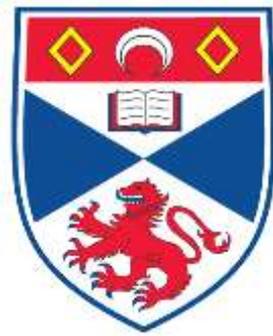


**IMPERIALIST WOMEN IN EDWARDIAN BRITAIN: THE
VICTORIA LEAGUE 1899-1914**

Elizabeth L. Riedi

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St. Andrews**



1998

**Full metadata for this item is available in
Research@StAndrews:FullText
at:**

<http://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/>

Please use this identifier to cite or link to this item:

<http://hdl.handle.net/10023/2820>

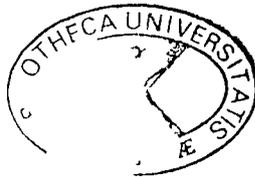
This item is protected by original copyright

**This item is licensed under a
Creative Commons License**

**IMPERIALIST WOMEN IN EDWARDIAN BRITAIN:
THE VICTORIA LEAGUE 1899-1914**

ELIZABETH L. RIEDI

Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
PhD at the University of St Andrews.



Abstract

This thesis, based on private papers, society records, autobiographies and memoirs, newspapers and periodicals, examines one mainly female imperialist organisation - the Victoria League - and the women who ran it. It considers two related questions - what made Edwardian women imperialist, and how, within the limits of Edwardian society, could they express their imperialism? The thesis shows that several of the League's founders and executive had visited South Africa during or shortly before the Boer War, and that this experience, particularly for those who came into close contact with Milner, was pivotal in stimulating them to active imperialism. The Victoria League, founded April 1901, aimed to promote imperial unity and a British South Africa in a variety of suitably 'womanly' ways: Boer War charities, imperial education, exporting literature and art to the white dominions (particularly the Transvaal), welcoming colonial visitors to Britain, arranging for the welcome of British settlers in the colonies, and promoting social reform as an imperial issue. It worked overseas through a number of independent Victoria Leagues in Australasia, the Imperial Order, Daughters of the Empire in Canada, and the Guild of Loyal Women in South Africa; and at home with a number of similar (though largely male) imperial propaganda societies. The thesis also considers the Victoria League's attitude to race, particularly through its debate over entertaining Indian students. It ends with a discussion of the options available to imperialist women; and of the obstacles they faced in questions of authority (how far and ⁱⁿ what ways a woman could pronounce on imperial subjects) and of ideology (as expressed through the anti-suffrage campaign). It concludes that the Victoria League, by transferring areas of activity long acknowledged as 'feminine' to the imperial stage, redefined areas of female competence and enlarged woman's 'separate sphere' to include the active propagation of imperialism.

I, Elizabeth Riedi, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 99,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

date 21/12/97 signature of candidate

I was admitted as a research student in October 1993 and as a candidate for the degree of PhD in October 1993; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 1993 and 1997.

date 21/12/97 signature of candidate

I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of PhD in the University of St Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

date 19/12/97 signature of supervisor

In submitting this thesis to the University of St Andrews I understand that I am giving permission for it to be made available for use in accordance with the regulations of the University Library for the time being in force, subject to any copyright vested in the work not being affected thereby. I also understand that the title and abstract will be published, and that a copy of the work may be made and supplied to any *bona fide* library or research worker.

date 21/12/97 signature of candidate ..

Acknowledgements

I have to thank the Victoria League in London for permission to read the Victoria League minutes; the late Rt. Hon. Lord Amery of Lustleigh for access to the Violet Markham-Leo Amery correspondence; the Victoria League in Scotland for information about its early days; Dr Julia Bush of Nene College, Northampton, for a copy of her paper from the 1995 Women's History Network Conference; and Hamish Scott, Chris Schmitz, Deborah Thom, Catriona Burness and James Bothwell for help with various aspects of this thesis.

Contents

Preface	i
Chapter 1: Prelude in South Africa 1894-1900	p1
Chapter 2: The Victoria League	p29
Chapter 3: Philanthropy & Politics: Early Work in South Africa	p52
Chapter 4: Imperial Education	p75
Chapter 5: Culture to the Colonies	p96
Chapter 6: From Home to Home: Hospitality & Settlers' Welcome	p112
Chapter 7: Imperialism & Social Reform	p133
Chapter 8: Sister Societies Overseas	p151
Chapter 9: Allies & Rivals	p174
Chapter 10: Dangerous Proposals: the Victoria League & Questions of Race	p192
Conclusion: Gender & Empire	p207
Bibliography	p216

Preface

Recent years have seen an expansion of interest in two related areas: popular imperialism and imperial propaganda; and the relationship between British women and the British Empire. This thesis, a history of a mainly female imperial propaganda society, the Victoria League, examines both of these issues from the inside and in doing so shines new light on Edwardian imperialist women, as individuals and as a group. In particular it aims to answer two questions: what made women active imperialists? and what were the options available to an imperialist woman in the Edwardian era? Women and girls anxious to do their bit for the Empire were usually referred back to motherhood and the home. Even the feminist Lady Frances Balfour suggested that 'women's imperial work' was to rectify the 'diminishing birth-rate'. 'The nation needs men; are they not, then, in supplying them, doing their share of Empire-building?'¹ Baden-Powell's Girl Guides, eager to combine patriotism and adventure, were restricted to 'training in domestic duties, including sewing, cooking, first-aid and nursing, together with moral training to enable girls to become the 'guides' of men'.² Women were also encouraged to 'teach the story of Empire to the next generation and ... awake in each childish breast a feeling of patriotism'. Better still, they could increase the range of 'imperial motherhood' by emigration to the white dominions.³ But this ideology, though widespread and often commented upon by historians, did not preclude a more active and directly political female imperialism. After examining the roots of Edwardian women's imperialism in Chapter 1, the thesis examines the areas and ways in which an active female imperialism could be expressed in Chapters 2-7; contrasts the Victoria League with other imperial propaganda societies, both colonial and London-based, male and female, in Chapters 8 and 9; explores the implications of race differences for the League in Chapter 10; and concludes with a discussion of British women and imperialism.

¹Lady Frances Balfour, 'Women's Imperial Work', *Spectator* 10 March 1906 p380.

²Jane Mackay and Pat Thane, 'The Englishwoman' in Robert Colls and Philip Dodds (eds.), *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920* (London: Croom Helm: 1986) p214.

³Mrs Archibald (Ethel) Colquhoun, 'Women and the Colonies', *Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute* XXXV 1903-4 pp326-344, p337.

Chapter 1.

Prelude in South Africa 1894-1900

Despite a revival of interest in imperial propaganda societies and female emigration schemes in recent years, very little work has been done on the individuals who ran them. This is the more surprising as their lives are generally well documented. In the case of the women who founded and ran the Victoria League, a common thread is quickly observed: many had visited South Africa either shortly before or during the Boer War and developed there an interest in imperial and South African politics. For some this was reinforced by intimacy with Milner, who inspired in them the kind of devotion he was later to inspire in his 'kindergarten'. This chapter explores the backgrounds and South African experiences of six women later to be active in the League - Alice Balfour, Violet Markham, Violet Cecil, Alicia Cecil, Edith Lyttelton and Mary Arnold-Forster - in chronological order of their arrival in Africa.

(1) Alice Balfour

Alice Balfour (1850-1936) was the daughter of James Balfour of Whittingehame and Lady Blanche Cecil, daughter of the 2nd Marquess of Salisbury. Her sisters were Eleanor Sidgwick (an able mathematician, one of the founders of Newnham College, Cambridge, and the wife of Henry Sidgwick) and Evelyn Rayleigh, wife of the physicist Lord Rayleigh. Arthur Balfour was her most famous brother. Though she provided her daughters with an education limited even by the standard of the 1860s, Lady Blanche Balfour was unusual among Victorian mothers in teaching them that 'no marriage was far better than marriage with the wrong person ... there was plenty of interesting work to do apart from marriage'.¹ Moreover, she gave this sentiment practical effect by arranging for the financial independence of her spinster daughters, so that in 1872 Alice and Eleanor (not yet married) were each worth 'not far from £30,000'.²

Alice Balfour devoted most of her life to acting as housekeeper for her bachelor brother Arthur. Balfour's biographers agree in describing her as one of the family 'casualties', permanently scarred by the strength of their mother's personality. 'Preoccupied with petty domestic economies, apologising often for herself and her

¹Janet Oppenheim, 'A Mother's Role, a Daughter's Duty: Lady Blanche Balfour, Eleanor Sidgwick and Feminist Perspectives', *Journal of British Studies* 34 (2) April 1995 pp196-232, p216.

²Oppenheim, 'A Mother's Role' p217-218.

chronic shyness' which 'gradually led to unusual introversion',³ engaged in a feud of devotion to Arthur with her sister-in-law Frances, Alice was not 'entirely well-oriented. She never married and hated men; she was full of repressed grudges and secret sorrows; she was a hoarder and had an over-weening jealousy of Arthur's friends'.⁴ Beatrice Webb, visiting Whittingehame in 1906, painted a more sympathetic portrait. Caustically noting how all the Balfour women paid homage to 'Prince Arthur'⁵ she described Alice as 'one of those sweet tempered, gentle-natured beings who are made to be oppressed - the slave of everyone but the *devoted* slave of her great brother'.⁶

It is a sad picture, but there was another side to Alice. Webb thought her 'neither brilliant nor very capable, but singularly loving, direct and refined, with talents both artistic and scientific wholly sacrificed to the endless detail entailed by her brother's political career and patriarchal establishment'.⁷ Even her less analytical contemporaries recognised that, by her devotion to Arthur, Alice had 'to some extent thwarted the development of her powers'. She founded a pioneer nursing association in East Lothian. Her interest in natural history was passionate and informed: she left a collection of lepidoptera to the Edinburgh Natural History Museum. Despite her preference for nature over humanity, 'her interest in politics was ... perfectly genuine'.⁸ The founder of the Young Conservatives Union wrote after Alice's death that she 'was privileged to be associated with [Alice] in London through much political work, and eventually it was ... under her auspices that the Y.C.U. was formed'.⁹ After meeting Alice and her sister Evelyn, the American ambassador, Walter Page, said that 'either of these two ladies could rule this empire'. (Her response, apparently, was 'I never did think much of that man's brains'.)¹⁰

In 1894 Alice Balfour made a journey by horseback and ox-waggon across the Chartered Company's territories of Matabeleland and Mashonaland with four companions. They were Albert Grey (who succeeded his uncle to become 4th Earl Grey later the same year); his wife Alice, known as Elsie; a Mr H. Fitzwilliam; and Albert Grey's cousin George Grey. George Grey was employed by the Chartered

³Max Egremont, *Balfour: A Life of Arthur James Balfour* (London: Collins: 1980) p17, p47, p106.

⁴Kenneth Young, *Arthur James Balfour* (London: G. Bell & Sons: 1963) p11.

⁵N. & J. Mackenzie (eds.), *The Diary of Beatrice Webb* (London: Virago: 1982-1985) vol. III p50 (16 September 1906).

⁶Beatrice Webb to Mary Playne 12 September 1906, quoted Pat Jalland, *Women, Marriage and Politics 1860-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon: 1986) p269. Jalland has a case study on Alice Balfour pp268-272.

⁷*Diary of Beatrice Webb* vol. III p50 (16 September 1906).

⁸*Times* 13 June 1936.

⁹*Times* 15 June 1936.

¹⁰Egremont, *Balfour*, p291; *Times* 13 June 1936.

Company and Albert Grey also had interests in the area: he later served as Administrator of Rhodesia (1896-97) and became a director of the Chartered Company (1898-1904).¹¹ Albert Grey seems to have considered the journey partly a research trip (he spent much time investigating mines) but the others were there purely for pleasure. Alice Balfour gave no indication of why she should have contemplated such an adventure, a highly unorthodox one for a woman ('Sir Henry Loch' she wrote, 'thinks we shall never stand the journey. He is not the only man that thinks us crazy').¹² But she obviously enjoyed herself immensely, despite the primitive life and the hazards of the journey, and took pride in her hardihood and independence. Her account of the expedition, *Twelve Hundred Miles in a Waggon*, based on her journal and letters home, was published the following year.¹³

Alice noted approvingly that in the Orange Free State Parliament women spectators were not 'separated by a grating as if they were Mahomedans, as they are at home'.¹⁴ Johannesburg, on the other hand, where they stayed with a Mr. Bailey (probably the Randlord Abe Bailey) filled her with horror. 'I hate this place ... The inhabitants have an immense pride in the town and its development and apart from that their whole souls and bodies are devoted to gold. It fills their thoughts morning, noon and night'.¹⁵ Her analysis of the political situation there ('more interesting even than goldmining') was orthodox imperialist. 'The ever-smouldering irritation of the English at the inequality of treatment they suffer under the Boers' was, she said, 'ready to burst into a blaze ... The inability of the Boers to see that they will have to accommodate themselves in the end to the much larger and intellectually superior population ... comes partly, I suppose, from the contempt in which they have held the English (and perhaps not without some apparent reason) ever since the war [the British defeat at Majuba Hill in 1881]. But they do not realise in how many ways the situation has changed'. Since the herds of antelope which had once roamed the plains of the Transvaal had been hunted almost to extinction, 'I am told that the younger generation, having had no practice at rifle-shooting, are not much better shots than the average "Tommy Atkins"'.¹⁶ In Bulawayo she met two would-be changers of the situation - Dr. Jameson and his right-hand man Sir John Willoughby. Alice was clearly impressed by the two Empire-builders. Jameson, she wrote, was 'a

¹¹*Who Was Who*; *Times* 30 August 1917.

¹²Alice Blanche Balfour, *Twelve Hundred Miles in a Waggon* (London: Edward Arnold: 1895) p102. Cf. Alice Balfour to Lady Betty Balfour Bulawayo 5 July 1894 [SRO GD433/2/216/6(1)] 'I hope we shall be able to make Sir H. Loch feel small'.

¹³The letters (but not the journal) are in the Balfour collection at the Scottish Record Office [GD433/2/216/1-10]. Where identical or very similar quotations are found in both the book and the letters both references are given.

¹⁴Balfour, *Twelve Hundred Miles* p37.

¹⁵Alice Balfour to Lady Betty Balfour Johannesburg 19 May 1894 [GD433/2/216/1(3)].

¹⁶Balfour, *Twelve Hundred Miles* p61.

short broad-faced frog-mouthed unimpressive man at first sight, but after about 5 minutes you no longer feel that at all. He has a keen sense of humour and a very clear and rapid judgement'.¹⁷ Giving an inventory of their scarce furnishings, she concluded that 'this indifference to show is one of the things that make one proud of one's countrymen'.¹⁸

Alice Balfour's attitude towards the local tribes was somewhat more complex. Her viewpoint was detached, sometimes amused and generally anthropological, though she frequently described them as 'just like children'.¹⁹ She seemed untroubled by such customs as polygamy and smiled at missionaries more concerned with the absence of clothes than of Christianity.²⁰ She was able to feel a sentimental pity for the defeated chief of the Matabele, but was shocked by stories of native 'insolence' before the war.²¹ In Basutoland she concluded that 'the prosperity of the country is of course due to the supervision of a civilised government over the native chiefs'.²² She was sometimes taken aback by the methods of 'civilised government' but her belief in its benefits never faltered. At a native threshing-dance George Grey demanded a drink from the chief. 'It was curious to see the chief of all these men, who could have crushed us in a minute if they had been so minded, after a look at Mr George Grey, humbly go and lift up the calabash and bring it to him without a murmur, while the rest of the natives stood gazing at us. I didn't half like it, but I expect it is right to impress them with our "moral superiority"'.²³

In Alice Balfour we have, then, a politically-minded women of considerable intelligence, whose abilities were largely frustrated by family devotion, whose ideas of female capabilities were not entirely conventional, and whose imperialist beliefs were unshaken by the sight of Empire-building in action and (through the Chartered Company's administration) in its crudest form. Her interest in South Africa proved an abiding one. Her sister-in-law Lady Frances Balfour remembered of the Jameson Raid that, 'What Dr Jameson was attempting to do was a little vague to most of us, it was however brought home by the deep unrestrained distress of Alice Balfour, who ... had become steeped in the heated politics of [South Africa]. We understood from her attitude that the crisis was not one to be undertaken lightly'. And at an entertainment for teachers going out to South Africa in 1902, Lady Frances, slightly cattily, noted

¹⁷Alice Balfour to Lady Betty Balfour 5 July 1894 [GD433/3/216/6(3)].

¹⁸Balfour, *Twelve Hundred Miles* p116.

¹⁹Balfour, *Twelve Hundred Miles* p140.

²⁰Balfour, *Twelve Hundred Miles* p49-50.

²¹Balfour, *Twelve Hundred Miles* p118.

²²Balfour, *Twelve Hundred Miles* p59.

²³Balfour, *Twelve Hundred Miles* p144; Alice Balfour to Lady Betty Balfour Victoria 25 July 1894 [GD433/2/216/7(3)].

Alice 'doing South African Guide book very effectively'.²⁴ In her work for the Victoria League and the South African Colonisation Society Alice Balfour translated these interests and beliefs into action.

(2) Violet Markham

Violet Markham was born in Chesterfield in 1872. Her father, Charles Markham, was a mining engineer who subsequently became the Managing Director of the Staveley Coal and Iron Company. Her mother, Rosa Paxton, was the daughter of Joseph Paxton, the gardener and architect who designed the Crystal Palace. Her parents' marriage was not a happy one: they had little in common and her mother, Markham wrote, was constantly 'set at nought before us all'.²⁵ This experience, and that of her sister's unsuccessful marriage, no doubt contributed to her long and deliberate spinsterhood. (Eventually, at the age of 43, she made a happy marriage with a professional soldier, James Carruthers, but recalled how 'in days long past the thought of a man about my room was intolerable to me').²⁶ After her father's death in 1888 Markham became very close to her mother (under whose influence she became an active anti-suffragist), living with her until her death, after a long illness, in 1912.²⁷

Markham's two ideological cornerstones were Liberalism and imperialism. The first she learnt at her father's knee. He was a 'staunch Liberal', though, unlike Violet and her brother Arthur (who became the Liberal M.P. for Chesterfield in 1900), with the emphasis on political rather than economic freedom. It was a highly literate and politically aware family. 'Politics I have heard discussed since my cradle' she said and her first memory was an *Illustrated London News* picture of the defence of Rorke's Drift.²⁸ She and Arthur were the moving spirits behind Rosebery's Chesterfield meeting of 1901 which aimed at a 'new and vigorous leadership' for their 'stagnant and divided party'.²⁹ In this it failed, but Markham held firm to her Liberal faith through all the party's vicissitudes until her death in 1959, though its co-existence with her imperial ideas was not always easy.

²⁴Lady Frances Balfour, *Ne Obliviscaris* (London: Hodder & Stoughton: 1930) vol. II p276, p382.

²⁵Violet Markham to Arthur Markham 22 July 1899 [Markham 27/50].

²⁶Violet Markham to Patrick Duncan 1917, quoted Helen Jones, *Duty and Citizenship: The Correspondence and Political Papers of Violet Markham 1896-1953* (London: Historians' Press: 1994) p3.

²⁷Markham, *Return Passage* (London: Oxford University Press: 1953) p18, p95.

²⁸Markham, *Return Passage* p4-7, p15.

²⁹Violet Markham, *Friendship's Harvest* (London: Max Reinhardt: 1956) p16-17.

Markham became a convert to imperialism in 1895 during an otherwise unusually frivolous visit to Cairo for the winter season. Here she was 'thrilled' by her glimpse into 'the world of British administration shepherding a backward oriental land into paths of righteousness for which many of its people had little taste'. In particular she was overwhelmed by Milner's *England in Egypt*, his exposition of 'what England is helping the Egyptians to do for themselves', and a defence of British rule and the 'New Imperialism' in general. 'Looking back, one recognises the decisive influence of certain books on one's whole way of thinking' Markham remembered, '*England in Egypt* was such a book to me. It shook me away from my Liberal moorings and made me for a long time a convinced Imperialist'.³⁰

In 1899, at the age of 26, Markham suffered a nervous breakdown, possibly the result of her difficulty in adapting to the domestic life expected of an unmarried daughter. (Helen Jones notes that her diary for the 1890s is full of 'muffled cries of frustration from an intelligent women without a sense of purpose in life').³¹ To convalesce, she travelled to South Africa, arriving early in June 1899, during the Bloemfontein Conference, and leaving at the beginning of October, three days before war was declared. The political crisis put a stop to her original plan of visiting Johannesburg and Rhodesia. She did manage to see Natal and Kimberley, but most of her time was spent in Cape Town. As she herself admitted, the visit was a turning point in her life.³² It confirmed and reinforced her imperialist views, while giving her the authority of experience on which to speak. Moreover it brought her into contact with the Milner circle, in England as well as in Africa. Many of them - Leo Amery, John Buchan and Milner himself - remained life-long friends.

Markham brought letters of introduction to Government House and she was soon taken under the wing of Annie Hanbury-Williams, the wife of Milner's military secretary, and acting hostess at Government House. Through this connection Markham was able to meet her two great 'heroes of empire', Milner and Rhodes. Her admiration for Milner was reinforced by personal contact. She considered him 'an extraordinarily level-headed person, one who would always look at a question without the smallest prejudice or bias'³³ and found his 'calm imperturbable manner ... really marvellous when one thinks what the man has to shoulder out here'.³⁴ 'He has a *personality* which drags the devotion and enthusiasm out of all the people who

³⁰Violet Markham, *Return Passage* p46-48.

³¹Jones, *Duty and Citizenship* p4.

³²Markham, *Return Passage* p60.

³³Violet Markham to Rosa Markham 30 June 1899 [Markham 27/49].

³⁴Diary 26 July 1899 [Markham 17/5].

know him³⁵ she told her mother, and this was certainly true for Markham herself. As for Rhodes, at their first meeting she found him 'one of the most repulsive men I ever came across' and declared that she would not trust him 'with 3d round the corner if by appropriating that 3d he could help forward his political schemes'.³⁶ But she was later won over by his charm,³⁷ and in any case she was in no doubt that 'Rhodes as a policy must be supported'.³⁸

Markham also met two women who were to have a lasting influence on her: Dora Fairbridge and Violet Cecil. She was introduced to the Fairbridges, 'very key people here', by Annie Hanbury-Williams soon after her arrival. Dora - soon to be the founder of the Guild of Loyal Women - was a third generation British Cape Colonist and later a writer on South African history.³⁹ Markham found her 'a charming, cultivated woman' and they remained friends and collaborators for years afterwards.⁴⁰ It was also through the Government House connection that Markham met the wives of two British officers besieged in Mafeking, Violet Cecil and Cicely Cavendish Bentinck. She found Cecil colder than Bentinck (something she attributed to the comparative success of their respective married lives) but 'certainly one of the cleverest women I have ever met in my life and the secret of her influence is that she is as fascinating as she is clever'.⁴¹ It is clear that Markham was more than a little in awe of Cecil. Much later she described their first meeting: 'we were of the same age but I was an inexperienced girl and she a matured woman of the world whose charm and gifts filled me with admiration'. Nevertheless, 'for 59 years we were friends, surprisingly so perhaps, for ... nearly every opinion I held [from Liberalism to the League of Nations] was an anathema to her'.⁴²

Markham was quickly caught up by the political situation in South Africa. The fact that the nearest she ever got to the 'Boer character' was having tea with the Dutch-sympathising Lady de Villiers did not prevent her from developing strong views on the subject. Like many of her contemporaries, Markham saw the Boers as following the same path of civilisation as the British, only several centuries behind, as blueprinted by their pastoral, rather than industrial, society. 'Their mental status is

³⁵Violet Markham to Rosa Markham 12 September 1899 [Markham 27/49].

³⁶Diary 25 September 1899 [Markham 17/5].

³⁷Diary 3 October 1899 [Markham 17/5].

³⁸Diary 25 September 1899 [Markham 17/5].

³⁹Violet Milner, *My Picture Gallery 1886-1901* (London: John Murray: 1951) p153; *Dictionary of South African Biography* vol. I p282-3. She was also unrequitedly in love with Milner (information from Peter Merrington, University of the Western Cape, and see Violet Markham to Rosa Markham, Toronto 13 September 1905 [Markham 27/58]).

⁴⁰Violet Markham to Rosa Markham 21 June 1899 [Markham 27/49]; Diary 23 June 1899 [Markham 17/5]; Dora Fairbridge to Violet Markham 25 February n y [Markham 25/27/27].

⁴¹Diary 26 July 1899, 26 September 1899 [Markham 17/5].

⁴²*Times* 15 October 1958.

that of a 15th century Dutch peasant'. She felt it would be hard to make the British public understand 'the extraordinary ignorance and social and intellectual barbarity of the handful of retrograde Dutch farmers who by their folly and arrogance are keeping the country in this state of ferment'.⁴³

Markham was equally certain of the course that must now be pursued. 'Personally it strikes me as a case of the survival of the fittest. The Boer is not fit and he must go to the wall. I don't say that this is morally right and pleasant but it's a natural law and nature does not care a hang for morals; she protects and helps the strong and the strong only'.⁴⁴ Britain had 'let things drift out here till they have reached a point of almost inextricable muddle. It's difficult to go forward, it's impossible to go back' she wrote.⁴⁵ 'We have tried conciliation and patience now for 20 years and with what a result! The time for just but firm action has now arrived ... The equilibrium between the races must be restored'.⁴⁶ It was moreover 'an Imperial question ... our prestige as Paramount Power is suffering in a way that can't be tolerated'.⁴⁷ It was necessary to demonstrate not only to the world but to the English in South Africa that Britain would defend its rights. 'If the Government vacillates at this crisis then English rule in S. Africa will fall with a crash and deservedly so. The Colony will never forgive it'.⁴⁸

When a Boer-sympathiser accused Markham, in a singular phrase, of being 'impregnated with Government House' she was indignant: 'I retorted that my politics were no mushroom growth of Cape Town but I had held these views for years'.⁴⁹ This would seem to be true. In her autobiography Markham says that she 'doubtless absorbed without hesitation a point of view which coincided perfectly with the one I had brought to South Africa'.⁵⁰ Clearly her ideas were largely set before her journey, probably partly under the influence of her brother Arthur, who was familiar with South Africa and had mining interests in the Transvaal.⁵¹ During her visit however, she came to 'feel almost personally about this South African crisis'.⁵² Thanking her mother for allowing her an extra month in the country, Markham wrote, 'I feel as if I am rather a mean cuss to do so but one has got mixed up in this

⁴³Diary 20 July 1899 [Markham 17/5].

⁴⁴Violet Markham to Arthur Markham 23 June 1899 [Markham 27/50].

⁴⁵Violet Markham to Arthur Markham 27 August 1899 [Markham 27/50].

⁴⁶Violet Markham to Rosa Markham 29 July 1899 [Markham 27/49].

⁴⁷Violet Markham to Arthur Markham 23 June 1899 [Markham 27/50].

⁴⁸Violet Markham to Rosa Markham 15 June 1899 [Markham 27/49].

⁴⁹Violet Markham to Rosa Markham 15 August 1899 [Markham 27/49].

⁵⁰Markham, *Return Passage* p54.

⁵¹Markham, *Friendship's Harvest* p14, p16; Violet Markham to Arthur Markham 12 June 1899 [Markham 27/50].

⁵²Violet Markham to Rosa Markham 17 July 1899 [Markham 27/49].

business and I want to see it through'.⁵³ By September the Transvaal crisis had become to her 'a black unending nightmare in which one moves round and round without any hope of finality'.⁵⁴ When war rumours began circulating freely she found the uncertainty terrible. Nevertheless, her health improved: 'at last this awful pall which has rested on me so many weary months is beginning to lift a little and my old interest in things is reviving'.⁵⁵ South Africa gave Markham the 'sense of purpose in life' she had lacked.

Markham shared fully the fear, expressed by Milner in his diary at a bad moment, that 'British public opinion is going to be befooled'.⁵⁶ She was also worried that the British government would fail to support Milner adequately. 'If one could do anything it might be easier' she wrote, 'but as a woman of no importance I rage at my own impotence to affect the course of affairs!'.⁵⁷ To her mother she enquired about 'old Ridley' (a friend of her father's, whose heir Markham later became): 'for the first and I hope the last time I feel I should like his money just for the sake of the influence it gives. As it is I can throw so little into the right scale!'.⁵⁸ Instead Markham turned to propaganda. She began in a small way while still in South Africa by writing private letters to the editor of her local paper, the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*. Then, with the approval of David Gill, the astronomer-royal at the Cape and a fervent supporter of Milner, she began an article on 'English and Dutch in South Africa' intended for the *Nineteenth Century*. 'I have kept deliberately to the English point of view because it's time somebody spoke up for that side' she told her mother, 'My cry here is ... "the Dutch must be put in their place!"'.⁵⁹

Markham found it hard to leave South Africa and to realise she 'was turning the page on perhaps the happiest and most interesting chapter of [her] life'.⁶⁰ She was comforted by the hope 'that I may still work for the cause in England' and by Milner's encouragement.⁶¹ 'I was very pleased at the word of approval from the Chief' she wrote, 'and it sends me home with double energy for the fray in England. I am to ... receive my instructions from Colonel Hanbury[-Williams] and perhaps a job to see after at home'.⁶² Back in Chesterfield Markham's main energies were now devoted to imperial propaganda. She began writing long articles, on Boer armaments

⁵³Violet Markham to Rosa Markham 27 August 1899 [Markham 27/49].

⁵⁴Diary 13 September 1899 [Markham 17/5].

⁵⁵Violet Markham to Rosa Markham 8 June 1899 [Markham 27/49].

⁵⁶John Marlowe, *Milner: Apostle of Empire* (London: Hamish Hamilton:1976) p81.

⁵⁷Violet Markham to Arthur Markham 27 August 1899 [Markham 27/50].

⁵⁸Violet Markham to Rosa Markham 29 July 1899 [Markham 27/49].

⁵⁹Violet Markham to Rosa Markham Tuesday August 1899 [Markham 27/49].

⁶⁰Diary 4 October [Markham 17/5].

⁶¹Diary 8 October 1899 [Markham 17/5].

⁶²Violet Markham to Rosa Markham 26 September 1899 [Markham 27/49].

and similar subjects, which were published in the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* and intended as the basis for a book. 'I have been busy all winter with a book on S. Africa which grew into a big piece of work' she wrote in April 1900, her first diary entry for the year. She completed it at the end of March, 'having worked at the rate of 8 and 10 hours a day to get it finished. Smith, Elder accepted the MS straight off'.⁶³

South Africa, Past and Present was published in May the same year, with the all-embracing sub-title *An Account of its History, Politics and Native Affairs followed by some Personal Reminiscences of African Travel during the Crisis preceding the War*. In it Markham set out a standard Milneresque manifesto against the continued policy of 'drift' and argued that the only hope for the future of South Africa lay in annexation of the Boer republics and 'Dutch submission to the principle of British supremacy'. Though not a commercial success (a month after publication only 350 copies had been sold)⁶⁴ it was widely and favourably reviewed. The far-right imperialist paper the *Outlook*, for example, found her 'delightfully and convincingly dogmatic ... we recommend her book as a fair and able statement of the whole question'.⁶⁵ With *South Africa Past and Present* Markham laid the foundations of her career as a respected commentator on colonial affairs.⁶⁶ In addition the book was the means of introducing her to people who became central to her public life. Edith Lyttelton, for example, remembered how she had first heard of Markham 'from Lord Milner in Cape Town when he talked of the astonishing feat of a young Englishwoman in writing such a good book about the African nation'.⁶⁷ It was through the connections she had made, directly or indirectly, in South Africa, that Markham became involved with the Guild of Loyal Women and later with the Victoria League, adding organisational work to her imperial propaganda.

(3) Violet Cecil

Violet Cecil (1872-1958) was the youngest child of Admiral Frederick Maxse and his wife Cecilia Steel, the daughter of a Colonel in the Indian army. Her elder brother Ivor followed this military tradition, eventually becoming a General. Her younger brother Leo became owner/editor of the right-wing, imperialist journal, the

⁶³Diary 30 April 1900 [Markham 17/5].

⁶⁴Diary 13 June 1900 [Markham 17/5].

⁶⁵*Outlook* 2 June 1900, p570.

⁶⁶Markham was also the author of *The New Era in South Africa, with an Examination of the Chinese Labour Question* (London: Smith, Elder & Co.: 1904), and *The South African Scene* (London: Smith, Elder & Co.: 1913), a surprisingly optimistic account of post-Union South Africa, as well as many articles and letters to the press.

⁶⁷Edith Lyttelton to Violet Markham 13 July 1946 [Markham 28/10].

National Review (a position she took over after his death in 1932). Violet's childhood was not a happy one. Her parents were incompatible, her mother leading a metropolitan life mixing with all the artistic giants of the day while her father preferred country life and politics. They separated when she was five years old and she thereupon led a divided life, taken by her mother to meet Oscar Wilde, Whistler and Sickert in London, then leading a 'countrified existence, with a great deal of riding, walking and a lot of serious subjects' with her father.⁶⁸

Gradually she began to live more with her father, through him meeting Matthew Arnold, ^{George} Meredith and Clemenceau. 'What educated me were my Father's wonderful friends and his talk' she wrote in later life, but she was not always happy with him at the time.⁶⁹ In her early teens she lived with him in Paris for two years, studying art.⁷⁰ 'I was very wild, living with my bags packed ready to rush back to my Mother, which I believed I could (legally) do on my 16th birthday' she remembered after his death.⁷¹ At nineteen she met Margot Tennant out hunting and through her became acquainted with the 'Souls' (a social/intellectual circle of 'personages distinguished for their breeding, beauty, delicacy and discrimination of mind')⁷² and 'the people who became my life's friends - the Harry Whites, the Pembrokes, Mr George Curzon, Mr A.J. Balfour'.⁷³

Violet was clearly a woman of great charm and panache who aroused strong feelings one way or the other. Her obituary describes her as a 'brilliant talker and hostess ... cast in the heroic mould ... a valiant fighter'.⁷⁴ An unusually enthusiastic *DNB* entry tells us that 'it was as much for what she was as for what she did that [she] is remembered. The glow of a lively, incisive and sometimes fierce mind shone in a face framed in an aureole of curly hair [*sic*] ... Every epoch has its grains of gold and she was one of them. Her talents made her one of that small band which raised the whole status and sphere of her sex during the latter half of the Victorian age and the subsequent generation'. It was therefore unfortunate that she chose in 1894, after an extremely short courtship, to marry Lord Edward ('Nigs') Cecil, 'a tall, drooping,

⁶⁸Vicountess Milner, *My Picture Gallery* p1-6. (Violet Cecil married Milner in 1921, three years after Lord Edward's death).

⁶⁹Violet Cecil, 'Diary' 13 December 1901 [Violet Milner F2/1]. According to a note at the beginning of the 'Diary', it was compiled in 1957, 'largely ... from letters. Nothing has been added but some things have been omitted'.

⁷⁰Milner, *Picture Gallery* p14.

⁷¹Violet Cecil, 'Diary' 6 July 1900 [Violet Milner F2/1]. Admiral Maxse died in June 1900 of typhoid contracted during a visit to South Africa earlier in the year.

⁷²Sir Charles Petrie, *Scenes of Edwardian Life*, quoted in Pat Jalland, *Women, Marriage and Politics* p103.

⁷³Milner, *Picture Gallery* p29-30.

⁷⁴*Times* 11 October 1958.

rather melancholy young officer, one of [Salisbury's] less successful younger sons'.⁷⁵

The marriage was not a success. Violet had difficulty adapting to the elevated atmosphere of Hatfield. Her near-atheism did her no good with the high Anglican Cecils and, she later wrote, 'I can't talk politics in this house, only political shop and yet I admire them all so much, they are such fine people but the standpoint is different'.⁷⁶ Lady Salisbury, never enthusiastic about the marriage, had hoped that Hatfield might 'overpower' Violet.⁷⁷ It did not. While the other Cecil spouses assimilated there was a basic lack of sympathy between Violet and her in-laws. 'I find myself on the whole and secretly, because it is of no use to parade disagreement, on the "other side" [from the Cecils] over most questions involving sentiment' she reflected.⁷⁸ Added to dissimilar temperaments and Violet's acknowledged lack of 'susceptibility'⁷⁹ it was a fatal difficulty. It was perhaps not coincidental that Lord Edward spent most of the 1890s on active service abroad, and after he joined the Egyptian government in the early 1900s he and Violet lived mostly apart.⁸⁰

In July 1899 Lord Edward was posted to South Africa as one of Baden-Powell's staff to defend Mafeking. Perhaps as a last attempt at saving the marriage, 'Lord Salisbury suggested that [Violet] should go too' though she thought he had 'few illusions about the seriousness of the situation at the Cape'.⁸¹ Leaving their small son George with his grandparents, the Cecils set off at less than a week's notice, arriving at Cape Town on 25 July. Lord Edward, having settled the Mafeking supply problem by giving the contractors a note-of-hand for £500,000, departed up-country, accompanied by Violet as far as Kimberley.⁸² 'I don't know how long I shall stay out - not long anyhow' Violet told Balfour in late July.⁸³ Things did not work out as expected. Lord Edward was besieged in Mafeking for seven months, from 14 October 1899 to 17 May 1900. Violet remained in South Africa until 3 October 1900 (mostly in Cape Town with a brief trip to Mafeking and Zeerust), a stay of 'upwards of fourteen months' as Milner meticulously noted on her departure.⁸⁴

⁷⁵Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* (London: Abacus: 1992 (1st1979)) p90.

⁷⁶Violet Cecil, 'Diary' 13 December 1900 [Violet Milner F2/1].

⁷⁷Kenneth Rose, *The Later Cecils* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson: 1975) p209.

⁷⁸Violet Cecil, 'Diary' 26 November 1900 [Violet Milner F2/1].

⁷⁹Violet Cecil, 'Diary' 3 January 1905 [Violet Milner F2/2].

⁸⁰Rose, *Later Cecils* p209.

⁸¹Milner, *Picture Gallery* p122-123.

⁸²Milner, *Picture Gallery* p125-126, p131.

⁸³Violet Cecil to Balfour 26 July 1899 [SRO GD433/2/39/13].

⁸⁴Milner, *Diary* 3 October 1900 [Milner Dep.70].

During the siege of Mafeking Violet remained in Cape Town. From October 1899 she ran Groote Schuur (in Rhodes' absence in Kimberley) with Cicely (Lady Charles) Bentinck.⁸⁵ They quickly became caught up in various philanthropic and propaganda movements, most urgently Dr Jane Waterston's relief committee for British refugees from the Boer republics, an 'avalanche of human beings' which poured into Cape Town during September and October 1899.⁸⁶ Violet also, through Gwendolen Cecil in London, ran 'an energetic campaign to supply the sick and wounded with comforts from home: pyjamas and slippers, sponges and tooth-brushes, none of which the War Office thought necessary for the private soldier of 1900'.⁸⁷

After the initial refugee crisis Violet became preoccupied with the state of the military hospitals ('bad, badly found and indifferently staffed')⁸⁸ around Cape Town. The Army Medical Service was characterised by an 'excessive influence of routine, [a] fear of unauthorised action, [a] reluctance to assume responsibility' together with 'a certain want of elasticity on the part of the medical officers, a tendency ... to consider diet sheets more important than diet, and returns than cures'. This was particularly marked in their hostility to female nursing staff.⁸⁹ Violet found it appalling and exasperating.

'Most days I go to one or other of the hospitals not so much to see people as to see that they are moderately comfortable - it is like drawing teeth to try and get out of the Doctors what they want for their patients and when we do get hold of a list neither the Doctors nor the nurses will use our things unless we stand over them. As the Government does not even supply pillows you may imagine all we have to provide. Last week alone we spent £1,500 Red Cross and Good Hope [Society] money. The whole military organisation is at sixes and sevens'.⁹⁰

Alerted by Violet, Milner 'went constantly to see the hospitals, but he had no control and his suggestions [including the idea that she should act as housekeeper in charge of food and linen at the Wynberg hospital] were not attended to'.⁹¹ When Kitchener and Roberts came out in January 1900 she promptly enlisted them in the struggle, asking Roberts - successfully - to double the number of nurses and taking Kitchener on tours of the hospitals.⁹² All these exertions improved the Cape Town hospitals considerably by the Spring of 1900, but by then there were new problems.

⁸⁵Milner, *Picture Gallery* p1

⁸⁶Milner, *Picture Gallery* p137-8. See Chapter 3.

⁸⁷Rose, *Later Cecils* p201.

⁸⁸Milner, *Picture Gallery* p148.

⁸⁹Leo Amery, *The Times History of the War in South Africa Vol. VI* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Co.: 1909) p521.

⁹⁰Violet Cecil to Cecilia Maxse 22 December 1899 [Violet Milner F2/4].

⁹¹Milner, *Picture Gallery* p148.

⁹²Milner, *Picture Gallery* p162, p164.

Roberts entered Bloemfontein, the capital of the Orange Free State, on 13 March 1900. The occupying army promptly succumbed to typhoid, an epidemic exacerbated by a poor supply system, non-existent sanitary precautions and in the military hospitals (but not the voluntary hospitals) a combination of inefficiency, indifference and neglect.⁹³ Violet Cecil, who had visited Bloemfontein at the beginning of April (she found it 'very interesting' but also 'terribly disheartening to see the chaos which reigns everywhere - chaos, stupidity, jealousy enough to make you cry')⁹⁴ set to work trying to improve the hospitals. 'I sent the pillows straight to Bloemfontein where they have got nothing, not even beds' she told Gwendolen. 'There is no civilian criticism at Bloemfontein so you can imagine the state of things'.⁹⁵ She also wrote to Salisbury, telling him that 'Far more people have been killed by negligence in our hospitals than by Boer bullets ... Men are dying by hundreds who could easily be saved'.⁹⁶ He paid little attention and she was later no more successful with Asquith, Haldane or Grey.⁹⁷ But in June 1900 she told her mother,

'I am glad to say there is going to be a big row about the up-country hospitals which are a disgrace. The *Times* has at last got hold of it so perhaps we shall get something done. It's useless to write to Ministers, I've done that until I am tired. No one minds men dying like flies, but an ugly paragraph in the papers is quite another matter. The nurses up country are dying off very fast and we want about 200 more but the Doctors say we *don't* and won't apply for them, so we have the usual deadlock. It's not a *pretty view* of human nature all this gives you'.⁹⁸

It was only the public scandal and the appointment of a new Secretary for War, St John Brodrick (an old friend and admirer of Violet Cecil who 'seldom missed a mail' to South Africa in his correspondence with her)⁹⁹ in October 1900 that finally led to improvements in the army medical service.¹⁰⁰

Even by November 1899 news of 'the usual round, Golf and visits' seemed to Violet 'infinitely remote like a collection of happy dreams. Here no one dreams or is happy' she told Balfour. 'It is all too close, we see the soldiers three days before they fight and the wounded three days after the battle and one is so near to it that one

⁹³Pakenham, *Boer War* p381-2.

⁹⁴Violet Cecil to Balfour 9 May [1900] [SRO GD433/2/39/22].

⁹⁵Violet Cecil to Gwendolen Cecil May 1900, quoted Rose, *Later Cecils* p201.

⁹⁶Violet Cecil to Salisbury 30 May 1900, quoted Pakenham, *Boer War* p371.

⁹⁷Milner, *Picture Gallery* p224-225.

⁹⁸Violet Cecil to Cecilia Maxse 3 June 1900 [Violet Milner F2/4].

⁹⁹Milner, *Picture Gallery* p154. In 1901 (after his wife's death) Violet received 'a proposal' from Brodrick, which she received with amusement. About to remarry, he later told her that 'he would have waited for [her] if *Nigs had been seriously ill!!!* He is a child of nature certainly' she wrote. (Violet Cecil, 'Diary' 30 August 1901; 1 November 1902 [Violet Milner F2/1]).

¹⁰⁰Amery, *Times History VI* p542-3.

can't see quite what is going on'.¹⁰¹ In early January she received (false) news that Lord Edward had been wounded. 'Oh my dear I am indeed under the deep waters now' she told her sister 'and cannot expect repose for many weeks for there will be no rest until this war is over'.¹⁰² 'I refugee, hospital, refugee, hospital' Violet reported. 'I write so many extraneous letters now ... what with wounded people's families and friends up-country and rows about medical comforts, life is one long ceaseless pull. I am very glad for it prevents one thinking'.¹⁰³

'Cissy Bentinck' she told Balfour, 'is the one great redeeming feature'.¹⁰⁴ There were others. 'Cicely and Violet ... have several of the convalescent officers staying at Groote Schuur which is so nice for both sides' reported Annie Hanbury-Williams.¹⁰⁵ Dr Jameson recuperated from typhoid there and varied the monotony by flirting with Violet. ('Lady Edward Cecil has got Jameson in her pocket' wrote Princess Radziwill, not one of Violet's admirers.)¹⁰⁶ 'Officers on leave from the front flocked to Groote Schuur for her lively talk. Those out in the field entrusted her with little commissions'.¹⁰⁷ There was also Milner. Violet had known Milner 'very well for years' and had 'always vaguely hoped that we might pay him a visit at Cape Town'.¹⁰⁸ Now she saw him nearly every day, when they would walk or ride together.¹⁰⁹ 'I think Milner saved my life' she told her sister, 'at least he has been everything to me just now and I owe him what I can never even tell him'.¹¹⁰ The feeling was mutual. Milner called Violet a 'Godsend' and confided his political problems to her (despite her constitutional indiscretion). 'It was she ... who gave him courage for [his] impassioned appeal to Chamberlain ... on 30 August [1899]'.¹¹¹ They remained on intimate terms thereafter. There are some grounds, therefore, for Kenneth Rose's assertion that Violet's time at Cape Town was 'the happiest time of her life'.¹¹² Certainly it retained a special place in her memory: more than half of her autobiography (which ends in 1901) was devoted to her experiences in South Africa.

¹⁰¹Violet Cecil to Balfour 29 November 1899 [GD433/2/166/45].

¹⁰²Violet Cecil to Olive Maxse 3 January 1900 [Violet Milner C34/9].

¹⁰³Violet Cecil to Cecilia Maxse 10 January 1900 [Violet Milner F2/4].

¹⁰⁴Violet Cecil to Balfour 29 November 1899 [GD433/2/166/45].

¹⁰⁵Annie Hanbury-Williams to Violet Markham 17 December 1899 [Markham 25/39].

¹⁰⁶Princess Radziwill to Hawksley 2 October 1900 [Rhodes MSS. Afr. s. 229/VI Radziwill (a) 97]. The flirtation resumed when Jameson visited England in 1904. 'I had rather minded being put on the shelf by him and was glad of the sensation he liked me a little better than other people' she reflected. (Violet Cecil, 'Diary' 8 August 1904 [Violet Milner F2/2]).

¹⁰⁷Rose, *Later Cecils* p202.

¹⁰⁸Milner, *Picture Gallery* p132.

¹⁰⁹Pakenham, *Boer War* p166.

¹¹⁰Violet Cecil to Olive Maxse 3 January 1900 [Violet Milner C34/9].

¹¹¹Pakenham, *Boer War* p90, p116-117, p166.

¹¹²Rose, *Later Cecils* p202.

Like Violet Markham, Violet Cecil had had her 'first sight' of the British Empire in Egypt, when she went to visit Lord Edward in 1897, and, again like Markham, it made a deep impression on her. As she left England Sir Alfred Lyall told her that she would never come back 'and in the sense that he meant it, I never have. For once you have seen Englishmen at work at their self-appointed great task, the dear island itself seems cramped'.¹¹³ Though so clearly imperialist in sentiment, she appears to have had no firm views on the particular situation in South Africa before her arrival there. 'As we read up the Transvaal question and discussed it with varyingly violent fellow passengers [on the boat out] we arrived at no conclusion' she wrote. 'I don't think I ever was so addled before'.¹¹⁴ From the first, however, she took care to convey Milner's views to Balfour as deputy prime minister (and her cousin-by-marriage),¹¹⁵ and under Milner's influence it did not take long to clarify her views. At the end of August 1899 Violet Markham commented, 'I have been much interested to notice the Cecils' development of ideas regarding the South African situation. On first arriving in Cape Town they seemed hesitating in their opinions like a good many other people and clearly thought the rest of us took rather extreme views. Now they feel as strongly as any one of us out here ... The Cecils fear a humiliating surrender as much as I do'.¹¹⁶

Violet Cecil did not hesitate to use her Cecil/Balfour contacts to promote her views, and the knowledge that she possessed these contacts inspired others to confide in her. Kitchener told Violet of his battles with the military authorities for stores and guns, the consequence of the internal war at the War Office. 'I imagine he did not tell me this for my *beaux yeux* so I pass it on to you'¹¹⁷ she told Balfour, and later, 'I hear from home that you none of you care a brass button about Army Reform. I wish you could come to South Africa for a fortnight to be corrected'.¹¹⁸ Her experiences in South Africa left her with a lasting contempt for the unreformed army (in 1901 she was prepared, unlike most imperialists, to concede that 'military stupidity' had probably contributed to the high death rates in the concentration camps).¹¹⁹ It did nothing for her opinion of professional politics either: this may have been why she once, at a dinner party, absent-mindedly described herself as 'an Anarchist (which is true)'.¹²⁰ At the same time, however, she came to identify herself with Milner and with his aims in South Africa and for the Empire as a whole. Violet

¹¹³Milner, *Picture Gallery* p103.

¹¹⁴Violet Cecil to Balfour 26 July 1899 [SRO GD433/2/39/13].

¹¹⁵See e.g. Violet Cecil to Balfour 26 July 1899 [SRO GD433/2/39/13].

¹¹⁶Violet Markham Diary 29 August 1899 [Markham 17/5].

¹¹⁷Violet Cecil to Balfour 23 January 1900 [SRO GD433/2/39/18].

¹¹⁸Violet Cecil to Balfour 9 May [1900] [SRO GD433/2/39/22].

¹¹⁹Violet Cecil, 'Diary' 1 November 1901 [Violet Milner F2/1].

¹²⁰Violet Cecil, 'Diary' Wednesday ? February 1904 [Violet Milner F2/2].

was not habitually uncritical even of those she liked and, on balance, admired. Of Rhodes, for example, she wrote that his ‘personal character, his kindness, his memory of old friends, his simple and indiscriminating respect for women make him very attractive and his quickness and powers of observation are amazing but he is the sloppiest thinker I’ve ever known and so “unnecessarily untruthful” ... Rhodes has no balance’.¹²¹ When it came to Milner, though, her capacity for criticism seems to have gone out of the window and she accepted his ideas and his analysis of the South African situation unreservedly.

Cape Town suggested to her a means of assisting Milner. During her stay at Groote Schuur Violet became hostess to an ‘important and interesting group of South African’ men.

‘Through them I got to know their relations, and Government House said to me, “Do, do something about the women, how about Miss A, and Mrs B?” So I got to know the women too. They were keen and practical. All the movement for the Victoria League, for the Ladies’ Empire Club in far away Grosvenor Street and for much else started over the tea-cups at Rondebosch and Claremont. The brain of all these things was Miss Dora Fairbridge ... she guided my steps and helped me to get to know both the place and the people of Cape Colony ... It was owing to her influence and patient work that a great society called “The Guild of Loyal Women” was started in the very crisis of the war’.¹²²

Violet attended the inaugural meeting of the Guild in March 1900, and she, Cicely Bentinck and Annie Hanbury-Williams all became honorary members. It was the Guild of Loyal Women which provided Violet Cecil with the model and the impetus to found the Victoria League.

(4) Alicia Cecil

A dearth of material makes Alicia Cecil (1865-1941)¹²³ a less accessible figure than the others studied here. She was the fifth of six daughters of William Amherst, 1st Baron Amherst of Hackney and his wife Margaret Susan Mitford, herself the daughter of Admiral Mitford of Mitford Castle, Northumberland.¹²⁴ Lord Amherst was a Norfolk landowner, an antiquary and the Conservative M.P. for his Norfolk district 1880-1892.¹²⁵ Alicia’s life was divided between two great passions: gardening (her *History of Gardening in England* (1895) was the first important

¹²¹Violet Cecil, ‘Diary’ 28 March 1901 [Violet Milner F2/1].

¹²²Milner, *Picture Gallery* p153. For the G.L.W. see Chapter 8.

¹²³Deborah Kelloway (ed.), *The Virago Book of Women Gardeners* (London: Virago: 1995) p259.

¹²⁴*Who Was Who* (entry on Dowager Baroness Rockley); *Burke’s Peerage and Baronetage* (entry on Amherst of Hackney).

¹²⁵*DNB*.

garden manual to be written by a woman) and the Empire, in particular the emigration of women to the dominions. Eventually she combined the two in her *Wild Flowers of the Great Dominions of the British Empire* (1935), the idea for which came to her on her way 'from Canada to Australia on behalf of the Society for the Oversea Settlement of British Women and the Victoria League' in 1926. 'What a uniting bond plants might become!' she enthused. 'Even a slight unscientific knowledge of them would add reality to the picture called up by the mention of other parts of the Empire...'.¹²⁶

The daughter of one Conservative family, in 1898 Alicia married into another. Evelyn Cecil (created Lord Rockley in 1934) was the Conservative M.P. for East Herts (later for Aston Manor), the son of Lord Eustace Cecil, and the nephew of the 3rd Lord Salisbury, to whom he acted as private secretary.¹²⁷ In 1899 the Cecils made a five-month tour around South Africa. Their adventures and reflections on the South African situation are detailed in Evelyn Cecil's *On the Eve of War* (1900). 'My wife and I landed in Cape Town on September 12th 1899. The war broke out on October 11th ... During that month I had exceptional opportunities of gaining an insight into the difficulties of the problem'. Travelling through Cape Colony they visited the Orange Free State and then the Transvaal before continuing to Natal. 'I was in Ladysmith on the day of the declaration of war [Alicia was not allowed to accompany him here], and in Natal for three weeks after it had been invaded. Travelling by sea to Beira we then visited Rhodesia, leaving there at Christmas and returning direct to England by January 26th [1900]'. Along the way they met and talked to - among others - President Steyn, J.H. Hofmeyer of the Afrikaner Bond, and the Cape Prime Minister, Will Schreiner.¹²⁸

Signs of war were already clear even before Kruger's ultimatum. In Johannesburg the Cecils found 'many of the mines there were already shut down, and barricades were up in shop windows in the streets'.¹²⁹ In Pretoria they were privileged to interview Kruger. 'I believe I was the last English traveller to see him before the war ... We sat around him - Mr Smuts as interpreter on one side and my wife on the other'. Kruger 'talked freely of various political subjects' including the franchise ('the Uitlanders don't want it'), and appeared convinced of Britain's

¹²⁶Lady Rockley, *Wild Flowers of the Great Dominions of the British Empire* (Macmillan: London: 1935) pvii, p2.

¹²⁷*Who Was Who* (entry on 1st Baron Rockley).

¹²⁸Evelyn Cecil, *On the Eve of War: A Narrative of Impressions during a journey in Cape Colony, the Free State, the Transvaal, Natal and Rhodesia September 1899-January 1900* (London: John Murray: 1900) ppvii-viii.

¹²⁹Cecil, *On the Eve* p101.

'murderous intentions' towards his country.¹³⁰ The Cecils found 'plenty of outward and visible signs that the collected populace [in the Transvaal] was at one with its government'.¹³¹ It was especially evident during their journey by train from Johannesburg to the Natal frontier 'very shortly before the declaration of war, and only two days before railway communication was stopped'. The train was crammed with refugees, 'it was by the merest good fortune that we had not to travel in cattle trucks ... Uitlander cheers and Boer hoots ... greeted our start ... it was clear that hostile feeling was beginning to run very high'.¹³²

The Cecils' South African journey was a striking experience, and one not to be lightly forgotten. The political views expressed by Evelyn Cecil in *On the Eve of War* are orthodox Conservative/imperialist though he often seems to write more in sorrow than in anger. Race feeling in Cape Colony, he felt, although accentuated by the 'ill-starred, outrageous and indefensible Jameson raid' originated with, and was now promoted by, the Afrikaner Bond.¹³³ While he considered the average 'ignorant Boer' in the Transvaal to be the 'innocent tool of the oligarchy', Cecil's interview with Kruger confirmed his view that 'the Transvaal under its present [corrupt] system of administration must have continued to be an incessant source of unrest to South Africa, and the nursery of every political and commercial bitterness'.¹³⁴ He became convinced that 'if the war had not come now, it was fated to come later with even greater bloodshed'.¹³⁵ The war was 'a just war, to compel Dutch burghers to give others the common rights of justice which they have always claimed for themselves'.¹³⁶

It is not only patronising but courting disaster to judge a woman's political views by those of her husband - witness the case of Lady Frances Balfour, married to Arthur Balfour's brother but the daughter of the Duke of Argyll and a staunch Liberal to the last. But everything in Alicia Cecil's later career suggests that her political views - on South Africa and the Empire at least - tallied exactly with those of her husband. She may well have acquired them from him (since her early life seems to have been devoted to gardening and the history of gardens) and they would have sat easily with her Conservative upbringing.¹³⁷ Her experiences in South Africa 'on the eve of war' stirred her into public activity, first running a small appeal for the

¹³⁰Cecil, *On the Eve* p34-38.

¹³¹Cecil, *On the Eve* p31-32.

¹³²Cecil, *On the Eve* p30-31.

¹³³Cecil, *On the Eve* p6-7.

¹³⁴Cecil, *On the Eve* p71, p73.

¹³⁵Cecil, *On the Eve* p68.

¹³⁶Cecil, *On the Eve* p112.

¹³⁷She also became a member of the Ladies' Grand Council of the Primrose League [*Englishwoman's Year Book*].

refugees in Natal, then working to promote female emigration to the Transvaal through the South African Colonisation Society and imperial sentiment through the Victoria League.¹³⁸

(5) Edith Lyttelton

Edith ('DD') Lyttelton (1865-1948) was the daughter of Archibald Balfour - no relation to the Balfours of Whittingehame - a Russia merchant whose finances were often shaky. Introduced in the 1880s to the 'Souls' she quickly became one of the set,¹³⁹ being highly literate, literary (she was later the author of several modestly successful plays) and universally regarded as 'charming'.¹⁴⁰ After an emotional entanglement with Adolphus ('Doll') Liddell, another Soul, Edith married Alfred Lyttelton as his second wife in 1892.¹⁴¹ Alfred - the youngest of the fourth Baron Lyttelton's large family and a nephew of William Gladstone - was a barrister with political ambitions and doubts about Home Rule. After his uncle retired in 1895 he was elected for Leamington as a Liberal Unionist, a seat he held until 1906.¹⁴² In 1903 he succeeded Chamberlain as Colonial Secretary, his most notable action while in office being to endorse the introduction of Chinese Labour to the Rand. Meanwhile Edith abandoned culture for politics and began reading to keep up with the issues of the day. She encouraged him in his initial decision to stand for parliament but seems to have had few independent political views, generally following Alfred's lead.¹⁴³

The outbreak of the Boer War found Edith Lyttelton the wife of a rising politician, 34 years old, mother of two children and pregnant with a third. Two of her brothers, Monty and Christopher Balfour, promptly joined up and in the early months of the war she was haunted by fears for their safety, especially when Christopher's regiment became besieged in Ladysmith. In the summer of 1900 Alfred Lyttelton, as

¹³⁸In 1919 she was instrumental in the negotiations for the foundation of the Society for the Oversea Settlement of British Women and remained its vice-chairman for twenty years thereafter, until illness compelled her retirement three years before her death [*Times* 15 & 19 September 1941; *Who Was Who*]. See Chapter 6.

¹³⁹Jalland, *Women, Marriage and Politics* p110; Nancy W. Ellenberger, 'The Souls and London 'Society' at the end of the Nineteenth Century', *Victorian Studies* Winter 1982 pp133-160.

¹⁴⁰Even by Beatrice Webb, inclined to despise the Souls. She found the Alfred Lytteltons 'a charming pair ... graceful, modest, intelligent' [*Diary of Beatrice Webb* vol. II p22 (19 September 1892)].

¹⁴¹Jalland, *Women, Marriage and Politics* p109-113. See also Edith Lyttelton, *Alfred Lyttelton: An Account of his Life* (London: Longmans, Green & Co.: 1917 (1st 1915)) p174-197. Alfred Lyttelton's first wife, Laura Tennant (who had also at one point been involved with Doll Liddell) died in childbirth in 1886 and promptly became enshrined as a saint-like figure in the Souls' collective memory.

¹⁴²*DNB*; *Times* 5 July 1913; Edith Lyttelton, *Alfred Lyttelton* p212-219. From 1906 until his death in 1913 Lyttelton was the M.P. for St George's, Hanover Square.

¹⁴³Jalland, *Women, Marriage and Politics* p197, p222-3.

a barrister as well as a politician, was asked by Chamberlain to chair the Transvaal Concessions Commission. The Commission was to investigate the monopolies granted by the Transvaal government, many obtained, it was believed, 'by extensive bribery' and 'against the interests of the country as a whole'. By now a British victory was expected imminently and plans for the administration of the Boer republics were well under way: no doubt the exercise was also a public demonstration of the undeniably corrupt nature of Kruger's regime. Lyttelton was not paid but was allowed to take 'his servant, his secretary and his wife'. Edith was uncertain whether she should go (their youngest child, Antony, was only two months old, and a general election was looming with H.J. Mackinder challenging Alfred's seat as a Liberal imperialist). But her 'desire to travel and experience' eventually triumphed and on 11 August the Lytteltons sailed for South Africa.¹⁴⁴

Arriving in Cape Town in late August, they initially stayed at Government House, where Edith was delighted to find her old friend Violet Cecil.¹⁴⁵ Alfred Lyttelton was expecting to begin work at once but was initially hampered by Milner's insistence (finally overcome) that they wait until the Transvaal was formally annexed. By mid-September the country was considered safe enough for Alfred to travel to Pretoria. Edith spent some time in suspense 'in case Kitchener or someone prevents me a mere woman coming up' and considering alternative plans ('I think I shall go to Kimberley or Natal by myself and then come home alone').¹⁴⁶ At last, on 28 September, Roberts agreed to give her a pass and on 4 October they set off.¹⁴⁷ After a week in the train they arrived in Pretoria, where Edith occupied herself by sitting in on the Commissions sessions and taking dictated résumés of individual cases in the evening. Their party was enlivened by the arrival not only of Christopher Balfour but Neville Lyttelton - Alfred's brother - and Milner himself. On 25 October Roberts proclaimed the formal annexation of the Transvaal. By November the Commission's work was done and by Christmas the Lytteltons were back in England.¹⁴⁸

During her time in South Africa Edith met most of the local luminaries: Jameson, Baden-Powell and above all Milner. She knew him already from her days as a 'Soul'¹⁴⁹ but in Cape Town they became more intimate. Milner may have thought

¹⁴⁴Edith Lyttelton, *Alfred Lyttelton* p236-7; Edith Lyttelton, *Diary of a Visit to South Africa* p2 [Chan. 6/3]. The diary (really a series of letters to her family) is typed (presumably a copy), includes several Kodak photographs taken by Edith, and is incomplete.

