A STUDY OF MIDDLE-CLASS FEMALE EMIGRATION
FROM GREAT BRITAIN,
1830 - 1914

by

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ABSTRACT

The plight of the impecunious unmarried gentlewoman is a familiar theme in Victorian social history. Historians have ransacked literary sources to demonstrate the misery of the Victorian governess and the depth of a dilemma that was sufficiently serious to generate the feminist movement. Yet there has been no systematic study of the changing fate of the Victorian "distressed gentlewoman" in the face of all the attempts by reformers and philanthropists to improve her position during the nineteenth century.

The problem of writing a social history of the Victorian middle-class spinster has been aggravated by the paucity of appropriate sources. This study is based on the records of contemporary female emigration societies and Colonial Office emigration projects, and on the personal correspondence of some emigrants. It investigates the position of distressed gentlewomen from 1830 to 1914, and explains the results of one popular remedy for their dilemma: emigration. Only in the latter half of the nineteenth century did voluntary organizations establish facilities expressly for the emigration of middle-class women. Yet some early-Victorian gentlewomen were sufficiently hard pressed to use the facilities of working-class organizations to escape from difficult circumstances in Britain. The emigration records permit a closer analysis of the social backgrounds and careers of some Victorian gentlewomen than has hitherto been possible.
Throughout the nineteenth century in Britain there was an increasing surplus of women of marriageable age. This intensified the problems of middle-class women who were without any means of financial support. The Victorian social code stressed marriage as the most respectable career for women, and for those unable to achieve that status the employment field was confined, in large measure, to the overcrowded and exploited occupation of the governess. For women with only mediocre qualifications for teaching who were accustomed to the relative leisure of the middle-class home the need to find employment could come as a rude shock, and usually involved a certain loss of caste. The economic problems of distressed gentlewomen are familiar, but it is not generally recognized that many of them suffered from what we today call alienation.

Emigration, more than any possible occupation in Britain, was able to alleviate this sense of alienation by providing remunerative work in combination with secure social relations, a combination rarely enjoyed by the working gentlewoman in Britain. In the British colonies a gentlewoman could safely become a domestic servant without losing social rank and the companionship of her employers. Yet several factors prevented large numbers of distressed gentlewomen from taking advantage of emigration. The early-Victorian prejudice against female emigration, the preference of the colonists for working-class women, the rigid principles of the feminists and the insistence of British emigration organizations on expensive preliminary domestic training raised formidable barriers against the emigration of most impecunious gentlewomen. When, in the late-Victorian and
Edwardian periods, voluntary organizations used the rhetoric of the Victorian feminine civilizing mission to encourage large numbers of educated women to emigrate, it was well-trained lower-middle-class women seeking professional work who benefited most, and not the less qualified distressed gentlewomen. The latter had not profited from the late-Victorian advances in female education; rather, the resulting competition worsened their relative position in the search for employment. Neither emigration nor the achievements of the feminists could solve the problem of the distressed gentlewoman, a problem which remained acute while the Victorian social code survived. Only the decline of that social code and the mass-mobilization of the female labour force during the First World War eliminated the existence of distressed gentlewomen as an important social problem.
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INTRODUCTION

A standard feature of the long Victorian era was the unmarried and invariably unmarrigeable "distressed gentlewoman." Her chief characteristics are familiar: brought up for a life of cultured leisure, in some cases suffering from "too much leisure," she was suddenly faced with the need to earn an independent living with the use of her superficial "accomplishments," music, drawing, dancing and a smattering of French. Her only possible employment was that of the governess, an overcrowded profession in which most members were ill-qualified, exploited and downtrodden. G. M. Young spoke both for contemporary fiction and recent historical treatment when he described the governess, "snubbed, bullied and usually quite incompetent," as a "standby of Victorian pathos." W. L. Burn recently described the dependent daughter as "one of the fundamentals on which the Victorian home was based." Equally, it is true that the impoverished single daughter was a nagging reminder of certain deficiencies in the Victorian social system, a disturbing indication that the wealthy and all-powerful middle-class was yet unable to preserve the status of its overprotected women.

Although she is a familiar figure the distressed gentlewoman has

yet to be made the subject of systematic historical or sociological analysis. Many writers have ransacked literary sources—most notably mid-Victorian novels—to produce vivid descriptions of the daily life of the governess. Historical works on feminism have demonstrated that the economic plight of the Victorian gentlewoman was a major factor in the origins of the "women's movement." What we lack is a composite view of the problems faced throughout the nineteenth century by the rank and file of distressed gentlewomen and of the response of prominent groups in society towards their problems. Most accounts based on literary sources tend to assume that the problem of the gentlewoman was an essentially mid-Victorian one, and that it tended to fade away with the establishment of the "women's movement." It takes little study to show that, on the contrary, the problems of the impoverished gentlewoman persisted up to the First World War, and that one of the first questions posed by a systematic enquiry should be why nearly all her problems remained impervious to all the reforms of the nineteenth century. How did various reformers react to and ameliorate this nagging social problem?

It is difficult to answer these questions if one intends to look beyond the customary well-researched literary sources. These sources made exhaustive use of the distressed gentlewoman and governess. Novels


from Jane Austen to the Brontës still remain valuable sources for insight into the dilemma of frustrated gentlewomen. But little non-literary material exists which could constitute a systematic body of sources to examine the problems of these women throughout the century.

It is at this point that the question of female emigration becomes relevant. Middle-class women in need of employment turned hesitantly towards emigration as a final resort during the nineteenth century. The emigration of respectable spinsters, however impoverished, was a controversial and hazardous venture which provoked strong disagreements among interested Victorians. It struck at the roots of a major Victorian preoccupation with the ideals, beliefs and expectations of genteel English womanhood. A study of the evolution of female emigration can therefore shed light on the reaction of various groups to the Victorian gentlewoman and her vexing problems. How, for example, did the politicians, the civil servants, the philanthropists and the feminists react to the impecunious spinster who contemplated emigration? How, also, did the colonies respond to the sudden arrival of such apparently unprepared misfits?

By the mid-nineteenth century the term 'middle-class,' although still a meaningful distinction, comprised a wide cross-section of sub-classes with diverse social backgrounds and degrees of wealth. The innumerable popular and literary studies of Victorian gentlewomen have done little to distinguish between the effect of various social changes
in the nineteenth century on women from each of these sub-classes. Ex­cept for a few prominent individuals we know little of the social back­grounds and subsequent careers of the first students to attend Queen's College and Bedford College at mid-century; nor, more important, do we know how these first steps in female educational reform affected the mass of excluded women who could not take advantage of the new opportunities. How, for example, did the borderline lower-middle-class woman and the more gently-nurtured, but impoverished, spinster fare in the face of late-Victorian higher teaching standards wrought by the improved teacher-training of a minority? This is the kind of question for which little direct evidence exists. The emigration sources, however, can be used indirectly to provide answers. It would be useful, for example, to know which middle-class women were most driven to the outlet of emigration, and what conditions in Britain motivated them. Did the late-Victorian reforms in female education and the consequent rise in teaching standards cause more poorly educated women to turn to emigration, and if so what were their social origins? Finally, how do the colonial careers of middle-class emigrants—their improvement or otherwise—illuminate the nature of their previous social position in Britain? Fortunately the re­cords of some female emigration organizations contain enough data, in the form of statistics and correspondence, to attempt some answers to these questions. In no case is there a massive and systematic body of

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6 The otherwise useful study of female education by J. Kamm, *Hope Deferred: Girls' Education in English History*, (London, 1965), evades this type of question; like other modern studies it operates primarily within an institutional framework.
quantifiable material, but there is sufficient to make some reliable generalizations.

The emigration sources also permit a fresh examination of Victorian feminism. Emigration is one of those social movements which impinged on the feminist movement at many points. Nearly all the factors which prompted an interest in female emigration also stimulated the wider movement for female emancipation at home. The chronic disproportion between the sexes which produced a visible reserve army of unmarried, unemployed and "redundant" women was a convincing argument for either a massive scheme of assisted emigration or a long-range plan to admit women to preserves of masculine employment. The all too obvious fact that most of the superfluous unemployed women in Britain were middle-class meant that both feminists and female emigration promoters oriented their campaigns primarily to women of that class. Furthermore, the feminists themselves turned at one point to emigration as a means to alleviate the pressure in Britain for female employment. Female emigration, however, raised a number of questions on marriage, education and employment which were calculated to conflict with the principles of the more ideological feminists. Their practical resolution of these questions makes clear the feminist attitude towards emigration and does much to explain the nature of feminist attitudes per se. A study of the emigration movement, therefore, can serve as a useful vehicle to illuminate the feminist movement at some of its most sensitive and hitherto unexplored points.
A straightforward study of feminism has yet to provide this illumination. Despite the popularity of Victorian feminism in recent historiography almost none of the output has contributed to the social and intellectual history of the feminist movement. Until very lately most studies were little more than biographies of the leading figures or chronological accounts of the path to emancipation, with the suffrage movement and its success the inevitable climax. The most recent historical works have followed this well-trodden path, and historians seem to have abandoned the entire field of the social history of the women's movement to sociologists. The latter have made useful studies of, for example, the relationship between feminism and the rise of birth control and the function of the Victorian family in relation to divorce legislation. The institutional approach of the historians, on the other hand, has

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elucidated thoroughly the growth, leadership and organization of the women's movement, but said virtually nothing about the women the feminists intended to help. Also, with very few exceptions, historians have treated the feminist movement in a vacuum, failing to relate it to its social context and other social movements.

This failing is due partly to the very nature of the feminist movement. Mary Wollstonecraft's feminism of the late eighteenth century was simply one inseparable aspect of the contemporary utopian radicalism, but the women's movement of a century later was an independent issue quite unrelated to other movements for social reform. The Victorian and Edwardian feminists were middle-class leaders interested solely in the problems of middle-class women. Most of their campaigns for education, employment and the suffrage were of a moderate and piecemeal nature which involved no fundamental restructuring of society; indeed, most feminists shrank from any suggestion of a change in the wider social structure. There was no larger social movement with which they could associate, and they would have held aloof in their middle-class gradualism even had there been one. Consequently there is little scope for historians of feminism to examine the subject within a wider progressive or revolutionary movement.10

10The fact that this general interpretation is very gradually becoming the new conventional wisdom suggests that the state of feminist studies is not as backward as is here alleged. The new syntheses, however, like that in the general historical discussion of N. I. MacKenzie, Women in Australia, (London, 1963), pp. 2-8, have preceded the more particularized social analyses required to support them.
The lack of appropriate sources is a further obstacle to deeper social analysis of the feminist movement, just as it is to an examination of the more general problem of the Victorian gentlewoman. At the administrative level historians have exhausted the material relating to the policies, motivations and achievements of the various feminist organizations, but these sources can yield little more insight unless they are supplemented by other material relating to the ranks of middle-class women who were the objects of feminist exertions. The records of feminist organizations are sadly deficient in this kind of material and what little exists has not been exploited. Most scholars, for example, rightly assume that feminist workers were interested solely in 'middle-class' women, but there has been no attempt to determine exactly which section of the middle-class benefitted most from their work.

Since there is no wider revolutionary or reform movement within which to examine feminism, future studies must examine it not in a vacuum, but in relation to other contemporary developments. For example, the sociological study by J. A. and Olive Banks of the role of feminism in the rise of birth control also yielded important knowledge about feminist attitudes towards married women.11 Similarly, an enquiry into the feminists' role in female emigration can show how they felt about marriage and domestic service. The short-lived feminist flirtation with emigration during the 'sixties and 'seventies should help to clarify some basic feminist attitudes. It can also help to explain the impact of the

11Banks, op. cit.
various feminist reforms in education and employment on different sub-
classes of women. The emigration sources, although by no means exhaust-
ive, do permit a deeper study of these questions than other material.

The pertinent sources for a study of female emigration extend be-
yond statistics, correspondence and material on the social backgrounds
of emigrants to the propaganda employed by various emigration organiza-
tions. By the early twentieth century the complex rhetoric used in sup-
port of female emigration assumes almost as much prominence as the con-
crete accomplishments of the movement itself. The rhetoric is a key
tool, therefore, in answering a central question posed by this study:
whether its promoters conceived female emigration to be a conservative
or progressive solution to the problems facing British women, and whether
it was, in practice, what they conceived it to be. It should not be
surprising to find a considerable gulf between the rhetoric and the reality.

Besides offering new material for the study of middle-class women
and Victorian feminism, the phenomenon of female emigration also provides
a novel perspective from which to view the massive emigration movement
of the nineteenth century. The first formal attempts to organize female
emigration schemes in the eighteen-thirties were made long before the
beginnings of the Victorian feminist campaign. The initial schemes were
working-class in orientation, but they appealed to significant propor-
tions of middle-class women. Furthermore, the chequered history of early
and mid-Victorian female emigration is itself a history, from an unusual
viewpoint, of the hesitant but wider development of middle-class emigration in general. The dangerous and unsavoury reputation enjoyed by emigration in Britain during the eighteen-twenties changed to a more favourable one over the subsequent thirty years; this change had important implications for the future of 'genteel' female emigration, and, conversely, female emigration projects themselves contributed towards the moulding of a new image of emigration. Hence the growth and acceptance of middle-class female emigration from an early hostile stereotype can best be studied against the background of the changing emigration image between the 'thirties and 'fifties. It was the emergence in the 'fifties of female emigration as a respectable outlet for educated women which prepared the ground for the more extensive schemes of the feminists and their successors.

The sources for this study are those of, or relating to, voluntary emigration organizations, and, in the second and third chapters, the emigration records of the Colonial Office. Wherever possible data relative to the lives of individual emigrants has been utilized, particularly their correspondence; but where this is impossible, statistics, administrative records and related published sources add dimension. Since emigrants' correspondence is less common for the early-Victorian period than later, a case study of one of the better known, although admittedly untypical, emigrants of this period, Mary Taylor, is used to sharpen the general conclusions. The main virtue of Mary Taylor as an emigrant is the relative abundance of useful documentary sources. Her
close friendship from adolescence with Charlotte Bronte gave rise to a voluminous correspondence, much of which was destroyed; but those letters that survived provide a clear insight into her background, motivation and emigration experience. That experience has some important features in common with other female emigrants, but it is more valuable as a guide to the social background of the most elusive type of female emigrant for the historian, the independent woman who emigrated alone and without the assistance of voluntary organizations. Already assured of a comfortable livelihood, these women instead sought independence and challenge, and since they spurned all forms of paternal protection they left no trace of their experience in the records of an emigration agency. Mary Taylor's history does much to compensate for this deficiency.

This study extends from the origins of the first formal attempt to organize an assisted female emigration scheme in the eighteen-thirties to the effective end of the old techniques of female emigration with the outbreak of war in 1914. The period under review, a long one compared to that covered by most monographs, covers three different generations of women, and illustrates the most important factors of social change which affected women in each generation. Between 1830 and 1914, however, there were some crucial factors in the lives of middle-class women which remained fairly constant. The opening chapter is therefore an attempt to identify these common factors.
Chapter I

The Problem of the Victorian Gentlewoman

The picture of the revered, idle gentlewoman, cultivated in manners and superficial accomplishments but shielded from the harsh realities of politics, business and urban poverty, is a familiar one to scholars of Victorian England. It is a notion which exerted powerful influence as a Victorian ideal and represented reality for countless middle-class women, whose place, married or single, unquestionably remained in the home. With a regular army of servants and appliances at her service, her concrete household functions were progressively reduced to insignificance in the nineteenth century, and to replace them contemporary theorists of "Woman's mission" devised abstract ideals of noble refinement which at times reached positively majestic proportions.

One of the peculiar offices of women is to refine society. They are very much shielded by their sex from the stern duties of men, and from that intercourse with the basest part of mankind which is opposed to the humanizing influence of mental cultivation. On them, the improvement of society in these respects chiefly depends.

1The term "middle-class", as used here, generally refers to the newly affluent suburban classes of the nineteenth century, and is most often determined by the father's occupation, which could range from minor clerk to barrister or industrialist. This broad frame of reference is realistic when discussing the Victorian woman, since the contemporary ethic of the 'young lady' applied to a wide range of women extending from the lower-middle to upper-middle-classes. Some non-urban women like the daughters of country clergymen fall within this definition, but in general the women under discussion here are those most affected by the progress of industrialization and urbanization.

Is this familiar picture an accurate one? Its unquestioned acceptance suggests that it may well be overdrawn and some qualification is undoubtedly necessary before accepting the conventional view. The long schedule of household duties prescribed by Mrs. Beeton in her famous Book of Household Management suggests that the female members of a middle-class family had little time to spare after their daily rounds of household supervision, child care and social obligations. Florence Nightingale, who belonged to an affluent upper-class family, found the assignment of supervising and taking inventory of the still-room, pantry and linen-room a taxing chore, much as she loathed its apparent futility. For most women the daily routine may have brought a sense of purpose which could easily be lacking from a life divorced from all the industrial and commercial pursuits of society. On the other hand the most systematic enquiry to date suggests that after the middle of the century middle-class women came to enjoy an increasing amount of leisure which only a few put to constructive use. From the eighteen-fifties the

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3 The amount of domestic chores could vary substantially depending on whether or not the family employed a housekeeper, in which case the housewife's role was reduced to one of supervising the housekeeper; still, for all Mrs. Beeton's diligence she was unable to find sufficient routine duties for more than a morning's work, and expected the afternoon to be devoted to social visiting; I. Beeton, Mrs. Beeton's Book of Household Management, (London, 1906, orig. published 1861), pp. 10-20.


5 J. A. and Olive Banks, Feminism and Family Planning in Victorian England; the Banks further speculate that the drive and energy of the feminists was a result of their release from the "burden of domesticity," and of the triviality and humiliation of leisured ladyhood, which both
rapid rise in the middle-class "standard of comfort" denoted a steady increase in the average establishment of domestic servants, which, together with the advent of labour-saving appliances, curtailed many of the household activities of most gentlewomen. J. A. and Olive Banks aptly described the effects of this change on the mistress of the house as transition from "the perfect wife to the perfect lady," and while their description of the idle gentlewoman as a status symbol may be exaggerated, it is clear that female leisure did become more of a mark of status and respectability during the mid-Victorian period.

The trend towards more leisure for the middle-class woman, although rapidly accelerated during the nineteenth century, was certainly not new. For several centuries the wife's pre-industrial role of partner in her husband's business had been diminishing. By the seventeenth century, most writers agree, the middle-class woman's time was almost wholly taken up with homemaking, normally a demanding task even with a large company of servants. Still, in such matters of slow and fundamental stemmed from the mid-Victorian rising standard of living, pp. 10-13; for a more detailed analysis of the increasing "standard of comfort," see the earlier study by J. A. Banks, Prosperity and Parenthood, (London, 1954), chaps. 5-7, esp. pp. 101-2.

6A. Clark, Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century, (London, 1919), p. 41; C. Hole, The English Housewife in the Seventeenth Century, (London, 1953), pp. 2-5; the best account of the pre-industrial family is in P. Ariès, Centuries of Childhood, (transl. R. Baldick, London, 1962), 339-41 and passim; Ariès' pre-industrial model of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries cannot be taken as an accurate description of the contemporary English family, which probably evolved to industrial patterns more quickly, but his picture of the closely knit family, including servants and employees, in which the wife was commonly regarded
change it pays to be circumspect. The wife of Peter Laslett's seventeenth century master-baker was both a partner and a subordinate, "a partner because she ran the family, took charge of the food and managed the women-servants, a subordinate because she was woman and wife, mother and in place of mother to the rest." So long as apprentices, journeymen and servants resided on the premises and were regarded as part of the family, some vestiges of the woman's pre-industrial role remained, and it was not uncommon for a widow to carry on the business after her husband's death. The major change for women only came with the separation of the dwelling-place from the entrepreneur's working-place, a change which, Laslett argues, was not a recognized feature of the seventeenth century social system. 7

The greatest acceleration in the process by which home and working-place became separated occurred during the nineteenth century. The suburban movement strengthened the tendency of women to be completely detached from the affairs of the family business. H. J. Dyos shows in his study of Victorian Camberwell that the drift to new suburbs became well established at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and attracted as a necessary business partner, indicates the basic shift which industrialization wrought in the woman's role.

prosperous new residents who travelled daily to the commercial metropolis for their employment. As transportation facilities improved the suburban movement gathered pace, and brought with it the social and economic isolation of women. The rapid changes seemed so fundamental to those who lived through them that in 1869 a female reformer could argue that the old unity of family industry had only been destroyed in the past forty years by the omnibus, steamboat and railway, creating "a state of things suggestive of monastic and conventual service without these enclosures." The virtues so enthusiastically assigned by the Victorians to their women were virtues of the suburban housewife with a family to breed, servants to supervise and a husband to civilize.

It has yet to be proved exactly how idle most middle-class women were in the nineteenth century, but the Banks' studies confirm the impression, which so much of the literature of the time conveys, that their idleness increased during the century, and that it became an important mark of respectability, or, as Banks described it, part of the "paraphernalia of gentility." Especially during the 'fifties and 'sixties as prosperity increased, and with it the retinue of domestic servants and household appliances, the woman's former role of domestic housekeeper diminished. A constant round of social visits, fancy needlework, the

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light morning routine of household supervision, tended to replace manual housework in the wealthy suburbs. The transition "from the perfect wife to the perfect lady" freed the middle-class woman from household drudgery, but, in return, frequently exacted a heavy psychological toll. The resulting pressure on so many Victorian women to live up to the noble ideal of the mission civilatrix contributed to their mental strain.

The popular Victorian version of the feminine civilizing mission contributed to the trend towards a norm of ladylike inactivity. The high puritanical tone of middle-class society in early industrial England suited the image of Coventry Patmore's Angel in the House. When John Ruskin spoke in 1864 of woman's "queenly power" and her duty to "assist in the ordering, in the comforting, and in the beautiful adornment of the state," he was repeating sentiments long held as an article of faith in polite society. Hannah More provided a manifesto for the doctrine in 1799 when, in justifiably condemning the frivolous nature of female education, she insisted that women should make a Christian use of more serious studies through a gentle religious influence on men. This influence she called "moral power." "Have men no need," she asked, "to have their rough angles filed off, and their harshnesses and asperities

10J. A. and O. Banks, Feminism and Family Planning, pp. 11-12; J. A. Banks, Prosperity and Parenthood, chapt. 5-7.


smoothed and polished by assimilating with beings of more softness and refinement?" For more than sixty years a host of lesser writers expressed agreement, and the moralizing literature of feminine obligation, especially common in the 'thirties and 'forties, continued to honour Hannah More's ideal woman.13

The wives and daughters of prosperous Victorian families were confronted with an unprecedented amount of leisure time which only a minority were equipped to use constructively. This, rather than the slow improvements in woman's position wrought by the feminist movement, was the most important change experienced by women during the nineteenth century. Not surprisingly, the Victorian cult of the family assured that this general tendency would be elevated to a positive qualification for gentility.


If women were to humanize their families they must remain within the protective confines of the home, removed from the hard realities of the outside world. At times the high flown rhetoric might sound unrealistic, but the meaning was clear enough: women required domestic leisure in order to qualify for gentility.

What society wants from women is not labour, but refinement, elevation of mind, knowledge, making its power felt through moral influence and sound opinions. It wants civilizers of men and educators of the young. And society will suffer in proportion as women are either driven by necessity or tempted by seeming advantages to leave this their natural vocation, and to join the noisy throng in the busy markets of the world.

It followed that marriage, the sole vehicle whereby women could fulfill their "natural vocation" was the primary respectable ambition for the middle-class young lady.

Yet the hard fact was that thousands of unmarriageable middle-class women were doomed to lives which both they and society felt to be unfulfilled. "'Woman's Mission,'" Mrs. Jameson indignantly remarked, "of which people talk so well, and write so prettily, is incompatible with 'Woman's Position,' of which no one dares to think, much less to speak." The hard fact was that throughout the nineteenth century the

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numbers of women in the United Kingdom exceeded, at an increasing rate, those of men. In England and Wales the most spectacular increase occurred between 1851 and 1861, as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1. Females per 1,000 Males, England and Wales

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<th>Year</th>
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<td>1851</td>
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<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>1,053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>1,054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>1,055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>1,063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>1,066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>1,068</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Several factors accounted for the female surplus. The male birth rate exceeded that for females, but male infant mortality was also higher, so that by the age of 15 there were more females living. The constant absence abroad of men in the armed forces and merchant navy, and the greater drain of emigration on the male population further increased the disparity. What worried the Victorians most about this phenomenon was the demonstrable fact that the greatest disparity occurred in the marriageable ages between 20 and 30, and the less verifiable assumption that the female excess was concentrated mainly in the middle-classes.

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Since emigration and the armed forces drained off a higher proportion of youthful males than those at other ages the greater excess of younger women was to be expected. Still the figures seemed alarming in 1861, and provided an apparent explanation for the plight of so many young but unmarriageable gentlewomen.

Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ages</th>
<th>Male Excess</th>
<th>Female Excess</th>
<th>Army, Navy and Merchant Seamen Abroad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-4</td>
<td>9,032</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>1,854</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>14,602</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16,782</td>
<td>27,121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>109,073</td>
<td>55,292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100,590</td>
<td>35,328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>63,398</td>
<td>19,110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>43,982</td>
<td>11,574</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>32,011</td>
<td>6,367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>24,220</td>
<td>3,021</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The figures were considerably distorted, for as successive census reports complained, many women had an irritating inclination to mis-state their ages. Girls under 20 frequently over-stated their age in order to qualify more readily for domestic service, and many women over 30 understated their age for reasons of personal vanity or eligibility in the marriage market. After 1841 each census revealed more women in the 20-25 age group than had been entered in the 10-15 age group ten years

\[20\text{Tbid., Appendix, p. 115, Table 70.}\]
earlier. Consequently, while an excess of women certainly existed, it was probably more evenly distributed throughout the ages from ten to forty than the census suggests.\textsuperscript{21}

On the second assumption, that middle-class women formed a disproportionate number of the surplus females, there was, and remains, little direct evidence, except for the fact that the majority of female emigrants were working-class. Middle-class districts included a large number of domestic servants, which complicated any head count of their female population. The associated popular belief, that middle-class men and women were delaying marriage until later ages, is less difficult to substantiate.\textsuperscript{22} The available evidence suggests that a trend towards earlier marriage among the general population occurred from 1851 to about 1881.\textsuperscript{23} Yet a private study of marriage and mortality among the upper and middle classes alone showed an unmistakable rise in the age at marriage in both sexes in these classes. In 1871 C. Ansell, Jr. obtained the following results from a survey of nearly 8,000 families:\textsuperscript{24}


\textsuperscript{22}On the discussion of 'The Proper Time to Marry,' see Banks, \textit{Prosperity and Parenthood}, Chap. 3.


\textsuperscript{24}C. Ansell, Jr., \textit{On the Rate of Mortality at Early Periods of
Table 3. **Middle-Class Age at Marriage, 1840-1870.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period of Marriage</th>
<th>Mean Age at Marriage</th>
<th>Mean Difference in Ages of Husband and Wife Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bachelor Years</td>
<td>Spinster Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before 1840</td>
<td>28.64</td>
<td>21.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During and since 1840</td>
<td>29.95</td>
<td>25.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Periods</td>
<td>29.32</td>
<td>25.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most significant feature was that the gap between the male and female age at marriage in the middle-class was widening. Therefore, if, as seems likely, a high proportion of the female excess occurred in the same class, it would be severely aggravated by the growing tendency of men to postpone marriage until a more affluent period of their lives.

Providing her family could continue to support her, the gentlewoman who could not find a husband, and who had consequently "failed in business" as the *Saturday Review* put it, had little else to look forward to. Not surprisingly, therefore, she often suffered from what sociologists and psychologists today call "alienation." The lone substitute for her earlier active and concrete role within the family was the business of affecting a respectable and prosperous marriage, and to this end the family, especially the mother, devoted their energies and

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*Life, the Number of Children to a Marriage, the Length of a Generation, and other Statistics of Families in the Upper and Professional Classes, (London, 1874), p. 45; Ansell conducted his survey for the National Life Assurance Society. His survey covered the clergy, legal and medical professions and a large number "of other gentlemen and Noblemen" in England and Wales. The clergy experienced the highest age at marriage at 30.44, p.46.

25 "Queen Bees or Working Bees?" *Saturday Review,* Nov. 12, 1859.
thereby served a real social purpose. But the marriage market, as the feminists never tired of stressing, was grossly overstocked with eligible women—redundant women as one writer called them—and the result in many cases was to rob the family of its sole remaining social function relating to the daughter. Sentimental ties remained, and probably were intensified, but the frustrating existence of suburban middle-class women implied that for them the family had declined in real value. They had little useful role to play in its business, and were faced instead with an aimless routine of trivial rituals.

Charlotte Brontë captured the symptoms of this aimless, alienated condition in her portrayal of Caroline Helstone in her novel *Shirley*. "Existence never was originally meant to be that useless, blank, pale, slow-trailing thing it often becomes to many, and is becoming to me, among the rest," mused Caroline. She went on to lament the declining health and "wondrous narrowness" of minds and views which invariably resulted from feminine aimlessness, and, like the feminists, appealed to fathers to provide their daughters with useful education and occupation. Contemporaries frequently described these results of uncultivated leisure as a condition of "ennui" which only useful activity could eliminate.27


The more perceptive analysts saw that this condition went beyond simple mental vacuity or loneliness. J. D. Milne's socio-psychological diagnosis has a positively modern ring.

As it is—prevented from mingling her regard in much that is of vital importance to the well-being of mankind, and from undertaking many duties to which she feels naturally called—there is entailed upon her a constant sense of alienation from society, and the still more oppressive sense of a purposeless existence.26

Admittedly the frustrations of the idle woman formed a major platform in the feminists' campaign for wider employment opportunities, and hence were subject to some exaggeration. But where the feminists speak from personal experience, as the majority did, their arguments can be compelling. Mary Taylor, who had herself once escaped from enforced idleness to New Zealand, described what to her must have been a familiar sight.

To receive few impressions, then—to lead the uneventful and almost solitary life which is often thought fit for women—is to approach the borders of insanity; of the state in which the mind cannot distinguish the real from the ideal, and is more under the dominion of the latter than the former.29

The feminists rightly attributed this sense of alienation to the deprivation of all purposeful activity. Commenting on the mental and physical weakness of middle-class women to the Social Science Association, Emily


Davies observed:

It is a rare thing to meet with a lady, of any age, who does not suffer from headaches, languor, hysteria, or some ailment showing a want of stamina. ... Dulness (sic) is not healthy, and the lives of ladies are, it must be admitted, exceedingly dull.  

At its farthest extreme the gentlewoman's alienation became a more serious case of insanity, and it is significant that "Independent Gentlewomen," as shown in Table 4, had a higher proportion of recorded lunatics than any occupational group, male or female. Public comment, especially among the feminists, to the effect that the aimless existence of half-educated idle women led in many cases to insanity, reflected this situation. "Ask medical men the effects of idleness in women," fulminated Barbara Leigh-Smith. "Look into lunatic asylums, then you will be convinced something must be done for women." Similarly, a writer in the *Englishwoman's Journal* based the desperate need for higher female education and wider employment opportunities on the high incidence of female insanity. The insanity statistics add weight to the feminists claim that idleness among middle-class women was widespread and psychologically damaging.

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30 E. Davies, 'On Secondary Instruction as Relating to Girls', *N.A.P.S.S. Transactions*, 1864, p. 396; (published as separate pamphlet, 1864); see also Stewart, op. cit., pp. 10-11, and Emily Faithfull, "Unfit Employments in which women are engaged," *N.A.P.S.S. Transactions*, 1863, p. 767.

31 E. L. Smith (afterwards Bodichon), *Women and Work*, (London, 1857), p. 13; 'Female Education in the Middle Classes,' *English Woman's Journal*, Vol. I, June, 1858, pp. 219-20; see also E. Shirreff, op. cit., p. 110, who argued that women took part in fashionable philanthropic work not out of pious altruism but for some escape, however unsuitable,
Table 4  Selected former occupations of lunatics compared to total of
each occupation in population, England and Wales, 1861.32

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total in Lunatics</td>
<td>% age of total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musician</td>
<td>1,618</td>
<td>5  0.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schoolmistress, master, and other Teacher</td>
<td>58,350</td>
<td>121 0.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governess</td>
<td>24,770</td>
<td>136 0.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Servant</td>
<td>962,786</td>
<td>2,695 0.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charwoman</td>
<td>65,273</td>
<td>240 0.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentlewoman, Gentleman, Independent</td>
<td>27,420</td>
<td>631 2.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Stated Occupation</td>
<td>1,026</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10,289,965</td>
<td>13,096 0.127%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not all of the single gentlewoman's problems were psychological.

With large families the norm it was clearly impossible for all these
women to remain in a state of unproductive dependence on their families.

from "morbid feeling and mental suffering bordering more nearly on de­
rangement than we like to allow."

32 Extracted from Summary Tables, Census Report, England and
Wales, 1861, PP. 1863, LIII, Pt. 1, (3221), pp. viii, xiii-lxv, ciic-
cix; the occupations of slightly less than a third of the female lunat­
cics were not recorded, but the numbers are sufficient to provide a
reliable sample.
Sooner or later, as the prospect of marriage receded, most of them had to seek employment, for which few of them were adequately prepared. The mid-Victorian period witnessed a dramatic rise in the middle-class standard of living, but an even steeper rise in middle-class standards of domestic expenditure—on food, drink and household requirements, especially domestic servants,—so that the average middle-class family had less money to allocate to the daughter's support. In some cases, notably under the stimulus of family economic misfortune or sudden death of the breadwinner, the need to work could arrive with dramatic suddenness.

The phenomenon of sudden impoverishment, although not the usual pattern of middle-class life in the Victorian period, was frequently responsible for producing what contemporaries called the "distressed gentlewoman." We are rightly accustomed to think of the mid-Victorian period, at least, as one of remarkable prosperity. Despite this the insecurity of most gentlewomen stemmed from a congenital "uneasiness" of a large proportion of the middle-class, who had little protection against most forms of family economic crisis. The income and social standing of members of the middle-middle and even upper-middle-classes could easily be threatened by financial crises, death or other family misfortunes.

Banks calculated that from 1850 to 1870 the middle-class rate of domestic expenditure increased by fifty percent, although retail prices rose by only five percent. The growing importance of the son's education put further pressure on the family budget, Prosperity and Parenthood, pp. 101, 146-7, chap. 11.

F. Musgrove has suggested a useful working definition of middle-
This would especially apply to those whose income was continually at risk in the form of investments, especially the more speculative type, and those on fixed incomes who attempted to keep pace with the rising standard of living and conspicuous consumption by "keeping up appearances." The "ruin" of a prosperous family was still sufficiently common to remain a popular Victorian literary convention; Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* is a classic example. More of a threat, however, was the vulnerability of most families to the death of a father who was inadequately insured.

Reformers and feminists often blamed inadequate insurance for the plight of most "distressed gentlewomen." Bessie Parkes, an early

Class divisions according to income and occupations from mid-century as follows: Lower-middle-class: £60-£200, routine clerks, elementary school-teachers, lower civil service officials. Middle-middle-class: £200-£1000, professional men, well-to-do clergy, lesser gentry, superior tradesmen and industrial managers. Upper-middle-class: £1000 and up, members of diplomatic service, government office-holders, senior public servants, military commanders, heads of professions, successful merchants and manufacturers, higher clergy; 'Middle-class Education and Employment in the Nineteenth Century,' *Economic Hist. Rev.*, Vol. XII, No. 1, 1959, p. 99.

feminist, argued that middle-class fathers had a moral responsibility either to give their daughters the means to provide for themselves in the form of a sound education or to make financial provision for their daughters by insuring their own lives. But such forethought was rare.

It is lamentable to think how small a proportion of our population insures, when it is so cheap, easy, and safe for the young married men to do so, and creates help for the women of a family just when, by the death of the breadwinner, they would otherwise be left without resource. To insure, or to save up a portion for every female child, this is a father's sacred duty. Style, position, the keeping of many servants, all should be stinted to effect this end.

Unfortunately, as she went on to explain, the passion for material acquisitions and a large establishment of servants to maintain mother and daughters in fashionable idleness precluded any outlay on insurance premiums. As late as 1893 George Gissing underlined the irony of this situation in The Odd Women, a novel which revolved around the feminist issues of the day. Dr. Madden, the father of six daughters, to whom the thought "of his girls having to work for money was so utterly repulsive that he could never seriously dwell upon it," is accidentally killed in the first chapter, leaving his daughters unprovided for, immediately after announcing to the eldest that on the next day he would insure his life for a thousand pounds.

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37 G. Gissing, The Odd Women, (First edition 1893, London, 1911), Chap. 1. Gissing was well qualified to discuss the social problems of women, having been married to a prostitute. He patterned some of his characters after leading feminists, and subsequently became a close friend of the progressive feminist Clara E. Collett; J. Korg, George
Judged by contemporary needs, it is apparent that most of the Victorian middle-classes were, as the feminists argued, chronically under-insured. In 1846 a committee of civil servants asked William Farr, for many years Superintendent of the Registrar General's Statistical Department, to investigate the existing civil service superannuation scheme and to examine their proposal for an alternative widows' and orphans' pension scheme. Farr found the old scheme ineffectual in the extreme. The yearly salaries of 16,353 civil service officers averaged only £111, among which 8,704 under £100 averaged only £86. The premiums of the superannuation scheme, established in 1829, fell most heavily on those with the lowest incomes, requiring a 2½% deduction from salaries under £100 and 5% from salaries exceeding £100. Furthermore, the 7,964 employees who returned Farr's completed questionnaires drew an average salary of only £106. 5,367 of this group were married, of whom 4,290 had 16,331 children, an average of 3.81 children for each productive family. Admittedly, Farr's sample was unrepresentative of the entire civil service, but his point was well taken that the superannuation deductions left the majority of those with the greatest need quite unable to insure their lives or provide for their widows and children. Farr noticed that this deficiency had already caused considerable distress among the families of deceased civil servants, and recommended a combined superannuation-pension scheme along the lines of that of the East India Company.

which, among other things, provided a £50 yearly pension to orphan daughters until marriage. But more important, in view of his intimate acquaintance with British population problems, was Farr's conviction that the same conditions obtained among most of the middle-classes, not least those more prosperous than civil servants. Life insurance in these circumstances became a moral duty.

Life insurance meets the risk of mortality; but it unfortunately happens in all professions—and in the civil service among others—that life insurance, to an adequate extent, is not effected by the great majority of husbands—and more particularly by those whose lives are most liable to be cut short, and whose large families are likely to prove the severest pressure of want—the heaviest burden on the community. Society has, therefore, a right, and whenever an opportunity offers, perhaps a duty to see, that such a deduction is made from the adequate income in active life as will lighten the sufferings of the fatherless children and widows of its members. If the Government set the example in the public service, it may be copied by other classes; and would ultimately prove a great boon and economy to the nation.38

Whatever the reasons for it, the impoverishment of a middle-class family forced independence onto women who, by custom, had been educated—with a smattering of fashionable "accomplishments"—for nothing more than courtship and marriage. Only the most exceptional and talented women could hope to prosper from this kind of independence. For Harriet

38W. Farr, Remarks on a Proposed Scheme . . . for the Support of Widows and Orphans of Civil Servants of the Crown, (London, 1849), pp. 3-5, 7-13, 16, 29-31. On Farr himself see N. A. Humphreys, 'Biographical Sketch' in W. Farr, Vital Statistics . . . , (London, 1885). Towards the end of the century some feminists began to argue that the proceeds of insurance were inadequate anyway, and that there was no substitute for sound instruction of wives and daughters in a good business, even in that of the husband; see 'Women and Work,' Victoria Magazine, Oct. 1876, pp. 570-1.
Martineau the economic crisis of 1825-6 which virtually ruined her family and forced her to work turned out to be a blessing. For those who were less talented the results were not nearly so positive. The working gentlewoman automatically suffered a certain loss of caste, and her scope for employment was extremely narrow. The vast majority turned to teaching, the only major occupation deemed remotely respectable until the last three decades of the century. The occupations in Table 5, extracted from the 1851 census figures, cover all those into which middle-class women could conceivably enter at mid-century without greater class decline than they had already suffered from merely being forced to work. This is not to say that all those listed in these occupations were distressed gentlewomen, or even from the middle-class. Elementary schoolmistresses, for example, could include a large proportion of working-class women. Furthermore, few distressed gentlewomen would be properly qualified to be teachers of specialized subjects, or as librarians, musicians and local officers. The feminists were therefore justified in describing the teaching profession as an "open gulf" (sic) into which the whole class of destitute ladies rushed.

The competition and overcrowding among unqualified gentlewomen was intensified by the increasing entry of young women "who are not gentlewomen by birth" with an entirely different motive, "for the sake of social advancement, just as men some-


40 B. R. Parkes, 'Educated Destitution,' op. cit., p. 81
times go into the church or the army in order to become gentlemen by
profession." A phenomenon which was significantly frowned upon by
many feminists, it made teaching a platform where two classes of women
met, in Bessie Parkes' words "the one struggling up, the other drifting
down." The most habitual and notorious resort of the distressed gentle­
woman, however, was that of the governess.

Table 5. Great Britain (excluding Ireland) Putatively middle-class
occupations for women, 1851

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Total Females</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Total Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commercial Clerk</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Schoolmistress</td>
<td>41,888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Librarian</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>Secretary, Literary and Private</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music Mistress</td>
<td>2,604</td>
<td>Law Stationer</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musician</td>
<td>532</td>
<td>Teacher of Belles-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(News) Editor, Writer</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>&quot; of Gymnastics</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parish, Union, District Officer</td>
<td>754</td>
<td>&quot; of Languages</td>
<td>571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governess</td>
<td>21,373</td>
<td>Teacher-General</td>
<td>5,259</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The records of the Governesses Benevolent Institution, which was
formed in 1843 to cope with the urgent problems of unemployed, ill-paid
and ill-qualified governesses, clearly demonstrate that the profession


feminist opposition to aspiring working-class governesses see Louisa O.
Hope 'Girls' Schools,' N.A.P.S.S. Transactions, 1860, p. 399-400. M. A.

43Census Report, 1851 'Results and Observations' pp. 1852-3, LXXVIII Pt. 1 (1691-1), PP. CXXI-CXXVII, Table 53.
was overcrowded with distressed gentlewomen. The Institution's annual reports are filled with references to decayed gentlewomen unexpectedly forced into teaching by sudden family impoverishment. The lists of candidates over 50 years old for an annual Institution annuity abound with such descriptions as the following: "Became a governess at 17 in consequence of the embarrassment of her father's affairs."; "Being left an orphan very early, she resided with an uncle, who failed, and she was compelled to become a governess."; "Her father formerly possessed a very large property, but having many children, and having suffered many losses, he was unable to make any provision for his family."; "Became a governess 30 years since in consequence of her father being reduced from extreme affluence to extreme distress. Her whole family being involved in complete ruin . . . "; "Father, principal of the Interior Office, Bank of England; his income ceased with his life, and she became a Governess." The Institution itself saw this state of things as right and necessary. Discussing the recent formation, under its auspices, of Queen's College for girls in London, the G.B.I. Report for 1818 cautioned that

The Committee disclaim any idea of training Governesses as a separate profession. They believe and hope, that the ranks of that profession will be still supplied from those, whose minds and tempers have been disciplined in the school of adversity, and who are thus best able to guide the minds and tempers of their pupils.

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44 Governesses Benevolent Institution (hereafter designated GBI) Annual Reports, 1814, pp. 17-21; 1817, pp. 22-33.

45 Ibid., 1818, p. 17; Elizabeth Eastlake in 'Vanity Fair and Jane Eyre,' Quarterly Review, Vol. LXXIV, Dec. 1818, pp. 176-7, argued similarly, stressing that "we need the imprudencies, extravagancies, mistakes, or crimes of a certain number of fathers to sow the seed from
The G.B.I. annual reports effectively demonstrate that the overcrowded state of the governess' profession produced severe economic hardship for distressed gentlewomen. But not all of the governess' problems were economic ones. The resident governess occupied a kind of nether world in the Victorian home between the family and servants, in which she was accepted as a social equal by neither. This "social isolation," described by so many contemporaries, led inevitably to extreme mental depression and sometimes insanity. Elizabeth Eastlake, a staunch anti-feminist, acknowledged that the déclassée governess, isolated in all social relations from employers, guests, servants and children "must to all intents and purposes live alone, or she transgresses that invisible but rigid line which alone establishes the distance between herself and her employers." The genteel young woman was the most vulnerable individual to this kind of separation. Charlotte Brontë wrote to her sister Emily of her first governess' position thus:

I see now more clearly than I have ever done before that a private governess has no existence, is not considered as a living and rational being except as connected with the wearisome duties she has to fulfil. While she is teaching the children, working for them, amusing them, it is all right. If she steals a moment for herself she is a nuisance.

which we reap the harvest of governesses," but adding that this inevitable situation could only be alleviated by obtaining higher pay for governesses.

16 The G.B.I. inaugurated a contributory scheme of "provident annuities for governesses because their meagre salaries, resulting from overcompetition, were insufficient to provide for the future; The Institution's "Home for disengaged governesses," was invariably filled to capacity; Annual Reports, 1844, pp. 15-16, 1852, p. 15.


18 C. Brontë to E. Brontë, Stonegappe, June 8, 1839, C. K. Shorter,
Charlotte Brontë reflected this conviction in the humiliation suffered by Jane Eyre from the tongue of Blanche Ingram, just as Anne Brontë's own experiences as a governess were reflected in Agnes Grey's isolation and loneliness. Mary Maurice, the sister of the Christian Socialist, also stressed the social isolation of the typical governess, constantly forced "to guard against the exactions of her employers—the impertinence, or coldness, of her charge, and the neglect and rudeness of the servants." This same theme of loneliness and social isolation dominated the minor propaganda novels written at mid-century to improve the treatment of governesses. Katherine West, who has attacked the concept of the downtrodden governess, was nevertheless driven to admit that the governess' situation might be productive of psychological disturbance.

The unmatched childless isolation of a woman constantly on the edge of a family circle, must surely have accounted for the unhappiness of more governesses than any other cause. It is strange, therefore, how few of our books so much as mention it.

The governess' mental condition amounted to more than simple loneliness. Before she resorted to teaching, the typical déclassée governess

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49 C. Brontë, Jane Eyre, An Autobiography (First published 1847), Chap. 17; A. Brontë, Agnes Grey, (First published 1850), Chaps. 10-11.

50 M. A. Maurice, op. cit., p. 31.


52 K. West, op. cit., p. 85.
had usually suffered an acute psychological shock in being reduced from a condition of comfortable family security and complacent anticipation of marriage to one of economic insecurity where the old protection of class solidarity lost its meaning. As we have seen, the affluent dependent gentlewoman frequently suffered from a form of alienation, and in some cases insanity. Similarly, loss of affluence also brought its psychological problems for the gentlewoman, and employment as a governess was likely to aggravate rather than alleviate these problems.

Since she was alienated in prosperity, it is not surprising that the distressed gentlewoman had difficulty in adjusting to the kind of misfortune which deprived her at one blow of the twin security of financial support and family and class solidarity. The death of a breadwinner which left his family impoverished, if it did not lead to the break-up of the family, was at least likely to cause the semi-permanent absence of the daughter who was forced to go out as a resident governess. This deprived her of the most important strand of emotional security she had retained in genteel comfort, that of family affection. The change was an abrupt one. "That very society that nursed her in and for her idleness disowns her now, and becomes her worst enemy. She has no right to be poor, but being so, must help herself."\(^5\) In a closely knit conjugal kinship system any more distant relatives were, as J. D. Milne argued,

The newly impoverished young lady was therefore left alone to attempt earning a living without suffering loss of caste, for as Jessie Boucherett observed "many prefer poverty to loss of social position." But until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the only occupation offering even a sham pretence of preserving caste was that of the governess. Most frequently, therefore, she exchanged her own recently overprotective family for one where "a cold, distant, stately reserve is too often shown by the mother, towards one whom she ought to regard as a fellow worker for her children's good." The governess in theory retained her middle-class gentility, but in practice she was most likely to experience severe deprivation of the most valuable security she had known in idleness, that of unquestioned solidarity with a distinct social class.

The usual solution of teaching, therefore, was likely to intensify, rather than diminish, the distressed gentlewoman's sense of alienation. In fact the combination of this heightened estrangement and unaccustomed mental and physical exertion resulted in mental illness for large numbers of governesses and teachers. Contemporaries were vague regarding the precise nature of the mental disturbance, but many agreed with Edward Gibbon Wakefield that governesses formed the largest single occupational class.

54 Milne, op. cit., p. 127.
56 Maurice, op. cit., p. 34.
in insane asylums. The G.B.I. reports frequently commented that the illnesses of governesses were usually nervous or mental, "the effects of early labour, anxiety and fatigue, acting on a delicate frame and weakened nerves," and often cited specific cases of women, young and old, who suffered from such ailments as "a nervous and brain fever" or periodic insanity with "lucid intervals." Florence Nightingale encountered similar experiences during her tenure at the Institution for Care of Sick Gentlewomen in Distressed Circumstances in 1853. "I had more than one lunatic," she wrote of her governess patients to Dr. Pincoffs, adding "I think the deep feeling I have of the miserable position of educated women in England was gained while there."

Much of this phenomenon can be explained by the growing numbers of professional and educated persons in lunatic asylums from about mid-century, which came to William Farr's notice in his census report for 1861. We have already seen, however, that governess lunatics did not, as was generally believed, form the largest occupational class in asylums.


58 G.B.I., Reports, 1843, p. 11, 1844, p. 11, 1848, pp. 24-35 Case No. 80, 1850, p. 11; see also M. A. Maurice, op. cit., pp. 158-9.

59 Quoted in B. Howe, op. cit., p. 116.

The proportion of "independent gentlewomen" was substantially larger, being 2.30% of their total number compared to 0.55% for governesses. Nevertheless, the proportion to total governesses was much higher than that among the highest numerical group, domestic servants, and, with the exception of schoolmasters, higher than the proportion of corresponding male occupation groups in asylums. A governess' position was therefore no solution to the gentlewoman's alienation, but was more likely to bring with it further problems of a psychological nature.

The problems of the distressed gentlewoman attracted the attention of reformers, and most of them, whether philanthropists or feminists, attacked the problem by catering to the needs of the governess. The Governesses Benevolent Institution began a major effort in 1843 by giving temporary financial assistance to unemployed governesses, establishing a savings scheme for provident annuities and awarding a limited number of annuities to aged and infirm governesses. Subsequently it established a "Home for disengaged governesses," an elaborate free employment register, an asylum for aged governesses and a savings bank. The G.B.I. was quick to recognize, however, that inadequate education was the most fundamental cause of the governess' plight, and in 1847 it began to effect this necessarily slow and long-term improvement by participating in the formation of Queen's College, Harley Street, where it encouraged potential and

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61 See Table 4.
actual governesses to obtain a thorough secondary education. The spread of sound education for all those who might become governesses was a painfully slow process, however, and the G.B.I. understandably devoted its energies to assuaging the most urgent economic problems of the governess. Since the governess' problems were not wholly economic, it was unlikely in these circumstances that much would be done to alleviate her condition of alienation.

The first major feminist campaign of the nineteenth century also focussed on the plight of the governess. In fact it was the problem of the insecure middle-class woman, brought up only for genteel marriage, but with few prospects of either marriage or alternative support, which provided the dynamic at the heart of the feminist cause in the latter half of the century. The struggle was one for wider employment opportunities for middle-class women, and for decades the most well rehearsed feminist protest was against the complacent assumption that women were by nature ill-equipped for any role but that of wives and mothers, when plainly there were thousands who could never marry and were forced into the overcrowded teaching profession as incompetent and exploited governesses. Mrs. Jameson's early diagnosis served her feminist successors well.

63 Anti-feminists like Elizabeth Eastlake argued that higher salaries, rather than a fundamental change in relations between the employer and employee, were the only possible way to assuage the inevitable hardships of the governess; 'Vanity Fair and Jane Eyre,' op. cit., p. 178.
The increasing number of unmarried men with the reading clubs, mechanics institutes—we will say nothing of taverns, theatres, and other places of social resort—argues, of course, an increasing number of unmarried females, who not only have no opportunities of mutual improvement, and social recreation, but if they be 'respectable' women, cannot even walk through the streets, without being subjected to the insults of men, also called and esteemed 'respectable;' and who are destined never to be either wives or mothers, though they have heard from their infancy that such, by the appointment of God, is their vocation in this world and no other. Such may be their vocation, but such is not their destiny: no, they must go forth to labour, to encounter on every side strange iron prejudices, adverse institutions formed and framed in a social state quite different from that which exists at present—a state in which the position of women was altogether different from what it is now.64

Like the G.B.I., the feminists gave highest priority to long-term educational reform. Their first object was equal employment opportunities for women, and much of their long campaign was directed against what they regarded as a root cause of female exclusion. Women were not being educated and trained for employment, but instead sought it only when all other avenues of genteel support were closed and they finally acknowledged the necessity to lose caste by entering the employment market. The demand for improved education for middle-class girls played a major part in the feminist programme, and not unnaturally the feminists often blamed parents for neglecting the daughter, who even in the 'sixties still received only a haphazard smattering of trivial accomplishments in deference to the son. Parents seemingly refused to learn, complained Jessie Boucherett, "that a willing heart is of small avail in earning a livelihood, if united to unexercised brains and unskilful hands." Dorothea

Beale, explaining the principles behind her famous college at Cheltenham, insisted that women of the higher classes must be taught the value of work, and complained that on enrolment at 15 years of age, most of her pupils, the daughters of professionals, bankers and merchants, were unable to answer the simplest questions in arithmetic and French.\textsuperscript{65}

With so much of their work devoted to long-term improvements or economic palliatives it was unlikely that reformers would effect an early revolution in the fortunes of distressed gentlewomen. Despite the dauntless efforts of the feminists the problem of women in genteel poverty was common to the entire century. By the turn of the century the main accomplishment of the feminist movement had been to establish precedents of female employment and equality for the future. The opportunities for fruitful higher education for women had improved vastly by 1900, but as Gissing's indignation in \textit{The Odd Women} makes so abundantly clear, untrained middle-class misfits still constituted a major problem in the 'nineties. Although middle-class nurses, shopclerks, competent teachers and typists could safely obtain respectable work in the late-Victorian and Edwardian periods, a more thorough integration of women into the economy waited upon the acceleration of social forces stimulated by the shortage of labour during the First World War.\textsuperscript{66} The

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{65}\textit{J. Boucherett, op. cit.}, p. vi; D. Beale, 'The Ladies College at Cheltenham,' \textit{N.A.P.S.S. Transactions}, 1865, pp. 274-5.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{66}\textit{McGregor, op. cit.}, p. 87; Gissing, \textit{op. cit.} Of the three surviving Madden daughters, Gissing depicts two as pathetically incompetent, invariably unemployed, governess-companions. The third,}
G.B.I. had certainly alleviated conditions for a minority of governesses and educated some branches of public opinion by mid-century, but the governess-problem remained at the heart of the feminist movement for another fifty years. The complaint of the feminists continued to be that so little had been done rather than the reverse. In fact the real campaign for improvement of middle-class female employment did not begin until 1857 with the establishment of the National Association for Promotion of Social Science, for years a forum for progressive feminist views. In that year John Duguid Milne, a Scottish advocate who frequently supported feminist causes at the Association, protested against the confinement of middle-class female employment to the occupations of authors, ladies' companions and governesses. For two generations the feminists repeated his protests, but until 1914 there was no all-embracing solution in Britain which could resolve the problem of the distressed gentlewoman through remedying both her economic hardship and her sense of alienation.

