THE GREAT ORNAMENTALS:

NEW VICE-REGAL WOMEN
AND THEIR IMPERIAL WORK
1884-1914

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I certify that this is my own work and has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.
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ABSTRACT

This thesis traces the evolution and emergence of the new vice-regal woman during a high point of the British Empire. The social, political, and economic forces of the age, which transformed British society, presented different challenges and responsibilities for all women, not least those of the upper-class. Aristocratic women responded to these challenges in a distinctive manner when accompanying their husbands to the colonies and dominions as vice-regal consorts.

In the last years of Queen Victoria’s reign a unique link was established between the monarchy and her female representatives throughout the Empire. The special role and patriotic duty of British aristocratic women was reinforced by the developing concepts of the new woman, new imperialism, and philosophies surrounding women’s philanthropy and work. Unlike their earlier counterparts, vice-regal wives of this era responded to the times and utilised their female and imperial networks and experience to bring a different and modern approach to their imperial role.

The concept of the new vice-regal woman during the period 1884-1914 will be explored through three case studies. The imperial stories of Lady Hariot Dufferin (1843-1936), Lady Ishbel Aberdeen (1857-1939), and Lady Rachel Dudley (c.1867-1920), establishes both the existence and importance of a new breed of vice-regal woman, one who was a modern, dynamic and pro-active imperialist. From 1884-1914 these three new vice-regal women pushed established boundaries and broke new ground. As a result, during their vice-regal lives Ladies Dufferin, Aberdeen and Dudley initiated far reaching organisations in India, Ireland, Canada and Australia aimed at assisting local colonial populations especially in the areas of health and employment.
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INTRODUCTION

*The Great Ornamentals* is a social narrative thesis covering the period 1884-1914.¹ This thesis will argue that the momentous social changes which transformed the public lives of women in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain were conveyed and expanded throughout the Empire by vice-regal wives. The role of the British vice-regal woman, the protagonist of this thesis, was altered forever by the force of these changes.

In the years spanning 1884-1914, that is, from the appointment of Lord Dufferin as Viceroy of India to the outbreak of World War One, formidable vice-regal women engaged with the evolving concepts of the ‘new woman’, ‘new imperialism’, and with the developing perspectives on work. The result of this interaction was the growth of a dynamic female imperial force, the ‘new vice-regal woman’. This vice-regal representative was no longer expected or content to be simply ornamental.

Rather than conforming to the traditional representative role as female figure-heads of British supremacy with little initiative or interest in the enterprise of Empire, many vice-regal women in late Victorian and Edwardian times contributed substantially to the spread of new social ideals and practices. During this era, vice-regal women located in disparate colonies and dominions, showed an independence of mind, a willingness to participate in change, and a heightened imperial spirit that had not been

¹The disparaging term ‘Great Ornamentals’ was first used by critics of the Raj in India in the 1880s and later by David Cannadine to describe vice-regal men and their entourages of the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. See Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, Yale University
evident or noticeable before. They pushed the boundaries, enlisted the collective power of women’s organisations, and established national projects. In fact, they altered the character and acceptable role of women’s participation in vice-regal appointments and embraced both the obligation, and what they came to see as the work, of Empire. No longer simply ornamental, many became enthusiastic innovators and agents for change, transforming the face of royal representation and creating a new breed of vice-regal lady.

It will be argued in this thesis that these vice-regal women were compelled by shifting social considerations and their particular upbringing and worldview, into a situation which would justify only one response - a new approach to the role of vice-regal wife. By the end of the nineteenth century, the various components forging this change were in place. The long reign of a female monarch, the re-moulding of woman’s place in society, the re-engineering of woman’s place in the workforce, and the re-alignment of woman’s place within the empire, inevitably led to a transformation of the female vice-regal role. The women responded to this changing climate by using their elite position, family contacts, resolute natures and organisational experience to involve themselves pro-actively in this newly enhanced role of the imperial spouse.

The concept of Empire and the implications of working within an imperial network of women are best understood from the viewpoint of the ladies themselves, through their words and actions. Modern values imposed on colonial practices of more than a century ago should not be allowed to colour a response to, and appreciation of, the efforts of the vice-regal wives. It is important to establish the late nineteenth and early

twentieth century view of the colonies and 'otherness' of colonial communities as
understood by these women and their contemporaries. It is also necessary to
comprehend the motives behind their desire to reshape colonial women and
communities in the modern, scientific, civilised, British mould. 'New, a key word in
critical discourse of the 1890s', has been appropriated and applied to these vice-regal
ladies. The term the 'new vice-regal woman' is used throughout the thesis to identify
the significant, particular and original type of vice-regal woman discernible during
this period. This term represents the fresh approach taken by vice-regal wives during
the years 1884-1914, a high point of the British Empire.

The altered philosophy of aristocratic ladies in general, and vice-regal women in
particular, is integral to an understanding of the changes implemented by these
women from the 1880s to 1914. Several key concepts are examined in this thesis to
evaluate their impact on the perception and performance of new vice-regal women.
These encompass elements of late nineteenth century British society, including the
new woman, new imperialism and the long reign of Queen Victoria, and changing
attitudes to work.

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2 Edward Said's concept of the 'other' as the antithesis of the West created by Western historians and
imperialists is not apparent in many endeavours of vice-regal ladies. See Robert Johnson, British

3 It is arguable that women were more likely to focus on the universal sameness of female existence
rather than difference or otherness. See Jane Haggis 'White Women and colonialism towards a non-
recuperative history', in Clare Midgley (ed.), Gender and Imperialism, Manchester University Press.

4 Bridget Elliott, 'New and Not So New Women on the London Stage: Aubrey Beardsley's Yellow
Book images of Mrs. Patrick Campbell and Rejone', Victoria Studies, Autumn 1987, pp 33-57

5 For concepts of new women, new imperialism, Queen Victoria and female work, see, for example,
Laura Stempel Mumford, 'The New Woman', in Victorian Britain, Sally Mitchell (ed). Garland
Maternal Feminism and the New Imperialism in the White Settler Colonies,' Women's Studies
The *new* woman was a turn of the century characterisation depicting independent and reformist women attempting to transform, to various degrees, the position of all women in society. From trouser-wearing cyclists to ardent suffrage supporters, the presence of the 'new woman' was pervasive in British society. *New* imperialism refers to the intense patriotic fervour, propaganda, and pride in Empire evident in the latter years of Queen Victoria's reign and the early years of the twentieth century. The Queen's female representatives and all new vice-regal women who were born while Victoria was on the throne, personally identified with Victoria. She was the great imperial figurehead. It was an age when perceptions of royalty and Empire were closely entwined and which continued into the reigns of Edward VII and George V.\(^6\)

\(^6\)Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: how the British saw their empire*, op.cit., p.102.
The concept of work, and particularly women's work also underwent change in this era. Work was viewed as both essential and edifying in itself, an antidote for personal and national problems, and necessary for continued imperial success. These three themes will be discussed in detail.

The class of vice-regal appointees referred to throughout this thesis embraces the aristocratic men who were appointed to colonial posts as Governors, Governor-Generals, or Viceroy's and their consorts. Within this definition, the term 'class' is used to describe a social and cultural construct rather than an economic divide, as demonstrated in the work of W.G. Runciman and David Cannadine. That is, class is summarised as the 'differences in the way English people can be seen to behave towards each other on account of life-style, education, inherited rank and conventionally defined prestige'.

By the late nineteenth century, the British Empire encompassed over eight million square miles and over two hundred million people. It was a diverse empire, strategically challenging yet economically strong. The vice-regal appointees despatched all over the globe as representatives of the Crown were predominantly from aristocratic backgrounds. They were gentlemen of inherited privilege with

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8 Runciman, *op.cit.*, p.25.


10 Julius Vogel, ‘Greater Britain in the Queen’s Long Reign’, *Nineteenth Century*, March 1897, p. 344.
equally elite wives who were expected to adapt to different styles of rule and many
types of societies. They might be the Governor of the self-ruling colony and later
state of Tasmania or the Viceroy of India. They might be living in a white settler
society such as Canada or in an ethnically diverse community such as Jamaica.11

The male vice-regal assignment covered two main areas. The incumbent would
mediate between the British Government and the colonial administration, and
secondly would provide a social focus for the community. Although they were
occasionally involved in crucial political decisions, by late Victorian times vice-regal
life was considered by many men as an extended holiday with pay, where a certain
amount of official duties were combined with a great deal of travel, sport and leisure
activities.12 Vice-regal men have been the subject of some academic attention, notably
in Australia with Christopher Cunneen’s King’s Men, Australia’s Governors-General
from Hopetoun to Issacs.13 Mark Bence-Jones, among others, has written on the
viceroys of India, and James A. Gibson on the governor-generals of Canada.14 Gavin

11For information on the British Empire of this period see, for example, P.J. Marshall (ed.), The
The Journal of Imperial and Colonial History, Studies in Imperialism series, Cambridge University
MacMillan, Basingstoke Kent, 1984; Niall Ferguson, Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World,
Allen Lane, London, 2003; Trevor Lloyd, Empire: The History of the British Empire, Hambledon and
12Cannadine, The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy, op.cit., pp.600-601.
13George Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1983. See also Cunneen, William John McKell: Boilermaker,
14George Curzon, British Governors in India; The Story of Viceroy and Government Houses, Cassell,
London, 1925; Henry Morris, The Governors-General of British India, Discovery Publishing House,
Delhi, 1981; Mark Bence-Jones, The Viceroys of India, Constable and Co., London, 1982, James A
Perkins and Angus Trumble, Victorian Colonial Governors 1839-1900, Melbourne University Press.
Melbourne, 1993.
McLean is currently working on a history of New Zealand governors, and David Cannadine has detailed the backgrounds and financial status of many vice-regal men through his recent publications.\textsuperscript{15}

The vice-regal wife of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, however, has not received the same serious scholarly attention. When she was acknowledged, especially in contemporary publications, she was consigned to being a decorative and easily dismissed subordinate, or perhaps a lazy self serving parasite or even arrogant autocrat.\textsuperscript{16} The fact that the role of the vice-regal lady substantially altered in the late Victorian era, and that these women made a considerable contribution to Empire, has largely been overlooked in historical discourse. This thesis therefore aims to redress this silence. It will follow the changing nature of the duties inherent in the role of vice-regal women through the Victorian and Edwardian eras, encapsulated through the form of the new vice-regal woman. By using a series of case studies, and by focusing on the lives and achievements of three vice-regal women, new perspectives on the role of vice-regal women will be presented. These female traffickers in Empire or new vice-regal women are exemplified in the persons of Ladies Harriot Dufferin, Ishbel Aberdeen and Rachel Dudley.

During this late Victorian and Edwardian period, the new vice-regal woman was evident throughout the Empire establishing modern organisations and propounding

\textsuperscript{15}Cannadine, \textit{Ornamentalism: How the British saw their Empire}, op.cit., and \textit{The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy}, op.cit.

\textsuperscript{16}See, for example, Charles Edward Drummond Black, \textit{The Marquess of Dufferin and Ava}, Hutchinson and Co., London, 1903, and Sir Spencer Walpole, \textit{Studies in Biography}, 'Lord Dufferin', T Fisher Unwin, London, 1907. These biographies pay little attention to Lady Dufferin other than to mention her as a perfect hostess and helpmate to her husband, although reserved and distant.
the British imperial ideal. A number of women could have been selected to illustrate
the altered imperial understanding and the impact of the new vice-regal woman on the
Empire during 1881-1914. For example, Lady Mary Minto in Canada (1898-1904)
with her Cottage Hospitals and in India (1905-1910) with the Lady Minto Nurses;
Lady Victoria Plunket and the Plunket Nurses in New Zealand (1904-1910); Lady
Audrey Tennyson, as wife of the Governor of South Australia and then Australian
Governor-General (1899-1902) and the Queen’s Home, a working-class women’s
maternity home in Adelaide; Lady Margaret Talbot in Victoria (1904-1908) with her
Colony for Epileptics, Milk Institute and College of Domestic Economy; Lady Alice
Northcote wife of the Australian Governor-General (1903-1908), and the first
Australian Exhibition of Women’s Work; Lady Helen Munro Ferguson and the
Australian Red Cross Society (1914-1920), and even Lady Maud Selborne as wife of
the High Commissioner of South Africa (1905-1910), can be viewed as adopting the
mantle of the new vice-regal woman.\(^\text{17}\)

Undoubtedly there are many more examples of vice-regal wives who fulfil the
requirements of new vice-regal women. Ladies stationed in the West Indies, in
Africa, on South Pacific islands, in fact wherever the British flag flew, are suitable
candidates for closer examination. But due to geographical considerations and
primary source constraints, Ladies Dufferin, Aberdeen, and Dudley were selected as
case studies to represent the evolution of the new vice-regal woman in diverse areas
of the British Empire from 1884-1914. By charting this new female vice-regal
position through the ‘careers’ of Ladies Hariot Dufferin, Ishbel Aberdeen and Rachel
Dudley, the significance and the defining nature of their actions will be recognised.

\(^{17}\)The Union of South Africa, and consequently the appointment of a vice-regal representative, did not
occur until 1910.
These three women are excellent examples of British ladies who were pioneers and reformers, prepared to promote new ideas, flout convention, and fight for their innovative organisations within an imperial framework.

The legacy of many new vice-regal women from 1884-1914 was the establishment and expansion of organisations which met considerable social needs, and resulted in an improved quality of life for colonial peoples, especially women and children. These ladies were attempting to fulfil their civilising mission. This thesis will chart the expansion of vice-regal philanthropic imperialism, which focused on nursing, women’s and children’s health, and employment issues. The historiography of nursing and women’s work while extensive for this period has largely omitted the role and influence of the vice-regal women.

Throughout the British Empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century

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18 Some historians are unconvinced of this concept of a civilising mission for the benefit of others and believe it was more a way of defining British superiority over native ‘savage’ societies. See Johnson, op. cit., p.97.

much was achieved in reforms of female health and employment. Ladies Dufferin, Aberdeen and Dudley took the opportunity offered by vice-regal status to further the Victorian ideal of progress through the development of reforming organisations. All of them were involved in innovative and practical advances in nursing and health strategies. Not just content with transplanting existing British associations overseas, they formulated new organisations catering directly to the needs of their colonies. For example, Lady Dufferin with the creation of the National Association for Supplying Medical Aid to the Women of India, Lady Aberdeen with the Victorian Order of Nurses in Canada, and Lady Dudley with Bush Nursing in Australia.

There is an increasing body of work available on women and the experience of Empire during the period 1884-1914. Many recent books and research articles such as those by Antoinette Burton, Claire Midgley, Margaret Strobel, and Penny Russell, have outlined the women’s lives within this colonial context.\(^{20}\) The concentration however has largely been on lower and middle-class women. The upper-class woman has received less attention. The important, and often overlooked, part played by aristocratic women in the ties of Empire and imperial associations had recently been addressed by Julia Bush in her ground-breaking book, *Edwardian Ladies and*

Imperial Power.⁸¹ Bush’s work focuses on aristocratic ladies, their associations, and their imperial endeavours conducted within Britain. Her work stresses the ‘inseparability of gender, “race” and class’, and how these in turn defined British women’s imperialism.⁸² This research reinforces our understanding of the process by which late nineteenth century social influences moulded women’s responses. She argues that the ‘spiritual creed’ of Empire that was so prevalent in the Victorian community was just as attractive a concept to women as it was to men.⁸³ By joining together to promote British values, these women were doing their part at home to advance and sustain imperial ideals. But there were other British aristocratic ladies who were equally committed to their imperial duty. New vice-regal women often spent years overseas directing their imperial work and reinforcing British ideals.

Although there has been some material published on the subject of vice-regal women, the historiography is limited.⁸⁴ A number of writers have produced biographies of notable vice-regal women, but most cover the period before the 1880s and discuss

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earlier or ‘traditional’ vice-regal ladies.25 Anita Selzer’s *Governors' Wives in Colonial Australia*, for example, provides a snapshot of many aspects of vice-regal wives such as ‘homemaker’ and ‘traveller’ before Australian federation in 1901.26 And Penny Russell’s ‘Paradise Lost: John and Lady Jane Franklin’, is based on one vice-regal woman, Lady Franklin and her life in Tasmania in the 1830s.27 These publications usually concentrate on the remarkable qualities and interesting personal lives of the women rather than their colonial accomplishments. Those few studies, which do cover the period 1884-1914, do not attempt to see these vice-regal wives as a growing class of modern imperialists. There have also been publications by children who grew up in government houses which adds another dimension to the historiography.28

An unpublished thesis on Lady Dufferin and Lady Aberdeen by Val McLeish of the University of London in 2002, ‘Imperial Footprints: Lady Aberdeen and Lady Dufferin in Ireland, Canada and India, 1870-1914’, does examine the imperial lives of two of the women of this thesis.29 McLeish’s focus is on the individual representations of the ladies as examples of elite British womanhood constructed in relation to health and disease, purity and pollution, and the political situation in their dominions. Her work acknowledges the general upper-class female responses to

26Selzer, *op.cit.*
27Russell, *op.cit.*
29Valerie McLeish, ‘Imperial Footprints: Lady Aberdeen and Lady Dufferin in Ireland, Canada and
imperial ideals but once again does not establish the new role undertaken by vice-regal women as a specific group during this period. 'Imperial Footprints' does not discuss or recognise the evolution of a new breed of vice-regal lady or her corresponding impact on the British Empire.

Vice-regal women are quite well served, however, by their own publications. Autobiographical studies and their travel adventures have been produced by several vice-regal ladies. Indeed in late Victorian and Edwardian times it was common for aristocratic women to publish their journals, and many were written with publication in mind. Vice-regal wives Lady Jersey and Lady Minto, for example, and two women from this study, Lady Dufferin and Lady Aberdeen, published numerous accounts of their lives and overseas exploits as royal representatives. Other vice-regal women, such as Lady Tennyson in Australia (1899-1902), and Lady Curzon in India (1898-1905) have had their personal papers published after their deaths.

In the new vice-regal woman's quest to implement the tenets of their imperial mission and to sublimate the disparate beliefs and lifestyles found throughout the Empire into


a colonial ‘Britishness’, we would expect to find the woman operating within a regime of racism, religious and cultural intolerance and elitism. In fact the reality in many cases was rather different. Most vice-regal ladies attempted to focus on the similarities shared by women while guiding what they perceived as less privileged women to a more enlightened state of civilisation. Although this could be seen as merely adapting the Victorian philanthropic rescue mentality to a world stage and upper-class ladies viewing themselves as saviours of their more downtrodden sisters, it went much further.\textsuperscript{32} New vice-regal consorts did not rigidly restrict themselves to imperial objectives. The plight of all women and the ideal of a universal sisterhood working for the benefit of women everywhere was an overarching concept. To improve life for all women noting their similar life experiences as wives and mothers and the strength of collective action was a growing response to a wider worldview.\textsuperscript{33} The strong bond of universal sisterhood was appealed to over and over again by new vice-regal women, and so much of what was enacted by these ladies spoke directly to the disadvantage faced by many women within the British Empire and beyond.\textsuperscript{34}

This thesis is structured in two parts. Part A, \textit{The Spirit of the Times}, is an analysis and discussion of the main themes, which form the background for the concept of the new vice-regal woman. The first three chapters identify and discuss these influences,

\footnote{\textsuperscript{32}In Britain, especially in large population centres, aristocratic women often devoted some of their time to visiting street girls, providing shelter and food, and attempting to ‘rescue’ them from their lives of prostitution. Lady Aberdeen shocked and dismayed her family by spending many nights in the east End of London with these women. This will be discussed in Chapters Three and Five.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{33}See, for example, Lady Audrey Tennyson’s efforts in South Australia to open a maternity home for all expectant mothers, those who could afford to pay and those who could not as they were all sharing the same experience. Selzer, \textit{op.cit.}, p.102-106.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{34}The internationalist Lady Ishbel Aberdeen, president of the International Council of Women from 1893, constantly appealed to this sisterhood. See Chapter Five of this thesis.}
which serve to explain the inevitability of the choices of new vice-regal women, and how their role was the pressured outcome of a convergence of other concurrent changes in society. The internal stresses, both personal and social, on the women, together with the action of outside forces on their elite position led inexorably to one result: the creation of a modern ornamental, a dynamic, pro-active imperial spouse - a new vice-regal woman. The experiences, upbringing, and worldview of the ladies must be considered comprehensively for the change in the female vice-regal role and its impact to be fully appreciated.

Chapter One, *Vice-Regal Ladies and their World*, explores the particular milieu of vice-regal women and what was expected of them prior to and including the time of the three women of the study. In order to understand the new vice-regal woman, we must identify the traditional vice-regal woman, and how the role changed from 1884-1914. When charting the evolution of the female vice-regal role from the 1880s, the imprint of the new woman is clear. Many elite women embraced the new attitude to collective action, female reforms, and empowerment. The reinterpretation of womanhood and the reforming of the female position was an additional demand on the established role of the aristocratic woman of this study. These pro-active women did not wish to forego their privileged position but rather to use it to improve the lives of their sisters both in Britain and throughout the Empire. This chapter identifies various instances of vice-regal wives who expressed dissatisfaction with traditional roles, ladies who fought for female rights and disadvantaged women, and pushed for reform on many levels in the changing society of the time, at home, and in the colonies. The world of vice-regal wives in 1884-1914 reflected, interpreted, and in some cases formalised these changes.
In Chapter Two, *Vice-Regal Women and New Imperialism*, the focus is on the impact of new imperialism as a nationalistic cause, and its connection with the changing role of women in this period. The economic and strategic importance of the Empire and the growth of imperial propaganda had a marked effect on the age. Politics and duty are also discussed in this chapter as well as their relevance to upper-class women and their concept of Britishness. Other important issues such as the role of mothers, race and Social Darwinism all impacted on late nineteenth and early twentieth century girls and women and also, therefore, impacted on new vice-regal women’s activities. The influence and legacy of Queen Victoria’s long reign gave an added dimension to new vice-regal women’s understanding of their imperial obligation.

Chapter Three, *Vice-Regal Women and Work*, defines old and new concepts of the work ethic and expands upon the changing role of aristocratic women in the context of Victorian and Edwardian ideals of work, duty and philanthropy and how these concepts fused together. One of the most significant of these community shifts was within the context of work and the opening up of female employment. As demonstrated in this thesis the new opportunities and expectations for waged and unwaged female participation were not lost on elite women. Traditional philanthropic concepts merged with new ideas of work, which led women to form organised charitable associations, combining philanthropy and employment. Many in the British upper-classes of the period acknowledged voluntary labour as authentic work. It is argued that the modern western understanding of work no longer validates this former widespread recognition of philanthropic endeavour. This chapter develops the theme of how aristocratic ladies managed to combine work, duty, modern health care and innovative organisational structures during this period. These interests and
experiences accompanied new vice-regal ladies to the colonies.

Part B, *The New Vice-Regal Woman in Action*, comprises three case studies, which reflect and reinforce the concept of the new vice-regal woman 1884-1914, in four areas of Empire - India, Ireland, Canada, and Australia. While the three ladies of the case studies pursued their vice-regal duties to differing degrees, exemplifying changes in the requirements of the role, society’s transformations, and their own personal motivations, they all represent the new style of imperial wife. In Chapters Four, Five and Six, we follow the evolution of the new vice-regal women in chronological order through the vice-regal careers of Lady Dufferin, Lady Aberdeen and Lady Dudley.

Chapter Four is devoted to the vice-regal career of Irish born Lady Hariot Dufferin (1843-1936). She was an archetypal mid-Victorian aristocratic woman, devoted to her home, husband and children. The wife of a famous career diplomat, she was required to accompany her husband on vice-regal duty, which she undertook with a dispassionate obligation and acknowledgment of her subordinate role. This is clearly evidenced in Canada where they were posted for six years. But this all changed with Lord Dufferin’s appointment as Viceroy of India in 1884. Queen Victoria personally intervened in Lady Dufferin’s duties by requesting her Vicereine to provide health care to the women of India. This resulted in the formation of the Lady Dufferin Fund for Supplying Medical Aid to the Women of India. Lady Dufferin’s extensive personal papers and diaries and the organisational papers of her Fund are held in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI). Hariot Dufferin has generally been ignored by others who have researched and written on aspects of women and
India under the Raj. Lady Dufferin, however, offers her personal accounts of vice-regal times in her published journals. Of particular note are *My Canadian Journal* and *Our Viceregal Life in India*. There are also considerable contemporary records about the Fund housed in the British Library.

Chapter Five follows the career of Lady Ishbel Aberdeen (1857-1939) a remarkable, confident, tireless and intelligent Scottish reformer and women's rights campaigner. The Countess of Aberdeen is a laudatory example of one vice-regal woman who took royal approval for independent female vice-regal action to new heights during her husband's assignments in Canada and Ireland. As with Lady Dufferin, the records for Ishbel Aberdeen's imperial efforts are vast and easily accessible. The Aberdeen Papers at Haddo House in Scotland and the copies held by the National Archives and Library of Canada in Ottawa are extensive, and are complimented by personal letters, diaries and notes. There is a considerable body of information in books and articles on Ishbel Aberdeen the woman, her organisations, worldview, and activities. Much

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35For example Antoinette Burton in Burden's of History, op.cit., pp.26-27, Burton specifically omits Lady Dufferin in her study of women in India. She contends that as Lady Dufferin was not actively involved in, or a fervent supporter of, British women's emancipation, her work in India was 'not considered for this study'.


of this is supplied by the Aberdeens themselves. Lord and Lady Aberdeen in their autobiographical works *We Twá* and *More Cracks with We Twá* give a very readable account of many facets of their lives including vice-regal assignments.\(^{39}\) Lady Aberdeen’s *Canadian Journal* is another important source of information, especially regarding the creation of the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC) and the Victorian Order of Nurses (VON).\(^{40}\) The NCWC and VON papers are held in the Canadian Archives and at VON headquarters in Ottawa. Ishbel herself wrote many articles for contemporary publications on a variety of topics.\(^{41}\) Lady Aberdeen has also been the subject of a number of biographies. In *Ishbel and the Empire*, Doris French attempts to trace and critique how Ishbel’s interesting personal life and beliefs impacted on her public role. Maureen Keane’s approach in *Ishbel: Lady Aberdeen in Ireland*, is the opposite, where the spotlight is on Lady Aberdeen’s productive public sphere activities in a troubled Ireland. The biography written by Ishbel’s daughter, Majorie Pentland, *A Bonnie Fechter*, is a solicitous look at her remarkable mother’s reformist and politically active life.\(^{42}\) There are also a variety of articles in magazines and journals on the interesting and newsworthy Lady Aberdeen which were published during her life.\(^{43}\) None of these publications, however, concentrate on Lady Aberdeen


\(^{40}\)Ibid.


\(^{42}\)French, *op.cit.* Keane, *op.cit.* Pentland *op.cit.*

\(^{43}\)A few examples include W.T. Stead, ‘Character Sketch, Lord and Lady Aberdeen’, February 1894,
and her work as a vice-regal woman.

In Chapter Six the third case study of new vice-regal women, the focus is on Lady Rachel Dudley. A modern, committed, and socially aware woman Lady Rachel Dudley, (c.1867-1920), was born in England but worked for the British Empire in Ireland, Australia and later in France during World War One. Lady Rachel Dudley is by far the most difficult of the three women to research. The dynamic wife of Lord Dudley the Irish Viceroy (1902-5) and the Australian Governor-General (1908-1911) has left very few personal documents.⁴⁴ There are no volumes of personal diaries or expanse of letters held anywhere in Britain or Australia. Rachel Dudley's vice-regal life must therefore be established through her actions. Some records for the Lady Dudley Nurses in Ireland exist in the National Library of Ireland in Dublin and the history of her attempt to form a National Bush Nursing Association in Australia can be pieced together through information available in the Victorian State Library, Melbourne and the Mitchell Library in Sydney. Other facts can be obtained through additional secondary sources such as newspapers and magazines. There is, however, almost a complete lack of other material surrounding Rachel Dudley and her vice-regal life.

Review of Reviews, pp.132-147. This gives a detailed description of Ishbel’s life up to arriving in Canada as wife of the Governor-General. See the Halifax Herald, 25 August 1894, p.4 on Lady Aberdeen’s ideas concerning the power of the sisterhood. See Saturday Night, 16 May 1896, p.1 on her household innovations and the Nursing Mirror, 9 November 1907, p.87, for her TB innovations in Ireland.

⁴⁴There are some letters, and organisational records housed in the National Library of Ireland Dublin and the Archives of the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. There is also a privately published book on her travels, Lady Rachel Dudley, Sunshine and Shadow in the West Indies, Archibald Constable and Co., London, 1907. Lady Dudley did publish an article in Australia for The Lone Hand, ‘Bush Nursing’, 1 August 1911, pp.293-301.
The three case studies exemplify the immense yet historically neglected part played by vice-regal women and their civilising crusades throughout the British Empire 1884-1914. Their responses to their position and their formation of imperial organisations stamp them as new vice-regal women. The associations they originated, rather than badges of subjection to British cultural identity were seen by these new vice-regal women as paving the way for British civilisation to manufacture a better world for those under British rule. This was their imperial goal. In addition their work was a way of empowering all women in their struggle for social justice.

These developments were exemplified in a variety of ways through the personalities of the women. The evolution was not just one of increasing power or influence, but encompassed the changes relating to the social duties and private and public expectations of the ladies in their work for the Empire. As one of the early new vice-regal women Lady Dufferin, in 1884, offered her services to projects as required. But by the time of Lady Dudley twenty years later, new vice-regal wives needed no encouragement. They were compelled to act. They were now overt and diligent purveyors of Empire, innovators and initiators who continued to campaign for imperial causes long after they had returned from their imperial outposts. *The Great Ornamentals* seeks to establish the emergence of new vice-regal women during the period 1884-1914, and to acknowledge the significance of their imperial careers during this high point of the British Empire.
PART A

THE SPIRIT OF THE TIMES
CHAPTER ONE

VICE-REGAL LADIES AND THEIR WORLD

‘the most civilised representatives of the civilised race’

In late October 1884, as Lord and Lady Dufferin were preparing to set sail for India as the new Viceroy and Vicereine, Queen Victoria requested that they visit her at Balmoral. This royal meeting and formal farewell between Her Majesty and her vice-regal couple prior to their departure was not unusual, but, on this occasion a new dimension was added which would dramatically transform the role of vice-regal women.  

Lord Dufferin, a former Lord-in-Waiting to the Queen, and royal favourite, had already received his official government orders and briefings concerning his Indian appointment. At the Balmoral encounter he was, therefore, simply wished well by Her Majesty. What was unusual, however, was the summoning of his wife Harriot, to a private audience with Victoria. At this meeting the Queen requested the vice-regal

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wife to undertake her own specific imperial commission for India.4

The Queen informed Lady Dufferin that she wished her to attempt to improve the health of Indian women by establishing modern medical practices on the subcontinent, especially in the areas of childbirth and the care of mother and baby. This royal request was a radical departure for a vice-regal woman. From now on she was not only expected to play a key supportive social and philanthropic role but also, pro-actively and in her own right, spread the benefits of British civilisation and Empire. This new direction came with personal input and encouragement from Queen Victoria. It is the contention of this thesis that the intervention of the Queen was the trigger for the blossoming of vice-regal women’s endeavours in the dominions in the period 1884-1914. The officially sanctioned new vice-regal woman was born. Henceforth, imperial spouses not only received official permission to broaden their activities, but they were openly encouraged, and indeed expected, to take on more serious imperial responsibilities by a Monarch who had herself proven the effectiveness of female authority.

Lady Dufferin thus became the first of the new royally engaged female imperial reformers. The path she would take was difficult and not one Harriot Dufferin would have chosen for herself.5 Her own personality tended to the conventional and conservative. She strived to be the perfect wife and imperial consort. Whilst this

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5 Lady Dufferin was a reserved woman in public who was happy for her husband to take the official limelight. See her journals, for example, Dowager Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava, My Russian and Turkish Journals, John Murray, London, 1916, Preface.
never altered, she was now to take on an added obligation. Lady Dufferin would embrace this new direction as she viewed it as not only enhancing her husband, the Viceroy’s position, but also her role as ‘the’ female representative of the Empire. Social and patriarchal traditions would impede her attempts at reform but not her resolve. Queen Victoria’s request on behalf of the women of India transformed forever the scope of imperial women’s endeavours throughout the Empire.

Although this was a major departure from the traditional vice-regal female position, it was in keeping with the changing place of women in society and the growth of imperial fervour that occurred in the second half of Victoria’s reign. The concept of the female and her place in Britain and the Empire was in the process of being reassessed both by the community and by women themselves. Women were progressively being regarded as imperative to the continued existence and success of the British Empire. Included in this new interpretation of late nineteenth century British womanhood was the part to be played by vice-regal women and the criteria they needed to successfully fulfil their obligations.

During this period vice-regal wives were to become imperial missionaries and Empire builders and to take on the important assignment of active promoters of ‘the cultural aspects of imperialism through their gender roles as caretakers and civilisers’. No

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7See thesis Chapter Four for a detailed analysis of Lady Dufferin’s reforms in India.
10Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women and Imperial Culture 1865-"
longer simply figureheads, many vice-regal consorts, with the knowledge of Lady Dufferin’s efforts and motivations in India, considered their demanding work in a new light. It was now seen as a vital though unpaid position in the service of the Empire. The attitude and the dimension of their work were thus transformed. Queen Victoria’s participation and obvious concern for women’s health was both a reaction to the contemporary mood and an impetus for change.\textsuperscript{11}

In 1884, as Hariot Dufferin took her leave of Queen Victoria at Balmoral en route for India, she was probably unaware of the dramatic change her commission would bring about in vice-regal women’s role. She would, however, have been confident in her ability to achieve the goal. She had the necessary credentials to succeed, her aristocratic upbringing preparing her perfectly for the task. The profound changes in British society and community attitudes forced elite women to reassess their place and vice-regal women to commit themselves confidently to major reform and innovation. These changes transforming her Empire were not lost on the conservative, matronly and ageing Queen Victoria. She too recognised the need for women to help themselves, each other, and the Empire.\textsuperscript{12} Hariot Dufferin was in the vanguard of this changing attitude to female vice-regal involvement and royal intervention gave added weight and importance to the role.

\textbf{The Late Victorian World}

Late nineteenth century Britain was a society in transformation. The changes facing


\textsuperscript{12}\textit{ibid.}, pp.5, 36, 68-70.
the British Empire and its inhabitants in the last years of Queen Victoria’s reign and the early years of the twentieth century were extensive and widespread, and acknowledged as such at the time. This challenging era saw many diverse views receive attention with traditional beliefs open to question, not the least of which was the place of women in the community, their rights, and society’s expectations. These debates and their consequences were not lost on aristocratic women within Britain or when they ventured overseas as vice-regal wives. To analyse the impact and influence of forces such as the new woman, new imperialism and new attitudes to work on the actions of vice-regal ladies, we need to understand the perceptions and worldview of aristocratic women.

This chapter will investigate the type of woman who undertook the vice-regal role in the late 1800s and the changing demands and practical imperial functions that were required of a modern vice-regal lady. In order to distinguish the new pro-active vice-regal woman from the traditional vice-regal woman, that is a vice-regal wife prior to the 1880s, it is necessary to define the role of the traditional lady, who she was, and what was expected of her. It is important to understand the significant shift in the role and function of the traditional vice-regal woman that occurred during the late Victorian and Edwardian periods and produced the new vice-regal woman as typified by Ladies Dufferin, Aberdeen and Dudley. These case studies will be analysed in depth in Chapters Four, Five and Six of this thesis.

A woman married to a vice-regal representative of the British Empire prior to the

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1880s was, in the main, viewed as an archetypal wife and mother, a leader of fashion and society, consummate hostess, and patron of worthwhile causes. She was perceived as a superior British lady, an ornament of the Empire, who resided at Government House and supported her husband in his representative duties. This subordinate role was rejected by the dynamic new vice-regal wife who was willing to independently pursue her own imperial agenda. To discern the motivations behind the emergence of this new style of vice-regal lady, it will be necessary at look to these women’s sense of self as upper-class women; their upbringing, their activities and sensibilities, their involvement in Society, marriage and family, their recognition of aristocratic duty, their response to the radical changes in women’s position occurring in British society, and their concept of Empire. This study contends that the new vice-regal consort who emerged during the latter part of the nineteenth century was both a product of her time and upbringing, and a symbol of the re-evaluation of female representation throughout the British Empire.

**The Traditional Vice-Regal Woman**

There was a carefully defined gender divide inherent in the established vice-regal post. It was considered ill advised and unworkable for a man alone to fulfil all vice-regal duties. The Governor had specific responsibilities and his lady had her own obligations. The appointment was, in essence, for a team, the Governor and his consort. This was in keeping with the community’s belief in the natural distinctions between the sexes, with men and women providing different yet complementary qualities, both of benefit to society.14 If the Governor was unmarried, as in the case of

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14Jim Badger, ‘The lamentable death of Lady Mary FitzRoy’, *Journal of the Royal Australian*
the homosexual Lord Beauchamp, Governor of New South Wales at the turn of the century, a female counterpart had to be found. In Beauchamp’s case the role was undertaken by his sister Lady Mary Lygon, an intelligent and cultured woman and a former lady-in-waiting to H.R.H. the Duchess of York. In another instance, when Sir Harry Rawson’s wife, Florence, died during his Governorship of New South Wales (1902-09), his daughter Alice took over her mother’s official duties. There must be a representative woman in Government House.

As aristocratic women were the social arbiters in Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, so too were the vice-regal women stationed throughout the Empire. It was important that the social superiority of the vice-regal couple be upheld, and the onus was on the lady to see that this occurred. Vice-regal women were expected to take the lead and set the tone. As well as fulfilling specific social functions, fashion and manners came under her domain. Government House was the centre of society and those invited to attend any function had to be of a certain class and respectability. It was imperative that the Governor’s lady set a high standard and kept up long held social distinctions. The Lady must be seen as approachable and

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15 Lord Beauchamp did marry but his continued blatant homosexual activity and the British attitude towards it meant he was eventually forced to live in exile in Europe. See Bede Nairn and Geoffrey Serle (eds.) Australian Dictionary of Biography, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1981 vol.7, pp.235-236.


17 Florence Rawson died in 1905.

industrious; she must be above censure though never haughty in her manner or choice of acquaintance. Frivolity and lack of purpose were unacceptable traits. She must undertake to be patroness of suitable charitable associations, lending her name at least, and personal commitment if possible, to the progress of philanthropic causes.¹⁹

Prior to the advent of the new vice-regal woman, the traditional role of official consort had been refined and standardised. There was an approved model, which the women were expected, indeed required, to uphold. Marguerite Hancock in her book *Colonial Consorts*, establishes a distinct traditional female vice-regal role.²⁰ This can be contrasted with the careers of the new vice-regal ladies: as exemplified by the case studies in this thesis of Ladies Dufferin, Aberdeen and Dudley. Hancock refers to the old or traditional idea of the position of vice-regal women as an attractive sideshow.²¹ Alison Alexander has described the role of the traditional Governor’s wife as ‘a good influence, from a position of rectitude to provide an example of correct and polite living, and to encourage this to be copied by the colonists’.²² The women were essentially seen as subordinate players who were expected to set an uplifting example for colonial society. They would help and assist their husbands who performed the ‘real work’. The lady did not attract serious attention in her own right.²³ Some traditional vice-regal women did include individual ‘pet’ projects within their sphere of social responsibilities, such as Lady Franklin in Tasmania and her interest in

¹⁹See, for example, Anita Selzer, *Governors’ Wives in Colonial Australia*, National Library of Australia, Canberra, 2002, for further information on the traditional role of vice-regal women.


²¹ibid., p.170.


²³Hancock, *op.cit.*, p.170.
education, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

This traditional approach was exemplified by two Governor’s ladies residing in the Australian colonies in the middle of the nineteenth century. Lady Caroline Denison in Tasmania (1847-55) was considered a near perfect example of the proper vice-regal wife. As Alexander describes her, Lady Denison was

A fruitful and fond mother; a faithful supportive wife; an ornament on social occasions; willing to help the respectable poor but not get too much involved with them. Someone whose main sphere of activity was the home, someone who played no part in government business, and who was no threat to male domination.\textsuperscript{24}

Lady Eleanora Fitzgerald, wife of the Governor of Western Australia from 1848 was another woman considered an exemplary Governor’s wife of the period. She led an active social scene in Perth, was constantly observed opening charitable institutions and fund raising bazaars, gave her support to a school for immigrant children, and taught at her own Sunday School.\textsuperscript{25} These roles were undertaken by most vice-regal wives to a greater or lesser extent across the Empire and were viewed as enhancing their husband’s careers, because, as one contemporary commentator explained, ‘so much of a Governor’s success depends upon his wife’.\textsuperscript{26}

As well as being personally acceptable and socially aware, a Governor’s wife had to demonstrate a willingness to intervene in areas affecting women and children. This

\textsuperscript{24}ibid., p.99.
\textsuperscript{25}ibid., p.155.
\textsuperscript{26}Said of Lady Talbot see Rita, ‘Victoria’s Governor, His Wife and His Home’, The Red Funnel, July 1905, pp.158-160.
was a constant theme within the traditional vice-regal ladies’ role. Although this field expanded and diversified with time, it was at the basis of many vice-regal wives’ colonial experiences. One of the earliest New South Wales Governors’ wives, Anna Josepha King, wife of Governor Phillip King, resided in the young colony from 1799. In the fledgling convict settlement, she and her husband saw a need to help the women and children of the colony, and in 1801 established a girls’ orphanage near the Tank Stream at The Rocks on the shores of Sydney Harbour.\(^{27}\) Mrs. King was on the administrative committee and made daily visits to the orphan house. In 1826, another early Governor’s wife, Eliza Darling, established a Female Industrial School in Sydney.\(^{28}\) These philanthropic actions were both expected and relied upon in colonial society across the British Empire.

Not all vice-regal ladies, however, followed the accepted pattern. In 1837, an early Governor of Tasmania, (Van Dieman’s Land), John Franklin, arrived with his second wife Jane. As Jane Franklin’s biographer Penny Russell has stated, the couple settled ‘in Van Dieman’s Land with a strong shared vision for its future progress and development’.\(^{29}\) Lady Jane Franklin always stressed that her activities were focused on fostering her husband’s career, ‘in furtherance, ... of his interests, reputation and character’.\(^{30}\) She upheld a belief that the vice-regal role was a partnership and that as an intelligent and capable spouse she could assist both her husband and the colony


\(^{30}\) *ibid.*, p.62.
through her direct involvement. The projects she undertook to achieve this goal established her as a woman before her time. The role she pursued in the 1830s was a precursor of the role that would, from the late nineteenth century, be expected of all vice-regal women. She did not allow herself to be limited to the functions traditionally followed by Governor’s wives, such as social arbiter, hostess, supportive spouse, caring mother, with some attachment to philanthropic interests. These sanctioned activities, as Alison Alexander notes, were ‘not at all what Lady Franklin had in mind’.

Lady Franklin believed in a ‘hands-on’ commitment to colonial society. As an idealistic and enthusiastic vice-regal woman, she travelled extensively and noted many areas where she believed her attention could aid colonial development. For example, she purchased land for a farming settlement along the Huon river which prospered, she encourage learning and the teaching of skills. Lady Jane also set about raising the intellectual tone of Tasmania by establishing the Tasmanian Natural History Society, later the Royal Society of Tasmania, the first official royal society outside Britain. Her procurement of 52 hectares of land in the Lenah Valley near Hobart for the establishment of a botanical garden still benefits Tasmanians today. However, her efforts were not always a success. For instance, Lady Jane showed enthusiasm for the founding of a superior Anglican secondary school for boys, which later failed due to its position in New Norfolk being considered unhealthy and its

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31ibid., p.52.
32Alexander, op.cit., p.152.
33ibid., pp.142-144.
34Selzer, op.cit., p.133.
35Alexander, op.cit., p.140
headmaster, Rev. Gell both unsuitable and unsuccessful. As well her attempts to
reform the prostitutes who were inmates of Hobart’s Female Factory was also not
well received. Many of the prostitutes were seemingly quite happy to continue their
unlawful lifestyles. Some initiatives, such as her innovative attempt to rid Tasmania
of snakes, and to aid homeless and ill Aborigines, did not retain her focus for long,
while others, such as her ardent efforts to assist female convicts at the request of the
noted reformer Elizabeth Fry, were constant, if largely futile. Yet in the 1830s, any
attention given to these problems was remarkable in vice-regal circles, indeed in
European colonial society as a whole.

Lady Franklin’s intervention was not universally applauded. Political factions
disapproved of her obvious interference in official matters; she admitted to her sister
that colonial dispatches often contained her ideas, suggestions and alterations. The
press also criticised many of her efforts, especially her instigation of the Female
Prisoners Reform Society and her constant and expensive trips, both within Tasmania
and overseas. Lady Jane knew her different approach was unwelcome in
conservative political and press circles and the enemies she made contributed to her
husband being recalled to England in 1843.

Jane Franklin’s refusal to accept the traditional passive role should be considered an
aberration for the 1830s. Although not consistent in her ardour, she was certainly

36 ibid., pp.140-141.
38 Selzer, op.cit., pp.92-95.
ahead of her time. It would be another fifty years before the majority of vice-regal women considered the civilisation of the outposts of empire and the enlightenment of colonial society as their acknowledged imperial mission.

The press was very influential in the depiction of the ideal vice-regal woman and her perceived success or failure. The highest accolade was to be called ‘a thorough representative of the “English lady”, the most truly lovable of created things’.\textsuperscript{43} However, if the Governor’s wife fell short in the eyes of the public or press the woman was not spared ridicule and reprimand. As Russell observes, ‘For the wife of a Governor to neglect the social and domestic duties which ... were quite rigidly codified, to leave the tasks of companion and hostess to others went beyond eccentricity to culpability’.\textsuperscript{44} Their husbands were paid by the colonies to perform to a certain standard, a standard which was strictly applied and constrained the behaviour of the vice-regal spouse. The Governor’s wife was continually held up to colonial public scrutiny.\textsuperscript{45} In addition to leading fashion, manners and society and providing the perfect example of upper-class female existence, they attempted to enhance the Crown’s position by lavish displays of court life. These vice-regal women were representing the Crown and many adopted the social conventions of Queen Victoria and her court while in the colonies. Their social obligations included holding official levees in the mornings, drawing rooms in the afternoons and dinners and balls at night. The ladies carried with them an aura of aristocratic superiority and could

\textsuperscript{42}Russell, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.67-69.

\textsuperscript{43}The Argus, cited in Hancock, \textit{op.cit.}, p.32.

\textsuperscript{44}Russell, \textit{op.cit.}, p.59.

\textsuperscript{45}Melbourne Punch and The Truth, and the Sydney Bulletin, took great delight in mocking and drawing the public’s attention to the perceived shortcomings of various vice-regal men and women throughout the late Victorian and Edwardian years.
supply what British officials believed colonists wanted, their own royal circle and court society.

By the late 1880s the script for female vice-regal participation was being re-written and vice-regal wives had to react to political, social and moral developments occurring to (differing degrees) throughout the Empire. Ladies in white settler colonies were often faced with distinct social dilemmas, which proved a constant worry for many. The growth of the nouveau riche in the colonies, those with interests in commerce, gold, and land was making it more difficult to keep up traditional social conventions. This sometimes led to tension between the new money households and old families of rank. Lady Jane Hotham, as wife of the Victorian Governor 1854-56, was accused by some sections of the public and the press of allowing ‘anyone’ to attend official functions. Although her open house policy was commended by some, to most in the community it was not the way a Governor’s lady should behave. On the other hand, retiring or disinterested vice-regal women, such as Susannah Hindmarsh, the shy wife of the first Governor of South Australia 1836-38, were seen as hampering their husband’s role and failing in their vice-regal spouse responsibility. Susannah offered no social leadership or hospitality and no documented evidence ‘of her assisting him in his duties’. Overall, however, prior to the late nineteenth century, most Governors’ ladies accepted and performed the traditional ceremonial role to the satisfaction of their colonial employers.

46 See Russell (ed.), For Richer, For Poorer, Early Colonial Marriages, op.cit.
47 Hancock, op.cit., pp. 35-37.
48 Alexander, op.cit., p.155.
The Emergence of the New Vice-Regal Woman

The late nineteenth century saw a marked change in women's place in British life. Numbers of upper-class ladies began to challenge the status quo and increasingly participate in the public sphere especially in the philanthropic area. This new proactive woman brought her dynamic approach to aristocratic duty and charitable endeavour to many parts of the Empire. The modern vice-regal wife saw an opportunity to push the British civilising agenda of new imperialism, and to capitalise on the growing networks of women's organisations.⁴⁹

In the period 1880-1914, the type of man selected for vice-regal office was also changing. The individuals sent out to represent the British Crown in the late 1800s and early 1900s were no longer in the main military men or career diplomats. Now vice-regal appointees were principally nobles, men of superior birth, with large estates, public-school education, pleasing manners, sporting prowess, community standing, and a belief in their traditional ability to act as ruler, guardian, and often missionary and teacher.⁵⁰

In the wave of constitutional changes to secure colonial independence, especially in white settler communities of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the Cape Colony, where responsible governments were in place, the male vice-regal role was growing into a largely ceremonial appointment.⁵¹ The Confederation of Canada in 1867

⁴⁹New imperialism will be investigated in Chapter Two, and women's organisations in Chapter Three.
incorporated the eastern Canadian provinces; Australia was federated in 1901, but separate state governments with cabinets responsible to elected parliaments were created from the mid-1850, and New Zealand passed the uniting Constitution Act of 1852. All these steps towards independence gradually took power away from the Crown and its male vice-regal representatives. In many regions of Empire the Queen’s men were becoming increasingly politically irrelevant in the day to day working of the governments. It must be noted that by the late nineteenth century finance and not politics was ‘the Governor of the imperial engine’ and official appointees were expected to keep a harmonious relationship between Britain and her dominions for increasingly important trade and strategic reasons. The Queen’s men, therefore, were to be superior and likeable gentlemen, capable of maintaining good relations between the Crown and the colony, in short ‘a peer with a pleasant wife’.

By the 1880s this revised official focus to one of ceremonial Governor with tact and elan opened the way for socially adept aristocrats to take on the appointments. Any lack of political expertise was deemed counterbalanced by their status, noble connections, social flair and elite position. Ideas of Empire were evolving to the

*Hopetoun to Isacccs, George Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1983.*


55For example, Lord Dudley was represented to the Australian people as a South African war veteran, former political secretary, former vice-regal appointee in Ireland, and most notably a wealthy land owner and important noble. See Town and Country, 25 March 1908, p.14.
extent that aristocratic peers were seen as the perfect choice to represent the Crown. The Empire was one place in which the elites’ ‘special skills were put to good use’.\textsuperscript{56} The late nineteenth century vice-regal appointee, the ‘new breed of Governor’, was often personally known to royalty or close to government leaders.\textsuperscript{57} This was also true of their wives.\textsuperscript{58} The spouses were, in the main, elite women with established royal and Society connections, self-assured and confident. Increasingly these couples were no longer appointed to perform important political roles, they were now appointed simply because of ‘who’ they were and the impression they made.

The expansion in aristocratic royal representatives coincided with the decline in aristocratic incomes in the late 1800s and the growing concern over the threat of lower-class revolution.\textsuperscript{59} Many saw a prestigious overseas posting as a way to alleviate their financial concerns, and to be seen as performing their national duty.\textsuperscript{60} An appointment to the white settler colonies of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa were favoured, but to be installed as the Viceroy of India was considered the pinnacle of vice-regal life.\textsuperscript{61} Some noblemen and their families became serial vice-regal or diplomatic appointees. Lady Hariot Dufferin, for example, spent much of her married life overseas representing the British crown.\textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{56}Cannadine, \textit{op.cit.}, p.601.

\textsuperscript{57}Edward D.J. Wilson, ‘What is a Colonial Governor?’, \textit{Nineteenth Century}, December 1878, pp.1053-1071.

\textsuperscript{58}Cannadine, \textit{op.cit.}, p.187.

\textsuperscript{59}Houghton, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.246-250.


\textsuperscript{61}Walpole, \textit{op.cit.}, p.159.

\textsuperscript{62}Lord Dufferin’s appointments as either governor or diplomat included Canada, 1872-8; Russia, 1879-81; Turkey and Egypt, 1882-3; India, 1884-8; Italy, 1888-91 and France, 1891-96.
Of course, the wives who accompanied these aristocratic men added their own special skills. They were also well-born, and well-connected leaders of Society. But by the late 1800s, in contrast to their husbands, the female imperial role was expanding. The ladies were now armed with greater freedoms and more perceived responsibilities. The office of vice-regal consort was developing beyond the traditional ‘Governor’s lady’ functions. This transition in roles, however, did not affect the basic concept of the vice-regal couple in the minds of the late Victorian and Edwardian establishment. The accepted image remained that of an elite and committed married couple with both parties contributing in their own way to the success of the appointment. As this thesis will demonstrate, new vice-regal women often encountered opposition from the more staid members of society who were sometimes disconcerted with the ladies endeavours to change the status quo.

The later Victorian era and the Edwardian period saw a rise in the pomp and ceremony accompanying vice-regal assignments. As real political influence declined vice-regal ritual and ceremony flourished. For example, Lord Hopetoun arrived in Melbourne in November 1889 as the new colonial Governor for Victoria, he and Lady Hopetoun rode through the city streets in style. Seated in an impressive coach drawn by magnificent horses, they were attended by footmen and postilions in elaborate livery with white powder in their hair. The couple were accompanied to Australia by numerous personal servants including Ibrahim, an Albanian, whose only function was to make and serve coffee. And Lord and Lady Brassey, also in Victoria

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63 See Alexander, op.cit.
64 See the case studies in Chapters Four, Five and Six for many examples of these conflicts.
65 Lord Hopetoun later became Australia’s first Governor-General in 1901.
(1895-1900), were attended by ‘red-breeched men in the morning and white coated (men) in the evening ...' \(^{67}\)

By the end of the nineteenth century the press and public had become fascinated with the aristocratic personalities and activities of vice-regal society. Many vice-regal wives took on celebrity status. Women’s pages and magazines were filled with stories, gossip, and descriptions of those who attended functions and the fashions worn. The birth of Lord and Lady Hopetoun’s son in Melbourne, Charles Melbourne, in 1892 was a source of on-going excitement in the ladies’ journals.\(^{68}\) Social events, theatrical performances patronised, visitors received, the hospitals, schools, and fairs visited, all received significant media attention. This was not only true in Australia. For example, Lady Aberdeen’s fund raising events in Canada (1893-8), and Lady Dudley’s imperial balls during the seasons in Ireland (1902-5), were major media events.\(^{69}\) By the end of the nineteenth century, however, not all vice-regal engagements or press references to vice-regal women concerned social or personal events. Some of these modern vice-regal ladies were breaking new ground. They were not only featured in the woman’s pages of major papers, they were also conspicuous in the news section. This was a significant departure from the past. Vice-regal women had begun to initiate their own newsworthy material.

With greater media interest Governors’ ladies were now under intense scrutiny, and with changes in expectations their lives became more demanding. Lady Audrey

\(^{67}\) *ibid.*, p.59.

\(^{68}\) Hancock, *op. cit.*, pp.205-208.

\(^{69}\) *The Ladies Realm*, vol.xiv, May-October 1903, p.132.
Tennyson, (married to Hallam the son of Alfred Lord Tennyson), as wife of the South Australian Governor 1899-1902 describes a typical week-end which followed a full week of functions. "... we have our state appearance ... Friday, (then) the 20th Anniversary of the Young Men’s Christian Association, Saturday a garden party ... then the opening of an enormous Fair’ with Church services and meetings on Sunday.⁷⁰ Official engagements, less formal meetings, and often extensive touring was combined with family life, and the organisation of their personal households.⁷¹ It was a hectic existence, which left little time for personal pursuits or relaxation.

In other parts of the Empire, too, vice-regal women were adapting their role. Lady Beatrix Cadogan, Vicereine in Ireland, 1895-1902, was a popular vice-regal consort who combined traditional and new woman aspects during her period in Ireland. She was extremely busy with drawing room functions, levees, State balls and concerts and a social calendar including racing weeks, horse shows and cricket carnivals.⁷² Most nights were taken up with dinners for eight to ten guests. Lady Beatrix was described as a loving mother and grandmother, a keen fisherwoman, horsewoman, dog lover, and gardener.⁷³ Art was high on Lady Cadogan’s list of interests. She often visited the Royal Hibernian Academy and purchased many water-colours from local female artists. The Vicereine devoted afternoons to meetings. She was an active President of the Irish branch of the Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Help Society, and was interested in the plight of disabled soldiers from the South African war. Continuing the work begun by her vice-regal predecessor Lady Ishbel Aberdeen, Beatrix took on the presidency of

⁷⁰Tennyson, op.cit., p.78.
⁷¹ibid., pp.58-59.
⁷³ibid., p.30.
the Irish Industries Association and played a leading part in organising a national Textile Exhibition in 1897 to showcase Irish industry to the world.\textsuperscript{74}

Lady Cadogan led a busy and demanding vice-regal life. She can be seen as a transitional vice-regal woman, combining aspects from both traditional and modern roles. She was anxious to assist her husband, to fulfil her established social position, and to participate actively in philanthropic enterprises and the progress of Empire. Beatrix Cadogan, however, did not push the boundaries, she did not enlist the power of women’s collective endeavours to establish new organisations, and she did not cause conflict within the establishment.

\textbf{The Role of the New Vice-Regal Woman}

By the late nineteenth century, British middle and upper-class women had become more visible in the public sphere, especially in political and social areas. The numerous and varied organisations they belonged to equipped them with experience in the wider world.\textsuperscript{75} The ‘new woman’ was reflected in the attitudes of many vice-regal women and this ‘new vice-regal woman’ came with a more practical and assertive agenda. As female Empire builders, they endeavoured to combine imperialism and the spread of British civilisation with practical solutions to the problems facing their communities. The growth of fervour regarding imperialism, race, duty and scientific breakthroughs combined with the established functions of women produced a change in both their perceived and actual responsibilities.

\footnote{ibid.}
Lady Cadogan: Transitional Vice-Regal Woman

Figure 1. The Ladies Realm Volume 10 1901
Vice-regal women were affected by the shift in middle and upper-class women's self-perception and society's expectations. Many Governor's ladies, and especially the wives of Governors-General, saw national accountability as part of their modern outlook to official duty, and assumed an important leadership role. This was a time when imperial fervour was at its peak, a high point of Empire, and when British people everywhere, due to constant reinforcement by government, media and society, were well aware of their duty to the Empire.76 No longer satisfied with taking on the established role of society hostess and patroness to existing charitable societies, many Governor's ladies saw new avenues of endeavour which they personally wished to address in their dominions. In a pro-active manner, and often with the personal sanction of royalty, but not necessarily requiring this, they went about attempting to turn the rhetoric of new imperialism into practice and to improve the lives of colonial subjects. In doing so they invigorated the vice-regal position, confident that this was their role, and convinced that they had the ability to achieve their goals.

These women despatched with their husbands all over the world were, as Alison Alexander states, a product of their age, 'society's reaction to them was caused by the state that society was in, and the women's subsequent activities were to some extent governed by that society's expectations'.77 Although this is partly true it does not take into account the agency of the new vice-regal women themselves who in spite of community concerns and interference, were determined to make a difference, wherever they were sent and whether local society was ready for it or not. The very women who were expected to keep the conventions often flouted them. The ladies

75 See thesis Chapter Three.
76 For an extended discussion of new imperialism see thesis Chapter Two.
77 Alexander, op.cit., p.156.
obliged and destined to uphold ‘tradition’ redefined their subordinate position to one of independent action.

The new imperial women did not just take ideas out to the empire but changed, adapted and adopted new concepts once they were settled in their official residences overseas. For example, Lady Aberdeen’s Victorian Order of Nurses established in Canada in 1897, whilst based on the Queen Victoria Jubilee Nurses in Britain, accommodated Canadian conditions and expectations. Vice-regal ladies were well aware of the endeavours and achievements of their peers and competition seems to have developed among some vice-regal ladies and their colonies. This competition was not necessarily detrimental. Imitation and rivalry produced cross-cultural discoveries, development, and growth across the Empire. As will be detailed later in Chapter Six of this thesis the Countess of Dudley’s Australian Bush Nurses incorporated features from her Lady Dudley Nurses for the poor of Ireland, the Queen’s Jubilee Nurses, and the Victorian Order of Nurses organisations.

Britain and colonial communities had their own separate ideas and agendas and sometimes the discourses clashed. Vice-regal ladies were occasionally caught up in these debates. Lady Dufferin’s attempts to bring modern health care to the women of India were often derided by native Indians who accused her of trying to Christianise the population by stealth.78 Usually a compromise could be reached. This thesis investigates the part played by several new vice-regal women in this incorporation of differing ideologies and beliefs within colonial organisations, while pushing ahead with the British establishment’s modern imperial civilising crusade. New vice-regal

78‘Lady Dufferin Fund, Minutes,’ Dufferin Papers, D/1071/J/D/5/1-7, 2 March 1887, PRONI, Belfast.
women were often confronted with divergent views and their first hand experience of the differences within the Empire gave them a unique perspective among aristocratic women.

 Armed with the considerable expertise many had obtained through charitable, political and religious women’s organisations in Britain, vice-regal women not only consolidated existing colonial organisations but initiated new associations. New vice-regal women were, however, somewhat hampered in their range of suitable activities as they were forbidden to show either their political allegiances or their personal loyalties. They had to be seen as non-political and neutral. Therefore, as would be expected, most of their work was within the acceptable fields of health, education, employment and the welfare of women and children. Acceptable and necessary were the two words which best illustrate their type of endeavours. As Lady Dufferin noted she hoped her work in India was viewed as needful, successful and appreciated.79 These women were not the traditional ‘Governor’s ladies’ as described by Alexander. These were modern vice-regal spouses with a new and separate agenda, a woman’s agenda. This sense of vice-regal ladies’ special responsibilities and duties to all members of the empire was just as evident in white settler dominions as in the ‘other’, non-white communities such as India and the West Indies.80 Condescending, patronising and imperious many may have been, but this did not preclude them from also being dedicated, resolute and hard-working.81

79 The Countess of Dufferin, A Record of Three Years Work of the National Association for Supplying Female Medical Aid to the Women of India, Calcutta, Thadur, Spink and Co., 1888, pp.99-100.
81 See Chapter Five on Ishbel Aberdeen who received a great deal on negative media attention during her vice-regal career.
As vice-regal men’s official roles diminished due to local administrative and political change, their wives became busier than ever. These wives were the ones who actually changed the meaning of vice-regal life and duty towards the end of Victorian times. Quite separate from their husbands, but always with the men’s acknowledged support, these women initiated their own work in fields, which they considered constituted important imperial work. Their interest in the dominions was usually a life-long concern with most women continuing a close association and a special regard for ‘their’ own piece of Empire. When back in Britain they become surrogate advocates and protectors of their dominions in the corridors of power.

The Worldview Of Aristocratic Women

To understand the elite ladies whose husband’s careers made them vice-regal wives, we need to appreciate their special attributes and the world they occupied. Vice-regal women, both old and new, came overwhelmingly from British aristocratic families. Once settled in the colonies, their sense of history and their upbringing informed their personal choices, their social awareness, and their perspective. The women responded to their vice-regal role in the way they did because of their upper-class upbringing and aristocratic worldview. This enabled the ladies to undertake their expanded female imperial responsibilities with confidence.

Aristocratic ladies in the late Victorian and Edwardian eras were a complex group of women drawn from every part of Great Britain. Although the majority were well-born, politically conservative Christians, there were women of every political,
religious, and social persuasion, and even the occasional American heiress, or ‘dollar princess’, in the elite ranks.\textsuperscript{83} By the late nineteenth century, however, the powerful bond which existed between them was strengthening, a bond based upon an intensifying class consciousness and a growing participation in a changing social order. This brought with it an increasing sense of connectedness, as David Cannadine characterises it, ‘a collective awareness of inherited ... superiority’. This bond was to be energised by the life and legacy of Queen Victoria.\textsuperscript{84}

Elite ladies identified with members of royalty as the highest representatives of moral standards who served to steady the social order and acted as symbols for the progress of the British race. The presence of Queen Victoria on the throne had an important impact on the understanding of the aristocratic woman’s place at home and abroad, ‘for Victoria embodied maternal imperialism at its most authoritative’.\textsuperscript{85} While successive Queens, especially Queen Alexandra and Queen Mary, were also held in high esteem, it was the long-serving Victoria, the independent ruler of the great British Empire and universal mother figure, who was held in the very highest regard.