¹⁴⁵Lyttelton, *Diary* 28 August 1900 [Chan. 6/3].

¹⁴⁶Edith Lyttelton to Kathleen Lyttelton 16 September 1900 [Chan. II 3/14].

¹⁴⁷Lyttelton, *Diary* 28 August 1900, 4 October 1900 [Chan. 6/3].

¹⁴⁸Edith Lyttelton, *Alfred Lyttelton* p248-262; Edith Lyttelton to Kathleen Lyttelton ? October 1900 [Chan. II 3/14].

¹⁴⁹In 1891, for example, Milner's diary notes, 'Infinite talk and most of it excellent, DD and Margot [Tennant] competing with one another, and both occasionally excellent' [John Evelyn

Violet Cecil a 'godsend' but he was not averse to other feminine company. Lyttelton was thrilled to be the confidante of the High Commissioner. 'He has hardly anyone outside his staff to speak to', she told Doll Liddell (by now comfortably established as a family friend) 'and I go on long walks with him two or three times a week, when he talks with the utmost freedom on all the subjects of the hour'.¹⁵⁰ To her sister-in-law, Kathleen Lyttelton, she wrote, 'I have really delightful walks and talks with Sir Alfred who as he expresses it finds it a real relief to be quite indiscreet'.¹⁵¹

At first Lyttelton found Milner 'very much altered, he has quite lost a certain diffidence - well diffidence is not the right word - but a certain want of ease. It makes him to my mind far more accessible and brings out his great charm'.¹⁵² 'The adoration of everyone about him for the Governor is really remarkable' she noted, clearly not immune herself.¹⁵³ They discussed Milner's boyhood, 'his own ambitions and desires perhaps too private to put down here' and his longing for home and quiet "“unless another definite job, which I thought I could do, turned up”".¹⁵⁴ These confidences were 'interspersed, as indeed his talk was all day long, with every kind of interesting discussion on the future of this country'¹⁵⁵ - not to mention the present and the past. Milner talked freely to Lyttelton about the background to the war, the personalities involved in it, and his plans for the future. Despite some misgivings ('I really feel compunctions about recording Alfred Milner's remarks (upon people especially) tho' they are very interesting if one can keep them to refer to after')¹⁵⁶ Lyttelton noted it all in her diary, usually without comment.

Milner denied indignantly that the Johannesburg capitalists had anything to do with the war, explaining that the pre-war Uitlander agitation had arisen from 'self-respect ... It's the spirit which has made our nation and kept us - the Briton says ... Why should I endure these insults and all this misgovernment'.¹⁵⁷ He told her that the Boer farmer was 'a doomed man. They are lazy and unprogressive ... he thinks they will gradually go down hill, become poor whites, and then blacker and blacker! The others will become Anglicised but it will all be a long process which must not be hurried or forced'.¹⁵⁸ Milner told Lyttelton of his plans for the new (post-

Wrench, *Alfred Lord Milner: The Man of No Illusions* (London: Eyre & Spottiswood: 1958) p113].

¹⁵⁰Edith Lyttelton to Doll Liddell 25 September 1900 [Chan. II 3/8].

¹⁵¹Edith Lyttelton to Kathleen Lyttelton, 4 September 1900 [Chan. II 3/14].

¹⁵²Lyttelton, Diary 28 August 1900 [Chan. 6/3].

¹⁵³Lyttelton, Diary 30 August 1900 [Chan. 6/3].

¹⁵⁴Lyttelton, Diary 6 September 1900, 1 September 1900 [Chan. 6/3].

¹⁵⁵Lyttelton, Diary 1 September 1900 [Chan. 6/3].

¹⁵⁶Edith Lyttelton to Kathleen Lyttelton 26 September 1900 [Chan. II 3/14].

¹⁵⁷Lyttelton, Diary 4 September 1900 [Chan. 6/3].

¹⁵⁸Lyttelton, Diary 2 September 1900 [Chan. 6/3].

annexation) Transvaal administration: 'I want to get the very best men everywhere. I want them to feel the contrast of the Government at once, and rub their eyes and say Hullo this *is* a different state of things'.¹⁵⁹ And he eulogised the 'loyal Dutch', who realised that 'the country would never settle down until dominated by one race. The British would govern well and fuse the races and give equal treatment - the Dutch never'.¹⁶⁰ Small wonder that Lyttelton became an ardent Milnerite.

Nevertheless they had their disagreements, the biggest of which concerned Cecil Rhodes. Milner felt that 'in spite of all his faults' there was 'something big about [Rhodes'] ideas which always redeems them'.¹⁶¹ Lyttelton remained unconvinced, even after Dr Jameson assured her that 'Rhodes is the only man still who can combine the English and the Dutch ... [he] wants to be Premier of the federated South Africa and he will be'.¹⁶² After hearing tales of widespread corruption by the Chartered Company Lyttelton concluded that 'it is true what I heard someone say about Rhodes, that whatever he may have done for our Empire with one hand he has done us inestimable harm with the other by introducing wholesale bribery into a new country'.¹⁶³ She felt it was 'quite easy to understand the mistrust of the Dutch when they view Rhodes' career'. In all,

'The more I find out about Rhodes in this country the more sinister an influence do I find him to be. And yet ... on all sides one hears hundreds of stories of the man's kindness of heart. It is this horrible bribery and unscrupulousness which haunt one. He's a very big man there's no doubt, but really most big men in the ordinary course are very coarse stuff. They say he can do nothing unless he is half-drunk'.¹⁶⁴

The Rhodes question clearly identifies Lyttelton as an idealist imperialist, one who believed in the Empire as a vehicle of civilisation, of high standards, and of equal treatment for all. Unlike Milner - and unlike Violet Markham or Violet Cecil - she was not a politician. Grubby compromises shocked her, and although she was able to put Milner on a pedestal as the just, cool-minded statesman, Rhodes was too 'coarse' to fit Lyttelton's concept of imperialism.

Edith Lyttelton claimed to have been untouched by what she had seen and heard in South Africa. 'I don't think this place makes me one bit more pro-England or pro-Boer than before. I've always held a very middle course. I can't swallow all the jingoism or talk about treason and rebels - on the other hand I hear every day

¹⁵⁹Lyttelton, Diary 1 September 1900 [Chan. 6/3].

¹⁶⁰Lyttelton, Diary 4 September 1900 [Chan. 6/3].

¹⁶¹Lyttelton, Diary 2 September 1900 [Chan. 6/3].

¹⁶²Lyttelton, Diary 19 September, 22 September 1900 [Chan. 6/3].

¹⁶³Lyttelton, Diary 6 September 1900 [Chan. 6/3].

¹⁶⁴Edith Lyttelton to Kathleen Lyttelton 16 September 1900 [Chan. II 3/14].

confirmation of the real grievances and scandal of the Republican Government'.¹⁶⁵ Certainly she was disgusted by a chance acquaintance (an arms dealer who claimed 'to have sold hundreds and hundreds of Mausers without ever suspecting they were instantly sold to the Transvaal') who 'talked in the ultra loyal way which puts one's back up - of how the leaders ought to be hung or exiled - of what lying brutes the Dutch are, and so on and so on'.¹⁶⁶ The government she thought 'too much on the suspicious side', scenting rebellion among the Cape Dutch 'where there is I expect often nothing but deep pain and anxiety'. But she saw the war as inevitable: 'the only thing that comforts me is the sense that sooner or later this conflict had to come. The antagonistic forces are too deep and solid and too strong'.¹⁶⁷

Nevertheless, South Africa provided Lyttelton with a crash course in Milnerism - an experience which, if it did not change her ideas, turned her from a passive imperialist to an active one. The chance of putting some of it into practice came through the various British patriotic women's organisations that had sprung up in Cape Colony since the outbreak of war. 'You would laugh' she told Doll Liddell, 'if you knew how I am besieged by various women here who want to see their philanthropies and organisations in connection with English ones - it's rather a bore but it's very interesting - and you would say thoroughly in character with such an earnest and severe person as I am'.¹⁶⁸

Lyttelton became interested in female immigration when she was canvassed by Mrs Bairnsfather of the Women's Immigration Society¹⁶⁹ and was enthusiastic about the possibilities in the usual terms: a mixture of employment opportunities, matrimonial prospects and racism. 'There is a tremendous demand for servants - and though it doesn't do to say this too much - for wives. B[aden] Powell is just enrolling 6,000 policemen - if they don't have wives it means Kaffir women and more of that odious mixed race, which have never yet come to any good. I am amused by hearing that Rhodes says "for goodness sake send us some decent looking ones"'.¹⁷⁰ 'It's a chance for the neglected spinsters of England' she wrote flippantly to Doll Liddell. But Lyttelton was genuinely enthusiastic about the possibilities South Africa offered to immigrants. 'If I was poor and young and alone I think I should try and throw in

¹⁶⁵Edith Lyttelton to Kathleen Lyttelton 26 September 1900 [Chan. II 3/14].

¹⁶⁶Lyttelton, Diary 18 September 1900 [Chan. 6/3].

¹⁶⁷Edith Lyttelton to Kathleen Lyttelton 26 September 1900 [Chan. II 3/14].

¹⁶⁸Edith Lyttelton to Doll Liddell 25 September 1900 [Chan. II 3/8].

¹⁶⁹Which encouraged the immigration of young women, particularly domestic servants, to the Cape, and worked with the South African committee of the British Women's Emigration Association (Brian Blakely, 'Women and Imperialism: the Colonial Office and Female Emigration to South Africa 1901-1910', *Albion* 13 (2) Summer 1981 pp131-149, p138). See Chapter 6.

¹⁷⁰Edith Lyttelton to Kathleen Lyttelton 26 September 1900 [Chan. II 3/14].

my lot with this country there's going to be so much scope and future, and the climate is so glorious'.¹⁷¹

Another means of possible 'helpfulness' was offered by the Guild of Loyal Women. Lyttelton visited Dora Fairbridge with Mary Arnold-Forster and reported back that 'half the members are Dutch and there are about 5,000 members already'. Lyttelton was especially interested in the G.L.W.'s work in the schools.

'So-called missionaries have arrived - their mission being to teach Dutch and spread a hatred of England. Within an hour of Cape Town [Fairbridge] knows a school where the teacher made the children draw the Vierklur, the Transvaal flag, for a week and then said 'Now you must always remember this flag, the flag of your fatherland, and have it graven upon your hearts'. The most atrocious lies are taught them about the English ... Nothing but the counteracting influence of the just government we have always extended could have prevented the whole Colony rising, it has been so persistently undermined in the most insidious ways by Transvaal money.'

Lyttelton thought that such teaching should be stopped, for 'the idea of Dutch paramountcy has become through the war a tangible though a defeated ambition'. Fortunately the Guild was doing its best by 'getting up lectures for children on the Empire all over the Colony. Quantities of children come, though when "God Save the Queen" is played, many of the elder ones go out with their fingers in their ears'.¹⁷² In all, Lyttelton found 'the interest of this place ... quite absorbing ... Alfred and I literally talk of nothing else'.¹⁷³ Her visit to South Africa in time of war was a pivotal experience. Despite a certain ambiguity in her attitude to the Guild ('Miss Fairbridge the 'loyal woman' came and bored me about some quite insignificant papers')¹⁷⁴ its sister society, the Victoria League, became the vehicle for her enthusiasm.

(6) Mary Arnold-Forster

Mary Arnold-Forster (1862?-1951)¹⁷⁵ was the eldest daughter of Professor Neville Story-Maskelyne, professor of mineralogy at Oxford and keeper of the minerals at the British Museum. He was also Liberal M.P. for Cricklade in Wiltshire from 1880 until 1886 when he split with Gladstone over Home Rule, after which he sat as a Liberal Unionist until 1892.¹⁷⁶ Story-Maskelyne was a friend of William

¹⁷¹ Edith Lyttelton to Doll Liddell 25 September 1900 [Chan II. 3/8].

¹⁷² Lyttelton, Diary 10 September 1900 [Chan. 6/3].

¹⁷³ Edith Lyttelton to Kathleen Lyttelton 16 September 1900 [Chan. II 3/14].

¹⁷⁴ Lyttelton, Diary 25 September 1900 [Chan. 6/3].

¹⁷⁵ *Times* 5 February 1951.

¹⁷⁶ *DNB*.

Forster and Matthew Arnold and it was presumably through this connection that Mary met Hugh Oakeley Arnold-Forster, whom she married in 1885.¹⁷⁷ He was a grandson of Thomas Arnold, nephew of Matthew Arnold and the son of William Arnold, director of public instruction in the Punjab. After the early deaths of their parents, he and his three siblings were adopted by their father's sister Jane and her husband William Forster, eventually assuming the name Arnold-Forster.¹⁷⁸

After reading for the bar H.O. Arnold-Forster became private secretary to William Forster, chief secretary for Ireland 1880-1882, before joining Cassell & Co. for whom he prepared a series of 'educational handbooks designed to propagate a wise patriotism'. Meanwhile he acted as secretary to the Imperial Federation League, of which William Forster was president. Arnold-Forster split with the Liberal party in 1884 over its Egyptian policy and the 'sacrifice' of General Gordon, and in 1903 followed Chamberlain in supporting tariff reform and colonial preference.¹⁷⁹ He was the Liberal Unionist M.P. for West Belfast 1892-1906, and for Croydon 1906-1909. A noted commentator on military and naval affairs, he became secretary to the admiralty in 1900 and succeeded Brodrick at the War Office in 1903.¹⁸⁰ He was much interested in South African questions and a tireless critic of the British South African Company.¹⁸¹

In early August 1900 Arnold-Forster, who had become convinced that soldier settlement in South Africa would solve 'many of the difficulties - military, social and political' facing a post-war government, was asked to head a Land Settlement Commission to investigate the question.¹⁸² Mary accompanied him and they arrived in South Africa in early September. The Commission sat first in Cape Town, then visited various parts of Cape Colony to investigate agriculture and irrigation schemes.¹⁸³ Mary found it 'a time of truly thrilling interest ... How thankful I am that I have been allowed and able to share it with my Darling!'.¹⁸⁴ They returned from Mossel Bay to Cape Town, where the Commission took Rhodes' evidence before heading north to Bloemfontein and Pretoria, while Mary, on 17 October, returned home.¹⁸⁵

¹⁷⁷Mary Arnold-Forster, *Hugh Oakeley Arnold-Forster: A Memoir* (London: Edward Arnold: 1910) p62.

¹⁷⁸*DNB*.

¹⁷⁹Mary Arnold-Forster, *Arnold-Forster* p49; *DNB*.

¹⁸⁰*DNB*.

¹⁸¹Mary Arnold-Forster, *Arnold-Forster* p114, p119-20.

¹⁸²*DNB*; Mary Arnold-Forster, *Arnold-Forster* p148-49.

¹⁸³Mary Arnold-Forster, *Arnold-Forster* p149-55; Mary Arnold-Forster to Florence O'Brien Cape Town 3 October [1900] [Trinity College Dublin MS 500-1/259].

¹⁸⁴Mary Arnold-Forster to Florence O'Brien Cape Town 3 October [1900].

¹⁸⁵Mary Arnold-Forster, *Arnold-Forster* p149-55; Mary Arnold-Forster to Florence O'Brien Cape Town 3 October [1900].

During this brief time Mary Arnold-Forster became acquainted with some of the visitors and residents in Cape Town, particularly Milner and Edith Lyttelton. 'I have been seeing Sir Alfred a good deal lately and very very kind he has been' she wrote home. 'He told Mrs Lyttelton the other day that he had been enormously impressed with the ability and opinions of Oakel[ey]'s [?]work and with the wonderful amount he had accomplished of actual work and mastery of facts'.¹⁸⁶ Already a strong imperialist, Mary was impressed by Milner but shared the widespread suspicion of Rhodes. She told Edith Lyttelton how her husband 'had been bribed by the Chartered Company, or rather how the Company had tried to bribe him, by offering him shares in the Chartered Company at half their price ... she went on to talk of the curious wide-spread influence which Rhodes exerts and the number of influential people who are under some obligation to him ... Groot [*sic*] Schuur is always kept open - everyone and anyone can go and stay there - it's all right, it's very hospitable but incidentally all sorts of people become, to say the least of it, grateful to Rhodes ...'.¹⁸⁷

She and Edith Lyttelton got on well. 'Mrs Lyttelton's being here has made an immense difference to me' wrote Mary 'We have been constantly together and her society is to me a real and sympathetic pleasure'.¹⁸⁸ They took part in some unusual viceregal frivolity.

'Yesterday I stayed on at Government House and then had to go and do shopping and provisioning for 'our Commission' - and the other day I had been all day with Sir Alfred at the races! We went in state (or such state as Cape Town affords which is not much) and very funny it was. It was hard to say which of us, the Governor, Oakel[ey], Mrs Lyttelton or I knew least about the horses or the sport!'.¹⁸⁹

As we have seen, they also paid a more business-like visit to 'have luncheon with Miss Fairbridge, the Secretary of the League of Loyal Women here'.¹⁹⁰ South Africa did not change Mary Arnold-Forster's opinions, but it did provide her with the stimulus and the contacts to put them into action through the Victoria League, to which (with her husband's active support) she became strongly committed.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁶Mary Arnold-Forster to Florence O'Brien Cape Town 3 October [1900].

¹⁸⁷Edith Lyttelton, Diary 6 September 1900 [Chan. 6/3].

¹⁸⁸Mary Arnold-Forster to Florence O'Brien Cape Town 3 October [1900].

¹⁸⁹Mary Arnold-Forster to Florence O'Brien Cape Town 3 October [1900].

¹⁹⁰Edith Lyttelton, Diary 10 September 1900 [Chan. 6/3].

¹⁹¹Temporarily incapacitated after her husband's premature death in 1909, she offered to resign from the League executive but added, 'I should like to stay on it and the more so because my husband ... loved my doing it and was interested in every point that came up on our Committee' (Mary Arnold-Forster to Alice Balfour 20 April [1909] [SRO GD433/2/140/104]). She remained on the executive for many years after.

Conclusion

The six women examined here had much in common. Many were exceptionally intelligent and talented. Most came from a small group of heavily interlinked families at the heart of the Victorian social/political world and benefited from the network of informal contacts it engendered. Though politically aware and aligned by party (generally according to family background) few had had any independent desire to engage in political work before their travels in South Africa. Their experiences there just before or during the Boer War (or, in the case of Alice Balfour, on the eve of the Jameson Raid) awoke in them an interest in South African and imperial questions which proved to be long lasting. For Violet Markham, Edith Lyttelton and Violet Cecil in particular, Milner proved strongly attractive: he had a profound influence upon them both intellectually as a proponent of the 'new imperialism' and imaginatively as an isolated figure defending the imperial frontier and beset by enemies in South Africa and at home. While the crisis atmosphere of turn of the century South Africa inspired them to active imperialism, Cape Town provided the contacts - with Milner, with the ladies of the Guild of Loyal Women, and with each other - that led them to organise the propagation of imperial sentiment through the Victoria League.

Chapter 2. The Victoria League

In 1909 Lady Jersey described how the Victoria League had come to be formed. 'On a dull day in the Spring of 1901 a number of ladies dressed in deep mourning gathered together'. Oppressed by grief for their dead Queen and by the anxieties of war, yet 'they were English women and the impulse of their race was not to sit with folded hands and tremble for the future but "out of this nettle danger to pluck this flower safety"'. The war had 'drawn the Empire together as never before ... a thrill of imperial sentiment was flashing from land to land, and from sea to sea'. Already the Guild of Loyal Women and, in Canada, the Daughters of the Empire had seized 'the psychological moment for closer unity. The women of the Mother Country did not stop to ask what statesmen might propose or what Governments might ordain'. Instead, working on the principle that 'Empire is above and beyond Party' they set out to 'promote true brotherhood between the mighty states which make up the British Empire'. An 'audacious scheme for a few women' - but they were spurred on by the perception that 'very much which might practically conduce to the end in view had not either been attempted at all, or had been handled in a feeble and ineffectual manner'. Here race instinct ('they were *English* women') triumphs over 'womanly' diffidence. Traditional female reactions to such a crisis - to watch and wait, or even to 'send out comforts for the soldiers in the field, and ... provide tendence for sick and wounded in camp' - are now 'not enough'. Comprehension of the urgency of the situation leads them to by-pass (male) politicians and party politics altogether, their feeling of 'audacity' relieved by a clear vision of practical work to be done.¹ As a psychological explanation (especially for those founding members who had not had the stimulus of knowing Milner and South Africa at first hand) this is probably fair enough. A detailed examination of the founding of the Victoria League, however, produces a more complicated and less elevated picture than Lady Jersey would suggest.

The original spur for the establishment of the League came from the Guild of Loyal Women. In November 1900, Mrs Stuart and Mrs Mackintosh of the Guild arrived in Britain and began to address audiences throughout the country on the subject of soldiers' graves. One of the earliest public meetings was held in Chesterfield, courtesy of Violet Markham. 'The Mayor is to preside' Markham reported, 'and I have coaxed two Radicals and two Conservatives to come ... After the tear-your-hair-scratch-your-eyes-out sentiments which prevailed at Chesterfield during the election it is rather uphill work

¹Lady Jersey, 'The Victoria League', *National Review* LII 1909 pp317-326, p317-8.

soothing ruffled feathers into their places'.² On 4 December the Women's Liberal Unionist Association (many of whose members subsequently helped to found the Victoria League) held a discussion meeting to hear the Guild delegates. It was held in Mrs Herbert Chamberlain's rooms, with Millicent Garrett Fawcett in the chair; Edith Lyttelton, Mary Arnold-Forster, the Frere sisters and Lady Frances Balfour were among those present. Mrs Stuart addressed the company on the care of soldier's graves, while Mrs Mackintosh spoke on 'the plans of the guild for educating Afrikanders in loyalty and promoting a better feeling between English and Dutch'.³

Stuart was not only raising money for the graves work but intended to see a sister society for the Guild established before she left Britain. 'She is a dear woman, simple-minded and whole hearted in her work' Markham told David Gill with less than overwhelming enthusiasm,

'But I wish she were a little more explicit in the matter of business. She wants me to start a branch of the Daughters of the Empire Guild here, but I have pointed out that a central organisation in London *must* be the beginning and the Guild must have a definite programme. Of course in S. Africa matters are very different, but here there is no disloyalty to combat ... I don't quite see what the Guild would have to do, beyond the enunciation of platitudes, unless it takes up some definite work in connection with the Colonies such as emigration or other philanthropic schemes. Pray don't think I am criticising Mrs Stuart. I like the woman extremely and we are the best of friends. Still I do feel that there is a certain lack of practical and definite purpose about the Guild. However I have promised to serve on the London committee and once that is started we shall be better able to see'.⁴

Markham later discussed the scheme with Sir Bartle Frere (son of the first baronet and brother of Georgina Frere, soon to be a founder member of the Victoria League) and with Mr Handcock of the Imperial South African Association, and refined her ideas further.

'They quite agree with me that it *must* have more definite planks than patriotic sentiments. My own feeling is that it should hook on more or less to emigration schemes; in this sense that if a Canadian girl wants to come and earn her living say as a governess or nurse in England, there should be a body in London to whom she could apply for information, who would recommend her respectable lodgings and give her what help they could to start her in her new career. And in the same way if an English girl wants to go as a governess to Australia that there should be a body of ladies in Sydney to whom she could be referred. This would be a practical exhibition of sympathy between the women of the Empire. But of course it's a big scheme and the financial part of it would require great thought and consideration. I am so sorry that Lady Edward Cecil is *hors de combat* just at present [she was heavily pregnant] for she had so much to do with the Guild in Cape Town and I should have liked to hear her views on the

²Violet Markham to David Gill 22 November 1900 [Gill Papers, Royal Geographical Society].

³*Times* 5 December 1900.

⁴Violet Markham to David Gill 15 February 1901 [Gill papers RGS].

subject. One wants to make the individual women *work*; not set up an organisation with a lot of paid clerks and secretaries'.⁵

Many of Markham's ideas later became central to the League, but how far Markham was responsible is a question not easily answered. Markham spent much of 1901 in Europe, ill, or nursing her mother, and she did not join the League executive until 1904. But she was on the League council from the first and was certainly in contact with several of the League's founders. The Frere sisters she had met as early as April 1900, when she had asked for a picture of the late Sir Bartle Frere as an illustration for *South Africa Past and Present*. Markham found them 'one and all most charming' and they remained in contact through various pro-British crusades during and immediately after the war.⁶ Violet Cecil she met again in January 1902 - they certainly discussed the Guild of Loyal Women and it would be surprising if the Victoria League was not also mentioned.⁷ It is quite possible therefore that Markham may have had some influence over the early development of the League, though she was not immediately involved in its foundation.

Between her two meetings with Markham, the Guild representative had also been working with Violet Cecil, who was apparently not as incapacitated by pregnancy as Markham assumed. Cecil, like Markham, found Mrs Stuart enthusiastic but undirected. She was also irritated by her 'enunciation of platitudes' foreign to the practical outlook of the founders of the Victoria League and by a certain colonial forwardness. Her comments about Stuart escalate in exasperation over time. Cecil first met her at the end of February 1901:

'Dora Fairbridge has sent me over a 'delegate' from South Africa - a Mrs Stuart - a Schreiner [Stuart was the niece of Will, Theodore and Olive Schreiner] - she is not a Schreiner for nothing. She is always 'feeling bound' or 'acting on her own initiative'. She has many virtues, is pushing, keen, hard-working, but an 'enfant terrible'.⁸

A few days later Cecil and her first two recruits spent 'an extraordinarily funny afternoon' with Stuart, attempting to draw up a ground plan for the League. 'We were all routed by Mrs Stuart' Cecil complained,

'Not that her arguments were good - but her flow of language! ... She is quite as impractical as William Schreiner. I must get Dora to take her away. She - Mrs Stuart - is a good soul, but her style - 'Oh my beloved sisters' - this to Alice B[alfour], Miss Frere and me - 'I have a beautiful plan for children' (we gasped, we had hoped there were no more plans) 'to link their little loving hearts together all over the Empire and make a bond of worship and loyalty (textual)'. I said boldly, 'to learn geography?' 'No,

⁵Violet Markham to David Gill 8 March 1901 [Gill papers RGS].

⁶Violet Markham, Diary 30 April 1900 [Markham 17/5] and see Chapter 3.

⁷Violet Markham, Egypt Diary 2 January, 9 January 1901; 2 February 1902 [Markham 27/2].

⁸Violet Cecil, 'Diary' 23 February 1901 [Violet Milner F2/1]; Richard Rive (ed.), *Olive Schreiner Letters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 1988) vol. I p4.

dear (!), no, to learn to dig and ride and make good little settlers'. Such a good soul - so ridiculous!⁹

Despite Cecil's reservations, Mrs Stuart stayed and plans for the League went forward. As the new organisation was to be 'non-party', and as Cecil, Alice Balfour and Georgina Frere all came from the Conservative/Liberal Unionist side, they were anxious to involve as many Liberals as possible. 'Haldane has 'passed' a circular I have written to start the new Women's League, the Victoria League' Cecil wrote on 2 March 1901, 'So I am sending to some Liberal ladies - Lady Tweedsmouth, Lady Grey [wife of Sir Edward Grey], Margot [Asquith]'.¹⁰ (Naturally they were aiming rather towards the Liberal Imperialist group). By 9 March, Cecil had recruited not only the first two Liberal ladies on her list, but also Lady Jersey, Edith Lyttelton, Lady Derby, Lady Alice Stanley, Lady Gosford and Lady Dufferin, and, she added sardonically, 'Lady Lock will join, she has "so many Dutch friends"'. Her first priority was to 'keep them away from Mrs Stuart at all costs'; her second, 'to get up an informal meeting, but they will all keep going away all the time. I am like a terrier trying to catch several ducks in a pond'.¹¹

By the end of March the details for the new League were being worked out. 'Alice Balfour dined with me' Cecil wrote, 'and we had a good go at Guild - V.L. business - constitution, programme, resolutions. I have kept my name off the programme [because of her position as the prime minister's daughter-in-law?] but I shall have to do any explaining that is wanted. Alice Balfour is invaluable'. On 2 April 1901, 'it having been proposed to form a Women's Association which should be a means of intercourse and help between different parts of the Empire, in furtherance of Imperial objects'¹² a preliminary meeting was held and duly recorded by Violet Cecil.

'Well - it's over and the Victoria League has come into existence and I have rushed home to recover from its birth! It occurred at 10, Downing Street [where Arthur Balfour, leader of the House of Commons, was living], Lady Jersey in the chair flanked by Alice Balfour and me. A good attendance and we passed our rules and general objects without difficulty ... I was interested to see how nervous Lady Jersey was. Now a speech is beyond me but I don't mind making a statement to a room full of people: I spoke of the need for wholesome political literature and history textbooks for schools [in South Africa]. Our bold fashionables said very little. There was a powerful group of Liberal Unionist ladies. Miss Frere was there, Duchess of Marlborough, D.D. [Edith Lyttelton], Mrs Gell, Hilda Brodrick, Miss Gully ... I wish Dora would send for Mrs Stuart. She was awful. Talked about my - coming - infant as a 'loving link [of Empire]!'¹³

⁹Violet Cecil, 'Diary' 1 March 1901 (all *sic*) [Violet Milner F2/1].

¹⁰Violet Cecil, 'Diary' 2 March 1901 [Violet Milner F2/1].

¹¹Violet Cecil, 'Diary' 9 March 1901 [Violet Milner F2/1].

¹²Minutes of Preliminary Meeting [in V.L. Executive minute book] 2 April 1901.

¹³Violet Cecil, 'Diary' 2 April 1901 [Violet Milner F2/1]. An edited version of this account appears in *My Picture Gallery* (London: John Murray: 1951) pp237-8. Cecil's daughter Helen was born 11 May 1901.

Twenty-five women attended the preliminary meeting. The founders of the Victoria League deliberately tried to recruit those, like themselves, with links to the social-political élite and started, naturally enough, with their own families. The Cecil - Balfour clan was well represented, with not only Alice Balfour and Violet Cecil, but Evelyn Raleigh (Alice's sister) and Lady Gwendolen Cecil (Alice's cousin; Violet's sister-in-law), as well as Mrs Leo Maxse, Violet's brother's wife. Georgina Frere recruited her sister Catherine. Lady Tweedsmouth and Millicent Garrett Fawcett represented the Liberal party. Mary Hervey and Edith Lyttelton Gell (both soon to join the South African wing of the British Women's Emigration Association), and Mrs St Loe Strachey and Mrs Maurice Macmillan (both of whom became long-serving Victoria League members) also attended this first meeting. A Duchess, a Marchioness and two Countesses added tone to the gathering.

The meeting adopted the groundrules for the new organisation. It was to be called the Victoria League 'in memory of our late Gracious Queen, and with the desire to continue the great work of closer union throughout the Empire, for which she did so much'.¹⁴ The League's founders undoubtedly shared the feeling at the Queen's death that, as Lady Jersey expressed it, 'a whole Empire had become one great orphaned family'.¹⁵ Violet Cecil wrote during the Queen's illness, 'I feel - if the Queen dies - as if we shall all be pulled up by the roots' and later that, 'the greatest, most influential life we have ever known is over'.¹⁶ The name, therefore, was intended as a genuine tribute. The other resolutions were:

I. That an Association shall be formed of women of the British Isles who are in sympathy with Imperial objects and desire a closer union between the different parts of the Empire ...

III. That the Association shall hold itself ready, as far as possible, to support and assist any scheme leading to more intimate understanding between ourselves and our fellow-subjects in our great Colonies and Dependencies.

IV. That it shall aim at promoting any practical work desired by the Colonies and tending to the good of the Empire as a whole.

V. That it shall endeavour to become a centre for receiving and distributing information regarding the different British dominions, especially information of importance to women.

VI. That this Association should invite the alliance of and offer help and co-operation to such bodies of a similar nature as already exist, or as shall hereafter be formed, in other parts of the Empire'.¹⁷

¹⁴Minutes of Preliminary Meeting 2 April 1901.

¹⁵Lady Jersey, *Fifty-One Years of Victorian Life* (London: John Murray: 1922) p380.

¹⁶Violet Cecil, 'Diary' 21 January, 22 January 1901 [Violet Milner F2/1].

¹⁷Minutes of Preliminary Meeting 2 April 1901. The second resolution concerned the name and is quoted in part above.

The first executive committee was elected at this meeting. Cecil described it as a 'rather impressive executive' and she was right.¹⁸ Lady Jersey, who had been informed of the fact 'most unexpectedly, just before the meeting', was appointed President. She modestly concluded that 'I was chosen because one great object of the founders being to emphasise 'no party politics', it was thought wiser not to select a President whose husband was of Cabinet rank ... though a Conservative I had the qualification of overseas experience' (during her husband's term of office as governor of New South Wales 1891-93).¹⁹ At fifty-one, she was also slightly older than many of the members, and was already well-known for her work for the Conservative organisation, the Primrose League, and as a political hostess.²⁰ Violet Cecil concluded correctly that 'she will do the Victoria League work admirably. She has tact and capacity and knows her Colonies. She has a beautiful place near London [Osterley Park] and will entertain there'.²¹ Lady Jersey remained President with striking success until her retirement twenty-six years later.

Lady Tweedsmouth, wife of a prominent Liberal peer, was appointed vice-president. The sister of Lord Randolph Churchill, she came from a Conservative family but 'associated herself, after her marriage, with the views and aims of her husband'. 'Distinctly a *grande dame*,' she became 'the recognised head of the social world of Liberal politics' and was noted for her reluctance to 'introduce party animosity into social life' - all suitable characteristics for the vice-presidency.²² Lady Tweedsmouth died suddenly in 1904 and the post was then taken by other Liberal women. Lady Carrington (wife of the Governor of New South Wales 1885-90) took the post until 1907, when she retired on health grounds. In Australia the Carringtons had 'fulfilled their social role with warmth and generosity' and marked success, while Lady Carrington had established a Jubilee fund to relieve distressed women, demonstrating 'a business capacity with which women are rarely credited'.²³ From 1907 until the First World War the vice-president was Lady Crewe, daughter of Lord Rosebery and wife of the Marquess of Crewe (Colonial Secretary 1908-10, and Secretary of State for India 1910-15). Lady Crewe was 'almost painfully shy' but Violet Markham later found her 'a brilliant chairman ... handl[ing] difficult people and difficult situations in a masterly manner'.²⁴

¹⁸Violet Cecil, 'Diary' 3 May 1901 [Violet Milner F2/1].

¹⁹Lady Jersey, *Fifty-One Years* p381.

²⁰Martin Pugh, *The Tories and the People* (Oxford: Blackwell: 1985) p47-48.

²¹Violet Cecil, 'Diary' 13 April 1901 [Violet Milner F2/1].

²²*Times* 6 August 1904. See also *DNB* entry on Lord Tweedsmouth.

²³Quoted *Dictionary of Australian Biography* vol. III p358-9.

²⁴*Times* 14 March 1967, 15 March 1967; Violet Markham [who worked with Lady Crewe on the Central Committee on Women's Employment], *Return Passage* (London: Oxford University Press: 1953) p149.

Mrs Maurice (Nellie) Macmillan became the League treasurer and served for more than thirty years.²⁵ An American from Indiana who had met her publisher husband in Paris, where she was studying art and music, she seems to have taken to British life and politics with enthusiasm. The biographer of her son Harold describes her as a 'forceful' woman whose 'determined features reflected her strong personality' and who was involved with many political and philanthropic bodies aside from the Victoria League: 'colleagues from ... the Women's Liberal Unionist Association and the Ladies' Working Guild filed through the house'.²⁶ There were ten other members of the Executive. Violet Cecil, Alice Balfour, Georgina Frere and Edith Lyttelton joined as a matter of course. Lady Derby (who had some knowledge of Canada from her husband's time as governor-general 1888-93) and Miss Mildred Grenfell served briefly, while Alicia Cecil and Mary Hervey for a longer time combined membership of the League Executive with work for the South African Expansion Committee [S.A.X.]. Lady Helen Munro-Ferguson also had links to S.A.X. but she remained with the League until her husband (Ronald Munro-Ferguson, Liberal M.P. on the imperialist wing of the party and for many years Rosebery's private secretary) was appointed governor-general of Australia in 1914. The daughter of the first Marquis of Dufferin and Ava, she came from a tradition of Empire service: she had accompanied her parents on her father's postings as governor-general of Canada (1872-78) and of India (1884-88),²⁷ and her brother, Lord Ava, had been killed fighting in South Africa in 1900. May Tennant (née Abraham), the first woman factory inspector in England, now married to the Liberal Imperialist H.J. Tennant, served until 1904 when she was replaced by Violet Markham. Other slightly later additions included Mary Emmott, wife of the Liberal Leaguer Alfred Emmott, who was later under-secretary of state for the colonies (1902), and Mary Arnold-Forster (1903). Two Canadians, Lady de Blanquiere (1902), and Joseph Chamberlain's sister-in-law, Lilian (Mrs Herbert) Chamberlain (1903), provided a colonial perspective. Lady Selborne joined in 1910, at the end of her husband's time as High Commissioner for South Africa.

The League's first meeting resolved to 'submit a resolution to the Council, that no word should be used in its constitution which might debar the future admission of men as members, if desirable'.²⁸ In fact the League admitted men as members and on subcommittees from the beginning, and on the executive from 1907. The male executive members were a talented group. Leo Amery was a friend both of Milner and of Violet

²⁵*Times* 29 October 1937 (tribute from Lady Jersey recording 'what she herself undoubtedly regarded as a major part of her life's work').

²⁶Alistair Horne, *Macmillan: the Official Biography* (Basingstoke: Macmillan: 1988) vol. I p8-9.

²⁷See Lady Dufferin's memoirs, *Our Viceregal Life in India* (1889) and *My Canadian Journal* (1891).

²⁸Executive 3 May 1901.

Markham, a far-right Conservative, member of the 'compatriot' and 'co-efficient' groups, journalist for the *Times* and editor of the *Times History of the War in South Africa*.²⁹ E.T. Cook, a Liberal imperialist, had worked with Milner at the *Pall Mall Gazette* and was a friend both of Violet Markham and May Tennant. Cook had been the editor of the *Daily News* (his pro-Milner *The Rights and Wrongs of the Transvaal War* (1901) was largely a collection of editorial pieces). But the paper was sold over his head to a 'pro-Boer' proprietor during the war and, though he became leader writer for the *Daily Chronicle*, his career never really recovered. Perhaps for this reason, Cook was more useful than Amery to the League, employing his editorial skills on the League's annual reports and in 1917 becoming deputy vice-president.³⁰ E.B. Sargant was another man whose career had peaked during the Boer War. 'A brilliant innovator and an original thinker', he had organised teaching in the South African concentration camps and was later briefly director of education for the Transvaal and Orange River Colony. An enthusiastic proponent of Anglicisation, Sargant irritated his deputies by his autocratic methods and was moved sideways to the post of 'education advisor to the governor'. When the post was abolished in 1905 Sargant largely disappeared from public life though he made intermittent pleas for a system of 'imperial education'.³¹ He too remained with the League for many years. Sir Curzon Wylie, who had returned to England as political aide-de-camp to the Secretary of State for India after many years in the Indian Army and in the government of India foreign department administering a variety of native states,³² and the much-travelled Liberal M.P. David Davies completed the selection.³³

There were some important later additions. Professor Wyndham Dunstan (joined 1908) provided a useful link to the Imperial Institute, of which he was director 1903-1924.³⁴ The geographer H.J. Mackinder (who joined in the same year), had been a member of the 'co-efficients' and a director of the London School of Economics.³⁵ Beatrice Webb described him as 'an able lecturer ... energetic traveller and organiser ... with a certain capacity for oratory and strong picturesque statement'.³⁶ Originally a Liberal imperialist, he was a convert to Conservatism and tariff reform. In 1908 he had

²⁹Leo Amery, *My Political Life* (London: Hutchinson & Co.: 1953) vol. I p336-7; *DNB*.

³⁰*DNB*; *Who Was Who*; J. Saxon Mills, *Sir Edward Cook KBE: A Biography* (London: Constable & Co.: 1921).

³¹*Dictionary of South African Biography* vol. I p685-6.

³²Details from *DNB*.

³³Annual Report 1907-8.

³⁴*DNB*; William Golant, *Images of Empire: The Early History of the Imperial Institute 1887-1925* (Exmouth: University of Exeter: 1984) p13-20.

³⁵Bernard Semmel, 'Sir Halford Mackinder: Theorist of Imperialism', *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* xxiv no.4 (November 1958) pp554-561; Ralf Dahrendorf, *LSE: a history of the London School of Economics and Political Science 1885-1995* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 1995) chapter 2.

³⁶N. & J. Mackenzie (eds.), *The Diary of Beatrice Webb* (London: Virago: 1983) vol. II p252 (7 June 1902). For her less flattering comments on the same occasion see ft. 114 below.

been bought out of the LSE directorship to 'devote his time to the cause of imperial unity' by a consortium organised by Milner and including Leo Amery and Violet Markham: he became a Conservative M.P. in 1910 and held his seat until 1922.³⁷ Sir Curzon Wyllie was replaced, after his death in 1909, by another man with a long Indian experience, Sir James Dunlop-Smith, then on the verge of retirement from his last post as private secretary to the Viceroy of India. Dunlop-Smith proved an enthusiastic Victoria Leaguer, ending as deputy president. Sir Hamilton Goold-Adams was appointed on his return from South Africa in 1910, having served as the Lieutenant-Governor of the Orange Free State since 1901. Sir Everard im Thurn, after a long colonial career in West Africa, Ceylon and the Pacific, retired from his final post as Governor of Fiji and High Commissioner of the Western Pacific in 1910 and was added to the League executive in 1911.³⁸ Sir Arthur Lawley, Lieutenant-Governor of the Transvaal 1902-10, served briefly from 1911 to 1912. Albert Mansbridge (secretary of the Workers' Educational Association) joined in 1912 and Henry Hadow (principal of Armstrong College, Newcastle) in 1913.

The League prided itself on its 'non-political' (i.e. non-party) nature. Just as Lady Jersey's Conservatism was balanced by a string of Liberal vice-presidents, the Victoria League was anxious to preserve a political balance on the executive - not easy since imperialist Liberals were in short supply. The executive for 1905, for example, included five Conservatives plus five Liberal Unionists, but only four Liberals;³⁹ and in 1906 it was decided that two more Liberals were needed and 'should be asked to fill the places of two present members, Mrs Alfred Lyttelton having expressed her willingness to resign'. (A suggestion at the same meeting that chairmen of subcommittees should be members of the executive *ex officio* ensured her quick return in a different hat.) No other volunteer arising, the executive decided to sacrifice Mary Hervey, the 'member representing Conservative opinion who had attended least often'. Two Liberal ladies, Mildred Buxton (wife of Sydney Buxton, Liberal M.P. for Tower Hamlets) and Mrs Birrell (wife of Augustine Birrell, Irish secretary 1907-16), were duly enlisted.⁴⁰ The League was also acutely sensitive about its associates, refusing, for example, to 'give

³⁷Brian W. Blouet, *Halford Mackinder: a biography* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press: 1987) p140; Violet Markham to Leo Amery 24 February 1909 [Amery Box 26]; Semmel, 'Sir Halford Mackinder' p560.

³⁸*Who Was Who*.

³⁹Plus Lady de Blaquiére. The Conservatives were Lady Jersey, Alice Balfour, Violet Cecil, and Alicia Cecil; the Liberal Unionists, Helen Macmillan, Lilian Chamberlain, Mary Arnold-Forster, Georgina Frere, and Edith Lyttelton; the Liberals, Lady Carrington, Mary Emmott, Lady Helen Munro-Ferguson and Violet Markham.

⁴⁰Executive 11 May 1906.

introductions to societies having a party political bias',⁴¹ and steadily declined to expand into Ireland 'owing to the difficulty of keeping clear of party politics'.⁴²

Similarly, the League tried to steer clear of the Tariff Reform debate. It was anxious to dissociate itself from Violet Brooke-Hunt who, after organising Soldiers' Institutes in South Africa during the Boer War, had become founder and organising secretary of the Women's Unionist and Tariff Reform Association.⁴³ In 1904 Brooke-Hunt consulted the League executive before agreeing to speak at the inaugural meeting of the Bath Victoria League 'in view of her addressing a Tariff Reform meeting at Bath about the same time'. The executive ruled that 'owing to Miss Brooke-Hunt's present official position with the Tariff Reform League she should not speak at Victoria League meetings'.⁴⁴ It was not a unanimous decision. 'Will some one tell me why free importers are so peppery?' Violet Cecil demanded of Milner before telling him of the debate

'on whether the V.L. would be 'compromised' by using the services of keen people on either side - I was all for having them all, [Millicent Garrett] Fawcett [a free-trader], Brooke-Hunt and Co. but barring the faithful Frere nobody agreed with me ... all the others - they all happen to be anti-Reformers in the Committee - got quite *purple* with fury so that I hurriedly dropped the whole thing. They were all quite willing to have Mrs Fawcett it was VBH they barred! I was very surprised and asked who they thought they would get to speak for them as everybody worth having was out in the open by now, but they only shook with fury and couldn't give an articulate answer! Of course D.D. [Edith Lyttelton] and Mrs Arnold-Forster were not there or we would have elicited some answers'.⁴⁵

The episode is a salutary reminder of hard-fought battles lying beneath the serene surface presented even by the executive minutes. But despite Violet Cecil's protests the executive's decision did remove Tariff Reform as an issue from the League, and apparently without any great loss of speakers. (The Bath meeting was addressed by Violet Markham, another free-trader, so perhaps Cecil had some grounds for grievance.)⁴⁶

The League's first carefully chosen executive having been selected, the first meeting was held on 3 May 1901. 'A full attendance ... including our two Liberal ladies [Lady Tweedmouth and Lady Helen Munro-Ferguson]' reported Cecil, 'Just the dry

⁴¹Executive 17 February 1910.

⁴²Executive 13 November 1902, 30 May 1907.

⁴³Violet Brooke-Hunt, *A Woman's Memories of the War* (London: James Nisbet & Co.: 1901); *Who Was Who*; *Times* 29 June 1910.

⁴⁴Executive 28 January 1904.

⁴⁵Violet Cecil to Milner 30 January [1904] [Milner 216/231-2].

⁴⁶Executive 28 April 1904. For Markham's position on Tariff Reform see Markham to David Gill 20 August 1903 and 5 October 1903 [Gill papers, RGS].

bone of business it was, the useful members were Lady Derby, Lady Jersey, Alice Balfour, Alicia Cecil (Lady Helen Munro-Ferguson is clever but wrong-headed)⁴⁷. The meeting discussed possible rooms for an office and the question of a paid secretary.⁴⁸ Meriel Talbot was appointed at a salary of £60 a year.⁴⁹ Talbot was Alfred Lyttelton's niece, so an element of nepotism was clearly involved, but she proved to be an excellent secretary, both tactful and efficient, and capable of speaking effectively on occasion. She was the daughter of J.G. Talbot, the Conservative M.P. for Oxford University, but her great-aunt was Catherine Gladstone, so she had a foot on each side of the political divide. In 1901 she was in her mid-thirties, unmarried and with previous experience as the honorary secretary of the Lambeth Charity Organisation Society: an able woman looking for occupation (and as one of a large family probably glad of the money as well). The Victoria League served her admirably and she stayed until 1916, when she left to join a series of government committees.⁵⁰

An office was taken at Dacre House, Victoria Street on a rent of £50 per annum and at first was only to be open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11 until 1 (by 1915 the hours were 11 to 4 every weekday).⁵¹ A second room was taken later in 1901⁵² and in March 1902 the League moved to three (and then four) rooms on the third floor of the same building at £75 p.a.⁵³ A telephone was finally installed in 1904.⁵⁴ A grant from the Rhodes Trust in 1907 meant an increase in office space (as well as higher staff salaries, a new clerk and a second typewriter),⁵⁵ and in 1908 the League moved to more convenient rooms in Millbank House in Westminster on a seven-year lease for a rent of £230.⁵⁶ Two assistant secretaries were added in 1904 (one was also the League lecturer; the other was the League librarian part-time)⁵⁷ and they and Talbot ran the office with some volunteer help and a copying clerk or two. The staff gradually expanded until by 1915 it had 'grown to ten paid workers and five honorary secretaries, besides several members of the League who give occasional help', taking up six rooms of Millbank House.⁵⁸

⁴⁷Violet Cecil, 'Diary' 3 May 1901 [Violet Milner F2/1].

⁴⁸Executive 3 May 1901.

⁴⁹By July 1901 it had been raised to £100 and by 1907 to £180 [Executive 15 May 1901; 24 July 1901; 20 February 1907].

⁵⁰*Who Was Who*; *Times* 17 December 1956, 22 December 1956.

⁵¹Executive 15 May 1901; E.B. Sargant, 'The Victoria League', *United Empire* NS Vol. 6 no. 8 August 1915 pp588-594, p589.

⁵²Executive 10 July 1901; 24 October 1901.

⁵³Executive 6 March 1902; 21 March 1902; Annual Report 1904-5, p9.

⁵⁴Executive 19 May 1904.

⁵⁵Executive 7 February 1907.

⁵⁶Executive 7 February 1908.

⁵⁷Executive 24 March 1904; 30 June 1904.

⁵⁸Sargant, 'Victoria League', p589.

Having arranged for an office and a secretary, the new League had now to consider in detail its future aims and methods. As Meriel Talbot remembered,

'This question called for constructive thought and clear definition. The Secretaries were turned to: Mrs Lyttelton [Hon. Secretary until October 1902] and I withdrew to the country, wrestled with the subject and returned with a draft "Scheme of Work"'.⁵⁹

The 'scheme of work' has not survived (although 500 copies of the revised scheme were published) but it seems to have suggested the formation of education and emigration subcommittees.⁶⁰ A suggestion from Kipling (who was a friend of Violet Cecil's and whose wife Carrie was an early member of the League Council) led to the addition of a hospitality committee.⁶¹ Over the years imperial education and hospitality became the two main planks of the League, though it also developed committees for British refugees; Boer women and children; soldiers' graves; literature; art; settlers' welcome; and agricultural and industrial matters.

The League followed a well-established pattern in its structure: an executive in London; a council which met once and sometimes twice a year; and a network of branches in the country. The first two branches - Cheltenham and Nairn - were founded in 1902. By 1904 four more branches had been established - Essex, Newlands Corner (Surrey), Wimbledon and Gloucester - and the League decided that a new subcommittee (on which representatives of each branch would serve) was necessary 'so that country branches could be kept in closer touch with the central office and with one another, and to consider the best means of developing the work'.⁶² Violet Markham, having previously submitted a scheme 'for the organisation of country branches', was asked to take the chair but refused. Mary Emmott took on the job 'temporarily'.⁶³ 'Possessing a unique knowledge of Empire ... affairs [and] a wealth of wisdom and judgement', she remained chairman until 1950, combining it with work for the National Council of Women and the London Society for Women's Suffrage.⁶⁴ The League now developed branches more rapidly, though not all survived more than a few years. By 1908 there were twenty branches, and by 1914, twenty-~~seven~~^{seven} (see table and map). Often they were started by

⁵⁹Meriel Talbot, 'Early History of the Victoria League', *Welcome: the Official Journal of the Victoria League* 1 (2) April 1951 pp11-13, p12.

⁶⁰Executive 7 June 1901.

⁶¹Executive 7 June 1901. He reported inaccurately in 1901 that '[Carrie] spends her leisure in rubbing salt and cayenne pepper into the committee of the Victoria League and sends Lady Jersey, its president, telegrams of a rude and uncompromising nature'. (Kipling to Anna Smith Balestier 5 July 1901, in Thomas Pinney (ed.), *The Letters of Rudyard Kipling Volume 3: 1900 - 1910* (Basingstoke: Macmillan: 1996) p62).

⁶²Executive 25 February 1904.

⁶³Executive 11 June 1903.

⁶⁴*Times* 19 November 1954, 26 November 1954.

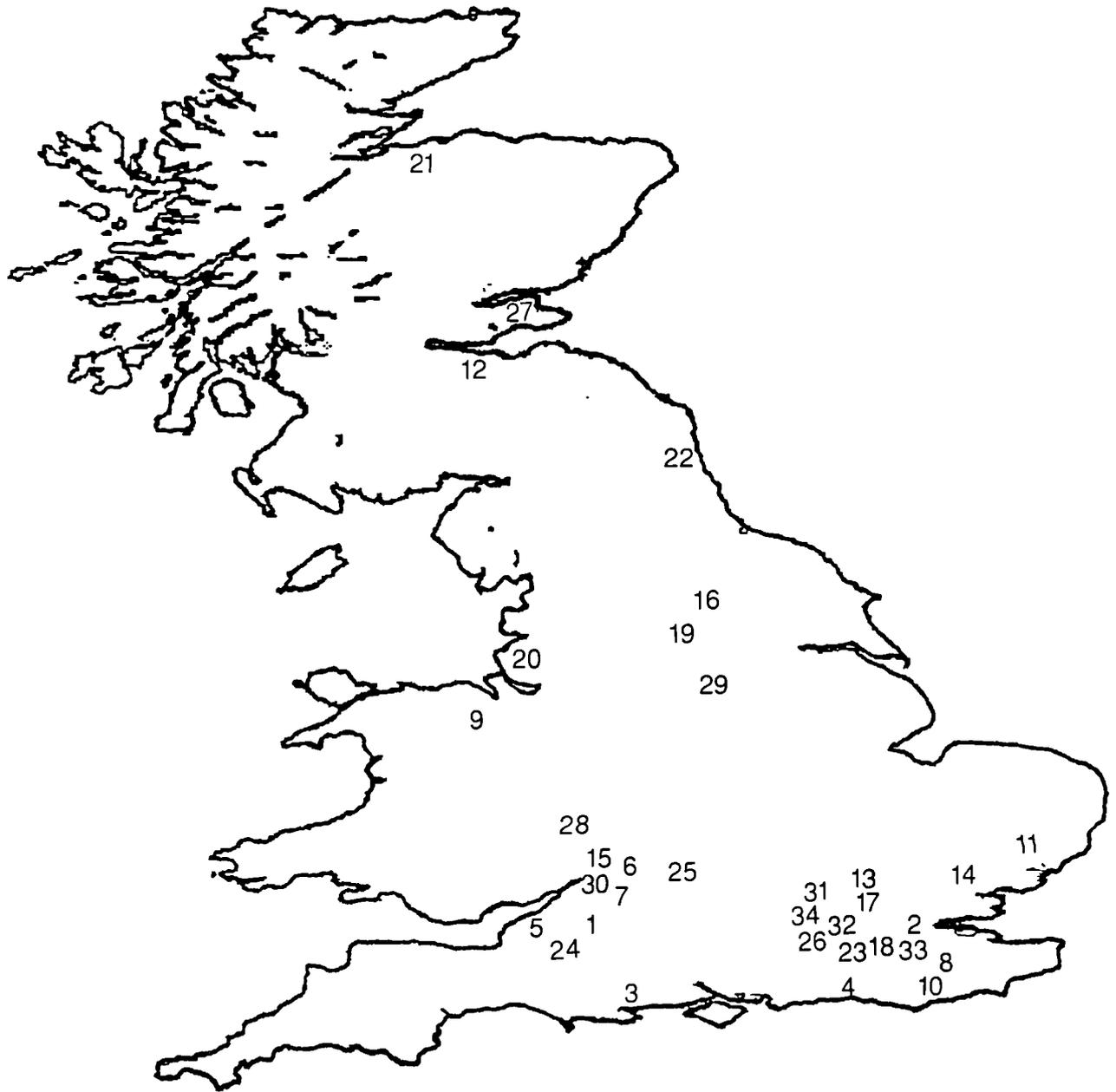
members of the League's inner circle - Lady Betty Balfour in Woking, Lady Evelyn Raleigh in Essex, Lady Carrington in Stroud, and Lady de Blaquiére in Bath.

Table 1.
Victoria League Branches to 1914

Branch	Dates Active	Membership 1914 ¹	Map Key
Bath	1904 -	171	1
Blackheath	1907 -	255	2
Bournemouth	1907 -	124	3
Brighton	1905 - 1908	-	4
Bristol	1906 - 1913	-	5
Cheltenham	1902 -	c.103	6
Cirencester	1906 -	64	7
Crowborough	1907 -	202	8
Denbighshire	1909 -	41	9
Eastbourne	1908 -	123	10
E. Suffolk & Ipswich	1907 -	129	11
Edinburgh	1907 -	c.105	12
Elstree	1904 -	124	13
Essex	1903 -	378	14
Gloucester	1903 -	81	15
Harrogate	1908-1913	-	16
Harrow	1905 -	891	17
Leatherhead	1908 -	55	18
Leeds	1906 -	c.40	19
Liverpool	1913 -	183	20
Nairn	1902 -	49	21
Newcastle	1912 -	183	22
Newlands Comer	1903 -	197	23
North Somerset	1905 -	50	24
Oxford	1910 -	58	25
Pirbright	1907-10	-	26
St Andrews	1907 -	-	27
Severn & Wye Valley	1907 -	125	28
Sheffield	1913 -	124	29
Stroud	1908-10	-	30
Watford	1908-10	-	31
Weybridge	1910 -	54	32
Wimbledon	1904 -07	-	33
Woking	1904 -	185	34

¹ Imprecise membership figures are for 1912-13.

Map 1.
Victoria League Branches



As the map shows, Victoria League branches tended to be concentrated in the wealthier areas of England, with a cluster around London and another around the River Severn. The League also had a presence in North Wales, the small Denbighshire branch, and, more effectively, in Scotland through branches in Edinburgh (founded 1906 after an earlier attempt in 1902)⁶⁵ and St Andrews (founded 1907) as well as Nairn. Most energetic was the Edinburgh branch, begun in connection with a University of Edinburgh scheme for the welfare of colonial students.⁶⁶ Lady Wallace remembered how she with Anna, Countess of Moray, Lady Helen Munro-Ferguson, Lady Gordon Gilmour, 'our hostess Lady Grainger Stewart' and her daughter Alice,

'gathered to hear Miss Meriel Talbot ... tell about the founding of the Victoria League and of the important work which it was already doing ... [and] how anxious her Committee were to have a Branch started in Edinburgh as they were finding more and more that practically all visitors arriving from distant parts of the British Commonwealth wanted to go to Scotland. With this irresistible incentive, Miss Talbot's listeners at once became the nucleus of an Edinburgh branch eager to spread the news and interest our friends'.⁶⁷

The Principal of Edinburgh University became the first Chairman, and the founding group became the officers and executive of the branch. Later additions included Alice Balfour and Elizabeth Haldane, sister of Richard Haldane and scholar, public worker and feminist.⁶⁸ Though a 1908 presentation of Union Jacks to Edinburgh schools featured a small display of Scottish nationalism by Lord Rosebery ('You know that Scotland became united to England first by our King James VI going and taking possession of England (laughter and applause) which I am happy to think the Scottish have kept ever since (laughter)'),⁶⁹ in general the League in Scotland seems to have been content to be part of *British* imperialism. The Edinburgh branch gradually declined until in 1912 the Executive considered it 'unsatisfactory',⁷⁰ but it was revived by a timely visit by Meriel Talbot which 'led to a somewhat increased membership'.⁷¹ All branches needed fairly constant visits by speakers from outside, and if possible from the centre, to keep up enthusiasm: in 1908, for instance, the St Andrews secretary expressed appreciation of a visit by the League lecturer, Miss Percy Taylor, 'and the good effect it had had in restoring life to the branch'.⁷² Their comparative isolation from London therefore made life difficult for branches much outside the Home Counties.

⁶⁵Executive 25 October 1902, 28 November 1902.

⁶⁶Executive 5 October 1906.

⁶⁷Lady Wallace, *The Story of the Victoria League in Scotland 1907 - 1957* (?Victoria League: 1957).

⁶⁸*DNB*.

⁶⁹*Scotsman* 22 February 1908.

⁷⁰Executive 11 January 1912.

⁷¹Executive 22 February 1912 and see *Scotsman* 13 February 1912. The Edinburgh branch published its own annual report from 1912.

⁷²Executive 19 November 1908.