With such meagre prospects of improvement at home, it was not surprising that some reformers should advocate, and some women should

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being attractive but untrained, contracts a prosperous but disastrously unsuccessful marriage.

67 'Female Education in the Middle Classes,' The Englishwoman's Journal, Vol. I, No. 4, June 1, 1858, pp. 217-8; Jameson, op. cit., pp. 234-5.

68 Milne, op. cit.
accept, the alternative of emigration. In the early-Victorian period Edward Gibbon Wakefield, an emigration promoter and Colonial Reformer, insisted that the vulnerability of the middle-class, or "uneasy class," to economic misfortune was a persuasive argument for a system of patrician emigration. He was the first systematically to describe the "uneasy class" with such prime emphasis on its major victim, the portionless daughter. He also offered a ready solution: emigration. Wakefield was chiefly interested in encouraging members of the middle-class to emigrate to Australia in order to establish an extension of the British hierarchical social structure there; consequently he was prone to exaggerate the case for middle-class emigration, but his location of the "uneasy," or "anxious, vexed or harassed class," was still important. Writing in 1833, Wakefield stressed all the factors which might expose members of the middle-class to economic misfortune, the same factors which became such common currency among the feminists a generation later. The uneasy class in the 'thirties, argued Wakefield, consisted of all classes above labourers who suffered from various forms of economic distress; to be more precise, as many as three-quarters—or even nine-tenths "of all who are engaged in trades and professions, as well as all who not being very rich, intend that their children should follow some industrious pursuit."\(^{69}\)

Wakefield's thesis was that there was an insufficient field for investment in Britain, consequently the profits of all small investors, retailers, etc., were perilously unremunerative, leaving them highly vulnerable to economic fluctuations. Their plight was exacerbated by the constant increase in expenditure necessary to maintain social rank, particularly the imposing task of first educating, and later providing for, a large family of children. Those on fixed incomes, particularly, were fully occupied in preventing their daughters' descent to a lower social class by means of imprudent marriage, but it was exceptional for women of small resources to marry men of the "spending class."

The general rule with the daughters of men of small income, whether fixed or not, is a choice between celibacy and marriage with one of the uneasy class. Now, a great proportion of young men in the uneasy class dread marriage, unless there be fortune in the case, as the surest means of increasing their embarrassment. This is one of the most important features in the social state of England.

The result was "exuberant prostitution" and mass celibacy among middle-class women. Their only employment outlet lay in education. Governesses faced greater competition for work than even labourers and formed the most common occupants of lunatic asylums. Wakefield's solution, that both the capital and labour of the uneasy class should be employed abroad, was not taken seriously outside radical circles in the 'thirties, but his introduction of the middle-class dilemma into emigration propaganda was logical.\(^70\) Significantly, the rarely-used appellation

\(^{70}\)Ibid.; John Crawford in 'New South Australian Colony,' Westminster Review, Vol. XXI, Oct. 1834, p. 417 agreed with Wakefield on the suitability of the uneasy class for emigration. For a further discussion of Wakefield, see supra. Chap. 2.
"uneasy class" was again coined in the 'sixties by Mary Taylor, a feminist who had once emigrated to New Zealand herself. 71

The doctrine of feminine civilizing influence had obvious implications for female emigration. The promoters of all the various emigration schemes regularly paid lip-service to the probable reform that the feminine touch would effect on a crude, male-dominated, pioneering colony.72 Many writers gave the civilizing mission concept a further peculiar twist which made it readily appropriate for this kind of treatment. This was the chauvinistic conviction that it was, above all, English women who possessed the necessary refinement to influence male society. In his introduction to the 1851 Census William Farr noticed the large number of women—wives, mothers and daughters—without employment, and added, with significant italics, "but it requires no argument to prove that the wife, the mother, the mistress of an English Family—fills offices and discharges duties of no ordinary importance." F. D. Maurice's sister, Mary, deplored the exposure to a lower moral tone faced by English governesses in France. The damage was permanent but not complete. "When she returns home, her salary may be higher, but her tone is lower, though she is still

71 M. Taylor 'Redundant Women,' op. cit., p. 31; on Mary Taylor, see supra. Chap. 4.

72 See, for example, Maria S. Rye, Emigration of Educated Women, (London, 1861), a paper originally read at N.A.P.S.S. Transactions in 1861. Rye spoke of the necessity to uproot colonial "vice and immorality" by means of importations of high class women, "an elevation of morals being the inevitable result" of their mere presence, pp. 9, 12.
a safer teacher than a French woman, who never had any right principle, to counterbalance her natural frivolity." Most of the ladies' magazines agreed, often attributing the superiority to the distinctive form of Christianity practised in England. It was a minor step from here to insist, as Wakefield did, that English-women should civilize abroad as well as at home.

As early as the eighteen-thirties some distressed gentlewomen began to follow Wakefield's advice and sought employment in the colonies. Emigration had some obvious advantages for middle-class women. Those who dreaded the loss of caste and embarrassment which might accompany a wage-earning career at home could safely pursue the same career anonymously in the colonies, where most women of all classes were more accustomed to a much wider range of menial chores. The feminists themselves began to promote emigration for gentlewomen in the eighteen-sixties. Until that time, however, certain public attitudes and a lack of facilities prevented many middle-class women from emigrating. Most emigration enthusiasts looked to Australia, where there was a severe shortage of women, as the best haven for British gentlewomen. But before mid-

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74 See infra Chap. 6.
century the public associated Australia, and to a lesser extent emigration generally, with convict transportation, pauperism, distress and prostitution, and these assumptions worked as a deterrent against any system of respectable female emigration during the early-Victorian period. Despite the inhibitions some middle-class women did emigrate, and the history of early-Victorian female emigration is mainly an account of its gradual emergence from this hostile stereotype.
Chapter II

The Stereotype of Female Emigration: Assisted
Emigration to Australia, 1832-1836

When Edward Gibbon Wakefield suggested that emigration was the solution for his "uneasy class" in 1833, there was, as later events demonstrated, an indeterminate number of single women in genteel poverty who stood to benefit by such a change. But where stark necessity proposed, social convention disposed. Apart from genuine obstacles to unchaperoned female emigration, such as the insecurity and primitive conditions on a long voyage and the uncertain prospects for cultivated women in a pioneering colonial society, most writers and politicians displayed a firm social prejudice against emigration for any but the most destitute class of labourers. This stemmed partly from the long debate on pauper emigration after 1815 and partly from the long association of emigration with convict transportation. The latter became especially important because it was the large excess of males in the Australian penal colonies which first prompted an interest in organized large-scale female emigration. The first attempt in the 'thirties to supply Australia with non-convict women from the large surplus of English spinsters was a working-class project. But the link between Australia and female emigration persisted for fifty years. Only as Australia's image and reputation improved did implacable opposition in Britain to middle-class female emigration soften. The fate of the first attempt to expatriate working-
class women to Australia consequently had profound implications for the subsequent attitudes to any proposals for female emigration, and particularly for those affecting middle-class women.

In the first decades of the nineteenth century the concept of emigration received a distinctly hostile press in middle-class circles. The vast emigration of the nineteenth century began after the Napoleonic Wars under the impetus of Malthusianism and economic distress. The period when large scale emigration became accepted was the same period in which a rising poor-rate added a note of urgency to the regular discussion of distress, pauperism, the poor laws and a "redundant population." This is obvious whether one turns to Parliament, the press or periodical and pamphlet literature. More obvious is the fact that emigration and pauperism were inextricably associated topics in the public mind. The discussion of one inevitably involved the other, and most writers saw emigration as simply one means of coping with a troublesome surplus population, or at times even an outlet to prevent revolution.\(^1\) In these circumstances, where emigration was automatically linked with pauperism, unemployment or at least individual failure, the concept of middle-class emigration was hardly likely to flourish.

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This taint was not confined to the respectable middle-class. From the 'twenties onwards there were innumerable petitions and projects presented in Parliament in favour of pauper emigration. Robert J. Wilmot-Horton, Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, played a prominent role in all these matters and was responsible for two experiments in 1823 and 1825 to settle paupers in Canada at state expense. He also published a series of letters in 1830 to propagate his conviction that emigration was the best remedy for pauperism. All his attempts to establish a government system of assisted pauper emigration came to nothing except for one permissive clause in the new Poor Law of 1834, but they did provoke considerable discussion in Parliament, and reaction—often hostile—in the press. In 1830 Lord John Russell was convinced that Wilmot-Horton's system of emigration and an improved poor law system "should go hand in hand." A later bill to finance emigration through the poor rates was brought in by Lord Howick in 1831, and while most opponents were hostile to it on grounds of expense, they readily admitted the need to cope with "the evils of a superabundant population." Outside the bill was interpreted even by London labourers as one intended

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2 The petitions were sometimes presented by distressed labourers, but more commonly by inhabitants of a parish hoping to reduce the poor-rate by means of emigration. See, for example, Hansard, Parliamentary Debates, N.S. Vol. XVI, Nov. 27, 1826, c.112-3; Vol. XVI (Lords), Dec. 8, 1826, c.317-20; Vol. XXIII, March 23, 1830, c.782-4.

3 R. J. Wilmot-Horton, An Enquiry into the Causes and Remedies of Pauperism. (London, 1830.)

4 Hansard, N.S. Vol. XXV, June 15, 1930, c. 366-70; for an example of press opposition see The Times, Feb. 17, 1827, p. 3.
to enforce compulsory transportation, and they petitioned Parliament against what they feared would be enforced exile. Their protest strongly suggests that the disrepute attaching to emigration extended well below the comfortable middle-class.

The issue of convict transportation also strongly shaped attitudes to emigration, especially to Australia. From the very beginnings of the Australian penal settlement comment in Britain focussed on the moral degradation of "Botany Bay". All the major Australian issues in Britain before 1850 had to do with convict transportation, and the press and periodical literature made constant capital out of the sensational issue of "moral depravity" which resulted. Even the pro-Australian defenders of the transportation system were forced to admit the strength of the resulting image of Australia.7 P.M. Cunningham, an apologist for convict transportation who extolled the delights of New South Wales for potential middle-class settlers, complained that

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6See, for example, the Monthly Review, October 1792, pp.197-8; G. Barrington, Voyage to Botany Bay, London, 1801, sequel pp.7-14, 59, 70; T. Watling, Letters from an Exile at Botany Bay, (Penrith, 1792), pp.18-9.

7The standard reference on Australia for twenty-five years was a systematic defense of the colony by a Judge Advocate of New South Wales, D. Collins, in An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales, (London, 1798 and 1802). Despite his position, he was forced to admit the "odium" associated with the colony in Britain and the widespread incidence of immorality; see 1798 Edition, p.502; 1802 ed., Vol. II, pp.2, 196; his critics, like Bentham, were quick with the charge that he provided all the necessary material to refute his own thesis. For a later apologist see W.G. Wentworth, A Statistical, Historical and Political Description of the Colony of New South Wales ... (London, 1819, 3 editions to 1824).
New South Wales has, in fact, but one drawback of a decidedly unpleasant nature, and even that is more ideal than substantial. — It must be admitted that it is the only country in the world which you are ashamed to confess the having visited. I have made several slips of this kind before strangers, and I certainly never yet gained a friend by the disclosure; every one, through some excuse or another, endeavouring to elude the pleasure of my society.

He went on to describe one encounter with a well travelled companion in a stage coach, who, upon learning he had visited "Botany Bay" recoiled with a grunt, "What! Have you been there, sir?" and withdrew, checking his pockets, to the farthest corner of the coach. 8

Jeremy Bentham set the tone of the campaign to abolish convict transportation by drawing heavily on the theme of Australian depravity. 9 His claim that transportation fostered the growth of a vicious and immoral society was increasingly utilized by his successors in their abolition propaganda. 10 This campaign came to a head in the 'thirties when the Colonial Reformers made it one of the key issues in their schemes for "systematic colonization" and semi-autonomous colonies of free set-


10The earliest attack on transportation was made by the Radical, H. G. Bennet. See his A Letter to Viscount Sidmouth on the Transportation Laws and the Colonies, (London, 1819, A Letter to Earl Bathurst, (London, 1820), and Hanserd, Vol. XXXIX, Feb. 18, 1819, c.484-509.
tlers in Australia, as proposed by Edward Gibbon Wakefield in 1829. But despite their establishment of the new South Australian colony, the combined efforts of the Colonial Reformers in the 'thirties appear to have done more to discredit the Australian colonies than the reverse, the exact opposite of their real intention. This was wholly attributable to the anti-transportation campaign, led by Sir William Molesworth with constant assistance from Richard Whately, Archbishop of Dublin. Their propaganda repeatedly stressed the crime and vice in Australia produced by large shipments of convicts. Molesworth chaired the Select Committee on Transportation in 1837 and 1838, and its reports occasioned widespread reviews and discussion; subsequently both Molesworth and Whately initiated lengthy debates in the two Houses of Parliament. At length the government discontinued transportation to New South Wales after 1840, although not to Van Diemen's Land, and only after tales of Australian "depravity" had been resurrected and given a greater hearing than ever before.

From the mid-twenties one of the main indictments against convict

11E. G. Wakefield, A Letter from Sydney, (London, 1829, published anonymously); Wakefield is rightly regarded as the leader of the Colonial Reformers, essentially a pressure group who for fifteen years campaigned to inject Radical principles into colonial policy, especially in Australia and New Zealand. A large part of their achievement consisted of the initial founding and settlement of South Australia, New Zealand and later the Canterbury settlement at Christchurch.

transportation was the charge that it fostered an ever increasing surplus of men in Australia, with all the attendant vices of a predominantly masculine community. Since transported males vastly outnumbered female convicts this sex disproportion, the inverse of that existing in Britain, was certain to persist so long as transported convicts exceeded free emigrants into Australia. In 1840 Molesworth detailed the widespread homosexuality which resulted, and argued that the women convicts were utterly beyond reform; the argument against female transportation, he insisted, constituted grave objections to the entire system of transportation, since there would be ill effects with or without the female offenders, and emigration of respectable women would be inhibited. But earlier writers were more sanguine. The two most popular, but widely criticized, defenders of Australia in the twenties, Wentworth and Cunningham, both argued the need for more convict women, or even mass shipments of prostitutes, to balance the sexes. Cunningham pointed to the example of the "Twelve Apostles", twelve women sent to Hobart Town by the philanthropist, William Fry in 1822. These, he claimed, had all arrived pregnant but nevertheless proved to be an eventual asset to the

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14 Hansard, 3rd Ser., Vol. LIII, May 5, 1840, cc 1245-6, 1256-7.
colony. For Cunningham, any form of female emigration would be a boon to the colony.

Women are in fact one of the best and most patriotic consignments that could be sent out to our rising country. Even furthering a few shiploads of volunteers from the streets of overgrown towns in Britain would benefit greatly our convict community;—benefit also the places from whence they might be despatched; and benefit the wretched creatures themselves, by enabling them to begin a new and useful life in another country.15

Despite their usual antipathy for Australia most of the reviews welcomed Cunningham's proposals. A writer in the Quarterly Review thought mass shipments of prostitutes would effect an improvement in colonial morals, and in the Edinburgh Review another writer described potential emigrants from Newgate and the streets of London as "a most patriotic and valuable cargo".16 But these enthusiasts, and especially Cunningham, overlooked the certain consequence that while these opinions prevailed the Australian colonies would hardly present an attractive prospect to potential middle-class emigrants. It was the misfortune of female emigrants to be closely associated, from the very beginning, with

15 P. M. Cunningham, op. cit., pp. 262-81; William Fry himself, who managed the Guardian Penitentiary Society, claimed that the much maligned "Twelve Apostles" had turned out well, and never admitted the charge that they all arrived pregnant; W. Fry to R. W. Hay, (Colonial Office Under-Secretary), March 3, 1833, C.O. 384/33. See also W.C. Wentworth, op. cit., pp. 482-4.

poverty, paupers and prostitutes. The subsequent history of middle-class female emigration is therefore a record of its constant attempt to gain respectability and escape from the trammels of a rigid association with the most depressed section of the working class.

It was in this setting, then, that the Government initiated the first scheme of large-scale assisted female emigration in 1832. Pressure had been mounting for some kind of reform since Wakefield's famous *Letter from Sydney* emerged from Newgate in 1829 while he was serving a three year sentence for abduction. In brief, Wakefield argued that colonial land sales at a high price should replace the old free land-grant system; immigrant labourers would thereby be forced to remain in the labour market until they could afford to purchase and cultivate their own land, and thus be prevented from rapidly becoming improvident landowners. Furthermore, a system of land sales would guarantee a constant supply of labour to the colony by providing a permanent fund to finance respectable emigration. The creation of this "emigration fund" was at the core of the Australian problem, for only thus could the intolerable disparity in fares between North America and Australia be reduced.17 Wakefield's principles were taken up by the members of his pressure group, the Colonial Reformers, and, partly impelled by their incessant pressure, Earl Grey's Whig Government incorporated the basic Wakefieldian system into official policy with the Ripon Regulations in 1831. The Colonial

Secretary, Lord Goderich, then established a uniform system of land-sales in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, and shortly afterwards adopted the principle of assisted emigration out of the colonial land fund.\(^{18}\)

Quite apart from colonial considerations the events of the early 'thirties were highly conducive to the encouragement of emigration in Britain. The burden of a growing poor-rate prompted the severe new Poor Law of 1834 which allowed parishes to mortgage their poor-rates in order to finance pauper emigration. Moreover, the threat of Luddism and agricultural unrest combined with the news of the French revolution of 1830 to bring a note of urgency, almost hysteria, to the "redundant population" problem. It was tempting to conclude that the country must be swept clean of rick-burners, machine breakers and pauper parasites. But it is clear that, at least initially, these motives played little part in the Government's action. This first project in state-assisted emigration consisted primarily of financial aid to single female emigrants, those most needed in Australia for moral reasons, and certainly not the most troublesome class in Britain. Justifying the new scheme to the Treasury, Lord Howick, then Parliamentary Under-Secretary, stressed that female emigrants would help "the moral improvement of the colony". The members of the Colonial Office, in fact, seem to have attached more importance to the shortage of women than did the colonists themselves. When those in Van Diemen's Land betrayed suspicions that they would simply

\(^{18}\) Viscount Goderich to Governor Bourke (New South Wales), Sep. 28 1831, *PP. 1831, XIX (328)*, pp. 126-31.
provide a dumping ground for the sweepings of British workhouses, Goderich reassured them that the lower cost of North American emigration would always attract individuals or Parishes who wished to finance pumper emigration. Although the scheme to assist working-class single women was to be accompanied by a loan scheme for married mechanics and their families the terms for the single women were more favourable, and the bulk of the annual £10,000 appropriated from the land fund of the colonies was to be applied to the latter scheme. For the men at the Colonial Office this was a price worth paying for nothing less than a campaign for moral reform in Australia, in which Englishwomen were to be the agents of civilization and morality.19

The major problems endangering the successful outcome of the scheme were administrative ones, especially those of emigrant selection, and since the ultimate judgement of the scheme was based on its administration it is worth examining in some detail. Goderich was blithely confident from the beginning that the selection of suitable working-class women for domestic and farm servants would present no problem. There were many unemployed young women, he told Bourke, qualified as

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19Howick to J. Stewart (Treasury), July 16, 1831, Enclosure in ibid; Goderich to Lt. Governor Arthur (Van Diemen's Land), Jan. 27, 1832, C.O. 408/7; married mechanics received a loan of £20, to be repaid in the colony, while the single women received a free grant of £8, increased to £12 in 1833 and again to £16 (the full fare) in 1835; £6,400 out of the fund was applied to the female emigration scheme, and the balance, only £3,600, to married mechanics. Bourke to Goderich, April 11, 1832, PP. 1833, XXVI (141), p. 36.
farmers' servants in the agricultural counties who would gladly emigrate if financial assistance was forthcoming. The necessary arrangements could be safely confided to the recently appointed Emigration Commission. Goderich admittedly had no precedents to follow, but he had no concept of how the best qualified country servants would be selected; nor did he seem aware of the difficulty of selecting virtuous uncorrupted young women from the ranks of the unemployed, many of whom would have been dependent on parish or charitable aid for long periods, with all its attendant risks for their "reputations". Furthermore, if large numbers of women were to be sent out collectively the Emigration Commission would be totally unequipped to handle the project, and the bulk of administrative detail would devolve onto their secretary, Thomas F. Elliot. Since Elliot's own capacities were limited, the offers of shipowners, brokers and charitable institutions to assist were certain to be welcomed with enthusiasm.

In October, 1831, the Emigration Commissioners issued the first regulations governing the selection of female emigrants. They made it clear that preference for the £8 grant would be given to single women


21The Emigration Commission was essentially an investigating and advisory body, and consisted of only five members, Lord Richmond, Lord Howick, R. W. Hay, F. Baring and H. Ellis. It was dissolved by Goderich in August, 1832 so there could have been no intention of letting it serve as a permanent administrative body; Report of Commissioners to Goderich, March 15, 1832, and Goderich to Commissioners, August 4, 1832, PP.1831-2, XXXII (724), pp. 6-7, 29-30.
between 15 and 30 who were emigrating as members of a family. This immediately settled weighty problems of administration for the Commissioners. It meant that prospective emigrants need simply engage their own passage with shipowners, and then apply for the bounty through their parents. All the problems of moral supervision on the voyage and reception and employment in the colony would be solved by parental supervision. Whether the women thus given priority of selection would be likely to be suited to colonial needs as the country servants Goderich had promised, the Commissioners did not consider. But they recognized that if the scheme was to reform colonial morals successfully this method could not provide the necessarily large numbers of women. They therefore proposed to recruit a large number of independent applicants and subsequently engage a vessel for single women exclusively. The regulations covering these women were to be more stringent than those for members of families. The minimum age was increased from 15 to 18, and their application was to include the recommendation of a minister and two householders from the woman’s local parish. Priority of selection would be given to those qualified as farmers’ servants, but the Commissioners did not suggest that any care would be taken to ensure that only such women would receive the grant. 22

The first method, under the supervision of families, successfully

facilitated the emigration of at least 430 young women to Australia without provoking colonial complaints of their suitability. But by 1835 it became apparent that the free offer of the bounty encouraged a number of unscrupulous private brokers and shipowners to pose as emigration agents with grossly exaggerated idyllic descriptions of Australia. In some cases deliberate fraud was practised on prospective emigrants, and by 1835, when the method of mass shipments was well established, the Government decided to discontinue the family method in favour of the mass shipment scheme under more reliable supervision.23

The mass-shipment scheme was a more enduring if more controversial project. It received a bad press both in Britain and Australia and was ultimately abandoned after 1836 as a failure because of the widespread belief that it had not reduced but increased the amount of immorality in the colonies. The criticisms stemmed from a number of very real abuses, but they tended to obscure the positive benefits which the scheme conferred on the colonies and the women themselves by enabling more than 3,000 females to remove to a more promising environment. Yet

the real success of the scheme was less important than the firm impression that it had failed, and the conclusion at the Colonial Office that such failure was inherent in any system of mass female emigration. Still the more favourable side of the scheme has yet to be described. Histori­ans have accepted without qualification the unfavourable verdict of contemporaries, and R. B. Madgwick, the only writer to treat the subject in extensive detail, has concluded that the abuses in selection which prompted colonial complaints were justified in branding the entire scheme as undesirable. 24

The case against the scheme turns on the poor quality of its administration, and at first glance is a strong one. The Emigration Com­mission, despite its temporary and advisory capacity, was initially left in charge of all the details of taking up and fitting out two emigrant ships exclusively for women, and of selecting suitable emigrants. The latter task would assume vast proportions if individual applicants were to be examined and selected separately, since each ship was to carry about 200 emigrants. However, the immediate offers from several chari­table institutions, in both London and Ireland, to provide large numbers of their female inmates as emigrants effectively solved this problem. 25

For the institutions this provided an opportunity to dispose of large


25P. Bessard to Elliot, Cork, Feb. 15, 1832; Secretary of "Incor­porated Society . . ." to Elliot, Dublin, March 5, 1832, C.O. 384/30.
numbers of burdensome women with few employment prospects for a small outlay. For the Commission it provided a welcome opportunity to reduce the costs of selection by confiding the entire responsibility to charitable institutions, which presumably had a fairly intimate knowledge of the qualifications and character of each prospective emigrant. Neither the Commission nor the Colonial Office was equipped to conduct interviews and investigate the backgrounds of hundreds of women. Without this gratuitous aid the scheme would have been impracticable under existing circumstances, but at the same time it meant that the "moral quality" and qualifications of the emigrants would be no better than those of the best to be found in institutions for the homeless and destitute.

Taken together, the experience of the first two shiploads of emigrants thus selected in 1832 indicated that dependence on charitable institutions for selection could, but need not necessarily, lead to great abuses to the detriment of both the colonies and the women. This same observation applies to the subsequent fourteen ships sent out between 1833 and 1836. The Red Rover, which sailed from Ireland to Sydney with 202 women selected by the Cork "House of Industry" and the Dublin "Incorporated Society for Promoting English Protestant Schools in Ireland" was an unqualified success in providing New South Wales with suitable emigrants.26 But the Princess Royal, which sailed from London to Hobart Town, Van Diemen's Land, with 193 women partly selected from the

26Bourke to Goderich, Sept. 24, 1832, C.O. 201/227.
"Guardian Penitentiary Society" and several London workhouses, was at best a qualified failure. Naturally the unfortunate experience of the latter ship attracted most attention and tended to obscure the value of the former. Both during and after the operation of the scheme its critics pointed to the Princess Royal as a typical example of the evils of collective female emigration.

Although various charitable institutions responded to the Commission's advertisement with offers of help, responsibility for the entire selection of the Princess Royal emigrants ultimately devolved onto William Fry. Fry was associated with several London charities and had handled the emigration of the notorious "Twelve Apostles" in 1822. He collected women for the Princess Royal from several London institutions. His own Guardian Penitentiary Society provided 2l emigrants, the National Guardian Institution for Respectable Servants provided 1½ and the Refuge for the Destitute and various "houseless societies of the same description" each provided a few. However, the Magdalen Female Penitentiary, which had originally proposed to assist ½ of its own inmates, subsequently withdrew from the project. At the same time the Princess

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28 See, for example, the evidence of Mr. John Russell of Van Diemen's Land before the Transportation Committee, Q.570. Report of Select Committee on Transportation, II, 1838. op.cit., p.59.

Royal, with a capacity of 200 passengers instead of 120, as originally expected, was engaged for the voyage. Consequently Fry was forced to look for additional women. He obtained a further 24 from London workhouses and selected the rest from casual individual applicants. Fry did not specify how carefully the latter were investigated, but his boast that the majority were "very respectable", including one daughter of a Baptist Minister from Stratford, was borne out by later reports from the colony after the initial complaints had subsided. But the result of Fry's selection was that the Princess Royal contained a wide range of women with diverse class backgrounds, from the most destitute of the working-class to the most respectable of the lower-middle-class, "suitable", in the words of Lt. Governor Arthur, "to become the wives of decent tradesmen".

It was exactly this "admixture" of classes which provoked the most serious complaints from Hobart Town. Arthur supported the principle of collective female emigration, but from the beginning he had urged the need for great caution to prevent "demoralization" of women on the voyage, and now protested strongly against the mismanagement of the Princess Royal emigrants. Although Fry had arranged the berths so as to keep the

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30 Forster to Elliot, ibid.; Fry to Hobart Town Ladies Reception Committee, April 15, 1832, C.O. 38/30; Fry to Hay, March 3, 1833, C.O. 38/33; Goderich to Arthur, March 29, 1833, C.O. 408/9.

31 Arthur to Goderich, Sep. 8, 1832, C.O. 280/35.
different classes of women segregated Arthur maintained that the "injudicious association" of the worst with best had caused embarrassment to some women and corruption to others. The most respectable women had expected to find only companions of their own class, but instead had found the humiliation of mixture with women from reformatories and workhouses. The respectable women blamed Fry for "deception" and feared that "their own characters have suffered from the lamentable association, which circumstances over which they had no control have forced upon them". But worse, Arthur complained that another class of women, those generally useful as domestic servants and with good reputations, had been corrupted by the "licentious proceedings" during the voyage. At least half of the emigrants were "far more depraved than the generality of convict women" and many suffered from venereal disease on embarkation. They had all exercised "a most baneful influence on others less depraved than themselves". Arthur did not question Fry's motives, but maintained that he had failed to realise how little reformation had actually taken place among most of the women from charitable institutions and workhouses.32

Arthur's criticisms were justified and to the point. Certainly the same abuses were not duplicated on the Red Rover to Sydney, whose Irish emigrants, while also from charitable institutions, were all of a single class. This is largely a comment on the relative influences of the different environments of Ireland and the metropolis on helpless women, but it seems true that Fry had been excessively optimistic in his

32 Ibid; Arthur to Hay, Sep. 10, 1832 (Private letter accompanying ibid.), C.O. 280/35.
hopes that many ex-prostitutes were permanently reformed. In his original report to the Hobart Town Ladies Reception Committee he confided that although the women from the institutions had been carefully selected "their late unhappy and fallen situation should be as much concealed as possible and they treated with the greatest delicacy". The Ladies Committee protested with reason that such concealment from potential employers would have been "unpardonable as it would have been impracticable". Nevertheless, critics in the colonies who contended that only a brief examination should reveal whether or not a woman had a background of prostitution ignored the virtually traumatic effect of a four month voyage in steerage conditions with 200 women and a few men, and the excitement of arriving in a new country. The experience was not calculated to bring out the best in anyone, even with the most rigid supervision, and the task of separating the whore from the pure always appeared easier after the voyage than before. Arthur's final comment on the "Royals", as some of the women became known in Van Diemen's Land, suggests that hasty complaints tended to distort the real picture.

I am happy to say that the mischief has been by no means so great as might have been anticipated, and that, upon the whole, the introduction into the colony of even these women has been very beneficial.

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33 Fry to Ladies Committee, April 15, 1832, C.O. 384/30.
With such qualifications then, need the criticisms of the scheme, by even Arthur himself, be tempered.

The imminent dissolution of the Emigration Commission in 1832 prompted the Colonial Office to appoint one of the many volunteer organizations as a permanent body to supervise preparation and emigrant selection. Edward Forster, Chairman of the Refuge for the Destitute, a London charitable association receiving government financial aid, offered the gratuitous services of the Refuge for all duties connected with female emigration. The Committee of the Refuge had responded immediately to the original Government notice of the project in 1831 by issuing a notice explaining the virtues of female emigration and calling for the formation of a committee of benevolent gentlemen to promote the Government's scheme.36 It was this committee, composed largely of members of the Committee of the Refuge, and apparently formed before any communication with the Colonial Office, to which the Government completely confided all the business connected with female emigration. By June, 1832, the London Emigration Committee, as it became known, had printed a detailed advertisement inviting applications from women throughout the country. Elliot assisted in such matters as advertising but otherwise the Committee assumed entire responsibility.37

36 Refuse advertisement dated Nov. 29, 1831, C.O. 384/27.

37 Forster to Elliot, Feb. 13, 1832, C.O. 384/30; Elliot to Forster, May 28, 1832, C.O. 385/14; Refuge advertisement dated June 9, 1832, C.O. 384/32; Cf. Madgwick, op.cit., pp. 100-1.
The Committee was completely voluntary and lacked any paid staff. Even its expenses had to be financed by a surcharge of £1 on the fare required from each emigrant. Without further help then, its activities would have been severely limited, for the task of recruitment and selection soon necessitated onerous duties of travel and correspondence with individual applicants and institutions. The only solution was to entrust the job of recruitment to shipowners whenever time and distance made it impossible for the Committee. In practice, this meant that the Committee interviewed applicants living in or near London at their office in Hackney Road twice a week, while those farther afield were recruited by the Committee's contractor and agent, John Marshall. Marshall submitted the applications to the Committee for acceptance or rejection with his own comments, and although the Committee did apparently reject some applicants despite Marshall's recommendation, it seems that they were in general bound to depend on his judgement. As a shipowner and contractor Marshall also received £16 for every female emigrant he sent out, so that, while he had a personal interest in each ship being fully loaded, he also had the influence and opportunity to ensure that any deficiency in numbers might be made up by recruiting undesirable women at the last minute. The colonists and the Colonial Reformers all based their condemnation of the scheme on this charge.  

It is as unnecessary as it is impossible to erect a conclusive defense of Marshall against these charges. Quite possibly he was guilty of fraud and misuse of colonial funds, and was consequently responsible for all the colonial complaints of unsuitable emigrants. But one should stress what Madgwick himself was forced to admit, that all the evidence on either side is circumstantial. The colonists were quick to notice that Marshall's dual role as shipowner-contractor and selection agent to the Committee was incongruous, but they could never support their accusations with positive proof. The only "real evidence" as Madgwick describes it, comes from the information given to the Select Committee on Transportation which took up the matter in 1838, and if, as Madgwick rightly suggests, Marshall would never admit having misused colonial funds, it is equally certain that the Transportation Committee, led by Molesworth, began with a bias against the entire scheme. Molesworth's Committee simply obtained the answer they desired by asking loaded questions, and elicited the preconceived conclusion that the scheme went wrong because of inadequate control over an incompetent committee and unscrupulous contractor and agent. Furthermore, it is difficult to reconcile the charges against Marshall with the fact that early in the scheme he received a guarantee of payment for the number of emigrants necessary to fill each ship to capacity. This made it quite unnecessary for him to smuggle in unqualified women.  

39 The extra payment was authorized at Forster's request after Marshall had taken a loss on three ships equipped for 200 emigrants each which all took less than their capacity; (the Sarah, Canton and Charles Kerr). Forster to Hay, July 16, 1835; Forster to James Stephen, Oct. 2, 1835, and Stephen's note, CO 38/38.
Committee, though suspect, was never questioned, especially the impressive volumes of letters he produced to demonstrate his extreme care in selection. The moral and occupational standards governing emigrant selection, he reminded those applying on behalf of seduced girls, were identical with those governing a private family when hiring domestic servants. Nevertheless, lacking adequate proof, the defense of the emigration scheme must rest on other grounds than these; as in the case of the Princess Royal the most convincing argument is one which demonstrates that the emigrants were not as undesirable as contemporaries believed, and as recent critics have since maintained. A comprehensive picture of the relative success or failure of each shipload, considering favourable as well as adverse reports, is likely to lead to a more balanced conclusion.

A careful analysis of all the available data extracted from the

\[h^0\] Marshall produced six volumes of correspondence carried on between himself and prospective emigrants, which unfortunately have not survived. Some extracts, however, were printed with the Transportation Committee Report; see esp. Marshall to G. Williams, Town Clerk, Tewkesbury, March 21, 1835 in reply to assistance for a seduced girl; Report of Select Committee on Transportation, II, 1838, op.cit., p.306. and Marshall's evidence QQ. 1050-53, pp.90-1.

\[h^1\] Critics like Madgwick and Mills simply selected colonial reports of the most undesirable women and depicted them as representative of the entire number. Madgwick, having examined four of the worst shiploads, concluded that "There is no point in making further references to particular ships. Every one of fourteen dispatched by the Emigration Committee was criticized to a greater or less degree on similar grounds"; op.cit., p.105.
despatches of colonial governors and reception committee reports on each ship strongly suggests that although there were many justified complaints about unsuitable women, the overall character of the female emigration scheme was not harmful.\textsuperscript{2} Out of fourteen ships despatched by the Committee,\textsuperscript{3} seven gave grounds for serious complaint in Australia, either because they contained numbers of prostitutes, girls under-age and ineligible for the bounty, and women not qualified for domestic service, or because of disorder, indiscipline and promiscuity during the voyage. But of these seven, the complaints of only one, the Layton in 1833, applied to a majority of the female passengers. Out of the other six, in spite of serious criticism of a minority of the women, the governors also praised the general character and behaviour of the majority on four vessels, the Bussorah Merchant, Strathfieldsay, David Scott and Canton. Only on three occasions, in the cases of the Layton, Charles Kerr and Boadicea, did the governors make their specific complaints a basis for wider criticism of the entire system. Furthermore, in two cases the women complained of were not selected by the Committee but had been fully financed by other institutions and were merely utilizing the Committee's ships and facilities. These included some of the women who were most seriously criticized for bad character, ill health and age on the Strathfieldsay and Boadicea. It is difficult to establish any exact numbers

\textsuperscript{2}For details of the outcome of each emigrant ship, on which the following is based, see Appendix A.

\textsuperscript{3}The Committee was not responsible for emigrant selection for the four ships despatched from Ireland, but this distinction was not apparently understood in the colony and in publicity at home.
of supposed unsuitable women as names and numbers were frequently not specified, but even assuming that estimates like "a few" or "in some cases" referred to as many as thirty women, those giving cause for complaint, including the emigrants not actually selected by the Committee, would amount to 360 out of a total of 2,703, or slightly less than fourteen per cent of the total. While this number was sufficient to justify constant complaints from the colonies and controversy at home, it certainly does not warrant the unqualified condemnation it provoked.

The other seven ships occasioned no colonial complaints whatsoever, and much commendation, with respect to the moral and economic quality and behaviour of the women. All four ships in 1836, the final year of the project, were included among these, but it is significant to note that the last three, the William Metcalfe, Duchess of Northumberland and Lady McNaughten did provoke indignant protests from Australia. These protests, however, had nothing whatever to do with single female emigrants, but referred exclusively to the new Government project of family emigration which was started in 1836 to replace mass female emigration. Both Franklin, the new Governor of Van Diemen's Land, and Bourke complained of the destitute and unqualified paupers sent out at colonial expense. The ships were overcrowded, and excessive numbers of children on board sparked off contagious disease and high mortality. But the Ladies' Committee in Hobart Town expressed their gratification to find such great improvement in the qualifications and character of the women on the William
Madgwick missed this essential distinction between complaints of single women and those of complete families. In fact the favourable reception of all the women in 1836 inescapably suggests that the Committee was just becoming proficient at its job when the whole scheme was abandoned.

The outcome of each voyage suggests that wise and rigorous supervision on board gave a greater assurance of success than the method of emigrant selection, although the latter was undoubtedly important. The most disastrous ship handled by the Committee was the *Layton* in 1833, which provoked angry protests from the Colonial administrators and the ladies' reception committee after a riotous voyage of unrestrained promiscuity. But as Bourke made clear, the basic cause was the Committee's faulty selection of two incompetent men to serve as the ship's Surgeon and Superintendent. They quarrelled throughout the voyage, accusing each other of inattention and improper conduct, and failed utterly to control the women and segregate them from the crew. On the other hand, the *Sarah*, one of the most orderly and appreciated ships, owed its success...
far more to "judicious supervision" in Arthur's words, than to any superior selection.\textsuperscript{46} Forster agreed, and afterwards took steps to ensure that the supervision on each ship would be as exemplary as that of Superintendent Charles D. Logan on the \textit{Sarah}. He combined the duties of the Surgeon and Superintendent into a single post, as on convict ships, and issued rigid instructions to each Surgeon-Superintendent along the lines of Logan's own report.\textsuperscript{47} The key to Logan's success had been the extensive use of married men, themselves emigrants, both as deputies to ensure discipline and as a "salutary influence" on the morals of the unmarried. Logan's report of the voyage of the \textit{Sarah} is especially important in view of future developments in assisted emigration, which in 1837 was converted to family emigration exclusively.\textsuperscript{48} By degrees the Government extended his concept of protection by families until no woman received assistance unless she went under the immediate protection of a married couple, preferably her parents or other close relatives.\textsuperscript{49} But Forster's meticulous instructions to each Surgeon-Superintendent, patterned after Logan's report, on the necessary precautions to guard the women's morals and behaviour demonstrate the Committee's pre-eminent concern to forestall

\textsuperscript{46} Arthur to Spring-Rice, Feb. 26, 1835, C.O. 280/55.

\textsuperscript{47} Forster to Hay, March 10, 1835, C.O. 38h/38.

\textsuperscript{48} Logan's supervision was a mixture of piety, diversionary instruction and duties and strict inspection. He kept a twenty-four hour male guard and made frequent unannounced inspections and ran nightly checks of the women's quarters; Report of Superintendent C. Logan of the \textit{Sarah}, in Arthur to Spring Rice, Feb. 26, 1835, C.O. 280/55.

\textsuperscript{49} Glenelg to Bourke, Sept. 18, 1836, and enclosures, PP. 1837, XLIII (358), pp.58-60.
any further complaints about the women in Australia. The results of
the Sarah and the six other ships with a clean record showed that their
aim was not unrealistic.

In terms of numbers the female emigration project was, therefore,
undoubtedly highly successful. It provided the Australian colonies with
badly needed female domestic servants and potential wives without the
stigma of a convict background, and opened a new field of gainful employ­
ment to women without prospects in Britain. But contemporaries, and esp­
ecially the Australian colonists, did not think in terms of numbers. For
them it was the isolated complaint which attracted attention and remained
representative of every woman on every ship. Horrors such as those des­
cribed on the Layton caused shocked reactions from men who had confident­ly expected that shiploads of women would civilise Australia. Ultimate­ly colonial dissatisfaction and adverse publicity combined with the wor­
sening image of Australia during the height of the Transportation con­trovery in 1836 to terminate the whole project. The fate of the scheme
was decided by the distortions of adverse publicity rather than by a
genuine assessment of its total contribution.

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50 See Forster’s instructions to John Sullivan, Surgeon-Superinten­
dent of the Canton, April 18, 1835, C.O. 384/45. The Committee had
earlier expressed its conviction that respectable families "exercise an
important check on the entire society on board ship, and essentially pro­
mote regularity, propriety and harmony. While parents watch over the
minds and conduct of their families, the moral influence extends far be­
yond the immediate objects of their solicitude and care"; Forster to Hay,
Dec. 30, 1834, C.O. 384/35; see also the Committee’s instructions to the
Captain, Surgeon and Superintendent of the Strathfieldsay, May 1, 1834,
C.O. 384/35.
From the outset the Colonial Office had been doubtful about the wisdom of moving large numbers of young women collectively. T. F. Elliot preferred them to emigrate in small groups protected by immediate families, but he was forced to qualify his preference by the need for speed in increasing the female population of Australia. Mass shipments were in his view a compromise with quality in order to obtain the more urgent quantity. Others shared his view that some abuses were inherent in such a large undertaking, but worth tolerating for the greater gain of reducing the disproportion between the sexes. Goderich told Arthur that the risk of disorder on the *Princess Royal* had been anticipated, "but that chance was deemed a less evil than the certain mischief of leaving the disproportion between the sexes in those colonies without an attempt at its correction." Similarly, Governor Bourke, more often a sympathetic mouthpiece for colonial complaints, acknowledged that it would be "altogether unreasonable" to expect a universally favourable report of the women's morals. Even Forster admitted that some cases of "deception" and the influence of a long voyage must inevitably produce some exceptional cases of undeserving women. Colonial immigration officials

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51 Elliot to Richard Dalton, Poor Law Officer, Bury St. Edmonds, Dec. 15, 1831, C.O. 385/12; Elliot to Catherine McDonough, Jan. 4, 1832, C.O. 385/13.


53 Bourke to Stanley, Dec. 6, 1833, PP. 1834, XLIV (616), pp. 33-5.

54 Forster to Hay, Dec. 30, 1834, C.O. 384/35.
frequently qualified their own complaints with similar observations.  

This view could easily change into downright criticism of Australian society. In 1834 an emigrant's handbook on New South Wales by the Rev. H. Carmichael defended the scheme on the grounds of its priceless value in reducing the disproportion between the sexes, and hence improving colonial morality. The author went on,

In individual cases the change of circumstances, and the state of the colony must, no doubt, have gone far to probe acutely the feelings of these females; and in other cases some may have become victims of the vice of the country. Yet on the whole, after the temporary feelings arising from separation from home, and from being thus thrown into this society have been overcome, their general condition is sure of being bettered; whilst their influence in restraining men from immorality and vice, will be more and more felt according as they become distributed as heads of families over the territory. Nothing has so powerful an influence over the conduct of men, as the society of virtuous and intelligent females.  

Carmichael's argument that the state of colonial society was to blame for ill-behaved women gradually became the main line of defense against the scheme's critics. Paradoxically, however, the constant reiteration of the influence of Australian "depravity" on innocent and helpless young women prompted fears that mass female emigration was suitable only for the most degraded women of England.

Although the Committee might regard some abuses as inevitable,  

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55 See, for example, the report of the Colonial Surgeon and Port Officer at Hobart Town on the Boadicea, Feb. 8, 1836, in Arthur to Glenelg, Feb. 19, 1836, C.O. 280/65.

the correspondence between them and the Colonial Office displays a most scrupulous regard to select well-qualified virtuous women. Furthermore, they invariably betrayed a hypersensitivity to criticism from all quarters, even seeming to expect it. One committee member, C. H. Bracebridge, questioning the minimum age limit of eighteen for female emigrants, remarked to the Permanent Undersecretary at the Colonial Office:

I believe parish officers will show that the age of seduction in England and consequently of expense to their fund is earlier, not to say anything of the hope of reform being greater in characters who have not been years immersed in vice . . . I will not deny (though it lessen the numbers of applicants) it [i.e. the 18 year limit] may save us from some abuse from mawkish humanitists who exclaim against separating a poor child from her natural protectors. Such persons know not how many of the ties of nature are irretrievably broken among the vicious of the lower classes who live without God in the world, and consequently sink far below the level of human nature in a highly civilised country.57

The Colonial Office shared this defensive attitude. Each year in the Parliamentary Papers they published recent correspondence with the Colonial Governors relating to emigration, and during the operation of the scheme this should have involved publishing the critical comments from Australia on some female emigrants. But in fact it is possible to read through the papers covering the first two years of the project without seeing any suggestion that a single complaint had emanated from either colony. The Governors' despatches were carefully censored so that every reference to prostitutes and misbehaviour of the women was absent from the papers presented to Parliament. The full purport of the correspondence, therefore, only becomes apparent when one consults it in the original,

57C. H. Bracebridge to Hay, June 12, 1832, C.O. 384/30.
conveniently impossible for contemporaries. For those interested in the success of the scheme, censorship of this kind forestalled, at least for a time, sensational criticism at home which might discourage the more respectable women from emigrating.

Government censorship, however, could not keep female emigrants out of the news indefinitely. Despite the time lag caused by a voyage of about four months, news from Australia eventually filtered back by means of correspondence, returning passengers or crew members. Still, it is surprising, in view of the official complaints of some of the earliest ships, that no serious criticism of the scheme was made in England before the Summer of 1834. And when that criticism came from The Times it must have taken the Committee by complete surprise, since they had previously received that very paper's praise. On May 2, 1834 a Times article described in glowing terms the emigrants on the Strathfieldsay and all the elaborate precautions on board prior to departure. But three months later The Times thundered and from that time the Emigration Committee was forced into a defensive position from which it never recovered.

Opposition to any organized emigration project was not inconsis-

58 Compare, for example, Arthur to Goderich on the Princess Royal, Sept. 8, 1832, in PP. 1833, XXVI (111), pp. 54-5 with original in C.O. 280/35; also compare Arthur to Stanley on the Strathfieldsay, Sept. 24, 1834, in PP. 1835, XXXIX (87) pp. 31-2 with original in C.O. 280/49.

59 The Times, May 2, 1834, p. 5.
tent with the long-established editorial policy of The Times. Since 1815 it had constantly opposed all official attempts to encourage emigration, ostensibly on the grounds that other means of employing a redundant population could be found at home. Furthermore, in the Summer of 1834 The Times and its owner, John Walter, were at the height of their fulminations against the new Poor Law, then in the final stages of legislation, so that any further opportunity to criticize the centralizing and interfering Whig Government would have been welcome. In view of Walter's later attacks on the scheme in Parliament in 1836 it is probable that the outbursts of August, 1834 were written at the behest of the proprietor.

In August, 1834, The Times printed three leaders critical of the female emigration project. Two were based on information from an "intelligent captain of a merchant vessel just arrived from Sydney" and one on a letter received from a returned female emigrant. The tenor of each was much the same. They tended to stress the more sensational abuses of the scheme, particularly those respecting prostitutes, but The Times, although extremely hostile, made no criticism which Colonial Governors and officials had not already made against a minority of the women; the difference lay in the clear impression that these abuses were

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60 On the Poor Law see J. Walter, A Letter to the Electors of Berkshire on the New System for the Management of the Poor Proposed by the Government, (London, 1834), and The Times, April 30, 1834, p.5.
the rule rather than the exception. This might be explained by the fact that in August, 1834 sufficient time had elapsed to permit news to reach London of only four emigrant ships, two of these, the Red Rover and the Princess Royal, not being handled by the Committee, and one, the Layton, provoking more serious complaints than any other ship. The Times' criticism, therefore, was made before the Committee had really had an opportunity to show that it had profited from its early mistakes.61

The growls of the Thunderer did not go unanswered. Five days after the appearance of the first critical leader a defensive letter by John Marshall, the Committee's agent and contractor, appeared in the Globe, Courier and True Sun, papers which had all reprinted the leader of August 6 from The Times.62 In rebuttal Marshall pointed out that the Committee had not been responsible for the Red Rover and Princess Royal, and that it had been formed for the express purpose of eliminating the original abuses. He then cited reports of the emigrants on the Bussorah Merchant and Layton diametrically opposite to those used by The Times. Characteristically, The Times dismissed all Marshall's evidence because it came from men who, like Marshall, had a "common interest" in encouraging emigration, but it is notable that it did not repeat the accusation, already made in Sydney, that Marshall had deliberately filled up the

61 The Times, Aug. 6, 1834, p.5; Aug. 11, 1834, p.2; Aug. 28, 1834, p.2.

62 The Globe, Aug. 11, 1834; The Courier, Aug 11, 1834; The True Sun, Aug 11, 1834.
ships with disreputable women immediately before departure. Further criticism in *The Times* on August 11 and August 28 prompted a more elaborate reply from Marshall in pamphlet form on August 29, which was really an extension of his first letter of August 7. Unlike the Committee and the Colonial Office he avoided the tactical error of suggesting that some abuses were inherent in a system of mass female emigration, but he did suggest that some experience was necessary before the system could attain perfection. It is hardly likely that Marshall's reply convinced *The Times* but, for whatever reason, it did not deign to answer him, and did not return to the subject until 1836.

In his pamphlet Marshall printed a letter to *The Times* from J. Henty, an ex-Van Diemen's Land resident, which the newspaper had refused to print. Henty had stressed the desperate need for women in Van Diemen's Land, and had suggested that the abuses described in Sydney did not apply to the smaller colony. He feared that *The Times* adverse publicity would discourage potential emigrants, and especially the more respectable women, from taking advantage of the Government bounty. His fear was well justified, for the next three ships to leave London, the *Sarah*...

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63 J. Marshall, *A Reply to the Misrepresentations ... Respecting Female Emigration to Australia*, (London, 1834). Marshall reprinted his letter of August 7 in this pamphlet, pp. 3-6; see also Marshall to Hay Aug. 21, 1835, C.O. 364/381, where Marshall stated that the Committee had induced him to write the pamphlet.


in October, 1834, the Canton in May, 1835, and the Charles Kerr in July, 1835, all departed without their full quota of women. In his report for 1834 Forster wrote that the Committee had fully anticipated filling the Sarah with much needed country servants, but after the press controversy many women of that class had withdrawn their application. Six months later he complained that respectable qualified women were still deterred by press criticism, and extended responsibility to the Australian press.

The unfounded attacks on the labours of the Committee by a portion of the newspaper press in this country, and the unwarranted imputations cast on them by the Colonial press (which are copied and circulated in this hemisphere) render it impossible for the Committee to select a number of young women of unexceptionable character from any class, and until the colonists themselves shall assist in aiding, instead of repressing, the exertions of the Committee, no well grounded expectation can exist of the Committee having it in their power to select a large body of females from those employed in any given line of life, more especially of persons from rural districts, where local attachments are the strongest.

If Forster was correct regarding the withdrawal of potential emigrants—and there is no reason to doubt it—then it seems certain that press influence was central to the success or failure of the system. The Committee's hypersensitivity to criticism thus becomes more understandable.

After the 1834 controversy the Committee had a reprieve from further serious criticism for nearly two years. The Times only broke its long silence in April, 1836 with a highly commendatory news report


68 Forster to Hay, July 16, 1835, C.O. 384/38; see also Forster to Hay, July 16, 1835, C.O. 384/38.
of the Committee's arrangements for the Amelia Thompson. But in July
the coup de grace was delivered in Parliament by the owner of The Times
himself, John Walter II. Walter brought the subject before the House of
Commons on three different occasions within a month. He objected to a
placard circulated by the Committee, with Government sanction, to all
post offices, clergymen and parish officers "urging young women, with
what he should call indecent and improper incitements, to quit their
homes." He denied the Committee's statement that their previous emi-
grants had been respectably employed or married.

He could ensure the House, from inquiry of several intelligent
gentlemen, who had returned to this country from New South Wales,
the region to which these poor women were invited, that two-thirds
of the emigrants were irrevocably and finally, consigned to pro-
stitution (Mr. C. Lushington: "No!! "Order" from the Chair.)

To Walter the entire system was nothing less than a "white slave trade"
far worse than the negro slave trade. The Committee, he argued, had
persisted, against the warnings of the Hobart Town Ladies' Committee,
in sending out young girls under seventeen to expect immediate marriage
with respectable men. Characteristically, Walter concluded with a dia-
triibe against all emigration schemes which, he argued, severed man from
all his most natural and affectionate ties. And if material improvement
was pleaded as a motive the greater was the shame of that Government
whose subjects could be induced to forsake their country in violation of

69The Times, April 29, 1836, p.6. In the same issue a related
leading article deplored the need for any emigration, but made no ad-
verse comments on the Committee, p.5.
all natural affections. In fact this was a concise précis of the traditional attitude of The Times to all organized emigration.