Queen Victoria was an icon for women of the leisured classes. She was a woman with power, wealth, prestige and ability, who, although perhaps considered conservative, had admirably managed to combine her royal duties with her female obligations. Victoria was an Empress and Queen but she was also a loving and accomplished wife

\textsuperscript{Four, Five and Six.}
\textsuperscript{83}Mollie Hardwick, \textit{The World of Upstairs, Downstairs}, David and Charles, London, 1976, p.79. One of these American heiresses was Consuelo Vanderbilt who married the 9th Duke of Marlborough in 1895.
\textsuperscript{84}Cannadine, \textit{The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy}, \textit{op.cit.}, p.24.
\textsuperscript{85}Julia Bush, ‘Edwardian Ladies and the Race Dimensions of British Imperialism,’ \textit{Women’s Studies
and mother, the latter being perceived as the highest calling for any woman, regal or not. Victoria had managed to place ‘the coronet of woman / Above the crown of Queen’. During her life and for many years after, Victoria’s image had developed a Weberian type of charisma, an aura that extended beyond the reality. Although the woman herself, especially after Albert’s death, was often viewed as a dowdy and matronly individual, stressing the middle-class virtues of work, thrift, and civic responsibility, the symbolism of her reign had a much greater community effect. The Empress Victoria, the great and powerful imperial mother, was an overarching image constantly before her subjects.

For the aristocrats of the period, 1884-1914, Queen Victoria served another purpose. She was a rock, a constant to cling to during a complicated time of shifting social and political attitudes and scientific development. Politically the Conservative Party was under pressure from the Liberals and the emerging Socialists and Labour Party. The role of the elite was being called into question by many in the community and the militant overthrowing of the landed aristocracy was being openly discussed, with the growing call to seize the ‘Idle land in the hands of idle men’. This increasing social instability coincided with a major decline in privileged incomes. Earnings from


86See discussion on motherhood in Chapter Two of this thesis.
89Julius Vogel, ‘Greater Britain and the Queen’s long reign’, *Nineteenth Century*, March 1897, pp.343-351.
farming estates fell. Declining agrarian interests left many noble families financially distressed. A suitable overseas appointment offered financial relief for some aristocratic men. Various members of the upper-classes maintained immense wealth from sources other than land. For example, Lord William Dudley, the husband of Lady Rachel one of the case studies of this thesis, derived his income largely from coal deposits on his Midlands estates. Even William Dudley, however, felt the economic downturn and was under pressure to live a more frugal life. He believed that taking a position in the colonies would relieve his temporary lack of funds. Overall men of the leisureed classes were undergoing an identity crisis from financial, social, and political changes.

Elite women’s views and lives were also undergoing a transformation which affected and influenced the ‘new’ vice-regal woman. Although these leisureed ladies lived in a world of stately homes, court activities and upper-class restrictions, they were not isolated from the community and general factors impacting on society. Through charitable work and supervision of their households they were in contact with other classes in society and this gave them an insight into the world of other women, an opportunity their husbands sometimes missed. Many elite ladies were well aware of the transformations taking place for women in their domestic and imperial roles, indeed for all members of late nineteenth century British society. These momentous

91 Lord Ernle, English Farming Past and Present, no publisher, London, 1936, p.377 Cannadine, op.cit., p.35 lists the forced sales of noble family lands and possessions during the late 1800s.
93 The Times, 28 June 1920, p.16.
94 G. Kitson Clark, The Making of Victorian England, University Paperback, Edinburgh, 1965, p.234. Some of the political changes were the Reform Acts of the 1880s including the Ground Game Act 1880; Malt Tax converted to beer duty 1880; the enfranchisement of male farm labourers in 1884; and the County Councils Act 1888.
social changes affecting and women ‘involved legal, political and economic issues, and touched on property ownership, the franchise, higher education, the birth rate, laws of marriage and divorce, the protocol of the court, and the future of the Empire’.  

Privileged women such as Ladies Dufferin, Aberdeen and Dudley were products of a combination of traditional upper-class upbringing and exposure to new ideas permeating society. With the old and new vying for attention, they were to use their aristocratic impulses and their status to great advantage when venturing into a changing world. Their ancestry and privileged existence can perhaps be seen as helping rather than hindering their progress. It would appear that the cloistered and narrow upbringing of aristocratic females did not always produce the uneducated, tiresome, subservient, and uninspiring gentlewoman of the stereotypes. Rather it can be argued it created a group of women confident in their position, rights, and duties, with strong family relationships and powerful contacts. Whatever else, the ladies were brought up as female leaders, as ‘Leadership was of the essence of upper-class existence’. They knew first hand of the authority of the Queen and the power and position held by many aristocratic women within society.

When this type of woman was exposed to fin-de-siecle ideas, a breed of woman was produced well suited to the public functions many pursued, especially in the role of vice-regal consort. Many became consummate lobbyists and accomplished public relations experts. They knew the right people, were seen in the right places and acted

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95Hynes, op.cit., p.172.
with class, clan and a pronounced fixity of purpose. The ladies of this thesis, when unhappy or frustrated with traditional official channels, simply went to the top, seeking royal or governmental approval through their network of family, friends and acquaintances.\textsuperscript{97} In short, these assured and often intelligent ladies did not underestimate their value and would not be denied.

This is not to say that previous generations of aristocratic and vice-regal ladies were not involved in change. However, it was in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods when opportunities for public recognition, organisation and reform liberated many upper-class women.\textsuperscript{98} One of the factors empowering the ladies was the emergence of the ‘new woman’.

\textbf{The ‘New Woman’}

The reformist woman had many guises. Ann Ardis noted that she ‘was called “Novissima”: the new Woman, the Odd Woman, the Wild Woman, and the Superfluous Woman in English novels and periodicals of the 1880s and 1890s’.\textsuperscript{99} The term ‘new woman’, coined by Sarah Grand, a novelist, in 1894 was used to describe a type of woman who had emerged in the 1880s, as an independent female with a modern outlook.\textsuperscript{100} The term took on many different meanings. One depiction of the

\textsuperscript{97}Ladies Aberdeen and Dudley when facing establishment resistance from the Queen’s Nurses organisational committee in England simply went directly to the Queen -Victoria, Alexandra, or Mary for support. See thesis Chapters Four, Five, and Six for a detailed discussion of these issues.

\textsuperscript{98}Hardwick, op.cit., p.85.


new woman was of a sexually active, anti-marriage and anti-motherhood female wearing male attire, drinking, smoking, swearing and taking part in other forms of ‘decadent’ behaviour. She was probably a Socialist as well. The temperament and style of this new woman was often lampooned in satirical journals and sometimes in the mainstream press. This extremist’s version of the new woman was considered by some of the time not to be a reality but ‘the finest work of the imagination which newspapers have yet produced’. More serious journalism referred to women who embodied a belief in female independence and the push for greater freedom in society, although not necessarily in a political way, as new women. These less extreme versions exhorted women to be ‘independent, active, self-supporting, individualised’ as long as they remained ‘essentially womanly’, and knew the importance of the role of wife and mother. In yet other representations, the typical new woman was middle or upper-class, educated and independent, who saw the benefit both financially and socially of working for a living. She advocated the opening up of male professions to women with the accompanying rates of pay, with little emphasis on motherhood. In the same way a girl or lady who did little more than ride a bike, (the ‘great emancipator’), were often referred to as new women.

The ‘new woman’ was not a politically specific group but a term used loosely to

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102 See illustration p.53A.
105 Laver, op.cit., p.185.
identify any women whose ideas conflicted with traditional female roles. Clearly, it was used to encompass many women, and to differentiate between those who upheld the traditional place of women and those who accepted the view that a shift was now evident in society that would change women’s direction and self perception. Anyone who professed or demonstrated an interest in feminine reform or progressive attitudes might be labelled a ‘new woman’ or a sympathiser with the cause.

Women in Britain, and elsewhere in the Empire, were aware that they were not the only ones experiencing a revolution in the way women were represented. It was a phenomena being played out in many Western democracies with American and Continental women also becoming more involved with personal, political and professional change. Beyond personally taking charge of her own life, the usually white ‘new woman’ desired to improve the lives of her sisters and to encourage public acceptance of female rights, including suffrage, and essential reforms for all women. In Britain it took on an imperial role. Cecily Devereux argues that the new woman was constructed to coincide with the expansionist views underpinning late nineteenth century imperial growth, especially in white settler societies. This ‘new woman’ was the woman of the second British Empire. Some saw her in the vanguard of imperialism, offering support to both Social Darwinism and Eugenic

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107 Beetham, op.cit., p.539.


110 Margaret Strobel, European Women and the Second British Empire, Indiana University Press,
The New Woman

"You're not leaving or, Jack! Tea will be here directly!"
"Oh, I'm going for a cup of tea in the Servants' Hall. I can't get on without Female Society, you know!"

Figure 2. Top: Lone Hand 1 October 1908
Figure 3. Bottom: Punch 15 June 1895
theories.\textsuperscript{111}

One of the great supporters of a greater public role for women as well as arch-imperialist was Lord Meath.\textsuperscript{112} Meath believed women brought different but necessary skills to any public office and that these were needed to advance society.\textsuperscript{113} He advanced the view that women had a sense of order, attention to detail, a delicacy of taste and a practicality often lacking in males. These qualities he reasoned were instilled in females by their daily lives and acquaintance with people from all economic classes. Meath was steadfast in his belief that females were intellectually and morally the equals of men but considered that some matters could be better handled by women. This was in line with a traditional view that subjects relating to personal relationships, morality and detail were all improved by female participation. Women, he asserted, were acknowledged to understand this better than men. Meath held that men and women were different and yet complementary, and this division of the sexes was considered part of the natural order. Indeed many militant upper-class ladies agreed with this view.\textsuperscript{114} Two reformist women of this study, Lady Ishbel

\textsuperscript{Bloomingt}on, 1991.

\textsuperscript{111}Francis Galton's studies such as \textit{Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development}, J.M.Dent, London, 1907, had many adherents and his theories on improving the biological make-up of the human species were widely discussed in this era. For information on race and late nineteenth century imperialism see V.G. Kiernan, \textit{The Lords of Human Kind; European attitudes towards the outside world in the Imperial age}, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1969; Christine Bolt, \textit{Victorian Attitudes to Race}, Routledge and K. Paul, London, 1971; M. Biddiss, (ed.), \textit{Images of Race} Leicester University Press, Leicester, 1979.

\textsuperscript{112}For information on imperialist and female reform advocate Reginald Brabazon, the twelfth Earl of Meath see J.R.H. Weaver (ed.), \textit{Reginald Brabazon, Dictionary of National Biography}, Twentieth Century 1922-1930, Oxford University Press, Humphrey Milford, 1937, pp. 100-101.


\textsuperscript{114}Such reformers as the Countess of Selborne, Millicent Fawcett, Lady Louisa Knightley and Lady
Aberdeen and Lady Rachel Dudley, also stressed the separate yet comparable roles of men and women and continued to endorse the home as woman’s greatest responsibility.\textsuperscript{115} They were both wives and mothers and this ‘status of wife and (preferably) mother retained great importance for the cause’.\textsuperscript{116}

The Earl of Meath and advocates of the ‘new woman’ had facts to back up their affirmation of female roles. In an article ‘The Women of To-Day’, written by Meath in 1893, he expressed his vision for female involvement in Empire and society as intelligent and patriotic wives and mothers.\textsuperscript{117} He asserted the value of promoting better education for girls and more political power for women. After all women in the 1880s had proved themselves as Poor Law Guardians and on schoolboards. He declared he was not speaking for himself alone but for other males with similar views. We ‘who advocate the extension of the sphere of usefulness now open to women’ he maintained must support the female cause.\textsuperscript{118} The article proceeded to answer many of the objections which had been raised in relation to women’s inclusion in the public arena. Meath suggested that women in the past had been artificially restricted from education and were, therefore, not fitted to fulfil the jobs undertaken by men; but, with better education and extended freedoms women would now be perfectly qualified to fill these posts. Women could perform the same job and to the same standard as men, and he asserted it was prejudice or custom on the males’ part not to accept this truth.

\textsuperscript{115}Frances Balfour all advocated the special role of mothers.
\textsuperscript{116}See Chapters Five and Six of this thesis.
\textsuperscript{117}Bush, \textit{op.cit.}, p.32.
\textsuperscript{118}Meath, \textit{op.cit.}
\textsuperscript{118}ibid., p.427.
One of the reasons propounded by opponents to women’s growing freedoms and political advancement suggested that by doing so women might become less agreeable to men. Meath lampooned this position remarking how wonderful it was of these men to want to protect poor weak women from making a terrible mistake. In the article the Earl wanted these men to understand that women were quite capable of deciding for themselves what was best for them personally. It was important for reforming women to have influential men backing their cause; to be part of the public sphere they must have public support, that is, male support. Male approbation gave weight to their endeavours.

The reformist ideas associated with the new woman, support for the female right to the vote, law reform, access to higher education and suitable paid employment extended to aristocratic women’s circles. This new agenda was both self-imposed and community engendered. Elite women were now organising, speaking publicly, and financially managing viable organisations. They were not only socially and politically aware they were often leaders in their fields.

This description of aristocratic women as at the forefront of change is not the standard view. The orthodox assessment of late Victorian and Edwardian aristocratic women is that they were women of little importance and interest. Studies concentrating on upper-class women of this era tend to focus on their privileged lifestyle rather than

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120 Hall, *op.cit.*, p.127.
121 This is clearly the case in major philanthropic organisations in which women played a significant role, for example, the Red Cross Society, the Young Women’s Christian Association, and District Nursing groups.
evidence of their individual growth or their contribution to social change. The leisured lifestyles of elite ladies are featured in the historical works of Pamela Horn, Keith Middlemass, David Cannadine, Leonore Davidoff, and Stella Margetson and present, for the most part, a picture of badly educated and self-indulgent women, most of whom lived for society, fashion and romantic intrigue.\textsuperscript{122}

The novelists, Vita Sackville-West in \textit{The Edwardians}, and E.F. Benson who ‘created a sensation’ satirising upper-class females in his novel \textit{Dodo}, propagated this image in their popular Victorian and Edwardian works.\textsuperscript{123} Other studies such as those by Pamela Horn, Jessica Gerard, Leonore Davidoff, Pat Jallard and Stella Margetson’s concentrate on the privileged nature of the ladies’ existence.\textsuperscript{124} Less stereotypical areas of these ladies’ lives, such as the motivations, time and effort many put in to reformist organisations, have received little attention. The standard representations of aristocratic ladies are, whilst no doubt appropriate in some instances, in stark contrast to the personalities and actions of many of the women who came from privileged backgrounds. Most knew of the changes occurring in society, politics and Empire and understood the implications. Many ladies were determined to become actively involved in this increasingly accessible public arena.


Despite some aspects of their traditional upbringing, such as a lack of formal education hindering their progress, numerous elite women went on to become reformers, innovators and leaders in the suffrage and reform campaigns for women’s rights. Some became progressive vice-regal women during the period 1884-1914. Their privileged status, family networks and inherent self-confidence gave them a great advantage, allowing them entry to formerly inaccessible fields. Consideration of the qualities instilled in the early lives of elite women reveals that these traits assisted rather than diminished their ability to perform in public life. As Julia Bush asserts, ‘dimensions of a privileged upbringing could compensate for some of the deficiencies in girls’ education’.¹²⁵ Many were confident, aware of their position and influence, well-connected, socially accomplished and in demand. They could, and did, command respect and possessed the resources to effect change. Their backgrounds offer evidence of the origins of their choices, their innate self-belief and their transformative authority.¹²⁶

Most upper-class children, boys and girls, lived separately from their parents from their earliest days. The Curzon sisters, born in the 1890s and early 1900s, viewed their widowed father as an Olympian figure who they saw, when he was home, ‘in the mornings, or if not, they would frequently receive a note’.¹²⁷ Aristocratic children, often inhabiting vast houses, were closeted with nurses and governesses in a limited number of rooms for their first few years, many forming a close bond with these

women. Boys, when they reached the age of five or six, were commonly despatched
to boarding school or instructed by tutors, while girls were expected to begin and
continue their education under the care of a governess. As Hancock observes, ‘a girl
could be educated adequately at home ... but a boy’s education was the foundation of
his career’, and thus it was assumed that an aristocratic boy should attend one of the
great British public schools.

The history of their ancestors, and the traditions and reputation of the families which
they were expected to emulate, were also routinely instilled in the children. Lady
Ishbel Aberdeen recalled that as a child she had ‘an abiding fear of bringing the
names of my parents and their forebears into disgrace’. This was reinforced by the
physical environment surrounding the girls. Most lived the major part of their early
lives until marriage in vast ancestral homes within extensive grounds complete with
family portraits, busts, statues, centuries-old furniture and libraries. This impressive
tangible history and the presence of servants to do their bidding would have made it
difficult for these girls not to have a sense of their position in the world. Although it
was obvious to them that they did not enjoy the same status as their brothers, they did
realise that theirs was an exclusive existence, and that they represented an inherited
superiority.

The role held out to the aristocratic girl was to be that of cultured, understanding, and
willing helpmates and mothers. Undoubtedly this narrow expectation would lead

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129Marguerite Hancock, ‘A marriage of opposites: Charles Joseph and Sophie La Trobe’, in Penny
Russell (ed.), For Richer or Poorer, op.cit., p.90.
130Horn, op.cit., p.24.
131Ibid., p.35.
many girls to have a limited outlook with few prospects or desires other than marrying well. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, aristocratic girls were brought up in much the same way as they had been for generations, with a set of ‘common assumptions’. They were to be model wives and mothers prepared to produce the future leaders of the nation and Empire. They considered themselves noble females with a traditional path to follow, yet, their world was changing and many saw the need to change with it. This was an age of remarkable upper-class women, many of whom glimpsed the possibility of a different role for themselves. These reformists among elite girls used the many influences, both positive and negative, in their lives to become instigators for change in the late nineteenth century.

Unfortunately female education was not a priority for the nobility in the Victorian and Edwardian era. Often the governesses employed to instruct the daughters of the house had themselves minimal education and little knowledge of a serious academic nature to offer their charges. Some had musical or artistic talent, some were excellent linguists or naturalists but there was little consistent, formalised learning. Most aristocratic girls in mid to late Victorian Britain received an unregulated haphazard education. It was anticipated that daughters would learn enough to be able to converse in society. To this end the girls were offered a superficial understanding of a limited number of subjects but there was little expectation of them receiving expert or comprehensive instruction in any area. Lord Curzon, a one-time Viceroy of India, held the view of many aristocratic fathers when he described the feminine ideal he

132Middlemas, op. cit., p. 2.
desired for his daughters as one ‘of accomplishment rather than education’. It was presumed the girls would display some artistic refinements and they were frequently taken abroad to expand their knowledge of art and languages. Educational travel was considered beneficial with the added advantage of enabling the girls and young women to purchase the latest continental fashions. By the time they were in their mid-teens these noble’s daughters were socially adept, if little else. Most of the girls were given just enough instruction not to appear totally ignorant and had refinements enough to prove popular at parties and balls prior to marriage.

By the late 1800s although female education was a central plank in the platform of the reformists and the expanding women’s movement, it was selectively adopted. Most noble families were slow to see formal instruction as advantageous for their daughters. Elite parents desired attractive, accomplished girls who could attract a suitable match, and could not see the benefits of Latin or mathematics to an aristocratic wife and mother. There was an added fear that educated or independent females would frighten away potential suitors. A further concern commonly held during the period was that overloading female minds with facts might detract from their future reproductive abilities, and the first duty of any elite wife was to produce a male heir.

Nevertheless, by the late nineteenth century, many reformed progressive girls’ schools were established which attracted gentlemen’s daughters but not many

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136 De Courcy, op. cit., p. 22.
138 Lady Violet Bonham-Carter declared she was instructed to conceal any knowledge as ‘men are afraid of clever girls’. Cited in Paul Thompson, The Edwardians, op.cit., p.60.
aristocratic girls.\footnote{Schools such as the ladies' schools of Hillary's Mount (1873), Roedean (1885) and Wycombe Abbey (1896) met with limited success.} There was a strong prejudice against these schools by titled mothers. Mabel, the Countess of Airlie, noted 'girls schools were looked upon with horror'.\footnote{Horn, \textit{op.cit.}, p.45.} Although the girls would receive a good education at these establishments, with reading, writing and arithmetic combined with sport and perhaps wax flower making, it was feared by aristocratic parents that their daughters would also mix with their social inferiors and this might have unfortunate consequences.\footnote{Such as unsuitable romantic attractions to male members of socially inferior families. See Adams, \textit{op.cit.}, p.56.} Most elite families were still having their daughters instructed at home by governesses until after World War One.

The majority of Victorian and Edwardian upper-class girls, if the conventional wisdom is to be given credit, accepted their designated educational role, and believed themselves as having different, and lesser academic abilities than men.\footnote{Horn, \textit{op.cit.}, p.39-51.} This idea was in accordance with Queen Victoria's beliefs who declared that women should not be admitted to professions such as medicine or law as 'God created men and women different - then let them remain each in their own position'.\footnote{Lytton Strachey, \textit{Queen Victoria}, Chatto and Windus, London, 1951, p.246.} Victoria, however, did accept women's vital role in the modern world and the need for more female participation in her great Empire.\footnote{This is borne out by Victoria's commitment to the professionalising of nursing and her involvement with the Queen's Jubilee Nurses. See M. Stocks, \textit{A Hundred Years of District Nursing}, George Allen}
nineteenth century later expressed regret over their traditional upbringing and lack of formal schooling. They considered that the few available educational and social options had restricted their opportunities for intellectual and personal growth. Women, such as Ishbel Aberdeen, Daisy Warwick and Mary Gladstone expressed bitterness in later life that their education had been 'wanting' and they had not been allowed to reach their full academic, cultural or spiritual potential.\textsuperscript{146} For some the time and effort spent on fashion, social arrangements and romantic intrigues although enjoyable was not sufficient to satisfy the craving for intellectual stimulation.

Numbers of ladies sought other outlets for their abilities. As Harriot Dufferin was to show with her interest in the education of Indian girls for medical positions, Ishbel Aberdeen with her advocacy of university and higher education for women, and Rachel Dudley with her support for employment agencies, new vice-regal women were strong advocates for female education, despite not being well educated themselves.\textsuperscript{147}

The only types of schools for girls which were not unacceptable to the aristocracy, and which were, in fact, advocated for short periods, were finishing schools. Upper-class girls were often sent to day finishing schools during the London season of May to September to be given a final veneer of elegance. Their manners and social skills were honed and their fashion sense and conversational techniques enhanced. Here the girls refined their already acquired accomplishments, drawing, letter writing, singing, and perhaps playing the piano well enough to accompany others in the drawing room.


\textsuperscript{147}See thesis Chapters Four, Five and Six.
A few had talents that stood out and these were used to good purpose. The Duchess of Sutherland published several books, her first novel *One Hour and the Next* appearing in 1899.\(^{148}\) Ladies Granby and Horner were accomplished amateur artists. Lord Cottesloe’s family had a small family choir which gave concerts.\(^ {149}\) Rachel Gurney, later Lady Dudley, cultivated her natural singing talent during her adolescence, in the knowledge that this skill gave her a distinct social advantage. In fact, at one time she considered a professional singing career.\(^ {150}\) Hariot Rowan-Hamilton, later Lady Dufferin, noted as a ‘shy’ girl, had an abiding interest in dramatic arts which began with drawing room family performances. This enabled her to express herself to good effect in public.\(^ {151}\) Ishbel Majoribanks, later Lady Aberdeen, had considerable talents and intellectual ability.\(^ {152}\) Frequently aristocratic girls were given time on the Continent, with Paris, Florence, and Dresden popular choices for elite women.\(^ {153}\)

**Marriage and Family**

Upper-class girls reaching the age of fourteen or so were gradually integrated into adult society in preparation for their coming out around the age of seventeen. A certain finesse was expected in the well-prepared privileged girl by the time of her coming out. All that was considered necessary for the coming years of parties and

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\(^{149}\)Horn *op.cit.*, p.138.

\(^{150}\)See thesis Chapter Six.

\(^{151}\)See thesis Chapter Four.


\(^{153}\)Not only was it considered educational, they could purchase the latest fashions. Irene Curzon, for example, was despatched to Dresden in the early 1900s for its music, architecture and cultural community. See De Courcy, *op.cit.*, p.33.
balls was ‘a superficially cultural veneer’. The girls’ first season was an anxious and exciting time. Their future depended upon the impression they made and they knew it. They were caught up in an incredibly competitive world. Ambitious mothers and daughters battled to be popular and in demand. The pressure was on the girls to be one of the prettiest, best presented, and most accomplished debutantes of the year. Being presented at court in magnificent dresses with metre long trains, jewels, ostrich feathers, embroidery, veils and offering deep curtsies to the monarch was only part of the ordeal. Their principal assignment was to attract a suitable match. Female relatives ensured the girls attended the right balls and parties and met the right young men. The most sought-after match was one which involved both personal attraction and a sound business relationship.

Once a suitable gentleman was accepted and an arrangement was arrived at, and the couple married, the girls were required to quickly adapt to a new way of life. The young women ventured, excited but often naive and inexperienced, into what were considered desirable marriages. Both parents and daughters were pleased when they had achieved their goal. Money, effort and time had been expended and a successful match was to be celebrated. Yet many brides had little idea of the realities ahead of them in the roles of wife, mother, and household manager. Some had limited sexual understanding while others were not at all as ingenuous as often depicted. Most, however, did lack household management abilities and this ignorance caused many

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154 ibid., p.42.
155 Horn, op.cit., pp.52-66.
156 Hardwick, op.cit., pp.79-80.
problems for the new bride.159

Even before the marriage, the aristocratic families' lawyers drew up intricate legal marriage arrangements. These detailed financial arrangements and the expectations of the specific marital roles played an important part in determining the wife's daily routine. Aristocratic marriages were viewed as a partnership for mutual benefit.160 Men would, on the whole, manage the estate, women the household. However, this division was not always adhered to. The Viscountess Howard, Countess of Yarborough, and Alice de Rothschild all successfully ran extensive estates.161 For most aristocratic wives, however, producing an heir and efficiently running the house was the designated and premier role.

Although it is easy to undervalue the household work performed by these women and to point to the number of staff they had to assist them, household management was not an easy job. It was an on-going obligation that required skill and commitment, and some upper-class women never really came to terms with it.162 The only training usually received by new brides had been acquired by watching and sometimes helping their mothers run the family home. Brides were expected to know or quickly learn how to do all the household accounts, inspect the housekeeper's books, order supplies and pay the bills. They planned the meals, paid staff, handled any problems, dealt with the working families on the estate and contributed to philanthropic endeavours. When the family went on holiday or spent some time in London, the

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Russell believes Victorian women and girls were not as naive as they have been portrayed.
159 Horn, op.cit, p.88.
160 ibid., p.79.
162 Lady Sitwell, for example, admitted being unable to keep accurate accounts, ibid., p.135
move was organised and overseen by the mistress. The successful running of the household equalled a successful aristocratic wife. Lady Greville, a noted society leader of the 1800s, believed the upper-class woman must be always alert to her duty: ‘she must never forget, never be ruffled, never be caught napping’. 163

The three vice-regal women focussed upon in this thesis were all experienced in running large and demanding households. The Countess of Dudley was chatelaine of the magnificent Witley Court in the English Midlands; Ishbel Aberdeen was the mistress of Haddo House and its estates in Scotland, and took on the added responsibility of becoming personally involved in the lives and well-being of her staff and estate families. Lady Dufferin, the wife of a career diplomat and vice-regal representative, had a large household and lands at Clandeboye, near Belfast, Ireland. She was also adept at, and alert to, her duty of making a comfortable home for her family wherever her husband was posted. 164 These ladies also had London houses which needed their personal attention.

Vice-regal women, although they had assistance, were still expected to be in control of the official household during their husbands’ colonial appointments. Lady Dufferin’s Journals contain constant references to her attempts to make the overseas households as homelike and comfortable as possible. 165 This need to personalise and anglicise their surroundings was eased by the family bringing a few key experienced

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163 ibid., p.133.
164 See thesis Chapters Four, Five and Six, on each of the ladies for details.
165 Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava, My Canadian Journal 1872-8, John Murray, London, 1891; My Russian and Turkish Journals, op.cit.; Our Viceroyal Life in India, John Murray, London, 1890. Harold Nicolson notes his aunt’s efforts in this area. She was pleased to have ‘made the room look homey with little tables, screens, plants and photographs’, Nicolson, op.cit., p.209.
and faithful staff with them. However, finding suitable staff to take to the colonies was always a problem.\textsuperscript{166} Personal maids and manservants, nannies and governesses were essential fellow travellers with vice-regal families. Aristocratic standards were to be upheld wherever the British flag flew.

The running of elite households in Victorian and Edwardian times was a considerable operation. Often there was more than one house and household to maintain with the London house annually opened up for the ‘Season’ as well as trips to the Scottish Highlands for the hunting, and holidays on the Continent all complete with household staff. A census taken in 1871 of 33 peers’ establishments reported that the median number of indoor staff was 20.\textsuperscript{167} Frequently the number topped 30. Even ladies in charge of less grand households would have a staff of twelve to fifteen. The inside household staff comprised mostly women and girls who performed physically demanding duties. The domestic work of these less economically fortunate women enabled the lady of the house to carry out her considerable supervisory assignments, a task frequently made more difficult by lack of suitable staff and budget restraints.

In this period of economic opportunities for the lower classes, with the continuing growth of factory and retail employment, it was becoming more difficult to obtain the necessary domestic workers to keep a large household running efficiently.\textsuperscript{168} The dilemma in gaining and keeping staff was a constant irritant for the elite wife. As

\textsuperscript{166}Audrey Tennyson, \textit{Lady Audrey Tennyson’s Viceregal Days}, Alexandra Hasluck (ed.), National Library of Australia, Canberra, 1979, p.309.

\textsuperscript{167}Gerard, \textit{Country House Life}, \textit{op.cit.}, notes to page 148. Lady Consuelo Marlborough had a staff of over 20 at Blenheim in the 1890s. See Horn, \textit{op.cit.}, p.91.

writer and social commentator Saki reflected; ‘The cook was a good cook, as cooks go; and as cooks go she went'. While it is true the whole aristocratic lifestyle depended upon the work of others, someone had to be in charge of the house and this fell to the elite wife. As Mrs. Beeton asserted, the lady of the house was ‘the commander of her army’ and she had grave responsibilities. The lady’s domestic efforts were under constant scrutiny and she was not free from criticism by her husband, extended family, and even visitors if she proved unequal to the task. The organisational and accounting skills attained by the lady of the manor in the management of her domain were such that they could be used in other endeavours. This was precisely the case with the Ladies Dufferin, Aberdeen, and Dudley. Once married, and even with these extra responsibilities, the scope of the lives of upper-class women broadened considerably. Married women had duties not only to her family and the household but also to the wider community. In reality, the married state provided opportunities for capable women to exercise their abilities.

Another role of the leisured ladies was to be socially active. Upon marriage it was up to them to uphold their husbands’ position in the local area and also in London society. They had to make calls and receive callers and be seen at important social functions. As hostess they had to entertain friends, relatives and influential guests, often including royals. It was noted that invitations from society ladies to meet the Prince of Wales went out with ‘monotonous regularity’. For many ladies, such as Millicent, the Duchess of Sutherland, dinner parties were a serious business.

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171 All three women in the case studies were on many committees while in Britain and also saw to the professional accounting standards of their imperial organisations.
172 Horn, *op.cit.*, p.162.
combining pleasure with instruction. As Denis Stuart reports, ‘On Friday evenings
she, (the Duchess), gathered round her people distinguished in many different
spheres, poets, actors, politicians or musicians to discuss books, read poetry or listen
to music’. The Duchess of Marlborough often had over twenty guests for the
weekend, all with their own valets or lady’s maid at Blenheim Palace. These
intimate evenings and overnight stays undertaken by numerous London hostesses
cultivated an establishment network of associations and friendships. Some ladies,
such as Lady Nevill and Lady Jersey, conducted political salons where young
Conservative party hopefuls would attend to improve their profiles. Ladies
Tweedmouth and Spencer did the same for Liberal contenders.

In Victorian times with the extension and modernisation of the railway system, and in
the Edwardian era with the proliferation of motor cars, the week-end house party
became a frequent and sometimes unnerving social event. These popular occasions,
which the mistress had to arrange, were often a strain as the family’s position and
reputation were at stake. The right people had to be invited and current information
on guests romances, estrangements, friends and enemies elicited. Many leisured
wives also chose to invite celebrity guests to their parties, as the society ladies were
often patrons of the arts and supporters of causes. These interests were expressed in
their guest lists, with artists, singers, writers, and adventurers mixing with royalty,
politicians, businessmen and sometimes the clergy. Society ladies with close

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173 Stuart, op.cit., p.61.
174 Horn, op.cit., p.96.
175 ibid., pp.170-172
176 Bush, Edwardian Ladies and Imperial Power, op.cit., p.25.
177 Horn, op.cit., p.161.
178 For example, Dame Nellie Melba the Australian opera singer, and Mrs. Humphrey Ward the novelist
Elite Victorian Society

Whitley Court, Worcestershire: Lord and Lady Dudley's Country Home
Lady Dudley managed the household staff of more than fifty

Dinner party 1884
Guests included: Earl and Countess of Rosebery, Henry Drummond, Prime Minister and Mrs Gladstone

Figure 4. Top: The Australasian 19 September 1908
Figure 5. Painting by A.E. Enslie. M. Pentland A Bonnie Fechter
connection to the throne and political and establishment figures could provide significant benefits. Ladies Dufferin, Aberdeen and Dudley were to use this familiar access to royalty and other influential individuals in their vice-regal lives. They often enlisted their upper-class networks to promote and overcome obstacles while carrying out imperial projects.\footnote{For example, Lady Dudley used her friendship with Nellie Melba to raise funds through benefit concerts for her vice-regal projects in both Ireland and Australia.}

More aristocratic women began accompanying men to sporting fixtures such as the racing at Ascot and the sailing at Cowes, turning them into social encounters as well as sporting events.\footnote{Society magazines such as Queen and Ladies Realm gave great coverage to these major social events.} Some privileged women took up pastimes such as golf and shooting, and many became expert, including the women featured in this study. Lady Rachel Dudley competed successfully in sailing events, and her daughter ‘Dickie’ was coached in golf from an early age. Lady Hariot Dufferin was an expert skater, and Lady Ishbel Aberdeen an accomplished horsewoman and fisherwoman. In reality, however, once the ladies became heavily involved in their vice-regal lives, they had little personal time. Their social responsibilities and philanthropic endeavours became a constant and demanding job.

The code of behaviour for aristocratic men, on the other hand, differed radically to that imposed on upper-class women. The stereotypical late nineteenth century male noble lived a free and leisure-filled existence: mistresses were de rigueur, an interest in politics was preferred, membership of clubs was mandatory, and participation in
sport essential. They were the guardians of the British status quo, gentlemen of the Empire, who would never cheat at cards. This lifestyle was transported overseas, for as Cain and Hopkins express it, 'The imperial mission was the export version of the gentlemanly order'.\textsuperscript{181} Ladies had a different role; with their supposedly innate superior morality and sensibility, they were seen as being responsible for keeping the social order intact and promoting the continued improvement of future generations.\textsuperscript{182}

Often under this veneer of respectability, some men and women of the upper-classes were involved in sexual liaisons and intrigues which sometimes lasted for years.\textsuperscript{183} It was viewed as a rite of passage for aristocratic young men to have an affair with a fashionable married woman. Lord Dufferin, for example, before his marriage to Hariot, conducted a long and passionate affair with a married lady.\textsuperscript{184} Lord Dudley saw marriage as no barrier to his continuing playboy lifestyle. Lady Dudley put up with his affairs for twenty years until the couple officially separated in 1912.\textsuperscript{185} Sexual liaisons, if they were conducted within the elite's self-imposed rules, might be regarded with equanimity.\textsuperscript{186} Ungentlemanly behaviour and financial scandals, however, were viewed in a different light. In the last years of Lord Dufferin's life he

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{182} See, for example, Horn, \textit{op.cit.}, Gerard, \textit{Country House Life, op.cit.}, Russell, \textit{op.cit.}
  \item \textsuperscript{183} The Prince of Wales had many long term relationships with aristocratic wives, and his relationship with Lady Brook, later Lady Warwick, was legendary. See Horn, \textit{op.cit.}, p.162.
  \item \textsuperscript{184} The lady in question was Lady Jocelyn, wife of Lord Jocelyn, Nicolson, \textit{op.cit.}, p.143. Marion Fowler, 'Lady Dufferin', \textit{The Embroidered Tent, Five Gentlewomen in Canada}, Anansi, Toronto, 1982, p.185.
  \item \textsuperscript{185} Lord and Lady Dudley's separation was on the grounds of his continued infidelity. See thesis Chapter Six.
  \item \textsuperscript{186} Some elite men and women believed sexual relationships outside of their marriages were acceptable but divorce was not. Women were expected to produce a legitimate heir before engaging in other liaisons. See Horn, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.164-166.
\end{itemize}
was involved with a failed investment company, the ‘London and Globe Corporation’. Dufferin was most distressed about the part he played in promoting the scheme and the harm the failure did to his good name and aristocratic standing.  

The entire aristocracy cannot be included in this portrayal, as once again, the stereotype does not give an accurate picture, with many aristocrat’s marriages successful and scandal-free unions. Both these positions can be seen through the lives of two subjects of this thesis. The enduring close personal relationship of John and Ishbel Aberdeen contrasted markedly with the disintegration of William and Rachel Dudley’s more flamboyant marriage.

Essentially the nobility was a codified and closed society. The female leaders of society, the chatelaines, and especially the dowagers, were the gate-keepers to this world, ‘Their smile or their frown sufficed to admit or to banish’. They were forceful and authoritative women who could and did easily ostracise any they considered unsuitable. These female leaders engineered marriages, promoted the arts, and arranged important cultural events. They were arbiters of social acceptability, standards, morals, culture and fashion. In this late Victorian era, these women were also instrumental in the political sphere, bringing together politicians with their supporters and important community leaders. They were dynamic and effective women.

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188 Sackville-West, op.cit., p.119.
189 Lady Aberdeen was an insider in Liberal politics and friend and confidante of its leadership. See Majorie Pentland, A Bonnie Fether, Batsford, London, 1952, pp.35-46.
By the turn of the century, the strict lines of demarcation between those in Society and those deemed not good enough, were becoming more flexible. The question of who was acceptable was now a more arbitrary matter. High profile financiers, some of them Jewish, rich and powerful self-made men, were tolerated in some circles and welcomed in others. The Prince of Wales’ set included many such men who could keep up with his gambling, travelling, racing lifestyle, now ‘Money, [was] the supplanter of birth’.\textsuperscript{190} It was more difficult for women, with the exception of actresses and American heiresses, to move into this world. These newcomers were not always viewed as desirable by the local ladies’ of pedigree.\textsuperscript{191} It was a complex time of shifting standards with the traditionalists trying to apply the old rules and the more progressive ladies seeking to change the long held conventions.

Other aristocratic women spent their lives as social beings and did not venture far from this role, rather they made it into a career. It was often not an easy existence. It was stressful, difficult, and in most cases constant work. The dedication shown by these society women to their lifestyle was appropriated by other aristocratic women who were more inclined to public service. They could identify with both Queen Victoria and society leaders as resilient women with position, power and achievement and they believed these attributes could be translated into public endeavours. In fact one of the positives of female aristocratic upbringing was the ladies’ general acceptance of differing paths; it was an individual choice, elite women acknowledged different ladies abilities, interests and shortcomings. They had a strong class-consciousness but also strong individual characteristics both of which became

\textsuperscript{190}Middlemas, \textit{op.cit.}, p.56.

\textsuperscript{191}Three years after the death of Lady Rachel in 1920, Lord Dudley married the actress Gertie Miller.
obvious in their public roles.\textsuperscript{192}

Numerous elite women managed to combine social events with a social conscience. Prior to being posted overseas, the three vice-regal wives of this thesis were already pursing reforming ideas as part of their aristocratic lifestyle. The beautiful and intelligent Lady Rachel Dudley, considered a social leader and member of the notorious Prince of Wales’ Marlborough House Set, delighted in balls and was famous for her fashion sense especially at the fancy dress parties which were very popular at the turn of the century.\textsuperscript{193} She and other aristocratic women could easily be dismissed as frivolous socialites who did little to contribute to the community. However, this would be a mistake as Rachel Dudley was a staunch advocate and worker for female rights in employment.\textsuperscript{194} Some women of this era including Lady Jersey with her imperial organisational work in England, Lady Sutherland and her work for the Temperance Union and homes for crippled children, Lady Warwick and her open marriage and socialist beliefs, Lady Bedford, Lady Dudley’s adoptive mother, with her constant toil for female prisoners and women’s employment - all made important and divergent contributions to society.\textsuperscript{195}

It can be misleading to dismiss these late Victorian and Edwardian upper-class women as inconsequential. The stereotype of aristocratic ladies as ‘idle drones’,

\textsuperscript{192}The apparent acceptance of Lady Warwick’s conversion to socialism is one example. Although considered eccentric, she was not ostracised from social activities. See Horn, op.cit., p.168.
\textsuperscript{193}The Marlborough House Set ideal was ‘to turn night into day’. It has been described as a hedonistic and philistine group of upper class men and women indulging in questionable activities. See Horn, op.cit., pp.152-154.
\textsuperscript{194}See thesis Chapter Six.
wasting time on ‘novel-reading, theatre-going, card playing, women ‘condemned to rot in idleness’, as mere ‘useless ladies’ is as Gerard insists, ‘clearly inaccurate and invalid’. Some reforming ladies chose to use their high profiles, their important connections, and the influence they exerted in philanthropic, reformist and political projects, to extend their profile further into public life. In fact they were able to transform the aristocratic traits of self-confidence and service, with the limited educational and life choice possibilities imposed by their upbringing, into tools for enacting change for themselves and other women. Concentrating on spheres of life deemed acceptable for women they became a force for change within the community, as the new vice-regal woman would become a force within the Empire.

Conclusion

From the late nineteenth century, elite women accompanying their husbands on vice-regal appointments, brought new attitudes and abilities with them. No longer content to be viewed as ‘ornamentals’ who dabbled in charitable endeavours to fulfil their moral obligations, or to ease their conscience, or to outdo other vice-regal ladies’ efforts, or to simply pass the time, many now had a more lofty view of women’s role in general and their position in particular. New vice-regal women saw themselves as female Empire-builders, ready to take on the burden of Empire alongside the men.

New vice-regal women were also women of their times. They were affected by

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197 There was an understanding of the female role shared by vice-regal ladies. For example, Lady Dudley was anxious to give Australia the same type of nursing system as founded by Lady Aberdeen in Canada.
changing trends in society. The new woman with her pro-active attitude and independent nature was a major influence as was Queen Victoria, the powerful yet maternal figure on the throne. From little girls with limited education eager to make a good match many emerged as competent and successful ladies. Their traditional upbringing and strong family connections enabled them to take on the role of new vice-regal women with confidence.

With society’s attitude to women being redefined during Victoria and Edward’s reign, so too was female imperial participation. The ensuing homage to the power of womanhood witnessed a shift in imperial ideology. Female morality, valued as essential to the stability of a British society, was now openly linked to imperial success. Women’s roles were gaining greater public recognition as a tool for demonstrating the benefits of British dominion, a tool many vice-regal women were willing to employ. The following chapter will analyse the impact of Empire on the lives of late nineteenth century aristocratic women and how this influenced their vice-regal careers.


CHAPTER TWO

VICE-REGAL WOMEN AND NEW IMPERIALISM

'To us - to us and not to others a certain definite duty has been assigned.
To carry light and civilisation to the dark places of the world'\(^1\)

The late nineteenth century world of elite women was constantly changing. They were surrounded by new ideas and modern concepts, which transformed their understanding. This led a number of upper-class women to question conventional wisdom and adopt a pro-active stance regarding the position of women in Britain and throughout the Empire. The impact of the new woman with her independent lifestyle had an effect on the traditional role of aristocratic women. Many began to question long held practices and elite assumptions concerning their world and their place in British society. A further significant factor was the development of 'new imperialism'. This chapter will discuss the far-reaching impact of this concept.

New imperialism, a pride and enthusiasm for all things imperial, was a distinct and pervasive feature of late Victorian and Edwardian life.\(^2\) Its premise was based on Queen Victoria as the great imperial mother, who ruled over a strategically unparalleled and economically prosperous Empire. This Empire embraced diverse peoples and lands and sought to bring to them the benefits of British civilisation. An enthusiastic push began to enable all those within the imperial family to attain a

\(^{1}\)H.F. Wyatt, 'The Ethics of Empire', Nineteenth Century, April 1897, p.518.

certain standard of living, most importantly in the areas of health and education. Improved technology in transport and communications in the late Victorian and Edwardian period also enabled all within the Empire to share this great period of imperial growth and to immerse them in the imperial ideal. However as will be discussed in this chapter, the Empire needed to look to its security. The defence capabilities of the Empire were a growing concern and there were key questions to answer. Would future generations be able to maintain the vast Empire? Was the British race deteriorating? What was needed to keep British manhood at the top of the evolutionary tree?

This perceived need to produce strong and patriotic children ready to defend the Empire and to take on the many imperial responsibilities merged with the growing scientific debates surrounding motherhood. As will be discussed in this chapter, the cult of motherhood, like new imperialism, was ubiquitous and produced a different representation of the ideal imperial woman, wife and mother. No longer content to view motherhood as totally natural, now it was perceived as something to be improved and modernised. Women were also seen as an important factor in the civilising mission of Empire, and new vice-regal ladies embraced the opportunity this presented to extend their influence and promote women’s imperial work and obligations.

British imperial studies, since the early days of Professor John Seeley’s Cambridge lectures, have followed two major lines of inquiry. The first traditional approach traces the path of positively reinforcing the importance of the politics, scientific

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3 These lectures were given in 1881.
advances, adventures and commercial successes of men of the Empire. The emphasis is on male exploits and the impact and result of British rule. The Empire is viewed as a proud achievement and the growing number of members successfully governing themselves proof of the natural progression from enlightened British rule to independence within the imperial family. Here the approach is to reinforce the narrow stereotypical British types and values and represent them as a true reflection of the golden era of British history. This strand builds on studies covering over two centuries of academic endeavour. 4

The second imperial school takes a more critical approach to the Empire and imperial outcomes. This school, including early critics such as J.A. Hobson, questions the moral and legal basis of the Empire, the methods employed, and the aftermath. 5 Today post-colonial theory and growing analysis of cultural imperialism have managed to relegate much contemporary study of the British Empire to a concentration on its faults, disappointments and failures. These investigations encompass race, class, religion, paternalism, exploitation, and women. This trend has


opened up fresh avenues of study. Recent imperial themes include sexuality and Empire, masculinity defined by Empire, race and Empire and the diverse female roles within the Empire. Many studies concentrate on specific colonies. An important new addition to British Imperial History are the British World Conferences encompassing all things imperial, which have been held in various venues throughout the ‘Empire’. The first was in London in 1998; then Cape Town, 2001; Calgary, 2003; the next is scheduled for Melbourne in 2004. There has been very little analysis, however, of elite women, vice-regal ladies, and their imperial significance.

In recent times the ‘women and Empire’ theme has been taken into a wider sphere, highlighting different aspects of life for all races of women from the lower and middle classes throughout the dominions. In this area, female imperial participation is acknowledged but usually in the form of ‘victim’. Often a mixture of concerns involving gender, race, class or economic circumstance has been cited as the reason for imperially imposed disadvantage of women. Various aspects of colonial women’s lives have received scholarly attention. Especially notable is the work of Antoinette Burton, Vron Ware, Catherine Hall and Claire Midgley. Their focus has been on the

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working class, race, and political issues. The studies either emphasise these struggles or focus on the efforts of lower and middle-class women to improve the situation for all women through social and political activism. These critiques, for the most part, concentrate on the failure of Empire through the strict application of establishment and paternalistic attitudes implicit in imperial rule. They also stress the subsequent growth of female independence through the collective struggle for reforms, notably with regard to suffrage, law, education and employment.

In Clare Midgley’s edited collection, *Gender and Imperialism*, for example, an attempt has been made to combine the history of Empire, the lives of women within the Empire, both in Britain and abroad with feminist doctrines and reform movements. While this was important and ground breaking work, it gives little attention to a whole class of important imperial players, privileged women in positions of influence, and working in the field, so to speak. This group of elite women is rarely mentioned in this scholarly work. Modern historians, with or without feminist credentials, have been slow to accept the obvious positive link between women’s reform movements incorporating race, class, politics, work, colonial imperialist sentiments, and the efforts of aristocratic ladies. This thesis seeks to

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8Midgley, *Gender and imperialism*, op.cit.

9See Jane Haggis, ‘White women and colonialism: towards a non-recuperative history’, in Midgley *Gender and Imperialism*, op.cit., p.46-51. Haggis pleads for the white woman’s voice in Empire but again it is not upper-class white women.
redress this omission.

Women and New Imperialism

A growing number of historians have recently turned their attention to nineteenth and early twentieth century women within the British Empire both individually, and through female organisations. Angela Woollacott has studied the issue of Australian women’s internationalism. Margaret Strobel, and Helen Callaway have established the importance of the women who populated the Empire especially the white wives and mothers, the women who carried British civilisation to others. Antoinette Burton has produced a considerable body of work on imperialism, gender and the clash of cultures. Burton contends throughout her work that organised feminism in Britain emerged within the late Victorian and Edwardian imperial ideology. She has concentrated her examination on India and how white and Indian women coped with the ideal of womanhood, imperialism, feminism and the momentum of universal sisterhood. This recent important research, however, has not considered the impact of vice-regal women and their careers on the British Empire during 1884-1914.

Historical research on ladies from the leisured classes and their participation in reform movements, the awakening of the collective social conscience, and their growing interest in imperialism, during the period under consideration, is fortunately

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12 See Burton’s publications op.cit.
beginning to receive attention especially through the work of historians such as Julia Bush. In *Edwardian Ladies and Imperial Power* Bush has produced a landmark study on the contribution of elite women and their British-based imperial organisations.¹⁴ Scholars like Bush, however, have not included in their studies British elite women living overseas, and the contribution they made to Empire. In researching British vice-regal women’s imperial history, however, it becomes clear that there was also a continuous stream of ideas and information passing in all directions between the mother country and the dominions and among the colonies themselves. This largely occurred through women’s organisations and an inter-active network of new vice-regal wives.

Most late nineteenth and early twentieth century vice-regal appointees would probably have agreed with the lofty sentiments of Lord Milner, British High Commissioner to South Africa 1897-1905.¹⁵ Milner believed that the Crown’s representatives would take their racial superiority, their good government, social order, religion and cultural integrity, health and scientific advances, educational progress, and economic prosperity to the outposts of the imperial world.¹⁶ Imperialism became a semi-religious crusade aimed at imposing superior British civilisation throughout the dominions and embracing both sexes. This exciting prospect was not lost on vice-regal women who were quick to appreciate the imperial ‘allure’ and to

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accept a female version of duty to the Empire.\textsuperscript{17} Although there is much to be delected about this flawed civilising ideology with its race, class, injustice and exploitation issues, there are also some areas, which are worthy of both consideration and approbation.

When Ladies Dufferin, Aberdeen and Dudley accompanied their husbands on vice-regal assignments to various colonies and dominions throughout the Empire, they were highly aware of the extent and meaning of the British ‘pink’ emblazoned across the globe. This awareness coloured their objectives and attitudes. British new imperial values remained strong and vibrant throughout the careers of these three women. The fact that many sections of the British community now accepted and expected female involvement in the public sphere allowed vice-regal women the freedom to bring the benefits of British civilisation to their imperial sisters.

This was taking place within the mantle of ‘new imperialism’, which as J.A. Hobson noted was a different concept of Empire. It was one planned by ‘financiers and capital investors’.\textsuperscript{18} It also embraced an aura of romance, of the exotic, of diversity and of national pride.\textsuperscript{19} Women were included in this concept, and as Antoinette Burton has argued, ‘the ‘new imperialism’ had an impact on gender identities, gender relations and ideas about appropriate spheres and conduct for men and women in the colonies as well as in Europe’.\textsuperscript{20} Important elements within the British establishment, the Church, the peerage, the Conservative Party, some Liberals, educationalists, and all

\textsuperscript{18}Johnson, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 40-41.
\textsuperscript{20}Burton \textit{op.cit.}, p.106.
those who styled themselves as part of the ruling class, were beginning to expect positive female involvement in Empire. As leaders of society, vice-regal women were to be at the forefront of this commitment to imperialism.

The emergence of ‘new imperialism’ and the growing focus on all things imperial, which occurred in the late nineteenth century, was pervasive. The impact of Empire was to play a major role in the lives of aristocratic ladies and, of course, on the duties and responsibilities of vice-regal women. As outlined in Chapter One what was expected of the vice-regal spouse and how the women themselves interpreted and carried out their role changed significantly in the late Victorian and Edwardian eras. Aristocratic ladies’ understanding of Empire was now not compatible with the traditional ornamental style of vice-regal wives. New imperialism had a vigour and dynamic quality that needed to be reflected in the participation of vice-regal ladies.

Vice-regal wives, as personified by Ladies Dufferin, Aberdeen and Dudley were women with traditional privilege and upper-class self-assurance and they combined this with a role which placed them in a position of imperial influence. The nexus of both internal and external forces of the late nineteenth century pushed these women to certain outcomes. The atmosphere of the time was such that pro-active imperial involvement was both mandated and self-imposed. Many of these women became enthusiastic female traffickers in the concept of Empire.

Imperialism was a core ideology of the age. J.R. Seeley’s influential book of 1883, *The Expansion of England*, gave voice to the new imperialistic ideal which found

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widespread community acceptance.\textsuperscript{22} The fact that Great Britain was the head of a great Empire was not lost on the population. As William Gladstone pronounced in 1878 ‘the sentiment of empire may be called innate in every Briton’.\textsuperscript{23} This Empire, which by the 1870s was the largest in history and covered over a quarter of the world’s surface, saw the government of 120,000 square miles of the United Kingdom with its 33 million people ruling over 8 million square miles and 200 million people.\textsuperscript{24} The Great British Empire was growing at a formidable rate: 90 million people and 4.75 million square miles were added in the years 1872-1902, and imperial revenue increased from £24,700,000 in 1840 to £143,553,000 in 1895.\textsuperscript{25} The British concept of Empire was one of inclusion although the ‘other’, with its racial, cultural and religious difference was conceded. The goal, as Marc Ferro suggests, was to produce model British citizens with common beliefs and ideals, for Britain ‘to reproduce itself in different spaces’.\textsuperscript{26}

The rhetoric embraced not only the foreign territories ‘out there’; it incorporated the people of Britain too. Empire was not ‘a singular place, nor did ‘home’ exist in isolation from it’.\textsuperscript{27} The British Empire stretched from the English country village to exotic outposts. The fact of belonging to this great entity was also brought home across Britain by state propaganda, the media, the military, numerous imperial


\textsuperscript{25}Julius Vogel, ‘Greater Britain in the Queen’s Long Reign’, \textit{Nineteenth Century}, March 1897, p.344.

\textsuperscript{26}Cited in Johnson, \textit{op.cit.}, and p.59.

exhibitions, and by the number of other races obvious in large cities, especially London. In the late nineteenth century, patriotic fervour, free trade, and pride in Empire were pervasive concepts and reflected in the frequent use of the term ‘new imperialism’. This phrase indicated an enthusiastic, dynamic, and modern approach to the idea of Empire.

This new imperial age provided not only economic gains with its free trade mantra and military might, but a feeling of superiority and self-righteousness as well. It also brought with it responsibilities and obligations. The Empire gave the British ‘a world view which was central to their perceptions of themselves’, and reinforced their perceived superiority. The upper-classes saw this Empire, and its ideals, as both a benefit and a burden. As the natural leaders of the great enterprise, they were answerable for its performance, for ‘power cannot be separated from responsibility’.

Not only the upper-classes but all Britons were expected to be involved. British people were not just subjects of an English monarchy, they were also part of a great Empire, giving them a dual identity. Those living within Britain and in the colonies shared this twin allegiance. There was a strong sense of belonging to something momentous and globally significant, something which would have important repercussions for the world. As arch-imperialist Alfred Milner implied: ‘In Empire we have found not merely the key to glory and wealth but the call to duty and the

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30Johnson, op.cit., p.23.
31Burton, Burdens of History: op.cit., p.6.
means of service to Mankind.\textsuperscript{33} The people living in the Mother country and their brothers and sisters around the world shared a bond greater than financial and defensive factors. They had a shared understanding and a similar worldview. ‘Deeper, stronger, more primordial than ... material ties is the bond of common blood, a common language, common history and traditions’.\textsuperscript{34} When vice-regal women took up their roles in the colonies, they understood their mission was to spread the benefits of British civilisation to all imperial peoples.\textsuperscript{35} Ladies Dufferin, Aberdeen, and Dudley expressed this through the establishment of specific health initiatives, which will be discussed in detail in the case studies of Chapters Four, Five and Six of this thesis. These women were acting on the knowledge that although the landscapes were different, the underlying Britishness of the white settler societies was indisputable. The ladies built their vice-regal careers on this common foundation. Lady Dufferin’s Indian health association, although aimed at assisting members of a different race and culture, did so within a typically British organisational framework.\textsuperscript{36} The skies may have changed but the fundamentals remained the same.\textsuperscript{37}

During the period 1884-1914, imperialism was a central and insistent theme in British life. John Mackenzie calls this period ‘the cult of Empire’ epoch, with government and officialdom openly pushing the policies of imperialism.\textsuperscript{38} The ideal was to

\textsuperscript{36}See Chapter Four of this thesis.
\textsuperscript{37}Bush, \textit{Edwardian Ladies and Imperial Power}, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.277-283.
\textsuperscript{38}John M. Mackenzie, (ed.), \textit{Imperialism and Popular Culture}, University of Manchester Press,
convert all people to the British way. Whilst this was relatively easy in white settler colonies, it was more problematic in countries with large native populations. In India, for example, officials in the late Victorian period were very aware of their precarious position. They had to avoid cultural disputes with the native inhabitants, while firmly enforcing their British rule. The native uprising of 1857, later known as the Indian Mutiny, left a legacy of fear among the white population and reinforced the vulnerability of the British rulers.\(^{39}\) The white population of the subcontinent in 1881 numbered about 145,000, and the native population around 250 million.\(^{40}\) Lady Dufferin with her medical aid for Indian women project was well aware of the necessity to respect local cultural difference as any forced change could prove disastrous.\(^{41}\)

By the late 1800s, the spread of British civilisation with all the perceived advantages this entailed, was a basic tenet of the British establishment, with most members of the Conservative, Liberal and Labour parties behind the concept of Empire. The general population was integral to this national recognition of the benefits and obligations of Empire, and the need to bring progress to the far-flung colonies. This, in turn, would secure the defence and continued prosperity of Britain itself. The focus of this stated ideology of Empire, however, changed over time. Paul Thompson suggests that for

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\(^{39}\)See Johnson, *op.cit.*, pp.31-36. This serious rebellion in northern India against British rule was triggered by Indian troops in the British military who believed animal fat was used on new rifle cartridges. This made them unacceptable to both Muslims and Hindus. It took the British about twelve months to regain complete control, and resulted in the rule of India being transferred from the British East India Company to the British Crown.


\(^{41}\)See thesis Chapter Four on the important work of Lady Dufferin.
the early Victorians, the major theme of imperialism was conquest and the dissemination of Christian principles. For the later Victorians and Edwardians, this gradually shifted, and the emphasis was placed instead on the triumph of race and superior culture, and the benefits this bestowed. The motives were gradually transformed from those associated with salvation to those associated with civilisation, but, both continued to be important ingredients in British identity and the development of the model imperial citizen. This sense of bringing modern secular ideas and practices to their overseas postings was a major factor in the activities of the new vice-regal woman. Experiences and innovations adopted at home including reforms for women could be incorporated into their vice-regal role. As Britain evolved into a more worldly society, imperial philosophy naturally followed these changes, and these changes were part of the philosophy of the new vice-regal woman.

The majority of aristocratic women who did push the boundaries both in Britain and overseas were not radical feminists or suffragettes. Many saw their role as one of obligation to others and commitment to reform rather than as a fight for rights. In many cases political rights were not the issue for these women of superior position and considerable self-esteem. They did not consider themselves inferior beings to men or lacking in power. In the view of many aristocratic ladies, including the three women of the case studies included in this thesis, men and women complimented one another, both sexes bringing different but essential attributes to the world. These ladies believed they were the upholders of a proud British tradition but nevertheless understood the momentous shifts occurring in their sphere. Many responded to this

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43 Bush, *op.cit.*, p.3.
developing society and their position in the new regime by acting as agents for change. They believed all women would benefit from the modern concept of the female role. Traditions were upheld but attitudes were in a state of transformation and the concept of universal sisterhood was gaining elite support. The growth of an organised women’s movement between 1860 and 1914 saw parallels being drawn between the positions of women and slaves, and as the slaves had been freed so too, it was argued, women could be reformed by emancipation. The ‘collective identity’ of womanhood and the advantages this bestowed were now being realised.

Ladies and Politics

By their participation in party politics upper-class women during the late 1880s were showing their political allegiance to Britain and the Empire. Politics and leadership had for centuries been seen as an obligation among the aristocracy. There was a belief that as the elite it was up to them to help rule the country and assist the crown. The changing fortunes of the landed classes in the second half of the nineteenth century now made it imperative for some upper-class men to view political appointments as a career rather than an amateur preoccupation. They looked to political success or government appointments to fulfil their duty and perhaps improve their financial position. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there were two major political parties in Britain. The Conservatives, the traditional party of the aristocracy, were working to maintain the status quo especially in terms of land ownership and the aristocratic right to govern. They were not interested in relenting on two of the big

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44 Ibid., pp. 83-104.
45 Clare Midgley in Midgley (ed.), op.cit., pp. 176-177.
46 Rupp, 'Constructing Internationalism:', op.cit.
issues of the day - the granting of Irish Home Rule and women’s suffrage. Their opposition, the Liberals, appealed more to the middle and lower economic classes and were proposing reform and developing a theory of social justice.\textsuperscript{47} Liberals among other things were pro Home Rule for Ireland and willing to explore ideas of female political reform. Both parties were in the main supportive of the British Empire and the benefits it could bestow.\textsuperscript{48}

Many aristocratic ladies became involved in their husband or family’s political careers and networks. Some virtually ran the campaigns, delivering speeches and visiting constituents.\textsuperscript{49} Wives also helped their husband’s political careers by their social activities. Women were acknowledged by the parties as excellent vote canvassers and were used to good effect by politicians, especially when those politicians were their husbands. London hostesses took political involvement a step further, combining public and private roles, and contriving to bring together political supporters in the form of auxiliary political organisations. High profile Conservative Party ladies in late Victorian times included the Marchioness of Londonderry, the Duchess of Devonshire, and the Countess of Jersey. Lady Spencer, Lady Waldegrave, and Lady Cowper were dominant hostesses in the Liberal camp.\textsuperscript{50} Other elite women were apolitical in the sense that they did not have a political allegiance yet were also involved. Lady Sutherland was one such woman who was adept at hosting diplomatic

\textsuperscript{47}There were, of course, aristocratic Liberals. Lord and Lady Aberdeen were impressive examples.
\textsuperscript{50}\textit{Ibid}, p.170.
receptions and providing a non-threatening haven for delicate government negotiations.\textsuperscript{51}

The most famous of these female led auxiliary organisations was the Primrose League. Formed in 1885 to support the Conservative Party, the Ladies Grand Council of the League was made up of influential and respected women, and had a wider appeal with membership in the hundreds of thousands.\textsuperscript{52} They worked to ensure the success of conservative candidates and to ensure the continued growth of British superiority and the Empire. The ladies exploited the inexpensive press to print their own \textit{Gazette}, and thousands of political campaign pamphlets. They conducted parties, rallies and outings, combining politics and social activity. This organisation with its large membership also helped women to become aware of and experienced in political affairs.

The rival Liberal Women's Federation commenced its activities in 1887. It always had a much smaller membership than the Primrose League. In 1904, there were approximately 60,000 members, but it was always a more reformist political association.\textsuperscript{53} The aristocratic ladies of the Liberal Federation were not interested in just aiding the party; they wanted to contribute to policy and adopted a more pro-active approach to Liberal politics. They openly fought for female suffrage, although this caused dissent among some members. Lady Ishbel Aberdeen was a motivating force in the establishment and continuing success of the Liberal Federation.\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{51}ibid.

\textsuperscript{52}Bush, \textit{op.cit.}, p.9

\textsuperscript{53}Horn, \textit{op.cit.}, p.178.

Even though the vote was denied until after World War One, other avenues of political influence for women were opening up. By the late Victorian era, upper-class women were also becoming active in local government, on education boards, as poor law guardians and public health inspectors.\textsuperscript{55} Pamela Horn quotes a figure of between 1500-2000 women working in these positions throughout Great Britain by late 1894.\textsuperscript{56} A result of these political activities and associations was the large number of women with both political knowledge and expertise. All political parties and local areas relied on women as representatives and volunteers and they could not disregard the valuable work these women did. Invaluable experience was gained through this political exposure. Women were learning how to act together, and improve their public speaking skills within a male organisational structure. Women were becoming more visible in the public arena and, as Gerard concludes, this further blurred the separate male and female spheres.\textsuperscript{57}

While there were some revolutionary thinkers in the aristocratic ranks, most socially aware women could be better described as reformers. They set about changing the role of women by committing themselves to publicly organising philanthropic endeavours which would benefit women, children and the community. These charitable enterprises brought upper-class women in close contact with middle-class women involved in the same areas. This enabled both groups of women to experience the outlook and ideals of the other and greatly increased their awareness of the role of all women, their universal sisterhood, and the need to assist their less advantaged

\textsuperscript{56}Horn \textit{op.cit.}, p.167.
sisters. However, as superior women belonging to the upper-class, some aristocratic women believed they had both the right and the duty to impose their ideals on others, and understood themselves to be the natural leaders of these groups.