The League branches organised imperial lectures, picture talks, reading circles and entertainments, encouraged the affiliation of local schools, ran small competitions for children, collected literature for shipment to frontier settlers, and welcomed colonial visitors to their vicinity. One of the first duties of any branch was the celebration of Empire Day (May 24th, Queen Victoria's birthday), a movement started in 1903 by the Tory imperialist Lord Meath to make the 'rising generations ... fully conscious of their Empire heritage, privileges and responsibilities'.⁷³ Although anxious to keep its distance from Meath,⁷⁴ the central branch also organised Empire Day celebrations - giving large London concerts, for example,⁷⁵ and in 1906 attempting to present Union Jacks to Chelsea schools, a scheme initially foiled by the Progressive-dominated London County Council but carried forward in 1907.⁷⁶ But Empire Day was the best opportunity for the country branches to carry the League message to their local communities, particularly if the local education authority could be persuaded to grant the schools a half-day holiday. The first act of the new Stroud branch in 1908, for example, was to organise extensive Empire Day celebrations with

'an open-air Flag Parade ... about 3,000 elementary school children marched past and saluted the flag ... an audience of over 4,000 ... the Trades Association was approached and agreed to decorate the town ... four bands, including the 5th Gloucester Regiment band ... Fire Brigades and Ambulance Brigade joined in the procession'.⁷⁷

Branches sometimes worked with other patriotic societies for the occasion: in 1909, for example, the Harrow branch co-operated with the National Service League and the Navy League and involved the Boy Scouts and the Lads' Brigade as well.⁷⁸ Speeches were made, sports held, and buns and oranges distributed.

Each branch had its own peculiarity according to the enthusiasms of the local committee. Woking was much influenced by the English folk revival, believing that Morris dancing and folk songs would 'help to foster the true British spirit and character upon which our Empire has been built up'.⁷⁹ The League's most active branch was the Newlands Corner branch near Guildford, run with flair and enthusiasm by Amy Strachey. The wife of the editor of the *Spectator*, Amy Strachey was also an L.C.C. representative on the Governing Board of Chelsea Polytechnic (the first, unwelcome, woman on the board); contributed not only to the Strachey journals but to the *Manchester Guardian*;

⁷³Quoted in J.O. Springhall, 'Lord Meath, Youth and Empire', *Journal of Contemporary History*, v (4) 1970 pp97-111, p105.

⁷⁴Executive 8 November, 29 November 1906.

⁷⁵In 1903 (in association with the League of the Empire) and 1907-9 (in association with a Dr Harriss).

⁷⁶Executive 5 April, 11 May, 31 May 1906, 11 April 1907; Annual Report 1907-8, p10.

⁷⁷Annual Report 1908-9, p65.

⁷⁸Annual Report 1909-10, p45.

⁷⁹Annual Report 1908-9, p72.

and in later life became a J.P. and a 'pioneer in child guidance matters'.⁸⁰ At its peak, in 1911, the Newlands Corner branch had 280 members, including 40 junior associates. Its most distinctive feature, clearly influenced by St Loe Strachey's forebodings of war with Germany, was the organisation of rifle clubs. Shortly after the branch's foundation he offered a cup 'to be shot for ... by members of the Victoria League only'.⁸¹ At first it was confined to adults but in 1905, at the suggestion of Lord Roberts, the branch undertook to organise boy's rifle shooting. The next year's competition, 'for the boys in the neighbouring schools' (both secondary and elementary), featured prizes given by Roberts, Kipling and Sir Percy Fitzpatrick (who presented a rifle to the winning school).⁸² The local boys apparently took to it with enthusiasm and annual competitions continued to be held until 1914. The girls, meanwhile, 'enjoy[ed] instruction in elementary nursing and first aid'.⁸³ Amy Strachey was also the author of *A Masque of Empire* (1908), an instructive drama in indifferent blank verse with music, patriotic songs, and recitations, which was performed not only in Surrey but in London (for the Victoria League annual meetings) and later by Victoria Leagues both in Britain and overseas.⁸⁴ Given this enthusiasm to imbue the young with imperialism, and to equip them with invasion-thwarting skills, it is not surprising that the recruitment of children as members of the Victoria League originated with the Newlands Corner branch.

Schools had been able to affiliate to the League since 1905. In 1907 - the same year that Baden-Powell was forming the Scouts for much the same purposes - Newlands Corner applied successfully to the executive for 'permission to allow children in the Branch schools [aged 14-18] to join the Branch as Junior Associates'.⁸⁵ The lower age limit was subsequently fixed at 10 years 'in order to secure as members of the League school children interested in the lectures and competitions' and in 1912, after some debate, it was decided to enrol 7-10 year olds as 'junior helpers'.⁸⁶ In some branches the Junior side became extremely successful. The branch at Harrow was run by G.H. Hallam, a Classics master at Harrow School who retired in 1906 and became the 'moving spirit' of the junior work.⁸⁷ Harrow had enrolled 500 children by the spring of 1908, and at its peak had more than 800 junior associates.⁸⁸ Three other branches - Blackheath, Essex and Woking - had more than 100 juniors by 1914 and most branches had at least a

⁸⁰Amy Strachey, *St Loe Strachey: His Life and His Paper* (London: Victor Gollancz: 1930) p63, p184, p27; *Times* 23 October 1957.

⁸¹*Annual Report* 1903-4, p25.

⁸²*Annual Report* 1905-6, p39; 1906-7, p29.

⁸³*Annual Report* 1913-14, p43.

⁸⁴*Annual Report* 1908-9, p12.

⁸⁵Executive 17 January 1907.

⁸⁶Executive 30 May 1907; Council 17 May 1912.

⁸⁷J.H. Stogdon (ed.), *The Harrow School Register 1845-1925* (London: Longmans, Green & Co.: 1925) vol. II p425; [Meriel Talbot], 'A Retrospective 1901-1910', *Monthly Notes* January 1912.

⁸⁸*Annual Report* 1907-8, p11; 1911-12, p35.

few. The junior associates attended lectures and picture talks, took part in pen-pal schemes, sent newspapers to the colonies, and attended special entertainments. The Harrow branch also ran rifle shooting for boys.⁸⁹ From 1910 a London junior branch - founded to extend the League's work 'among children of the richer classes' - organised two large entertainments a year.⁹⁰

The question of how many members the League had is a difficult one. It is complicated by the various degrees of membership, calculated on a money basis - at least five guineas for vice-presidents, one guinea for members of Council, five shillings for ordinary members, one shilling for associate members and threepence or sixpence for junior associates, depending on age⁹¹ - and by the alternative of joining either a particular branch of the League or the League central. Branches reported their membership each year in the League annual reports, and members of Council were also listed there, but there are few details of other members attached to the central. In times of financial stress the numbers of members joining, and resigning from, the central were reported to the executive with an eye to the money they represented. From June to December 1912, for example, 57 new members had joined (total gain £22-10-0) but 39 had died or resigned (total loss £24-14-6), giving 'for the first time a deficit'.⁹² This, with the occasional statement that a member of Council had 'resigned by death'⁹³ is at least enough to confirm that the Victoria League in its accounts of membership figures was not following the example of the Primrose League, few of whose members, according to its records, ever resigned or died.⁹⁴ On several occasions the League gave a grand total for membership, which it said numbered 148 by 1 May 1901;⁹⁵ 2,350 by 1907;⁹⁶ 'close on 4,000' by 1908;⁹⁷ and 6,500 by 1915.⁹⁸ In 1908 total branch membership numbered about 1,975 while the Council had around 500 members: if the grand total of 'close on 4,000' is correct there must have been some 1,500 members at the central. The addition of junior associates ensured a marked growth in membership after 1908. At its pre-war peak (1909-10) the League had about 4,700 branch members, of which about 1,400 were juniors.⁹⁹

⁸⁹Annual Report 1908-9, p53.

⁹⁰Executive 12 February 1909; 20 January 1910; 17 March 1910.

⁹¹This kind of division was common in Victorian/Edwardian societies. In the Primrose League, for example, higher-paying members were known as 'Knights' or 'Dames', and lower-paying members as 'Associates' [Pugh, *Tories and the People* p22].

⁹²Executive 19 December 1912.

⁹³e.g. Lady Knightley, Executive 16 October 1913.

⁹⁴Pugh, *Tories and the People*, p27.

⁹⁵Annual Report 1901-3, p9.

⁹⁶Annual Report 1906-7, p9.

⁹⁷Annual Report 1907-8, p12.

⁹⁸Sargant, 'Victoria League' p593.

⁹⁹There were in addition special junior branches, but it is not clear whether these were all absorbed into local branches (and counted in their membership figures), though some e.g. Harrow and Bournemouth certainly were.

The Victoria League from its origins had been an upper-middle-class institution with a strong aristocratic component. The London executive was formidably well-connected socially and politically, and provincial branches tended to be formed around women of much the same social standing. The Newlands Corner branch, for example, in 1905 had the Countess of Onslow as President, Amy Strachey as Chairman and a Lady Harmslow and an Honourable Mrs Vaughan-Johnson on the committee.¹⁰⁰ However, the more energetic Victoria Leaguers were aware that the League's 'Society' connections, though a source of strength in many ways, were also a sign of weakness, and the League made spasmodic efforts to establish a broader base. The Liberal landslide, with its apparently anti-imperialist significance, brought home to many the significance of the working-class vote. In Edith Lyttelton's words, 'the great thing for people who care about the Empire of whichever party is to instil that idea into the working man. They are going to determine all elections in the future ... Never mind which party they put into power - we must see that they care for the Empire. The V[ictoria] L[eague] must work harder than ever'.¹⁰¹ As Meriel Talbot told Violet Markham in 1906, 'We must aim, I feel, at diluting the aristocratic element largely and at getting in touch with working-class organisations whenever possible'.¹⁰²

The League did already have some working-class links by 1906, mainly through its lecture programme.¹⁰³ It made several unsuccessful attempts to widen its constituency in other ways, making overtures to the Manchester Co-operative Union in 1907,¹⁰⁴ and in 1908 planning a meeting on 'Labour and the Empire' which was to feature George Parkin, Sidney Webb and Labour M.P.s but folded for lack of additional speakers.¹⁰⁵ The 'interesting if melancholy'¹⁰⁶ experiences of Meriel Talbot and Violet Markham addressing the Oxford summer meeting of the Workers' Educational Association in 1911 gave a new spur to the League. 'Audience gave the impression of suspicion, of hostility to the subject and of considerable indifference to the conditions prevailing in the Colonies. Miss Markham felt strongly that the meeting revealed the need for getting the educational work of the League into the industrial centres'.¹⁰⁷ She and Talbot therefore embarked on what Markham described as

'a forlorn hope of trying to persuade the working man in the North of England that the Empire is a system of governments of great political and

¹⁰⁰Annual Report 1904-5, p25.

¹⁰¹Edith Lyttelton to Violet Markham 22 January 1906 [Markham 25/51].

¹⁰²Meriel Talbot to Violet Markham 25 January 1906 [Markham 26/28].

¹⁰³See Chapter 4.

¹⁰⁴Executive 7 September 1907.

¹⁰⁵Executive 16 January, 20 February; 19 March, 9 April 1908.

¹⁰⁶Constance Leconfield to Violet Markham 31 August 1911 [Markham 25/90/14].

¹⁰⁷Executive 21 September 1911.

economic importance and that it doesn't mean jingoism flag waving and aggression. I won't forget my round at Balliol with the W.E.A. students in a hurry! ... we shall have some strange and doubtless discouraging experiences'.¹⁰⁸

In this defeatist spirit Markham and Talbot approached the industrial North of England much as Talbot approached the colonies in her League tours of 1909-11,¹⁰⁹ aiming in each town not for the 'working man' but for the local Mayor and other establishment figures. New and active branches were founded at Newcastle (with district sub-branches at Sunderland and Durham), at Sheffield, and at Liverpool, and by 1914 the League was also aiming to expand into Manchester and Birmingham.¹¹⁰

How far was this success due to the 'industrial classes'? An unusually high proportion of associate members (i.e. those paying the lowest subscription) does suggest a slightly different class basis in the Northern branches. But Markham and Talbot's lack of contact with working-class organisations; the class profiles of the Northern branch committees (the Newcastle committee, for example, included Countess Grey as President and fourteen vice-presidents including two baronets); and the choice of venue for the branch inaugural meetings (the University in Liverpool, Armstrong College in Newcastle) make the League's ability to gain working-class support dubious at best. The League displayed the same lack of real commitment in its attempts to adapt its hierarchical constitution to accommodate working-class members.¹¹¹ Its proposal to open its annual meeting to a working-class audience by holding it in the evening and in a public room failed for lack of speakers and was postponed indefinitely.¹¹² The Victoria League's efforts to attract a working-class membership, in short, veered between the half-hearted, the misdirected and the ineffectual. Its attempt to convert to imperialism the Industrial Syndicalist Education League - the propaganda branch of the anarchist-trade union movement - verged on farce. For Empire Day 1914 the London branch of the I.S.E.L. asked the Victoria League for 'an Imperialist to give us a lecture on the Empire'.¹¹³ H.J. Mackinder volunteered for what proved to be an unusually exciting meeting.

'He reported an audience of between 60 and 70, mainly young men - He had met with a somewhat cynical reception and a small bomb from a strongly prejudiced audience - He considered that a certain amount of

¹⁰⁸Violet Markham to Hilda Cashmore 1 October 1911 [Markham 25/12].

¹⁰⁹See Chapter 8.

¹¹⁰Executive 19 March 1914.

¹¹¹Council 17 May 1912. The right to elect members of the executive - never in practice used except to rubber-stamp the executive's own choices - was extended from the Council to all League members, but the money basis of the Council and its 'legislative power' were retained.

¹¹²Executive 20 November 1913, 19 March 1914.

¹¹³Annual Report 1914-15, p10.

good had been done especially at the end of the address when a great many questions were put and answered'.¹¹⁴

It was a dramatic finale to a strikingly unsuccessful initiative.

Closely connected with the question of membership was the question of finance. The Victoria League was always run on a shoestring. In June 1901 its balance was 'just over £100' and it was to remain at this level for some time.¹¹⁵ The League's basic income came from subscriptions (branches kept the subscriptions of their own members and paid a 'tribute' to the central) but subscriptions rarely matched expenditure and alternative sources of income had to be found. The simplest was donations, or inflated subscriptions, from its own members. In 1905, for example, it was reported that 'Lady Dawkins would in future subscribe £20 per annum instead of £50. Miss Markham said she would raise her subscription from £3-3-0 to £5 and Mrs Alfred Lyttelton agreed to double hers'.¹¹⁶ Violet Markham and Lady Jersey proved generous patrons of the League, donating at least £210 and £115 respectively between 1906 and 1914, mostly for special causes such as Meriel Talbot's tours around the Empire.¹¹⁷ Even so, the League had to raise funds from outside sources. Those with South African links proved most useful. The Rhodes Trust gave the League a donation sufficient to appoint an organising secretary in 1902,¹¹⁸ and in 1903, though it refused to fund an ambitious League education scheme, donated £200 for general expenses.¹¹⁹ In 1907 and again in 1911 the Rhodes Trust awarded the League a five-year grant of £500 p.a., giving it a basis of financial stability, though its ever-increasing commitments never allowed it to relax its search for funds. In 1911 an appeal to the City Companies produced almost £400¹²⁰ and in 1914 a special committee (Lady Crewe, E.T. Cook, John Buchan and Meriel Talbot) appointed to raise 'a capital fund to be invested for the for the furtherance of the League's work' collected £510.¹²¹ Nevertheless the League relied very largely on Rhodes Trust money: it was no doubt fortunate that so many of the Trustees - Milner, Jameson, and Albert Grey, for example - were personal friends of the League executive.

¹¹⁴Executive 27 May 1914. No doubt Mackinder managed to cope - Beatrice Webb thought him 'a coarse-grained individual (Bertrand [Russell] says brutal)' [N. & J. Mackenzie (eds.), *The Diary of Beatrice Webb* (London: Virago: 1983) vol. II p252]. The V.L. 1914-15 annual report claimed that 'a successful meeting, followed by much keen discussion' had been held (p10).

¹¹⁵Executive 21 June 1901.

¹¹⁶Executive 2 March 1905.

¹¹⁷Annual Report 1906-7, p50; 1907-8, p87; 1908-9, p110; 1909-10, p88; 1910-11, p92; 1911 12, p83.

¹¹⁸Annual Report 1903-4, p6.

¹¹⁹Executive 28 May 1903.

¹²⁰Executive 16 February 1911; 7 July 1911.

¹²¹Executive 20 November 1913, 19 February 1914; Annual Report 1913-14, p5-6.

The activities of the League, its subcommittees and all its branches were detailed in annual reports, which began in 1903 and by 1908 also included reports from the League's sister societies overseas and ran to more than seventy pages. The establishment paper, the *Times*, was always willing to publicise the League's work and the League also had privileged access to the *National Review* (edited by Violet Cecil's brother Leo Maxse) and to the *Spectator*. In 1905 the Victoria League received an offer from the journal of the British Women's Emigration Association, the *Imperial Colonist*, that the Victoria League 'should make use of the magazine as their organ'.¹²² At Violet Markham's suggestion, however, it was rejected in favour of an independent quarterly leaflet, 'to be made as generally interesting as possible'. Lilian Chamberlain then proposed that the leaflet 'should include reports to be received direct from the Colonies dealing with Imperial questions in a non-[party]-political manner'.¹²³ The annual Council meeting discussed the scheme of 'outlining a summary of current Colonial news, by means of carefully selected Correspondents possessing first-hand knowledge of particular countries, who would send their contributions to a representative appointed by the League for editorship'.¹²⁴ The idea presaged that of the *Round Table* founded in 1910 by two members of Milner's 'Kindergarten', Lionel Curtis and Philip Kerr, as 'a well-informed and well-balanced periodical review of imperial politics' with information supplied by supporters in the dominions.¹²⁵ But the 'difficulty of dealing with party political questions' and the thought that it 'might easily prove a failure' proved too much for the League Council: the members present divided evenly for and against the idea and it was eventually allowed to languish.¹²⁶

The quarterly leaflet, minus the Colonial news summary, began but had been suspended by April 1906, owing to high production costs and low demand. Despite suggestions from Violet Markham 'in regard to possible future development of the leaflet - special articles, inter-correspondence between the Colonies, regular reports from the Colonies' it was not revived.¹²⁷ In early 1908 the journal *Britannia* offered 'a page or two in each month's issue of the paper for the notices, reports and meeting etc. of the League' with no financial liabilities attached. This was accepted, 'the Secretary to send the monthly report after obtaining news from the Branches and any other likely source'.¹²⁸ Despite a complaint from Lady Carrington of *Britannia*'s Unionist slant, the

¹²²Executive 20 January 1905.

¹²³Executive 6 April 1905.

¹²⁴Council 29 June 1905.

¹²⁵Kerr, quoted in Walter Nimocks, *Milner's Young Men: the 'kindergarten' in Edwardian Imperial affairs* (London: Hodder & Stoughton: 1970 (1st 1968)) p180.

¹²⁶Council 29 June 1905.

¹²⁷Executive 5 April 1906.

¹²⁸Executive 16 January 1908. *Britannia* - evidently a fly-by-night periodical - does not appear in the British Library catalogue.

arrangement continued for two years. In 1909 the League took over four pages of the journal, the first page listing names of officers, 'the second, the chronicle of Victoria League doings for the month, the third, a portrait of a Victoria League member, with some account of his or her life work; and the fourth, the junior page'.¹²⁹ The League branches ordered 1,300 copies of the first issue.¹³⁰ Despite this, by 1910 *Britannia*, which had 'never been on a paying basis', was on the rocks, having failed to produce either a January or a February issue, and the League decided to publish a monthly leaflet independently.¹³¹

Through 1910 and 1911 the *Monthly Notes* remained small-scale and no copies seem to have survived, though the League ensured their wide circulation by distributing them through the Orient and P & O steamer lines and the Canadian Pacific Railway.¹³² From 1912 an enlarged, six-page, version was brought out. The new *Monthly Notes* (price 1/2d.) combined news of League events and League branches with notes from sister societies in the dominions. There were articles of general imperial interest (the Royal Visit to India and Scott's expedition); reports of lectures such as Dr Parkin's address on Canada to the Geographical Society ('these snaps of Arctic frost ruled out a black population altogether and favoured the hardy men of Northern Europe ... Canada would become the home of men with strengthened backbones');¹³³ and essays on life on the colonial frontiers. The 'Boys' and Girls' pages' were edited by G.H. Hallam of the Harrow branch and included extracts from his *Empire Calendar*, a miscellany of births and deaths of famous Britons and Colonials, imperial events and cultural milestones. 'Extra Notes on the Calendar' gave the stories of imperial heroes and heroines. Colonial adventure stories, 'Cricket in the Empire', 'Echoes from the Schoolroom' (collections of schoolboy 'howlers') and competitions - for poems on Captain Oates or essays describing a conversation between Queen Elizabeth and Queen Victoria in the Elysian fields - were also regular features.

The annual reports and the *Monthly Notes*, together with the executive and council minutes and the private papers of its most prominent members, provide a mass of information on the League and its manifold activities. Hardly had the League been established when it began work in many different directions, all intended to further the aim of a 'more intimate understanding between ourselves and our fellow subjects in our great Colonies and Dependencies'. Most urgent of these activities was a series of philanthropic funds directed towards the victims of the war in South Africa.

¹²⁹Executive 30 September 1909.

¹³⁰Executive 18 November 1909.

¹³¹Executive 17 February 1910, 19 May 1910.

¹³²Executive 17 November 1910; 19 January 1911.

¹³³*Monthly Notes* April 1912.

Chapter 3.

Philanthropy & Politics: Early Work in South Africa

At its first annual meeting in 1902, Asquith told the audience that the Victoria League 'had been the medium in South Africa and during the anxieties and stresses of the war of affording boons and benefits which probably could not have been provided ... in any other way - not, indeed to the combatants, but to the sufferers on both sides'.¹ Together with the marking of war graves, the relief of British refugees and the provision of comforts to concentration camps made up the first practical work undertaken by the League.

(i) Concentration Camps

The concentration camps controversy was the most explosive issue of the Boer War. In March 1900, under pressure from the Boers' guerrilla tactics, Roberts began burning farms to cut off Boers on commando from food and supplies, a policy that became systematic under Kitchener. The displaced Boer women and children were transported to camps originally set up to house surrendered burghers, where they were kept virtually as prisoners-of-war. Africans in the way of the British military sweep were rounded up and sent to separate camps.² Kitchener defended the camps as a military necessity: 'the women left in farms give complete intelligence to the boers of all our movements and feed the commandos in their neighbourhood'.³ He also hoped that the camps would 'work on the feelings of the men to get back to the farms'.⁴ Brodrick preferred to portray the camps as 'voluntary ... formed for protection',⁵ an explanation that seemed less convincing once the escalating mortality rates in the camps (which reached a peak of 3,205 or 344 per 1,000 per annum for the month of October 1901) became public. In all, 27,927 Boers (some 22,000 of them children) died in the concentration camps, many from epidemics of measles, pneumonia and dysentery.⁶

Conditions in the camps were exposed to the British public by Emily Hobhouse in June 1901. Hobhouse had visited the camps between January and April 1901 to distribute food and clothing from the anti-war South African Women and

¹*Times* 19 June 1902.

²Paula M. Krebs, 'The Last of the Gentlemen's Wars: Women in the Boer War Concentration Camps Controversy', *History Workshop* 33 1992 pp38-56, p39-41.

³Quoted Krebs, 'Last of the Gentlemen's Wars' p41.

⁴Quoted S.B. Spies, 'Women and the War' in Peter Warwick & S.B. Spies (eds.), *The South African War: the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902* (London: Longman: 1980) p168.

⁵Quoted Krebs, 'Last of the Gentlemen's Wars' p41.

⁶Spies, 'Women and the War' p170-1. Mortality rates in the African camps, ignored by both sides, were even higher.

Children's Distress Fund. Her *Report of a visit to the Camps of Women and Children in the Cape and Orange River Colonies* emphasised that the inmates of the camps were not there voluntarily but by military force; revealed the unhealthy conditions in the camps and the lack of adequate or suitable food, clothing, shelter and fuel; detailed the high mortality rates; and concluded that the whole system should be abolished. The report caused an uproar. On June 14 the Liberal leader Campbell-Bannerman, addressing the National Reform Union, condemned the camps as 'methods of barbarism' and split his own party.⁷ The government appointed a 'committee of ladies' to visit South Africa and report on the camps. Led by Millicent Garrett Fawcett, as staunch an imperialist as she was a feminist, the Commission included Lady Knox, wife of General Sir William Knox, then with the forces in South Africa; a nurse, Miss Katherine Brereton; a factory inspector, Lucy Deane Streatfield; Dr. Jane Waterston from Cape Town; and Dr. Ellen Scarlet.⁸ The commissioners inspected camps from August 1901 until December. Their report made many detailed criticisms of individual camps (often the same as those made by Hobhouse) and led to significant improvements by the end of the war. But the Commission also accused the Boer women, by their ignorance and superstition, of having contributed to the deaths of their children, and in general endorsed the camps system.⁹

The Victoria League was not untouched by the concentration camps debate. In late June 1901 Edith Lyttelton 'brought forward a suggestion that the V. League should appeal for funds to provide extra comforts for the women and children in such camps'.¹⁰ Lyttelton was the least political and the most emotional of the League executive. She 'loathe[d] the burning' of farms and it is not surprising to find her initiating a fund for its victims.¹¹ More unexpected is the alacrity with which the suggestion was taken up. The committee immediately 'agreed to consider the suggestion and authorised Hon. Secretary to ask for the approval of Lord Milner and Mr. Brodrick subject to the obtaining of which an appeal should be publicised through the press'. Official approval having been obtained, a subcommittee was organised by the beginning of July.¹²

This was not an uncontroversial decision: it was reported in October 1901 that 'ten members of Council had withdrawn on account of Committee's action in

⁷John Wilson, *CB: A Life of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman* (London: Constable: 1973) p349.

⁸M.G. Fawcett, *What I Remember* (London: Fisher & Unwin: 1924) p153.

⁹*Report on the Concentration Camps in South Africa by the Committee of Ladies appointed by the Secretary of State for War* [Cd. 893] 1902. See Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* (London: Abacus 1992 (1st 1979)) Chapter 39 for summary.

¹⁰Executive 21 June 1901.

¹¹Edith Lyttelton to Kathleen Lyttelton 16 September 1900 [Chan. II 3/14].

¹²Executive 21 June 1901; 3 July 1901.

regard to concentration camps, S. Africa'.¹³ The orthodox imperialist reaction to the concentration camp controversy is well illustrated by Violet Markham, who told David Gill in July 1901,

'The Freres [Georgina Frere of the Victoria League and her siblings] ... are very anxious I should produce an anti-Hobhouse manifesto and when the evidence is collected I am to serve it up in article form ... we all feel strongly that more attention should be drawn to all the sufferings of our people ... I can't tell you how angry we have all felt at Miss Hobhouse's performances. My dear friend, why are women so tiresome and irresponsible when they take up fads?'¹⁴

Markham's article defended the camps as a humanitarian necessity and characterised Hobhouse as sentimental, prejudiced and easily misled, throwing unwarranted blame on conscientious British officials from her ignorance of peacetime Africa. The ignorance of the Boer women had 'largely contributed' to the high child mortality. Sympathy for Boer women and children while the guerrilla war continued amounted, Markham suggested, to disloyalty. Instead the British public should confine its sympathies to the British refugees, whom she described as being of a 'better' class and infinitely more sensitive than the Boers.¹⁵

The League accommodated this feeling by establishing a fund for British refugees at the same meeting that approved the Dutch Women and Children Fund. It also took pains to distance itself from Hobhouse and to stress its support for the government and the war effort. The appeal emphasised its full recognition that, as the Government was engaged in supporting many loyal South Africans as well as 'protecting and feeding some 60,000 of its enemy's women and children', it could not 'do more than provide the necessaries of life' for the latter.

'Many people who are in entire sympathy with the policy of the war, and are assured of the humanity with which, under most difficult conditions, its operations have been conducted, yet think that private benevolence has a legitimate opening to further soften the rigours to women and children of camp life. They have hesitated hitherto to subscribe to a fund for this purpose administered by a committee some of whose members made no secret of their dislike and disapproval of the aims and methods of the majority of their fellow-country men with regard to the South African question'.

The Victoria League, in providing 'additional comforts for these non-combatants who have now become our fellow-subjects', would create an outlet for patriotic humanitarianism.¹⁶ The League appeal was supported by a letter from Brodrick to Edith Lyttelton, assuring her that

¹³Executive 24 October 1901.

¹⁴Violet Markham to David Gill 26 July 1901 [Gill papers RGS].

¹⁵Violet Markham, 'British and Boer Refugees in South Africa', *Empire Review* vol. II no. 10 November 1901 pp510-522.

¹⁶*Times* 26 June 1901

‘the Government view with pleasure the suggestion that funds should be raised to provide comforts in the concentration camps beyond the actual necessities which the Government can properly supply’.¹⁷

It was, of course, these very necessities which Hobhouse denied were being provided.

To some extent the League appeal became a smokescreen for the camps issue.

A *Times* leader of 26 June pointed to the Victoria League letter as

‘sufficiently prov[ing] that there is no lack of desire on the part of those who support the policy of the Government to do whatever can be done to ameliorate the necessary hardships of war. English benevolence does not stop at seeing these Boer refugees made as comfortable as they are accustomed to be at home and as free from disease as their own habits and prejudices will permit. The Victoria League aims at making their condition better than they have been used to, and Mr Brodrick assures it that every assistance will be rendered by the Government to efforts which lie outside the scope of direct Government action’.¹⁸

The League, implicitly defending the farm-burning and the need for the camps while offering humanitarian assistance to its victims, eased the consciences of the Government’s supporters and convinced them of their own benevolence.

Nevertheless, the League camps committee boasted a most unusual prevalence of Liberals (from the imperial wing of the party) including Lady Helen Munro Ferguson, Margot Asquith, Haldane and Charles Trevelyan. The more resolute imperialists, such as Violet Cecil and Georgina Frere, restricted their efforts to British refugees. Gwendolen Cecil and Mary, Countess of Galloway (the inevitable Cecil relations) did join the committee, together with Sir Bartle Frere (the second baronet) and Fleming Sandwith, who had been Senior Physician of the Imperial Yeomanry Hospital at Pretoria.¹⁹ So did Katherine Lyttelton, wife of General Neville Lyttelton but inclined to be sympathetic to the Boers. Lucy Deane Streatfield, the most open-minded of the Ladies’ Commission, met her in South Africa in November 1901 and found it

‘so jolly ... finding someone who genuinely sympathised with me about the camps and who is not violently prejudiced ... it came as a shock of pleased surprise to me to meet someone who was open and fair and who doesn’t instinctively think one a fool for believing perhaps the Camps are not all perfect and perhaps the people are not all brutes! I could have wept on her neck!’.²⁰

¹⁷*Times* 26 June 1901. Brodrick added that he would ‘equally welcome any similar provision for those loyal subjects of the Crown in South Africa who are suffering privation’.

¹⁸*Times* 26 June 1901. It went on to urge a League fund for loyalists: ‘in doing good to those that hate us there is no necessity to exclude from our benevolence those that love us’.

¹⁹Details from *Who’s Who*.

²⁰Transcript of Letter from Lucy Streatfield to her Sister 1 November 1901 [Streatfield 2/11/ii]

Mrs. Humphrey Ward also joined the committee. Emily Hobhouse recalled that Ward had attended her first meeting on June 10th. 'Directly after, she began to organise another fund for the camps, but a passing illness delayed her when, finding the ladies of the Victoria League were also stirring in the matter, she wrote me that she was merging with them'.²¹

The response to the press appeal was considerable. By 4 July £462-15-0 had been collected, including £100 from Lady Carlisle, the 'Radical Countess'.²² In addition, 'Messrs Barnes & Co., shippers, consent to act as agents and receive all gifts in kind ... Eastern Telegraph Co. has consented to accept messages free between Committee and its representatives in S. Africa'.²³ Shortly afterwards £400 was received from the Lord Mayor and by the end of October 1901 £1925-2-8 had been subscribed.²⁴ Of this 'about £80 had been collected in Cape Town', probably in response to a letter in the *Cape Times* which emphasised that the committee's aims were 'purely philanthropic, absolutely non-political'.²⁵ The speed and substance of this response suggests that the League had been right in anticipating a rush from a concerned but patriotic public, uneasy at Hobhouse's revelations but needing the reassurance of the League's immaculately establishment committee to contribute.

The foundation of the League's Dutch Women and Children Fund just antedated the establishment of the Ladies' Commission to investigate the condition of the concentration camps. Fawcett remembered,

'one day in mid-July 1901, Mrs Alfred Lyttelton came to see me and asked me if I should be willing to go to South Africa, starting almost immediately and accompanied by other ladies with expert knowledge of infant welfare, to make recommendations to the Government with the view of improving the conditions, especially of child-life in the camps ... I felt sure she came, in a sense, as a messenger from [Alfred Lyttelton] and the Government'.²⁶

The League decided almost immediately to work through the Ladies' Commission and in Cape Town through the Good Hope Society, begun in 1899 'chiefly on the initiative of Mrs Hanbury-Williams ... [as] a Society for Aiding the Sick and Wounded in the War'.²⁷ Fawcett's diary for 20 July notes an interview with Brodrick:

²¹Rykie van Reenan (ed.), *Emily Hobhouse: Boer War Letters* (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau: 1984) p123-4.

²²Executive 10 July 1901; 27 June 1901.

²³Executive 10 July 1901.

²⁴Executive 24 July 1901; 24 October 1901.

²⁵Executive 24 October 1901; *Cape Times* 9 August 1901 (clipping in Fawcett Diary [Fawcett 90B/2]).

²⁶Fawcett, *What I Remember* p153.

²⁷Executive 24 July 1901; *Report of the Good Hope Society for Aid to Sick and Wounded in War, South African War 1899-1902* (Cape Town: W.A. Richards & Sons: 1902) p1.

'The Victoria League he understood would put their resources at our disposal for providing extra comforts etc. ... Mrs Alfred Lyttelton ... wrote to say that for the present Mr J. Fairbairn, Parliament House, Cape Town, Hon. Sec. of Good Hope Society, would act for the Victoria League and carry out our recommendations "as far as the resources of their fund will allow". At present they have £1,200. Mrs Lyttelton said probably the Vic. League wd. send out a representative of their own to act in co-operation with us'.²⁸

The League never did send out a representative (although Lady Helen Munro-Ferguson, May Tennant and the Countess of Airlie had each 'offered themselves to go to South Africa if thought advisable')²⁹ but acted with apparent mutual satisfaction with the Ladies' Commission.

This was natural. The Ladies' Commission in general were convinced of the righteousness of the British case and the errors of Emily Hobhouse before they ever set foot in South Africa.³⁰ The Victoria League too, despite its protestations about being non-political, had other motives than the purely philanthropic in its concern for the camps. Edith Lyttelton told Fawcett in late July,

'The Co[mmittee] today decided to leave the question in your hands but many of us feel very strongly that it would be very advisable either to have a label which could be fastened to things given by charity from England or to give away some simple little leaflet in Taal with the things which would explain that they came from all political parties in England. If you agreed that either of these things would be wise for you to do the Co. asked that you should feel authorised to spend some of the fund on having these labels or leaflets printed in Taal ... If you can devise any better way of marking the fact that these things were given *not* by the Govt. as part of the ordinary ration but by the kindness of the very people who wish to go on with the war I think it might do good. Please think of it'.³¹

The intention, in short (though there is no evidence that Fawcett complied with the suggestion) was to minimise the bitterness of the Boers against Britain, to stimulate a belief in British good intentions and even to awaken a spirit of gratitude for charitable relief freely given.

By 15 November 1901 the Commission had visited 24 camps, five of them twice, and had spent perhaps £500 of the League's fund.³² The report of the Ladies' Commission states that at Kimberley, where on the 26th/27th August four separate

²⁸Millicent Garrett Fawcett, Concentration Camps Diary 20 July 1901 [Fawcett 90B/2].

²⁹Executive 27 June 1901.

³⁰Except Lucy Deane Streatfield. Disagreement among the Commissioners is not generally commented on but Streatfield considered writing a minority report, though she finally settled for strengthening the criticisms and recommendations in the general report [Transcript of Letter from Lucy Streatfield to her Sister 23 December 1901, Streatfield 2/11/ii].

³¹Edith Lyttelton to Fawcett 25 July 1901 [Streatfield 2/4].

³²Fawcett to Edith Lyttelton (copy) 15 November 1901 [Streatfield 2/4].

epidemics were raging and hospital accommodation was seriously lacking, the commissioners considered,

'a central kitchen for the preparation of the suitable food for patients ill in their own tents, would be highly desirable at the present emergency. We are prepared to recommend a grant from the Victoria League Fund of £100 for the expense of such a kitchen, but we feel that its usefulness is almost wholly dependent upon the appointment of a matron and nurses'.

Returning on the 6th of November they found that 'a soup kitchen (for starting which we gave a grant from the Victoria League Fund) with four 10-gallon Soyer stoves, has been set going under the direction of ... [a] camp matron. She has a list ... of about 200 children who would be the better for a pint of good soup daily, but only about 100 actually receive it; the parents of the others will not take the trouble to come for it'.³³

At Orange River on the 29th August, where milk was scarce, a case of scurvy was found and some families lacked clothing, the Commission

'applied to the Victoria League for the following grant -

50 yards flannel ['for the little children']
 1 doz. Allen and Hanbury's First Food
 1 case Mellins'
 1 case Ideal milk
 5 doz. of lemons, or lime juice cordial, for scurvy cases'.³⁴

At Bethulie, on 7 September 1901, they 'recommended a grant of £20 from the Victoria League Fund towards the expenses of the soup kitchen' intended 'to supply invalids with beef tea, barley broth etc.'.³⁵ At Vryberg, meanwhile, an 'unauthorised' camp in much confusion, the Commissioners found that Colonel Murray (the officer in charge of the Vryberg district) 'was most anxious to start a school, and had made preparations for engaging teachers etc., but had failed to get the necessary authorisation'. They 'promised to guarantee the school for one month' stating that 'in all probability this guarantee will be taken over by the Victoria League'. The school was started at once, backed by League funds, and 'went on very satisfactorily till it was stopped in consequence of an outbreak of measles'.³⁶

Nevertheless, in November 1901 there was still 'about £1,400 left' in the Fund and the commissioners were 'beginning to think carefully upon the best use which [could] be made of' it. Fawcett told Lyttelton,

³³*Report on the Concentration Camps* p67-68.

³⁴*Report on the Concentration Camps* p70.

³⁵*Report on the Concentration Camps* p60.

³⁶*Report on the Concentration Camps* p161, p165.

'medical comforts of all kinds are very liberally provided by the administration and we feel that the money collected privately need not therefore go in this direction. For any substantial improvement in rations or fuel supply for nearly 100,000 people £1,400 would go no way at all. Recommendations in this direction must be made to the Governments which are responsible'.

This being so, the Commission recommended spending the balance on

'the promotion and improvement of the education given in the camps. The schools are among the most cheerful features of camp life: the children are intelligent and eager to learn but more and better teachers are badly needed ... We spoke to Mr. Sargant [E.B. Sargant, organiser of the schools] about this need and he repeated what he had told us before, of the difficulties of getting teachers, the small salaries offered and so on. Now we are disposed to place the balance of the V.L. fund at Mr. Sargant's disposal for the benefit of education in the camps, either by supplementing teachers' salaries, or in providing special teachers in hygiene, cooking etc., or in furnishing the schools with lending libraries, or in starting prizes, or in any other way which his experience leads him to believe most useful'.³⁷

The League replied by telegram to Dr. Waterston, who passed it on to Fawcett: 'members Concentration Committee agree to ... proposition generally will talk over details when they meet'.³⁸

On their return to England the Commissioners again advised the League that 'the remaining balance of £800 should be devoted to educational purposes ... the needs for foods, comforts etc., having ceased' and this was accordingly done.³⁹ It apparently occurred to no-one that it might be considered irregular to spend money collected for 'additional comforts' on an education scheme that, though voluntary, was clearly the first step in Milner's Anglicisation programme. The committee met in May 1902 'to decide as to the final disposal of the funds, the suggestion having been made that the money would be most profitably be spent in helping orphanages'.⁴⁰ It appears, however, that the residue was also given to Sargant. In 1904 he obtained the League's agreement 'to dispose of £600 still in hand as follows, £300 to projected Rescue Fund in Pretoria, £300 to projected Maternity Home in Bloemfontein'. Again, in 1905 Sargant reported 'disposal of £249-19-6 being the remainder of the sum sent to him from the Dutch Women and Children's Fund ... to assist the Guild cottage started by the Benevolent committee' of the G.L.W.⁴¹ It is hard to believe that this money could not have been devoted to work of a more purely humanitarian nature in the camps. The Ladies' Commission disliked 'indiscriminate charity' in

³⁷Fawcett to Edith Lyttelton (copy) 15 November 1901 [Streatfield 2/4]. See also *Report on the Concentration Camps* p6 para 11.

³⁸Telegram Dr Waterston to Mrs Fawcett via Mr Hoye [Streatfield 2/4].

³⁹Annual Report 1901-3, p10.

⁴⁰Executive 9 May 1902.

⁴¹Executive 3 June 1904, 3 May 1905.

general and attempted without success to apply Charity Organisation Society methods to a crisis situation. The 'difficulty of distinguishing between real and pretended destitution' and the commissioners' feeling that 'the indiscriminate distribution of charitable relief ... has a demoralising effect upon the recipients',⁴² together with their generally impatient attitude to complaints about conditions in the camps, and the Victoria League's ambiguity over the camps issue, led to the diversion of a significant proportion of the fund to purposes other than those for which it had been collected.

(ii) British Refugees

The Victoria League's British Refugees' Fund, which continued the work of the Mansion House Fund for refugees, had began as a counterweight to the League concentration camps fund. It was not entirely uncontroversial itself. In September 1901 Violet Cecil noted,

'Row on the V.L. Campbell Bannerman having come down extra strong on the Boer side, Lady Tweedsmouth will not hear of giving any help to loyalists only to rebels. I hope we manage to avoid a split until her time as vice-president is up in the Spring'.⁴³

Nevertheless, it was far more in character with the League's sympathies than the concentration camps fund. Several members had already worked for the cause. In March 1900 Alicia Cecil had appealed in the *Times* for clothing for the refugees she and her husband had seen in Natal just before the war. By June she had sent 'considerably over 3,000 items of clothing' to Natal at some cost to herself.⁴⁴

Violet Cecil had worked hard on the refugee relief committee in Cape Town in 1899-1900. Refugees had begun arriving in Natal and the Cape even before war was declared. According to S.B. Spies,

'the exodus of Uitlanders from the Transvaal started as early as June 1899, and according to one estimate an average of 150 a day left until the beginning of September, when the tempo increased to 500 a day. During the final two weeks before the outbreak of war ... 30,000 whites ... left Johannesburg alone. According to returns of the Netherlands Railway Company, from 1 September to 19 October 1899 a total of 130,991 people of all nationalities (53,000 whites and the rest Africans and Indians) crossed the border of the Transvaal in trains bound for the Cape Colony, Natal or Mozambique'.⁴⁵

⁴²*Report on the Concentration Camps* p4, para. 6.

⁴³Violet Cecil, 'Diary' 6 September 1901 [Violet Milner F2/1].

⁴⁴*Times* 26 March 1900; 28 June 1900.

⁴⁵S.B. Spies, *Methods of Barbarism? Roberts and Kitchener and Civilians in the Boer Republics January 1900 - May 1902* (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau: 1977) p19.

By May 1900 only a few hundred British subjects remained in the Transvaal.⁴⁶ At least 20,000 of the refugees came to Cape Town. On 1 September 1899 Dr. Jane Waterston organised a women's committee to organise relief for women and children. They collected money locally and also distributed money collected in Britain through a Mansion House Fund.⁴⁷ The committee included the Mayoress of Cape Town, Mrs Ball, Annie Hanbury-Williams, Violet Cecil, and Cicely Cavendish Bentinck.⁴⁸

Violet Cecil later recalled how first the Randlords and then the professional classes had moved to the coast or returned to Europe, leaving behind them 'thousands of families who had been holding on mainly owing to the difficulty of realising any portion of the value of their business, stock or household goods ... combined with the uncertainty of their future if they left'. By late September, 'the trains were pouring into Cape Town all day and all night' and 'it seemed to those that met them [the committee worked in shifts meeting the trains] that three in the morning was the favourite hour'. 'In open trucks, destitute, having often been robbed on the way (and the men occasionally beaten), stiff with cramp and bewildered after four days journey under the glare of an African sun and the cold of spring nights, the people who had created the wealth of the central states of South Africa came to the coast towns'. 'They were all shaken, hungry, *furious* at the way they had been treated'. Half a century later, Cecil still had a 'vivid recollection' of a 'nervous journey' to hospital in a Cape hansom with a woman who had gone into labour as the trains arrived. The refugees had to be fed, clothed and housed. Rations were distributed according to need (Violet Cecil and Cicely Bentinck spent 'five mornings a week at the Town Hall' doing this). Many of the able-bodied men joined up; others, and many of the women, found work. Relief was not given to any family with an able-bodied man not working. Those left on relief were women, children, the old and the sick.⁴⁹

The committee moved quickly to deal with the crisis. Annie Hanbury-Williams wrote in early October 1899,

'Cicely and Violet are ... very busy with the Rand Refugee work. The Johannesburg Uitlanders are most excellent and methodical in their way of working - and the dear sleepy Mayor has formed a men's committee like our ladies' one. The Town Council has voted £1000. Rhodes has given £500 and offered to take 100 Refugee men at £1 per week on his road and he has also offered land to put up tents'.⁵⁰

In December she reported,

⁴⁶Spies, *Methods of Barbarism?* p20.

⁴⁷Lucy Bean and Elizabeth van Heyningen (eds.), *The Letters of Jane Elizabeth Waterston 1866-1905* (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society: 1983) p241.

⁴⁸Viscountess Milner, *My Picture Gallery 1886-1901* (London: John Murray: 1951) p137.

⁴⁹Viscountess Milner, *My Picture Gallery*, p137-8, p145; Violet Cecil, 'The Johannesburg Voter', *National Review* 47 1906 pp100-4.

⁵⁰Annie Hanbury Williams to Violet Markham 10 October 1899 [Markham 25/39].

'The Refugees are still very numerous, naturally they increase as time goes on. I think we shall have all we can do to keep them despite the big amount of money from Home. We ladies are still on our *own* money only coming onto the Mansion House Fund this week'.⁵¹

It was a dedicated and efficient committee. 'Ladies working steadily, day after day, giving out relief and seeing that the wrong people do not get it' wrote Jane Waterston. 'I never saw such steady sustained, businesslike work done by women with Houses and families to look after ... month after month, with steady toil'. By September 1901 the committee had distributed £24,255-5s-6d to 5,788 women and children.⁵²

The Victoria League committee began work in July 1901. It naturally included Violet Cecil, together with Evelyn Cecil (husband of Alicia), and another Cecil relation, Viscountess Cranborne, whose husband had briefly served in South Africa. The second Sir Bartle Frere and his sister Catherine; Dudley Leigh (Lady Jersey's brother); Agnes Goldman (wife of Charles Goldman who had interests in South African mining and served as a special correspondent during the war); Edith Lyttelton, Mildred Buxton, Mrs Leverton Harris, Kipling, Col. the Lord Edmond Talbot (another South Africa veteran and Conservative M.P.) and H.J. Tennant (Liberal M.P. and husband of May) also joined. Most of these men probably lent little more than their names. The committee was chaired by Lord Windsor and the secretary was J.D. Rees, a retired Indian civil servant.

On 1 July the *Times* gave notice that the Victoria League was prepared to 'receive subscriptions and forward them to those who have been carrying on the work since the beginning of the campaign'. By 10 July £195-5-6 had been raised.⁵³ On 12 July the *Times* published an appeal from the League which gave details of the Committee, emphasised its 'non-political' character, and stated that,

'it is the desire of the Victoria League ... to provide a means whereby, till the end of the war, and for as long afterwards as may be necessary, all that is possible may be done to alleviate distress, which is as bravely and uncomplainingly borne by our fellow-subjects in South Africa as it is acute and widespread'.

The Victoria League, despite its 'desire ... to abstain from controversy' defended the Government against charges of neglecting the refugees. Only private charity, it argued, could adequately provide 'such comforts and, in some cases, such little luxuries as are necessary for the old, the young, the infirm and the suffering'.

⁵¹Annie Hanbury Williams to Violet Markham 17 December 1899 [Markham 25/39].

⁵²Jane Waterston to John Stephen 10 January 1900, in Bean and van Heyningen (eds.), *Letters* p243; *Letters* p241.

⁵³Executive 10 July 1901.

Appeals stressed the gratitude of the Cape Committee for British help, and the continuing need for funds and gifts in kind as refugees exhausted their savings.⁵⁴ By August 1901 £1,400 had been collected, including £600 from the Lord Mayor.⁵⁵ Joseph Chamberlain sent two donations with the charitable rider, 'Not a penny please for the Boers'.⁵⁶ By October 1901 £4019-15-6 had been subscribed, by March 1902 £5064.⁵⁷ When the fund closed in November 1902 it had collected £6379-7s-11d,⁵⁸ of which about £1000 had been spent on goods to be sent out to South Africa.⁵⁹ The British public, though willing to subscribe for Dutch women and children, was clearly more enthusiastic about helping British refugees.

The vast majority of the money collected was sent direct to South Africa where it was distributed by the Mansion House Cape Committee (chaired by the Governor and made up of British civil servants) to 'local committees who know best where help is most needed'.⁶⁰ The bulk almost certainly went to Dr Waterston's committee. A small proportion of the fund - £600, or about 10% - was spent 'in relieving distressed Refugees in England pending their return to their homes at the conclusion of the war'.⁶¹ The committee also assisted 'the return of refugees [from England] to their homes, principally in conjunction with the South African Expansion Committee'.⁶² Grants were made in the best Victorian charity tradition after enquiries through the Charity Organisation Society, the town clerk, or the local clergyman.⁶³

In late 1901 the League sent Georgina Frere to South Africa to collect first-hand information about the condition of the refugees.⁶⁴ Frere, who had almost certainly lived in South Africa when her father, Sir Bartle Frere, was serving as High Commissioner,⁶⁵ left for Africa in November 1901 and stayed until May 1902. Extracts from her letters to the League were published in the press, providing additional publicity for the refugees' fund. From the Cape she emphasised both the hardships undergone by the refugees, and their estimable qualities:

'To most of the refugees the strain of the last two years succeeded a journey, the horrors and sufferings of which have not been exaggerated ... it has left an undeniable impression mentally and physically on many and has been the prelude only to these years of

⁵⁴*Times* 20 September 1901.

⁵⁵*Times* 5 August 1901; Executive 24 July 1901.

⁵⁶Chamberlain to Edith Lyttelton 26 July 1901 [Chan. II 3/27].

⁵⁷Executive 24 October 1901; *Times* 4 March 1902.

⁵⁸*Times* 22 November 1902.

⁵⁹Annual Report 1901-3, p12.

⁶⁰*Times* 19 December 1901.

⁶¹Annual Report 1901-3, p12.

⁶²*Times* 22 November 1902.

⁶³Annual Report 1901-3, p12-13.

⁶⁴Annual Report 1901-3, p12.

⁶⁵Biographies of Sir Bartle Frere are extremely vague about his family.

privation and want, and at best to beginning life over again. It does speak well, I think, for these people that out of about 60,000 British refugees now awaiting in Cape Colony and Natal their return home (for there is not a soul of them who does not want to go back) less than 3,000 should be actually dependent for support on the Mansion House Relief Fund'.⁶⁶

By the end of February 1902 Frere had moved to Johannesburg, the new sphere of action as the refugees returned home.

Roberts had entered Johannesburg in May 1900 but due to lack of transport and supplies, and still more to the outcry raised by Uitlanders still on military service, civilians were allowed to return only in 1901, and then only slowly.⁶⁷ In December 1901, however, by which time 15 out of the 77 gold mines were operating, the number of returning refugees began to rise sharply.⁶⁸ The Victoria League modified its appeal accordingly:

'We now learn from the Colonial Office that gifts in kind are urgently needed, as there will be a great demand for bare household necessities, such as sheets, blankets, towels etc., on the part of poorer refugees upon their return to the Rand, their houses for the most part having been looted, and their goods dispersed beyond hope of recovery'.⁶⁹

Milner told the committee that they 'would be doing good work if they would send out a considerable quantity of such articles as would be likely to be useful to persons returning to empty houses'.⁷⁰ In March 1902 the League announced that goods should be sent direct to 'Lord Milner, Johannesburg, Government Stores, British Refugees'.⁷¹

A letter from Frere dated Johannesburg 27 February (and published 2 April) reported that 'refugees are now coming up at the rate of a dozen or so at a time almost daily and have been for some time past', and that recently 400 had arrived from East London, Cape Colony, on one day. Frere described the joyful scenes at the station, the arrangements made to meet and house for the refugees, and the attempts to provide them with the means of making a living in the long-term, for example setting up a woman with a boarding-house. In the town she found 'rows and rows of once neat and prosperous little houses, now broken-windowed, dilapidated, and absolutely without a fragment of furniture left' - damaged in the dynamite factory explosion, deliberately raided by the Boers, or 'a prey to evildoers of all sorts, during

⁶⁶*Times* 4 March 1902.

⁶⁷Spies, *Methods of Barbarism?* p164-5.

⁶⁸Spies, *Methods of Barbarism?* p247.

⁶⁹*Times* 19 December 1901.

⁷⁰*Times* 7 January 1902.

⁷¹*Times* 4 March 1902.

the temporary dislocation of authority during the change of rule'. Food prices were high, transport difficult, the postal service almost non-existent. These 'petty details', she explained, were given to show 'that when people say that the refugees are fast returning it is not exactly to life as they left it, and though they are cheerfully setting out to climb the hill again, they are mostly at the bottom now. Whatever the Government may or may not do for them there is a large scope for the sympathy and help of their fellow-subjects at home'.⁷²

Apparently the fellow-subjects responded. On 10 April, Rees reported that 'at the last subcommittee meeting order had been made to cable £200 to credit of Miss G. Frere for immediate purchase of goods at her discretion, and the expenditure in England of £300 on household necessities for immediate dispatch for South Africa'.⁷³ This was the last of Frere's work.

'Georgie Frere, just as she was starting for England (or rather she expected a fortnight amongst friends here [at the Cape] before starting for England) got more money cabled out for her work. I advised her to go back to Johannesburg and arrange personally various matters in connection with it on the spot and she did so. She comes here on Wednesday morning again and sails in a day or two by a transport'⁷⁴

David Gill told Violet Markham in mid-May. Shortly afterwards Rees began to consider closing the fund.⁷⁵

The Refugees committee was initially split between the two options of 'gradual extinction' or a further appeal 'in view of future work on wider and more active lines'.⁷⁶ However, the question was settled by a communication from the Colonial Office stating that 'Mr Chamberlain does not think appeal necessary ... letter from Lord Milner stating present position in regard to aid given to Refugees and advising no appeal to British public having appeared in Public Press October 29 1902'. The fund was therefore wound up and the remaining £600 authorised to be spent on 'useful Christmas presents' for the refugees.⁷⁷ A small surplus (about £50) was used in co-operation with the Guild of Loyal Women to help such deserving cases as A.T. Webster 'on account of injury done at the siege of Kimberley'.⁷⁸ A letter to the press announced that the fund was closing because 'the present distressed loyalists

⁷²*Times* 2 April 1902.

⁷³Executive 10 April 1902.

⁷⁴David Gill to Violet Markham 12 May 1902 [Markham 25/31(ii)].

⁷⁵Executive 5 June 1902.

⁷⁶Executive 28 October 1902.

⁷⁷Executive 29 October 1902. The letter, from Geoffrey Robinson to the Lord Mayor, stated that 'His Excellency is glad to say that there is no necessity, in his opinion, for ... an appeal to the British public' [*Times* 29 October 1902].

⁷⁸Executive 9 November 1905; 1 February 1906; 8 November 1906; 17 January 1907.

can no longer strictly be called refugees' and because the 'further work of helping the repatriated British families to re-establish themselves has been taken up by an influential committee'.⁷⁹

This committee had been started by Violet Cecil. She had suggested to Kipling as early as July 1902 that an appeal be made but at that time he had scouted the idea:

'My own notion is that just at present the English people might not respond to the appeal which you suggest in any way that would be adequate ... [in any case] do you think that we diminish our debt to the Loyalists by giving them charity where we owe them justice? The Government which is spending £3,000,000 on the Boers will doubtless have reckoned on this and will spend at least as much on the Loyalists who really ought to be given that sum *plus* - for the unnecessary duration of a war which could have been reduced one third if the army had been up to the job'.

The Boer relief fund, he said, would probably go to rearming. 'Let's save our subscriptions and appeals till the war is resumed'.⁸⁰

By the beginning of October, however, it had become clear that the British government was not going to do as much as expected for the loyalists, and Kipling advised Violet Cecil,

'I think now that it is high time the appeal was made for Refugees and Loyalists ... 'you are hereby authorised' to sign for me. Pity that the appeal can't be controversial when you think of what the other side are doing ... I have been thinking about making some sort of verses about the unhappy Loyalist but I am afraid they'd be controversial - highly so'.⁸¹

Cecil had already begun work. The Editor of the *Globe* proved 'willing to run an appeal for the loyalists for me and 'identify the paper' with the movement'. There was another motive for haste: 'I want to get in, if possible, ahead of the Boer Generals' (Botha, de Wit and de la Rey, who toured Europe in the autumn of 1902 to raise funds for Boer refugees).⁸² Cecil quickly recruited others for the committee, mostly from her immediate friends and family. When the appeal was published in the *Globe* on 18 November (and in the general press the day after) it was signed by Cicely Cavendish Bentinck, Georgina Frere, Alfred Lyttelton, and Hugh Cecil, her brother-in-law; plus the Duke of Montrose, who had served in the Boer War.

⁷⁹*Times* 22 November 1902.

⁸⁰Kipling to Violet Cecil 17 July 1902 [Violet Milner C395/1].

⁸¹Kipling to Violet Cecil 8 October 1902 [Violet Milner C395/4]. Kipling's name was not used: no doubt he was too 'controversial'.

⁸²Violet Cecil, 'Diary' 5 October 1902 [Violet Milner F2/1].

The appeal stated that the refugees

'now they have returned home ... find ... houses destroyed, lands without crops, and almost stripped of livestock, and to begin life again in a land where at this moment famine prices are charged for everything ...

Compensation is necessarily a slow process, and the Imperial Government have plainly indicated that at best the loyalists will only be compensated up to 50 per cent of their losses. This means that well-to-do people will for years be poor, and that poor people will have a most desperate struggle to live at all'.

In addition the sufferers - 'the proud hard-working farmer and artisan, who are the backbone of any community fortunate enough to possess them' - faced political 'hostility and discouragement' even in Cape Colony. A supporting article by Violet Cecil in the *National Review* urged readers 'to believe in our own people and their national spirit, even when they live 6000 miles away'.⁸³

The fund (worked through the Guild of Loyal Women in South Africa)⁸⁴ though necessarily unofficial given Milner's pronouncement in October, immediately took off. On 21 November Cecil wrote,

'The Loyalist appeal is simply booming. All the morning papers put in the appeal in full, except the *Daily News* and the *Daily Telegraph*. The latter was the only paper which did not notice it at all. Most of the others had leading articles. The Provincial Press is pouring in with appeals and leaders devoted to the Loyalists. There is evidently a great deal of pent up feeling. All the money I have received so far, except £200 from Lord Rothschild, is from strangers'.⁸⁵

A few days later,

'Only a week since the Loyalist Fund was started. It is a tearing success. No Royal patrons, no big donations, no official help and we've got close on £5,000 ... Isn't it fun? The Royal Family will not look at us because they must not 'differentiate' between Loyals and disloyals! ... I have told Joe [Chamberlain] what I'm doing and how the money will be spent, but I haven't asked him what he thinks'.⁸⁶

And by December: 'it is fun to have got £9,000 without any Patronage or Government sanction'.⁸⁷

Like the concentration camps fund, there was more than a strictly philanthropic slant to the refugees committees. Letters from South Africa published in the League's annual report stressed the 'moral effect' of the refugee fund. 'The

⁸³Violet Cecil, 'Part of our Nation', *National Review* vol. 40 no. 238 December 1902 pp532-3, p533.

⁸⁴*Times* 10 December 1902.

⁸⁵Violet Cecil, 'Diary' 21 November 1901 [Violet Milner F2/1].

⁸⁶Violet Cecil, 'Diary' 25 November 1901 [Violet Milner F2/1].

⁸⁷Violet Cecil, 'Diary' 6 December 1901 [Violet Milner F2/1].

knowledge that ladies have not only felt sorrow and compassion, but have worked hard to *prove* their sympathy, has had a wonderful effect in giving fresh courage to hundreds who have suffered greatly through the war' wrote Mrs Macintosh of the G.L.W. from Port Elizabeth. In 1903 she added, 'I can hardly express the softened, grateful feelings to which the action of the Victoria League had given birth in the minds of many who were sick in mind, body and estate through the war'. A Mrs. Wege stressed the gratitude of Guild members in Petrusville, 'mostly poor and ... uneducated Dutch people, but who would gladly lay down their lives for their King'.⁸⁸ The psychological impact, the knowledge that the mother country had not forgotten them, the stiffening of morale during the war, and renewed loyalty to Britain and determination to assert British power in South Africa afterwards, was as important as the relief of physical suffering.

This perception was not confined to the League. Kipling, among his reasons why Violet Cecil should make her fund a Mansion House one, included

'The Bond would realise that the Loyalists were not wholly without friends across the water ... It would be the best conceivable chance for the Empire to show what its real feelings to the Loyalists are ... and lastly the moral effect all round would be incalculable'.⁸⁹

A *Times* leader, praising the League's fund, used a similar argument: 'some more human and personal form of sympathy and aid is not only needed to supplement Government action, but will also be much more grateful to the feelings of the recipients and better fitted to make them realise that their hard case is known and felt for by their fellow-subjects at home'.⁹⁰

There were also practical, political reasons for easing the return of refugees to the Transvaal. The refugees at the Cape had been impatient to return ever since the occupation of Pretoria in June 1900. Milner fought a prolonged battle with Kitchener (who was determined to monopolise transport and supplies for military purposes) to get the refugees back and start up the mines - not for humanitarian but for political reasons.⁹¹ He told Chamberlain in October 1900,

'I am anxious gradually to bring back the exiled population to the Rand and to restart business there, even if guerrilla bands are still roaming about many parts of the country and occasionally cutting the line. It seems to me that nothing could more completely demonstrate

⁸⁸Annual Report 1901-3, p13-14.