Walter's motion to have the Committee's placards removed was defeated, and he was ably answered, first by Sir George Grey, Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office, and then by Charles Lushington, a member of the Emigration Committee. "Considering the great number of females which went out" argued Grey "it was not to be wondered at if some turned out badly." This was the traditional defense of the Committee's operations, but this time, it was not sufficient, for on July 21 the Emigration Committee passed a resolution against sending any further women to New South Wales. The Committee resolved that, advertting to the information imparted to the Committee, both collectively and individually, of the excessive immorality stated to prevail in certain districts of New South Wales, the Committee have formed the opinion that they cannot conscientiously recommend to the Government to encourage the further emigration of single females (however well selected), unprotected by parents or near relatives, to Sydney.

Forster advised Grey that the resolution did not apply to Van Diemen's Land, where "a very different state of society prevails, and the entire state of that community is much more moral and religious." Nevertheless,

70Hansard, 3rd Ser., Vol. XXXV, July 11, 1836, cc.96-105; see also July 8, 1836, cc.12-3; Aug. 5, 1836, cc.943-6; Vol. XXXIV, July 5, 1836, cc.1268-9.

71Ibid. Vol. XXXV, July 11, 1836, c. 102.

72Committee Resolution, July 21, 1836, and Forster to Grey, July 22, 1836, PP. 1836, XL (76), p. 1; this resolution was printed in The Times, Aug. 6, 1836, p.3.
Walter raised the subject in the Commons again on August 5 and boasted that the Committee's resolution stemmed from his own recent motion. But he denied that Van Diemen's Land society was any more moral than that in Sydney and urged the Government to put a stop to the entire system.  

Walter's attack on the Committee was not without its effect, but it is unlikely that it alone caused the Committee's sudden decision. The Colonial Reformers, led by Edward Gibbon Wakefield, were agitating for a more "systematic" approach to emigration and colonization. On June 27 Wakefield had appeared before the Select Committee on Disposal of Colonial Waste Lands where he attacked the Emigration Committee and ridiculed the Government for allowing "so important a work as the conduct of emigration by the State, to be superintended by a party of people whom nobody knows anything at all about." But more important, as far back as October 14, 1835, Governor Bourke of New South Wales had submitted a proposal to Glenelg to transform the entire basis of assisted emigration into a family emigration scheme in which single females would qualify only under a family's protection. Under the new scheme the colony would send its own selection agents to England to select,

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74Evidence of E. G. Wakefield in Report from the Select Committee on Disposal of Lands in the British Colonies, PP. 1836, XI (512), pp. 99-100, Q.926; see also p. 95, Q. 898; and p. 97, Q. 910 where Wakefield advocated the assisted emigration of young childless married couples.
supervise, and accompany assisted emigrants to Sydney. Glenelg did not forward his approval of this plan until September 18, so it must have been under consideration for about six months. There is no evidence of any official communication of the matter to the Committee, but it is inconceivable that they would still be ignorant of its contents by August. Their resolution of July 21, pleading the depravity of New South Wales as a pretext for their decision was, therefore, probably little more than a face-saving operation.

Despite its announcement the Committee managed the three remaining emigrant ships already contracted for the current year, two from Cork to Sydney and one from London to Hobart Town. But in his year-end report Forster proposed that the Committee's services might be altogether dispensed with. In July the Committee had felt that single women might still be sent to Van Diemen's Land without their natural protectors, but now "they confess that so many conflicting opinions have reached them that it would not be right to disregard the doubts which have been expressed on that subject." In any case, as Forster acknowledged, the appointment of colonial selection agents and restriction of financial assistance to women emigrating in families rendered the Committee

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75Bourke's proposal was based on the suggestions of the Committee of the Legislative Council on Emigration; Bourke to Glenelg, Oct. 14, 1835, and Report of Committee, Sept. 18, 1835; PP. 1837, XLIII (358), pp. 3-12; Bourke took steps to implement these proposals before receiving Glenelg's approval; see Alexander McLeay (Sydney Colonial Secretary) instructions to selection agent Dr. David Boyter, Feb. 10, 1836, C.O. 384/45.
Unfortunately for the Committee its termination did not mark the end of public criticism of the system it had managed. As the events became more distant the sweeping generalizations against the system became more strident; and if the Committee's reputation tarnished with age, so did the concept of any organized system of female emigration.

One of the most influential writers to criticize the Committee was the resident Presbyterian clergyman in Sydney, John Dunmore Lang, who had himself shown considerable interest in emigration schemes,77 and in 1837 launched a scathing attack.78 Like other critics Lang emphasized Marshall's incongruous position as both agent and contractor, and thought that the exposure of unprotected women to the strong temptations of Australian society militated against a successful outcome. But above all there was "the improbability of inducing any considerable number of really virtuous females to a distant country, without natural protectors." Lang's italics stressed what every self-respecting middle-class parent fervently believed, that respectable young women should never travel —let alone emigrate—en seul. The dire consequence of this delusion,

76 Forster to Grey, Dec. 6, 1836, C.O. 384/41.

77 See Lang's suggestions to Hay, Jan. 15, 1834, C.O. 384/36; Lang had already written one popular anti-transportation book on Australia, A Historical and Statistical Account of New South Wales, (London, 1834), already in its third edition in 1837, so that his second book was widely reviewed in England.

78 J. D. Lang, Transportation and Colonization: The Causes of the
argued Lang, had been the further corruption of Australia rather than, as intended, its refinement and civilization. For the past three years the streets of Sydney had been infested with prostitutes from the Committee’s ships, whereas he had seen nothing of the kind previously. 79

"The thoroughly demoralizing influence of such exhibitions may be easily conceived," he concluded, "for one bad woman let loose upon society does infinitely more harm than a dozen bad men." The implication was obvious: female emigrants had signally failed to play their anticipated civilizing role; instead of bringing humanity they had brought corruption. 80 The lesson was not lost on those responsible for the future conduct of emigration.

Lang's strictures on female emigration met with widespread approbation in the British press. The Times, devoting space in two issues to his book, described the scheme as "a wicked knavish trick." William Molesworth in the Westminster Review derided the scheme as a misguided attempt to convert the vagabonds of London into the matrons of Australia, which instead had polluted Sydney's streets with the refuse of Westminster; the pathetic result was that "the free emigrants now outstrip in vice and obscenity" the convict population. But few made the analysis of a

Comparative Failure of the Transportation System in the Australian Colonies, (London, 1837).

79 Significantly, Lang had no experience of, and did not discuss Van Diemen's Land, but his remarks were taken to apply to the entire scheme.

80 Ibid., pp. 48-9.
writer in the *British and Foreign Review*, who insisted that so long as convict transportation continued to Australia, either mass female emigration or female convict transportation must be carried out to prevent the greater evil of a disproportion between the sexes from growing. The familiar evils of prostitution, it seemed, were minor compared to a society where "the monstrous conception of a Marquis de Sade seem to have received the sanction and notoriety of general custom." 81

This popular criticism was damaging enough, but Sir William Molesworth's Select Committee on Transportation subjected the scheme to further public scrutiny in 1837 and 1838. As a leading Radical and Colonial Reformer, Molesworth was committed to the total abolition of convict transportation, and it at first appears inconsistent that the emigration scheme should have been given so much attention by the Committee. But the criticism of female emigration served a useful purpose in Molesworth's anti-transportation argument, as shown by his own speech in the Commons in 1840 introducing a motion to abolish convict transportation. The failure of female emigration conveniently demonstrated the futility of trying to correct the disproportion between the sexes in Australia by any other means than the total abolition of transportation.

"It is vain," argued Molesworth,

to think of altering the proportion of the sexes in the penal colonies by means of good female emigration, as long as transportation continues, because respectable women will not consent to go alone to dwell among convicts. 82

The Transportation Committee's attack on female emigration was therefore a convenient means to emphasize further their foregone conclusion that all attempts at moral reform in Australia were futile so long as convict transportation persisted. In line with the Wakefieldian doctrine that emigration should be systematically administered by fully responsible paid officials Molesworth also criticized the role of John Marshall as contractor and selection agent. 83 But in fairness one should add that Molesworth failed to prove his case from the evidence collected by the Committee. He ignored the defensive testimony of Marshall himself and two members of the London Emigration Committee, Edward Forster and H. W. Parker, as well as the favourable comments on the results of the scheme in Van Diemen's Land by two residents, and the Rev. W. Ullathorne's qualification of his own criticism of the New South Wales emigrants. 84 Furthermore the Committee's line of questioning, while not always successful, was too obviously slanted to confirm

83Ibid.
84Report of Select Committee on Transportation, (II), 1838, op. cit., evidence of Marshall, pp. 88-100, QQ. 1037-1160; Forster, pp. 100-1, QQ. 1164-79; Parker, pp. 155-63, QQ. 1228-1331; Russell, QQ. 567-72; Murdock, pp. 119-120, QQ. 1471-80; Ullathorne, pp. 22-3, Q. 220.
its own preconceived conclusions.\textsuperscript{85} Admittedly the most critical evidence suggests that complaints of some of the Sydney emigrants were largely justified,\textsuperscript{86} but they are hardly warrant for Archbishop Whately's statement in the House of Lords that "19/20ths of these unfortunate creatures were swept down the strong current of licentiousness which prevails in those regions, and which no ordinary strength can be expected to resist."\textsuperscript{87} But it was Whately's view which prevailed, and with damaging consequences for the future of female emigration.

The view that any really respectable young woman would never consider emigrating alone, especially to Australia, without her "natural protectors" was the most persistent argument against female emigration. The very fact of her willingness to leave the theoretical protection of her family for an unknown land was sufficient to brand any woman as a moral risk and liability as an immigrant in the new country. However much this ignored the desperate economic plight of thousands of young women of all classes in Britain, those closest to the routine conduct of assisted emigration were convinced from actual observation that their experience formed the basis for a hard and fast law of feminine behaviour.

\textsuperscript{85}See for example Hawes' questioning of Marshall, \textit{ibid.}, p. 92, QQ. 1076-7.

\textsuperscript{86}\textit{Ibid.}, (I), PP. 1837, (518), Evidence of Sir Francis Forbes, pp. 28-9, QQ. 476-86; Lt. Col. Henry Breton, pp. 153-4, QQ. 2h00-2, 2h4-10; J. D. Lang, pp. 254-5, QQ. 3939-43; Ullathorne, pp. 22-3, QQ. 219-21; these comments did not go unnoticed in the press, see Horace Twiss, "New South Wales," \textit{Quarterly Review}, Vol. LXII, Oct. 1836, p. 482.

\textsuperscript{87}\textit{Hansard}, 3rd Ser., Vol. LIV, May 19, 1840 (Lords), c. 275.
Indeed, while this general conclusion was unwarranted, it would be difficult to exaggerate the bias against unaccompanied travel as a deterrent to female emigration, and even to female mobility within England.®® The resulting taint associated with female emigration persisted well into the century and for decades inhibited the development of any really significant middle-class project.

Before the termination of the scheme in 1836 the conviction that only unsuitable women would emigrate alone was expressed only by the colonists. In 1835 the New South Wales Committee on Emigration acknowledged "the difficulty of inducing young women of virtuous principles and prudent habits to quit the protection of their homes, and migrate on a voyage of adventure to a distant land."®® But from the moment that family emigration replaced female emigration the opinion was expressed with increasing frequency at the Colonial Office, and, as already noticed, gained a wide public hearing. James Stephen, advising the Treasury of the new emigration policy, admitted that the recent plan had failed to live up to expectations. Despite the praiseworthy exertions of the Committee, he added, "no care and vigilance can guard against the recurrence of

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®®See especially Liverpool emigration agent Lt. R. Low to Hay, June 21, 1834, advising that he had selected many respectable women for emigration if a ship could be sent from Liverpool, but that "there seems an unwillingness on the parents' parts, of the lower better order of society, to trust their children so far from their sight previous to embarkation;" C.O. 364/35.

®®Report of the Committee of the Legislative Council on Emigration, Sept. 18, 1835, op. cit., p. 111; see also J. D. Lang to the Secretary of State, Jan. 15, 1834, C.O. 384/36.
evils, which appear naturally to flow from the separation of females at any early age from their natural guardians and protectors, and their exposure, notwithstanding the asylum provided for them by the Government on their arrival, to more than ordinary temptations. 90 The most persistent critic at the Colonial Office was T. F. Elliot, who became Agent-General for emigration at the end of 1836. Commenting on a request from Lt.-Governor Franklin to renew female emigration to Van Diemen's Land, he advised Stephen,

> The fact perhaps is, that the very circumstance of a young woman's being prepared to quit the country alone, and separated from all her friends, is in itself, though I should be very sorry to say a conclusive objection, yet an occasion of additional difficulty in obtaining a perfect assurance of the respectability and correct views of the party. 91

Elliot would not budge from his position that the experiment of female emigration had been tried and found wanting, and he remained determined throughout his career that the attempt should not be repeated.

The most significant feature of all this is that the belief in the inherent evils of female emigration came to be held more tenaciously in Britain than abroad. The new policy of family emigration in 1837 was based entirely on the needs of New South Wales and ignored the different circumstances in Van Diemen's Land. In the latter colony, as Franklin told Glenelg, the population was concentrated along the coast, and, unlike New South Wales which already possessed numerous interior

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90Stephen to A. Y. Spearman, Aug. 19, 1836, PP. 1837, XLIII (358), p. 60.

91Elliot to Stephen, Jan. 3, 1839, PP. 1839, XXXIX (536-I), pp. 75-6.
townships, there were few employment opportunities for married mechanics. Furthermore, in Van Diemen's Land there was a surfeit of assigned convict servants, who resided in their master's homes, and although many settlers might prefer free labour, they were not equipped to take in whole families. The first shipload of families sent out with the last single women in the William Metcalfe convinced the Legislative Council that family emigration was positively injurious to the colony; but female emigration was now popular, and the Council suggested that about 300 women annually be sent to Van Diemen's Land in groups of twenty to forty each. The strength of colonial feeling on this subject was suggested in a letter from Mr. Henty of Launceston, read before the Transportation Committee in 1838 by H. W. Parker, a member of the Emigration Committee. Henty deplored the cessation of female emigration, arguing that the women had wrought a great "moral improvement" in Launceston society; he feared that without it Launceston would "revert back to the old and barbarous state of the colony as it existed in 1832." Large towns like Sydney, and even Hobart Town, he argued, were cut off from the country settlers, and the women had no chance to obtain safe and suitable employment, but in Launceston the country settlers flocked into town when the women arrived, and immediately took them away "from all temptation and vice."

92 Franklin to Glenelg, April 12, 1837, CO. 280/78.

93 Minutes of Van Diemen's Land Legislative Council Meeting, April 11, 1837, enclosed in ibid; see also Franklin's formal request to Glenelg, PP. 1839, XXXIX (536-1), pp. 74 - 5.

94 Henty's letter in evidence of H. W. Parker, Report of Select
But the Colonial Office remained steadfast against these arguments. The embarrassment and criticism wrought by one experiment in female emigration was sufficient to deter any attempt to repeat the exercise. Franklin's requests for female emigrants to Van Diemen's Land were therefore denied, and Elliot's view that any such system carried with it the seeds of its own failure persisted. As late as 1850 the Emigration Commissioners warned the proponents of a new female emigration society against all the inherent evils in the scheme, and related a long history of the experience of the London Emigration Committee. Furthermore, in the public mind female emigration continued to be associated with prostitutes and workhouses, or at best unemployed domestics. Indeed, there is evidence to show that regular prostitutes themselves generally dreamed of Australia as an escape from their plight. The experience of the first female emigration scheme bolstered the stereotyped attitude in Britain which viewed female emigration as a hazardous last resort for the destitute and ruined, and as an almost unthinkable alternative for the middle-class young lady without fortune or employment.

Committee on Transportation (II) 1838, op. cit., p. 112, Q. 1326; the tenor of this letter was similar to Henty's earlier letter to The Times printed by John Marshall; supra p. 86.

95Glenelg to Franklin, Jan. 11, 1839, PP. 1839, XXXIX, (536-I), p. 75.
96Memo. of Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners to Sidney Herbert's Fund for Promoting Female Emigration, PP. 1850, XL [1637], pp. 166-9.
Chapter III

The Pioneers: Early-Victorian Emigrants

One of the factors which persistently inhibited the development of emigration as a viable alternative for the distressed gentlewoman was the obvious lack of demand in the colonies for refined educated women. As the colonists never tired of pointing out, a crude pioneering agricultural and pastoral society was suitable for none but the most hard-working servant women of humble origins—and preferably country servants at that; consequently they looked askance at the arrival of genteel governesses reluctant to do the most menial kinds of domestic and farmwork.¹ This inherent incompatibility between the occupational needs of middle-class women on the one hand and new societies on the other continually obstructed the growth of middle-class female emigration on a large scale. Only in the eighties when the emigration societies—and the emigrants themselves—finally faced up to this problem did the actual numbers of middle-class female emigrants increase significantly.

Despite all the obstacles there was unrelenting pressure in Britain for some form of middle-class emigration of both sexes. Partly this was a response to the economic need of Wakefield's "uneasy class;"

¹See, for example, the evidence of Alexander McLeay, New South Wales Colonial Secretary, to the Committee of the N.S.W. Legislative Council on Immigration, Minutes of Evidence, Sept. 18, 1835, PP. 1837, XLIII (358), p. 16.
Wakefield's model colonies in South Australia and New Zealand were intended as exact replicas of the social structure of Britain, a precise transplantation of every class from the humblest to the highest. But the greatest persuasion was directed to that class most traditionally reluctant to leave. R. S. Rintoul's *Spectator*, the mouthpiece of the Wakefieldians, argued that the new South Australian colony in 1834 offered most advantage to men of small or moderate fortunes, having large families to provide for—a career for all the sons, be they ever so many, husbands for all the daughters, however large the brood; and for the contented father, a field of profitable exertion and honourable ambition.

Wakefield did indeed root out many middle-class emigrants of both sexes at a time when the vast majority of emigrants were working-class. But as Brinley Thomas recently suggested this very success probably diverted the more class-conscious working-class emigrants to the United States, and was a contributory factor in causing that country to gain in population at the expense of the Empire.

All the arguments inducing middle-class families to emigrate applied with equal force to single women of the same class. The combined influence of the Government emigration scheme and Wakefieldian promotion campaigns in the 'thirties prompted small numbers of middle-class women to risk the dangers of a long unpleasant voyage and unknown colony in

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2*Spectator*, Jan. 4, 1834, pp. 7-8.

preference to genteel poverty at home. This, undoubtedly, was only the
tip of the iceberg of thousands of "redundant women," most of whom re­
mained in Britain to swell the ranks of unqualified governesses and
schoolmistresses. But for this reason it is important to get some idea
of exactly who emigrated and for what reasons. Did these pioneer middle-
class emigrants before 1850 really fit the well known description of the
"distressed gentlewoman?" The evidence is meagre and scattered but,
taking all the associated clues into account, some tentative answers
should emerge.

The Government emigration scheme begun in 1832 was clearly in-
tended as a working-class project to encourage domestic and country ser-
vants to emigrate. But in a very short time various pressures emerged
for some assistance to middle-class women. An extraordinary proposal
by R. F. Breed, a Liverpool shipowner, suggests that commercial inter-
est soon detected the potential lucrative profits which might derive
from such a scheme. Breed solicited the Government's support for a pro-
ject initially to send out to Hobart Town fourteen to sixteen "respect-
able young females" under twenty-three. He would not charge for the
passage but expected, rather naively, to be paid 150 guineas when each
woman married. At that time also, he hoped that the Government would
allow each of the emigrants a small grant of land as a "marriage portion."

Not surprisingly the Colonial Office declined, but Breed was per-
sistent. In a subsequent letter he simply requested that the Government
guarantee protection of the women in the colony until their marriage. He claimed to have already contacted three families "overburthened with Females of excellent standing and character." One of the fathers was an artillery Captain with twelve children, "all well educated but in straitened circumstances. These families expressed delight at the idea of being able to embrace an opening to better the fortunes of some of their Daughters with comfort and protection." But comfort and protection was the key term, and assuming that his own scheme was to lapse, Breed suggested

whether some revisal of the Circulars may not hereafter be made so as to hold out inducement to the Emigration of Females of a higher order than seems to be contemplated. The scale of passage money in those circulars would admit of beggarly accommodation fit only for paupers, or the lowest order of society, and in vessels that must I take it be crowded with passengers in which a respectable Female would not embark under any consideration.

Goderich dismissed this as "absurd," and in his scribbled note displayed a marked ignorance of the situation of middle-class women.

He says the aid should be such as to tempt respectable (meaning wealthy) females to emigrate. It does not appear to have occurred to Mr. Breed that wealthy females would be able to pay for themselves. The sooner the letter is put out of sight the better.

It does not appear to have occurred to Goderich that, as the artillery captain's daughters knew only too well, middle-class respectability was no guarantee of middle-class wealth, and similar women in "straitened circumstances" sought for the same solution from their genteel poverty.¹

At a time when a "respectable" cabin passage to Australia cost from £40 to £80\(^5\) (roughly the average annual salary of a well qualified governess) it is not surprising that some middle-class women attempted to take advantage of Government assistance, which by 1835 consisted of a wholly free passage. For many this presented a rare opportunity to extricate themselves from an otherwise hopeless situation. At the same time it seems that the majority had to be convinced that all other alternatives were first exhausted. Mary Scheidweiler, for example, only petitioned the Crown from Buttevant, Ireland, after passing through all the familiar experiences of the distressed gentlewoman. The educated daughter of an officer who had retired in Ireland, she had maintained rank so long as he drew half-pay, but on his death was left at the age of 20 to support a younger sister and brother. Excess competition had prevented her from obtaining "a situation in the capacity of Governess or in some other respectable line." She had recently equipped her sister to emigrate to New South Wales, but was herself unable to make a living "in consequence of which disappointments she would be inclined to avail herself of the opportunity afforded by Your Majesty's benevolence to young unmarried females of emigrating to the colony of New South Wales." With a fourteen-year-old brother also in need of assistance, it is unlikely that Scheidweiler was successful, but her case is typical of

\(^5\)See Elliot's replies to enquiries, e.g. Elliot to T. Borrows, Oct. 13, 1831, C.O. 385/12 and Elliot to J. B. Monck, April 5, 1832, C.O. 385/14.
those who turned to emigration only as an absolute last resort.⁶

The Colonial Office was usually quick to discourage such casual middle-class applicants. The passage money, they insisted, was provided out of colonial funds to supply badly needed domestic servants from the working-class; consequently educated women were not eligible for any form of grant. Elliot advised a Miss Fitzpatrick that the Government's arrangements "have reference principally to females of the working-classes, and that they are scarcely calculated to furnish the inducement which you observe would be requisite to lead Ladies in your circumstances to the Colonies."⁷ At times the Colonial Office showed more diligence in this respect than the colonists themselves. In 1833 it emerged that two assisted emigrants were daughters of Mr. Yeoland, the Van Diemen's Land Auditor-General. "It is quite clear", wrote Hay, "that they are not the class of females whom the Government intended to assist in emigrating to the colony," and he requested that Arthur demand immediate repayment from Yeoland.⁸ In most cases, at least, the Colonial Office

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⁶Petition of H. Scheidweiler, Buttevant, Cork, Ireland, July 24, 1835; forwarded from Home Office to Hay, July 29, 1835, C.O. 36/39. Miss Scheidweiler was the daughter of a Hanover immigrant who had served as Quartermaster in the First Regiment of Lifeguards for 28 years; her petition included a testimonial from the Vicar of Buttevant, James Law, who concluded that "she would be a very valuable acquisition to the colony of New South Wales." There is no surviving record of a Colonial Office reply. The usual response to eligible enquiries was to send application forms to be completed and returned to the Emigration Committee.


was intransigent on the point that assistance must be confined to those qualified for the roughest domestic service. 9

Despite these official discouragements, however, it is all too clear that considerable numbers of middle-class women did in fact receive the Government grant, and others were enabled to emigrate under the scheme's protection at a lower cost than would otherwise have been possible. The frequent colonial protests at receiving governesses, nursery governesses and ladies' maids suggest that one of the major Australian resentments against the scheme was that so many women had social backgrounds which did not suit them for hard colonial work. 10 On the other hand one complaint from Van Diemen's Land might imply that it was not so much soundly educated middle-class women they resented as those with humble backgrounds and middle-class aspirations. The Ladies Reception Committee noted that

that class which usually style themselves "nursery governesses" are little required . . . A few good governesses, who are thoroughly competent to undertake the education of children in respectable families would find situations. 11

9 See, for example, Elliot to Miss Chambers, Kenrdngton Cross, June 23, 1832, C.O. 385/14.

10 See Arthur to Hay, Oct. 9, 1832, C.O. 280/36; Evidence of Alexander McLeay to the Committee of the N.S.W. Legislative Council on Immigration, op. cit., p. 16. The same opinion reached England. In an otherwise favourable description of Amelia Thompson, a reporter in The Times suggested that the demand for governesses in Van Diemen's Land must be less than the supply on this one ship. April 29, 1836, p. 5.

The problem, of course, was that the best qualified governesses in most cases had neither need nor desire to emigrate. But whatever their qualifications the surviving passenger lists indicate that Marshall and the Committee were less reluctant to admit middle-class women than were the Colonial Office. Consequently the alleged working-class scheme included a liberal sprinkling of middle-class women.

Once the scheme was well established even the Colonial Office attitude on middle-class emigrants apparently softened. Hay sent Bourke a list of women on the Layton who "are of superior habits and education, whom misfortunes in life have compelled to seek a maintenance in another Hemisphere," and requested special treatment for them in the colony to ensure that they found suitable employment.12 It is not clear exactly what caused this new approach but in some cases it was undoubtedly due to the intervention of persons with some influence. Sophia Eyre, a governess recommended by the Earl and Countess of Denbigh and Viscountess Fielding, received exceptional attention from the Colonial Office, who requested Bourke's personal assistance for her in the colony.13 On another occasion Arthur took special pains to place two sisters as schoolteacher and governess after a special request from Stanley.14 Elliot's deferential tone in his communications with a Miss Igglesden contrasts


sharply with his abrupt rejection of Miss Fitzpatrick's request. He had been approached by friends sufficiently influential to prompt him to go to considerable lengths to obtain an assisted passage on a private ship. She had, he told a shipowner, "been in very respectable circumstances, but the limited extent of her means would preclude her from engaging any accommodation but the cheapest." With the right friends, it seemed, the Government was quite prepared to help women to escape from their poverty.

By 1834 the pressure of middle-class applicants was so great that Marshall and the Committee made special arrangements to segregate their shipboard accommodation from the steerage emigrants. For an extra charge of £5 women "of great respectability" could be accommodated in the poop deck cabin. The Charles Kerr carried as many as fourteen of these "poop governesses," as they came to be known. Marshall described these arrangements in his pamphlet in 1834, stressing that apart from accommodation all other conditions, including provisions, were identical to those for women in the steerage compartment, "and they are allowed the conveniences alluded to more to preserve their own peculiar associations than for any other purpose." This constituted a significant departure from Goderich's professed policy to provide the Australian colonies with a

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15 Elliot to Miss Igglesden, June 4, June 5, June 21, June 28, July 23, 1832; Elliot to John Masson, June 20, June 23, July 23, 1832, C.O. 385/14.

"hardy peasantry" by means of the scheme, and had the scheme itself not proved abortive, would probably have provided a growing outlet for middle-class women.

In spite of this tolerance there seems to have been a general understanding between Marshall and the Committee that emigration was only suitable for the genuinely "distressed gentlewoman." Marshall was quick to point out to potential emigrants that the least well-educated fared little better in Australia than in England, rarely earning more than £20 in the most junior teaching positions. When Mrs. Caulfield enquired on behalf of a young woman who "can readily obtain employment here at a high salary," Marshall immediately questioned the prudence in leaving such contentment and prosperity for such a "distant contingency." Although she would probably do well in Australia, where solid ability and accomplishment were needed, she was unable to reach it without passing through considerable annoyance, trials, and even, to a certain extent, privations, and I am no advocate for young women of refined mind and acquirements encountering all this when they are happy in this country.

Marshall's attitude conformed to his experience, which had shown that only the most desperate middle-class women resorted to emigration; his advice tended to reinforce the tendency of economic and social forces to drive those educated women to emigrate who were least equipped by family

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17 Goderich to Arthur, Jan. 27, 1832, C. O. 408/7.

background to adjust to such a fundamental change.

Nevertheless, the very fact that such well-provided women showed an interest in emigrating suggests that the "distressed gentlewoman" was not the only type among her class to choose this alternative. It suggests that a second type, best described as the "independent adventurer," sought emigration not as a last desperate economic necessity but as a wider field for ambitious and venturesome spirits. In a sense the social motivation was similar. The rigid prescriptions on female behaviour in Britain failed to provide an outlet for women not satisfied with the traditional goals of marriage or private teaching. The independent adventurer, like the distressed gentlewoman, was expelled from Britain because there were insufficient respectable occupational opportunities for middle-class women. But it would be misleading to confuse the two. The former, although dissatisfied, rarely shared the sense of alienation suffered by the latter, and did not constitute a social problem. There is evidence that a steady trickle of independent adventurers emigrated, especially to Australasia, throughout the nineteenth century, but their outlook differed fundamentally from that of distressed gentlewomen.

It is clear, however, that the middle-class women assisted by the London Emigration Committee consisted almost wholly of distressed gentlewomen. As Marshall's letter to Mrs. Caulfield demonstrates, the administrators of the scheme understood the problem well of the distressed gentlewoman. Furthermore, as far as one can establish, those who did
emigrate probably constituted the most severely depressed of their class. But in most cases this can only be inferred from the various occupations listed in different sets of passenger lists.

Some passenger lists have survived from eleven out of the Committee’s fourteen ships. For five ships there are two lists, one compiled by the Committee before departure showing the previous occupations of each emigrant, and one compiled in the colony showing the type of work obtained, the employer and the salary received. Two other colonial lists also indicate previous as well as colonial occupations so that a basis for comparison exists in seven out of the fourteen ships. To be useful here, however, it is necessary to make the rather bold assumption that all those listed with middle-class occupations necessarily had middle-class family backgrounds. In a few instances, at least, this was almost certainly not the case. On the Australian side, for example, it is evident that middle-class gentility was not a universal prerequisite for governesses; some cases occurred, on the Strathfieldsay, for example, of previous servants or milliners being hired as governesses on arrival. Conversely, the instances in which ex-governesses took positions as housemaids, nursery maids and dressmakers almost immediately after arrival could imply deception before departure, as well as the more meaningful possibilities that the Australian supply of governesses exceeded demand and that domestic servitude in Australia carried with it less of a social stigma. But the evidence already cited confirms that several middle-class women experienced as governesses did receive assistance,
and there are other casual references in correspondence to qualified, and therefore probably middle-class, governesses. Absolute certainty is impossible but it is reasonable to assume that most of the women listed as governesses and teachers before departure actually had middle-class backgrounds.

Appendix B shows the Australian occupations taken up by emigrants with middle-class origins. To the 110 listed with middle-class occupations in Britain should be added 5 from the Amelia Thompson, for which no British list exists, who obtained teaching positions in Australia. Thus there were 115 middle-class women out of 2160 female emigrants on the 11 ships with passenger lists, or 5.32% of the total. This does not include 22 women listed as nursery-governesses, an occupation sufficiently flexible to attract qualified working-class women unless employers insisted on teaching duties. Furthermore, there is little reason to suppose that this percentage would be reduced if figures were available for the remaining ships. Even the first ship sent out by William Fry in 1832, the Princess Royal, included eleven women (out of a total of 193) whom Fry described as "Teachers and Upper Servants" selected from casual applicants. The obstacles to genteel female emigration, as discussed in chapter two, were still strong enough to prevent a larger number of

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20Fry to Van Diemen's Land Ladies Committee, April 15, 1832, C.O. 384/30.
middle-class women from using the scheme, but at a time when working-
class emigrant ships were generally regarded with horror, it is signifi-
cant that any "young ladies" at all were sufficiently hard pressed to re-
sort to this outlet.

At the same time Appendix B clearly indicates that some middle-
class women entered distinctly non-middle-class occupations in Australia.21 This was essentially a question of supply and demand. As Alexander McLeay, the New South Wales Colonial Secretary, emphasized, the Australians needed domestic and country servants, not "governesses, nursery governess-
es and ladies' maids."22 But the rapidity with which these women accept-
ed domestic service or needlework—usually within two weeks of arrival
and before many genuine servants had been hired—suggests that the social opprobrium of ungenteel menial work in Australia was not nearly so great
as in Britain. The fear of class decline might be considerably allayed
after a congenial meeting with a potential employer of high social-stand-
ing and respectability. Most of these women, indeed, obtained positions

21The figures in Appendix B are based on the following passenger
lists in the Colonial Office records: Sarah: C.O. 38h/35 and 280/55; Strathfieldsay: C.O. 38h/35 and 280/49; Canton: C.O. 38h/38 and 201/252; Charles Kerr: C.O. 38h/38 and 280/60; James Pattison: C.O. 38h/39 and
201/255; Rodacies: C.O. 280/65; William Metcalfe: C.O. 280/78; Duchess of Northumberland (I): C.O. 201/245; Layton: C.O. 38h/32; David Scott:
C.O. 38h/35; Amelia Thompson: 280/67. The following lists from
Australia were copied in the Parliamentary Papers: Sarah: PP. 1836,
XL (76), pp. 39-40; Strathfieldsay: PP. 1835, XXXIX, (87), pp. 33-7;
Duchess of Northumberland (I): PP. 1836, XL (76), pp. 30-3.

22Evidence to the Committee of the N.S.W. Legislative Council on
Immigration, op. cit., p. 16.
with families of high social position and gained recognition of their gentility in above average salaries. Mary Anderson, an ex-teacher aged 29 from the William Metcalfe, became a general servant in Major Newman's family at Hobart Town with a salary of sixteen pounds, "to be raised," while most domestic servants from the same ship obtained only eight to twelve pounds. Elizabeth Chippett, a Somerset teacher off the Sarah, became a nursery-maid at sixteen pounds for a Mrs. Hewett at Hobart Town. Ann Rowe, an Irish governess of 25 years of age off the Canton, took work as a lady's maid at fourteen pounds in the home of Mr. Plunkett, the Solicitor-General at Sydney. Although, in common with many governesses who took up their usual employment in Australia, the salaries of these women were low, it is safe to assume that they accepted work they would never consider in Britain simply because it was judged to be less de-meaning in the new country and because they no longer had to reckon with the embarrassing disapproval of their peers in Britain. Their main obsession was not money but a sense of solidarity with an elite social class, and in Australia this was not inconsistent with most forms of domestic work.

26 Most governesses and teachers obtained salaries from about £15 to £30, not high by English or Australian standards; a few only obtained as much as £60. Marshall made this quite clear to applicants; he told Mrs. Caulfield that "I believe the scale of remuneration is not generally
These findings are corroborated by the testimony of a later emigrant in the 'forties. Susannah House, a lady's maid in England who became a nursemaid at a salary of twenty-five pounds in Van Diemen's Land in 1841, told a Committee on Immigration that there were many women in England who would emigrate if they could get employment. She thought that women would do much better than men in Van Diemen's Land, but added "we are obliged to lend a helping hand to so many things here that we do not do in England," and later elaborated her complaint, "I have no servants here to wait upon me; I had always two or three servants under me." But she gave no hint that she found this extra work and less exalted position in any way humiliating. In Britain any middle-class woman forced to share in as much common domestic drudgery as her colonial counterpart would instantly consider herself declassed, whereas in Australia a common class origin with her equally industrious employers was usually sufficient to preserve her dignity. The roots of her alienation lay less in her hostility towards work than in the social implications involved in that work, but this did not become clear until she removed to a more primitive and egalitarian, albeit still socially stratified, society. This point is of special importance in view of developments towards the end of the century when the prospect of domestic work became the best means high; some of the least educated have not obtained more than £20 a year, as assistants in schools etc.," Feb. 13, 1835, Marshall to the Hon. Mrs. Caulfield, op. cit., p. 304.

of ensuring a steady flow of middle-class women—at least several hundreds annually—to the colonies.

Emigration then, could function as a valuable release from the complex influences of social isolation and alienation, but as Appendix B indicates, the emotional effects of emigration prevented some women from exploiting its advantages. It may be significant that out of 3,098 emigrants sent out in the sixteen ships from 1832 to 1836 the only four reported cases of insanity should occur in two women described as governesses and two as nursery governesses. One of the governesses, Frances Haydon on the Strathfieldsay, was sponsored by the "Corporation of Sons of the Clergy." The destitute daughter of a deceased clergyman, she only consented to emigrate to Van Diemen's Land "after many trials and disappointments" in England. As the Registrar of the Corporation, Oliver Hargreave, put it:

She has considerable repugnance to the transplantation to so distant a possession of the British Crown, but I hope she may find reason to repent her resolution, as situations here are not to be obtained always by persons of the best character.

But soon after departure the surgeon and superintendent noticed that "she was labouring under an aberration of mind, which continued more or less the whole voyage," and when admitted to hospital at Hobart Town showed such "considerable imbecility of mind" that Lt. Governor Arthur determined to send her back to England. Hargreave denied the colonial suspicion that Haydon had been persuaded to emigrate against her will asserting that her case
was one of pure compassion, calculated, as far as we could see, to extricate her from inevitable misery and destitution in this country, and enable her to earn an honest livelihood and independence in a new colony.28

If the pressures of emigration drove these women insane, it suggests that, in many cases, the women most likely to be driven to consider emigration were those least capable, from family upbringing, of turning its advantages to their profit. The small numbers involved in this particular sample do not allow for any statistical certainty, but common-sense suggests that emigration would be more of a traumatic wrench for impoverished middle-class women than for women of the working-class, who seem to have adjusted to the experience more rapidly. The "distressed gentlewoman," at her most distressed, was unlikely to benefit from a genuinely promising last resort.

After 1836 it became increasingly difficult for middle-class women to emigrate with the kind of financial assistance they obtained between 1832 and 1836. Under the new emigration procedures from 1837 the colonists exercised the greater amount of control, and were entitled to refuse to grant the Government bounty for any emigrants they considered ineligible. A few governesses and lady's maids continued to appear in

the returns of assisted immigrants from Australia, but on the whole the colonists attempted strictly to exclude middle-class women from the Government scheme. In 1822 the New South Wales authorities refused the bounty on Mary O'Connor, whose dress and appearance "showed her to be very much above the class of persons eligible for a free passage under the regulations now in force." Even nursery governesses were excluded from government assistance, and Earl Grey, who as Colonial Secretary, vigorously prosecuted the assisted emigration of working-class women—predominantly Irish orphans—from 1818 to 1851, remained steadfastly opposed to middle-class emigration.

There is evidence that, despite the colonial attempts to exclude

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29 See the Report of J. D. Pinnock, the New South Wales Agent for Immigration, for 1838, Feb. 28, 1839; under the "bounty system," by which shipowners selected the emigrants and received payment, upon approval, in the colony, there were 9 governesses and 2 lady's maids out of 162 single women in 1838; in ships chartered by the Government in Britain there were 6 governesses and 3 lady's maids out of 1,096 women, both married and single, PP. 1840, XXXIII (113), p. 25; see also the report of F. Merewether, the N.S.W. Immigration Agent, for 1841, May 14, 1842, PP. 1843, XXXIV (109), p. 88, and the Return of unmarried adult immigrants to N.S.W. for 1848, PP. 1850, XL (163), p. 68. For a full discussion of the various systems of assisted emigration to Australia see R. B. Madgwick, op. cit., pp. 131-95.

30 Merewether and Brown to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, Feb. 8, 1842, in Governor G. Gipps to Stanley, Feb. 24, 1842, PP. 1843, XXXIV, (323), pp. 100-2.

31 Return of trades of Bounty emigrants, July 1, 1841 to June 30, 1842, Aug. 22, 1842, PP. 1843, XXXIV, (109), p. 70.

32 Grey to Fitzroy, June 16, 1849, PP. 1849, XXXVIII (593), pp. 116-123. For details of the assisted female-emigration prior to 1851, which was largely composed of paupers, see R. B. Madgwick, op. cit., pp. 189-216.
middle-class women from subsidized emigration, some impoverished gentlewomen continued to obtain the assisted passage, and their final resort to the degradation of an emigrant ship is a measure of their desperate plight. In some cases their genteel origins could easily provoke the enmity of working-class emigrants on the same ship. In 1842 Roger Therry, a judge of the New South Wales Supreme Court, prosecuted the Captain and Surgeon of the *Carthaginian* for encouraging the persecution of Mary Ann Bolton during the voyage. Whenever "any disturbance arose, or impropriety was committed by some of the vile women who filled the vessel, they attributed the blame to her," and she was frequently brought on deck in her nightclothes to be doused with buckets of cold water. She died from consumption soon after the trial in Sydney, but not before she had become a personal friend of Judge Therry, who soon detected her social background:

> I learned little of her history beyond the fact that she had been a governess. She was certainly a highly educated person, and her language and sentiments were those of a lady who had seen happier days.  

The loss of the helpful facility of the 'thirties in no way caused the pressures for the emigration of superfluous women to ease. In 1849 some officials of the Governesses' Benevolent Institution approached the Emigration Commissioners with a plan to organize an emigration scheme for

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33R. Therry, *Reminiscences of Thirty Years Residence in New South Wales and Victoria*, (Second edition, London, 1863), pp. 221-2. This episode is also described in M. Kiddle, *Caroline Chisholm*, (Melbourne, 1850), p. 52, but under the name of Margaret Ann Bolton.
governesses, and in the same year Hyde Clarke laid plans for the "National Benevolent Emigration Fund for Widows and Orphan Daughters of Gentlemen, Clergymen, Professional Men, Officers, Bankers and Merchants." Both these schemes proved abortive for the simple reason that the Australian colonies could offer no prospect of an effective demand for educated women. The colonial reactions to initial inquiries were generally negative and at best lukewarm.

Although these projects came to nothing, Clarke's intentions did show a thorough understanding that the problem of the distressed gentlewoman was primarily one of status, and that only emigration permitted the declassed young lady to take any form of work without loss of caste:

A clergyman, or professional man leaves a widow, and two or three daughters, with no other endowment than their talents or education, and absolutely destitute of the means of changing their place of residence. A young lady engaged in tuition finds herself after sickness deprived of employment, and forced to struggle against the competition of an overstocked profession. A family brought up in competency, by some sudden stroke of misfortune are deprived of their property, obliged to seek a subsistence; their delicacy would rather find it among strangers than among neighbours.

Widespread destitution of this kind in Britain, argued Clarke, was matched by the pressing wants "of a higher class of feminine society in the colonies" and their need for a higher moral tone in society. But this combined relief and civilizing mission was obstructed so long as the women were "debarred by want of means, and want of friends, protectors

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34 Emigration Commissioners to H. Merivale (Permanent Under-Secretary). July 11, 1849, and H. Clarke to B. Hawes, June 23, 1849, PP. 1850, XL [11637], pp. 98-101. The Colonial Land and Emigration Commission was
and advisers, to aid them in undertaking voyages to distant and strange lands." Clarke's society intended to provide this aid to well-recommended women by means of loans in Britain and the superintendence and protection of ecclesiastical authorities in the colonies, and he asked the Colonial Office to request full co-operation from each colony. 35

The Emigration Commissioners thought the project worthy of encouragement "under proper restrictions," but felt that the greatest difficulty, as with the G.B.I.'s scheme, was "the mode of affording adequate security and protection to the younger females who may be sent out." They were, at least, sanguine enough to anticipate a sufficient demand for governesses in Australia to justify the project. 36 But the Australian reaction was far less optimistic. From South Australia the Lieutenant Governor wrote that there were already "more respectable and educated females seeking employment in that capacity than there are families requiring their services," and few settlers were yet in a position to hire governesses or any kind of upper servants. 37 In Van Diemen's Land Sir

formed in 1842 as a sub-branch of the Colonial Office to administer affairs relating to Colonial lands and emigration; T. F. Elliot was the first Chief Commissioner; see F. H. Hitchins, The Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, (Philadelphia, 1931).


36Emigration Commissioners to Merivale, July 14, 1849, op. cit., pp. 100-1.

W. Denison received only three interested replies to his advertisements on the Society's behalf, and while admitting that some well-paid openings existed for educated women, he insisted that no more than two or three should be sent at once, and that the Society should have facilities available for their support in case they could not obtain immediate employment. Francis Merewether, the New South Wales Immigration Agent, recognized the great moral and educational need for such women, and thought that before long the more prosperous settlers might recognize the potential benefit to their families, but for the present "it would be positive cruelty to any person of that description in England, to encourage her to come here, unless she has friends on whom she can depend for a home." The only certain prospects of employment were in regular domestic service, the same work performed by shiploads of assisted working-class immigrants. Hyde Clarke may possibly have had this contingency in mind when he assured Grey that "candidates will be made fully aware the career open to them is one of industry; and it is to be expected the ordinary household education, in town or country, will fit them to become useful members of society in the colonies." But the prospect of menial

38 Lt. Gov. Sir W. Denison to Grey, July 18, 1850, and enclosures; not all the colonists agreed with Denison; Walter A. Bethune, who applied for one of the society's governesses, claimed that many families would willingly hire such women at double the salaries paid in Scotland, i.e. 30 to 40. PP. 1851, xl (347-111), pp. 140-2.


domestic service was obviously insufficient to entice distressed gentle­
women away in sufficient numbers, for no more was heard of Clarke’s 
Society after this discouraging reaction.

This lack of colonial demand inhibited the development of any 
large-scale middle-class female emigration until much later in the cen­
tury. The absence of a large urban middle-class which demanded private 
tutoring for its offspring afforded little opportunity for educated 
women to pursue genteel occupations abroad, Wakefieldian publicity not­
withstanding. But there can be no doubt that the colonies steadily ab­
sorbed Britain’s “redundant” women up to the limits of their modest cap­
acity. The very rejection of Hyde Clarke’s project by the Australians 
was based on the fact that they already had more middle-class emigrants 
than they could employ. Fitzroy’s own experience in Sydney confirms 
this interpretation.

The numerous applications that have been made to my daughter since 
her arrival in this colony, by ladies who left England under the 
impression that they would obtain immediate employment as governesses, 
and their statements of the little encouragement that they have 
met with, convince me that Warewether’s report is well founded. 

He added that “the lady in whose favour your Lordship did me the honour 
to write to me” had received no better offer than a governess’ situation 
in a large family at only twenty pounds, and had finally decided to re­
turn home.\footnote{Fitzroy to Grey, April 23, 1850, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 42-3.}
Such certainty is less possible with respect to other British colonies and the United States. The evidence is almost wholly negative, but there are few grounds to suppose that educated women emigrated to North America in greater numbers than they did to Australasia in the first half of the century. The early-Victorian propaganda for multi-class emigration—largely Wakefieldian inspired—applied exclusively to Australasia, and especially to South Australia and New Zealand. Henry Samuel Chapman, an enthusiastic reviewer of Wakefield’s *England and America*, discerned a revolution in attitudes to middle-class emigration as early as 1841. "Colonization," he maintained,

has taken the place of mere emigration; the removal of society, that of mere masses; and men of refinement and education may now emigrate, without any material disturbance of their previous habits ... As to the change itself, it is impossible to go into intelligent society without meeting some evidence of it. People to whom the idea of severing themselves from their native country was insuperably repugnant, now speak familiarly of emigration as a possible contingency, either not to be dreaded, or to be desired. Among the educated portion of the middle-class, where families are numerous, it is now not unusual to find some one or more of the sons seeking fortune in our distant possessions. Young women, too, of refined education, no longer object to emigrate if circumstances favour that step.42

But his comments applied exclusively to the new Wakefieldian colonies in South Australia and New Zealand, and had little relevance for North America.

The American immigration records provide no opportunity to detect the numbers and types of middle-class immigrants to the United

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States in the nineteenth century. As Brinley Thomas pointed out, prior to 1903 the term "immigrant" applied only to steerage or third class passengers, so that aliens travelling first or second class—which would include most middle-class immigrants—were not counted.\(^3\) The best record of United States immigration, official or unofficial, for the first half of the century leaves the great majority of female occupations "not stated," and those that are listed are almost entirely working-class.\(^4\)

Common-sense suggests that in such a vast migration of population as that from Britain to America many individuals of all classes and conditions must have participated. But the distressed gentlewomen among them must remain largely an unknown quantity. Besides, single women generally required assurances of assistance and protection before they would emigrate, and all the British agencies along these lines were oriented towards the colonies rather than the United States. At the turn of the nineteenth century, when British emigration to the United States was transformed from a predominantly working-class movement to a substantially elite middle-class movement,\(^5\) the propaganda of the various feminist societies promoting female emigration within the Empire was at its height. There is, then, a strong likelihood that the emigration of educated spinsters was for the most part confined to the British Colonies. This being

\(^3\) Thomas, op. cit., pp. 121-2.

\(^4\) J. Bromwell (of the Department of State). History of Immigration to the United States, 1819-1855, (New York, 1856).

\(^5\) Thomas, op. cit., p.153.
the case the surviving records of that movement assume a more representative and reliable nature as a model.

For the colonies other than Australia the useful documentary sources in the early Victorian period are extremely sparse. One of the rare surviving records of cabin passengers does seem to suggest that a small but steady stream of "independent adventurers" continued to flow out of Britain. This is a register of cabin passengers, plus the totals of steerage emigrants, on most of the ships sent to New Zealand by the New Zealand Company between 1839 and 1850, the formative period of New Zealand settlement. The figures themselves are too small to warrant detailed analysis, but they do reveal a middle-class disposition to emigrate quite apart from assisted emigration schemes. Although no occupations are shown for female cabin passengers it is a safe assumption that women who paid the price of a cabin passage to avoid steerage conditions were genuinely middle-class. Most of the male occupations, when listed, are either middle and upper-middle-class, such as gentleman, minister, banker, clerk, surgeon and farmer; or lower-middle-class, such as printer, hardwareman, bookseller, chemist and druggist. Most of the single women were in their early twenties and in some cases the circumstances of their travelling suggest a considerable degree of independence. Some of these women might have been travelling to join families who preceded them, but whatever their circumstances it is unlikely that many of them would fit the description of distressed gentlewomen. On the basis of this admittedly inadequate sample one might tentatively suggest that there was a
considerable movement of "independent adventurers" from Britain besides the steady trickle of "distressed gentlewomen." 46

By 1850 some observers were beginning to notice the phenomenon of the genteel female emigrant. A writer in the Colonial Magazine and East India Review described the hard-working successful lives of English gentlewomen in colonial kitchens, dairies and farms. "Such is the life," he wrote,

led by hundreds of young ladies who once figured as belles in crowded ball-rooms, and are now the happy, industrious and prosperous wives of Colonists, and mothers of healthy children, but who, had they remained in England, would too probably have become, like thousands and thousands, jaded, listless, unhappy women, unable to marry, and in many instances useless members of society. We say such a state of things was not intended, it is contrary to all the beneficent ordinances of Heaven, and it is only through the ignorance, the folly, the weak fears, the want of energy of society that it exists. 47

The pre-eminent obstacle, then, to middle-class female emigration in the early-Victorian period was the incompatibility of colonial labour needs and the skills and gentility of educated women. But despite this inhibition a steady trickle of educated women did emigrate, their numbers exceeding 5% of all women during the assisted emigration project; their

46 Out of 648 single women, in 78 of the Company's ships, 581 were steerage passengers, and 67, or 11.5%, were middle-class. More than two-thirds of these, however, were simply emigrating in company with their parents. This leaves only 21, or 3.24% of the total, who emigrated independently, unaccompanied by any "natural protectors" in the contemporary sense. In fact, when the high cost of cabin passage and the primitive state of New Zealand society is taken into consideration, the figure of 3.24% does not seem insignificant; New Zealand Company; Register of Cabin Passengers by the Company's Ships, C.O. 208/269.

47 Vol. XXI, April 1851, p. 344.
persistent arrival in Australia intensified colonial opposition to the point where they refused to grant Government assistance to middle-class women. The most characteristic prototype of this emigration was the distressed gentlewoman who had previously exhausted all other alternatives, and chose to emigrate only as a desperate last resort. The occasional result was that those most likely to be driven to emigration were the same women whose social backgrounds least fitted them for success as emigrants, as demonstrated by the incidence of insanity. But those able to benefit from emigration frequently showed a willingness to perform menial work they would never take in England for fear of loss of caste. Their primary need, which was at the root of their alienation in Britain, was for a sense of class solidarity, which remained uncertain while they stayed in England. Finally, two types of educated female emigrants are discernible from the available evidence: the "distressed gentlewoman" and the "independent adventurer." While both emigrated with varying degrees of hope there was a considerable element of despair present in the "distressed gentlewoman" which was totally lacking in the "independent adventurer." In this sense the less fortunate women may be said to have been "pushed" by adverse conditions at home while the "independent adventurers" were "pulled" by the lure of greater freedom abroad.
Chapter IV

A Case Study: Mary Taylor in New Zealand

Although it is clear that significant numbers of early Victorian distressed gentlewomen emigrated, there is no evidence to suggest that they were imbued with feminist sentiments. The fact that most of them emigrated as an utter last resort suggests that they had no concept of controlling their own destinies by means of resolute principled action, but rather were goaded on by the force of events. On the other hand the exceptional minority of 'strong-minded' feminists clearly had very little outlet for their ambitions and righteous indignation before the 1850s, and even then their opportunities remained strictly limited.¹ The late Victorian feminists had sufficient encouragement to fight their battles for equality in Britain, and successfully overcame, for example, the masculine defences of the medical profession.² But in the earlier period the uncommon spinster of sound education, talents and principles had

¹The establishment of the first important educational institutions for women at mid-century, notably Queen's College, Harley Street (1848), Bedford College, London (1849), the North London Collegiate School (1850) and The Ladies College, Cheltenham (1853), provided a few opportunities for serious female educationists; J. Kamm, Rapiers and Battleaxes, (London, 1966), pp. 46-51; W. J. Reader, Professional Men, (London, 1966), p. 171.