As can be seen clearly in the case studies of this thesis, Ladies Dufferin, Aberdeen and Dudley used their connections and elite networks to enhance their position and organisations. Society, and the London season, house parties, and holidays, were viewed as valid and valuable pastimes which enhanced the profile of the women involved and led to a growing interaction and networking between them. These meetings and the sharing of concepts, ideas and beliefs by influential ladies led to the setting up and formalising of associations of importance to women, the community, and notably the Empire.

**Pride in Empire**

This deep commitment to the great British Empire was fostered at all levels of society. The projected image of a modern and prosperous Empire capable of protecting and defending all who lived under the British flag was enthusiastically adopted. This new imperialism was reinforced by school textbooks and thrilling adventure stories which spread the propaganda of the benefits of Empire for all. Pride in Empire was encouraged and transformed into a national passion. The growth of Empire Day, institutionalised in Britain in 1902, quickly spread throughout the dominions. Wherever they were found the British were to show respect for the flag and the monarchy and revel in their obvious superiority. The heroic deeds of Empire

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58 See thesis Chapters Four, Five and Six.
builders, and the civilising effect of stable Christian values, government, and culture were to be celebrated. As Lord Meath noted, by 1909 millions of people celebrated Empire Day but British power and pride could not ‘be separated from responsibility’.  

The imperial enthusiasm of the young was fuelled by the rise of public schools and the growth of imperial organisations and sporting teams. In John Hobson’s famous 1902 study, *Imperialism*, he concluded that the influence of Empire on young men led to a new type of male willing and enthusiastic about adventure and war. He maintained militarism and jingoism had pervaded English society and influenced English masculinity. Girls also were encouraged to believe in their important role in Empire, and the duty of both sexes took on a new and influential place in the minds of the young. Even though the main emphasis of the campaign was directed towards boys, it was impossible for girls to remain untouched by the ardour and spirit of the message. At a London Boy Scout rally in 1909, numbers of girls arrived dressed in scout uniforms, ready and willing to participate. Boy Scout founder, Baden Powell, was aghast and with the help of his sister Agnes, the Girl Guide movement was established to give girls an outlet for their imperial ardour and desire for action.

Clubs and associations catering to British youth grew spectacularly in this period, many as a result of the late Victorian preoccupation with imperial defence. The

Images of Empire

My Boys
Mother England and her cubs

Figure 7. Top: Punch 28 February 1885
Figure 8. Bottom Left: Programme of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition 1886, Illustrated London News 9 July, 1887
Figure 9. Bottom Right: Dorothy Thompson Queen Victoria
twelfth Earl of Meath, Reginold Brabazon 1841-1928, as perhaps the greatest promoter of his age of all things imperial and patriotic, and an imperial crusader with 'a quasi-religious attachment to Empire', was also a believer in the necessity for a potent fighting force to be ready at any time to defend Britain and the Empire. To this end he was involved in groups such as the Boy's Drill Association (1899).

The merits of Empire were being disseminated in every possible quarter and at every possible opportunity. Elite women and girls could not have been immune to its impact. The works of Eric Hobsbawm, John Mackenzie, and Robert Johnson show how popular culture was pervasively employed in the service of 'Imperialism'. Imperial ideals were spread in the pulpit and schoolroom, and through newspapers, magazines, newsreels, motion pictures, and the collection of such things as cigarette cards and postcards. These collectables included such series as builders of Empire, exotic scenes, wondrous locations, and overseas troops. The armed forces gained kudos and reinforced the Empire's leading military role, with defence displays, marches, and patriotic music played by regimental brass bands. All things imperial were both ubiquitous and popular.

The ardour fostered by the New Imperialism meant the sale of royal souvenirs and


64Mackenzie, Propaganda and Empire, op.cit., p.154


Johnson, op.cit.
colonial mementos flourished. Commercially the Empire was lauded in posters included with the purchase of everything from soap to chocolate, biscuit tins, tea cadies, and embroidered cushions depicted imperial themes. Every year vast crowds were drawn to ever expanding Imperial Exhibitions. The 1901 Glasgow exhibition attracted eleven million visitors. The 1911 Crystal Palace Coronation festival of Empire featured a train which travelled around the Empire in miniature, showcasing Indian palaces and jungles, a Malay settlement, Canadian forests, an Australian sheep-station, a Maori village, and South African gold mine. Vice-regal ladies were often connected with the exhibitions from ‘their’ colonies.

The news of Empire captured general public interest and when coupled with the latest technology proved profitable. Magic lantern slides depicting scenes from imperial travel, missionary work and royalty drew large audiences. The funeral of Queen Victoria and the coronations of Edward VII and George V were extensively covered in print and film. In distant Australia, Lord and Lady Dudley viewed the newsreel coverage of the funeral of the King Edward VII in 1910 with interest. They scrutinised the crowd of mourners, hopeful to catch a glimpse of their son Lord Ednam among the illustrious throng of dignities. Major news events, sports, personalities and adventures from within Britain and the colonies were disseminated by the media throughout the Empire. The Boer War, the exploits of imperial adventurers such as Shackleton and his Antarctic expeditions, and Australian versus

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66 Hobsbawn, *ibid.*
68 Paul Thompson, *op.cit.*, p.182.
70 Unpublished letter, Dickie to her brother Eccles (Lord Ednam), July 1910, Dudley Letters, Dudley Library Collection, Dudley, U.K.
England cricket matches were all big imperial news. Royal personalities and regal occasions were eagerly followed in the Dominions and news from the colonies was popular with those within the British Isles.

Queen Victoria and her activities were also major sources of imperial news. The Queen’s Jubilee’s in 1887 and 1897 were huge events with intense media coverage. The great transformation of Britain during Victoria’s reign and the simultaneous growth of Empire were celebrated in film and print. Magazines and newspapers published special editions and supplements covering the Queen’s jubilee news. Newsreels captured the official ceremonies and throughout the Empire these images and publications fuelled the imperial spirit. The vice-regal women, too, were often the subject of popular interest and were immortalised in film and photo. Their jewels and clothes elaborately detailed, their hair styles copied, and their opinions on social matters sought. They were featured in women’s magazines and on imperial keepsakes, appealing to the public’s growing taste for celebrities and at the same time reaffirming the worth and accomplishments of Empire.

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72 See illustration p. 103a.

73 For example *Table Talk*, in June 1887, devoted eleven pages of descriptions and illustrations to Lady Loch’s Queen Victoria’s Golden Jubilee Ball held at Government House Melbourne, while *Melbourne Punch* praised Lady Loch’s establishment of a Queen’s Jubilee charity, the still functioning ‘Queen’s Fund’, 26 May 1887, p.241.

74 See, for example, stories in *The Red Funnel*, a general interest journal published in New Zealand Lady Talbot in Rita’s, ‘Victoria’s Governor, His Wife and His Home’, July, 1905, pp.158-160; and
New Imperialism and the Future of Empire

New vice-regal women were in the vanguard of new imperial attitudes to women being spread throughout the Empire. They took the attitudes being debated at ‘home’ with them to the colonies. In late nineteenth century Britain, the ‘modern’ concept of womanhood as an asset to civilisation received much publicity and support. Woman, the producer of healthy children, the social mediator, and the virtuous moral influence, was lauded. These ideas were appropriated in official discourse on Empire. They underpinned imperial thinking. ‘Imperial expansion was seen as an affirmation of national virility and health, of racial superiority, and of the higher stage of evolution of the colonising nation’. It was obvious to the British that they had proved themselves to be the leading race, especially where it mattered, on the battlefield and in the boardroom. The British, superior ‘to the less gifted and less fortunate nations of the world’, would, with toil and effort, forge ahead. God and nature had seen fit to bestow upon the British a great Empire, which did not come, however, without accountability. Imperial obligations decreed that the British must strive to bring all under their care up to a certain standard of civilisation and understanding. Women were to play a central role in meeting this obligation.

For this progression to the perfection of civilisation to succeed, the British race

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needed to produce strong, patriotic citizens. The Social Darwinism paradigm provided a framework for the blossoming discipline of eugenics which maintained that ‘... future citizens should come from the best stock’. 79 Francis Galton and later Karl Pearson were British pioneers in the eugenics field. 80 They maintained that the continued superiority of the race could be guaranteed by a scientific approach to breeding which would ‘foster the birth of desirable future citizens, while suppressing the reproduction of racially unfit degenerates’. 81 For Britain to continue as a world leader, more superior British children needed to be born and nurtured under the British flag. Therefore, it was conceded, British women were fundamental to the Empire’s prosperity and growth. 82 White women already in the colonies needed to be aware of, and educated in, their maternal imperial duty. 83 New vice-regal women encouraged this in their innovative organisations to improve the health and well-being of women and children. Ladies Dufferin, Aberdeen, Dudley and Plunket’s women’s health organisations which spanned India, Ireland, Canada, Australia and New Zealand during the period 1884-1914 are testament to the power of the rhetoric of imperial motherhood. 84

79 Horn, op.cit., p.75.
80 Bush, Edwardian Ladies and Imperial Power, op.cit., p.106.
81 ibid.
83 Colonial women’s magazine’s and self-help manuals were widespread. For example, J.F. Dawson, ‘Women in India: her influence and position’, Calcutta Review, vol.83, July 1886, Birch’s Management and Medical Treatment of Children in India, Green, Calcutta, 1913.
84 The Victorian Order of Nurses began in Canada in 1897; Lady Dudley’s Nurses in Ireland 1903 and the Australian Bush Nurses in Victoria in 1910; and Lady Plunket’s Nurses in New Zealand, 1907. For information on the Lady Plunket’s nurses see Melanie Oppenheimer, ‘Nursing For Empire: Lady Victoria Plunket, Truby King, and the New Zealand Society for the Health of Women and Children 1907-18, unpublished paper, AHA Conference, Brisbane, July 2002.
Another way to achieve continued superiority was to stock the colonies with British women in order to produce local versions of the superior race. British women were encouraged to emigrate and were given practical help to do so.85 Organisations such as the Girls Friendly Society (1874), the Primrose League (1883), the British Women’s Emigration Association (1884), and the Victoria League (1901), vigorously backed female emigration and established agencies to aid this practice. Vice-regal women, before, after and during their vice-regal careers were often prominent in these groups.86

A third solution to the need for healthy imperial populations would be to aid native colonials by making available the benefits of scientific and medical advances. New vice-regal ladies and aristocratic women’s organisations played an important part in this grand plan to achieve a higher (or more British) level of health and civilisation for both colonial and native populations. Lady Dufferin’s Indian women’s health association was directly targeted at native women.87 Canadian native Indians were also included in the Countess of Aberdeen’s concept of a Victorian Order of Nurses.88 It should be noted that this inclusive policy was aimed towards women and children, while native men were not as easily accommodated in vice-regal women’s philanthropic schemes.

85Bush, Edwardian Ladies, op.cit., 146-147.
86For example, Lady Helen Munro Ferguson, wife of the Australian Governor-General from 1914-1920 was involved in the Red Cross in Scotland and transported this interest to Australia where she established a national Red Cross Association. See Melanie Oppenheimer, “‘The Best P.M. for the Empire in War’?: Lady Helen Munro Ferguson and the Australian Red Cross Society; 1914-1920’, Australian Historical Studies, vol.33, no.119, April 2002, pp.108-124.
88Victorian Order of Nurses Papers, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa, MG 28 1 191 vol.9.
The official rhetoric endorsing a belief in British racial superiority and their 'ruling over less masterful races', inevitably led to racist acts and judgements. Women, black races and elementary societies were all perceived as subordinate to white British male empire builders, and would therefore benefit from conquest, whether sexual or military. Within Britain as well as within its colonies, governments and administrations introduced restrictive laws and immigration practices. The 'lesser' races were urged to embrace British values to be fully accepted. However, they were frequently viewed with a combination of disdain, pity, and fear. Native peoples were also sometimes perceived as posing a sexual threat. The spread of sexually transmitted diseases, the birth of racially mixed children, and a general associated decline in moral behaviour were all of concern to late Victorian imperialists. It was held, however, that once true British values were accepted, there was hope for future generations. Everyone viewed as racially or culturally inferior, and this included in various degrees the Irish, Jews and Indians, as well as Africans and Asians, could embrace British civilisation and progress to a higher level. In the colonies, the 'inferior' races and the white local inhabitants would both be improved by their relationship with Britain and could be used to assist in imperial defence and economic growth. The great British civilisation would mediate class and difference and create a

82 Australian Aborigines were viewed as savages in some official quarters. See Trainor, ibid., 'civilising this interesting but hopeless race', p.83. Lady Dudley on a trip to the West Indies expressed her superior attitudes to the local black colonials throughout her writing, see Lady Rachel Dudley Sunshine and Shadow in the West Indies, Archibald Constable and Co., London, 1907.
83 See, for example, Himani Bannerji, 'Age of consent and hegemonic social reform' in Midgley, Gender and Imperialism, op.cit., pp.21-44.
84 MacMillan, op.cit., pp.105-106.
dominant and unifying imperial identity.\footnote{Johnson, \textit{op.cit.}, p.59.}

Officialdom within Britain during this period, however, believed there was major cause for concern over the future of the superior British race.\footnote{See, for example, Max Simon Nordau, \textit{Degeneration}, Heinmann, London, 1895 on community anxiety about the future of the superior British race.} The infant mortality rate in England in 1899 was a very high 163 per 1000 births.\footnote{F.M.L. Thompson, \textit{The Rise of Respectable Society; A Social History of Victorian Britain 1830-1900}, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, 1988, p.115.} Along with this worrying mortality rate was a falling birth rate. Between 1870-1910, the birth rate in the United Kingdom declined by nearly thirty percent.\footnote{Samuel Hynes \textit{The Edwardian Turn of Mind}, Pimlico, London, 1991, p.197} The figures were seen as disastrous for a nation where the birth of numerous healthy and intellectually sound children was considered the reason for their superiority, and a necessity for the continuation of a strong Empire.

At the turn of the century, the Boer War (1899-1902) further heightened anxieties were over the nation’s health. The poor physical attributes of British Boer War recruits was the subject of much controversy.\footnote{Middlemass, \textit{The Pursuit of Pleasure, op.cit.}, pp.104-105.} This debate lead to fears of racial decline which were invoked by social commentators such as Hugh Perry Dunn in his 1894 article, ‘Is our race degenerating?’ and Max Nordau in his 1895 book \textit{Degeneration}.\footnote{Hugh Percy Dunn, ‘Is our Race Degenerating?’, \textit{Nineteenth Century}, August 1894, pp.301-314.} Questions were being asked about the future of the British Empire. The final victory over the Boers came only after a long and drawn out conflict, and the length of the war was blamed partly on the physically deficiencies of the British
troops. These concerns were exacerbated by the questionable moral values displayed towards Boer women and children in the notorious concentration camps in which over 4000 Boer women and children died from neglect and disease. Many aristocratic ladies, particularly Liberal’s like Ishbel Aberdeen, although firmly behind their troops, were concerned with the barbarism of the concentration camps. Lady Sutherland confessed to having ‘little shudders about the heart,’ over British policy during the war. Degenerate troops acting in an uncivilised manner was not the British way.

The horrified reaction in many sections of the community to the war and its atrocities underlined the growth of a social conscience among the community, especially among some key women’s groups. Nevertheless, war was still seen to most as a national duty, and to many young men appeared as a glorious adventure, a game, and one at which the British were champions. Concerns were raised, however, about future success. Government became intensely involved in children as a national asset, and numerous reports and reviews were conducted. One, the ‘Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration, 1904’ reinforced the view that British physical standards were in decline. Some were questioning British ability to keep its leading place in the world. As T. J. Macnamara, Liberal M.P. stated in 1905, ‘I know Empire cannot be built on flat-chested citizens’ and one doctor claimed ‘the battalions which give lasting victory are the battalions of babies’.

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100Bondi and Bullock, *et. al., op.cit.*, p.20.
103Cited in Paul Thompson, *op.cit.*, p.183 and Carol Adams, *op.cit.*, p.34.
One of the solutions to this problem was seen in making available to Britain the resources of the dominions. It was the Empire which would provide economic prosperity, and it was the Empire which would provide healthy young men to defend the race and British civilisation. The result was that England needed her mothers at home and in the white settler colonies, as well as native mothers, to produce physically superior children and to ensure that these off-spring would be willing to defend their Empire. Imperialist Lord Meath appealed to mothers ‘to consider themselves the trustees of the Empire in the training of their children.’

This was an important factor in the growth of the cult of motherhood.

The Cult of Motherhood

The 1884-1914 period witnessed an almost unparalleled propaganda campaign concerning all aspects of motherhood. The belief that motherhood was women’s natural role was stressed. To be a mother was depicted as a female’s highest calling. There was a renewed emphasis on women and their central role as child-bearer, child-rearer, moral guardian at home and on an extended level as an imperial emissary. Although women’s qualities were regarded as universal, the ‘ideal Englishwoman’s special quality was that she practised these virtues in a fashion superior to women of other countries’.

Ladies Dufferin, Aberdeen, and Dudley all conveyed this belief of the ideal of English womanhood throughout their travels and into the realms of their

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104 Bush, Edwardian Ladies and Imperial Power, op.cit., p.142.
husband's appointments. Like Queen Victoria, the ultimate maternal symbol, they combined motherhood with work, and they became 'Empire Mothers'.\textsuperscript{107} The Queen's devotion to Albert and the birth of her nine children were testament to her womanly qualities. Her long and wise rule was seen as proof of her ability to combine her duty and work with motherhood.

Vice-regal ladies took this ideal of imperial motherhood with them to the colonies. Many bore children while stationed overseas and engaged in imperial work, and these children were viewed as true sons and daughters of the colony in which they were born.\textsuperscript{108} The fact that vice-regal spouses were wives and mothers gave them currency when dealing with colonial women and their problems. As members of the universal sisterhood, they were perceived as having an empathy with all women and were therefore legitimately able to focus their imperial endeavours on health and prosperity issues for women and children. The role model the vice-regal spouses offered of wife, mother and imperial agent for change was significant in promoting colonial women's positive self perceptions. It was not a voluntary role, it was part of their imperial duty, and each individual lady must ask herself 'what are you contributing to the commonwealth'.\textsuperscript{109} The answer must include practical help but within an acceptable womanly framework, as Queen Victoria had declared 'woman should not be allowed to unsex herself'.\textsuperscript{110} Vice-regal wives believed they could expedite the imperial motherhood mission through the utilisation of their private experiences. In their

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\textsuperscript{106}Mackay and Thane, \textit{op.cit.}, p.191.
\textsuperscript{108}Lady Dufferin's son Frederick and daughter Victoria were born in Canada in 1870s. Lady Dudley's daughter Alexandra Patricia was born in Ireland in 1904.
\textsuperscript{109}Edith Lyttelton Gell, 'Squandered Girlhood', \textit{Nineteenth Century}, December 1892, p.933.
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Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee
1897

Contrasts and achievements during Queen Victoria’s reign

Figure 10. Top: Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria 1897 Bridgeman Art Library LMG144947
Figure 11. Bottom: Illustrated London News Supplement June 1897
persons, the ladies were carrying out the agenda which imperial propaganda demanded and devised for them.

The rhetoric of the period concluded that both the moral and economic future of the nation and Empire was in the hands of wives and mothers and therefore it was considered imperative that they were guided along the right path. Government, church and some sections of the community saw their role as constantly to reinforce this ideology of motherhood. Organisations that sought to improve the abilities of women and girls to better perform their womanly duty were encouraged.\textsuperscript{111} Eileen Jane Yeo writes of these combined efforts as the ‘creation’ of motherhood.\textsuperscript{112} She asserts that there is a history of social construction of motherhood that was especially pronounced in 1880-1920 period. Yeo believes that the state of the family, the nation and the Empire became a weighty responsibility for mothers at this time, affected as they were by official government, religious and community pressure. They were obliged to fortify Christian values through their domestic influence, and to ensure the progress of the race by producing healthy children. They could either provide a superior future race or they could ‘hinder the great forces of evolution’.\textsuperscript{113}

Everywhere women were reminded of their responsibilities. From the early 1870s it was a favourite topic, one on which just about everyone had an opinion as evidenced by the articles on the subject in contemporary journals, newspapers and magazines.\textsuperscript{114}

\textsuperscript{111}These included the Mother’s Union, Girls Friendly Society (1875), Young Women’s Christian Association, Girls Realm Guild (1900), and the Girl Guides (1909).


\textsuperscript{113}Dr. Elizabeth Sloan Chesser 1914, cited in Mackay and Thane, op.cit., p.201.

\textsuperscript{114}See, for example, H.M. ‘The Responsibilities of Women’, The Englishwoman’s Review, 14 January
As one male author pointed out, the home was woman's special domain, 'Women's nature, physical, intellectual, moral, and emotional, clearly points to home as her sphere, for here she was 'the priestess and the queen', where she had a duty to excel. The propaganda was mainly aimed at middle and upper-class women who were perceived to have the time and inclination to improve themselves. Women in the lower economic class were often working both within and away from home and therefore had little time for her queenly duties. It was difficult, however, for any woman not be influenced by this almost universally accepted ideal, which was expounded in varied areas of government policy, in books, journals, the press, the pulpit, scientific papers, ubiquitous self-help manuals, and the community. The debates concerning the responsibilities of women encompassed all women and many British females recognised themselves as part of a universal sisterhood.

The heightened interest in the scientific study of female reproduction, and advances in the treatment of medical conditions, informed the motherhood debate. Added to this, ideas of Social Darwinism and the Whig historical notion of progress engendered a belief that the British race would continue to flourish if motherhood was given continued scientific and social attention. Social theorists, including Herbert Spencer, suggested that European races were at the top of the evolutionary ladder and, because European women were known to have produced superior off-spring, they must be encouraged with the aid of education to continue to do so. Women being useful members of society within this patriotic context gave womanhood in

1882, p.7.


116 Rupp, Worlds of Women, op.cit.

general greater public status. The recognition extended beyond the situation in Britain itself: mothers were the building blocks of empire. This belief informed much of the philanthropic work undertaken by new vice-regal women during the period 1884-1914.

By the last decades of the nineteenth century, there was a case for the growing body of scientific knowledge to be used in a reconstruction of the traditional concept of motherhood. In the traditional view motherhood itself was sanctified but not all mothers. Preferred mothers were healthy, white, Christian women. The late nineteenth-century objective transformed this to embrace other females and to enhance the mothering capabilities of all women. Motherhood, rather than naturally perfect in the superior races could be improved through medical advances and education, especially among lower class women and women from different racial groups. It was at this time that the concept of teaching women to be better mothers came to the fore. It was conceded that women were born to be mothers but it was understood that their abilities in this direction could be enhanced.

The moral authority of women over their family and the wider community was also accepted and encouraged as a civic responsibility. Recognition by Victorian and Edwardian society of this as an important maternal attribute enabled women to publicly organise and exchange experiences. Thus women as moral arbiters were

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119 Truby King and vice-regal wife Lady Victoria Plunket, daughter of Lady Hariot Dufferin, began the mothercare nursing specialists, the Plunket Nurses in New Zealand in 1907. The first mothers clinic opened in London in 1907. See Oppenheimer, 'Nursing For Empire, *op. cit.*
120 Jessica Gerard, 'Lady Bountiful: women of the landed classes and rural philanthropy', *Victorian*
urged to play a greater collective role. Organisations often instigated by upper-class ladies, such as district nursing associations, clean milk groups, save the infant funds, and the Mothers Union were gaining members, and making an impact.\textsuperscript{121} The joining together of women’s voices created a public force that had been previously unknown.

To the more conventional members of society these changes were viewed as dangerous, taking women away from their rightful place in the home and out into the male dominated wider world. Those opposing this changing role of women advised that certain occupations were divinely set apart for women and others divinely forbidden; those divinely sanctioned occupations were in the home, for ‘marriage was the first essential and motherhood the sacred function of the females species’.\textsuperscript{122} In the patriarchal and traditional society of Victorian Britain, there were many men and women happy with the status quo and not impressed by ‘the women’s movement’.\textsuperscript{123} One, Sir George Sitwell declared that women’s position in the world ‘was that she should be out of it’\textsuperscript{124}

The on-going struggle and intense conflict was undeniable and confusing. Women and girls were instructed that their most important work was in the home but they were also pressured to contribute to the growth of the nation, to moral regeneration and imperial prosperity by fulfilling their potential through more public

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\begin{flushright}\textsuperscript{121}See thesis Chapter Three for a discussion on these organisations.
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\begin{flushright}\textsuperscript{123}Millicent Garrett Fawcett, ‘The Future of Englishwomen; A reply’, \textit{Nineteenth Century}, August 1878, p.347.
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\begin{flushright}\textsuperscript{124}George Sitwell was a member of a famous literary family. See Middlemass, \textit{op.cit.}, p.147
\end{flushright}
endeavours. Elite women saw they were in a position to combine both roles. In their superior position they could publicly aid females in their mothering and nurturing roles. Aristocratic women were intimately involved in countless associations during the under consideration, such as the Charity Organisation Society (COS), the Girls Friendly Society (GFS), the Girls Realm Guild (GRG), the Girl Guides, the Red Cross Society, the St. John’s Ambulance, and Temperance Leagues. Vice-regal ladies were often at the forefront of these attempts in the dominions. The GFS, GRG, Girl Guides, Red Cross and Temperance associations all had strong followings in white settler societies and often attracted female vice-regal patronage.

By the late 1880s it was recognised that modern women could be a dynamic force within the British Empire. This idea was promoted by male establishment figures such as Lord Milner, Cecil Rhodes, Joseph Chamberlain and the twelfth Earl of Meath. In response to the obligations facing all women during this period a new and modern way was demanded. This idea found resonance in the concept of a ‘new woman’ discussed in Chapter One. A ‘new woman’ in an imperial mould, independent, reforming and active, whose activities, desires and rights were to be considered of equal importance to those of men was essential to the further growth of

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126 See Julia Bush, Edwardian Ladies and Imperial Power, op.cit., for detailed information on elite women and their organisations.
127 For example, Lady Aberdeen was president of the Red Cross in Ireland and Lady Dudley president of the Girls Realm Guild in Australia.
128 Lord Milner 1854-1925, imperialist, Governor of the Cape Colony and High Commissioner to South Africa, later Secretary of War and Colonial Secretary. Cecil Rhodes, 1853-1902, prominent South African politician and Prime Minister of Cape Colony. Joseph Chamberlain 1836-1914, Liberal and then Conservative politician and Secretary for the Colonies. Earl of Meath, Empire enthusiast and female rights advocate.
A Woman’s Place?

The Labourer’s Welcome
A late Victorian depiction of the ‘true woman’

Figure 13. Top: Joseph Clark held by Sheffield Galleries and Museums Trust, Sheffield, U.K.

Figure 14. Bottom: Punch 5 April 1899
the Empire.

This imperial ideal also appealed to many leading British female activists who espoused the view that as members of a great Empire they had an important and public role to play in its continued success.\textsuperscript{129} It must be conceded, however, that it appears little or no attention was paid to the force used to obtain and maintain the imperial acquisitions and pressing questions of racial and social justice were in many cases similarly ignored. To many female reformers the Empire was a means to harness the abilities of all women under British rule, and to use these for mutual benefit. It was the universality of women’s condition that formed the link with other women and a female-led imperial crusade would benefit all women of the Empire.\textsuperscript{130} This group believed that their strength, determination and abilities would produce reforms of imperial benefit. Elite women such as Edith Lyttelton, Laura Ridding, and Lady Jersey were active new imperialists and saw themselves as improving the position of women throughout the Empire. They hoped their efforts would also gain recognition for reforming women in Britain. Through organisations such as the Women’s Emigration Association (1880), the British Women’s Emigration Association BWEA (1884), and the Victoria League, (1901), they aimed to improve the status of women both abroad and at home.\textsuperscript{131}

**Conclusion**

\textsuperscript{129}Lady Jersey for example was a foremost lady imperialist as her work for the Victoria League testifies. Julia Bush’s entire book, *Edwardian Ladies and Political Power, op.cit.*, is proof of the power of the concept.

\textsuperscript{130}See Ishbel Aberdeen and her work with both the Canadian and International Council of Women., ‘The International Council of Women in Congress’, *Nineteenth Century*, July 1899, pp.18-25.

\textsuperscript{131}See Bush, *Edwardian Ladies and Imperial Power, op.cit.*
Although female reform and imperial growth were commonly connected and seen as complementary it was, of course, not a universally accepted concept. Women such as Isabella Tod, an Irish feminist who disagreed with British imperial expansion and novelist Virginia Woolf who rejected the imperialism of the Rudyard Kipling type and called herself a citizen of the world, were two prominent women on the other side of the debate.\(^{132}\) It would seem, however, that the majority of middle and upper-class women readily accepted the right of the British to spread their civilisation and race throughout the world and thus bring ‘benefits’ to their less fortunate sisters.

The modern woman was expected to strike a balance between the two roles she was intended to fulfil, and numerous elite women took up this challenge. They believed females needed more freedoms, the right to education, admission to the occupation they wished, social reform regarding sexual exploitation and political equality with men, but it was also necessary to maintain the true womanly function of wife and mother. ‘Domestic perfection had to be combined with some ... of the independence and adventurousness of the new woman’.\(^{133}\) Lady Cleremont declared many women had developed a social conscience and aimed ‘at growing a soul in spite of being a wife, a mother, and a hostess’.\(^{134}\) Queen Victoria, the maternal icon and ‘imperial matriarch’ had managed to combine the two, and many upper-class ladies, especially vice-regal women, saw no reason why they could not do so as well.\(^{135}\)


\(^{133}\) Mackay and Thane, *op.cit.*, p.208.

\(^{134}\) Gerard, *Country House Women*, *op.cit.*, p.137.

With society’s attitude to women being redefined during Victoria’s and Edward’s reign, so too was female imperial participation. The ensuing homage to the power of womanhood witnessed a shift in imperial ideology. Female morality, valued as essential to the stability of British society, was now openly linked to imperial success. Women’s roles were gaining greater public recognition as a tool for demonstrating the benefits of British dominion, a tool many vice-regal women were willing to employ.

New imperialism and the new woman were interconnected discourses that pervaded the community in the late Victorian and Edwardian eras. Whether a manipulative exercise in empire-building, a concerted reaction by women to their second rate position in society or a combination of the two, the roles and responsibilities of these reforming women extended far beyond Britain and the home. The pro-active approach that was adopted by vice-regal women was in the end a response to the times and their upbringing. The results they achieved in their vice-regal careers were the product of these forces, each woman responded to the challenge, each drawing on their aristocratic beliefs, upbringing and networks.

Vice-regal wives endeavoured to combine facets of both the true and the new women to become imperial missionaries and Empire builders and to take on the important assignment of active promoters of ‘the cultural aspects of imperialism through their


137 Trainor, op.cit., p.181
gender roles as caretakers and civilisers.¹³⁸ No longer simply role-playing, many imperial consorts considered their demanding work in a new light. These ladies, who in the main were not radicals or revolutionaries, embraced the changed attitudes to women and their imperial responsibilities and used them to good effect throughout the British Empire. By the late nineteenth century the type of female vice-regal work, and society’s attitude to it, had undergone a fundamental shift. Work and the aristocratic understanding of its meaning will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

VICE-REGAL WOMEN AND WORK

‘From the hour she [Queen Victoria] gets out of bed till she gets into it again there is work, work, work’\(^1\)

The significance of the place of women in late nineteenth and early twentieth century British society was enhanced not only by the importance placed upon their innate womanly qualities, and how these could benefit Empire, but also through their progressive civilising projects. By the last years of Queen Victoria’s reign, the concepts of the new woman and new imperialism were integral to female royal representatives throughout the Empire. This shift in what was considered acceptable for vice-regal women was also evident in another sphere - work.

It was during the period 1884-1914 that the themes of philanthropic endeavour and paid work for ladies became inextricably entwined. The traditional charitable pursuits of aristocratic and upper-class women combined with the growing trend towards organisational work to produce a dynamic new force. This chapter will investigate the interest of upper-class ladies in philanthropy organised on a large scale and in a professional manner. It will also analyse how these same ladies involved themselves, and their associations, in furthering employment opportunities for all women. The years spanning 1884-1914 were a time when enormous amounts of unpaid voluntary work, both individually but increasingly within organisational frameworks, was

\(^{1}\text{Cited in Lytton Strachey, Queen Victoria, Chatto and Windus, London, 1951 p.184.}\)
undertaken by middle and upper-class women. As Keith Middlemass remarked, this impulse for public service was 'something quintessentially late Victorian'. This chapter will examine the motivations and outcomes of this impulse surrounding women and work, and how vice-regal women in particular took the ideal of voluntary organisations, service, and employment opportunities to a new level.

The importance to the female vice-regal experience of the Victorian and Edwardian philosophy of women's work, paid and unpaid, organisational, philanthropic and reformist, cannot be underestimated. Of all the issues that impacted most powerfully on late nineteenth century society, there were three which were fundamental to the careers and achievements of vice-regal ladies. Firstly, there was the changing status of women and the emerging 'new woman', and secondly, the development of the concept of new imperialism and the role of women and motherhood. These topics have been documented and analysed in earlier chapters as important influences which did much to determine the paths that Ladies Dufferin, Aberdeen and Dudley and other vice-regal women were to tread. However, it is the third factor, the culture

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surrounding ‘work’ that forms the basis of the female imperial philosophy of the period. Theoretical and practical ideologies were developed around the concepts of work, which underpinned the ‘causes’ explored throughout this thesis. Work, it will be argued, shaped vice-regal women’s lives and helped to create the new vice-regal woman of the period, 1884-1914.

This chapter deals with an exploration and analysis of late Victorian and Edwardian aspects of work. As Leslie Hume and Karen Offen noted, the Victorian age saw the birth of an industrial society, the growth of the working class, and the increasingly important part work was believed to play in social stability, economic growth and nation-building, personal fulfilment and affluence. The world of industry and productive work was seen as the way of the future and women were included in this vision, both women who worked for wages and women who worked for no financial remuneration. Every member of society should contribute to Britain and by extension to her Empire. In this chapter close attention will be paid to the following ideas - ideological change, religion, duty, scientific-based humanism, leisure time, social conscience, organisational growth and women’s work generally. The main focus will be on changing concepts of paid and unpaid work; how Victorians themselves viewed work; the rise of organisational philanthropy; and how this impacted on the attitude of vice-regal women to their imperial mission.

There is some misunderstanding surrounding late Victorian and Edwardian upper-

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class women's attitudes and actions with regard to philanthropy and work. This appears to stem from confusion over the definition of work itself. Today when discussing work, the current meaning generally applied is that work is, 'a person’s employment or occupation ... especially as a means of earning income'.\textsuperscript{4} Work is not measured by the effort involved, either physical or mental, but rather by whether remuneration is forthcoming. By comparison non-paid work is either disregarded or denigrated as being of lesser value and significance. It is often prefaced by the word voluntary making it a type of sub-category of ‘real’ work.\textsuperscript{6} This does not appear to be how Victorians, especially upper-class women, viewed the subject. An understanding of work for these ladies did not necessarily involve money. Work, however, was not restricted to paid employment for it to be considered genuine. Unpaid work was recognised as having authentic, fulfilling, practical, moral, and spiritual aspects. Work was part of their duty to the progress of humanity and a social responsibility they held in common with men. Work was also part of their service to others.\textsuperscript{7} In the view of the ladies it was essential that everyone contribute to society. Whether this was through paid or voluntary work was of little consequence. They were not to be physically idle, for, ‘There is no sadder sight in the world than that of a wasted life’.\textsuperscript{8} Today we neatly divide roles and work into paid and unpaid labour. Victorian women from the upper-classes made no such distinction. Their philosophy of work


\textsuperscript{7} For example, the epitaph on the wife of the Australian Governor - General 1914-1920, Lady Helen Munro Ferguson’s (Lady Novar) commemorative memorial begins -'In the service of others her life was spent'. I thank Melanie Oppenheimer for this information.

\textsuperscript{8} Catherine Hall, \textit{White, Male and Middle-Class. Explorations in Feminism and History}, Polity Press,
encompassed all labour. This corresponds with the ideas expressed by Marilyn Waring in her significant study published in 1989, *Counting for Nothing*.

Waring’s argument is that much of the work performed by millions of women around the world is simply invisible in economic figures as it is not considered financially productive, that is, it does not have a defined monetary value. However, this economically based paradigm is a relatively recent way of looking at work and productivity. Although this concept of work, related to earnings, can be traced back to the influential Adam Smith in the eighteenth century, it was not until the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century with its long term impact of taking work away from the home that these ideas developed. The social and economic conditions in the western world from late Victorian times through to the large influx of women into the workforce hastened by the First and Second World Wars have constructed a particular meaning for the word ‘work’ - a meaning which no longer recognises unpaid contributions to the overall economic well-being of a nation. This representation was formally adopted in the 1950s when United Nations System of National Accounts (UNSNA), became officially, and almost universally, accepted. This system of accounting leaves no room for the inclusion of anything other than paid work, no matter how substantial the investment of non paid work may be in the economy.

It is the contention of this thesis that upper-class and vice-regal women and indeed most of society at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century, held a different


*ibid.*, pp.37-38.

*ibid.*, p.42. A detailed discussion of Waring’s views on this accounting system can be found here.
view. Money, salary, and wages were an important concept, but not integral, to the principle of work. Work involved the giving of time, energy, and expertise to achieve an end. As will be discussed shortly, work was seen as an important part in everyone’s life, and it was indeed a necessary part of life as stressed by Victorian philosophy. In women’s employment organisations, such as the Central Bureau for the Employment of Women established in 1898, where Lady Rachel Dudley was a leading figure, both paid and unpaid work are listed as suitable occupations for women.12 Their publication, The Fingerpost, gives information on many jobs available to women including, public service and Philanthropy.13 This understanding is compatible with Waring’s and Oppenheimer’s concept of work. As Waring asserts, ‘It seems to me that where there is a market equivalent, where obvious skills are involved, where there is obvious production, and even where there is, (heaven forbid), pleasure in the task, it is work’.14

It is important to emphasise that in many cases volunteer and paid employees existed side by side in Victorian and Edwardian philanthropic organisations. Usually the patrons and committee members were not paid while others in the organisation received wages. Despite this remuneration divide, no marked lines of demarcation between the two are obvious, and the only mention of salaries or otherwise occur in the wages column published in the annual reports.15 This fusion of volunteer and employee worker was common in many philanthropic projects and was adopted by

12New vice-regal woman Lady Rachel Dudley was closely involved with this organisation from its earliest days. See thesis Chapter Five.
15See, for example, the Annual Reports for Lady Dudley’s Scheme for the Establishment of District
vice-regal women when founding their associations in the dominions. Throughout the Empire, the innovative nursing schemes established by these women during their vice-regal careers, for example, were run along these lines and all participants from the unpaid president to waged ward assistants were in no doubt that they were all working, and often working very hard.

A noted Cambridge economist of the 1880s, Alfred Marshall, expressed this prevalent Victorian attitude to work when he observed that the revenue of a nation should include all commodities, material and immaterial, and services of all kinds, with no specific mention being made of monetary remuneration.\textsuperscript{16} This was the philosophy of the vice-regal ladies of this thesis. Their work, although unpaid, was nevertheless work. Lady Aberdeen when speaking to an audience of eight hundred Glasgow mill girls in the 1890s stated that she and many upper-class women, were like the mill girls, working women. Even though the ladies received no remuneration, ‘we can rejoice together at being numbered among the world’s workers’.\textsuperscript{17}

In this attitude we see a radically different interpretation placed on the terms volunteer and voluntary worker to that of today. A twenty-first century understanding of work should not be imposed on these nineteenth and early twentieth-century women. Many in the community today still regard volunteers as mostly middle-class women with time on their hands, and usually with good intentions, but not involved in real work.\textsuperscript{18}

\textit{Nurses in the Poorest Parts of Ireland 1903-1920}, National Library of Ireland, Dublin.

\textsuperscript{16}\textit{ibid.}, p.41. Thane, \textit{op.cit.}, p.15.


\textsuperscript{18}See for example, Margaret Steinberg and Lara Cain, \textit{Putting Paid to Prescribed Roles; A New Era for Australian Women and Philanthropy}, Centre for Philanthropy and Non-profit Studies, Brisbane, 2003.
This depiction does have connections to Lady Bountiful and the explosion of charitable organisations run by aristocratic women in the late Victorian and Edwardian period, but it does not look behind the stereotypical representations. This chapter will explore the motivations and accomplishments of upper-class ladies, their voluntary work and the role of their organisations.

**Overview of Victorian Concepts of Work**

To many Victorians, work was the gospel of life. Work, rather than being a means to an end as it was in earlier times, became the end in itself. Work in late nineteenth century Britain had become a virtue and its own reward.\(^{19}\) God, faith and effort were constantly invoked by most sections of the establishment, and work took on a quasi-religious nature. As Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) stated in the mid 1800s, 'There is a perennial nobleness, and even sacredness, in work'.\(^{20}\) Work was extolled from the pulpits and lauded in pious publications and thereby given divine significance. To some Victorians and Edwardians, it became the faith by which they lived their lives, for, 'a man perfects himself by working'.\(^ {21} \) Work was viewed as the universal antidote for the evils of the age: religious doubt, depression, social discontent, and moral and physical decay, all could be overcome as 'Work is the grand cure of the maladies and miseries that ever beset mankind'.\(^ {22} \) This cure-all was also an obligation for all, and one which was growing with the expansion of the Empire. As William Beveridge later


\(^{20}\)Carlyle cited in Hall, *op.cit.*, p.266.


\(^{22}\)ibid., Thomas Carlyle in an address given at Edinburgh, April 1866.
remarked, work ‘if not the sole object of life, was a social necessity’.\(^{23}\)

From the days of the early Victorians, the British people were bombarded with new views and theories, both religious and secular, ranging from the Non-Conformists and Evangelicals to the laissez-faire and utilitarian ideas of Adam Smith and the Benthamites.\(^{24}\) Many people of this era understood themselves to be living through an age of transition. Epoch-making fresh ideas and opinions were expressed in such landmark publications as Charles Darwin’s, *On the Origin of Species* (1859), John Stewart Mill’s *The Principles of Political Economy* (1848), *On Liberty* (1859), and *The Subjection of Women* (1869), Herbert Spencer, *The Proper Sphere of Government* (1843), and *The Man versus the State* (1884).\(^{25}\) These scientific views on the place of men and women in an age of new economic advantage vied with growing liberal and social attitudes.

It has been argued that Evangelical views of morality through the living of a good daily life, was ‘probably the single most widespread influence in Victorian England’.\(^{26}\) The Evangelicals were seen as crusading Christians determined to change society from within and greatly increased the number of Non-conformists within the


\(^{26}\)Hall, *op.cit.*, p.75.
establishment.\textsuperscript{27} When the Evangelicals succeeded in their anti-slavery campaign in the 1830s, they turned their attention to bringing their idea of justice to British society and the wider world. This was achieved through practical intervention within Britain and by despatching missionaries around the globe.\textsuperscript{28} Central to this reform ethic, initially at least, was the belief that the way to heaven was through daily effort. Life was seen as a pilgrimage and all were expected to live a moral life to achieve salvation - it was one’s duty to do so. Philanthropy and charitable endeavours were essential to their faith, and good works were an important element of their practical approach.\textsuperscript{29} Not only the upper-classes, but everyone was influenced by the ‘work ethic’ to some degree. From the chapels of the Baptists and Methodists, to Puritan teachings and Evangelical meetings, to the pulpits of the Protestant and Catholic cathedrals, the message was repeated ‘in toil, however humble, if honest and hearty lies our true worth’.\textsuperscript{30}

Nevertheless by the late nineteenth century, the type of lifestyle practised by many in Britain did not necessarily include God, religion or salvation. Lord Shaftesbury noted it was a generation ‘which served God less and man more’\textsuperscript{31} Another commentator observed sadly in 1877 that, ‘the power of the pulpit as an institution is manifestly on the wane’.\textsuperscript{32} For some late Victorians and Edwardians, a secular philosophy supplanted the divine and numbers of people from all classes embraced the seemingly contradictory idea of living a Christian life without the accompanying supernatural

\textsuperscript{27}\textit{ibid.}


\textsuperscript{29}Gerard, ‘Lady Bountiful’, \textit{op.cit.}, p.188.

\textsuperscript{30}Houghton, \textit{op.cit.}, p.244.

beliefs. In this modern late nineteenth century world, Father Barry lamented that there was a rising faith in ‘analytic science which has banished God’. The ensuing decline in spiritual orthodoxy, Barry continued, left both a spiritual and cultural vacuum.\footnote{Baldwin Brown, ‘Is the Pulpit Losing its Power?’, \textit{Nineteenth Century}, March 1877, p.107.}

According to some late Victorians, the answer to this void was to be found in the human race. Mankind’s earthly existence rather than heavenly reward became the centre of attention. The fate of humanity was now seen as everyone’s responsibility and to neglect social evils was considered against both God and man’s laws.\footnote{Father William Barry, ‘Democratic Ideals’, \textit{Nineteenth Century}, May 1894, p.718.} The ideology of the progress of the race through human intervention became increasingly relevant to both those with and those without a strong religious faith. The work of Herbert Spencer and Emile Durkheim, which promoted the ideology of Social Darwinism, was debated.\footnote{Prochaska, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.21-22.} Their ideas provided a modern scientific framework for evolving social ideas. These theorists suggested that the division of labour and the growth of the private and public divide were evidence of a highly developed community. The concept embraced the belief that nations had evolved down the centuries into the highest type of social existence and that the British nation and race were at the forefront of this evolution. These ideas were extended to Empire. As Caine and Sluga have stated, ‘The aims and achievements of imperialism were understood in relation to theories of evolution, which elaborated the ‘scientific’ bases of racial and sexual differences’.\footnote{See Benjamin Kidd, ‘Social Evolution’, \textit{Nineteenth Century}, February 1895, pp.226-240, F.W. Headley, \textit{Darwinism and Modern Socialism}, Methuen, London, 1909.} The philosophy behind the new imperialism incorporated this tenet. The British race had proved its superiority through the
nation’s civilised social structure, industrial leadership, military might, and vast Empire.

In this age when everything was called into question, new scientific discoveries and philosophical theories gained credence. Life was no longer just a preparation for eternity. Earthly existence and the individual’s place in the order of things was to be taken seriously; people had to be aware of the bigger picture, ‘and what duties and responsibilities it might entail’. Carlyle’s early Victorian declaration still held true; ‘The time for levity, insincerity, and idle babble and play-acting, in all kind is gone by; it is a serious, grave time’. The vision was now that effort and toil were needed if the grand purposes of life were to be achieved. Moral struggle, self denial, and sacrifice were necessary in this new social consciousness. This, in turn, would lead to self development and national advancement. Progress became a mantra of the age. It was understood that by seeking ways to improve one’s own character and that of the community at large, the result would eventually be social and individual perfection.

If, therefore, by the late 1880s, God was no longer the centre of all Victorians’ lives - duty was. Duty became the focus of both the religious and the non-religious. As the Empire took on the image of religious icon, as discussed in Chapter Two, it in some sense replaced orthodox Christian practice. Faith and religion gave way to a cult of

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imperial duty, and this ‘new gospel of empire produced a noisy rallying point in the last decade of the century’. Throughout the Empire, the Victorians expressed their imperial ideology as something ‘that we can live for, and would die for’. Duty encompassed many concepts, and one of the most important was a new understanding of work. ‘No human being, whether male or female, had the right to be idle’. On a state level, personal and national success was becoming inseparable. The effort of the individual and the success of the nation and the Empire were viewed as one by officialdom. It was believed that ‘national progress is the sum of individual industry’. This philosophy extended to women. Whereas ‘work’ in the public sphere for the upper-classes was formerly a masculine domain, now lady workers emerged from advantaged homes.

To the new vice-regal woman this entwining of individual and national success was a seminal concept in the advancement of the British Empire. In the lives of leisured ladies and the careers of vice-regal women, public and private endeavour, national and imperial issues became one. To seek the highest and strive for the best in every field was a common Victorian platitude, which many of the elite took as their motto and applied directly to their work. Lady Margaret Jersey who was devoted to her longstanding imperial work provides an example of this type of commitment by an aristocratic lady and new vice-regal woman. Not only was she active in Australia when her husband was Governor of New South Wales from 1890-3, she was involved

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43 Hall, *op.cit.*, p.192.

with many philanthropic associations during her long life including being a founding member and influential president of the Victoria League.\textsuperscript{45}

It is difficult to elicit the precise rationale behind aristocratic participation in reform, work, and philanthropy during the late Victorian era. Derek Fraser has suggested four major motives for charitable acts,

A fear of social revolution, a humanitarian concern for suffering, a desire to improve the moral tone of the recipients and satisfaction of some psychological or social need, that is a desire for the confirmation of social status.\textsuperscript{46}

As Fraser has alluded, there was a less altruistic agenda lurking within this new aristocratic approach to work. The increasing upper-class attention to work and charitable endeavour was viewed by some as a way to stall the threat of revolution. Judith Godden states ‘Philanthropy was an activity of the dominant, or those who wished to associate themselves with the dominant, in order to lessen class conflict arising from the exploitation of the poor’.\textsuperscript{47} The writings of Karl Marx with his class theories were gaining followers in nineteenth century Britain. Aristocratic men were also British capitalists with large land holdings and investments in industry.\textsuperscript{48} The growth of socialism and the fear of the violent overthrow of the ruling classes by the

\textsuperscript{45}Dowager Countess of Jersey, \textit{op.cit.} The aim of the Victoria League was to promote British imperialism and to aid women across the Empire.

\textsuperscript{46}Thane, \textit{op.cit.}, p.26.


\textsuperscript{48}The example, Lord Dudley owned land and the profitable coalmines around the Dudley area of central England.
masses were a constant undercurrent.⁴⁹ Dr. Thomas Bernardo (1845-1905), the renowned philanthropist, was well aware of the threat from the ‘dangerous classes’.⁵⁰ Contemporary social theorists suggested upper-class charity was a centuries old way devised to quell social unrest.⁵¹ William Aydelotte expressed the sentiment that ‘Benevolence thrives in a period of social distress and political uncertainty’.⁵² Numbers of the upper-class may have reasoned, therefore, that if they were actively seen to be performing their duty, running their estates in a fair and modern way, working at ruling the country, and undertaking charitable works, they would not be viewed as ‘parasites’ living off the work of others.⁵³ Through work they could be seen to pay the moral debt they owed to society, to validate their superior position, and so remain at the top of the ‘natural’ social order. This aristocratic view of work and society also ‘included the idea of a mission’.⁵⁴ For the elite it was desirable to be perceived as fulfilling their historic mission as rulers by benefiting the nation through strong leadership and reformed economic management.

The impetus behind upper-class ladies participation and work in the philanthropic field may have included some or all of Derek Fraser’s motives. The case studies of

⁴⁹The aftermath of the French Revolution, the European revolutions of 1848 and the growing unrest within Britain were not lost on British aristocrats. Anti-upper-class rhetoric was widespread. See, for example, the contemporary writings of H.M. Hyndman, The Coming Revolution in England, William Reeves, London, undated and Arthur Arnold, ‘The Abuses of a landed gentry’, Nineteenth Century, May 1877, pp.458-478.
⁵¹Howard Newby, The Deferential Worker: A Study of Farm Workers in East Anglia, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1979, p.44.
⁵³ibid., p.246.
⁵⁴ibid., p.250.
Ladies Dufferin, Aberdeen and Dudley suggest, however, that the principal motive was simply that as late Victorian British aristocratic women it was their duty to do so.

This Victorian obsession with work, and its benefits, overlapped into leisure time. It was no longer considered proper to do nothing, even for the aristocratic set. Recreation time was now to be both personally and socially edifying and rewarding. In this climate, clubs, leagues, and associations flourished. Any new abilities acquired and any contributions made would benefit the rest of society, and thus maintain the superior position of British citizens and the status quo. To achieve this, the entire population needed to be motivated. Those in a more fortunate economic position could undertake to aid the less fortunate. To sacrifice one’s own comfort to help others and to do so with a sense of community would enable others to help themselves. Consequently idleness became a transgression not easily forgiven especially in the upper-class and equally for women and men ‘action was prized; idleness or reflection ... were not’. Through work, the supreme virtue, the nation’s true worth could be measured; thus leisure was to be restricted, morally uplifting, and constructive.

Many aristocratic women embraced the Victorian concept of self-help and self-examination and became social reformers. Non-conformist ladies took the gospel out of the church and into the community, combining Christian ideals with worthwhile activities. Lady Aberdeen introduced this idea into her own household

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with the radical Haddo House Group.\textsuperscript{58} All members of the Aberdeen household, including the Lord and Lady, their children, and their staff would regularly meet to discuss contemporary issues, learn new skills and contribute artistic performances to the occasion. The original 43 members of the household would divide into interest groups such as the home reading circle or the wood carving class on selected evenings, and then come together for social nights where the butler’s magic lantern shows were greatly anticipated.\textsuperscript{59} The Haddo House experiment later expanded to an association with member households throughout Britain. It was an organisation aimed at a group working together for mutual benefit.

One way for the leisured classes to ‘assist mankind’ was to work for the less fortunate. The earlier strict utilitarian views of right and wrong, deserving and undeserving were softened by some of the late Victorians with their different attitude to the poor. For them, sympathy and benevolence were no longer negative attributes. Now they accepted that these qualities were required in their philanthropic endeavours.\textsuperscript{60} The rhetoric claimed that to be human meant to feel an empathy with all mankind, no matter the race, creed or class, and to be Victorian meant to act. Community awareness and socialism were energetic concepts gaining momentum in society, and notably in middle and upper-class circles.\textsuperscript{61} Lady Warwick is a famous example of an elite woman who turned to socialism in an attempt to encourage social equity from a privileged position.\textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{58}Ishbel Aberdeen, ‘Household Clubs: An Experiment’, \textit{Nineteenth Century}, March 1892, pp.391-398.
\textsuperscript{59}ibid.
\textsuperscript{60}Thane, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.11-19.
Such was the view of some leading late nineteenth century social activists including Sidney and Beatrice Webb and members of the Fabian Society.\textsuperscript{63} This society founded by a small group in London in 1883 wished to employ the highest moral standards in order to reconstruct society. A growing sense of social responsibility to those less fortunate was promoted by some Victorian and Edwardian charitable organisations and enacted through legislation.\textsuperscript{64} Government was urged to become more involved. Rather than remaining detached and removed from these areas of obligation some believed that government could be used as a tool for social justice. Socialists implored the Government to take responsibility for its citizens.\textsuperscript{65}

Towards the end of Victoria’s reign, women of the middle and upper-classes made it clear that they were looking for a broadening of life experiences, both for personal fulfilment and the common good. The role of wife, mother, or a life of personal pursuits was no longer considered enough by some.\textsuperscript{66} They wanted to be included in the public world, the world of ‘action’.\textsuperscript{67} Ladies were being encouraged to expand their minds and their physical abilities, and they ‘must work with both hands’ to fulfil their destiny.\textsuperscript{68} Women’s clubs were a growth area, which encouraged female networking and freedom. It was a widely accepted view that women by their nature wanted help those in need, for it was ‘her task, her lot, her ministry, her special destination’ and that women in concert could be a force for good.\textsuperscript{69} Many upper-class

\textsuperscript{63}Hynes, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.88-92.

\textsuperscript{64}Finlayson, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.160-166. An example of this legislation is the Factory and Workshop Bill of 1891.

\textsuperscript{65}\textit{ibid}. The Fabian Society helped to establish the British Labour Party in 1906.


\textsuperscript{67}\textit{ibid}.

\textsuperscript{68}H.M. in ‘The Responsibilities of Women’, \textit{op.cit.}, p.13.

\textsuperscript{69}Reverend Alexander Young, cited in McCarthy, \textit{op.cit.}, p.13.
women who believed in the worth of women’s charitable organisations and
associations adopted this fundamental principle.

**Aristocratic Ladies as Lady Bountiful**

Leisured ladies already had a grounding in charitable projects through the traditional
form of work which aristocratic women were expected to undertake. The term Lady
Bountiful was often used in this regard.⁷⁰ As the wife, mother, sister or daughter of the
Lord of the Manor, it was her duty to see to the physical and spiritual welfare of the
families that worked on their estate. Estate workers anticipated the regular visits of the
‘Lady’, often accompanied by her daughters, to distribute food and other necessities
to the workers.⁷¹ The ladies were expected to know the names and circumstances of
the families they called upon, and were required to respond to any significant family
events such as births or deaths. Certain elite women seem to have carried out this role
as a necessary evil while others showed real compassion for, and interest in, the
country families. Louise Creighton, a girl of the upper-class, commented ‘Visiting
taught much about the lives of the people & certainly enlarged my experience & I
hope, my sympathies’.⁷²

The Lady of the Manor as Lady Bountiful was encouraged to strengthen the bonds
between the elites and their workers. The traditional system of social subordination of
the working class by their social and moral ‘betters’ through charitable acts was

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⁷⁰This term can have a negative connotation, especially when women grudgingly dispersed charity to
Creighton was to become a founding member of the National Union of Women Workers.
reinforced by active philanthropic ladies of the nineteenth century. This was acknowledged at the time. George Holyoake believed that, ‘the rich as a class are not averse to the dependence of the poor. Patronage is pleasing to them, and ministers to their influence’. 73 Jessica Gerard also contends that landed women’s philanthropy was used to ‘rule over the rural poor, implementing paternalism and enforcing deference’. 74 Religious beliefs and moral standards were cultivated to ensure that lower-class women could achieve success in their roles as wives and mothers. The growth of temperance organisations in the late nineteenth century and their goals were favoured by many upper-class women as one way to assure working class adherence to their social responsibilities. Ladies such as Rosalind, Countess of Carlisle, took up the temperance cause and successfully persuaded many of her workers on the Castle Howard estates to take the pledge. 75

A majority of aristocratic women were convinced they knew what was best for the poor, uneducated, and disadvantaged and that they had the right to impose their ideas and beliefs upon them. 76 Their natural ‘superiority’ made them duty bound and better able to run all aspects of their estate families’ lives as well as delivering their traditional largesse. On the other hand, working families expected the gifts and visits from the gentry as their ancient right and were quick to claim their due and criticise any shortfalls. 77 The social conditioning of both classes led to a mutual expectation and acceptance between the compassionate lady and the deserving worker. The

73 ibid., p.1114.
75 ibid., pp.125-126.
76 Finlayson, op.cit., pp.51-53.
77 Gerard, op.cit., p.129.
benevolence and personal visits made by the ladies were often seen as less demeaning to estate workers than the alternative aid offered by the parish or official authorities.78

Aristocratic philanthropy was not a one-sided relationship, and both the giver and recipient were active participants. Rural working class girls were encouraged to gain skills that would help secure them a job in service, such as needlework and cooking, and other desirable qualities like cleanliness, obedience, and a work ethic.79 To this end many ladies established schools and clubs for their estate workers and their families.80 These self-help arrangements were not totally voluntary, as it was expected that the working families would attend the classes and lectures provided for them.81

The necessity for competent, reliable employees was a constant theme among the upper-classes. Women’s philanthropic groups confronted this question with vigour. Country house ladies looked to ways to aid women on their own estates. Some historians, including Anne Summers, argue that self-interest was an important motive behind middle and upper-class interest in local girls’ working lives.82 She has suggested that in order to obtain good household staff for themselves and their peers some leisured ladies interested themselves in the training of servants from the working class and aided them in finding suitable employment.83 Particular ladies, including the Duchess of Sutherland and Lady Jersey, opened their own servant

78 George Jacob Holyoake, ‘State Socialism’, Nineteenth Century, June 1879, p.1120.
81 Horn, op.cit., p.119.
83 Gerard, op.cit., p.190.
training schools on their country estates. Some girls who attended these schools did find desirable positions in aristocratic establishments, but the majority ended up working in middle-class homes. Although self-interest may have played a part in the establishment of these training facilities, a growing social awareness and spirit of the times can not be neglected in any discussion of turn of the century upper-class attitudes towards female employment.

Such attitudes can be found in the Countess of Warwick’s training establishment. Lady Warwick’s hostel at Reading for ladies interested in horticulture and agriculture was an excellent example of expanding female endeavours. Begun in 1898, and originally in association with Reading College, this ‘scientific’ training of women was considered a modern response to the pressing employment situation. The targeted students were educated ladies and gentlewomen in reduced circumstances who needed to earn their own living. To increase the number of girls who could benefit, a loan fund was established to pay for training. The recipients then repaid the fund when they secured a job. This need for paid employment for ladies was a major factor behind aristocratic interest in female work reform. Women generally did not have money of their own once they married. Their husbands controlled the funds and provided them with household expenses. This lack of personal income and the dependence upon men influenced upper-class women’s growing attention to the need for higher female education and the learning of employable skills.

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84 bid., p.199.
85 ibid.
86 Blunden, op.cit., pp.137-138
87 Horn, op.cit., pp.189-191.
88 This situation was relieved somewhat by the Married Woman’s Property legislation of 1870 and 1872 when the husbands previous right to his wife’s money upon marriage was restricted.
The fundamentals of work were being expanded to cater for the changing attitudes and demands within society. Philanthropy and duty combined to produce middle and upper-class reforming women determined to link voluntary and paid work with modern ideas, Christian principles and imperial fervour. Women could see progress on the horizon; and the way forward lay in active public participation, the combination of charity endeavour and work for all, if within a somewhat limited field. As Baldock explained, volunteer work was seen ‘as an extension of women’s domestic labour’, so women put themselves or were put in the position where they worked with women and children.  

Although aristocratic philanthropic endeavours had begun in the country mostly in a small way, by the late Victorian period they had expanded into the cities and large urban centres. It was in the towns and cities that traditional charitable acts and the new attitude of working towards social progress found common ground in the formation of women’s associations and organisations. Now numbers of ladies as volunteers could combine on a large scale and harness the power of numbers to aid the less fortunate. Philanthropy and volunteer work became entwined. As Kathleen McCarthy states ‘an identifiable women’s culture centred on charities and voluntary work emerged’ and this combination would drive the growth of women’s philanthropic endeavours in the late nineteenth century in Britain and throughout the Empire.  

The main concentration of these voluntary charitable organisations in Britain was in  

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89 Baldock, op.cit.
London. When upper-class ladies and their daughters went to town for the Season or accompanied their husbands and fathers on business or to attend parliament many took their philanthropic predisposition along. The poor of greater London, who at the end of Victoria’s reign in 1901 was the world’s largest city, with a population of over six million, attracted both official and non-official charitable activity.\textsuperscript{91} Female volunteer and philanthropic work on city streets was predominantly in the areas of health and welfare, which were typically defined as ‘caring labour and women’s work’.\textsuperscript{92} This female philanthropic activity concentrated on what was considered to be women’s special world. Schemes to help prostitutes, women prisoners and alcoholics, the unemployed, and to educate mothers and supply hygienic nourishment for children, baby clinics, pure milk depots, home visiting and classes in ‘the domestic arts’ for girls, were a late Victorian and Edwardian priority for female philanthropists. This charitable ideology encompassed traditional rescue work of the disadvantaged and evolving preventive measures.

The political and philosophical climate in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Britain was conducive to individuals combining their efforts in the public arena. The redefined work ethic of both personal and national responsibility was having an impact. The abilities of upper-class women, formerly restricted in their scope, now had a wider stage. The most visible and widely felt result was the proliferation of women’s societies, organisations, clubs, councils, and leagues throughout Britain and the Empire.\textsuperscript{93} Poverty, unemployment, intoxication, prostitution, health, children and

\textsuperscript{94}McCarthy (ed.), \textit{Lady Bountiful Revisited}, \textit{op.cit.}, p.6.

\textsuperscript{91}Thane, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.7-48. Thane details the work of private charitable endeavours especially to do with health and poverty and government legislation in such area as pensions and working conditions.

\textsuperscript{92}Baldock, \textit{op.cit.}

\textsuperscript{93}Lady Albinia Hobart-Hampden, ‘The Working Girl of To-day’, \textit{Nineteenth Century}, May 1898,
the birthrate, motherhood, female prisoners and education were all matters taken up with enthusiasm by elite woman's associations at home and overseas. As Samuel Barnett noted, there was 'a growing disposition among all classes to trust in societies'.

When this was coupled with women's new ability to communicate with others through inexpensive publications and women's magazines and greater freedom of movement brought about by improved rail travel and the motor car, women began to attend meetings and convene conferences in increasing numbers. Community awareness of social responsibility was growing and women were being externally shaped and internally informed on how to perform their role.