⁸⁹Kipling to Violet Cecil 15 November 1902 [Violet Milner C395/5].

⁹⁰*Times* 4 March 1902.

⁹¹Cecil Headlam (ed.) *Milner Papers Volume II* (London: Cassell & Co.: 1933) p88, p277.

our mastery or show the Boers the hopelessness of further resistance than to begin work again in spite of them'.⁹²

The League, therefore, in appealing for help to assist refugees returning to Johannesburg in early 1902 was also assisting Milner in his scheme for ending the war by non-military means. In alleviating the plight of the refugees the League was also diminishing the possibility of political dissatisfaction on the Rand. Between late 1902 and mid-1903 Violet Markham sent £1,000 to Milner for 'any person or persons, cause or thing that you care to give it to, in South Africa'.⁹³ Thanking her for the money, which he had used to assist returning refugees, Milner told her that there was 'no trouble' in Johannesburg: 'the trouble would have been if I had been unable to help them'.⁹⁴

(iii) Graves

Nearly 450,000 soldiers fought for the British in the Boer War, 365,693 Imperial troops and 82,742 Colonials. Of these, 22,000 died: 5,774 killed in battle and three times as many - 16,168 - from wounds or disease.⁹⁵ In places where large numbers had died - Bloemfontein, for instance - the government took responsibility for the graves. To tend - even to find - where those killed in battle had been buried was more difficult, for 'the number of small skirmishes ... made the task of keeping each grave in order very hard, while the [frequent] necessity ... of marching a few hours after men had been killed made even the marking of graves difficult'.⁹⁶ Anticipating the voluntary organisations of World War 1 (the Australian Red Cross Information Bureau, for example) which became 'the essential link between the front and the home front',⁹⁷ the Guild of Loyal Women took it upon itself to find, identify and mark permanently as many as possible of these scattered graves.⁹⁸

Mrs Stuart, the Guild's delegate, arrived in Britain in November 1900 and immediately began to hold meetings and issue appeals. Violet Cecil, 'as an honorary member of [the Guild's] committee' backed the appeal in a letter to the *Times*: 'I feel sure that English men and women will wish to contribute to what must be to many

⁹²Milner to Chamberlain 28 October 1900, *Milner Papers II* p169.

⁹³Violet Markham to Milner 22 October 1902 [Milner 215/161]; 30 July 1903 [Milner 216/108].

⁹⁴Milner to Violet Markham 20 September 1903 [Markham 25/56(i)].

⁹⁵Pakenham, *Boer War*, p572. It is estimated that about 7,000 died out of the 87,000 Boers fighting in the war.

⁹⁶Lord Methuen, quoted *Times* 14 October 1904.

⁹⁷Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: the Great War in European cultural history* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1995) p36-9.

⁹⁸So closely identified was the Guild with this work that in 1901 Emily Hobhouse scathingly described it as concerned solely with the dead, a charge it indignantly denied [*Times* 7 September 1901].

a sacred obligation and to all an office of reverence and gratitude' she wrote, adding '£5,000 is still required'.⁹⁹ The Victoria League's links with the Guild made it natural that the League would also become involved in the graves work. The South African Graves Subcommittee was the first Victoria League Subcommittee to be appointed, though it continued long after the war. In May 1901 the League received from Mrs Stuart 'a list of names of ladies who were willing to serve on a committee for raising money for the care of graves in South Africa'. It was decided 'to ask Mrs Stuart if the ladies interested in the care of graves ... would join a subcommittee formed by the V. League for that purpose'.¹⁰⁰ By June the committee had been set up, with Mrs Stuart as honorary secretary and treasurer until mid-July.¹⁰¹ (Subsequently both she and Dora Fairbridge became honorary members of the committee.)¹⁰² Her successor was Lady Goodenough (née Countess Anna Kinsky), the widow of Sir William Goodenough, commander in chief of the British forces in South Africa 1894-98.¹⁰³ The committee was presided over first by Violet Cecil and then, from late 1902, by Georgina Frere. In later years Lady Jersey 'testified ... how in the early days the care for the fallen had supplied motive power to the whole League'.¹⁰⁴ Possibly it did not seem quite like that at the time: 'V.L very ardent. My poor old Graves Committee bores everyone' reported Violet Cecil in October 1901.¹⁰⁵

The Guild claimed to be uniquely suited to the graves work. 'Being spread over so many parts of South Africa, [it] can ... reach through its members isolated graves far away from towns or villages and many miles away from the railway or other lines of communication'. Certainly its members seem to have been both enthusiastic and efficient. A record book was kept in Cape Town with information on each dead soldier: 'name, rank, regiment, date and cause of death and place of burial', with 'the names ... arranged according to the regiments and indexed alphabetically'. Letters of inquiry were forwarded to the relevant local branch, which was responsible for the identification and care of graves in their area. The military authorities and the government (which eventually appropriated all plots of land containing graves) both helped the Guild, but the difficulties - even after the peace - remained considerable. 'Many of these graves are out on the veldt, wind and sand and storm swept; they are scattered over a vast area; to reach them often entails great

⁹⁹*Times* 6 December 1900.

¹⁰⁰Executive 15 May 1901.

¹⁰¹Executive 16 July 1901.

¹⁰²*Times* 27 September 1901.

¹⁰³*Dictionary of South African Biography* vol. 3, p335.

¹⁰⁴Executive 18 July 1912.

¹⁰⁵Violet Cecil, 'Diary' 22 October 1901 [Violet Milner F2/1].

expense, but unless they are identified soon they will be entirely obliterated'.¹⁰⁶ The Guild also cared for the graves of Boers 'wherever practicable, as it is when they are buried beside our own men'.¹⁰⁷ It was hoped that this gesture would hasten reconciliation, though Fawcett reported that it had initially been greeted by a Boer newspaper with the headline 'Hands off, ye Ghouls!'¹⁰⁸

The Victoria League graves committee had two main responsibilities. The first was to act as a channel of communication between the Guild and the British public. The committee received and passed on to South Africa inquiries about individual graves, and generated publicity by forwarding Guild letters to the press and holding large, well-reported meetings with notable speakers.¹⁰⁹ Unlike other Victoria League committees, the graves committee held its own annual meeting and put out its own annual reports. Its second and related duty was to raise funds. Judging from the sums collected the graves work - particularly during and immediately after the war - was a popular cause. The Guild representatives had raised £1,100 in Britain by autumn 1901, and the Victoria League eventually sent more than £8,000 to South Africa.¹¹⁰ No doubt much of this came from those who had lost relations and friends in the war. Various organisations, usually military, gave large sums. In 1902, 'the most notable sums received had been £250 from the Lord Mayor's Discretionary Fund, £250 from the Imperial Yeomanry, £150 from the Lancashire Freemasons and £100 from the county of Cheshire'.¹¹¹ Later contribution included £100 from Sir Julius Wernher of the De Beers company and Wernher, Beit & Co., and £50 from the Army Council '(second donation from the profits of the Naval and Military Tournament)'.¹¹² The donations, said Violet Cecil, 'varied from these large sums down to a few penny stamps sent by some poor widowed woman for her husband's or her son's grave'.¹¹³ Apart from these more or less spontaneous donations, funds were raised by sporadic appeals in the press, collections at public meetings, and by more private, specifically female, methods - 'concerts and drawing-room meetings, and by means of collecting cards'.¹¹⁴ Often graves meetings featured displays of photographs of South African graves: in 1907 the committee gave a collection of 293 photographs to the Union Jack Club.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁶*Times* 13 August 1902; 28 October 1901; 22 May 1902.

¹⁰⁷*Times* 27 September 1901.

¹⁰⁸Millicent Garrett Fawcett, 'South Africa in 1901 and 1903', *Contemporary Review* LXXXIV November 1903, p635-55, p655.

¹⁰⁹See e.g. *Times* 26 June 1901.

¹¹⁰*Times* 27 September 1901; Executive 19 March 1908.

¹¹¹*Times* 22 May 1902.

¹¹²*Times* 30 November 1906.

¹¹³*Times* 22 May 1902.

¹¹⁴*Times* 22 May 1902.

¹¹⁵Executive 25 July 1907.

By 1903 the committee's attention had shifted from finding and marking the graves to securing their permanent upkeep. In February that year Georgina Frere reported that a letter had been 'sent to South Africa for the purpose of finding out exactly what work remained to be done, with a view to winding up the fund'.¹¹⁶ This proved to be a lengthy business, however, and it was not until November 1906 that a final appeal was made, signed by Princess Christian, Georgina Frere, Lady Jersey, Lady Carrington, Lady Lawley, Milner, Roberts and Ian Hamilton. They asked for money for two separate objects: iron crosses for the 4,000 graves still unmarked, and the establishment of an Upkeep Fund to provide a permanent income for the Guild's care of the graves. In all they hoped to raise £12,000, the League having undertaken to provide £5,000 for the Upkeep Fund.¹¹⁷ The Graves Committee intended to raise as much as possible 'by next spring when the work would be wound up' but they were over-optimistic.¹¹⁸ Only about £3,000 was raised for the Fund, and that not until 1908.¹¹⁹ In January 1909, however, the Trust deed was drawn up and signed, *ex officio*, by Lord Selborne (the South African High Commissioner), Lord Methuen (Commander-in-Chief of the forces in South Africa), the Guild President and Lady Jersey. 'The task of permanently marking every one of the graves of the late war was practically completed' by now, and the work was wound up.¹²⁰

The war memorials of the Boer War, in contrast to those of World War I, emphasised patriotism, glory and service, acting as much as models for the next generation as memorials to the dead.¹²¹ The rhetoric of the Victoria League graves committee expressed similar feelings, often with overtones of the Victorian revival of chivalry identified by Mark Girouard.¹²² At its first annual meeting, for example, one speaker quoted Wordsworth's 'Character of a Happy Warrior' and another

'said that this movement gratified not only their personal feelings, but their patriotic sentiment, because those whose graves were being cared for were the heroes of the Empire. Whatever might have been the blunders of the war, one of its most conspicuous features had been the strenuous and splendid bravery with which the soldiers of the Empire

¹¹⁶Executive 19 February 1903.

¹¹⁷*Times* 3 November 1906. The appeal was backed by further letters from Richard Solomon and David Gill (20 November 1906) and Lord Leith of Fyvie (4 January 1907).

¹¹⁸Executive 8 November 1906.

¹¹⁹*Times* 12 March 1908.

¹²⁰Executive 19 January 1909; *Times* 12 June 1909. In 1911 the Victoria League in London took over the responsibilities of the Upkeep Fund. See Chapter 8.

¹²¹Bob Bushaway, 'Name upon Name: the Great War and Remembrance' in Roy Porter (ed.) *Myths of the English* (Cambridge: Polity: 1992). K.S. Inglis and Jock Phillips, in 'War Memorials in Australia and New Zealand: A Comparative Survey', *Australian Historical Studies* 1991 24 (96) pp179-191, further suggest that Boer War memorials in New Zealand display 'a perception of the war as an outlet of national pride and achievement' (p184).

¹²²Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press: 1981).

had conducted themselves and had laid down their lives in testimony of their courage and devotion (Cheers) ... the graves in South Africa proved that the best traditions of British courage had been preserved in this war'.¹²³

It was a particularly strident presentation of a widely held view.

The committee constantly reiterated the gratitude of surviving soldiers for the work. 'The soldiers themselves were always most anxious to mark a comrade's last resting place' said Violet Cecil, passing on a story that should appeal 'to all within the Empire' from Lord Methuen, 'who, on asking why a soldier was chipping at a piece of stone, learned that it was for an epitaph, the words being, "Pass friend and all's well"'.¹²⁴ Post-war meetings boasted a strong military presence, notably Roberts (whose son had been killed at Colenso) and Methuen. As the daughter of Bartle Frere - seen in imperialist circles as a hero and prophet betrayed by a cowardly government - Georgina Frere had a certain figure-head status. Methuen, presiding at a public meeting of the graves committee, said that he did so

'mainly because of the great respect in which he held Sir Bartle Frere and any member of his family. There was no finer memorial to a great and earnest public servant than the late war in South Africa was to Sir Bartle Frere'.¹²⁵

The Duke of Cambridge similarly used the platform of the graves committee to pay tribute to Bartle Frere and thus the whole 'forward policy' in South Africa.¹²⁶

The tending of war graves was seen as an appropriate way for women to express their imperialism.¹²⁷ Alone among the Victoria League's early committees the Graves committee was an all-female affair. The 'poor widow' was the archetype for all the relations whose gratitude to the League and the Guild was chronicled in the *Times* and the annual reports. Who but women could provide the 'patient and loving care' needed to maintain the graves? The very efforts of the Guild, the visits to the graveyards, the flowers placed on the graves at Easter and Christmas, proffered hero status on the dead. The politics and the blunders responsible for the slaughter were smoothed away into an image of warrior heroes and 'loyal women ... tenderly caring for their last resting place on earth'.¹²⁸

¹²³*Times* 22 May 1902.

¹²⁴*Times* 22 May 1902.

¹²⁵*Times* 14 October 1904.

¹²⁶*Times* 13 June 1903.

¹²⁷Somewhat later the Auckland Victoria League began to mark the graves of soldiers killed in the Maori wars, in co-operation with the New Zealand government (the Maoris, however, unlike the Boers, were not similarly honoured) [Executive 21 July 1910; 15 December 1911; 22 February 1912; 21 November 1912; 20 November 1913].

¹²⁸*Times* 20 November 1906; 4 January 1907.

Methuen spoke of the 'gratitude which the Army owed to the women in England, not only for their interest in them during the war, but also for the care which they took of the soldiers when wounded and the interest which was taken in the graves of their comrades who had fallen'.¹²⁹ The feeling was reciprocal. The Imperial Order, Daughters of the Empire [I.O.D.E] described their donation to the Upkeep Fund as 'an Imperial gift testifying to the loyalty of the Women of Canada, and as a permanent memorial of their deep gratitude to their countrymen, who by their sacrifice bore witness to the oneness of Britain and Greater Britain beyond the seas'.¹³⁰ The collaboration between the Guild and the Victoria League (and between the Guild and the I.O.D.E.) was a model of Imperial co-operation: it proclaimed that the soldiers had died, and not in vain, for a worthy cause.

Conclusion

The Victoria League's first committees portrayed themselves as exclusively philanthropic and quite removed from politics. The League's largely female membership added credence to this representation. Philanthropy was the archetypal occupation for 'ladies', while women were, in theory anyway, by definition outside politics. Emily Hobhouse, the government and the Ladies' Commission all played on this idea for their own purposes during the concentration camps controversy. The image of the League as an imperial Lady Bountiful was, however, misleading. The members of the Victoria League executive were political animals almost to a woman: active, well-connected and well-informed with contacts in South Africa and links to Milner in particular. The concentration camps, British refugees and the care of soldiers' graves were *not* apolitical subjects and no-one would have been more aware of this than they must have been. This is not to say that they were coldly unconcerned about the well-being of Dutch women and children, the fate of British refugees, or the grief of soldiers' relatives. But in organising humanitarian aid the League had ulterior motives: the quashing of the concentration camps controversy which threatened to undermine public support for the war; the re-establishment of a British population in the Boer republics; and the remembrance of those who had died to secure a British South Africa.

¹²⁹*Times* 5 July 1904.

¹³⁰*Times* 18 January 1906.

Chapter 4. Imperial Education

On St. George's Day 1907 a meeting was held at the Guildhall in London 'to consider the question of education in relation to the Empire'. The meeting arose partly from a correspondence in the *Times* in which the absence of Empire textbooks and maps suitable for schools and clubs was deplored, and a subsequent petition signed by many prominent imperialists - Roberts, Milner, Strathcona, Alfred Lyttelton and Sir George Goldie. Milner and the Australian Alfred Deakin were the main speakers and as the result of the meeting an Empire Education Fund was set up to reinforce existing organisations. An approving *Times* editorial commented that 'knowledge, as [Deakin] says, is power, and right judgement and true patriotism are impossible without it. Without mutual knowledge we shall not only miss opportunities of consolidating the Empire; we shall find it difficult to keep what we have'.¹ This viewpoint was shared by the many imperialist societies already at work - the League of the Empire for example and, especially after 1910, the Royal Colonial Institute.² The Victoria League, prominent in the field of Empire education, directed its efforts not only towards the 'mother country' but to the 'white dominions' (particularly South Africa) as well.

The Victoria League's first appearance in print, in April 1901, was a response to a letter in the *Spectator* from Sarah Heckford of Pretoria on the reconstruction of South Africa. Heckford, well-known for her account of her activities as *A Lady Trader in the Transvaal*, had for some years been convinced that lack of education was at the bottom of British/Boer tensions, and that the answer was a system of farm schools in the rural parts of the Transvaal.³ Now she urged that education should be paramount among the 'works of peace':

'I fear that this word is used too lightly by many who do not appreciate its political and social significance. Why is that so many Colony Dutch are disloyal, passively, if not actively? ... Why is that those Colonials who are thoroughly loyal to England in feeling cannot, as a rule, refute the abuse of her by these agitators or their followers with greater force than by disproving, or endeavouring to disprove, individual statements? The answer, I believe, is to be found

¹*Times* 24 April 1907.

²See Chapter 9 and, for the League of the Empire, J.G. Greenlee, 'The A B C's of Imperial Unity', *Canadian Journal of History* 14 (1) 1979 pp49-64; for the R.C.I., Greenlee, 'Imperial Studies and the Unity of the Empire', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 7 (3) May 1979 pp321-335.

³Vivien Allen, *Lady Trader: A Biography of Mrs Sarah Heckford* (London, Johannesburg & Cape Town: Collins: 1979) p201-2, p209, p216-7. See also Heckford's obituary in the *Times* 21 April 1903 and her entry in the *Dictionary of South African Biography* vol. IV.

in the fact that the South African Colonist, as a rule, knows nothing of history ... Let us be wise, and carefully sow the germ of true loyalty to the Empire by teaching history in ... all South African elementary schools ... Thus the mind is opened to understand that the greatness of a nation depends mainly on its moral excellence; opened to understand why we English are justified in saying that it is an honour for South Africa to be united under the English flag; why we say it is for the good of the late Republics to have succumbed to the arms of England'.⁴

In reply Lady Jersey, agreeing that 'the question of education in the schools of South Africa ... is doubtless all-important' invited Heckford,

'and any who have read her letter with sympathy, to send for the programme of the 'Victoria League'. This society, which will be formally inaugurated next month, already numbers amongst its supporters women of all shades of politics, who, in the words of the first resolution passed at the preliminary meeting 'are in sympathy with Imperial objects and desire a closer union between the different parts of the Empire'. At this meeting ... the subject of education was mooted and a strong desire expressed to aid the 'Guild of Loyal Women' ... to take steps towards widening the historical knowledge of the rising generation in the new Colonies'.⁵

Violet Cecil recorded of the first meeting that she 'made a statement about South African objects, the need for wholesome political literature and of good history books for schools'.⁶

Both Heckford and the Victoria League echoed the concerns of Milner, who saw education as central to his schemes to Anglicise the Boer colonies, and had a touching faith in history in particular.

'Next to the composition of the population, the thing which matters most is education ... Language is important, but the tone and spirit of the teaching conveyed in it is even more important. Not half enough attention has been paid to school reading books. To get these right would be the greatest political achievement conceivable. I attach especial importance to school *history books*. A good world history would be worth anything. At present children are only taught the history of South Africa, with at most a little English history, of the narrowest purely English type, thrown in. Everything that makes South African children look outside South Africa and *realise the world* makes for peace. Everything that cramps and confines their views to South Africa only (limits their historical reading, for instance, to Slagter's Nek and Dingaan's Day, and Boomplaats and Majuba) makes for Afrikanerdom and further discord'.⁷

Milner subsequently inspired his old friend Bertha Syngé to write a textbook on the lines he had set out, entitled *The Story of the World*.

⁴*Spectator* 20 April 1901, p564.

⁵*Spectator* 27 April 1901, p616.

⁶Viscountess Milner, *My Picture Gallery 1886-1901* (London: John Murray: 1951) p237.

⁷Milner to John Hanbury Williams 27 December 1900, Cecil Headlam (ed.), *Milner Papers II* (London: Cassell & Co.: 1933) p242-3; see also p134 for Milner to Pretymán 26 June 1900.

Reliance on school textbooks to inculcate loyalty to the nation and enthusiasm for the British Empire was nothing new. John Mackenzie shows how schoolbooks from the late Victorian period until at least the 1940s followed Seeley's exhortation to employ history to raise the morale of the nation, and presented imperial expansion as the moral of the past and the key to the future. 'The history of England was invariably taught ... as "a series of unavoidable wars", from which pupils could learn patriotism, good citizenship, and moral training'.⁸ Textbooks from such writers as Kipling and Hugh Oakeley Arnold-Forster (both supporters of the Victoria League) reinforced the message.

With such a background it is not surprising that the first educational efforts of the Victoria League were directed towards South Africa. The League's Education Committee, founded in June 1901 with Edith Lyttelton in the chair, included Violet Cecil, Miss Mary Gurney of the Girls' Public Day School Company, Alfred Lyttelton, and H.O. Arnold-Forster.⁹ The League recruited two more notable educationalists - H.J. Mackinder, soon to take up the directorship of L.S.E., and Michael Sadler, director of the office of special inquiries and reports in the Education Department from 1895 until he resigned in 1903, by which time he was known as 'the greatest living authority in England on educational matters'.¹⁰ In July 1901 the committee formulated a 'scheme of offering prizes in [South African] schools for geography and English history'.¹¹ By October Violet Cecil could report 'purchase and dispatch of £10 worth of Victoria League prizes in books for South Africa for distribution by the Guild of Loyal Women. First rate quality only'.¹² Alfred Beit, the South African financier, later donated £50 for the project: it was spent on elaborately bound books as prizes for essays on imperial subjects written by school children in all four of the South African colonies.¹³ The League expanded the scheme to send prizes for history to Australasia as well.¹⁴

At the same meeting in October 1901 the 'dispatch of lectures and magic lantern slides to South Africa' was reported. 'Miss Hodgeson had promised to write Victoria League lecture on St Paul's Cathedral and promises of lectures on the Abbey

⁸John M. Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press: 1984) p179, p181.

⁹ Annual Report 1901-3, p15.

¹⁰*D.N.B.*

¹¹ Executive 3 July 1901.

¹² Executive 24 October 1901.

¹³ Annual Report 1901-3, p18; Beit, Rhodes' fellow-director in the De Beers Diamond Company and the South African Company, spent much of his vast fortune on public works [*D.N.B.*].

¹⁴ See e.g. Annual Report 1903-4, p13.

and the Tower had also been made. Mrs Lyttelton with Lord Milner's permission had completed lecture on Egypt founded on Milner's *England in Egypt*.¹⁵ Some of the impetus for this latter scheme had perhaps come from Mrs Heckford herself, who was in England raising money to found 'small Education Institutes in different centres in the Transvaal', and to organise popular lectures in South Africa, illustrated by magic lantern slides, on world history and geography.¹⁶ She had met the League committee in July 1901 when 'great interest was evinced on both sides'.¹⁷ Heckford remained in England, writing lectures, collecting slides and publicising her schemes, until her death in 1903:¹⁸ she may have given the League the idea for the lecture plan and certainly must have encouraged it.

The scheme expanded when, in April 1902, a Miss Pease wrote to the Victoria League offering 'to lecture in South Africa at her own expense', a proposal which was accepted with gratitude.¹⁹ Millicent Garrett Fawcett's offer, later the same year, to 'give Victoria League lectures in [South Africa] subject to all arrangements being made and slides provided' created considerable excitement.²⁰ Fawcett had maintained an interest in South Africa since her stint as a concentration camp commissioner: she had already asked the League to consider 'Lady Knox's request for lectures, books, maps in South Africa'.²¹ Now she was revisiting the country to see her daughter Philippa, who had temporarily abandoned a mathematics fellowship at Newnham College, Cambridge to work for the Transvaal Education Department under E.B. Sargant.²² Mrs Fawcett was not perhaps the ideal choice of lecturer since she was well-hated by the Boers for her part in the concentration camp controversy, but she was a 'name' speaker and popular with loyalists. The League jumped at the opportunity: it authorised Edith Lyttelton to arrange for the slides, granted £25 from the Central Fund to cover expenses, and passed a 'cordial vote of thanks to Mrs Fawcett for her generous offer'.²³

By early 1903 'lantern slides as far as money granted would allow had been purchased'. The Executive offered a further £37 to pay for the passage of Miss Brereton, who had been one of Fawcett's fellow concentration camp commissioners

¹⁵ Executive 24 October 1901. See also Edith Lyttelton to Alfred Lyttelton 4 August 1901, 'I am longing to construct a lecture on Egypt out of Sir Alfred's book' [Chan. II 3/11].

¹⁶ Executive 16 July 1901; Allen, *Lady Trader* p216-217.

¹⁷ Executive 16 July 1901.

¹⁸ Allen, *Lady Trader* p224-27.

¹⁹ Executive 10 April 1902.

²⁰ Executive 13 November 1902. The Annual Report 1901-3 (p16) implies that the initial suggestion was made by the League.

²¹ Executive 10 April 1902.

²² Millicent Garrett Fawcett, *What I Remember* (London: Fisher & Unwin: 1924) p164.

²³ Executive 13 November 1902.

and now accompanied her on the South African lecture tour.²⁴ In fact the War Office granted free passages to both women,²⁵ but that the Victoria League was prepared to put a total of £62 from its slender resources towards the project is a good indication of the importance attached to it. Fawcett herself provided about eighty slides and prepared four lectures on 'the life of Queen Victoria, a Visit to London, the Country Houses and Gardens, and the Institutions of England'.²⁶ She and Brereton spent the summer of 1903 in South Africa, and Dora Fairbridge and other Guild members kept the League informed about the 'great value of Mrs Fawcett's lecturer and influence'.²⁷ (There was, however, a later complaint from Cape Colony about the 'patronising attitudes of English lecturers in South Africa', apparently referring to Fawcett's lecture at Grahamstown.)²⁸ On their return to England, the League organised a drawing-room meeting when 'Mrs Fawcett gave a description of her important tour ... [which] proved most interesting to the large number present'.²⁹ The inner circle of the Victoria League turned out in force to hear Fawcett, who told them that she had 'delivered about thirty lectures and she did not think that more than two of these gatherings could be described as complete failures. The great majority were successful'.³⁰ There is perhaps a hint here of an unexpectedly tricky assignment, but Fawcett seems to have been eminently successful in stirring up 'loyalist' feeling. Emily Hobhouse told her aunt that a Klerksdorp acquaintance 'has joined the Loyal Women's Guild and does not want to know me. Mrs Fawcett has recently been visiting Klerksdorp and reviving the Guild and lecturing to it on Queen Victoria etc.'.³¹ As for the slides, they were left in South Africa for at least a further eighteen months, for the use of the Guild of Loyal Women in the Cape and Orange River Colonies.³²

Fawcett's tour marked the high point of the Victoria League's educational efforts in South Africa. In early 1902 Violet Cecil wrote a 'begging letter' to Rhodes, bringing to his attention a scheme

'by means of lectures to bring home to English people in Great and Greater Britain what the Empire is, Where it is and why we have got it and above all, what responsibilities such a possession - such a partnership entails. We have begun humbly ... but our ambitions are greater, we should like to give really first class lectures by the best

²⁴ Executive 5 February 1903.

²⁵ Annual Report 1901-3, p16.

²⁶ Annual Report 1901-3, p16.

²⁷ Executive 11 June 1903.

²⁸ Executive 28 January 1904.

²⁹ Annual Report 1903-4, p8.

³⁰ *Times* 13 November 1903.

³¹ Emily Hobhouse to Lady Hobhouse 30 August 1903, in Rykie van Reenan (ed.), *Emily Hobhouse: Boer War Letters* (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau: 1984) p277.

³² Executive 28 May 1903, 30 June 1904.

men in the great towns at home and to send good lecturers to the Colonies - to tell the people there about England, what she is and what her people have done ... no parish pump ... but the history, geography and ethics of our great responsibilities'.³³

Rhodes having died in March 1902, the Victoria League 'Plan for Imperial Education' (compiled by Michael Sadler, with the assistance of the education committee) was submitted to the Rhodes Trust.

The plan, intended to 'produce among the masses of the population [in the United Kingdom and self-governing dominions] a clear and reasoned conviction of the importance of maintaining and strengthening the unity of the British Empire', was in two parts. Part one (inspired by a scheme Sadler had observed in America) was 'a system of visual instruction, by means of lantern lectures, illustrating life in its various aspects of the Empire', while the second and more important part called for

'the propagation of Imperial ideas by means of a small staff of highly educated young men, specially chosen for the work by reason of their intellectual force, ability as speakers, and strong convictions, and sent out to investigate certain Imperial problems, and to lecture throughout the chief self-governing Colonies and in this country, on subjects bearing on the unity of the Empire'.

While the first part 'enable[d] the masses of people vividly to realise what the Empire actually is' the second would 'stimulate them to think what the Empire might be, and what steps must be taken to defend and develop it'. The lecturers would 'prepare themselves by a course of special study' at L.S.E. or the Oxford School of Geography, serve for a period of five years (lecturing on the mother country in the colonies while simultaneously studying local conditions, then lecturing on the colonies at home) and eventually form 'the nucleus of a school of thought which would be of great value to the Empire'.³⁴

Curzon, consulted by Violet Cecil on the scheme, sent her much advice, not all of it to the point:

'As regards the Educational Aspect of your Victoria League do not make it too educational in the technical aspect. I see that your Committee consists largely of Educational experts. An educational expert is usually wedded to a system, which is usually a wrong one and he seldom makes sufficient allowance for sentiment, which is the guiding power in the actions of men.

Above all correlate your Educational or oratorical exertion with local knowledge ... [for instance] it is of no good to send any one to India to preach Imperial Federation ... When the ordinary Indian finds himself proscribed and persecuted in South Africa, Australasia and

³³Violet Cecil to Rhodes 'Sunday' n.d. [Rhodes MSS Afr. s. 228 C28/155-156].

³⁴Victoria League Plan for Imperial Education [in Milner papers 467/305-312] p1-3, p5.

other parts of the Empire he does not quite see where the blessings of Imperial Citizenship come in'.³⁵

The League at first had 'good hopes' that the Rhodes Trustees would put up the money, but in May 1903 Violet Cecil wrote sadly, 'as for our poor V.L. scheme, Rosebery blocks it and has now converted Grey, who is as hot against it as he was for it'.³⁶ Cecil had hoped that Milner might persuade the other Trustees in its favour,³⁷ but the scheme was not funded and so came to nothing.

After this setback the League restricted its education work overseas to less direct methods. It continued to send out manuscript lectures with accompanying slides to its allied associations in the colonies. In 1906 there were six lectures on loan, on subjects very similar to those given by Fawcett in South Africa. 'Scenes of English Life' went to New Zealand; the 'Life of Queen Victoria' and 'London' to Tasmania; 'St Paul's Cathedral' and 'Westminster Abbey' to South Africa. They were said to be 'of great use in country districts and farm schools'.³⁸ Later additions included 'The Tower of London' and 'Some English Industries' (1907), and 'Canterbury', 'Windsor Castle' and 'Hampton Court' (1908).³⁹ No further lectures seem to have been written, but they were circulated around the various colonies for variety. Apart from this the Victoria League confined itself to the sending out of literature, periodicals and art as discussed in the next chapter.

Instead, the League concentrated on providing imperial education within Britain itself, something it had tentatively begun even before the Plan for Imperial Education had been drawn up. Kipling had early impressed on the League 'the need for wider knowledge of the Colonies in England'.⁴⁰ Children, in particular, should be informed about the Empire, and the League began work in a variety of schools, both state and private.

'In these schools are being trained the citizens of the future; and the Victoria League takes every means and opportunity that may be placed within its reach to bring home to the scholars the realities, responsibilities and duties of the Empire, the fortunes of which will one day be entrusted to them'.⁴¹

These means included essay competitions, school linking, pen-friend schemes, flag exchanges and the promotion of Empire Day.

³⁵ Curzon to Violet Cecil 4 June 1902 [Violet Milner C251/2].

³⁶ Executive 5 February 1903; Violet Cecil, 'Diary' 16 May 1903 [Violet Milner F2/2].

³⁷ Violet Cecil to Milner 1 July 1903 [Milner 216/18].

³⁸ Annual Report 1905-6, p20.

³⁹ Annual Report 1906-7, p11; Executive 19 March 1908.

⁴⁰ Executive 7 June 1901.

⁴¹ Annual Report 1909-10, p14.

As in South Africa, one of the earliest methods used by the League was the promotion of essay competitions on Imperial subjects. Prizes (usually books) were frequently offered to particular schools or groups of schools by individuals connected with the League. Thus in 1903-4 Lady Darley, Sir Gilbert Parker and Edith Lyttelton all offered prizes to the Girl's Public Day School Company for essays on Australia or Canada.⁴² Victoria Leagues overseas (particularly Tasmania) also organised competitions in schools in different parts of Britain for essays on the relevant colony.⁴³ From 1907 the League began to organise country-wide competitions for 'schools other than elementary schools', for undergraduates, and on one occasion for teacher training students, 'whose future influence in promoting a feeling of wider patriotism among the children whom they may have to teach must be of the greatest importance'.⁴⁴ Only six teacher trainees entered, but among school children numbers were usually far higher: 150 entries were received for the 1907 competition, and 86 in 1911.⁴⁵ The essay topics were predictable, though some were doubtless more interesting than others: 'Imperial Citizenship; its Privileges and Responsibilities', 'The Centenary of Tasmania', 'The True Temper of Empire', 'The Significance of the Monarchy to the Empire' (a Coronation year special), 'The River Systems and Water Supply of the various Provinces of Canada', and 'The Meaning and Ideals of Empire Day'.⁴⁶

In time the League began to forge more stable and long-lasting relationships with individual schools. In May 1904 it received a request 'from the Headmaster of the Effingham Board School for help in linking his school and others to schools in the several colonies'. The Victoria League therefore decided to take up school linking between Britain and the colonies, despite the fact that the League of the Empire had originated the scheme in 1902 and considered the work its exclusive province.⁴⁷ With the help of the League's sister societies in the colonies, by 1906 thirty-four British schools were corresponding with colonial ones (twenty-one in Canada, five in New South Wales, and one each in India, New Zealand and South Africa).⁴⁸ By 1909 there were seventy-two (despite long-standing problems with the equivalent Canadian organisation, the I.O.D.E.) and in 1910 one hundred British

⁴² Annual Report 1903-4, p13.

⁴³ See e.g. Annual Report 1912-13, p13.

⁴⁴ Annual Report 1910-11, p15.

⁴⁵ Annual Report 1907-8, p15; Annual Report 1911-12, p12.

⁴⁶ For a typical list see Annual Report 1906-7, p12. The V.L.'s *Monthly Notes* also ran Empire-wide essay competitions for children: a 1914 prize was won by Miss Ngaio Marsh of Christchurch for an essay entitled, 'Three pages, taken at random, from the autobiography of a New Zealand pioneer' [*Monthly Notes* June 1914, p55].

⁴⁷ Executive 19 May 1904; 30 June 1904. See Chapter 9.

⁴⁸ Annual Report 1905-6, p20.

schools were corresponding.⁴⁹ Some schools corresponded with more than one country at once. In 1911 it was reported that the work had 'increased so much that it has been found advisable to arrange a scheme for decentralisation, whereby the Secretaries of Branches in Great Britain and of Branches and Allied Associations Overseas have been invited to co-operate directly with each other instead of communicating only through the Central Office in London'.⁵⁰ At the same time the League's personal correspondence (penfriend) work was also decentralised. It had begun only in 1909 as a result of the defection from the League of the Empire [L.o.E.] of the organisers of the L.o.E.'s Comrades Correspondence scheme,⁵¹ and appears to have been run very much within schools.

The linking of schools or individual children within the Empire was intended to broaden the children's horizons, to illuminate for them the history and geography of the Empire, and to create a personal link which might, as the children grew older, develop into a political leaning towards the preservation of imperial bonds. School correspondence was often arranged between two places with the same name, a practice encouraged by the League:

'The study of place-names, with all the associations and memories which they suggest, is a valuable element in historical education; and the linking of schools in different places of the Empire, which bear the same name, should suggest many a theme to a teacher of imagination and sympathy'.⁵²

As well as letters, objects were often exchanged: postcards, seeds of local plants, and sometimes flags. The Edgeware School in London - which had taken up the idea with enthusiasm, corresponding with one school in Ontario and another in Sydney, with some pupils writing additionally to children in New Zealand - showed how the scheme worked in practice.

'Teachers, as well as children, have welcomed this correspondence, for not only does it give them a fine opportunity to make the children 'think imperially', but it is also a splendid incentive to interest in many of the lessons - particularly in the geography, history and nature study lessons. It is no vague, general interest that the children take in this affair, for each child has his own special correspondent whom he calls by name and to whom he addresses his letter. The letters are written under the personal supervision of the teacher so that each one contains something of real interest and instruction, instead of being the 'string of blethers' it otherwise might be. The choice of subjects discussed is varied in the extreme, ranging from Roman remains in Britain, to the latest thing in aeroplanes. With regard to the former, the Edgeware children discovered that the Canadian children

⁴⁹ Annual Report 1908-9, p22; 1909-10, p15. For Canada see Executive 7 February 1907 and Annual Report 1907-8, p16.

⁵⁰ Annual Report 1910-11, p16.

⁵¹ See Chapter 9.

⁵² Annual Report 1909-10, p15

were doing the Roman occupation for their history lessons, with the result that there was a perfect influx of picture postcards of Roman remains ... The children here happen to be very keen on Nature Study, so that every batch of letters contains specimens of local wild flowers, carefully pressed, mounted and named by the children. In return we have received some beautifully pressed specimens from Canada and Australia'.⁵³

It has been suggested that the inclusion of Imperial content in the school curriculum provided a welcome diversion to pupils in schools characterised by dry subjects and authoritarian teaching methods.⁵⁴ This is surely true of the school correspondence. Though heavily supervised⁵⁵ the scheme provided a rare break in the school routine, a breath of fresh air and a glimpse of the outside world. Its popularity is hardly surprising.

Despite its work in schools, the League never lost sight of its adult audience. They too, and especially the working-classes, needed to be informed about the Empire. Here the answer seemed to be lectures, with or without lantern slides. Lady Jersey donated a lantern.⁵⁶ The League considered 'engaging lecturers trained in elocution to deliver written lectures' but could not afford the expense.⁵⁷ However, in October 1902 Sir Vincent Caillard, after reading the League's Imperial Education leaflet, donated £100 to the cause,⁵⁸ and this money was spent on 'lectures to be given in large towns this winter by Mr Mackinder at £10 a lecture'. At the same time the committee determined to organise a 'smaller lecture scheme for villages and country towns as quickly as possible and to endeavour to raise money for the same'.⁵⁹ In February 1903 - at which time the League still had hope of Rhodes Trust funding - a 'Picture Scheme' was considered: 'lantern pictures on imperial subjects to be shewn throughout the United Kingdom and thus prepare ground for bigger scheme'.⁶⁰

By the summer of 1903 it had become clear that Rhodes Trust money for the plan of Imperial Education would not be forthcoming. Violet Cecil told Milner,

⁵³ Annual Report 1912-13, p13.

⁵⁴ Stephen Humphries, quoted Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire* p194.

⁵⁵ Annual Report 1905-6, p21.

⁵⁶ Executive 17 January 1902.

⁵⁷ Executive 5 December 1901, 6 March 1902.

⁵⁸ Executive 29 October 1902. Caillard had been president of the council of administration of the Ottoman Public Debt 1883-1898 and at this time was a director of Vickers, shipbuilders and arms manufactures: in 1903 he became a fervent advocate of Tariff Reform [*D.N.B.*]. Dr Jameson, a friend and admirer of Violet Cecil, also donated money to the Education Committee [Annual Report 1901-3, p15].

⁵⁹ Executive 13 November 1902.

⁶⁰ Executive 5 February 1903. The cost of working this scheme was estimated at £300 a year.

'The Victoria League in spite of our great disappointment over Sadler's scheme ... goes on its way ... we have a smaller lecture scheme for England only which we mean to start soon'.⁶¹

In the autumn of 1904 the League offered prizes totalling £36 for manuscript lectures on India, South and West Africa and Canada: several had already been received by the end of October and the prize essays were used as the nucleus for the Victoria League collection.⁶² A Reader, Miss Percy Taylor, was appointed in January 1905 and later retained as a permanent lecturer.⁶³ By 1909 there were fifteen different lectures available, including twelve on different countries plus 'Our Mediterranean Possessions', 'Native Races within the Empire', and 'A Journey round the Empire'. These, complete with reader and lantern slides, could be provided to any organisation. 'Fees vary from £2 to £10 10s, in addition to travelling expenses'. A cheaper option, available only to Victoria League Branches, was a Picture Talk on Canada, South Africa, India, Australia, New Zealand or 'Round the Empire': 'Fifty slides in each set, with MS and notes. Fee 5s. for single exhibition'.⁶⁴

In addition to these prepared lectures, the League relied on an impressive array of auxiliary talent: John Buchan, Leo Amery, both William and Maud Pember Reeves, Violet Markham and Theodore Morison, as well as H.J. Mackinder, all spoke for the League at one time or another. (This wide use of amateur lecturers may have been unusual: Violet Markham found herself eyed with some suspicion by her hosts during her League lecture tour for the Worcestershire Union of Working Men's Clubs.)⁶⁵ Wherever possible the lecturers spoke from personal experience. Thus Lady Hamilton, wife of the late governor of Tasmania, spoke on Australia; Mr Allardyce spoke on the Falkland Islands with the authority of having governed them; Meriel Talbot told audiences of her journey 'Round the Empire'. Lectures were sometimes given at the Victoria League's Ladies' Empire Club,⁶⁶ and there were occasional showcase lectures by well-known speakers, such as Stephen Leacock (who attracted an audience of more than 500) in 1907.⁶⁷ Colonial visitors were frequently enlisted to give lectures on their homeland to the local Victoria League branch, and sometimes elsewhere as well. In 1912-13, for example, a Dr Barrett of Melbourne

⁶¹ Violet Cecil to Milner 1 July 1903 [Milner 216/18].

⁶² Executive 27 October 1904; Annual Report 1904-5, p13.

⁶³ Annual Report 1904-5, p13; 1905-6, p18.

⁶⁴ Annual Report 1908-9, inside front cover. Later additions included 'The Sea Road to the East', 'Burma' and 'The Resources of the Empire'.

⁶⁵ Violet Markham to Albert Grey 12 December 1905 [Grey 207/8].

⁶⁶ e.g. J.L. Garvin in 1906 (Violet Markham to Albert Grey 3 April 1906 [Grey 207/8]).

⁶⁷ Executive 30 May 1907. Leacock, Canada's most famous humorist, was then best known as a political scientist and a spokesman for imperialism [Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press: 1970) p43].

gave four lectures and two speeches for the League, and the Produce Commissioner for New Zealand, Mr H.C. Cameron, lectured eight times.⁶⁸

The League was particularly blessed with notable Canadian women speakers. Mrs Clare Fitzgibbon spoke frequently for the League during her years in England. In 1909-11 Agnes Deans Cameron, the Canadian schoolteacher, suffragist and journalist, visited Britain, backed by the Canadian Government, to promote emigration to Canada.⁶⁹ The Victoria League arranged with the Canadian Government that she should lecture for the League, and Cameron gave some twenty lectures on different aspects of Canada to various branches and to schools affiliated with the League.⁷⁰ The branch reports show that she was a particularly interesting and likeable speaker, and there was widespread grief when she died suddenly in 1912, shortly after her return to Canada.⁷¹ Another popular speaker was Julia Henshaw of the Alpine Club of Canada, who in 1914 spoke to packed houses in Newcastle, Durham and Sunderland, while over 100 people had to be turned away when she lectured in Chelsea on the Rocky Mountains.⁷²

The League started modestly with a series of ten lectures in the winter of 1903-4 (the 'lecturing season' ran from October to April), rising to 28 plus additional branch lectures in 1904-5.⁷³ The next year the scheme took off, with 51 (plus branch) lectures. Much of the growth came from two sources that the League was to find increasingly useful over the years: lectures given to working-class clubs (20 were given to the Worcester Union of Working Men's Clubs) and lectures in association with public libraries (a course of ten lectures including two by Mackinder was given in connection with the Bingham Library, Cirencester).⁷⁴ In 1909 the League calculated that it had addressed some 8,776 people during a total of 69 lectures over the previous winter.⁷⁵ During 1909-11 the number dropped off, due to lack of funds and the fact that the lecturer, Miss Percy Taylor, was deputising as League secretary during Meriel Talbot's absence on tour,⁷⁶ but 98 lectures were given

⁶⁸ Annual Report 1912-13, p11.

⁶⁹ Roberta J. Pazdro, 'Agnes Deans Cameron: Against the Current' in Barbara Latham and Cathy Kess (eds.), *In Her Own Right: Selected Essays in Women's History in British Columbia* (Victoria, B.C.: Camuson College: 1980) p120. Cameron's *The New North* (1910) described her 1908 journey to the Arctic Circle.

⁷⁰ Annual Reports 1909-10, 1910-11, 1911-12.

⁷¹ *Monthly Notes* August 1912, p72.

⁷² Annual Report 1913-14, p12; Executive 19 February 1914.

⁷³ Annual Report 1903-4, p12; 1904-5, p13.

⁷⁴ Annual Report 1905-6, p18-20. The League estimated that 16,000 people had been addressed in total, with an average attendance of 400 at the Cirencester lectures.

⁷⁵ Annual Report 1908-9, p19-20.

⁷⁶ Annual Reports 1909-10, 1910-11, 1911-12.

in 1913-14. Meanwhile, Picture Talks also expanded, with around sixty a year being given after 1908, with a peak of 91 in 1909-10 and a low of 36 in 1913-14.⁷⁷

The high proportion of working-class audiences reached by the League lectures is striking. The 1907-8 annual report gave as instances of 'the variety of audiences to whom the work appeals' that 'at Willenhall the audience consisted of over 500 working people' while at Winchester 'a series of lectures on Canada and India were given to shop assistants in their leisure hours'.⁷⁸ A list of lectures given the following year includes one by Leo Amery on Canada to the Co-operative Society in Northampton; one by W. Pember Reeves on 'The Social and Political Economy of New Zealand' to the Workers' Educational Association in Bournemouth; and six other lectures to various Working-men's Clubs.⁷⁹ In 1909-10 a series of lectures were given at Hollesley Bay Labour Colony by John Buchan, Violet Markham and W. Pember Reeves: the executive considered this 'especially satisfactory'.⁸⁰ It is probable that the League gave undue prominence to such work, but complete lists provided from 1909-10 indicate that, from small beginnings, about one third of League lectures in the period 1912-14 were given to working-class audiences, mainly through working-men's clubs, settlements and the Workers' Educational Association. Of the 1913-14 lectures, 22 had been given in public libraries 'to audiences varying from 100 to 900'; 18 to 'Clubs, Etc.' (these included Toynbee Hall, Mildmay Radical Club, and the Stepney Jewish Lads' Club); and 11 in association with the W.E.A.⁸¹

In parallel with the development of the lecture scheme, a Victoria League library was built up. In 1903 the Education Committee had decided to collect a lending library of books on the colonies 'for use among Branches and for anyone desiring such literature'.⁸² A preliminary list of 200 books was compiled, 'enquiries for this purpose having been made at the [Royal] Colonial Institute, the Imperial Institute, Messrs Macmillan and Messrs Cassell, besides of many individuals both in England and the Colonies'.⁸³ Lady de Blaquiere promised to 'consult the head of the University, Montreal for further list of books on Canada' and the Executive resolved to 'make the Library known in order to receive gifts of books and money as well as added names'.⁸⁴ Alfred Beit acted as godfather to the library, donating the

⁷⁷ Annual Reports.

⁷⁸ Annual Report 1907-8, p14-15.

⁷⁹ Annual Report 1908-9, p19.

⁸⁰ Annual Report 1909-10, p10-11.

⁸¹ Annual Report 1913-14, p10-12. Six had been given to schools and 41 to branches.

⁸² Executive 12 November 1903.

⁸³ Executive 22 October 1903.

⁸⁴ Executive 12 November 1903.

initial £200 to start it, and giving £50 a year for the librarian's salary for three years from 1905.⁸⁵ At his death in 1906 he left an endowment to the League for the purchase of books, and his brother and executor Otto continued to give an annual grant of £25 to the Library until the First World War.⁸⁶

Collecting the library was clearly seen as a delicate task. Violet Cecil wrote to Milner,

'I am sending you - only to be glanced at - the ... list of prospected books for our library. Beit has most handsomely given us the money we want to begin buying. Now I haven't even *heard* of most of these books and we don't want 1) to buy poison, 2) to buy rubbish, so I send this to you - don't trouble to write about it, Miss Fairbridge can post the list here if you will kindly send it her ... I must apologise for troubling you but I shall probably have the choosing of the ... books and I want to make *no* mistakes...'.⁸⁷

Milner was obviously obliging, for a few months later Cecil wrote again:

'Dora Fairbridge ... says you will kindly mark my book list 'poison' and 'trash'. If you *knew* the trouble I have to keep Latham and other works of the same class off! Every time I tidy the list some fool comes and adds all the rubbish I have eliminated. The committee are very good but the secretary has a passion for asking people to "add a few names" to my list ...'.⁸⁸

Among others, the League also consulted Kipling, William Pember Reeves and George Parkin. The Library was intended to contain 'not only the standard works on the different Colonies, but also the best fiction dealing with colonial life'.⁸⁹

The Library continued to grow, as the League added 'many of the newest books on the different countries, as well as other carefully selected ones, in some cases obtained direct from the Colonies'.⁹⁰ By 1906 there were 500 volumes and by 1910 the League had collected 1,154 (of which 379 were duplicates).⁹¹ Many were bought with the endowment Alfred Beit left to the League on his death in 1906⁹² and the 'Rebecca Hussey's Book Charity' made occasional grants for buying books.⁹³ Members of the Executive, such as Lady Jersey, Violet Markham and Alice Balfour, gave books from time to time, as did ordinary members of the League, in particular

⁸⁵ Executive 28 January 1904, 6 April 1905, 8 November 1906.

⁸⁶ Annual Report 1906-7, p13; Executive 21 May 1908, 7 July 1911.

⁸⁷ Violet Cecil to Milner 7 January 1904 [Milner 216/229].

⁸⁸ Violet Cecil to Milner 4 March [1904] [Milner 216/233]. Cecil may have been referring to Robert Gordon Latham (1812-1888), whose works included *The Ethnology of the British Colonies and Dependencies* (1851) [D.N.B.].

⁸⁹ Annual Report 1903-4, p12.

⁹⁰ Annual Report 1905-6, p22.

⁹¹ Annual Report 1905-6, p22; 1909-10, p13.

⁹² Annual Report 1906-7, p13.

⁹³ Annual Report 1908-9, p21; 1913-14, p13.

John and Susan Buchan. By 1911 the League could report that 'some new books [were] purchased every quarter'.⁹⁴ Books from the Lending Library were available to Victoria League members for an annual payment of 2s. 6d, and to branches for their annual payment to the central fund.⁹⁵ In 1912 the League ruled that 'branches may for their Annual Subscription of 10s. a year take out any number of books up to 50 at one time, provided these are exchanged only twice a year'.⁹⁶ Following requests in 1905 from schools and institutions (including the Worcester Union of Working Men's Clubs) it was agreed that these could affiliate to the League 'independently of branches in order to avail themselves of the League's lectures and library'.⁹⁷ This broadened access to the library so that by 1909 the collection (then numbering 900 volumes) was 'insufficient to meet the increased demand from schools, Teachers' Associations, Workmen's Clubs and Institutes, and individual members of the League'.⁹⁸

The Library was seen as a back-up resource for the League's more active education work, and especially its lectures, and was also useful for a scheme by which each branch took up one colony or subject for the winter's study. In the winter of 1904-5, for example, the League's Cheltenham branch studied India; Woking, New Zealand; and Newlands Corner, 'the Power of the Sea'.⁹⁹ Rural districts in particular found the Library convenient:

'the books are very greatly appreciated in the country Branches; reading circles are formed and each book is read many times over during the three months of its country tour. In villages and small towns where books are not easily accessible, the demand for literature on the various portions of the Empire and their different problems is most encouraging. A great deal of elementary knowledge is thus being disseminated, and a living interest aroused which cannot fail to bear good fruit in the future'.¹⁰⁰

As the League developed closer links with schools and expanded the number of Junior Associates it became increasingly concerned to add 'good children's books on Imperial subjects' to its Library, and by 1914 a 'special catalogue of books suited to Junior Associates' had been drawn up.¹⁰¹

The Victoria League also accumulated a substantial stock of slides which, like the library, acted as a back-up to the lecture scheme. Many of the slides had

⁹⁴ Annual Report 1910-11, p14.

⁹⁵ Annual Report 1903-4, p12.

⁹⁶ Annual Report 1911-12, p11.

⁹⁷ Executive 20 January 1905.

⁹⁸ Annual Report 1908-9, p21.

⁹⁹ Executive 27 October 1904.

¹⁰⁰ Annual Report 1904-5, p14.

¹⁰¹ Annual Report 1910-11, p14; 1913-14, p13.

originated as amateur photographs taken by League members. The development in 1889 of the Kodak camera, reasonably cheap and with films processed by the company (slogan: 'You Press the Button: We Do the Rest'), had opened up photography to a wide middle-class audience. As travel also became easier the Kodak accompanied many a tourist around the Empire and elsewhere. Lady Aberdeen popularised the activity with her lavishly illustrated travel diary, *Through Canada with a Kodak* (1893).¹⁰² Edith Lyttelton took a Kodak to South Africa in 1900.¹⁰³ Several Victoria League reports record that 'friends [had] given or lent photographs from which slides have been made'.¹⁰⁴ Other slides were given by colonial organisations or government bodies. An early collection of slides on Natal came from the League of the Empire in that colony.¹⁰⁵ In 1914 the governments of the Australian states provided sets of slides illustrating each state.¹⁰⁶ When in 1912 the League decided to overhaul its stock 'with a view to replacing any out-of-date slides by those giving accurate pictures of present conditions' it was aided by gifts and permanent loans from the Canadian, Australian, New Zealand, and Tasmanian authorities, and from the Canadian Pacific Railway, as well as from individual members and the Victoria League of Jamaica.¹⁰⁷ By December 1905 the League already held 1,800 slides, by 1911 over 3,000, and after the overhaul probably rather more.¹⁰⁸

The Victoria League was certainly not unique in its use of slides to demonstrate the glories of the Empire. The most elaborate - though hardly the most successful - attempt to use lectures and lantern slides as an aid to imperial education was made by the Colonial Office Visual Instruction Committee, established with Chamberlain's support in 1902. The Committee included representatives from the Victoria League and other imperialist societies as well as official bodies, and several prominent members of the League's education committee also had links to the V.I.C. Michael Sadler (who had outlined a similar scheme in the League's Rhodes Trust application) was partly responsible for its foundation. H.J. Mackinder was commissioned to write the lectures, something he did extremely slowly and eventually abandoned altogether in 1910, despite receiving a large salary from the Committee. An artist/photographer was dispatched around the Empire to provide illustrations for

¹⁰² Marjorie Harper, Introduction to 1994 Edition of *Through Canada with a Kodak* (University of Toronto Press) pxxv-xxvii.

¹⁰³ Lyttelton's Diary of a Visit to South Africa [Chan. 6/9] includes the photographs she took on the trip.

¹⁰⁴ See e.g. Annual Report 1908-9, p21.

¹⁰⁵ Annual Report 1901-3, p16.

¹⁰⁶ Annual Report 1913-14, p13.

¹⁰⁷ Annual Report 1912-13, p12.

¹⁰⁸ Council 12 December 1905; Annual Report 1910-11, p14.

the lectures. Despite all this expensive and time-consuming effort, after eight years the results were considerably less than that produced by such amateur, unofficial organisations as the Victoria League, and the Colonial Office considered passing over the entire scheme to one of them.¹⁰⁹

In September 1911 the Victoria League was approached with some secrecy by Sir Philip Hutchins of the Visual Instruction Committee, who asked for an opinion on 'the possibility of a Joint Committee of the V.L. and V.I. being appointed to take over the business of the V.I. Committee'. An interview with Sir Charles Lucas of the Colonial Office revealed,

'the difficulties of making the scheme of lectures a success through a Government department. Over £4,000 had been spent on the lectures. The property would be a good one for any Association to possess. The set on India [by Mackinder] was already published, those [by Professor A.J. Sargent] on Eastern Mediterranean, Australasia, Canada and Newfoundland in preparation, all material being ready'.¹¹⁰

Mackinder himself was also consulted and reported that

'the V.I. Committee would probably continue even after Sir Charles Lucas's resignation [from the Colonial Office]; they considered that the scheme fell now into two parts, first, that suitable for Government control connected with the preparation of books and slides and certain facilities of a special kind, and the second, the need for propaganda work in the country, which had best be done by an efficient unofficial organisation'.¹¹¹

Despite a certain amount of anxiety evinced by the Visual Instruction Committee to interest the Victoria League in the proposition it ultimately came to nothing. The Imperial Institute, the Royal Colonial Institute and the League of the Empire had also been considered, but eventually the rival claims of all these societies combined with fears of losing patronage and funding dictated that the Visual Instruction Committee stayed at the Colonial Office with Lucas serving as a private member. Eventually, during the First World War, the V.I.C. was transferred to the Royal Colonial Institute, but it was never a real success.¹¹²

One reason for the ineffectiveness of the Visual Instruction Committee was its resistance to new technology: in 1908 the Committee made a definite decision not to

¹⁰⁹ Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p162-165.

¹¹⁰ Executive 21 September 1911. Already in 1909 the League had considered approaching the V.I.C. for use of its slides: the Princess of Wales had supported the idea and assured them that 'should a distributing agency be required the Victoria League should be remembered' [Executive 17 June 1909]. From 1907 the V.I.C. had been supported by a fund-raising committee under the patronage of the Princess of Wales (later Queen Mary) and chaired by Lady Dudley.

¹¹¹ Executive 21 September 1911.

¹¹² Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p165.

use a cine camera.¹¹³ The Victoria League was not so hidebound. In 1912, when Meriel Talbot met a Mr Gower, head of the Quaker School in Hobart, Tasmania, the League began to look into the future.

'The ever-increasing influence of picture shows [was] discussed ... In Hobart hundreds of boys and girls flocked to see them ... [the] pictures were constantly of a very unworthy kind. The question of whether this popular method might not be used to promote a better knowledge of British history and events [was considered]'.¹¹⁴

In Britain, too, the 'cinematograph' was becoming a widespread influence. The earliest ever projected film performance before a paying audience had taken place in 1895 in Paris, and in the late 1890s a British film industry began to develop, producing short narrative films and newsreels. Colour films were developed in the early 1900s. At first the films were shown in music halls, or by travelling showmen, or in empty shops turned into improvised 'penny gaffs'.¹¹⁵ The first purpose-built cinema opened in 1906. Thereafter cinemas sprang up all over the country, particularly after 1909 when the Provincial Cinematograph Theatres Company Ltd. was founded. By 1910 there were approximately 1,600 cinemas in Britain, and by 1916 there were 3,500.¹¹⁶

The cinematograph question was therefore of considerable contemporary significance, and the Executive discussed it at some length:

'Lady Helen Munro-Ferguson reported seeing vulgar and harmful films mixed up with good ones. Mr Mansbridge considered the whole question very important and though difficult that it was well worth the Victoria League taking it up. Mr Sargant suggested that possibly an influential meeting to consider the matter in all its bearings might be arranged - the Syndicates controlling the shows to be approached, and possibly an association be formed to exercise censorship, and the inclusion of wholesome and educational pictures'.¹¹⁷

The cinema was already showing pictures related to the Empire. Newsreels had showed troops departing for the Boer War and even scenes from South Africa itself. Coronations and Royal funerals were extensively covered. An impressive feature on the Delhi Durbar was made and shown before the King himself.¹¹⁸ Clearly there was room for expansion.

¹¹³ MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p108.

¹¹⁴ Executive 16 May 1912.

¹¹⁵ George Perry, *The Great British Picture Show* (London: Hart-Davis, MacGibbon: 1974) p21-25.

¹¹⁶ James C. Robertson, *The Hidden Cinema: British Film Censorship in Action 1913-1972* (London: Routledge: 1989), Introduction.

¹¹⁷ Executive 20 June 1912.

¹¹⁸ Perry, *Great British Picture Show*, p26, p34.

To the Victoria League, however, the issue was almost as much moral as educational: not only that this new and popular medium might become an effective means of Empire Education¹¹⁹ but that it should, through censorship, be prevented from injuring the moral fibre of the next generation. This was a common middle-class reaction, echoed, for example, in a *Times* editorial on 'The Abuse of the Cinematograph':

'People who only go to well-conducted and fairly expensive places of amusement can have no idea of the scenes presented to the eyes of children in the cheap shows that now abound in every large town, or travel about from one village to another. Films depicting crimes - burglaries, robberies, suicides and so forth - are more powerful for evil than the worst of the sensational literature which is often deplored ... A great increase in juvenile crime noted in Leeds and other places is reasonably ascribed to vivid representations of violence, cruelty or criminal enterprise operating upon minds at their most receptive and imitative stage'.