²Women did not overcome all official opposition to female medical practice until the 1880s, but it is noteworthy that the pioneer woman doctor in Britain, Elizabeth Blackwell, had first emigrated, qualified and practised in the United States. Kamm, Rapiers . . ., pp. 65-68; Reader, op. cit., pp. 173-80.
few other outlets than anonymous authorship. Such a woman, if she lacked the talent or financial resources to become a writer, and if she did not marry, might languish in Britain for want of activity, or, more likely, seek the adventure of foreign travel or permanent emigration.

When progressive-minded women did emigrate they were likely to place a high premium on their newly found independence. Their decision to emigrate was a symbolic act of freedom—or even rebellion—from the inhibiting social conventions of the Old World. For this reason they would be unlikely to solicit assistance from government or charitable emigration agencies but would be inclined to rely solely on their own initiative and the advice of friends or relatives who may have previously emigrated. By the eighteen-forties a 'respectable' single cabin passage, to New Zealand for example, could be procured without the aid of charitable organizations for £30 to £50, well within the means of middle-class women who had not suffered a serious reversal of fortune. Most of these independent emigrants left little trace of their history, but it is possible to make some tentative generalizations on the basis of a fairly well-documented case study of Mary Taylor, a New Zealand emigrant in the

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3 To avoid popular prejudice female novelists invariably masqueraded under male pseudonyms, the Bronte sisters, for example, published their works as Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell.

4 The New Zealand Company, which organized the first large-scale colonisation of New Zealand, initiated the reduction in cabin fares from seventy to eighty guineas down to thirty guineas in 1842 by eliminating champagne, wine and other luxuries from the daily first-class menu. Their
eighteen-forties.

The main virtue of Mary Taylor as an emigrant is the relative abundance of useful documentary sources pertaining to her emigration. Her close friendship from adolescence with Charlotte Brontë gave rise to a voluminous correspondence, much of which was destroyed, but of which the surviving letters provide a clear insight into her background, motivation and emigration experience. Charlotte Brontë's accurate characterization of her friend as Rose Yorke in *Shirley* allows for a much closer examination of family background and personality than is normally possible. The most obvious conclusion to emerge from this material is that Mary Taylor was not representative of any group of contemporary female emigrants. In terms of personality she would have been an exceptional woman in any social class and any historical period. In actual wealth example was quickly followed by other shipping companies; *New Zealand Journal* (London), Oct. 1, 1842, p. 229; Oct. 15, 1842, p. 241; Feb. 18, 1843, p. 37.


she remained well above the familiar class of distressed gentlewomen. Despite these differences her experiences do illustrate the forces which brought her class of women to contemplate emigration. In her social and political attitudes, however, she was undeniably exceptional, and her radical feminism provides a unique opportunity to examine the relationship between female emigration and feminism in the early-Victorian period.

The Taylor family of Gomersal in the West Riding of Yorkshire, in wealth far removed from the "uneasy class," was, according to Charlotte Brontë's description in *Shirley*, "the first and oldest in the district."7 The 'Red House,' (the 'Briarmains' of *Shirley*), an imposing two-storey building of red brick, which stood out sharply against the usual grey Yorkshire stone, had formed the Taylor residence since 1660 when William Taylor built it after prospering in the woollen cloth trade. His descendants rose to greater prominence as cloth manufacturers during the eighteenth century. Mary's grandfather, John Taylor, built a large textile mill nearby at Hunsworth in 1785, and his specialisation in army cloth manufacture brought further prosperity during the Revolutionary wars. The Taylors also played the classic role of the commercial middle-men of the Industrial Revolution by taking in the productions of most small manufacturers in the Spen Valley. John Taylor was sufficiently wealthy in 1803 to easily survive the destruction of his mill by fire. He promptly built a new one in 1804, and bequeathed a going concern to his eldest

7C. Brontë, *Shirley*, (First published 1849), Chap. 4.
Joshua Taylor enthusiastically expanded his inheritance. To supplement his province of cloth manufacturer and merchant he became a banker after building the 'Gomersal Bank' behind the 'Red House,' and issued his own notes under 'Joshua Taylor and Sons.' Taylor suffered a major setback during the financial crisis of 1825-6, the same depression which reduced Harriet Martineau's family, when his bank failed in the general crash. This was not the total ruin of Taylor for he continued, as before, with the manufacture and trade in woollen cloth. He conducted his business, until his death in 1841, with the sole aim of repaying his creditors, and an interval of nearly thirty years elapsed before his eldest son, Joshua, finally cleared the debt of several thousand pounds thus incurred.

For the Taylor household, which included Mrs. Taylor, four sons and two daughters, this long term debt involved constant parsimony and a grave reduction in their standard of living. Ellen Nussey, the third member of the group of friends with Mary Taylor and Charlotte Brontë at Roe Head school in 1831, noticed that Mary and her sister Martha

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were not dressed as well as other pupils, for economy at that time was the rule of their household. The girls had to stitch all over their new gloves before wearing them, by order of their mother, to make them wear longer. Their dark blue cloth coats were worn when too short, and black beaver bonnets quite plainly trimmed, with the ease and contentment of a fashionable costume. Although their social decline was not on the scale of family disasters which produced so many Victorian distressed gentlewomen—the Taylors, after all, retained their property and were able to send their children to school—it was to make Mary, the eldest daughter, well aware of the value of money, and to reinforce her desire for economic independence.

An infinitely greater influence on Mary's future was the long Taylor history of religious dissent and radicalism. The secluded position of Gomersal made it a safe haven for persecuted nonconformists, and it afforded a major birthplace for Yorkshire Moravianism and Wesleyanism in the eighteenth century. John Wesley, in fact, was a close acquaintance of John Taylor, and lodged at the 'Red House' when he preached at Gomersal in 1776 and 1789. Despite this connection John Taylor held himself aloof from the Wesleyan sect and preached in the family's own chapel, known as 'Taylor's Chapel,' near the 'Red House.' His independent following had more in common with the Quaker-like, quietist Moravians, who were most firmly established in the contiguous area between Leeds and Halifax. In Charlotte Brontë's time, however, the character of

10) Nussey impressions, ibid.
12) The Moravian leader, Count Zinzendorf, preached his first English
the services had apparently changed, for the scene she described at the 'Briar Chapel' in Shirley approximated more closely to the emotional spontaneity of Primitive Methodism. Mary's father, who Charlotte Brontë described as "not irreligious but a member of no sect," apparently lost interest in the chapel, for sometime shortly before or immediately after his death in 1841 it was converted into cottages, and his widow subsequently held religious services in the Taylor kitchen, conducted by men from Bradford. 13

Mary Taylor inherited her father's penchant for a personal religion and contempt for all forms of ecclesiastical organisation. 14 She also inherited those common bedfellows of religious dissent: political and social radicalism, and, in her case, a forthright and militant feminism. Joshua Taylor combined all the qualities of the laconic, straightforward and iconoclastic Yorkshireman with those of the cultivated and well-travelled English gentleman. He would vary his speech from a broad


14 See her comment to Elizabeth Gaskell, (n.d., c. 1856) who was preparing a biography of Charlotte Brontë, Shorter, Brontës, I, p. 118. She shocked her devout sister-in-law in New Zealand by telling her that she (Mary) only went to chapel "for amusement;" M. Taylor to C. Brontë, Wellington, July 24, 1848, ibid., I, pp. 431-5.
Yorkshire dialect to the purest educated English as the mood or company dictated.\textsuperscript{15} The result of this combination was a truculent but intelligent radicalism which Mary inherited whole. Commenting on the description of her family in \textit{Shirley}, she approved of Charlotte's characterization of all but one member, complaining:

But my father is not like. He hates well enough and perhaps loves too, but he is not honest enough. It was from my father I learnt not to marry for money nor to tolerate anyone who did, and he never would advise anyone to do so, or fall to speak with contempt of those who did.\textsuperscript{16}

When a schoolgirl, Charlotte Brontë, the clergyman's daughter and loyal Tory, frequently clashed with Mary and Martha Taylor on subjects of religion and politics. Her visits to the 'Red House' invariably resulted in indignant lectures on the virtues of republicanism and the evils of the monarchy and the established church. The timid conservative was, Mary told Elizabeth Gaskell,

always a minority of one in our house of violent Dissent and Radicalism. She used to hear over again, delivered with authority, all the lectures I had been used to give her at school on despotic aristocracy, mercenary priesthood etc.\textsuperscript{17}

For Mary this popular radicalism did not mellow but intensified with age.

\textsuperscript{15}Taylor spoke French and Italian, and took pride in his collection of Continental paintings; even allowing for Mary's qualification, the best description of him is in Shirley, chaps. 3, 4, 9. See also E. C. Gaskell, \textit{The Life of Charlotte Brontë} (first published 1857), (London, Dent, 1958), pp. 100-1.


\textsuperscript{17}Quoted, Gaskell, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 100-1.
She wrote from New Zealand to berate Elizabeth Gaskell for presenting too mild a picture of the Yorkshire gentry in her biography of Charlotte Brontë:

You give much too favourable an account of the black-coated and Tory savages that kept the people down, and provoked excesses in those days. Old Roberson said he 'would wade to the knees in blood rather than the then state of things should be altered,'—a state including Corn law, Test law, and a host of other oppressions.18

The most important result of Mary's radical background was her ardent desire for independence and a firm determination not to be bound by conventional restrictions on female conduct. To her closest friends, Charlotte Brontë and Ellen Nussey, she frequently adopted the role of mentor, encouraging them to join her in her most recent adventure of independence. Neither, however, shared her contempt for social convention. Charlotte ignored Mary's suggestion that she teach in a German boy's school, and Ellen, always conscious of her family "duties," failed to respond to Mary's call to join her in rewarding work and freedom in New Zealand.19 Mary's rebelliousness contrasted with Charlotte's patient


submission during their early schooldays; both top pupils who had learnt all that their instructors could teach them, they were each given Blair's *Belles Lettres* to memorize; only Mary stubbornly refused to degrade herself with such seemingly useless activity, and preferred to accept punishment. In later years this difference expressed itself in two contrasting attitudes on the feminist issue. Mary took Charlotte to task for her mild position on the need for female employment:

I have seen some extracts from Shirley in which you talk of women working. And this first duty, this great necessity, you seem to think that some women may indulge in, if they give up marriage, and don't make themselves too disagreeable to the other sex. You are a coward and a traitor. A woman who works is by that alone better than one who does not; and a woman who does not happen to be rich and who still earns no money and does not wish to do so, is guilty of a great fault, almost a crime—a dereliction of duty which leads rapidly and almost certainly to all manner of degradation. It is very wrong of you to plead for toleration for workers on the ground of their being in peculiar circumstances, and few in number, or singular in disposition. Work or degradation is the lot of all except the very small number born to wealth.

Charlotte Brontë was no anti-feminist, but her moderate stand for women's work, at one with the sentiments of mid-Victorian feminists, illuminated the more advanced and aggressive opinion of Mary Taylor.

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Not until her father's death in 1841 did Mary begin to practice her philosophy. With Joshua Taylor gone there was little to hold the family together, since none of the children could long tolerate their cantankerous mother.\footnote{The best account of Mrs. Taylor is given in Shirley as Mrs. Yorke, chaps. 9, 23. Her hostile reaction to the characterization suggests that it was not far wrong; M. Taylor to E. Nussey, Wellington, March 11, 1851, Shorter, Brontës, II, pp. 198-200.}

Immediately after Taylor's death Charlotte Brontë accurately predicted the break-up and dispersal of the family. She was convinced that they were all "restless, active spirits, and will not be restrained." But Mary especially, she maintained, "has more energy and power in her nature than any ten men you can pick out in the united parishes of Birstall and Haworth. It is vain to limit a character like hers within ordinary boundaries—she will overstep them."\footnote{C. Brontë to E. Nussey, Jan. 3, 1841, Shorter, Brontës, I, pp. 198-9. With hindsight, Charlotte gave a similar prediction of Mary's ultimate irrevocable rebellion in Shirley, chap. 9.} Within three months of her father's death Mary had decided that the boundaries of England itself were too limiting and she resolved to emigrate to New Zealand. Charlotte Brontë most succinctly summarized her reasons. Mary had made up her mind, Charlotte told her sister Emily, that "she cannot and will not be a governess, a teacher, a milliner, a bonnet maker nor housemaid. She sees no means of obtaining employment she would like in England; so she is leaving it."\footnote{C. Brontë to E. J. Brontë, April 2, 1841, ibid., I. p. 208; see also W. Gerin, Charlotte Brontë, The Evolution of Genius, (Oxford, 1967), p. 174.}
Unfortunately little further direct evidence exists about the exact nature of Mary's decision. Charlotte Brontë in *Shirley* describes her decision more as the outcome of impatient wanderlust, although Rose Yorke's proviso that "I shall have an object in view" precludes any notion of aimless drifting. Her resolve, a startling one in her time and social milieu, as shown by Charlotte's astonishment, was clearly the outcome of her intense desire for independence which she saw as unattainable in England. But the drastic nature of her action was softened by the fact that her younger brother, Waring Taylor, also decided to emigrate. This would give her one of those "natural protectors," so essential in the minds of the organizers of female emigration. In fact Waring emigrated in 1841 while Mary did not follow until 1845, but the presence of a brother in Wellington to meet her upon arrival considerably eased the usual complications of emigration for single women, and added the necessary aura of respectability to her adventure. The absence of this convenience would hardly have deterred Mary Taylor from emigrating, but it eliminated many obstacles and significantly reduced the rebellious nature of her act.

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25 Chap. 23. The only reference to the original decision of Mary and Waring is in Charlotte's letter to Emily of April 2, 1841, loc. cit.

26 Wise and Symington, op. cit., II, pp. 234-5 and Shorter, Brontës, I, 431, maintain, in error, that Mary and Waring emigrated together in 1845; I am indebted to Dr. Joan Stevens, Dept. of English, Victoria University of Wellington, who is engaged in local research in New Zealand, for drawing this fact to my attention.
The particular choice of Wellington, New Zealand is not much easier to explain. Charlotte's original discussion suggests that Mary and her brother had considered alternative settlements. "Their destination unless they change," she told Emily "is Port Nicholson [i.e. Wellington] in the northern island of New Zealand!!!... I cannot sufficiently comprehend what her views and those of her brother's may be on the subject, or what is the extent of their information regarding Port Nicholson, to say whether this is a rational enterprise or absolute madness." No doubt their decision to go to New Zealand at this particular time reflected the considerable publicity which accompanied the organization of the New Zealand Association (later the New Zealand Company) and the initial settlement at Wellington from 1839. Not all the publicity was good. The Evangelical-missionaries, who opposed New Zealand colonisation, found a powerful ally in The Times, whose editors were consistently hostile to emigration schemes, but acrimonious differences like those between the Wakefieldian Spectator and The Times usually enhanced the popularity of schemes to promote emigration. Since the publication of Wakefield's England and America in 1833 the Colonial Reformers had laid constant stress on the need for middle-class emigration, and this was a persistent theme in the New Zealand publicity. Furthermore, all the excitement and controversy of a new colony—the first ship for Wellington, the Tory, had only sailed in May, 1839, without Government approval and before British annexation of New Zealand—would be especially attractive to the

27 C. Brontë to E. Brontë, April 2, 1841, Shorter, Brontës, I, 208.
adventurous Taylors. 28

Although Mary waited four years before following her brother to Wellington, she did not in the interim languish in England. She did, apparently, consider the possibility of filling a governess' position in Ireland, but, as Charlotte Brontë put it, she was "so circumstanced that she cannot accept it" since her brothers had "a feeling of pride that revolts at the thought of their sister 'going out'". She added, "I hardly knew that it was such a degradation till lately."29 It was exactly this kind of restriction which made life in England so unbearable for Mary Taylor, and in escaping from it she managed to combine her desire for foreign travel with some useful preparation for an independent future. She made several trips to Brussels, sometimes in company with her sister Martha, her brothers John and Joseph, and on one occasion with Charlotte Brontë. Again, these visits were facilitated by the presence in Brussels of her cousins from Birmingham, the Dixons, who currently


29C. Brontë to E. Nussey, June 10, 1841, Shorter, Brontës, I, p. 212.
lived there; as a result of this connection both Mary and Martha in 1842 attended a boarding school in the Brussels suburb of Koekelberg, where Mary conveniently improved her French, German and music, qualifications which later proved useful during her early years in New Zealand. Her sister's sudden death from cholera in October disrupted these arrangements, and in her ardent desire to quit Brussels she turned, not back to England, but farther afield to Germany. Now, for the first time, she went alone, and after a period of further instruction in German she began to teach at a school in Iserlohn. This was conventional enough, but what startled her contemporaries was that she took a position in a boys school.30

Characteristically Charlotte Brontë took alarm at her friend's "resolute and intrepid proceedings." She recognized, as she told Ellen Nussey, that such a step proved "an energetic and active mind" as well as courage, independence and talent, but she condemned it on grounds of imprudence. Perhaps, she added, genius like Mary's might surmount every obstacle without the aid of prudence,

but opinion and custom run strongly against what she does, that I see there is danger of her having much uneasiness to suffer. If her pupils had been girls it would all be well; the fact of their being boys, or rather young men, is the stumbling block.31


31C. Brontë to E. Nussey, Brussels, April 1, 1843, and November, 1843, Shorter, Brontës, I, pp. 263-5, 273-4.
But Mary Taylor was willing to risk any amount of social disapproval to meet her need for constructive activity. Immediately after Martha's death she told Ellen Nussey that she was torn between a desire to return to Yorkshire and another to go to Germany. She finally chose Germany, "activity being in my opinion the most desirable state of existence both for my spirits, health, and advantage." A few months later she wrote from Germany to confirm that she actually was "cheerful and active." For her these two states were synonymous, and if she could have found them together in England she would never have emigrated to New Zealand.

By April, 1844 Mary was back in England, and in a few months revived her plan to emigrate. The reaction of Charlotte, to whom it was "something as if a great planet fell out of the sky," suggests that she had permitted the idea to lapse since Waring's departure. Indeed, although Charlotte frankly admitted that Mary would be "in her element" in New Zealand with "a toilsome task to perform, an important improvement to effect, a weak vessel to strengthen," her general reaction was understandably one of regret. For this reason her comments to Ellen Nussey do not always accurately reflect Mary's true situation in New Zealand. She was quick, for example, to interpret Mary's momentary expressions of

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depression as sure signs that she was "more homesick than she will confess." But in fact, Mary, who finally sailed in March, 1845, adjusted to the primitive environment of the infant Wellington colony with unusual rapidity. Her own letters, frequently filled with details of her business dealings and plans, are ample demonstration of this fact.34

Mary spent her first four years in New Zealand at a variety of occupations without becoming fully committed to any single one. Unquestionably her situation was eased by the presence of her brother, with whom she lived at first. She was not wealthy, nor was she one of the leisured ladies of the administrative class of New Zealand like Charlotte Godley of Canterbury or Mrs. H. S. Chapman of Wellington, but unlike many 'distressed gentlewomen,' who necessarily took any available employment, she could afford to experiment.35 Consequently she was not confined to the traditional outlet of teaching. She did, however, teach, during the first four years, and even here she managed to astonish Wellington society by teaching a widower's daughter at his own home without any intention of marrying him. She also combined this with other less orthodox female activities. Most important of these was her dealing in cattle, which she purchased with money borrowed at five per cent interest from

34 C. Brontë to E. Nussey, June 5, 1847, Shorter, ibid., I. p. 352; On Mary's departure see Wise and Symington, op. cit., II, pp. 234-5, but note also footnote 26 supra.

her brothers, John and Joseph in England. By July, 1818, she had spent £100 in this way and anticipated a total expenditure of £500, with an eventual profit as high as fifty per cent. She also bought land and built a house, which she rented at twelve shillings a week. In addition she began to write, something she had never been inspired to do in England. Her New Zealand letters contain innumerable references to her "novel," which in the event was not published until 1890. She wrote one article for Chambers's magazine on a New Zealand earthquake, and talked of writing more.

These diverse occupations made for "an active, happy and joyous life" from which Mary was moved to express pity for Charlotte Brontë's "comparatively dull, uneventful, and unoccupied existence." Yet she had a more grandiose ambition: to establish an independent business or school of her own. And it is probably indicative of her ambition that

36c. Brontë to Miss Margaret Wooler, Aug. 28, 1818, Wise and Symington, op. cit., II, pp. 248-9; M. Taylor to C. Brontë, Wellington, July 24, 1848, Shorter, Brontës, I, pp. 431-5; Shorter printed an incomplete version of this letter, incorrectly dated July 24, 1849, in his earlier publication Charlotte Brontë and her Circle, pp. 245-7. Mary's optimistic estimates of her profits were not fulfilled; two years later she wrote to say that she would only just escape loss on her cattle, but she escaped hardship when her brothers converted their loan into a gift, Wise and Symington, op. cit., III, pp. 94-7. For the reference to the Chambers's article see M. Taylor to C. Brontë, Wellington, April 10, 1849, Shorter, Brontës, II, pp. 41-2; Chambers's did not print her article and "three or four articles" sent to Tait's Edinburgh Magazine were not acknowledged, Shorter, Brontës, I, pp. 431-5.

she did not feel disposed to put it into practice until she could do so in partnership with her younger cousin, Ellen Taylor, who joined her in 1849. In fact her letters give no indication that she had any specific occupation in mind either before or for at least three years after she emigrated. Her only certainty had been that she would find it easier to earn her living independently and without degradation in the colonies than in England. Now, with the prospect of a partner, she began to form more concrete plans, and after Ellen's arrival the pair decided to establish a woman's clothing and drapery shop. By 1849 Mary had become intimately acquainted with many potential customers and business associates among the tiny but growing Wellington population—in 1845 when Mary arrived the population totalled only 2,667, of whom 1,145 were children under 14—and with the local retailing experience of her brother and no prospect of serious competition she could be assured of reasonable success. 38

The surviving evidence on Mary's cousin, Ellen Taylor is meagre. The existing references do suggest that her short life approximated much more closely to the familiar distressed gentlewoman pattern than did that

38 M. Taylor to G. Brontë, Wellington, April 10, 1849, Shorter, Brontës, II, pp. 41-2, contains the first reference to a scheme to establish a school or shop with Ellen Taylor. Mary discussed the prospects of the shop in her letter to G. Brontë of April 5, 1850, Wise and Symington, op. cit., III, p. 94-7; see also Ellen Taylor to G. Brontë, Wellington, n.d. (approx. mid-1850), ibid., III, pp. 133-5; the Wellington census dated August 31, 1845 was published in the New Zealand Journal, May 9, 1846; the total for Wellington and surrounding districts was 4897.
of Mary Taylor. Ten years younger than Mary, it is probable that she lost her parents at an early age, since all the efforts to assist her education and employment appear to have been made by her cousins. In Abraham Dixon, who frequently accommodated Mary in Brussels, wrote that a recent business setback had forced him to abandon the idea of helping to finance Ellen at Madame Heger’s school (the same institution attended by Charlotte Brontë, both as a pupil and English teacher, in 1842 and 1843). Even as late as June, 1848 Mary’s brother, Joseph, and Ellen’s brother, Henry, made further enquiries about the same school on Ellen’s account, although it is unclear whether they wished her to go as a pupil or teacher. The latter fact suggests that Ellen’s future had become something of a problem, for only seven months later she emigrated to New Zealand with her brother. Their decision, however rational, was not planned far in advance like Mary’s, and was probably due to the absence of reasonable alternatives in England. Ellen’s action did not have

39M. Taylor to C. Brontë, Aug. 13, 1850, Shorter, Brontës, II, pp. 152-3. The only precise reference to Mary Taylor’s age is in her obituary, from which it can be reckoned that she was born on February 26, 1818. She would therefore have been 28 when she emigrated in 1845; in 1849 when Ellen arrived their ages would have been 32 and 22; Bradford Daily Telegraph, Mar. 2, 1893, p. 2.


41C. Brontë to E. Nussey, Feb. 16, 1849, ibid., II, p. 28, mentions the imminent departure of Ellen and Henry Taylor from London. Ellen’s disappointed resignation to her fate is suggested in Mary’s subsequent remark that “She thought she was coming woefully down in the world when she came out, and finds herself better received than ever she was in her
the strong overtones of feminist ideology so characteristic of Mary's. She did, as Mary put it, emigrate "with just the same wish to earn her own living as I have, and just the same objection to sedentary employ-
ment," but, unlike Mary, she would not have emigrated without a large net-
work of relatives to accompany, welcome and assist her. Her disregard for
convention largely resulted from the influence of Mary's company and a
more egalitarian colonial environment. She observed to Charlotte Brontë
that most Wellingtonians laughed at her shopkeeping, and added "Before I
left home I used to be afraid of being laughed at, but now it has very little effect on me." Her experience in New Zealand was a short one—
she died in December 1851 after only two and a half years—but it was long
enough to illustrate the liberating effects of a colonial environment on
women who had been slaves to rigid conventions in England.42

By all accounts the Taylors' shop prospered from the beginning.
As with Mary's cattle dealing this was largely due to the substantial
help provided by her brothers in England. They lent her £100, gave her
a further £300, and assisted Ellen on a slightly smaller scale so that
they began "with as large a capital as probably any in Wellington." Their
shop occupied an advantageous site, and being among the first in town was
free from the threat of competition. They also benefitted from the sales

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42 Ibid., Ellen Taylor to C. Brontë, Wellington, n.d. (approx. mid-
1850) ibid., III, pp. 133-5; on Ellen's death see ibid., II, p. 234.
experience of Waring Taylor, who taught them book-keeping and assisted in wholesale purchasing. There is no record of their actual profits, but in 1850 they anticipated returns as high as £400 a year. By 1854, over two years after Ellen's death, Mary had prospered sufficiently well to add a twenty foot extension to her shop. By 1857 she found wholesale purchasing "not near such an anxious piece of business now that I understand my trade and have, moreover, a good 'credit'", and could afford to hire an assistant, who eventually purchased the business when Mary returned to England. Such a career, it must be emphasized, was radically different from that of most middle-class female emigrants; in the first place few women who could command so much capital without working would ever bother to emigrate. But the Taylors' experience does suggest how much greater scope for female ambitions could exist in the colonies than in Britain. They appear to have encountered virtually no social prejudice, and their relative boldness apparently caused more amusement than disapproval in Wellington.\(^3\)

This is an important point, for although Mary Taylor was by no means a typical female emigrant, her attitude towards work in New Zealand was characteristic of that adopted by many others when exposed to a

\(^{43}\) M. Taylor to C. Brontë, Wellington, April 5, 1850, *Ibid.*, III, pp. 94-7; E. Taylor to C. Brontë, n.d., *ibid*, III, pp. 133-5; M. Taylor to E. Nussey, Wellington, Aug. 15, 1850; Feb. 24, 1854, Shorter, *Brontës*, II, pp. 155-7, 347-9. In her letter to Charlotte Brontë Ellen Taylor said that their shop-keeping project "astonishes everybody here" and that many thought it only a temporary whim, but also noticed that when Mary went to buy merchandise "the people are always civil to her."
colonial environment. For her it was simply a matter of behaving as she had always wished to do; for the majority—including Ellen Taylor—it was a matter of adjusting to a social environment in which it was no longer considered a degradation to perform many kinds of ungenteel work and to tolerate primitive living conditions. The gulf between the two states of mind in England and abroad was expressed in Charlotte Brontë's astonishment to hear that "Mary Taylor sits on a wooden stool without a back, in a log house, without a carpet, and neither is degraded nor thinks herself degraded by such poor accommodation."

Mary Taylor was fully aware that she was neither a typical middle-class woman nor a typical emigrant; even the New Zealanders raised their eyebrows at her eccentricities. "To be sure," she said, "I pass here for a monkey who has seen the world, and people receive me well on that account." But she was no less certain that emigration would provide the same escape for others from frustration, worry and genteel poverty. She tried, unsuccessfully, to persuade Ellen Nussey, a thoroughly conventional and submissive woman, to join her in New Zealand. A woman could only earn her living in England by teaching, sewing or washing, she argued.

The last is the best. The best paid, the least unhealthy, and the most free. But it is not paid well enough to live by. Moreover it is impossible for anyone not born to this position to take it up afterwards. I don't know why but it is.

This state of things she described as a "nightmare" from which one could only escape by making a "desperate plunge, and you will come up in

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The new world will be no Paradise, but still much better than the nightmare. Am I not right in all this? and don't you know it very well? Or am I shooting in the dark? I must say I judge rather by my own history than from any actual knowledge of yours. Still you yourself must judge, for no one else can. What in the world keeps you? ... You could get your living here at any of the trades I have mentioned, which you would only die of in England. As to 'society' position in the world, you must have found out by this time it is all my eye seeking society without the means to enjoy it. Why not come here then and be happy? 

Mary and Ellen's letters are filled with enthusiastic descriptions of their endless jobs, from the building of their shop to the division of domestic chores which in England had been performed by servants. The result, far from being degradation, was genuine satisfaction and freedom from the familiar frustrations of the respectable English social routine, as illustrated by Mary's revealing statement: "We have been moving, cleaning, shop-keeping, until I was tired every night—a wonder for me. It does me good, and I had much rather be tired than ennuyée." 

The Taylors' attitude to work was an essential part of their integration into a more homogeneous society. Class distinctions certainly existed—the great majority of early New Zealanders of all classes were, 


46 M. Taylor to C. Brontë, Wellington, April 29, 1850, Ibid., II, pp. 131-4. In her letter to C. Brontë Ellen Taylor described their routine thus: "We take it in turns to serve in the shop, and keep the accounts, and do the housework—I mean Mary takes the shop for the week and I the kitchen, and then we change"; Wise and Symington, op. cit., III, pp. 133-5; cf. M. Taylor to C. Brontë, Wellington, April 5, 1850, Ibid., III, pp. 94-7; M. Taylor to E. Nussey, Wellington, March 11, 1851, Shorter, Brontës, III, pp. 198-200.
after all, only recently transplanted from Britain—but in such small, closely knit communities as existed in New Zealand the predominant social forces fostered the development of egalitarianism. Most important of these was the frequent necessity for men to marry "beneath their station" because of the lack of single women, and this induced a large degree of social mixing. In these conditions, while the Taylors were clearly distinguished from the administrative class, the Wellington aristocracy, Mary could rejoice in the fact that their company was better than it would have been in the same circumstances in England. Her own analysis was shrewd: "Classes are forced to mix more here, or there would be no society at all. This circumstance is much to our advantage, for there are not many educated people of our standing." For Ellen Taylor, a decade younger and apparently more attractive than Mary, it was "quite new to be of such importance by the mere fact of her femininity." Her popularity also involved Mary in a succession of dances and other social events at the new Mechanic's Institute. The class of people involved in their own circle were, as she described them,

not in education inferior though they are in money. They are decent well-to-do people. One grocer, one draper, two parsons, two clerks, two lawyers, and three or four nondescripts. All these but one have families to 'take tea with' and there are a lot more single men to flirt with.

Such an unlikely mixture of occupations would have been rare in Britain,

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47 In 1847 there were 528 bachelors and 246 spinsters in Wellington, J. Miller, Early Victorian New Zealand, (London, 1958), pp. 162-3. Miller tends to underrate the pressures for egalitarianism and overrate the imported class distinctions and social rituals.
and the implications for middle-class women could be profound. The majority, like Ellen Taylor, regarded the very need for emigration as a confession of social decline, but instead of "coming woefully down in the world" their education alone earned them new status, causing Ellen, for example, to find herself "better received than ever she was in her life before." The social value to the colonies of single women, and more especially of educated women, was too great for them to lose caste by the mere performance of menial work.

A more tolerant attitude to the performance of menial work extended in large measure to all classes in all the settlement colonies during most of the nineteenth century. The shortage of women, common to all the colonies, implied not only a dearth of prospective wives, but a chronic scarcity of domestic servants for the highest classes. Consequently even women of the administrative class in New Zealand were invariably exposed at an early stage to unfamiliar domestic chores. Catherine Chapman, wife of the Wellington judge, was initiated into such tasks during the voyage when her only maid was disabled by seasickness.

Those fortunate enough to find well-trained and efficient servants invariably lost them on short notice to new husbands. Until replacements

\[48\] M. Taylor to C. Brontë, Wellington, April 5, 1850, Wise and Symington, op cit., III, pp. 94-7; M. Taylor to E. Nussey, Wellington, March 11, 1851, Shorter, Brontës, II, pp. 198-200. Mary found that young middle-class women of New Zealand were no different from those in England, except that "they have certainly more energy," Loc. cit.  

\[49\] Drummond, op. cit., pp. 66-7.
could be found there was no alternative but to soil one's fingers. After one such interlude Lady Barker, on a sheep run in Canterbury with her husband in the 1860s, wrote "in the meantime we had to do everything for ourselves, and on the whole we found this picnic life great fun."50 Comments such as these abound in the memoirs of well-to-do middle-class women. Sarah Greenwood, whose husband later became headmaster at Nelson College, wrote that she had become expert in household work and cooking, and, far from feeling degradation, "I never was happier or better in my life." Shortly afterwards she cheerfully remarked "I am now complete maid-of-all-work, and very very fully my time is occupied; all I regret is the want of more time for the education of my children." This was a common experience of colonial women, whether they settled in the towns or country.51 Lady Barker's observation was apt.

The mothers are thoroughly domestic and devoted to their home duties, far more so than the generality of the same class at home. An English lady, with even an extremely moderate income, would look upon her colonial sister as very hard-worked indeed.52

In such circumstances the middle-class spinster had no cause to fear loss


51Letters of Sarah Greenwood, Nelson, August, 1843; Motueka, March 31, 1844, in Drummond, op. cit., pp. 73-7. Jessie Campbell, the wife of a settler at Wanganui, had similar experiences, and implied that the greater activity of colonial women made childbirth a much easier ordeal than in England, ibid., p. 63.

52Barker, Station Life . . ., p. 57.
of caste by stooping to work which had been considered ungenteel in England. Mary Taylor, who could proudly exclaim "How we work! and lift, and carry, and knock boxes open as if we were carpenters by trade; and sit down in the midst of the mess when we are quite tired," was perfectly at home in this environment.53

In 1859, at the age of 41, Mary Taylor returned to England after almost fifteen years in New Zealand. Her letters give the impression that she had never intended to stay permanently, although her friends in England remained uncertain. In 1844 Charlotte Brontë predicted that Mary would not stay away for long unless she married, yet was unconvinced enough in 1849 when she wrote Shirley to conclude her description with the question "Will she ever come back?

Mary's literary ambitions and her unusual tenacity for the intellectual life she had known in England prevented her from ever entirely integrating into Wellington society. In a sense she lived a double life, and could never have been at home in either country.

I can hardly explain to you the queer feeling of living, as I do, in two places at once. One world containing books, England, and all the people with whom I can exchange an idea; the other all that I actually see and hear and speak to. The separation is as complete as between the things in a picture and the things in a room. The puzzle is that both move and act, and I must say my say as one of each. The result is that one world at least must think me crazy.


54C. Brontë to E. Nussey, Sept. 16, 1844, Shorter, Brontës, I, p. 284; Shirley, Chap. 9.
Her yearning for intellectual companionship, which she rarely found in Wellington, was partly satisfied when Ellen joined her, but even then the two of them talked of returning to England when they had earned enough money. They planned at one time to send wholesale goods to New Zealand after gaining four or five years' experience in shop-keeping.\(^{55}\)

The fact is that apart from an unfettered opportunity to combine meaningful activity with earning her own living, the advantage of New Zealand to Mary Taylor was that it offered the only method in which she might provide for an independent and prosperous future in England. Exactly how prosperous she became cannot be determined. But after selling her shop to her assistant, Miss Smith, she was wealthy enough to return to England, build a secluded house of her own—High Royd at Gomersal—and live a life of cultured leisure devoted to writing and travel.\(^{56}\)

\(^{55}\)Mary frequently expressed contempt for the intellectual capacities of New Zealanders; after discussing Charlotte's novel, Jane Eyre, she said of them "They are not literary enough to give an opinion;" M. Taylor to C. Brontë, Wellington, July 21\(^{st}\), 1858, Shorter, Brontës, I, pp. 431-5; M. Taylor to E. Nussey, Wellington, Aug. 15, 1850, ibid., II, pp. 155-7.

\(^{56}\)On Mary's final arrangements in New Zealand see her letters to E. Nussey, Jan. 26, 1858 and June 4, 1858, E. Nussey, The Story of the Brontës, with MSS notes, (Bradford, 1885-9, British Museum, suppressed before publication). Shorter, Brontës, II, pp. 403-4; cf. Shorter, Charlotte Brontë . . . , p. 259; C. M. Edgerley, in an unannotated article, 'Mary Taylor—The Friend of Charlotte Brontë,' Transactions, The Brontë Society, Pt. LIV, Vol. X, No. 5, 1941, p. 220, maintains that Mary traded in timber in New Zealand and made a "small fortune," but there is no evidence of this in the English sources, nor, according to Dr. Joan Stevens, Victoria University of Wellington, in New Zealand. Mary's shop, known as Te Aro House, was eventually purchased by a James Smith, who expanded his business substantially. James Smith's is now the largest department store in Wellington; L. E. Ward, Early Wellington, (London,
Mary Taylor stands out from other contemporary female emigrants in several ways, not least in her access to substantial funds from her relatives. But her greatest difference was her radical feminism, her ideological commitment to the principle of female independence. On this characteristic her emigration experience had little effect, for she felt as strongly after her return as she did before. She found that most middle-class women were hopelessly under-educated and "generally too ignorant to talk to" in New Zealand just as they were in England.\textsuperscript{57} But as already suggested she was also distinguished from her feminist contemporaries by a more comprehensive radicalism with its roots in the nonconformist tradition. From 1865 to 1870 she published a series of articles in the \textit{Victoria Magazine}, a feminist journal, with the avowed object, "to inculcate the duty of earning money" for women. These articles, collected and republished as \textit{The First Duty of Women} in 1870, say, in effect, that women must learn to be selfish. Unlike the moderate feminists of her generation she contemptuously dismissed the notion of woman's civilizing mission as a sham to deprive women of their rights.

It is an offer that those who make it would not take were the case their own, and the frequent repetition of it when women are in question, suggests the suspicion, that those who urge it are not thinking of the woman's interests but of their own; and more than that, that they do not believe the two to be identical.\textsuperscript{58}

\begin{itemize}
\item [\textsuperscript{57}]M. Taylor to C. Brontë, Wellington, July 24, 1848, \textit{Shorter, Brontës}, pp. 431-5.
\item [\textsuperscript{58}]M. Taylor, \textit{The First Duty of Women}, (London, 1870), pp. iii-iv, 13-4, 158-84.
\end{itemize}
At times the gulf between herself and the moderate feminists was wide. She was not content, as were most of them, to fight simply for the right of middle-class spinsters to work. Married women, even mothers, she argued, had a duty to earn money and contribute to the well-being of their families, especially when their time was left idle by an army of servants. Her novel, finally published in 1890, is packed with such sentiments, but it also indicates that her radicalism was not simply confined to feminist issues; it was the radicalism of Hiram Yorke in Shirley, and unmistakably sympathized with virtuous working-class Dissenters against a callous ruling-class. Arrogant insinuations of mob violence during an economic depression prompt such statements from Yorkshire workers as "If we had not more respect for law than them that says we've none, we could raise fire through one end o' t' country to t' other." Had Mary Taylor lived during the Edwardian years of militant feminism she probably would have shared the socialistic outlook of Sylvia Pankhurst rather than the conservative feminism of Sylvia's mother and sister. Her only inconsistency was to share the weakness of other feminists in defining their needs solely as those of one sex, and hence locating the enemy in the other. Like all her principles she expressed this one with extreme vehemence. Her concept of the feminist struggle is summarized in an imaginary dialogue between a man and a

59 *ibid.*, pp. 86-110.

woman which concludes as follows:

Gentleman: I mean that our guidance is due to our inferiors.
Lady: Then don't give it to women.
Gentleman: Just to them we should give it.
Lady: Then if by guidance you mean the right of the strongest, you deserve to be cheated and made use of.
Gentleman: We are still the strongest.
Lady: And we are strong enough to hate you for your tyranny. EXIT
Gentleman: The folly was in telling her so. 61

It was sentiments of this kind which led to the Edwardian anti-male crusade and irrevocably set feminism apart from other progressive social movements. This was a contradiction in Mary Taylor's thought, which in other respects was exceptionally progressive for her time.

An important example of her general attitude, where her views coincided with those of the feminists, was on the subject of emigration. Despite her successful experience as an emigrant, she implacably opposed female emigration if intended as a means simply to find husbands. In his article of 1862, 'Why are Women Redundant?', William R. Greg had proposed a massive scheme of middle-class female emigration in order that redundant women in England would be able to marry in the colonies. 62 Mary replied indignantly.

The men who emigrate without wives, do so because in their opinion, they cannot afford to marry. The curious idea that the women, whom they would not ask in England should run after them to persuade them would be laughable if it were not mischievous. Those who adopt it must dispense with that cultivated forethought that makes both sides wish for some provision for the future before entering into matrimony. It is true there is a certain number who have

61 Taylor, First Duty . . ., p. 262.
attained their object, and have the means to marry, but the greater number are intentionally single, as are the corresponding class in England. Although she did not discuss it, Mary Taylor would, as her advice to Ellen Nussey indicated, recommend emigration as a means to female independence and employment, but as husband-hunting she saw that it must work against the cause of female independence. In this she differed from the late-Victorian emigration societies, which never hesitated to hold up marriage as a praiseworthy motive for emigration. Mary Taylor was sufficiently sophisticated in her thinking to be able to make this distinction.

Mary Taylor was highly untypical of middle-class female emigrants in the early Victorian period. Her financial resources, her personality and, above all, her radical feminism set her apart from more characteristic "distressed gentlewomen" and even "independent adventurers." But despite these differences her history is still instructive. As Ellen Taylor's experience suggests, the very attraction of New Zealand for Mary Taylor, principally a marked tolerance towards the performance of ungentle work by middle-class women, was the most crucial factor in enabling less exceptional emigrants to adjust to a colonial environment and overcome their experience of alienation so common in England. The study therefore supports the previous hypothesis that middle-class women could safely accept menial work in the colonies without experiencing degradation and social exclusion from the colonial middle-class. Furthermore, despite

63 Taylor, First Duty . . . , p. 43.
Mary Taylor's salutary emigration experience, she steadfastly opposed any notion of female emigration as a device to find husbands. In this respect she foreshadowed the feminist run emigration society of the 'sixties and 'seventies which consistently worked against any form of "matrimonial colonization." Her feminism differed from that of most contemporary feminists, however, in that it was only one integral aspect of her more comprehensive radical outlook.
Chapter V

The Early 'Fifties: Voluntary Effort and the New Image of Emigration

During the first half of the nineteenth century public attitudes in Britain towards Australian emigration were extremely slow to change. Despite the founding, under Wakefieldian auspices, of new, convict-free colonies in South Australia in 1836 and New Zealand in 1840, the old association of Australian emigration with the disgrace of convict transportation persisted throughout the 'forties. Similarly, the old view of emigration as a cure for pauperism died hard. When Thomas Carlyle pleaded, in 1843, for a "free bridge for emigrants" he had in mind not the uneasy middle-class but the most depressed section of the labouring-class, the paupers and "Physical-Force Chartists" who posed such a threat to domestic tranquillity.¹ Until these attitudes changed, and female emigration was seen to be safe and respectable, the departure of any significant number of middle-class women would be inhibited.

These entrenched attitudes underwent a profound change during the early eighteen-fifties. No single event, but a conjuncture of developments which upheld public interest in Australia and emigration at a sustained high pitch, operated to transform the image of emigration for the middle-classes. The impetus given to emigration by the Irish famine in

the late 'forties, the Wakefieldian Canterbury Settlement in New Zealand in 1850, the proliferation of philanthropic emigration societies at mid-century and discussion of the Australian gold-rush in 1852 all played an important part in this minor revolution. Significantly, in each of these developments female emigration assumed a unique importance and prompted a serious discussion on the role of women in the founding of new societies. Consequently the issue of female emigration was itself instrumental in revolutionizing the appeal of emigration for the middle-classes, but more important, the changes of these years laid the groundwork for more enduring projects to assist educated women to emigrate.

At this point, therefore, it is necessary to digress slightly from the precise subject of middle-class female emigration in order to establish that the early 'fifties formed a watershed in the evolution of attitudes towards Australia and female emigration. The catalyst to this transformation was the energetic activity of private and philanthropic emigration promoters. To indicate the contrast between their work and the unpopular activities of the Colonial Office it will be useful to examine first the progress of the State-assisted emigration to Australia during the 'forties. The contrast should become clear in the subsequent investigation of Edward Gibbon Wakefield's Canterbury Settlement project, which, although not obviously related to female emigration, affords the first and most apparent indication of a fundamental change in attitudes towards Australasian emigration. The subsequent discussion of the philanthropic work of Caroline Chisholm and Sidney Herbert, and of the role of middle-class women in the
Australian gold-rush, should demonstrate the significance of these attitude changes for the future of female emigration.

During the decade prior to 1850 all organized female emigration was in the hands of the Colonial Office. The official scheme consisted solely of the assisted working-class emigration to Australia, financed out of the colonial land fund and administered, for the most part, by the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners. The Colonial Office was at first reluctant to conduct any large scale project but pressures from both Australia and Britain eventually forced them to send out regular shiploads of single women. The greatest stimulus to their change of policy was the Irish famine, which threw a large surplus of young female orphans into Irish workhouses. After 1848 Irish orphans formed the majority of assisted female emigrants, and the results of the project gave rise to much criticism and adverse publicity in Australia and Britain. The apparent bungling of the State system stimulated humanitarians to form a multitude of voluntary emigration organizations, which, in contrast, earned enthusiastic support in Britain. The Irish orphan system therefore provides a convenient background against which to study voluntary activity.

The Colonial Office emigration system underwent a series of administrative changes during the eighteen-forties. From 1835 to 1845 the "bounty system" co-existed with the system of direct control by the Commissioners as a means of introducing emigrants to Australia at colonial expense. Private settlers or their agents, under the bounty system, were
reimbursed with a "bounty" for introducing eligible emigrants to the colony. As the colonial authorities thereby exercised a final control over the acceptance of assisted emigrants the system was much preferred in Australia. The growing volume of emigration caused emigrant selection, by means of bounty permits issued by the colonial Governor, to be handed over to English ship-owners. When the bounties were substantially increased in 1840 many ship-owners sent out overcrowded vessels with ineligible and "abandoned" emigrants who were frequently selected indiscriminately from workhouses. Familiar abuses, such as the introduction into the colony of prostitutes and cases of immorality and disorders during the voyage, ensued, and after 1845 the Colonial Office discontinued the bounty system, and the Emigration Commissioners assumed full control over the machinery of assisted emigration. 2

After the experience of the female emigration scheme from 1832 to 1836 officials in both London and Australia remained hostile to the shipping out of any single women without the close protection of their immediate families or other near relatives. It was the departure from this requirement by shipowners which caused hostility to the bounty system in Australia. Governor Gipps of New South Wales, like his predecessors, was convinced that "the evil of sending women of bad character is one which

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will never be entirely got rid of, so long as single women are allowed to emigrate." The Emigration Commissioners were quick to reject any proposals to assist the collective emigration of large numbers of unattached women. In 1840 they refused a proposal of the Poor Law Board to assist 12½ young workhouse women with a stern reminder of their invariable rule "which is never to take unmarried females unless they are under the protection of their families and near married relatives, or unless they go as servants to cabin passengers by the same ship. Experience has shown that a contrary course is attended with the worst consequences." For several years, therefore, assisted emigration to Australia was little more than a system of rigidly controlled family emigration, and afforded small opportunity for the emigration of unattached spinsters of any class.

In response to the colonial shortage of women the assisted emigration of the eighteen-forties gradually reverted from this inflexible form of family emigration to a system, like that begun in 1832, which provided for large shipments of unattached single women. Proponents of exclusive family emigration tended to overlook the fact that an important object of the first assisted female emigration scheme had been to correct the serious disproportion between the sexes in Australia. Only a steady surplus of female emigrants could cure the disproportion, and the progressive

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3Sir. G. Gipps, Memo. on Immigration to N.S.W., with his despatch to Stanley, May 14, 1842, PP., 1843, XXXIV (323), pp. 108-11.

4Commissioners to R. Vernon Smith, Nov. 23, 1840, PP., 1842, XXXI, 307, pp. 528-32.
relaxation of the rules which required "natural protectors" was a response to this need. The Colonial Office took the first step in 1843 when it relaxed its insistence on immediate relatives and required that any woman over eighteen "be placed under the bona fide protection of a married couple, who may be willing to undertake that she shall form part of their family during the voyage, and at least a fortnight after its termination." In effect they exchanged real protection for the appearance of protection.

This modified system was, not surprisingly, short-lived. Although it enabled more women to emigrate, it soon led to some predictable abuses. Mrs. Caroline Chisholm, who rescued many of the women consequently left helpless on the streets of Sydney, complained that in most cases the girls were unacquainted with each other until they met at the emigrant depot or even on board ship; "the consequence is indifference, and but too often total neglect; and which, in many cases, has proved fatal to numbers of poor emigrant girls." Although married couples gave a signed undertaking to protect specified young women, they were in no way accountable for their responsibility. Even the conscientious often found it difficult to fulfil this extra duty on a crowded ship and at the same time care for their own families. Reviewing the system in 1848 the Emigration Commissioners concluded not only that the intended protection was in

5 Commissioners to J. Stephen ( Permanent Undersecretary), Sept. 2, 1843, and Stephen to Commissioners, Sept. 5, 1843, PP., 1844, XXXV, (626-I) pp. 8-10.

6 G. Chisholm to B. Hawes (Parliamentary Undersecretary), Feb. 28, 1847, PP., 1847-8, XLVII (50-II), pp. 12-3
practice illusory, but that it still worked so as to limit the numbers of female emigrants. With the Colonial Office committed to a policy which would introduce no more single men than single women to Australia, this meant that the emigration of single male labourers, those most willing to emigrate, was also artificially restricted. A more efficient means of female emigration was therefore urgently required to properly expedite the necessary emigration of single men.  

The obvious solution was a cautious return to the system pursued from 1832 to 1836. The Colonial Office was at first unwilling to risk sending ships with upwards of 200 women as in the earlier scheme, but in 1846 they sent, experimentally, 269 single women, under the charge of matrons and carefully segregated from other passengers, in seven separate ships to South Australia. In such manageable proportions collective female emigration answered well. But in 1848 Earl Grey, then Colonial Secretary, decided to extend the system to the other Australian colonies in larger numbers, and, more important, yielded to domestic pressure to use the scheme as a means to rid Irish workhouses of large numbers of female orphans. The depopulating effects of the Irish famine were clearly at work here, and as the Commissioners constantly reiterated in reply

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7 Eighth General Report of Emigration Commissioners, May 17, 1848, PP., 1847-8, XXXVI, [9617], p. 8.

8 Ibid., p. 8; Commissioners to H. Merivale (Permanent Undersecretary from 1847), Jan. 11, 1848; Grey to Fitzroy (Governor of N.S.W), Jan. 31, 1848; Commissioners to Merivale, Feb. 17, 1848, and Grey to Fitzroy, Feb. 28, 1848, PP., 1847-8, XLVII, [9867], pp. 83-4, 88-90; cf. Madgwick, op. cit., pp. 193-9.
to colonial complaints, there was no great unemployment of domestic servants in Britain by the late 'forties, and young Irish orphans were frequently the only class of uncorrupted women who could be induced to emigrate in significant numbers. The Australians, rarely able to attract the best emigrants, invariably had to be satisfied with the "best available." 9

The orphan emigration, which lasted until 1852, has been condemned as a piece of high-handed imperial domination. 10 It was, indeed, a flagrant example of how Imperial interests could over-ride those of the colonists, who in fact financed the entire operation. But it was difficult to reconcile complaints by the colonists with their equally persistent and urgent requests to send large numbers of female servants, especially since the Commissioners had made it amply clear that respectable female emigrants could only be procured in sufficient quantity from Irish institutions. 11 When the colonial complaints are placed in their proper

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9Eleventh General Report of Emigration Commissioners, May 2, 1851, PP., 1851, XXII (183), pp. 4-5; Commissioners to Merivale, July 26, 1852, in Pakington to Young (Governor of South Australia) Aug. 3, 1852, PP., 1852-3, LXVIII (1627), pp. 231-2; Madgwick, op. cit., passim.

10Ibid., pp. 193-8.

11See, for example, Lt. Governor Robe (of South Australia) to Grey, April 12, 1848, PP., 1849, XXXVIII, (593), pp. 160-3; Robe argued that female servants could "scarcely be sent out in sufficient numbers to satisfy the wants of householders" and reported that many of the recent female immigrants had rapidly married and were already seeking female servants themselves; see also Lt. Governor C. J. Latrobe (of Victoria) to Grey, Dec. 20, 1851 and March 23, 1852, PP., 1852-3, LXVIII, (1627) pp. 108, 127-8.
perspective it becomes apparent that the scheme's benefits far outweighed its abuses. Apart from raising the old spectre of popery and religious prejudice in Australia, its main disadvantage was the incapacity of many of the young untrained orphans for domestic service. Practical experience in the colony rapidly corrected this fault, and Australia gained a large number of useful women of unblemished character since most of the Irish orphans were too young to have experienced corruption or 'ruin' at home. Indeed, the colonists later asked for more Irish orphan girls to counteract the massive influx of single and restless male gold diggers.13

This revised judgement is necessary to understand the orphan scheme correctly, but it is true that sensational abuses did occur and received equally sensational treatment. The first large shipment to South Australia of 221 Irish orphans on the Roman Emperor provoked harsh

12Fitzroy to Grey, June 16, 1819, and enclosures, PP., 1850, XL 1163, pp. 48-50; R. Therry, Reminiscences of Thirty Years Residence in New South Wales and Victoria, (London, 1863), pp. 412-3. A frequent complaint was that the Irish orphan emigration introduced a disproportionate number of Roman Catholics to the colonies and that some colonists refused to hire them because of their religion. Lt. Governor Young (of South Australia) to Grey, Sept. 10, 1818, PP., 1819 XXXVIII, (593), pp. 178-9; Sixteenth General Report of Emigration Commissioners, April 7, 1856, PP., 1856, XXIV (2089), pp. 18-9; J. F. Hogan, The Irish in Australia, (London, 1887), pp. 142-5.