Mature and privileged ladies were encouraged from the pulpit, by the establishment, and in the media, to stand up for the aggrieved and suffering of all classes. Some came to understand that their lifestyles were bound up with the work of other women. There was a growing realisation that they relied on women from the lower economic classes to perform household and nursery duties, to sew their clothes and produce goods to enhance their lives. They saw the need for trained women to be available for this and also began to understand that these lower-class working women deserved appropriate wages and conditions. Growing interest was also shown in other women and girls who worked at low-paid jobs in factories or sweatshops. Various aristocratic and middle-class ladies concluded that their work or even duty was to relieve the social distress of these women, and that the most effective way was through a combination of philanthropy and improved female employment

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pp.724-730.


95Hall, op.cit., p.64.
opportunities. It was a new attitude, as the Countess of Carlisle commented, ‘We want no Lady Bountifuls in this last quarter of our nineteenth century’.\textsuperscript{96}

The Organisational Rush

During this period there was an aristocratic philanthropic push to join or found charitable organisations. Although the concentration here is on elite ladies, it must be noted that middle-class women and middle and upper-class gentlemen were involved in philanthropic and unpaid work as well.\textsuperscript{97} Some elite women did little more than send donations and subscriptions, or lend their name to associations to fulfil society’s expectations, whilst others became deeply involved and committed to philanthropic work. These ladies proved to have a genuine belief in their role as philanthropists and the good they could accomplish in the public sphere, for women, the nation, and the British Empire.

The late nineteenth-century female reform movement had a large middle and upper-class base and encompassed a variety of views and ideas. Many aristocratic ladies were often enthusiastic members of several organisations, which frequently overlapped in ideas and participants.\textsuperscript{98} Some women were radical suffrage advocates while others were just as strongly against women’s suffrage.\textsuperscript{99} Some saw women’s role as primarily in the home, while others wanted them in the public sphere. In many cases...

\textsuperscript{96}Finlayson, \textit{op.cit.}, p.159.  
\textsuperscript{97}Algernon West, ‘The Great Unpaid’, \textit{Nineteenth Century}, October 1899, pp.541-549.  
\textsuperscript{99}For example, vice-regal women such as Lady Ishbel Aberdeen were pro-suffrage while Lady Margaret Jersey was anti-suffrage. Others activists such as Lady Adeline Bedford remained neutral not
instances these women, while differing on certain issues, coexisted quite happily within various groups. For example, Lady Rachel Dudley, the stylish hostess, was both a representative of the Marlborough House set and a powerful advocate for women’s work reform.100 Aristocratic ladies, many seeing it as an extension of their traditional duty, took up the national and imperial philanthropic challenge with zeal and commitment. Although often innovative and resolute in their approach, their associations were usually confined to a select and acceptable range of subjects. Most involved themselves in established areas, particularly the plight of poor, sick, or disadvantaged women and children, and the need to promote Christian female ideals. New vice-regal women in their colonial careers would adopt this narrow spectrum of involvement. This will be demonstrated in detail in the case studies of Ladies Dufferin, Aberdeen and Dudley in Chapters Four, Five and Six of this thesis.

These groups, in the main, espoused their openness to all women from all parts of the world, of any religion or political affiliation, occupation or race, a truly international sisterhood. Although they claimed to be representatives for all women, in reality they were established and run by white, Protestant, middle and upper-class Western ladies.101 However, for all the European or Western bias of these organisations, they did give women a collective voice, a public recognition, and in some instances an international focus.102 This public face of the British sisterhood of women with ability

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102Associations such as the Mother’s Union, The Girls Friendly Society and the Young Women’s Christian Association were all important organisations throughout the British Empire.
and power brought to the fore the changing lives of women and the contributions their collective effort could make both to other women and to the general population. The organisations initiated by Ladies Dufferin, Aberdeen and Dudley throughout the Empire, and detailed in the case studies to follow, conformed to the standard contemporary organisational frameworks established in Britain.

With the growth of volunteer organisations during the late nineteenth century, female philanthropic work was taken from the home and the individual to the greater community. Here was an overlapping of the traditional and modern roles. This private and public female work has been termed a ‘borderland’ by Ann Digby, a place where women successfully extended their role and place in society without venturing too far from their perceived womanly mission in life. Aristocratic women and new vice-regal ladies followed a set path through this borderland. There was an accepted progression for elite women to follow.

Many aristocratic girls embarked on the established philanthropic road from an early age. As a girl, Ishbel Aberdeen did rescue work and Rachel Dudley visited female prisoners with Lady Bedford. Large numbers of upper-class girls belonged to the Charity Organisation Society (COS), or similar groups, where they were expected to visit working-class mothers and question or counsel them on their private lives and mothering abilities. The COS championed the concept of an organisational case

104 Thane, op.cit., pp.11-30.
106 See thesis Chapters Five and Six respectively
Women in the Public Sphere

Domestic Service

A Day Nursery in a Shop Window

The Work of Women in the Home

The Advancing Cause in the Modern Election

Women in the Political Arena

Figure 14. Black and White Magazine 5 December 1908
work philosophy, which endeavoured to give the needy the necessary support, information, and skills for them to help themselves. The reasoning was that women should be available to other women on a personal basis as advisers, trainers, rescuers, advocates and representatives.\textsuperscript{108} While class assumptions continued to mediate the roles played out by aristocrats for the benefit of the poor, needy, downtrodden and fallen, a sense of feminine solidarity in pursuit of social progress was felt and respected by many. It was realised that to make a difference on a large scale in the public sphere women needed to organise in a professional and structured manner.\textsuperscript{109}

Women took this emerging opportunity to organise themselves in the promotion of their mothering, moral guardianship and imperial duties. They managed to achieve this by emphasising women’s sisterhood, a universality of experience that overcame class, race, and religion.\textsuperscript{110} This ideal was ‘nourished by a special combination of sisterhood and ambition’.\textsuperscript{111} British women became active members and volunteers, especially upper-class ladies who were conspicuous chairpersons and officials, with many being on executive councils and committees of several organisations which they openly promoted and enthusiastically supported.\textsuperscript{112}

The National Union of Women Workers (NUWW), forerunner to the National Council of Women of Britain (NCW), with Lady Ishbel Aberdeen, and her close friend Lady Adeline Bedford on the committee, was involved in the growing work

\textsuperscript{108}Octavia Hill, ‘Our Dealings with the Poor’, Nineteenth Century, July 1891, pp.161-170.


\textsuperscript{110}This attitude is expressed by Ishbel Aberdeen in M. Pentland, A Bonnie Fechter, B. T. Batsford Ltd., London, 1952, p.38.

\textsuperscript{111}McCarthy, op.cit., p.6.

\textsuperscript{112}See Bush, Edwardian Ladies and Imperial Power, op.cit., Appendix 2.
and charity alliance. *The Times* noted this group brought ‘together women who are working either professionally or philanthropically’.\textsuperscript{113} Voluntary rescue work was a popular charitable endeavour for upper-class women and the NUWW held conferences for these ‘rescue workers’ to present papers and exchange information.\textsuperscript{114} Some ladies visited workhouses, prisons and slums and set up homes for fallen women and settlement houses for orphaned children.\textsuperscript{115} Many agreed with Lady Aberdeen that the educated and upper-class ‘must repay a social debt’.\textsuperscript{116} The privileged ladies maintained that this personal woman to woman contact was beneficial. They believed that as members of the universal sisterhood they could have a great impact on the lower classes.\textsuperscript{117} As the proliferation of female imperial organisations testifies, it was believed that this type of woman-to-woman and girl to girl help would be beneficial in Britain, and could be introduced and employed throughout the Empire.\textsuperscript{118} During 1884-1914, new vice-regal women were eager to help disseminate these virtues in the colonies as part of their new agenda.

Another of the favoured aims of these associations was to spread understanding of a new approach to motherhood. Women, especially mothers, were regarded as the key to the future. As has been discussed in Chapter Two, motherhood was no longer considered so much a natural instinct as a skill that needed to be learned; and it

\textsuperscript{113}*The Times*, 9 August 1895, p.4.

\textsuperscript{114}For example, *Report of the Conference of Rescue Workers*, held in Manchester, October 1907, Office of the Union, London, 1907. Lady Bedford and Lady Aberdeen were founding members of the NUWW. Lady Bedford was also Lady Rachel Dudley’s guardian.

\textsuperscript{115}Lady Rachel Dudley and Lady Bedford spent many days visiting female gaols and trying to improve conditions.


required woman-to-woman education.\textsuperscript{119} If lower class women could be saved from a life of depravity and given basic skills, then their children and the community would benefit. This edifying educational role of the privileged assisting the needy was encouraged in popular literature. In one of Mrs. Humphrey Ward’s popular novels, the 1894 \textit{Marcella}, her young heroine seeks ‘peace and wisdom working as a district nurse among London’s chaotic Soho poor’.\textsuperscript{120} Ladies were encouraged to work in the poorest parts of the city to rescue the needy, immoral, or criminal. The work, although difficult, did hold romantic overtones for some women. Ellen Ross observes that certain ladies saw philanthropy as an area for ‘female adventure and self-discovery’.\textsuperscript{121}

The aid offered to women by women also extended to employment opportunities. As work became an increasingly vital national obligation many contemporary studies appeared on this vital topic, often linking unemployment and poverty, and how the employed and unemployed affected society.\textsuperscript{122} Work was not always seen as drudgery. There was a growing trend towards the idea of ‘job satisfaction’, especially for women. One female shopworker commented on her employment that, ‘there is the pleasure of always being able to look nice and neat, and the charm of variety’.\textsuperscript{123}

\textsuperscript{118}For example, the Victoria League, The British Women’s Emigration Association, the Mothers Union, the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, and the Girls Friendly Society.


\textsuperscript{120}Mrs. Humphrey Ward, \textit{Marcella}, Virago, London, 1894 Mrs. Humphrey Ward (1851-1920), was both an author and campaigner for better services for children. Ellen Ross, ‘Good and Bad Mothers: Lady Philanthropists and London Housewives before the First World War’ in Kathleen McCarthy (ed.), \textit{Lady Bountiful Revisited, op.cit.}, p.174.

\textsuperscript{121}Ross, \textit{op.cit.}, p.174.


\textsuperscript{123}Carol Adams, \textit{Ordinary Lives A Hundred Years Ago}, Virago, London, 1982 p. 84
Duguid Milne in his paper, ‘Industrial and Social Position of Women in the Middle and Lower Ranks’, published in 1870, argued that it was a waste for women to lead purposeless lives and, although work could be exhausting, it carried a satisfaction of being useful and interesting as well as supplying a wage.\textsuperscript{124} Women’s associations rose to the challenge and became involved in the world of work.

At home on the country estates, privileged women created educational and employment opportunities from their own resources, using their household finances, and taking advantage of their local elite position. In the cities it was a much more expensive enterprise, but with regulated effort, organisation and funds, it could be achieved. Money was always an issue and mainly collected through donation, voluntary subscriptions and fund-raising activities. This somewhat haphazard range of financial support was, as Frank Prochaska noted, a characteristic of Victorian charitable organisations. If the wealthy stopped contributing, the project simply collapsed.\textsuperscript{125}

Philanthropic societies offered late nineteenth century upper and middle-class ladies opportunities to create what we would today describe as sustainable, transparent and professional associations. Originally not everyone was happy with the way the ladies went about their organisational endeavours. This was especially the case with women and employment groups. In the 1880s, \textit{Irresponsible Philanthropists} was published. This book questioned the motives and abilities of many organisations established by upper-class charities to help women gain suitable employment and an acceptable

\textsuperscript{124}Cited in Hall, \textit{op.cit.}, p.192.

\textsuperscript{125}Hall, \textit{ibid.}, pp.22-29.
remuneration.\textsuperscript{126} The groups were criticised for their lack of formal structure, their inability to give appropriate training, and in some cases the way they lost money in a cavalier fashion. Some blamed this on voluntarism. As Edith Shaw noted in 1897, ‘unpaid labour is apt to be irresponsible, unreliable and dilettante’.\textsuperscript{127} Many reforming women accepted this criticism and attempted to establish expert and professional but still volunteer driven social service associations. They wished to succeed in improving their outcomes and accountability in this ‘age of universal charity’.\textsuperscript{128} And charity was a huge enterprise. In 1882, in London alone, combined philanthropic income was approximately £6.2 million and this rose to £8.5 million by 1911, with most money contributed by subscription.\textsuperscript{129}

The professional approach for philanthropic organisations included a properly constituted body including a president, secretary and treasurer, a written prospectus and/or constitution, published annual reports, the benefit of expert knowledge, both waged and unwaged workers, and an established high-profile group of committee members, which often included reformist and knowledgeable men. Many women’s societies placed men in advisory positions especially in respect of finances. This, they conceded, gave extra weight to an enterprise.\textsuperscript{130} Financial solvency and competency were of paramount importance and a great emphasis was placed on the best use of their funds. The women also relied on established aristocratic networks, contacts, and family links and were quick to call upon their establishment or royal connections to smooth over major difficulties. Considerable rivalry existed between the ladies, their

\textsuperscript{127}Edith M. Shaw, ‘How Poor Ladies Might Live’, \textit{Nineteenth Century}, April 1897, p.626.
\textsuperscript{129}Thane, \textit{op.cit.}, p.60.
\textsuperscript{130}Bush, \textit{op.cit.}, p.127.
organisations, and the patrons they could attract. Elite ladies understood that royal or celebrity sponsors enhanced their schemes and their ability to command both funds and media attention, and they actively sought to outdo each other in money collected and practical achievements. This competition sometimes led to open hostility, as in the case of Lady Stanley, wife of the Governor of Victoria and Lady Munro Ferguson, wife of the Governor-General, over Red Cross Society funds in Australia during the First World War. The rivalry degenerated into ‘nearly, if not quite, a pull-hair fight’.\(^{131}\) The organisational fundamentals of successful groups became the characteristic hallmarks of imperial projects initiated by many new vice-regal women in the 1884-1914 period.\(^{132}\)

These associations although concentrating on private sphere activities brought public sphere skills to the women and their societies, and their growing organisational expertise gradually brought greater public acceptance and support. The broad skills acquired by the ladies included the ability to administer, to organise, to deal with money beyond household expenses, to speak at least in small meetings, to move around a greater area distributing tracts and visiting the poor, to write speeches, letters, and submissions, and to make acquaintances from all classes. Their efforts always rested on their special claim to ‘authority and influence’.\(^{133}\)


\(^{132}\)These traits are observable in the imperial organisations established by Ladies Dufferin, Aberdeen and Dudley. See Chapters Four, Five and Six of this thesis.

Through these skills, reforming women forged the ‘languages of Christian duty and individual fulfilment, into weapons’ which could be used in the war against female oppression.\textsuperscript{134} The most useful outcome of these collective involvements, besides community and imperial benefit, was contact with other like minded women. Upper-class women began to appreciate and exploit the power of numbers. Acting together the women found they were hard to ignore and by pursuing causes in concert they had a better chance of success. Most ladies and their associations were acting within society’s defined fields of endeavour for women, that is home, health, women, children, and education. Some radical women and their organisations went further and extended their horizons. Lady Constance Lytton, for example, from the militant Women’s Social and Political Union with a female suffrage agenda, and Lady Theresa Londonderry and her crusade for Home Rule for Ireland were examples of two fervent elite campaigners for political rights and social equality for women.\textsuperscript{135}

The growth of women’s organisations was not confined to Britain or the Empire but occurred throughout the Western world. During the late nineteenth century, women began to communicate and co-ordinate across vast distances, different languages, and diverse cultures. This history of women’s ‘internationalisation’ has been well documented by historians Leila J. Rupp and Jill Roe.\textsuperscript{136} Women were organising locally, nationally, and internationally, holding numerous meetings and conferences where their ideas, goals and achievements were debated. Rupp’s work concentrates on

\textsuperscript{134} Hall, \textit{op. cit.}, p.193.

\textsuperscript{135} Horn, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.171&174.

three groups, the International Council of Women (ICW), of which Ishbel Aberdeen was a long serving President, the International Alliance of Women (IAW), and the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). This association avoided taking sides on controversial issues such as women’s suffrage where both pro and anti-suffrage ideas were canvassed. Lady Aberdeen, in her leadership role, believed that women’s family and home life brought the sisterhood together across economic, class, and race lines. The ICW claimed to represent four to five million women by 1907, and by 1925, 36 million women.\textsuperscript{137} However, it was an expensive and time consuming exercise to actively participate in these organisations as extensive travel and time away from home was often involved. This meant that women leaders needed both time and a private income to be able to participate, and so the leadership generally came from elite ranks. For example, the Countess of Aberdeen paid all her own expenses during her ICW presidency.\textsuperscript{138}

**Women’s Employment and Unemployment Issues**

Unemployment was considered the great evil of the age - a national crisis. Contemporary social theorists in the late 1800s, such as J.A. Hobson, who were actively attacking the issue of unemployment, were also declaring the need for intervention.\textsuperscript{139} Paid work it was believed could aid in overcoming many of the problems facing society, especially those facing women. Government and political parties were urged to become involved. The Conservatives, the Liberals, the emerging


\textsuperscript{139}J.A.Hobson, noted social theorist wrote many tracts including, *The Problem of the Unemployed*, Methuen, London, 1896.
Labour party, and the Socialists exerted the major political influences of the age. The Conservatives advocated the traditional female role; the Liberals wanted to expand female community involvement through education and a shift in attitudes; and Labour and the Socialists wanted special consideration given to women through specific legislation. In the 1880s and 1890s, some socialist and labour women challenged middle-class and upper-class female involvement in organisations designed to ameliorate working class problems, especially over industrial legislation and trade union membership.\textsuperscript{140} Traditional economic liberalism, with its spirit of ‘self-help’, was pitted against the more interventionist style of the activists of the labour movement and the Socialists.\textsuperscript{141} Employment and unemployment became significant issues for women from all political persuasions. Employment opportunities, conditions and satisfactory remuneration were seen as vital for women from all classes. By enlisting their sisters and organising, upper-class women believed they could make a difference.

As Thane contends, the end of the Victorian period saw the beginnings of the welfare state in Britain.\textsuperscript{142} The government was being called upon to aid charities with official funds and bureaucratic guidelines. New Liberalism, a popular philosophy influential in the British Liberal party at the turn of the century, asserted that the state should intervene in what had formerly been largely privately charity.\textsuperscript{143} With the government and private charitable groups working in unison, it was expected that real inroads into

\textsuperscript{140}Caine and Sluga, \textit{op.cit.}, p.51.
\textsuperscript{141}Holyoake, \textit{op.cit.}, p.1116.
\textsuperscript{142}See Thane, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.6-93. Thane details the growth of government involvement and legislation from the late nineteenth century. Adams, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.35-36.
the crisis of unemployment could be made. Although it was gradually becoming more involved in welfare, government remained removed from many services and provided little other than occasional official assistance. In reality governments were happy to leave much of the social welfare agenda, especially in areas to do with the family, to the ‘ladies’.

Aristocratic women were deemed to be part of the employment crusade. There were a significant number of forward-thinking, enthusiastic and competent ladies, for whom work and the British imperial mission were powerful motivating forces. New viceroyal ladies Ishbel Aberdeen and Rachel Dudley were strong advocates of suitable employment opportunities for women. In 1903, for example, the Countess of Dudley while the Viceroy of Ireland, established the Irish Central Bureau for the Employment of Women to assist in the training of, and enhance the employment opportunities for, Irish women.

Many upper-class women assisted the change to the British public’s understanding of the culture of philanthropy, and its link to paid work. Philanthropy was developing into a national, public, professional and highly organised field. As the charitable associations were increasingly involved with government programs and wider social initiatives, they grew in stature and influence. In some cases the women’s groups began to directly affect governmental political and social policy through their advocacy claims. Outspoken discussions of the various methods appropriate to the

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146 See the *Englishwoman’s Review*, 15 July 1903, pp.196-198.
147 See Finlayson, *op.cit.*, pp.107-200. Here Finlayson details the role of charities in government policy on social issues.
tackling of pressing social issues were sometimes heard and heeded by policymakers. The women were being recognised as a political force. As McCarthy acknowledged, the women ‘carved out invisible careers through gifts of time, skill, money’ and their organisations ‘exercised significant political and social pressure on the direction and administration of official policies’.

By the late nineteenth century, the economic climate and views surrounding work had changed to the extent that paid employment for ladies was not only desirable but in many cases an absolute necessity. During this era many middle and some upper-class women found themselves without a male benefactor, with little income and in need of employment. As most Victorian women of the higher economic classes were defined ‘both economically and ideologically as secondary - as people who care for, and support others rather than themselves being active in the world’, they were financially dependent on men. The result of the dramatic downturn in agricultural incomes in the late 1800s, land reforms, and the increase in government taxes produced an influx of gentlewomen, often widows or spinsters, desperate to find a paid position. In the Victorian age almost one third of women between 55 and 64 were widowed, many with very limited means. Younger women of the middle and upper-classes were also under financial and some social pressure to work, even though there was

150 ibid., p.60.
151 Leonore Davidoff and Belinda Westover, ‘From Queen Victoria to the Jazz Age; Women’s World in England, 1880-1939’ in Davidoff and Westover, Our Work, Our Lives, Our Words. Women’s History
continuing debate in the community on the acceptability of a lady undertaking paid work. As Davidoff and Westover have observed 'Any activity which paid a salary, however, was regarded as a slur on her father, husband or brother's honour in being able (or willing) to provide for her'. This dichotomy between the need for a reliable income and the obligation to uphold the traditional conception of a lady was a real and pressing problem for late Victorian and Edwardian women. The questions and arguments were on-going, should ladies work and what type of work would they do?

It was imperative that new fields of acceptable work were opened up for these women. It was also imperative that all women were made aware that theirs was an uncertain future which could, however, be made secure by the acquiring of employable skills. Ladies from the leisured class founded such associations as the Ladies' Industrial Society, the Ladies' Work Society, the Gentlewomen's Self-Help Institute and the Central Bureau for the Employment of Women. These were established to enable middle and upper-class women in straightened circumstances to obtain paid work. Some ladies broke free from the accepted position and undertook to earn their own living. These women included sisters Rosamund and Matilda Talbot who sold their water colour paintings, Vita Sackville-West who earned money from her writings from age 15, Mary Anne Broome, who was later to accompany her husband on vice-regal duty in Western Australia was also a writer, and Lady Radnor who gave public musical recitals with her string band and ladies chorus.

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*Frances H. Low, 'How Poor Ladies Live', *Nineteenth Century*, March 1897, pp.405-417.*

*Davidoff and Westover, *op.cit.*, p.10.*

*See Chapter Six for Lady Dudley's involvement with women's work organisations.*

The Nurse

Late nineteenth century reforming women were increasingly concerned with expanding work opportunities for middle and to some extent upper-class women to gain entry to suitable, socially acceptable, ‘feminised occupations’ and well-paid positions.\textsuperscript{156} Service type jobs were the areas of real expansion in women’s employment for the upper-classes. Teaching and nursing were the two most favoured professions. It was the ‘evolution of the ministering angel and mother into the professional teacher, nurse or doctor’.\textsuperscript{157} Nurses, for example, were able to bridge the ‘new woman/traditional woman’ divide, employed but womanly. As Beatrix Tracy remarked, ‘Study the nurse and her calling, its conditions, its popularity, and be contented. Woman is still a woman. On that score all is well with the world’.\textsuperscript{158} The new professional occupation of nursing was promoted as requiring a special kind of woman, capable, intelligent, and with a calling to help others. This put nursing on a higher plain than an ‘ordinary’ job.\textsuperscript{159}

\textsuperscript{156}Caine and Sluga, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.46-52.

\textsuperscript{157}Young, \textit{op.cit.}, p.91.

\textsuperscript{158}Beatrix Tracy, ‘The Ministering Angel’ \textit{Lone Hand}, 1 July 1908, p.236.

By the late 1800s the nurse was closely associated with both the womanly virtues of nurturing, compassion and care, and with British scientific advances. It was a noble profession ‘a consecration of power and strength and intellect to the service of the world’. Although this depiction which linked moral obligation to employment was helpful in enabling more women from all classes to enter the workforce, it had the unintended consequence of devaluing the practical skills these women had to acquire and the actual hard work they performed. Late nineteenth century nursing was considered not so much an occupation as a vocation.

Nursing underwent a transformation in the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1851, the census recorded 25,775 nurses and midwives; by 1891 this had doubled, and included many more middle and upper-class women. Florence Nightingale’s training and hospital reforms ‘deeds not creeds’, were instrumental in the formation of the modern nurse. Queen Victoria’s long time support for nurses, and in particular district nursing, and her use of her Jubilee Fund of 1887 to endow a nursing institute also added new dimensions to the occupation. The role of the nurse became very important not only in England but also throughout the Empire. In fact nurses and


161For a discussion of the politics of nursing see Roberts and Group, op.cit.
162This is still evident today in women’s service type occupations. The work is still portrayed as requiring special people with caring qualities. See recent newspaper articles including 'Super nurses', Sydney Morning Herald, 26 December 2000, p.9.
164For information on the Queen’s Jubilee Nurses see the Queen’s Nurses’ Magazine, no.1 vol.1, 1 May 1904, pp. 3-4.
nursing were pivotal in the new vice-regal woman’s imperial agenda. Nursing organisations and health care in general provided opportunities for these ladies to fulfil their civilising and reform programme and also served to aid women’s education and employment prospects. Vice-regal ladies understood the impact they could make on their colonies by the improvement of nursing services. Ladies Dufferin, Aberdeen and Dudley with their health initiatives were at the forefront in this endeavour. Nursing was also an acceptable female patriotic activity, a woman’s imperial response that was supported by elite women. This was borne out at the turn of the century by the nurses sent to the Boer War, including those working on Lady Churchill’s Hospital Ship which set sail for South Africa in 1899, proudly flying the Union Jack supplied by Queen Victoria.\textsuperscript{165}

Nurses gained first hand war experience during the Boer War and the profession continued to be seen in a patriotic light. From 1907, English women could join the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry, which trained women and their horses for field hospitals. In 1910, women were allowed to participate in Voluntary Aid Detachments set up by the British Red Cross Society, the Army Medical Services and the War Office.\textsuperscript{166} Florence Nightingale was evoked as the inspiration for women’s war work. She had embraced her duty on the battlefield. Military duty was a duty of citizenship. The First World War gave the profession of nursing and its appeal to all women a boost, women could express their patriotism in terms of working for the war effort.\textsuperscript{167}

\textsuperscript{165}Bush, Edwardian Ladies and Imperial Power, \textit{op.cit.}, p.44

\textsuperscript{166}See Melanie Oppenheimer, ‘The Best P.M. for the Empire in War?’ \textit{op.cit.}, and, \textit{All Work and No Pay; Australian Civilian Volunteers in War}, \textit{op.cit.}

Upper-class women also expressed their patriotic duty through nursing and the organisation of nursing services. One striking example was Lady Rachel Dudley and the Australian Voluntary Hospital in France 1914-1918. Other ladies such as the Duchess of Westminster and Duchess of Sutherland also established Red Cross hospitals in France during World War One, and many other aristocratic women opened their homes in Britain to sick and wounded soldiers.

Women from all economic classes were increasingly attracted to nursing. Although the number of aristocratic girls entering the profession was small, by the early 1900s a few were undertaking nursing training at major London hospitals. As prominent hospital matron Ilsa Stewart reported ‘Nurses are recruited from all classes ... in the hospitals a housemaid may be found sitting next to a baronet’s daughter’. The profession was now within the parameters of aristocratic and noble interest and this enabled close personal contact between nurses and nursing supporters. Judith Godden has observed that throughout the second half of the nineteenth century middle and upper-class networks of families and their connections became involved with the modern approach to nursing and advanced it as a desirable occupation. This boom

\[168\] See information on the Australian Voluntary Hospital in the case study of Lady Dudley in Chapter Six.

\[169\] Horn, *op.cit.*, pp.208-209.


\[171\] One such upper-class example was Lady Hermoine Blackwood, daughter of Lord and Lady Dufferin who dedicated her life to nursing and received her Queen’s Nurses badge from Queen Alexandra. Melanie Oppenheimer is currently working on a biographical study of Lady Hermoine and her sisters Lady Helen Munro Ferguson and Lady Victoria Plunket. For a contemporary view of the new attitudes to nursing, see Lady Eliza Priestly, ‘Nurses a la mode’, *Nineteenth Century*, January 1897, pp.28-37.


\[173\] Godden, *op.cit.* p.143. Lady Dufferin and her daughters are a good example of an upper-class family involved and committed to nursing.
Nursing for Empire

UNDER
THE RED CROSS
FLAG.
BY SARAH A. TOOKEY.

Red Cross Nurses in the Boer War

The Princess of Wales Hospital Ship 1899

Figure 15. Top: The Ladies Realm Volume VII November 1899
Figure 16. Bottom: The Ladies Realm Volume VII November 1899
in nursing and establishment interest in health allowed vice-regal women to seize the opportunity to establish and support well organised nursing associations throughout the Empire. These women saw nursing as a way to fulfil their new concept of duty and work and, with the Queen’s blessing, to advance the imperial cause. In addition the organisations provided training and education, and increased female employment options.

Elite ladies were not only concerned with middle and upper-class women and their employment issues. Many were also involved in improving the circumstances of the wider sisterhood of women workers. Of the six million women in Britain in the 1880s, about three and a half million were working or looking for paid work and the majority were from the lower economic classes. One third of these paid female workers were domestic servants, but the bulk worked in factories or as piece-workers. Upper and middle-class women’s organisations actively offered support to women from the lower classes to find jobs, to be paid appropriately, and to ‘help themselves’ rather than simply remaining the recipients of charity. As philanthropic associations turned their attention to women’s work and as women found jobs through elite ladies organisations, these groups widened their range of jobs and services and more opportunities appeared for both waged and unwaged female employees.

Women workers were now more visible in the public arena and they were also gaining official voices through political reforms. In 1869 the Municipal Franchise Act

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gave unmarried women ratepayers a vote in council elections; in 1870 with the *Elementary Education Act* they could vote for and stand for election on school boards; in 1875 the first female poor law guardians were elected; and the 1894 *Local Government Act* opened up local political activity to both married and unmarried women.\(^{177}\) Women’s organisations were also able to exert unofficial influence through unions and associations. Some, such as the women involved in the Trade Unions Congress (TUC), advocated protective legislation for women workers, while others such as the Women’s Protective and Provident League (WPPL) and the National Union of Working Women (NUWW) took a more liberal line. They wished to see women workers treated as equal to men.

From 1873, when Emma Paterson, a female suffrage supporter formed the Women’s Protective and Provident League, an alliance was forged between women of different classes to achieve their common goals. This involved women from all classes working together for industrial reform.\(^{178}\) Many lower-class working women, however, were suspicious of the motives and abilities of ‘the ladies’ in the League, who, they asserted, seemed not to fully understand the situation. They wanted more working-class women to represent them on committees and at conferences because ‘a lady would not give the facts accurately’.\(^{179}\) Although the ladies may not have been the lower-class workers’ first choice, their high profile participation did draw attention to the plight of their sisters and succeeded in getting official recognition for many of their claims.\(^{180}\)

\(^{177}\) Horn, *Ladies of the Manor*, op.cit., p.167.


\(^{179}\) *ibid.*, p.253.

\(^{180}\) Thane, *op.cit.*, pp.40-42.
During the period 1841-1911, the percentage of female factory workers rose from 35 to 45% of the female labour force.\textsuperscript{181} This was due to the better wages and conditions on offer in comparison with domestic service.\textsuperscript{182} Remuneration, however, did not reflect work performed, "Wages were set in accordance with sexual assumptions about the needs and entitlements of the wage earners rather than accordance with any precise measure of output".\textsuperscript{183} Factory work of 12 to 15 hour days and family responsibilities were difficult to reconcile and many women worked casually or part time. Workshops too employed women and once again the conditions were not conducive to traditional family rules.\textsuperscript{184} Many women had no alternative other than piece work performed at home. These occupations were low paid with little job security or regulation. Domestic service was still a major employer for young women aged between 15-24. In 1900, over 30% of working women in England (1,450,000 females) were involved in residential domestic service.\textsuperscript{185} While factory and workshop labour was considered by many unsuitable for women, deemed physically too demanding, domestic service, which could be just as hard and involve longer hours, was considered a good basis for their future role as wife and mother.\textsuperscript{186} Many women were struggling against the sexual division of labour and the resulting low wages, as well as against some men's hostility to women straying very far from the family home.\textsuperscript{187}

\textsuperscript{182}Caine and Sluga, \textit{op.cit.}, p.45.
\textsuperscript{183}\textit{ibid.}, p.48.
\textsuperscript{184}Davidoff and Westover, \textit{op.cit.}, p.15.
\textsuperscript{185}Caine and Sluga, \textit{op.cit.}, p.46.
\textsuperscript{186}\textit{ibid.}
\textsuperscript{187}\textit{ibid.}, p.49.
Paternalism was strong in the workplace, and with the new industrial age a ‘new paternalism’ developed, with many male factory owners wishing to be seen as concerned for their female and child labourers, the future of the nation. There was growing concern over the so-called ‘sweated trades’; these included some major outwork industries such as textiles, footwear, nail and chain making, and straw plaiting. This piece work was performed at home or in a small workshop for a contractor or middleman. This poorly paid and irregular work was often performed in ill-ventilated, hot, dusty premises, and as Miss March Phillips complained ‘too often, the room in which the trade is carried on is that in which the family eats and sleeps’. Ladies associations made submissions to a Commons Select Committee on the Sweating System in 1888, which brought down a finding condemning the practice. It was feared this type of work might be harming the mothers of the race, ‘the mainstay of peace and virtue and therein of national security’.

The patriarchal protection of women was evident in trade union associations as well. Many male unions wished females to remain in what they considered their proper sphere, the home, and not be expected to compete with men in working environments. This union position was helpful in boosting the wages of working men and deflecting competition from women for scarce jobs. In the late 1800s, the wage for a married male factory worker, aged 20-30 was between £1-2 per week, for

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188 Lown, *op.cit.*, p.95.
190 Adams, *op.cit.*, p.82
191 Andrew Ure quoted in Hall, *op.cit.*, p.66.
192 Adams, *op cit.*, p 83.
an unmarried female doing similar work, merely 10-15 shillings per week. As Caine and Sluga point out it was not just tension caused by economic fears, it was a deeper concern about the continuance of male dominance in society. Elite women played a leading role in this gender specific rather than class specific response to the problem of female employment. Gerda Lerner characterises these women as existing in two worlds, as members of the general culture and also as participants in their female culture.

Trying to resolve the issues surrounding women’s work, wages, conditions and traditional female roles as wife and mother was one of the major sources of community debate in late Victorian and Edwardian times. No matter what economic class they belonged in most women understood the transformation taking place in women’s occupations and conditions. They now had access to new ideas rapidly distributed throughout society via inexpensive publications and journals, they were in a position to move beyond the familiar, widen their horizons and gain information about the activities of other women. Alongside modern and different ideas, however, traditional roles were also being reinforced. The magazines themselves were debating grounds for the whole ‘Woman Question’. Books and magazine articles, which widened the concept of the role of women, influenced many western women and the literary depictions and true life stories about new women inspired the next generation of girls. The stories often described the pioneering lives of women throughout the Empire, self-reliant and free women bringing British civilisation to others. The Empire needed such women to expand and prosper. Such titles as Woman, and

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193 *ibid.*, p.68.
194 Caine and Sluga, *op.cit.*, p.42.
Woman at Home, had large readerships both in the colonies and at home. Many women personally contributed to them, including women from the dominions, with their true life experiences. Young girls were often writing in with questions to be answered, and matrons were both submitting recipes to the cooking pages and debating suffrage. The Women’s magazines of the 1890s “brought together gender, class and Englishness”.

Female organisations tried to redress the imbalance in women’s working opportunities through the publication of women’s employment journals. This was believed to be of benefit to women of all classes. Many work related magazines appeared, such as Business Girl, the Nursing Times, and the Woman’s Farm. Philanthropic publications like the Charity Record, Philanthropic News and Philanthropic Notes and Official Advertiser, also assisted. They not only offered helpful advice, news and job descriptions, but also they acted as employment agencies, advertising vacancies and “work wanted” columns.

This new approach to women and work was on display at various women’s exhibitions held in this period, such as the Victoria Era Exhibition in London 1897. The display showcased the scope of employment open to females. As Marion Leslie described,

It was but a natural outcome of a woman being upon the throne, that the general status of all women should be improved, and in consequence, the progress of women’s work has been more remarkable during the Victorian

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196 See magazines such as Home, Girls Realm, Women’s Weekly, Girls Own Paper, Queen, Home Chat.
Era than in any other period of the world’s history; and its development and influence has been most felt within her Majesty’s dominion.\textsuperscript{198}

Many influential aristocratic women were involved including the Duchess of Devonshire as President, and the Marchioness of Tweedale, the Duchess of Sutherland, and the Countesses of Ellesmere, Cowper, Cadogan, Warwick, and Selbourne. The exhibition was divided into many parts with committees and sub-committees such as Literature, Historical and Commemorative, and Education. The last under Lady Warwick, featured the leading girls’ schools and colleges of the day. Women’s jobs and occupations were highlighted, from medicine to gardening.\textsuperscript{199}

Conclusion

The late nineteenth century British concept of work, perhaps more than any other cultural understanding of the Victorian and Edwardian age, significantly contributed to the scope and freedom employed by the vice-regal ladies of this study in their duties as care-takers and upholders of Empire. ‘Work! Not work at this or that - but Work!’ could be their motto.\textsuperscript{200} The idea of necessary work, whether paid or unpaid, gave such fuel to their philanthropic endeavours and organisations, that they looked upon themselves as purposefully employed perhaps for the first time in British imperial history. As vice-regal women they had access to recognisable and valued jobs beyond the home. This was a momentous change. These new women displayed independence, freedom of mind, and growing political awareness. The elite women

\textsuperscript{198} Marion Leslie, ‘Women’s Work at the Victorian Era Exhibition’ \textit{Ladies Realm}, vol.ii, 1897, p.58-61.

\textsuperscript{199} \textit{Ibid.}

who took on the 'job' of being vice-regal did so with the expectation that their efforts would be recognised as real work, and important imperial work at that. These reforming women, however, did not attempt to proceed as individuals alone; they knew the importance and potency of the 'group'.

These considerations were prominent in the vice-regal roles of Ladies Dufferin, Aberdeen and Dudley. The health and nursing organisations they established not only supplied a remedy to a perceived need but also provided employment opportunities for women. Women's work both paid and unpaid was a major factor informing the evolution of the new vice-regal woman and her new imperial role.

It is evident that women from the Victorian and Edwardian eras had a strong understanding of work and its place in their life. Work was both a means to financial security and a duty to be performed. Women adopted the philosophy and engaged in labour for the benefits this produced personally, and for the community, and for the Empire. The assumption that real work necessarily involved monetary remuneration was a foreign concept to late Victorian aristocratic ladies and vice-regal women. As Lady Tennyson, when wife of the Australian Governor-General in 1902 commented, 'I am so beset with work I do not know where to begin'. But new vice-regal women had begun, and in doing so changed their colonies and the Empire.

New vice-regal women took the influences of the new woman, new imperialism, and new attitudes to work with them when they accompanied their husbands on imperial duty throughout the Empire. The following case studies will discuss in detail the

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201 Audrey Tennyson, Audrey Tennyson's Vice-Regal Days, Alexandra Hasluck, (ed.), National Library
imperial work and colonial organisations initiated by three new vice-regal women, Ladies Dufferin, Aberdeen and Dudley from 1884-1914.
PART B

THE NEW VICE-REGAL WOMAN IN ACTION
LADY HARIOT DUFFERIN
(1843-1936)

Figure 17. Dufferin Photos, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland D/1071/J/G/8/4
CHAPTER FOUR

LADY HARIOT DUFFERIN
(1843-1936)

‘detached (she was always detached),
slim, (she was always slim), and stately’

The new vice-regal women who emerged in the 1880s were British upper-class ladies with a modern imperial civilising agenda. They took the traditional responsibility placed on vice-regal wives out of the realm of social hostess and ornamental adjunct and into the wider world of social reform.

Lady Hariot Dufferin, an unlikely candidate for a social activist, was the first vice-regal woman to take up the challenge presented to her by Queen Victoria in 1884 in relation to women’s health in India. Her Majesty’s request, along with the new approach to Empire brought the transforming ideology of the new woman to infuse the female vice-regal role. The creation of the Lady Dufferin Fund for Supplying Medical Aid to the Women of India in 1885 was a landmark in vice-regal women’s history.

The representative life and work of Lady Dufferin has been explored through the extensive Dufferin family papers held at the Public Records Office of Northern

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Ireland (PRONI). The Dufferin Papers comprise official material as well as personal journals, diaries and letters. The use of the Indian vice-regal printing press enabled all official and many private papers to be copied and archived. Much of this information relates to Lady Dufferin’s time in India and the formation of the Dufferin Fund. This material is supplemented by Hariot’s published journals compiled while her husband was stationed throughout the world as diplomat, Governor-General and Viceroy.

**Early Life and Marriage**

Hariot Georgina Rowan Hamilton, eldest daughter of Archibald Rowan-Hamilton, was born in 1843 at the ancient Norman castle of Killyleagh, County Down, in the north of Ireland. In 1862, the young Hariot married Frederick Hamilton-Temple-Blackwood, 5th Baron Dufferin. Frederick or Dufferin or ‘D’ as Hariot addressed him all their married life was a celebrated Irish peer, the master of Clandeboye and estates within the triangle of the small towns of Killyleagh, Comber, and Crossgar in today’s Northern Ireland not far from Belfast. Clandeboye was about twelve miles from the young Hariot’s castle home. The Hamilton and the Blackwood families had a centuries long association ‘in blood and battle’ forged through their close geographical proximity.

Lord Frederick Dufferin came into the title at the age of fifteen and when he reached

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3. *Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava, My Canadian Journal 1872-8*, John Murray, London, 1891; *Our Viceregal Life in India, Selections from my Journal 1884-1888*, John Murray, London, 1890; These two of all Hariot Dufferin’s Journals contain the most useful information in regard to this study.
his majority in 1847 he was a wealthy young man, a substantial landlord and important Irish peer. Frederick attended Eton and Oxford, loved the outdoor life of hunting and fishing, was athletic and considered an excellent sportsman. His mother, Helen, was a great and constant influence on him throughout her life. The formidable Lady Helen Dufferin was grand daughter of the playwright Richard Brinsley Sheridan and a renowned poet in her own right. The Sheridan connection gave the young Lord Dufferin an insight into two lifestyles, the aristocratic Irish/English nobleman and the literati. Dufferin published several books during his life, including travel accounts, reports, despatches and pamphlets on many subjects. His *Letters from High Latitudes* narrating his adventures on a sea voyage to Spitzbergen and Iceland was a best selling travel book. Politically he was a Liberal as a younger man but as he aged his political opinions became more those of the Conservatives. His views on Irish tenancy and Home Rule changed over time, and he later became a staunch supporter of the rights of landlords and the pro-British Ulster Orange movement which was against Home Rule. He loved music, he sketched, and he wrote poetry. Frederick Dufferin was

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5Lady Helen Dufferin wrote patriotic verses including *The Irish Emigrant and Emerald Isle*. Some of her work was edited by Lord Dufferin and published in Helen, Lady Dufferin, *Songs, Poems and Verses*, John Murray, London, 1894.

6 Lord Dufferin published books and articles throughout his adult life, including *Mr. Mill's Plan for the Pacification of Ireland Examined*, John Murray, London, 1868; *Tenure of Land in Ireland*, John Falconer, Dublin, 1870; *The Place of the Emigrant; Speeches Delivered by His Excellency, Lord Dufferin*, Ottawa, 1874; *Speeches Delivered in India 1884-88*, John Murray, London, 1890. This may have influenced Lady Harriot who also had many of her journals published, for example, Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava, *My Canadian Journal 1872-8*, op.cit., and *My Russian and Turkish Journals*, John Murray, London, 1916.


well known for his love of pomp, ceremony and correct form. He was made a Lord-in
Waiting to Queen Victoria in 1849 and it was during this period that he forged a life
long friendship with the Queen. Victoria liked the young man, considering him ‘much
too good-looking and captivating’. ⁹

This long standing royal friendship extended to the nineteen year old Hariot Hamilton
of Killyleagh when she married the superior and courtly 36 year old Dufferin in 1862.
Hariot who had spent her childhood being educated at home also loved the outdoor
life and family social activities. However, she was always considered controlled and
reticent. Lord Dufferin was said to have admired Hariot’s calm serene nature and
docility as well as her beauty. ¹⁰

It was this shy young woman who married the experienced, worldly and confident
Lord Dufferin and moved into Clandeboye with him and Helen, his beloved mother.
Lady Hariot’s response to her beautiful, talented and adored mother-in-law, her
husband’s perfect mother and symbol of the ultimate woman, was to mould herself
into the perfect wife. She became exactly the sort of wife expected of her-
subservient, morally superior and womanly. Hariot’s upbringing and nature contained
little of the ‘new’ woman. She considered herself a ‘true’ woman, and as such an
opposite, as nature intended, to the true man. D was strong, powerful and masterly.
Lady Dufferin was delicate, accommodating and worthy. Hariot’s core beliefs are
hard to fathom as both her public and private journals reveal little of the inner
woman. It is difficult to find her personal opinions on most subjects, except fashion
and interior decorating. She does not let us into her ‘private’ realm. Rather she writes

⁹Nicolson, op.cit., p.86.
about what she should be concerned about, what the true woman should undertake, and she responds as she is supposed to respond.\textsuperscript{11} Her activities are always represented in relation to her husband and to a lesser extent her seven children, Archibald, Helen, Terence, Hermione, Basil, Victoria and Frederick, and to her imperial obligations.\textsuperscript{12}

The marriage immediately placed the new wife of Lord Dufferin in an expanded and rarefied social sphere. Royalty, politicians, diplomats, leading establishment figures were now everyday acquaintances. She soon adapted and became the quintessential society wife. Hariot was the partner and helpmate of Lord Dufferin; she never strove for an independent role, she was content with her position, as was her husband. Lord Dufferin, endorsing the beliefs of many elites of the age, commented during a speech to pupils at a Ladies College, that women held their own special place, for they ‘are the ornaments of our houses’.\textsuperscript{13} Young and traditional Lady Dufferin wanted to be the very best of ornaments.

In the early years of their marriage, Lord Dufferin worked for the India Office and the

\textsuperscript{10} Fowler, \textit{op.cit.}, p.184.
\textsuperscript{11} \textit{ibid.}, p.186.
\textsuperscript{12} The Dufferin children all contributed to the aristocratic understanding of duty and Empire. Archie, a career soldier died in the South African war in 1900; Helen, as Lady Munro Ferguson, was a new vice-regal wife in Australia 1914-20; Terence worked at the Foreign Office; Hermione was a Queen’s Nurse and served in Belgium and France during the First World War; Basil was a Governor of Barbados and was killed in France in 1917; Victoria as the wife of Lord Plunket, was a new vice-regal woman in New Zealand 1907 and commenced the Lady Plunket Nurses; Frederick served as a member of the vice-regal staff in Australia and India and was Speaker of the Senate of Northern Ireland until his death in an aeroplane crash in 1930.
\textsuperscript{13} George Stewart, \textit{Canada Under the Administration of the Earl of Dufferin}, Rose- Belford, Toronto, 1878, p.313.
War Office. Money was to become a constant worry for Dufferin with landlord problems and poor returns from his Irish estates.\textsuperscript{14} His political work, therefore, helped him to combine his duty and his lifestyle with the added benefit of a wage. Later diplomatic appointments were not only strategic career choices but they also helped to lessen the burden of his debts. He lived a lavish lifestyle and spent much of his income on aristocratic pursuits such as yachting and hunting and living up to his idea of aristocratic standards. Frederick Dufferin believed God had given him a position in life and that he must live up to it.\textsuperscript{15}

\textbf{Hariot Dufferin as Royal Representative}

Lady Hariot’s vice-regal career spanned two different eras. The early years of her representative life easily fit into the role of the traditional vice-regal wife. In Canada, Russia, Egypt and Turkey in the 1870s and the early 1880s, she played the part of the perfect diplomatic spouse. Yet in India she showed all the essential features of the new vice-regal woman, pro-active, dynamic and committed. This development in her vice-regal understanding from traditional to new concurs with the argument of this thesis that a new vice-regal woman emerged from the 1880s to transform imperial womanhood.

Hariot was born into a generation of deferential aristocratic women who largely adapted to their husband’s lifestyle and complied with their husbands’ wishes, in public at least. Yet it was also a time of momentous change for women and imperial

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Summary of the Dufferin Papers, Public Records Office of Northern Ireland, (PRONI), Belfast, pp.6-7.}

\textsuperscript{15} Black, \textit{op.cit.}, p.64.
expectations. Hariot was content with the status quo. Her idea of the woman's role in public office was to allow her husband to shine in his appointment while she did everything she could to enhance his reputation by fulfilling to the best of her ability the social and charitable obligations that fell to her. Lord Dufferin was a proud and ceremonious man who demanded the respect he felt was due to him from his wife, children and the general population. Hariot too expected deference, as she was, after all, the wife of a great aristocrat and received her recognition through her husband's achievements. The more successful the husband, the more successful the wife. Lady Dufferin strove to be exalted especially among her peers. Female aristocracy was a very competitive affair, and diplomatic and vice-regal appointments were often vigorously contested. Missing out on a posting sometimes caused great anxiety.  

Once in the position the wives were well aware of other vice-regal women's activities and often attempted to outdo each other in charitable, social and cultural pursuits.

Together, Hariot believed, she and Lord Dufferin represented the great British people and the Empire. It was their duty as trustees of this legacy, especially while abroad on imperial business, to champion the just and righteous British civilisation and personify the Crown. Both Lord and Lady Dufferin regarded themselves as undertaking a solemn obligation; they were to be viewed as living and working examples of British superiority. However, a woman was on the throne and Queen Victoria's presence meant the female representative had a special role to play. Lady

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16For example, Lord Dufferin had allowed his name to be put forward for Viceroy of India in 1872. Both he and Hariot were disillusioned when the post was given to Lord Northbrook. Dufferin's subsequent appointment to Canada was very important to the couple's viceregal career. See Walpole, *op.cit.*, p.159, and Summary of the Dufferin papers, *op.cit.*, p.16.

17For example, the establishment of health services for women became almost obligatory for new vice-regal wives, as can be seen in the three case studies of this thesis.
Hariot embodied a regional version of the imperial mother figure, powerful, aloof yet compassionate, and this responsibility was not lost on her.

Through Lady Dufferin’s Journals as wife of the Governor-General in Canada and Ambassador in Russia, Turkey, and Egypt we can trace her social role and her interests.¹⁸ These are an invaluable resource as they give a personal insight into Lady Dufferin’s understanding and undertaking of her vice-regal and diplomatic responsibilities prior to her husband’s Indian appointment and her venture into a new vice-regal role. Most of the Journal entries seem trivial and superficial, although to be fair they were originally written for herself and her mother and so it is perhaps a little harsh to judge her on these alone. However, Hariot’s personal unpublished diaries also contain much the same information, about houses, fashion, children and social events, with D and his activities getting much attention.¹⁹ It was not unusual for middle and upper-class women to publish their diaries and journals and some wrote them with this in mind.²⁰ Hariot’s entries do not strive to entertain or inform - they simply cover subjects of specific interest to herself and her mother.

After various political positions Lord Dufferin was given his first vice-regal appointment to Canada in 1872. When the Dufferins and their children arrived in Ottawa, Hariot was 29 years old, with a young family of five, Archibald, Helen, Terence, Hermione, and Basil. Two more children, Lord Frederick and Lady Victoria,

¹⁸Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava, My Canadian Journal 1872-8, op.cit and My Russian and Turkish Journals, op.cit.
²⁰Lady Aberdeen and Lady Dudley both published books. Lady Dudley’s Sunshine and Shadow in the West Indies; Archibald Constable and Co., London, 1907, was a private edition distributed to her friends.
God-daughter of Queen Victoria, were born during their stay. In her Canadian writings Lady Dufferin does not display an interest in politics or community concerns; in fact she appears as more pre-occupied with making Government House, Rideau Hall, Ottawa, livable, since Ottawa in the 1870s was an isolated and unsophisticated town. As she announced in the Preface to *My Canadian Journal*, ‘I have not attempted to record in it any part of the business of the Governor-General: [other than how it] ... affected our movements, and our social arrangements’. Lady Dufferin did not become publicly involved in causes even if she was willing to help behind the scenes. As Veronica Strong-Boag comments, Hariot was ‘a socially indifferent aristocrat in Canada’, a true ornamental. Prior to India, as a vice-regal wife, Lady Dufferin followed the traditional model, as explained in Chapter One. However, it should be remembered she was also a young woman immersed in her family who also led a very busy and complex official life.

As befitted the traditional vice-regal wife the home was her domain and here she took command. *My Canadian Journal* has manifold references to her attempts to improve all her Canadian residences and to make them homely. The residences had to reflect her role as angel of the house, a wife and mother, and to provide a peaceful haven for her husband and children. Hariot perceived this as her first duty and she spent her life living up to it. The colour schemes and furnishings of various rooms occupy much of her time. Her children, their dress and concerns are also a priority in the journals.

The Dufferin Family in Ottawa, Canada 1870s

Lord Dufferin 1872

Lady Dufferin 1872

Terence, Archie and Nellie Ottawa 1876

Dufferin Family group Rideau Hall Ottawa

Figures 18-21. Photographs from the National Archives of Canada
C1224/C2087/PA148612/PA13151
Hariat’s writings contain many references to her children, displaying her love and preoccupation with them. It is in relation to her children that we see a less formal woman, trying the native Indian sport of tobogganing, playing marbles, and even participating in muddy ball games.\textsuperscript{25} Hariot was also an expert skater who arranged Saturday afternoon skating parties for her family and social contacts on the Rideau Hall rink.\textsuperscript{26}

In the main, Lady Hariot’s \textit{Journals} are not really about her at all; they are a record and commentary upon her husband’s movements, social events, fashion, furnishings and children’s health, interests, and activities. Occasionally she lists what she saw but rarely displays any depth of interest in her travels.\textsuperscript{27} His Excellency ‘D’ was always the centre of attention in her writings as in her life, even to the extent that ‘she would suddenly cease speaking the moment he appeared’.\textsuperscript{28} He was the important one, she was the woman who enabled him to achieve his goals, and her writings confirm this. In her \textit{Canadian Journal}, Lady Dufferin appears a woman of quite limited education and interest who does not attempt to further educate herself, assured she can leave intellectual activity to the men.\textsuperscript{29} For example, at this point in her vice-regal life, Hariot does not give speeches, she does not involve herself in politics or reform movements, she is stately, uninterested and quiet. She was not unadventurous or dull, but she only took activities to a certain level. To be fair, it should be remembered that she was pregnant twice during her Canadian stay. She did indulge her love of fishing

\textsuperscript{25}\textit{Ibid.}, p.45.
\textsuperscript{26}\textit{Henderson, op.cit.}, p.494.
\textsuperscript{27}\textit{Fowler, op.cit.}, pp.211-214.
\textsuperscript{28}\textit{Nicolson, op.cit.}, p.144.
\textsuperscript{29}\textit{Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava, My Canadian Journal, op.cit.}, p.37.
and also went sailing, hiking, and hunting. This included bear and moose hunting with ‘D’, but she never attempted anything too strenuous or dangerous, for again she left this to the men.\footnote{\textit{ibid.}, p.141.} She enjoyed being treated differently because of her gender. She allowed ‘D’ to take care of and look after her. In turn she would behave in a noble and dignified and womanly manner at all times. In short she behaved as the quintessential traditional vice-regal wife.

In her journals, Hariot never seemed to be free from her work as wife, mother and representative of the crown, and she seemed to revel in these functions. Hariot did not strive for a greater role. She was not a weak or ignorant individual, simply an example of a mid-Victorian elite woman and traditional representative spouse.\footnote{Fowler, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.196-197.} She managed her household, her children, and her female vice-regal duty, juggling her various social obligations and her family responsibilities with good nature and assurance. For Hariot it was a busy and complete life. A diary entry for 1880 light-heartedly notes ‘ninety visitors between 1.30 till six, then read to the children, dined, and went to a French play’.\footnote{Dowager Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava, \textit{My Russian and Turkish Journals}, \textit{op.cit.}, p.62.} Naturally reserved, ‘D’ was the centre of her world, she relied on him, and it was the formidable Lord Dufferin who made the impact in the vice-regal role. This was how Lady Dufferin and the vast majority of vice-regal women of her time believed it should be. Their hoped-for reward and the measure of their achievement was the success of their husband and children.

Lady Hariot was always the Lady. This was obvious throughout her public life, and especially in Canada. In her role of vice-regal wife, she played the traditional role to
perfection. She was the perfect hostess and imperial spouse, declaring that ‘Society is at present my business in life’.\textsuperscript{33} Balls, garden parties, levees, visiting charitable institutions and schools, partnering her husband on official duties, were all attended to with decorum and stateliness. She made visits to convents, churches and Indian settlements but the people she met received little attention in her writings. She was more interested in the architecture and surroundings.\textsuperscript{34} She and ‘D’ toured Canada extensively, but to Lady Dufferin it seemed more a trial than a pleasure, she always preferred home.\textsuperscript{35}

At the same time, however, Lady Dufferin was an extremely busy woman and worked hard for the Empire. She was patroness of many charitable associations and much of her time was spent on fund-raising exercises.\textsuperscript{36} All traditional vice-regal wives were expected to become patrons of charitable societies and to make appearances at meetings and charitable events. Inspect, smile, comfort, and hopefully encourage others to supply funds, this was the job description for the vice-regal woman. Lady Hariot in Canada was the personification of the traditional vice-regal wife, the moral and socially adept wife and mother. Her role was to bring a highly visible superior female presence to government house and so spread British civilisation to the Canadian people. This took time and effort, both of which Hariot was happy to expend. She displayed no inclination, however, to take the role to the next level. In Canada, Hariot did not attempt to take on the responsibility of a proactive vice-regal woman with her own imperial agenda.

\textsuperscript{33}ibid., p.26.
\textsuperscript{34}ibid., pp. 26-27 and p.81
\textsuperscript{35}ibid., p.162.
\textsuperscript{36}Fowler, op.cit., pp.197-198.
After the Canadian assignment ended in late 1878, Lord Dufferin was appointed Ambassador to Russia. The Dufferins arrived in St. Petersburg in February 1879. This was a very volatile time in Russian history, climaxing in the Tsar’s assassination in March 1881, of which Hariot gives an account.\(^{37}\) Lady Dufferin was out visiting when she heard the news and she ‘almost ran the whole way home to tell ‘D’’.\(^ {38}\) She writes that this assault on the ruler, this ‘cruel persistent murder left a fearful impression on one.’\(^ {39}\)

In the main the *Journal* entries of this period are concerned with life from Hariot’s circumscribed perspective. As she pointedly remarked ‘the business part of it is entirely left out’.\(^{40}\) Her Excellency was not involved in the diplomatic work for that was ‘D’’s assignment. In Russia, and later in Turkey and Egypt, Hariot noted the new sights such as the vista ‘and very pretty it looks’ of the Pyramids, and the differences in lifestyle.\(^ {41}\) Occasionally Hariot attempted to join in. In Turkey she was interested in learning local dances, although she found belly dancing ‘ugly’.\(^ {42}\)

Hariot continued to be busy with bazaars, fairs and institutional visits during all her husband’s assignments, carrying out the role expected of her in the style expected of her. She writes with great enthusiasm about the entertainments she created for her philanthropic endeavours, such as her Great Charity Ball, held in March 1883 at Cairo. As a typical late Victorian aristocratic lady, she had experience in charitable


\(^{38}\)ibid.

\(^{39}\)ibid.

\(^{40}\)ibid., preface p.v.

\(^{41}\)ibid., p.243

\(^{42}\)Fowler, *op.cit.*, p.195.
organisations in Britain and knew the importance of a professional approach to charity. At the end of that year, Hariot could boast that her charitable duties, including the Ball, had raised £8,517.\textsuperscript{43} Following the traditional path of vice-regal ladies the funds were distributed to needy families, thus improving the lives of the local population.\textsuperscript{44} Hariot also showed her understanding of the new responsibilities that were transforming female philanthropy. Her experience in late nineteenth British charitable associations, their formalised structures and the need for financial accountability is obvious, for she states that in Egypt, "receipts were taken for every penny that was given out".\textsuperscript{45}

Lady Dufferin, regal and assiduous wife and consort, was a diplomatic dream. In her superior British way she made no unforgivable, \textit{faux pas}, she caused no scenes. On the contrary, she spent her time dining, entertaining and behaving like a model envoy's spouse. A diplomatic mistake on her part was considered an impossibility.\textsuperscript{46} In London society, her shyness and reserve may have been a handicap but in official circles where everything was prescribed for her, she was superb. She knew she could be the regal dignified figure that was required. Her aristocratic good manners and stately presence and control were legendary. It was the King of Greece who noted "that there was no lady in Europe who could enter a room like Lady Dufferin".\textsuperscript{47} The only time we see a less formal Hariot was when she took part in her much loved amateur theatricals.\textsuperscript{48} Acting was a life long passion and a chance for Hariot to cast

\textsuperscript{43}ibid., p.320.
\textsuperscript{44}ibid., p.321.
\textsuperscript{45}ibid.
\textsuperscript{46}Henderson, op.cit., p.494.
\textsuperscript{47}Nicolson, op.cit., p.145.
\textsuperscript{48}For example Hariot appeared in Sweethearts, Cut off without a Shilling, and The Critic, among
off her own, and society’s, enforced restrictions.⁴⁹

When considering Lady Dufferin’s contribution to vice-regal life prior to her time in India, the adjectives that come to mind are traditional and dutiful. She did what was expected of her in a superior and exemplary manner. She took on the traditional vice-regal woman’s role and successfully fulfilled the obligations this involved. However, this was all about to change for Lady Dufferin and other vice-regal women when in August 1884 Lord Dufferin was recalled from Constantinople to replace Lord Ripon as Viceroy of India. India was the great prize for all ambitious diplomatic men. As Spencer Walpole, Dufferin’s biographer has noted, ‘for an Englishman, the grand climacteric of honour and power is attained when he enters upon the Governor-Generalship of India’.⁵₀ In the 1880s the Indian question was one of complicated foreign policy especially over Afghanistan and Burma and difficult domestic problems regarding Hindu and Muslim conflicts and as a result His Excellency Lord Dufferin, was well briefed and advised on his important appointment.⁵¹ Lord Dufferin was 58, Harriot 41. This was the post the couple had long desired and they were determined not to fail.

**Lady Dufferin and Medical Aid for Indian Women**

As outlined in Chapter One, in October 1884 Lord and Lady Dufferin travelled to

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⁵₀Walpole, *op. cit.*, p.159.
Balmoral in Scotland to see Queen Victoria prior to leaving for India. Her Majesty often said farewell to her vice-regal appointees in this way. She spoke to them of their imperial role and sent them off with her best wishes.\textsuperscript{52} This time, however, there was a significant difference. Hariot notes in her diary entry of 25 October 1884 that she spoke with the Queen and was given ‘her special order’, her personal assignment in India.\textsuperscript{53} For the first time a vice-regal woman was assigned a separate and independent role from her husband. It was a directive from the sovereign to the new Vicereine alone. It was to be a women’s initiative, by women, for women.\textsuperscript{54} As W.W. Hunter noted ‘the Queen commended to her consideration the possibility of some scheme for rendering medical relief available to Indian women’.\textsuperscript{55} No longer in just a supportive role, Lady Hariot now had royal assent, indeed a royal command, to originate programs and reforms. It was a modern response to imperial needs and Lady Dufferin’s upbringing, social duties and organisational connections equipped her with the necessary skills to succeed.

At this meeting Queen Victoria discussed with Lady Dufferin her concerns for the health of the over 100 million women in India and their lack of modern medical care.\textsuperscript{56} She desired Lady Hariot to take up this challenge and help these women. The Queen had a long held interest in nursing and health and was passionate about helping those she felt were in distress.\textsuperscript{57} As a woman she believed she understood the pressing

\textsuperscript{52}See for example, Dowager Duchess of Jersey, Fifty One Years of Victorian Life, John Murray, London, 1922, p.242.

\textsuperscript{53}Lady Dufferin’s diary, Saturday 25 October 1884, Dufferin Papers, \textit{op.cit.}, D/1071//D/5/1-7.

\textsuperscript{54}W.W. Hunter, ‘A Female Medical Profession for India’, \textit{The Contemporary Review}, August 1889, p.212.

\textsuperscript{55}\textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{56}Hunter, \textit{op.cit.}, p.209.