Instead, the *Times* concluded, the cinematograph's potential as a 'valuable educational tool' should be utilised, and it hoped also that films could be used to interest children 'in the endless forms of human effort which it is good for them to admire and imitate'.¹²⁰

The idea of 'cinematograph shows' caught the imagination of the League. At the next executive meeting it was reported that

'Mr Argyle [of the education committee] had interviewed one of the smaller proprietors, who expressed his willingness to help in any possible way. Miss Hall, Secretary, reported that the Scala Theatre intends to have the first of an Empire series in the Autumn, dealing with Australia. Lady Helen Munro-Ferguson referred to a statement in the Press that some of the leading proprietors of Cinematograph shows had agreed to consider possible censorship'.¹²¹

The owner of the Scala Theatre was encouraging about the League's proposals for documentary Empire films, considering that 'if the League could obtain particular facilities in the Dominions for taking special pictures, much might come of it'.¹²² The League's sister societies overseas were also enthusiastic. Letters came from Jamaica, 'cordially approving the suggestion and giving assurance that such pictures could easily be obtained'; from the Transvaal, 'reporting that Mr Leo Weinthal, Editor of the "African World" had just obtained a large number of films of great

¹¹⁹ As it eventually did: see Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire* chapter 3.

¹²⁰ *Times* 4 April 1913.

¹²¹ Executive 18 July 1912. The British film industry began self-censorship through the British Board of Film Censors in March 1913. Local authorities had for some years been using a loophole in the 1909 Cinematograph Act to censor local screenings and continued to do so: the *Times* editorial quoted above commented approvingly on particularly stringent guidelines issued in Liverpool.

¹²² Executive 17 October 1912.

interest in South Africa, and suggesting that the Victoria League in London should communicate with him'; and from Tasmania, expressing the view that 'the proposal would be a very fine advertisement for Tasmania, and approving in every way of it'.¹²³

In March 1913 the League sent Sir James Dunlop-Smith as a delegate to the International Kinematograph Conference in London. He reported that it had chiefly been attended by educationalists discussing the educational pros and cons of the cinematograph. Dunlop-Smith had spoken 'emphasising the desire of the Victoria League to help in the matter of including subjects of Empire interest into the different shows, and ... the importance of having some central committee or authority to whom material collected by the Victoria League could be submitted'.¹²⁴ In April the League was informed that the New Zealand government, timber mills and big manufacturers offered 'special facilities for films of their industries to be taken',¹²⁵ and in June the Victoria League in Tasmania reported that it was actually sending cinematograph pictures of the country to the League in London through the Agent-General.¹²⁶ At the annual general meeting for 1914, one of the main features was a 'Discussion on the Cinematograph', featuring Albert Smith of the London Teachers' Association, a Professor Green and Lady Jersey.¹²⁷ The cinematograph scheme, one of several League plans broken off by the outbreak of the First World War, well illustrates the openness to innovation demonstrated by the League's education committee while other, more 'establishment' imperial propaganda societies stuck firmly to traditional ways.¹²⁸

The Victoria League, then, used a wide variety of methods to get its message across - but what was the message? Greenlee describes the approach of the Royal Colonial Institute as 'Kiplingesque' with an emphasis on 'duty, self-sacrifice ... the grandeur, romance and moral benefits of the empire'.¹²⁹ The Victoria League, which prided itself on its 'sane imperialism', preferred to play to a lower key. Some idea of the League attitude may be gathered from this extract from Violet Cecil's 'Diary':

'I have been reading this evening at D.D.'s [Edith Lyttelton's] request one of the new type of British Empire lesson books - very trashy and clap-trappy ... I wish I were a Rhodes Trustee and could get something of the kind really well done. The intention of all of

¹²³ Executive 17 October 1912; 21 November 1912.

¹²⁴ Executive 24 April 1913.

¹²⁵ Executive 24 April 1913.

¹²⁶ Executive 19 June 1913.

¹²⁷ Executive 23 April 1914; *Monthly Notes* June 1914, p50; *Times* 26 May 1914.

¹²⁸ The Royal Colonial Institute did develop a cinema sub-committee, but not until the interwar years [Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p170].

¹²⁹ J.G. Greenlee, 'Imperial Studies and the Unity of the Empire', p324.

them is good but there is too much about 'Impregnable Gibraltar' when one knows it is quite pregnable ... instead of which one ought to say, 'our forebears by courage and constancy did all this for us, and we have to see that it is properly defended and used'. Birrell's description of the Daily Telegraph as a 'Rowdy Philistine' would apply to all these so-called Imperial books'.¹³⁰

This is very close to the attitude that Milner felt should be produced by a study of the British Empire: not boastfulness, aggression and Jingoism but

'a spirit of gratitude ... for the greatness of our birthright - a spirit of humble admiration for the efforts and sacrifices of the past ... a deep anxiety to preserve anything so precious ... a desire to be worthy of privileges so unique'.¹³¹

In addition, the Victoria League had a firm belief that knowledge about the Empire - not so much its grandeur and romance as the nitty-gritty facts of its geography, population, farming and industries - would of itself inspire the proper attitude towards the Empire and its future. In 1911, for example, the Leeds and Victoria branches of the League organised an exchange of slides: one set illustrating 'the whole wool growing industry, including mustering, dipping and shearing etc.' in Australia; and the other 'showing the process of manufacturing the wool in the Leeds district'.¹³² This was precisely the kind of thing encouraged by the Victoria League: educational in itself, full of local interest, and demonstrating most vividly the interdependence of the mother country and the colonies.

¹³⁰ Violet Cecil, 'Diary' 3 May 1904 [Violet Milner F2/2].

¹³¹ Milner, *The Nation and the Empire* (London: Constable & Co.: 1913) p172-3 (speech delivered at the Guildhall on Empire Education, 23 April 1907).

¹³² Annual Report 1910-11, p45 (Leeds branch report).

Chapter 5. Culture to the Colonies

Though the Victoria League's 'Plan for Imperial Education' came to nothing, the League did not abandon its aspiration to educate the white dominions in the importance and significance of the imperial connection. It was able to pursue this aim most effectively through the provision of books to settlers on the imperial frontiers (particularly the Boer colonies) and especially to schools. Over time the literature work expanded to include the organisation of newspaper exchanges and the mounting of travelling exhibitions of 'old master' prints to Australia and South Africa. In all these schemes the obvious cultural and educational aspects hid deeper political aims.

The original idea for the literature scheme came from Mrs Clare Fitzgibbon, London correspondent for the Toronto *Globe* under the pen-name 'Lally Barnard', who acted as a Canadian advisor to the League during its early years. In the summer of 1902, a large number of colonial politicians being in London for the Coronation and the Colonial Conference, the Victoria League organised a conference of premiers' wives. Mrs Fitzgibbon suggested as a possible subject of discussion,

'the need of counteracting the influx into Canada of American literature and trade advertisements by reducing the postal rates between England and Canada. Distribution in the schools of Canada and other Colonies of suitable illustrated books and lithographed prints of the little Princes etc.'¹

The conference resolved that 'the facts should be obtained if possible from the Colonies as to what magazines would be welcome and how they should be distributed. The G.L.W. and I.O.D.E. to be informed'.² Some months later letters were received from 'Mrs Stone, Transvaal, and Lady William Seymour, stating need of children's magazines and suitable literature in outlying parts of South Africa'. It was therefore decided to appoint a subcommittee 'to organise a collecting depot in London, and collection, and transmission to South Africa, of suitable literature for children and adults, in that country. Wherever possible the distribution to be done by the Guild of Loyal Women and the Children of the Empire League'.³

Thus, although the scheme had originated from Canada, it was at first directed only to South Africa. The letter which appeared in the *Times* in February 1903 announcing the project appealed to 'those interested in the progress and development

¹ Executive 10 July 1902.

² Executive 22 July 1902.

³ Executive 13 November 1902.

of our South African Colonies', and the League annual report explained that the subcommittee had been created

'to organise the distribution of English literature in South Africa, many requests having been received for books and magazines for distribution among the outlying farms and country districts, and to form the nucleus of lending libraries to be attached to the Schools and elsewhere throughout the country. Mr Chamberlain has sent a message urging the need for such an organisation'.

Official support also came from Fabian Ware, Milner's Minister of Education in the Transvaal, Mr T.R. Price, General Manager of the Central South African Railways, and Lady Lawley, wife of the Lieutenant-Governor of the Transvaal.⁴

Books were undoubtedly scarce in South Africa. Even in 1910 Meriel Talbot found that the library of a government school at Harrisburg in the Orange Free State consisted of 'a copy of *Swiss Family Robinson* almost in tatters, also a simplified *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Settlers in Canada*'.⁵ However, the scheme was not exclusively educational. The League had two other aims in mind. The first was to render more bearable the isolated lives of British settlers on the frontier (and thus increase the chances that they would *stay* on the frontier) at a time when Milner was insisting that the only long-term solution to the 'South African problem' was large-scale British land settlement in the annexed Boer republics.⁶ The second was to 'promote a knowledge of English history and life among all settlers in South Africa'⁷ - that is, to act as an auxiliary to Milner's plan to Anglicise the Boers, in particular through education.

The Victoria League worked in close co-operation with the administrators of the new colonies. In January 1904 it announced that the work of attaching 'a lending library of good English literature, suitable for circulation among the children and the people generally' to each Transvaal school district would be carried on 'through a special committee organised by Lady Lawley, including Lord Milner, the Bishop of Pretoria, and Mr Fabian Ware'.⁸ The League insisted that the literature work would 'heal the wounds of war in South Africa'.⁹ 'The more I know of the various adverse influences at work in this country' wrote a Transvaal headmistress, 'the more I feel that bitter and long-continued trouble in the future can only be averted by agencies such as yours. I think it is impossible to over-estimate the importance of your work

⁴*Times* 12 February 1903; Annual Report 1901-3, p22-3.

⁵Talbot Diary 17 October 1910 [Talbot U1612 F222].

⁶See e.g. Cecil Headlam (ed.), *The Milner Papers Volume II* (London: Cassell & Co.: 1933) p144.

⁷*Times* 12 February 1903.

⁸*Times* 11 January 1904.

⁹*Times* 11 January 1904.

from an Imperial, a humanitarian, or a Christian standpoint'.¹⁰ It also stressed that the libraries would be 'one of the most effective means of spreading a knowledge of the English language and literature among the inhabitants of South Africa'.¹¹ It was hoped that this would extend beyond the schools themselves: 'some of the parents, who can only understand the most simple English, enjoy the books as much as the children'.¹² The literature provided by the League would contribute to that broadening of vision which Milner hoped to produce in the next Boer generation through history lessons. 'The illustrated papers' reported a Transvaal school inspector, 'are most keenly appreciated by the Boer children, and will prove very valuable in making them familiar with other scenes and phases of life outside South Africa'.¹³

By 1912 the Victoria League had sent some 22,000 books to the Transvaal and more than 6,000 to the Orange River Colony.¹⁴ In addition several cases had been sent to Rhodesia, and about 200 books to schools in Cape Colony, under a scheme whereby the Cape Superintendent-General of Education 'offered book shelves and a gift of 60 books to any library of the kind started by the Victoria League'.¹⁵ Responsible government and Union had undermined the original *raison d'être* and exposed the League to Boer hostility. Although one Transvaal school inspector told Talbot in 1910 that 'they welcomed the English story books at the Dutch schools', another reported that he had 'had to stop V.L libraries in schools - the books now going to farmers and others'.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the League's literature work was restricted less by politics than by a perpetual lack of resources. The Literature committee issued a succession of appeals calling for

'Boys and children's books (these specially wanted). Standard works, fiction or otherwise. Good modern novels. French books. History. Biography. Travels. Books on science and art. Magazines (bound or unbound). Illustrated papers (recent)'

(and discouraging offers of 'old school books, old theological works, or out of date works on scientific subjects').¹⁷ Nevertheless the committee's reports reveal a painful contrast between 'Greater Britain's' apparently boundless capacity to absorb literature and the League's extremely limited means of supplying it.

¹⁰Annual Report 1904-5, p16.

¹¹*Times* 13 April 1905. See Table 2, p110.

¹²Annual Report 1903-4, p14.

¹³Annual Report 1906-7, p15.

¹⁴See Table 2.

¹⁵Executive 1 February 1906.

¹⁶Talbot Diary, Pretoria 24 November 1910, Johannesburg 15 January 1911 [Talbot U1612 F222].

¹⁷Literature Committee leaflet c.1913.

The League organised a system of local collectors, 'each collector undertaking to send a yearly subscription of £1, and not less than fifty books'.¹⁸ By 1905 there were 106 but it was found necessary to make constant appeals. 'We want many more people who will become country collectors; we want many more books, especially children's books; and above all, we want money to buy new books, which are even more useful than old'.¹⁹ Many publishers (perhaps encouraged by the fact that Mrs Maurice Macmillan was the Victoria League treasurer) supplied books free or at reduced rates. The War Office (in the early years) and an increasing number of shipping lines transported books without charge. The managers of the League's Pall Mall (and later Hudson's) book deposit charged only a nominal rent for storage space. But the League was anxious to provide as many new books as possible and there were 'heavy incidental expenses, such as making cases, shipping and dock dues'.²⁰ It was estimated that 'the yearly cost of packing and transport is nearly £100, and the Committee have only a few subscriptions to rely on for meeting the necessary expenses and buying any books which are specially needed'.²¹ A particularly pathetic report, printed in the *National Review* in an attempt to raise money, after detailing the gratitude of the recipients and the work remaining to be done, concluded, '*Funds - Balance in hand to meet above needs, 6s. 4d.*'.²² By this time the League had extended its literature work to include Canada and then the other settler colonies, particularly in association with the Victoria Leagues in Tasmania and other parts of Australasia. The shortfall between demand and supply became correspondingly more severe, though several branches, especially Edinburgh, sent out literature to the colonies direct.

The Literature committee expanded into Canada through the Aberdeen Association, which had provided the model for the Victoria League's literature work. The Association had originated in Lord and Lady Aberdeen's 1889 tour of Western Canada. Visiting a number of recent emigrants they had known in Scotland, the Aberdeens were depressed to discover that although 'many of those people had received a good education in the old country [they] were living quite shut away from news of any kind, and were so intent on making their land pay that they would grudge even a few pence on books or papers as an unnecessary luxury'. Before leaving Canada, Lady Aberdeen addressed the women of Winnipeg, asking 'if it would not be possible to organise a collection of magazines, papers, and books from

¹⁸ Annual Report 1903-4, p15.

¹⁹ *Times* 13 April 1905.

²⁰ Annual Report 1903-4, p16.

²¹ Annual Report 1909-10, p20.

²² *National Review* vol. 50 1907-8, p667-8.

homes in Winnipeg, and send them out periodically to settlers' homes'.²³ The plan was adopted and later expanded (with the help of W.T. Stead, Andrew Carnegie, and the Canadian railways and shipping companies) to rely largely on literature sent out from Britain via an office at the Imperial Institute. Recognising the similarities of the Aberdeen Association organisation and the Victoria League's new scheme, in 1904 the League took over the British side of the Aberdeen Association's work, the Association continuing to direct distribution at the Canadian end.²⁴ The two committees already had a common member in the Dowager Lady Dufferin (wife of the governor-general of Canada 1872-78), and in 1905 the League committee enrolled Lady Minto, whose husband had just retired as Canadian governor-general.

By 1912 the League was sending almost twenty-five cases of magazines and unbound books a year to Canada through the Aberdeen Association.²⁵ In addition it had provided small libraries for a number of cottage hospitals founded by Lady Minto²⁶ and from 1905 began to send out 'Minto Libraries' - 'small circulating libraries inaugurated by Lady Minto in newly or sparsely settled districts' in the Canadian North-West.²⁷ With the help of the Aberdeen Association, which in 1909 agreed to pay £2 towards each Library, by 1912 forty-seven Minto Libraries, 'consisting of about 250 volumes each' had been sent to Canada.²⁸ Most were 'dotted about among new settlers in the huge provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan, into which the main stream of immigration is now pouring'.²⁹ Others went to the North-West Mounted Police, lumber camps, Gravenhurst Sanatorium in Ontario, a Medical Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen in Labrador, 'a mission ship, cruising along the coast of British Columbia' and 'the 'Sunday School by Post' society which ministers to children of all denominations over an immense area in Saskatchewan and Alberta'.³⁰

Though the anti-British threat in Canada was considerably less than in South Africa there were fears not only of creeping Americanisation but that the wave of East and Central European immigration to the North-West provinces might undermine the peculiarly English character of the Dominion. Quebec, regarded by the British public

²³ *We Twa: The Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen* (London: W. Collins & Co.: 1925) vol. I pp293-6. See also Marjorie Harper, *Emigration from North-East Scotland* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press: 1988) vol. II pp256-259.

²⁴ Annual Report 1903-4, p15.

²⁵ Annual Report 1909-10, p18.

²⁶ Annual Report 1903-4, p14.

²⁷ Annual Report 1904-5, p17.

²⁸ Annual Report 1909-10, p18; 1905-6, p25. See Table 2.

²⁹ Annual Report 1906-7, p16.

³⁰ Annual Report 1905-6, p25; 1907-8, p19; 1904-5, p17; 1906-7, p17, p16; 1909-10, p18.

as 'a quaint and picturesque anomaly', was generally ignored by the Victoria League, though on one occasion it reported that 'a consignment of French books has been forwarded to the French branch of the [Aberdeen] Association'.³¹ Imperialist emigration societies in Britain tried hard to persuade potential emigrants to head for the frontier rather than stay in the cities. Women in particular were wanted to bear the next generation of Canadians and bring them up in British ways. Strong efforts were made to acculturize non-British immigrants. In 1910 Meriel Talbot visited two Winnipeg schools where, she noted approvingly, 'they are moulding the little foreigners into the national life of Canada ... one class sang our National Anthem which they are carefully taught'.³² Here it was hoped that the Literature Committee might do its bit. In November 1909 the Aberdeen Association suggested 'arranging for articles on imperial questions being inserted in general magazines'.³³ Though this scheme seems to have come to nothing, the next annual report stated that it was 'much desired to introduce a distinctively patriotic element into the work of the Aberdeen Association for the sake of the numerous foreigners who are pouring into Canada. The Literature Committee of the Victoria League will be particularly grateful for any books or magazine articles likely to promote appreciation of and attachment towards British institutions'.³⁴

Pursuing much the same objects, the Victoria League had already, in 1905, developed a 'newspaper scheme' as an addition to the literature work. Like the League's hospitality scheme³⁵ it depended on personal contact between individuals in the 'mother country' and in the colonies. The workings were simple. 'Anyone willing to help should apply to the Hon. Secretary, Newspaper Scheme ... stating the name of the magazine or paper offered. A suitable address to which to post it will then be submitted. The Hon. Secretary does not undertake to receive papers to be forwarded'.³⁶ Thus the senders were responsible for the cost of postage, a considerable sum in total as the League calculated in 1910.

'Adding senders in the Colonies to senders at home, we reach a total of 1,067. Putting their postage expenses at the low estimate of 1d per week each, a sum of £230 is shown to have been spent on Imperial work, - a sum which does not appear in any statement of Victoria League accounts'.³⁷

³¹R.G. Moyle & Doug Owsram, *Imperial Dreams and Colonial Realities: British Views of Canada 1880-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press: 1988) p89; Annual Report 1906-7, p16.

³²Talbot Diary, Winnipeg 12 May 1910 [Talbot U1612 F221].

³³Executive 18 November 1909.

³⁴Annual Report 1909-10, p18.

³⁵See Chapter 6.

³⁶*Times* 29 April 1911. Also published in the *National Review* vol. 57 1911 p719.

³⁷Annual Report 1909-10, p22-3. See Table 3, p111.

Nevertheless the work did involve the League in a good deal of correspondence: in 1912-13 the Literature Committee received 1,940 letters and dispatched 2,874.³⁸

Every year the Victoria League report printed letters from those sending or receiving newspapers in this way. The selection provided gives a good idea of the League's aims for the scheme. It was supposed to be both benevolent and educational. One woman wrote from Alberta:

'I wish you could realise what a treat it is to us North-West woman, engaged as we are in our house five long months in the winter time, to get a peep at the world outside. I feel it my duty to read all the good literature I can and enlarge my education for the sake of my children'.³⁹

The supply of British newspapers was also intended to strengthen the Imperial bond by keeping British settlers in touch with British news and culture:

'Sending these papers seems to form a link which binds us still closer to the dear old Motherland'.⁴⁰

'The papers keep the love of country and the pride of Empire alive within us'.⁴¹

Not only the British-born would benefit. One man wrote from Potschefstroom in the Transvaal with a pleasing picture of racial harmony.

'Every mail day now I receive the *Times* and every mail day at sunset the clatter of horses' hoofs can be heard nearing the farm house. It is the coming of my friends, two English and one young Boer, to read the Home papers. It is a grand thing to sit down at night after the day's work and read the *Times*'.⁴²

Another letter, this one from the Orange Free State, hints at a further benefit that might be expected in South Africa:

'In a few years the younger generation will all read English as well as Dutch, and English newspapers distributed amongst them will stimulate them to further exertions and give them truer ideas of what England is than at present held by them'.⁴³

³⁸ Annual Report 1912-13, p15.

³⁹ Annual Report 1913-14, p16.

⁴⁰ Annual Report 1913-14, p17 (letter from Australia).

⁴¹ Annual Report 1909-10, p22 (letter from the Transvaal).

⁴² Annual Report 1911-12, p17. The *Times* reprinted this letter with some satisfaction, 24 May 1912.

⁴³ Annual Report 1911-12, p17.

In Canada the situation was somewhat different. The problem here was felt to be that the country, especially the West, was being Americanised by the prevalence of U.S. periodicals. A clergyman from Saskatchewan wrote,

'I was glad to sit down and enjoy some good, reliable news ... At present this part of the British Empire is flooded with cheap American literature - ungrammatical, ill-spelt, of the 'Uncle Sam first and John Bull nowhere' type. News of the old country finds its way into Canadian papers through the States, and I have often been astounded at the paragraphs which sometimes appear in the North West papers as Gospel truth'.⁴⁴

It was a common complaint. When Violet Markham visited Canada in 1905 she found that 'the country is flooded with cheap American trash. Literature in any real sense of the word is non-existent'. In Toronto she met Leo Amery for the first time and they immediately agreed that 'all imaginable pressure should be brought to bear upon two points, the creation of a British news agency [and] the lowering of the [postal] rates on English journals and magazines'.⁴⁵ Markham told her mother, 'We are going to start a campaign in London about this rotten Canadian press. The papers are absolutely contemptible, all news comes through the States and British news is nil. Mr Amery is going to hammer the *Times* and Lord Stanley and I are going to hammer Alfred Lyttelton. I think it's most serious the country should be Americanised in such a way'.⁴⁶

On her return from Canada Markham publicised the issue in a letter to the *Times*. From Montreal to Vancouver, she said, she had heard but one opinion on the subject: 'the prohibitive charges on printed matter are destructive to the circulation of British newspapers and literature in the Dominion'. They were replaced by American imports, 'for the most part worthless in quality, not infrequently anti-British in tendency ... Canada is ... being Americanised against her will and against what she feels to be the best interests of her people'. Reduced prices would create a profitable trade. Even if it did not,

'the gain from the imperial point of view would be so great as to justify any sacrifice on the part of the home Government. The United States exercises somewhat heavy pressure in various ways on her neighbour, and that the British Government should assist this operation in any fashion is a fact which creates very strong, not to say sore, feeling in the Dominion'.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Annual Report 1905-6, p12.

⁴⁵ Violet Markham, Canada Diary 16 September 1905 [Markham 27/4].

⁴⁶ Violet Markham to Rosa Markham 18 September 1905 [Markham 27/58].

⁴⁷ *Times* 1 December 1905.

The Victoria League had been campaigning for lower postal rates to Canada since 1903.⁴⁸ In the autumn of 1905, no doubt encouraged by Markham's dispatches from the front, the League held a public meeting at which two prominent Canadians, Mr Colmer and Dr Parkin, spoke on the subject.⁴⁹ Their speeches were printed in a Victoria League leaflet, and a copy was sent to the Postmaster General, Sydney Buxton, who sent back an encouraging reply, 'pointing out at the same time that the solution of the difficulty is far from simple, and expressing his willingness to receive from the League any further information on the subject'.⁵⁰

In May 1906 Buxton sent the League a copy of a confidential letter to the Canadian High Commissioner, suggesting that 'the Victoria League might help in getting his views agreed to by the Canadian Government' and it was decided that 'it would be well to report on the general position to Sir George Drummond, Mr Lemieuf, Mrs Fitzgibbon and other prominent Canadians'.⁵¹ Buxton himself spoke on postal rates at the League's A.G.M. that year and in its next annual report the League was able to announce that a deal had been made (largely funded by the Canadian government) by which 'the rate of newspapers, magazines and trade journals from Great Britain to Canada will be reduced approximately from 4d. per lb. to 1d. per lb. per packet'.⁵² When in January 1908 Buxton wrote 'calling the League's attention to the satisfactory results of his recent postal reforms' he claimed that 'the additional number of periodicals per year sent under the new Canadian Magazine Post may be estimated at between 5 and 6 million'.⁵³ The *Times* applauded the arrangement as 'calculated to stimulate the growth of close sympathy and common sentiment between Canada and the Mother Country'.⁵⁴

The benefits to be expected from the Victoria League's newspaper scheme at the colonial end, therefore, included recreation, education, the maintenance of imperial sentiments in those settlers who came of British stock, and the inculcation of such sentiments into those who did not. But the advantages were not intended to flow all one way. In many cases exchanges were set up, whereby, for example, an English family might send the *Manchester Guardian* to a settler in Australia and receive in return the *Melbourne Age*, thus getting a glimpse of Australian life and a better

⁴⁸ Annual Report 1903-4, p9.

⁴⁹ Annual Report 1905-6, p9.

⁵⁰ Executive 1 February 1906.

⁵¹ Executive 11 May 1906.

⁵² Annual Report 1906-7, p7.

⁵³ Executive 16 January 1908.

⁵⁴ Quoted Annual Report 1906-7, p7-8. The League made later attempts to get the postal rates to Australia (which remained at 4d. per pound) similarly lowered: see Executive 21 July 1910, 20 October 1910, 16 May 1912.

understanding of colonial affairs. The educational value of such exchanges was thought especially important for children and the working classes. The League's Junior Associates were encouraged to participate in such schemes 'as it is felt that Overseas Illustrated Weeklies and Monthlies are proving an important factor in Imperial education'.⁵⁵ Working-men's clubs seem to have appreciated a supply of overseas newspapers in any case, but the League suggested 'to all interested in reading rooms and men's clubs' that a subscription to a colonial paper would also be 'a valuable asset to the cause of Imperial education'.⁵⁶

Even when exchanges could not be arranged - and the supply of settlers wanting British papers was always far greater than the number of those who could afford or were willing to send colonial papers in return - it was hoped that a personal link would be established between the sender and the recipient. 'Senders have expressed great gratification at the interesting letters received in acknowledgement of their papers, by which they have gained, at first hand, information of life and conditions in various parts of the Empire'.⁵⁷ And the Victoria League was an early supporter of the idea that the personal was political. One member wrote,

'I really think by this time we (*i.e.* the recipient and sender) feel quite old friends. I cannot say enough in praise of the League and its methods. I am sure more is accomplished by the sort of *personal* interest and tie it creates in its members than from a mere society's advantages'.⁵⁸

The League aimed to knit the ties of Empire thread by thread. After the usual bulletin of grateful letters from the empire's frontiers, one report concluded, 'it is impossible to receive such letters without a conviction that the Newspaper Scheme of the League may be a real factor in the bridging of distances and in the promotion of Imperial solidarity'.⁵⁹

In 1911 the Victoria League developed a variation on its literature work when it began to send prints of old masters to the colonies. The League had for some years been sending in its cases of books 'a large number of pictures, coloured and in monochrome ... in reply to frequent requests'.⁶⁰ The bigger scheme originated in 'an appeal, made to Miss Talbot when she visited Broken Hill [New South Wales] for help in getting artistic things in that lonely place'.⁶¹ The idea impressed her and

⁵⁵ Annual Report 1909-10, p21.

⁵⁶ Annual Report 1907-8, p22.

⁵⁷ Annual Report 1912-13, p15.

⁵⁸ Annual Report 1911-12, p17.

⁵⁹ Annual Report 1909-10, p22.

⁶⁰ Annual Report 1908-9, p24.

⁶¹ Annual Report 1913-14, p18.

blossomed during her South African tour. On the ship to Cape Town she met Sir Hugh Lane (the art collector and critic who had organised the Dublin modern art gallery and collected a group of seventeenth-century Dutch pictures for the National Gallery in Cape Town) *en route* to act as advisor for the new Johannesburg municipal gallery.⁶² Talbot was impressed both by Lane and by the Johannesburg collection, which she visited several times. 'Three rooms full of fine modern pictures [the collection included works by Rodin, Sargent and Monet] ... It is a possession for a brand new place like this. A refreshment for the many living here who have so little of that particular influence'.⁶³ The Durban gallery inspired quite different reflections. 'About three good pictures ... Oh! for my travelling collection!'⁶⁴ Talbot's experiences in South Africa convinced her of the need 'to bring art into the Colonies and go shares more with Great Britain'.⁶⁵

At the Victoria League's Conference of Patriotic Societies held in June 1911, shortly after Talbot's return,

'a fresh suggestion was made for a greater encouragement of artistic tastes. A strong desire was expressed that the Victoria League should try and procure the loan of some of Great Britain's countless art treasures, so that exhibitions in the various dominions might be held and the overseas citizens of the Empire enjoy this privilege'.⁶⁶

Shortly afterwards Violet Markham and Edith Lyttelton communicated with the Medici Society 'in regard to the possible circulation of the pictures'. As a result, 'the Society offered the entire gift of three sets of 50 pictures each (valued at published prices, some £150). Also to frame in any frames chosen at discount of 40%, on condition ... that at the end of the catalogue printed, at least two pages should be included giving information on the Medici Society and its work'. The offer was considered generous and duly accepted.⁶⁷ Spurred on by expressions of interest from Australia and South Africa,⁶⁸ a small Art Committee was formed with Mary Arnold-Forster in the chair and Sir Hugh Lane as artistic advisor.

By March 1912 Mary Arnold-Forster had submitted a 'list of fifty carefully chosen prints with estimates for framing, packing and for the purchase of five special ones'. She also reported the encouraging example of 'a similar exhibition organised

⁶² *DNB*.

⁶³ Talbot Diary, Johannesburg 22 November 1910 [Talbot U1612 F222]. Lane was an early British collector of Impressionists [Samuel Hynes, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press: 1975 (1st 1968)) p324-5].

⁶⁴ Talbot Diary, Durban 26 October 1910 [Talbot U1612 F222].

⁶⁵ Talbot Diary, Johannesburg 21 November 1910 [Talbot U1612 F222].

⁶⁶ Annual Report 1911-12, p6.

⁶⁷ Executive 7 July 1911.

⁶⁸ Executive 20 July 1911.

by Lady Bell in Middlesborough and of the great interest shown by the working people in that district'.⁶⁹ The League's selection included coloured reproductions of 'works of all schools and ages, from Van Eyck and Pisanello to Whistler ... the works chosen are rather the most interesting than the most obvious'.⁷⁰ The pictures were sent off in a hurry in the autumn when an opportunity of free transport came up.⁷¹ Nevertheless, at the end of the year the Art Committee was in the red, having spent £131-9-0 and collected only £22-2-0, although another £50 had been found by July 1913.⁷² The League hoped to raise some more by the sale of the catalogues which had been written by R.H. Benson, one of the Trustees of the National Gallery, to accompany the exhibition.⁷³

The prints went first to Johannesburg, the Witwatersrand Council of Education having given £100 towards the exhibition expenses. Here they were 'seen by 10,000 persons, and a series of lectures was arranged upon the various schools of painting represented in the Medici prints'. After this the prints went on a tour of schools, first in Johannesburg and then in other centres in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State.⁷⁴ Further exhibitions were also held at Heidelberg and Bloemfontein. The Victoria League of South Africa reported 'half rates granted by the railway authorities ... the exhibition at Heidleburg a great success - Public Library wished to purchase some for forming permanent collection',⁷⁵ and later that the print exhibition was 'moving from school to school - organisation of picture talks alongside ... Dutch teachers' interest ... the good taste shown by many of the children in selecting favourite pictures'.⁷⁶ The last letter was given in more detail in the League's annual report:

'At Standerton [in the Transvaal] the exhibition was at the Government School and I gave the children a picture talk. The teacher who accompanied me was a Hollander who told me I had made her very proud of her country by the things I had said of the Dutch pictures. I asked the children which of the prints they would have, supposing they were allowed a choice, and the answer was Giorgione's 'Picture of a Man' and Raphael's 'Madonna del Gran Duca'. Not bad for a lot of children who had most of them never seen anything of the kind before. These two have been favourites in

⁶⁹Executive 21 March 1912.

⁷⁰*Times* 11 December 1912. The League also considered a more ambitious scheme: in 1913 Edith Lyttelton visited Windsor to talk to Queen Mary about making prints of the Holbeins in the Royal collection for exhibition overseas [Executive 20 February 1913].

⁷¹Executive 17 October 1912,

⁷²Executive 19 December 1912; 7 July 1913.

⁷³Annual Report 1912-13, p16.

⁷⁴Annual Report 1912-13, p16.

⁷⁵Executive 24 April 1913.

⁷⁶Executive 15 January 1914.

almost every school. De Hooghe's 'Dutch Interior' and Carpaccio's 'Vision of St. Ursula' come next'.⁷⁷

The League's interest, however, was not entirely cultural. From a practical point of view the Medici Exhibition provided, as Richard Feetham said, 'something tangible for people to see as a result of the League's organisation, and as a starting point from which interest in the League had been aroused in many places'.⁷⁸ More than this however, it was the League's desire 'to spread facilities for the common enjoyment of literature and art among British subjects throughout the Empire and thus to increase the number of their common interests'.⁷⁹ Although the Art Committee also sent out a set of prints to Australia, which were exhibited first at Broken Hill and then at Melbourne, Geelong and Ballarat, this was an aim most specifically directed towards South Africa. While Australia had already produced a distinctive national artistic school - the 'Heidelberg school' of the 1880s and '90s - and Canada was just developing one in the 'Group of Seven', white South African art remained 'halting and conservative, aggravated by lack of exposure to developments abroad'.⁸⁰ Talbot did see one South African painting, displayed in Kruger's house:

'to crown the monstrosity of it, an oil painting of the old man sitting on clouds, angels above him, and a crowd of Transvaalers gazing from below!! It's really past belief: the old man's shoulders appear above the clouds in a frock coat!'

From it she drew the moral of an essential cultural difference: 'no wonder the fusion of English and Dutch here takes time!'⁸¹

Led by Hertzog, many Dutch South Africans were turning more and more towards their own culture (represented by language and religion) as an assertion of Boer nationalism, and away from what Talbot described as 'English = European and progressive education'.⁸² The League Medici exhibition represented an attempt to win over the Boers (particularly the children) to the European cultural heritage. Every sign of Boer enthusiasm was meticulously noted. One report quoted a 'suggestive incident' mentioned in the Bloemfontein *Friend*: 'Many of the inhabitants of the district who attended the quarterly Nachتماال services made use of their time while in town to visit the Town Hall for the purpose of viewing the

⁷⁷ Annual Report 1913-14, p18.

⁷⁸ Executive 19 February 1914.

⁷⁹ Annual Report 1913-14, p18.

⁸⁰ Jane Turner (ed.), *The Dictionary of Art* (London: Macmillan: 1996) vol. 2 p746-747, vol. 5 p566-567, vol. 29 p108.

⁸¹ Talbot Diary, Pretoria 16 November 1910 [Talbot U1612 F222].

⁸² Talbot Diary, Johannesburg 13 January 1911 [Talbot U1612 F222].

exhibition'.⁸³ It was perhaps not only artistic judgement that emphasised Dutch pictures in the collection.

The Guild of Loyal Women had for many years attempted to stimulate artistic endeavour in South Africa through 'Milner Scholarships' for higher education in art, music or literature.⁸⁴ Members of the Canadian I.O.D.E. were pledged to 'assist in the progress of art and literature'.⁸⁵ In settler colonies such aims were frequently seen as women's province, since the men were supposed to be too busy Empire-building and making money to have the time or the desire to indulge in cultural activities. Female emigration societies routinely claimed that 'gentlewomen' especially would 'keep up the tone of the men with whom they mix by music and booklore when the day is over'.⁸⁶ The Victoria League, therefore, was following a well-trodden and suitably 'feminine' path when it decided to send literature and art to the dominions. But there was always a political slant to the League's activities. Behind the benevolent and cultural aspects of the literature/newspaper work was a clear desire to propagate the English language, British culture and Imperial sentiments, and to create personal ties between Britain and 'Greater Britain'; while the exhibition of prints of old masters attempted to persuade Dutch South Africans in favour of the 'enlightenment and progress and the greater civilisation' of Europe.⁸⁷

⁸³ Annual Report 1913-14, p18.

⁸⁴ Annual Report 1907-8, p69-72.

⁸⁵ Mrs W.G. Lumbers (attrib.), *The Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire Golden Jubilee 1900-1950* (Toronto: 1951) p9-10.

⁸⁶ Quoted A.J. Hammerton, *Emigrant Gentlewomen* (London: Croom Helm: 1979) p161.

⁸⁷ Talbot Diary, Bloemfontein 6 October 1910 [Talbot U1612 F222].

Table 2: Books Sent

Year	Transvaal	ORC	Canada	Australasia	Other	Total
1903-4	?	?	?	?	?	6,240 ¹
1904-5	5,000	1,200	c.200	c.200	-	6,600 ²
1905-6	5,000	800	2,350	-	200	8,350 ³
1906-7	2,000	600	1,950	100	200	4,850 ⁴
1907-8	3,000	750	1,500	c.100	150	5,700 ⁵
1908-9	2,500	900	1,626	c.200	1,000	6,126 ⁶
1909-10	2,400	800	2,445	c.100	900	6,645 ⁷
1910-11	850	300	2,200	c.400	600	4,350 ⁸
1911-12	1,600	1,000	2,763	incl. --->	370	5,733 ⁹
1912-13	?	?	?	?	?	10,800 ¹⁰
1913-14	?	?	?	?	?	?

Note: - These figures are for books sent from the V.L. Literature committee only, i.e. not those sent direct from Branches. This table does not include magazines etc. sent through the Aberdeen Association (see Periodicals table) nor the books sent to the South African Railway Mission. A case is counted as = 100 books and a Minto Library as = 250 books where no details are given. There are no figures for 1913-14 or 1914-15.

¹ 'Since the New Year we have sent away forty-eight cases; averaging about 130 books each'. [2nd AR p15]

² Two cases were sent to Tasmania and another two to the Gravenhurst Sanatorium in Ontario. [3rd AR p17]

³ Five Minto Libraries, 'consisting of about 250 volumes each'; five cases to Minto Hospitals; and six cases 'consisting of about 100 volumes each' to the North-West Mounted Police were sent to Canada. A case was sent to Rhodesia and another to Irene Orphanage near Pretoria. [4th AR p24-5]

⁴ Seven Minto Libraries, a case to Gravenhurst Sanatorium and 'a consignment of French literature' were sent to Canada. Two cases went to the Cape. [5th AR p15-16]

⁵ 'Some 5,700 books' were reported to have been sent in total. Two cases were sent to Rhodesia, and 200 volumes to the Royal Horse Artillery in South Africa. One case went to Gravenhurst Sanatorium. [6th AR p18-19]

⁶ As well as the usual annual case to Tasmania, 'over 100 books' went to the V.L of Victoria, and 'in all, about 1,000 books ... have gone during the past year to various parts of the Empire, where the V.L is only gradually becoming known'. [7th AR p24-5]

⁷ The Canadian figure includes 226 Sunday School Reward Books. 1,000 books, including the annual Tasmanian case, were distributed outside Canada and South Africa. [8th AR p18-19]

⁸ The Canadian figure includes 'a special collection of theological and secular works, towards which the Guild of Church and Empire made a handsome contribution'. 1,000 books, including a case each to the VLs of Tasmania, West Australia, and Canterbury and Wellington in New Zealand, were distributed outside Canada and South Africa. [9th AR p17-18]

⁹ Many of the OFS books were 'special gifts'. 240 books and papers 'including about 100 Coronation numbers of illustrated papers, presented for South Africa' were also sent in small parcels. [10th AR p15-16]

¹⁰ 2,300 'paper-books' were also sent. [11th AR p14]

Table 3. Periodicals

Year	Aberdeen Association (Cases)	Newspapers Out	Newspapers Into GB
1903-4	-	-	-
1904-5	15	-	-
1905-6	?	8,036 pa ¹	2,288 pa ²
1906-7	7	21,736 pa	5,720 pa ³
1907-8	23	38,480 pa	6,292 pa ⁴
1908-9	13	c. 51,500 pa ⁵	?
1909-10	25	87,080 pa ⁶	100 people send.
1910-11	22	83,168 pa ⁷	?
1911-12	23	97,660 pa ⁸	3,260 101 recipients.
1912-13	?	102,693 pa ⁹	101 recipients.
1913-14	?	103,521 pa ¹⁰	132 recipients.

¹ Calculated from 134 papers sent weekly plus 89 papers sent monthly. [4th AR p14]

² Calculated from 44 papers sent weekly. [4th AR p15]

³ An overestimate. Calculated from 418 papers leaving Britain, and 110 coming into Britain: 'of these the great majority are sent weekly, the remainder monthly or occasionally'. [5th AR p17]

⁴ As above. Calculated from 740 papers leaving Britain, and 121 coming into Britain, 'mostly weekly'. [6th AR p23]

⁵ '1,560 magazines and nearly 50,000 papers are being sent out from England per annum'. [7th AR p28]

⁶ 'About 15,320 magazines and 71,760 newspapers are now being sent per annum by 967 persons in Great Britain to 906 recipients in the Dominions'. [8th AR p20]

⁷ 'Upwards of 79,000 newspapers are rescued per annum from premature death in wastepaper baskets to carry their messages far and wide to our fellow-subjects beyond the Seas ... The number of magazines leaving Great Britain under this scheme is now 2,808 per annum; 1,360 Times Supplements per annum are also being sent'. [9th AR p18-19]

⁸ 'There are now 1,690 senders in the United Kingdom (300 more than last year), 92,581 papers have been sent (13,581 increase), 3,896 magazines (1,098 increase), Times Supplements only have decreased (1,183 against 1,360 last year). Grand total 97,660, against 83,168 last year, increase 14,492 ... There are now in the United Kingdom 101 recipients of Overseas papers. Available information shows that 3,260 overseas papers and magazines have come in during the past year'. [10th AR p17-18]

⁹ 'There were 1,806 senders of newspapers to addresses overseas, and 101 recipients of newspapers at home. The total number of newspapers, etc., sent during the year was 102,693'. [11th AR p15]

¹⁰ 'The number of persons sending papers from the British Isles through the League's Newspaper Scheme is now 1,969. There are 132 recipients of Overseas papers, and many applicants for these remain unsupplied. Newspapers are now leaving Great Britain at the rate of 99,994 per annum, and magazines at the rate of 3,527 per annum'. [12th AR p16]

Chapter 6.

From Home to Home: Hospitality & Settlers' Welcome

Kipling described the Victoria League as 'the first attempt to organise sympathy'.¹ Nowhere is this aim more apparent than in the League's hospitality work or its natural corollary, the settlers' welcome scheme for emigrants to the 'white dominions'. While the Victoria League in Britain entertained and assisted colonial visitors to the mother country, its allied associations in the colonies welcomed British visitors and British settlers. Thus goodwill could be engendered, knowledge exchanged, and personal ties created which, with luck, would translate into political ties holding the Empire together.

(i) Hospitality

'A lot of Imperialist ladies asked me to tea to meet schoolmasters from New Zealand and editors from Vancouver, and that was the dismalest business of all'.

The Rhodesian Richard Hannay in London.
John Buchan, *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1916).

The entertainment of colonial visitors in London, one of the activities for which the Victoria League became best known, originated in an early suggestion from Kipling, who urged upon the League 'the need ... for hospitality to be offered for Colonials when visiting England'.² The idea was quickly taken up, for there was a wide-spread feeling that hospitality generously offered to British visitors in the colonies was too often returned inadequately, or not at all, when colonials visited Britain. Some hoped for an official solution. Albert Grey frequently urged upon Colonial Secretaries

'the importance of having a staff of A.D.C.s attached to the C[olonial] O[ffice] whose duty it should be to see that the visitors from Greater Britain whom they might be instructed to look after should have during their stay in London the best of times ... Canadians of influence have had their white hearts towards England turned inky black by C.O. neglect ... A little attention is so tremendously appreciated, and conversely a want of attention excites all sorts of disappointed and angry feelings'.³

But as Edith Lyttelton crisply pointed out, there was not 'the slightest chance of getting that done as it would cost money'.⁴ Instead, like so many other imperial

¹Lady Jersey, *Fifty-One Years of Victorian Life* (London: John Murray: 1922) p381.

²Executive 7 June 1901.

³Grey to Violet Markham 17 November 1906 [Markham 25/33]. Grey's scheme was of long standing.

⁴Edith Lyttelton to Grey 17 February 1905 [Grey 215/3].

activities, the task devolved onto a voluntary organisation.

By January 1902 the League had formulated a 'scheme for organising some regular system whereby names of visitors could be obtained and the right kind of hospitality extended'. A committee was formed, members being chosen for their social clout and personal links with the colonies. Lady Jersey, whose garden parties at Osterley Park were famous, took the chair. She 'knew well it is hospitality that warms the heart of visitors', having 'at long range from the Antipodes' during her husband's stint as Governor of New South Wales 'promoted the English tour of an Australian politician [Sir George Dibbs], watching his supposed Republicanism dissolve in the warmth of his welcome'.⁵ Lady Jersey was succeeded in 1907 by Lady Leconfield, Lord Rosebery's favourite sister and 'an accomplished woman ... supreme in all social gifts'.⁶ The first honorary secretary was Lady Frances Balfour, one of the League's less successful appointments. 'My mistakes were many and my groans vociferous' she remembered, 'but I entirely deny one legend of the period ... It was reported that I left London [for Edinburgh on the eve of a League entertainment], taking the lists with me, and that I sent this telegram to the Office. "Flying north, hope dinner will be a great success"'.⁷ She resigned in 1903⁸ and was succeeded by a string of less conspicuous but more efficient replacements. The committee became increasingly dominated by prominent hostesses, especially following a decision in 1910 to admit 'honorary members' (including Margot Asquith, Mrs. Moberly Bell, the Marchioness of Salisbury, and Susan, Lady Malmesbury) as helpers.⁹

The Victoria League inner circle were almost all, by birth or by marriage, at the heart of London 'Society', the 'Upper 10,000' of largely inter-connected families who still dominated much of the political as well as the social life of Britain. The social year of the aristocracy and the upper-middle class followed the Parliamentary year. After a winter spent in the country they began to travel to London after Christmas for the opening of Parliament. The 'Season' proper began in May and ran through June and July, a non-stop whirl (particularly for young girls just presented at Court and entering the marriage market) of dinners, dances, parties and balls. 'Society' left London *en masse* for country house parties in August and September as Parliament adjourned and the grouse season started: to be seen in London during these months was to admit to poverty and social failure. By October

⁵Violet Powell, *Margaret, Countess of Jersey* (London: Heinemann: 1978) p166, p114.

⁶*Times* 28 June 1939.

⁷Lady Frances Balfour, *Ne Obliviscaris* (London: Hodder & Stoughton: 1930) vol. II p379-80.

⁸Executive 12 November 1903.

⁹Executive 19 May 1910; 7 July 1910.

it was 'decent' to be seen in Town again, but many remained in the country for the pheasant season, cub-hunting, and then fox-hunting proper before returning to London in the Spring to begin the whole thing over again.¹⁰

The Victoria League too followed this social round. The executive met monthly from October to July (the Council and General meetings being held in May or June) before dispersing for the obligatory two months in the country. Edith Lyttelton, apologising for the neglect of the Canadian Clifford Sifton one August and September, explained that 'the V.L. could do nothing because ... not a soul was in London'.¹¹ The League's hospitality was concentrated in the three months when the 'Season' happily coincided with the bulk of colonial visitors. The etiquette of 'Society' was also followed by the League, with some modifications to fit the needs of the case. The Hospitality committee acted as middlemen, receiving introductions brought by colonial visitors and ensuring that they were entertained suitably by obliging hostesses. Introductions were essential as a guarantee of the respectability of the person introduced. Etiquette manuals warned, 'an introduction *is a social endorsement*' and should not be given lightly.¹² The League was anxious to ensure that each visitor received 'the right kind of hospitality'. 'It would be a great mistake to entertain indiscriminately and invite people to meet who would not know each other at home' Edith Lyttelton told Grey. 'Therefore we must have some personal introductions and first hand knowledge. The Agents-General and the Colonial Institute' she complained 'do not know these social distinctions'.¹³

The League was fortunate in its timing, for the Coronation of Edward VII in 1902 boosted its hospitality scheme as nothing else could have done. Scores of visitors arrived from the colonies for the occasion, and, since the event was postponed from 26 June to 9 August due to the King's attack of appendicitis, many undoubtedly remained in Britain longer than they had intended. The League's opportunities for hospitality were therefore almost unlimited, and its members pulled all the social strings available to them to ensure that the opportunities were not wasted. According to Meriel Talbot, 'some 4,000 [colonial visitors] were ... entertained during the summer of 1902'.¹⁴ Some Victoria Leaguers, at least, had a deeper motive than the simple one of wanting to make Colonial visitors feel appreciated and at home. Violet Cecil reported in June that

¹⁰ Leonore Davidoff, *The Best Circles: Society Etiquette and the Season* (London: Croom Helm: 1973), chapter II.

¹¹ Edith Lyttelton to Grey 17 February 1905 [Grey 215/3].

¹² Davidoff, *The Best Circles* p41.

¹³ Edith Lyttelton to Grey 17 February 1905 [Grey 215/3].

¹⁴ Meriel Talbot, 'Early History of the Victoria League', *Welcome* 1 (2) April 1951 pp11-13, p12.

'Colonials are 'the fashion' and our South African friends are to have a really royal time. There are plenty of disloyalists too, who are I hope grinding their teeth at being out of all the fun. I do want to make loyalty 'pay' *for once*'.¹⁵

She seems to have succeeded. The League obtained 300 seats in St. Paul's Cathedral for the 'Solemn Intercession Service' on 29 June (during the King's illness) together with 'a smaller number for the Royal Review of the Colonial Troops, and for the Coronation Procession'.¹⁶

For informal entertaining, the League solicited 'private introductions ... from the Governors and others in the different Colonies' for visitors to London. Some were less obliging than others. Violet Cecil told Milner,

'that fool Lady Hely[-Hutchison, wife of the governor of Cape Colony] has written to say she can't give any letters of introduction as she knows only two people going home, the Seldens and Mr. Bender and 'they wouldn't care to be entertained'. As a matter of fact thanks to Dora [Fairbridge] and Annie [Hanbury-Williams] we have got pretty nearly all the Cape folk who matter'.¹⁷

Introductions obtained, the League approached English hostesses 'with the result that nearly every well-known house in London extended a warm personal welcome to all visitors introduced by the Victoria League'. In addition, 'during the months of May, June and July forty parties of various kinds were given, and about 4,600 invitations sent out to visitors from ... every corner of the British Empire'.¹⁸

It was the first time that London 'Society' had entertained Colonials on such a large scale, and there were perhaps some social difficulties to be overcome. Violet Cecil gave Milner a colony by colony analysis:

'One thing I am sure you will like to hear and that is that by far the best behaved, least grasping folk for invitations are the South Africans. Canada breeds good looks, good manners, more *savoir vivre*. They are like nicer Americans, less rich and with a more profound and mellowed sentiment about life. Australians and New Zealanders are like the lower middle-class at home (though they have their aristocracy too); they are touching in their wide-eyed admiration and love for this country. I feel them to be more our own people than the others, even the vulgarities of dress or accent (they have no other vulgarities) are familiar. I would rather rely on them in a tight place than upon the others'.¹⁹

¹⁵Violet Cecil 'Diary' 12 June 1902 [Violet Milner F2/1].

¹⁶Annual Report 1901-3, p21.

¹⁷Violet Cecil, 'Diary' 16 June 1902 [Violet Milner F2/1].

¹⁸Annual Report 1901-3, p21.

¹⁹Violet Cecil, 'Diary' 16 June 1902 [Violet Milner F2/1].

But the shock-troops of the Coronation visitors opened the doors to later colonial arrivals and got the Victoria League hospitality programme off to a flying start.

The Coronation gave impetus to another scheme, and one that became permanent: the Ladies' Empire Club established by the League 'in order that ladies living in England and visiting London from all parts of the Empire might have a centre for meeting, in addition to the ordinary advantages of a club'.²⁰ By March 1902 'about 60 members had already joined and much encouraging response had been shewn'.²¹ A home having been found for it 'after a good deal of trouble' at 'Whitehall Court, belonging to the Automobile Club', the Club was formally opened by Joseph Chamberlain on 13 May 1902.²² It was run on an experimental basis for six months and to promote its use, 'during the months of May, June and July, the [Club] committee were 'at home' to members on Tuesday afternoons; many attended and the scheme was entirely successful'.²³ The Club's success was probably evident very early on, for as early as June 1902 the committee of management pressed 'to be formally released from their position as a subcommittee of the Victoria League and to form an independent committee responsible for the future constitution and financial management of the Club'.²⁴ The Club, therefore, was removed from the direct control of the League, though the League maintained a substantial interest in it: of the committee of management's eighteen members, six were to be League nominees.²⁵

The original lease expiring in November 1902, the Club was homeless for some months, but in February 1903 'Mrs. Lyttelton reported that owing, almost entirely, to the labours of Mrs. Herbert Chamberlain, a committee had been formed. Directors including Lord Strathcona, Lord Brassey, Sir Vincent Caillard ... a good house [had been] obtained at 69 Grosvenor Square'.²⁶ Herself a Canadian, Lilian Chamberlain was particularly dedicated to promoting the interests of colonial visitors. The opening of the new clubhouse was celebrated by a 'conversazione' attended by the Joseph Chamberlains and many other distinguished imperialists on 22 May 1903.²⁷ Thereafter the League's responsibility for the Club became something of a formality, though individual members certainly took a considerable interest in it and most prominent Victoria Leaguers listed their membership in *Who's Who*. In 1904

²⁰*Times* 23 May 1903.

²¹Executive 21 March 1902.

²²Annual Report 1901-3, p19.

²³Annual Report 1901-3, p19.

²⁴Executive 18 June 1902.

²⁵Executive 10 July 1902.

²⁶Executive 5 February 1903.

²⁷Annual Report 1901-3, p20; *Times* 23 May 1903.

Edith Lyttelton attended a meeting and reported 'strong interest shewn in Imperial purpose of club and resolution to build an entertainments room, for lectures etc.'²⁸ but the Club largely disappears from League records thereafter.

The mid-nineteenth century had seen the expansion of the London clubs both in numbers and influence as part, Leonore Davidoff argues, of a

'general growth of semi-private institutions where rules of selectivity would guarantee social acceptability ... The club provided the same sort of social protection as the private home without the rigid formality of etiquette imposed by women or the financial burden of upkeep'.²⁹

By the turn of the century, however, 'Clubland' was not exclusively male. One observer in 1902 (who counted 125 respectable clubs for 'gentlemen') also found twelve clubs for 'ladies'.³⁰ Women's clubs more than men's felt it necessary to recreate the upper-middle-class home, since they were providing a substitute 'drawing-room' where ladies could receive their friends. The League congratulated itself on 'the taste with which the house had been decorated and ... its homelike and comfortable character'.³¹ An illustrated article by Mrs. Clare Fitzgibbon (probably intended as a publicity piece), describing the Club's charms and conveniences, also praised its 'distinctly home-like air'.³² With such attractions membership rose rapidly - by 1904 the Club numbered 'about 900 Members, of whom nearly 300 are Colonial Ladies'.³³ Growth was slower thereafter but numbers remained high and steady. By 1915 the Club had 'a membership of 1,050 and ... an altogether assured position'.³⁴

The Ladies' Empire Club aimed to be more than a London base for visiting Colonial ladies. Joining the Club was not wholly straightforward: two sponsors, a one guinea entrance fee and an annual fee of two guineas (if in England) or ten shillings and sixpence (if resident in the colonies) were required. Even then there might be difficulties. In 1903,

'We have just been having a tussle over electing Mrs. J.B. Robinson to our large and flourishing Ladies' Colonial Club. Violet [Cecil] and I are determined to blackball her in spite of Joe [Chamberlain] being

²⁸Executive 28 April 1904.

²⁹Leonore Davidoff, *The Best Circles* p24.

³⁰Richard Machray, *The Night Side of London* (1902), quoted in Hilary and Mary Evans, *The Party that Lasted 100 Days. The Late Victorian Season: A Social Study* (London: MacDonald & Jane's: 1976) p48.

³¹Annual Report 1901-3, p20.

³²'Lally Barnard' [Mrs Clare Fitzgibbon], 'The Ladies' Empire Club of London', *Canadian Magazine* vol. XXIII no. 3 (July 1904) pp195-199, p195.

³³Annual Report 1903-4, p9.

³⁴E.B. Sargent, 'The Victoria League', *United Empire N.S.* Vol. 6 1915 pp588-94, p592.

twice brought to bear on us. The awkward part of it is that J.B. gave £500 to the Club - but we want to return the money and be quit of them. Surely respectable [South] Africans won't join a club which welcomes Mrs. J.B',

Edith Lyttelton told Milner, adding, 'No wonder English people still think all Johannesburgers are rascals if they confound them with the J.B.s and Mrs. Barnato'.³⁵ But, as Davidoff notes, and as this example illustrates, the precondition of selection made a club an admirable setting for meeting strangers on terms of equality - and in this case for 'suitable' colonial visitors to gain an entry to London 'Society' who might otherwise have been excluded for no better reason than lack of personal contacts in Britain.

As unwarranted exclusion from London 'Society' was thought to breed colonial resentment, and as colonial resentment towards the 'mother country' might lead to thoughts of independence, the Ladies' Empire Club, like the League's hospitality work in general, was as much political as social. The *Spectator*, drawing a dismal picture of the enthusiastic (male) colonial visiting Britain for the first time, made the connection explicit:

'It is a country where the social organisation does not readily admit a stranger. He finds no sign anywhere that England considers himself or his land of any great importance ... Is he to be blamed if he feels that Britain is an exclusive, self-contained community, to which the Colonies are tagged on as dependencies?'

A 'genuine social meeting-ground of Englishmen and Colonials ... a club, a first-class club ... to which all good Colonial clubs should be affiliated' was needed. Among members 'there would be no need for introductions, but a man would speak to his neighbour as if he had known him for years'. Here the visitor could meet not only fellow-countrymen, but also 'the large and growing class of Englishmen who are more interested in the things of the Empire than the gossip of Mayfair or Newmarket'. And here he would realise 'what he still dimly believes - that behind the stolidity of the average Briton there is a real and Imperial brotherhood'.³⁶

³⁵Edith Lyttelton to Milner 9 July 1903 [Milner 216/103]. J.B. Robinson was considered anti-British in South African politics and was 'universally distrusted and disliked' both personally and in business matters - in 1922 the House of Lords vetoed his acceptance of a peerage from Lloyd George. Mrs. Barnato laboured under the double social disadvantage of being 'coloured' and having lived with her husband for some fifteen years before their marriage [Geoffrey Wheatcroft, *The Randlords* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson: 1985) p277, p238, p59].

³⁶Anon, 'An Imperial Club for London', *Spectator* 14 November 1903 pp802-3. Pointing to the Ladies' Empire Club as an example, the writer demanded, 'Why cannot men, who, after all, need a club more than women, go and do likewise?'

Edith Lyttelton's husband, Alfred, who succeeded Chamberlain as Colonial Secretary in 1903, was another firm believer in the use of social interaction to cement political bonds.

'Alfred was convinced that nothing could help his work more than personal intercourse with as large a number as possible of the people over whose public affairs he had, by virtue of his office, either some power or some influence. He made a point of seeing everyone who came from the Colonies, or was in the Colonial Service, and that not merely in a formal way'.³⁷

The Lytteltons were an attractive and sociable couple and Edith threw herself into the social aspect of Alfred's work. She told Milner,

'my little part in Alfred's office consists of pegging quietly away at the social recognition and care of our Colonial visitors. I am so very conscious to try and establish a precedent - difficult to do in the short time, so that every Colonial Secretary's wife may feel it her duty to take trouble, find out who is here and make a point of seeing them and getting her husband to - it is a terrible lot of trouble but I do think tremendously worthwhile - and they are such nice people and repay one so fully and generously ... I am training up various possible Colonial Secretary's wives in the way they should go'.³⁸

Her efforts did not go unappreciated. Albert Grey, as governor-general of Canada, wrote to her 'to thank you semi-officially for all you have done to make the hearts of Canadians white towards England. Every Maple Leaf which sees you in London comes back quivering with affection for you'.³⁹

As well as promoting the entertainment of colonial visitors by example, Alfred Lyttelton linked the Colonial Office more closely to the Victoria League. 'He made arrangements by which, through the League, the arrival of distinguished visitors from the Colonies was communicated to a few people who undertook to direct hospitality'.⁴⁰ This information was essential to the League's hospitality scheme. As Edith Lyttelton told Grey,

'The only difficulty is to know who is coming and where they are and that I think must depend on the officials at your end [i.e. in the colonies]. They must let the Colonial Office know who is coming and if possible where they are to be found. We of the V.L. wrote round to the various colonies and got a very good response - now I understand Alfred is trying to make an official request of the same kind. The C.O. would pass on the names to the V.L. who would look after them socially ... Of course the numbers are daunting. Last year I had 800 people on my book and managed personally to see a great deal of

³⁷Edith Lyttelton, *Alfred Lyttelton* (London: Longmans, Green & Co.: 1917) p313-314.

³⁸Edith Lyttelton to Milner 15 April 1904 [Milner 216/341].

³⁹Grey to Edith Lyttelton 5 June 1907 [Chan. II 3/4]. See also Grey to Edith Lyttelton 11 March 1905 [Chan. II 3/29].