13Young to Newcastle, Oct. 27, 1853, and enclosures. PP., 1854, XLVI, (436-7), pp. 21-2. Herman Merivale, who was Permanent Undersecretary from 1817 to 1859, later wrote in praise of this phase of female emigration; because of it, he asserted, "Victoria has been free from the worst features of the turbulence, vice, and insecurity, which attended the height of the gold fever in California," Lectures on Colonization and the Colonies, (London, 1861 edition), pp. 472-3.
criticism of some immoral women; the second mate was "convicted under very demoralizing circumstances, of a liaison with one of the female emigrants." Similar abuses occurred in subsequent ships despite the extreme caution of the Emigration Commissioners. Governor Fitzroy of New South Wales asserted that 56 out of 195 Irish orphans on board the Earl Grey in 1818 had "mixed with the lowest grade of society," many of them being common prostitutes from Belfast, and had set a "pernicious example" to the other well-behaved emigrants. In the same year Fitzroy condemned the captain, officers and surgeon-superintendent of the Subraon for allowing and encouraging "unrestrained freedom of intercourse" and immorality between the women and crew. On the Thomas Arbuthnot in 1849 "The usual gratuity was withhold from the Chief Officer, in consequence of his having been found in bed with one of the single females, for which he was disrated by the master." The Emigration Commissioners in London, anxious to exonerate their own selection procedure and the general character of the emigrants, were inclined, after investigation, to attribute all responsibility for such abuses to laxity and indiscipline on the part of the ship's officers. But their reaction indicates an extreme pre-occupation with these events and the unfavourable publicity thus provoked.

14 Young to Grey, Oct. 24, 1848, and enclosures, PP., 1849, XXXVIII, (593), pp. 208-9; Fitzroy to Grey, Dec. 19, 1848, and enclosures, PP., 1850, XL, (1163), pp. 1-4; Fitzroy to Grey, Nov. 14, 1848, and enclosures, PP., 1849, XXXVIII (593) pp. 25-9; Fitzroy to Grey, June 18, 1849, and enclosures, PP., 1850 XL (1163), pp. 50-4.

When Mr. Brooks King, the surgeon of the ship *James Gibb*, wrote a letter to *The Times* from Sydney criticizing the "coarse indecency" of the female emigrants, the Commissioners remarked that his statements are calculated to excite so much repugnance, and, if unfounded, so much mischievous repugnance, to emigration in this country, that we hope we may be allowed to point out the grounds, on which we feel justified in pronouncing them incorrect and exaggerated.16

In 1836 it was exactly this kind of "repugnance," based on adverse publicity, which had prematurely arrested the first female emigration scheme, and the Commissioners rightly saw that on such a potentially sensational issue a few well publicized colonial grievances might have a similar effect.

The assisted emigration schemes run directly by the Colonial Office never enjoyed a favourable press. Such direct participation in a controversial activity provided a vulnerable target for attack on the government of the day. In 1850 Lord Mountcashell indignantly questioned Earl Grey about a report of assaults by drunken crew members on female emigrants on board the *Indian*. The *Illustrated London News* discussed the same report on the following day, remarking that without guarantees against such treatment "it were idle to expect virtuous females, or indeed any persons, to leave their native land."17 Although *The Times* was favourable to well-organized emigration by mid-century, it rebuked


the Government for sending out "the refuse of our great towns and villages." Robert Rintoul's Wakefieldian journal, the Spectator, which favoured more complete government participation in emigration, never failed to attack the ineffectual half-measures of its current involvement. Even an Australian emigrants' guide, designed to encourage potential emigrants, repeated Caroline Chisholm's warning to young women.

"Who has not been shocked!" writes Mrs. Chisholm, "by the frightful details we have read in the public papers, how orphan after orphan has been victimised on board emigrant ships, by men calling themselves Christians; how modest maidens have been brutalized over and insulted by those whose peculiar duty it was to protect them."

It was not unusual to stigmatize the Government's emigration activities, but in the middle of the nineteenth century the expansion of these activities caused the consequent public criticism and controversy to heighten in intensity.

It was in this highly unfavourable setting for the popularity of middle-class emigration that private and philanthropic exertions began to influence the image of emigration in the late eighteen-forties. Largely a haphazard development, the voluntary impulse was stimulated by the sheer weight of hungry and dispossessed Irish and the accompanying

18 The Times, Sept., 24, 1851, p. 4; Spectator, Dec. 8 and Dec. 29, 1849, pp. 1158-9, 1232; another journal which lobbied for colonial interests, the Australian and New Zealand Gazette, published in London, argued that the Irish orphans "have done nothing but to spread vice, together with the hellish doctrines of popery, which sanctify vice—as a means to an end." Feb. 5, 1853, pp. 130-1.

controversy and public interest in emigration. The misfortunes of the Colonial Office system enhanced the popularity of voluntary efforts, which were, in any case, far more in tune with the prevailing ethos of self-help. The superior propaganda value of independent emigration schemes gave them a unique opportunity to promote a new image of middle-class emigration, and the fortuitous episode of the Australian gold rush bolstered the trend to respectable emigration.

The most determined and self-conscious agent in the movement toward respectable emigration was the old colonial reformer, Edward Gibbon Wakefield. His last major work, *A View of The Art of Colonization*, published in 1849, resurrected all his old arguments of the 'thirties in favour of respectable middle-class, and especially female, emigration, and included an attack on Earl Grey for his emigration policy. Wakefield blamed Grey for fostering a situation in which "contempt for the colonies, a sense of their inferiority or lowness, pervades society here," so that the "gentry class," by which he meant the middle-class, came unconsciously to associate emigration with shame and failure, with hardened convicts, wretched paupers and black sheep who had forfeited their good names at home. The key to successful colonization was the emigration of the respectable and well educated, who lead and govern the emigration of the other classes. These are the emigrants whose presence in a colony most beneficially affects its standard of morals and manners, and would supply the most beneficial element of colonial government. If you can induce many of this class to settle in a colony, the other classes, whether capitalists or labourers, are sure to settle there in abundance . . . This, therefore, is the class, the impediments to whose emigration the thoughtful
statesman would be most anxious to remove, whilst he further endeavoured to attract them to the colony by all the means in his power.  

As in his England and America in 1833, Wakefield deplored the plight of women of the "uneasy" or "anxious" classes, the very women most needed in the colonies. Great Britain was "the greatest and the saddest convent the world has seen" with thousands of educated women condemned to a reluctant barren spinsterhood. But in 1849 Wakefield gave his usual argument a novel twist. A vital element in any civilized colony, he argued, was religion; without it, whatever its cast, any society must decline into barbarism, as had all British colonies with the exception of that of the devout French Canadians. Now, the essential and natural transmitters of religion were women. They were a vital element in every phase of colonization, but were indispensable to the building of a civilized religious community. There were more religious women than religious men, and in every class the best female colonists were those to whom religion was "a rule, a guide, a stay, and a comfort." A colony founded with religious men might in time degenerate in morals and manners, "but if you persuade religious women to emigrate, the whole country will be comparatively virtuous and polite." This was the Victorian civilizing mission carried to its natural conclusion. But the Victorian civilizing mission was a concept born of feminine leisure at the bourgeois domestic hearth, and Wakefield tried to impose it on a society where women


21Ibid., pp. 72-5, 152-8.
of all classes were of necessity active and hard-working pioneers.

Wakefield's sudden interest in religion stemmed from deliberate calculation. He was never noted for his piety. He showed few religious scruples when abducting an heiress in 1826 and he had not undergone a sudden religious conversion. His plea in 1849 for new sectarian colonies "with the strong attraction for superior emigrants of a particular creed in each colony" he based on far more practical considerations. Wakefield was planning a new colony in New Zealand and required influential support and patronage. Traditionally at odds with most members of the establishment, he now courted them with a blueprint for an exclusively Church of England, Tory settlement in Canterbury. To enhance the colony's prestige, Wakefield even intended to have a Bishop. His attempt was eminently successful. The Archbishop of Canterbury accepted the presidency of the Canterbury Association, and the committee included such notables as Archbishop Whately of Dublin, Bishop Blomfield of London, Lord Ashley (later Lord Shaftesbury), Sidney Herbert, the Earl of Lincoln and Lord John Manners, altogether encompassing eighteen eminent clerics, sixteen titled aristocrats and eleven members of Parliament. As Wakefield's

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22 "Ibid., pp. 152-61.


biographer has described it, the Canterbury Settlement in the South Island of New Zealand was "according to the book: pure Wakefield theory translated into practice with almost pedantic exactness." For once Wakefield achieved his ideal of transplanting an exact cross-section of society, an extension of the English class hierarchy. The first of four ships for Christchurch, which sailed in September 1850, carried 127 cabin passengers at £42 a berth, 85 intermediate passengers at £25 a berth, and 534 steerage passengers at £15 a berth. Gentry, women and children all formed their due proportion in a model example of patrician emigration which put the Government's "pauper-shovelling" to shame.

Certainly this was the impression presented in the Canterbury publicity. The press universally welcomed the prospect of a truly respectable colony and took every opportunity to stress the hierarchical character of the new community, often making odious contrasts with the Government's own activity. For The Times the new scheme was a piece of heroic patriotism, for by transplanting a complete "slice of England" it ensured that the colony would remain British; it was therefore essential that the mass of emigrants "should not be mere heaps of pauperism shovelled from our shores, but fairly selected portions of British society."

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25 Ibid., p. 292.

26 Carrington, op. cit., pp. 94-5. Up to February 1851, 363 passengers out of 1512 to Canterbury took cabin passages; Eleventh Report of Emigration Commissioners, May 2, 1851, PP., 1851, XXII, (1383), p. 16.

27 The Times, April 18, 1850, pp. 4, 8; July 5, 1851, p. 8.
A fashionable shipboard public banquet for the Canterbury gentry on July 30, 1850 received widespread coverage, and the bishop-designate, the Rev. Thomas Jackson, somewhat pretentiously set the tone by proclaiming that Canterbury would not be a colony "where men drink and do not dress for dinner." This sustained and ubiquitous publicity had a rapid impact on the image of emigration. Fraser's comment only a month after the first departures may have been as much a self-fulfilling prophecy as a true estimate of events, but it undoubtedly reflected a genuine shift of attitude:

In ecclesiastical, then, as well as civil institutions, Canterbury bids fair for the revival of the colonizing art. She seems by her first appeal to have struck a chord of sympathy in the heart of this nation; and we can scarcely yet accustom ourselves to the novelty she has already realized in her speedy conquest of what Mr. Wakefield almost despondingly laments over, as the indisposition of respectable people to emigrate.29

The Canterbury project overshadowed a host of minor schemes to foster emigration. It was a major colonization scheme, sanctioned by the Government, which captured the imagination of the British public. In fashionable news value it often competed favourably during 1851 with the Great Exhibition. At the same time other influences were at work transforming the image of emigration. Each of them was less grandiose than the Canterbury scheme, but they exerted a powerful collective impact. From 1849 the sudden interest in emigration gave rise to a multitude of

28 Carrington, op. cit., p. 87
charitable and commercial emigration societies, some regional, some occupational, some comprehensive, but all actively competing for public support. The author of a guide to London charities in 1850 observed that emigration was so universally recognized "as the panacea for destitution and distress" that "no opportunity is lost of advertising into notoriety various schemes of private interest, and advocating peculiar measures," not all of them wholly charitable in origin. In Scotland alone the Society for Assisting Emigration from the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, patronized by Prince Albert, and the Shetland Female Emigration Fund both curried popular support; the St. Andrews Society in South Australia encouraged them to promote Scottish emigration. Hyde Clarke's abortive emigration scheme for orphaned gentlewomen in 1849 was a product of this general enthusiasm and appropriately reflected the temper of mid-century opinion. The British Ladies Female Emigrant Society, also formed in 1849, regretted the necessity for female emigration, but attempted to render it more safe and palatable for the emigrants. Its members, which included the philanthropist Mary Jane Kinnaird, recruited matrons to superintend single women, visited emigrants on board ship before departure to distribute bibles, tracts and work materials, and organized


32 On Hyde Clarke's society see supra. chap. 3.
colonial committees to assist female emigrants after their arrival. Less spectacular than most other contemporary projects, it endured longest until 1888 when it became the basis for a more ambitious scheme to assist middle-class women.  

The mid-century "rage for emigration" encompassed every sector of society, but the organizations which attracted the most sustained interest in Britain were either exclusively devoted to unmarried women or were substantially preoccupied with female emigration. The British Ladies Female Emigrant Society came under this head to some extent, although the two societies with the greatest influence on public opinion were Mrs. Caroline Chisholm's 'Family Colonization Loan Society' and Sidney Herbert's

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33Low, op. cit., pp. 160-1; D. Fraser, Mary Jane Kinnaird, (London, 1890), p. 65. Emigrant's Penny Magazine, Plymouth, Vol. I, No. 2 June 1850, pp. 25-9, Vol. II, No. 11, March 1851, pp. 71-4; The Times, April 17, 1850, p. 6, April 24, 1852, p. 7; Australian and New Zealand Gazette, Aug. 23, 1851, pp. 373-4; Ellen Layton, 'On the Superintendence of Female Emigrants', N.A.P.S.S., Transactions, 1863, pp. 616-8. Other charitable societies not expressly designed to assist emigration, such as the 'Governesses Benevolent Institution' and the 'Jewish Ladies Benevolent Loan and Visiting Society,' looked to emigration as a means of relief for women during this period; Report of Commissioners, July 1849, in Grey to Fitzroy, July 30, 1849, PP., 1850, XL, p. 11637, pp. 100-1; M. S. Oppenheim (Hon. sec. of Jewish Ladies Society) to Newcastle and Commissioners, June 10, 1853, C. O. 384/91.

34The large number of letters on emigration received by Chambers's Edinburgh Journal prompted one writer to claim that it was currently the subject with the strongest hold on the public mind. 'A New Emigration Field,' Vol. XII, Oct. 20, 1849, p. 219. In the same journal only five months later another article began "Never was there a period at which the public mind was more deeply stirred by the question of emigration than at the present moment," 'Mrs. Chisholm,' Vol. XIII, March 30, 1850, p. 201. An emigrants guide as late as 1855 considered that emigration "rages as a national epidemic," E. Mackensie, The Emigrant's Guide to Australia, (London, 1855), p. 3.
'Fund for Promoting Female Emigration.' Both these societies, which overlapped in aims and management, achieved a fashionable popularity in Britain for about four years, and publicized the notion of female emigration to an unprecedented extent.

Caroline Chisholm, who has finally achieved heroic stature in Australian history, had a lifetime interest in the welfare of female emigrants.\(^{35}\) The wife of an officer in the Indian army, she already had some experience of philanthropic work when she moved with her husband to Sydney in 1838, having organized and run a school for the footloose daughters of Indian soldiers in Madras. Her early years in Australia coincided with the period, in 1841 and 1842, when shipowners flouted the bounty system regulations and crowds of ineligible emigrants landed in Sydney. Among these were hundreds of friendless single women who had no protectors on the voyage and no one to receive them on arrival. As this influx unhappily coincided with an economic depression in Sydney, following a boom in land speculation, there was no ready employment for these women, and in any case no organization to suit employer to employee. The result was that helpless women wandered the Sydney streets and beaches, a procuror's paradise; Caroline Chisholm estimated that at one time there were 600 women so abandoned in the town. Initially without material help or even official support, she gathered these women together, set up a

\(^{35}\) Despite her contemporary reputation Caroline Chisholm's importance was neglected until the recent publication of a biography by Margaret Kiddle, *Caroline Chisholm*, (Melbourne, 1950).
female emigrants' 'Home' in Sydney, established an employment registry and saw to it that the women reached their new employers. Her legendary trips into the bush with bullock-drays full of young women delighted settlers who sought servants for their wives and wives for their sons; Roger Therry, a Supreme Court judge in New South Wales, once met her with a company of forty women, all with pre-arranged employment, heading for the interior. In 1841 and 1842 the "emigrants' friend," as she became known, placed about 2,000 emigrants in this way. Among these were some complete families, but she devoted her major efforts to the interests of single women. 36

Mrs. Chisholm returned to England in 1846 after successfully pioneering a whole series of improvements in emigrant reception, but her departure did not end her mission. At home she besieged the Colonial Office with proposals for more efficient and humane methods of female and family emigration, and she herself was besieged with anxious enquiries from intending emigrants. During 1847 and 1848 she conceived a plan to form her own emigration society, and with the active support and membership of Lord Ashley and Sidney Herbert, organized her Family Colonisation Loan Society. As its name implies, the Society was neither wholly eleemosynary nor

designed expressly for single women. Mrs. Chisholm was convinced that
the best method of emigration was that of complete family units. She
organized groups of families in England before their departure, allowing
them to become acquainted at regular meetings at her Islington home.
Each family contributed the maximum possible amount to the cost of its
emigration, and the Society provided the balance as a loan to be repaid
in the colony, thus satisfying the self-help enthusiasts. Numbers of
single women without relatives were introduced and assigned to family
groups for protection; shipboard accommodation, all of a single class and
divided into small cabins of families, single women and single men, was
scrupulously designed to provide the maximum possible protection and su-
perintendence. 37

The Family Colonisation Loan Society was thoroughly successful.
It enabled several thousands with lower middle-class or skilled working-
class backgrounds to emigrate, and these were for the most part appreci-
ated and welcomed in Australia. 38 The New South Wales Legislative
Council was sufficiently convinced of the Society's value in 1853 to vote

37 Kiddle, op. cit., pp. 130-61; Anon., What has Mrs. Caroline
Chisholm done for New South Wales?, (Sydney, 1862), pp. 5-12; Mackenzie,
The Emigrant's Guide . . ., pp. 27-8. Lord Ashley was president of the
society.

38 The total numbers of emigrants assisted by the Society remains
obscure; Kiddle's reasonable estimate of 5,000 must be placed against
Mrs. Chisholm's comment more than twelve years later—and unsubstantiated
elsewhere—that the scheme had "provided . . . for upwards of 20,000
£10,000 for its exclusive use. What is more the Society received unqualified praise in Britain. The press used the Society to show up the glaring deficiencies in Government emigration. In the Westminster Review the Manchester School, eager to demonstrate the virtues of laissez-faire, saw in the Society "lessons for the lovers of legislation . . . . The State beaten by a woman!" An article in Household Words stressed Mrs. Chisholm's great improvement over the Government's standard of shipboard conditions, especially her scrupulous care to avoid indecency sleeping arrangements; The Times drew the same distinction, noticing that her scheme was unique in catering to the feelings, and especially the modesty, of the working class. A Times correspondent, stressing the bureaucratic obstructions in the Government's procedures, thought Caroline Chisholm, in enabling persons of all ages to emigrate, "follows the law of nature, while the Commissioners act up to their own restrictions." Although the Society's first ship did not sail until September 1850, when, as a later pamphlet recalled, the news media and Parliamentary orators were monopolized by the Canterbury Settlement scheme, the romantic excitement of Mrs. Chisholm's Society kept publicity at a high and favourable pitch.

39 The Victoria Legislative Council voted £5,000 to the society after Mrs. Chisholm returned to Australia in 1854, ibid., pp. 180-1.


41 What has Mrs. Caroline Chisholm done for N.S.W.? p. 6.
Eulogistic publicity for Caroline Chisholm and her society was ubiquitous, and nowhere more sustained and influential than in Charles Dickens' highly popular periodical, *Household Words*. Dickens had shown an interest in emigration ever since he contrived to send Martin Chuzzlewit to America in 1844. It was logical that Dickens, with his inclination to seek solutions to social and industrial problems outside the industrial social system, should be attracted to the simple safety-valve of emigration. After becoming personally acquainted with Caroline Chisholm he mentioned her Society in the first issue of *Household Words*, and frequently described in great detail the careful procedures she followed to secure a reliable system. One article, written during the gold rush in 1852, suggested that family colonisation was the only remedy for colonial society against "the curse of gold," which attracted hordes of unattached males. Dickens extended his interest into his current novel, *David Copperfield*, which began serialized publication in 1849, ended with the emigration to Australia of two problem families, the Micawbers and Peggottys. The choice of destination is significant, for Australia was

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becoming the new el Dorado before the gold rush. But more important is Dickens' description of the actual departure, which bears a striking resemblance to the descriptions of Caroline Chisholm's procedures in Household Words. He reminded his readers of the success rewarding such a prudent step by carefully detailing Micawber's rise to the magistracy and Peggotty's return visit to England as a successful sheepfarmer. Both men had faced ruin and family disintegration in England, but by emigrating they assured their prosperity, preserved family solidarity and demonstrated the infallibility of the Chisholm method.\(^\text{45}\)

The common impression of the Family Colonisation Loan Society, confirmed in Miss Kiddle's biography, suggests that Caroline Chisholm viewed female emigration as a mere by-product of her system of family emigration. But this impression is grossly misleading. Herself a devoted wife and mother and a devout Roman Catholic, she shared absolutely the notion of the feminine civilizing mission, and saw in Australia a field where this hitherto abstract concept might be translated into genuine practice. When she talked of the "social wants of the people" in Australia, she stressed that even sorely needed schools and churches would yield few benefits without "'God's police'—wives and little children—good and virtuous women."\(^\text{46}\) Bachelors in the bush, she argued, would never be

\(^{45}\)David Copperfield, Chaps. 51, 57, 63. The novel was published serially during 1849 and 1850, when talk of female emigration to Australia was at its height.

\(^{46}\)Chisholm, Emigration and Transportation Relatively Considered, (London, 1847), pp. 21-2.
loyal subjects, but "Give them help-mates, and you make murmuring, discontented servants, loyal and happy subjects of the State." An article she wrote for *Household Words* related the details of her visit to an Australian farm which accommodated five bachelors. Despite all the signs of comfort and prosperity she noticed a certain vacuum.

Yes, this spot of beauty, to make it a delightful happy home, required, what one of our favourite poets, and the poet of nature, calls nature's 'noblest work'—woman. 'Tis but too true—John Witney wanted a wife to make his home a fit habitation for man. What is John Witney without her? ... It was this hope alone, warming and clinging to his heart, that some day he could call himself the father of a family, that inspired him to gather all these beauties and comforts around him.48

These views stemmed naturally from her Australian experience of 1841 and 1842, and in promoting female emigration she was simply being consistent.

Fully aware of the potential dangers in a poorly administered or ill-conceived method of female emigration, Mrs. Chisholm was convinced that only well-organized family emigration could assure the complete success of such a delicate operation. Responsible families afforded the best possible protection for single women, and the only means of avoiding the "brutalization" suffered by the Irish orphans, victims of the Government's faulty emigration policy. Under proper guidance she expected her system to improve to the point where "our young women can be sent into a ship with the same confidence with which females now enter our trains and mail

47Chisholm, *ABC of Colonisation*, pp. 30-1.

coaches." Her scheme was not unlike that followed by the Government from 1837, but in her case it succeeded, largely due to her insistence on mutual acquaintance of family groups before departure. She no doubt took special pains to make the married men feel the full weight of their responsibility, and extracted the following lofty pledge from them as a last reminder.

That we pledge ourselves, as Christian fathers and heads of families, to exercise a parental control and guardianship over all orphans and friendless females of good repute for virtue and morality, proceeding with the family groups; to protect them as our children, and allow them to share the same cabins with our daughters.

After the gold rush, when Australia provided its own stimulus to emigration, Mrs. Chisholm increasingly dwelt on the need to provide for "a speedy emigration of women." But in fact this had always been her major interest.

Caroline Chisholm's work for women was of a practical and straightforward kind, but the high-toned rhetoric of the press and other admirers—and sometimes herself—gave it the semblance of a moral and matrimonial crusade. It was an issue highly charged with romanticism and sentimentality, and well suited to long-winded journalists able to expatiate at length on the visible manifestation of the mission civilatrix. The

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49 Chisholm, ABC of Colonisation, pp. 7-11.


politician Robert Lowe, who had witnessed her labours in Australia, dubbed Mrs. Chisholm in a poem "The guardian angel of her helpless sex."

The Times, in a laudatory leader written on the occasion of her prospective return to Australia, asserted "There never was a more vigilant or efficient protector of female virtue, and thousands of happy wives and mothers in Australia owe it to her that they are living in peace, honour and competence, instead of vice, infamy, and poverty." Mrs. Chisholm herself had a talent for choosing the most touching anecdotes to illustrate her point; She told of a worried father who travelled a hundred miles to see her; "'If' said he, 'you could only get me a good girl; if I could see my son married to a good woman, then I should die in peace.'"

At a time when marriage was deemed the single respectable occupation for women it was natural that the rhetoric in praise of female emigration should stress the favourable matrimonial prospects.52

52R. Lowe, 'Mrs. Caroline Chisholm,' What has Mrs. Caroline Chisholm done for N.S.W.?; pp. 20-1, first published in the Spectator, Sydney, Feb. 28, 1846, Kiddle, op. cit. p. 16; The Times, Aug. 8, 1853, p. 6; Chisholm, Emigration and Transportation Relatively Considered, p. 20. Mrs. Chisholm admitted that "I should not feel the interest I do in female emigration if I did not look beyond providing families with female servants—if I did not know how much moral good they may spread forth in society as wives," but she was careful to add that in all her matchmaking expeditions in N.S.W. she allowed no immediate engagements or employment in bachelors' premises, instead placing the women with families in areas where wives were in the most obvious demand, Mackenzie, Memoirs of Caroline Chisholm, pp. 95-106. An emigrants guide by the same author included a lengthy warning to women, not to accept immediate proposals on arrival without proper acquaintance and courtship, Mackenzie, The Emigrants Guide to Australia, pp. 127-8. J. F. Hogan gave the same warning 20 years later, and maintained that 99% of female emigrants were influenced by the hope of immediate marriage, op. cit., pp. 164-5.
Closely associated with Caroline Chisholm's Society, and at times confused with it, was a charitable organization devoted wholly to the emigration of single women known as the Fund for Promoting Female Emigration, organized and run by Sidney Herbert with Lord Ashley. This Society's original aim was to finance the emigration of London's distressed needlewomen, but Herbert's decisive shift of interest over a period of three years from destitute needlewomen to educated women of some gentility reflects the parallel shift in general attitudes to emigration. By 1853, when Herbert turned to women of a "superior class" middle-class emigration had become a more respectable proposition. Hence, although the emigration of needlewomen seems to have little immediate bearing on middle-class female emigration, some examination of the Society's work and the social origins of its emigrants should help to show how the events of the early 'fifties produced a more favourable climate for the emigration of middle-class women.

Herbert's Society was born from the conjuncture of a rising interest in emigration with a sudden flurry of attention to the conditions of the most depressed class of needleworkers and "slopworkers" in the metropolis publicized by Henry Mayhew's famous articles on the London poor in the Morning Chronicle for 1849. Herbert and Lord Ashley immediately organized an emigration scheme which lasted for nearly four years, and during that time gradually turned its attention to women other than London needleworkers. Like previous schemes it unfortunately gave offense to some colonists because it sent out a few women whose moral standards were
not of the highest. But unlike the criticism of the Government's scheme during the 'thirties, criticism of Herbert's work was absent from the British press, and the Society remained popular and fashionable in Britain, where its frequent exposure to favourable publicity exerted an important influence on the general attitude to female emigration.

The most novel feature of the new scheme was the provision for a 'Home' in London to lodge prospective emigrants for several weeks prior to their departure. This was a lodging house in Hatton Garden rented from the Society for Improving the Condition of the Labouring Classes at £130 a year. It was completely furnished to accommodate over forty women, and the Society provided for careful supervision by appointing a permanent matron and a ladies committee in full charge. Besides functioning as a quasi-convalescent home for the most destitute and under-nourished women, this institution provided a further opportunity to ensure a judicious selection of emigrants best suited to colonial society. Herbert admitted in his report that the most careful selection procedures could still not prevent some corrupted women from obtaining a free passage, but several weeks in the 'Home' under the "gentle discipline" of the matron, Mrs. Batkin, served as a further weeding-out process. In practice, a small proportion of women admitted to the 'Home' were regularly denied a free passage, and others were kept there beyond their original sailing date until their characters could be "more thoroughly determined." Residence in the 'Home' also provided a useful opportunity for training in domestic service, a vital qualification for all female emigrants. In
this way it foreshadowed the more sophisticated colonial training-schools for middle-class women at the end of the century. It represented the first genuine attempt to meet the special needs of colonial societies in their demand for well trained women. 53

The routine press accounts of the Society's ships' departures were accompanied by glowing editorial comment long after the initial novelty of the Society had worn off early in 1850. The Times concluded from a report of the Society in 1852 that the Australian bush "must be a perfect Arcadia" for British women, and heaped praise on Sidney Herbert's efforts. 54 Spokesmen for colonial interests continued to use the Society to demonstrate the shortcomings of Government emigration, and viewed Herbert's scheme as the core of a potential massive plan of female emigration. 55 Melodramatic periodical fiction also reflected the Society's popular theme of emigration for distressed needlewomen. "Ellen Linn the Needlewoman," in Tait's, described the heart-rending tale of an unemployed, starving needleworker,


54 The Times, Jan. 2, 1852, p. 4. See also the praise of the society during a debate on female emigration in the House of Commons, Debates, 3rd Ser., Vol. CXI, May 28, 1850, C. 444.

desperately seeking a character testimonial in order to join her lover in Australia. Ellen Linn's accumulated misfortunes drive her mad just before the long sought help arrives, thus implying that the cumbersome regulations of State emigration are inadequate to deal with the intimate personal details of needy needlewomen. Both Punch and the Illustrated London News depicted the Society's operations in drawings of scenes of the women on board ship, in the Hatton-Garden 'Home' and in an imaginary domestic utopia in Australia. The Illustrated saw the events on Herbert's ships as a "striking characteristic of the season" in 1850. For at least two years, and throughout the period of excitement in Australia, Herbert's Society remained one of the most fashionable and intriguing charities on the London scene.

Sidney Herbert, like Caroline Chisholm, obtained some of his valuable support and publicity from Charles Dickens. It is a mistake to suggest, as does Miss Kiddle in her Chisholm biography, that Dickens' interest in emigration stemmed solely from his contacts with Caroline Chisholm and the Family Colonisation Loan Society. In fact, as Miss

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Kiddle observed, it was Mrs. Elizabeth Herbert who arranged the first meeting between Caroline Chisholm and Dickens in February, 1850, a time when the publicity of the Herbert Society was at its height. Elizabeth Herbert told Caroline Chisholm that Dickens had agreed to publish some emigrants letters, "and he seemed to think that the giving them publicity would be an important engine towards helping on our work." Since Elizabeth Herbert was a member of the ladies committee on her husband's Society, and Caroline Chisholm had herself assisted in its organization, it is clear that "our work" referred to the work of both societies, and not simply that of Caroline Chisholm's scheme. Dickens, besides, already had some experience in female emigration. In 1846, before Caroline Chisholm came to England, he had helped the famous philanthropist, Miss Burdett-Coutts, to found 'Urania College,' a home for fallen women, and from the start had advocated that the reformed women should be enabled to emigrate after leaving the home. The emigration to Australia in David Copperfield of Martha, a penitent prostitute, and Little Emily, the victim of a classic Victorian seduction by Steerforth, owed much to Dickens'

60 Mrs. Elizabeth Herbert to Mrs. C. Chisholm, Feb. 24, 1850, in Kiddle, Caroline Chisholm, p. 143.

work with Miss Burdett-Coutts, but even more to his interest in Sidney Herbert's female emigration scheme. An account in Household Words, in January, 1852, of the departure of the Euphrates with sixty female emigrants bore the marks of Dickens' style in its minute description of shipboard events, and praised every facet of the Society's operations. For Dickens the Herbert and Chisholm societies were essential elements in the right kind of Australian "emigration mania," both precious antidotes to the evils of the gold rush.

Public discussion of Herbert's work, like that of Caroline Chisholm, soon took on the appearance of propaganda for a moral and matrimonial crusade. This was partly due to a sudden unprecedented interest in the disproportions between the sexes in Britain and Australia. In his original appeal Herbert had stressed the deplorable effects of too many women in Britain and too many men in the Antipodes. Excessive male emigration was a cause, and increased female emigration an obvious solution to this joint evil, and the point was quickly taken up by the press. The Times thought the "disease" required an urgent remedy in the form of massive assistance to female emigrants, and blamed the short-sightedness of past policy.

Just at the moment that colony after colony is threatening independence it strikes the British public, as a novel thought, that it has made the great mistake of creating a settlement at the Antipodes.


63 Herbert's public letter, The Times, Dec. 6, 1849, p. 3.
with twice as many men as women instead of that equality which Heaven has ordained. And this is the accumulated error of half a century. Year after year we have witnessed its development with stupid indifference. 64

The conception of the problem in these terms led logically to an interest in husbands rather than employment. A poem in Punch, inspired by Sidney Herbert's society, saw the solution to the needlewomen's plight in Australia "Where in wedlock's tie, not harlotry, we shall find men to mate us." 65 Samuel Sidney, the emigration promoter, welcomed Herbert's scheme, and argued in a pamphlet that women were needed in Australia more as wives than servants.

It is perfectly possible that a shipful of emigrant girls might give dissatisfaction to the fashionables of Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide, and yet be gratefully received and happily settled in the interior of those districts . . .

The grateful recipients would be "the now solitary dwellers in the bush of Australia, whose homes will be lightened, and civilized, and Christianized, by 'wives and little children'." 66 The popularity of

64 The Times, Jan. 2, 1850, p. 4. See also the first Times leader on the Society, Dec. 7, 1849, p. 4.

65 'The Needlewomen's Farewell', Punch, Vol. XVIII, Jan. 12, 1850, p. 11. The above mentioned article in Household Words concluded by prophesying husbands for most of the women on the Euphrates "if men in Australia have at all an eye to what they are about;" Vol. IV, Jan. 21, 1852, p. 414. A contemporary leader in The Times, commenting on the Society's annual report, observed that the emigrants wrote "above all, of the perfect facility with which excellent husbands are forthcoming on the faintest inquiry, or indeed, without any inquiry at all. It is all Acis and Galatea in practice;" Jan. 2, 1852, p. 4.

this matrimonial rhetoric had predictable effects on the expectations of the emigrants, and the Society began to warn the women against making imprudent marriages after their arrival in the colony. Not that marriage was an unworthy ambition, but the Society urged women first to depend on their own conduct and industry, and subsequently "they might expect in due time to get good and worthy men to marry them, and thus they would ensure their future happiness." Herbert fully realized that the practical exigencies of an emigration scheme were far more complex: women must be willing and able to face hard work in Australia, but it was natural that such a popular project should be romanticized into an Imperial marriage bureau in Britain. What other respectable occupation, after all, could women have?

The matrimonial issue soon raised fundamental questions about the women's social origins. The prospect of boatloads of brides for bushmen was not universally welcomed. A writer in Household Words later recounted that "some very delicate people were shocked to think that wives should be exported like so many bales of printed cotton." Part of the problem here was a confusion over exactly what kind of women the Society meant to assist. Mayhew's famous articles had established a firm connection—if it did not already exist—between the themes of needlework

67 See the address of the Rev. B. Noel to the emigrants on board the Northumberland, reported in The Times, Aug. 3, 1852, p. 8.

and prostitution, and William Brown, the M.P. for South Lancashire, immediately questioned the wisdom of encouraging abandoned slopworkers, unqualified in domestic work, to emigrate; "women," he remarked, "who cannot be helpers will be destroyers." Herbert quickly replied that the Society was less interested in professional needlewomen than ex-domestic servants who had been forced into the lowest-paid forms of needlework, and that he expected the supervision of the 'Home' to operate as a check on the character and qualifications of each candidate. "Nor do we wish by any means," he added, "to confine ourselves to that, or indeed any other class." Herbert's original stress on distressed needlewomen therefore caused some perplexity about the purpose and function of the Society. No total figures for the entire duration of the Society have survived, but various scattered reports indicate that needleworkers were never in a majority. The Society classified only 167 out of its 14,091 emigrants in 1850 as needleworkers or dressmakers of various kinds, and 169 as domestic servants. The Society was careful to point out that many women designated as servants were in fact "servants-out-of-place" who had temporarily resorted to the needle to eke out a living, but the majority could still obtain testimonials from previous employers and had at least some experience in domestic service. The majority of women,


70 Herbert, First Report of Committee, p. 4.
regardless of their previous history, took work as domestic servants in Australia, so that the proportion of them with relevant experience was a measure of their immediate suitability for the colonies. The needlewomen controversy provided the necessary impetus to launch the Society, but in practice a much wider assortment of women obtained assistance.

The most important feature of Herbert's appeal to a broad cross-section of women was the increasing facility it provided for middle-class women to emigrate. In his response to Herbert's initial appeal for a society Samuel Sidney expressed a hope that "many young ladies of narrow means would benefit Australia by their education and refinement, and secure themselves better establishments than England can afford them, who are now deterred, by the want of maternal protection, from venturing on the voyage." The Society at first made no specific appeal to "young ladies," but its records show that it regularly accommodated liberal numbers of middle-class women. The 409 women sent out in 1850 included only six who can be identified as middle-class by occupation, i.e. three

71 Out of 90 emigrants to Victoria from July 1, 1851 to June 30, 1852, 51 were domestic servants, 27 milliners and dressmakers and 12 not designated, while 64 of them took work as domestic servants in the colony. In 1853 there were 46 servants, 49 needlewomen and 25 others, of whom 91 entered domestic service; Report of Victoria Immigration Agent, H. Childers, June 30, 1852, Appendix 16, in Latrobe to Pakington, Aug. 6, 1852, PP., 1852-3, LXVIII [1627], pp. 139-145, 160; Report of Victoria Immigration Agent for 1853, in Lt. Gov. Sir C. Hotham to Sir Geo. Grey, Oct. 24, 1854, C.O. 309/27. The Society also accepted some women from Ireland, Haly to Herbert, Dec. 13, 1851, Herbert Papers.

72 Sidney, op. cit., p. 13.
governesses and three teachers, but Herbert's first report indicates that larger numbers of distressed gentlewomen obtained assistance. The report described 38 case histories of the Society's emigrants, of which at least 16 had suffered the familiar experience of a steep class decline following the death of a father, loss of family fortune or other causes usually identified with genteel poverty. E.H., for example, the 27 year old daughter of a newspaper editor, was left without support after her father's death, and subsisted for ten years on the declining proceeds of her needlework; once admitted to the 'Home,' however, she lent responsible assistance to the Matron and was appointed Sub-Matron during the voyage. Persistent complaints from Victoria against educated women who would not stoop to domestic service suggest that their numbers amounted to more than a trickle. La Trobe told Herbert after the first arrival with 39 women that the most unsuitable woman for the colony was the type who possesses no resources and but ordinary education and accomplishments, and who neither can nor will make up her mind to descend to what she has been led, from previous habit or association, to consider an inferior grade or servile occupation.

In 1853 the Victoria Immigration Agent, Edward Grimes, again complained that governesses ignorant of domestic service were not only useless but a moral liability to the colony while they remained unemployed. Despite


74La Trobe to Herbert, July 19, 1850, in Fitzroy to Grey, Oct. 17, 1850, pp., 1851, XL, (347), pp. 52-4.

these warnings the press reports of ships' departures gave increasing attention to well-educated emigrants whose "manners gave evidence that . . . they had seen better days." In 1851 the Society began to provide for "protected cases," or women, invariably middle-class, who could afford to pay their own passage but preferred to travel under the Society's protection.76 Like the London Emigration Committee in the 'thirties, the Society was increasingly drawn into the problem of the distressed gentlewoman, and responded by making it possible for them to emigrate, despite the meagre demand for educated women in the colonies. The Society's gradual shift of attention largely stemmed from the unrelenting pressure from desperate educated women for assistance, but it was facilitated by the more tolerant attitude to emigration wrought by three years of intensive voluntary activity.

In 1853 the character of the Society changed to a program of emigration assistance exclusively for middle-class women. Since 1851 the Australia and New Zealand Gazette, a Wakefieldian mouthpiece in Britain for colonial interests, had been urging Sidney Herbert to organize a

C.O. 311/5; see also the Agent's report for 1852, Victoria, June 9, 1853, Appendix No. 4, PP., 1854, XLVI, (l36), pp. 168-9; see also F. Merewether's complaints of unqualified women sent to N.S.W. in the Jane Morrison, letter to Herbert, Nov. 2, 1850, Herbert Papers.

scheme of emigration for educated women. It originally suggested an extraordinary plan to send out genteel women on specific orders as wives for "well to do bushmen." In 1853 it began more frequently to expose the anomalous position of thousands of highly cultivated London women forced into "the degrading position of governess" who, married and settled in Australia "would completely change the face of society among the half-million male bipeds already there." On May 21, 1853 it again argued for an emigration society for accomplished women "solely with a view to marriage," and in the same issue it reported that the Society's funds were almost depleted and that Herbert had proposed to send out a higher class of women, paying their own fares, under the auspices of the Society's name. On June 18, it reported a committee meeting of June 10, at which the Society officially resolved to confine its operations to taking up and fitting out first class ships for respectable women who could pay their own fare of £22—£10 less than the current intermediate cabin fare to Australia—and to provide all the customary protection, complete with experienced matron and surgeon, during the voyage and on arrival. The Morning Chronicle insisted in a leader that the new scheme was directed more towards lower-middle-class women than to the "matrimonial necessities of Australia." They should be neither "fine ladies nor untaught paupers" but women of respectable parentage with some home experience in housework. This class, the Chronicle maintained, was in greatest need of emigration "for the drudgery which married life involves to the lower section of our middle-classes—the grade above servanthood—is only known
to those most experienced in our social organization." This approach went beyond the earlier spasmodic assistance to distressed gentlewomen and foreshadowed some of the later female emigration schemes which made a special point of helping lower-middle-class women. The last reference to the plan was on July 16, when the Gazette reported that most of the first party of forty middle-class women had been accepted, and that the ship was expected to leave for Sydney in mid-August. The Society's protection, it reported, was felt to remove the difficulties and objections which have hitherto stood in the way of unprotected female emigration. For a payment of £22, the friends of a young woman who has sufficient moral and physical energy to encounter a colonial life, may now, through the instrumentality of this society, make almost a life provision for her, without apprehension as to her safety, and with the almost certainty of her success.

The new scheme was close to the kind of project the Gazette had been advocating for two years. The project must have been short-lived, however, for there is no further reference to its existence, and no indication of the fate of the first ship which left in August.77

Despite the persistent agitation of the Australia and New Zealand Gazette it is unlikely that it was the prime force in the Society's change

77 Australia and New Zealand Gazette, July 12, 1851, pp. 324-5, Feb. 5, 1853, pp. 130-1, May 21, 1853, pp. 490-1, June 18, 1853, p. 587, July 16, 1853, pp. 684-5. The leader of July 12, 1851 was reprinted in the South Australia News, Aug., 1851, pp. 534-5. On Feb. 5 the journal cited Mrs. Meredith, (previously Louisa Twamley) a well-known Australian poetess and narrator of colonial manners, who had emigrated with her husband in 1839, as the type of woman it hoped would benefit by its plan; Morning Chronicle, July 8, 1853, pp. 4-5.
of policy; the new plan bears the obvious stamp of Caroline Chisholm's influence in its emphasis on self-help principles and its concentration on respectable and educated women. Ever since the onset of the gold rush in 1852 Mrs. Chisholm had hoped to organize a new large-scale project of female emigration. Her husband told a Victoria Select Committee on immigration in 1852 that she was ready to organize such a system with the help of Herbert, Shaftesbury and their wives, and that she was already touring the United Kingdom to establish village emigration societies. When she spoke of the need for "a speedy emigration of women" in January, 1853 she stressed that if the women were unable to pay their own passage, their independence must be preserved by a system of loans rather than charity. Furthermore, in June, 1853, when Sidney Herbert announced the change of policy, he also replaced Lord Shaftesbury as Chairman of the Central Committee of Mrs. Chisholm's Family Colonisation Loan Society. A Melbourne paper subsequently mentioned that that Society had under consideration "a plan of female emigration suggested by Mrs. Chisholm." The strong implication is that the two societies arranged some form of amalgamation at this time, although there is no further suggestion that


79 Report of address at Greenwich Mechanic's Institute, The Times, Jan. 5, 1853, p. 5.

80 Kiddle, Caroline Chisholm, p. 181.

81 Argus, Melbourne, Aug. 31, 1853, quoted, ibid., p. 181.
it was actually implemented. There is sufficient evidence, however, to indicate that both Herbert and Chisholm had shifted their focus to middle-class women. The Society had moved a long way from the pathos and degradation of Mayhew's needlewomen.

The reputation of Herbert's society has fared less well in the hands of recent historians than it did among the enthusiastic mid-Victorian contemporaries. Wilbur S. Shepperson quite unjustifiably concluded, from a few unfavourable colonial reports, that the Society "was forced to disband," and Margaret Kiddle maintained, from the same evidence, that the Society was unsuccessful "chiefly from the poor character of the women and girls it introduced." In fact, the Society was never forced to disband, and Victoria, the only colony to object persistently to Herbert's emigrants, noted a marked improvement in the respectability of the Society's women in 1853. The major reason for its gradual disappearance in 1853 was simply depletion of funds, and one factor in the shift to the middle-class project was a feeling that there was much less suffering among working-class women in 1853 than three years earlier.

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64*Australia and New Zealand Gazette*, May 21, 1853, pp. 490-1. *Morning Chronicle*, July 8, 1853, pp. 4-5.
Conditions would have been ripe for the middle-class plan in 1854, but the outbreak of the Crimean War in March hampered shipping arrangements and diverted Herbert's philanthropic energies; Caroline Chisholm, who might have supervised the scheme, left for Australia in April, 1854. The Victoria Immigration Agent, far from discouraging the Society, recommended in 1853 that a request by the Society for a grant of £10,000 from the colony's emigration fund should be granted "provided certain restrictions are imposed upon the Society." The grant was obviously not made, for in December, 1853 a letter from Mrs. Chisholm appeared in The Times, praising the Society's benevolence and regretting "that the funds of the Society should be nearly exhausted." Subsequent comments in the press referred to the Society, in the past tense, as having found wives for many deserving bachelors during a time of severe need. Simply in terms of numbers the Society's achievement was small; in over three years it enabled more than 1300 women to emigrate. But its constant praise in

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86 The Times, Dec. 8, 1853, p. 8.


88 To the end of 1852 the Society assisted 1071 women in 29 ships;
the press popularized the subject of female emigration and had an important effect on public opinion, thus easing the way for the acceptance of feminist sponsored plans for female emigration six years later.

A major reason for Caroline Chisholm's renewed interest in female emigration in 1852 was the unprecedented male emigration to Australia prompted by the gold rush. The gold fever coincided with the voluntary operations of the early 'fifties, and served to enhance public support for them by again drawing attention to the need for an equilibrium of the sexes in emigration. The first gold discoveries were in 1851, but it was in 1852 that the "national epidemic" of emigration to the goldfields began to rage. In that year emigration to Australasia leapt from 21,532 in 1851 to 87,881. The gold rush probably did more than any other single development to kill finally the old identification of emigration with paupers, poverty and transported criminals. For once people of all classes who were not faced with starvation or ruin at home began to emigrate. The Times welcomed the polite tone of the new move-

In 1853 it despatched six more ships on the old plan, three of which carried 120 women to Victoria; assuming the usual average of 40 women in each ship the remaining three ships would have carried 120 women, giving a total of 1311 emigrants, not including the 40 middle-class women presumably assisted in August 1853, Illustrated London News, March 12, 1853, p. 204; Report of Victoria Immigration Agent, 1853, in Hotham to Sir G. Grey, Oct. 24, 1854, C.O. 309/27.


ment, but began to take alarm when it estimated that

at least half of the 15,000 persons who last quarter left London for the gold-fields had already a position more or less settled of their own. Many large establishments are now, in fact, like regiments after a battle, with young hands unexpectedly promoted to the duties of seniors, and vacancies in abundance still.91

The gold-rush emigration contained a premature embryo of that elite emigration from Britain which set in steadily during the late-Victorian period.92 A major inhibition to its acceleration at mid-century was the simple fact that Australian society could not accommodate large numbers of professionals and white-collar workers.

Gold-rush emigration had a romantic appeal to numerous middle-class men, women and whole families, despite protests from the colonies that it was a mistake for genteel people to emigrate unless they were prepared for a life of hard physical labour. Few educated persons were suited to the rough life of the gold-fields and there was a continual surfeit of men seeking white-collar work in Melbourne, the last resort of the disappointed gold-seeker. In a land where high wages were the real basis of emigration even the aspiring gentleman farmer was unable to escape hard

91Nov. 4, 1852, p. 4. After the first news of the gold discoveries reached England The Times enthusiastically predicted that gold would do more than Sir William Molesworth to finally arrest Australian convict transportation. The convict element would be swamped by the sudden increase of population "bringing with them the feelings and associations of English citizens." Sept. 4, 1851, p. 4, Sept. 23, 1851, p. 4.

manual work. Throughout the gold rush, Lt. Governor La Trobe complained about the multitude of decent men of small means and large families, decayed or unfortunate tradesmen, half-educated clerks, young men of no decided calling or character, professing their willingness to do any thing, with the power of doing nothing well.  

The Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners in their annual reports repeated all the warnings against middle-class emigration, but with little immediate effect. It is no exaggeration to describe the mid-century change of attitude towards Australia and emigration as a minor revolution. The new enthusiasm even penetrated artistic circles. The pre-Raphaelite sculptor, Thomas Woolner, joined the exodus to the gold-fields in 1852, and inspired his colleague, Ford Madox Brown, to paint *The Last of England*, in which he probed the mixed emotions of an educated middle-class couple taking final sorrowful leave of their country.

The sudden urge to emigrate did not solve the major social problem: the shortage of women in Australia. The excess of males in the population

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93La Trobe to Pakington, Oct. 28, 1852, PP., 1852-3, LXIV /1607/, p. 261.


increased still further with the gold rush, and the colonies stepped up their urgent demands for more women to redress the sex disproportion. Domestic servants, never abundant in Australia, were now chronically scarce. In 1853 John Loch, the Immigration Agent for Van Diemen's Land, a colony immune from the vast inrush of gold-diggers, pointed out that ladies "of the highest respectability" were being forced to perform "the most menial offices in the household" and many were unable to leave their houses because they had no one to care for their children. Loch urged that more funds should be expended on Government emigration to attract superior servants, and expressed the view that

daughters of persons of a somewhat higher sphere, but in difficult circumstances, who are unwilling to go to service where they are known, would gladly undertake the duties of nursery maids, housemaids, parlour servants, needlewomen, and nursery governesses in this colony, were they aware of the advantages which would here attend them, and could they be brought out free of expense not being themselves able to contribute.\footnote{Report from Immigration Agent, Van Diemen's Land, Jan. 31, 1853, in Lt. Gov. Sir W. T. Denison to Pakington, April 1, 1853, \textit{PP.}, 1854, XLVI. (436-I), pp. 51-64; see also the official pamphlet 'Information Regarding the Colony of Van Diemen's Land,' \textit{ibid.}, pp. 99-100.}

This argument was becoming familiar in Britain but its appearance in Australia, where colonial officials normally discouraged the emigration of middle-class women, indicates how urgent the need for women had become.

The most salient development in all the Australian emigration propaganda at mid-century, was the candid nature of appeals to middle-class women. No longer were they advised to pursue the same narrow occupation of the governess to which they were restricted at home. Demand for female
teachers in Australia lagged far behind the supply. Educated women were needed as colonial housewives, but if they must work before marriage they should enter domestic service, and they would be treated as partners by their equally hard-working mistresses. An emigrant's guide warned that few Australians could afford to employ governesses who would not stoop to housework, as the employers themselves would "have to become the servants of those they employed." An attractive alternative remained, however.

But it is in the power of any female to become practically acquainted with domestic duties or dressmaking, and by this knowledge, after emigrating, find herself released from the painful dependence, bondage, and trying position of 'the young person' in this country. There they would at once take a respectable position in society, have their own home; and instead of begging for bread, their industry would be begged of them, and handsomely rewarded. 97

Appeals like these suited the new climate of opinion which acknowledged that the externals of the British social hierarchy had been severely disturbed in Australia. A pillar of orthodoxy like The Times was now able to welcome the persuasion of a Melbourne paper which exhorted "gentlemen and ladies to throw off at once the pride of a condition they can no longer support, to bow to the necessity of the times, and to seek menial employment at the present rate of wages in whatever capacity they may be fortunate enough to find it." The Times went on to note that the new employers were effected by the change as much as the new employees.

Extreme modesty is not a prevailing fault among the inhabitants of new colonies; but we can imagine an old convict rather embarrassed by finding that he has engaged a 'senior optime' for his valet, and a maid of all work a little discontented at being assisted in her toilette by a baronet's daughter.98

Genteel women could draw the implication that menial work need bring no loss of caste provided it was not done in Britain.

The new tolerance towards 'educated menials' for Australia was consistent with the Victorian moralists' concept of the mission civiliatrix. In 1845 Elizabeth Eastlake argued that the Englishwoman's particular suitability for foreign travel stemmed from her special domesticity, a unique characteristic which distinguished the Englishwoman from her European contemporaries. The Englishman was highly mobile and adaptable to foreign countries simply because "he takes his home with him; and has more within it and wants less beyond it than any other man in the world." The peculiar English taste for travel, she maintained, was due "to nothing less than the domesticity of the English character." Eastlake was thinking of women like Mrs. Louisa Meredith—whose book she went on to review—who as emigrants combined the duties of the all round domestic help-mate with the culture of the poet and author. In a later book Mrs. Meredith berated some middle-class colonial women for being ashamed of their domestic role. In the cities too many women tried to hide the fact that they performed hard manual work at home, and tried to give a false impression of fashionably-dressed idleness. Mrs. Meredith shared the

98The Times, Aug. 16, 1853, p. 8.
candour of the emigration propagandists: she considered the neat working-attire, which pleased her husband, quite fit for casual visitors.

And it seems to me far more pleasant to imagine one's lady-friends notably busy in a morning, as good country housewives must be and are, than to conceive such useless impossibilities as ladies (some of whom in this place, I know, keep no female servants) dressed in new silks or muslins at noon, and seated on a sofa doing nothing!