\textsuperscript{57}\textit{Queen’s Nursing Magazine}, 1 May, vol.1, no.1, 1904, pp.2-3.
need for her Indian female subjects to receive the benefits of British civilisation and scientific advancements. Victoria’s humanitarian response to the need in India also corresponded with the current imperial thinking on health and defence. To defend the great Empire, the Dominions were looked to for the supply of robust and willing manpower. Fears of degeneration within Britain and the need to expand trade, financial, and defence links made imperial ties of the utmost importance. As Lord Dufferin stated ‘No nation’s independence or possessions are safe for a moment unless she can guard them with her own right hand’. In this area, vice-regal women could make a positive and important contribution to British supremacy. From now on vice-regal women’s contributions were viewed in a more patriotic light. Their work was to improve women’s health and moral standing, to improve children’s health, and provide strong and moral sons for the defence of the Empire. This was the beginning of the work of the new vice-regal woman.

Queen Victoria’s views on the critical medical needs of Indian women came largely from two physicians Dr. Elizabeth Bielby and Dr. Mary Scharlieb. Elizabeth Bielby had been working as a missionary in India for five years, when in 1883 she decided to return to England to continue her studies. The Maharani of Punna, an influential Indian lady, entrusted Dr. Bielby with a letter to be handed personally to the Queen. This message appealed for medical help for the women of India. Once made aware that ‘the women of India were, by the customs of their country debarred from making use of the medical skills that their European sisters enjoyed’, the Queen acted.

59 Henderson, op.cit., p.500.
60 Balfour and Scott, op.cit., p.3.
1883, she summoned Dr. Mary Scharlieb to Windsor to discuss the topic of Indian women’s health and the lack of female medical workers. Dr. Scharlieb had spent many years helping native Indian women and discussed with Queen Victoria the urgent need for aid for her female subjects on the sub-continent, especially in the area of childbirth. At the meeting, the doctor related her harrowing experiences to the Queen who appealing to her Lady-in Waiting said ‘how can they tell me there is no need for medical women in India?’

Many Indian women of higher classes observed the Purdah. This rigid culturally enforced system meant women were not allowed to see any men other than close relatives. Subsequently in most cases this resulted in close confinement for many women in female only, or Zenana, areas. The British women doctors informed the Queen this confinement had devastating results on women’s health. Many could not personally consult male doctors, or attend hospitals or clinics where men were present. Lower caste women had considerable more freedom and could see medical men for general complaints but large numbers of upper caste Indian women were forbidden from consulting men for childbirth or related complaints. As a result some women were forced to have treatment without being physically examined by doctors and most relied on the services of ‘dais’ or native midwives. This was usually a hereditary occupation passed on from mother to daughter. The only training was

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62 The Queen was referring to her government officials who believed the medical service in India was doing a good job. See Margaret Balfour, Ruth Young and Humphrey Milford, The Work of Medical Women in India, Oxford University Press, London, 1929, p.20.
63 Balfour and Scott, op.cit., p.3.
through the passing on of knowledge and experience of older women. The British asserted that insanitary practises and, in some cases, carelessness and ignorance were commonplace. It was believed this led to unnecessary suffering and often the deaths of many mothers and babies. Lady Dufferin stated that 'there is no doubt the lives of thousands of women and infants are yearly sacrificed ... by the treatment they are subjected to'. As discussed in Chapter Two an intense scientific motherhood debate was taking place throughout the British Empire at this time. The need for a modern approach to women's health was to become a major concern for new vice-regal ladies.

Whilst there was an efficient government medical aid service already available in India, and large modern hospitals, dispensaries, and good medical practitioners, these were mostly staffed by men and there were very few women-only wards or clinics. Native Indian welfare agencies, medical missionaries, and other philanthropists had attempted to ameliorate the situation but Queen Victoria saw the need for a national scheme, where a central agency could both raise and supply funds, provide expertise, and give advice. The emphasis was to be on training Indian women in modern medical methods thus enabling them to practice among their native sisters.

This was the beginning of a remarkable imperial organisation, the National Association for Supplying Medical Aid to the Women of India, commonly called the

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65Balfour and Scott, op.cit., p.4.
66George W. Forrest, 'The Countess of Dufferin’s Fund', Pall Mall Gazette, 13 April 1897, p.16.
67Balfour, Young and Milford, op.cit., p 89.
68For example a Mr. Ketteridge had begun his 'Women of India Fund' in Bombay in 1882, and managed to open a local women's hospital, the Cama Hospital. See The Countess of Dufferin's Fund, Fifty Years' Retrospect India, op.cit., p.4.
Lady Dufferin Fund or simply the Dufferin Fund. It was also the beginning of the ‘new vice-regal woman’ in action. In this project we see the immense power of the concept of the sisterhood of all women within the British Empire. On the sub-continent, as Lady Dufferin stated, ‘their work was for the good of their sex’. Cultural diversity and different circumstances would be mediated by women working for women. The women assisting and the women receiving assistance were viewed as part of a universal collective of women who understood the nature of their gender and the problems they faced, and were confident in their ability to help. The underlying message was the Victorian concept of rescue and prevention. With the British at the peak of civilisation it was believed that they had an obligation to help and save others. This was the same rescue mentality as illustrated by the work of aristocratic women in the London slum missions, where ladies from privileged backgrounds helped their disadvantaged sisters. Indian women soon became part of an imperial rescue mission. But the concept went further. Along with rescue, a self-help component would be activated and eventually the Indian population would be in a position to look after themselves, with ‘indigenous female practitioners ... being trained ... to solve the problem of self-supporting medical relief’.

It should be noted, however, that this image of sisterhood and disadvantage was not static. Over time the bond between women in the Empire evolved, and adopted a less rigid hierarchy. Later new vice-regal ladies, such as Lady Aberdeen, expressed their

71 As discussed in thesis Chapter Three.
73 Mary Hobhouse, ‘Lady Dufferin’s Five Year Report’, Indian Magazine and Review, 14 October
desire for an imperial community of women, a collective of women. They asserted that they belonged to a sisterhood of women who were fighting for universal equality, existing beyond the paternalistic division of victims and saviours, white women and other races.74

For Lady Dufferin’s women’s health organisation, however, race was not a major concern. There was no negative assessment of the native women’s ability or intelligence implicit in the organisation she developed. Once the local women had been educated and trained, it was planned that they would take over the health care. In the Dufferin Fund, British superiority was conceded only to the extent that as they, as a race, had arrived at a certain level of social understanding, scientific knowledge and technological expertise and experience. It was now their duty to pass this on to those within their Empire.

In this vice-regal organisation, it was class rather than race, which seemed to play a major role. Most of the women who would benefit from women-only medical practices were of the middle and upper-classes. Hariot herself was involved almost exclusively with higher caste women. She was not fond of mixing with those whose ‘houses were mere matting sheds, and people [who] looked very poor and naked’.75 Her Excellency’s attitude to her undertaking was one of obligation to Her Majesty’s wishes, and she never became too personally involved, or stepped down from her elite pedestal, despite what she saw - this was not Hariot’s style. Lady Dufferin was

1894, p.575.

74See thesis Chapter Five for the role of sisterhood. Lady Ishbel Aberdeen was continually invoking the notion of ‘sisterhood’. See, for example, ‘Empire’, 28 October 1893, Aberdeen Papers, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa, MG21 1B5, vol 14.

concerned about the health of Indian women and determined to make her organisation a success but it was not a passion or heartfelt obsession - it was her imperial duty.

It has been argued that "The Dufferin Fund was not a political or social, but a purely humanitarian organisation. It was not concerned with the customs, habits or religion of the patients it treated". From the outset, Lady Dufferin asserted the importance of the project not being seen as aligned to any religious group or philosophy. This became the standard model for most female vice-regal reform organisations initiated between 1884-1914. Religion was a topic best avoided. All new vice-regal women became aware that the organisations they initiated in their role as vice-regal wife needed to be viewed as secular in nature. Although many were involved in religious associations as well, the 'official' organisations they established were free from religious allegiance. The Dufferin Fund for Indian Women was to be viewed as a scientific and medical approach to a pressing health problem operating within the cultural norms of society with no doctrinal overtones.

Another outstanding factor of this innovative organisation was its liberal attitude to cultural difference, for it was culturally sensitive in a largely intolerant age. Although many women's organisations of the period were intolerant of difference and strove for a pure and homogenous Empire, this stance needed to be modified by new vice-regal ladies. In Lady Dufferin's attempt to civilise some aspects of Indian life

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76 Balfour, Young and Milford, op. cit., p.35.
77 This may in part have been due to Indian Mutiny of 1857. After this event officialdom were directed to take a more accepting attitude to cultural difference as a way to prevent dissent.
78 British emigration groups were anxious to help white women establish themselves throughout the Empire. It was believed this would both raise the moral tone and also alleviate the numbers of mixed race children being born.
with scientific British superiority, the culture was clearly identified as different, respected for that difference, and incorporated that difference into the project. There was no plan to alter the purdah system but rather to work within the difficulties of purdah conventions on a universal humanitarian basis rather than a British cultural imperialist foundation. The project ‘directed its employees to respect all religious and social prejudices of the patients’. The British with their self-acknowledged supremacy and a growing interest in social justice believed they could and should bring aid to these women, but in this case to do so in a culturally acceptable way. Val McLeish argues that the actions of Lady Dufferin, ‘placed the colonised Others in an inferior position’. This thesis contends that while British imperialism as practised by new vice-regal women was paternal, it was also striving to overcoming this paternalism and moving to create indigenous self-reliance.

When Lady Dufferin commenced the scheme in 1885, it was envisaged that in time and with adequate training, Indian women would run the scheme themselves, so that reliance on Britain would no longer be required. The organisation would educate, train and employ significant numbers of Indian women. This comprehensive attempt to improve female health and female employment simultaneously, became the blueprint of much of the philanthropic work carried out by later new vice-regal wives.

The ‘New’ Vice-Regal Woman

The previously conservative and traditional Lady Dufferin was required to take on a

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79 Balfour, Young and Milford, op.cit., p.35.
new and demanding role. Thrust into action, Hariot was an ornament no more. Her Excellency rose to the occasion, and, seemingly undaunted by the task of supplying medical aid to over 100 million women, founded the National Association for Supplying Medical Aid to the Women of India, (commonly called the Dufferin Fund) in 1885. Her Majesty, the Queen/Empress was its patron, and Lady Dufferin and the Queen kept in contact regarding the Scheme during Hariot’s time in India. Among Lady Dufferin’s papers are letters from Queen Victoria thanking Hariot for her reports and one commending ‘the very interesting enclosure respecting the great work you have so successfully undertaken for the poor women of India’. 

Her Excellency took her imperial work seriously. On arriving in India, Hariot, Lord Dufferin and their children immediately began learning Hindustani and studying the Persian alphabet. By 1885, Hariot was having language lessons four days a week. Lady Dufferin did not view this as acquiring a personal attribute but rather as a necessary duty to be undertaken to enhance the prestige of the imperial couple. They must be seen to be making an effort. From the moment the couple disembarked in India they were surrounded by pomp and ceremony. Upon their arrival a parade of over two and a half thousand troops presented arms. The Dufferins believed it was their due. Hariot commented ‘we nearly always drive with four horses, postilions, footmen, outriders, and escort, all in scarlet and gold liveries’. Even though Hariot had an important commission from the Queen, it did not change her interest in

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81 The Dufferin Papers, op.cit., The Dufferin Fund, D 1071 J/A/4.
82 Letter Queen Victoria to Lady Dufferin, 19 March 1886, Lady Dufferin’s Papers, op.cit., D1071/A1/1A.
84 ibid., p.15.
ceremony, household details, fashion and society.

As discussed in previous chapters Lady Dufferin was a product of her aristocratic upbringing. Her Journal reveals her thoughts on her new surroundings, especially the household furnishings and Indian society especially the native elite ladies’ clothes and jewellery. There is also discussion of exotic Simla where the vice-regal couple lived for six months of every year and mixed with such British families as the Kiplings.85 While Hariot was undertaking her medical venture, Lord Dufferin as Viceroy was involved in a most tense and complicated time in Indian politics and foreign policy.86 Lady Dufferin, unconcerned, took it all in her usual aloof style. Her diary entry for 20 October 1885, observes, ‘We breakfasted at eight o’clock. At a quarter past the Viceroy signed the declaration of war with Burmah’.87 To Hariot war and peace were male responsibilities and of little consequence to her. She had a new dimension to her own vice-regal work to get on with.

The Beginnings of Lady Dufferin’s Medical Association

Upon her arrival in India, Hariot began to inform herself about women’s health and what could be done. The Countess acknowledged that the lives of Indian women were at risk and that thousands of Indian women and children were lost every year due to the lack of adequate medical care.88 It was a situation, which she believed could no

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85Lady Dufferin took many photographs while in India mainly of her sitting room, her horse and her view. The native people and the Association do not feature in the surviving photographs in PRONI. Dufferin Papers, op.cit., D 1071/J/D/6/1-53.
87ibid., p.31.
88Hunter, op.cit., p.209.
longer be tolerated by enlightened British citizens. Following the plan used by well-established philanthropic associations throughout the Empire, as discussed in Chapter Three, Lady Dufferin involved influential people and all interested parties, looked into the finances needed for the present and future success of the project and put the framework into place to operate an open and transparent association. Harriot first held meetings with all interested and knowledgeable parties. These included Indians and Europeans, officials, medical organisations and missionaries. Discussions took place about the best method to pursue. Lady Dufferin decided to enlist prominent European women to help establish the scheme. She wrote to all the governors’ wives suggesting a national association to provide medical relief for women by women in India. All responded favourably. Within a year of her husband’s appointment Lady Harriot had succeeded in starting a fund and establishing a central committee to manage local branches of the enterprise.

By August 1885 a prospectus had been drawn up and published. This was produced in different languages and distributed throughout the country. The importance of publicity was not lost on the Vicereine; she knew from her previous charitable activities that the public must be made aware and continually informed of the fund’s progress. In November 1885 over 570(Rs) or about a third of the Lady Dufferin Fund’s total expenditure went on advertising or ‘genuine propaganda’. The success of the organisation came in part from this advertising which brought a national

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89 The Countess of Dufferin, A Record of Three Years’ Work of the National Association for Supplying Female Medical Aid to the Women of India, Calcutta, Thadur, Spink and Co., 1888, p.5
90 Balfour and Scott, op.cit., pp.4-6.
91 The Countess of Dufferin, A Record of Three Years’ Work of the National Association for Supplying Female Medical Aid to the Women of India, op.cit., p.10.
92 Minutes’, 21 December 1885, The Dufferin Fund, Dufferin Papers, op.cit., D 1071 J/G/1A/1. and
realisation of the seriousness of the problem facing native women and children which could be diminished by practical help. The information disseminated by the Association awakened many to the need, and to the offered solution.  

The Countess was shrewd enough to get expert help for her Fund, with prominent British officials, native dignitaries and important gentlemen all recruited as founding members.  

From the beginning the organisation was set up on official and businesslike lines, and Hariot was fortunate to have had the assistance of those in the vice-regal administration for this. Originally all the organisers and committee members were volunteers as was the case with most charity and philanthropic groups. However, later the Association needed to take on some paid personnel to ensure the professional running of the Fund.

The *Prospectus* set out the aims and principles of ‘the work’. Donations began to arrive at Fund headquarters - the vice-regal residence, and so the Countess of Dufferin’s Fund or simply the Dufferin Fund was established for the benefit of the ‘National Association for the Supplying of Female Medical Aid to the Women of India’. The official formalities of the organisation took some time to achieve and it was finally registered in 1888. However, it had been functioning almost from the first

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see Balfour, Young and Milford, *op.cit.*, p.39.

93Lady Dufferin wrote and held meetings with hundreds Indians and British people from the beginnings of the Fund, and published information in different languages. The Countess of Dufferin, *A Record of Three Years’ Work of the National Association for Supplying Female Medical Aid to the Women of India, op.cit.*, p.5.

94Balfour and Scott, *op.cit.*, p.5.

95In 1890 the Fund decided to hire a paid clerk to take over the role of Honorary Secretary, Dufferin Papers, *op.cit.*, The Dufferin Fund, D 1071 J/G/1B/1.

96The Countess of Dufferin, *A Record of Three Years’ Work of the National Association for Supplying...
meeting of 1885. The Association was to be non-sectarian and universal. The main objectives were:

1. medical tuition, including teaching and training in India of women as doctors, hospital assistants, nurses and midwives.
2. medical relief, including the establishment under females of dispensaries and cottage hospitals, the opening of female wards in existing hospitals under female supervision, the provision of female medical officers and attendants, the founding of hospitals for women with special funds.
3. the supply of trained female nurses and midwives for women and children in hospitals and private houses.

The Queen Empress Victoria was the Patron, the Governors and Lieutenant Governors were Vice-Patrons. A Central Committee in Calcutta managed the Scheme, directed policy, and acted as a link to the various local branches being set up throughout the country. From the early days there were over twelve independent branches in the states and provinces.

Lady Dufferin was the President. Influential members of the public were enrolled according to the size of their donations as life councillors, life members or ordinary members and subscribers. Harriot spent much of her time dealing directly with Indian

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Female Medical Aid to the Women of India, op.cit., p.9

97 ibid., pp.1-5.
98 ibid., pp.8-10
99 Balfour and Scott, op.cit., p.6.
100 See map, p.215A. These included among others, Assam, Buluchistan, Bengal, Orissa, Bombay, Madras, Mysore and the Punjab.
Princes and giving them significant roles within the organisation. \(^{101}\) It was recognised from the beginning that the funds needed to run the Scheme would be large and ongoing and that the support of extremely wealthy locals would be necessary for the project to succeed. \(^{102}\) They could promote and back the organisation in their regions, as Hariot kept insisting these men were ‘invaluable to our work’ \(^{103}\) It was essential to involve and keep involved influential men for the women and children to be helped.

The importance of male participation and interest was not lost on Lady Dufferin or on other philanthropically minded women: ‘it lies with them to give women dependent upon them relief in suffering’ and they must ‘draw back the purdah ... and let our women in!’ \(^{104}\) Local committees, most under the control of native princes, made themselves responsible for the opening of a hospital or the supporting of a doctor or midwife according to the funds they could supply. \(^{105}\)

In the first three years, the Central Committee held weekly meetings wherever Hariot was at the time. It was a huge undertaking and had considerable problems, but the once retiring Hariot was always there. ‘I have had almost every difficulty, every doubt, and every success brought before me’ \(^{106}\) Although Hariot was intimately involved with the Association, it was not her passion, it was rather her responsibility. She wrote to her mother: ‘I do not trouble you with much Fund information ... [I]

\(^{101}\) The Countess of Dufferin, *A Record of Three Years’ Work of the National Association for Supplying Female Medical Aid to the Women of India*, op.cit., pp.8-10.

\(^{102}\) Letter to the Gentlemen of the Punjab, Dufferin Fund, Dufferin Papers, op.cit., D1071/J/G1.

\(^{103}\) Dufferin Fund, Dufferin Papers, op.cit., D1071/J/G/8/4.

\(^{104}\) The Countess of Dufferin, *A Record of Three Years’ Work of the National Association for Supplying Female Medical Aid to the Women of India*, op.cit., pp.8-12. And line from untitled Kipling poem in Lady Dufferin’s Scrapbook Dufferin Papers, op.cit., D1071/J/D/7.

\(^{105}\) The Countess of Dufferin’s Journal, op.cit., D1071/J/C1/8/3, p.84.

\(^{106}\) The Countess of Dufferin, *A Record of Three Years’ Work of the National Association for Supplying*
keep a record of all that I do, with regard to this matter, in a very dry and business-like way'.

In the interests of keeping standards high and involving officialdom, Lady Dufferin requested the help of the Indian Government health officials for her Association. The Indian Surgeon-General was anxious to aid the Viceroy’s wife. He helped the society with its selection of health workers and the supervision of their labour, and both sides were happy with this arrangement as long as it was understood the Association workers were not government employees. The government also supplied the services of a civil service clerk. This official assistance was beneficial to the Association as it released the Central Committee from these responsibilities and improved the position of the female employees by giving them government recognition.

Money or the lack of it was always a worry. However, the Central Committee, through the initial lavish donations of several prominent Indians including the Maharajah of Jeypore, the Nizam, and the Maharajah of Ulwar managed to raise seven lakhs of rupees. The Indian rulers were very competitive. When one gave a large donation and received acclaim for doing so others followed suit. Many also

_Female Medical Aid to the Women of India, op.cit., p.8._

_Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava, Our Viceregal Life, op. cit., p.281._

_Balfour and Scott, op.cit., pp.10-11._

_1 Ibid._

_Balfour, Young and Milford, op.cit., p.36._

1 lakh equals 100,000 rupees or approximately £7000 which was a considerable sum in the 1880s and would go a long way as a hospital assistant received 20 rupees a month, The Countess of Dufferin, _A Record of Three Years’ Work of the National Association for Supplying Female Medical Aid to the Women of India, op.cit., p.20._
Local Support for The Dufferin Fund

*Begun of Bhopal* One of the few female rulers and Dufferin Fund supporter

*Maharajah of Jodhpur* also a supporter of Lady Dufferin’s medical scheme

*Victoria Zenana Ward*  
Lady Dufferin Hospital

*Figures 22-23. Top:* C. Waswick and A. Embree *The Last Empire* Aperture, New York, 1976  
*Figure 24. Bottom:* *Dufferin Fund Photos* Public Record Office of Northern Ireland  
D/1071/J/G/8/4
wanted to erect lasting monuments to their largesse or as memorials to a family member. The Babu Durga Prosad, for example, gave 10,000 rupees to his local Gaya branch of the Fund on the proviso that the hospital erected should be named Pavitra after his mother. This occurred throughout the country and men were not the only ones to donate. At Camilla, in central India, four local ladies jointly offered the total amount needed to build a hospital including one of the few female rulers, the Begum of Bhopal. However, it was cash which the project required and when the organisers had received sufficient money they had to decide which way to proceed. It was decided to invest over five lakhs. This became the basis of the Dufferin Fund and gave the organisation a yearly income to help cover operational costs. The organisation was registered under Act XXI of 1860, thus securing the trust Fund a legal status and the ability to regulate its income. The remaining money was distributed to the branches in building grants.

Lady Dufferin, after seeking advice, believed that rather than spending the money on impressive buildings, it was more important to have the necessary medical staff in place. So the initial emphasis was on recruitment and staff training. Female doctors and a smaller number of nurses were to be brought from England, initiated into Indian life and culture, and formed the nucleus of female medical professionals in India. In time it was envisioned that newly trained native women could take over.

\[112\] Ibid., pp.34-35.
\[114\] Ibid.
\[115\] Balfour and Scott, *op.cit.*, p.5.
\[116\] The Countess of Dufferin, *A Record of Three Years Work of the National Association for Supplying Female Medical Aid to the Women of India*, *op.cit.*, p.23.
Hariot was adamant the money in the fund should go primarily to training female medical students. She did not want to spend ‘our substance in bricks and mortar’ but rather to fund places within existing establishments so that ‘a large number of female medical practitioners will year by year emerge’.

The University of Madras was the first to admit female students to its medical courses, others soon followed. These students were also given lessons in ladylike behaviour and dignity. In the late nineteenth century it was important that women, whatever they were doing, should conform to a certain standard of womanhood and new vice-regal ladies reinforced this view. Many of the women out-performed their male counterparts in the exams and two girls in Hyderabad came first in their year, and as a result were sent to England to complete their training. High priests from the Temples of Baidyanath and Tripathy established scholarships and moral support from several Hindu priests was regarded as a most valuable asset.

After the initial fund-raising success of the Central Committee, it no longer concentrated on money matters but rather on issues of administration. The financial responsibility was handed to local committees who were expected to raise their own money to train and pay medical women in their areas. Once again it was the enthusiasm of the local committees and their fund raising that proved the backbone of the organisation. This replicated the situation in aristocratic ladies’ philanthropic associations in Britain. It was expected that those receiving treatment who could

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118 Billington, op. cit., pp. 100-106.
119 The Marchioness of Dufferin’s Report, op. cit., p. 149
120 Balfour, Young and Milford, op. cit., p. 36
afford to pay should do so, but all would be treated no matter the circumstance.\textsuperscript{121} It was also emphasised that any and every donation was needed. The popularity of the Empress in India ‘the great white Queen and Mother of her people’, aided the growth of the scheme.\textsuperscript{122}

Queen Victoria’s Golden Jubilee of 1887 provided a boost to the coffers especially since the monarch stressed her regard for nursing by establishing the Queen’s District Nurses with the Jubilee donations received in Britain.\textsuperscript{123} Her Indian subjects also wanted to help in the health area. The Maharajah of Jaipur donated a lakh in commemoration of the Jubilee which delighted Hariot.\textsuperscript{124} Ten years later the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee also attracted funds and The Victoria Zenana Hospital at Joaara was built with money raised through the Jubilee Appeal. In 1903, Lady Cuzon, the then Vicereine, capitalising on the reverence still felt for the dead Queen began the ‘Victoria Memorial Scholarship Fund for the training of indigenous dais’.\textsuperscript{125}

British women, too, were urged to donate to the Fund which needed money to continue and expand. British women were reminded of their sisterhood with the native women of India: they were all women, they all understood women’s special problems and universal responsibilities. They should all work together to benefit their sex and the Empire. The proposal to Hariot Dufferin by Queen Victoria and the eventual success of the Fund can, in some sense, be attributed to the intense

\textsuperscript{121}Balfour and Scott, \textit{op.cit.} p.7
\textsuperscript{122}Balfour, Young and Milford, \textit{op.cit.}, p.33.
\textsuperscript{123}For information on the formation of the Queen’s Jubilee Nurses see the \textit{Queen’s Nurses’ Magazine}, no.1 vol. 1, 1 May 1904, pp. 3-4.
\textsuperscript{124}Lady Dufferin’s Journal, Dufferin Papers, \textit{op.cit.}, D 1071 J/C1/8/3.
\textsuperscript{125}Balfour and Scott, \textit{op.cit}, p.13.
motherhood debate and the position of women occurring throughout the Empire in late Victorian times. Mothers, Empire and continued British success were interlinked, as Rudyard Kipling wrote in his poem on Lady Dufferin and the Fund, 

‘is it a little thing that she has wrought? 

Then Birth and Death and Motherhood be nought’.126

At the inception of the Fund in India independent branches in Britain were also formed to supply funds for the association.127 The main goal of these British branches was to supply fares and outfits for medical women to go to India. The standard amount was £80 for an outfit plus passage money. The British branches of the Fund financed both British and Indian women to train in London and then return to work in India.128 And as in India, the accounts were regularly audited and published, and ‘every rupee accounted for’.129

In 1889, Lady Hariot chaired a meeting of the Fund in London with three main aims: to publicise the work of the Fund, to strive to procure more money, and to select and support more British doctors to go to India. Lady Dufferin became President of the British Association.130 A central committee and a general committee were established and most of the philanthropic society ladies and men of the day were represented including Florence Nightingale and Lady Ishbel Aberdeen. Royal interest was

126Rudyard Kipling, The Song of the Women, Pioneer, 17 April, 1888.
128Ibid.
129The Countess of Dufferin, A Record of Three Years Work of the National Association for Supplying Female Medical Aid to the Women of India, op.cit., p. 36.
considered essential for the success of any charitable organisation and Lady Dufferin and all new vice-regal women were keenly aware of this. HRH The Prince of Wales became Patron of the Fund.\textsuperscript{131} A subscription list was established and this was published in \textit{The Times}.\textsuperscript{132}

Lady Dufferin's Scheme flourished. Training centres were set up for local women and scholarships were established to send them to large Indian hospitals or universities in Great Britain for study. All local women and girls of a certain educational standard, native, Eurasian and European were accepted for training. Lady Dufferin referred to all these females as Indian women.\textsuperscript{133} If they were already qualified, they were considered for positions. If not, they could begin training. The training schools and hostels which were established were women-only so as not to upset the powerful cultural sensibilities. Five Indian Universities, at Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Agra, and Lahore enrolled women students. Unfortunately they required men and women to study together resulting in few native Indian women becoming doctors in the early years of the Fund.\textsuperscript{134} Originally most of the Dufferin Fund’s doctors were English with degrees from British universities.

As the most desperate need was for trained female medical staff, the establishment and ongoing commitment to scholarships was one of the mainstays of the Lady Dufferin Fund. To help with training of Indian doctors, scholarships were initiated for training both in India and Britain. Scholarships and awards were offered from many

\textsuperscript{131}Dufferin Fund, Dufferin Papers, \textit{op.cit.}, D1071/G/1B/1.
\textsuperscript{132}ibid.
\textsuperscript{133}Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava, "The Countess of Dufferin Fund, \textit{The Indian Magazine and Review}, February 1895, p.55.
\textsuperscript{134}Billington, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.103-105.
Dufferin Fund Doctors and Trainee Nurses

Women Doctors trained by the Dufferin Fund

sources. The number grew, in the first decade of the Association they included the Jubilee Queen/Empress, the Elgin, the Stuart Mill, the Lansdowne, and the Lady Dufferin scholarships. Mrs. Henry Fawcett donated money for a prize for the top native female medical students in Bombay and Calcutta. As well, there were many students supported by Indian philanthropists. For example the High Priest Baidyanath of a Hindu Temple provided for a medical and a nursing student at the Calcutta Medical School.

Those applying for assistance created volumes of paperwork and required many recommendations. In the beginning most applications were reviewed by the Central Committee and personally approved by the Countess. The original intention was to train native Indians but many Europeans and Eurasians applied and were accepted. The list of applicants in the first decade of the programme contains Hindus, Brahmans, Moslems, Baptists, Catholics, Protestants and Jews. For example, Ma Saw Sa was a Burmese Baptist; Miss Luckli Monie Ghose a Bengali Christian; and Miss G.A’Abreu, a Portuguese Protestant. The ability to speak several languages was a great advantage. Those selected were found positions in either Indian or British medical schools including the London School of Medicine for Women, the Medical College for Women Edinburgh, the Queen Margaret College Glasgow, and the School of Surgery of the Royal College of Surgeons Dublin. Miss Jagamathew, a scholarship recipient, acquitted herself well as a Demonstrator of Anatomy at the Edinburgh School of Medicine. The U.K. branch minutes noted that ‘it is very

136 Minutes’ 2 August 1886, Lady Dufferin Fund, Dufferin Papers, op.cit., D1071/J/G/1A/1
137 Dufferin Fund, Dufferin Papers, op.cit., D 1071/J/G/5/1
138 Ibid.
interesting to see a dozen English and Scotch girls looking up to an Indian lady for instruction. The sisterhood, in this instance had managed to overcome race and cultural differences.

The scholarship holders were given a stipend and when trained were obliged to serve in the area of those who supplied the scholarship or under the direction of the Central Committee. Further incentives were supplied by medals and prizes. Victoria personally donated Queen/Empress gold medals which were awarded to the most distinguished female students studying in Indian Universities. Lord Dufferin sponsored silver medals to other worthy students. Lady Dufferin's organisation tried to work with existing societies and institutions to further their objectives for this was the most cost effective way. The universities and medical schools of India afforded the means of tuition and already established hospitals could provide training with the addition of new female only 'Zenana' wards. The Fund worked in many areas. Elementary health and hygiene standards were taught at local schools, and a primer *The Way to Health*, was promoted by the Fund and translated into the local language. More advanced texts for health professionals were commissioned and published by the Fund in Indian dialects.

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139 Minutes of the British Branch, 3 March 1890, Countess of Dufferin Fund, Dufferin Papers, *op.cit.*, D 1071 J/G/1B/1.
140 *ibid.*
141 Minutes 29 January 1886, Lady Dufferin Fund, Dufferin Papers, *op.cit.*, D1071/J/G/1A/1
142 *ibid.*
143 The Countess of Dufferin, *A Record of Three Years Work of the National Association for Supplying Female Medical Aid to the Women of India*, *op.cit.*, pp.21-22.
144 *ibid.*
Problems for Lady Dufferin’s Fund

All, however, was not smooth sailing. The Fund faced considerable challenges. Opposition to the Association came from three major sources, the missionary societies, the Indian medical bodies, and the medical establishment. Hostility from the large and powerful missionary societies such as the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, the India Mission of the Foreign Christian Missionary Society, and the Society of Friends Indian Mission was unexpected. These groups had been supplying medical assistance for decades and were cautious about this new national, vice-regal, non-religious project. They felt they were progressing well in the area of women’s health and objected to the non-sectarian character of the Association, believing that Christian women were to be excluded from the Scheme.¹⁴⁵

W. Alfred Redwood, a renowned missionary in India, questioned the Dufferin Fund’s ‘no evangelising’ rule and the fact that ‘Any agent will be dismissed if she speaks of Jesus/salvation and the Christian religion’.¹⁴⁶ In 1887, the London magazine Medical Missions at Home and Abroad, published an editorial about the Fund and its ‘anti-Christian’ stance.¹⁴⁷ Lady Dufferin’s reply was hostile, calling the article ‘exaggerated and unfair’ and noting that most English people had little interest in their doctor’s religion so why should faith play a part in Indian medical services?¹⁴⁸ The missionaries were anxious not to lose their place in Indian society. They had coupled health care with evangelism and did not want secular philanthropic workers in the

¹⁴⁵Minutes 2 March 1887, Lady Dufferin Fund, Dufferin Papers, op.cit., D1071/J/G/1A/1
¹⁴⁶ibid.
¹⁴⁷Minutes 27 October 1887, Lady Dufferin Fund, Dufferin Papers, op.cit., D1071/J/G/1A/1
¹⁴⁸ibid.
field. The distrust continued for some years but eventually the missionary societies accepted Lady Dufferin’s work.\textsuperscript{149} This may have been because of the Queen’s ongoing interest and support, or perhaps because of the obvious benefits the Fund delivered to the native population. Their opposition gradually evaporated and the hierarchy of many Christian Churches, including the Protestant and Catholic Bishops, later appealed for donations to the Fund.\textsuperscript{150} Many women trained by the missionaries in health care were later employed by the Dufferin Association, and a long term mutual support system grew between the two groups.

Opposition and suspicion was also held by native Hindu and Moslem Indians such as the Maharajah Jotendro Mohun Tagore. Tagore dismissed the non-sectarian rhetoric. Rather he saw the scheme as a cunning way to indoctrinate patients with Christian beliefs and argued that the Dufferin Fund was attempting ‘to take advantage of the weak ... on a sick bed’.\textsuperscript{151} Hariot was constantly reassuring the Indian public and press that no missionary activities would be permitted by the Association with many notices appearing in the press to that effect.\textsuperscript{152} Gradually all sides saw the complementary nature of the work they performed and that through cooperation, they could produce positive results in the community. As Hariot remarked after three years of Fund work ‘in practice the unsectarian character of the Association presented no difficulty at all’.\textsuperscript{153}

\textsuperscript{149}Hunter, \textit{op.cit.}, p.212.
\textsuperscript{150}‘Lady Dufferin’s Work’, Dufferin Papers, \textit{op.cit.}
\textsuperscript{151}Minutes’, 2 March 1887, Lady Dufferin Fund, Dufferin Papers, \textit{op.cit.} D1071/J/G/1A/1
\textsuperscript{152}For example, a piece stressing that no missionary activity was permitted by the Fund appeared in the Calcutta Crescent, 3 July 1886, Dufferin Fund, Dufferin Papers, \textit{op.cit.}, D1071/J/G/1A/1.
\textsuperscript{153}The Countess of Dufferin, \textit{A Record of Three Years Work of the National Association for Supplying
The white medical establishment was also cautious in backing Lady Dufferin at the outset. The medical societies were not happy to see interference in their world. Many medical men considered vice-regal women as meddling nuisances or at best good hearted but ignorant complications, and they preferred the traditional or 'Ornamental' vice-regal model. They were not appreciative of 'new women' who pushed the boundaries and set up organisations as proficient and important as those established and run by men. Midwives were desperately needed, and this was appreciated by the local physicians. The doctors also did grudgingly accept well trained female counterparts as necessary to deal with native women but were not as appreciative of the new lady medical assistants. Lady Dufferin was adamant. Surely the doctors would agree that the introduction of any trained medical professional was a great improvement on no medical treatment at all? She did not envisage these female medical assistants as doing the work of doctors but rather treating the minor maladies which when neglected could lead to serious complications. However, the doctors needed constant reassurance that all those working in the health area were adequately trained and supervised. Some medical men did not like female doctors being put into positions and hospital posts formally occupied by their male colleagues. As will become clear in the following chapters this opposition from medical men was one faced by all new vice-regal ladies and their health associations.

Indian tradition and culture generated other difficulties for the Association. Dhais, the indigenous medical women, were unhappy that their position in the important sphere

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Female Medical Aid to the Women of India, op.cit., p.92

154Balfour, Young and Milford, op.cit., p.34-35.

155Hunter, op.cit., p.208.

156May 1891, Dufferin Fund, Dufferin Papers, op.cit., D1071 J/G/1B/1

157Balfour, Young and Milford, op.cit., p.43-46.
of childbirth was being usurped. It would take many years to overcome the basic mistrust and, in some cases, deep-rooted prejudice of many of the population toward western medical treatments. The *Englishwoman's Review* underlining the mistrust of some Indians, reported, perhaps with some poetic license that many native patients showed 'a great dread of the clean sheets of the European beds, fearing that resting between these will make them Christian'. Whatever the feeling between some in the indigenous community and the new organisation, Hariot did not give in to them or to the medical establishment, or to Government control over female health workers and patients, or to the dhais. Elite women knew their worth and did not surrender or easily accept defeat. Her Excellency was convinced that the benefits of the Association would become obvious to all over time. Hariot was pushing boundaries and questioning convention and interference from the establishment be it white or Indian was not to be tolerated. As her nephew remarked Lady Dufferin had a 'capacity for imposing obedience on other people'.

**Lady Dufferin’s Fund in Action**

Lady Dufferin spent much of her time in administration, gathering new support and sustaining existing connections for her association. Once she had influential men on side such as The Nizam at Hyderabad and the Maharja of Jeypore, Hariot wished to extend her support with the help of Indian ladies of rank. Lady Hariot hosted many receptions for these women at Government House, ably assisted by her two elder

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159M.A.B., *op.cit.*, p.23.
160Dufferin Papers, *op.cit.*, D1071/II/G/1B/1.
daughters Lady Helen and Lady Hermione. No men were allowed at these meetings, including servants. This caused inconvenience on occasions, such as the night when no-one could be found to light the gas so the meeting proceeded in darkness until a man was located to perform the job.¹⁶² Imperial sisters were meeting together, discussing the problems and trying to find common ground and solutions. The Countess also spent a great deal of her time visiting hospitals, medical schools, interviewing important medical practitioners and pushing the credentials of the Fund.

In a few years the Association was not only officially recognised but also occupied ‘a considerable position in the Indian Medical Department’.¹⁶³ By 1887, the Home Department of the Government co-operated by having an Officer from the Sanitary Commission as an Honorary Secretary on the Central Committee. An important innovation in pay and conditions was also put into practice. As a national health organisation, an independent grading system of qualifications was introduced with a pay scale to suit. This meant that employees of the Association received the same wages wherever they worked throughout the country. This greatly assisted in persuading suitably qualified women to work in poorer areas and gave them an official structure and confidence in a career path which was often lacking in female employment at the time.

The three grades were lady doctors, female assistant surgeons, and female hospital assistants. These were the same grades that existed for men in the Government Medical Service.¹⁶⁴ Those considered suitable for employment by the Scheme

¹⁶³Lady Dufferin’s Work*, The Lady, 13 May 1895, p.680.
¹⁶⁴The Countess of Dufferin, *A Record of Three Years Work of the National Association for Supplying...
included lady doctors, registered in Great Britain, Ireland, or from other recognised
countries, female assistant surgeons, and female hospital assistants. The women were
to receive slightly higher wages than men with the same qualifications and in the
same grade of the government medical service.\textsuperscript{165} However, in India, the women
health workers would not receive a pension and could not expect the same rate of
salary increases. New vice-regal women such as Lady Dufferin, and later Ladies
Aberdeen and Dudley, were firm in their belief that workers within their
organisations should receive equitable remuneration. Any lady doctors brought from
England also received their passage, a uniform allowance and accommodation. They
also could carry on a separate personal medical practice if they wished.\textsuperscript{166}

As to the training of local women, the Association drew on existing facilities. The
medical universities and colleges were pressed into taking female students. As these
were situated in the large cities and not open to all, the Fund decided to also begin
their own training centres in distant provinces. By 1893, there were 224 women and
girls studying and training under Lady Dufferin’s scheme in India.\textsuperscript{167} Although the
training was open to all women, (Indian, Eurasian and European), the vast majority
were native born. There were 153 indigenous women including Hindus, Muslims,
Parsees, Brahmins and Christians, 50 Eurasians, and the remainder European.\textsuperscript{168} The
organisation was looking for higher caste educated females to train as doctors, yet
even with generous scholarships the Fund had difficulty attracting them, as women

\textsuperscript{166}\textit{ibid.}
\textsuperscript{167}Mary Hobhouse, ‘Lady Dufferin’s Five Years’ Report’ \textit{The Indian Magazine and Review}, October
1894, p.576.
\textsuperscript{168}\textit{ibid.}
from this class were not encouraged to work. In this their life mirrored the aristocratic ideal for British women. Their function was not to work but to produce children, especially sons. As was the case in Britain, upper-class women who chose a paid career had to break the traditional rules and to overcome both family and community concerns. Lady Dufferin’s scheme was much more successful in procuring students for the hospital assistance class of employment. These came from the lower orders of girls who possessed a respectable primary education. In truth, however, it was many years before sufficient numbers of local women were trained as doctors and ancillary health workers.

Although the training in India was progressing slowly the demand was growing. In 1893 there were 13 lady doctors, 42 assistant surgeons and 45 hospital assistants in the system. After five years, 65 institutions were either directly or indirectly connected with the Fund. Ten of these were constructed and supported by local rulers in conjunction with the Fund. Native architects and advisers directed the building of the purdah rooms and caste traditions were considered in all nursing and cooking arrangements. The availability of women-only hospitals, wards, and dispensaries meant a massive increase in the numbers of women using medical institutions. In 1888, about 100,000 women and children sought medical treatment, and this had risen to 601,574 by 1893 and over a million by 1895.

Despite the initial problems associated with the establishment of the new

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169 *ibid.*, pp.576-577
172 *ibid.*
173 Dufferin Fund, Dufferin Papers, *op.cit.*, D 1071/J/G/7C/1.
organisation, by the time of Lady Dufferin's departure in 1888 the scheme was well established and achieving remarkable results.\textsuperscript{174} Many buildings were erected or adapted for medical services as the benefits of the Association spread throughout the country. Lady Dufferin was fortunate that she had many very rich Indian supporters to call upon for assistance. The most generous supporters were the Maharaja of Jeypore, the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Maharaja of Ulwar.\textsuperscript{175} Money was donated, dispensaries opened and scholarships founded. Many Indian nobles including the Maharajahs of Oodeypore, Ulwar, and Durbunga built new hospitals, each maintaining a lady doctor.\textsuperscript{176} There was a flurry of hospital and clinic construction. The Dufferin Hospital in Nagpur cost 30,000 rupees and opened in 1888. Other hospitals that commenced admissions included those at Kotah, Patalia Agra, Benares, Oodeypore and Calcutta, and many were named after Lady Dufferin. Nursing schools were also established, some having separate quarters for 'Parsees, Hindoos, and Mohammedans'.\textsuperscript{177} At the Lady Dufferin Zenana Hospital Dispensary, Calcutta, 3,224 new cases were attended during the first six months. In the Hyderabad Hospital 9,125 women attended the Zenana wards in the first year.\textsuperscript{178}

Conclusion

When the Dufferins left India in 1888, the Fund had only been in existence three years, yet it had become an institution in Indian Medical circles. Lady Dufferin was

\textsuperscript{174}The Strand, op.cit., p.460.

\textsuperscript{175}The Countess of Dufferin, A Record of Three Years Work of the National Association for Supplying Female Medical Aid to the Women of India, op.cit., p.31.

\textsuperscript{176}The Marchioness of Dufferin's Report, op.cit., p.148.

\textsuperscript{177}The Strand, op.cit., p.462.

\textsuperscript{178}The Marchioness of Dufferin's Report, op.cit., p.149.
Dufferin Fund Activities c1910

Figure 26. Dufferin Fund Papers, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland. D10173/G/3/4
given much credit in India for its inception, as she was the instigator of a project ‘so profound in its sympathies, and so high in its ideals, (it) was surely one of the finest ever evolved from woman’s brain and heart’.\(^{179}\) This elaborate prose, which was common in the jingoistic rhetoric of the new age of imperialism while perhaps overly embellished, was not without substance. Kipling’s\(\text{The Song of the Women,}\) a poem dedicated to Hariot, and many other glowing testimonials, testify to the regard given to Lady Dufferin for her great imperial work in India.\(^{180}\)

Throughout her time in India and especially on her departure Hariot received many thank you letters and acknowledgments of her devotion to native women.\(^{181}\) These were often signed by her ‘sisters’, calling themselves the weak and helpless in the community whose suffering had been ameliorated and health and social conditions improved. Some were exquisitely embroidered or printed on silk and satin from all parts of India including the ‘ladies of Lahore, devoted and humble servants, all classes throughout the Punjab, the people of Narainguinge, the female relations of the Talukdars of the Bara Bauki’ they all extolled the benefits of her Fund and the feeling of universal sisterhood.\(^{182}\) The Countess regarding the recognition as her due nevertheless responded in the traditional womanly way, she asserted the work was not her own, without the encouragement and interest of the Viceroy, ‘I myself could have done nothing.’\(^{183}\)

\(^{179}\)Billington, \textit{Woman in India, op.cit.,}\ 1895, p.87.

\(^{180}\)Rudyard Kipling, from \textit{The Song of the Women, op.cit.}, Kipling wrote this poem as well as other works about Lady Dufferin and her Fund which appear in Lady Dufferin’s Scrapbook, Dufferin Papers, \textit{op.cit.}, D 1071 J/D/7.

\(^{181}\)Dufferin Fund, Dufferin Papers, \textit{op.cit.}, D 1071 J/G/6/2.

\(^{182}\)\textit{ibid.}\)
Hariot Dufferin had no great personal attachment to the Fund itself, or to the work it involved, but she was an enthusiastic imperial wife. She was the first face of the new vice-regal woman with a personal and independent role. As an individual though Hariot belonged to the world of the mid-Victorian female. Her Excellency, esteemed for her successful management of the Fund in India also received commendation on a larger scale in Britain for her skilful combination of the public and the private. She was cited as ‘a lady president who combined all that was most graceful and gentle in her sex with rare practical sense and business ability’.184 This was the impression aristocratic ladies involved with reform and especially vice-regal women were now expected to present to the Empire. Lady Dufferin’s National Association for Supplying Female Medical Aid to the Women of India provided just such a combination. In the tradition of late Victorian charitable societies, the organisation provided a double benefit combining philanthropic aid with female education, training and employment initiatives. Hariot expressed her own part in the organisation as follows, ‘I have I hope proved that its work is needful, that it is successful, that it is appreciated by those for whom it was established’.185 Lady Dufferin’s career in India reveals links between the old and new vice-regal woman. She was at the forefront of a transformation in the vice-regal wife’s role. Hariot herself, whilst slightly resistant to the concept of pro-active change and the risks involved responded in a committed and effective way when the role was thrust upon her.

The Lady Dufferin Fund for Supplying Medical Aid to the Women of India

183 ibid.
184 Billington, op.cit., p.151.
185 The Countess of Dufferin, A Record of Three Years Work of the National Association for Supplying Female Medical Aid to the Women of India, op.cit., pp.99-100.
celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 1935. Hariat, now the Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava and aged 92 attended the India Office in London and gave a speech to mark the occasion.

In the ensuing fifty years, the number of women doctors had risen to over 700, with thousands of female medical assistants, and hundreds of clinics, dispensaries and hospitals. The last Madras Branch Annual Report of 1946 detailed the good work being accomplished by the organisation but noted a huge shortfall in the number of nurses and midwives employed.\textsuperscript{186} There was only one nurse every 226 square miles working for inadequate pay and in sub-standard conditions. The Fund was still functioning well, receiving subscriptions and bestowing scholarships when the Association was taken over by the new government at Indian Independence in 1947. In 2002 the Countess of Dufferin Fund (Repeal) Bill was passed by the Indian Parliament, drawing to a close the Fund’s official involvement in India.\textsuperscript{187}

After India, Lord Dufferin was created the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava and was appointed Ambassador in Rome (1888-91) and Paris (1891-6). In 1896, Lord Dufferin aged 70 retired from diplomatic service and returned to Ireland. The Marquis was a notable statesman and a conspicuous public figure, an eminent Victorian. During this time Lord Dufferin suffered severe financial problems and loss of prestige with the failure of the London and Globe Corporation. He had taken on the position of chairman, invested heavily and had recommended it to others.\textsuperscript{188} In 1902

\textsuperscript{186}\textit{Countess of Dufferin’s Fund, Madras Branch 61st. Annual Report 1946, Government printer, Madras, 1947, pp. 2-10.}


\textsuperscript{188}The financier Whitaker Wright persuaded Dufferin to lend his name to this questionable enterprise.
he died under this cloud of financial ruin. Hariot and the family were subsequently left with little income.

The Marchioness continued to fulfil her aristocratic functions and her charitable works until her death. She was described as ‘unquestionably the greatest Ulsterwoman of her time’ and was intimately involved with many organisations including the Ulster Ladies’ Work Society, the Mother’s Union, The Girls Friendly Society, the Red Triangle Boys Club, and the Red Cross. She also continued to display a maternal interest in her vice-regal dominions. Hariot once remarked, I and ‘so many of my family have served overseas that I feel I belong there’. This was a sentiment echoed by numerous vice-regal women, who continued to look upon their former ‘homes’ as having a special meaning for them, and they often acted as unofficial representatives for their colonies. The former Vicereine always tried to attend Canada House in London on Canada Day, and often attended the India Office on official occasions.

Lady Dufferin suffered many personal setbacks. By 1930, all four of her sons were dead. Two died in wars, sacrificed for the Empire and one in a plane crash. Her three daughters outlived her. Lady Hermione devoted her life to nursing as a Queen Victoria Jubilee Nurse; Lady Helen as wife of Ronald Munro Ferguson Governor-General of Australia continued her mother’s vice-regal role and founded the Australian Red Cross Society; and her youngest daughter Lady Victoria Plunket wife

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British Australian, 29 October, 1936.

Henderson, op.cit., p.500.

The Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava died in 1936 aged 93. She had received many honours during her life including membership of the Orders of the Crown of India, Victoria and Albert, the Turkish Chefakat, the Persian Order of the Sun, and was created a Dame of the British Empire. She was buried beside her husband at Clandeboye. Hariot was acknowledged as essentially a Victorian woman who ‘right up to the end in fine lace and diamonds, preserved the costume, the beauty, and the erect bearing of a dame’.\footnote{\textit{Edinburgh Evening News}, ‘A Grande Dame’, 27 October 1936.}

Lady Dufferin’s Indian viceroyalty should be viewed as the beginning of a new wave of vice-regal wives’ imperial work and service. To the traditional Hariot, the vice-regal wife undertook an obligation to serve. With the intervention of Queen Victoria, however, she was required to fulfil a new dynamic role. Personally, it was not a passion or a mission. The Countess was obediently and diligently following Her Majesty’s instructions. By the time Lady Dufferin left India, however, the vice-regal role had changed and was being taken up by the next era of vice-regal wives in a more committed, expansive and earnest way. Armed with her own intrinsic reforming ideology, Lady Ishbel Aberdeen, the subject of the following chapter, developed the
role of the new vice-regal woman, and with confidence and ability took it to greater heights.
Lady Ishbel Aberdeen
1857-1939

Figure 28. National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.C149331
CHAPTER FIVE

LADY ISHBEL ABERDEEN
(1857-1939)

‘Lady Aberdeen might well be graced with the title of Governess-General’

This chapter will further develop the evolution of the new vice-regal woman by investigating the career of Lady Ishbel Aberdeen, a truly remarkable example of a late Victorian and Edwardian imperialist and social reformer. Ishbel, never merely ornamental, embraced liberal ideas from an early age and believed in the impact motivated women could make in occasioning social change. Ishbel Aberdeen’s intense interest in the position of women generally is well demonstrated in her life as a new vice-regal woman in Ireland and Canada.

The world of late Victorian and Edwardian vice-regal women and the creation of the new vice-regal woman are well demonstrated by the imperial career of Lady Ishbel Aberdeen. Although she was an exceptional woman on many levels, the focus in this thesis is on how Ishbel Aberdeen extended the new imperial opportunities opened up by Queen Victoria and women such as Lady Dufferin. As well as utilising the eras developing social understanding of the era, Ishbel made the female vice-regal role into a civilising crusade. From 1884, with Lady Dufferin’s efforts in India,

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expectations were raised and vice-regal women began to foster a new pro-active position. Once the independent work of Governor’s wives had received royal authorisation, new vice-regal women such as the dynamic Lady Aberdeen established a number of socially challenging organisations aimed at revolutionising the imperial role of women.

Ishbel Aberdeen or the Countess of Aberdeen was an outstanding woman whose work encompassed the new frontiers opening up for women and spanned the transforming late Victorian and Edwardian eras. As Ishbel commented ‘The world has seen a revolution in this century with regard to the work, position and opportunities of women’. She continued this revolution by constantly pushing the boundaries of women’s involvement in the public sphere. Ishbel was at the forefront of a growing social awareness of the need for individuals and governments to take responsibility for the entire community. She was also in the vanguard of the women’s reform movement within Britain, throughout the Empire, and across the wider world. This chapter will demonstrate how Ishbel Aberdeen, as a new vice-regal woman, took her perceived representative duties to a higher level, extending the established limits for vice-regal wives. Despite facing determined opposition from traditionalists and organised interest groups, this new vice-regal lady proved that an increased engagement with other women could make a profound difference.

There were three major influences in Lady Aberdeen’s early life, which would later affect her vice-regal work. Firstly her strong Protestant religious conviction was very

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3 See Veronica Jane Strong-Boag, The Parliament of Women: The National Council of Women of
important. She held that God had a plan for everyone, that He was a personal saviour who was always present in individual lives but who demanded service from His followers. The influence of evangelists gave her an ecumenical outlook, which could be easily aligned with the new scientific discoveries of the times, especially Charles Darwin’s evolutionary ideas. Secondly, along with her Liberal political objectives and social justice agenda, Lady Aberdeen had a vision for the world’s women. This vision saw women as strong and independent, being able to decide their own destiny on an equal footing with men. 4 Although she accepted the dominant ‘woman in the home’ or separate spheres ideology of the age, she also believed that women needed to be self-reliant and educated to fulfil their duty to the best of their ability. She viewed this as a crusade. This would be good for women, the family, the nation, the Empire and the world. The third of Ishbel’s basic tenets was her Victorian conviction about the worth of work. Ishbel wrote ‘we can thank that grim taskmaster work for giving us a power of self-mastery, a solace in anxiety, a refuge in grief’. 5 To her, work and the special vocation or calling which may be ‘our lot’ was of upmost importance. Ishbel decided her lot was to work for God and society. These three influences led Ishbel to pursue her goal of a fairer, caring and more civilised world.

The life of Ishbel Aberdeen has been well covered by the works of Lady Aberdeen herself, autobiographies, published diaries and articles, in fact the Countess of Aberdeen’s prolific writing has been a great asset in plotting the emergence and growth of the new vice-regal woman. 6 There are also a number of biographies that


6 See for example, Lord and Lady Aberdeen, We Twas, W. Collins Sons & Co. Ltd., London, vol.1&2, 1925; The Marquis and Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair, More Cracks with ‘We Twas’, Methuen
illustrate her intelligence, reformist ideals, and boundless energy. Lady Pentland's life of her mother is a historical narrative detailing various periods of Ishbel's life and numerous interests. Maureen Keene concentrates on Ishbel's Irish connection where as the work of Doris French in *Ishbel and the Empire* is more speculative on some aspects of Lady Aberdeen's personal life and motivations. None of these publications, however, look at Lady Aberdeen's vice-regal work as a distinct entity and none view her vice-regal career in Canada and Ireland as redefining and extending the scope of the female vice-regal position. Of greater interest here are the Aberdeen Papers housed in the National Archives of Canada, Ottawa, Canada, and the Haddo House Collection, Haddo House, Aberdeenshire, Scotland. These records include Lady Aberdeen's journals and diaries written during her vice-regal days, as well as personal letters and papers. They also house information regarding Lady Aberdeen's contribution to Ireland, including The Irish Industries Association, Ireland at the World's Fair in 1893, the Irish Women's National Health Association, and her undertakings in Canada with organisational papers for the National Council of Women of Canada and the Victorian Order of Nurses. These are all examples of the new dynamic vice-regal woman at work.

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*Maureen Keane, Ishbel: Lady Aberdeen in Ireland, Colourpoint, Dublin, 1999.*  
8Both these collections incorporate both organisational and personal records of Lady Aberdeen's vice-regal life.  
Lady Aberdeen was a forthright woman aware of her standing and abilities and her papers both published and unpublished emphasise this fact. From her work for the International Council of Women to her entries describing the death of her beloved son Archie, she wrote what she felt. In the vice-regal sphere too, as her journals prove, the Countess of Aberdeen was not afraid to make her views known. Lady Aberdeen’s papers give insights into her motivations and are an important resource in helping to explain the outlook of the new vice-regal woman.

Ishbel’s Early Life and the Beginnings of Social Activism

Lady Aberdeen was born Ishbel Maria Majoribanks on 14 March 1857. Her father, Dudley Majoribanks, later created Baron Tweedmouth, was a Liberal parliamentarian for Berwick-on-Tweed in Scotland. He had become a rich man largely from his brewery interests, and in 1848 married a wealthy Irish girl, Isabel Hogg. Ishbel was their fourth child. She was bought up at ‘Guisachan’ a large house in the lonely and wild Scottish Highlands of Inverness. Taught at home by a Swiss governess for eight years, the young Ishbel was a great reader but mostly led an active outdoor life. She rode her white pony, cooked and sewed. It was a small community where isolation led to interaction. As a result Ishbel mixed with the surrounding

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10 For example Lady Aberdeen was scornful about American feminists who she believed did all women a disservice by placing home and family last and emphasising the woman rather than the achievement, ‘you capitalise the Woman rather than the work’, Aberdeen Papers, MG27 1 B5 vol.14, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa, Canada.

11 Marquis and Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair, Archie Gordon – An Album of Recollections of Ian Archibald Gordon, privately printed, 1910. Lord and Lady Aberdeen produced a touching book in the Victorian mode, with photographs and pieces written by his friends detailing the life of their son Archie, who died as the result of a car accident in 1909. He was 25.
people of all economic classes and religions. This would be of great advantage to Ishbel in later life where her ease in any company enabled her to form a connection with disparate groups and gave her an understanding often found lacking in the upper-class. Most importantly for her future career, she was accepting of difference and could see another’s point of view. Ishbel was not just a Scottish country lass. When parliament was sitting the Majoribanks family spent six months of the year at their Brook Street House in London. Here, surrounded by her father’s wonderful art collection, she was introduced to many political and social leaders who influenced her beliefs.

Although Ishbel had a privileged upbringing, her family life was not particularly happy. Her parents’ relationship was often strained, her mother was a harsh disciplinarian, and her father was given to violent outbursts of anger. As a bright, intelligent girl, Ishbel was resentful of her parent’s lack of understanding of her needs and her wish for further education. A Scottish professor impressed by Ishbel’s ability had urged her parents to send her to Girton College, Cambridge. But her father rejected the idea as ‘preposterous’ - all a girl had to be prepared for was her coming out. As outlined in Chapter Two, this was a typical attitude displayed by many of her social class and generation. Ishbel felt she had not been given the educational opportunity she deserved. Throughout her public life she made many references to her regret that she did not undertake university studies, and she was determined other

\[12\] Stead, op.cit., p.141.
\[13\] ibid.
\[14\] ibid.
\[16\] ibid., p.xiv.
women would not miss out on their right to a good education.\textsuperscript{17} Ishbel had no doubts that women were intellectually the equals of men and she never underestimated her own capabilities.

Her marriage, at the age of twenty, enabled her to escape her stressful homelife. She had met John Campbell Gordon, ‘Johnny’ or ‘A’, when she was eleven and he was twenty one.\textsuperscript{18} It was said she fell in love with him then and remained so for the next seventy years.\textsuperscript{19} Ishbel and the seventh Earl of Aberdeen were married in 1877. She was now a young Countess, and her husband, the Earl, an unremarkable thirty year old. Johnny was Oxford educated, shy, very religious, and an accomplished sportsman. Due to one elder brother dying at sea, and another committing suicide, John, the third son, became Earl at the age of 23 and master of the extensive Haddo estates in Aberdeenshire, Scotland.\textsuperscript{20}

From the outset Ishbel and A were not the conventional aristocratic married couple. On their honeymoon in Egypt, they adopted five children whom they supported financially rather than see them sold as slaves. One they took back to England, gave him a university education and saw him become a medical missionary in China.\textsuperscript{21} Lord and Lady Aberdeen went on to have five children of their own. One daughter Dorothea Mary died in infancy. The remaining four were George Gordon, Lord Haddo, Lady Marjorie Adeline, Hon. Dudley Gladstone, and Hon. Ian Archibald or

\textsuperscript{17}Pentland, \textit{op.cit.}, p.52
\textsuperscript{18}ibid., p.47.
\textsuperscript{19}Stead, \textit{op.cit.}, p.142.
\textsuperscript{20}ibid.
\textsuperscript{21}Pentland, \textit{op.cit.}, p.25.
Almost immediately Ishbel began implementing her liberal ideas into married life. The first area of concern was her household. The devout and innovative couple often held prayer meetings and mingled with their staff. While household prayers were not uncommon among upper-class families, the Aberdeens extended this interaction into the secular field and initiated household clubs where all met once a week for activities including singing, music, poetry, discussions, and lectures. It was a democratic system where everyone from the thirty plus staff was invited to share their views and suggest programmes. This was an unusual household arrangement but Ishbel took it even further, expanding the concept to farm hands, with Saturday evening classes in arithmetic and English given by local schoolmasters. Ishbel herself conducted the geography class. As local mistresses would not allow their female servants out at night to attend the classes, Ishbel began correspondence courses for the girls. Other Lady Aberdeen initiatives included penny lunches for local school children and establishing a health service with a district nurse and cottage hospital on the estate. A doctor was paid an annual fee for his attendance by Lord Aberdeen. The Countess tried to improve the lives of workers in many areas as her vision was not confined to any one sphere. Later as the Queen’s representative overseas, she also became involved in many areas of reform.

Lady Aberdeen’s innovations were also not confined to the Scottish estates. When in

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22Stead, op.cit., p.143.
23ibid.
25ibid., p.32.
26ibid., p.29.
London the devout Ishbel, with her close friend, the equally religious Adeline, Lady Tavistock, the future Duchess of Bedford and mentor of Lady Rachel Dudley, felt they needed to make a stand about lax moral standards. The behaviour of the Prince of Wales and the Marlborough House set did not go unremarked.\textsuperscript{27} The gambling, infidelities, and perceived superficial lifestyles of this group were causing disquiet as a role model for the young. In 1884, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London were preparing a mission in London. Society ladies were asked to discuss how they could aid in improving the moral standards of the day, especially among the upper-class and their children. Ishbel and Adeline and other similarly minded women formed the Lambeth Penitents.\textsuperscript{28} The Penitents were ‘a reaction to the endless flirtations and liaisons pursued in Britain’s great houses’.\textsuperscript{29} They hoped through prayer to raise the moral tone of society. Special church services and addresses for this dedicated group of society women were arranged and continued for several years.

Ishbel always had a strong commitment to philanthropy and aristocratic duty. She taught Sunday School from a young age and in her late teens and early married life she had open days at Dollis House, her home near London, for working girls and poor London residents.\textsuperscript{30} Lady Aberdeen also worked for the Strand Rescue Mission in London, where aristocratic women provided a warm room and a cup of tea for the street girls.\textsuperscript{31} These ladies saw themselves as rescue workers who had an obligation to save their sisters and help them begin a better life. This rescue mentality was behind some imperial philanthropic schemes as well, such as the case of Lady Dufferin’s

\textsuperscript{27}French, op.cit., p.71.
\textsuperscript{29}ibid.
\textsuperscript{30}Pentland, op.cit., p.38
\textsuperscript{31}ibid., p.39.
Indian women's health project. But Ishbel took a slightly different approach. On many Friday nights, Ishbel went alone to The Strand in the hope of persuading the prostitutes to make a new life for themselves but also to seek out and try to remedy the causes of the girl's situation. Although her parents were horrified, Ishbel stated that she 'learned much there' and appreciated the friendship of the women.\textsuperscript{32}

Early in her life Ishbel had become very attached to the ideology of the Liberal Party and their leader Mr. William Gladstone (1809-1898).\textsuperscript{33} He was a regular visitor at her father's London home and the young girl regarded him as both a great politician and a friend. She later commented that she was 'nurtured under the shadow of Mr. Gladstone's high idealism'.\textsuperscript{34} His public speaking ability was legendary and his Liberal views appealed to Ishbel and she remained committed to them throughout her life. The Liberals, and Ishbel, believed among other things in social justice, Home Rule for Ireland, and greater reforms for women.\textsuperscript{35}

Although in his early years Lord Aberdeen had been politically uncommitted, sitting on the cross benches in the House of Lords, under Ishbel's influence he became a Liberal.\textsuperscript{36} Mr. Gladstone spent many weekends with Ishbel and Johnny at their Dollis House residence. The couple spent a good deal of their time aiding and expounding the Liberal cause. Lady Aberdeen was also close to Lord Rosebery who was seen as a future Liberal leader.\textsuperscript{37} She agreed with his imperial view. Rosebery did not look at

\textsuperscript{32}Aberdeen, We Twa, op.cit., p.198.

