Richmond, Virginia to be Episcopal City Missionary. This position calls for preaching and ministering in state, city, and charitable institutions. In 1926 the University of Richmond confirmed an honorary

degree of Doctor of Divinity upon Mr. Montague, the citation being “for outstanding work for the fortunate.”