For the moralists the cultivated domestic like Mrs. Meredith was performing a more noble function than the idle women of genteel society at home.99

The evidence of mid-century emigration of middle-class women to Australia is unsystematic, and lends itself to description rather than statistical analysis. It can, however, be said with certainty that the early 'fifties offered unprecedented conditions to encourage gentlewomen to emigrate, and that many responded. Both Caroline Chisholm and Sidney Herbert facilitated their movement, and the only discouragement came from some colonial officials, whose warnings were not widely publicized in Britain. Other incidental evidence suggests that for a brief period Australia did indeed become the distressed gentlewoman's El Dorado. One of the most illuminating sources in this respect is the published writing of a female emigrant who married in Australia, Mrs. Charles Clacy. Mrs. Clacy accompanied her brother, who had discarded his Homer and Euclid for

"Guides to the Diggings," to Victoria in 1852, and described her experiences in a best selling book, *A Lady's Visit to the Gold Diggings of Australia in 1852-3*, published in England in 1853. Mrs. Clacy herself was an ideal type, although exceptionally articulate, of the independent middle-class emigrant. Her book describes several encounters with less fortunate middle-class women who had emigrated in desperation, and prospered and eventually married in Australia. In an appendix headed 'Who should emigrate?' she summarized her experiences, giving the familiar advice that only the less fastidious women who were prepared to work hard should emigrate. "The worst risk you run" she continued, no doubt reflecting on her own success in marrying within a year and returning to England,

is that of getting married, and finding yourself treated with twenty times the respect and consideration you may meet with in England. Here (as far as number goes) women beat the 'lords of creation,' in Australia it is the reverse, and there we may be pretty sure of having our own way.100

The rapid success of Mrs. Clacy's book—it was published at the height of the 'gold fever'—encouraged her to write a second work, a two volume collection of short stories, all avowedly "founded upon facts that have occurred in real life—the greater portion of them having fallen within the personal knowledge of the author."101 Each of her sixteen

100Clacy, pp. 9, 151. The first edition sold out immediately and was followed by a second edition during 1853.

101Mrs. C. Clacy, *Lights and Shadows of Australian Life*, (London, 1854), Vol. I, pp. v-vi. It was usual for emigration promoters to use fiction as propaganda; see especially W.H.G. Kingston, *How to Emigrate; or the British Colonists. A Tale for all Classes*, (London, 1850); Kingston's story was a model of multi-class emigration to Australia.
melodramatic tales recounts the experiences of middle-class families, and most often middle-class women, in the setting of Australian emigration. The minor details and underlying themes of these stories are significant for their capsule description of the educated woman's response to a different social milieu, and for the educating influence they must have exerted on their readers. One protagonist, a young governess, summarizes all the striking "social wonders" for the uninitiated middle-class woman in Australia in a single passage:

Ladies are at a premium, and have no lack of suitors; using your hands is not considered debasing; those that were the poorer classes are richer than the fine gentlemen who land here, and servants are accustomed to have the upper hand of their masters and mistresses.  

Mrs. Clacy's stories are full of the themes of love and marriage, but in each case the final successful match is brought about by the agency of emigration and the novel social conditions in Australia. All the familiar Victorian clichés of Australian life are present; bushrangers, bush-fires, convictism, gold discoveries, and extreme social mobility abound, but each serves as a catalyst to cement a relationship between a once forlorn spinster and a bachelor who needs only a wife to ensure his honest prosperity. In 'The Bush Fire' Julia joins her brother in Australia and soon learns to conquer her old prejudices against menial work.

... Instead of wandering beneath the gum trees like a forsaken maiden in romance, she exerted all her energies to impart to her brother's home that air of comfort which a true Englishwoman disseminates wherever she goes. There was always something to be done, and she entered into the rough life with a hearty good will, and at length found herself absolutely enjoying it.

102 Clacy, 'Leaves from a Young Lady's Diary,' ibid., Vol. II, p. 258.
Her brother's partner, Hugh Clements, impressed with Julia's dignified domesticity, falls in love with her, but being of humble origins feels it would be "an act of profanation" to declare himself. Their mutual love is revealed during a bush-fire, and their marriage, which would have been considered a mésalliance in England, happily assured.\(^{103}\) In almost every story the dismal prospect of celibate poverty in the overcrowded "mother-country" is exchanged for a future of married prosperity in Australia. Mrs. Clacy's stories, besides being an excellent record of comparative social history, were some of the most effective pieces of propaganda for middle-class female emigration, and reflected the considerable change in opinion over five years. The popular themes of female emigration had moved a long way from the social conscience emphasis of 'Ellen Linn the Needlewoman' in 1850.\(^{104}\)

The early 'fifties were an important watershed in the development of attitudes towards Australia, towards middle-class female emigration and towards emigration in general. The combined influence of increased working-class emigration to Australia, the Canterbury Settlement, popular female emigration schemes and the Australian gold rush, all combined to break down many of the old horrors associated with emigration. Technical improvements in communications also began to erase prejudices against a long and fearsome voyage.\(^{105}\) As more of the middle-class became willing

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\(^{103}\)The Bush Fire,' ibid., Vol. I, pp. 165-84.

\(^{104}\)On this short story which appeared in Tait's see supra. p. 194-95.

\(^{105}\)See the estimate in the Illustrated London News, Aug. 21, 1852.
to emigrate the barriers against genteel female emigration were lowered, conversely it was the popularity of female emigration schemes like those of Caroline Chisholm and Sidney Herbert, with their strong overtones of a moral and matrimonial crusade, which exerted a powerful influence on the disposition of middle-class families to emigrate. In the mood of the early 'fifties the voluntary activities of Wakefield, Chisholm and Herbert were in a far better position than State sponsored schemes to stimulate this new attitude; their propaganda was more credible than that of the Colonial Office, which suffered from a general hostility to expanding Government activity. The philanthropists had no greater knowledge of Australian conditions than did Colonial Office officials, but they benefitted from favourable public regard and had the good fortune to coincide with the gold rush, which gave Australia and the feminine civilizing mission a fashionable appeal. Female emigration was itself instrumental in modifying the general sentiment towards emigration in Britain. The diverse developments in Antipodean emigration during the early 'fifties brought a permanent change in emigration attitudes for all classes. Henceforth, the colonies were still to be associated with hard work, but rarely, as Wakefield had complained, with crime, degradation and pauperism. The high-toned rhetoric which fostered this development made emigration easier for large numbers of middle-class women during the early 'fifties, but it also prepared the ground for the feminists' subsequent work which concentrated exclusively on the emigration of educated women.

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p. 125, of a fifty days journey in a fast mail steamer from Liverpool to Melbourne; this was a revolutionary prospect compared to the old sailing voyage of 100 days.
Chapter VI

Feminism and Female Emigration, 1861-1885

The projects stimulated by the "rage for emigration" of the early 'fifties demonstrated effectively that the colonies might offer a genuine solution to the vexed problems of the distressed gentlewoman. By 1853 the climate of opinion was well prepared for a formal scheme to encourage and assist middle-class women to emigrate in large numbers. But an important question remained: which groups or individuals were best suited to promote such a scheme? Since colonial authorities were constantly hard-pressed to maintain an adequate flow of working-class emigrants they were hardly likely to initiate schemes to assist genteel spinsters; nor was the Colonial Office. Similarly, philanthropists in Britain, by necessity and custom, were fully pre-occupied with the urgent problems of the working-class, and large-scale charitable agencies for the genteel were unlikely to receive more than fleeting public support. There remained the feminists, who until the late 'fifties were too disorganized to initiate systematic schemes of any kind. By 1861, however, the feminist movement was well established, and its members were engaged in a variety of projects to assist middle-class women. One of the earliest of these schemes was a system of protected emigration.

The feminists, of all groups in Victorian society, seemed the most appropriate to foster a scheme of genteel female emigration. Whether they worked for reforms in the suffrage, education, employment or civil rights
their main pre-occupation remained with women of the middle-class. As women and members of the educated classes themselves they were in the best position to understand the problems of impoverished gentlewomen. Under their direction a female emigration scheme should logically have achieved more success than under any other group. Yet for nearly a generation, from 1861 to 1885, the feminists failed to stimulate a numerically significant emigration of women, and the philanthropists who succeeded them achieved much greater success. Among the variables which inhibited the rapid growth of a major scheme were such uncontrollable factors as the meagre colonial demand for governesses and the shortage of funds. But under the leadership of Jane Lewin the feminists refused to exploit some excellent opportunities to widen the scope of their project, and by so doing they made emigration more difficult for the two classes of women who stood to benefit most from it: impoverished gentlewomen and rising, but poorly educated lower-middle-class women. Emigration touched feminist principles at a sensitive spot, frequently causing the feminists to restrict, rather than to encourage, female emigration, and the reason for their inaction over twenty four years demands explanation.

During the late 'fifties the scattered impulses of the Victorian feminist movement finally merged into a campaign to improve the lot of women. The leaders of the movement were themselves members of the upper-middle-class, and not surprisingly concentrated on the nagging problems of middle-class single women: the dearth of suitable employment and educational opportunities. Two significant events in launching the new
movement were the founding of a feminist periodical, the *English Woman's Journal*, by Bessie Rayner Parkes early in 1858, and the publication of a widely-read and influential article in the April 1859 issue of the *Edinburgh Review* on 'Female Industry' by Harriet Martineau. Both of these exposed the desperate need for fundamental reform. But a third, and more powerful influence was the foundation of the *National Association for the Promotion of Social Science*, whose annual congresses, beginning in 1857, gave a sympathetic hearing to every aspect of the women's movement. Not only did it publicize a wide range of advanced feminist views for the first time, but it gave the foremost feminists a novel opportunity to deliver their own speeches and join in discussions without fear of vindictive attacks.

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2 The first general committee of the association included a cross-section of prominent politicians, progressive intellectuals and philanthropists, including William Gladstone, Lord John Russell, John Stuart Mill, John Ruskin, Charles Kingsley, Frederick D. Maurice and C. H. Bracebridge; the latter had been a member of the London Emigration Committee from 1832 to 1836, (see supra, chapter two), *N.A.P.S.S. Transactions*, 1857, pp. xv-xvi. At the first meeting in 1857 two progressive papers on 'The Industrial Employment of Women' were read by Charles Bray and John Duguid Milne; Milne a Scottish advocate, had already achieved prominence with his recent comprehensive book on the situation and needs of women, *The Industrial and Social Position of Women in the Middle and Lower Ranks*, (London, 1857); a revised edition was published in 1870, *Transactions*, 1857, pp. 531-8, 544-8. On the importance of the Social Science Congresses in promoting the status of women see the papers delivered by Bessie R. Parkes, 'A Year's Experience in Woman's Work,' 1862, pp. 808-9, also her book *A Passing World*, (London, 1897), p. 17, and Frances P. Cobbe, 'Social Science Congresses and Women's Part in Them,' in *Essays on the Pursuits of Women*, pp. 1-37, reprinted from *MacMillan's Magazine*, December, 1861.
All the feminist speakers at the early Social Science Congresses were pre-occupied with the need to find wider employment opportunities for women outside the overcrowded trades of needlework and teaching. They recognized that the problem was more complex than simply breaking down the popular prejudice against women's work. Most feminists followed the lead of J. D. Milne, a Scottish advocate who ardently supported them at the Association, in insisting that only free access to the higher branches of industry and the professions could emancipate women from the constant fear of destitution and estrangement from the opposite sex. In order to fill these exalted positions women must obtain an education equal to that of men and far superior to the superficial accomplishments which were prescribed by fashion for young ladies. Thus the feminists quickly resolved the question into a more fundamental campaign to improve female education, a necessarily long-term project. The feminists agreed with Harriet Martineau that they must give female education priority before they could "open a fair field to the powers and energies we have educated." In the meantime the immediate problem remained: thousands of ill-educated women needed some form of employment. The editor of the *English Woman's Journal*, Bessie Parkes, asked the pertinent question: "Are we trying to tide the female population of this country over a time of difficulty, or are we

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seeking to develop a new state of social life? In the event, as the
Social Science Congresses showed, the feminists worked towards both these
ends, and the long-term campaign for higher education and entry into the
professions co-existed with a search for short-term palliatives to allevi­
ate the pressing employment problems.

In the eighteen-sixties the employment field for partly educated
women who were not qualified to teach was extremely narrow, and many of
the feminists' suggestions necessarily held little promise for more than
a few women. Mrs. A. Overend suggested that ladies might take up litho­
graphy, clay modelling, ornamental design, wood engraving and photograph
colouring in their own homes as a respectable and uncontroversial liveli­
hood. For many ill-educated gentlewomen who twenty years earlier would
have turned to teaching there were few alternatives. By the eighteen­
sixties it was becoming increasingly difficult for women with a superficial
education to fill the traditional role of the governess. The earliest sec­
ondary schools for women, Queen's College, Bedford College, Miss Buss's
North London Collegiate School and Miss Beale's Cheltenham Ladies' School,
all founded between 1848 and 1853, had become prestige institutions cater­
ing to the daughters of the upper-middle-class. In 1865 Dorothea Beale


5'Remunerative Employment for Educated Women,' N.A.P.S.S., Transactions, 1861, p. 86; for similar suggestions see J. Boucherett, Hints on Self-Help, pp. 28-34.

6Miss C. A. Biggs, 'Girls' Public Day Schools,' N.A.P.S.S.
listed the parental occupations of her pupils at Cheltenham; out of 100 fathers 83 were military officers, "private gentlemen," clergymen or medical men, and the rest were civil servants, lawyers, bankers, merchants and manufacturers. Many graduates of these institutions took up teaching as a profession and in a short time their superior qualifications became the general standard for governesses. Competition in an already overcrowded profession consequently became far more intense. Most contemporaries saw this change as an unmixed blessing. The leading feminist education reformer, Emily Davies, welcomed the fact that the first advancement in female education had done much "to raise the standard and improve the tone of education generally." What she overlooked was that the profession of governess consequently became far more difficult and unprofitable for the impecunious ill-educated lady of a slightly lower class. The Queen's College graduate was certain to be hired in preference to the girl with only a smattering of accomplishments learnt from her own ill-educated governess and a year at a young ladies' academy. Sarah Harland later observed at the Social Science Congress that "the usual opening for

Transactions, 1879, pp. 442-4.


impecunious gentlewomen, that of teaching, had been taken up by others with higher qualifications for the work, who are without the impulse of poverty. The feminists began to face up to this problem in the late 'fifties by seeking entry into traditionally masculine fields of employment for a mounting number of redundant governesses. The feminists' search soon led them to encourage emigration for women whose future in Britain appeared bleak.

The feminists quickly translated their rhetoric into practice. The real spur to action came from Harriet Martineau's *Edinburgh Review* article of April, 1859, which prompted several articulate women to unite in seeking for wider employment opportunities and job training for women. The 'Society for Promoting the Employment of Women' emerged from a meeting held in June, 1859, and was headed by Jessie Boucherett and Jane Crowe, two prominent feminist writers and speakers. The establishment of this central society in London was soon followed by the organization of branch societies in Edinburgh, Dublin and various provincial cities, and all were affiliated with the Social Science Association. Each of these

9 'Educated Women as Technical Workers,' N.A.P.S.S., Transactions, 1884, pp. 417-8. In 1884 Sarah Harland was a mathematics Lecturer at Newnham College for women, Cambridge.


11 The annual meetings of the Social Science Association were held
societies ran an employment registry for women, endeavoured to establish
openings in new fields and facilitated actual instruction and apprentice­
ship for women entering new trades. From the beginning the employment
societies concentrated on manual occupations from which most proper Vic­
torian young ladies would shrink. Telegraph offices provided one of the
earliest openings, quickly followed by printing, lithography, hairdressing,
shop-keeping and a variety of semi-menial vocations.12 The feminists'
major aim was to give these trades a new air of respectability. Emily
Faithfull made a major effort in this direction by establishing the
'Victoria Press,' a printing establishment run for and by women. By 1860
she had apprenticed 19 female compositors, and found that other printers
were also planning to admit women to the trade.13 Still, with the except-
ation of law-copying and book-keeping most of these new opportunities ap-
pealed primarily to women with lower middle-class backgrounds.

in different cities each year and usually added momentum to local feminist
activity. The Dublin branch was established after the meeting there in
1861 and the Edinburgh branch was formed as a result of the Glasgow meet­
ing in 1860. The first seven meetings were held in Birmingham, Liverpool,

12J. Boucherett, 'Local Societies for Promoting the Employment of
Women,' N.A.P.S.S. Transactions, 1861, pp. 685-6; Miss A. B. Corlett,
'Some Account of the Society for Promoting the Employment of Educated
Women in Dublin,' N.A.P.S.S., Transactions, 1862, pp. 612-3; A. B. Corlett,
'Report of the Irish Society for the Employment of Educated Women,' and
Miss F. Blyth, 'Statement of the Working of the Edinburgh Society for Pro­
moting the Employment of Women,' N.A.P.S.S., Transactions, 1863, pp. 698-
700, 700-7.

13E. Faithfull, 'The Victoria Press,' N.A.P.S.S., Transactions, 1860,
pp. 819-22. The Victoria Press obtained printing orders for most feminist
works, especially the well known mouthpiece, The Victoria Magazine; later
The feminists were well aware that the middle-class women they intended to help covered a wide spectrum of British society, and they often reacted with hostility against young women who appeared to be climbing above their proper station. Social mobility in mid-Victorian England was high, and nowhere more evident than among the ambitious daughters of a growing army of minor white-collar workers, shopkeepers and other tradesmen who were occupying the new suburbs. The feminists echoed the old complaint against women of the lower middle-class with "cheap accomplishments" and aspirations to "fine lady-ism" who encroached on the already overcrowded middle-class preserve of the governess. In 1860 Louisa Hope thought that this class, too eager for the "peacockism of education," would be better off "as cottagers or tradesmen's wives and mothers, or as household servants." Others were more dispassionate and simply admitted ruefully that the teacher's profession was so overcrowded because persons entered it "who were not gentlewomen by birth." Bessie Parkes estimated in 1860 that these less refined women constituted one third of the middle-class female work-force. She added that most of the "semi-mechanical employments" so assiduously promoted by the feminist employment societies were only suitable for this class; the salary of a telegraph clerk, after all, hardly allowed her to look and live "like a lady." The great mass

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15 Boucherett, Hints on Self-Help, pp. 24-5.

16 B.R. Parkes, 'A Year's Experience in Woman's Work,' N.A.P.S.S.,
of ill-educated and distressed gentlewomen were consequently helped little by the first palliatives to relieve the pressure for employment, and were invariably forced back into some form of underpaid teaching.

Clerks' positions provided one of the few new outlets which distressed gentlewomen might safely consider respectable, and, significantly, it was the overwhelming demand for such employment from gentlewomen which led the feminists to promote emigration. Maria S. Rye had this class in mind when she opened a law-copying office in Lincoln's Inn Fields as a branch of the employment society. Recruiting women as copyists was a simple matter. Miss Rye was inundated with applications and on one occasion 810 women applied for a single position paying only fifteen pounds a year. Faced with this hopeless situation she quite independently advised and assisted the applicants to emigrate, and in 1861, without any formal organization, she helped 22 educated women to reach various colonies by providing loans and arranging for their protection and reception. The emigration idea grew rapidly among the feminist circle at the Social Science Association and the employment societies, and there is no doubt

Transactions, 1860, pp. 814-5. No comprehensive study of the changing position of the lower middle-class woman in mid and late-Victorian Britain has been made, but the evidence suggests that it was this class which provided the working material for feminist energies and benefitted most from their work. Josephine Butler claimed that the half-educated daughters of clerks, tradesmen and poor professional men frequently lapsed into prostitution when no respectable alternative employment was available; Woman's Work and Woman's Culture, pp. xix-xx.

that initially they saw it as a panacea for women of a "superior class" who were unemployable in Britain. At the Social Science Congress in 1860 Bessie Parkes argued that many women unsuited to the "semi-mechanical arts" required

a wider field of intellectual and moral exertion than the compositor's case or the law-copyist's desk can afford; and seeing, as I do daily, how great is the comparative delicacy both in brain and in the bodily frames of women of the middle and upper class---of the bad effect on them of long hours of sedentary toil, and of the supreme difficulty of introducing them in great numbers into the fields of competitive employment, the more anxious I become to see the immense surplus of the sex in England lightened by judicious, well-conducted, and morally guarded emigration to our colonies, where the disproportion is equally enormous, and where they are wanted in every social capacity.

Miss Parkes hoped that a large scale emigration would allow the remaining gentlewomen in Britain to be trained "in all those functions of administrative benevolence, which are in fact but a development of household qualities." From the beginning, therefore, some feminists linked the idea of female emigration with moderate notions of reform in order to limit women's employment to their 'proper sphere' as circumscribed by two generations of Victorian moralists.

At the 1861 Social Science Congress Maria Rye described her emigration work of the previous year and appealed for help in establishing a formal society to promote the emigration of educated women. Like Bessie Parkes she viewed emigration as the one fundamental solution to the problem of the distressed gentlewoman in Britain, and she expected that the colonies would benefit equally, "an elevation of morals being the inevitable

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result of the mere presence in the colony of a number of high class women." Unlike Miss Parkes, however, she already had some experience of female emigration and had communicated with interested persons in Australia, New Zealand and Natal who had impressed upon her their great need for domestic servants. To meet this need she suggested that a dual emigration system of gentlewomen and "superior servants" might be established. The various colonial emigration schemes strictly excluded all women above the working-class. She therefore advocated a system of loans to a wide range of middle-class women, with a network of representatives in each colony to receive the emigrants and arrange suitable employment.  

At the same Congress meeting three other speakers, including the General Secretary, G. W. Hastings, made enthusiastic reference to emigration as the "best and natural solution" and the "truest remedy" for educated women. The rapid publication of Rye's paper as a separate pamphlet, and its appearance in the English Woman's Journal, publicized the subject outside feminist circles, and a popular debate in the press on the merits of female emigration ensued.

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19 Rye, op. cit., pp. 2-14; a summary of Rye's paper appeared in N.A.P.S.S., Transactions, 1861, p. 686; her paper was read at the Dublin meeting during the third week of August, 1861. Introduction, p. xlix.

See also the centenary history of the feminist emigration societies by Una Monk, New Horizons, (London, 1963), pp. 1-3. Miss Monk's book contains a clear account of the formation of the various societies but unfortunately lacks any reference to source material.

The actual formation of Maria Rye's 'Female Middle Class Emigration Society' in May 1862 was accompanied by a stream of letters in *The Times*, most of which supported her exertions. Emily Faithfull followed up her publication of Rye's pamphlet by writing to *The Times* in December, 1861, explaining the aims of the proposed Society, and reporting that one emigrant had already been offered three different positions in Melbourne. In April, 1862 Rye herself began to write regular letters acknowledging subscriptions and explaining the Society's intentions.

On April 3, Sidney Godolphin Osborne, (Lord Osborne), well known to *The Times* correspondence columns as 'S.G.O.,' wrote in praise of the scheme, arguing that the women most needed in the colonies were those for whom employment was most difficult in Britain, "women just educated enough to be above the work of domestic service, but not sufficiently so to be equal to the duties of governesses." This was hardly Rye's main intention, but she welcomed any support, even for the wrong reasons. The Christian Socialist, Charles Kingsley, greeted the plan as "the only one on which..."

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22 Ibid., April 7, 1862, p. 6, April 9, 1862, p. 12, April 26, 1862, p. 12.

a practical man can look with unmixed satisfaction."

Kingsley's praise, which stemmed from his view that all attempts to find female employment were mere substitutes "for that far nobler and more useful work which Nature intends her—to marry and bear children," implied that the new Society would be little more than a colonial marriage bureau, and a controversy immediately erupted over the merits of "matrimonial colonization." Lord Osborne protested at the mere hint that emigration for work might be a masquerade for a degrading kind of husband-hunting. A Times leader answered by pointing out that the unbalance of the sexes in Britain and Australia rendered female emigration a necessity for any reason; and in any case, a woman who emigrated under responsible and respectable protection "is guilty of no more indelicacy than a girl who goes to a ball or an archery meeting." The rituals of fashionable society, after all, were a mere facade for the high stakes of the mating game. Maria Rye effectively disposed of the argument: if women were not so fastidious about whom they married at home they could easily find unworthy (i.e. lower-class) husbands immediately; there was no reason to think they would be less scrupulous in the colonies. Her Society sought to find decent employment for women in the colonies, and marriage was a matter for individual decision. The argument was a circular one, but contained important implications. As The Times noticed, all prospective

\[\text{\textsuperscript{24}}\text{The Times, April 11, 1862, p. 5. Kingsley was a brother-in-law of Lord Osborne, White, op. cit., p. x.}\]
emigrants, no matter what their destiny, must possess "an industrial training and domestic accomplishments even more than they are likely to want in this country."25

But was there, in fact, any effective demand for genteel, educated spinsters in the colonies? "J. K. A Returned Australian Governess," described to The Times how she was forced to do daily needlework in Melbourne because of the lack of employment for governesses, and finally returned to England on the proceeds of a subscription raised by her friends. Other letters warned against sending governesses to Australia without pre-arranged employment, and Lord Osborne, whose initial enthusiasm for the Society had waned, stressed that the women most in need of emigration would be unqualified to fill the position of really competent governesses. To send out women who were of no use in the colonies would be worse folly than to send convicts. Thus the outlook for the Society seemed dim when Stephen Walcott, a member of the Land and Emigration Board, reported that the latest information from Australia indicated that there was no demand whatever for such a "superior class" of female emigrants as governesses and milliners; a few might succeed if they had friends in the colony to care for them indefinitely, but any large scale project would only end in disappointment and disaster. These forebodings did not daunt Maria Rye, for the experience of her own emigrants, who had all obtained well-paying situations, was exactly to the contrary. She continued to insist

25 The Times, April 11, 1862, p. 5, April 28, 1862, pp. 5, 8, April 29, 1862, p. 11, May 1, 1862, p. 11.
that there were openings "for many hundreds of women vastly superior to
the hordes of wild Irish and fast young ladies who have hitherto started
as emigrants."\(^{26}\)

The controversy over the formation of the Female Middle-Class Emi-
gration Society coincided with a renewed interest in the very real prob-
lem of the disproportion between the sexes in Britain. The two subjects
were intimately related, and the subsequent discussion of the sex dispar-
ity had an important bearing on the attitude adopted by feminists towards
the new scheme. The interlocking controversies over the "redundancy" of
women and the panacea of emigration caused many feminists to oppose female
emigration because it was a popular anti-feminist solution. It could ap-
pear all too readily as a device to confine women to their "proper sphere"
of the household and as an unjust safety-valve to siphon off pressure for
progressive reform.

William Rathbone Greg, who was certainly no feminist, discussed
the problem of the disproportion between the sexes, at the height of Maria
Rye's emigration controversy, in his frequently reprinted essay, 'Why
are Women Redundant?' first published in the *National Review* in April,
1862. For Greg, all the surplus women were "redundant" only in the sense
that they lacked the opportunity to fulfil their "natural" role in relation

\(^{26}\text{Ibid., April 23, 1862, p. 6, April 24, 1862, p. 12, April 25, 1862,
p. 5, April 28, 1862, pp. 5, 8, April 26, 1862, p. 12, April 29, 1862,
p. 14, April 30, 1862, p. 7, May 1, 1862, p. 11.}\)
to men. The great mass of domestic servants, for example, were not redundant because they "fulfil both essentials of a woman's being, they are supported by, and they minister to, men. We could not possibly do without them." The 1851 census had revealed that out of every hundred adult women, thirty of them were spinsters, and Greg blamed the more numerous emigration of men for altering the balance; the "natural rectification" was simple. Emigration had created the problem, and emigration could solve it by providing wives for the surplus men in North America and Australasia. Nothing less than a massive emigration of up to 40,000 women a year, in the spirit of Caroline Chisholm's work, would suffice to eliminate the redundancy of 405,000 adult women in Britain. Greg recognized that most middle-class women would be reluctant to emigrate, but saw no reason why female emigration should not be "proportionate from all ranks" if only the women were made aware of its advantages. Furthermore, he estimated that the largest group of redundant women belonged to the class immediately above the labouring poor, "the daughters of unfortunate tradesmen, of poor clerks, or poorer curates." These women had all been disciplined in "the appropriate school of poverty and exertion," and their education and refinement would ensure their adaptability to new conditions in the colonies. Greg's solution rested on moral foundations, for he maintained that extensive female redundancy made men "profligate" and unwilling to marry. If most of the redundancy was physically removed they would soon wish to make the remaining women wives instead of mistresses. The one thing to be avoided was the feminist solution of making
single life as easy, attractive and lucrative as it was for men, and thereby encouraging further "redundancy" of women who did not minister to men.27

In 1862, as we have seen, the feminists were by no means opposed to female emigration, but Greg's blatant association of emigration with anti-feminism, together with some discouraging reports from the colonies, caused many of them to change sides. Frances Power Cobbe thought Greg's remedy amounted to a sentence of transportation or starvation to all old maids. She still favoured emigration as a means to give women a free choice between marriage and profitable employment—a choice most women were still unable to exercise in Britain—but she estimated that the colonial demand for educated women was so low as to render the proposal irrelevant to the women's problems.28 Arthur Houston took a more aggressive line. A significant emigration of gentlewomen, he argued, could only occur if they took up agricultural labour and menial domestic service, which would be a tragic waste of their talents and intelligence, a condemnation to "the drudgery of praedial servitude." The only real solution was free

27Loc. cit., Vol. XXVIII, pp. 434-60, passim. Greg's essay was reprinted six years later in his collection, Literary and Social Judgements, (London, 1868, 2nd edition 1869), and as a separate pamphlet in 1869. Greg was a moderate liberal in political and social matters, but by the 'sixties showed signs of increasing conservatism; see the 'Memoir' by his wife in Greg, Enigmas of Life, (London, 1891), pp. xxxviii-xli; on the disproportion between the sexes in Britain see supra, chap. 1.

entry into suitable employments at home. By 1863 there was further confirmation from some colonies that the demand for governesses was extremely limited, and Jessie Boucherett regretted that this seemingly obvious solution to the quest for women's work would provide little relief so long as women lacked specialized training for a single occupation.

A writer in the Victoria Magazine thought that the colonial news could only disappoint those who, misled by the statistical accounts of the disparity of the sexes, which, of course, reveal nothing as to the causes of the disparity, took for granted that the whole question of the employment of educated women could be summarily disposed of by wholesale shipments to the colonies. It may be hoped that we shall now have no more suggestions about making homes for settlers, as the only and the very easy solution of this troublesome problem.

Most feminists continued to support the prudent and modest efforts of the Female Middle-Class Emigration Society, but they were united in rejecting Greg's promotion of the idea for the wrong reasons. The point about emigration was its ability to appeal, for different reasons, to a wide cross-section of opinion on the 'women's question.'

The discussion of 1862 and 1863 by no means disposed of Greg's argument. Female emigration and the sex disproportion were topics of great moment during these years, and the republication of Greg's essay in 1868

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29 A. Houston, On the Emancipation of Women from Existing Industrial Disabilities, Considered in its Economic Aspect, (London, 1862), pp. 30-4; (inaugural lecture as Whately Professor of Political Economy at Dublin University).

30 See the report of the special correspondent in Melbourne to The Times, Aug. 16, 1862, p. 10; Boucherett, Hints on Self-Help, pp. 42-8.

31 'Social Science,' Victoria Magazine, July 1863, pp. 282-3,
and 1869 brought another round of comment. Mary Taylor's contemptuous reply that women would be fools to chase men who would not marry them at home to the colonies has already been quoted.32 Jessie Boucherett returned to the issue in 1869, again stressing the unsuitability of educated women for colonial environments, and advocating instead a greater male emigration in order to make room for women to replace them in suitable employments in Britain.33 Even the notoriously anti-feminist journal, the *Saturday Review*, while agreeing that emigration would be an ideal method to find much needed husbands for superfluous women, admitted that the practical difficulties made any major emigration scheme unlikely.34 Yet in spite of all these discouragements the appeal of female emigration continued. Successive census reports attributed the female surplus to greater male emigration, and in the 1871 report William Farr, like Greg, showed that the shortage of males in Britain reappeared as an excess in the colonies and the United States; his conclusion was familiar: "Those who seek to extend the sphere of labour for women will find, therefore, in Australia and America a most fruitful field for such of the sex as are willing to play a part in the foundation of the great States of the future."35

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32See supra, Chap. 4; her article 'Redundant Women' was first published in the *Victoria Magazine*, June, 1870.


34'The Redundancy of Women,' Vol. XXVI, April 24, 1869, pp. 545-6.

35Preliminary Report, Census, England and Wales, 1871, PP., 1871,
The controversy, in fact, was a perennial one, and female emigration, whether defended or attacked as a panacea for the 'women's question,' was an issue never regarded as settled before 1914.

The division of opinion on sex disparity and female emigration enabled Maria Rye's Society to survive a good deal of criticism by ensuring a steady flow of supporting propaganda. Widely reported statements that governesses were a drug on the market in the colonies were bound to affect the rate of public subscriptions. Nevertheless the new Society obtained some influential support and achieved the status of a fashionable charity. Lords Shaftesbury and Brougham each promoted and assisted the Society, and Shaftesbury became its first President. Anthony Trollope was well acquainted with it, and in Phineas Finn, first published in 1869, he made its fictional equivalent, the "Female Protestant Unmarried Women's Emigration Society," the favourite charity of Lady Baldock. The heroine, Violet Effingham, a rich heiress, is nearly persuaded to go out "as a sort of leading Protestant unmarried female emigrant pioneer," and Finn, the young M.P., described it as a "grand prospect .... Such an

LIX, [381], p. xxiv. In the final general report for 1871 he added, "should the emigration of women keep pace in future with the emigration of men to the healthy colonies, their education must be directed so as to suit the circumstances of the country and colonial life;" PP., 1873, LXXI, (872-1), Pt. II, p. xliii; see also the General Report for 1861, PP., 1863, LIII, [3221], Pt. I, pp. 6-7.

opening in life. So much excitement, you know, and such a useful career.

The real society's emigrants were never numerically significant—in 23 years it assisted only 302 middle-class women—but it had proved that middle-class female emigration could be made safe and workable, and set an important precedent for its successors.

The Society survived a great deal of criticism and questioning, but it could not evade some of the fundamental questions raised in the continuing debate. Maria Rye's insistence, in the face of colonial warnings against sending governesses, that her own emigrants all obtained decent employment, often with several alternative offers, did not always conform to the facts reflected in private letters from the emigrants to the Society. From Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, the women frequently reported that governess' positions were scarce or ill-paid, and many experienced difficulty at first in adjusting to a situation in which, materially at least, they were no better off than in Britain.

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39 See, for example, the letters of Caroline M. Heawood, Melbourne, March 25, 1862, and Catherine Brough, Cape Town, March 20, 1863, who reported "I am far worse off than ever I was in England; it is next to impossible to obtain employment and the pay is so low that though I have had two temporary engagements I have not earned enough to pay my board, lodging and washing.", and J. M. Cary, Dunedin, Oct. 18, 1863, F.M.C.E.S., Letter Book No. 1, (Fawcett Library), pp. 15-8, 51-4, 101-4. Similar comments recur throughout the emigrants' correspondence.
Furthermore, the joint insistence by the Society's critics that domestic servants were most needed in the colonies and that even the most refined and accomplished governess must be prepared to do some plain housework on occasion, demanded the Society's attention. An ex-Australian resident's paper at the Social Science Congress in 1862 recommended that intending emigrants should "undergo a short training on the theory, at all events, of household work and duties, and needlework of the more useful kinds, and in medicine so far as to treat ordinary diseases."^4O

Together the issues of inadequate colonial demand for governesses and the need for domestic training raised the question of exactly what kind of system the organizers intended. 'Middle-class! it must be, but beyond that it could be either a mere agency for placing governesses in the colonies or a more comprehensive project to enable a wide range of middle-class women to find varieties of employment—including domestic service—abroad. The separate approaches of Maria Rye and her successor Jane Lewin on these issues epitomized the contrasting views of the philanthropists and feminists on emigration and female employment. Maria Rye, the philanthropist, was content to promote the emigration of women of all classes, whether for professional work, domestic service or eventual marriage. The close association of colonial domestic service with ideas of marriage and the feminine civilizing mission prompted Jane Lewin, the ardent

^4OPaper from "a lady who lived several years in Australia" read by Miss Florence Hill, 'The Emigration of Educated Women Examined from a Colonial Point of View', N.A.P.S.S., Transactions, 1862, p. 812.
feminist, to make a clear-cut distinction between husband-hunting and the professional career concept. Jane Lewin thereby blocked the protected emigration of the most unfortunate and least qualified women, especially those from the lower-middle-class, in the face of massive evidence that emigration ameliorated the psychological alienation of women for reasons quite unrelated to the gentility of their work.

Maria Rye was well acquainted with the fundamental problems of colonial occupations for women. Her early reading had included Susanna Moodie's famous account of her experiences as an emigrant's wife in the Canadian backwoods, *Roughing it in the Bush*. Quite apart from its unquestionable literary merit, Moodie's book effectively demonstrates the subtle process by which a genteel woman adapted to the crude physical and social conditions of a new society. Moodie made no virtue of her severe privations and toil in Canada, in fact she emphasized them as a warning to well-bred ladies. But she also stressed that for the impoverished middle-class emigration was "an act of severe duty," because, to remain independent, "they cannot labour in a menial capacity in the country where they were born and educated to command." Her book is an object lesson in the contemporary moral that honest hard work is not degrading and eventually brings its rewards.\(^1\) Her hardships were known

to be shared by others, including her sister, Catherine Parr Strickland, whose writings of the 'thirties were still being published as official emigrants' guide material in 1860, warning educated young ladies to obtain a thorough training in the most menial household tasks before emigrating. Any serious reader of these works, like Maria Rye, could not fail to be impressed with the special need for domestic preparation and adaptability on the part of educated female emigrants.

While the new society remained under Maria Rye's superintendence, these basic needs were well attended to. She hoped to accommodate the colonies' special needs by maintaining a two-tier system of female emigration. Two classes of women, both above the working-class, but very different in social origins and training, would receive assistance. First, "a few really accomplished governesses, who command from £40 to £100 in England, and who could obtain situations in the colonies, equal in money value and superior in social position and comfort." Secondly, "A class beginning with the half-educated daughters of poor professional men, and including the children of subordinate government officers, petty shopkeepers, and artisans generally, who have been accustomed to domestic economy at home, and on whom the want of employment often pressed heavily."
Besides well trained governesses Rye hoped to send out many women from the lower middle-class who would presumably be willing to enter domestic service in a new country. But regardless of their origins, she insisted that all of them must be prepared to stoop to menial work, and inserted a clause in the society's rules to that effect: "Every applicant is examined as far as possible, with regard to her knowledge of cooking, baking, washing, needlework, and housework, and is required to assist in these departments of labour, should it be necessary." Rye's plans, given her understanding of the mutual social needs of female emigration on both sides, had the makings of a successful large scale project.

Unfortunately for the Society, Rye did not remain at the head of its operations. Her intimate knowledge of colonial requirements led her progressively to an exclusive interest in working-class emigration. Almost immediately after the Society's formation in May, 1862, and quite independently of her work with the Society, she began to foster the emigration of working-class women, including Manchester cotton operatives. News of a rising demand for servants—but emphatically not governesses—

1861 in her Emigration of Educated Women, pp. 9-11. It was the same kind of scheme envisaged by Roger Therry (an ex-judge of the N.S.W. Supreme Court); he welcomed Rye's proposal to include the lower middle-class, noting that, although trained in domestic work at home, "they are loth to enter into hired service in England, from the sense of having once occupied a better position in life; but in the colonies, where they are now known, they would readily enter into domestic service. op. cit., pp. 430-2.

F.M.C.E.S., First Report, 1861-2, p. 3. Rule 2.
in British Columbia prompted her to co-operate in recruiting working-class women to emigrate in association with the newly formed 'Columbian Emigration Society.' Also the Queensland and New Zealand Governments requested her to recruit female emigrants for their assisted passages for domestic servants. Altogether in 1862 she independently helped 400 women to emigrate, of whom only 40 were governesses. Later in the year she decided to accompany 100 women to New Zealand, of whom only eight were governesses—a proportion deemed admirably suitable by Roger Therry, who added that Miss Rye had "wisely and successfully extended her zeal and exertions to the introduction of a much more needed class in the Colony—domestic servants." Ostensibly, her own reason for leaving was to ascertain the exact requirements of the various colonies in Australia and New Zealand, and to complete the Society's arrangements for reception facilities. Her experience confirmed her view that there was plenty of room in the Antipodes for all classes of women provided they were hard working and adaptable. After her return in 1865, however, she left the Society's work to others in order to concentrate exclusively on working-class emigration. She made several trips to Canada to facilitate her work, and after 1869 organized a system of Canadian emigration for young "waifs and strays," a scheme designed to thwart the growth of prostitution in Britain.45

Rye's work as Honorary Secretary of the Society was taken over by her co-worker, Miss Jane Lewin, who occupied that position until her retirement in 1881, herself conducting most of the actual routine administration and interviewing. Lewin shared Rye's conviction that the most refined women must be prepared, when required, to help with household work; the Society, as she put it "requires education of the hands, as well as of the head." But she abandoned Rye's concept of a two-tier system of female emigration in which women from the lower middle-class, frequently unqualified to teach, would play a major role. Under her direction eligible emigrants ranged from the highly accomplished finishing governess to "a woman who can do little beyond teaching English correctly."

In short, she reduced the Society's function to that of a colonial placement agency for governesses. This, more than the lack of overseas demand for governesses, constricted the Society's operations to token proportions during its twenty-three years of existence, and inhibited the growth of a larger project of middle-class female emigration until the 'eighties.

The surviving records of the Society indicate that Jane Lewin pursued her objective persistently. From the Society's reports it is possible to determine the initial colonial occupations of 222 out of its 302 emigrants. Of these 113 were either governesses or schoolteachers, 34


46J. Lewin, 'Female Middle-Class Emigration,' N.A.P.S.S., Transactions, 1863, pp. 612-6.
joined friends or relatives on arrival, 20 were married shortly after arrival, 16 were unemployed for reasons of health, age or misconduct, 9 returned to England and 8 were lady's companions. Only 22 took occupations which could possibly identify them as lower middle-class, such as milliners, dressmakers, cooks, nursery governesses or singers. Furthermore, the Society's records of emigrants' correspondence indicate that many women who did not obtain immediate employment ultimately took up teaching. Out of 114 correspondents 98 eventually turned to some form of teaching or intended to do so, and only 5 entered menial or less respectable occupations. Jane Lewin was obviously insisting on teaching qualifications from most of her applicants, for a later report observed that the small numbers of actual emigrants were out of all proportion to the large numbers who applied. The Society's funds were undoubtedly limited, but had it cast its net among a wider cross-section of British society extra funds would have been forthcoming.

Compiled from lists of emigrants in F.M.C.E.S., Reports, (First, 1861-2; Second, 1862-72; Fifth, 1880-2; Sixth, 1883-5); there is no trace of surviving copies of the third and fourth reports covering the period from December 1872 to 1879.

F.M.C.E.S., Letter Books No. 1 and 2, Fawcett Library. The letter books contain contemporary copies of 276 letters received from 114 different emigrants. The basic incentive for most of the letters was to repay the Society's loans, but most of the emigrants were informative correspondents and revealed a good deal about their colonial lives, although less about their former circumstances in Britain.

F.M.C.E.S., Fifth Report, 1883, pp. 3-4.

Maria Rye's initial collection in 1862 had amounted to £500, and by 1885 the society's capital was only £269. Once in full operation, however, a large working capital was unnecessary, for most emigrants
Some caution is necessary in interpreting the Society's records, for a woman's colonial occupation would admittedly be an unreliable guide to her social position in Britain. Since governessing was a popular means of achieving upward social advancement among women of the lower-middle and working-classes, and since moderate teaching ability was the sole qualification, the Society might easily admit women from all classes. The content of most of the emigrants' letters suggests that this was not the case, however. Most of the letters indicate that their writers came from middle-middle or even upper-middle-class origins. Many complained condescendingly of the social position of their employers, like Annie Davis, who, when moving to a new position in Sydney, noted that "In my new home I shall make acquaintance with a new class of people—'the nouveaux riches' but I may consider myself now 'colonized' so it will be only viewing a new phase of life." She found them "very vulgar," however, and left them after only five months. Similarly, Sarah Henderson "was certainly not remarkably comfortable in my first situation, as the husband of the person I was living with was an exceedingly vulgar low minded man." The women made frequent complaints of the vulgar working-class

repaid their loans and many paid a part or all of their passage, requiring only the protection and guidance of the Society. F.M.C.E.S., Sixth Report, 1886, pp. 3-6.

emigrants during the voyage. Marion Hett found their presence unduly irksome.

Certainly if one could choose one would not select a ship which carried Government emigrants. The girls were always on the poop with us, and often annoyed us extremely by their levity of conduct. They ought never to come out in a ship with mixed passengers, but if possible emigrants should have a ship to themselves .... 52

The tone of these letters points conclusively to a level of gentility not common to the lower middle-class. Emigrants like the stationmaster's daughter who had been an impecunious dressmaker in England and went to Colorado as a nurse and helper were rare exceptions to the general rule.53 Most of the Society's emigrants were genuine distressed gentlewomen, with the first emphasis on their gentility.

The Society also assisted women who could best be described as 'independent adventurers.' In these cases economic or psychological hardship played little part in their decisions to emigrate. Caroline Haselton, who could afford to send regular donations to the Society, was able to move about at will. She taught for high wages in South Africa and Australia, and her last letter from Melbourne contained enquiries about the possibilities of teaching in India or South America. Annie Davis was delighted with her new circumstances in Sydney, but added that


53 Emigrant No. 219', F.M.C.E.S., Fifth Report, pp. 7-11.
her English experience "was a singularly happy one."

Many of the Society's most enterprising women had sufficient capital and qualifications to be able to establish their own school soon after arrival. The Society's greatest success story in this respect was Miss S. A. Hall. She emigrated to South Africa in 1868 and nine years later made persistent requests to Lewin to send out teachers for her thriving institution at Graaf Reinett. She obtained highly qualified teachers who had all commanded good salaries in Britain; three of them were honours students from prominent English educational institutions. The Society recruited at least seven women of this stamp for Hall, and each of them obtained high salaries between £100 and £150. While commendable, this was hardly the class most in need of emigration. In by-passing the less qualified women who had been thrown out of employment by competition with the new generation of well-educated teachers the Society was ignoring the class with the greatest social need.

Under Jane Lewin's direction the Society clung to her policy of governess emigration, despite overwhelming evidence from its own emigrants that the colonies proved a salvation for its distressed gentlewomen not

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because they earned higher wages as governesses, but because they adapted to a social environment which exerted fewer social taboos on the kind of work respectable women could perform, and accordingly suffered less alienation than they would have as déclassée gentlewomen in Britain. Some emigrants did complain about low salaries but invariably felt compensated by close kinship in a more egalitarian social milieu. Mary Long took a governess' position in a clergyman's family in Canterbury at only £30—an low enough figure by British and New Zealand standards—and did a great deal of needlework and housekeeping besides teaching four children; in spite of all this she was content because "kindly treated and quite one of the family," and concluded that, regardless of salary, "I would rather be a governess here than in England." Eleanor Blackith earned the same salary at Napier, New Zealand but had no complaints, noting that she would "help Mrs. Simcox in anything and she treats me exactly like a sister;" in a subsequent letter, still thrilled with the fact of being treated "exactly as one of the family," she boasted that since arriving she had "become quite clever in the art of cooking."

This tolerance towards household chores and delight at being treated as "one of the family" pervades almost the entire correspondence of the society's emigrants. Miss L. Geoghegan became a governess in the Australian bush

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and was soon impressed with the lack of social distinction towards governesses; bush life, "a strange mixture of roughing and refinement," could be dull, but "I can rake or hoe in the garden as I please and the freedom to please oneself more than compensates for the monotony." The position of the rural governess, she observed, could be an exalted one, despite the need to light the schoolroom fire:

It is a totally different life from what it is at home. In nearly every instance you are looked on as the Intellectual member of the Establishment; you are the constant companion and associate of the Lady, considered—I might say indulged in every way, and your only difficulty is to civilize the children.

From Dunedin, New Zealand, Eliza Brook wrote that although the work was rougher than in England, "where everyone works there is no occasion for pride;" governesses were appreciated in Dunedin and could always command from £30 to £60, "but for those who object to be on an equality with the family and are afraid to render assistance when required I do not think there is such good promise." Sarah Henderson recognized that her youth was a major factor in enabling her to adapt so quickly; she was so delighted with the free and easy life of Natal that she hoped to persuade her mother to join her "but I am afraid what is pleasure to us would be privation to Mamma." Similar quotations abound among the emigrants letters and constitute the major theme in the entire collection. In case Jane Lewin missed the point, Mrs. H. Herbert, the Society's representative in Hawke's Bay, New Zealand, spelt out colonial requirements yet again. To ensure adaptability, she insisted, the accent must be on youth; ladies of forty were too old to be transplanted to the roughness of colonial life;
household conditions for the gentlewoman were different, "there are fewer servants—sometimes the family is left for weeks without any—and a governess who stood on her dignity and refused to help would do a foolish thing."\(^{57}\)

From the insistence that governesses must be prepared to help with the household chores it was a short step to suggest that the less well-qualified adopt domestic service or other menial work as a full time colonial occupation. This was the step that Jane Lewin failed to take, despite all the evidence that it would have been a feasible proposition. The Society's emigrants and colonial representatives repeatedly urged that only highly qualified and competent governesses should be sent out; teaching standards were high, especially in the cities where Government schools were beginning to supplant governesses, and the mediocre would fare much better as colonial servants.\(^{58}\) Annie Davis, whose own qualifications gave

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\(^{57}\) L. A. Geoghegan, Aspley, Victoria, Oct. 18, 1867, May 17, and Aug. 12, 1868, E. Brook, Dunedin, Jan. 20, 1869, S. Henderson, Natal, June 1, 1863, Letter Book No. 1, pp. 285-6, 302-4, 310-12, 331-3, 65-6; H. Herbert, Waipukurau, N. Z., Nov. 8, 1879, Letter Book No. 2, pp. 76-80. See also Miss Barlow's letter from Melbourne; she had opened her own school and boasted "I am getting quite a Colonial woman, and fear I should not easily fit into English ideas again, can scrub a floor with anyone, and bake my own bread and many other things an English Governess and Schoolmistress especially would be horrified at;" June 24, 1863, Letter Book No. 1, pp. 76-8.

her ample security as a governess, remarked,

Were I in the position of the third or fourth rate Governess (I was about going to say second) in England, I would unhesitatingly become a domestic servant in Australia in preference . . . I have no doubt it would require some common sense and humility for such a Governess to become a Servant, but she would find herself infinitely better off (salary apart). Servants are more considered, there is more freedom and independence here than at home. If my words could reach some of my toiling sisters at home I would say 'Be sensible, undergo a little domestic training and come out here to take your chance with others with a certainty of succeeding withal.'

The colonial demand for governesses was sufficiently unreliable to force many emigrants to follow Davis' advice in extremity. In Brisbane, Agnes MacQueen knew of many instances where intending governesses were compelled "to take situations in shops at a better rate of pay." Miss J. Merritt, who condescendingly described her employers as "rather low," was nevertheless well conditioned in colonial ways, and she candidly admitted that she would rather become a servant than a governess at £25. Annie Hunt, who had apparently worked as a law-copyist in England, refused to mix with the freshly arrived dressmakers and needlewomen in Melbourne, but was quite content to become a "milliner-dressmaker-machinist" with a family up country. There was ample precedent for successfully implementing Annie Davis' suggestions, and Jane Lewin's reluctance to make any

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60 A. B. MacQueen, Brisbane, April 18, 1866, Letter Book No. 1, pp. 222-5.
62 A. M. Hunt, Melbourne and Wangaratta, Victoria, Oct. 11, 1869 and May 9, 1870, Letter Book No. 1, pp. 349-52, 361-5; see also, F.M.C.E.S., Second Report, 1873, pp. 6-12, esp. no's 107 and 120.
effort to promote the emigration of middle-class women as domestic servants demands some explanation.

The most likely explanation for Jane Lewin's intransigence lies in the suggestion that she found the idea of genteel domestic service repugnant and inconsistent with her feminist principles. She was a niece of the Utilitarian-radical historian, George Grote, and her radical background enhanced the ideological appeal to her of the feminist movement. The philanthropic approach followed by some moderates held little interest for her. Like Mary Taylor and Arthur Houston she was bound to object to those solutions so tenaciously upheld by moralizing anti-feminists like William R. Greg and the Saturday Review, which rested on notions of women's 'proper sphere.' If the feminists were to promote female emigration it must be as a means to emancipation and life-long independence rather than a mere prelude and training period for the contingency of marriage. On the other hand, Maria Rye's approach was in the tradition of Victorian philanthropy. She joined the feminists in order to further piecemeal efforts to improve the material conditions of unemployed women, and saw no

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63 Pratt, op. cit., p. 30. On George Grote's work as a Benthamite see E. Halevy, The Growth of Philosphic Radicalism, (Boston, 1955, first published 1928), pp. 291-513, passim. There is little evidence to determine whether Lewin was more partial towards applicants who shared her own principles; Miss Hall, the schoolteacher at Graaf Reinett, reported that one emigrant's (Miss Jackson's) "great idea is to educate women that they shall be what she calls 'emancipated' and placed on an equality with man; that they may be thoroughly independent of them." Hall did not share Jackson's "great idea." Unfortunately this is an isolated example and the question must remain open; S. A. Hall, July 18, 1878, Letter Book No. 2, pp. 40-1.
inconsistency in later helping whole families and abandoned children to emigrate. Characteristically, she withdrew from the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women when its members joined the women's suffrage movement. It is symptomatic of the basic difference between these two approaches that Lewin immediately abandoned Rye's policy of encouraging poorly educated and lower middle-class women to emigrate as domestic servants.

During the 'seventies genteel domestic service in the colonies began to take on a new logic and an aura of respectability. Trollope's account of his Antipodean tour compared the Australian country house to its English equivalent of the eighteenth century: "The ladies stayed at home and looked after the house, and much that is now trusted to domestics and stewards was done by the mistress and her daughters, or by the master and his sons." As a result of this, and of the chronic servant shortage, the Australian servant "is not degraded in her own estimation by her own employment, and has no idea of being humble because she brings you hot water." At the end of the decade Arthur Clayden emphasized that New Zealand was a mecca for all middle-class women except "fine young ladies who are unused to domestic work, and whose heaven of heavens is a drawing-room couch with the latest novel before them." Louisa M. Hubbard, a

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64 Kamm, op. cit., p. 102, D.N.B. Supplement, 1901-11, pp. 245-6.
66 A. Clayden, *The England of the Pacific, or New Zealand as an*
feminist campaigner for women's work who later helped to form another female emigration society, reluctantly conceded that the only hope for women inadequately qualified for work at home "is to go where the mere fact of being a woman, and therefore able to cook or wash, or do other feminine work, in however blundering a way, may stand them in some stead." These arguments served as the basis for the later emigration societies formed in the 'eighties, and except for Jane Lewin's influence, should have stimulated a much larger project during the 'sixties and 'seventies.