\textsuperscript{33}Gladstone was Prime Minister in 1865,1880,1885 and 1892.

\textsuperscript{34}Aberdeen, We Twa, op.cit., p.272.


\textsuperscript{36}Stead, op.cit., p.139.

\textsuperscript{37}See John Buchun, Lord Rosebery 1847-1930, Humphrey Milford, London, 1930 and H.C.G.
Ishbel’s Activism and Politics

The Countess of Aberdeen at a meeting of the Scottish Women’s Liberal Federation, Glasgow

Prime Minister and Mrs Gladstone and the Aberdeens

*Figure 29. Top:* Sketch from the Daily Graphic 13 January 1891
*Figure 30. Bottom:* Haddo House 1884, Aberdeen Papers National Archives of Canada C149332
the Empire 'merely as a strength to the state but as a brotherhood of communities, free yet united'.\textsuperscript{38} This was the concept of Empire Ishbel embraced, for her it represented a sisterhood of opportunities.

Other events, which shaped Ishbel's ecumenical style of leadership, included the 1883 Affirmation Bill introduced by Mr. Gladstone. This Bill allowed those who did not have any religious beliefs or those with different affiliations not to take an oath to God or church but merely affirm religious liberty.\textsuperscript{39} Lord Aberdeen defended and supported the Bill. Ishbel and Lord Aberdeen maintained a very progressive and tolerant attitude to different beliefs, rituals, and ideas. From 1881 as Lord High Commissioner to the Church of Scotland for five years, Lord Aberdeen had relaxed accepted conventions and created a much wider circle of clergy drawn from beyond the establishment. This brought him both praise and criticism; but for Ishbel, it was the only way to act.\textsuperscript{40} From her childhood Ishbel had socialised with all classes and religions, and she knew common ground could often been found. Ishbel did not believe different concepts and understandings should divide people, rather hers was an inclusive philosophy. She would continue to implement these ideas throughout her public life both at home through her vice-regal career.

From the beginning of their public life the Aberdeens acted as a team, both sharing the triumphs and disappointments of their combined career. Although Ishbel was the more dynamic of the two, she was, however, quick to promote her role as willing

\textsuperscript{39}\textsc{Pentland}, \textit{op. cit.}, p.40.
\textsuperscript{40}\textsc{John Campbell Gordon, Earl of Aberdeen, 'The Affirmation Bill 1883', reproduction of an article from The Fortnightly Review, Chapman and Hill, London, 1883.}
helpmate in her husbands appointments.\footnote{ibid., p.44.} New vice-regal women, in order to flout conventions without undue opposition, generally stressed their commitment to their husband’s official position. Lady Aberdeen spoke for many new vice-regal ladies when she declared she was solidly behind her husband and was one who ‘thought and fought for him in all his affairs’.\footnote{ibid.}

During the first years of her married life Ishbel was actively involved with London social activities. She lived in the world of the elites, a privileged existence of pleasure and indulgence with servants to do her bidding. But it was not a totally selfish life. Ishbel was also a member of many women’s organisations. As already discussed in Chapter Three, during the late nineteenth century these rapidly expanding aristocratic philanthropic groups were not only socially acceptable but they were also linked to the late Victorian sense of work and duty. Philanthropic acts and a commitment to work merged in these organisations. It was in this arena that Lady Aberdeen made contact with other religious and philanthropic leaders. She came ‘into personal touch with the actual leaders of the various sections of political, religious and social work’\footnote{Aberdeen, We Twa, op.cit., p.199.}. This laid the foundation for long term interaction and networking. The members gained new skills by working with like-minded people as a team and in a structured manner. The organisations provided a sound basis for Ishbel’s later innovations and reforms that could not have been achieved without the expertise, friendships and female networks formed at this time. Some of Ishbel’s activities included involvement with the National Home Reading Union, Homes for Working Girls, Homes for Little Boys at Farningham and Swanley, George Holland’s Mission
in Whitechapel, Provision of Seats for Shop Assistants, Parents National Education Union, and the Canning Town Women’s Settlement. At the same time Ishbel was also contributing articles on a myriad of topics to magazines and journals as she had learned to appreciate the impact of the media on public opinion and debate.

It was during the 1880s that Lord and Lady Aberdeen became involved with the great religious missions of the evangelists, many of whom were from the United States. This included the meeting and subsequent lifelong friendship with the young Scottish natural scientist and religious orator, Henry Drummond (H.D.). Drummond, who at thirty two was a professor at the Free Church College of Glasgow, impressed the Aberdeens. This man was to have a great influence on the future religious direction and worldview of the couple. Although Henry Drummond was important in the life of both Lord and Lady Aberdeen, it was Ishbel who most enthusiastically promoted his teaching and writing and became personally involved with his life. In her biography of Lady Aberdeen, Doris French, stated that these two carried on a long affair with the apparent blessing of Lord Aberdeen. Whatever the truth, there was a strong bond between the three as evidenced by the Aberdeens numerous references to H.D. in

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45Some of the Countess of Aberdeen’s writings include editing and contributing to Onward and Upward; The Journal of the Haddo House Association, 1890-1920, Haddo House, Aberdeen, Scotland; Ishbel Maria Aberdeen, Our Farm Servant Girls, Haddo House, Aberdeen, 1882, Mistresses and Maidservants: suggestions towards the increased pleasure and permanence of their domestic relations, Brown and Co., Aberdeen, 1884.
47Aberdeen We Twa, op.cit., pp.203-205.
48French, op.cit., pp.69-75.
their reminiscences.  

Drummond’s spiritual message, which combined science and religion, was popular in the changing society of late Victorian Britain. He claimed the laws of science and supernatural belief complemented one another. His Christianity was one of prayer, study, and righteousness combined with activity, nature and fun. It was a less austere and ritualistic form of Christianity, which stressed personal service. H.D.’s religious views invoked a fair deal for all, and encouraged an awakening of the social conscience. His outlook combined Darwin and the Bible, and he saw no need for conflict between the two camps. Ishbel credits Drummond with changing her and her husband’s life and outlook, transforming them from ‘the prim goody young couple that we were’ to more understanding, dynamic, and modern reformers.

Ishbel immersed herself in Drummond’s theories and became very interested in science. As president of the Edinburgh and Aberdeen Societies for the University Education of Women she pushed for more scientific education for women and was enthusiastic about the scientific certificates being made available to female students. Henry Drummond, like Gladstone, was a charismatic lecturer and once again reinforced to Ishbel the power of public speaking. She endeavoured to become a polished and powerful speaker, a woman who could sway an audience and push her cause. It was another accomplishment Ishbel could add to her list of public sphere

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50 Henry Drummond’s book Natural Law in the Spiritual World, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1890, was a best seller in the 1890s.

51 Pentland, op.cit., p.47.

52 ibid., pp.51-52.
skills. By the late 1880s, Lady Aberdeen was well known as ‘a practised speaker, organiser, writer for the Press; as a practical reformer’.\textsuperscript{53}

Drummond and Ishbel’s message was one of service to others. In 1885, this theme led Lord and Lady Aberdeen, along with H.D., to involve themselves in the setting up of an organisation to be of service to others less fortunate, and to bring some spiritual meaning into their lives. This organisation became the Associated Workers League (AWL), with Ladies Ishbel Aberdeen and Adeline Tavistock, holding the position of secretaries.\textsuperscript{54} The League would act as an employment registry office, where those in the higher levels of society could help those from the lower classes. Upper and middle-class volunteers could attend and see if any suitable work was available for them, and how their skills could be best put to use. Some of the jobs undertaken by these volunteers included working at hospitals, as school managers, helping with evening classes just initiated by the London School Board, and parish visits. Later the 88 Club was formed by girls along the same lines as the AWL. Lady Aberdeen became president of this association, and Lady Adeline Tavistock was also involved. Ishbel and Adeline belonged to and contributed to many reform groups and saw each other often on both a personal and organisational basis from 1879 until Lady Aberdeen left for Canada in 1893.\textsuperscript{55} Both women were community minded and religious, and they remained the best of friends until Adeline’s death in 1920. This friendship also involved Rachel Gurney, the future Countess of Dudley, the third case study in this thesis, and Adeline’s ‘adopted’ daughter.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{53}ibid., p.87.
\textsuperscript{54}French, op.cit., pp.69-75.
\textsuperscript{55}Lord and Lady Aberdeen, We Twain, op.cit., p.209.
\textsuperscript{56}Lady Adeline Tavistock, later The Duchess of Bedford, was Rachel Gurney’s cousin and Rachel lived with the Duke and Duchess as a young woman.
Not all of Ishbel’s time was taken up with charitable work or activism to advance social justice; she still had time for her beloved Liberal Party. Ishbel had been present at the inception of a new organisation of Liberal women, the Woman’s Liberal Federation, created as a foil to the Conservative Primrose League.\(^{57}\) Formed in 1886, the Federation’s national body was not just a political association aimed at Liberal electoral success and Irish Home Rule. It also took an independent view and stood up for moral and social issues, and pushed female reforms.\(^{58}\) Ishbel was voted president and once again, her enthusiasm, political awareness and charisma were seen as a great asset for the group, which at its height had a membership of over 80,000.\(^{59}\)

Lady Aberdeen, following her Liberal/Gladstonian political persuasion and Henry Drummond’s spiritual path, viewed her personal vocation as working for reform. Believing that all people had good instincts, she held that they should be given the tools of education and training to improve themselves, then the progress and scientific discoveries of the age could be channeled for the benefit of humanity. Although a political activist and female suffrage supporter, she did not put all her faith in Government or the power of the vote.\(^{60}\) Instead she advocated taking personal and community responsibility for a changed society. What was needed was to use ‘our own influence in bringing about a change in public opinion’ which would force governments to act.\(^{61}\) Ishbel later lived up to this ideal as a politically aware and pro-


\(^{58}\)Stead, \textit{ibid.} Also see the Women’s Liberal Federation Quarterly Leaflets, Women’s Liberal Federation, London, 1895-1916, British Library, London.

\(^{59}\)Stead, \textit{ibid.}, p.144.

\(^{60}\)See Bush, \textit{op.cit.}, Appendix.

\(^{61}\)National Council of Women of Canada Papers, \textit{Annual Report}, 1896, National Council of Women
active new vice-regal woman.

The Irish Experience

Lord and Lady Aberdeen’s political aspirations were growing, and when Mr. Gladstone was returned to office in 1886, with a pledge to Irish Home Rule, the Aberdeens were given a vice-regal reward. Gladstone wanted a sympathetic man in the job of Viceroy (Lord Lieutenant), and so the congenial and intelligent Lord Aberdeen and his clever wife were sent to Ireland. On 5 February 1886, Lord Aberdeen accepted Gladstone’s offer to be the new Viceroy in Ireland. Ishbel was not pleased at first. She felt that in going to Ireland the family would be treated ‘like State prisoners’. 62 Ireland in the late Victorian period had many large and active anti-British organisations and security was so tight that the vice-regal family was under constant guard. 63 The Lord-Lieutenant and his wife were to be seen as apolitical, but as the Viceroy was appointed by the Government of the day and as the assignment ceased when the Government lost power, this was difficult to achieve. Added to this, Lord Aberdeen had been a member of the Liberal government of 1880 but now had to be seen as putting aside his political allegiances and representing the monarchy. Whoever the incumbent in Ireland, the Lord-Lieutenant and his family faced hostility and tension. To many Irish they represented the detested British, foreign rulers on Irish soil. 64 The Aberdeens had little time to make arrangements for the move. Two weeks after being approached about the position the Aberdeens, and their large

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62 Pentland, op.cit., p.56.
64 Aberdeen, We Twa, op.cit., pp.248-255.
personally selected staff, left for Dublin. In late February 1886, they began their term in Ireland.\textsuperscript{65}

The couple replaced Lord and Lady Carnarvon who had been very popular and had done away with many military displays and numbers of guards. In practical terms, Lord Aberdeen's job was mainly administrative and ceremonial. Lady Aberdeen was to be a traditional vice-regal society hostess. Just a few years earlier Lady Cowper was cautioned she would be bored in Ireland as 'a lady lieutenant has no duties'.\textsuperscript{66} Ishbel, however, was not content with the traditional role. She wanted to become more involved and so began her career as a new vice-regal woman.

The situation in Ireland was volatile; many Irish mistrusted Gladstone and the Liberals who had let them down in the past.\textsuperscript{67} The Irish knew little about the Aberdeens and in truth the couple knew little about the Irish. There was a certain amount of suspicion on both sides. Both the Irish Popular Party who wanted Home Rule and the Loyalists were wary of the new occupants of Dublin Castle.\textsuperscript{68} There was no large procession when the new vice-regal party arrived. There was, however, a small parade, and the astute Ishbel had her four children, all under the age of seven, and dressed in Irish poplin, accompany her in the state coach.\textsuperscript{69} Ishbel, whose mother was Irish, decided that appealing to national pride and inherent Celtic qualities would be the key to their success among the Irish, and she was right.

\textsuperscript{65}ibid.

\textsuperscript{66}Pentland, op.cit, p.57.

\textsuperscript{67}Stead, op.cit., p.139.

\textsuperscript{68}ibid.

\textsuperscript{69}Lord and Lady Aberdeen, We Twain, op.cit., p.252.
Her Excellency, who had been concerned with the plight of the unemployed and disadvantaged in London, saw an even greater need in Ireland. The problem was that although different organisations existed to aid the poor, they were disparate groups who acted independently. Ishbel knew that these associations could be brought together, and that she and Lord Aberdeen could be the catalyst. Ishbel sought ladies from both nationalist and loyalists groups to assist her efforts. She gave her personal attention to many organisations and felt she could see a way to pursue long term benefits for the Irish peasant workers. 

At the time Ishbel was on the committee of the Edinburgh International Exhibition of 1886 and realised that an Irish industries display would be of mutual benefit to the Exhibition organisers and the Irish workers. Lady Aberdeen began immediately to organise an exhibit of Irish work, and her efforts were well rewarded. According to The Times, the sight of Irish girls spinning, weaving, and lacemaking made it one of the best exhibitions at the Edinburgh fair.

Lady Aberdeen, now stressing her Irish ancestry through her mother’s family, the O’Neills, threw herself heart and soul into the new vice-regal woman’s role. Her involvement with charities to aid in the 1886 famine, and her engagement with the Irish working class, enabled her to declare she had ‘many Irish friends’. The poverty of the majority of the population was overwhelming, and although the Irish Industries Exhibition in Edinburgh had been a success what was needed was a long-term strategy. Ishbel, the great advocate of work, and especially women’s work set about

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71 More Cracks with ‘We Twa’, op.cit., p.223.
73 More Cracks with ‘We Twa’, op.cit., p.225.
the job. In Ireland, she believed with organisation and commitment, the skills of
cottage industry workers could be employed to give Irish workers a future, and many
of these skills belonged to women.

In 1886, she inaugurated the national Irish Industries Association with a large garden
party at the vice-regal Lodge. Guests were requested to wear clothes of genuine Irish
manufacture, Irish jigs were danced, and Irish folk songs performed.\textsuperscript{74} This was the
first of a long line of vice-regal occasions arranged by Lady Aberdeen to launch a
myriad of new organisations with reforming ideas. Relying on experience from her
English and Scottish philanthropic days she employed what was becoming the
standard organisational procedure for new vice-regal ladies.\textsuperscript{75} The plan was as
follows; enlist important people and all the interested parties and give them input and
senior positions, advertise widely and have sound financial and organisational plans
in place.\textsuperscript{76} These tactics were adopted to great effect by many ‘new’ vice-regal
women throughout the 1884-1914 period.

The Irish Industries Association encouraged industry from lace making to rabbit
farming and bee keeping. The ideas behind the organisation were simple. They
included an expansion of the skills of poor Irish workers through the teaching of
practical crafts at schools and night classes, identifying trends, publicising and
advertising the wares and establishing international trade and industry connections.\textsuperscript{77}
In true Ishbel vice-regal style, it was not undertaken as a half-measure. The group

\textsuperscript{74}Keane, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.62-63.
\textsuperscript{75}It was used by Lady Dufferin in India and Lady Dudley in Australia
\textsuperscript{76}As discussed in Chapter Three.
\textsuperscript{77}\textit{More Cracks with ‘We Twa’}, op.cit., pp.224-225.
drew together different factions, including Protestants, Catholics, Methodists, Presbyterians, Quakers, other faiths and agnostics as well as Nationalists and Unionists. This ecumenical approach was a hallmark of Ishbel’s leadership. From the beginning she was aware that to achieve her objectives she must have a united membership behind her and a professional approach. The Association was set up as a limited liability company with Lady Aberdeen as President. At this time, one outlet for Irish goods, the Irish Lace Depot, a wholesale market for lace workers, was in a perilous position due to the death of its owner.\(^78\) Ishbel insured her life to obtain the financial agreement necessary to keep the market open and bring it into the Industry Association Fold.\(^79\)

Lord and Lady Aberdeen’s time in Ireland came to an abrupt and early end with the defeat of the Gladstone Government’s Home Rule Bill of 1886 and a change of government. Yet within the six months of the appointment, the Aberdeens and especially Ishbel, had managed to earn the respect and affection of large numbers of Irish people. One newspaper correspondent remarked on her leaving, ‘I have seen many failures, and never perhaps such a complete success as Lady Aberdeen’s’.\(^80\) She had managed to create a glittering social season at the castle, which once again she opened up to many different people. On their departure an Irish band played the much-despised ‘God Save the Queen’ which they had stayed up all night to learn.\(^81\) It was a tribute to the Aberdeens that they had brought an understanding of the Irish situation to their role and once again Ishbel established herself as an exceptional

\(^78\)Keane, op.cit., pp.62-63.
\(^79\)ibid.
\(^80\)Aberdeen and Temair, Ishbel Gordon, Marchioness, The Canadian Journal, op.cit., p.xx. This comment came from a female correspondent for the Truth newspaper.
\(^81\)ibid.
coordinator and an acutely aware political and social analyst. The few months in Ireland had proved to Ishbel that she could accomplish a great deal, particularly in vice-regal circles, and that she had abilities which could be used to benefit both the Empire and women's place in the world. Her Excellency proved in Ireland that her intelligent, pleasant, hardworking and accepting nature got results. The couple were greatly disappointed at both the outcome of the election and leaving Ireland. They spent the next few months travelling the world and were greeted by enthusiastic Irish well wishers wherever they went.  

Back to England and Back to Work

As has already been discussed in Chapter One, the aristocracy was under pressure in late Victorian Britain. Edward Carpenter's 1887 book *England's Ideal*, portrayed the better off in society as a corrupting and draining influence on the economy, and that this influence should be destroyed.  

Ishbel felt the social inequality of the times and believed those with something to offer, such as her husband and herself were duty bound to try to improve the situation for all British people. She was alarmed at such revolutionary talk - surely much could be reformed without violence. To Ishbel privileged women must claim their right 'to be allowed to perform our duty', and those who possessed a better education and more time and opportunity must 'think for the hard-pressed working woman who has no leisure for thought, no chance for action'.

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82 The Marquis and Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair, *More Cracks with 'We Twas', op.cit.*, pp. 50-52.
85 Pentland, *op.cit.*, p.75.
Therefore upon her return to Britain Ishbel immediately threw herself back into the arena of workers organisations. In 1888, she arranged a three-day conference of women workers in Aberdeen Scotland. Ishbel’s speech on working reforms and the need for well-paid employment opportunities for females was well received. On the strength of this, Ishbel was invited to Birmingham to give an address on Home Rule to a Liberal Party meeting of over 5000 at the Town Hall. Ishbel was both nervous and exhilarated by the experience. The speech was a success and the press were full of admiration for this woman who spoke with knowledge, power and thought, with ‘no suggestion of the blue stocking or of hysterical rhetoric’ about her. The reporters believed that the Countess was the type of new woman that they could applaud, for she had admirable ‘male-like’ attributes, such as intelligence and the ability to speak in public and yet she did not lose her femininity.

Lady Aberdeen continued on unabated. She rejuvenated the Women’s Liberal Federation, electioneered for the new London County Council and designed her new London house. This house built in 1887-8 in Grosvenor Square, was planned with the intention of combining meeting rooms with a home. The result was a residence with large inter-connecting rooms, electric lights, and several bathrooms. Over the years the building saw the formation and ongoing meetings of many associations. One of the first events in 1888 was an exhibition of thirty co-operative societies.

86 Abid., p.73
88 As Ishbel was not a ratepayer she was not eligible to stand in the County Council elections but she campaigned for others.
89 For example, The National Home Reading Union, the Provision for Seats for Shop Assistants, the London Playing Fields Association, The National Poultry Council and the Co-operative Movement to name a few. Pentland, op.cit., p.77.
where the public could learn more about the work of these groups.\footnote{ibid.}

But Ishbel, the wife and mother of young children, Ishbel the activist, Ishbel the religious crusader, was wearing herself out. Henry Drummond admonished her in a letter stating she was working like a tiger and needed to slow down because not only was it against nature it was ‘even against the Factory Acts!’\footnote{ibid., p.81.} In October 1889, Ishbel collapsed. Blinding headaches and fatigue, left Ishbel in need of a complete break. She also had financial concerns caused by her overspending and the added weight of her mother’s serious illness.\footnote{French, op.cit., p.59.} Under doctor’s orders, she was to take a year off and spend her time resting, reading and writing.\footnote{Pentland, op.cit., p.82.}

It was during this year off, spanning 1889-1890, that Lord and Lady Aberdeen went on a long holiday to Canada. Although a private visit, it gave Ishbel the opportunity to follow up her interest in emigration, which she believed was the best hope for the poorer classes. It was through migration that they could improve their economic position and become useful citizens of the British Empire.\footnote{Keane, op.cit., p.60.} In Canada, the couple, accompanied by their children and a large entourage, rented a house for three months at Hamilton, near Niagara Falls. The Aberdeens formed a long lasting affection for the Dominion and went on tour to learn a little about the people and geography of the country. All this Ishbel recorded with her new love, a Kodak camera.\footnote{See, Countess of Aberdeen, Through Canada with a Kodak, op.cit.} Leaving the children at Hamilton, Lord and Lady Aberdeen set off to visit a settlement of
Highland crofters in Manitoba. Lord Aberdeen had donated £2,000 to this enterprise to establish Scottish settlers in remote provinces, as the Aberdeens were active imperialists even when not in vice-regal office. They then travelled further west to the scenic country along the Pacific coast and on local advice purchased a 480-acre farm in Okanagan, Western Canada, sight unseen. Ishbel’s brother, Coutts, was recruited to run the farm for them.

Lady Aberdeen was appalled at the lack of physical comforts and mental stimulation available for the Canadian pioneer families she saw during this trip. Although still recuperating from her collapse she was unable to stop her reforming urges and decided to rectify the situation. At a meeting of 1,400 women at Winnipeg she suggested a solution; books and magazines. Within a month the ‘Lady Aberdeen Association for Distribution of Literature to Settlers in the West’ had been formed. Branches were formed throughout Canada and distribution centres opened in the United Kingdom. This Association was run in London by Lady Dufferin. Harriot Dufferin was fulfilling her new vice-regal woman’s ongoing duties to one of her colonies by providing reading material until 1904 when it was taken over by the Victoria League.

Ishbel, back from Canada and feeling better once again entered the public arena. Lady Aberdeen wanted to be seen as a real worker, with a real understanding of the demands of a worker’s life, despite the fact that she received no remuneration for her

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96 Keane, op.cit., p.60.
97 Pentland, op.cit., p.91.
98 Keane, op.cit., p.60.
100 ibid.
work. In 1890, she gave a speech to 800 Glasgow mill-girls on the Scottish Women’s Benefit Society.\textsuperscript{101} It was during this speech that Ishbel reinforced the view of many reforming upper-class ladies, by proclaiming that they, too, were working women. The work they performed may have been of a different nature and they may not have received a wage but, nevertheless, as Ishbel proudly declared to the mill-girls we are all ‘numbered among the world’s workers.’\textsuperscript{102}

Ishbel again took up her work for the Irish Industries Association (IIA). She was often in Ireland, pressing for innovation and helping with sales, trade and skill training. An Irish industry shop was opened in Dublin and London and the goods were also successfully marketed in Paris.\textsuperscript{103} Ishbel knew America was the next step. The Association was planning to send a showcase of their wares to the World’s Columbian Exposition or World’s Fair to be held in Chicago in 1893.\textsuperscript{104} A simple showcase was not good enough for Ishbel. Aware of the need to advertise and impress, her suggestion was that the Association should build a complete Irish village with cottages, dairying, farming, Irish colleens and young men, making and selling their goods on site. And why not include a full-sized model bride dressed in Irish lace complete with wedding presents?\textsuperscript{105} In 1891, the Aberdeen’s set out for Chicago to discuss the Fair.

Notwithstanding the drain on their finances, the 1891 trip went ahead and not just for

\textsuperscript{101}ibid., p.87. This society was established to help women in need through aid supplied by the fund. This aid was financed by the workers contributions.

\textsuperscript{102}ibid.

\textsuperscript{103}Keane, op.cit., p.63.

Irish Industries. The Aberdeens met and discussed international relations with Theodore Roosevelt, Canadian independence and the British Empire with Wilfrid Laurier in Boston, international arbitration with James Blain, and social problems and women's role with Jane Addams.\textsuperscript{106} Ishbel with her interest in politics and activism was in her element. She could discuss and debate important international issues in distinguished company. She was one of what Robert Kelly termed 'the transatlantic persuasion'.\textsuperscript{107} This band of individuals included a number of influential people from Britain, the United States, and Canada who shared a liberal, egalitarian world view. The Countess, when mixing in these circles, realised she was not lacking in ability or intelligence, and this involvement gave Ishbel great confidence in what she could achieve. It also increased her international profile and expanded her networks.

In 1892 a general election was held in the United Kingdom and Gladstone and the Liberals were voted back into government. Lord Aberdeen was expected to be returned as Lord Lieutenant to Ireland, but this did not happen as the Government decided a new man with no political baggage was needed. As a consolation prize, Gladstone offered the Aberdeens the choice of several overseas posts.\textsuperscript{108} They chose Canada. This appointment was to begin in September 1893. The Aberdeens were both sorry to be leaving the passionate political and social scenes of Britain but were also looking forward to a new challenge. Ishbel, aged 36, and with a young family set off for Canada, but she did not leave her political beliefs behind. It was said that there was a picture of Gladstone displayed in every room at Government House, Rideau

\textsuperscript{105}ibid.


Hall, Ottawa.\textsuperscript{109} The timing of the Canadian appointment enabled Ishbel to concentrate on the Irish exhibition at the World’s Fair in Chicago and to attend the opening in April 1893. Lady Aberdeen knew she had been entrusted with a mission by ‘persons of all classes, all denominations of religion, and all sections of politics, [and it was] of wide and practical importance to the poor of Ireland’.\textsuperscript{110} Ishbel also knew that Irish ancestry was common in the United States and called on all those proud children of Ireland to her display. Irish harps, pipes, dancers and singers all added to the Irish illusion at the Exhibition. At considerable trouble and expense, the Irish Industries Association established a village within the overall display. It was this actual working village that was Ishbel’s chief undertaking. Fifteen Irish cottages with few home comforts, iron pots and original bog-turf were peopled by eighteen pretty Irish colleens personally chosen by Ishbel, making lace, spinning cotton and serving meals.\textsuperscript{111} The Irish village was a great success for Ishbel and Irish industries.\textsuperscript{112} On opening day it attracted over 20,000, visitors each paying 25 cents for the experience.\textsuperscript{113} Alert to every opportunity, Lady Aberdeen was quick to follow up on the World’s Fair success with the opening of an Irish store in Chicago.\textsuperscript{114}

Once in Canada as wife of the Governor-General, she pushed for the importation of Irish goods. By September 1894, several stores including John Murphy and Co. were

\textsuperscript{109} Schull, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.18-25.
\textsuperscript{110} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{111} Pentland, \textit{op.cit.}, p.98.
\textsuperscript{113} Sheey, \textit{op.cit.}, p.147.
featuring Irish imports in their stores and becoming Canadian agents for Irish industry.115 Ishbel’s abilities did not only extend to the political and charitable arenas, she was also a shrewd businesswoman. She did not, however, pay the same attention to her personal finances, and these were always an afterthought. Lord Aberdeen’s financial position was steadily worsening in the 1880s and 1890s, the agricultural depression and his penchant for cutting his tenants rents, the couple’s philanthropy, holidays and purchases did not enhance their position. Ishbel was concerned by ‘this gnawing at one’s heart over money’.116

Ishbel, the internationalist, was strengthening her global links with the women’s network. A congress of women from many organisations and countries was held in Chicago at the time of the Fair. It was here that Lady Aberdeen, as a British delegate, was elected the President of the newly formed International Council of Women.117 It would continue to meet every five years. An American National Council of Women had been formed in Washington in 1888 and was attracting much attention. At this Chicago congress in 1893 Ishbel met different and enthusiastic women’s groups from many countries who wanted to go home and form their own national councils. It was also in Chicago that Lady Aberdeen the ‘dedicated woman’s suffragist’, held almost daily conferences with the American suffrage advocate Susan B. Anthony, on ‘strengthening the suffrage ranks both in England and in America’.118

114 *ibid.*


Lady Aberdeen and the National Council of Women of Canada

Before Ishbel arrived in Canada in late 1893 (in her vice-regal role), she had met a Canadian, Mrs. Willoughby Cummings in Chicago, who was anxious to begin a National Council of Women in Canada. Within a month of Ishbel’s official arrival as wife of the Governor-General, she found herself in Toronto at a meeting to establish a national woman’s organisation for Canada. The Canadians were unaccustomed to seeing and hearing a woman give a public address, and Ishbel was the first vice-regal woman to do so. Lady Dufferin during her vice-regal stay in Canada in the 1870s adopted the traditional vice-regal wife’s role and never attempted a public speech. Ishbel, accustomed to public speaking acquitted herself well in front of 2,000 women at the Toronto Pavillion. It was important for these Canadian women to have a President who was high profile yet was outside local politics, religious and class rivalries. Consequently Lady Aberdeen, the experienced organiser, was elected President of the newly established Canadian National Council of Women (NCWC).

Before leaving for Canada, Ishbel had been warned by her Liberal friends, and her mother, not to take on any duties which could be seen as political. But Ishbel felt no-one ‘could possibly take exception to a project that would combine women of all political complexions, all faiths and all social groupings in a common endeavour’. Lady Aberdeen believed this was the type of work that fitted the mould of the new vice-regal woman.

\[119\] Strong-Boag, *op.cit.*, pp.139-140.
\[121\] *ibid*.
\[122\] Schull, *op.cit.*, p.22.
With the NCWC, unity was the goal. Though her earlier organisational experiences Lady Aberdeen knew much could be achieved when women’s associations joined under one umbrella group. Ishbel was constantly striving to bring the Canadian sisterhood together, stressing the power of numbers and the benefits of working with one another. She wished “to forge a golden link uniting all the women workers from ocean to ocean in bonds of sisterhood.”¹²³ She spoke to Canadian women of her association with the Union of Women Workers in England, formed in 1883, and how ‘now we are surrounded by a network of agencies conducted, partially or entirely by women for every conceivable object’.¹²⁴ Ishbel desired the same outcome for the Canadian organisation, however, without the help of wealthy peers or aristocratic links to draw upon, ‘Ishbel put her faith in the efforts of enlightened women’.¹²⁵

Early in 1894 Ishbel was busy travelling the country and speaking to a variety of women’s societies about forming Local Councils to incorporate all regional women’s groups into this new umbrella organisation, called the National Council of Women of Canada. Any association could affiliate if they accepted the basic precept of strength through ‘unity of thought, sympathy, and purpose, and that an organised movement of women will best conserve the highest good of the Family and the State’.¹²⁶ Questions of religion, race, class and politics were openly discouraged. All groups of women workers could and should be represented. The local and national councils would also be part of the international network of women working for women the ICW.¹²⁷ It was,

¹²³Lady Aberdeen from a speech given to a public meeting at Port Arthur, 25 September, 1894, Aberdeen Papers, op.cit., MG27 I B5 vol 16.
¹²⁴Empire, 28 October, 1893, Aberdeen Papers, op.cit., MG27 I B5 vol 14.
¹²⁵French, op.cit., p.147.
¹²⁷Through her experience as President of the International Council of Women Ishbel was able to
admittedly, a mainly white, middle and upper-class institution. Nevertheless, the idea was to provide assistance and reform for all women regardless of class difference because the differences did not outweigh the similarities. Internationalists like Lady Aberdeen saw ‘the sisterhood stretching out its hand to those sisters of other countries’ in order to push for a universal improvement in female lives. From poor Indian girls to their enlightened New Zealand sisters, all had obstacles to overcome and all would benefit from the women’s network. Women’s position in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, even privileged white women, was still narrowly confined to motherhood, and economic, educational, political and personal subjugation. This view of the sisterhood was evident in the careers of many new vice-regal women but to different extents. Ishbel’s sisterhood was a more encompassing and egalitarian ideology than that expressed by Lady Dufferin and her Association for Supplying Medical Aid to the Women of India. Lady Dufferin’s Fund appeared to view the connection as largely one sisterhood of influential white women helping another sisterhood of less fortunate Indian women.

Lady Aberdeen was anxious to involve all women including those with divergent views, and all input from different groups was to be given equal importance. Once again, Ishbel was conscious of the power of numbers and ‘the sisterhood of women’ to ‘link together all the women workers’ as the way to reform and advancement. At

explain the goals of the Council to Canadian women.

128 *Halifax Herald*, 25 August 1894, p.4

129 The three women of this thesis had very little formal education, all were dependent on their husbands for financial security and all suffered motherhood-related tragedies; Lady Dufferin lost two baby sons at birth, Lady Aberdeen’s daughter died at a few months, and Lady Dudley nearly died after a miscarriage.

130 See thesis Chapter Four.

131 *Halifax Herald*, 23 August 1894, p.5.
the Toronto meeting in 1894, the *Globe* reported that ‘All classes of womankind were represented, from factory operatives to leaders in the world of fashion’. In many of her speeches to local women’s organisations Ishbel stressed that the unity of women could be put to good effect. She reiterated that even without the vote, united women’s groups could influence government and community ideas. Although Lady Aberdeen was a female suffragist she was careful not to push her opinion on the subject while a vice-regal wife, and she did not believe the vote was the only avenue to reform. She stressed that much could be accomplished in a wide social context. Her Excellency pointed to the Aberdeen Organisation, which she had formed with the help of local female reformers in Scotland. Politicians, she observed, were careful to know the views of the group before expounding policies, and they also asked these women for recommendations on different social considerations. This new vice-regal woman was stressing the influence the combined voices of women could have on government. The women of the National Council, she noted, should be aware of their collective power.

Different types of women’s work and women workers were important to Lady Aberdeen and she wanted it all included in the agenda of the various councils of women. As she said in 1894, ‘How the home workers are needed and the public workers! In these Unions or Councils of women all these different sorts of workers

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132 *Globe*, Toronto, 20 February 1894, p.3.
134 *ibid*.
135 *ibid*.
Women working for wages, women working for charitable organisations, women working within the family, all deserved recognition. Lady Aberdeen’s perspective on work and that of the NCWC indicates that for many women work was not valued according to remuneration only. Paid and unpaid occupations were all work and required attention.

Although Ishbel believed the organisation of the National Council would be a straightforward process, she soon found herself embroiled in all sorts of protests from many quarters. Women from the Canadian Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) wanted membership restricted to total abstainers; the Catholic Bishop of Montreal had his reservations which led to local Catholic ladies in the French speaking areas being reticent; many Jewish women in the Dominion were not sure of their position; and the Presbyterian wives of Bishops in Quebec who did not speak or understand French and kept themselves apart, were undecided. The London organisation wanted to begin each meeting of national councils formed within the Empire with Protestant prayers and a Bible reading. This was objectionable to Catholics, Jews, and other religions such as Unitarians and Quakers and who those possessed other beliefs. The matter became very heated on both sides of the Atlantic with letters and comments appearing in the press and from the pulpit. Ishbel and the organisation were accused of a lack of faith and un-Christian attitudes, just as Lady Dufferin had experienced earlier in India. One newspaper headline read ‘National

136London Free Press, 15 February 1894 p.7. Lady Aberdeen made this speech while on a trip home to London where she addressed a huge audience at the Opera House.

137Strong-Boag, op.cit., p.139

Council of Women against Lord’s Prayer'. Lady Aberdeen suggested a period of silent reflection before the meetings. This was agreed to by an executive vote of 56 to 45, but not without spirited temperance union resistance.

On 11 April 1894, the first annual meeting of the National Council of Women of Canada opened in Ottawa with a silent interlude. Ishbel commented it was a strange feeling to be linked not by ritual or religion but by a need ‘to bind together all workers, to get them to know and appreciate one another and to unite for common purposes’. The women who joined were accepted as adherents to their particular faith but the society had nothing to do with religious teaching or indoctrination.

By the time Ishbel left Canada in 1898, the NCWC could boast of many positive results. It had succeeded in introducing manual and domestic training in schools, the appointment of female factory inspectors, home reading circles, boards for the relief of distress and unemployment, reforms in age, immigrant, infirm, and prisoner care, baby and mother health clinics, health talks and anti-tuberculosis measures and the establishment of the Victorian Order of Nurses (VON). This is an impressive list and Ishbel continued to reminded the ladies throughout her time in Canada that in unity they could achieve much. They should not wait for Government to act, they should take personal responsibility to awaken the social conscience, as ‘any improvement can be made by people who feel the need for it and mean to see it carried out’.

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140 ibid., p.22.
141 ibid.
143 Lady Aberdeen, “President’s Closing Address of the Fifth Annual Meeting of the National Council
Lady Aberdeen has been criticised by some for what has been characterised as her conservative role in the NCWC and the ICW. It has been argued that she was not radical enough, not a true feminist, and had kept the organisation from real success. Overall, the critics claim that her ‘influence inhibited flexibility and creativity over the long term’. Strong-Boag asserts that Ishbel’s dominant personality stifled the society and the fact that she did not push suffrage was a serious failing. Although Ishbel’s personality is stamped on the early years of the NCWC, it can be argued that without her intelligence, experience and negotiating skills it is questionable whether the NCW would have been formed in Canada at all in the 1890s. Again with the ICW, without Ishbel’s hard work and continued support, it too may not have succeeded. Ishbel gave her time and abilities to these groups as well as attending to her official vice-regal responsibilities and her domestic duties, ‘with knocks raining on my unoffending door all day; (I then) work for the NCW and VON all night’, the criticism seems extraordinary and misplaced.

Ishbel and the Victorian Order of Nurses (VON)

As already noted Lady Aberdeen, as wife of the Governor-General of Canada 1893-1898, was instrumental in forming many associations in Canada. Her greatest accomplishment, however, was undoubtedly the creation of the Victorian Order of Nurses (VON). Unlike Lady Dufferin, Lady Aberdeen received no special instructions from Queen Victoria about forming a specific health service for Canadian women. Ishbel, as a modern vice-regal woman with a new agenda, took it upon


144Strong-Boag, op.cit., p.146.

herself to initiate nursing reforms, as she saw a real need in the Dominion and sought to remedy it. As was fitting, however, she personally kept the Queen informed of the scheme’s progress.\textsuperscript{146} By the end of the nineteenth century, new vice-regal women saw themselves as having a duty to the Ruler and to their husband’s position to enhance the lives of British subjects and to spread British civilisation and expertise through their official capacity and innovative associations across the Empire. They embraced the concept of new imperialism and forged ahead with this opportunity to widen the scope of women’s public involvement wherever they went.

In May 1896, at a NCWC meeting in Montreal, Lady Aberdeen as president of the NCWC was invited to consider the plight of Canadian health in outlying districts.\textsuperscript{147} It was suggested by Vancouver delegates that nurses should be trained to assist town and country families and native Indians as well.\textsuperscript{148} This request for remote health care arrived at a time when other local councils, notably the women of Halifax, and Ishbel herself, were considering a suitable national memorial for the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1897. The idea of a district nursing organisation was discussed.\textsuperscript{149} Ishbel was enthused by the fact that women from both sides of the country considered health as an area that needed their attention. These two ideas, district nursing and the Jubilee, seemed to be in harmony. After all did not the Queen ten years earlier use the money raised from her Golden Jubilee Fund to establish the Queen’s Nurses who were trained to nurse the poor and needy in their own homes within the United

\textsuperscript{146}Lord and Lady Aberdeen, \textit{We Twa, op.cit.}, p.114 & p.128.

\textsuperscript{147}Victorian Order of Nurses Papers, MG 28 I 171, vol.9, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa, p.1

\textsuperscript{148}Although not attracting much press coverage the Aberdeens often visited Indian missions and lands. See, for example, their visit to the Squamish Mission, \textit{Daily Columbian}, 1 November 1894, p.15.

\textsuperscript{149}Victorian Order of Nurses Papers, \textit{op.cit.}, MG 28 I 171 vol.9, p.1-2.
Kingdom?

Was not the Queen still involved with the organisation and had not she made clear her interest in nursing? Queen Victoria had instigated Lady Dufferin’s pioneering work in India and continued to promote the movement for medical aid to the women of the sub-continent. Victoria considered the health issue of vital importance throughout her Empire. Why not give the Queen a gift she would appreciate and a gift the Dominion needed - a national Canadian nursing scheme?

In Britain in 1897, Queen Victoria’s Jubilee saw more funds being injected into the Queen’s Nursing Institute for the district nursing of the poor in Britain and Ireland. Canada, and Lady Aberdeen, could use the patriotic feeling created by the Diamond Jubilee to raise funds to establish a nursing order along similar lines. Ishbel informed the Queen of her proposed project. She soon received a cable from Windsor conveying Victoria’s approval. With royal authorisation for her Jubilee initiative, Lady Aberdeen went to work. Utilising the aristocratic ladies’ unofficial blueprint for initiating organisations, which involved influential people and interested parties, assessing financial needs for the present and future success of the project, and operating an open and transparent association. Ishbel invited all those both interested and affected, experts in the field, and interested parties, to be involved from the

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151 *The Nursing Record and Hospital Record*, 27 November, 1897, p.438.

152 *Toronto Mail and Empire*, 1 April 1897, Aberdeen Papers, *op. cit.*, MG27 I B5 vol.25.

153 The Queen had emphasised this by her interest in district nursing and her request to Lady Dufferin in India.

154 Victorian Order of Nurses Papers, *op. cit.*, MG 28 I 171 vol.9, pp.1-2

155 For information on the Queen’s Jubilee Nurses, see the Queen’s Nurses’ Magazine, no.1 vol.1 1 May 1904, pp. 3-4.

Queen Victoria’s Blessing to the VON

Figure 31. Toronto Globe April 1897
Immediately a small medical advisory committee consisting of several doctors and advisers was convened. This committee drew up some suggestions for the selection and training of nurses. Lady Aberdeen, with the backing of the NCWC, was asked to approach the Prime Minister, Sir Wilfred Laurier, the Dominion government, and to call a public meeting in Ottawa to gauge community attitudes to the idea. The Prime Minister privately visited Lady Aberdeen in January 1897. He gave Ishbel his approval, and suggested that perhaps government funding could be made available and the scheme become the official National Memorial to Queen Victoria, if he could get an unanimous vote from parliament. The press then became interested and Lady Aberdeen, using all the skills and experience she had gained from years of aristocratic philanthropic work, set the plan in motion. Ishbel held a press reception at Government House, Rideau Hall, where the national and local reporters were wined and dined and informed about the new organisation’s proposed structure and goals. Once assured of positive media coverage Ishbel then called a public meeting in Ottawa to explain the plan to Canadians.

At this meeting, held on 10 February 1897 in the hall at the Normal School and presided over by His Excellency Lord Aberdeen, Ishbel outlined her project. She felt it was necessary to immediately start a national fund to be able to pay for the training of suitable women to reside in the most needy districts of the vast country in a

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157 Lord and Lady Aberdeen, We Twain, op. cit., pp.114-133. Lady Aberdeen already knew Wilfred Laurier, see p.238 of this chapter.
158 Penney, op. cit., p.18.
capacity of 'home helpers'. The work required nursing the sick, caring for mothers and children, and instilling knowledge about household sanitation and basic economy. It was the type of organisation that combined philanthropy and work which new vice-regal women were eager to establish. At this early stage, and with the approval of Laurier, the idea for the Victorian Order of Home Helpers as the Dominions answer to the Queen’s Jubilee memorial, was thus placed before the Canadian people, both white and Indian.

Ishbel once again proving her lobbying expertise, invited all Lieutenant-Governors, federal and provincial ministers, senators, bishops, judges, members of doctors organisations and boards of health along with the presidents of the women’s councils to become vice-presidents of this Jubilee Memorial Fund. The speeches and results from the meeting were widely circulated by the press and through the local women’s councils. Other meetings were held throughout the country including Montreal, Toronto and Halifax and representative committees were formed to promote the scheme. Nearly all who heard of the project responded with enthusiasm. Ishbel was delighted with the promised backing of the government, and she thought it would be an easy path to establishing the Order. The Prime Minister invited Ishbel to address the combined houses of parliament on this Canadian Diamond Jubilee Memorial to the Queen. Ishbel, the unofficial politician, seized the opportunity. The government members received the Governor-General’s wife cordially and Ishbel believed they

159 Victorian Order of Nurses Papers, op. cit., MG 28 I 171 vol.9, p.1.
160 The Nursing Record and Hospital World, 1 January 1898, pp.9-10.
161 Aberdeen, We Twa, op. cit., p.116.
162 Penney, op. cit., pp.18-19
163 ibid.
were impressed by her presentation.\footnote{164}{Victorian Order of Nurses Papers, \textit{op.cit.}, MG 28 I 171 vol.9, p.2.}

It was an ambitious scheme, and although $100,000 was considered a satisfactory amount for the first year, the sum of one million dollars was mentioned as an endowment.\footnote{165}{Lord and Lady Aberdeen, \textit{We Twa, op.cit.}, pp.115-120.} Lady Aberdeen, with the help of her husband, selected approximately thirty influential people to form a provisional central committee to organise the scheme. This group would meet weekly until the basic plan was established. It was suggested that funds be raised from donation and subscription and that these be collected on a local level and then sent to the executive committee for dispersal. The central board would set the nursing standards and would decide which and when nurses were to be dispatched to the needy areas.\footnote{166}{\textit{ibid.}, pp.117-9.} This provisional committee was very active, holding 37 meetings between March 1897 and May 1898, with most held in the office of the Governor-General and chaired by Lady Aberdeen.\footnote{167}{See the Victorian Order of Nurses Papers, \textit{op.cit.}, MG 28 I 171, vol.9, for information on the establishment of the scheme.}

The ten members of the medical committee suggested two important changes to the scheme. As the nurses were to be known as the Queen’s nurses they must, therefore, be of the highest standard, and it was determined that only fully trained hospital nurses would be accepted. Therefore the words ‘home helpers’ was dropped in favour of the ‘Victorian Order of Nurses’ (VON).\footnote{168}{Victorian Order of Nurses Papers, \textit{op.cit.}, MG 28 I 1171, vol.9.} Secondly, although the idea was to send the nurses to outlying districts it was thought that the cities must be involved in the training of VON nurses. Without the financial backing of the large towns and cities,
the project would fail.\textsuperscript{169}

The project needed to have a high profile. It was decided to publish a pamphlet to be widely circulated which would give a clear account of the scheme to the general public.\textsuperscript{170} English and French announcements were made in the press, notices and handbills placed in post offices, banks and railway stations. Meetings were to be held in all the larger cities and towns. Approaches for support were made to Bishops, wealthy citizens, and to Canadians in the United States. Bank managers were encouraged to open subscription lists. Post Offices were asked to allow free postage for VON material. The Aberdeens were to give special attention to Government ministers, hoping to obtain a Government grant for the Order.\textsuperscript{171} Lady Aberdeen was to personally appeal to all school children to help with a unique Canadian children's tribute to Queen Victoria. The Committee wrote to every clergyman in the Canadian Almanac asking them to make a reference to the Order in the sermons of 23 May 1897, the Queen's Birthday weekend.\textsuperscript{172}

As this list of activities testifies, Lady Aberdeen and her committee were very thorough in their determination to make their plan a success, and Ishbel used all her experience and committee 'know-how' to push the project. Of course, Ishbel had assistance, however, it was her personal appeal to all Canadians and her appearance in dozens of small centres which helped to produced the national result she needed. She was successful in getting local committees of the VON formed in large towns

\textsuperscript{169} ibid.
\textsuperscript{170} ibid.
\textsuperscript{171} ibid.
\textsuperscript{172} ibid.
such as Hamilton, Montreal, Vancouver and Victoria, and such tiny settlements in the
Maritimes as Woodstock, Campbelltown and Chatham. The nurses were for both
city and outlying areas and Lady Aberdeen wanted the locals to have a sense of
ownership of their nurses. The Countess needed both money and support from the
communities she was trying to assist. But while Ishbel was working hard in Canada to
get her scheme operating, she also had to contend with problems arising in Britain
with regard to the original Queen’s Nurses.

British Objections

The Canadian committee believed affiliation with the British Queen’s Nurses, the
Queen Victoria Jubilee Institute for Nurses, would give their organisation both
prestige and a proven model from which to launch their organisation. The Canadian
organisation was to be part of a larger imperial crusade towards improving society.
Some in the Institute in England, however, were not enthusiastic about the work
being taken overseas and therefore out of their hands. The Institute’s President at
this time, the Rev. Arthur Peile, was concerned about the unchecked growth
throughout the Commonwealth of organisations wanting to align themselves with the
British Institute. This view did not sit well with Ishbel’s imperial mission ideal.

One of those who did wish to promote overseas expansion was Harold Boulton, who,
as Hon. Secretary to the Queen’s Commemoration Fund in London, had approached

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173 See map page 279a.
174 Lord and Lady Aberdeen, We Twain, op.cit., p.128.
Rev. Peile about expanding the scheme to the colonies. But Rev. Peile and others on the Institute’s Board were not happy. They were worried that the high standards of their District Nurses could not be adequately assured in the colonies. They put great value on their unique organisation which set an example and on their ability to inspire confidence and bring health to their patients. Although bringing such nursing expertise to the Empire was a duty, it was also complicated, and in the view of many in the Institute, too difficult. Their aim was to have a continuing supply of well-trained district nurses in Britain, and to ensure continuing supervision, inspection and upgrading of standards.

Mindful of the problems, Boulton and others, were, nonetheless, active in trying to get a Federation of Queen Institute’s Nurses established throughout the Empire. In 1896, a draft document was prepared outlining the ‘Conditions of Federation’ and it was envisaged that Central Councils in the colonies would be set up to oversee training and supervision. Harold Boulton believed this would be carrying on the work which Queen Victoria herself had commenced. Many on the Institute’s Board, however, decided that adequate supervision could not be guaranteed throughout the vast distances of Empire, and therefore, that the London Institute would not sanction any wholesale expansion of the service in the colonies. They were not interested in a Canadian branch.

Ishbel would not accept ‘no’ for an answer. Her Canadian nursing association would

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176 Baly, op.cit., p.64.
177 Stocks, op.cit., pp.186-188.
178 ibid., p.188.
179 ibid.
180 ibid.
have the backing of the Queen’s nurses. Through her contact with the Duke of Westminster, one of the chief officers and trustees of the Queen’s Jubilee Nurses of Great Britain, she pressed ahead and went directly to Queen Victoria with her plan.\footnote{Victorian Order of Nurses Papers, Lady Aberdeen’s correspondence, \textit{op.cit.}, MG 28 I 171, vol.5, 5-40.} This was the trump card that aristocratic women could draw upon, a personal relationship with the monarchy which provided a benefit to new vice-regal women in their endeavours. Used as a last resort, or as a threat, this association opened many closed doors. By using this connection, Lady Aberdeen succeeded in having the Canadian Order established as an independent identity, although affiliated with the British Nursing Institute, and adapting the Institute’s model for Canadian use.\footnote{Countess of Aberdeen, \textit{What is the Use of the Victorian Order of Nurses for Canada?} Mortimer, Ottawa, 1900, no page numbers, and Victorian Order of Nurses Papers, \textit{op.cit.}, MG 28 I 171, vol.9.} On 19 May 1898 the VON was granted a Royal Charter by Her Majesty.\footnote{Victorian Order of Nurses Papers, \textit{op.cit.}, MG 28 I 171, vol.9, p.12.} It was not normal to grant Royal Charters to dominion organisations but by December 1898 the Royal Charter for this new organisation was published.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}} This Royal Charter was a personal triumph for Ishbel. The interest and acceptance of the Queen added to the prestige of any organisation but to her, as a vice-regal woman, it was a validation of the importance of her imperial work. Ishbel believed it also proved to Canadians that they were an integral part of the great British Empire and an acknowledged partner in imperial progress.

The VON accepted the training standards of the Queen’s Institute in Britain and was reluctantly given permission to wear the uniform of the Institute. This included a similar blue and white badge with the added words ‘Victorian Order of Nurses’ to be
worn by the Canadians. There was a somewhat strained relationship between certain sections of the two organisations for years. As will be discussed in the following chapter when Lady Dudley requested help from the London Institute for her Australian organisation of bush nurses in 1909 she, too, met resistance.

Lady Aberdeen had sought help for the formation of the VON from every source she could find, including Florence Nightingale. She sent off letters to Miss Nightingale setting out the objectives and the structure of the Order. Miss McLeod, the future head of the organisation in Canada, also paid Florence a visit and impressed her with her devotion to the calling of district nursing. All three women had a particular vision of what a nurse should be, which was a dedicated and faithful type of woman, willing to give her life to the sick. Even the name of the organisation, the Victorian Order of Nurses had religious connotations. Dedicated lives of nurses were depicted in such publications as *Blessed be Drudgery*; where nursing was elevated to a semi-religious level. As previously detailed in Chapter Three, during the late Victorian and Edwardian periods, the work of the nurse was represented as a worthy vocation for women. As such it was important to Ishbel and other like minded reformers to have

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185 *ibid.*
186 Aberdeen, *We Twa*, op.cit., p.128.
187 See thesis Chapter Six.
189 Victorian Order of Nurses Papers, Lady Aberdeen’s correspondence, op.cit., MG 28 I 171, vol.5, pp.5-29.
190 William C. Garnett, *Blessed be Drudgery*, David Bryce and Son, Glasgow, 1892, with a forward by the Countess of Aberdeen.
the role depicted as one of service to humanity. And ladies needed community approval for their reform programs to succeed. The support of such an important figure as Florence Nightingale was a bonus and the Countess of Aberdeen was greatly encouraged by her good wishes and belief in the success of the Scheme.\footnote{Penney, \textit{op.
ic}, pp.34-35.} Once again Lady Aberdeen had used her networks and she made sure Miss Nightingale’s backing was mentioned in the papers and press releases.\footnote{\textit{ibid.}} Media manipulation was an early skill learned by new vice-regal women to promote their endeavours, and Ishbel used it to great effect.

During these months of uncertainty over the British Institute’s backing of the project, Ishbel pushed ahead and the Victorian Order of Nurses published their provisional constitution in November 1897.\footnote{Victorian Order of Nurses Papers, \textit{op.
ic}, MG 28 I 171 vol.9} The final constitution and by-laws were drawn up in a professional manner with the help of Mr. Justice Burbidge and others with expertise in Constitutional Law. The Canadian Order did not take over the British order’s rules and regulations but had their own, if similar, Charter, as befitted their independent status.\footnote{\textit{ibid.}}

There would be a Central Board to oversee the entire operation as was the case with Lady Dufferin’s Association in India, and Local Boards in the areas where nurses were established. These local boards would supervise the nurses, and guarantee their salary, board and lodging. This style of organisation was common in British philanthropic societies. His Excellency, Lord Aberdeen became patron of the fund
and Lady Aberdeen its president. The Committee included many religious, political, educational, business and society names. Another permanent medical committee was formed that could be referred to for professional guidance. Here again, as in so many charitable programs run by upper-class women, we have the hybrid type of philanthropic organisation, where volunteers and paid workers toiled side by side, both groups confident they were contributing, and with little or no acknowledgment of their waged or unwaged status. The Committees and trustees were volunteers. The Council of Women members, who helped to establish the nurses throughout the country, were all unpaid, but the nurses themselves received appropriate wages. This differentiation in remuneration status seems to have made no difference to their understanding of their jobs in the organisation or to work they performed.

The VON Faces Local Opposition

Lady Aberdeen met with the Canadian parliamentarians again in May 1898 and was hopeful that the promised government financial support in the form of a grant would be forthcoming. However, as in India with Lady Dufferin’s project, influential men in the Canadian medical hierarchy were not happy with the idea of such a nursing scheme which they viewed as upsetting the established medical order. In Canada the opposition was concerted and personal, even the ever optimistic Countess confessed ‘the young Order had a pretty hard struggle for existence’. The anti-VON

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197 See the careers of both Lady Dufferin and Lady Dudley in this thesis for further examples of doctors’ reluctance to sanction such projects.

198 Victorian Order of Nurses Papers, op.cit., MG 28 I 171 vol.9, p.1a.
doctors took out huge ads in newspapers across Canada voicing their opposition, warning it was a scheme ‘deleterious to the health of the country’ .\textsuperscript{199} The major detractors of the project came from the Ontario Medical Society.\textsuperscript{200} This association came out in direct opposition to the scheme and as it was the largest and wealthiest medical organisation in the country the threat it posed was considerable. Ishbel needed the doctors support in order for the nursing scheme to succeed. The Ontario Medical Society’s opposition was twofold. Firstly, they expressed concern that untrained or partly trained nurses were going to take on cases without doctors’ supervision which could lead to the lowering of health standards. Secondly, and what Ishbel believed the major reason, was anxiety over their livelihoods, and those of their country colleagues. Well trained nurses would be a cheaper alternative than doctors.\textsuperscript{201}

The Aberdeens had a formidable opponent in the Ontario Medical Society and particularly one of its members, Sir Charles Tupper.\textsuperscript{202} Tupper, a doctor and the Tory leader of the Canadian opposition had acrimonious political dealings with Lord Aberdeen and never forgot or forgave the Governor-General or his wife for what he believed was their bias against him and their interference in political matters.\textsuperscript{203} He

\textsuperscript{199} Lord and Lady Aberdeen, \textit{We Two}, \textit{op.cit.}, p.119. \textit{Kingston Whig}, 8 September, 1898, Aberdeen papers, op cit.

\textsuperscript{200} Countess of Aberdeen, \textit{What is the Use of the Victorian Order of Nurses for Canada?}, Victorian Order of Nurses Papers, 1900, \textit{op.cit.}, MG 281171 vol.9.

\textsuperscript{201} \textit{ibid.}

\textsuperscript{202} See Sir Charles Tupper, \textit{Recollections of Sixty Years in Canada}, Cassell, London, 1914. Sir Charles Tupper believed the Aberdeens had been behind his downfall as the Conservative Prime Minister in 1896 in favour of the Liberal leader Wilfred Laurier.

\textsuperscript{203} French, \textit{op.cit.}, p.232.
was ‘never again to speak a civil word of lord or lady’. Tupper, not only a doctor and politician but also a major newspaper proprietor, was behind much of the misinformation that was being spread about the proposed organisation. This was coupled with hearsay appearing in the press about the Aberdeens supposed strange household rituals. Rumours of Ishbel’s household arrangements, where servants were said to be treated as equals, where the Lord and Lady were said to share the household work, and sometimes even serve at table, were also damaging to the scheme, painting the Aberdeens as dangerous socialists. Other detractors displayed open antagonism to the imperial agenda of the organisation and to Ishbel’s ‘petticoat rule’. Lady Aberdeen was depicted as an interfering socialite playing at health reform and pushing British imperialism on an unresponsive population. Who was this aristocrat, with her imperially condescending attitude to Canadian citizens, using ‘Canada as a footstool’ for her own ambition? New vice-regal ladies were often accused of only becoming involved in charitable exercises to increase their own social standing and have their name go down in history attached to some good work.

The opposition continued, and it was suggested by Professor Robinson from the VON’s Provisional Committee that the abuse to which their Excellencies were being

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204 Schull, op.cit., p.19.
206 Aberdeen Papers, op.cit., MG27 I B5 vol.21.
207 Aberdeen and Temair, Ishbel Gordon, Marchioness, The Canadian Journal, op.cit., pp.441-442. Also see the Ottawa Free Press of April-June 1898; Aberdeen’s We Twa, op.cit., vol.11, p.2; Saturday Night, 16 May 1896, p.1. This term was applied to other new vice-regal women such as Lady Rachel Dudley and her Australian Voluntary Hospital committee, see Chapter Six.
208 Schull, op.cit., p.19.
subjected was not fitting for a Governor-General and his wife, and perhaps the project should not go ahead. The vice-regal couple considered this suggestion but decided to continue. Ishbel commented ‘the only thing to do was to go straight ahead as if totally unconscious of the opposing hosts’. The medical authorities were once again assured that only fully trained hospital nurses would be employed and they would work under the medical supervision of local doctors. However, the continued medical opposition resulted in many of the parliamentarians who had previously supported the scheme deciding it was not in their interests to back the vice-regal endeavour and Government money was not forthcoming.

Lady Aberdeen was quick to reassure all involved that the VON was to act in harmony with doctors. Any misunderstandings would be corrected. The VON was to be a professional organisation with highly trained employees capable of performing all nursing procedures and aimed to assist doctors in their demanding jobs. The withdrawal of Government support was a blow, but not prepared to give up simply because federal funding was no longer available, Ishbel looked elsewhere for the money. Her Excellency believed her appeal to Canadian school children could supply the necessary capital. In 1897, she sent a letter to all teachers which she requested they read to the children. Ishbel published this letter in all major newspapers and made reference to it in many interviews and speeches. In this letter she asked the children to heed the Queen’s request to ‘Make this a year of jubilee to

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210 Lady Dudley was to suffer the same type of allegations in Australia, see thesis Chapter Six.
211 Lord and Lady Aberdeen, We Twa, op.cit., p.121.
213 Victorian Order of Nurses Papers, op.cit., MG 28 I 171 vol.9, p.3a.
214 Penney, op.cit., p.23.
215 Victorian Order of Nurses Papers, Lady Aberdeen’s correspondence, op.cit., MG 28 I 171 vol.5, 5-
the sick and suffering of My Dominions.\textsuperscript{216} She reminded the children of their duty to help. Although the children responded well, their small donations were not enough. Ishbel needed the doctors on-side. By the middle of 1898, the project was in real jeopardy, with both the Ontario and the Winnipeg Medical Associations savagely opposed and many Canadian newspapers conducting anti-VON campaigns.\textsuperscript{217}

The VON project was only saved by a visit to Boston. During 1897-8, the Aberdeens made many fund raising trips around Canada. They even travelled to Boston, the home of many Canadians, at the invitation of Dr. Lorrimer, the pastor of Tremont Temple.\textsuperscript{218} While in Boston Lady Aberdeen met Dr. Alfred Worcester, the founder of the Waltham Home for the Training of District Nurses.\textsuperscript{219} Dr. Worcester had studied district nursing throughout Europe including the Jubilee Nurses in England and had direct contact with the mother of district nursing Florence Nightingale.\textsuperscript{220} Worcester believed that nurses who had only been trained in hospitals made poor district nurses and that special training for being a district nurses was needed. They needed different skills to hospital nurses. He felt they were special women with a vocation, determination, and devotion, all qualities needed to take on the tough life.\textsuperscript{221} Many of the nurses training at the Waltham Training Home were Canadian as was the Lady Superintendent of the establishment, Miss Charlotte Macleod from St John’s, Newfoundland.\textsuperscript{222} Ishbel understood that what was needed was a strong and

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\textsuperscript{216} Penney, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.21-23.
\textsuperscript{217} Lord and Lady Aberdeen, \textit{We Twa, op.cit.}, p.122.
\textsuperscript{218} \textit{ibid.}
\textsuperscript{219} Penney, \textit{op.cit.}, p.23
\textsuperscript{220} \textit{The Nursing Record and Hospital World}, 11 December 1897, p.473.
\textsuperscript{221} Lord and Lady Aberdeen, \textit{We Twa, op.cit.}, p.122.
\textsuperscript{222} \textit{ibid.}, p.123.
experienced woman to take on the specific training required for VON nurses. Miss Mcleod was that woman.