⁴⁰Edith Lyttelton, *Alfred Lyttelton* p314.

them. But the whole scheme depends on getting prompt and full information from the Governors'.⁴¹

After the 1906 Liberal Landslide, the Victoria League approached the Colonial Office 'offering on behalf of the Entertainment Committee to receive names of visitors formerly sent to Mrs. Lyttelton as wife of the Colonial Secretary'.⁴² The Colonial Office agreed and the arrangement was thus perpetuated. Allied associations overseas also provided names and introductions for visiting colonials: the Victoria League of Victoria, for instance, in one year issued 99 letters of introduction ('half were people travelling for pleasure, the other half were for professional men and women, teachers, art and university students and hospital nurses').⁴³

With these arrangements in place, the League regularly entertained more than 1,000 visitors a season. The Coronation year of 1911 brought 1,500, but even this was not much up from normal numbers: 1,400 visitors were entertained in 1912 and 1,250 in 1913.⁴⁴ Even out of season the League might have several hundred visitors on its books at any one time: in October 1913 the number of visitors introduced to the Victoria League and then in England was 734.⁴⁵ A standard list of entertainments might include 'Countess of Crewe, garden party; Lady Leconfield, afternoon parties ... Lady Robson, tea party at the House of Commons ... Ladies' Empire Club, afternoon party ... the Lady Betty Balfour and the Woking Branch, organised country entertainments; Mrs. St. Loe Strachey ... invitations to a rifle club meeting at Newlands Corner'. The League also obtained tickets for such events as 'Debates in the House of Commons. The Trooping of the Colours. Many exhibitions of pictures. The King's procession to St. Paul's. Ranelagh and Roehampton polo matches'.⁴⁶ Most importantly, the League resolved to show colonial visitors 'the home life - the real England - and that, not only for their sakes, but equally for a truer understanding here of our fellow subjects overseas ... Weekends in the country, Sunday suppers in London, leading often to friendship and all that follows from it'.⁴⁷ Visitors were appreciative, the Guild of Loyal Women, for example, thanking the League on behalf of its members for the 'privilege and pleasure of being welcomed guests in their beautiful English homes'.⁴⁸

⁴¹Edith Lyttelton to Grey 17 February 1905 [Grey 215/3].

⁴²Executive 1 February 1906; 1 March 1906.

⁴³Annual Report 1909-10, p61.

⁴⁴Annual Report 1911-12, p7; 1912-13, p7; 1913-14, p8.

⁴⁵Executive 16 October 1913.

⁴⁶Examples from Annual Report 1906-7, p22-23.

⁴⁷Talbot, 'Early history of the Victoria League', p12.

⁴⁸Executive 1 February 1906.

From 1908 onwards the committee itself organised weekly tea-parties at the League office during the Season, to which London members as well as colonial visitors were invited, 'individual members of the committee volunteering to act as hostess ... and undertaking the financial expense'.⁴⁹ During the Colonial Conference of 1907 a luncheon was given for the wives and daughters of the Colonial ministers, 'to which many colonial visitors to London were bidden'.⁵⁰ A similar event was held for the wives and daughters of delegates to the 1909 Imperial Press Conference.⁵¹ In 1910, and again in 1912, a large party of Canadian teachers visited Britain. They were entertained by the League branches (Weybridge showed them flying and motor racing) and guided round the London sights. Some of the 1912 party were invited to the Royal Garden Party. The results were most satisfactory. 'I know that we shall go back home with a far different feeling, not more loyal perhaps, but now our loyalty will be an expression of love and not of duty' wrote one of the teachers, 'We have found new (old) friends which will make this land a reality to us and, we trust, to all those children who come under our care'.⁵²

To those with particular interests, 'sectional hospitality' was available. 'In my quest for all Institutions and social work among children in London and America I have had many introductions from Miss Talbot, which have opened doors to me everywhere and saved many hours of fruitless search' wrote one grateful visitor, 'and to all those interested in Art, Music, Literature, the same warm helpful welcome is freely extended'.⁵³ For some time an Agricultural committee existed to organise hospitality for farmers visiting Britain and to arrange visits 'to the most progressive of the home farms'.⁵⁴ The League was also concerned to befriend colonial students in Britain. During her tour Meriel Talbot went out of her way to meet the parents of students she knew in London - the mother of 'my young engineering friend in England' in Dunedin, for example.⁵⁵ Welcoming colonial students was the main activity of League branches in university towns. Lady Wallace of the Edinburgh branch remembered, 'usually I had an initial party in my own house ... the idea was that before the party broke up every newly arrived student had been invited to something by somebody and this worked very well'.⁵⁶ In Oxford, Kathleen Haldane

⁴⁹Executive 7 May 1908.

⁵⁰Lally Barnard, 'Victoria League's Luncheon to Colonial Ladies: a Charming Incident of the Conference', *Toronto Globe* 1 June 1907.

⁵¹Annual Report 1909-10, p7.

⁵²Annual Report 1910-11, p7-9; 1913-14, p8. A similar visit of South African teachers was proposed in 1911-12 but did not materialise [Executive 15 December 1910; 16 February 1911; 22 February 1912].

⁵³Quoted Annual Report 1912-13, p9-10.

⁵⁴Executive 16 July 1903.

⁵⁵Talbot Diary 5 February 1910 [Talbot U1612 F221].

⁵⁶Lady Wallace, 'The Story of the Victoria League in Scotland', p6.

was particularly energetic. She was eventually decorated 'for work among Colonial students',⁵⁷ though her daughter recalled that the students 'had to be suitable ones. She did not, for instance, like Afrikaner accents'.⁵⁸

The Victoria League also acted as a tourist information centre, providing details on 'such matters as apartments, nursing homes, doctors, dressmakers, country inns, schools (day and boarding) etc.'.⁵⁹ From 1904 'a book [was] kept at the office, divided into different headings, for practical information, in which members of committee [were] asked to write addresses to be signed in each case; this book to be made known among Colonial visitors, and a label to be attached announcing that no responsibility is taken by the Victoria League in the matter'.⁶⁰ In February 1913 the League opened an Information Bureau in response to a request from Mr Barrett of Melbourne, who reported 'the great need for some organised system in Great Britain whereby visitors could easily obtain information upon matters of all kinds during their stay in the country'.⁶¹ By 1914 the Bureau, advertised through Thomas Cook, was 'in complete working order' and the League could boast of having even been able to satisfy the queries of an Australian visitor interested in archaeology and heading for Asia Minor.⁶²

(ii) Settlers' Welcome

They change their skies above them,
But not their hearts that roam!
We learned from our wistful mothers
To call old England 'home'.

Rudyard Kipling, 'The Native-Born' (1894).

While the Victoria League welcomed colonials to Britain, it also maintained links with a variety of societies dedicated to encouraging female emigration to the colonies. The first major emigration society directed towards women had been the Female Middle-Class Emigration Society (founded in 1862), an explicitly feminist society run by members of the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women, which established a dual system of emigration for 'gentlewomen' and for 'superior servants'. The F.M.C.E.S. gradually became little more than a colonial placing

⁵⁷L.K. Haldane, *Friends and Kindred* (London: Faber: 1961) p187-90.

⁵⁸Naomi Mitchison, *Small Talk: Memoirs of an Edwardian Childhood* (London: Bodley Head: 1973) p87.

⁵⁹Annual Report 1903-4, p9.

⁶⁰Executive 25 February 1904.

⁶¹Executive 17 October 1912.

⁶²Annual Report 1913-14, p9.

agency for governesses, but it played an important role in making emigration a 'respectable' option for women.⁶³ Its most important successor was the British Women's Emigration Association, founded in 1884, which remained the largest female emigration society until 1919.⁶⁴ The B.W.E.A. was run from London with a network of regional voluntary workers, responsible for contacting potential emigrants and collecting references for them, for the B.W.E.A. refused assistance to those who could not produce guarantees of their moral character plus a satisfactory medical certificate. The society would then lend the emigrant her ticket money, if necessary, and provide for her 'protected passage' to Canada, Australasia or South Africa. Most emigrants became domestic servants or 'lady helps', with a sprinkling of factory workers, governesses, teachers, nurses and stenographers.⁶⁵

The perceived 'surplus women problem' lay behind all female emigration work. While the F.M.C.E.S. had promoted emigration as a route to a career and independence, B.W.E.A. propaganda increasingly emphasised marriage, motherhood and the preservation of 'Anglo-Saxon ideals' in a colonial home as the desirable path for the female emigrant, and particularly for 'gentlewomen'.⁶⁶ During and after the Boer war the idea of the female emigrant as a breeder of British children and a propagator of British ideals became particularly attractive to imperialists. 'The emigration of women to South Africa has become a question of national importance' wrote Alicia Cecil in April 1902.

'If that country is in the future to become one of the great self-governing colonies of the British Empire, warm in sympathy and attachment to the mother country, it must be peopled with loyal British women as well as British men'.⁶⁷

She went on to stress the political danger of mixed marriages between British men and Boer women ('it has been proved over and over again that the children of such marriages are Boers and not British in either character or sympathy') and to detail the plentiful employment opportunities awaiting 'women of high moral character,

⁶³A. James Hammerton, *Emigrant Gentlewomen: Genteel Poverty and Female Emigration* (London: Croom Helm: 1979), chapter 5.

⁶⁴Una Monk, *New Horizons: A Hundred Years of Women's Migration* (London: HMSO: 1963), chapter 1.

⁶⁵The workings of the B.W.E.A. are described in its evidence to the *Royal Commission on Natural Resources, Trade and Legislation of Certain Parts of His Majesty's Dominions* (First Interim Report 1912-13) Cd. 6515 XVI.

⁶⁶Hammerton, *Emigrant Gentlewomen* p162-3. For a discussion of gender and imperial emigration, particularly to South Africa, see Julia Bush, 'The Right Sort of Woman: female emigrants and emigration to the British Empire 1890-1910', *Women's History Review* 3 (3) 1994 pp385-409.

⁶⁷Alicia M. Cecil, 'The Needs of South Africa II: Female Emigration', *Nineteenth Century* April 1902, pp683-692, p683. Cecil was replying to an earlier article by May Hely-Hutchinson ('Female Emigration to South Africa', *Nineteenth Century* January 1902, pp71-87) which was highly pessimistic about female emigrants and emigration societies.

possessed of common sense and a sound constitution'.⁶⁸ The emphasis, again, was on domestic service, but, mindful of Milner's concern to get British settlers on the land, she also suggested that small groups of women might make a success of co-operative farming and market gardening.

Cecil was already putting her ideas into practice with the B.W.E.A.'s South African Expansion Committee [S.A.X.]. Milner described her as its 'moving spirit' and 'as businesslike as she is devoted'.⁶⁹ S.A.X. had been established in 1901 to combine the B.W.E.A.'s expertise with the plan of Sir John Ardagh (director of Military Intelligence at the War Office) for the large-scale emigration of 'young, healthy and fairly good-looking' single women, who would be married off as soon as possible to establish a British population in South Africa. At first it was a very small and amateur concern, but from August 1902 S.A.X was worked - and subsidised - through the Transvaal government's Women's Immigration Department. The scheme was never really satisfactory, time, public opinion and the irreconcilable aims of the B.W.E.A. (concerned primarily with 'gentlewomen') and the Colonial Office (who wanted marriageable domestic servants) working against it. Nevertheless, Blakely calculates that the South African Colonisation Society (as it had become by May 1903) had sent 5,748 women and children to South Africa by 1914.⁷⁰

Van-Helten and Williams note that the Boer War had 'added a younger generation of committed imperialists to the ranks of the B.W.E.A' who rapidly became involved with South African emigration.⁷¹ We can go further than this, for many of them were the same women who had joined the Victoria League executive. The newly-active group emerging after the Boer War included Alicia Cecil, Alice Balfour, Helen Munro-Ferguson, Violet Brooke-Hunt and Mary Hervey, many of whom had personal links to South Africa. The Victoria League and the female emigration societies founded after 1901 demonstrate an overlapping membership which does not extend to the older B.W.E.A. proper. It is noticeable that when the Colonial Intelligence League (an emigration society directed specifically towards 'educated women') was founded in 1910 it attracted many workers already active in the Victoria League. Among them were Lady Leconfield, Lady Talbot and Susan

⁶⁸Cecil, 'Needs of South Africa', p684.

⁶⁹Milner to Roberts 10 August 1901, Cecil Headlam (ed.), *The Milner Papers II* (London: Cassell & Co.: 1933) p232.

⁷⁰Brian L. Blakely, 'Women and Imperialism: The Colonial Office and Female Emigration to South Africa, 1901-1910', *Albion* 13 (2) Summer 1981 pp131-149, p132-5; Jean Jacques Van-Helten and Keith Williams, 'The Crying Need of South Africa: The Emigration of Single British Women to the Transvaal, 1901-10', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 10 (1) October 1983 pp17-38, p22-3.

⁷¹Van-Helten and Williams, 'Crying Need', p23.

Buchan, while the Victoria League lecturer, Miss Percy Taylor, resigned her post to become secretary to the C.I.L.

Even those who did not ultimately join the emigration societies were caught up by the idea. Edith Lyttelton had found in South Africa that one of the 'things which I feel I shall be able to help a little about in England' was female emigration.⁷² She told Milner shortly after her return,

'I went to a meeting about emigration the other day addressed by Chamberlain and Mr. Lyttelton Gell. I am afraid I giggled hopelessly at the latter. He was so *very* refined. He never ventured to say that women might be needed as wives and mothers in the colonies - no - he said we were needed as 'heads of houses and originators of families, as people who spread the highest traditions of English womanhood'. It was irresistibly funny ... Yet he made a good speech. I wish I knew whether to go on the S. African branch of this Emigration Society [the B.W.E.A.] ... I want to have a finger in the pie but the affairs seem to be hopelessly embroiled'.⁷³

Lyttelton never did join S.A.X. but, despite her amusement at the high-minded euphemisms in which female emigrationists dealt, she did remain interested in emigration to the Colonies. In 1905 she told Milner that she and Alfred had 'been so much struck by the Salvation Army and its colonisation work' and hoped that 'some of the unemployed may be emigrated under their auspices'.⁷⁴ She also appears in the records of the Colonial Intelligence League, first as a subscriber, then as honorary member of Council.⁷⁵

Violet Cecil had a more explicitly political interest in emigration. She and Kipling collaborated in 1902 on a land settlement scheme for the Orange River Colony. The object, in Kipling's words, was to 'put in good white men who may be a help in that hour of danger' which ultra-loyalists anticipated in the near future.⁷⁶ The project does not seem to have come to much, but for a while Cecil found she was 'very like Mrs. Jellaby ... Really, 'settling our surplus population on the banks of the African rivers' is my chief thought'.⁷⁷ It is clear that Cecil also approved of S.A.X. and its activities. In May 1902 she expressed a desire that the Canadian teachers going to the concentration camps should 'all marry and settle in S. Africa';⁷⁸ and

⁷²Edith Lyttelton to Kathleen Lyttelton 26 September 1900 [Chan. II 3/14].

⁷³Edith Lyttelton to Milner 21 March 1901 [Milner 214/192].

⁷⁴Edith Lyttelton to Milner 10 January 1905 [Milner 217/88].

⁷⁵C.I.L. Annual Report 1912-13, p40; 1913-14, p36.

⁷⁶Kipling to Violet Cecil 24 September 1902 [Violet Milner C395/2].

⁷⁷Violet Cecil, 'Diary' 23 January 1903 [Violet Milner F2/2].

⁷⁸Violet Cecil, 'Diary' 8 May 1902 [Violet Milner F2/1]. At least one of them did: Merial Talbot met her at Ficksburg in the Orange Free State and found her a fierce anti-Boer (Talbot Diary 10 October 1910 [Talbot U1612 F222]).

also recorded that she was arranging for Dr. Jameson 'to meet the Women's Emigration Committee. He jibbed at this but will see them I think'.⁷⁹

Meriel Talbot's round-the-Empire diaries reflect an interest in emigration evidently of long standing. By 1910 the emphasis of the emigration societies had largely shifted to Canada. The North-West was fast opening up as potential wheat-farming country, and Canada was also nearer to Britain, cheaper to get to, and largely free from the linguistic and racial problems that bedevilled South Africa. Talbot reflected this shift while, as usual for female emigrationists (and Canadian immigrationists), emphasising selection, protection and domestic service.⁸⁰

'One need really exists i.e. a Hostel in different centres here managed by a capable woman under a local committee to which servants could go on arrival and in between situations, and where they could be seen by intending mistresses. It would obviously be a real boon to the girls, bring many of the right sort into the country and do something to solve the pressing servant problem in the Colonies - I have visions of V.L. Hostels being started and becoming famous'.⁸¹

She visited hostels across Canada and concluded that 'everything on that subject is far clearer to me since I have stayed in the Colonies myself'.⁸²

Talbot was not ignorant of the real conditions of frontier settlement. In Edmonton her host told her of

'the tremendously hard life settlers right out in the country here have to endure. The strain of the loneliness and the long hard winters; having to build their own houses and wait for the first crop to bring them any return. We both agreed on the wickedness of painting it all in England as Utopia, and not telling people *some* of the real facts before they come here. There have been numberless cases of men and women going mad - especially the latter - and he told me of men found frozen to death at the end of the winter, no one having heard of them before. Of course there are splendid instances of success following upon great physical strength and determination, and starting with some capital. But everybody can't have that combination'.⁸³

Later in Basutoland Talbot heard some of the white women's early experiences there - babies born prematurely with no medical assistance, a woman on a remote station who 'every now and then ... used to go to the bottom of her garden and just scream aloud' - and commented, 'it is the women of these countries who have had to learn

⁷⁹Violet Cecil, 'Diary' 9 May 1902 [Violet Milner F2/1].

⁸⁰For the Canadian Hostel movement see Barbara Roberts, 'A Work of Empire: Canadian Reformers and British Female Immigration' in Linda Kealey (ed.), *A Not Unreasonable Claim: Women and Reform in Canada 1880s - 1920s* (Toronto: Women's Educational Press: 1979).

⁸¹Talbot Diary 25 April 1910 [Talbot U1612 F221].

⁸²Talbot Diary 3 May 1910 [Talbot U1612 F221].

⁸³Talbot Diary 1 May 1910 [Talbot U1612 F221].

the full meaning of suffering'.⁸⁴ But Talbot was a true enthusiast for these 'new' lands: 'it's all so big and beautiful and such splendid taming of the land and productiveness' she wrote from British Columbia.⁸⁵ It is no surprise to find her after the war working for the Society for the Oversea Settlement of British Women, the quango that amalgamated and replaced the older emigration societies.⁸⁶

The Victoria League's most prominent emigrationist was Alicia Cecil of the South African Expansion Committee. Cecil was honorary secretary of the League's short-lived emigration committee established in July 1901 (Alice Balfour and Mary Hervey were the other members)⁸⁷ and provided a link to the emigration societies. The Victoria League and S.A.X. were chiefly connected through the repatriation of British refugees to the former Boer republics.

'When S.A.X. started it did try to help out returning refugees, chiefly by giving them protection in our parties ... The Victoria League who work with the Loyal Women agreed to work all emigration through the S.A.X. and ... I being on both committees have generally undertaken their cases. They have frequently assisted by loans and grants of money towards the fare. The cases that have come to us are not very numerous and not infrequently they are single women whom it would be quite easy to include in one of our parties',⁸⁸

wrote Alicia Cecil in December 1902, by which time the work had been taken over by the Transvaal Women's Immigration Department.

The League seems to have had wider emigrationist ambitions, though strictly as an auxiliary to the established societies. When the secretary of the Cheltenham branch enquired in February 1902 whether 'the object of the League [was] to enlist interest rather than collect funds - with a view principally to promote emigration of the right class of women' the executive decided 'to answer ... in the affirmative'.⁸⁹ The League also resolved (Edith Lyttelton proposing, Alicia Cecil seconding) that whenever the B.W.E.A. or S.A.X. wished 'to organise emigration in country places they should invite the co-operation of the Victoria League either through Branches already existing or through those to be newly formed. All emigration work of the V.L. to be done through the British Women's Emigration Association'.⁹⁰ An informal response from the B.W.E.A. was not encouraging, 'referring ... to their

⁸⁴Talbot Diary 3 February 1911 [Talbot U1612 F222].

⁸⁵Talbot Diary 23 April 1910 [Talbot U1612 F221].

⁸⁶*Who Was Who*; Brian Blakely, 'The Society for the Oversea Settlement of British Women and the Problems of Empire Settlement, 1917-1936', *Albion* 20 (3) 1988 pp421-444.

⁸⁷Executive 3 July 1901.

⁸⁸Alicia Cecil to Miss Russell 13 December 1902 (copy) in 'Early Transvaal letters from Mrs Evelyn Cecil to S.A.C.S. in the Transvaal' [Fawcett Library 1/SAX/3/1 (Box 41)].

⁸⁹Executive 6 February 1902.

⁹⁰Executive 6 March 1902.

already existing country members in upward of 100 places',⁹¹ but the society's Council later 'cordially welcome[d]' the proposal.⁹² At the B.W.E.A.'s suggestion, the League agreed to draft its own guidelines on emigration for local workers.⁹³

The Victoria League maintained a close relationship with the emigration societies. When Lady Knightley, editor of the B.W.E.A.'s magazine, the *Imperial Colonist*, suggested 'that the Victoria League should make use of the magazine as their organ',⁹⁴ the League considered the proposal seriously, though eventually deciding in favour of starting its own quarterly leaflet.⁹⁵ In 1907 S.A.C.S. made a renewed appeal to League branches 'inviting their co-operation in making their work known among women suitable for emigration'.⁹⁶ A year later Princess Christian herself (as Vice-Patroness of S.A.C.S.) requested the League's help, 'to make known in any way that seemed best to them the great demand which exists at present in South Africa for women's work' and 'the advantages offered by this society in assisted passages and protection', and 'to find a local correspondent or helper in each district represented by the Branch, with whom the South African Colonisation Society might communicate'.⁹⁷

The League circulated this letter to all branches, but it firmly repressed any more independent emigration work. When the Bournemouth branch, possibly overstimulated by the S.A.C.S. letter, proposed forming an emigration bureau, it was told to restrict itself to acting as a correspondent for the Society.⁹⁸ When a Miss Hughes wrote 'asking that a Canadian school might be linked with a school in Ireland "for the purpose of acting as an emigration agent"' the Executive 'disapproved the suggestion so far as the Victoria League is concerned' but offered to turn it over to 'a good emigration society'.⁹⁹ There were no problems with overseas branches working with accredited emigration societies, however. The executive happily recommended the Child Emigration Society to the Victoria League of West Australia.¹⁰⁰ It was also prepared to accept the Colonial Intelligence League acting directly with Victoria

⁹¹Executive 10 April 1902.

⁹²Executive 1 May 1902.

⁹³Executive 9 May 1902.

⁹⁴Executive 20 January 1905. Lady Knightley had first been drawn to emigration work after listening to a paper from Edith Lyttelton at the 1901 N.U.W.W. conference [Julia Bush, 'Lady Imperialists and the Cause of British South Africa', paper given at 'South Africa 1895-1921: Test of Empire' Conference, Oxford March 1996].

⁹⁵Executive 6 April 1905.

⁹⁶Executive 7 February 1907.

⁹⁷Executive 16 January 1908.

⁹⁸Executive 20 February 1908.

⁹⁹Executive 6 April 1911.

¹⁰⁰Executive 15 December 1911.

Leagues in Victoria and Auckland, though when the Victoria League secretary in Auckland offered herself as an agent for the C.I.L., the Executive was anxious to keep 'the work of the two societies as much apart as possible'.¹⁰¹

Perhaps because of its long connection with the emigration societies, the League did not develop its own emigration initiative, the Settlers' Welcome scheme, until 1908, when Mr. E.T. Scammell, 'late Special Commissioner for the Government of Western Australia', proposed turning over to it his embryo Citizen's League of Welcome.¹⁰² The League of Welcome aimed 'to secure for every settler a personal welcome from residents in the particular country in co-operation with churches, clubs, Friendly Societies and other bodies who are already concerned in the welfare of emigrants'.¹⁰³ Some problems quickly emerged. Scammell had apparently already 'alarmed certain people in Victoria on account of their suspicion of immigration schemes' and was now firm that 'the words "emigration" and "immigration" should have no part in the scheme and that any question of money help should be strictly excluded'.¹⁰⁴ He was also, it transpired, 'working a commercial scheme in connection with emigration' - an 'office for giving information and advice to intending emigrants and travellers ... he himself would profit through emigrants booking their tickets through his son, a shipping agent and passage broker'.¹⁰⁵

By this time, however, the League had taken up the idea on its own account. Lady Talbot had early given her opinion that 'the Victoria League would be doing useful work in Victoria if it took up the personal befriending of all classes, and especially the poorer ones'.¹⁰⁶ She had reason to know, her husband, Sir Reginald Talbot, having just returned from a four-year posting as governor of Victoria. She had left her own mark there. 'Lady Talbot, far from being that governor's wife, the woman behind the man behind the times, actively promoted advanced social welfare projects ... Premier Bent sighed in her presence, "I am getting frightened of Lady Talbot now. She is in so many things that are making demands on the Treasury"'. They included the Talbot Colony for Epileptics, the Lady Talbot Milk Institute (dispensing 'pure' milk to needy recipients) and the College of Domestic Economy.¹⁰⁷ Lady Talbot (née Stuart-Wortley) was also the sister of Caroline Grosvenor and the aunt of Susan Buchan, a mother and daughter team deeply

¹⁰¹Executive 15 December 1911; 18 April 1912; 18 December 1913.

¹⁰²*Times* 8 May 1909, Executive 10 July 1908.

¹⁰³Executive 19 November 1908.

¹⁰⁴Executive 15 October 1908, 19 November 1908.

¹⁰⁵Executive 2 December 1908, 12 February 1909.

¹⁰⁶Executive 15 October 1908.

¹⁰⁷*Australian Dictionary of Biography* vol. 12, p165.

involved in emigration work.¹⁰⁸ Lady Talbot became chairman of the Victoria League Settlers' Welcome committee, which first met in April 1909.

The committee provided prospective emigrants bringing satisfactory references with letters of introduction to the League's sister society in the appropriate colony.¹⁰⁹ Allied associations overseas already eagerly entertained any visiting Victoria Leaguers: when in 1910 the Victoria League of Victoria received no introductions 'on behalf of well-to-do visitors arriving in Australia', it complained to the London office, stating that this had caused 'considerable disappointment to members'.¹¹⁰ Now they would welcome more permanent arrivals. Essentially, it was the hospitality scheme worked in reverse. 'Friendship is capable of being organised, as well as hospitality' said E.T. Cook,

'and the aim of this new Committee is to secure to the new-comer a friendly welcome from someone on the spot, who is ready to give advice and information. Those who know what it is to arrive in a new country unfriended, will easily appreciate the useful and kindly work which lies ready to be done'.¹¹¹

By September 1909 'the scheme had been well taken up overseas: 3 applications for introductions had been received and dealt with by the Committee'.¹¹²

Many emigrants came to the League through the Agent General of the colony for which they were leaving: it was noted in 1911, for example, that the 'Agent-General for Queensland had sent many cases'.¹¹³ Others came through the emigration societies. The League continually worried as to how best it could make its scheme known to emigrants before they left Britain. By March 1913, however, it could report that

'the Board of Trade have arranged that the League's poster shall be displayed in all Labour Exchanges in Great Britain ... Co-operation has been arranged with the Church Army and with the Church of England Men's Society. An excellent method of spreading knowledge of the Committee's work has been found by the kind permission of many of the Bishops for descriptive paragraphs to appear in their Diocesan magazines. A request is made to the local clergy to see that those who leave their parishes may know where they can apply for letters. A new small poster has been issued which is specially suited for putting up in Clubs, shops and any other place where people meet'.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁸See *Times* 7 October 1937.

¹⁰⁹*Times* 8 May 1909.

¹¹⁰Executive 21 July 1910.

¹¹¹Annual Report 1909-10, p8-9.

¹¹²Executive 30 September 1909.

¹¹³Executive 26 October 1911.

¹¹⁴*Monthly Notes* March 1913, p18.

When the League established a branch at Liverpool in December 1913 it swiftly distributed Settlers' Welcome posters to 'the Free Public Library ... the Employment Bureau for Educated Women, the University Settlement', various YWCAs, and the Charity Organisation Society.¹¹⁵ Overseas, the allied associations were asked to co-operate and most did, though in Canada, the I.O.D.E. having refused to take up the work 'as their work was patriotic', Settlers' Welcome cases were initially sent to individuals.¹¹⁶

Even without this assistance, however, the League seems to have reached a wide cross-section of emigrants. The committee early noted the 'very varied types of applications' and Cook listed them in 1914 as including

'accountants, bakers, blacksmiths, bricklayers, butchers, clerks, coachmen, cooks, electricians, engineers, farm labourers, fishermen, gardeners, a golf-instructor, governesses, grooms, lady-helps, nurses, an office-keeper, old soldiers, Oxford graduates, school-teachers, signalmen, valets and wheelrights'.¹¹⁷

It was also hoped to attract 'gentle people travelling for pleasure and asking for information'.¹¹⁸ The League tried to keep track of its settlers. 'Satisfactory reports on the whole had been received from overseas' it noted in 1912. 'Most of the settlers in Victoria had found good situations and were getting on successfully'.¹¹⁹ Towards the end of the period quite large numbers approached the League for introductions: in ten months work in 1911, for instance, '145 cases had been dealt with, 92 men, 53 women - to Australia 78, Canada 56, New Zealand 5, South Africa 4, New York 2'.¹²⁰ By March 1914 the total number of Settlers' Welcome cases was 600.¹²¹ At a conference held by the League in February 1914, colonial governments, emigration societies and the British Passenger Agents Association expressed support and offered co-operation: it would probably have resulted in a significant expansion of the work had not the war terminated the Settlers' Welcome scheme shortly thereafter.¹²²

Conclusion

The object of the Settlers' Welcome scheme, according to the League, was to make emigrants to other parts of the Empire feel 'that they are only in another part

¹¹⁵Annual Report 1913-14, p40.

¹¹⁶Executive 26 October 1911. From late 1911, under new leadership, the I.O.D.E. proved more co-operative [Executive 15 December 1911].

¹¹⁷Executive 15 December 1910; *Monthly Notes* 15 March 1914, p20.

¹¹⁸Executive 26 October 1911.

¹¹⁹Executive 21 November 1912.

¹²⁰Executive 26 October 1911.

¹²¹Annual Report 1913-14, p9.

¹²²*Monthly Notes* 15 March 1914, p19-21.

of home'.¹²³ This kind of rhetoric was common among emigrationists: the Toronto Women's Welcome Hostel, for example, aimed 'to make the girls feel that this is merely another room of the British Empire'.¹²⁴ Thus minimising the differences between Britain and the adopted land thousands of miles away, and emphasising their common 'Britishness' of character, no doubt made the idea of emigration less off-putting. But the word 'home' (or 'homely' or 'homelike') appears in Victoria League writings about both the hospitality and settlers' welcome schemes with striking frequency. It was of course a gendered, 'feminine', word: the Victorian doctrine of 'separate spheres' decreed that the home was a woman's place. Defining Britain, or even the whole Empire, as 'home' enlarged this sphere considerably. As Buchan's Richard Hannay, a man's man if ever there was one, felt so acutely, offering hospitality to visitors was a traditionally female occupation. Here the League had carved out an imperial role for women at which the most conservative could not balk nor the most rigid anti-suffragist cavil. At the same time the League aimed to demonstrate the essential unity of the Empire by organising a welcome for visitors and settlers alike. Though efforts to promote formal, constitutional unity had failed or were faltering, the League would strengthen imperial bonds by creating a web of personal ties from the mother country to the 'white dominions' and back again.

¹²³ *Monthly Notes* August 1912, p69.

¹²⁴ Quoted in Marilyn Barber, 'Sunny Ontario for British Girls 1900-1930', in Jean Burnet (ed.), *Looking into my Sister's Eyes: an exploration in women's history* (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario: 1986) p69.

Chapter 7. Imperialism & Social Reform

'The greatest danger ... to the nation' warned Milner in 1907 'is, that the ideals of national strength and Imperial consolidation on the one hand, and of democratic progress and domestic reform on the other, should be dissevered, and that people should come to regard as antagonistic objects which are essentially related and complementary to one another'.¹ In fact, imperialism and social reform had been linked since at least the 1880s when Lord Meath called attention to the 'decay of bodily strength in towns' - an evil, he said, which would 'ultimately lead to a degeneration of the race and to national effacement'.² The Boer War compellingly illustrated the national aspect of high infant mortality and low standards of physical fitness in the urban working-classes. In 1903 Major General Sir Frederick Maurice asserted that of every five men who tried to enlist, only two were still in the Army as effective soldiers at the end of two years. He blamed the drift to the towns, low wages for the unskilled and, above all, mothers who worked outside the home for 'diminishing the virile manhood of the country not only by reducing the virility of those who survive but because of the deaths, more numerous than on any battlefield, that strew with corpses the way for the poor survivals'.³ Maurice's comments provoked wide-spread discussion and the appointment of an Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration which reported in 1904.⁴

By the turn of the century 'social-imperialism' appeared in various guises across the political spectrum. Joseph Chamberlain's Tariff Reformers argued that only imperial preference could save British industry and the prosperity of the British working-classes. A disparate band of Unionists, including Milner and H.J. Mackinder, came to believe that the Chamberlain programme offered the best solution available to the problems of German competition, the menace of socialism, and the need for social reform. Many Fabians, including Shaw and the Webbs, were 'imperial socialists' with more in common with the Chamberlain party than with the laissez-faire Little Englanders.⁵ The Liberal Imperialist group clustered around Rosebery had originally been concerned with domestic problems⁶ and in the 1900s led the campaign for 'National Efficiency' - what Rosebery

¹Milner, *The Nation and the Empire* (London: Constable & Co.: 1913) pp249-250.

²Lord Brabazon, 'The Decay of Bodily Strength in Towns', *Nineteenth Century* XXI May 1887 pp673-676, p674. (Brabazon succeeded to the Earldom of Meath later in 1887.)

³Sir Frederick Maurice, 'National Health: a Soldier's Study', *Contemporary Review* LXXXIII January 1903 pp41-56, p56. He had earlier put forward his concerns under the pen-name 'Miles' in 'Where to get Men', *Contemporary Review* LXXXI January 1902 pp78-86.

⁴*Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration 1904* [Cd. 2175].

⁵Bernard Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform: English Social-Imperial Thought 1895-1914* (London: Allen & Unwin: 1960) p26-27.

⁶H.C.G. Matthew, *The Liberal Imperialists: The Ideas and Politics of a post-Gladstonian Elite* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 1973) p8.

defined as 'a condition of national fitness equal to the demands of our Empire - administrative, parliamentary, commercial, educational, physical, moral, naval, and military fitness'.⁷ Haldane especially became close to the Webbs, and Grey also joined the Webbs' dining club, the Coefficients, for the discussion of the 'aims and methods of Imperial policy'.⁸

The Victoria League included two influential Liberal Imperialists, both of whom had strong interests in social reform for its own sake as well as for the future of the Empire. One was Violet Markham, who from her mid-twenties had worked on the Chesterfield ladies' workhouse committee and the Chesterfield School Board. Markham's inheritance went partly to establish a settlement in Chesterfield, which started schools for mothers and for crippled children. In 1908 she helped to found the Personal Service Association, of which Edith Lyttelton became chairman. The P.S.A. recruited volunteers to visit the unemployed, aiming both to help the 'respectable' poor and to promote a greater sense of civic responsibility towards them in the middle-class volunteers.⁹ Explaining the motives behind the Personal Service Association, Markham told Grey,

'unless here in England we can somehow get even with unemployment, physical deterioration, and that dreadful unemployable element in the nation it seems to me the future of the Empire can only be a black one. England is the heart - an unsound heart can only mean unsound extremities'.¹⁰

Her concern for social reform did more than anything to keep Markham in the Liberal party, even when she considered the Liberal policy in South Africa little less than treason. If anyone could make the Conservatives 'see the truly Imperial aspect of social reform and that the real Imperialist can't tolerate sweated industries and child labour and drunkenness and over-crowding - well then the nation will preserve your name in gold' she told Leo Amery. 'But your task will be Herculean'.¹¹

Markham's 1905 article, 'The True Foundations of Empire: the Home and the Workshop', published in the wake of the Physical Deterioration Report, amply illustrates her (highly gendered) ideas on the health of the nation and its imperial implications. The

⁷Quoted Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform*, p63. See also G.R. Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency: A Study in British Politics and Political Thought 1899-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press: 1971) chapter IV.

⁸Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform*, p74-75; Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency*, p122.

⁹Jane Lewis, *Women and Social Action in Victorian and Edwardian England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press: 1991) p268-271, p274-276; Violet Markham, *Return Passage* (London: Oxford University Press: 1953) p60.

¹⁰Extract from letter from Markham to Grey, enclosed in Grey to Howick (copy) 11 January 1909 [Grey 203/3].

¹¹Violet Markham to Leo Amery 21 May 1907 [Amery papers, box 26].

physique of the population, Markham argued, was 'regulated in the main by two fundamental factors, the home and the workshop ... at the root of the mischief we too often find degraded conditions of labour, creating in turn a degraded home'. The employment of married women in factories led to high infant mortality and low male self-respect.

'A nation, at least a great nation, must have certain ideals by which to live if it hopes to prosper in the world. Such prosperity is not to be obtained through the violation of the primary and natural law that the man is to work for the wife and children and the woman is to be the guardian of the home'.

The children of such parents, 'reared on bread, gin and sugar', would go 'to swell the ranks ultimately of the pauper and criminal classes'. Markham therefore advocated legislation to prohibit factory work to women within three months of their confinement, while for unmarried female workers she called for just wages and (to protect potential mothers) adequate health and safety legislation. 'Empires are not built up on the offspring of denaturalised parents' she warned, 'Flat chests and rickety limbs will not hold converse with the enemy at the gates'. The situation was serious. 'The foundations of Empire are at stake in this matter ... the worker is the true Empire-builder. Hence we must look to it that here in the homeland, where the pressure of life is inevitably greater than in the Colonies, we too are raising a race of men and women worthy to claim kinship with the strong young nations of the new worlds'.¹²

May Tennant, the Victoria League's other prominent social reformer, had been secretary to Lady Dilke and then to the Women's Trade Union League before being appointed Woman Assistant Commissioner on the Royal Commission on Labour in 1892. In 1893 she became the first woman factory inspector in England and by 1896 was the superintending inspector of a group of five woman inspectors. The same year this career ended when she married H.J. (Jack) Tennant, brother of Margot Asquith and Liberal M.P. for Berwickshire.¹³ Unlike his father, Sir Charles Tennant, who was 'possessed by an almost maniacal hatred of trades unions and all their works',¹⁴ Jack held sympathetic views on industrial reform - May had met him when he chaired the 1895 Dangerous Trades Committee. Neither marriage nor five children ended May Tennant's public life. 'For twenty years she and her husband worked indefatigably side by side at all industrial questions which touched Workshop and Factory legislation'.¹⁵ From an I.L.P.

¹²Markham, 'The True Foundations of Empire: the Home and the Workshop', *Nineteenth Century* LVIII October 1905 pp570-82.

¹³*DNB*; Violet Markham, *May Tennant: A Portrait* (London: Falcon Press: 1949) p9-33; Olive Banks, *The Biographical Dictionary of British Feminists Volume II* (New York: New York University Press: 1990) p201-3.

¹⁴Raymond Asquith to H.T. Baker 28 December 1897, in John Joliffe, *Raymond Asquith: Life and Letters* (London: Century: 1987 (1st 1980)) p33.

¹⁵Markham, *May Tennant*, p36.

sympathiser she became like her husband an active Liberal Imperialist, both Tennants working with Violet Markham and E.T. Cook in 1906 to 'rally a group of Liberal Free Traders on Imperial matters' through the Liberal Colonial Club.¹⁶ Famously, she was the only 'Limp' to be spared the strictures of Beatrice Webb. 'Perhaps the most keen of the lot are the Jack Tennants' Webb recorded in 1902, 'Mrs Jack ... is a fine-natured woman, with real knowledge and enthusiasm. She has inspired her husband with the same helpful attitude towards social questions'.¹⁷

Two years after her marriage Tennant founded the Industrial Law Committee 'to spread knowledge of the legal protection to which workers were entitled and to whom complaints might be addressed about breaches of the law', with an Indemnity Fund, largely funded by Asquith and Sir Charles Dilke, to compensate workers dismissed for revealing abuses to factory inspectors. Edith Lyttelton, remembered by a fellow member as 'really helpful', both worked on the committee and publicised the cause through her 'effective and vivid' play *Warp and Woof* (1904). Concerning sweated workers at a court dressmakers, the play 'made a further contribution to the volume of growing public opinion about industrial evils'.¹⁸

In March 1905, on the proposal of Violet Markham and Edith Lyttelton, a Victoria League industrial committee was formed.¹⁹ May Tennant took the chair with Edith Lyttelton as treasurer and Violet Markham, who had met Tennant through Lyttelton in 1902 ('within five minutes I was at her feet where, be it said, I remained during an unbroken friendship of forty years')²⁰ as secretary. Alice Balfour and Harry Birchenough, an expert on the trade and industry of the Empire who had visited South Africa after the Boer War as Special Trades Commissioner reporting on 'the present position and future prospects of British trade',²¹ joined as ordinary members. So did the Fabian Maud Pember Reeves, whose husband was the author of *State Experiments in Australia and New Zealand* (1902), an exposition of antipodean land, labour, pension and immigration laws, and who was herself active in the Women's Trade Union League and

¹⁶Violet Markham to Grey 12 July 1906 [Grey 207/8].

¹⁷N. & J. Mackenzie (eds.), *The Diary of Beatrice Webb* (London: Virago: 1982-85) vol. II p237 (28 February 1902). The same entry describes Asquith as 'wooden', Grey as 'slight', Haldane as dividing his energies 'between highly skilled legal work and the processes of digestion' and Jack Tennant himself as 'a little man, mentally and physically'.

¹⁸Markham, *May Tennant*, p38-9; Gertrude Tuckwell to Violet Markham n.d. [?1948] [Markham 28/11]. Lyttelton's play gave rise to a spirited correspondence in the *Times* between Frances Balfour advocating 'the removal of regulations that restrict, harass and penalise the employment of women'; and Lord Lytton, Jack Tennant, and Mary Macarthur of the Women's Trade Union League rejecting the idea and supporting Lyttelton [*Times* 4 July 1904, 8 July 1904, 16 July 1904].

¹⁹Executive 2 March 1905.

²⁰Markham, *May Tennant*, p44.

²¹Birchenough was also a friend of Milner, a supporter of Rhodes, and a director of the British South Africa Company from 1905, becoming president of the company in 1920 [*Times* 13 May 1937, 18 May 1937]

the National Anti-Sweating League.²² The committee aimed 'to collect and compile all the factory laws of the self-governing Colonies, and to publish the same in a handbook, with comparative tables',²³ a natural progression from Tennant's earlier work, *The Laws Relating to Factories and Workshops, including Laundries and Docks* (1896). The probable aim of the handbook, never clearly defined, was to provide a guide to reformers, and to act as a voice of conscience to those countries whose industrial laws were found wanting.

In the autumn of 1905 Violet Markham visited Canada and took the opportunity to gather information for the *Handbook*. During her travels from Montreal to Victoria and back again she buttonholed officials, visited factories and tried, usually in vain, to gather statistics on labour questions. 'I have been making enquiries about industrial matters in every province as well as land settlement and immigration' she told her mother.²⁴ Markham's impression of industrial affairs in Canada was mixed. Mackenzie King, then Deputy Minister of Labour, she found 'a most charming and able young man full of the right ideals' - so much so that she subsequently helped to fund his political career, assuring him that it was 'for Canada's sake as fully as your own'.²⁵ Miss Carlyle, the Ontario Inspectress of Factories, with whom she visited two factories and went through the Canadian Factory Acts, struck her as 'a most shrewd nice woman in every way, fully alive to the points to which Mrs Tennant attaches importance ... [she] recognises the supreme importance of avoiding the beginning of bad conditions. We agreed the creation of sound public opinion on industrial questions was of far greater importance than legislation'.²⁶ But in general Markham found 'a good deal of cheery and inaccurate optimism',²⁷ and she was forced to conclude that 'their industrial outlook is not our own ... they don't seem to realise that the relative absence of industrial abuses in this country arises from the fact that there is at present little or no industrial pressure'.²⁸

Almost more scandalous to Markham's tidy mind than the match factory she found run on child labour²⁹ was the slipshod nature of Canadian industrial legislation.

'British Columbia seems to employ its abundant leisure in passing legislation for the future and they have a fine collection of acts devoid of the smallest practical application. These latter however do not include a Factory Act though they do include an amazing effort in Shop Acts ...

²²Banks, *Biographical Dictionary* p161-3. Maud Pember Reeves was later author of the Fabian tract, *Round About a Pound a Week* (1913).

²³Annual Report 1904-5, p33.

²⁴Violet Markham to Rosa Markham 22 October 1905 [Markham 27/58].

²⁵Markham, Canada Diary 23 October 1905 [Markham 27/4]; R. MacGregor Dawson, *William Lyon Mackenzie King: A Political Biography* (London: Methuen: 1958) p224.

²⁶Markham, Canada Diary 15 September, 16 September 1905 [Markham 27/4].

²⁷Canada Diary 28 October 1905 [Markham 27/4].

²⁸Canada Diary 27 October 1905 [Markham 27/4].

²⁹Canada Diary 23 October 1905 [Markham 27/4].

Practically there seems to be no industrial legislation in British Columbia beyond this Shop Act administered by Heaven knows who'.³⁰

The 'same complete absence of statistics' she found 'as remarkable in Manitoba as in all the other Provinces' and the Winnipeg Inspector of Factories proved sadly lacking. 'Could give me no exact data of registered factories, workshops and employees. Said the Government supplied no papers for returns. I pointed out gently that acts without reports and reports without statistics was as useful as a piece of music with the treble and clef signs left out [*sic*] ... He 'thought' there were about 600 factories and workshops in Winnipeg ... a statement at which I gasped'.³¹ In Montreal things were no better. She agreed with the inspector, M. Louis Guyon, that 'a uniform law was not possible in Canada owing to the wide diversity of local conditions' but 'they might keep some records!'³² 'It's really comic the number of Imperial enquirers in this country' Markham wrote home, 'I am looked on as heavily industrial and labour laws! As the latter hardly exist in Canada - more's the pity - I have collected more theories than facts'.³³

The report of the Committee's first year's work suggests that they were finding the job more difficult than expected.

'The Industrial Subcommittee regret they have as yet no very definite results to lay before the Council as regards their work ... [It] is inevitably a somewhat slow operation, for the industrial conditions of the Empire vary widely, and correspondence with scattered officials in all the different Colonies is a question not of weeks but of months. The collection of the various documents is a laborious matter, no sort of uniformity existing throughout the whole Empire in the matter of Shop, Factory and Employers' Liability Acts. Some Colonies may possess all three, some two, some one. Much correspondence, therefore, is necessary - especially as regards the younger and less developed states - before accurate information on all these points is forthcoming ... The absence of any very definite statistics in Canada renders the task of compilation in their case somewhat difficult'.

However 'the work of compilation [was] now progressing satisfactorily and the Australian portion of the proposed Hand Book is already completed' as 'Australian Reports follow very closely the lines of the English ones'. From Canada, Mackenzie King, Miss Carlyle, and M. Guyon agreed 'that the proposed Hand Book of the Victoria League ... would be of material assistance to workers in the different Colonies'.³⁴

In March 1907 Markham told the executive that publication of the handbook 'was now under consideration - the work had been arduous on account of the difficulties

³⁰Canada Diary 8 October 1905 [Markham 27/4].

³¹Canada Diary 16 October 1905 [Markham 27/4].

³²Canada Diary 27 October 1905 [Markham 27/4].

³³Violet Markham to Rosa Markham 24 October 1905 [Markham 27/58].

³⁴Annual Report 1905-6, p31-32.

in getting answers from the different colonies and the need for great care in verifying the facts and bringing them up to date. The Handbook would be merely a record of the different Industrial conditions throughout the Empire including a tabulated chart and would contain no expression of opinion'. The executive 'desired Miss Markham to assure the publisher that the book would be taken by many of the members'.³⁵ The annual report added that

'Further correspondence with the various Governments has been necessary so that the latest statistics available may be included in the tables appended to the abstracts of the various Acts. The Subcommittee regret they have been unable to carry out their original intention of including Employers' Liability Acts in the Handbook. The labour involved in the compilation has proved much greater than what was anticipated, and the Employers' Liability section could not have been undertaken without paid assistance'.³⁶

Nevertheless, by July 1907, 'my handbook of Industrial Laws is nearing completion' Markham told Albert Grey 'and I shall be overjoyed to get it off my chest'.³⁷

The Factory and Shop Acts of the British Dominions: A Handbook compiled by Miss Violet Markham; together with a General View of the English Law; and a Preface by Mrs H.J. Tennant [Issued by the Industrial Subcommittee of the Victoria League] was eventually published by Eyre & Spottiswoode in January 1908, Markham bearing all incidental expenses. Sending a copy to Grey she told him

'It's not literary but statistical. The information has not been collected before and I hope the comparative tables may be useful. You know how keen I am to insist on the *Imperial* side of *industrial* issues ... Canada doesn't show up very well by the side of Australia ... There are various slips in the book I fear but I corrected the proofs under circumstances of great difficulty'.³⁸

The International Association for Labour Legislation, the Industrial Law Committee, and the Industrial Law Indemnity Fund were advertised in the endpapers. (The executive had refused permission to include a notice for the National Anti-Sweating League, 'present officers and committee belonging to the one political party only'.)³⁹ The League took 100 copies at 2/- for resale at 2/6. May Tennant succeeded in 'getting book before the Editors of several leading newspapers, before the labour press, the Fabian Society and Women's Trade Union Review [and] the Bulletin of the International Association for Labour Legislation'. It was also publicised at a 'big Anti-Sweating League meeting'. Notices were sent to the Factory Helpers Union, the Charity Organisation Society, the

³⁵Executive 21 March 1907.

³⁶Annual Report 1906-7, p23.

³⁷Violet Markham to Grey 15 July 1907 [Grey 207/8].

³⁸Violet Markham to Grey 21 January 1908 [Grey 207/8]. Markham's mother had been seriously ill for some months.

³⁹Executive 5 December 1907.

Sanitary Inspectors Association, the Co-operative Union, and to colonial labour departments and Principal Lady Inspectors of Factories. Approaches were made to the *Spectator*, the *Times Literary Supplement*, the *Contemporary Review*, the *National Review* and the *Standard*.⁴⁰ Mackenzie King sent his appreciation to the League and the *Handbook* was reported to have been 'favourably received by Industrial organisations in this country, and by various Labour Departments in the self-governing Colonies'.⁴¹

In her preface May Tennant explained that

'this survey of Comparative Industrial Legislation is published in the hope that it may be of value to the self-governing Dominions beyond the Seas no less than to the Mother Country. The great issues raised by our common industrial problems are certainly of Imperial as they are of industrial importance since a high standard in industrial conditions is vital to the well-being of the whole Empire ... a standard is more likely to be realised if by an interchange of industrial statistics and a comparison of industrial laws, the Mother Country can show to the younger countries by her longer and frequently bitter experience the errors to avoid; and the daughter States can in their turn lead the Parent State to a more hopeful and original treatment of problems which threaten alike the welfare of all'.⁴²

The *Handbook* itself was divided into four sections covering Britain, New Zealand and Australia (by state), Canada (by province) and, alone among the South African colonies, the Cape of Good Hope (where only shop acts existed).⁴³ Each section gave a brief history of industrial law for the area and an exposition of laws covering health and safety and hours and conditions, dangerous trades, laundries, truck acts, shop acts and the administration of the laws. Tables made it simple to compare and contrast on such points as restrictions on work for children and maximum hours of work, and showed up those places found lacking in industrial legislation.

Reviews of the *Handbook* were favourable but revealed some uncertainty as to the audience aimed at - understandably, as the committee never defined it. The *Saturday Review* said that Markham and Tennant, both 'tried experts at this branch of social work', had done 'good work in producing a useful synopsis of factory legislation at home and in the colonies' which 'should prove of value to social workers'. It warned however, that 'they [ran] some risk of confusing the minds of others less familiar with factory legislation than themselves by the somewhat bare arrangement of their material ... It is useless to make comparisons of industrial legislation unless at the same time the

⁴⁰Executive 16 January 1908.

⁴¹Executive 19 March 1908; Annual Report 1907-8, p27.

⁴²*Factory and Shop Acts*, pv - vi.

⁴³Before 1918 the regulation of industry in South Africa was 'nothing more than a patchwork of temporary expedients' [C.W. de Kiewiet, *A History of South Africa, Social and Economic* (Oxford: Clarendon: 1941) p267].

conditions of life in the communities concerned are carefully examined'. As an example it suggested that Australia could afford to eliminate sweating because its protective tariffs eliminated competition from cheaply-made foreign goods.⁴⁴

The *Athenaeum*, though it suggested that notes might have been given to illuminate some aspects of the subject, thought otherwise. 'The difficulties in the way of the writers are great. It is not easy to treat the labour laws *in vacuo*, without explanation of their history or their results; but this course has - rightly, we think - been followed. The attempt to construct a treatise for the general reader would present still graver inconvenience'. It identified Markham as 'one of the three woman authors who gave us the three best statements of the British case in our relations with the Boer republics' and commended the book's 'general accuracy'.⁴⁵ The most enthusiastic response came from the *Contemporary Review*.

'An admirable handbook ... an excellent example of the work now so strenuously advocated by the Society of Comparative Legislation - the comparison side by side of legislation dealing with similar evils under various conditions and skies ... We recommend this book very heartily. It is clearly written; it gives the fullest information as to the law in Australia, New Zealand and Canada; and shows how much we have to learn from colonial experiments'.⁴⁶

The *Spectator* recommended that 'employers of labour and those who are in any way called upon to protect its interest, cannot do better than study it'.⁴⁷

For some years after the publication of the *Handbook* the Industrial Committee languished, dropped from the annual reports and omitted from the Victoria League Open Conference in 1911.⁴⁸ Shortly afterwards, however, it was revived (with Violet Markham in the chair and May Tennant as an ordinary member) as a by-product of the League's Northern Extension Scheme. Since it was considered that an emphasis on the social/industrial aspects of Empire would make the League more attractive to the working-classes, an 'advisory Council for the consideration of social questions of imperial importance, or those affecting the British Dominions as a whole' was proposed.⁴⁹ Violet Markham suggested that letters should be written 'to the municipalities of the big towns in the Dominions asking for statistics on the three

⁴⁴*Saturday Review* 29 February 1908 Vol. CV, p273.

⁴⁵*Athenaeum* 25 January 1908 Vol. 100, no. 4187, p100.

⁴⁶*Contemporary Review* February 1908 Volume XCIII Literary Supplement, p20-21.

⁴⁷*Spectator* 1 February 1908 Volume 100, p192-3.

⁴⁸Executive 9 June 1910; 17 March 1911.

⁴⁹Executive 21 September 1911.

questions of town planning, care of infant life, prevention of consumption'; she aimed to get these subjects 'taken up on an inter-Dominion scheme'.⁵⁰

From these roots came the Victoria League Imperial Health Conference, first proposed in November 1911 under the title, 'National Health: an Intercolonial Conference'. It was to concentrate on the two themes of 'Housing' and 'Care of Infant Health'. Lord Henry Bentinck (a Conservative M.P. with Radical leanings whose main interests were in 'social questions, particularly those relating to hours and conditions of labour and wages, and to the betterment generally of the working classes'),⁵¹ Judge John Greenhalgh, and Lady Sybil Grey were co-opted to assist.⁵² By February 1912 a timetable had been drawn up. Lord Grey was invited to open the conference, and Michael Sadler, Lord Robert Cecil, and the trade unionist M.P. Henry Vivian to chair individual sessions.⁵³ Markham gave Grey 'a thousand thanks' for his 'generous response about the Conference ... won't it be fun to get that mixed team of Imperialists and Social Reformers together!' she wrote.⁵⁴ She was also delighted to discover a kin-spirit on her committee, sending Grey 'just a line to tell you Henry Vivian has been to tea with me today and I have *fallen in love with him* - but *hopelessly* - *completely*!! *What a nice man!* Why can't the Labour party throw up more leaders of that type. I thought you would be amused to hear that one of your favourites has won my heart right away'.⁵⁵

Official approbation came from John Burns at the Local Government Board, Sydney Buxton at the Board of Trade, Reginald McKenna at the Home Office and J.A. Pease at the Board of Education.⁵⁶ From the colonies, the Canadian prime minister, Borden, expressed his sympathy, and Botha and the premiers of Western Australia and Victoria sent their support.⁵⁷ The prime minister of Tasmania reported that 'in the opinion of Dr Purdy, Chief Medical Officer, the suggested Conference would be of inestimable benefit to the Overseas Dominions where in the oldest centres the absence of any definite scheme of town planning tended to repeat the acknowledged bad conditions existing in past days in Great Britain; and that as regards the Care of Child Life the

⁵⁰Executive 21 September 1911; Violet Markham to Hilda Cashmore 1 October 1911 [Markham 25/12].

⁵¹*Times* 7 October 1931.

⁵²Executive 16 November 1911. Markham had met Lady Sybil Grey, the daughter of Lord Grey, during her visits to Canada.

⁵³Executive 22 February 1912.

⁵⁴Violet Markham to Grey 4 February 1912 [Grey 207/8].

⁵⁵Violet Markham to Grey 21 February 1912 [Grey 207/8]. Vivian had earlier visited Canada on Grey's invitation [*Times* 31 May 1930].

⁵⁶Executive 21 March 1912; 18 April 1912

⁵⁷Executive 16 May 1912; 20 June 1912.

Conference would reveal the extensive work now being carried on in the Dominions in regard to that subject'.⁵⁸

In June 1912 the League executive decided to postpone the Conference until 1914 'owing to Miss Markham's illness since her mother's death, and her decision to go a voyage round the world'. They agreed that 'Miss Markham's visit to the Dominions would largely help to make it a still greater success'⁵⁹ and she did manage to publicise the Conference widely in South Africa. In Johannesburg Raymond Schumacher, a partner of Eckstein & Co. and 'interested in a model village and workman's houses in connection with the mines' was 'much interested in the V.L. scheme'.⁶⁰ Support also came from Dr Viljoen, the Orange Free State Director of Education, and honorary vice-president of the League, Sir Jacobus von Boeschoten, president of the Pretoria Branch, and Dr Bohr in the Transvaal.⁶¹ Struck anew by the lack of town planning evident in the colonies, Markham became increasingly convinced of the Conference's necessity.⁶² She decided that 'the industrial question here is ... largely a housing question', arguing that the physical and moral well-being of a white labour force could only be maintained by proper accommodation.⁶³ When Schumacher showed her the site of his proposed model village she 'begged him not to build houses with two bedrooms ... there can be no decent family life in a country where only two bedrooms are provided for artisans' houses'.⁶⁴

On Markham's return to England in the spring of 1913 plans for the conference resumed.⁶⁵ In June the scheme was enlarged.

'Miss Markham reported recent suggestion received by the Industrial Committee to organise a housing and health exhibition as suggested by the Co-partnership Tenants Society [founded in 1907 by Henry Vivian to develop garden villages and suburbs]⁶⁶ in connection with the forthcoming Health Conference ... the exhibition would probably add largely to the interest of the Conference and enlarge attendance'.⁶⁷

⁵⁸Executive 18 July 1912.

⁵⁹Executive 20 June 1912. Markham had intended to visit New Zealand and Australia as well as South Africa but was prevented by 'a legal case connected with her family' [Executive 18 July 1912].

⁶⁰Markham, South Africa Diary, 13 December 1912 [Markham 27/7]; *Dictionary of South African Biography* vol. III p292.

⁶¹Markham, South Africa Diary, 28 December, 18 December 1912 [Markham 27/8].

⁶²Markham, South Africa Diary, 1 November 1912 (Bulawayo) [Markham 27/7]. See also her comments on Johannesburg, *The South African Scene* (London: Smith, Elder & Co.: 1913) p41-43.

⁶³Markham, South Africa Diary, 16 December 1912 [Markham 27/8].

⁶⁴Markham, South Africa Diary, 15 December, 16 December 1912 [Markham 27/8]. The correlation between housing and moral welfare was an idea commonly expressed by British and American housing reformers.

⁶⁵Markham, *Return Passage* p109. She spent the autumn and winter of 1913 travelling in the Far East, returning in February 1914 having resisted the temptation to 'tell the Victoria League Conference to go hang' and go on with the Greys to Australia (Violet Markham to Grey 24 January 1914 [Grey 207/8]).

⁶⁶*Times* 31 May 1930.

⁶⁷Executive 19 June 1913.

The idea was adopted, the Co-partnership Tenants Committee having 'offered to undertake the organisation and financial responsibility' of the exhibition 'provided room could be secured by the League'.⁶⁸ A 'strong exhibition committee' was formed under Henry Vivian's chairmanship, and it was decided to allow 'exhibits from foreign countries ... so that the educational effect of the Conference might be increased'.⁶⁹

In October 1913, the name of the Conference having been 'criticised by some leading people from Australia and Canada - the word 'Colonial' being objected to', it was renamed the Victoria League Imperial Health Conference and Exhibition.⁷⁰ The Industrial Committee was temporarily enlarged to include Mary Emmott, Georgina Frere and Sir James Dunlop Smith.⁷¹ 'A representative from each Dominion and from the Crown Colonies was invited to join this special Committee or act as its representative overseas'. Sir John McCall MD, agent-general for Tasmania and former president of the Central Board of Health, represented Australia; Dr John W.S. McCulloch, Canada; and Richard Feetham, South Africa; while Dr Truby King, promoter of 'mothercraft', founder of the Royal New Zealand Society for the Health of Women and Children, and author of *Feeding and Care of Baby* (1913), represented New Zealand.⁷² Meriel Talbot, who was also 'interested in the anti-sweating movement in England',⁷³ had met Truby King during her tour and had 'much interesting talk' with him about 'infant nutrition and ... all that means for weal or woe to the race as a whole'. Talbot found King a 'fine hopeful resolute man' and admired 'his determination to stop the terrible infant mortality and the equally bad maiming of human life through wrong treatment at the start, which even in a young country like this exists to such an alarming extent'.⁷⁴ She resolved to 'find out what is being done of the same sort in England and help to get it going still more if possible. It's an imperial subject really and no mistake'.⁷⁵

The Victoria League Imperial Health Conference took place at the Imperial Institute on 18 - 21 May 1914 with delegates from Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and the United States as well as Britain. It was reported that 1,300 people had attended the conference and that 'the average attendance at the eight sessions had been 164'.⁷⁶ Five thousand people were said to have visited the Exhibition arranged in

⁶⁸Executive 17 July 1913.