It is significant that the Society began slowly to change its policy back to the original scheme begun by Maria Rye after Jane Lewin's retirement as Honorary Secretary in 1881. None of her successors were particularly prominent feminists, and one of them Julia Blake, was attracted to the Society through her previous work with other emigration societies rather than feminism. The last general report of the Society indicated a cautious return to Rye's policy:

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Both Rye and Lewin remained on the Society's committee, but the working secretary exercised final control over the selection of applicants. A Miss Strongith'arm succeeded Lewin in 1881, and in 1884 was replaced by Julia Blake, from the Colonial Emigration Society, and Alice Bonham-Carter, F.M.C.E.S. Sixth Report, 1886, title page, pp. 3-6; cf. Monk, p. 23.
Half-educated teachers must be warned to turn to any other means of living (such as 'Mother's Help') rather than face the just competition with the well-trained teachers, who, if holding a certificate from any of our Universities, can still command a good salary—but she too must make up her mind to an 'up-country' life.69

This attitude reflected the more ambitious policies being pursued by new emigration societies operating in 1886. But the depleted funds and modest facilities of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society prevented the implementation of a new policy on any large scale. Other societies had assumed the major burden of promoting female emigration, and the old Society was eventually absorbed into their organization.70 The paradox of the first Society was that in twenty-three years it probably did more to inhibit than to encourage female emigration.

The Society's 302 emigrants constituted only a fraction of the total numbers of middle-class women who emigrated from 1862 to 1885. Unfortunately the available emigration statistics are insufficiently reliable to make possible any precise statements of percentages. The only useful hint in the emigration records is the entry for "gentlewomen and governesses," but it would be a mistake to count only these as middle-class; as the century progressed more middle-class women would be counted under other occupations, and the other entries are too comprehensive to permit any distinctions, such as, for example, "Domestic and Farm Servants, Nurses, etc." Furthermore, out of the total female emigrants, approximately

69 F.M.C.E.S., Sixth Report, 1886, pp. 3-6.
70% consistently stated no occupation, or stated only "married" or "spinster." Hence even the existing figures can hardly be taken as representative. All that can be said is that there was almost certainly a significant increase in the numbers of "gentlewomen and governesses" emigrating after 1860; from 1854 to 1860 the percentage of this class among total female emigrants recorded was .7, from 1861 to 1870 it was 5.75, and from 1871 to 1876 it was 10.93.\footnote{N. H. Carrier and J. R. Jeffrey, \textit{External Migration: A Study of the Available Statistics, 1815-1950}, (London, 1953), pp. 57-9. The unreliability of these figures is indicated by their inconclusive pattern, which fails to correspond with the well-established trend of growing middle-class male emigration at this time; for example, instead of continuing to show the general trend of growth, the percentage for 1877 to 1880 drops to 1.39, for 1881 to 1890 to .61, and for 1891 to 1900 to .84. For a further discussion of this period see infra. Chap. 7.} As a rough average of 100,000 females were emigrating from the United Kingdom each year in the 'seventies this suggests that ten percent, or 10,000 middle-class women were leaving annually.\footnote{The total female emigration figures for 1870, 1871 and 1872, respectively, are 102,475, 99,287, and 116,165; in 1873 the figure jumped to 245,068, and in 1877 reached a low of 38,375; I. Ferenczi, \textit{International Migrations}, (New York, 1929-31), Vol. I, pp. 633-4, Tables V-VI.} The majority of these women emigrated to the United States, most likely in company with their husbands or parents, and the increase is probably most easily accounted for by a growing disposition to emigrate on the part of the middle-classes; this was the beginning of that elite emigration which gradually replaced the earlier mass migration of the working-class.\footnote{Musgrove, \textit{Migratory Elite}, pp. 17-28.} Apart from this there can be little doubt that
the final institutionalization of middle-class female emigration in 1862 made the way much easier for many women. Maria Rye commented in 1862 that some local communities were following the example of her society by facilitating the emigration of local distressed gentlewomen. If Jane Lewin's feminism caused the society to fall short of its actual potential it nevertheless marked the genuine beginning of safe and respectable female emigration.

Female emigration emerged in the 'sixties as one of the feminist solutions to the problem of middle-class female employment, a problem aggravated by higher standards of private teaching which had constricted even further the narrow opportunities for the mediocre ill-educated governess. Most of the feminists' early inroads on masculine employment preserves were only short-term palliatives to assist the unqualified until a higher standard of female education became universal. The palliatives, however, were largely in such "semi-mechanical" trades as printing, which appealed primarily to women of the rising lower middle-class, and not to impoverished gentlewomen. As one of these palliatives, emigration was unique in appealing to both these classes, and especially to governesses. But the concurrent controversy over the "redundancy" of women and the panacea of emigration caused many feminists to oppose female emigration because it was a popular anti-feminist solution; it could appear too easily as a device to confine women to their "proper sphere"

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74 Letter to The Times, April 9, 1862, p. 12.
of the household and as an unjust safety-valve to siphon off pressure for progressive reform. The feminists, on the other hand, rejected notions of "matrimonial colonization," and if they promoted emigration, did so simply as a means for well-educated women to pursue a useful career abroad. These two contrasting notions were epitomized in the separate approaches of Maria Rye and Jane Lewin in their direction of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society; Rye promoted emigration from all classes, and found nothing repugnant in genteel domestic service or husband-hunting, while Lewin confined her work to the professional career concept. Lewin thereby blocked the protected emigration of the most needy and poorly qualified women, especially those from the lower middle-class, despite massive evidence that emigration relieved the psychological alienation of women for reasons quite unrelated to the genteel nature of their work. The emigrants' experience pointed to the possibility that middle-class women might undertake domestic service abroad without ill effects, and Lewin's unwillingness to foster such a scheme inhibited the growth of a larger project of middle-class female emigration until the 'eighties.
Chapter VII

The 'Home-Help': Social Class and Incentives to Female Emigration, 1880-1914

Jane Lewin's work clearly revealed that the feminist impulse alone was inadequate to stimulate a numerically significant emigration of middle-class women. The feminist emphasis on professional careers conflicted at too many points with a project which relied on domestic service to encourage women with diverse social backgrounds to emigrate. Jane Lewin's successors overcame this obstacle by departing from the principles of rigid feminism. From 1880 to 1914 a variety of female emigration schemes came into being, whose leaders, although women, emphatically were not feminists. These schemes stimulated a larger flow of educated women than any of their predecessors, and attracted women with a wide variety of social origins. Yet distressed gentlewomen again failed to benefit fully from the new opportunities, in spite of the increase in numbers and a steady stream of propaganda directed primarily towards them. Social changes in Britain and the colonies combined to exclude this most needy class of women at a time when the facilities to assist her finally became readily available. The rhetoric of the late-Victorian emigration societies masks both the kind of women who emigrated and the social changes which brought a new class of women to turn to emigration. It would be instructive to know, therefore, whether the emigrationists acted in accordance with their own highly sentimentalized propaganda, or whether
they responded to the rapid social changes at the end of the century by ignoring the language of the feminine civilizing mission and fostering the emigration of well-trained and highly professional women.

The facts about the formation of the late-Victorian emigration societies may be briefly stated. In 1880 a meeting of several like-minded philanthropists launched the short-lived Women's Emigration Society, a scheme designed to encourage women of all classes to emigrate. It resulted mainly from the cooperation of two prominent women, Mrs. E. L. Blanchard and Miss Louisa M. Hubbard. Mrs. Blanchard had already gained substantial experience in emigration work as an official selection agent for the New Zealand and Queensland Governments' assisted emigration schemes. Louisa Hubbard, as the proprietor and editor of the women's magazine, Work and Leisure, supported emigration as one among many schemes to alleviate the condition of women. By 1883 two well established branches of the Society were operating, one in the East End of London run by the wife of the vicar of St. Philip's Stepney, Adelaide Ross, and a Northern Branch in Marylebone run by Mrs. Blanchard. The Society's central organization was never placed on a sound footing, however, and by 1884 it had disintegrated. The two regional branches continued in operation, Mrs. Blanchard's northern branch becoming the Colonial Emigration Society, which concentrated mainly on recruiting working-class emigrants for the colonial governments' assisted passage schemes.¹ This left a

¹Mrs. Blanchard had herself travelled to New Zealand in the course
situation in which innumerable individuals prosecuted their own local emigration work without the aid and finance of a central parent society. Louisa Hubbard was responsible for bringing together some of these prominent emigration workers, the most important being Mrs. Ross of Stepney and Mrs. Ellen Joyce, a clergyman's widow who had already organized an emigration department for members of the Girls' Friendly Society, and had helped families to emigrate through the Winchester Emigration Society at her home in Winchester. In 1884 these women organized a register of emigration workers, and then consolidated the independent workers into a single United Englishwomen's Emigration Association, ultimately renamed as the British Women's Emigration Association. It was this Society, again catering to all social classes, which directed the bulk of protected female emigration for the next thirty years. It absorbed Mrs. Blanchard's Colonial Emigration Society in 1892, and in 1902, after the Boer War, its special sub-committee to direct South African emigration detached itself as a sister organization, the South African Colonisation Society. Finally, in 1910, some of the members of these two societies formed the Colonial Intelligence League to promote the emigration of

of her work as an emigration agent; Pratt, A Woman's Work for Women, pp. 64-9; Pratt, Pioneer Women in Victoria's Reign, pp. 62-6; Anon., Women's Emigration Society, Introductory brochure describing the preliminary meeting of Jan. 12, 1880; Anon., 'The Northern Branch and "Home" of the Women's Emigration Society,' brochure accounts of meetings of W.E.S. on May 25 and June 21, 1882, reprinted from the Borough of Marylebone Mercury, June 3 and July 1, 1882; see also Monk, op. cit., pp. 7-13.
educated and professional women exclusively.²

All these societies benefited from the trials and errors of their predecessors. For one thing their organization was far more elaborate, and extended well beyond the confines of London. The B.W.E.A. had separate Scottish and Irish branches, county branches for Staffordshire, Wiltshire and Somerset, and individual workers in practically every provincial town in the country from Aberdeen to Worcester to Winchester. Many local workers were clergymen or schoolmistresses, and the society was extensively publicized in parish magazines and at girls' schools and clubs.³ From 1902 the B.W.E.A. and S.A.C.S. published their own monthly journal, the Imperial Colonist, which discussed the most promising colonies and openings for female emigrants and the methods they should follow to get there safely.⁴ The main aim behind most of the organizers' painstaking work was their ambition to achieve a reputable and safe method

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of female emigration. Adelaide Ross and Ellen Joyce, the two foremost emigration workers, were sadly aware of the manifold dangers inherent in the emigration of single women, and repeatedly stressed the need for them to travel under their society's auspices. They took meticulous precautions to safeguard each step of the process. They established hostels in Liverpool and London where women from the provinces could reside before departure. The largest of these was the 'Wortley Hostel' in Paddington, founded in 1902, which "combined the unusual advantages of a house for lady boarders of a superior class, with a locality equally suited for approaching the various railway stations." The next step was the actual voyage, and the B.W.E.A. eventually took charge of the responsibility for providing matrons to supervise each "protected party" of women. By 1897 matrons on the Canadian voyage were accompanying the emigrants across the continent to Vancouver and Victoria; one of these matrons, Miss Mary Monk, accompanied thirty-five separate parties to Australia, New Zealand and Canada over a period of twenty years.

5E. Joyce, 'Emigration Notices—Canada', Imperial Colonist, Vol. XI, Dec., 1913, p. 211; see also 'Notes of the Month,' Ibid., Vol. VI, Oct., 1907, pp. 1-2.


7The 'British Ladies Female Emigrant Society' had selected matrons from 1818 to 1888, and its example prompted the colonial governments to employ them to supervise its own assisted female emigrants; after the death of the Society's secretary, Miss Tipple, in 1888, the 'Society for
Finally, in the colonies the various societies established an intricate network of co-operative "correspondents" who informed them of local demand for female emigrants and arranged for the women's safe reception, lodging and respectable employment. Emigration workers like Mrs. Blanchard and Ellen Joyce travelled through each colony to recruit responsible helpers. By 1900 there were "welcoming hostels" with reception committees in all the major cities of Canada and South Africa, and in some cases, notably Vancouver, the Y.W.C.A. took over the same function. The emigration societies could justly claim that theirs was a near foolproof system of "protected emigration."  

With the exception of Louisa Hubbard, none of the prominent emigration workers were notable feminists. Women like Adelaide Ross, Ellen Joyce and Mrs. Blanchard shared a deep bond of sympathy for all unemployed women, including impoverished gentlewomen, and were fired with a desire to help them, but, like Maria Rye, their sentiments derived from the


philanthropic spirit rather than feminist principles. They were attracted to middle-class female emigration either through more general work in emigration or through wider charitable efforts quite unrelated to the women's movement. Mrs. Joyce was characteristic in doing her first emigration work for the Girls' Friendly Society, an offshoot of the Church of England whose leading workers were primarily clergymen's wives and, according to Rae Strachey, some of the most bitter anti-feminists in the country. In 1912, at the height of the female suffrage issue, the B.W.E.A. was quick to disassociate itself from the suffrage activities of one of its members. It is significant that after the initial organization of the B.W.E.A. in 1884, Louisa Hubbard left emigration work for other causes within the women's movement for employment and education which she deemed more important. In doing so she exemplified the typical single-mindedness of the feminists, who would have regarded the B.W.E.A. decision in 1889 to extend their assistance to men


10The Society reported "great annoyance" that "Mrs. Tuckwell, B.W.E.A." had been reported in The Times of August 29, 1912 to have joined a deputation from the 'Women's Social and Political Union' to urge Robert Borden, the visiting Canadian Prime Minister, to give the vote to Canadian women. "The President at once wrote to Mr. Borden to explain to him that Mrs. Tuckwell had absolutely no right to represent the B.W.E.A., which is an entirely non-political body, neither Suffragist nor Anti-Suffragist." 'What are we doing,' Imperial Colonist, Vol. X, Nov. 1912, pp. 182-3.

11Pratt, A Woman's Work for Women, pp. 72-3.
and families as an irrelevant diversion from the feminist cause. By its very nature female emigration attracted workers who were philanthropists rather than feminists.

All the new emigration societies made much of their intention to devote most of their energies to middle-class women, either refined "ladies" or at least women with some education. They strictly applied all the various loan funds towards the emigration of a "superior class," those in the greatest need of help, and never towards domestic servants or other working-class women. When the U.B.W.E.A. took over the remains of the moribund F.M.C.E.S. loan fund in 1886 they promised to administer it, like their own, "for the emigration of educated women only." Unlike the F.M.C.E.S., however, all the new societies, with the exception of the Colonial Intelligence League, formed in 1910, also gave aid, short of actual financial assistance, to working-class women. Frequently this meant offering their protective umbrella to women who had already decided to emigrate. By offering their advice, providing their facilities and enforcing their rules, the societies could ensure an orderly progress of

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12 The Society claimed that it had adopted the new policy "without at all losing sight of its primary object—the protection and care of women." U.B.W.E.A. Annual Report, 1889-90, p. 10.

13 Proposal for Administering the F.M.C.E.S. Fund on the lines of the U.B.W.E.A.
female emigration, and prevent colonial strictures against the quality of British womanhood. The B.W.E.A. frequently protected, and occasionally selected, working class women for the state-assisted passages provided by colonial governments such as Queensland and Western Australia, and more than half of its emigrants were consistently working-class. 14

This expansion from the narrower policy followed by the F.M.C.E.S. came at an opportune time for many women whose social origins ranged from the lower middle-class to the upper levels of the working-class. It was these women, rather than the traditional distressed gentlewomen, who began to fill the new female employment outlets created during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. They were an indeterminate social group, barely distinguishable at one extreme from the mass of working-class women. Clara Collet attempted to analyse this group in 1892; she placed a "second group" above the first group of lowest-paid women workers.

From the second group of working women are drawn our better-paid factory girls, our tailoresses, domestic servants, and a large number of our dressmakers and milliners, shop-assistants, barmaids, clerks and elementary teachers. A considerable number of dressmakers and milliners, shop-assistants and clerks are, however, drawn from the lower-middle class, and a few from the professional class. Although this second group is the largest group in London, and probably in England, it is the one about which we have least information. They have hardly been made the subject of industrial inquiry, do not regard themselves as persons to be pitied, and work in comparatively

14 See the various annual reports of the B.W.E.A. which listed occupational classifications of most of the emigrants; the 1907 report, for example, listed 122 "industrial workers," 166 servants and 22 dressmakers out of 538 women sent to Canada, p. 13.
small detachments. They are nevertheless of more industrial importance than the working women of the first group. . . . Their work is skilled and requires an apprenticeship. They are in the majority of cases brought into direct contact with the consumer, and education, good manners, personal appearance and tact all raise their market value.15

Collet's intention here was to discuss skilled working-class women, but she unwittingly came to recognize that many of these women shared a large employment field with the lower middle-class. Later she noticed that lower middle-class women also joined the upper middle-class as teachers and civil-service clerks. The meaning of all this was that the old accepted social classifications for women were becoming obsolete. By the end of the century a new generation of aspiring suburban women of varied backgrounds had joined the more refined but no better qualified group of middle-class women in a search for employment on equal terms.

The results of this turbulent social mobility were compounded by the fact that, even at the beginning of the twentieth century, the majority of educated working women still turned to the overcrowded teaching profession for respectable employment. The hospital, the shop-counter and the typewriter attracted increasing numbers of late-Victorian women, but the school-room still appealed to the majority. The 1891 census revealed that out of 328,393 "professional" females, there were 146,375

15Collet herself was one of the few early M.A. graduates from London University; 'Prospects of Marriage for Women,' (reprinted from the Nineteenth Century, April, 1862), in Educated Working Women, (London, 1902), pp. 48-9.

16Ibid., p. 53.
teachers, 70,650 students over 15 and 54,392 in medicine (including nurses); furthermore the teachers continued to show a greater increase than any other occupation, having jumped from 123,995 in 1881. These teachers constituted a vast number of women with varying qualifications, and with steadily increasing standards of education only those with the very best preparation could expect good salaries. The highest qualification, a university degree, only commanded £105 to £150 in 1890, and Clara Collet noticed that out of the 800 to graduate so far—of which she herself was one—the great majority took up some form of teaching. For the rest the competition was even more intense than it had been among mid-Victorian governesses, and the demands more intellectually rigorous; teaching was still "the only brain-work offered them, and badly paid as it is, it is better paid than any other work done by women." Emigrationists, in particular, were in a unique position to understand the process by which so many women were reduced to a situation where emigration might provide the best alternative:

While governesses, all but those of exceptional attainments, and many teachers who once passed muster, find their occupation gone with our greater demands, there are more 'unemployed' than ever of the educated

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17 Occupations of Males and Females, England and Wales, Summary Tables, Vol. III, 1891 Census, PP., 1893-4, CVI, [7058], p. vii, Table 4; Occupations of Males and Females, England and Wales, Summary Tables, 1881 Census, PP., 1883, LXXX, [3722], p. vi, Table 4.

18 C. E. Collet, 'The Economic Position of Educated Working Women,' (Delivered in South Place Chapel, Finsbury, Feb. 2, 1890), South Place Ethical Society Discourses, no. 25, (pp. 205-16), (London, 1890), pp. 207-10.
classes, to whom emigration offers the best solution of the struggle for life. 19

The new societies therefore catered to a wide cross-section of women, even within the group they defined as "educated." The logical consequence of this, combined with the colonial shortage of domestic servants, was that they all openly encouraged middle-class women to take up domestic service in the colonies. This advance on Jane Lewin's policy was dictated primarily by the occupational needs of the various colonies, but it also reflected a shift of opinion in Britain on the subject of employment for educated women. By the mid-'seventies a number of people were advocating domestic service in Britain as a field of employment for gentlewomen. The initial impetus in this direction emanated from the forum of the Social Science Association. In 1869 a Mrs. Browne suggested that educated ladies who could not become governesses should take employment in private nurseries; they would be far more reliable than the customary uneducated nurse, would obtain a useful preparation for married life and would be brought "into the most intimate and friendly relationship with the mother." 20 This first hesitant step—in fact simply an attempt to elevate the questionable reputation of the nursery-governess—was followed in five years by two papers advocating full-fledged domestic ser-

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19 Training for English Girls as Colonists, 'The Queen,' April 11, 1891, p. 566.

vice for gentlewomen. Mrs. E. M. King argued that if domestic economy could be raised to the status of a science, equal with, for example, political economy, domestic service would shed its menial connotations and assume the respectability of a promising career for educated women.21 At the same meeting Mrs. Rose Mary Crawshay made a determined appeal to popularize the idea of "domestic service for ladies;" she surpassed her colleagues in having actually tried the experiment in her own home, and proceeded to establish an office in London to promote genteel domestic service.22

Rose Crawshay elaborated on her ideas in a book, which by 1876 went into a third edition. She had found that many women, who until recently would have become governesses, were now willing to work as domestic servants under certain conditions. "Those who used to take governesses' situations can no longer obtain them, owing to certificates of proficiency in teaching being required, which they, unfortunately, cannot furnish." She had herself hired five "lady-helps" at her large home, Cyfarthfa Castle in Wales, and judged the experiment a promising success. In large part she owed this success to her regard for the genteel susceptibilities of her lady-helps. In the first place she retained regular domestic servants to perform the dirtiest and heaviest work; the lady-

21 'The Science of Domestic Economy,' (Summary), N.A.P.S.S., Transactions, 1874, p. 947.
22 'Domestic Service for Ladies,' (Summary), ibid., p. 947.
helps were willing to work hard at menial chores, and did everything for themselves "except cleaning grates and scouring floors, which no head-servants do." Secondly, by employing more than one lady-help Crawshay disposed of the old obsessive and irksome need of the governess to be treated "as one of the family." The lady-helps formed their own company, having a room set aside for their use, and were not forced into "degrading" association with that lower order of beings, the regular domestic servants. A single lady-help would be nothing more than the old "useful companion," but two or more brought social advantages to both servants and employers: "where several are together, they form a little society of their own; and, while happy to associate on equal terms with their employer, at such times as may suit her, they are by no means dependent on her for society." The crux of Crawshay's system then, was the willingness of the mistress of the house, the "padrona," to cater to the gentlewoman's attachment to her social class. Her aim was close to the feminist ambition to reconcile hard work with culture and refinement. The question remained whether, for the feminists, domestic service was not an excessively liberal interpretation of the principle of hard work.\footnote{\textit{R. M. Crawshay, Domestic Service for Gentlewomen: A Record of Experience and Success}, (First Edition, London, 1874), pp. 7-17.}

The way in which Rose Crawshay followed up her first appeal indicated that her scheme might meet with some success. She established an "Office for Lady-helps" in Portman Square, London, and in eight months
placed over a hundred women, of whom only six were reported to be failures. She also arranged for cookery lessons "to meet the great demand for 'lady-helps' as cooks, having all the rough work done for them." In general, however, the time was unpropitious for a new departure in genteel domestic service. The trend during the last quarter of the nineteenth century was emphatically in the opposite direction, towards the decreasing popularity of domestic service. By the 'nineties late-Victorian moralists were lamenting the shortage of servants and the fact that the traditional servant class regarded domestic service as dishonourable and only entered it under protest. Rose Crawshay's scheme, in any case; could only be of use to families of the upper middle-class and aristocracy with a large establishment of servants. Genteel cooking also required sufficiently wealthy employers to be able to afford all the latest modern appliances, and in her second edition Crawshay recommended, as an example, that every kitchen designed for a lady-help should have a gas stove. Under these conditions it was unlikely that genteel domestic service in Britain would become fashionable either with potential employers or legions of impoverished gentlewomen.

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The reaction to Rose Crawshay's scheme denotes some interesting shades of opinion on the feminist issue. The anti-feminist Saturday Review was not alarmed, as one might expect, that cultured women would lose their gentility in domestic service. It thought that the lady-help would never solve the problem of women's work, but might "for the present stop a gap and furnish a subject for conversation." On the whole it thought the new system a "retrogressive movement," and instead argued that "many of our social difficulties would be almost entirely mastered if young ladies would consent to become lady-helps in their own homes." This was the language of hostility to the "Girl of the Period," long deplored by the Saturday Review for her genteel idleness and utter ignorance of "the rudiments of domestic economy" which caused so much mismanagement and discomfort. The feminists, on the other hand, were obsessed with the implied loss of gentility in the position of the lady-help. Louisa M. Hubbard set the tone by arguing that gentlewomen should only accept domestic service if they were willing "to relinquish the social position accorded to persons belonging to the educated and cultivated classes." If faced with charity or starvation gentlewomen should definitely accept domestic service, and would probably be respected for their refinement by discriminating persons.

The test of class seems to us to be very much one of education and culture... We only suggest that a line should be drawn somewhere, and that while a lady should be ready to accept any respectable

employment which will support her when she needs it, she should not expect to enjoy the privileges of education and culture while relinquishing the exercise of both in a class possessing neither.\(^{27}\)

One feminist journal, the *Victoria Magazine*, considered the "new fangled term 'lady-help'" a tribute to a vulgar spirit which degraded the meaning of the word 'lady,' and dismissed it as an attempt to glamourize "the unpalatable idea of domestic service." Domestic service was unfit for gentlewomen, and in any case quite impracticable.\(^{28}\) The significant point of this is that the feminists were more interested in preserving gentility in women's work than were their antagonists; employment which, by the nature of its task-work, compromised a woman's social position, was not acceptable to the feminists.

A knowledge of this feminist hostility towards domestic service is essential to understand properly the attitude of emigration promoters like Ellen Joyce and Adelaide Ross. Neither were snobbish about the idea of lady-help, and they did not hesitate to recommend this occupation as a means for educated women to begin a fresh life abroad. In this respect their attitude was much closer to that of Rose Mary Crawshay in catering first to the practical needs of women rather than to their genteel susceptibilities. For them the basic situation was simple. All the settlement colonies needed women, both as wives and domestic servants; Britain had

\(^{27}\) Hubbard, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-5.

\(^{28}\) *Victoria Magazine*, April 1876, pp. 510-12, 562-3; June, 1876, pp. 185-6.
the surplus women to supply their deficiency, but the surplus occurred primarily among women above the traditional servant class, hence their task was to make it possible and palatable for these women to become first colonial servants and ultimately competent wives and mothers.

From the 'eighties onwards the emigration societies were markedly sensitive to the charge that they encouraged much needed domestic servants to leave the country. As charitable organizations dependent on public goodwill they could not afford to alienate potential subscribers by urging the least plentiful class of women to emigrate. In 1886 Adelaide Ross regretted the frequent criticism of female emigration made on the grounds that England was threatened with a failure in the supply of good domestic servants. The natural reaction was to discourage openly this class from emigrating, and to only offer protection if servants insisted on leaving. The strict refusal of each society to extend loans to domestic servants was a part of this policy. Most often, however, their defense rested simply on the argument that domestic servants were sufficiently well off in Britain not to wish to emigrate, and that the class needing their help had little scope at home.

The 'superfluous women' of the United Kingdom are not the 'good cooks,'


30B.W.E.A., Annual Report, 1909, p. 14; see the reports of interviews with the B.W.E.A. Secretary, Miss Grace Lefroy, in which she was at pains to stress the Society's opposition to the emigration of domestic servants; Cassell's Saturday Journal, July 3, 1895, p. 835; Morning Leader, Nov. 24, 1897, p. 3.
'house-parlour maids,' and 'capable general-servants,' for which there is everywhere an insatiable demand; but the sensible useful girls who are practised in the necessary duties of their own homes and who desire to earn their living in some such active employment; without losing caste by having to associate with those who are less educated than themselves.31

Their argument was sound, and they adhered quite literally to the policy of discouraging the regular servant-class, but the misfortune of having to work in an atmosphere of increasing servant shortage bedevilled all the societies up to the outbreak of the World War, and probably operated as a permanent check on the size of their funds.32

To dissuade qualified servants from emigrating solved one problem for the societies, but it created two others. First the persistent colonial demand for trained domestic servants had to be satisfied by sending a class of women not previously accustomed to the duties and social position of domestic service. Ellen Joyce sent a circular to Western Canada in 1906 explaining that the British servant shortage was as severe as that

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31 Some Situations offered for Useful Helps, Imperial Colonist, Vol. III, Oct. 1904, pp. 116-7; see also the paper read by the S.A.C.S. Organizing Secretary, Miss Beatrice Vivian, at the 'National Union of Women Workers' at Birmingham, Oct. 26, 1905, pp. 3-5; enclosed with Imperial Colonist, Vol. V, Jan. 1906, and see 'A Word to Our Country Workers,' Imperial Colonist, Vol. VI, May, 1907, pp. 3-4.

32 In 1912 the B.W.E.A. obtained a grant from the Corporation of the City of London only after a determined defense against the charge that 'we are very short of servants in this country; you are endeavouring to get them out of the country;' speech of Lord Mayor of London to B.W.E.A. annual meeting for 1913, Imperial Colonist, Vol. XII, April 1914, pp. 57-65.
in Canada, and that emigrant servants had to be drawn from a higher class. More important was the need to reconcile educated women to the idea of taking domestic service overseas. Mrs. Crawshay had successfully induced a few gentlewomen to become servants in Britain, but it was by no means certain that significant numbers would be prepared to do the same abroad, notwithstanding the advantages of a more marked colonial egalitarianism. It was necessary to convince potential emigrants first that only in domestic work "is the newcomer certain of finding instant employment on landing," and, secondly, that no domestic who is any good remains a domestic in the Colonies. They prosper, rise in life, set up establishments of their own, and require domestic help for themselves. The effort to popularize the notion of genteel domestic service in the colonies, and to lend to it an air of polite respectability constituted the greatest single theme of the emigrationists' propaganda for over thirty years, and embodied a novel application of the feminine civilizing mission.

In encouraging educated women to become colonial servants, the emigration societies had to tread carefully to avoid offending the sensitivities of both colonial employers and the women themselves. Colonial house-


wives wanted helpers who would not be ashamed to perform the roughest chores to which they themselves were accustomed, and middle-class women who hesitantly consented to such a drastic step needed assurances that they would receive treatment due to a 'lady' and social equal. The various euphemisms used to describe the genteel servant reflect the delicate position of the emigrationists in trying to please both sides. The women were variously known as 'home-helps,' 'lady-helps,' 'companion-helps' and 'help-companions.' The 'home-help' was the most enduring title, and eventually replaced the more pompous 'lady-help' "to prevent Canada thinking that those we send are fine ladies."  

After a South African complaint that many 'companion-helps' "seem to think too much of the Companion part and not enough of the Help," the B.W.E.A. characteristically inverted that title to 'help-companion.'  

The emigrationists successfully made a virtue out of some of most potentially distasteful aspects of colonial life for the home-help. They warned women that the emigrant, whatever her class, must be prepared to "rough-it" and to work long and hard at tasks she would disdain at home. Adaptability and youth were pre-requisites to successful emigration, but given these advantages a woman could expect to be rewarded with success.  

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The colonial environment was a fertile field for applying the old Victorian mystique of hard work and success, and nowhere was it used with greater effect than on the educated woman. A Canadian woman argued that her country had no room for idle and thriftless women, but great promise for the industrious.

You must be a worker, you must know how to do something, and be able to turn your hand to do anything . . . . On your powers of adaptability will depend your progress and success . . . . I often tell friends in the Motherland that we live on hard work and hope in Canada. 38

The educated woman ennobled menial domestic work by bringing her greater intelligence and dignity to bear on it and by combining the chores of the kitchen and wash-tub with the social graces of a companion-hostess at visiting times. In Canada, again, all women were working women, but as compensation "one perceives mental culture to be a weapon as well as a defense in every condition of life, and for that reason Canada should be the Mecca of that ever-increasing body of Englishwomen who, on this side of the Atlantic, come under the category of the 'working gentlewoman'." 39

The Imperial Colonist welcomed the tenor of an article in The Times which argued that intending female colonists must not be afraid to soil their hands. A little learning, it added, often distorted the outlook of the working-class, but those above them had no such qualms; a well-bred girl


undertaking gardening, cooking or nursing was proud enough to perform "every preparatory stage which leads up to the final triumph." An educated woman could perform all the usual work of the poor far better than they because she used brains as well as hands. "If any work is menial it is so because of the worker, not because of the work." With these arguments the gentlewoman was persuaded that her simple labour would be a dignified blessing overseas.

Another disadvantage for the sophisticated home-help was that most of the colonial openings, whether in Canada, South Africa, or Australia, were "up-country" or in the "bush." The societies warned gentlewomen that in large colonial towns, such as those of Eastern Canada, class distinctions flourished as strongly as in England, and employers treated the servant accordingly, regardless of her social origins. By the twentieth century, with the growth of large colonial cities, this process was impossible to ignore, and emigration propaganda directed women instead to sparse and primitive settlements in the Canadian West, the Transvaal and Orange River Colony and the Australian bush. The great drawback here for the educated woman was isolation and boredom. But all this, claimed the emigrationists, was compensated by the easier social mobility and the greater respect and distinction given to the culture of a gentlewoman. In

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country districts respectable housewives were anxious to have intelligent companions rather than mere "ignorant and uneducated" servants, and the ideal home-help combined dignified service and companionship. The household chores were shared equally between the mistress and help, "and they hardly ever put their hand to anything the squatter's wife would not do herself." Above all, the colonists acknowledged the social position of home-helps by willingly treating them "as members of the family." This was a constant factor in female emigration propaganda after 1880. The societies repeatedly drew attention to the letters of contented emigrants who were "very happy and comfortable, treated quite as one of the family, and dine at the same table." It was the most effective appeal possible to the sensitive gentility of the "young lady."

Most emigration promoters recognized that the home-help came from a wide range of differing class backgrounds. In 1897 the B.W.E.A. asserted that it was the class "above the servant class, rising up to the highly cultivated women of our day, that the Association most desires to help."

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At one extreme were the women of the lower-classes, forced as Viscountess Strangford argued, out of their "natural station" by "over-education" into overcrowded competition with distressed gentlewomen; barely above them were the daughters of tradesmen and small farmers whose mothers had frequently been "superior domestic servants, but they will not let their daughters go to service, and prefer, as more genteel, the comparatively unhealthy and inactive lives of the shop and office." Finally, at the other extreme, were the impecunious but "well-born ladies, who belong to the collateral branches of well-connected families, or who are the daughters of men who have been in the services or in the medical profession." All these women made useful home-helps, but Ellen Joyce was insistent that only one specific type formed the ideal woman for colonial service.

She is country bred and born; it is in the country villages she thrives; she is the useful eldest daughter of the large families of the poorer clergy. She lives in the riverside homes of the retired officers of both services; she gets her education and some knowledge of the world at the High School . . . . In many of these households no servant is kept. Indeed we have sent so many to South Africa it is difficult to get any and thus we are forced to make Home-Helps for ourselves.

This country girl—providing she had done "a great part of the household work" herself—was an ideal home-help only because she was well qualified to take up the rough domestic work of a colonial home; the rest, and

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44. 'Emigration of Educated Women,' The Queen, Dec. 4, 1886.
47. Mrs. Joyce's speech at a "private Conference at H.R.H. Princess
notably the more gently nurtured women, were invariably ignorant of household work, and raised the question of preparation and training for colonial life.

The home-help enthusiasts soon recognized that some previous training in domestic work formed the very essence of a successful policy. The untrained gentlewoman, no matter how willing, could be little other than incompetent and shocked when faced with a sudden unfamiliar round of rough household chores in a colonial farmhouse, with unfortunate results both for herself and her employer. To send women abroad "without an idea of lighting a fire or sweeping a room would be, as everyone knows, a cruel kindness." After four years' experience of this kind the B.W.E.A. acknowledged the problem by establishing, in 1890, a "Colonial Training Home" at Leaton in Shropshire. For a payment of ten shillings a week for three months, middle-class women in residence received a thorough grounding from a farmer's wife in all the essential duties of colonial housework. They were instructed in "housewifery," cooking, baking and washing, and in addition milking, dairy-work, poultry-care and bee-keeping.


48'Training for English Girls as Colonists', The Queen, April 11, 1891, p. 566; the B.W.E.A. later acknowledged that there were "multitudes" of women whom they "dare not encourage to run the risk of emigration without previous training, but who cannot afford it;" Annual Report, 1892-3, p. 22.
Furthermore, the "Home," an old-fashioned manor house, contained neither modern household conveniences nor domestic servants so that the trainees were forced to do all the work, including the heaviest and dirtiest, for themselves. In this way, the managers claimed, Leaton secured the rejection of the unfit as well as the training of those likely to succeed. They also claimed that the wholesome atmosphere of the "Home" improved the women's health and increased their adaptability. Most important the comradely atmosphere bred a new attitude towards work which would be valuable abroad, since "the frame of mind generally supposed to be rather common among girls of this class, of considering domestic work menial, does not exist."  

The Leaton "Home" was unquestionably a successful and appropriate venture. It catered to that depressed class of women who, by virtue of their genteel backgrounds, would be least prepared for any form of colonial life without some training. It occasionally accommodated some working-class women, but the various reports indicate that the great majority of trainees were definitely middle-class. A Leaton administrator remarked that the women's social status often differed, but her examples suggest that in most cases this social status stopped just short of the lower middle-class:

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With the present fierce struggle for bread, we have had women glad to be prepared for colonial life whose names are written in 'Burke' and 'Walford' and whose fathers have been sheriffs or deputy-lieutenants for their counties, whilst other pupils have been the daughters of professional men, farmers, or small business-men.

The constant demand for training from women of a "superior class" invariably filled the "Home" to capacity; in 1907 it was transferred to larger premises at Stoke Prior, near Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, and renamed the "Colonial Training College." The "Home's" establishment in 1890 coincided with the beginning of an upsurge in emigration—and especially female emigration—to the Canadian West and South Africa, and most of the trainee home-helps emigrated to those regions. The institution became so well known in British Columbia that many employers there refused to accept "ladies who have not been trained at Leaton," and demands for trained "Lady-Helps" soon followed from Australia and New Zealand. By 1912 530 women had been trained at the College, which only closed down when the outbreak of war in 1914 caused a sharp drop in all forms of emigration.

The influence of the B.W.E.A. College extended far beyond the

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50 Letter from "One of the Foundresses of the Leaton Colonial Home," St. James's Gazette, April 20, 1897, pp. 4-5; Miss Vernon noted that "although the greater number of girls trained at Leaton come from the middle-classes, a good many ladies have also been among the pupils," Vernon, op. cit., pp. 13-4.


relatively modest numbers of its actual trainees. Its 530 graduates formed only a fraction of female emigrants during the twenty-two years from 1890 to 1912, but it established an important precedent which others quickly followed. By 1902 there were dozens of similar colonial training colleges operating throughout Britain. Some were run by private individuals for profit, others by benevolent members of an emigration society; in some cases well-established training schools extended their work to "colonial training," one of these being the domestic economy school of the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire. In 1902 the Yorkshire Ladies Council of Education framed a special course of domestic instruction "suited to Colonial life generally, and with special reference to life in South Africa." Various county councils ran similar courses for "lady emigrants," among them, Lancashire, Hampshire and Sussex, the latter's 'School of Domestic Science for Women and Girls' being established in 1894. The Imperial Colonist eagerly welcomed with favourable publicity each new training school designed for emigrants. When a Mrs. Headlam established a new school in London it remarked that she was devoting her house in Chelsea to this purpose for the benefit of girls who cannot afford a long and expensive preparation for earning their own living, or who do not care to mix with those who attend the classes

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54 "Training Schools," and G. Lefroy 'Where to Train and How to Train,' Imperial Colonist, Vol. I, Oct. 1902, pp. 91, 92-6; these two articles give a complete list and description of the existing colonial training schools in 1902; see also ibid., Dec. 1902, pp. 115-6; on the Yorkshire Ladies Council see ibid., May 1902, pp. 42-3.
Before long the Canadians began to compete with this proliferation of training colleges. Mary Urie Watson, of the MacDonald Institute in Guelph, argued in the *Imperial Colonist* that training in the colony was superior because of the instructors' acquaintance with specifically local conditions. On Vancouver Island a Miss Bainbridge-Smith established the Haliburton College for Gentlewomen, offering household and farm training at £85 a year to students whom she hoped would subsequently buy land in the neighbourhood, and "carry on their own business, with the friendly advice of the college teachers." However impractical a few of these schemes were for impoverished gentlewomen they all recognized that the typical middle-class Englishwoman was wholly unequipped for colonial life, especially as a home-help, without some prior intensive training. The Colonial Intelligence League was formed in 1910 largely to ensure that only properly trained

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56 MacDonald Institute,' *Imperial Colonist*, Vol. VII, April, 1909, p. 57. In 1914 a graduate of the MacDonald Institute began giving colonial training, "reproducing Canadian conditions," at Hoebridge Farm, Woking, Surrey, established by Lady Gwendolen Guinness; 'Overseas Training School for Women,' *ibid.*, Vol. XII, May, 1914, pp. 79-80.

women were helped to emigrate. It gave a "practical test in efficiency" to women at several colonial training colleges, and only those successfully obtaining its "card of credentials" were assisted. In 1913 it opened the Princess Patricia Ranch, a farm settlement for women near Vernon, British Columbia to provide both occupations and further familiarization for its emigrants. By this time training had shifted from the interesting sideline of 1890 to the major pre-occupation of all female emigration societies.

The advantage of offering sound domestic training to gentlewomen enhanced the credibility of the emigrationists' rhetoric. After 1890 it was much easier to argue that the cultured home-help had a real civilizing mission to perform. At first the B.W.E.A. emphasized that "only efficient practical women are introduced by the Association," but the emphasis soon shifted from practicality to nobility. In her foreword to the first number of the Imperial Colonist Mrs. Joyce stressed that the great colonial need was for healthy, cultured women with domestic training "who will keep up the tone of the men with whom they mix by music, and book-lore when the day is over." On a later occasion she told a Girls' Friendly Society conference that cultured colonial women preferred cultured and refined home-helps, "as associates for their growing children as well as for themselves."

58 C.I.L., Annual Reports, 1911-2, pp. 9-10, 1913-4, pp. 10-1.
60 Imperial Colonist, Vol. I, Jan. 1902, pp. 3-5.
and added, significantly, that the same well-bred women "are greatly need-
ed as helpmates for the well-bred men." The B.W.E.A. British Columbia
representative welcomed well-trained cultivated home-helps for the moral-
ity they brought with them.

There is no greater civilizing power in the world than that which a
truly good woman possesses. There are many mothers and sisters in
the dear old land across the seas who will never fully know how much
they owe to the gentle mannered women who had gone to far-off cor-
ners of B.C. to make their home—-I write of what I know—the rough
jest is hushed and men grow ashamed of a careless life. The sound of
the 'soft English voice' brings back to them memories of other days.61

Most writers believed that women exercised their greatest moral influence
in the domestic sphere, agreeing with the popular comment of the college
matron that the work at Stoke Prior "is, after all, only woman's natural
work."62 Miss S. R. Perkins, who had lived in Australia, appealed for
more real gentlewomen to be trained and sent as useful companions to the
colonies, where they would more easily resist the temptations and dangers
of a rough colony, to which so many lesser women succumbed; as potential
wives and mothers they would exert a critical influence on the character
of new communities; for the women themselves the simpler life, more fre-
quent recreation, and more sociable neighbours easily compensated for the
harder work.

61 'Thirty Years of G.F.S. Imperial Work,' paper read at G.F.S.
1912, p. 154; Mrs. Skinner, 'In British Columbia,' ibid., Vol. II, April
1903, pp. 39-41.

62 'A Visit to the Colonial Training College for Ladies at Stoke
The balance of advantages and prospects is distinctly on the side of those living in the rougher, newer districts. What can be more ennobling, more healthy, or more truly womanly than the doing of domestic work as our ancestresses did? Women will be doing truly good work there in helping some overburdened house mother; and how new countries benefit by the presence of more women of culture and high principle none can realise who have not seen for themselves. They maintain the chivalry of men, raise the tone of their less favoured sisters, and uphold the standards of morality and good manners, as only women and women of this type can do. 63

The enthusiasm for domestic training coincided with a growing interest in female emigration to Western Canada, especially British Columbia, and South Africa. The higher fares to Australia had caused the new societies to shift their main attention to less distant colonies during the 'eighties, and by 1890 the general increase in emigration to the Canadian West and Southern Africa induced them, as usual, to follow the fashionable trail of most emigrants to relatively new settlements. The real emigration booms to both these regions occurred after 1900, but during the 'nineties the societies prepared the ground for an intensive system of female emigration. Representatives from both areas reported insatiable demands for home-helps. The B.W.E.A. representative in Vancouver, Mrs. Skinner, who also worked through the local Y.W.C.A. employment bureau, reported in 1907 that she had only managed to provide 200 women in the face of requests for 900. 64 Most striking was the exodus of women to South Africa immediately


64 'Emigration Notices', ibid., Vol. VI, Aug., 1907, p. 11. See also the various reports by and about Mrs. Skinner in ibid., Vol. II, April,
after the Boer War. Empty troop ships returning from England took out women for a nominal charge, and the pressure on B.W.E.A. facilities was so great that their South African Expansion Committee re-formed into a separate society, the South African Colonisation Society. Politicians like Joseph Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary, and Lord Milner, the South African High Commissioner, attended the Societies' meetings to encourage female emigration, especially to South Africa, as an imperial duty.

1903, p. 37, Vol. III, June 1904, pp. 67-70, Vol. V, June, 1906, pp. 83-4, Vol. IX, Aug. 1911, pp. 355-6, Vol. X, May, 1912, pp. 88-9. The Colonial Intelligence League, established in 1910 to encourage the emigration of educated women exclusively, revived interest in the emigration of 'lady-helps' to Australia, and the Victoria Government subsidised its candidates with £9 each, but it devoted the bulk of its work to British Columbia, even to the extent of purchasing the 'Princess Patricia Ranch' at Vernon; C.I.L., Annual Reports, 1911-2, pp. 5-6, 1913-4, pp. 10-3. The various annual reports were consistent in stressing that the demand in both British Columbia and South Africa was specifically for educated women; gentlewomen were "overwhelmingly in demand" in Western Canada, and "only women of good family" were accepted as "lady home-helps" in British Columbia and the North-West; E. Lewthwaite, 'Useful Helps for Western Canada.' Imperial Colonist, Vol. I, March, 1902, pp. 19-20. B.W.E.A., Annual Report, 1906, p. 11. As early as 1892 the B.W.E.A. was stressing that the principal openings for educated home-helps were in South Africa, and five years later with its "stretching possibilities," that colony "has always presented the best field for the employment of educated women;" Annual Reports, 1891-2, pp. 23-4, 1897, p. 13. In 1903 Miss Johnson reported that Natal had no need for the "ordinary departmental servant," but for young gentlewomen and lower middle-class women; 'Domestic Helps in Natal,' Imperial Colonist, Vol. II, April 1903. On the Canadian immigration boom cf. Thomas, op. cit., p. 205.

B.W.E.A., Annual Reports, 1902, pp. 40-2, 1903, p. 11.

Lord Milner expressed support for the B.W.E.A.'s work in the first number of the Imperial Colonist, Vol. I, Jan. 1902, p. 1, and in 1907 spoke at the annual meeting of the S.A.C.S., ibid., Vol. VI, June 1907, pp. 3-7. Chamberlain's speech at the B.W.E.A. annual meeting of 1901 "crystallized a wave of thought which had been moving in the minds of statesmen and both
The combination of female emigration propaganda with the heady enthusiasm of fin-de-siècle imperialism gave a new and unique twist to the rhetoric of the feminine civilizing mission, which was stronger at the end of the century than it had been during mid-Victorian years. Notions of imperial destiny and class and racial superiority were grafted onto the traditional views of refined English motherhood to produce a concept of the Englishwoman as an invincible global civilizing agent. The emigrationists' general argument was that cultivated British women had an "Imperial mission" to perform by bringing British ideals to an abandoned generation of male pioneers who were threatened with alien assimilation; these ideals, furthermore, could only be implanted by women who occupied their "proper sphere" in the colonies as civilized domestic helps, teachers, wives and mothers. The founders of the C.I.L. hoped that their work would "help to keep the British Empire for the British race," and the editor of the Spectator, at a B.W.E.A. annual meeting, argued that female emigration was the only way to influence rising states with "our Anglo-Saxon ideals;" only women could build colonial homes, without which the Empire could not exist. Miss J. R. Chitty feared that it was too easy

military and commercial men," to the effect that "the settling of new countries could not, it was felt, be carried out or maintained unless 'women-settlers' followed the men pioneers;" Annual Reports, 1901, p. 16, 1900, pp. 51-7. In 1902, through the influence of Lord Milner, the South African Government allotted £15,000 annually for female emigration to the Transvaal and Orange River Colonies; copies of telegrams between Chamberlain and Milner, June 21, 1902 and Aug. 12, 1902, reprinted in the Imperial Colonist, Vol. I, Oct. 1902, pp. 89-90.

67 C.I.L., Annual Report, 1910-1, p. 12; speech by John St. Loe-
for colonies to lose their "Imperial heritage" after the first generation of settlers; it was woman's vital mission to counteract this evil tendency by making attractive homes for Englishmen abroad "that they may cease to think of themselves as exiles, but may realize that they have but migrated from one part of the family estate to another, and are still among their own people." In their "potential motherhood" women held the key to the situation.

Away in the back-blocks, the whole early training of the children falls upon the mother alone. Upon her it depends to make a living reality of all that lies quite outside their circumscribed lives, above all the Church and Empire.  

In a later article this same writer took her argument to a further extreme by arguing that the colonies had a great need for British "women of leisure," who had some capital and no great economic need to emigrate. Their emigration would be an imperial duty to give personal service as social workers, educators and even wives to a generation that had grown up ignorant of Britain; "it is the Englishwoman who can best teach them the way, because they start with all the advantages of that sex privilege which the Briton wraps around the womanhood of his race." The doctrine reached

Strachey at the annual meeting on March 23, 1909, B.W.E.A., Annual Report, 1908, p. 34. Strachey was a staunch Unionist and Imperialist, he edited and owned the Spectator from 1898 to 1925; D.N.B. (1922-30) pp. 816-8.


the peak of its expression in Dora Gore Browne's poem 'To England's Daughters' in 1904. Englishwomen, who traditionally "bore aloft the torch of freedom," were now entrusted with a higher duty "to keep the flaming torch of loyalty on fire, in the land of your adoption, for the honour of your home," as "future nursing mothers of the English race to be." This was Edward Gibbon Wakefield's old tenet in modern form, and just as his notion had initially sprung from the threat of alien convictism in Australia, so the new version grew from the fear of alien influences in Canada and South Africa. 70

The major threat in Canada was that the country would become cosmopolitan rather than British, and the emigrationists took alarm when they saw that the Canadian immigration boom in the first decade of the twentieth century consisted of Europeans other than Britons. Mrs. Joyce was shocked that a Winnipeg newspaper should have to be printed in four different languages, Russian, German, French and English, to reach that city's polyglot population. To counteract this others had to be convinced "that the Empire, and not the Island, is woman's sphere." She insisted that England's supremacy depended on keeping Canada British, and if, through indifference, it fell into alien and foreign hands "then we shall go under and share the fate and decay of older nations." The cure was a determined application of the "Science of Empire Building," that is, sending the

70 For the complete poem, which was first published in the Imperial Colonist, Vol. III, Dec. 1904, p. 133, see Appendix C.
right women where they were most needed from an imperial point of view.

And if any listeners thought Mrs. Joyce was talking in platitudes, she could recall specific examples of the kind of women Canada needed:

A cultured woman takes her love of culture within herself, and in the winter evenings has longer hours for study than we have, or generally use. I only wish that my acquaintance with English Literature had been half as good as that of the wife of a Major in the North West Mounted Police, or that I had kept up my music as she had kept up hers... We know quite well that the duties of a housewife do not interfere with her being one of the most educated women in the world.

With such educated women, argued Mrs. Joyce in 1913, it would be decided within the next five years whether Canada was to be "British or Cosmopolitan." 71

The racial argument was, predictably, strongest in South Africa, and could be used to highlight potential threats from either Boers or indigenous Africans. During the Boer War the view that the Dutch population might eventually be swamped by a mass migration of Englishwomen gained increasing currency among emigration promoters. Even when the absurdity of the view was recognized it usually survived in a modified form,

71E. Joyce, 'Thirty Years of G.F.S. Imperial Work,' read at G.F.S. Imperial Conference, York, July 17, 1912, Imperial Colonist, Vol. X, Aug. 1912, pp. 136-41 and 'The Imperial Aspect of G.F.S. Emigration,' read at G.F.S. Imperial Conference at the Imperial Institute, London, June 19, 1913, ibid., Vol. XI, Aug. 1913, pp. 123-31. A similar argument on the threat of cosmopolitanism to the Empire in general was expounded in a 'Memo on the Emigration of Women' in the Report of the Standing Committee on Emigration of the Royal Colonial Institute; they feared that while middle-class women were redundant at home, "the British character of the Dominions is imperilled by the want of British women to build up homes, and is largely becoming cosmopolitan rather than British;" ibid., Vol. IX, Aug. 1911, pp. 346-8.
such as the hope that Englishwomen might instil English virtues among the Boers by example, or that they should at least be sufficiently numerous to prevent Englishmen from being forced to marry Dutch women. Before the war ended the B.W.E.A. noted that the great emigration interest of the future would be in South Africa, for "the possibility of the settler marrying his own countrywoman is of Imperial, as well as family importance."\(^{72}\) The Countess of Malmesbury urged the task of the "repopulation" of South Africa on the B.W.E.A. "by sending out the right sort of women, fitted to be the wives of settlers and the mothers of loyal subjects."\(^{73}\) By 1903 Lord Onslow, the Colonial Undersecretary, felt it necessary to remind the S.A.C.S. that the British encouragement of female emigration arose from no desire to swamp the Boer element, but after a long and bloody war it would be absurd "that we should not also look after the interests of our own people."\(^{74}\) Most writers and speakers interpreted Onslow's view loosely. Lilian Orpen thought the English governess in a Dutch family had "a splendid opportunity of serving the Empire by instilling British principles into the minds of the children, and helping to counteract the evil and disloyal influence by which they are surrounded."\(^{75}\)

\(^{72}\)B.W.E.A., Annual Report, 1900, p. 12.


\(^{74}\)Speech to S.A.C.S. annual meeting, May 13, 1903, ibid., Vol. II, June 1903, pp. 65-7.