Dr. Worcester asked Ishbel what he could do to help the fledgling Canadian organisation. Her Excellency replied with the plea to lend us Miss Mcleod to start our VON and come and talk to your sceptical medical colleagues in Canada, and explain the benefits of district nursing. Miss Macleod was first loaned to the Canadian Order for three months from November 1897. After this period she resigned from the Waltham Training Home and worked for the VON for the next three years. She was just what the fledgling organisation needed, an experienced and dedicated woman who knew what was required and how to achieve it. Lady Aberdeen later commented ‘the history of the Victorian Order must always be inseparably connected with the name of its first Chief Lady Superintendent, Miss Charlotte Macleod’. Described as gentle and sweet but with a determined nature, she realised the value of thorough organisation and discipline. Matron Macleod was very exacting in her selection of the first VON nurses. She was looking for special women with special qualities. Ishbel stated ‘Her whole being is in her work, she looks on it as a mission ... her practical experience and tact carry all before them’.

Dr. Worcester also came to Canada and held informal meetings with the top medical men in Ottawa and Toronto. At first the Canadian doctors were not impressed by an

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223 Penney, op.cit., p.23.  
225 Penney, op.cit., p.23.  
227 Penney, op.cit., p.23.
American doctor telling them what was good for them. They also viewed themselves as independent Canadians and were not necessarily happy to be associated with an organisation with such imperial connections. Dr. Worcester said that if he an American could respect Queen Victoria he felt that her citizens in Canada could do the same. Although still not without opposition Dr. Worcester did convince many in the Canadian medical establishment to give district nursing and the VON a chance. Ishbel in her Journal described Dr. Worcester’s meeting in Toronto as ‘a transformation scene & it was wonderful’. The number of doctors on side increased markedly, the Ontario Medical Association even sent a delegation to Lady Aberdeen to profess their conversion to the project, which led Ishbel to enthuse that ‘a miracle has occurred!’ As the nurses began their work they were soon accepted, indeed, seen as a necessity. Once the ‘prejudices and misconceptions’ were dealt with the VON became a very popular institution with both the Canadian medical profession and the public.

As the organisation began work it was necessary to ensure it could continue and, therefore, a steady income was needed. One contrast between the British and Canadian organisations was their differing views over patient payment. In Britain the Queen’s Nurses were established to bring medical aid to the poor, and the patients were treated for free. Ishbel recognised that Canadians would want to pay the nurses and not be considered charity cases, as ‘the independent spirit of Canada would prefer the principle of paying for services’. This would not only help the scheme

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230 *ibid.*, p.436.
231 Stocks, *op.cit.*, p.120.
232 Lord and Lady Aberdeen, *We Twa*, op.cit., p.128.
financially but as the Committee wanted the VON to be seen as a scheme providing nurses for all Canadians, it would encourage everyone to make use of the scheme. As Lady Aberdeen wanted the organisation to be relevant to all Canadians, she knew she needed national community involvement. With the help of the local committees in Montreal, Toronto, Ottawa, Halifax and Vancouver and the expertise of Miss Macleod, training centres were established in these cities and district superintendents were appointed.  

Several areas applied for nurses and accepted the conditions set down by the committee. They had to guarantee a salary of C$300 a year with board, maintenance and uniform, with the central board initially paying travelling expenses. These local nurses were to be paid for by the voluntary support of the community. It was also expected that those receiving treatment would pay for the service. Those very poor who could not pay were treated for free but this was a very small number. Ishbel worked hard to get the nurses actually out in the field. Twelve nurses were officially admitted to the organisation in November 1897 in a formal badge-giving ceremony in the name of Queen Victoria. The nurses undertook to remain in their appointed district for two years. 

Continued publicity for the VON and its work was crucial to maintain public interest and support. An early and unexpected high profile role for the nurses came from the Canadian Government. The Committee of the VON was asked by the Government to send four nurses with a detachment of soldiers, the Yukon force, to the Klondike.

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235 Queens Nurses Magazine, vol.2 no.2 1905, p.57. The standard rate in 1905 was 25 cents per visit to a working class patient, 50 cents for those better off and 10 cents for those in poor circumstances.
237 The Nursing Record and Hospital World, 21 May 1898, p.418.
The Klondike in the far north west of the country contained a series of small gold mining settlements. The Government was sending these troops to the Klondike to keep order in the region and wanted the nurses to take care of any medical needs on the journey, and to spend three years nursing in the remote area, where medical care was practically non-existent. Lady Aberdeen, although concerned for the well being of any nurses sent to such a harsh posting, could not resist the positive media exposure such a request would bring the organisation. In fact it is not inconceivable that Ishbel engineered the request herself, as in We Twa she notes that Colonel Evans, the commander of the Yukon force was ‘a good friend of ours and a fine soldier’. The VON Central Committee agreed to the appeal and a special fund of $2,899 was established. Of course there were the usual detractors to the plan concerned about women’s ability to cope in the harsh male-dominated landscape. One was Mr. James Christie who believed ‘Life in the Yukon might be worse than death for women nurses’. Ishbel and the Klondike nurses disagreed.

Four nurses were engaged in April 1898 to travel with the troops. The contract was for three years, with the nurses being paid between $500 and $600 per year. Misses Georgina Powell, Margaret Payson, Rachel Hanna and Amy Scott set out with the two hundred men of the Yukon Force on the 18 May 1898. Lady Aberdeen wanted to make sure that suitable women, capable, and able to withstand the difficulties ahead were chosen. She was happy with the result and describes them as ‘brave

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239 Lord and Lady Aberdeen, We Twa, op.cit., p.131.
240 Victorian Order of Nurses Papers, op.cit., MG 28 I 171, vol.9, p.11. All were Canadian except Scott who was English.
241 Nursing Record and Hospital World, 16 April 1898, p.319.
242 Victorian Order of Nurses Papers, op.cit., MG 28 I 171 vol.9, p.11.
women ... very strong & are about 35 years old and have considerable experience'.

They were carefully outfitted with suitable clothing and Lady Aberdeen personally presented each nurse with a 'kodak' to capture their historic adventure. Under the command of Colonel Evans, the nurses went by train to Victoria, by steamer to Wragell, Alaska, by riverboat up the Stikine River to Glenora, walked for around 100 miles through very difficult terrain to Lake Teslin and then continued by boat for the Yukon River.

This expedition of VON nurses caught the public's attention and one newspaper, the Toronto Globe, sent along female reporter Faith Fenton to cover the adventure. Her dispatches appeared for several months tracing the trials and work of the Klondike Nurses. The nurses were officially commended on the way they undertook the job. Unfortunately, they could not establish themselves as district nurses and all ended up working in the small and totally inadequate local hospitals. These frontier towns were not capable of supporting district nurses as they were too poor and too haphazard, yet the need was great. The nurses encountered filth everywhere and diseases such as 'typhoid with pneumonia, with malaria, congestion of the liver, rheumatism, neuralgia, sore throat, discharge from the ears and sore eyes'. The four women made an impact on Klondike health services and the VON was asked for more nurses. The expedition was ultimately a failure as no voluntary funds could be raised to sustain the nurses, and by 1900 the VON's work in the Klondike ceased.

244 Nursing Record and Hospital World, 21 May 1898, p.419.
246 Also see a letter from Nurse Powell written enroute, Vancouver Semi-Weekly, 16 August 1898.
248 See an account written by Georgina Powell in Countess of Aberdeen, What is the Use of the
Klondike Nurses and Doctor Aberdeen

Figure 32. Top: Victoria Order of Nurses Papers, National Library of Canada, Ottawa NL22466

Figure 33. Bottom: Aberdeen Papers, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa PA27870
Later, under Lady Minto, the next vice-regal wife, and with the establishment of cottage hospitals, VON nurses returned to these districts. The Yukon adventure served the VON well in terms of public goodwill. Adventure and romance were helpful to vice-regal initiatives, the allure of imperial duty in the outposts of Empire was a strong motivating force.

Their Excellencies left Canada in late 1898 with the VON well established. Prior to her departure, Lady Aberdeen was presented with a fully furnished house in Ottawa by Senator Cox, an early supporter of the scheme. This residence Ishbel then donated to the VON as headquarters for the Order, housing the Lady Superintendent, and the Ottawa District Nurses. The scheme was still in need of funds and Lord Aberdeen paid Miss Mcleod's salary and expenses for a year as his parting gift to the nurses. The new vice-regal appointees, the Mintos, were in Canada before the Aberdeens left. Ishbel was active in ensuring continuing interest in the VON, and the Countess of Minto consented to become Hon. President of the organisation. Ishbel personally introduced Miss Macleod to Lady Minto before she left. The Countess of Minto threw herself wholeheartedly into the task and the Lady Minto Cottage Hospital Scheme, staffed by VON nurses later became an integral part of the Scheme. It was Lady Minto who put the organisation on a sound financial footing, when she raised over one million dollars which went in an endowment fund. Other vice-regal successors to Canada, including Lady Grey (1904-11) and the Duchess of Connaught

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*Victorian Order of Nurses for Canada?, Victorian Order of Nurses Papers, op.cit., MG 28 I 171 vol.9.*

249 Ibid., p.36

250 Victorian Order of Nurses Papers, op.cit., MG 28 I 171 vol.9, p.11

251 Penney, op.cit, p.32.

(1911-16) sponsored major fundraising drives and innovations for the VON. By this time, the early decades of the twentieth century, the role of the new vice-regal wife was confirmed. Successors of Ishbel Aberdeen in the vice-regal role were involved in active participation, community service, and independent action. No longer merely the supportive spouse with limited social obligations, the Governors’ wife now had imperial employment.

When Lady Aberdeen arrived home she personally reported on the VON to the Queen who expressed great interest in its progress. In fact Ishbel was invited to stay at Windsor overnight to explain all aspects of the VON to the Queen. It was not the end of Lady Aberdeen’s involvement with the Order. She kept in touch with the organisation for the remainder of her life. The VON, the NCW, and Canada itself always remained important to Ishbel.

Other Initiatives

As one of the pioneering new vice-regal women Lady Aberdeen focussed on her grand imperial mission of a national nursing service for all Canadians, but she did not neglect her conventional vice-regal role while in Canada. The Aberdeens, although busy, were socially adept and this was highlighted by the proficiency and social mastery they displayed in the December 1897 Victorian Era Ball, held at the

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253 ibid.
256 French, op.cit., p.250.
257 Lord and Lady Aberdeen, We Tw, op.cit., pp.132-134.
Extent of Victorian Order of Nurses Work in 1905

Figure 34. Queen's Nurses Magazine Volume 2, No.1 30 April 1905
Armories in Toronto.\textsuperscript{258} This extravaganza, held in the last days of the Jubilee year, was a fancy-dress pageant which illustrated the progress made within the British Empire during Victoria’s reign. The Jubilee brought the British together around the globe, and as Ishbel remarked, ‘the mighty Empire united to celebrate it’.\textsuperscript{259} The Victorian Era Ball highlighted the arts, industry, science and sports, with special dances to represent each period of the Queen’s sixty year reign. There was also a much admired Empire section where party goers dressed as citizens from Canadian territories or figures from Canadian history or from other lands of which Victoria was Queen. The ladies of Toronto took up the idea with eagerness and with much toil and organisation guaranteed the success of this elaborate ball. The beautiful programme of the ball available after the event, included sketches of the guests, sets and costumes and is testament to the magnificence of the occasion.\textsuperscript{260} A British dominion Canada may have been, but many Canadians were also proud of their place as an important component of Empire. This tribute to the Queen and Empire was not only fun and spectacular; it was conceived and carried out in ‘a patriotic spirit’.\textsuperscript{261} Of course, Ishbel could not let such an opportunity pass and the grand Victorian Ball was actually a fund raising event for the fledgling VON.

Ishbel’s imperial mission also included children. She believed that children, especially girls, needed training to reach their true potential, and so utilising the experience of the ‘88 Club’ she and Henry Drummond had commenced in England, she initiated the May Court Club, in Ottawa. Here young women from middle-class

\textsuperscript{258}Aberdeen Papers, op.cit., MG 27 I B5 vol.27, Toronto Mail, 29 December, 1898.

\textsuperscript{259}Book of the Victorian Era Ball, Rowsell & Hutchison: G.N. Morang, Toronto 1898. Introduction.

\textsuperscript{260}ibid.

\textsuperscript{261}ibid., p.1
and upper-class families gathered in pretty white frocks around their elected May Queen. As well as games and education, the girls were encouraged to do useful community work. In true Victorian and Ishbel fashion, all society functions had to have a moral dimension. Ishbel, who understood that these were the prospective leaders of Canadian women’s organisations, wanted them to comprehend their duty to others. The future of the Empire and the civilising crusade would be in their capable and reforming hands. The May Court Clubs continue in Canada today as volunteer organisations involved with health and children’s welfare.

Lady Aberdeen also gave numerous addresses on the topic of female education. She believed that ‘the best way to ensure that woman shall most speedily find her best place is to give her the same freedom as man has. Similar freedom to work, to vote, to think to act’. Ishbel gave several reformist speeches on the greater need for female university education at many Canadian institutions including Queen’s and McGill University, and Sackville Ladies College. For Ishbel the reason for female educational reform was simple. It had to do with rights. Women had a right to ‘as thorough and as real an education as men’. Ishbel still held firm to her belief that the home was woman’s first duty and that all female reforms should recognise this, but she wanted intelligent independent women in these homes. It was not only elite women upon whom she directed her educational zeal; she was instrumental in the

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262 French, op.cit., p.252.
263 The Ottawa May Court Club is Canada’s oldest women’s service organisation.
265 ibid.
266 ibid., McGill Fortnightly, 26 October, 1894.
forming of the Educational Union of the female teachers of Ottawa. Her speechmaking ability and interest in her reforming ideas led to Ishbel receiving a unique offer. Some sections of the American press had long been supporters of Ishbel. She was often depicted as a woman of the future, an internationalist, who saw ‘further than Great Britain and its dependencies,’ and this is how Ishbel saw herself. She was invited by the University of Chicago in April 1894 to address a convocation at the University, and she was the first woman to do so. Her speech was a plea for men and women to work co-operatively to achieve the best results, especially in home life. She reminded all present that this had been called, with accuracy, ‘the age of women’ but that women still had much to accomplish.

Another first came with the Honorary Degree of LL.D conferred upon Ishbel by Queen’s University, Kingston Ontario. Ishbel was the first woman to receive an honorary degree from any Canadian University. Ever gracious, Her Excellency accepted the honour as a compliment to the women of Canada and acknowledgment of women in higher education. Ishbel had an all encompassing view of women’s role. In the preface to a joint publication by the Canadian Council of Women and the Victorian Order of Nurses titled Woman: Maiden, Wife and Mother, A Study of Woman’s Worth and Work she stressed the revolution in women’s position and opportunities that was occurring and the need to capitalise on this new agenda.

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267 French, op. cit., p.253, Arcadian Recorder, 14 August 1894.
268 Influential American journals, the American Review of Reviews, the Chicago Record, and the Philadelphia Times had flattering articles on Ishbel from the days of the World’s Fair and afterwards, Aberdeen Papers, op.cit., MG 27 IB5 vol.19 and vol.24.
270 Chicago Evening Post, 2 April 1897, Aberdeen Papers, op.cit., MG 27 IB5 vol. 25.
271 Ibid., Toronto Mail, 29 April 1897.
272 Rev. B.F. Austin, (ed.), Woman: Maiden, Wife and Mother, A Study of Woman’s Worth and Work in
However, as always with Ishbel it was to be a cooperative effort of men and women working together, not necessarily doing the same work but both striving for the common good, and she appreciated male assistance for ‘woman needs all the help she can get in serving her apprenticeship and in preparing herself worthy to fill her place in the new order of things’.\(^{273}\) This new order would see women working and serving alongside men, not behaving like men but behaving as women fulfilling their role.\(^{274}\) For the Countess, the true women was proficient in all areas of life. This was the message she imparted again and again in her speeches and articles and correspondence.

**Back to England and Return to Ireland**

Once back in Britain, Ishbel continued her work with the ICW. She was enthused by the number of countries who were establishing their own National Councils and Ishbel, at her own expense continued in the role of President. She was unanimously elected President at the meetings held in Berlin in 1904, Toronto in 1909 and Rome in 1914.\(^{275}\) She worked hard chairing meetings, writing reports and publishing accounts for worldwide consumption. The ICW adopted as goals, women’s suffrage, peace and arbitration, and an equal moral standard for both sexes, as well as such contrasting subjects as the use of an international language and the protection of birds. After the First World War, Ishbel was instrumental in having the ICW, which now represented over twenty million women, being heard at the Commission set up in Paris to form

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\(^{273}\) *ibid.*, preface by Lady Aberdeen.

\(^{274}\) *ibid.*, p.122.

\(^{275}\) Pentland, *op.cit.*, pp.135-139.
the League of Nations.\textsuperscript{276}

The ICW was not Lady Aberdeen's only interest at the turn of the century. There were, among many other interests, the Women's Liberal Federation, the Haddo House Onward and Upward Association, and her cherished Irish Industries. She was busy publishing articles on many issues, notably the anti-Boer War campaign, and from the early 1900s, the British Red Cross Society in both Scotland and then Ireland as well as unions and workers associations and her Liberal Party work.\textsuperscript{277} These occupied her time until A. was once again appointed Viceroy of Ireland.

With the Liberal victory of 1905-6, the Aberdeens were returned to Ireland. Lord Aberdeen held the office from 1906-1914.\textsuperscript{278} Ishbel was back in the country that she loved, doing what she loved, being a new vice-regal spouse, and making a difference in Irish life. Now, at nearly fifty, Ishbel's amazing energy and enthusiasm continued. She was involved in dozens of associations. One was the Central Bureau for the Employment of Women initiated in Ireland by Lady Dudley during her vice-regal days 1902-1905. Lady Aberdeen's address to the Bureau in March 1906 was on the necessity for parents to prepare their daughters for 'the battle of life'.\textsuperscript{279}

Ishbel also continued her work for the Irish Industries Association and the Lace Depot. However, Her Excellency now had a new project to claim her attention. Her anti-tuberculosis campaign became her 'crusade'. Although not a new disease,

\textsuperscript{276}ibid., pp.132-142.
\textsuperscript{277}ibid., pp.182-185.
\textsuperscript{278}Keane, \textit{op.cit.}, p.174.
\textsuperscript{279}ibid., p.119.
consumption as it was commonly called was rapidly spreading in Ireland. The death rate in Ireland during the period 1880-1905 was greater than in Scotland and England. In 1905, 11,800 deaths were attributed to tuberculosis, compared to 8,600 to old age and 8,200 to heart disease.\textsuperscript{280} Ishbel had to struggle to educate the population that TB was not hereditary but infectious, and that steps could be taken to prevent the spread of the disease. Her Excellency already had some idea of the ravages caused by tuberculosis due to her work within the International Council of Women. Ishbel, anxious to begin her crusade, launched it in Dublin on 13 March 1907, just before her fiftieth birthday.

At the same time the Countess founded the Women’s National Health Association (WNHA). Although it was to concentrate on TB it had a broad agenda. This included a movement for the care of mothers and children, the quest for pure milk, and health of school children. Once again Ishbel approached as many important community leaders as possible to back the new society. The newspapers applauded the initiative and Ishbel arranged for lectures to be given on every aspect of TB by noted doctors. Ishbel arranged for a tuberculosis stand at the Dublin International Exhibition, in October 1907.\textsuperscript{281} After the success of the exhibition, it was decided it should go on the road as a travelling educational tool.\textsuperscript{282} As well, a magazine of the WNHA was established in 1909. Titled \textit{Slainte}, (good health), it aimed to be the voice of the various branches of the association. Edited by Ishbel, who also chose the contents, it was a practical guide to improving the health of the Irish.\textsuperscript{283} They could benefit from

\textsuperscript{280}Ibid., p.128. Keane quotes the figures of ‘42nd Annual Report of the Register General for Ireland’.

\textsuperscript{281}Lord and Lady Aberdeen, \textit{More Cracks with ‘We Twas’}, op.cit., pp. 136-137.

\textsuperscript{282}Nursing Mirror, 9 November 1907, p.87. One of the nurses in this organisation was Lady Hermoine Blackwood, daughter of Lady Dufferin.

\textsuperscript{283}Lord and Lady Aberdeen, \textit{More Cracks with ‘We Twas’}, op.cit., pp.136-137.
the fruits British civilisation, a concept fostered by new vice-regal women.

Upon the declaration of War in 1914 Lady Aberdeen, as president of the British Red Cross Society in Ireland immediately took on working for the war on the Irish home front. As early as August 10, she held a meeting to discuss Red Cross work, and pressured the government to set up a training scheme for voluntary nursing aids (VADS).\textsuperscript{284} She proposed that Dublin Castle be used as a Red Cross hospital for wounded soldiers. Ishbel found herself in trouble over her belief that a separate Irish Red Cross was preferable to being under the British Red Cross control. It was to become a bitter and controversial struggle.\textsuperscript{285}

There was little time, however, for Ishbel to continue her great war work plans. At the end of 1914, Lord Aberdeen received a letter from Prime Minister Asquith informing him he was no longer required in Ireland. Asquith believed that nine years in Dublin was long enough for the vice-regal couple.\textsuperscript{286} This was a shock and a blow for the Aberdeens. Both Lord and Lady Aberdeen made pleas to be able to remain, but to no avail.\textsuperscript{287} Lord Aberdeen, as consolation for his years of service, was given the title Marquis of Aberdeen and Temair. The Aberdeens left Ireland in February 1915. Ishbel, although very upset about her 'expulsion' from Ireland, worked until her death in 1939 for the Irish. ‘Ireland is laid on us to do all in our power for her for ever’.\textsuperscript{288} In 1915, she went on a fund raising tour for Irish charities to the United States. The couple spent two years raising £20,000 which was handed to the WHNA to distribute

\textsuperscript{284}Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen, We Twa, op.cit., pp.229-238.
\textsuperscript{285}ibid.
\textsuperscript{286}Pentland, op.cit., p.177.
\textsuperscript{287}ibid., pp.177-178.
\textsuperscript{288}Lady Aberdeen cited in Pentland., ibid., p. 64.
to alleviate the most serious health problems, and much of the money was used to establish TB sanatoria.\textsuperscript{289}

The new Marquis and Marchioness of Aberdeen and Tamair’s personal finances were by now in a much depleted state. Wartime taxes took their toll and general mismanagement had seen the gradual demise of the vast estates to a fraction of their former size.\textsuperscript{290} In 1920, they turned the estate at Haddo over to their son George, Lord Haddo, and moved to Cromer, a small house at Deeside, Aberdeen. Lord Aberdeen retired from public life but Ishbel at 63 was still active. She was re-elected President of the ICW after the First World War and remained so until her retirement in 1936.\textsuperscript{291} She travelled a great deal for the ICW and visited Ireland several times a year. During this period Lady Aberdeen received her second honorary degree from Aberdeen University, the Grand Cross of the Empire, and in 1931 was made a Grande Dame of the Empire. The couple spent their last years writing their memoirs but Ishbel was still involved with many causes. Lord Aberdeen died in 1934 and Ishbel in 1939.

**Conclusion**

Ishbel Aberdeen was ‘a most remarkable woman in this age of remarkable women’ who furthered the role of vice-regal ladies through her intelligence and determination and her commitment to expanding women’s horizons.\textsuperscript{292} After Lady Aberdeen’s career in Ireland and Canada, vice-regal women across the Empire were under no

\textsuperscript{289}ibid., p.181.

\textsuperscript{290}Keane, *op.cit.*, p.226.

\textsuperscript{291}ibid., p.227.

\textsuperscript{292}Gazette, 1 October 1896, Aberdeen Papers, *op.cit.*, MG 27 I B5 vol.29.
illusions about their new pro-active role. She was not only a pioneer, she also gave a structure to the work which could be adapted by other imperial women. More than simply an ornamental herself, Ishbel had the ability to give others a belief in their abilities, their power, and their vision, through her personal conviction and infectious optimism. As American woman Florence Kelly remarked, ‘Everybody was brave from the moment she came into the room’. 293

The role and expectations of the new vice-regal woman expanded through the last years of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century. Ishbel Aberdeen in her official capacity pushed the boundaries of woman’s participation and proved intelligence and perseverance could result in the formation of many successful and long lasting imperial organisations. The new woman, new imperialism, the value of work and the push for social and female reform were all factors in Lady Aberdeen’s vice-regal career. By incorporating modern ideas and techniques, she forged a sisterhood of workers who could face and overcome the challenges they met. The Irish Industries Association, the Irish Exhibition at the World’s Fair, the National Council of Women of Canada, the Victorian Order of Nurses, the May Court Club, the Irish Women’s National Health Association, and the Red Cross Society are just some of the organisations this new vice-regal women either initiated or energised.

Lady Rachel Dudley
c.1867-1920

Figure 35. Black and White Magazine 23 August 1902
CHAPTER SIX

LADY RACHEL DUDLEY
(c.1867-1920)

‘She should have been a general, for no doubts assailed her and no difficulties appalled her’

Following the path set by new vice-regal women such as the Ladies Dufferin and Aberdeen, representative ladies of the early twentieth century had a modern imperial agenda to emulate. The death of Queen Victoria in 1901 and the loss of a powerful female figurehead did nothing to diminish vice-regal wives from further promoting their pro-active imperial role and expanding women’s functions in society. One new vice-regal woman to embrace this concept and provides us with the third case study was Lady Rachel Dudley.

Rachel Dudley was a determined and enthusiastic recruit to the ranks of the new vice-regal woman. In both Ireland (1902-5) and Australia (1908-11), the Countess was extensively involved in both nursing and work reforms for women. In Lady Dudley’s vice-regal career we see the progression of the new vice-regal woman as charted in this thesis. The first ground-breaking steps taken by Hariot Dufferin in India in 1884, and the independent dynamic response of Ishbel Aberdeen in the 1890s, led to the clear understanding of a vice-regal woman’s imperial responsibility as displayed by

Rachel Dudley in the first decade of the twentieth century.

This chapter will investigate Rachel Dudley as a new vice-regal woman through her imperial involvement in the Lady Dudley Nurses in Ireland, the Central Bureau for the Employment of Women, the Girls Realm Guild, and the Bush Nursing Scheme in Australia. Lady Dudley’s nursing scheme in Ireland was based upon the Queen’s Jubilee nurses in England. It was a district nursing scheme aimed at bringing health care to the poorest and most remote areas of the country. The Australian Bush nursing project planned to bring nurses to isolated regions of Australia. The establishment of the Central Bureau for the Employment of Women in England and Ireland at the turn of the century, and her interest in the Girls Realm Guild in Australia underline Rachel’s commitment to the new world of women’s work. These imperial organisations aimed to foster links between education and employment opportunities for women across the Empire.

Lady Rachel Dudley is the most elusive of the three case studies in this thesis. Unlike Ladies Dufferin and Aberdeen, no personal journals and very few letters of Lady Dudley’s vice-regal experiences have survived. There have also been no published biographies on Lady Dudley. She did not publish her diaries, except for a small private volume of her trip to the West Indies. She therefore does not have the high profile of Ladies Dufferin and Aberdeen, and she has not attracted the eye of academic historians until now. Due to this lack of material, the research for this case study relies mainly on selected primary and secondary sources. In the main the information comes from contemporary reports, various association publications, and

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2Rachel Dudley, *Sunshine and Shadow in the West Indies*, Archibald Constable and Co., London,
newspaper and journal articles from England, Ireland and Australia.

**Early Life**

The Countess of Dudley was born Rachel Anne Gurney, daughter of Charles Gurney,a banker from the financially troubled ‘discount House of Gurney’, and Alice Prinsep of Freshwater, the Isle of Wight. Although not born an aristocrat, as were Ladies Dufferin and Aberdeen, Rachel was brought up as one of the landed gentry and later moved into aristocratic circles. Her father, Charles, and his relatives involved with the Gurney bank suffered severe financial setbacks when their company Overend, Gurney and Co. failed in a spectacular way, with huge losses, which affected many prominent British families. The Gurney family was distinguished Quakers, normally closely connected to the Liberal Party, and well known for both their banking and philanthropic endeavours. The family included the renowned prison reformer, Elizabeth Fry.

Rachel’s parents Alice and Charles separated when Rachel and her sister Laura were young. After the separation Alice and her daughters were left with little money. This dire financial situation in her childhood affected Rachel’s character, and she was determined to overcome her chequered early life. There is an unsubstantiated story that Alice Gurney and her daughters, in an attempt to support themselves, opened a

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1907.


6Charles Gurney was made a bankrupt on 13 June 1891.
millinery shop in the West End of London, catering to society women. The *Sydney Mail*, when reporting on Lord Dudley's appointment to Australia, described his wife Rachel as 'The daughter of a banker whom fortune treated cruelly, she found herself one of the pioneer lady milliners in London'. Rachel was also musical with a lovely voice and at one stage considered a professional singing career.

Mrs. Alice Gurney, although lacking money, was not without influential relations, and Rachel's cousin Lady Adeline and her husband Lord George Tavistock, later the 10th Duke of Bedford who were childless, 'adopted' Rachel. She lived with them during her late teens and early twenties and was a beautiful and popular member of London society. Lady Bedford was Rachel's friend, mentor and confidant throughout her life. During the period Rachel spent with Lord and Lady Bedford she was a much sort after young woman and through her social activities she met the rich and handsome playboy, and close friend of the Prince of Wales, William Humble Ward, the second Earl Dudley. The couple married in September 1891 at the Holy Trinity Church, Sloane Street London. The Duke of Bedford gave Rachel away with the reception given by the Duke and Duchess in Chesham Place, London. The *Queen* - *The Lady's Newspaper* reported that there was 'extraordinary interest' in the marriage

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7*The Lady's Realm*, November 1896-April 1897, pp.102-103.
8*Sydney Mail*, 25 March 1908, p.777. Although this story of the millinery shop was denied by the Dudleys, it was widely accepted as true and was included in an obituary in *The Australasian*, 3 July 1920.
10As has been noted Lady Adeline Tavistock/Bedford was a close friend of Isabel Aberdeen. The term 'adopted' was often used to describe the relationship between Rachel and the Bedfords. In reality, it appears Rachel lived with them and was financially supported by them.
11Lady Bedford visited Lady Dudley in both Ireland and Australia.
and a huge ‘disorderly crowd’ turned up outside the church to see the couple.\textsuperscript{13} Rachel and Dudley were both 24 at the time of the wedding.\textsuperscript{14}

Lord William Dudley was reputed to have acquired land, buildings, and money worth over £1,000,000 when he inherited the title in 1885 at the age of 18. In addition, his father, the infamous first Earl, left William one of the best art collections in Britain.\textsuperscript{15} The new Lord Dudley had estates in Worcester, Stafford, Merioneth, Salop and Roxburgh and interests in the West Indies. Most of his income came from the vast coal deposits on his land in the Black Country surrounding Worcester.

As a young man, Dudley did his best to spend his inheritance in the shortest possible time. He unsuccessfully dabbled in racehorse breeding, he indulged his love of travel, yacht racing, gambling, and pursuing beautiful women.\textsuperscript{16} Although handsome and charming, Lord Dudley did not have a good reputation when he walked down the aisle with Rachel in 1891. The marriage of the playboy and the society beauty caused much media speculation and the presence of the Prince of Wales added to the occasion.\textsuperscript{17} The dazzling Rachel ‘stepped almost directly from behind the counter of a fashionable milliner’s shop to be chatelaine of one of the four most splendid palaces in England’ Witley Court, Worcestershire.\textsuperscript{18} If this often repeated millinery shop story

\textsuperscript{13}\textit{The Queen}, 19 September 1891, p.464.

\textsuperscript{14}It is difficult to verify Rachel’s age as I have been unable to find any official record of Rachel Gurney’s birth.

\textsuperscript{15}The first Earl of Dudley was a renowned womaniser and spent much time in the company of the Prince of Wales. His son continued in the same vein. ‘Lord Dudley a Character Sketch’, \textit{Review of Reviews for Australasia}, 1 June 1908, p.557.

\textsuperscript{16}\textit{Weekly Irish Times}, 16 August 1902, p.4.

\textsuperscript{17}\textit{The Queen}, 19 September 1891, p.464.

\textsuperscript{18}\textit{Sydney Mail, op.cit.}, p.797.
is true, the Countess of Dudley was one of the very few vice-regal woman who had actually spent some time in paid employment in order to survive. This gave her first hand experience of paid work and the need for middle and upper-class women to have suitable and marketable skills to find a job if the need arose. And even if Rachel never served in a shop, the grim financial position of her mother made her acutely aware of the need for women to be able to earn a respectable living.

The marriage of William and Rachel, which seems to have begun with genuine love and produced seven children, Gladys Honor, William Eric, Morvyth Lillian, Roderick, Alexandra Patricia, and twins Edward and George, ended in official separation in 1912. Lady Dudley’s personal life was one of constant trials. She suffered dangerous miscarriages, her health was always suspect, she tried to accept the escapades of her philandering husband and his dwindling finances but in the end the pair agreed to separate. None of this, however, appears to have affected her belief in her imperial mission and her interest in women’s work.

Rachel was ‘always ambitious’ and in the early years of her marriage insisted her husband be perceived as a hardworking and worthwhile member of the aristocracy. As with Ladies Dufferin and Aberdeen, Rachel believed her contribution and fulfilment as an aristocratic wife would come by helping her husband become a success. Lord Dudley too, was also anxious to be seen as doing his duty without abandoning all his male aristocratic pastimes. He was involved with conservative politics and from 1892, was a member of the House of Lords. William Dudley was

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19 See The Times, 7, 9, 12-15 November 1918 for detailed information on the Dudley marriage.
20 The Lady’s Realm, November 1896-April 1897, pp.102-103.
elected to the London County Council in 1895 and was mayor of Dudley in 1895-6. The Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury made him Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade, in 1895, a position he held until 1902. He served overseas on Lord Robert’s staff during the Boer War. Although he made an effort, his public service career was not a great success. During this period Rachel was a society hostess and she and Dudley were ‘Marlborough House Set’ regulars.

However, as well as pursuing the life of a society figure, Rachel was also involved with her ‘adoptive’ mother Adeline, the Duchess of Bedford, in women’s employment organisations. Adeline, and her close friend Ishbel Aberdeen, were founding members of the National Union of Women Workers (NUWW) in 1888 and served on the committee for many years. This organisation became the National Council of Women for Great Britain and Ireland (NCW) in 1897. Lady Rachel and Lady Adeline were also active participants in the London Central Bureau for the Employment of Women (CBEW).

To Ireland

Lord Dudley’s cash flow was affected by economic downturn of the late nineteenth century with the collapse of the agricultural base of the economy. He sold Dudley

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23*The Lady’s Realm*, November 1896-April 1897, pp.102-103.
25*The Times*, 15 May 1903, p.15.
House in London and some of his father’s famous collections of art and china. Short of ready money, and once more involving himself in questionable recreational activities, Dudley appealed to his influential friends for an overseas appointment, hoping to revive both his marriage and career. In 1902, he was despatched to Ireland as Lord Lieutenant. This was the beginning of Lord and Lady Dudley’s vice-regal experience. The Irish did not immediately appreciate the appointment of Lord Dudley ‘failed turf and bloodstock enthusiast’, and his wife, who brought ‘great beauty’, but little else, to the vice-regal office.

Rachel Dudley took on her Irish role with the knowledge that there was now an expectation that she was to work for the Empire and fulfil her own imperial mission as a vice-regal woman. She was one of the ‘new’ vice-regal breed, now well established by women such as Dufferin and Aberdeen. Vice-regal wives were noting the accomplishments of others in the role and the ladies often alluded to the good work of their peers in other dominions. Performing their imperial duty and hastening the progress of the colony or domination and its people was the main aim of the new vice-regal sisterhood. Being a vice-regal wife meant belonging to a select group; they acknowledged and often copied each other’s imperial activities, and were willing to

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27 *The Times*, 28 June 1920, p.16. During the period 1886-1902 Lord Dudley parted with china, old masters and jewels worth over £240,000.
30 *Weekly Irish Times*, 16 August 1902, p.4.
31 Lady Dudley, when attempting to organise the Bush nurses in Australia was continually comparing what she desired for Australia with Lady Aberdeen’s Victorian Order of Nurses in Canada. See, for example, *The Nursing Mirror*, 26 February 1910, p.1.
expand their functions through the exchange of information. When Lady Dudley arrived in Ireland in 1902, she wished to build on another new vice-regal woman’s legacy, that of Lady Ishbel Aberdeen.

Her Excellency, the Countess of Dudley, was 35 years old and the mother of two sons and two daughters when she disembarked in Ireland as wife of the Lord Lieutenant. Lady Dudley was determined to make the most of the appointment. Rachel had a strong imperial conviction. Like many of her peers she was imbued with the propaganda surrounding Empire and the benefits and obligations this entailed. A few years after the Irish appointment, Rachel expressed her imperial perspective in a limited and private publication that detailed her trip with Lord Dudley to the West Indies. She distributed this book as a gift to her friends. Rachel stated that she had seen the ‘distant watch fires of Empire’ kept burning bright ‘by faithful sentinels’ and she noted, there were ‘new fields for work and responsibility’ opening up in these lands. Rachel believed the obligation was not hers alone but belonged to each individual, ‘each tireless worker weaving their separate thread in the mighty web of civilisation and colonisation which England has spun for centuries’. Upper-class attitudes to the might of Empire combined in Rachel’s understanding with new concepts of the position of women in imperial endeavour. Lady Dudley wanted to participate in this imperial adventure and to push the idea of work and responsibility

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32 For example, Lady Minto in Canada, enthusiastically took up where Lady Aberdeen had left off in the work of the VON and kept Ishbel informed of developments. Lady Aberdeen too, was happy to succeed Lady Dudley as patron of the Lady Dudley Nurses in Ireland. See The Nursing Mirror, 22 May 1909, p.127.
33 *Weekly Irish Times*, 7 March 1903, p.12.
34 Rachel Dudley, *op.cit.*
35 *ibid.*, pp.79-80.
36 *ibid.*
for all through the position of the vice-regal wife.

**Irish Industries and Women’s Work**

Once again the Irish were fortunate in their vice-regal wife, even if they took a while to appreciate the new Vicereine. Rachel was a resourceful and independent woman who was keen to fulfil her imperial role with a special emphasis on female reform, particularly in education and employment. These two issues were close to her heart and reflected her tenuous early life. Lady Dudley, without the public sphere experience of Lady Aberdeen and also perhaps without the self confidence, was a little more cautious in her first imperial endeavours than Ishbel Aberdeen. But it was not long before she made her opinions known. In May 1903, when giving a speech as President of the Alexandra College Guild, an exclusive girls’ institution in Dublin, Rachel urged the students to strive for excellence in their work and not be content to be second-class workers to men in either performance or wages. In July 1903 Lady Dudley, in a public address on female work opportunities, expressed an interest in establishing a national bureau for the employment of women in Ireland. She explained to the audience that she had a long-held interest and experience in the subject and had just resigned her position as Chairman of the Committee for the Central Bureau for the Employment of Women (CBEW), in London, before coming to Ireland.

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37 *Weekly Irish Times*, 16 August 1902, p.4. Within a few months Lady Dudley’s hard work was being noticed by the press.

38 *Weekly Irish Times*, 16 May 1903, p.8.

39 *Weekly Irish Times*, 4 July 1903, p.7.

40 *The Times*, 15 May 1903 p.15.
The CBEW had been established in London in 1898, largely as a result of the efforts of Mrs. Louise Creighton with the help of Lady Adeline Bedford, Ishbel Aberdeen’s close friend and Rachel’s ‘adoptive’ mother. As discussed in earlier chapters, there was a strong network of like-minded women who were very involved in many female associations, as a way of hastening necessary reforms. Ishbel Aberdeen, Adeline Bedford and Rachel Dudley were among them. Lady Dudley would remain committed to female work opportunities and reform throughout her life and her vice-regal role enabled her to give a high profile to her efforts. The CBEW’s mission was to link those women seeking work or marketable skills with employers and educational institutions.

As was normal for the time and this type of upper-class philanthropic organisation, the employees were both voluntary and paid. As was also the custom, no distinction seems to have been made between the two, except sometimes in title, such as ‘honorary secretary’. They were all classed as ‘workers’. Funds to run the Bureau came from subscriptions, donations and charges for services from those looking for work, attending training courses, and from employers seeking workers. The stated aim of the CBEW was to gain suitable and properly paid work for all women. In practice, however, it mainly catered to the middle-class. The focus was to train women in new occupations, and to open up new avenues for ladies seeking work.

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41 Louise Creighton, wife of Mandell Creighton, the Bishop of Peterborough and later London, was also a founding member of the National Union of Women Workers. The Central Bureau for the Employment of Women was still operating in the late twentieth century. Lord and Lady Aberdeen, *We Twa*, W. Collins Sons & Co. Ltd., London, 1925, p.200.

42 *The Times*, 29 May 1905, p.3.


44 *The Times*, 6 July 1900, p.8.
Most importantly, the CBEW strove - 'to bring together those who wanted work, and those who wanted workers' and an employment register was established to this end.\textsuperscript{45} The Bureau also wished to accumulate expert information on women's employment opportunities.\textsuperscript{46} In 1900, the list of appropriate occupations for women, training information, and suitable accommodation, had expanded into a monthly newspaper, \textit{Women's Employment}. Lady Dudley had taken a keen interest in the beginnings of the publication detailing what the work of each occupation entailed, the training needed, and the wages paid.\textsuperscript{47} In 1906, 78 professions were included in another publication, \textit{The Fingerpost}, the CBEW employment magazine.\textsuperscript{48}

Rachel Dudley was successful in her bid to open a similar women's occupation service in Ireland, and the Irish Central Bureau for the Employment of Women (ICBEW) was established in 1904. At the First Annual Meeting in 1905, Lady Dudley in her position as president of the Council, explained in her address the value she placed on female education and employment, and the success of the fledgling association in furthering the cause. She believed that the advancement of women was the advancement of Ireland, for 'there is space and need for the utilisation of that great national asset, the brains and energies of the women of Ireland'.\textsuperscript{49} She stressed the importance of education and training for girls to obtain good jobs using the motto

\textsuperscript{45} \textit{The Times}, 29 May 1905, p.3.
\textsuperscript{46} \textit{The Times}, 6 July 1900 p.8.
\textsuperscript{47} \textit{The Times}, 6 July 1900 p.8.
\textsuperscript{49} \textit{Weekly Irish Times}, 4 March 1905, p.8
'en avant les jeunes femmes'.\textsuperscript{50} At this meeting it was announced that branches of the Bureau had been set up in Belfast, Killarney, and Tralee and four honorary secretaries for the counties had been appointed. After just a few months there were 341 applicants on the books of the ICBEW.\textsuperscript{51}

The organisation flourished. The ICBEW was a notable example of innovation from the new style of vice-regal wife. Lady Dudley took her interests and her experience and used them to good effect in Ireland, as Ishbel Aberdeen had done in Canada.\textsuperscript{52} The ICBEW was a professionally run woman’s organisation, successfully transplanted with the new vice-regal appointment to Ireland.\textsuperscript{53} To Lady Dudley, female independence was the way forward and she believed that the Bureau was assisting in this. She was privileged in ‘marching in step with those who desired to see Ireland continually moving forward in the way of progress’.\textsuperscript{54} Progress was the cornerstone of new vice-regal women’s thinking.

Like Harriot Dufferin and Ishbel Aberdeen, Rachel Dudley used the media to great advantage. This was a typical tactic of the evolving new vice-regal woman. In one area, however, Rachel was probably even more modern in outlook than either Harriot or Ishbel and took public relations to a higher level. As well as royal and aristocratic patrons, Rachel made great use of celebrities to publicise her organisations. Throughout her life Lady Dudley understood the power of the star or popular

\textsuperscript{50}ibid., ('en avant les jeunes femmes' or 'forward young women').

\textsuperscript{51}The Times, 27 October 1905, p.4

\textsuperscript{52}For example Ishbel Aberdeen’s May Court Club in Canada based on the 88 Club in Britain. See thesis Chapter Two.

\textsuperscript{53}The Times, 27 October 1905, p.4.

\textsuperscript{54}The Times, 27 February 1905, p.8.
personality to advertise her causes and attract community interest. Ladies Dufferin and Aberdeen were more likely to ask aristocrats or political notables to give weight to their plans. Lady Dudley combined these with the cultural luminaries or entertainers of the day. For example, in 1905, at the First Annual Meeting of the Dublin Bureau of the ICBEW, Rachel invited Mrs. Humphry Ward to address the meeting. Mrs. Ward, a famous novelist and female activist of the time, was the perfect role model for the modern working lady. She was an intelligent and independent woman who demanded respect, as well as a motivated speaker.\(^55\)

Mrs. Ward gave a speech on women’s work in the fields of medicine, nursing, local government, literature and the arts, and their growing influence in industrial, economic and artistic research. She believed the movement in favour of training women in occupations where they were most ‘naturally capable’ was the way of the future for female financial independence. She was also anti woman’s suffrage, arguing that the vote was not necessary for reform.\(^56\) Again we see this emphasise on the special areas of employment suitable for women with a strong focus on the traditional household skills areas of sewing, weaving, or gardening, in the arts, or in the nurturing or caring spheres such as nursing or teaching. Rachel’s Bureau, however, was based in practicality, and was striving through training to secure Irish women stable employment and improved conditions in whatever fields were open to them.

By 1905, the Irish Bureau and its sister society in London had branched out

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\(^{56}\)The *Times*, 27 February 1905, p.8.
considerably into technical training for girls of the ‘industrial class’. The Bureaux set up working committees on different themes such as domestic service and emigration. With the assistance of the National Union of Women Workers and the National Council of Women, research on overseas organisations was initiated. This gave the Bureau an international perspective and understanding of British women’s employment across the Empire.

Lady Dudley was also closely involved with Irish cottage industry. She became President of the Royal Irish Industries Association, which had been fostered by Lady Aberdeen during her first vice-regal sojourn in Ireland. The association was expanding and had a London committee, and a London and Dublin depot. The Vicereine took up the challenge; she chose locally produced furnishings for the vice-regal Lodge, Irish material for her clothes, and both she and Lord Dudley had boats built by local craftsmen to indulge their love of the sea.

Lady Dudley was committed to her support of Irish industries and to women’s employment. In Dublin in 1902, the Countess was at the opening of a doll-making factory, which was to employ many local women and girls. On this occasion, Lady Dudley expressed the wish that these Irish girls working in a local enterprise could earn the 10 or 12 shillings a week which was currently going to German factory

57 *The Times*, 6 July 1900 p.8.
59 *ibid*.
60 *Irish Weekly Independent*, 7 March 1903, p.12.
61 *Lady of the House*, 14 February 1903, p.24. Lord Dudley’s was a racing yacht, the Fodhla, and Lady Dudley’s a small sailing boat.
workers. The need for more training, expertise and wage equity was Rachel’s philosophy. Unlike other aristocratic women involved in work reforms, Lady Dudley was very pragmatic and interested in the details of reform, such as wage rates and working conditions. Her close involvement with the CBEW gave her comparative information and a comprehensive understanding of women’s work issues in other comparable countries.

The Countess pushed for the practical side of work, not just the rhetoric. In July 1903, she took samples of Irish lace to Paris to have French experts establish its worth and suggest future directions for home based lace-making in Ireland. She had previously sought business from the French for Irish crochet workers. As with Ishbel Aberdeen, the new vice-regal wife was not afraid to take her imperial mission out of the realm of Empire. They were internationalist in outlook and sought help for their imperial mission to modernise wherever it could be found.

Lady Dudley realised these home industries were vital to family incomes, especially in the west of Ireland. The business-like Rachel, having obtained new designs and patterns she sent these to the Congested Districts Boards to be taught in classes for interested women in the poorest areas of Ireland. She used her royal connections to have Princess Margaret of Connaught’s wedding veil designed and produced in Ireland. She also supported Irish produce stalls at bazaars and exhibitions

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64 Congested Districts Boards were set up by the government to assist the poorest regions of Ireland where agricultural activity was not capable of providing for the large population. These areas were concentrated in the west and north-west of the country.
65 Unpublished letter, Lady Dudley to Miss FitzGibbon, May 1905, National Library of Ireland, Dublin,
throughout England, notably at Hull in October 1903 which showcased Irish tweeds and jerseys, and in November at a sale of Irish goods at Windsor. In March 1904, Lady Dudley was patron of the Irish women's work and handicraft section at the Midlands Exhibition and personally took charge of the St. Patrick's Day stall of the sale of Irish goods in Dublin 1905. When Lady Dudley resigned as President of the Irish Industries Association prior to her departure from Ireland in December 1905, the organisation was in a much improved financial position. At her farewell many speakers stressed the great progress the group had made under the Countess' judicious leadership. In Lady Dudley, the organisations with her patronage received practical financial guidance. Rachel, knew the value of a pound, her upbringing and early financial struggles were not easily forgotten.

Nursing In Ireland

It was not only Rachel’s involvement with Irish industry that left a lasting impression. The Earl and Countess of Dudley as the Lord and Lady Lieutenant of Ireland 1902-05 toured the country extensively in the early years of Dudley's appointment. The west of Ireland was desperately poor. Lady Dudley was particularly moved by the lack of medical care available to the peasant families on the land. These remote agricultural districts were too poor to form local committees to fund their own district nurses from subscription or locally collected poor-rates. Lady Dudley, with the example of other

Ireland.

67 *Weekly Irish Times*, 5 March 1904, p.23.
68 *Weekly Irish Times*, 16 December 1905, p.2
70 *The Countess of Dudley's Irish Nurses*, *Lady of the House*, 15 March 1905, p.4
new vice-regal women before her, decided she would try to alleviate the situation.\textsuperscript{71}

Rather than simply becoming patroness of a fund to encourage donations the Countess, consistent with the new role of the vice-regal wife, decided to found an organisation to specifically address this problem. Rachel later related how she had received ‘constant appeals’ from various sections of the community for help in the form of district nurses to be sent to ‘the poorest and most congested parts of the country’.\textsuperscript{72} The result was the establishment of a district nursing organisation especially for the poorest inhabitants of Ireland.

Rachel enlisted the support of the existing district nursing scheme, which operated very successfully in towns and cities. The Queen’s Jubilee Nurses were once again the chosen model.\textsuperscript{73} Her Excellency approached the Central Authority of the Queen Victoria’s Jubilee Institute for Nurses in London. The Countess of Dudley, as was the way with vice-regal women, used her friendship with Queen Alexandra to gain the approval of the somewhat reluctant Central Authority.\textsuperscript{74} The Queen Victoria Jubilee Institute already had two affiliate training colleges in Dublin, the Catholic nurses being trained at St. Lawrence’s and the Protestants at St. Patrick’s. These Irish nurses were trained in accordance with the rules set down by the London Jubilee Institute.

\textsuperscript{71}Lady Aberdeen had also seen the desperate need during her first vice-regal stay in Ireland. The Marquis and Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair, \textit{More Cracks with ‘We Twa’}, Methuen & Co. Ltd., London, 1929, p.225.

\textsuperscript{72}Lady Dudley’s \textit{Scheme for the Establishment of District Nurses in the Poorest Parts of Ireland, First Annual Report}, Published by the Scheme, Dublin, April 1903-04 p.6, National Library of Ireland, Dublin.

\textsuperscript{73}Lady of the House, 15 March 1905, p.4.

\textsuperscript{74}Lady Dudley and the Queen had been friends since the days their husbands spent a considerable time together hunting, yachting, playing cards and pursuing other pleasurable activities.
Beginning The Lady Dudley Nurses

Lord and Lady Dudley touring the west of Ireland 1902

One of The Lady Dudley’s Nurses at work

*Figure 36. Top: The Graphic 8 November 1902*

*Figure 37. Bottom: Lady Dudley’s Nursing Scheme Report 1 National Library of Ireland IR614L3*
Lady Dudley chose these nurses, both Catholic and Protestant, for her scheme as they were fully trained medically and surgically, had district nursing experience, and most were also certified midwives.⁷⁵

Once the support of the nursing organisations was guaranteed, Lady Dudley set about getting the necessary finance. The cost of keeping a nurse in the remote agricultural areas was estimated at £108 a year. This sum included rent, taxes, salary, uniform allowance and other expenses. Another £55 was initially needed to supply the nurses with a bicycle or pony and cart, and medical stores.⁷⁶ To obtain the funds, Lady Dudley advertised the Scheme and her Fund in both Irish and English newspapers and organised many fund raising events and meetings to encourage donations and subscriptions. Lady Dudley’s letter to the Times of December 1903 entitled “For the Sick Poor in Ireland” elicited an influx of £738.⁷⁷ The response to the appeal was both ‘generous and encouraging’ and enabled the scheme to go ahead.⁷⁸

The Countess was determined the project would be on a sound financial footing. This was the trademark of all Lady Dudley’s organisations. She insisted that ‘no nurse be appointed until the money necessary for her equipment is in the hands of the Committee and the yearly sum required for her maintenance guaranteed’.⁷⁹ In April 1903, the Lady Dudley Scheme for the Establishment of District Nurses in the Poorest Parts of Ireland officially commenced. From May, the newspapers began to

⁷⁵ Lady Dudley’s Scheme, First Annual Report, op.cit., p.3
⁷⁶ ibid.
⁷⁷ The Times, 14 December 1903, p.10.
⁷⁸ Lady Dudley’s Scheme, First Annual Report, op.cit., p.7.
⁷⁹ Lady Dudley’s Scheme, Third Annual Report, April 1905-06, published by the Scheme, Dublin, National Library of Ireland, Dublin, Ireland, p.16.
receive a constant flow of Lady Dudley’s progress reports, appeals for funds and thanks. She used the press to great advantage. This use of the media characterised Lady Dudley’s vice-regal career in both Ireland and Australia.\textsuperscript{80} Rachel left no stone unturned in the promotion and running of her scheme, with the media, the arts and celebrities all called upon to help the cause.

The Countess of Dudley gathered a very influential committee together to oversee the project. They included H.R.H. the Duchess of Connaught, the Countess of Mayo, the Countess Grosvenor, Viscountess Castlerosse, Lady Arnott, the Lord Plunket, Fane Vernon, the Governor of the Bank of Ireland, and W.J.D. Walker, Inspector on the Congested Districts Board.\textsuperscript{81} It was a mixture of society, business, church and government, with royal interest an added benefit. The list of committee members resembled those formed by Lady Dufferin in India and Lady Aberdeen in Canada in that it was made up of the elite of local society. Queen Alexandra, on an official visit to Ireland in August 1903, expressed interest in the plan and before leaving sent a donation to Lady Dudley with a note asking to be kept informed on the progress of the scheme.\textsuperscript{82} Here can be seen a change in the part played by the monarch in response to the female vice-regal role. The evolution of the post was such that royalty was now inquisitive about and supportive of organisations begun in the name of Empire and launched by new vice-regal women. Queen Alexandra was involved with Lady Dudley’s Nurses once the scheme had been set in motion. Unlike Queen Victoria with Lady Dufferin in India, she was not an instigator of the project. By the

\textsuperscript{80}\textit{Irish Weekly Times}, 2 May 1903, p.5, \textit{Irish Weekly Independent}, 2 May 1903, p.3. Both the royalist Protestant \textit{Irish Times} and the Home Rule Catholic \textit{Irish Independent} gave support to the organisation.

\textsuperscript{81}\textit{Lady’s Dudley’s Scheme}, \textit{First Annual Report}, op.cit., p.2.

\textsuperscript{82}\textit{Weekly Irish Times}, 11 August 1903, p.13.
early 1900s this was part of the independent imperial role of new vice-regal women, they had taken the responsibility for improving colonial life, especially for women and children, into their own hands.

Once the funds were in place, the Committee set about choosing the initial Lady Dudley Nurses and to select the most needy areas where work could begin. Once again, from the outset, the committee acknowledged that an exceptional type of woman was needed to take on these nursing positions, women who saw nursing as a calling rather than just paid employment. The nurse as a woman with a particular vocation for service was by now well and truly entrenched in nursing circles. Women with special personal qualities, plus sound training, and stamina were required.

The Committee decided to select the areas to be supplied with nurses according to need. "The principle which has guided the Committee in making their selection of districts has been simply that of choosing out of many necessitous ones the most necessitous." On the 17 August 1903, the first two nurses commenced work. Nurse McCoy began at Geesala, Co. Mayo, and Nurse Cusack at Bealadangan, Co. Galway. Geelsala, in the parish of Bangor, aimed to serve a population of about 2000 scattered along a peninsula surrounded by a wide and desolate bog. Bealadangan, situated on a isthmus connected many small islands with a population of around 3500, was one of the poorest districts in the country. The area had an illiteracy rate of over 61%. Most of the inhabitants lived with their families in one room 'cabins', in reality stone

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86 *ibid.*, p.8 and 18.
hovels, the majority housing six to ten people.

One nurse at this time gave an example of typical living conditions:

called to a patient, and arrived there about 12 midnight. The house only the
size of a small stable; one room, and the half of it occupied by a cow and calf;
there was just room in the other half of it for the bed and the fireplace and a
small table.\textsuperscript{87}

By the end of the first year of operation, in April 1904, Lady Dudley’s Scheme had
nine nurses operating in the poorest areas of the country.\textsuperscript{88}

The subsequent \textit{Annual Reports} of Lady Dudley’s Nurses outline the growth of the
organisation and the hardships encountered by the nursing sisters.\textsuperscript{89} They also include
many letters of thanks from the better educated people of the serviced areas
recounting the great difference the nurses had made to their region. The Committee
was interested in any suggestions on how to improve the program and took these on
board. Lady Dudley took an active interest in the running of the scheme and
continued to contribute personally to the production of the \textit{Annual Reports}. Often
between 1903-1905, Lady Dudley either alone or with officials from the Congested
Districts Board visited patients and her nurses. The ‘good lady’ was welcomed into
many stone huts throughout the west of Ireland.\textsuperscript{90}

As mentioned earlier, Rachel was most adept at public relations and realised constant

\textsuperscript{87} \textit{Lady Dudley’s Scheme, Ninth Annual Report, op.cit.}, p.15.
\textsuperscript{88} \textit{Lady’s Dudley’s Scheme, First Annual Report, op.cit.}, p.16
\textsuperscript{89} See \textit{Lady Dudley’s Scheme, Annual Reports, 1-20, op.cit.}
attention was needed to keep everyone involved with the scheme on-side. Most of Lady Dudley’s contribution, however, was financial. She worked constantly to keep the scheme viable. Tirelessly labouring to increase the number of subscribers and benefactors by writing letters, newspaper articles, magazine stories and by fundraising events, including art unions, bazaars and concerts.91 This was the way of the twentieth century new vice-regal lady, initiator, financial coordinator and promoter of grand schemes.

By the time Lord and Lady Dudley departed Ireland at the end of 1905, Lady Dudley’s Nurses had made over 17,000 visits.92 The Countess left behind a thriving organisation with fourteen nurses ministering throughout the west of Ireland. The new incumbent as Lord Lieutenant was Lord Aberdeen and so saw the return of Ishbel Aberdeen to Ireland. She immediately accepted the position of Patroness of Lady Dudley’s Scheme. Ishbel and Rachel could easily step into each other’s vice-regal shoes as they had a common view of their evolving role. Even when Lady Dudley left Ireland and had other important commitments, she kept in close touch with her namesake organisation and often prepared or contributed to the society’s Annual Reports.93 Lady Dudley discharged the role of President with vigour until her death.

Lady Dudley’s contribution to the poor and sick of the west of Ireland was in the style of the independent new vice-regal woman and her imperial duty. In Lady Dudley, the Irish had a hard working practical advocate for reform who went about responding to

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91 *Weekly Irish Times*, 10 June 1905, p.8
92 *Lady Dudley’s Scheme, Second Annual Report*, April 1903-04, Published by the Scheme, Dublin, National Library of Ireland, Dublin, Ireland, p.17.
93 See *Lady Dudley’s Scheme Third and Ninth Annual Reports*, *op.cit.*
need. All this was executed along with her more ceremonial duties; that is, her hosting of dinners and balls, her conferring of awards, her attending meetings of the many organisations she was associated with, and her entertaining and accommodating King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra on their royal tours of Ireland. Lady Dudley was a social leader in her younger days and still enjoyed these activities when in Dublin. In her personal life too, Rachel was kept busy. She nearly died from appendicitis in December 1902, gave birth to Lady Alexandra Patricia in 1904, and faced severe personal financial problems, which meant that the family had to spend holidays in Europe to save money.\textsuperscript{94} In addition, Lord and Lady Dudley’s time in Ireland coincided with the continuing bitter and turbulent Home Rule debate. It is a credit to Lady Dudley that her nurses were seen as a body of women with no political or religious allegiances and both nationalists and unionists supported her scheme.\textsuperscript{95}

**To the Antipodes**

After 1905, with the end of his vice-regal appointment in Ireland, the Earl of Dudley was looking for another overseas assignment. His finances were not at that time in a favourable position and the family had been forced to spend some time abroad. It was rumoured he made personal entreaties to King Edward VII for another vice-regal post.\textsuperscript{96} His preference was for Canada, but in March 1908, he was appointed to

\textsuperscript{94}It was less expensive to spend time in Europe rather than continue to entertain in Ireland throughout the year. *The British Journal Of Nursing*, 13 December 1902, p.486. *Irish Weekly Independent*, 10 January 1903, p.12.

\textsuperscript{95}*The Nursing Mirror*, 14 December 1907, p.159.

\textsuperscript{96}Nairn and Serle, vol.8, *op.cit.*, pp.347-348.
replace Lord Northcote as the next Governor-General of Australia.\footnote{C. Cunneen, \textit{King’s Men, Australia’s Governors-General from Hopetoun to Isaccs}, George Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1983, p.73.} At this time the couple’s marriage was under pressure. A legal document drawn up in 1908 stated that ‘in the event of Lord Dudley’s being unfaithful or treating Lady Dudley cruelly, she should be entitled to live apart’.\footnote{\textit{The Times}, 12 November 1918, p.2.} Lady Dudley hoped the Australian appointment might help keep the family together and keep Lord Dudley away from ‘temptation’.\footnote{\textit{The Times}, 7 November 1918, p.2.}

Lord Dudley was presented to the Australian people as a South African war veteran, former parliamentary secretary of trade and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. He was depicted as a man of means with 30,000 acres in the English Midlands containing valuable mineral deposits and a large iron works, and substantial estates in Jamaica.\footnote{\textit{The Town and Country Journal}, 25 March 1908, p.14. Lord Dudley’s financial position fluctuated greatly in the early 1900s.} Lady Dudley did not receive much initial media attention. She was simply deemed the Earl’s ‘particularly gracious wife’ who may have worked in a hat shop.\footnote{\textit{The Sydney Mail}, 25 March 1908, p.777.}

Lord Dudley arrived in Australia in September 1908 on board the \textit{Aorangi}, where he ‘made himself very popular’ by joining in with the other travellers in a ‘democratic’ way.\footnote{\textit{The Town and Country Journal}, 9 September 1908, p.14.} His wife and children did not accompany him. His investiture at the pavilion in the Sydney Domain was a grand affair although this display did not meet with universal approval. The \textit{Worker} called it ‘A Sham Australian Court of St. James’ and drew attention to what it called the feudal British practices that were ‘archaic,

It was not Lord Dudley’s first trip to Australia. As a teenager he had visited in 1886 while on a round the world yachting cruise. The young aristocrat had spent time in Sydney, Melbourne, extensively toured Victoria, visited Adelaide and Albany in Western Australia. On this second trip, however, Lord Dudley, along with his wife and children, soon decided they preferred Sydney to Melbourne and they spent a great deal of time utilising Government House in Sydney as well as the official vice-regal residence in Melbourne. This caused extra expense that did not go unnoticed by the Federal Parliament. Nevertheless, Sydney became their home and, although Lady Dudley was worried about the family’s financial position, she enrolled Honor and Morvyth in the Church of England Sydney Girls Grammar School (SCEGGS) at considerable expense. Education for girls was one of her passions and, even though the norm in the Edwardian years was for the majority of aristocratic daughters to be educated at home, the Countess believed formal school instruction would best prepare her girls for a changing world. She wished her daughters to be ‘instructed on the most

103 The Worker, 17 September 1908, p.16.
104 The twins were named after and sponsored by King Edward VII and George, the Prince of Wales.
106 Cunneen, op.cit., p.87.
Lady Dudley and Children Government House, Sydney

The Dudley Children in Fancy Dress

*Front Left to Right:* Lady Morvyth, Lady Alexandra, Lady Gladys Honor *Back:* Roderick

Lady Dudley in her study Government House, Sydney

*Figure 38. Top:* Mitchell Library Sydney Picture Catalogue 34428
*Figure 39. Bottom:* Mitchell Library Sydney Picture Catalogue 34416
up-to-date principles and also have other girls to compete with.\textsuperscript{108}

Lady Dudley had arrived in Australia with several problems. Her health was poor and she endured a bout of her recurring malaria not long after arriving in Australia. She missed her three children, especially the baby twins, and the support of her family and friends in England.\textsuperscript{109} Rachel’s health concerns and her homesickness combined with her marital differences did not make for an auspicious beginning. Lady Dudley, however, began her vice-regal life in Australia as an independent and industrious woman who was determined to be an active and involved vice-regal wife. She had an interest in politics although she did not demonstrate the commitment or capabilities of Lady Aberdeen. Rachel was in the public gallery to witness the defeat of the Deakin government in 1908 and also attended the May 1909 formal opening of the Commonwealth parliament.\textsuperscript{110} Although there is little information about the political affiliation of Lady Dudley, it appears she supported her husband’s Conservative stance while adding her own pro-suffrage beliefs and her faith in female reform.\textsuperscript{111} Lady Dudley’s politics involved working for women’s rights, especially in the fields of education and work.