⁶⁹Executive 16 October 1913.

⁷⁰Executive 16 October 1913.

⁷¹Executive 18 December 1913.

⁷²Annual Report 1914-15, p3.

⁷³Talbot Diary, Dunedin 8 February 1910 [Talbot U1612 F221].

⁷⁴Talbot Diary, Dunedin 9 February 1910 [Talbot U1612 F221].

⁷⁵Talbot Diary, Dunedin 10 February 1910 [Talbot U1612 F221].

⁷⁶Annual Report 1914-15, p6; Executive 27 May 1914. The figure of 1,300 (which seems to make no allowance for multiple attendances) is probably an overestimate.

the main hall of the Institute and featuring 165 exhibits on the themes of town planning and child life. They included

‘models and plans of garden cities, of special schools, of the new Australian capital at Canberra, and the new and stately Delhi ... model nurseries ... mothercraft models, open-air schools ... pictures for schools, plans of school buildings and playgrounds, the Montessori method, Board of Trade Juvenile Employment charts’.⁷⁷

Other attractions were ‘charts and diagrams prepared by Dr Truby King illustrating the wonderful work achieved [in New Zealand] in securing health to mothers and infants’, and models and plans from the Edinburgh School Board and the Transvaal Education Department.⁷⁸ Evening ‘displays of dancing and singing by children from different London schools’ were arranged with addresses by Mrs Humphrey Ward (founder of the Passmore Edwards Settlement), Lord Lytton, and Waldorf Astor, Conservative M.P. and member of the ‘Round Table’.⁷⁹ Tickets for the conference cost 1/- for a session, or 5/- for the series, while the exhibition was free.⁸⁰

The Conference sessions, divided between the two subjects of Housing and Town Planning, and the Care of Child Life, give a good overview of the priorities and attitudes of Edwardian social reformers. The first session was devoted to Town Planning. Henry Vivian, betraying ignorance both of Scottish preferences in housing and of housing conditions already common in the ‘white dominions’, argued from an ‘environmentalist’ point of view.

‘He pleaded that we should not accept, in any part of the Empire, the tenement house, half a dozen or more stories high, as our ideal home for the workmen of the future. That type of house would surely, if slowly, wreck the character and destroy the individuality without which we cannot build up a strong nation ... “I am one of those who believe that the degree of imagination people have is largely affected by their immediate environment ... Give the people a truly imperial city to live in and there is nothing more certain than that their thinking will tend to correspond” ... It would be a crime if the canker of the slum were allowed to grow in the young cities of the Dominions’.⁸¹

Herbert Samuel of the Local Government Board urged that ‘town planning should be made obligatory’, though he was later contradicted by Lord Peel, chairman of the L.C.C., who called instead for ‘a special race of municipal statesmen’.⁸² Other papers were given by the architect Herbert Baker (one of the designers of the ‘new and stately Delhi’) on town planning; by Seebohm Rowntree on ‘Housing Reform in Great Britain’; and by

⁷⁷Annual Report 1914-15, p5-6.

⁷⁸Monthly Notes May 1914, p35.

⁷⁹Annual Report 1914-15, p5-6.

⁸⁰Monthly Notes May 1914, p35.

⁸¹Monthly Notes June 1914, p46.

⁸²Times 20 May 1914, 22 May 1914.

Basil Holmes of the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association on 'Open Spaces'; while from the colonies the Hon. Thomas Mackenzie spoke on 'The Workers' Dwellings Act in New Zealand', and Frank Beer of the Toronto Housing Association on 'Better Housing in Canada: The Toronto Plan'.⁸³

Discussion the next day centred on 'The Care of Child Life' and, reflecting the current obsession with infant mortality and physical deterioration, was extensively reported in the *Times*. Henry Hadow, having described British achievements in lowering infant mortality, ventured onto more controversial ground, 'deal[ing] with the question of sex hygiene and la[y]ing it down that all children of suitable age should be taught frankly, openly and reverently the great facts of their origin'.⁸⁴ Dr David Forsyth called for state intervention on eugenic grounds, advocating not only 'the practical training of girls in their responsibilities as mothers' but that

'the marriage of the mentally unfit must be forbidden. Houses must be improved, the laws of diet must be made known, children who are not fed and cared for at home must have food and care provided for them'.⁸⁵

A paper by Truby King on 'The Hygiene of Childhood' was read.⁸⁶ The views of Forsyth and King were apparently held by many delegates, for a provisional resolution was suggested

'asking for Government action towards securing standardisation in infant hygiene, and towards complete supervision of the health of children from birth onwards, and the provision of grants for this object'.⁸⁷

Later Maurice White, the Inspector of Schools in the Transvaal, described 'Child Life on Transvaal Farms', and a number of papers from Australia and Tasmania were read.⁸⁸

On the final day Lord Robert Cecil addressed the conference on 'The Child as Wage Earner'. 'The problem might be taken in three broad divisions, dealing with the health, morals and mental development of the child'. Much could be done by the State as regarded the health of the child, but its moral development must be largely left to the parents. 'All the State could hope to do was to see that children were not employed in trades affording special temptations such as ... the employment of boys as caddies in golf clubs ... he was struck by the very deteriorating influence on many of the boys engaged as caddies (Hear Hear)'.⁸⁹ Papers were given urging the more rigid enforcement of laws

⁸³*Monthly Notes* June 1914, p46.

⁸⁴*Monthly Notes* June 1914, p46; *Times* 21 May 1914.

⁸⁵*Times* 21 May 1914.

⁸⁶*Monthly Notes* June 1914, p46; *Times* 21 May 1914.

⁸⁷*Monthly Notes* June 1914, p46.

⁸⁸*Monthly Notes* June 1914, p46.

⁸⁹*Times* 22 May 1914.

governing the employment of schoolchildren; outlining the work of Birmingham City Council in advising school-leavers on their choice of employment; and describing child life in Melbourne and Jamaica.⁹⁰ The Resolution was passed unanimously

‘that the Delegates and Members present recognise the vital importance of the subjects discussed at the Victoria League Imperial Health Conference as affecting the social conditions of the Empire. Further, they feel it is desirable that the Victoria League should take steps to ascertain how far the ground is covered by existing effort and organisation, for the furtherance in practical form of the imperial questions discussed at the Conference’.⁹¹

The resolution emphasised the main purpose of the Conference - an exchange of ideas between the ‘mother country’ with its longer experience of social problems, and the colonies, the ‘laboratories overseas’, whose social legislation was frequently far in advance of Britain. It also pointed the way to a new and wider role for the Victoria League, an idea made explicit in E.T. Cook’s closing speech.

Said to have ‘put into words the underlying thoughts in the minds to whom and for whom he spoke’, Cook’s speech was lavishly scattered with examples from history and concluded with a reading of Blake’s ‘Jerusalem’. The Conference, he declared, had been ‘eminently business-like and practical; it has been so because, in large measure, it has dealt in details ... [But] details are only profitable when they are illumined by large ideals’. The subject-matter of the Conference was ‘essentially Imperial work - Imperial both in its range and in its purpose’. The Conference had ‘shown three things very clearly. First, that the problems we have been discussing are common to all parts of the Empire ... [Secondly] that there is a great deal which each part of the Empire may learn from the other ... thirdly ... that a healthy spirit of emulation may do much for the solution of the problems which we have been discussing’. This accumulated experience should not be allowed to go to waste.

‘The moral to be drawn is that every great town in the United Kingdom ought to have a Victoria League, and that every Victoria League should have an Industrial Committee ... I think it is of the utmost importance that, by a network of such committees or otherwise, the sources of mutual information, which have been opened by the Victoria League through this Conference, should be kept in being’.

Here would open ‘a field of truly Imperial work’ for practically minded imperialists for whom ‘patriotic songs and displays’ were not enough.⁹² The speech was a great success. ‘I was rather in trepidation’, Cook recalled, ‘but brought into it a nice quotation from Blake and Ruskin and the ruins of Imperial Rome, and that did the trick. Violet

⁹⁰*Times* 22 May 1914; *Monthly Notes* June 1914, p47.

⁹¹*Monthly Notes* June 1914, p47.

⁹²*Monthly Notes* June 1914, p47-49.

Markham wept and they cheered for a minute or two, and men and women came up to shake my hand!'.⁹³

The conference proceedings were printed in book form.⁹⁴ At Richard Jebb's suggestion an 'intelligent article' summarising the conference and signed by Meriel Talbot was written for the *Britannic Review*.⁹⁵ Another, unofficial, article by Maud Selborne appeared in the *National Review*. Entitled 'Imperialism and Motherhood' it argued that the findings of the conference showed clearly that 'the possession of political power makes the best mothers of infants ... the English mother is nearly twice as good as the German in the matter of keeping her babies alive, and the voting New Zealander and Australian far better than either'.⁹⁶ Selborne had long looked to Australian women, who 'if the test of physical good motherhood is keeping your child alive and well' were 'the best mothers in the world', to prove the beneficial effects of the female vote on both sexes. 'Women's suffrage makes for clean government and good sanitation' she told Violet Markham.⁹⁷ Markham, an anti-suffragist, refused to be convinced, and can only have resented Selborne's hijacking of the League conference to bolster the suffrage cause.

The subjects upon which the Victoria League industrial committee chose to concentrate - industrial law, town planning, and the health of children - were key topics in Edwardian debate. Milner, opening the Industrial Law Committee's 1907 exhibition on sweated industries, advocated reform not just from humanitarian motives but because of the 'supreme interest of the community in the efficiency and welfare of all its members'.⁹⁸ Two years later he commended the I.L.C.'s work on the 'broadest national grounds'.⁹⁹ 'Housing and Town Planning' had been on the imperial agenda since Lord Meath in the 1880s had urged the necessity of 'open spaces' in towns, warning that if urban congestion was not relieved the British people would be 'handicapped in the race of nations'.¹⁰⁰ C.F.G. Masterman's *The Heart of the Empire* (1902) warned that 'with a perpetual lowering of the vitality of the Imperial Race in the great cities of the kingdom through overcrowding in room and in area, no amount of hectic, feverish activity on the

⁹³Quoted J.W. Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper* (London: Methuen: 1952) p346-7.

⁹⁴Executive 18 June 1914. There is an index card for the report in the Royal Commonwealth Society collection, but the book itself appears to have been destroyed in the Blitz. It is not listed in the British Museum catalogue.

⁹⁵Executive 27 May 1914; Meriel Talbot, 'Practical Imperialism', *Britannic Review* 1 (3) July 1914 pp351-356.

⁹⁶Maud Selborne, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', *National Review* 63 1914 pp984-988.

⁹⁷Maud Selborne to Violet Markham 27 February n.y. [?1912] [Markham 26/30].

⁹⁸Milner, *Nation and Empire* p260.

⁹⁹Milner, *Nation and Empire* p285.

¹⁰⁰Lord Brabazon, 'Open Spaces and Physical Education', *National Review* VIII 1886 pp483-490.

confines of Empire will be able to arrest the inevitable decline'.¹⁰¹ 'The care of child life' and its imperial implications had been a subject of worry since the late nineteenth century discovery that the birth-rate was falling while infant mortality remained high. 'The history of nations' said the eugenicist C.W. Saleeby, 'is determined not on the battlefield but in the nursery, and the battalions which give lasting victory are the battalions of babies. The politics of the future will be domestics'.¹⁰² The Empire, said Sidney Webb, was 'rooted in the home'¹⁰³ and he argued that the 'endowment of motherhood' was the only way to avoid 'race degeneration if not race suicide'.¹⁰⁴ Imperialists, eugenicists and Fabians alike tended to blame maternal failings rather than wider social conditions, combining an 'elevation of motherhood' with a firm belief in the selfishness of middle-class women and the ignorance of working-class mothers.¹⁰⁵ The Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration recommended strengthening the laws against the employment of mothers in factories, and called for the training of women and girls in cookery, hygiene, domestic economy and child-care.¹⁰⁶ Advocates of 'mothercraft', the 'science' pioneered by Truby King, were assured of a sympathetic hearing. The Victoria League industrial committee, as the success of the *Handbook* and the Imperial Health Conference demonstrated, had tapped into the national mood.

The committee drew on two other strands of Victorian/Edwardian thought. Philanthropy, often overlapping into social reform, was well established as a proper part of 'woman's sphere'. In 1893 it was estimated that 20,000 women were 'maintaining themselves as paid officials in works of philanthropic usefulness in England' - through the Charity Organisation Society, the settlement movement, and the older philanthropic organisations - while 'about half a million [were] occupied more or less continuously and semi-professionally in similar works'.¹⁰⁷ In addition, from the 1870s middle-class women began to establish themselves, against considerable odds, in local government - on school boards, as poor law guardians, and on parish and district, borough and county councils. Justifying their public work through the imagery of separate spheres and in the 'language of family and domesticity' they described local government as 'social housekeeping', taking responsibility in particular for women, for infants and children, for

¹⁰¹C.F.G. Masterman et al, *The Heart of the Empire: Discussions of Problems of Modern City Life in England* (London: Fisher Unwin: 1902) p25.

¹⁰²Quoted Anna Davin, 'Imperialism and the Cult of Motherhood', *History Workshop* Spring 1978 pp9-65, p29.

¹⁰³Quoted Davin, 'Imperialism' p18.

¹⁰⁴Sidney Webb, 'Physical Degeneration or Race Suicide?', *Times* 16 October 1906.

¹⁰⁵Anna Davin, 'Imperialism' p13-14.

¹⁰⁶*Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration* 1904 [Cd. 2175] p88-90.

¹⁰⁷Louisa M. Hubbard, quoted in Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women 1850-1920* (London: Virago: 1985) p211-212.

the old and the helpless.¹⁰⁸ As early as 1889 women's work in local government had been accepted even by the anti-suffrage movement.¹⁰⁹ Strengthening the Empire through social reform, therefore, was an acceptable female expression of imperialism.

In a speech that summarised much of the ideology behind the Victoria League industrial committee, Milner told the Women's Canadian Club of Montreal in 1908 that

'One of the essentials of national greatness is good social organisation ... And here is where the influence of women especially comes in ... Heaven forbid that we should try and circumscribe the influence of women in public life ... But their actual work will necessarily lie in the sphere of internal and social development. What I want them to realise is that in doing that work well they are rendering national and Imperial service as much as any soldier or sailor or diplomatist'.

He listed education, housing, hospitals, 'the life of women and children employed in mines and factories and shops' and 'the care of those who have fallen in the race of life' as 'spheres of work in which the co-operation of women is particularly valuable'. Milner went on,

'What is known throughout the Empire as 'the women's movement' can only gain, and may gain immensely, from an exchange of experiences, from the women of one part of the Empire following the efforts, and learning from the successes or the failures, of women in other parts. That is one of the chief advantages of the unity of the Empire, of what I have spoken of as our common citizenship ... People do, in fact, learn more easily from those of their own household. We do, in fact, learn more easily from the efforts and experiments of men and women in other parts of our own Empire, than from what is done or attempted in foreign lands ... there is a very great deal that we can learn with regard to social organisation generally from other parts of the Empire'.

Here was the second idea behind the industrial committee's work - that it was natural for the 'mother' and 'daughter' countries of the Empire to share ideas and to learn from each other's experiments and mistakes. As Milner concluded, it was 'by mutual knowledge, by mutual help, by learning from one another, that we shall preserve in some and develop in others the vivifying and inspiring sense of being, despite many differences of origin and tradition, one people with a common mission in the world'.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸Patricia Hollis, 'Women in Council: Separate Spheres, Public Space', in Jane Rendall (ed.), *Equal or Different: Women's Politics 1800-1914* (Oxford: Blackwell: 1987) p206, p195.

¹⁰⁹'An Appeal against Female Suffrage', *Nineteenth Century* vol. XXV no. 148 (June 1889) pp781-788, p782.

¹¹⁰Milner, *Nation and Empire* p352-358.

Chapter 8. Sister Societies Overseas

The Victoria League freely admitted that the initiative for its foundation had come from its sister societies in 'Greater Britain'. The League continued to feel a special affinity with these 'allied associations' and the colonial contacts thus acquired were part of its strength. Independent of the London body (even those bearing the name 'Victoria League'), they were held together, as the League hoped the Empire as a whole could be, by 'the will of a free people, ... united ... by mutual affection, and ... in loyalty to the flag and the throne'.¹ Theirs was 'the loyalty of complete independence', the only kind Violet Markham felt could last.² 'Unity in aim, but diversity in administration: such, in the League's opinion, is the only effective way of working towards Imperial Unity'.³ The societies operated within a framework of mutual respect. Despite requests, the Victoria League tried not to organise branches in countries where its sister organisations operated, and they, on the whole, reciprocated. In 1904, for example, the Guild of Loyal Women in Bloemfontein resolved not to amalgamate with the League of the Empire so as not 'to break with the Victoria League'.⁴ Notwithstanding occasional problems, the association with these sister societies was a vital part of the League's work and fundamental to its self-image.

In 1909 Edith Lyttelton proposed that a Victoria League representative should visit the self-governing Colonies. 'She considered that for the success of the forthcoming Conference [of allied associations] in 1911, and the development of the League's work generally, a visit of the kind was essential'.⁵ Empire-wide tours were becoming *de rigueur* for imperial thinkers and organisers. The young Richard Jebb's *Studies in Colonial Nationalism* (1905) had resulted from his tour of Canada and Australasia in 1898-1901 (he did not visit South Africa until 1906).⁶ Lionel Curtis, already familiar with South Africa from his time with Milner's 'kindergarten', began a similar tour in 1910 with the double aim of collecting information relevant to the question of imperial unity, and establishing Round Table groups in the antipodes.⁷ James Boosé of the Royal Colonial Institute first visited Canada to boost

¹Lady Jersey, 'The Victoria League', *The Queen* CX 23 November 1901 pp802-803, p802.

²Markham, *Canada Diary* 5 September 1905 [Markham 27/4].

³Annual Report 1903-4, p7.

⁴Executive 30 June 1904.

⁵Executive 17 June 1909.

⁶John Eddy and Deryck Schreuder, *The Rise of Colonial Nationalism* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin: 1988) p1.

⁷Walter Nimocks, *Milner's Young Men: the 'kindergarten' in Edwardian Imperial affairs* (London: Hodder & Stoughton: 1970 (1st 1968)), p162-3; John E. Kandle, *The Round Table Movement and Imperial Union* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press: 1975) Chapter 4.

membership and organise branches in 1912; in 1915 he became the R.C.I.'s travelling commissioner and by his retirement had visited almost every part of the Empire.⁸ The League of the Empire's secretary, Mrs Ord Marshall, was also on tour in 1909 - something which may have prompted Lyttelton's suggestion.

The Victoria League decided that Meriel Talbot should undertake two journeys, one round Australasia and Canada beginning in the autumn of 1909, the other round South Africa beginning in autumn 1910.⁹ Colonial officials and the allied associations were alerted, and a fund-raising campaign was launched. Her instructions were to 'stimulate wherever possible, the work of the Allied Associations, and to establish the Victoria League in places where no society of the kind already exists, and to use her discretion in extending the work'.¹⁰ Talbot was also 'to confer with the Victoria Leagues and Allied Associations ... to explain to them the operations and ideas of the Central League and its Branches at home ... The Committee attached great importance to the opportunities which the tour would afford for the receiving and acquiring of information first-hand'.¹¹

Talbot landed at Freemantle in early October 1909 ('my first sight of a British colony')¹² and from there she 'proceeded from Perth to Kalgoorie, afterwards visiting Victoria, South Australia, New South Wales ... Queensland', Tasmania and New Zealand. Talbot then started for Canada, landing at Victoria B.C. on April 6th 1910, and crossed the country west to east, arriving back in London in time to address the League's annual meeting in June.¹³ After a few months in England she left for South Africa, arriving at Cape Town in late September 1910. She did not return until April 1911, having visited all four provinces, 'attending meetings of Guild Committees in order to explain Victoria League methods and aims, and on her part, to learn more of the work of the Guild ... and in every way endeavouring to attain the object of her tour, "the furthering of the common cause"'.¹⁴

⁸Trevor R. Reese, *The History of the Royal Commonwealth Society 1868-1968* (London: Oxford University Press: 1968) p208.

⁹The Victoria League also had a branch in Jamaica, and two largely inactive branches for British women in Boston and in Rome.

¹⁰Executive 22 July 1909.

¹¹Annual Report 1909-10, p4-5.

¹²Meriel Talbot, Diary 3 October 1909 [Talbot U1612 F221 (Australasia and Canada), U1612 F222 (South Africa)]. The diary covers her tour for the League only, and is incomplete.

¹³Annual Report 1909-10, p5.

¹⁴Annual Report 1910-11, p5.

The Victoria League in Australasia

One of the major successes of Talbot's tour was the dramatic expansion of the Victoria League in Australia and New Zealand. The League had always had some representation in the antipodes, originally mainly through the wives of British officials. At the first Council meeting in 1901, for example, Lady Hamilton 'representing Lady Gormanston', wife of the governor of Tasmania, welcomed the Victoria League 'saying that there was considerable scope for such organisation in Australia'.¹⁵ In 1903 the Victoria League's first overseas branch was started in Tasmania; by 1908 it 'hope[d] soon to number 1,000'.¹⁶ The Victoria League of Victoria was formed in May 1908 'at a public meeting convened by Lady Talbot' (the governor's wife, later chairman of the Victoria League Settlers' Welcome committee). A year later it had 520 members.¹⁷ In New Zealand, a branch was formed for the province of Otago in 1905 and for Wellington in 1906.¹⁸ The branches provided introductions for visitors to Britain, organised Empire correspondence among schoolchildren, and collected literature for country districts.

In New South Wales the League had a strong supporter in Elizabeth Macarthur Onslow,¹⁹ whose daughter Rosa had helped to found the Ladies' Empire Club in London in 1902.²⁰ Her attempt to form a branch, however, was pre-empted by the women's auxiliary of the British Empire League in Sydney, which in 1905 expressed a desire to co-operate with the Victoria League.²¹ The London executive decided 'that visitors from Sydney should be received as members of the League, the final arrangement with the British Empire League in that town having not been satisfactorily concluded'.²² By 1908 it had been accepted as an allied association and was granted space in the annual report, where it explained that it was 'intended for solid work, its object being to keep up the spirit of loyalty and true Empire feeling in Australia'.²³ Arriving in Sydney, Talbot persuaded the B.E.L. to work on Victoria League lines. She 'strongly advised the amalgamation of the Central League and the

¹⁵Council 22 May 1901. Lady Hamilton was the widow of Lord Gormanston's predecessor in Tasmania.

¹⁶Executive 11 June 1903, Annual Report 1907-8, p62.

¹⁷Annual Report 1908-9, p79-82.

¹⁸Annual Report 1907-8, p60-67. Each had around 230 members in 1908.

¹⁹*Australian Dictionary of Biography* Vol. X p196, p198.

²⁰*ADB* Vol. X p198-199. Rosa was in 1924 the eventual founder of the Victoria League in New South Wales.

²¹Executive 25 February 1904, 20 January 1905. The British Empire League in Sydney had been founded in 1902, the more active women's auxiliary in late 1903 (Maurice French, "'One People, One Destiny" - A Question of Loyalty: the Origins of Empire Day in New South Wales, 1900-1905', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 61 (4) December 1975 pp236-248, p240-3).

²²Executive 5 July 1906.

²³Annual Report 1907-8, p74.

Women's Branch in order to strengthen and enlarge the general work ... [the amalgamated body to] have power to appoint special committees to deal with particular sides of the work, such as flag exchange, bush libraries, hospitality and education'.²⁴ Her advice was unanimously accepted - something of a diplomatic triumph as the executive had earlier received a letter from the 'ineffectual'²⁵ Women's Branch 'emphasising, unofficially, the desire of their society to remain an organisation of women only'.²⁶

Dealing with Victoria Leagues proper Talbot followed a basic plan. Where a League was already established she would confer with the committee, tactfully put forward suggestions where she considered the work to be too narrow or insufficiently active, address the members to stir up enthusiasm, and spread the word to the general public through meetings and the press. League parties and receptions would also be held, as in Launceston, where 'the [Masonic] Hall [was] decorated with red, white and blue flowers and hangings and a great Union Jack behind the little dais ... Quite 150 were presented and many men ... Touching farewells all round ... 'God Save the King' sung with a real thrill'.²⁷ Where no League yet existed she would enlist the local social leaders (and, ideally, politicians from both sides, churchmen, editors and labour leaders). A meeting would then be held (with these worthies on the platform) at which she would explain the aims and objects of the League, and a committee would be elected. Probably some local interest would have been evinced beforehand - at least there is no recorded instance of Talbot trying to start a branch and failing.

Talbot often found the success or otherwise of the League dependent on a small number of influential individuals. Sometimes it was the governor's wife, or less often the governor himself, who pushed the League. It was 'thanks to the energy and care of [the governor's wife] Lady Edeline Strickland [that] a very representative general committee had been formed to organise the work of the Victoria League in Western Australia'.²⁸ In Wellington, the governor, Lord Plunkett, 'couldn't say too much for the good the League was doing in welcoming New Zealanders to England'.²⁹ It was 'owing to [his] having puffed the Victoria League at his farewell speech here the day before and people being more awake in consequence', that Talbot was able to establish a provisional committee in Napier, new country for the League.³⁰ Official status was not necessary: social status would suffice. In Tasmania

²⁴Annual Report 1909-10, p70.

²⁵Executive 20 January 1910: Lady Chelmsford's opinion.

²⁶Executive 22 July 1909.

²⁷Talbot Diary 21 January 1910.

²⁸Talbot Diary p2; 12 October 1909.

²⁹Talbot Diary 26 February 1910.

³⁰Talbot Diary 4 March 1910.

the League was run largely by the Cameron family, the matriarch of which, a Scotswoman by birth and the widow of a successful sheep farmer, was 'quite the grande dame of Hobart'³¹ and had been the first president of the local Victoria League.³² Her son, Colonel Cameron, was a Boer War hero; her daughter Mrs Stourton was Honorary Secretary of the League in Tasmania; and her daughter-in-law was prominent in the Launceston branch.³³

Talbot was anxious to stress two things to her colonial audience: the Victoria League's non-political stance and - somewhat misleadingly - its classlessness. In Kalgoorlie the local women 'at first ... thought the Victoria League was political and would have none of it'. But Talbot 'soon got them to see its point' and a branch was founded with a 'really keen' committee.³⁴ In Otago, where membership was fairly small, Talbot spent some time 'working up the Friendly Societies and the Labour people and the general public, so as to get rid of that silly idea that the Victoria League is a classy sort of thing' before suggesting successfully to the local executive 'that the League should be constituted on a fresh basis and its work extended so as to gain the sympathy of all classes'.³⁵ In Wellington she was dismayed by the pervasive narrow-minded provincial snobbery and found the Governor 'quite with me in wishing to get it into hands other than the 'Push' [apparently the local social mafia]. The class distinctions and prejudices in a place like this are very strong and quite ludicrous, for they are obviously artificial'.³⁶ At the Wellington meeting Talbot 'hit out hard at the absurdity of class difference in work of this kind, and hope[d] it went home to some of the silly 'Push''.³⁷

The point of the Victoria League, Talbot continually emphasised, was *practical* imperialism. She had no time for co-speakers who gave only 'the usual imperial platitudes with pounding repetition', preferring those *who 'hit well at shoddy imperialism and big sounding financial and other union which result in little and praised the personal work of the Victoria League with its far-reaching results in bringing British people closer together'*.³⁸ (Talbot had discovered in Perth that 'the facilities offered by the League to visitors of all classes arriving from England, the work among schools, and the books to up-country districts seemed most to appeal').³⁹ She found 'the response to the Victoria League spirit and practical work'

³¹Talbot Diary 22 January 1910.

³²ADB Vol. III p336-7.

³³ADB Vol. VII p535; Talbot Diary 21 January 1910.

³⁴Talbot Diary 14 October, 16 October 1909.

³⁵Talbot Diary 7 February 1909; Annual Report 1909-10, p65.

³⁶Talbot Diary 26 February 1910.

³⁷Talbot Diary 28 February 1910.

³⁸Talbot Diary 1 February, 14 March 1910.

³⁹Talbot Diary p2.

in Australia 'very encouraging',⁴⁰ probably because it provided tangible benefits without offending feelings of colonial nationalism. Together with Talbot's business-like approach, her dedication (even when, in Otago, she received news of her father's death, she resolved 'to go on with my work here in New Zealand at any rate'),⁴¹ her social contacts, and her winning personality, it was a highly successful combination.⁴²

Talbot's tour resulted in the formation of eleven new committees in Australasia. By May 1910 there were five branches in New Zealand and 'a Victoria League or an Association representing it, in every state of the Australian Commonwealth'.⁴³ It was not an unmitigated success. The Queensland branch closed in autumn 1911 owing to 'want of adequate support and interest in the work'.⁴⁴ Problems arose with the British Empire League in Sydney almost immediately, largely because it did not share the Victoria League's disinclination to become involved in controversial political questions.⁴⁵ But the Victoria League clearly agreed with Mrs Macarthur Onslow's opinion that 'it would be unsuitable to start a branch there unless the British Empire League was shown to be incompetent' and in the long run it was decided 'to continue the arrangement made by Miss Talbot while in Sydney'.⁴⁶

However, some of the new branches proved to be extremely energetic. By July 1910 Auckland could already report the formation of school libraries, 'strong support given by the Auckland Board of Education, also by the Press; names of correspondents among school children collected; care being given to mark the graves of soldiers who died in the Maori wars; help to new settlers'.⁴⁷ By November 1913 it had 1,124 members and 250 children linked for Empire correspondence.⁴⁸ Some of the older branches also showed a new energy. Tasmania quickly undertook the 'reorganisation of the constitution to include men members, several of whom had consented to serve on Committees'.⁴⁹ The Victoria League of Victoria had 800 children linked for Empire correspondence by 1911⁵⁰ and hoped to organise the

⁴⁰Talbot Diary 14 March 1910.

⁴¹Talbot Diary 2 February 1910.

⁴²A tribute from the Victoria League of Victoria (one of many from around the Empire) recorded that 'she seemed to know the way to win everyone's confidence, and her presence here and the friendly spirit towards the League, which everyone who met her was induced to show, has strengthened the links created by the League into something tangible and much stronger than before' [Annual Report 1909-10, p60].

⁴³Annual Report 1909-10, p6.

⁴⁴Annual Report 1911-12, p55.

⁴⁵Executive 7 July 1910; 17 November 1910.

⁴⁶Executive 20 October 1910; 7 July 1910.

⁴⁷Executive 21 July 1910.

⁴⁸Executive 20 November 1913.

⁴⁹Executive 20 October 1910.

⁵⁰Executive 26 October 1911.

local reception of new settlers for the Colonial Intelligence League and the Naval and Military Association.⁵¹ By 1912 it had collected sixty-eight bush libraries,⁵² and in 1914 it had 1,242 members.⁵³ Three more New Zealand branches were established⁵⁴ and the Victoria League in South Australia split itself from the League of the Empire 'by mutual consent'.⁵⁵ By 1914 the Victoria League had a large and active presence in Australasia.

The Imperial Order, Daughters of the Empire

The I.O.D.E.,⁵⁶ the Canadian precursor to the Victoria League, was established in early 1900 by a Scotswoman, Margaret Clark Murray. Born in Paisley, the daughter of a prominent manufacturer, she moved to Canada after her marriage, first to Kingston and then to Montreal where her husband taught at McGill University.⁵⁷ Mrs Murray, who was also the founder of the South African Graves Association, became inspired to start the I.O.D.E. on a visit to England in late 1899.⁵⁸ She had long been convinced that something should be done to remedy British ignorance of Canadian life, and while in England she 'met many women who were anxious to help on the home front but were handicapped by lack of channels through which to work'.⁵⁹ On her return to Canada she 'resolved to form an organisation based on the foundations of Patriotism, Loyalty and Service ... to foster a bond of union between the women and children of the Empire and promote loyalty to King and Country'.⁶⁰ She publicised the idea by writing to the Mayors of all the capital cities in the Dominion and on 1 January 1900 the first 'chapter' was formed in Fredericton, New Brunswick.⁶¹ Mrs Clark Murray subsequently formed a central organisation in Montreal.

The new society aimed 'to provide an efficient organisation by which prompt and united action may be taken by the women of the Empire when such action may be needed'. More specifically it hoped

⁵¹Executive 15 December 1911.

⁵²Executive 18 July 1912.

⁵³Annual Report 1913-14, p59.

⁵⁴Annual Report 1910-11, p75; 1912-13, p56; Executive 15 January 1914.

⁵⁵Annual Report 1911-12, p54-5.

⁵⁶The organisation began life as the Federation of the Daughters of the Empire, shortly afterwards became the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire, and in 1912 changed to the Imperial Order, Daughters of the Empire. It is referred to throughout as the I.O.D.E.

⁵⁷Sir Charles G.D. Roberts and Arthur L. Tunnell (eds.), *A Standard Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto: Trans-Canada Press: 1938) p352.

⁵⁸Mrs W.G. Lumbers (attrib.), *The Imperial Order, Daughters of the Empire Golden Jubilee 1900-1950* (Toronto: 1950) p5.

⁵⁹Lumbers, *IODE* frontispiece, p1.

⁶⁰Lumbers, *IODE* p3.

⁶¹Lumbers, *IODE* p2; *Standard Dictionary* p353.

'to promote in the motherland and in the colonies the study of the history of the Empire, and of current imperial questions; to celebrate patriotic anniversaries; to cherish the memory of the brave and heroic deeds, and the last resting places of our heroes and heroines, especially such that are in distant and solitary places; to erect memorial stones at spots that have become sacred to the nation, either through great struggles for freedom, battles against ignorance, or events of heroic and patriotic self-sacrifice'.⁶²

'All women and young people of the Empire, and her colonies, by birth, adoption or residence' were eligible for membership⁶³ and members were pledged 'to forward every good work for the betterment of their county and people' and 'to draw women's influence to the bettering of all things connected with our great Empire and to instil into the youth of their country patriotism in its fullest sense'.⁶⁴

The Victoria League early began what was to become a long and troubled association with the I.O.D.E. In June 1901 a letter from Lady Minto, wife of the governor-general of Canada, 'containing full information about Mrs Clark Murray' was swiftly followed by an interview with a Mrs Haldane. 'Mrs Clark Murray ... is on her way to England and Mrs Haldane considers it important that the Victoria League should communicate with her immediately'.⁶⁵ Representatives of the Victoria League, the League of the Children of the Empire and the Guild of Loyal Women assembled to meet Mrs Murray who

'gave a full account of her work ... and said she had come to England to form an important central committee in London, and at first did not seem disposed to work with the Victoria League in the matter - Lady Jersey made a statement as to the present position of the Victoria League in London and that she hoped they might come to some arrangement of co-operation between Mrs Murray and her League'.

An arrangement already existed between the I.O.D.E. and the Guild of Loyal Women but there was some confusion as to its terms, for 'a misunderstanding between the Daughters of the Empire League and the G.L.W. as to the subtitle of the latter and their imagined want of loyalty to Mrs C. Murray' was only narrowly averted.⁶⁶ A second and more satisfactory meeting with Mrs Murray was held shortly afterwards: 'Results - abandonment by Mrs Clark Murray of her original idea to form a big London committee. Willingness to propose the Daughters of the Empire League as an Allied Association of the Victoria League, and to co-operate in every way'.⁶⁷

⁶²*Montreal Gazette* 14 February 1900.

⁶³*Montreal Gazette* 28 February 1900.

⁶⁴Lumbers, *IODE* p9-10.

⁶⁵Executive 7 June 1901; 11 June 1901.

⁶⁶Executive 21 June 1901.

⁶⁷Executive 27 June 1901.

In October 1901 further complications arose. Lady de Blaquiere (a French Canadian who had married an Englishman and who was soon to join the Victoria League executive) wrote from Montreal,

'stating that Mrs Clark Murray was no longer secretary, that she leads a committee of uninfluential people in Montreal *only* and has given a false impression of the recent negotiations between herself and the Victoria League in London. The Committee in Toronto, incorporated for the province of Ontario, is a strong and influential body and is now anxious to correspond directly with the Victoria League. Had been told by Mrs Clark Murray that the Victoria League was bitterly opposed to them. Head office of the Daughters of the Empire is to be moved to Toronto'.⁶⁸

The Victoria League decided in favour of the Toronto branch, which had expressed a desire to co-operate with the League,⁶⁹ and subsequently ignored a series of plaintive letters from Mrs Clark Murray protesting and even 'asking for withdrawal [of] and apology for [the] expression "breach of faith"'.⁷⁰

The new national president, Edith Nordheimer née Boulton, though the wife of a highly successful Toronto businessman of German Jewish descent who acted as consul for the German Empire, came originally of old British-Canadian stock. She had earlier been involved with the Imperial Federation League and was also connected with the Toronto South African Memorial Association, the Victorian Order of Nurses and the Female Immigrants Receiving Home in Toronto.⁷¹ Under Nordheimer's leadership the I.O.D.E. expanded rapidly, with 2,710 members in 65 Chapters (branches) by May 1903.⁷² Although in 1905 Mrs Nordheimer complained of 'hindrance to the work owing to pressure for reciprocity with the United States and growing spirit for an independent Canada', by 1910 there were 137 Chapters (including 18 in the western provinces) and 'nearly 10,000' members in Canada, as well as some in the United States and the West Indies.⁷³

The I.O.D.E.'s efforts to stimulate imperial feeling were extremely diverse. Its first year's work included 'supplying ... helmets and literature to the South African contingents', 'the building of the beautiful Alexandra Gateway in Toronto in honour of the visit of ... the Prince and Princess of Wales', and promoting Empire correspondence among the young in association with the British League of the

⁶⁸Executive 31 October 1901.

⁶⁹Executive 30 January 1902; 10 April 1902.

⁷⁰Executive 10 April 1902.

⁷¹*Toronto Globe* 21 May 1910; H.J. Morgan, *Canadian Men and Women of our Time 2nd Edition* (Toronto: William Briggs: 1912) p855; H.J. Morgan, *Types of Canadian Women Volume 1* (Toronto: William Briggs: 1903) p255.

⁷²J. Castell Hopkins, *The Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs 1903* (Toronto: Annual Review Publishing Co.) p340.

⁷³Executive 20 January 1905; *Canadian Annual Review 1910* p124.

Children of the Empire.⁷⁴ By 1912 its activities had expanded to include 'active support to the Boy Scout movement in the presentation of uniforms, colours, etc., the presentation of flags to institutions and schools, the promotion of Memorials to the late King Edward at Vancouver, Amherstburg and Edmonton' and a 'Patriotic Programme ... to provide patriotic historical questions and answers for school children'. Less obviously imperial were the 'encouragement of Municipal action in promoting parks, playgrounds etc.,' and 'the establishment of hospital cots and wards at many points'.⁷⁵

For the Victoria League, however, the I.O.D.E. was soon proving unsatisfactory as a channel of communication with Canada. When Violet Markham visited Canada in 1905 the executive asked her to 'make it known unofficially that the Victoria League would be ready at any time to receive proposals from any smaller organisation in Canada for the extension of the work and for, if possible, organising it on the lines of the Victoria League'.⁷⁶ Markham did not in fact do this ('it seems clear to me the Victoria League will have to work through the Daughters of the Empire') but she did spend some of her tour investigating the state of the I.O.D.E. and was 'relieved to find they are on much sounder lines than we imagined in London ... their chapters for working women seem to me excellent'.⁷⁷ Shortly after her arrival in Canada, Markham met the Nordheimers, 'the leading people in Toronto'.⁷⁸ Markham was

'sorry about the way Mrs Nordheimer discussed the [Quebec] French. One is puzzled and distressed to find racial feeling running so high in this country ... all the far-sighted men say [the French] are excellent Canadian citizens and a good element in the state. It's no good clamouring for them to see eye to eye with the United Empire Loyalists ... How far the Daughters of the Empire take this broad and statesmanlike view ... how far the educated women ... are cultured and capable of taking these wide views I have not been here long enough to judge'.⁷⁹

She added that 'Mrs Nordheimer seems quite alive to the need of pushing the work in the N. West but the communications are very scattered and throughout Canada there seems a lack of people to do things - the population is ludicrously disproportionate to the territory it is spread over'.⁸⁰

⁷⁴*Canadian Magazine* vol. XIX no.2 June 1902, p176.

⁷⁵*Canadian Annual Review* 1912 p146-7.

⁷⁶Executive 13 July 1905.

⁷⁷Markham, Canada Diary Toronto 13 September 1905 [Markham 27/4].

⁷⁸Violet Markham to Rosa Markham 15 September 1905 [Markham 27/58].

⁷⁹Markham, Canada Diary Toronto 13 September 1905. By the end of the trip Markham had dismissed most middle-class Canadian women as 'very stupid, lacking both education and culture ... [they] spend their lives entertaining each other at lunch and tea' (Violet Markham to Rosa Markham 27 October 1905 [Markham 27/58]).

⁸⁰Markham, Canada Diary 13 September 1905 [Markham 27/4].

The internal dissensions of the I.O.D.E. were still in evidence. The Montreal branch had 'seceded from the I.O.D.E. owing to financial difficulties caused by Mrs Clark Murray'.⁸¹ They too wished to be allied with the Victoria League but had been fobbed off with a message 'expressing appreciation of any effort to co-operate in the common aim of drawing closer the different parts of the Empire' but regretting that 'until the position of the two organisations at Toronto and Montreal had been more defined, a formal alliance could not be considered'.⁸² Markham reported that

'the situation of the Daughters of the Empire in Montreal seems a very difficult one. Mrs Mackenzie [the head of the Montreal chapter] is much better than her committee and people like her personally ... But [Montreal] declare they won't be under Toronto, who they assert has [*sic*] reaped what they sowed'.

Markham 'preached conciliation and unity' and hoped that 'the Victoria League might help them come to an understanding',⁸³ a hope that was to remain unfulfilled.

Mrs Nordheimer's autocratic style of government created discontent on both sides of the Atlantic, and the Victoria League made several more half-hearted attempts to establish an alternative base in Canada.⁸⁴ When Meriel Talbot reached Canada in 1910 she found the Daughters of the Empire all 'gloriously vague'⁸⁵ but she also saw them as an untapped resource. 'These good women who have banded themselves together under the high-sounding name - Daughters of the Empire - have never thought out their work, and all I can tell them of the V.L. practical things seems a new and wonderful revelation to them! Very funny'.⁸⁶ Later she wrote,

'I just long to make them see what a lot of really good work is waiting for them to do - instead of these silly fountains and hospital cots, to get money for which they get up dances and follies of all sorts. Leave that to others, as I tell them, but for pity's sake don't call it "imperial"'.⁸⁷

At the end of her trip Talbot finally met Mrs Nordheimer 'face to face. An important moment, for the V.L. has had many difficulties with this lady, and much of our future work in Canada depends on how I can make her see one or two things'.⁸⁸ Talbot lunched with 'some of the leading Toronto and D of E ladies ... obviously all in awe of Mrs N. The atmosphere somewhat tense'. Afterwards,

⁸¹Executive 7 June 1905.

⁸²Executive 13 July 1905.

⁸³Markham, Canada Diary 29 October 1905 [Markham 27/4].

⁸⁴Executive 7 February 1907, 9 April 1908.

⁸⁵Talbot Diary, Saskatoon 4 May 1910.

⁸⁶Talbot Diary, Calgary 29 April 1910.

⁸⁷Talbot Diary, Winnipeg 11 May 1910.

⁸⁸Talbot Diary, Toronto 17 May 1910.

'I talked a little of our V.L. work. Mrs N inflammatory - ready to suggest that D of E was doing all and more - and no apparent interest in hearing of any other society. Some of her colleagues obviously more interested. Felt inclined to be warlike every now and then'.⁸⁹

Talbot's efforts were unavailing and Mrs Nordheimer declined to co-operate with the League.

The whole question of the Nordheimer administration boiled over in 1911. Early that year the League received hints that the I.O.D.E. was planning to encroach on its territory by forming 'an Imperial Chapter in London'.⁹⁰ In May the I.O.D.E. attempted unsuccessfully to swamp the League's Open Conference of patriotic societies to propose 'a standing Imperial Council for London'.⁹¹ In October, however, Mrs Nordheimer faced 'rebellion at the [I.O.D.E.] Annual Meeting',⁹² an event reported by one of the more sensational Toronto newspapers under the headline 'Hisses and Cheers for the Rival Factions in the I.O.D.E. Convention'.⁹³ She resigned in favour of the vice-president, Mrs Gooderham, and was voted an honorary life member. At the next meeting, in May 1912, one member declared that 'we never had freedom of speech until the last few months ... Autocracy must succumb to democracy'; and the constitution was changed to give 'the widest possible representation'.⁹⁴

The new president, Mary Gooderham, the daughter of a Scottish father and a Canadian mother, had married in 1883 Albert Gooderham, financier, philanthropist and officer in the volunteer militia. She was also involved with the South African Memorial Association. An 'outstanding figure' combining 'dignity and charm' with 'zeal and generosity'⁹⁵ she proved significantly more sympathetic to the Victoria League. By December 1911 'a most cordial letter had been received from Mrs Gooderham ... determined to co-operate in every possible way with the Victoria League and notifying to the Chapters that they should communicate direct with the League in regard to hospitality'.⁹⁶ A few months later several Chapters had declared themselves willing to co-operate, and Winnipeg in particular showed considerable enthusiasm for Settlers' Welcome work.⁹⁷ There are few subsequent references to the

⁸⁹Talbot Diary, Toronto 18 May 1910.

⁹⁰Executive 19 January, 6 April 1911.

⁹¹Executive 18 May 1911; 7 July 1911.

⁹²Executive 16 December 1911.

⁹³*Toronto Daily Star* 19 October 1911.

⁹⁴*Toronto Globe* 1 June 1912.

⁹⁵*Standard Dictionary* p174-6; Morgan, *Canadian Men and Women* p453; Lumbers, *IODE* p21.

⁹⁶Executive 15 December 1911.

⁹⁷Executive 18 April 1912; 16 May 1912.

I.O.D.E. in the Victoria League executive minutes, suggesting that co-operation between the Chapters and the League's subcommittees was working smoothly.

The Guild of Loyal Women of South Africa

Until very recently the Guild of Loyal Women was a forgotten institution, triply damned in South African history as being British, imperialist, and female. Even now that interest is again being shown in the Guild it remains a shadowy institution, if only because the South African records have disappeared.⁹⁸ However, the papers of the Victoria League and some of its members, in conjunction with the few G.L.W. papers extant in the British Library and the Royal Commonwealth Society collection, provide a surprisingly revealing sidelight on the Guild. Sometimes known as the League of Loyal Women or the Loyal Women's League, the Guild was established in Cape Town in March 1900 through the efforts of Dora Fairbridge.⁹⁹ Annie Hanbury-Williams sent a lively account of the inaugural meeting to Violet Markham.

'It is an *imperial* not a *political* Guild ... Mrs Arderne is Chairman and we have all kinds of English and Dutch named members. Cicely [Bentinck], Violet [Cecil] and I and a few others are honorary members as we are non-residents. We had an excellent first meeting at the Ardernes' house. Dr Gill took the chair, and spoke *very* well, he was so moderate, which was wonderful for him. Artie Stanley also spoke and several other people, and Prince Alexander of Teck happened to be down here, so he very good-naturedly went, and was put into the largest arm-chair (it was all in the open) with Violet and me each side!'¹⁰⁰

The Guild's personal ties with the Victoria League executive (particularly between Dora Fairbridge and Violet Cecil and Violet Markham) ensured harmonious relations between the two organisations.

The Guild, it was claimed, had begun 'due to the spontaneous outburst of loyal feelings burning within the hearts and lives of thousands of women - Dutch and English ... Non-political, save for their determination to uphold the Imperial supremacy in South Africa, they felt that a crisis had come which called on all women, true to Queen and country, to bestir themselves, and to throw their womanhood's loving gentle influences upon the right side ... believing as they do that love must be the conqueror, and finally break the barriers between the Briton and the Boer'.¹⁰¹ The Guild's 'three fundamental principles' were

⁹⁸Information from Peter Merrington, University of the Western Cape.

⁹⁹Violet Milner, *My Picture Gallery 1886-1901* (London: John Murray: 1951) p153.

¹⁰⁰Annie Hanbury to Violet Markham 3 April 1900 [Markham 25/39]

¹⁰¹*Times* 17 November 1900.

'(a) To endeavour to make the people of South Africa realise and feel proud of the fact that, whatever their names or descent, all are members of the great British Empire; (b) loyally to strengthen the hands of the Imperial Government and of her Majesty's Representative in this land; (c) to draw closer the ties which unite Great and Greater Britain, and to form a link in the chain which binds the dependencies and colonies to the mother country'.

It further aimed to 'spread right views of the great questions uppermost in all minds just now', and to 'educate the coming generation, and make them realise that they belong to the "greatest and best Empire the world has ever seen"'.¹⁰²

The Guild soon obtained the approval of prominent male imperialists such as Kipling.¹⁰³ Milner allowed its functions to take place in Government House gardens and occasionally addressed its meetings.¹⁰⁴ In 1901 he advised Mrs Lyttelton Gell of the South African Colonisation Society to

'co-operate for all you are worth with the Loyal Women's League. They are very much abused, but they are only abused by those who don't like loyalty and are trying to make out that it is a party movement. All this is nonsense. The League is quite sensible and not at all anti-Dutch. Their objects are such that every decent person would approve, and the movement is gaining considerable influence ...'.¹⁰⁵

For Milner the organisation was important not only as a means of combating disloyalty but as a model for a future South Africa. 'I have watched with the greatest interest and satisfaction the growth of your Society and the successful federation of its branches' he told Mrs Arderne in 1903. 'I believe the example you have set will not be without its effect in advancing the ideal of a United South Africa, ready to take its place in the still greater Union of 'All the Britains'. Amity, unity and loyalty are your watchwords. The women of the country can exercise a most potent influence in promoting them all, in drawing closer the bonds between the several parts of South Africa and the different sections of its population, as well as fostering a feeling of attachment to the Throne and to the great sister-nations which own the same allegiance'.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰²*Times* 17 November 1900.

¹⁰³See Kipling to Violet Cecil 24 September 1902 ('I have written the letter for Miss Fairbridge ... I have also written to Park privately on the matter of the League...') in Thomas Pinney (ed.), *The Letters of Rudyard Kipling Volume III 1900-1910* (Basingstoke: Macmillan: 1996) p107-8. Pinney identifies 'the League' as the South African League, but the recipient and the content of the letter suggest very strongly the League of Loyal Women.

¹⁰⁴Cecil Headlam (ed.), *The Milner Papers Volume II* (London: Cassell & Co.: 1933) p12, p232; Milner, *The Nation and the Empire* (London: Constable & Co.: 1913) p19-20, p26-28.

¹⁰⁵*Milner Papers II* p232.

¹⁰⁶*Milner Papers II* p233.

The Guild quickly became associated, especially in Britain, with one main cause: the care of soldiers' graves. To publicise this object, and also to establish a sister society, two delegates arrived in Britain in November 1900. Mrs K. H. R. Stuart, 'a very fluent speaker *both* in English and Dutch ... [with] a real power of appealing to her audiences',¹⁰⁷ was assisted by Mrs Mackintosh from Port Elizabeth. Instrumental in the foundation of the Victoria League, Mrs Stuart and Mrs Macintosh also recruited members and established some branches of their Guild in Britain, mainly as fund-raising centres for the graves work. However, the Guild, unlike the I.O.D.E., had no particular ambition to expand into Britain. Mrs Stuart soon wrote to the League executive listing 'names of ladies who have consented to join the Guild of Loyal Women in South Africa and whom Mrs Stuart proposed should be transferred to the Victoria League as members'.¹⁰⁸ A week later, 'an interview with Mrs Burrige of the G.L.W.' was reported. 'A branch had been started in East Kent and considerable local interest aroused. A very successful meeting had been held at Bexley, when £45 had been collected for the Guild - and two meetings were arranged for in the future, at Dartford and Bournemouth, for which help was asked' - and granted - 'from the Victoria League'. Mrs Burrige joined the Victoria League's graves subcommittee.¹⁰⁹ Nothing further was heard of the Guild in Britain. Probably its members joined the Victoria League (a 'transference of £3-10-6 from the G.L.W. through Mrs Stuart to the Victoria League' later in 1901 suggests diverted subscriptions)¹¹⁰ or dropped out of the movement altogether.

Even after Mrs Stuart's return to South Africa English links with the Guild remained strong. In early 1902 Violet Cecil, Violet Markham and Dora Fairbridge found themselves in Cairo at the same time. This 'necessarily spelt business' and two days were spent 'licking the Federal Constitution of the Guild of Loyal Women into some sort of shape'. Markham at least had 'never done such a thing before' and had to hope that 'the Colonial ladies will relish the hay we have made of their precious document!'¹¹¹ A brisk correspondence was maintained between the Victoria League and the Guild, referring not only to their collaboration on the graves project but to many other South African questions in which the League was concerned: the condition of the concentration camps, the League's scheme for offering prizes in schools for geography and English history, the refugee work and so on. This was supplemented by private letters (in particular between Dora Fairbridge and Violet Cecil) and occasional reports from British travellers in South Africa.

¹⁰⁷Mary H. Currey to Lady Gladstone 9 February 1912 [British Library Add. 46072 f186].

¹⁰⁸Executive 15 May 1901.

¹⁰⁹Executive 21 May 1901.

¹¹⁰Executive 3 July 1901.

¹¹¹Violet Markham to Rosa Markham 31 January 1902; 4 February 1902 [Markham 27/54].

Despite some hints of early internal strife,¹¹² the Guild swiftly became a large and multi-faceted organisation, established in all four South African colonies and by February 1908 in Rhodesia as well. Like Milner, they were proud of the fact that 'the Guild of Loyal Women is the first 'Federated' body in South Africa'.¹¹³ By May 1908 there were 55 branches with a total of 2,550 members in Cape Colony.¹¹⁴ This was clearly declining from a war-time peak (Edith Lyttelton reported 'about 5,000 members' in September 1900)¹¹⁵ but it was partially made up for by the new districts, and by the expansion of the work in new directions. An early report of six months work in the Orange River Colony included 'distribution of Victoria League box of books to nine different districts. Progress of tree planting in cemeteries. Distribution of clothes and household necessaries among distressed loyalists after careful enquiries'.¹¹⁶ In 1908 the marking of graves was still the Guild's 'principal work' but endeavours 'to foster all the works that will raise the tone of womanhood, and make 'the hand that rocks the cradle' feel and understand what a factor she is in the development of the country' had led to other interests, mostly educational and philanthropic. The Cape division organised an 'advisory education committee' for 'ascertaining the ideas of mothers on the education of their daughters' and to encourage women to stand for school boards. On the philanthropic side, the Guild ran a crèche, a convalescent home and a holiday fund in Natal; set up a maternity hospital in the Transvaal; and maintained a district nurse and a benevolent fund in Rhodesia.¹¹⁷

The name of the Guild of Loyal Women, contrasting as it did with its expressed desire to unite the two white races in South Africa, came intermittently under attack. As early as 1902 Lady Hely-Hutchinson wrote from Cape Town with 'a request that the Victoria League should urge upon the G.L.W., the advisability of a change of name'.¹¹⁸ Some years later it was reported that 'a large section of the Dutch women would not join the G.L.W. on account of its name'.¹¹⁹ The issue was postponed until 1910, when the Union of South Africa, incorporating the former Boer republics, brought it into sharp relief. It was indeed 'a vital moment for the Guild, "Life or Death"'.¹²⁰

¹¹²Executive 10 April 1902.

¹¹³Annual Report 1907-8, p69.

¹¹⁴Annual Report 1907-8, p69.

¹¹⁵Edith Lyttelton, Diary of a visit to South Africa, 10 September 1900 [Chan. 6/3].

¹¹⁶Executive 12 November 1903.

¹¹⁷Annual Report 1907-8, p69-72.

¹¹⁸Executive 22 July 1902. The League decided not to interfere [Executive 28 October 1902].

¹¹⁹Executive 14 October 1909.

¹²⁰Opinion of Mrs Kemp, G.L.W Federal Honorary Secretary [V.L. Executive 20 October 1910].

In February 1910 the Cape G.L.W. annual meeting rejected a proposal to change the name to the Victoria League and sent a motion to the Federal annual meeting to adopt the name of the Daughters of the Empire. The League received this information without enthusiasm and Georgina Frere 'undertook to write a personal letter ... hinting that the suggested change of name did not make it possible to include men members'.¹²¹ In September Meriel Talbot arrived in South Africa with instructions to

'aim at securing the organisation of the work on a broad basis, in which men and women could join, independent of party politics, and do practical work such as is now undertaken by the Victoria League. In all cases the Guild of Loyal Women to be carefully consulted and asked to co-operate in this wider organisation'.¹²²

Talbot was clearly influential in the transformation of the Guild of Loyal Women into the Victoria League of South Africa. She quickly became acquainted with the Cape and Federal Guild officials: Mrs Kingsley the Cape President; Mrs Currey the Federal President; Miss Currey the Federal Graves Treasurer (a 'clever go-ahead little woman');¹²³ and the Federal Graves Secretary and future Federal President, Mrs Beaumont Rawbone. Rawbone was known as 'the ablest woman at the Cape' and besides her Guild work had been 'elected to the school board, head of the poll, the only woman' and was 'doing Truby King work among the babies here'.¹²⁴ Talbot soon converted them to her 'reorganising proposals for the Guild' - to transform it into a Victoria League with 'a big mixed body of men and women representing both political parties' - and reflected that 'the wider outlook of the leading women here' made reform far easier than in Canada.¹²⁵ (Dora Fairbridge, however, she found 'stiff with prejudices of all sorts').¹²⁶

After a brief tour of Guild branches in the O.F.S. and Natal, where her proposals met with a more mixed reception, Talbot returned to Cape Town in November for the Union celebrations. She also attended 'two important [Guild] meetings' which resulted in 'the decision of the Guild to consider complete reorganisation. The matter would now be considered by each Provincial branch at their meetings in January and the emergency Federal Council would then be summoned to consider the decision arrived at by the Provincial branches'.¹²⁷ The League executive cabled Talbot to stay in South Africa until the Federal meeting in

¹²¹Executive 17 February 1910.

¹²²Executive 21 July 1910.

¹²³Talbot Diary, Cape Town 30 September 1910.

¹²⁴Talbot Diary, Cape Town 28 September 1910.

¹²⁵Talbot Diary, Cape Town 28 September, 30 September 1910.

¹²⁶Talbot Diary, Cape Town 2 October 1910.

¹²⁷Reported Executive 15 December 1910.

March, and in the interval she travelled north, visiting small Guild branches in the Transvaal and Rhodesia, and staying with friends in Johannesburg.¹²⁸ During this time she met Patrick Duncan and Richard Feetham, both members of Milner's 'kindergarten', and the architect Herbert Baker (a close friend of the 'kindergarten') all of whom became strong supporters of the League in South Africa. Meanwhile the provincial meetings considered the resolution that 'at this juncture in our history the Guild of Loyal Women should in order to maintain its influence in the country adopt a wider organisation and carefully define its work for the Empire' and that it should be expanded to include men, women and children.¹²⁹ The Cape, followed by Natal and the Orange Free State, voted for 'the winding up of the Guild of Loyal Women and the formation of a patriotic society to be called the Victoria League of South Africa'¹³⁰ but the Transvaal was split on the necessity for reorganisation and determined to keep the name of the Guild.

At the Federal meeting at Johannesburg on 22 March 1911 the cause of reorganisation was carried by an emotional speech from Miss Currey, the Cape delegate. Currey called on the meeting

'to face the fact that the Guild was steadily declining in numbers and in its position and estimation with the public ... it is quite clear that an organisation ... which is not growing but is gradually decreasing is *doomed*, and this is the position which we need to face in our Guild ... let us, with South Africa, today turn over a new leaf and build up an organisation better adapted to the new conditions of her life and in which we may serve her in a larger way'.¹³¹

Even the Transvaal delegates were convinced and the motion 'that in the opinion of this Conference the Guild of Loyal Women should cease to exist after duly safeguarding its responsibilities' was carried unanimously.¹³² The choice of name was left to the new organisation but it was agreed to transfer the Graves Upkeep Fund to the Victoria League in Britain. A Provisional Committee was appointed to organise the beginnings of the new society, made up of three delegates from each Province and several men including Richard Feetham and Herbert Baker.¹³³

The Committee met first on 24 March 1911 with Meriel Talbot in attendance. 'Her help and advice were of the highest value' and her influence is plain in the Committee's conclusions. The new organisation aimed to promote among its

¹²⁸Her diary ends 22 February 1911.

¹²⁹Guild of Loyal Women of South Africa, *Federal Leaflet July 1911 Special Number* (Cape Town: 1911) p15.

¹³⁰*Federal Leaflet*, p26; V.L. Executive 17 March 1911.

¹³¹*Federal Leaflet*; p23-24.

¹³²*Federal Leaflet*, p10.