\(^{75}\)Orpen, 'Governesses in South Africa,' ibid., Vol. III, May, 1904, pp. 50-3.
S. R. Perkins felt that the educated home-help who made herself valued and welcomed in a Dutch family "may feel that she is doing a real work for the Empire," and J. C. Wedgewood, M. P., told a S.A.C.S. annual meeting that such women should overcome the Boer antipathy for people and things British. "These people are not only going out to be married, but as missionaries of our Empire." In 1909, shortly before the Union Act gave South Africans self-government, the Earl of Crewe, then Colonial Secretary, was still reassuring the S.A.C.S. that racial differences were actually disappearing, and might happily be still further obliterated by intermarriage of Dutchmen with Englishwomen. By this time the temperature of the Dutch-English racial conflict had subsided, but a more apparent bogey was readily available in the insidious presence of the threatening negro.

As the Boer question cooled the argument shifted to an emphasis on the need for preservation of the white race in South Africa. L. S. Amery maintained in 1908 that the S.A.C.S. had made it amply clear that it had no intention to swamp the Dutch with a mass of English servants and teachers, but rather to improve the quality of social life and education for both white races; this could only be attained in a white man's country,

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and so long as Africans continued to perform domestic duties and influenced the children's upbringing the country did not belong wholly to the white man; women, therefore, must first replace the Africans in the household. This was an argument that came easily to a generation reared on imperial notions of the white man's burden and the natural inferiority of the negro. In 1904 the Governor of Natal, Sir Henry McCallum, had told the S.A.C.S. that his colony needed Englishwomen as servants to ameliorate the lot of colonial housewives whose children were being raised by Kaffir servants, with deplorable results, "for daily contact with a lower race must induce a familiarity with lower ideals." Lord Robert Cecil praised the South African Union Government of 1910, maintaining that the aim of the S.A.C.S. should now be "to furnish South Africa with a white female population, true colonists and settlers, who would live there and make homes for white men," and Sydney Goldman, at the same meeting, thought the object of emigration "was surely to strengthen the Anglo-Saxon race in South Africa, to keep pace with the increasing vigour of the natives." The women writers invariably saw the situation in more vivid terms.

Eleanor Tyrrell highlighted the moral dangers of the shortage of English-

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78 Speech to S.A.C.S. annual meeting, May 13, 1908, ibid., Vol. VI, June, 1908, pp. 6-8.

79 Speech to S.A.C.S. annual meeting, 1904, ibid., Vol. III, June, 1904, pp. 64-5.

women by depicting the life of the lonely settler in a life "face to face with primitive Nature. She has a way of making her demands imperatively felt." Without moral and social support it was difficult to always adhere to the "straight path."

Dick knows a man not so far away, a Harrowboy, he was, whose little house is clean, his bed comfortable, his dinner well-cooked, and ready when he wants it. A coloured woman seems to do extremely well for Smith, and nobody says anything about the half-caste child that is occasionally seen. Smith is jolly and contented, works hard on his farm, and his farm prospers.

The idle women of England had a duty to emigrate in order to prevent this degradation, for the sake of the men, themselves and the Empire.  

It is easily apparent that the arguments for domestic competence and racial dominance were integral parts of a rhetoric which made marriage and motherhood the highest ideal of female emigration. The complementary disproportion of the sexes in Britain and the colonies was still the most striking evil for emigrationists, and the emigration of potential wives seemed a natural remedy. From its beginning the Women's Emigration Society propaganda concentrated on the fruitful marriage prospects for its emigrants and the imperial benefit of sending properly educated women as mates for educated colonists. At times this propaganda became so

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82 An account of the opening meeting of the W.E.S. 'Northern Branch' deplored the shortage of good wives for colonial men "of good birth, of honest life, following the most wholesome of occupations, who would give all that life is worth to have a woman like his sisters come and make his home complete," while in Britain, "there are hundreds of women, well bred
obvious as to prompt criticism. Colonel Sir Gerard Smith, an ex-Governor of Western Australia, complained that too many speakers, "in advocating female emigration—not to Western Australia alone—have dwelt on the advantages which await emigrants in the shape of marriage, as if marriage were the be-all and end-all of human existence and aspirations." In 1907 the B.W.E.A. reminded its "country-workers" that the accusation of being a "matrimonial society" under camouflage was a perpetual hindrance to its operations; quite to the contrary, it maintained, "Work is inscribed on our banner, the security of immediate employment—and this does not commend itself to the woman whose primary object is to 'get settled.'" The B.W.E.A. was correct inasmuch as its major practical work was devoted to finding colonial employment rather than spouses for its emigrants. But there was a curious rift between practice and propaganda. The emigration societies were as active in promoting marriage as anyone, and most of the articles in the Imperial Colonist either openly stated or implied that colonial motherhood was the greatest need and highest aspiration for an educated woman. Mrs. Joyce remarked that in emigration "Success and well educated, who have been practiced in home duties, but who find no room for the exercise of these duties. These are just the women who are wanted as wives in the colonies. They need feel no sense of injury in the plain statement of the fact;" Anon. pamphlet, 'The Northern Branch and "Home", of the W.E.S.', reprinted from the Borough of Marylebone Mercury, June 3, 1882.

84 'A Word to Our Country Workers', ibid., Vol. VI, May 1907, pp. 3-5.
85 The B.W.E.A. annual report for 1909 expressed a desire to direct
usually means matrimony," and Miss Clark was not afraid to admit that in
the Canadian West women schoolteachers "invariably have the choice of the
matrimonial market." Other writers thought such noble prospects deserv-
ed more eloquent language. Mrs. Shepstone thought there was no shame
for a woman in anticipating "that supreme development of her own being,
which should make her part of the most important and powerful influences
necessary to our Empire." In 1909 Dr. G. R. Parkin argued that home
life, with women's "light and influence," was the secret of Britain's
imperial power and greatness, "which is transferred to homes abroad by
the good wives and mothers sent out to every part of the world." One
writer criticized the younger generation of British women for being too
selfish to venture abroad as pioneer help-mates.

Why, if it is well for the young Englishman of the upper and middle-
classes to face Colonial life, should it be considered impossible
for their sisters? . . . Are our women so neurotic, so deteriorated
since the early days of America, India and Australia, that they will
not help their men to conquer new worlds, give them the one really
strong incentive to Colonial settlement, rear sons and daughters to
carry on the English tradition in wider spaces?89

women "from other occupations to take up domestic duties in Canada, so as
to fit them eventually for homes of their own. p. 14.

86E. Joyce 'On Openings for Educated Women in Canada,' read at a
conference for the Central Bureau for the Employment of Women, June 18, 1906,
Imperial Colonist, Vol. V, July, 1906, pp. 100-4; G. B. Clark, 'Women's

87'Some Views of the Emigration of Women to South Africa,' ibid.,

88Speech at B.W.E.A. annual meeting, March 23, 1909, Annual Report,
1908, p. 34.

The gulf between reality and rhetoric is suggested by Eve Grahame's admission that many girls reacted contemptuously when matrimonial possibilities were mentioned in connection with emigration; she felt constrained to add the reminder that "in Canada there is almost a certainty of marriage for any attractive girl who wishes to settle and have a home of her own." 90

The same writers who made so much of the civilizing mission rhetoric were equally frank about their anti-feminist sentiments. Not surprisingly, since the contentious "marriage question" was at issue, the two attitudes invariably went hand-in-hand. The emigrationists judged the female excess in Britain to be the root cause of both female unemployment and feminist unrest, and assumed that once the sex disproportion had been eradicated by emigration both these symptoms would disappear in a society where most women could find their natural destiny as wives and mothers. Mrs. Piers Dutton, who had recently visited Rhodesia, maintained in 1913 that even the successful working women of England, the typists, governesses and schoolmistresses, still felt "a sense of something missing:" the lonely London typist "may have a few women friends, but too often a normal human society of both sexes is beyond her reach." In such circumstances her sense of injustice easily prompted her to look to the vote as a solution, "but a vote will not touch the causes, social and economic, that make for hardship in the existence of the woman-worker." On the other hand, in a

1913, pp. 27-8.

"well-organized Community" like Rhodesia women felt they had a good part to play in social life, and there was no sign of "the violent symptoms of the great feminine unrest" which plagued an overcrowded England. Miss Perkins deplored the fact that, because of the female surplus, women were forced into occupations "in which a woman's special aptitude finds no play;" the 1901 census had revealed that many women were engaged as commercial travellers, chemists, bill discounters, auctioneers, dentists and undertakers, all "to the detriment of these duties, most important of all to the State, of rearing the citizens of the future, which they alone can perform." The feminists were striving for women to be accepted in just such occupations as Perkins described, but she insisted that all of them were aberrations for women, who would be far better off as much needed housewives in the colonies. Another emigrationist, in describing the life of the "colonial lady-help," insisted that whatever may be said by the advanced suffragists, the natural destiny of the sex is marriage, and so much the worse for the world when the majority think otherwise.

Female emigration consistently appealed most to those who recoiled at the turmoil wrought by the feminists, and by 1914 the emigrationists could still agree with the 1881 strictures of Viscountess Strangford on the need


for women to colonize;

And after all what is the mission of women? Is it not to be the helpmeets of our Men and mothers of our Boys? I am told that women look higher now; but I myself know no mission so high as this—nor any education that can be given to women high enough to fit them for it: for those who mould the future are surely of the highest importance in the Present.94

A few years prior to the First World War the emigrationists won support from a new and unexpected source, a branch of the scientific community. From 1909 Caleb Williams Saleeby, a young eugenicist, turned his attention to the disproportion of the sexes in Britain. Saleeby claimed intellectual kinship with Herbert Spencer, but like the earlier eugenicists, for example Sir Francis Galton and Karl Pearson, he departed fundamentally from Spencer's *laissez-faire* social Darwinism by advocating specific social measures, such as birth control and temperance, to secure the survival of the fittest and racial perfection.95 For Saleeby eugenics was the business of the patriot; "National eugenics" was vital for the survival of the British Empire, which was a beneficent force for good in the world. The basic need was for a fuller exploitation of racial genius, and eugenics should be able to raise the average level of intelligence while at the same time providing the right conditions in which genius

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94 Viscountess Strangford speech at W.E.A. meeting at Grosvenor House, June 22, 1881, in brochure Women's Emigration Society, (Fawcett Library, News Cuttings, Book 1).

could prosper. Certain social problems inhibited these ideal conditions, however, one of the most important being the "woman question," for which Saleeby blamed the surplus of over a million and a quarter women in Britain. This, he argued, was a natural phenomenon in that the root cause was a higher infant mortality among males than females, but its long-term solution lay in the realisation of the "ideal of race culture," that is a reduction of the birth rate to the extent where all children were "already loved and desired in anticipation." In *Parenthood and Race Culture* in 1909 Saleeby rested his argument on this single solution, namely birth control, but three years later in *Woman and Womanhood*, he extended his interest to short-term solutions, and suggested emigration as a means to eliminate the female surplus.96

In his second book Saleeby deplored the emigration of more males than females, suggesting that Britain must either cease exporting its males or send an equal number of women to accompany them. The cooperation of women was essential to the founding of new nations, and the colonies needed more white women to prevent the growth of a "half-caste" population. In Britain the alternative to female emigration would be polygamy,

96 C. W. Saleeby, *Parenthood and Race Culture: An Outline of Eugenics*, (London, 1909), pp. x-xi, 291-4. Saleeby graduated M.D. from Edinburgh in 1904 and was the Royal Institution Lecturer in Eugenics in 1907, 1908, 1914, 1917 and 1923; he was Vice-President of the National Temperance League, and in 1920-1 was Chairman of the World League Against Alcoholism, an issue to which he was passionately devoted in the cause of eugenics; *Who Was Who*, Vol. III, 1929-40, London, 1941, pp. 1189-90.
or at least "something immeasurably worse," prostitution, which was already a deplorable symptom of the disproportion between the sexes. Hence the growing surplus of females threatened the very practice of monogamy, which was essential to Saleeby's "race-culture." But quite apart from that, the causes of the sex disparity at home—such as infant mortality, child mortality, war and excessive male emigration—were evils in themselves, in the case of emigration because it threatened racial improvement throughout the Empire.97

The emigrationists welcomed this espousal of their cause, agreeing that large scale female emigration to the dominions "is a measure of fundamental statesmanship and indispensable if, for example, the White Empire is to be saved for British blood and British ideals."98 But Saleeby's attitude is most illuminating for its combination with the same kind of anti-feminism which appears in emigration propaganda. The object of all Saleeby's proposals was to ensure that "the best women must be the mothers of the future," and to this end all other matters must be subordinated. He agreed with Herbert Spencer's dictum that all female activities which were incompatible with motherhood were liabilities to the nation; a woman was, in effect, an instrument for furthering the progress of

98 Imperial Colonist, Vol. IX, April, 1911, p. 282.
"race-culture:"

Women, being constructed by Nature, as individuals, for her racial ends, they best realize themselves, are happy and more beautiful, live longer and more useful lives, when they follow as mothers or foster-mothers in the wide and scarcely metaphorical sense of the word, the career suggested in Wordsworth's lovely lines. [A tribute to motherhood].

Saleeby did not insist that all women must marry, but did expect spinsters, at least, to become "foster-mothers" in the sense of working, like Florence Nightingale, at characteristically feminine duties such as teaching and nursing. Female higher education should concentrate on a curriculum directed towards motherhood, specifically household economics and child psychology. The feminists were misguided in that most of their aims were incompatible with eugenics; in fact, according to Saleeby, many varieties of feminism would be "ruinous to the race." Instead he advocated "Eugenic Feminism," a doctrine which allowed women the same right to consideration, recognition and opportunity as men, but at the same time asserted that the best means for women to fulfil themselves was in motherhood. Saleeby supported female suffrage and the prospect of female Members of Parliament—he was taken with the potential wisdom of the "elder matron" as M.P.—because he was convinced that women's vote would serve the cause of eugenics, but he was at odds fundamentally with the basic feminist drive for equal access to the professions and all other typically male employment preserves.  

For all its apparent scientific grounding, Saleeby's position hardly differed from that of the mid-

99Saleeby, Woman and Womanhood, pp. 6-24, 128-31.
Victorian moralists who insisted that women should be confined to their "proper sphere." His attitude, combined with his support of the emigrationists, illuminates the thesis that female emigration, and especially the home-help policy, was by its very nature an anti-feminist movement.

Saleeby's arguments reinforced the credibility of the emigrationists' highly sentimentalized propaganda, but to what extent did their propaganda really reflect the colonial lives of home-helps? Certainly the emigration workers themselves were not unaware of the tendency of their writings, and one admitted that it was wise first to entice the genteel sheltered woman to a point where she would at least be willing to face a course of domestic training, the first step in preparing for the roughness of colonial life. The B.W.E.A. and S.A.C.S. received many letters from "young ladies" wanting colonial employment but not wishing "to emigrate" or do "anything menial." Three months of training often brought such women down to earth, but in the meantime a few euphemisms could be helpful:

Sometimes it is better not to 'call a spade a spade,' but by talking of technical training with big T.T. and domestic economy and woman's work (also in capitals), or home experience and manual not menial work, with allusions to the development of the young nations and building up of the Empire, to arrive at the same point as if we had written back at once to say 'you must be prepared to undertake the family wash'! 100

The persistent colonial opinion on the prime need for rough hard work and a willingness to face hardship and privation was never hidden by the

100: How Not to Do It' Imperial Colonist, Vol. VI, Sept. 1908, pp.8-9.
emigrationists, but it is questionable whether their noble compensations of social equality and being made "part of the family" always lived up to expectations.

A frank corrective to some of the more effusive propaganda was published in 1912. Ella C. Sykes, a wealthy English gentlewoman, undertook a visit to Canada in 1911 to study women's employment conditions for the 'Colonial Intelligence League;' instead of making the usual enquiries, however, she masqueraded as a genuine inexperienced home-help, and published her impressions of six different engagements on her return. Most of her experiences were not encouraging for the prospective educated home-help. Even after overcoming her initial incompetence she found that her education and previous social position counted for nothing. In recently emigrated English families and in Canadian families in towns she was treated as an ordinary servant with no concession towards being considered "one of the family." In isolated farm and prairie homes, where the atmosphere was more comradely, the work was so hard as to amount to

101 The overwhelming impression conveyed by published answers to a questionnaire sent to Western Canadian housewives in 1886 was that women must be ready to work hard, stoop to any manual chores and be prepared to face privations and set-backs before being successful; Anon. What Women Say of the Canadian North-West. A Simple Statement of the Experiences of Women Settled in all parts of Manitoba and the North-West Territories, (1886). Emigration propaganda continually reiterated that "fine ladies are not wanted" as emigrants. 'Emigration for English Girls, A Chat with Mrs. Joyce, The Spinning Wheel, For Wives, Mothers and Daughters, Vol. IV, Sept. 8, 1894.
a perpetual round of drudgery, which left no time for reading or the other common pursuits of an educated woman. Only in Victoria, where the older population regularly sought 'lady-helps,' and a few other locations in British Columbia did she find that the educated home-help's treatment lived up to that depicted in emigration propaganda. But despite all this she still concluded that most educated women would be better off as Canadian home-helps; providing they avoided the more sophisticated towns they would not be looked down on socially as in England. Ella Sykes did in fact suffer some humiliating experiences in the more class-conscious families, but after all her varied experience she insisted that if she had to earn her living she would "not hesitate for a moment between the wide, free life of Canada and my probable lot in an overcrowded England." On balance she thought it would be "well worth a girl's while to put up with some discomfort and toil in the Dominion, where she is badly needed, and where, if of the right type, she will in all likelihood succeed beyond her anticipations." A review of her book in the Imperial Colonist insisted that Ella Sykes would have avoided her unpleasant experiences if she had obtained positions through B.W.E.A. representatives instead of independent advertisements, but by and large it agreed with her general conclusions and reiterated the opinion that the best place for the home-help was in British Columbia.\footnote{E. C. Sykes, A Home-Help in Canada, (London, 1912), p. ix, 302-4 \textit{et passim}; Imperial Colonist, Vol. X, Jan. 1913, pp. 214-5. Sykes was already accustomed to world travel, having accompanied her brother, Sir Percy Sykes, to Persia in 1896; she was the first woman to ride from the Caspian Sea to India, which she described in Through Persia on a Side Saddle, \textit{Who Was Who}, Vol. III, 1929-30, p. 1319.}
All the signs point to the conclusion that although the colonial home-help did not find the utopia promised in the emigrationists' rhetoric, the emigration solution still proved more ameliorative to the educated woman, for socio-psychological reasons, than any alternative in Britain. Some writers made much of the fact that the South African "lady-help" was best off because African servants performed all the heaviest work, but the printed letters from home-helps indicate far more satisfaction with circumstances surrounding their home life and social intercourse than actual duties and remuneration. "L.C.C." went as a governess to Bloemfontein, South Africa, and was at first shocked that she was expected to assist in all household duties like any home-help, but she soon adapted to this novelty and found other compensations in the different customs of the country: "one learns not to mind these things a bit, I look upon it all as a huge picnic." Repeatedly these women implied, often indirectly, that the biggest change for them had been in their basic way of life rather than in salary, and the Old World stigma attaching to "menial work" simply never arose. A Vancouver "companion-help" thought her new circumstances admirably suited to similar women still in England.

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103 See, for example, 'A Talk with Miss Lefroy,' The Echo, April 13, 1895, p. 2; S. R. Perkins, 'Openings for Women in South Africa,' Imperial Colonist, Vol. IV, Aug. 1905, pp. 87-8; Speech of Richard Jebb to S.A.C.S. annual meeting, June 10, 1909, ibid., Vol. VII, July 1909, pp. 100-2.

104 Letter to Miss Wilson, Scottish correspondent, B.W.E.A., Sept. 20, 1897; U.B.W.E.A., Annual Report, 1897, p. 34.
Why don't they come out here some of those white slaves in England? Why, why? I have always taken good salaries myself, but have met many of these poor girls, and only hope that I may in writing to provincial English papers induce some of them to come out here and enjoy with me this simple, natural, though not lazy life.  

Such letters abound in the publications of the various emigration societies, and although the societies would be naturally inclined to print the most favourable letters, there is no evidence of any significant number of failures or dissatisfaction, which was quick to communicate itself through disgruntled colonial employers. The overwhelming impression is that the educated home-help was successful because she was freed from the class-bound conventions of British society.

For women who were not satisfied with the life of a home-help the societies' advice to use that position as an initial "stepping-stone" to more challenging employment seems to have been widely followed. Many went with that exact intention, and the B.W.E.A. Training College reported that numbers of its students regularly became teachers, typists and hostel superintendents after a year as home-helps.  

The B.W.E.A. saw this as

105 "E.R," a "young lady" to Miss Lefroy (B.W.E.A. Secretary), Vancouver, (n.d.), U.B.W.E.A., Annual Report, 1898, p. 29. See also "G.H." to Lefroy, Kelowna, May 17, 1912, another home-help who, after describing her new talents at milking cows, caring for chickens and ducks, added that she would never want to live in England again; B.W.E.A., Annual Report, 1912, pp. 41-2. The societies also described cases of women with genteel backgrounds, one of whom, for example, "had the courage to go out as a general servant," and prospered eventually as a home-help; Imperial Colonist, Vol. II, July, 1903, p. 80. See also the report of the B.W.E.A. annual meeting, Feb., 28, 1905, Imperial Colonist, Vol. IV, April 1905, p. 40.

a question of adaptability, for after a year of colonial domestic work
most women were much more likely to succeed in any other occupation.

Of the many ladies and middle-class girls 'placed' by the W.E.A. in
the Colonies, those who were now doing best were those who took at
once any work they could get, and who, having thus proved their
willingness and their capabilities, had by degrees been enabled to
better their position.107

The Colonial Intelligence League formed in 1910, was primarily directed to
ensuring that this kind of progress took place. It sought to place wo-
men in "other professions besides those of Teacher and Home-Help" but in-
sisted that they first be prepared to work as home-helps.108 This ap-
proach began during the late 'nineties and became increasingly common in
the years immediately preceding the World War. It meant that a new type
of educated woman was beginning to emigrate, a woman for whom "the cruel
 crush of life" no longer centered round the governesses' schoolroom but
round "the soul-destroying typewriter, so largely her only resource,
grinding out youth and joy and life, day after day, for small pay, in hot
indoor narrowness."109 Distressed gentlewomen, in the classic mid-
Victorian sense of the term, still existed in thousands at the beginning
of the twentieth century, and they remained a major preoccupation of the

107 Women's Emigration Association," "an account of a paper read
by Miss Lefroy on 'Emigration' at an 'At Home' held by Mrs. Younghusband,"
in The Queen, Feb. 15, 1896, p. 272. See also M. Montgomery Campbell,
1903, pp. 17-8.

108 Colonial Intelligence for Educated Women," Imperial Colonist,
Vol. VIII, April, 1910, p. 51.

109 Mrs. J. Hopkinson, 'On Colonisation of Women in South Africa,'
read to the 'British Association' on board S.S. Durham Castle, Oct. 13,
emigrationists, but the trained typist, clerk or nurse was relatively new to the colonial scene, and reflected recent changes in British society and the position of women.

As already discussed the new emigration societies facilitated the emigration outlet after 1880 for a wide range of lower middle-class women as well as impoverished gentlewomen. The home-help idea proved to be a practical solution for both classes, although the lower middle-class girl, who had frequently done the housework in her own home, often had the advantage in that she required no special training before emigrating. By the turn of the century, however, an increasing number of women were preparing for other careers in secretarial work, nursing and teaching. The fact that the well-educated minority still monopolized the better paid jobs in Britain meant that considerable numbers of partly trained women, many of them from lower middle-class suburban families, sought to pursue their careers abroad, where in general the prospects and pay were better.\textsuperscript{110} Distressed gentlewomen, who, by definition, were untrained for employment when they most needed it, again suffered in relation to the lower middle-class emigrant, and consequently often turned to relatively eccentric occupations such as the "lady-gardener."\textsuperscript{111}

\textsuperscript{110}See, for example, the discussion of Canadian secretarial work, reporting that general conditions were better and working hours shorter, B.W.E.A., Annual Report, 1908, p. 24.

\textsuperscript{111}There was considerable interest in gardening, or horticulture,
Teaching remained a possibility, whether as a schoolmistress or private governess, but the emigration societies, acknowledging the colonial demands for adequate training, insisted that prospective teachers of any kind be properly educated, with some form of certificate or diploma. By the twentieth century it was as difficult for the distressed gentlewoman to emigrate as it was for her to obtain respectable and remunerative employment in Britain.

During the decade preceding 1914 the emigration societies devoted more and more of their work to the new professions and trades of the lower middle-class woman, at the expense of the ill-qualified distressed gentlewoman. Basically this was a function of the sudden explosion in the populations of colonial towns especially in Canada. In 1909 the Alberta

as a career for women during the decade before the World War, and in each case the colonial possibilities of such a career were pursued, but for the impoverished gentlewoman it involved the same specialized training as any other career. See especially Viscountess F. G. Wolseley, *Gardening for Women*, London, 1908, p. xiv, 1-7, 89, 232; The Times, Dec. 26, 1907, p. 8; Mrs. J. Hopkinson, 'On Colonisation of Women in South Africa,' *Imperial Colonist*, Feb. 1906, pp. 38-40.


113 Ella Sykes gave a long catalogue of her encounters with innumerable English gentlewomen in Canada who were wholly unequipped for any useful work, but expected to find the following kind of employment: "I want to live in a home and arrange the flowers and help the lady of the house with her correspondence;" Sykes, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-103. Miss G. B. Clark noted in one of her surveys of employment prospects in Canada that "It should always be remembered that Canada has a horror of the useless gentlewoman," 'Are Educated Women Wanted in Canada?' Part III, *Imperial Colonist*, Vol. VIII, April, 1910, pp. 52-5.
Deputy Minister of Education, D. S. MacKenzie, visited England and appealed to the B.W.E.A. to send out more qualified teachers; the demand in elementary schools far outstripped local supply, and women with an English certificate could be certain of immediate employment. Secondary and specialist teachers were usually required first to take some Canadian training, but opportunities for primary schoolteachers were unlimited. The new schools also effectively supplanted the governess, and except for remote rural areas the Canadian governess became a rarity. The well-trained stenographer also found colonial employment an easy matter, but, as Ella Sykes discovered, each city was overstocked with "indifferent typists" so that good training was essential. The C.I.L., during its brief four years of active existence before 1914, still catered to the home-help, but was increasingly involved in finding professional and semi-professional work for professional women, and this, indeed, was the reason


for its original formation.\textsuperscript{117} The B.W.E.A. itself, which maintained its traditional approach of assisting women of all classes, with the emphasis on educated women, signified the shift of focus by a noteworthy change in terminology. Until 1909 its annual reports classified educated emigrants, into two groups, one "Ladies" and the other "Middle-class;" from 1910 it dropped the term "Ladies" and instead used "Educated women," "Middle-class and business," and a finer breakdown of other occupations such as "Teachers," "Nurses" and "Stenographers."\textsuperscript{118} Yet in spite of all these changes the emigrationists' rhetoric which expounded the domestic helpmeet's civilizing mission continued unabated. Changes in both British and colonial social structures forced the emigration societies to become sophisticated placement agencies for highly qualified women, but their traditionalist and anti-feminist inclinations remained enshrined in pious and sentimental propaganda.

The female emigration societies were at their peak when, in 1914, their active operations, like those of most voluntary emigration organizations, came to an abrupt end with the outbreak of war. There are no

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{117} The C.I.L. committee was partly composed of B.W.E.A. and S.A.C.S. members who were exclusively interested in the problems of the educated woman, but one half of the committee members were members of the 'Head Mistresses Association,' this concession being a condition of their help. The first report of the C.I.L. recognized that its formation was necessary because "During the last ten or fifteen years the position of the educated woman in this country has become every day more difficult." \textit{Annual Report, 1910-1}, pp. 7-9; see also the report for 1912-3, pp. 24-5.
\item \textsuperscript{118} B.W.E.A., \textit{Annual Reports}, 1909, p. 10, 1910, pp. 16-7, 1911, p. 15.
\end{itemize}
total figures for the W.E.S., which operated from 1880 to 1884, but between them the B.W.E.A., S.A.C.S. and C.I.L. helped approximately 20,000 women to emigrate in the thirty years between 1884 and 1914, or an average of less than 700 each year. A large proportion of these women were distinctly working-class, and there are insufficient records to determine the exact numbers and origins of middle-class emigrants. The closest analysis, which must still be heavily qualified, can be made from the records of the B.W.E.A. annual reports. After 1906 the B.W.E.A. began to list class origins or the occupations of some of its Canadian emigrants; unfortunately the same was not done for Australasian and American emigrants, and nearly half of those listed were indistinguishable as to class, being described only as "escorts to friends, relations, situations" etc. if the society did not provide actual financial assistance. With these reservations it is possible to form a conservative estimate of the proportion of middle-class women helped to emigrate to Canada by the B.W.E.A. in these years.

Table 6

Female Emigrants Assisted to Canada by B.W.E.A., 1906-1914

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>538</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>706</td>
<td>639</td>
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<td>1908</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>142</td>
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<td>1909</td>
<td>398</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>202</td>
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<td>1910</td>
<td>932</td>
<td>803</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>1012</td>
<td>905</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>1126</td>
<td>956</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>1007</td>
<td>857</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>6706</td>
<td>5768</td>
<td>1079</td>
<td>2629</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage of Total to Canada 18.5% 45.5%

Table 6 reveals that 18.5 percent of the Canadian emigrants were variously classified as middle-class while 45.5 percent were not distinguished as to class at all; the proportion, therefore, was probably somewhat higher than indicated here. In 1912 Lady Knightley, the B.W.E.A. president, and Mrs. Joyce told a Dominions Royal Commission that approximately 20 percent of B.W.E.A. and S.A.C.S. emigrants were educated women.\(^{121}\) The absolute numbers shown here are, of course, minimal, but to these must be added

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\(^{120}\) The figures are compiled from the B.W.E.A. Annual Reports, 1906 to 1914. Nurses are not included in the middle-class column.

\(^{121}\) Evidence of Mrs. Joyce and Lady Knightley of Fawsley to Dominions Royal Commission on Natural Resources, Trade and Legislation of Certain Portions of H. M. Dominions, Part I, Migration, PP. 1912-3, XVI, Cd. 6516, p. 45.
those of the S.A.C.S., which after the Boer War was assisting an average of about 400 women a year. The C.I.L. assisted 269 women, all of them educated, between 1911 and 1914, and its own work probably accounts for the decline in the numbers of the middle-class emigrants sent after 1911 by its sister organisation, the B.W.E.A.\textsuperscript{122} The indications are that middle-class women were turning increasingly to emigration on the eve of the World War. The national figures are of only slight help in confirming this trend, since even after 1900 approximately 70 percent of female emigrants were not classified as to occupation, and most middle-class ‘home-helps,’ for example, would have been entered as domestic servants. Still, even these inadequate figures reveal a marked increase in middle-class female emigration after 1903, as shown in Table 7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Female Emigrants</th>
<th>Teachers, Clerks, or Professional Women</th>
<th>Miscellaneous or Occupation not stated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>57,248</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>36,348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>63,909</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>41,555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>65,213</td>
<td>666</td>
<td>45,653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>73,663</td>
<td>686</td>
<td>56,864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>86,687</td>
<td>1698</td>
<td>66,815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>96,224</td>
<td>1737</td>
<td>70,275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>88,279</td>
<td>1351</td>
<td>65,982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>105,139</td>
<td>1656</td>
<td>77,474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>128,920</td>
<td>1812</td>
<td>96,866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>97,174</td>
<td>2165</td>
<td>71,371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>103,138</td>
<td>2225</td>
<td>73,102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>136,699</td>
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<td>97,402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>156,606</td>
<td>3751</td>
<td>110,642</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{122}C.I.L., Annual Reports, 1911-2 - 1914-5.

\textsuperscript{123}Ferenczi, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 635, Table viii, see also Carrier
In the late-Victorian and Edwardian periods single women increasingly turned to emigration without the assistance of voluntary organizations, and the B.W.E.A. was convinced that far more women emigrated independently than under its auspices. Emigration was no longer the hazardous experience it had once been, and independent women could often safely spurn the aid of a protective society. Ella Sykes met some of these women in Canada and was impressed with their self-reliance. The most than can be said with certainty, therefore, is that the numbers of single middle-class female emigrants increased steadily up to 1914.

Although emigration was the most promising and ameliorative solution for the problems of distressed gentlewomen, the growing emphasis on training and professional work made it increasingly difficult for them to emigrate. The multi-class policy of emigration promoters after 1880 was invaluable in opening the door to lower middle-class women, very likely

and Jeffrey, op. cit., Table 12, pp. 58-9.

124 U.B.W.E.A., Annual Report, 1900, p. 25; Dr. E. C. Sparrow, 'Canada for Girls,' Imperial Colonist, Vol. XI, Feb. 1913, pp. 29-32; Sykes, op. cit., pp. 3-4, 76. It was not unusual for wealthier colonial residents to hire women on a visit to England and return with them, thus avoiding the need for a voluntary organisation; U.B.W.E.A., Annual Report, 1889-90, p. 10. Some idea of the pressure among women for emigration compared to those assisted by the societies is derived from the figures of actual applicants; in 1906, for example, when the B.W.E.A. aided 60 women, it had 3,501 applicants and conducted 2,126 interviews; Annual Report, p. 12. In 1901, when the 'South African Expansion Committee,' (subsequently the S.A.C.S.) sent 670 women to South Africa, it had 7311 applications; 'What We Are Doing,' Imperial Colonist, pp. 110-1.
the most socially mobile women in late-Victorian and Edwardian England. Furthermore the home-help training schemes revealed just how practical and down-to-earth the emigrationists could be, and enhanced the credibility of their propaganda, which concentrated almost exclusively on the role of domestic workers, housewives and mothers. This propaganda was very likely of greater significance than the size of the actual movement. But the emigration rhetoric, a unique and anachronistic combination of the mid-Victorian civilizing mission with notions of imperial and racial superiority and the sanctity of English motherhood, antagonized the feminists and was at odds with the general trend toward the emigration of well-trained professional women seeking professional work. The rhetoric was understandably repugnant to the feminists, and it obstructed their effective co-operation in a movement which offered encouraging prospects to a wide range of middle-class women, and diverted attention from the new trend of the future: the migration of the elite, highly specialised and far from "distressed" woman.
Chapter VIII

Conclusion

The Victorian age exhibits some sharp contrasts: doctrinaire laissez-faire economics co-existed with a drift to collectivism, faith in progress with insecurity, enthusiasm and earnestness with anxiety and doubt. The contrast between a pervasive optimism and the stark reality of the "Two Nations" of rich and poor is a commonplace of Victorian history. Similarly, the progress and prosperity of the middle-class was qualified for countless families by the threat of economic insecurity. Prosperous Victorians also had their casualties, and throughout the long Victorian era few were so persistent or impervious to reform as the phenomenon of the unmarried distressed gentlewoman. Her existence in the midst of affluence was an uncomfortable reminder of deficiencies in the Victorian social system.

A strict moral code compounded the distressed gentlewoman's dilemma and made the most practical solutions all the more difficult of attainment. Most female employment was inconsistent with middle-class respectability, and even the impoverished gentlewoman was reluctant to run the risk of further class decline by turning to degrading menial work. Emigration, which offered the most attractive escape from the spinster's alienation, was subject to similar sanctions by the middle-class, at least during the first half of the century. The middle-class prejudice against female emigration, in the face of the pathetic condition of a growing army of distressed gentlewomen, is a measure of the pervasive strength of Victorian
moral values. The prevailing social code emphasized marriage as the most respectable career for women, and for those who could not achieve it the same rigid social code proscribed most forms of unorthodox escape. When, in the early 'fifties, female emigration, especially to Australia, finally did emerge as a respectable alternative, middle-class terminology invested it with the pious justification of the feminine civilizing mission, a convenient means to make it appear to conform to Victorian expectations of English womanhood.

The existence of distressed gentlewomen was a paradox among a predominantly self-confident, if not complacent, middle-class, but more paradoxical was the fact that these women should remain a major problem until 1914, in spite of all the progress made in female education and employment after the eighteen-sixties. The problem was only surmounted with the almost universal absorption of women of all classes into productive industry during and after the First World War, and the subsequent increase in the attendance of middle-class girls at secondary schools. The events of the war, which simultaneously siphoned off the male labour force and created new demands for domestic industry, served as a catalyst to accelerate the trends already discernible in the Edwardian period towards female employment. Not only did the impetus of war create the revolutionary but temporary phenomenon of the genteel munitions worker, bus-conductress and the like, but it marked, in Arthur Marwick's words, the decisive "rise of the business girl, taking the term to cover the whole range from executive secretary to shorthand typist." At the same
time the new working woman frequently found it necessary to travel or live far from home, and consequently gained an unprecedented amount of social independence.¹ Thus there was a quickening in the steady atrophy of the Victorian moral code which placed prohibitions on female work and mobility, and while British women continued to emigrate in numbers after the war, they no longer did so as helpless gentlewomen, and their emigration ceased to raise the issues that it had done in Victorian society. The existence of the distressed gentlewoman as a major problem was essentially a pre-war phenomenon that faded with the demise of the old society that had produced it.

The Edwardian period contained all the elements of both post-war and Victorian societies in an unstable confrontation. The new elements were especially volatile with respect to women. George Dangerfield claimed that the militant suffragette movement symbolized the reassertion of a great female principle, the "long-neglected masculinity" of women. By 1910, he argued, "the ideal of personal security through respectability had become putrid: therefore it was necessary that it should die."² He gave less emphasis to the equally important reaction of conservative

¹By 1897 only 20,000 girls were attending recognized (i.e. with a curriculum approximating that of boys' schools) secondary schools; in a little more than twenty years the number increased to 185,000 and by 1936 the figure was 500,000. Kamm, Hope Deferred, p. 233. A. Marwick, The Deluge, (London, 1965), pp. 92-4.

elements against the frightening doctrine of the "New Woman." Quite apart from militancy, the open Edwardian discussion of divorce and birth-control, which foreshadowed a social revolution in relations between the sexes and the role of women in society, caused a defensive return to all the old Victorian cliches about women's "proper sphere." The threat of basic changes in marriage and sexual relations raised the spectre of the independent mobile woman, the decline of the family as a stable social unit, a declining population, a crumbling Empire, promiscuity and sexual license and the new socialism. Victorian moral values had been less subject to the doubting and insecurity which had troubled nineteenth century intellectual theories, but for conservatives Edwardian feminism posed a challenge to traditional moral values; for them it seemed to threaten the entire social structure, and with it male government, sexual morality and their own moral authority.  

These inflammatory changes and tensions found an echo in Edwardian female emigration. The Edwardian female emigrant was very largely a new kind of woman, the well-trained, independent and professional girl who, instead of simply seeking in the colonies the husband who had eluded her

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3S. Hynes, in The Edwardian Turn of Mind, (Princeton, 1968), pp. 172-200, only recently emphasized the depth of the conservative reaction to the Edwardian revolution in attitudes to sexual relations; R. Fulford, in Votes for Women: The Story of a Struggle, (London, 1958), argued that the conservative reaction to the militant suffragettes deferred the granting of the suffrage; W. E. Houghton, in The Victorian Frame of Mind, (New Haven, 1957), pp. 10-1, distinguishes between the constant insecurity of Victorian intellectual theories and the relative firmness of contemporary moral values.
in Britain, concentrated, at least initially, on the search for remunerative and rewarding work. By contrast the gentlewoman without professional training who could combine her culture and refinement with the domestic drudgery of the colonial housewife became a rarity. Yet the sentimental rhetoric used to justify female emigration reached its peak in intensity and complexity during this period. Enthusiastic moralists promoted the feminine civilizing mission with renewed vigour and invested it with the noble ideal of preserving the Empire for Anglo-Saxon virtues through English motherhood. The wide disparity between propaganda and practice strongly suggests that this sudden revival of interest in English motherhood in the colonies was an integral part of the conservative reaction against the "New Woman" of Edwardian England. The revolutionary doctrines of psychologists, Fabians and militants furthered this reaction, but beneath doctrine and theory lay the hard fact that a growing proportion of independent and mobile women were free from the constraints of the Victorian family. They included the women who were emigrating in force to Canada and South Africa.

The same individuals who reacted so violently against the signs of sexual revolution found the combination of emigration with the feminine civilizing mission a safe and comfortable notion. John St. Loe Strachey, the Tory editor of the Spectator, countered H. G. Wells' criticism of the existing matrimonial system with the flat statement that "one man and one woman is the law of fecundity," and was offended at the immoral implications in Wells' novel, Ann Veronica, in which the heroine uses birth-control
to escape the penalty of an illicit relationship. Not surprisingly, Strachey also lectured the British Women's Emigration Association on the virtues of influencing rising states with the "Anglo-Saxon ideals" of English motherhood, arguing that the Empire could not exist without female emigrants who would go out to build colonial homes. These arguments were a solace to those who feared that attacks on marriage and the family, made by the proponents of easier divorce and birth-control, would depopulate the Empire. In the Edwardian period the popular concept of female emigration became a defense mechanism against the break-up of Victorian moral values.

The failure of the Victorian emigration societies to provide a consistent major outlet for distressed gentlewomen reflected the inability of the Victorians to provide for women who theoretically had no place in the social system. The constant pressure on early-Victorian working-class emigration facilities from these women indicates that the desire to emigrate was certainly present. But at different times the demands of the colonists for working-class women, the principles of the feminists and the insistence of the British emigration organizations on expensive preliminary domestic training raised insuperable barriers. The barriers, in fact, became stronger throughout the century, and they accentuated the tendency of late-Victorian reforms in female education and employment to

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make the distressed gentlewoman's position increasingly untenable. Unable to afford the necessary training for colonial life, superficially educated, untrained and impoverished gentlewomen found their old place usurped by lower-middle-class women who already had experience of domestic work in their homes, and whose education, however brief, had been directed towards useful employment rather than polite accomplishments. Similarly, until the twentieth century the expansion of secondary education for girls progressed at a slow pace and benefitted mainly the women of the upper-middle-class. Impecunious gentlewomen whose parents had stubbornly refused to provide them with a "modern" education consequently found that competition became more intense and demoralizing in their traditional career of teaching. The mid-Victorian governess was a pathetic figure, but less so than the unemployable late-Victorian spinster, immortalized in the 'nineties in George Gissing's *The Odd Women*. Hence until secondary education became a universal acquirement of middle-class girls all the well-intentioned philanthropy and reforms of the Victorians only compounded the problems of their distressed gentlewomen.

The failure to exploit the advantages of emigration for distressed gentlewomen seems ironic in the light of evidence that this outlet, more than any other alternatives in Britain, alleviated the experience of alienation shared by these women. It could provide this solution because only in new societies could a gentlewoman find the combination of remunerative work and a radical change in social relations. In Britain it had been the disturbance of the woman's social relations which produced such
a unique form of alienation, a condition which differed fundamentally from the kinds of alienation we today recognize as the results of life in advanced technological societies. Modern sociologists are inclined to look for the roots of alienation in an individual's actual work situation. The current perspective views the employee's inability to find meaning in his employment and the helpless feeling of being a cog in a depersonalized machine as basic alienating tendencies. This was emphatically not the case for the Victorian gentlewoman. The vital aspects of her life revolved round the family and a perceived solidarity with an elite social class. This solidarity was lost with the economic decline and dispersal of a woman's family, and only the remote contingency of a good marriage was likely to restore it in Britain. Hence the return of that class solidarity in a colonial environment, where a woman's employment did not compromise her gentility, resolved the distressed gentlewoman's dilemma. Her alienation was rooted in the need for secure social relations rather than the search for meaning in work.

Practically every facet of the distressed gentlewoman's experience, like her alienation, stemmed from conditions in Victorian society, and her problems had little in common with those faced today by modern women in Western societies. Distressed gentlewomen, however impoverished, who emigrated still constituted a social elite by virtue of their gentility.

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Unlike the elite migrations of the twentieth century, however, theirs was stimulated by downward social mobility, and in this respect had more in common with contemporary working-class emigration. In the familiar terminology of many historians of migration movements they responded more to the "push" of adverse conditions in the old country than to the "pull" of attractive opportunities in the new. Only at the end of the century does the more modern phenomena of female emigration stimulated by the aspirations of upward social mobility among lower-middle-class girls become apparent. Nevertheless, the psychological maladjustment of distressed gentlewomen foreshadowed similar problems which characterize the "migratory elite" of modern societies, the basic difference being that emigration relieved the alienation of distressed gentlewomen while the modern elite become alienated as a result of their experience as immigrants.  

The existence of the distressed gentlewoman was the most striking evidence of the need for the emancipation of Victorian women, and in fact was the prime factor in moving the early feminists to begin their campaign for equality. Today, in Western industrial societies, while many incongruities still exist, female equality in its broad outlines has been achieved, the distressed gentlewoman is unknown, and the modern problem is essentially one of learning to cope with the different aspects of emancipation. The implications of female education, employment, the vote, birth-control and the impact of emancipation on sexual relations and the

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6 Musgrove, Migratory Elite, passim.
family are today problems calling for adjustments in society, but their feasibility in principle is no longer a matter for serious debate. The independent mobility of modern women is taken for granted, and is one symptom of the fundamental change that has occurred since the break-up of the Victorian social code. Distressed gentlewomen were a product of that social code, and for the majority the lost opportunity of emigration highlighted the irrational logic of a system which failed to take account of their existence.
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## Appendix A

**Record of 14 Female Emigrant Ships despatched by the London Emigration Committee, 1833-1836.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ship and Year</th>
<th>Origin of Emigrants and Destination</th>
<th>Number of Females</th>
<th>Remarks on type of emigrants, reception by colonists, etc.</th>
<th>Nature of colonial reactions &amp; publicity</th>
<th>Actual quality of emigrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bussorah Merchant 1833</td>
<td>Predominantly English. London to Sydney.</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>Initial reaction expressed satisfaction but subsequent reports complained of a &quot;few exceptions&quot; who were prostitutes.</td>
<td>Adverse</td>
<td>Majority employed immediately. Beneficial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leyton 1833</td>
<td>Predominantly English. London to Sydney.</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>Strong complaints of disorder and promiscuity during the voyage, later attributed by Forster to quarrels between Captain, Surgeon and Superintendent. Majority were such abandoned prostitutes that Sydney Ladies Committee refused to supervise them. Only 50 described as suitable.</td>
<td>Adverse</td>
<td>Majority unsuitable, but 50 useful. Most unfavourable ship of the entire scheme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strathfield 1834</td>
<td>Predominantly English. London to Hobart Town.</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>Committee's emigrants described as &quot;of a very superior&quot; class, but strong complaints of 14 disorderly women accompanying them who were not assisted or selected by the Committee. Disorder on voyage attributed to disagreement between Surgeon, Superintendent and Matron.</td>
<td>Adverse</td>
<td>Beneficial</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ship and Year</th>
<th>Origin of Emigrants and Destination</th>
<th>Number of Females</th>
<th>Remarks on type of emigrants, reception by colonists, etc.</th>
<th>Nature of Colonial Reactions &amp; Publicity</th>
<th>Actual Quality of Emigrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>David Scott, 1831</td>
<td>Predominantly English. London to Sydney.</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>Majority of females &quot;highly respectable,&quot; but 41 described as prostitutes. Disorder on voyage attributed to an incompetent Superintendent. Colonists accused Marshall of embarking the worst women just before departure.</td>
<td>Adverse</td>
<td>Majority beneficial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah, 1834</td>
<td>Predominantly English. London to Hobart Town</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>Arthur and Ladies' Committee praised this as the best shipment of emigrants and attributed it to the model superintendence of Chas. D. Logan. Logan's report was subsequently used as a guide for future superintendents.</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Highly beneficial but not widely publicized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duchess of Northumberland (I), 1834</td>
<td>Irish Dublin and Cork to Sydney</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>Described without exception as the best emigrants thus far.</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td>As above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canton, 1835</td>
<td>Predominantly English. London to Sydney.</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>Initial report six weeks after arrival was favourable and uncritical. Six months after arrival Bourke sent a &quot;black list&quot; of 28</td>
<td>Adverse</td>
<td>Majority beneficial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shipped and Year</td>
<td>Origin of Emigrants and Destination</td>
<td>Number of Females</td>
<td>Remarks on type of emigrants, reception by colonists, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canton 1835</td>
<td>Predominantly English. London to Launceston, V.D.L.</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>Women of &quot;improper character&quot; or living as prostitutes, and described these faults as &quot;inherent in the system.&quot;</td>
<td>Adverse</td>
<td>Majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Kerr 1835</td>
<td>Irish and English. London to Hobart Town.</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>Initial report praised the general quality of most of the women, who were quickly employed. But 30 girls under age and nearly blind and a few of bad character occasioned complaint. On investigation it was shown that these were not Committee emigrants but sponsored by other institutions. A later report indicated that they had been cared for and trained locally and were now employed and well behaved.</td>
<td>Adverse</td>
<td>Highly</td>
</tr>
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Appendix A (cont.)
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ship and Year</th>
<th>Origin of Emigrants and Destination</th>
<th>Number of Females</th>
<th>Remarks on type of emigrants, reception by colonists, etc.</th>
<th>Nature of colonial reactions &amp; publicity</th>
<th>Actual quality of emigrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amelia Thompson 1836</td>
<td>Predominantly English. London to Launceston.</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>Reports highly favourable except for a few girls under-age.</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Highly beneficial.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Metcalfe 1836</td>
<td>Predominantly English. London to Hobart Town.</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>Unqualified praise in all respects for all the female emigrants, but this was coupled with severe criticism of the new family emigration system. 168 persons in families accompanied the female emigrants, and were mainly described as destitute paupers. Franklin requested that family emigration be stopped but that female emigration be continued at the rate of 300 a year.</td>
<td>Excellent but obscured by adverse report of family emigration.</td>
<td>Highly beneficial.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ship and Year</td>
<td>Origin of Emigrants and Destination</td>
<td>Number of Females</td>
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<tr>
<td>Duchess of Northumberland (II) 1836</td>
<td>Irish, Cork to Sydney</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>Reports of female emigrants uncritical, but Bourke blamed Marshall for overcrowding of family emigrants and an excess of cargo. There were 88 family emigrants.</td>
<td>Excellent but obscured by adverse report of family emigration.</td>
<td>Highly beneficial.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lady McNaughten 1836</td>
<td>Irish, Cork to Sydney</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Reports of female emigrants uncritical, but Bourke again criticized the overcrowding and excess of young children among 310 family emigrants which caused a high rate of mortality. (53 children and 14 adults.)</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td>As above</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix A Footnotes

1This information is based on the reports of Colonial Governors and reception committees after the initial excitement of the women's arrival had abated and sufficient time had elapsed for them to obtain stable employment and to adjust to new social conditions.

2Bourke to Stanley, Dec. 6, 1833, PP. 1834, XLIV (616), pp. 33-5. Bourke to Colonial Secretary, May 8, 1835, C.O. 201/245; the adverse comments in this despatch were deleted from the version printed in the Parliamentary Papers; see PP. 1836 XL (76), pp. 27-9.


4Arthur to Stanley, Sept. 24, 1834, and enclosure, C.O. 280/49; similar deletions from printed version as in fn. 1 supra; see PP. 1835, XXXIX (87), pp. 31-2; Forster to Hay, March 10, 1835, C.O. 384/38.


7Bourke to Colonial Secretary, May 8, 1835, C.O. 201/245.


11 Bourke to Glenelg, March 3, 1836 and enclosures, C.O. 201/252.

12 Arthur to Glenelg, Sept. 9, 1836 and enclosure, C.O. 280/67.

13 Franklin to Glenelg, April 12, 1837 and enclosures, C.O. 280/78; Franklin to Glenelg, April 4, 1838, PP. 1839, XXXIX (536-I) pp. 74-5.

14 Bourke to Glenelg, April 10, 1837, C.O. 201/260; Bourke to Glenelg, July 7, 1837, C.O. 201/260.

15 Ibid.
## Appendix B

### Comparison of British and Colonial Occupations of Middle-class Emigrants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Occupation</th>
<th>Subsequent Occupations in Colony</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ship and Destination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Hobart Town</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strathfield-saye Hobart Town</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canton Sydney</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Kerr Launceston</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Pattison Sydney</td>
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(father)
### Appendix B (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ship and Destination</th>
<th>G'ness, Nursery Teacher G'ness</th>
<th>Nursery Teacher G'ness</th>
<th>Dom. Service (Gen. servant, nursery maid)</th>
<th>Dress-making or Needlework</th>
<th>Actress Married on Arrival or Friends</th>
<th>Insane</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td>Boodicea</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>William Metcalfe</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ship and Destination</td>
<td>G'ness, Nursery Teacher or Lady's Maid</td>
<td>G'ness, Nursery Teacher or Lady's Maid</td>
<td>Dom. Service (Gen. servant, nursery maid)</td>
<td>Dressmaking or Needlework</td>
<td>Actress Married on</td>
<td>Insane</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
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<td>Duchess of Northumberland (II)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
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Appendix C

'To England's Daughters' By Dora Gore Browne

Do you feel the heart of England beating high with love and yearning
As her daughters gather round her, ere they sever from her knee?
'Oh, my children!' hear her speaking, 'when your steps from home are turning,
See you keep my fame unsullied, be you true to God and me.

'For I bid you to remember how from days of ancient story
Every loyal English daughter, who was worthy of the name,
In whose heart the glow was kindled for her country's highest glory,
Bore aloft the torch of freedom, adding lustre to the flame.

'And to you 'tis now entrusted with a meaning larger, higher,
You, my daughters, as you go to join your kinsfolk o'er the foam,
'Tis for you to keep the flaming torch of loyalty on fire,
In the land of your adoption, for the honour of your home.

'Yes! for God and for your country now 'tis yours to make the story,
You, the future nursing mothers of the English race to be,
In your arms his love will lay them, and he looks for England's glory
To her loyal sons and daughters in her homes beyond the sea.

'God be with you, then, and speed you, as you cross the heaving waters,
God be with you, as you land upon our kinsmen's distant shore,
Let them feel that Mother England sends the noblest of her daughters,
Forges living links of Empire, links to bind us more and more.

'Keep your anchor firmly grounded on the steadfast Rock of Ages;
Keep your eyes upon His cross who died to save us in his love;
Seek the Holy Spirit's guiding, as life's ocean round you rages,
He will lead you to the haven, to the Father's home above.'

(From the Imperial Colonist, Vol. III, December 1904, p. 133.)