**Lady Dudley and the Girls Realm Guild**

In Australia the Countess, as per the new vice-regal woman, was more interested in her own unofficial imperial objectives and platform for reform than her husband’s

\textsuperscript{108} *Lady of the House*, 14 October 1905, p. 8

\textsuperscript{109} Unpublished letter, Lady Honor to Viscount Ednam, undated c. late 1908, early 1909, Dudley Letters, *op.cit.*

\textsuperscript{110} Cunneen, *op.cit.*, p. 86.

\textsuperscript{111} After their term in Ireland both the Dudley’s were pro Irish Home Rule.
official duties. She was a woman who advocated social responsibility and endorsed associations that promoted this goal. One example of an imperial organisation where socially and economically advantaged women were encouraged to help those in need and to advance women’s status was the Girls’ Realm Guild (GRG). This organisation was initiated in England in 1900 because of concern over ‘what to do with our girls?’, which as we have already seen, was a question being asked throughout the Empire and a project very close to Rachel’s heart. Lady Dudley had long considered that useful and rewarding work was the remedy for most of society’s ills and the need was very obvious among women of the middle and upper-class.

This organisation ‘The Girls Realm Guild of service and good fellowship’ had been enthusiastically adopted in Australia. The association was based in Britain around the Girls Realm magazine. This publication spread the ideals of helping the disadvantaged and included news of the Guild around the world. The Girls Realm was popular throughout the empire for many years in the late Victorian and Edwardian eras. In 1900, in an article appearing in the magazine, the Bishop of London suggested that girls had a capacity to assist one another, with the emphasis being on the advantaged helping the disadvantaged. The association ran on very simple lines. A few girls would get together, decide on how they would help other girls and form a centre, with the aid of a responsible adult woman mentor suggesting ideas and giving support. It was a highly democratic process, which gave the girls

112Susan Priestley, Bush Nursing in Victoria 1910-1985, Victorian Bush Nursing Association in conjunction with Lothian Publishing, Melbourne, 1986, p.7. For example, Lady Dudley was involved with the Mother’s Union, Queen’s Jubilee Fund, Girl’s Friendly Society, Kindergarten Union, and Melbourne City Newsboy Club among others.

113The Guild Gazette, published by the Guild, Sydney, 16 October 1907, pp.3-5, Mitchell Library, Sydney, Australia.
freedom to be creative in their contributions, and charity work, for an individual girl was allowed 'to choose her own line of helpfulness'. According to the Bishop of London, the Guild, 'strikes the note of service according to opportunity, it offers suggestions and guidance by which those who have may help those who have not'.

It was stressed that by helping others the girls were also benefiting themselves, hopefully maturing into independent women, learning practical skills and, in the process, strengthening the Empire. As the Guild's own magazine proclaimed, there was 'a compelling force about this army of girls which nothing can resist'. This was a Christian response to the growing sense of sisterhood.

Early in her colonial stay, Lady Dudley consented to become the Patroness of the Australian Girls' Realm Guild. The Guild's local magazine, the Guild Gazette, was impressed that Her Excellency's daughters Lady Honor and Lady Morvyth had become Guild members. Rachel demonstrated once again that personal involvement was appreciated by all female organisations. Although the rhetoric of the British Guild was imported to Australia, in reality the Australian organisation operated less on the stated aims of the more socially advantaged helping the poor than on all girls working together to benefit female independence. Class was not a big factor in the Australian association. Lady Dudley was quick to understand that imperial alliances had to be adapted to be acceptable and viable in different areas of Empire and she adopted an egalitarian approach while working for the Guild in Australia.

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115 The Guild Gazette, op.cit., p.5.
116 ibid., 16 October 1907, p.5.
117 ibid., 22 October 1909, p.18.
118 ibid., 16 October 1907, pp.3-5.
By pushing the colonial development theme, the work of the Guild was placed before
the Australian public in general. This was accomplished through Australian versions
of the ‘What to do with our Girls’ Exhibitions. These exhibitions had been
successfully staged in London and Lady Dudley’s CBEW had participated in one in
1908 before Rachel came to Australia. The first Australian ‘What to do with our
Girls, Unique Exhibition and Bazaar of Employment’s and Hobbies for Girls’ took
place from 21-28 April 1909 at the Sydney Town Hall. It was an ambitious
initiative by the GRG to showcase all types of work, with the emphasis on paid work
being available to all Australian women. The Countess of Dudley gave the official
opening speech on the 22 April. The Countess appeared dressed in GRG colours,
purple and white, and her daughters Honor and Morvyth accompanied her, their sailor
hats adorned with loops of purple ribbon. Lady Dudley, who was recovering from
another bout of illness, spoke at length without notes.

Her Excellency brought her modern and pragmatic approach to this topic, as well as
her excellent public speaking skills. She did not mention the Guild’s charity projects
but focused on female independence and employment. She reflected on the many
women she had known throughout her life who would have had more productive and
fulfilling lives if they had learned some basic skills in practical work, professional or
otherwise, in childhood. Her Excellency stressed that discipline, training and work
had a very valuable effect on character and attitude and as modern women they had
the right and duty to work. ‘Thank God,’ went on Lady Dudley, ‘... that the days were

\(^{119}\) *What to do with our Girls?* op.cit., April 1909.

\(^{120}\) *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 April 1909, p.7.

\(^{121}\) *Ibid.*
long gone when women working was considered an unfortunate necessity.¹²² This brought cheers from the audience. All girls benefited from having the skills and knowledge necessary to earn their own living, for 'it was an extra weapon with which to fight the battle of life'.¹²³ Lady Dudley expressed her sympathetic interest in the goals of the exhibition and the inspiration it had given her and she hoped it would inspire the young women of the state to look 'outside the limits of domestic life'.¹²⁴ Lady Dudley was expressing the new woman's ideal of preparing girls for a modern world. Here she was once again confronting the traditionalists and pushing the new vice-regal woman's agenda for reform.

By 1911 the Guild, now affiliated with the British National Council of Women, boasted 7000 members worldwide with 1600 in 22 centres in New South Wales.¹²⁵ In April 1911, capitalising on this success, the New South Wales GRG held their second 'What to do with our Girls, unique Demonstrational Exhibition (and Bazaar) of Employments and Hobbies for Girls'.¹²⁶ On 26 April, Lady Dudley once again opened the Exhibition flanked by a guard of honour of Girl Aides. By this time the Countess was arranging to leave Australia and her daughters had already departed for England. She was accompanied to the Exhibition by the Duchess of Bedford, and particular note was made in the press coverage of the Duchess' contribution to the GRG in Great Britain.¹²⁷

¹²²Ibid.
¹²³Ibid.
¹²⁴Ibid.
¹²⁵'What to do with our Girls?' Second Exhibition, Official Programme, April/May 1911, Mitchell Library, Sydney Australia.
¹²⁶Ibid.
The Countess of Dudley’s opening address expressed her delight in the success of the Exhibition. She understood that the number of exhibitors had to be limited due to lack of space and she commented on the great advance and progressive work of the Guild over the past two years.\textsuperscript{128} Lady Dudley referred to what she saw as a typically Australian attribute among educated girls, namely a desire to follow a profession or make themselves proficient in some field. She felt girls in other countries should follow Australian girls’ good example in this area, as this would give an immense advantage to any woman.\textsuperscript{129} Archbishop Wright, in thanking Her Excellency for her speech, referred to the GRG as another strong link to Empire, ‘and we could not have too many of those’.\textsuperscript{130} The ties of Empire and the ideals of new imperialism were the core of new vice-regal woman’s role, and as Rachel noted, also a way of taking the special attributes of the colonies back to Britain.

An Australian Nursing Scheme

In fulfilling her many ceremonial duties, Lady Dudley often made personal references to her observations of women and work in other places. In Australia she was quick to underline ‘the great and high possibilities open to women here’.\textsuperscript{131} Like Lady Aberdeen she knew that confidential anecdotes and opinions helped to give a familiar and welcoming sense to any address. The audience could relate and therefore respond. At the opening of a nurses’ home at the Royal Alexandra Hospital in 1909, Lady Dudley declared that her own special interest in nursing, ‘had been in close

\textsuperscript{127} The Sydney Morning Herald, 27 April 1911, p.7

\textsuperscript{128} ibid.

\textsuperscript{129} ibid.

\textsuperscript{130} ibid.

\textsuperscript{131} The Times, 21 November 1910, p.9.
intimacy with nurses’, and was ‘glad to identify herself with anything pertaining to nurses and nursing’. She reassured the listeners that she understood the nature of nursing and ‘of the strenuousness, of the self-sacrifice, and of the devotion’ required.\textsuperscript{132} This was one profession new vice-regal women could wholeheartedly endorse. As shown by her district nursing scheme in Ireland, Lady Dudley had a passionate belief in the need for health services among poor and remote communities. She saw this need going unanswered in Australia and believed she had the necessary experience to remedy the situation.\textsuperscript{133} She also had the successful models of her own nurses in Ireland, the Queen’s Nurses in Britain, and the Victorian Order of Nurses in Canada as prototypes, and the experiences of other new vice-regal women, such as Lady Dufferin and Lady Aberdeen, to draw upon.

Lady Dudley travelled quite extensively throughout eastern Australia during her first year in the country. While on these trips Rachel noticed the lack of health services in the bush as she had done years earlier in Ireland.\textsuperscript{134} Several of Australia’s major centres already had district nursing. However, this was on a very limited basis and did not extend beyond large population centres. The aim of the district organisations was to nurse the sick poor in their own homes. The nurse’s wages were raised through donations. It was once again assumed that those undertaking this work would be women of ‘strong sympathetic personality, altruistic principles and Christian ideals’.\textsuperscript{135} It was determined that the ‘most needy poor seem to live in and closely

\textsuperscript{132}The Australasian Nurses’ Journal, 15 April 1909, p.129.

\textsuperscript{133}Lady Rachel Dudley, extract from speech before the National Women’s Council in Brisbane, in Australian Bush Nursing Scheme, pamphlet, Atlas Printing, Melbourne, 1910, p.3.

\textsuperscript{134}Priestley, \textit{op.cit.}, p.7.

\textsuperscript{135}The Australasian Nurses’ Journal, 15 October 1908, p.97.
around the city’.  

Rachel Dudley questioned this and wanted to extend health services to the country, not as a charitable endeavour, but as an on-going national self-funded nursing organisation. The health of the entire population was seen as a national asset that needed to be improved. This was an imperial obligation that Rachel wished to address. While delivering the closing remarks to a regional conference of the National Women’s Council (NWC), in Brisbane in August 1909, Lady Dudley outlined her ideas on nursing. She recognised that as the National Women’s Council was made up of five strong and independent state councils, she as national patron could be ‘the personal link’ between them, and that by all acting together great things could be achieved on a national basis. She held that the women could put their energy behind an Australia-wide cause, and she had one in mind.

Rachel, undoubtedly with the knowledge of the involvement of the Canadian National Council of Women in the establishment of the VON under Lady Aberdeen’s direction, believed that she too could persuade the Australian NCW to back her project. The Countess went on to explain her ideas to the ladies present. Lady Dudley wanted district nursing to be extended to cater for the sick in the nation’s remote areas. During her year in Australia, the Countess had seen the plight of women and children in country areas, denied help in time of accident, illness or

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137 Lady Rachel Dudley, extract from speech before the National Women’s Council in Brisbane, in *Australian Bush Nursing Scheme, op.cit.*
139 Lady Rachel Dudley, extract from speech before the National Women’s Council in Brisbane, in *Australian Bush Nursing Scheme, op.cit.*
childbirth because of the lack of medical assistance in the area. Lady Dudley told her audience that there was a necessity for such a service in Australia and that she was prepared to use her vice-regal position and the experience she had obtained in Ireland in implementing a bush nursing scheme on a national basis.¹⁴⁰ Not unmindful of the difficulties surrounding the organising of this type of health service, Lady Dudley expressed the view to the women in Brisbane that, although this was a huge undertaking, ‘with courage, common sense, and perseverance, difficulties which appear insuperable are eventually overcome’.¹⁴¹

This speech and the idea of a ‘Bush Nursing Scheme’ were reported in the press and Lady Dudley repeated her plan to the National Congress of the National Council of Women (NCW), in Melbourne in October 1909.¹⁴² Again the standard view of women’s responsibility to their children, the nation and the Empire was referred to, and the Countess emphasised that women held the future of Australia in their hands.¹⁴³ The response she demanded of modern Australian women involved a national woman-to-woman egalitarian approach. The female vice-regal position and the notion of imperial sisterhood were evolving at the same time, each aiding the other to a new understanding of their roles.

The Countess noted the success of district nursing in Great Britain in the previous twenty years. The expansion of this style of nursing occurred mainly through the efforts of the Queen’s Jubilee District Nursing Association, founded by Queen

¹⁴⁰ ibid.
¹⁴¹ ibid.
¹⁴² See, for example, Table Talk, 7 October 1909, p.4, and the Nursing Mirror, 29 January 1910, p.292.
¹⁴³ Priestley, op.cit., p.8.
Victoria with her Jubilee fund. Lady Dudley believed this could be adapted to the Australian bush, however, she acknowledged that ‘the task of bringing within reach of dwellers in the bush a carefully organised system of district nurses would be a very difficult one’. Rachel stated that this type of remote nursing had been successfully accomplished in Canada, which had similar problems to Australia with distance. Lady Dudley did not acknowledge, probably even to herself, how difficult the scheme would be to implement.

Lady Dudley’s nursing plan was widely discussed by women’s groups, the press, especially the country newspapers, and the medical profession. The response was mostly positive. The Warrnambool Standard, for example, while enthusiastically endorsing the project also declared their support for Rachel. They concluded ‘the best thing the Governor-General had done was the bringing of the Countess to Australia’. Many letters were received from country people endorsing the project and confirming the great need for remote nursing, and some of these were published in a brochure produced to outline the scheme. Donald MacDonald, a noted journalist, was also enlisted to further the cause. He wrote a passionate piece on Bush Nursing calling the lack of it in Australia a ‘defect of our civilisation’. This was believed a serious shortcoming, as the perfection of civilisation was the imperial aim in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. These propaganda publications, a standard device of aristocratic ladies in promoting their philanthropic endeavours

144 As discussed in thesis Chapter Three.
145 Lady Rachel Dudley, Australian Bush Nursing Scheme, extract from speech before the National Women’s Council in Brisbane, op.cit.
146 Priestley, op.cit., p.8.
147 See the Australian Bush Nursing Scheme, pamphlet op.cit.
were also used to great effect by the new vice-regal woman.\(^\text{149}\)

Another important factor in the success of any new project was royal and aristocratic support. As this was limited in Australia, Lady Dudley turned to other vice-regal incumbents for assistance. Lady Rachel asked for, and received, the early and lasting endorsement of Lady Carmichael, wife of the Governor of Victoria. Lady Carmichael had a long-standing interest in nursing and was a close friend of Lady Hermoine Blackwood, daughter of Lord and Lady Dufferin. Hermoine was a Queen’s Jubilee nurse and was involved in district nursing in Ireland.\(^\text{150}\) Rachel also garnered her essential celebrity support in the form of international opera star Nellie Melba who already knew Her Excellency from social contacts in London.\(^\text{151}\) In September 1909, Nellie Melba had began a ‘back-blocks’ concert tour of Victoria. She visited places ‘far beyond the regions usually visited’, ‘where life is solitary and arduous’ and therefore had first-hand experience of the need for this type of remote district nursing.\(^\text{152}\) Melba offered to perform at a special fundraising concert for the newly formed Lady Dudley’s Bush Nursing Appeal.\(^\text{153}\) The concert, complete with illustrated program, was held on 15 November 1909 at the Glaciarium in South Melbourne.\(^\text{154}\) The concert and surrounding efforts raised approximately £2,500. This

\(^{149}\text{Ibid.}\)

\(^{150}\text{UNA, Journal of the Royal Victorian Trained Nurses Association, Published by the Association, Melbourne, 30 November 1910, p.132.}\)

\(^{151}\text{Table Talk, 7 October 1909, p.4. Jeffrey Richards, Imperialism and Music in Britain 1876-1953, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2001.}\)

\(^{152}\text{Nellie Melba, Melodies and Memories, Nelson, Melbourne, 1926, p.178.}\)

\(^{153}\text{Table Talk, 28 October 1909, p.31.}\)

\(^{154}\text{Programme, ‘Madame Melba’s Concert in aid of Her Excellency the Countess of Dudley’s scheme of extending nursing to the bush’, Atlas Press, Melbourne, 1909.}\)
was put on fixed deposit and called the Lady Dudley Bush Nursing Trust Fund.\textsuperscript{155}

In her quest for financial backing, Lady Dudley did not make a public appeal for individual subscriptions for the Bush Nursing Fund. Rather she sought donations from established philanthropic and official sources. These would be supplemented by innovative fundraising events. Lady Dudley’s early efforts to put the project on a sound financial footing had a long way to go. It was calculated that £100,000 would be needed to establish the scheme nationally, with nurses working in every state.\textsuperscript{156}

**Problems for the Scheme**

Similar to the experiences of Ladies Dufferin and Aberdeen before her, not everyone in the field of charitable endeavours was behind Rachel Dudley’s high profile fund raising effort. Once again a new vice-regal woman was pushing established boundaries. Some newspapers notably *The Argus*, an influential Melbourne daily, published criticisms of Lady Dudley’s idea, suggesting that the project was undertaken more for reasons of personal satisfaction and for establishing a legacy from her vice-regal stay in Australia, rather than from any desire to create a much needed organisation.\textsuperscript{157} This was a constant criticism faced by pro-active vice-regal women and not totally without foundation. The residents and establishment figures of self-governing dominions such as Canada and Australia often took exception to philanthropists, and ‘Ladies’ especially, arriving from Britain with grand and questionable plans to ‘improve’ colonial lives. They had seen many such attempts

\textsuperscript{155}Priestley, *op.cit.*, p.13.
\textsuperscript{156}ibid.
\textsuperscript{157}*The Argus*, 24 May 1910, p.6.
such as temperance unions and religious revivals. Even conservative journals such as *The Australasian* were also questioning Lady Dudley’s expertise to begin such an immense undertaking, doubtless ‘as to whether she has lived long enough in this country to fully appreciate the difficulties ahead’. Business leaders, too, queried Rachel’s credentials to successfully manage such an organisation. As has been noted Lady Aberdeen with the VON in Canada suffered the same local resistance to the new vice-regal women’s imperial plans. One of the leading opponents of the Bush Nursing Scheme was George Fairbairn, chairman of the board of the Alfred Hospital in Melbourne. He felt that limited funds were being stretched even further on a questionable enterprise. Like Ishbel Aberdeen’s loudest critic in Canada, Sir Charles Tupper, Fairbairn had the press, in the form of *The Argus*, supporting him.

It was not just funds and public support the organisation needed; it also required nurses. Ladies Dudley and Carmichael were careful to include the Royal Trained Nurses Society of Victoria, and similar organisations in other states, as important participants in the scheme. Numerous meetings, lunches and garden parties were held to which the leading nursing officials were invited. Lady Dudley’s idea was to adopt the ideals and methods of the Queen Victoria Jubilee Institute (QVJI), which carried out remote district nursing in Great Britain, as she had previously done in Ireland with her organisation of district nurses for the poor. The Institute’s methods

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160 *The Argus*, 15 September 1909, cited in Priestley, *op.cit.*, p.10. Mr. Fairbairn later had a problem with the wife of the Governor-General Lady Helen Munro Ferguson’s plan for an Australian Red Cross in 1914, as he did not approve of having a woman as president. See Melanie Oppenheimer, “The Best P.M. for the Empire in War”?: Lady Helen Munro Ferguson and the Australian Red Cross Society, 1914-1920’, *Australian Historical Studies*, vol.33, no.119, April 2002.
would, of course, be adapted to Australian ideas and circumstances. Rachel Dudley, like Ishbel Aberdeen, understood that Royal recognition of the plan would add weight and dignity to the scheme and the nurses employed by it. An Australian Order of District Nursing with a Royal Charter was envisaged similar to the VON in Canada.\textsuperscript{162} Lord Dudley wrote to the VON asking for their help in the Australian project. However, this request was denied after the Canadian Order had conferred with Lord Grey, the Governor-General of Canada, who believed it inadvisable to send anyone from the Canadian organisation, although no explanation was given as to why.\textsuperscript{163} Perhaps vice-regal interference was behind this rejection, or perhaps the VON was not in a position to help. Whatever the reason, the Countess of Dudley then turned to the Jubilee Institute in London for advice and practical help on an Australian version of its remote nursing system.\textsuperscript{164}

Although this overseas expertise and assistance would be of great help, Lady Dudley realised that most of the work needed to be done in Australia. On 8 December 1909, an official campaign for the establishment of a Bush Nursing Scheme was launched at a meeting held at Government House in Melbourne.\textsuperscript{165} The launch was not as successful as hoped with some in the medical profession voicing their dislike of the idea of giving nurses what was traditionally seen as a doctor’s role.\textsuperscript{166} Lady Dudley should have expected some opposition, as she knew the problems faced by Lady Aberdeen. In Australia, the medical men did not express their concerns as potential

\textsuperscript{162}ibid.
\textsuperscript{163}Victorian Order of Nurses Papers, MG I 171 vol.9, National Archives of Canada, (NAC), Ottawa.
\textsuperscript{164}The Nursing Mirror, 26 February 1910, p.1.
\textsuperscript{165}Table Talk, 16 December 1909, p.5.
\textsuperscript{166}Caroline E. Anderson, The Story of Bush Nursing In Victoria, Renown Press, Melbourne, 1951, no page numbers, also see The Sun-Herald, 25 June 2000, p.22. Some doctors still oppose the concept of
loss of income as they had in Canada but rather as the down grading of patient care. The doctors were ‘were quite opposed to the project, as they feared that such nurses would become a sort of inferior Practitioner’. 167 One doctor declared ‘We can kill plenty of people ourselves, without having to step in and finish off the nurses mistakes’. 168 Concern was also spreading among the numerous country hospitals, of which there were 113 in New South Wales alone in 1908. 169 The staff felt their role was being denigrated and their position usurped in the bush nursing debate. 170 Government officials also expressed reservations about the financial viability of such an undertaking. Most importantly the Australian states, and state based associations, less than a decade after federation in 1901, were still fiercely independent and not amenable to ‘national’ projects which they believed may undermine their position. Lady Dudley was caught in this federal and state government struggle. 171

Nevertheless Rachel decided to seek British nursing expertise. She believed a structured, professional and successful approach would sway the Australian sceptics. In the middle of December 1909, Lady Dudley decided to travel to England to visit her twin sons and to see what she could achieve at the Queen’s Nursing Institute in enlisting support for the Australian Bush Nursing scheme. 172 In London, Lady Rachel’s visit did not go to plan. Even though Rachel spent some days at Court visiting her friend Queen Alexandra, her health was of concern and the Queen

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nurse practitioners.

168 Paterson, op.cit., p.198.
169 The Times, 6 August 1910, p.5.
170 ibid.
172 The Times, 17 February 1910, p.10.
Victoria Jubilee Institute did not appear overly keen to assist the Bush Nursing in Australia just as they had been reluctant to assist Lady Aberdeen in Canada.\textsuperscript{173}

In February 1910, Lady Dudley addressed the Institute on the subject.\textsuperscript{174} She asked for their help, but informed the Institute that a two-tiered nursing system, one for those who could pay and one for the poor, with two levels of nursing expertise, was unacceptable to Australians.\textsuperscript{175} As an independent people, the Australians, she believed, would not appreciate an organisation arranged in this way. Although in the early days of the project in Australia reference was made to the needs of the poor in rural districts, this rhetoric was soon abandoned. Lady Dudley and her advisers became aware that this was an unacceptable concept to both country and city supporters of the scheme, and references to the poor or lower-class were deemed inappropriate.\textsuperscript{176} New pro-active vice-regal women knew that it was necessary to accept differences in outlook in their adopted colonies. The goal may have been the same but the way to achieve it would be different throughout the Empire. Soon the image of pioneering Australian families advancing the economy and bringing civilisation to remote areas was the favoured representation of those to benefit from Bush Nursing.\textsuperscript{177} While in London, the Countess also acquainted the Institute with her plan to visit Canada on her way back to Australia and study the remote district nursing scheme instituted there.\textsuperscript{178}

\textsuperscript{173}Priestley, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.11-13.
\textsuperscript{174}The Nursing Mirror, 26 February 1910, p.1.
\textsuperscript{175}The Australasian Nurses' Journal, 'The British Journal of Nursing' 16 May, 1910, p.162
\textsuperscript{176}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{177}See the Australian Bush Nursing Scheme pamphlet, \textit{op.cit.}
\textsuperscript{178}The Argus, 18 February 1910, p.7.
This Canadian trip could not be executed, however, as Lady Dudley’s health deteriorated and on 10 March she had a major operation carried out at the Ritz Hotel in Piccadilly, London.179 Her ‘adoptive’ mother Adeline, the Duchess of Bedford and her sister, Lady Laura Troubridge, travelled to London to be with her. Newspapers published bulletins on the Countess’ health for several days and noted the concern of the King and Queen over her condition.180 Rachel was critically ill for some time.

Once partially recovered, the determined Lady Dudley requested the Council of the Jubilee Institute of the Queen’s Nurses to grant six months leave of absence to the general superintendent of the Institute, Miss Amy Hughes, so she could visit Australia and help set up the Bush Nursing Scheme.181 Miss Hughes had travelled to the United States and Canada to study district nursing in these vast countries with varied climates and scattered populations, and so had some idea of what would be required in Australia. In 1898, the charter for the QVJI contained the following pledge, to educate ‘nurses to tend the sick poor in their own homes, and to promote the establishment of branches all over the kingdom’.182 Lady Dudley wanted this commitment on an amended basis extended to Australia and she wanted a proven performer in Amy Hughes to help her.183

The Committee of the Institute was not as enthusiastic as Lady Dudley about expanding its type of service to Australia or parting with Miss Hughes for a

179 The Australian Home Journal, 1 April 1910, p.25.
181 The Times, 4 March 1910, p.11.
182 ibid.
183 See The Health Visitor, May 1991, p.151, for a brief summary of Amy Hughes’ career.
considerable amount of time.\textsuperscript{184} Lady Dudley, however, appealed to the palace for help. The intervention of the Queen left the Jubilee Institute with little choice. Queen Alexandra, patroness of the society, and supporter of Lady Dudley had written of her pleasure at hearing about Lady Dudley’s plan for the Australian bush, as she had with Lady Dudley’s Nurses in Ireland. ‘Her Majesty was very sympathetic with the Australian project’.\textsuperscript{185} In a personal letter to Lady Dudley the Queen stated ‘You may rest assured of the great and warm interest I take in the scheme’.\textsuperscript{186} The sentiment is similar to that expressed by Queen Victoria to Ladies Dufferin and Aberdeen. The fact that Lady Adeline Bedford, Rachel’s adoptive mother, was president of the Queen Alexandra Committee, which raised funds for the Jubilee Institute also, worked to Lady Dudley’s advantage.\textsuperscript{187} All possible links and networks were used to ease the new vice-regal ladies path. At a special meeting of the Institute in early March 1910 the Council agreed to loan Miss Hughes to Australia for six months.\textsuperscript{188} Mr. Harold E. Boulton, the honorary treasurer of the organisation who had just returned from a study tour of the Canadian operation, the VON, also agreed to come to Australia and add his expertise to that of Miss Hughes and Lady Dudley.\textsuperscript{189}

Rachel, Miss Hughes and Mr. Boulton, arrived on the RMS \textit{Osterley} in Fremantle in May 1910. Lady Dudley had still not fully recovered from her operation and made it known that ‘for some time to come, therefore, her social engagements will be very

\textsuperscript{184} \textit{The Times}, 17 February 1910, p.10.
\textsuperscript{185} \textit{The Argus}, 30 May 1910, p.6.
\textsuperscript{186} \textit{ibid}.
\textsuperscript{187} \textit{The Nursing Mirror}, 10 July 1909, p.1.
\textsuperscript{188} \textit{The Nursing Mirror}, 12 March 1910, p.838.
\textsuperscript{189} Priestley, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.12-3.
limited’. This was a set back for the scheme as Lady Dudley was in poor health for months. The death of King Edward VII in May 1910 had also caused a downturn in official engagements and fundraising activities. The King’s death led to a suggestion that the Nursing Scheme be turned into a memorial for Edward VII and this was endorsed by the Prime Minister Andrew Fisher and the leader of the opposition Alfred Deakin. They addressed a joint letter to the Australian public on the subject, appealing for financial support for the scheme. *Australian Country Life* suggested that a national memorial that had been approved of and supported by the late King would be fitting testimonial to his reign, and it believed the Bush Nursing Scheme was the obvious choice.

Even with such prominent backing this idea did not succeed and memorial statues in state capitals were erected to the late King instead. Once again the States were not going to be dictated to by a fledgling federal parliament. This option was ridiculed by a cartoon in the Sydney based *Worker* newspaper of 9 June 1910. It was perhaps the only time that the socialist press had a good word for the vice-regal family.

On 20 June 1910, over three hundred trained nurses and Council members of ATNA were invited to Government House, Sydney, to meet Miss Hughes and Mr. Boulton and hear an address on Bush Nursing. As Lady Dudley was unwell the Earl Dudley gave the speech in which he tried to reassure the nurses and medical profession that

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190 *The Australian Home Journal*, 1 June 1910, p.35.
191 Ibid.
192 *Australian Country Life*, 15 July 1910, pp.4-5.
193 *The Times*, 31 May 1910, p.5.
194 *Australian Country Life*, 10 July 1910, p.4.
195 See illustration p.335a
AUSTRALIA: It seems to me that one competent nurse in the bush is worth a dozen stone effigies in the city.

Figure 40. Sydney Worker 9 June 1910
the scheme was to be a well-regulated and financially viable project, not a charity but a self-supporting professional organisation financed by subscriptions and local fund raising.\textsuperscript{197} It was a strong and impassioned plea for acceptance of this new nursing concept.

Amy Hughes and Harold Boulton stayed in Australia for three months, touring extensively especially in country New South Wales, Victoria and southern Queensland. They lectured in large towns and country areas explaining the meaning of district nursing and 'interviewing representatives of political, social, medical and nursing interests'.\textsuperscript{198}

Meanwhile, Lady Dudley, still not in good health, was spending most of her time working on her Bush Nursing Scheme, meeting representatives from country communities and arranging charity fundraising events. The Dudleys' daughter, Lady Morvyth, 'Dicks', wrote to her brother Viscount Ednam, 'Eccles' who was at Eton about the preparations for the charity shows, fund raising events and Bush Nursing meetings their mother held at Government House, Sydney, with a 'whole lot of old men who had come down from their stations and asked mum to speak to them'.\textsuperscript{199} 'Dicks' goes on to say about her mother, 'I have never seen any one work so hard as she has over this scheme'.\textsuperscript{200} Lord Dudley, too, mentions in his letters to his son Lady Rachel's commitment and the effect on her health; 'she is still very thin and easily

\textsuperscript{196}The Australasian Nurses' Journal, 15 July 1910, pp.228-229.
\textsuperscript{197}ibid.
\textsuperscript{198}ibid.
\textsuperscript{199}Unpublished letters Lady Morvyth to Viscount Ednam 1 July and 24 July 1910, Dudley letters, Dudley Library, Dudley, England.
\textsuperscript{200}ibid, 24 July 1910.
tired’, he wrote, for she works continuously on her Bush Nursing project, ‘and is very run down in consequence’.201 Rachel would not let her scheme fail because of lack of effort on her part. Unlike Lady Dufferin, she took the project personally, believing its success or failure depended upon her commitment, and unlike Lady Aberdeen, she did not have a strong and happy marriage to give her extra support.

It was at this time in 1910 that Lady Dudley asked Banjo Paterson to assist with publicising the scheme. Paterson, the reporter and poet, was closely identified with the bush and was the perfect celebrity to sell the idea. The intention was for Banjo and the Countess to canvas the backblocks in the vice-regal train calling for donations and support.202 Banjo agreed, but the tour never eventuated due in part to Rachel’s continuing ill-health.203 Paterson, although not enamoured with Lady Dudley’s superior manner, was nevertheless impressed by her ability and commitment.204 Her Excellency was determined to use all her propaganda and marketing skills to ensure the success of the Scheme.

Another meeting was called by Lady Dudley at Government House Sydney on 30 July 1910. Here representatives from New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, and South Australia gathered to discuss the setting up a provisional federal council of an Australian Order of District Nursing. Miss Hughes, Mr. Boulton and the secretary of Australian Trained Nurses Association were also present.205 A draft constitution was drawn up declaring ‘the Order was to establish, maintain and extend a high uniform

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201 Unpublished letters, Lord Dudley to Viscount Ednam, 4 July and 31 July 1910, *op.cit.*
203 ibid.
204 ibid.
standard of district nursing throughout the Commonwealth and particularly in the
more thinly populated districts.\textsuperscript{206} This constitution was a detailed document, well
crafted and complete with by-laws and regulations.\textsuperscript{207} The scheme was to be self-
supporting if possible and for the benefit of those in remote districts with the
extension of medical services to these isolated areas. Lady Dudley knew the public
did not want another charity that needed continual support and was determined that in
time the nurses would be paid for by the district where they were employed. A
hierarchy of local, state and federal councils and committees would work together,
each with their own spheres of responsibility. The details of the Australian scheme
were similar in style to the VON in Canada. The bush nurses were to be fully
accredited general nurses using standards set by the Trained Nurses Association, with
the addition of six months extra training as a district nurse. Nurses were to work
closely with a doctor whenever possible.\textsuperscript{208} Although the scheme was to be well
regulated and highly structured, it was still not received with total enthusiasm. Miss
Hughes and Mr. Boulton left Australia on 29 August 1910 aboard the \textit{Marama} for
England via Canada, knowing they had not been entirely successful in their
assignment.\textsuperscript{209}

Unfortunately the Countess’ lofty plans for a federal scheme could not be put into
practice. It seemed to be impossible to get the different state nursing associations and
doctors groups to agree.\textsuperscript{210} The problems of commencing a federal nursing scheme
when no federal medical schemes existed at the time were proving overwhelming. By

\textsuperscript{206}Priestley, \textit{op.cit.}, p.14.
\textsuperscript{207}\textit{The Lone Hand}, ‘Bush Nursing’, \textit{op.cit.}
\textsuperscript{208}Priestley, \textit{op.cit.}, p.14.
\textsuperscript{209}ibid. p.15.
\textsuperscript{210}Anderson, \textit{op.cit.}, no page numbers.
September, the six State governors informed the federal committee they could not form state councils as required in the federal draft constitution.\textsuperscript{211} Lady Dudley’s grand idea of a vast confederated nursing programme was not to be. The lack of money and medical agreement on a federal level meant it was decided to let the scheme proceed on a State by State basis. As Banjo Patterson noted ‘The scheme would have gone through with a bang only that the medical profession, for once, sank all their intercine feuds and combined against Lady Dudley’.\textsuperscript{212} Objections of various kinds had eventually stymied the scheme. The doctors did not want nurses treating cases without a doctor’s supervision; nurses were against a federal body to appoint nurses to bush nursing positions as they wanted their State nursing associations in charge; established benevolent foundations saw the scheme as an unwanted rival; and the public did not want another charity to support.

This failure was a first for Lady Dudley. Her earlier employment and nursing projects in Ireland had been a success. National schemes initiated by other new vice-regal ladies such as Lady Dufferin’s in India and Lady Aberdeen’s in Canada were flourishing. How would this new vice-regal woman respond to the collapse of her grand plan? She did so in a pragmatic and professional manner. The Countess acted in a way expected of an official or politician, displaying the new vice-regal woman’s maturity and responsibility. As head of the organisation, she accepted the obligation this placed upon her and responded accordingly. Rachel sent out press statements to major newspapers and letters to country communities explaining the failure of the federal scheme.\textsuperscript{213} She attributed this to the insufficiency of public money to fund not

\textsuperscript{211}Priestley, \textit{op.cit.}, p.15.
\textsuperscript{212}Paterson, \textit{op.cit.}, p.193.
\textsuperscript{213}\textit{The Australasian} 10 September 1910, p.685.
the nurses themselves, but the necessary administration. She insisted it was not due to any lack of need or enthusiasm from the bush, as over eighty districts in six states had expressed interest in the scheme. She also focused attention on the separate state nursing associations and the autonomy they wished to maintain. Their support and that of doctors would have been necessary for the formation of state councils which were an integral part of the federal scheme; without this support the project could not go ahead. Lady Dudley expressed her personal disappointment and her responsibility at not being able to make the scheme acceptable to the states as she stated ‘I am more deeply impressed than ever by the need for a more extended system of district nursing in Australia’.214

The loss of a national bush nursing scheme was a huge disappointment to Lady Dudley. She had put a great deal of effort into her plan and to see it fail was a personal blow. This happened at the same time as a scandalous and revealing article appeared in John Norton’s The Truth which accused Lord Dudley of being named as co-respondent in two divorce cases and generally being considered a gambler, bon vivant and unfaithful ‘devil of a Don Juan’, a man of ‘libidinous lecheries and lascivious lapses’, who paid little attention to his wife or his vice-regal duties.215 Lord Dudley denied all the allegations, to both the British and Australian governments. To friends he confessed that he had heard the charges with ‘the most profound amusement’.216 It soon became obvious Lady Dudley was not amused.

It had been widely acknowledged in social circles that Lord and Lady Dudley were

214 ibid.
estranged. Lady Dudley seemed to have accepted the position privately as was often the case in aristocratic unions. However, once it was made public and the children were subjected to the publicity, the situation changed. Legal documents in the form of a ‘terms of agreement’ contract were drawn up in early October 1910 giving Lady Dudley and the children financial security and the right to live in the country house Witley Court in Worcestershire and Carlton Gardens in London. As ever, the practical Rachel made sure of her finances. Lady Dudley signed the document and agreed to remain in Australia. Although the marital problems the couple shared were considerable, they did not seem to extend to bitterness or personal animosity, or at least it was not evident especially where the children were concerned. Letters written by Lord Dudley to his son Viscount Ednam around this time depict Lord and Lady Dudley holidaying together and acting in a civil, if not friendly way towards each other. On top of her disappointments over the Bush Nursing Scheme and her marriage difficulties, there was once again a marked deterioration in Lady Dudley’s health.

The Countess had never fully recovered from the operation performed in England in early 1910. Her condition worsened, she was in constant pain, and it was decided that another serious operation, similar to the one carried out in London, was necessary. Lady Dudley put the surgery off until after the Melbourne Cup Week festivities, which were a highlight of Melbourne social life, as she was conscious of her public duty as wife of the Governor-General and the significance of her presence during this

218 The Times, 9 November 1918, p.2.
220 The Australasian, 26 November 1910, p.10.
particularly sensitive time for Lord Dudley. All new vice-regal women, like their earlier traditional counterparts, showed strong public support for their husbands and their imperial position. The operation took place on 21 November 1910 at Government House Melbourne and although serious complications were experienced, it was deemed a complete success.\textsuperscript{221} By the new year Lady Dudley was considerably better and ready to promote the Bush Nursing Scheme on a State by State basis.\textsuperscript{222} She received much needed support with the arrival in Australia of Adeline, her ‘adopted’ mother, the Dowager Duchess of Bedford, in January 1911.\textsuperscript{223}

From mid-September 1910, when Lady Dudley had announced the inability of the Federal Bush Nursing Scheme to proceed, some State associations had enthusiastically taken up the cause. The first State was Victoria. On 15 September, a meeting of bush nursing supporters assembled at the Melbourne Town Hall and decided to forge ahead with a State scheme.\textsuperscript{224} This meeting was attended by the Governor of Victoria and the Prime Minister, Andrew Fisher, who both publicly thanked Lady Dudley for her efforts.\textsuperscript{225} This meeting decided to instigate a Victorian bush nursing scheme based on the lapsed federal scheme. The money raised by Victorians for the federal project was reimbursed to the Victorian association, which was formally in place, by December 1911. Lady Dudley accepted the position of patron of the association.\textsuperscript{226} The first area chosen for a nurse was Beech Forest, Victoria, where Amy Hughes and Harold Boulton had held a meeting on their lecture

\textsuperscript{221}The Times, 21 November 1910, p.13. Although it is not explicitly mentioned it seems it was a kidney or gall bladder problem.

\textsuperscript{222}Australian Country Life, 15 February 1911, p.24.

\textsuperscript{223}The Australasian, 21 January 1911, p.162.

\textsuperscript{224}Priestley, \textit{op.cit.}, p.17.

\textsuperscript{225}ibid., p.18.
tour in June. Beech Forest was a remote forested region, in the Otway Ranges south west of Melbourne, which had been taken up by a large number of selectors in the 1850s and 60s.\textsuperscript{227}

By the end of 1910, advertisements appeared for the first Victorian bush nurse. Mary Thompson, who had trained at Melbourne Hospital, had completed a midwifery course and had spent several years nursing individual families in isolated areas, was chosen.\textsuperscript{228} In an interview published before she took up her post, she spoke of her enthusiasm for the job and her understanding of the special needs and lifestyle of bush families.\textsuperscript{229} Nurse Thompson had nursed for many years in the Mallee region of rural Victoria, and as she expressed it, the ‘life was tough but it was real’.\textsuperscript{230} She spent two weeks with the district nurses in Melbourne before taking up her employment on 18 February 1911.\textsuperscript{231} As a bush nurse she not only attended medical cases but also taught first aid and looked after the general health of the children at the local school.

On the 14 March 1910, Lady Dudley, Lord and Lady Carmichael, and a large official party arrived from Melbourne by special train to perform the first bush nurses’ installation ceremony at Beech Forest. Lady Dudley was absolutely delighted.\textsuperscript{232} The local school children showed off their newly learned skills, a small girl bandaged the Countess for a broken collar-bone, and other dignitaries received similar treatment. Lady Dudley gave an emotional address to the local residents in her installation

\textsuperscript{226}\textit{ibid.}

\textsuperscript{227}\textit{ibid.}, pp.20-22.

\textsuperscript{228} \textit{Australian Country Life}, 15, February 1911, p.24.

\textsuperscript{229}\textit{ibid.}

\textsuperscript{230}\textit{ibid.}

\textsuperscript{231} \textit{The Australasian}, 20 January 1911, p.173.
speech. This was not an ordinary occasion for her, this was ‘a red letter day ... the realisation of a hope which has lain near to my heart ever since I came to Australia’. This was the duty of the new vice-regal woman, to lead their dominion along the modern path to civilisation, to bring the latest scientific practises to their colonial sisters. Rachel may not have succeeded federally but at least the State of Victoria was a start.

The second Victorian Bush Nurse was installed at Gunblower, a dairying district in northern Victoria. The people of Gunblower had subscribed freely to the Bush Nursing Scheme, and on 11 April 1911, nurse Caroline Burke began her duties. Lady Dudley made a special journey from Sydney to install this second bush nurse. She was particularly pleased that the nurse would be totally funded by the local community and went out of her way to thank the efforts of Lord and Lady Carmichael in helping to make the project a reality. This was the last inauguration Lady Dudley was to attend as Lord Dudley had resigned his position and she was to leave Australia a few months later. Before the end of 1911, four bush nursing centres were established in Victoria.

New South Wales, too, decided it would do something to alleviate the health needs of families in remote regions. In April 1911, the New South Wales Bush Nursing

\[237 The Australasian, 16 March 1911, p.688.\]
\[233 The Argus, 15 March 1911, p.12\]
\[234 ibid.\]
\[235 The Sydney Morning Herald, 17 April 1911, p.11.\]
\[236 Priestley, op. cit., pp.20-26.\]
Association was formed, with Lady Dudley as life patroness.\textsuperscript{238} By January 1912 New South Wales had five bush nurses at work. The Association grew strongly and was greatly boosted in 1920 by a grant from the British Red Cross Society to supply nurses to areas taken up by ex-servicemen in the soldier settlement schemes.\textsuperscript{239} Gradually other states took up the service. Tasmania had one bush nurse in 1912, and South Australia had extended its Adelaide district nursing system to remote areas in the state. Queensland did not have a Bush Nursing Association until 1917, even though it had been under consideration for many years.\textsuperscript{240}

Prior to leaving Australia in July 1911, Lady Dudley wrote an article to the people of Australia on the Bush Nursing Scheme. It was published by \textit{The Lone Hand}, in August 1911.\textsuperscript{241} In this long and detailed piece she explained that, no longer hampered by her vice-regal position, she could now frankly answer her critics and explain her intentions to the Australian public regarding a subject ‘very close to my heart’.\textsuperscript{242} It was a spirited vindication of her federal plan. She stated her motive was simple - she wished to bring relief to ‘the hardships endured by settlers in the bush ... particularly where women are concerned’.\textsuperscript{243} Once again the importance of women and mothers was stressed. The project would help all but was especially necessary for ‘the faithful ones, women and children who follow the footsteps of the pioneer’.\textsuperscript{244}


\textsuperscript{240}\textit{ibid}.

\textsuperscript{241}\textit{The Lone Hand}, ‘Bush Nursing’, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.293-301.

\textsuperscript{242}\textit{ibid}, p.293.

\textsuperscript{243}\textit{ibid.}, p.296.

\textsuperscript{244}\textit{ibid.}, p.301.
the Governor-general she had hoped to accomplish this on a national level.

This article was another sign of the new vice-regal women's awareness of their public position and accountability. Lady Dudley believed Australians deserved an explanation regarding the Bush Nursing Scheme and she deserved to be heard. The Countess went on to explain the necessity for the extension of district nursing to the bush and her sincere belief that its benefits outweighed the difficulties of its implementation. The National Bush Nursing project was a scheme for the pioneer settlers of remote areas. It was not a charity; it was a way of bringing professional and much needed medical skills to the bush.\textsuperscript{245}

Lady Dudley conceded that the public, medical establishment and politicians did not embrace her national scheme, but she nevertheless defended her reasons for proposing it. Perhaps she did put 'the cart before the horse', but she was looking at the big picture, the finished product, not the first steps.\textsuperscript{246} Lady Dudley admitted that although the national project had failed something good had come of the idea and she was delighted that now the system was growing slowly, State by State.

Her Excellency tried to impress on the readership that this type of remote nursing was a feature of many parts of the British Empire and should be seen as a necessary extension of the humanitarianism of the British people. This style of nursing was operating 'in the heart of rural England, ... (in Scotland's) mountains and moors, ... in the barren stretches of bog land in (Ireland's) west, ... in Canada, that land of snows and distance, ... and the latest development the inauguration of a scheme for adoption

\textsuperscript{245}ibid., p.299.
in South Africa'. The concept of modern and scientific health practises being available to all citizens of the Empire was one being taken up by the sisterhood of vice-regal women as part of their self-appointed and community-expected imperial mission. As Lady Dudley asserted ‘Wherever the British flag flies it [remote nursing] is becoming an institution in some form or other’. Australia owed her pioneer families access to medical assistance and Lady Dudley was sure that the nation would live up to its responsibilities.

Her Excellency, Rachel, Countess of Dudley, accompanied by Adeline, the Duchess of Bedford, departed Australia on the Zealander for England via Canada on 3 July 1911. Australian Country Life suggested society ladies in Sydney and Melbourne were probably not sad to see her go, as she did not seek their company, but rather would be missed by ‘folk in a very different walk of life who knew her Excellency as Society people never knew her’. Lady Dudley’s sojourn in the Commonwealth had been a busy and not wholly pleasant experience. Rachel had two failures to deal with, the demise of her scheme and the end of her marriage. Lady Dudley never visited again but it was not the end of her interest and involvement with Australians.

Conclusion

Upon returning to England in late 1911 Lord and Lady Dudley attempted a reconciliation at the request of the Dudley family. This attempt failed and the couple

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246 ibid.
247 ibid., p.301.
248 ibid.
249 Australian Country Life, 24 July 1911, p.39.
legally separated in 1912.²²⁰ Divorce was still not an acceptable option for many aristocrats. Rachel, however, unlike many elite women, would not put up with a sham marriage and preferred the separation option. This official separation did not seem to slow Lady Dudley down. Like vice-regal women before her she held close and ongoing ties with the people of her former dominion posts. She continued to feel a special bond with Ireland and Australia, with her support of district nursing, her interest in Irish industry and women’s work reforms. She was still an important figure in the Central Bureau for the Employment of Women, which had expanded. There were now off-shoots including the thrift department, which helped women with their finances, and the Student Careers Associations, which began in 1910. The publications also increased in number and scope with more specialist editions being produced. By 1914 Lady Dudley was back as a vice-president. The Fingerpost now became Careers - A Guide to the Professions and Occupations of Educated Women and Girls. During the Great War the Bureau opened a special War Relief Work section, and Lady Dudley was elected as president of the Bureau’s Loan Fund in 1918.²²¹

The Lady Dudley Nurses in Ireland also received her attention. She spent much of her time examining the finances of the Scheme and writing the annual reports. The work continued to expand over the years.²²² Local Irish health authorities also contributed to the scheme. In April 1974, after seventy one years of operation the Lady Dudley

²²⁰The Times, 7, 9, 12-15 November 1918 for detailed information on the Dudley marriage.
²²²The position of the organisation was greatly enhanced by an injection of £40,000 in 1920 upon Rachel death. This sum was raised by Lady Mayo in America as a memorial to Lady Dudley. The Countess of Mayo had been closely associated with Lady Dudley’s Nursing Scheme since its inception.
Nurses ceased to exist. The remaining thirty three nurses passed into the service of the Irish Regional Health Boards.\textsuperscript{253}

On her return to England after her husband’s Australian vice-regal appointment, Rachel combined her work with her social commitments. Although her marriage was over she was still a Countess, she still had public obligations and she still had a family to care for. Her youngest children, the twins Edward and George, were only eight years old at the outbreak of World War One.

At the end of hostilities in 1918 Lady Dudley returned to her pre-war pursuits especially those concerning women’s employment and the Lady Dudley Nurses in Ireland. On 26 June 1920, Rachel travelled to Screebe Lodge on the Connemara coast of Ireland for a holiday.\textsuperscript{254} This lodge had been purchased by Lord and Lady Dudley during their viceroyalty in Ireland. On the same afternoon Lady Dudley, accompanied by her maid, went down to the water for a swim. After some time and about thirty yards from shore Lady Dudley appeared to struggle in the water and then disappeared. Lady Dudley’s body was found half an hour later.\textsuperscript{255} The death was attributed to heart failure. Lady Rachel Dudley aged fifty three, was buried at the Dudley family home, Witley Court, on 3 July 1920 with Lord Dudley and her seven children in attendance. Placed on her coffin, which was wrapped in the Red Cross flag, were the nine decorations she had received in her lifetime.\textsuperscript{256}

\textsuperscript{254} \textit{The Times}, 28 June 1920, p.16.
\textsuperscript{255} \textit{The Times}, 30 June 1920, p.13.
\textsuperscript{256} \textit{Ibid.}
In the life of Lady Rachel Dudley we see the commitment to imperial ideals of progress of the new vice-regal woman. Lady Dudley used all her skill and attributes, her position, networks, experience, combined with force of will and hard work during and after her Irish and Australian careers. In Ireland the ICBW brought much needed expertise to Irish women looking for employment, Lady Dudley’s Nurses filled a void in remote health care for the poor. In Australia, Rachel’s involvement with the GRG and the Bush Nurses once again underlined new vice-regal women’s understanding of the need for pro-active involvement in imperial progress. This new vice-regal woman had successfully combined philanthropy and work to establish important colonial organisations.

Like Ladies Dufferin and Aberdeen, Lady Dudley grasped the need to integrate her imperial aspirations into the local culture. She adopted, adapted and expanded existing organisations to initiate new colonial projects. The Countess of Dudley, however, took the evolving role of the vice-regal wife to a new level. The vice-regal wife now had her own acknowledged imperial assignment. No longer simply partners in imperial duty new vice-regal ladies such as Rachel Dudley were now independent and committed modern working women.

**Postscript – Lady Dudley and World War One**

It was the outbreak of war that enabled Rachel, the Countess of Dudley, to put all her imperial, vice-regal and aristocratic attributes to full use. She was taking the evolution of the female vice-regal role to the next level. Many imperial wives, when they
returned home to Great Britain, still believed they had an obligation to offer encouragement, help, and assistance to ‘their’ colonies. Over time this sense of a continuing and personal relationship grew. Women such as Lady Jersey would devote their time to furthering the Empire for the rest of her life.\textsuperscript{257} Lady Dufferin would continue to support the Medical Fund in India; Lady Aberdeen never stopped working for Ireland and Canada; and Lady Dudley always helped Ireland and Australia where she could.

In 1914 aristocratic women in Britain were making their contribution to the war effort, not only seeing their husbands and sons off to war but also actively supporting the effort themselves. Many opened their stately houses as hospitals and convalescent homes and trained as members of Voluntary Aid Detachments (VAD’s).\textsuperscript{258} The more adventurous ladies, such as the Duchess of Westminster, and the Dowager Duchess of Sutherland, opened hospitals overseas with the aid of the Red Cross.\textsuperscript{259} It was the former wife of an Australian Governor-General Lady Rachel Dudley, however, who took her continuing vice-regal involvement out of the Empire and on to the battle fields of France.

In August 1914 with the declaration of war Lady Dudley suggested the formation of an all Australian voluntary hospital to be stationed in France. She did this not as a philanthropic aristocrat or a woman with a high profile connections; she did it as a new vice-regal woman continuing her modern approach to imperial commitment.

\textsuperscript{257}See Dowager Duchess of Jersey, \textit{Fifty One Years of Victorian Life}, John Murray, London, 1922.

\textsuperscript{258}See Thekla Bowser, \textit{The Story of British VAD Work in the Great War}, Andrew Melrose, London, 1917, for information on this topic.

Within a month Rachel had a fully manned and equipped hospital, the Australian Voluntary Hospital (AVH) at Wimereux, on French soil. The Countess obtained financial support from the wealthy Australian brewery baron living in England, Sir Robert Tooth. The hospital was staffed by medical men and women who were part of the ‘Australian colony’ in London. The Countess organised the necessary approvals, funds and ordinance and Australians provided the expertise and personnel. These partners in Empire were to contribute to the war effort as a team. Rachel proved equal to her self assigned imperial task.

Through her networks, through her vice-regal connections, through her determination and through her hard work Lady Dudley supplied and delivered this Australian hospital to France, she also kept it going against the odds and remained with it as a worker until the armistice of 1918. The AVH began operation in northern France in September 1914, with the Countess as Lady Superintendent.

The hospital was taken over by the British Army in 1916 and renamed British Stationary Hospital No.32 due to the medical staff being directed elsewhere by Australian authorities. The end of the AVH as an Australian entity did not mean the end of Lady Dudley’s relationship with the hospital at Wimereux. She remained with the Hospital until 1918. Rachel Dudley, a staunch advocate of female employment, now proved her commitment. Like many upper-class women she had trained as a VAD being a member of the London 52 detachment, but used her skills at the hospital

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260 See Eames Collection, ‘History of the Australian Voluntary Hospital’, Australian War Memorial Archives, Canberra, IDRL/0667 vol.1-12.
261 ibid.
262 ibid.
in France. In 1917 due to the shortage of medical staff at the hospital, the 51 year old Countess qualified as an anaesthetist and worked in the operating theatre during the battles of 1918.\textsuperscript{263} The hospital chief Lt. Col. Eames reported she often ‘gave as many as 25 anaesthetics in a day’ and was a respected member of the staff.\textsuperscript{264} For her work in France Lady Rachel Dudley was awarded the Mons Star, Royal Red Cross, was made a Commander of the British Empire and was mentioned in dispatches twice.

\textsuperscript{263}\textit{Lady Rachel Dudley}, British Red Cross Society Archives, London.

\textsuperscript{264}\textit{Eames Collection}, ‘A History of the Australian Voluntary Hospital’, \textit{op.cit.}
CONCLUSION

‘to be something so much worthier than the doll in the doll’s house’

There was a dynamic new breed of vice-regal woman evident throughout the British Empire in the period spanning 1884-1914. From the time Queen Victoria requested Lady Harriet Dufferin to help the women of India with a pioneering health organisation the vice-regal wife could no longer be considered simply ornamental. The role was expanded and enhanced in this era as evidenced by the case study of Ishbel Aberdeen in Ireland and Canada with her remarkable concept of sisterhood and women’s collective power. It was pushed even further when Lady Dudley took her vice-regal commitment from the poorest parts of Ireland, to the Australian bush, and on to the battlefields of France.

This new vice-regal woman was pro-active, hard working, practical, assured, and well aware of her imperial responsibilities. New vice-regal ladies took the duty of Empire and their civilising mission to a heightened level, and in doing so constructed an imposing legacy. As imperial agents for change, they established progressive and sustainable organisations which were, and in many cases still are, of considerable benefit to their communities.

The momentous changes transforming British society in the late Victorian and

Edwardian eras were not lost on aristocratic ladies and vice-regal wives. The influence of Queen Victoria, the emergence of the independent new woman, the enthusiastic acceptance of the concept of new imperialism, and the great importance placed on the concept of work all impacted on the female imperial role. The traditional functions of the Governor’s lady such as moral guardian, social hostess, and philanthropic patroness were liberalised and expanded. The ladies themselves also carved out their own vice-regal careers as modern representatives of both Empire and British womanhood.

These self assured, competent, and enthusiastic women used their particular elite characteristics, connections and networks to initiate reform. During their husband’s vice-regal appointments, the women put their abilities and skills to imperial use pushing the boundaries of what was considered acceptable in the field of female endeavour. These women of rank and influence left their mark on numerous British communities across the world. Armed with practical experience from the creation and operation of philanthropic associations within Britain, they took this blueprint for success to the colonies.

The new vice-regal woman brought a professional and modern approach to social reform within British imperialism. Pro-active and royally sanctioned elite women merged the private and public spheres through their influential vice-regal position. They took the rhetoric of female responsibilities within new imperialism to greater heights, giving women an important role in the vanguard of a modern and responsive British Empire. The three ladies of this study provide a glimpse of the diverse interests and modern attitudes of late nineteenth century elite woman and new vice-
regal woman.

Queen Victoria's commanding and long-lasting influence on aristocratic women should not be underestimated. Although Victoria is often depicted as a reclusive and demanding woman with middle-class values, she was nonetheless the head of a great Empire, and a symbol of female power. The continued presence of a woman on the throne and one willing to support other women's initiatives in the area of health was of immeasurable importance to new vice-regal ladies. Queen Victoria's encouragement and royal endorsement enabled her representatives to overcome many difficulties encountered in the colonies and dominions. This active royal involvement was continued by Queen Alexandra and Queen Mary, but it was Victoria that gave many upper-class women a symbol of female authority that later enhanced their imperial careers.

The three main themes which propelled these new vice-regal women were the new woman, new imperialism, and changing concepts of work. The evolving ideals of the new woman, her rights and responsibilities further empowered many elite ladies. Although brought up in the traditional way with little formal education, and in some cases little ambition beyond marriage and motherhood, they did have an innate understanding of their elite status and privileged position which gave many of them confidence to proceed in a changing world. Unlike previous generations of upper-class wives and mothers, some new elite women saw their role as active participants in a wider sphere, while not abandoning their commitment to motherhood and domestic life. Through their established networks of family and influential friends, they harnessed their attributes in the service of the nation. As moral, civilised and
productive women, they would help maintain the status of the British people as recognised masters and leaders. To do this healthy, bright and patriotic children needed to be produced wherever the British lived. It was here that many aspects of the new woman and new imperialism met and intersected.

New imperialism gave a structure to the new vice-regal woman’s role. The independence and reforming spirit of the new woman could be put to good use throughout the Empire. This great Empire which British superiority in arms and technology had acquired would, with British scientific endeavour, commitment to civil society, ideas of fair play, and hard work, endure in a changing world. This Empire of the future would share goals, opportunities and responsibilities. New vice-regal women produced practical examples of these new imperial sentiments. The organisations they initiated were a testament to the ideals of a crusading and dynamic imperial spirit, intent on progress, emphasising the unlimited potential of the lands and people that comprised the British Empire.

To achieve these lofty outcomes often sentiment and rhetoric were not enough. What was needed was work. It was in this area that the new vice-regal women differed most from her traditional counterparts. The new vice-regal woman was public and proactive in her work for Empire. She placed her imperial agenda before the community, and viewed her position as one of imperial employee. The new vice-regal woman used the experience she had gained through philanthropic associations in Britain to enhance her imperial endeavours. She desired to establish professionally run, and community sponsored, organisations. The new vice-regal wives would shoulder much of the work including cultivating media interest and procuring celebrity backing. She
would make sure all the prerequisites were in place to establish and maintain a successful association.

The importance of nursing cannot be underestimated in the success of the colonial organisations of these new vice-regal women. Health, especially concerning women and children was considered an appropriate avenue for their interest and support. The new vice-regal women grasped this opportunity and with each colonial community formed a team which worked together to produce sustainable outcomes. Most of these enterprises stayed within a limited field of endeavour encompassing women and children’s health, education and employment. These restrictions did not preclude them, however, from achieving valuable and far reaching results.

All these factors, to different degrees, influenced the three new vice-regal women of this thesis. Each lady responded in her own way, using personal characteristics and attributes to further imperial goals, push the boundaries and question conventional wisdom. They were no longer only loving mothers and helpmates, hostesses and patronesses and the first choice to open fetes and visit hospitals. New vice-regal women were now activists and reformers, shrewd, dedicated workers in the service of Empire. When faced with difficulties or opposition they rose to the occasion. Aristocratic women were not easily intimidated and new vice-regal women did not readily accept defeat. Taking on the characteristics of some earlier male imperialists they proved themselves to be adventurous, brave, tenacious, and determined to perform their imperial duty.

The first of the new vice-regal women, Irish born Lady Hariot Dufferin, imperious
and detached, needed the impetus of a royal request to begin her new vice-regal role. Once in motion, however, she proved equal to the mammoth task. By establishing a non-sectarian, modern and culturally sensitive medical organisation catering to over 100 million women, she constructed a framework of imperial endeavour which acted as an exemplar for future new vice-regal women. The Dufferin Fund combined traditional vice-regal philanthropic responsibility with vital medical aid and female education and employment opportunities. These three fields were the major areas for new vice-regal attention in the late Victorian and Edwardian period just as they were within British women’s reforming groups. Lady Hariot Dufferin proved that vice-regal women’s active involvement in local issues could have a beneficial and enduring effect.

The second new vice-regal woman of this thesis was the remarkable Scot, Lady Ishbel Aberdeen. Ishbel needed no encouragement to push the limits of the female imperial role. The unstoppable Lady Aberdeen found time and enthusiasm for a myriad of reforms, but it was through her vice-regal role that she furthered imperial goals, combining much of the new woman’s reforming agenda with the demands of modern vice-regal life. Her organisational experience assisted in the successful establishment and continued prosperity of the Victorian Order of Nurses, The National Council of Women of Canada, the Irish Industries Association, and the Irish Tuberculosis campaign, health, education and employment were paramount concerns. The Countess of Aberdeen’s contribution to the position and well-being of women in both Ireland and Canada was considerable and ongoing. Ishbel harnessed her energy, and the momentum created by the British female reform movement, in the service of Empire. As a new vice-regal woman, Ishbel was unrivalled in her ability to merge the
benefits of imperialism with the power of the sisterhood.

The English beauty and socialite Lady Rachel Dudley, the third new vice-regal woman studied here, brought an indomitable quality to the new vice-regal women's role. Intelligent and sympathetic, the Countess of Dudley combined a realistic view of the lifestyles and opportunities available to woman in Ireland and Australia with a pragmatic approach to how these could be improved. Although confronted with public and private obstacles and disappointments, Rachel Dudley undertook the challenge to change the lives of Irish and Australian families for the better through her direct intervention via Lady Dudley's Nurses in Ireland, The Irish Bureau for the Employment of Women, and the Australian Bush Nurses. Again philanthropy, health and work were linked as essential areas of female vice-regal duty. When the Countess of Dudley established the Australian Volunteer Hospital in France in 1914 she took the new vice-regal woman's concept of British imperialism along, for Rachel Dudley, the new vice-regal responsibility went beyond physical boundaries and above official disapproval.

These three vice-regal women demonstrated a new approach to their imperial roles. The traditional position of vice-regal spouse had changed forever. In the late Victorian and Edwardian eras there was a virtual regiment of lady imperialists in the guise of vice-regal wives enacting change in whatever colony or dominion they found themselves. These new vice-regal ladies were women of understanding and character with a vision for the Empire, especially for its women and children, and a willingness to work hard to achieve it. They exerted a profound influence on British imperial history through their organisations by improving colonial health, education and
employment opportunities. Ladies Hariot Dufferin, Ishbel Aberdeen, and Rachel Dudley were three representatives of this growing cohort of progressive new vice-regal women. They were women who had firmly slammed the doll’s house door behind them and who had vacated their place on the mantelpiece for a position on the podium - ornamentals no more.
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