¹³³*Federal Leaflet*, p13-14.

members and in South Africa generally 'a sense of comradeship as fellow citizens of the British Empire'.¹³⁴ It was to co-operate with the London League's hospitality committee; welcome to South Africa 'British subjects coming from other parts of the Empire'; 'extend knowledge of the history and present day needs and conditions of the different parts of the British Empire amongst all classes of people'; and encourage 'the more general distribution and promotion of good Art'.¹³⁵ By November 1912 five branches of the Victoria League of South Africa had been formed in the Transvaal.¹³⁶ The Orange Free State was also quick to organise, having 80 members by October 1911,¹³⁷ while the Cape and Natal followed more slowly.

Not all the Transvaal Guild members had been convinced of the necessity for reorganisation, however, and 'three recalcitrant branches' refused to dissolve. The problem was not so much their 'claim to be considered as the Guild of Loyal Women in South Africa' as their claim to the Guild funds, including the Graves Upkeep Fund which had been partially raised by the Victoria League in Britain and was now to be turned over to the League to administer.¹³⁸ The 'good Transvaal Guild dissenters' steadily refused to 'see the error of their ways and realise the opportunity for any amount of British patriotism in the new V.L. of S. Africa',¹³⁹ and a compromise solution was eventually reached which avoided legal action. The final meeting of the Guild of Loyal Women on 4 November 1912 passed a resolution of dissolution but agreed that it was 'not to have the effect of dissolving such branches as expressed a desire ... to maintain their individual existence not withstanding the dissolution of the Guild as a whole'.¹⁴⁰ There had earlier been a prospect of the remaining Guild branches 'concentrating on benevolent work and not clashing in any way with the Victoria League of South Africa'¹⁴¹ and this they presumably did. Meanwhile a new Trust Deed was drawn up for the Upkeep Fund (with Lord Gladstone, Sir Reginald Hart and Sir Percy Fitzpatrick as trustees) and a new South African Graves Association established to continue the graves work.¹⁴²

The new branches of the Victoria League of South Africa turned their attention to educational work, the organisation of Empire correspondence among children, the celebration of 'Empire or Union Day' and mounting the Victoria

¹³⁴Victoria League of South Africa, *Report by Provisional Committee to the First Meeting of the Provincial Council of the League for the Transvaal Province held on 29 November 1912.*

¹³⁵Constitution of the Victoria League of South Africa.

¹³⁶*Report by Provisional Committee.*

¹³⁷Executive 26 October 1911.

¹³⁸Executive 20 June 1912.

¹³⁹Meriel Talbot to Lord Gladstone 8 March 1912 [BL Add. 46072 f201].

¹⁴⁰Executive 19 December 1912.

¹⁴¹Executive 17 October 1912.

¹⁴²Meriel Talbot to Mrs Beaumont Rawbone (copy) 12 January 1912 [BL Add. 46072 ff134-136].

League travelling exhibition of Medici fine art prints.¹⁴³ Whether it achieved its aim of incorporating Dutch members is questionable. There was some Dutch support. In Pretoria Mrs Botha, no doubt pursuing her husband's aim of reconciling British/Dutch differences, joined as branch vice-president and made a speech which it was thought 'would prove very helpful in giving confidence to members of the Nationalist Party'.¹⁴⁴ At the inauguration of the Vereeniging branch one of the speakers was a Mr Synman, 'a well-known Dutch magistrate who formerly had had strong anti-British feelings. Sir James Dunlop-Smith had heard ... that Mr Synman's support was most remarkable, and testified to the value of the League in bringing Dutch and English together'.¹⁴⁵ On the other hand, trouble soon arose with the South African Vrouwen Federatie, which in 1912 passed a resolution that 'no member of the Federatie should belong to the Victoria League, and ... founded opposition to the V.L. on the ground of a Life of Livingstone, containing adverse criticism of the Boers, which had been sent out by the V.L. in England. Evidence had come that it was a strong party political move and made in ignorance of the real aims and objects of the V.L. in S.A.', and Mrs Botha reaffirmed her support but it was hardly a good omen.¹⁴⁶

Throughout Violet Markham's travels in South Africa in 1912-13 she met and talked with members of the Guild. What she saw did not make her hopeful about its conversion to a bi-racial Victoria League. Herself at this time highly optimistic about the future of South Africa, Markham found Mrs Kingsley and Mrs and Miss Currey 'all very hot and very sore about the political situation, said the Union had come much too soon, that everything had been given back to the Dutch and that racial feeling was most bitter in the north'. Mrs Kingsley was 'a very nice woman but desperately conservative with the strongest racial prejudices. I am a little doubtful as to the reorganisation of the V.L. if that sort of spirit is to obtain in it. She said she was not interested in social work but loved the Royal Family and Imperialism. She is also opposed to a mixed committee [i.e. one including men]'.¹⁴⁷ In the Transvaal it was suggested to Markham that 'the men [were] less bitter than the women ... the practical affairs of daily life tended to rub their angles off'.¹⁴⁸ The League had made one notable convert, Mrs Brandt, whom Markham found 'a remarkable woman'.¹⁴⁹ During the Boer War Johanna Brandt had run a liaison service for Transvaal burghers,

¹⁴³See e.g. Executive 24 April 1913.

¹⁴⁴Executive 17 October 1912.

¹⁴⁵Executive 16 October 1913.

¹⁴⁶Executive 21 November 1912.

¹⁴⁷Markham, South Africa Diary, Cape Town 26 October 1912 [Markham 27/7]. Mrs Kingsley and Mrs Currey later joined the Committee of the Victoria League in the Cape, Mrs Kingsley as Hon. Treasurer.

¹⁴⁸Markham, South Africa Diary, Johannesburg 13 December 1912 [Markham 27/7].

¹⁴⁹Markham, South Africa Diary, Johannesburg 20 December 1912 [Markham 27/8].

sheltered Boer spies, and nursed in the concentration camp at Irene.¹⁵⁰ Talbot saw her as 'one who had been our bitterest foe when the struggle was going on, but as now seeing the possibilities ahead for her native land which before couldn't have been'.¹⁵¹ Markham reported that Brandt

'has a passionate feeling for Dutch nationality and admires Hertzog as a patriot who has made the Dutch language a reality in the Union. But she takes the wider view and wishes to get the best out of the British connection - not materially as much as spiritually'.

Unfortunately, ^{for the V.L.} she was an exception. 'Apparently racial feeling is still intense among the Dutch women who compose the Federatie and the S. African party and she has become very unpopular owing to her views'.¹⁵²

But not all the news was bad. In March 1913 Markham spoke with Patrick Duncan (now a Unionist M.P.) at the inaugural meeting of the Cape Province branch of the Victoria League. She 'gave an eloquent address, dwelling largely on the responsibility rather than the glory of Empire. The result [was] a quite unusual wave of enthusiasm'¹⁵³ among the audience, 'which was representative of many different political opinions. Over 70 joined at the meeting'.¹⁵⁴ By the spring of 1914 the Cape had additional branches in Wynberg, Caledon and Messina, had distributed 'literature and [Victoria League] 'Monthly Notes' ... to outlying farms' and had held 'more than one 'At Home'... at Government House, Cape Town'.¹⁵⁵ The Natal branch, founded in 1913, was 'now an accomplished fact' and had organised a lecture, the travelling Medici exhibition, and the distribution of literature.¹⁵⁶ Although the general progress in the Transvaal had been 'somewhat disappointing' owing to the 'industrial unrest and general depression', 510 children throughout the British Empire had been linked for personal correspondence.¹⁵⁷ The Orange Free State had organised a book club of 800 volumes 'for people in outlying parts', picture talks on English Cathedrals and Public Schools, and a celebration of Empire and Union Day in which 2,700 people participated.¹⁵⁸ Despite continuing British/Dutch tensions the new Victoria League of South Africa was proving to be a vigorous plant.

¹⁵⁰*Dictionary of South African Biography* vol. IV p55. She was the author of *The Petticoat Commando, or Boer Women in Secret Service* (1913).

¹⁵¹Talbot Diary, Johannesburg 14 January 1911.

¹⁵²Markham, South Africa Diary, Johannesburg 20 December 1912 [Markham 27/8].

¹⁵³*Monthly Notes* April 1913, p28.

¹⁵⁴Executive 14 March 1913.

¹⁵⁵Executive 18 December 1913; 27 May 1914; 19 February 1914; Annual Report 1913-14, p74.

¹⁵⁶Annual Report 1913-14, p74.

¹⁵⁷Annual Report 1913-14, p69-70.

¹⁵⁸Annual Report 1913-14, p71-3.

Conclusion

A number of possible alternative futures seemed to face the Edwardian empire. One was the eventual complete independence of the 'white dominions'. Another, promoted most effectively by Lionel Curtis and, through him, the Round Table, was 'organic unity' - 'the creation of a sovereign central authority directly elected by the people of the Empire which [would] control policy and services such as army and navy, and raise taxation'.¹⁵⁹ A third option was popularised by Richard Jebb, who on his journeys around the Empire had discovered what Curtis had failed to spot, that the settler dominions were forging their own separate 'colonial nationalisms'. 'New nations' he reported, were 'bursting the colonial chrysalis'.

'Colonial loyalty, rooted in the past, is slowly giving way before national patriotism, reaching to the future. As the evolution proceeds, the Empire is valued less for its own sake and more in proportion as it subserves the interests and ideals of separate nationalism'.¹⁶⁰

Jebb proposed the restructuring of the empire with a system of negotiated alliances between Britain and the dominions, and concluded that only economic interdependence ('mutual-aid-in-living') could ultimately hold the empire together.¹⁶¹ Alongside these ideas the old hope still persisted that imperial unity could be preserved simply by sentiment, the 'crimson thread of kinship' and shared loyalty to the crown.

The Victoria League approach combined a firm belief in the importance of 'imperial sentiment' with something of Jebb's appreciation of the reality of colonial nationalism. This was partly necessity. While the organisation of sentiment might be a suitable 'womanly' occupation, the re-organisation of the Empire's political structure assuredly was not. And the League was only too well aware of the fierce independence of the I.O.D.E. in Canada and the Guild of Loyal Women in South Africa. But it also reflected the wider views of at least some of the executive. 'To me true nationalism is the basis of all true imperialism' Violet Markham reflected in 1912.¹⁶² In 1913 she addressed the new Victoria League in Bloemfontein on 'the League and its ideals'.

'She described its motto as 'Unity in Diversity' and said that it was a source of pride to the organisation that the Leagues in different countries were self-governing bodies, following the lines of their own

¹⁵⁹Philip Kerr (who was more dubious about the idea) quoted in Kendle, *The Round Table Movement* p67-68.

¹⁶⁰Richard Jebb, *Studies in Colonial Nationalism* (1905) quoted in Eddy & Schreuder, *Rise of Colonial Nationalism* p1, p169.

¹⁶¹Eddy & Schreuder, *Rise of Colonial Nationalism* p77. Jebb, like ^{many of} the Round Table, therefore supported Tariff Reform, though with different aims.

¹⁶²Markham, South Africa Diary, Johannesburg 15 December 1912 [Markham 27/8].

individuality ... [As with the League, so with the Empire.] Membership of the Empire gave a wider citizenship and horizon than could be possible to individual nations. There was absolutely no conflict between the spirit of Empire and nationality, for nationality was inseparable from Empire. It was because the nations were so different that they were so strong. But ... they must stretch out the hand of their friendship to the other members of their family'.¹⁶³

Though 'big sounding financial and other union ... result[ed] in little', the 'loving gentle influences' of women and the practical assistance offered by the Victoria League might keep the Empire together, the white dominions firmly held to the mother country by the 'hand of friendship'.

¹⁶³*Monthly Notes* March 1913, p20.

Chapter 9. Allies & Rivals

The Victoria League was densely embedded in a network of London-based imperialist and patriotic societies, many now-forgotten, with which it co-operated and negotiated in a more or less friendly spirit. This chapter is not intended to supply an overview of British imperial propaganda societies, something already provided by John Mackenzie,¹ but aims to place the Victoria League in its context as one of many similar organisations; to chart the influence that those other organisations had on the League's development; and, by comparison, to identify those characteristics of the Victoria League which were common to imperial societies, and those which were unique to the League.

The Victoria League in its aims and objects offered 'help and co-operation to ... bodies of a similar nature', but in practice not all such organisations proved acceptable. Some were refused for their party-political associations. The Imperial Maritime League, inviting the League to 'take part in a "Round Table Conference" for the support of candidates at the next election, who would make the subject of "Imperial Defence" the main plank of their political platform ... such candidates would almost certainly be Unionists', was rebuffed with a letter regretting that it was 'impossible for the Victoria League to take part in any movement designed to influence Parliamentary elections'.² The National Service League was also politically suspect: Victoria League branches were advised 'that for some particular occasion such as the celebration of Empire Day co-operation might be desirable but that great care should be taken in any more permanent arrangement'.³ Others were politically dubious in a different way. Lady Jersey replied to an approach from the Atlantic Union 'declining co-operation with any movement connected with Mr. Stead'.⁴ Yet others failed to come up to the League's standards for practical imperialism. The Imperial Organisation Society, which approached the League 'with a view to promoting an imperial parliament', was dismissed as 'obviously visionary and not worth further consideration'.⁵ The Victoria League did become substantially involved with some societies however, in particular the League of the Empire, the British Empire League, the Overseas Club, and the Royal Colonial Institute.

¹John M. Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press: 1984) chapter 6.

² Executive 14 October 1909.

³ Executive 21 September 1911.

⁴ Executive 14 May 1903. W.T. Stead, originally a friend and supporter of both Milner and Rhodes, had switched sides during the Boer War - Lady Jersey's response was therefore the orthodox imperialist one.

⁵ Executive 22 May 1913; 19 June 1913.

The League of the Empire, as the most similar organisation to the Victoria League, concerned it most closely. The L.o.E. had been founded in early 1901, slightly predating the Victoria League, as the League of the Children of the Empire.⁶ As with many other imperialist societies, the stimulus for its foundation was the Boer War: the L.o.E. stemmed from a feeling that 'the linking together of the children of the Empire would do something towards maintaining its future stability'.⁷ The League was founded by two women, both of whom (as was so often the case with the Victoria League) had links with South Africa. Henrietta Trimen, the first honorary secretary and credited in *Who's Who* with originating the scheme, was married to a retired Cape civil servant⁸ while her co-worker, Alys Trotter, was the wife of Alexander Trotter, who had been government electrician at the Cape 1896-99.⁹ Unlike the Victoria League, however, it soon became increasingly male dominated.

The officers of the L.o.E. were almost all men. The presidency was held successively by Lord Strathcona (the Scottish-born Canadian financier and politician, raiser of 'Strathcona's Horse' during the Boer War, and the High Commissioner for Canada 1896-1911); Hallam, Lord Tennyson, son of the Poet Laureate and first governor-general of Australia; and Sir Frederick Pollock, a lawyer who had earlier advocated formal, constitutional routes to imperial unity. During a trip to Canada in 1905, however, the strength of colonial opposition became so apparent to him that he decided that only informal agencies - such as the L.o.E. - could maintain the unity of the empire.¹⁰ Sir Philip Hutchins, who had worked for the East India Company and the Indian Civil Service, and later for the Council of India and the Colonial Office Visual Instruction Committee, chaired the L.o.E. Council from the beginning until 1923.¹¹ The exception to the rule of male domination was the honorary secretary Elizabeth Ord Marshall, daughter of a Suffolk clergyman and widow of William Ord Marshall, précis writer and Librarian to the War Office.¹² Greenlee, though he describes her as 'the most dynamic individual at the League'¹³ generally ignores Mrs Ord Marshall, but it is clear that she was central to the L.o.E.'s activities, as an innovator as well as an organiser. The *Times*, reporting the L.o.E.'s 1907 Federal

⁶The L.o.E.'s minute books were lost in the Blitz (James Greenlee, *Education and Imperial Unity 1901-1926* (New York: Garland: 1987) p7) - the following is based on printed sources and Victoria League records.

⁷Frederick Pollock, 'Kindred Societies - Past and Present. VIII - The League of the Empire', *United Empire* NS Vol. 6 1915 pp736-741, p736.

⁸*Who Was Who 1916-28*, entry on Roland Trimen.

⁹*Who Was Who 1941-50*.

¹⁰Greenlee, 'The A B C's of Imperial Unity', *Canadian Journal of History* 14 (1) 1979 pp49-64, p50-51; Trevor R. Reese, *The History of the Royal Commonwealth Society 1868-1968* (London: Oxford University Press: 1968) p73-74.

¹¹*Times* 22 May 1928.

¹²*Who Was Who 1929-1940*.

¹³Greenlee, *Education and Imperial Unity* p8-9.

Education Conference, said that 'it was no secret that the idea of federating our scattered dominions in education originated with Mrs. Ord Marshall ... to her must be given the credit of authorship'.¹⁴ A strong-willed woman - Milner described her as possessing a 'Bismarckian personality'¹⁵ - she ran the League of the Empire from 1902 until her death in 1938.

The League of the Empire aimed 'to inspire personal and active interest in the Empire as a whole and to promote educational and friendly intercommunication between its different parts' in three main ways. One - though not the most successful - was to encourage children to 'fit themselves for life in other parts of the Empire, should such be their lot, by acquiring manual arts, horsemanship and the power of self-defence'.¹⁶ The League of the Empire was attempting to turn out patriotic soldier-settlers, no doubt with the English settlement of the annexed Boer republics firmly in mind. It therefore intended 'everywhere [to] encourage and assist boy Members to join Cadet corps, and attend such handicraft and technical classes as are provided by the County Council and other bodies' and 'as promptly as funds permit, endeavour to assist each allied school and Local branch to procure suitable rifles and the services of an Instructor'.¹⁷ The L.O.E. thus reflected the contemporary concern that the British education system, emphasising scholarship at the expense of practical knowledge, was failing to produce the Empire-builders Britain needed. This argument was frequently directed at girls as well: it is perhaps surprising that the League of the Empire did not aim to encourage girl members to develop the domestic skills so necessary for female emigrants, and in the mothers of Empire-builders. That boys should be taught to shoot was also a widespread turn-of-the-century enthusiasm, especially among those (like St. Loe Strachey) who looked not only to the imperial frontiers but to the possibility of a German invasion of the British mainland.

The L.O.E.'s second object was 'the supplying to the youth of the Empire a common bond of literary intercourse ... by means of written correspondence, Member with Member, or School with School'.¹⁸ Boosted by Joseph Chamberlain's approval, the League's Comrade Correspondence Branch had 700 participants by March 1903.¹⁹ It was organised by Kathleen (Mrs. John) Haldane, whose family had long-standing links with India and who had become by her marriage the sister-in-law of Richard Haldane. Despite having married into a Liberal family, and despite her

¹⁴*Times* 5 June 1907.

¹⁵Milner to Violet Markham n.d. [c.1907] [Markham 25/56(i)].

¹⁶Lady Jersey, 'The Victoria League', *Queen* CX November 1901, p803.

¹⁷League of the Empire Leaflet n.d. [c.1903] [in Grey papers 234/9] p2.

¹⁸League of the Empire Leaflet, p1.

¹⁹*Times* 4 March 1903

own feminist views, Kathleen Haldane remained an 'Edinburgh Tory' all her life, inculcating her imperialism firmly into her own children (in the short term at least).²⁰ Her son's diary gives us a child's-eye view of how the L.o.E. worked at grass-roots level.

'Mother told us very much what is put in the papers, that it is a society for making people more able to fight for their country, and to be useful if they emigrate to the colonies, and to let them know about colonial life by a system of couples of correspondents in England and a colony, or two colonies, and that the Empire isn't a lot of little countries, but one big one, in fact to teach them to be good citizens of the Empire'

Jack recorded of a Scottish meeting in 1902. He was frequently taken along to L.o.E. events when Kathleen Haldane, a gifted speaker, 'showed "things from the colonies" ... Canadian birch bark models, African beadwork and so on'.²¹

The L.o.E.'s third aim - 'the teaching of imperial history and conditions' - was the most important. The belief that the teaching of history was a vital tool for moulding the citizens of the future, inculcating in them the importance of the Empire and the need for imperial unity, was central to the League of the Empire, as it was to Milner and many other imperialists. The L.o.E. used a variety of methods, most of them common ones, to pursue this aim: 'illustrated lectures directly in connexion with and supplementing courses of study undertaken in the schools'; more general lectures 'to be delivered in secondary schools on subjects connected with the various countries of the Empire, their history, natural features, animal and vegetable life, industries, population, social conditions, and connexion with the mother country';²² empire-wide essay competitions which were held annually from 1903; and open Sunday afternoon lectures which began in 1905. Plays based on events in imperial history were performed in schools and historical calendars produced.²³ The L.o.E.'s real innovation was to recruit several prominent historians to its cause, among them A.F. Pollard, Professor of English History at the University of London; J.B. Bury, Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge; and H.E. Egerton, Beit Professor of Colonial History at Oxford.²⁴ This committee had produced three historical textbooks by 1915, of which the most important was the first, *The British Empire: Its Past, Its Present and Its Future*, edited by Pollard, which appeared in 1909.²⁵

²⁰L.K. Haldane, *Friends and Kindred* (London: Faber: 1961) Chapter XIII, XIV.

²¹Naomi Mitchison, *Small Talk: Memoirs of an Edwardian Childhood* (London: Bodley Head: 1973) pp84-88. Both Haldane children turned to the far left politically in later life.

²²*Times* 4 October 1904.

²³Greenlee, 'The A B C's', p54-55.

²⁴A.F. Pollard, *British Empire: Its Past, Its Present and Its Future* (London: League of the Empire: 1909) piv; Greenlee, 'The A B C's', p51.

²⁵Pollock, 'League of the Empire', p739.

The activity for which the L.o.E. became most noted - 'promoting co-operation in education throughout the British Dominions'²⁶ - was not among the original objects but initiated by Mrs. Ord Marshall shortly after the League's foundation. In 1903 Chamberlain had encouraged education departments throughout the Empire to affiliate with the L.o.E., and the League developed this suggestion to include the affiliation of individual schools.²⁷ In 1907 the League used the contacts with British and colonial education departments thus developed to organise a Federal Conference on Education in London, feeling that 'co-operation in education and a greater mutual knowledge of educational ideals, activities and characteristics in different parts of the Empire, would be of inestimable value, not merely to the newer countries, but to the Motherland'.²⁸ The Conference was extremely well attended, with representatives (mostly the local Directors of Education or Superintendents of Schools) arriving from each province of Canada, Australia, South Africa, and India, from New Zealand, West Africa and even the Falkland Islands, as well as from the home education departments and several universities, colleges and educational societies.²⁹ Though the L.o.E. had originally intended the conference to draw up the groundplan for the federation of the British Empire through education, the overwhelmingly negative colonial response dictated that the matter could only be approached piecemeal. The conference discussed the exchange of teachers and inspectors, the closer uniformity of curricula and official statistics, and the establishment of a permanent central bureau for federal education. Neither the colonial nor the British delegates showed much enthusiasm for any of these ideas (except, in principle, the central bureau) but they did agree that the conference should reconvene every four years.³⁰ Perhaps the most concrete effect of the conference was to confirm the League of the Empire's reputation, especially in the colonies. Thus when Mrs. Ord Marshall visited Edmonton in 1910 she was able to inaugurate a local L.o.E. branch at the house of the Alberta Premier, A.C. Rutherford, who had attended the 1907 Conference as the provincial Minister for Education.³¹

The Victoria League became aware of the existence of the League of the Empire very shortly after its foundation. A subcommittee was appointed to confer with the L.o.E. 'in order to arrive at a clearer understanding of their methods and

²⁶ Pollard, *British Empire*, p784.

²⁷ Greenlee, 'The A B C's', p55; Pollock, 'League of the Empire', p737.

²⁸ Pollock, 'League of the Empire', p736-737.

²⁹ For a list see *Times* 24 May 1907 and 3 June 1907.

³⁰ For a summary of the Conference see Greenlee, 'The A B C's', pp57-62; Pollard, *British Empire* pp785-788; and the *Times* 24, 25, 27, 28, 31 May, 1, 3, 5 June 1907.

³¹ *Edmonton Journal* 30 April 1910.

objects and as to the advisability of affiliation, or of inviting them to become a juvenile branch of the Victoria League'.³² The subcommittee deciding that 'the League of Children should produce good results from the Imperial point of view if judiciously managed'³³ the two Leagues became allied associations. The Victoria League's name was printed on L.o.E. papers, and a Victoria League representative joined the L.o.E.'s committee.³⁴ It was agreed that they would co-operate to 'promote lectures in country districts, League of the Children of the Empire to get the schools and Victoria League to provide the lecturer if possible, during the autumn [of 1901]. The League[s] ... to amalgamate in country districts and never to work independently in the same place'.³⁵

It soon became apparent, however, how closely the two Leagues resembled each other. The original emphasis of the L.o.E. on work with children soon merged into a more general concern with education, hence its change of name in March 1903. At the same time the Victoria League, which had always had an educational aspect, became increasingly involved with children as well as adults. Both Leagues were involved in such activities as the celebration of Empire Day. In 1902 the L.o.E. 'point[ed] out that their correspondence work has brought them members among big boys and schoolmasters and ask[ed] for a Victoria League sanction to an announcement that this had its sympathy'.³⁶ A few months later Meriel Talbot reported an interview with Mrs. Ord Marshall which had revealed the 'need for conferring with them to avoid overlappings, especially with regard to lectures'.³⁷ It was decided that the work would be best furthered by amalgamation. The situation was complicated by the fact that both Leagues were also considering amalgamation with the British Empire League. In late 1902 Violet Cecil's proposal that a list of suggestions for an amalgamated League be sent to the L.o.E. was accepted, with the proviso (insisted on by Mrs. Macmillan and Alice Balfour) that the British Empire League should first be approached for a definite scheme of co-operation.³⁸ None such being immediately forthcoming, the first in a long series of negotiations with the League of the Empire began, only to founder on the Victoria League principle of the autonomy of colonial branches, together with warnings from the Guild of Loyal Women about the L.o.E.'s 'pro-Boer membership in Cape Colony'.³⁹

³²Executive 15 May 1901.

³³Report of the V.L. Subcommittee, in V.L. Executive Minute book.

³⁴Executive 7 June 1901; 11 June 1901; see League of the Empire leaflet [1903] cited above.

³⁵Executive 27 June 1901.

³⁶Executive 22 July 1902.

³⁷Executive 13 November 1902.

³⁸Executive 28 November 1902.

³⁹Executive 3 April, 28 April, 25 June, 16 July 1903.

Thereafter relations between the two Leagues deteriorated. When Lady Burghclere resigned as Victoria League representative on the L.O.E. council there was no successor.⁴⁰ In May 1904 the Victoria League trespassed on what might have been considered L.O.E. territory when it began school correspondence. The question was considered

‘in regard to future co-operation with the League of the Empire, whose committee had originated the school linking ... Dangers of overlapping, of confusing the public by the fact of two organisations doing similar work ... also the hindrance to Victoria League’s work in the country by refusing similar requests from schools, and the difficulty of two organisations working at different branches of the same work in one area’.

It was resolved by a majority ‘in this and in cases of a similar kind to authorise the Education Committee to make the necessary arrangements’.⁴¹ Despite protests from the L.O.E. the Victoria League stuck to its decision, though undertaking ‘as heretofore [to] endeavour to avoid neighbourhoods in which the League of the Empire was already working’.⁴²

In May 1905 it was decided ‘to sever the formal alliance’ with the League of the Empire ‘on account of the confusion likely to arise in the Colonies from the difference of principle between the League of the Empire and the Victoria League in regard to co-operation with Allied Associations and others in the Colonies’.⁴³ However, amalgamation negotiations resumed in late 1906 when a Victoria League application for Rhodes Trust funds revealed that ‘a similar appeal had been made a few days later from the League of the Empire ... the Trustees were likely to consider the Victoria League rather more favourably but ... it would tell considerably in favour of the work as a whole if the two organisations co-operated and ceased to work independently’.⁴⁴ In fact the Victoria League was granted £500 a year for five years in January 1907, thus giving it a significant advantage over the League of the Empire (which received the same grant but had wanted extra money to fund its more expensive organisation).⁴⁵ Nevertheless both sides seemed prepared to co-operate. The Victoria League education committee urged closer co-operation, complaining that ‘supporters of the League of the Empire seemed to be continually stating that the Victoria League was responsible for having failed to amalgamate, that it was a party organisation and principally connected with South Africa’.⁴⁶ Presumably as a gesture

⁴⁰ Executive 24 March 1904. She resigned only because of absence from London.

⁴¹ Executive 19 May 1904.

⁴² Executive 30 June 1904, 2 March 1905.

⁴³ Executive 3 May 1905.

⁴⁴ Executive 13 December 1906.

⁴⁵ Executive 17 January 1907; Greenlee, ‘The A B C’s’, p62.

⁴⁶ Executive 11 April 1907.

of goodwill, the Victoria League was given a last minute invitation to the L.o.E.'s 1907 Federal Education Conference.⁴⁷

In February 1908 the Victoria League executive decided that complete amalgamation should be the aim, though Lady Jersey warned of the 'need for safeguarding the prestige and financial liabilities of the Victoria League', and Meriel Talbot that 'the difficulty [was] ... the future position of the Hon. Secretary [i.e. Mrs. Ord Marshall]'.⁴⁸ Both sides agreed that there was 'great difficulty in arranging co-operation on account of the complexity of the work' and that 'the fundamental matter ... for amalgamation would be that there should be a Council containing these elements, representatives of Governments, representatives of expert Educational bodies and representatives of the members of the amalgamated Leagues'.⁴⁹ Although 'a very unsatisfactory state of things' regarding the L.o.E.'s finances was revealed,⁵⁰ the delegates contrived to work out mutually agreeable arrangements for the Executive, a Joint Presidency and the secretariat⁵¹ before Mrs. Ord Marshall sabotaged the negotiations by declaring 'that she herself was opposed to amalgamation and that she knew it would be met by opposition on the part of many members of the League of the Empire'.⁵² While all the Victoria League representatives (with an eye to public opinion) signed the report recommending amalgamation, only one of the L.o.E. representatives, Samuel Butcher, did so.⁵³ In June 1908 the Victoria League Council accepted the report⁵⁴ and the Council of the League of the Empire rejected it. Butcher informed the Victoria League that 'the personal question had dominated the vote' and that 'the Council had been attended by a small number, the majority of whom had gone determined to oppose amalgamation'.⁵⁵

In the autumn of 1908 the League of the Empire put forward new proposals. By this time it was having problems with its own members. Butcher resigned in November over the amalgamation issue;⁵⁶ the Oxford Branch, headed by Kathleen Haldane, was considering joining the Victoria League;⁵⁷ and Haldane was also corresponding with the Victoria League with a view to turning the Comrades

⁴⁷ Executive 25 April 1907.

⁴⁸ Executive 7 February 1908.

⁴⁹ Executive 20 February 1908.

⁵⁰ Executive 19 March 1908.

⁵¹ Executive 19 March, 9 April 1908.

⁵² Executive 9 April 1908.

⁵³ Executive 1 June 1908.

⁵⁴ Council 30 June 1908.

⁵⁵ Executive 10 July 1908.

⁵⁶ Executive 15 October 1908.

⁵⁷ Executive 15 October 1908.

Correspondence Branch over to it.⁵⁸ The new proposals were obviously aimed at minimising what Milner had identified as ‘the *personal* problem’ - Mrs. Ord Marshall and her ‘Bismarckian personality’⁵⁹ - while safeguarding the L.o.E.’s expensive educational federation work. The work was to be divided into two separate sections, ‘Mrs. Ord Marshall’s educational, the Victoria League’s general’.⁶⁰ Lady Jersey and Sir Frederick Pollock subsequently modified this into a scheme involving an Executive and strong sub-committees to be called ‘special committees’, one of which was to ‘to carry on Imperial correspondence work and the main part of which the League of the Empire had already undertaken’ under Mrs. Ord Marshall’s chairmanship. Pollock was anxious to emphasise that ‘there was no question of annexation of the League of the Empire by the Victoria League, and that, while to the proposed union the League of the Empire could bring little financial help, they had much in the way of goodwill and of a going concern’.⁶¹

After nine tedious months of negotiation the Victoria League decided that ‘the time had now come for getting a definite agreement from the League of the Empire on specific proposals or of terminating the negotiations’.⁶² A somewhat peremptory letter was therefore sent to which the L.o.E. responded with hurt surprise and failing to agree to several of the proposals, which it claimed had not been fully discussed previously.⁶³ The Victoria League therefore broke off negotiations and the matter closed with an exchange of recriminatory letters in the *Times*.⁶⁴ Both sides clearly felt injured: the Victoria League thought that the League of the Empire had been obstructive, while the League of the Empire considered that the Victoria League had broken off negotiations without prior warning. The L.o.E. felt so strongly about this that it issued a pamphlet containing the complete correspondence between the two Leagues from July 1908 onwards.⁶⁵ However, members of the League of the Empire continued to vote with their feet. Mrs. Haldane and Colonel Plunkett (with much of the League’s personal correspondence work)⁶⁶ and the entire Oxford branch of the L.o.E.⁶⁷ went over to the Victoria League. Lord Tennyson resigned as L.o.E. President, allegedly for health reasons, and became an Honorary Vice-President of the

⁵⁸ Executive 19 November 1908.

⁵⁹ Milner to Violet Markham n.d. [c.1907] [Markham 25/56(i)].

⁶⁰ Executive 15 October 1908.

⁶¹ Executive 19 January 1909.

⁶² Executive 17 June 1909.

⁶³ League of the Empire, *Report of the Negotiations for Amalgamation between the League of the Empire and the Victoria League* (August 1909) p8-10.

⁶⁴ Executive 15 July 1909; *Times* 17 July, 21 July 1909.

⁶⁵ League of the Empire, *Report of the Negotiations*.

⁶⁶ Executive 19 January 1909.

⁶⁷ Executive 22 April 1909.

Victoria League.⁶⁸ There were clearly other resignations as the Victoria League several times considered publishing lists of their names, and invited them to join the V.L. instead.⁶⁹

The Victoria League, therefore, though it had lost the battle for amalgamation had won the war, and though the League of the Empire continued (and still exists today) it never regained the high point of the 1907 Conference. The two Leagues continued to compete for colonial co-operation. Meriel Talbot found on her tour that the 'wretched League of the Empire' was 'in the way with the Education Department' in Wellington; and in Canada that 'the troublous Mrs. Ord Marshall' was ahead of her and 'gulling many as usual'.⁷⁰ But the Victoria League had definitely gained the upper hand. In 1912 Mr. Ney and his 'Hands Across the Sea' movement which brought Canadian teachers on visits to Britain, described the L.o.E.'s latest conference as a 'fraud', declared that 'they wished to have nothing further to do with the League of the Empire' and asked the Victoria League for hospitality instead.⁷¹ That in 1912-13 the League of the Empire made further overtures (which ultimately came to nothing), Mrs. Ord Marshall even offering 'her personal withdrawal from the work if a union of the Leagues could be secured on equitable terms'⁷² suggests strongly that the L.o.E. was in difficulties.

The Victoria League and the League of the Empire were too similar to co-exist easily. Certainly there was a difference of emphasis, the L.o.E. being directed almost entirely towards imperial education (with the rather strange exception of the Lace and Embroidery School it established on St. Helena), while the Victoria League had several other strings to its bow. But they were the products of the same contemporary concerns, used many of the same methods, and played to essentially the same constituency. That both could continue to exist suggests that the constituency for this type of imperial propaganda was considerable - pen-pal schemes, for example, were clearly extremely popular, for the Victoria League reported in 1911 that the personal correspondence work had increased so much that a decentralisation scheme had been found necessary,⁷³ while the L.o.E. claimed 26,000

⁶⁸ Executive 14 October 1909.

⁶⁹ Executive 30 September 1909; 14 October 1909; 18 November 1909; 16 December 1909; 13 January 1910.

⁷⁰ Meriel Talbot, Diary Wellington 1 March 1910; Calgary 28 April 1910 [Talbot U1612 F221]. Talbot and Mrs. Ord Marshall toured Canada simultaneously in the spring of 1910, Talbot travelling west to east and Ord Marshall east to west.

⁷¹ Executive 17 October 1912.

⁷² Executive 21 March 1912.

⁷³ Annual Report 1910-11, p16.

participants in its scheme by 1913.⁷⁴ Personality problems and the determination of each group to protect its power base, however, precluded the kind of close co-operation that might have seemed logical.

The Victoria League was also connected with the British Empire League, which had been founded in 1896 as the direct successor to the Imperial Federation League. Its aim was 'to bring about closer connection with the Colonies, by means of better commercial relations, by means of improved communications, by means of increased sympathy with each other, of increased knowledge of each other'.⁷⁵ It was also concerned with imperial defence. A consistent advocate of periodic Imperial conferences, the British Empire League was made responsible for the entertainment of colonial delegates at the Conferences of 1902, 1907 and 1911. In 1910 the League opened a British Empire Club in London.⁷⁶ It had branches in several large towns in Britain as well as colonial branches in Canada and, from 1901, in Australia.⁷⁷ Though it was far more directly political than the Victoria League, therefore, there were significant similarities. The main difference, and one reflected in its agenda, was that the British Empire League was an all-male institution. The Victoria League, however, was prepared to take up female variations on the B.E.L.'s activities, for example in 1902 when it was suggested that it should 'entertain Colonial women coming for the Coronation on the line adopted by the British Empire League'.⁷⁸

The two Leagues several times considered amalgamation, in 1901,⁷⁹ in 1902,⁸⁰ and more seriously in 1904 'in regard to the inclusion of a large number of men as members' of the Victoria League.⁸¹ By this time the Australian British Empire League had developed an energetic women's branch.⁸² The B.E.L. wanted the Victoria League to function as the women's branch for Britain. The Victoria League preferred a more flexible 'scheme of amalgamation which would leave the work in the U.K. independent as at present and enable the Colonies to regard the two Leagues as similar organisations and thus avoid forming branches of both Leagues in the same colony'.⁸³ This too fell through and the two associations went their separate ways.

⁷⁴ Greenlee, 'The A B C's', p54.

⁷⁵ C. Freeman Murray, 'Kindred Societies Past and Present III - The British Empire League', *United Empire* NS Vol. 6 June 1915 pp431-439, p431; Reese, *Royal Commonwealth Society*, p71.

⁷⁶ Freeman Murray, 'British Empire League', p433-7.

⁷⁷ For the Australian branch of the B.E.L. see Chapter 8 above.

⁷⁸ Executive 6 March 1902.

⁷⁹ Executive 21 June 1901.

⁸⁰ Executive 28 October 1902.

⁸¹ Executive 25 February 1904.

⁸² Executive 19 May 1904.

⁸³ Executive 1 December 1904.

When in 1906 the B.E.L. complained about an attempt to start a Victoria League branch in Manchester (where a B.E.L. branch already existed), the Executive merely 'considered the question, the many differences in the work of the two organisations, and decided to ignore the existence of British Empire League branches in such places as it was thought desirable to start a branch of the Victoria League'.⁸⁴

A slightly more fruitful relationship was established with the Royal Colonial Institute. The R.C.I. was by far the most senior of the imperialist organisations, having been founded in 1868 as a counter-balance to the 'Little England' school of political thought.⁸⁵ It was incorporated by royal charter in 1882, when its declared objects were 'to promote the increase and diffusion of knowledge respecting as well Our Colonies, Dependencies and Possessions, as Our Indian Empire, and the preservation of a permanent union between the Mother Country and the various parts of the British Empire'.⁸⁶ The R.C.I.'s handsome premises in Northumberland Avenue incorporated the facilities of a club with an extensive library on imperial affairs and a newspaper room providing a wide selection from the colonial press.⁸⁷ Papers on colonial subjects were regularly presented and subsequently published in the Institute's monthly journal, which started in 1890 and ran from 1909 under the name *United Empire*.⁸⁸

As an institution it was, first exclusively and then overwhelmingly, male. Women were not admitted as fellows until 1922, although they had been allowed to attend meetings as guests of fellows since the 1870s, and in 1909 had been admitted as associate members, entitled to receive the R.C.I. journal and attend ordinary meetings. No woman addressed the Royal Colonial Institute until 1894 when Flora Shaw, Colonial Editor of the *Times*, read a paper on Australia, an event occasioning not only two-and-a-half columns, and a leader, in the *Times* but a cartoon in *Punch* as well. Although Shaw addressed the Institute twice more, women speakers remained few and far between.⁸⁹ The one woman to have a significant impact on the R.C.I. was Ethel Colquhoun, who briefly succeeded her husband Archibald as editor of *United Empire* after his death in 1914.⁹⁰

⁸⁴ Executive 3 May 1906.

⁸⁵ Reese, *Royal Commonwealth Society* p14-15.

⁸⁶ Reese, *Royal Commonwealth Society* p28.

⁸⁷ Reese, *Royal Commonwealth Society* p26, 93-94.

⁸⁸ Reese, *Royal Commonwealth Society* p87-88.

⁸⁹ Reese, *Royal Commonwealth Society* p104; *Times* 10 January 1894; E. Moberley Bell, *Flora Shaw* (London: Constable & Co.: 1947) p168-9; *Punch* 20 January 1894.

⁹⁰ *Who Was Who; Dictionary of South African Biography* V p763. Ethel Colquhoun was the author of *The Vocation of Woman* (1913) which argued that women should confine themselves to home duties and child-bearing. Childless, she became Rhodesia's - and the British Dominions' - first woman M.P. in 1924 after her second marriage to John Tawse Jollie.

The R.C.I. was more or less moribund from 1890 to 1909, when its more energetic members, complaining of stagnant membership and the encroachment of 'one horse, single-barrelled, dot-and-carry-one Leagues', launched a campaign to revive it.⁹¹ Both the start of *United Empire* and the partial admission of women were part of this process. A development which concerned the Victoria League more nearly was the R.C.I.'s establishment of a fund for Empire lectures to be given outside London.⁹² In October 1909 three male Victoria League representatives - E.B. Sargant, H.J. Mackinder and Wyndham Dunstan - attended an R.C.I. meeting 'to point out that the work, which it was now proposed that Institute should undertake was already done by the Victoria League and that much overlapping and expense could be avoided if the Royal Colonial Institute would co-operate with the Victoria League'.⁹³ The R.C.I. agreed to an informal meeting between representatives of the two societies, 'the subject of "amalgamation of societies engaged in Imperial work" having been considered by their Council'. The Victoria League, still smarting from amalgamation negotiations with the League of the Empire, agreed to the discussion of 'co-operation'.⁹⁴ The two societies were clearly thinking along different lines, for in January 1910 the R.C.I. invited the Victoria League 'to submit a definite scheme specifying as to privileges suggested for members, and also upon financial questions'. The League proposed instead 'a Committee for the purpose of exchanging information and preventing overlapping' although 'some co-operation might perhaps be possible as for instance in cases where the two societies were preparing to start work in the same city'.⁹⁵

Eventually - although not until early 1913 - a committee of this sort was set up, and the two organisations further agreed to exchange lists of lectures and essay competitions held during the past two years and proposed for the future.⁹⁶ The committee was to meet twice a year, lecture notices were to be exchanged to promote attendance, and the colonial organisations were also to co-operate.⁹⁷ When the committee met in December 1913 it became clear all was not well. 'Sir Edward Cook considered the position was profoundly unsatisfactory and that the first results of co-operation had been damaging to the Victoria League - viz. Newcastle, Bristol and

⁹¹ Reese, *Royal Commonwealth Society* p98.

⁹² Reese, *Royal Commonwealth Society* p90. For the R.C.I.'s educational work see J.G. Greenlee, 'Imperial Studies and the Unity of the Empire', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 7 (3) May 1979 pp321-335.

⁹³ Executive 14 October 1909.

⁹⁴ Executive 16 December 1909.

⁹⁵ Executive 20 January 1910.

⁹⁶ Executive 20 February 1913.

⁹⁷ Executive 14 March 1913.

Bournemouth'. (The R.C.I. began to organise a branch in Bristol - its first in Britain - in October 1913, though the premises did not open formally until 1915. According to Reese the R.C.I. branch at Bournemouth - where the V.L. already had a branch - was established only in 1917, but Victoria League records make it clear that a basis had already been laid down by 1913. Reese does not mention any R.C.I. activity in Newcastle.)⁹⁸ Sargant 'especially deprecated the R.C.I.'s attitude in starting an Information Bureau [at the same time as the Victoria League]'. It was agreed however that 'the joint committee served a useful purpose in supplying information of what is being done'.⁹⁹

The R.C.I. defended its actions, stating that it 'reserved to itself the right to establish Branches in any place - [it] considered the existing system of co-operation ... as "a division of work rather than a division of areas"'.¹⁰⁰ In practice the Bournemouth branches co-operated, and just before the outbreak of war it was agreed that local joint committees should be established where both organisations had branches.¹⁰¹ The two societies were negotiating from a very equal basis. The Royal Colonial Society had its royal charter and its greater reputation, and it regarded itself as 'not only the senior but also as the only learned body among the voluntary patriotic organisations' - but the Victoria League had its network of British branches and a decade of energetic educational work behind it. In the interwar years the R.C.I. and the Victoria League moved closer together and together with the Overseas Club established a system of three-way co-operation.¹⁰²

The Victoria League had been connected with the Overseas Club since March 1912 when Meriel Talbot interviewed Evelyn Wrench, organiser of the Club and editor of the *Overseas Daily Mail*.¹⁰³ She reported that

'the first idea had been formulated in 1910 in an article written by Mr. Wrench in the *Overseas Daily Mail*. As a result 5,000 letters had been received from people in all parts of the Empire wishing to enrol themselves as members. Four hundred Branches had been formed ... many others about to follow. No committee had been formed in England - Mr. Wrench with nine clerks in the office of the *Daily Mail* were carrying on the correspondence. Mr. Wrench had intimated his desire to co-operate with the Victoria League and to consider how the large membership and Overseas organisations of the Club might best be used'.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁸ Reese, *Royal Commonwealth Society* p205-6.

⁹⁹ Executive 18 December 1913.

¹⁰⁰ Executive 15 January 1914.

¹⁰¹ Executive 16 July 1914.

¹⁰² Reese, *Royal Commonwealth Society* p159-60.

¹⁰³ *DNB*. Wrench later also founded the English-Speaking Union, was for some years editor of the *Spectator*, and wrote biographies of both Geoffrey Dawson and Milner.

¹⁰⁴ Executive 7 March 1912.

The creed of the Overseas Club was simple: 'Believing the British Empire to stand for justice, freedom, order and good government, we pledge ourselves, as citizens of the greatest Empire in the world, to maintain the heritage handed down to us by our fathers'. Equally simple were its four main objects:

- '1. To help one another.
- '2. To render individual service to our Empire.
- '3. To maintain our Empire's supremacy upon the seas.
- '4. To draw together in the bond of comradeship British people the world over'.¹⁰⁵

The Overseas Club prided itself on its democratic nature, its low subscription (which never exceeded 5 shillings) and its large membership. After a meeting between Wrench and Victoria League representatives, E.T. Cook 'emphasised the fact of membership being drawn principally from members of the industrial class, and that such a response from 80,000 in 17 months was a striking fact'.¹⁰⁶ Colonial Victoria Leagues were urged to co-operate with the Overseas Club.¹⁰⁷ At a later meeting some problems were discovered. 'The point upon which all present seemed most to agree was that there was only room for one living organisation of this kind in each Colonial centre'. More details about the Club revealed 'membership now nearly 100,000 - the complete independence of branches - the absence of any central fund or central membership or committees in England - that [Wrench] had a "small debt" of £800 and that the only source of income was the sale of badges. Admitted that regular news was published in the Overseas Edition of the [Conservative] *Daily Mail*, but [insisted] that the constant support of men belonging to different parties in the Dominions and of the Governors proved the non-party character of the Overseas Club'.¹⁰⁸

On the same occasion Wrench was informed by Edith Lyttelton that 'both the strong committees in London and the definite scheme of work put forward by the Victoria League brought strength to that organisation which was lacking in the other'. Wrench might have retorted that the high membership of the Overseas Club brought it a strength lacking in the Victoria League, but he was already aware of the problems and later in 1912 set out with his sister on a tour of the Dominions 'with a view to co-ordinating more closely the existing branches and promoting new ones'.¹⁰⁹ Relations

¹⁰⁵ Richard Jebb, 'Kindred Societies - Past and Present. VII - The Overseas Club', *United Empire NS* Vol. 6 no. 9 September 1915, pp650-655, p650.

¹⁰⁶ Executive 21 March 1912.

¹⁰⁷ Executive 18 April 1912.

¹⁰⁸ Executive 17 October 1912.

¹⁰⁹ Jebb, 'The Overseas Club', p651.

between the two societies continued cordial, both in Britain and in the Colonies. The Wrenches were entertained by various colonial Victoria Leagues on their travels - so much so that Wrench wrote from Auckland, 'I am beginning to believe that I am travelling round the Empire for the Victoria League!'¹¹⁰ Not only were the two organisations co-operating on a local basis, but it seemed there was after all 'ample room in most places for both organisations as they seem to reach a different class of people'.¹¹¹ This was confirmed by League correspondents - the secretary of the West Australia Victoria League, for example, 'regarded the Overseas Club as a kind of hospitality committee for a particular kind of people who look for a practical return from membership'.¹¹² Given this different class basis, the Victoria League and the Overseas Club were not competing but complementary organisations.

Many other imperialist organisations existed with which the Victoria League came into contact - indeed the League records provide information on many smaller and more transient societies. A Boys' Empire League, for example, approached the V.L. in 1903, asking, unsuccessfully, for co-operation 'in the scheme of lectures on the colonies' and 'in the formation of a Ladies Auxiliary to assist in organising entertainments to increase the funds of the League'.¹¹³ The National Union of Women Workers had a 'special committee for befriending girls arriving in London from the Colonies' (on which the Victoria League had a representative) from 1903 until it was replaced by an 'international' committee in 1905.¹¹⁴ A British Women's Patriotic League, founded in 1909 'to interest women of all classes, politics and religion in the defence of the Empire and in the maintenance of its national traditions',¹¹⁵ made periodic approaches to the Victoria League, which were received without enthusiasm.¹¹⁶

The Victoria League also had loose links to a number of better established organisations - to the Imperial Institute, for example, through the addition of its director, Professor Wyndham Dunstan, to the Victoria League's education committee (and later to the executive).¹¹⁷ In December 1912 Meriel Talbot interviewed Howard

¹¹⁰ V.L. Annual Report 1912-13, p17.

¹¹¹ Executive 14 March 1913.

¹¹² Executive 20 February 1913.

¹¹³ Executive 5 February 1903. Alice Balfour reported that she had been approached by the Ladies' Auxiliary 'already formed under the Countess of Warwick's Presidency'.

¹¹⁴ Executive 12 November 1903; 27 October 1904; 3 May 1905.

¹¹⁵ *Times* 1 May 1909, and see *Spectator* vol. 103, 17 July 1909, p92. There are occasional references to the British Women's Patriotic League in the *Times* throughout the interwar years, but it does not seem to have been a very active organisation.

¹¹⁶ Executive 6 May 1909; 27 April 1911.

¹¹⁷ Executive 12 December 1903; for Dunstan see William Golant, *Image of Empire: The Early History of the Imperial Institute 1887-1925* (Exmouth: University of Exeter: 1984) p13 14.

d'Egerville, the secretary of the Empire Parliamentary Association, noted that 'his Association dealt entirely with M.P.s in different parts of the Empire: arranging for visits of M.P.s from Great Britain to the Dominions, and for hospitality to those coming to this country', and concluded that it 'seemed likely that the League and the Empire Parliamentary Association might be mutually helpful'.¹¹⁸ The League later gave a welcome party for Mary Emmott, her husband the Under-Secretary for the Colonies, and other members of the E.P.A. on their return from a tour of the Dominions.¹¹⁹ Among the junior imperialist societies, the Victoria League had a representative on the Girls' Friendly Society's Imperial committee¹²⁰ and an arrangement with the Girl Guides to offer them 'tickets for any Victoria League meetings which might be held in places where the Guides were organised'.¹²¹

The Victoria League's experience shows that there existed a lavish - perhaps over-lavish - supply of Edwardian imperialist societies with frequently very similar objects and methods, sometimes co-operating, sometimes co-existing peacefully, and sometimes fighting for the same constituencies or to maintain a monopoly on a particular method of propaganda. The basic structure of the Victoria League - a London-based executive with branches in Britain and the colonies - was a common one. Its main aim - 'a more intimate understanding between ourselves and our fellow subjects in our great Colonies and Dependencies' - was certainly not unique. Its methods - lectures, work in schools, hospitality, the provision of literature to the colonies, 'settlers' welcome' for emigrants - were all used, though not together, by various other organisations.¹²²

Thus far the Victoria League was typical of imperial propaganda societies. We may now see more clearly the things which set it apart. Firstly, the keynote of the League was *practical* imperialism, and it uniquely combined a singleness of purpose with a multiplicity of methods. It prided itself on being 'the maid of all work of the British Empire'¹²³ but it never lost sight of the essential object: the maintenance of imperial unity through the promotion of imperial sentiment. Meriel Talbot was exasperated with the I.O.D.E. for concentrating on 'silly fountains and hospital cots'

¹¹⁸ Executive 19 December 1912. See also Howard d'Egerville, 'Kindred Societies Past and Present. IX - The Empire Parliamentary Association', *United Empire* NS Vol. 6 no. 11 November 1915, pp830-837.

¹¹⁹ Executive 18 December 1913. Mary Emmott's account of the tour was subsequently published in the League's *Monthly Notes* (December 1913, p94-97).

¹²⁰ Executive 6 April 1911.

¹²¹ Executive 21 March 1912.

¹²² The exception is the industrial committee, the result of a strong group of Liberal imperialists on the Victoria League executive.

¹²³ J. Saxon Mills, *Sir Edward Cook* (London: Constable & Co.: 1921) p243.

and calling it 'imperial' work;¹²⁴ and a project such as the L.o.E.'s St. Helena Lace School would never have been undertaken by the Victoria League. Secondly, although most of these organisations had colonial branches, the Victoria League - partly through the circumstances of its foundation - was the only one for which colonial autonomy was, as Edith Lyttelton told Milner, 'a first principle'.¹²⁵

Thirdly, and most significantly, the Victoria League was the only major empire propaganda society in Britain run predominantly by women.¹²⁶ Though men were admitted on the League's subcommittees from the start and on the executive from 1907, it still remained very much a women's organisation. This had important consequences. It enabled the League more convincingly to keep clear of party-politics - for though all imperialist societies claimed to be apolitical very few managed to avoid a Conservative tinge.¹²⁷ Again, as a women's organisation the Victoria League, unlike its fellow societies, chose to avoid any mention of grander, more overtly political schemes - for imperial defence for example - or of more formal arrangements for imperial unity. This was perhaps a limitation, but it also made it possible for the League to act as an umbrella organisation for imperialists of all shades - free traders and tariff reformers, enthusiasts for organic unity and supporters of an empire held together only by the ties of sentiment - and to pursue its programme of 'practical imperialism' quietly and efficiently, without being distracted by side-issues.

¹²⁴ Talbot Diary, 11 May 1910 [Talbot U1612 F221].

¹²⁵ Edith Lyttelton to Milner 9 July 1903 [Milner 216/102-4].

¹²⁶ I exclude the female emigration societies. Mackenzie includes them in his chapter on imperial propaganda societies but they do not really belong to the same group as the organisations discussed here and are covered in Chapter 6 above.

¹²⁷ See e.g. Reese, *Royal Commonwealth Society* p91-92.

Chapter 10.

Dangerous Proposals: the Victoria League and Questions of Race

The Victoria League's vision of empire was undoubtedly white and predominantly Anglo-Saxon. Violet Markham, much influenced by the 'scientific racism' of the late nineteenth century, declared that 'the ethics of colonisation bluntly resolve themselves into the fact that a strong white race will always take possession of any land where its surplus population can flourish, quite irrespective of the wishes and feelings of the original inhabitants'. Nature 'ordain[ed] that her gifts are not for the first comer, but for the one that can make the best use of them'.¹ In the aftermath of the Boer War the League's concern was to unite the British and Dutch in South Africa under British rule and its subsequent expansion was confined to the 'white dominions'. The Boers too, of course, and particularly in the run-up to war, had been designated an extremely low branch on the tree of evolution. 'The Dutch ... are only white Kaffirs and ought to be treated as such' Violet Markham had pronounced in 1899.² She had gone so far as to ascribe their manifest inferiority to early miscegenation. 'It is unnecessary to exaggerate the strain of black blood in the Boer ancestry, but it cannot be totally ignored ... in the offspring of such unions it is as though the savage had lost both strength and vigour, and the European his moral sense' she declared, before going on to ascribe 'the brutality and cunning at times displayed by the Boers' to their 'Kaffir forebears'.³ In the aftermath of war and annexation, however, it was prudent to play down such attitudes (which Markham herself had recanted by 1913) while looking forward to the success of Milner's Anglicisation scheme. Otherwise, the *League tried to avoid* confronting issues of race, anxious, like Chamberlain, 'not to make invidious distinctions between the different races who live under the British flag'.⁴ On two occasions, however - in 1907 when it was suggested that the League should entertain Indian students, and in 1913 when the possibility of Jamaican children being included in the League's Personal Correspondence scheme was raised - questions of race and 'invidious distinctions' were brought directly to the attention of the League executive.

It was difficult for an avowedly imperial organisation to ignore India completely, but the League did its best, acting evasively when Indian questions were brought to its attention. In 1903 Mr Rees (a retired Indian civil servant who had

¹Violet R. Markham, *South Africa Past and Present* (London: Smith, Elder & Co.: 1900) p252.

²Violet Markham to Rosa Markham 23 August 1899 [Markham 27/49].

³Markham, *South Africa, Past and Present* p21.

⁴Quoted in Wolfgang Mock, 'The Function of "Race" in Imperialist Ideologies: the Example of Joseph Chamberlain' in Paul Kennedy and Anthony Nicholls (eds.), *Nationalist and Racist Movements in Britain and Germany before 1914* (London: Macmillan: 1981) p200.

served on the League's concentration camps committee) asked the League 'for help in entertaining an Indian Rajah'. The executive 'agreed that his name should be sent to Mrs Wernher but that such visitors should not be offered hospitality with the compliments of the Ladies' Committee'.⁵ In 1905, several members of Council having suggested 'the need for the League's closer connection with India', affiliation with the National Indian Association was briefly considered, but not with any degree of seriousness.⁶

In February 1907, however, the League received 'several individual requests from people interested in Indian questions and in the welfare of Indian students in Great Britain' who 'considered that a great deal more could and should be done with Indians coming to this country, either for education or as visitors'.⁷ It consulted Colonel Loch, secretary of the Northbrook Society, 'aimed at the native Indian students who came to London'.⁸ The Society organised 'periodic afternoon gatherings of European and Native ladies and gentlemen' and did 'its best to advise and assist young Indian gentlemen arriving in England'.⁹ Loch advised the League that 'it was important to do whatever possible to bring [Indian students] in touch with the educated life of England', and a 'private and informal conference with representatives of the Indian Associations' was therefore arranged.¹⁰ As well as the Northbrook Society, representatives from the National Indian Association (founded in 1870 by Mary Carpenter 'to spread knowledge of India in England and understanding of English culture among Indian visitors'),¹¹ the M[ohammedan] A[nglo-] O[riental] College Association, and the Indian Women's Association were invited to the conference.¹² Lady Jersey and Lady Crewe represented the Victoria League. Sir Curzon Wyllie and Sir Theodore Morison also attended. The Indian associations agreed on the 'need for extending personal friendliness to Indians in this country' and that 'the help of the Victoria League would be of especial value'. The

⁵Executive 28 May 1904.

⁶Executive 13 July 1905.

⁷Executive 27 June 1907; 7 February 1907.

⁸Executive 13 June 1907.

⁹*Times* 27 May 1907. The Northbrook Society's 'attendance' for the first four months of 1907 consisted of 612 Europeans, 998 Indians and 54 'Ladies', race unspecified; its membership in May 1907 included 148 Europeans and 80 Indians.

¹⁰Executive 13 June 1907.

¹¹Barbara N. Ramusack, 'Cultural Missionaries, Maternal Imperialists, Feminist Allies: British Women Activists in India, 1865-1945' in Chaudhuri & Strobel (eds.), *Western Women and Imperialism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press: 1992) p122.

¹²The MAO College Association and the Indian Women's Association are not listed in *Whitaker's Almanac* for 1907 or 1908, or in Chris Cook, *Sources in British Political History 1900-1951* (London: Macmillan: 1975).

League decided that 'they would be willing to offer personal hospitality through their members to Indian girls and ladies coming to England'.¹³

An all-male committee of three - Wyllie, Morison and a Lieutenant Hordern, RN - was appointed to consider the question of entertaining Indian men. Wyllie, after his long Indian experience, was 'deeply interested' in the welfare of Indian students. Theodore Morison had spent many years in India, first as tutor to several Maharajas, later as a professor and finally principal at the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh, serving after his return to England in 1905 on the Council of India.¹⁴ When the 'Indian Consultative Committee' reported on 7 November it was discovered that, though its members agreed on the principle that 'it is desirable that personal hospitality should be offered to Indian male students', they differed as to how it should be done. Wyllie and Morison believed that 'the Victoria League through a specially appointed subcommittee should request the National Indian Association and the Northbrook Society to supply from time to time the names of such Indian students as might with safety be introduced to individual members of the Victoria League; and after considering their names should recommend them to the individual members'. Hordern was more cautious. 'The Victoria League should not undertake any responsibility itself though it might furnish the names of any members willing to receive Indian students to both the above societies'.¹⁵

Violet Cecil, who had already 'wished it to be recorded that she greatly deprecated the Victoria League taking up this Indian work'¹⁶ took the gloomiest view of the whole affair. She told her husband on 10 November,

'I am not very hopeful of saving the League - Hordern is gallant and doing splendidly - but the dear nice innocent women all think that Mohammedans have only got to see them to become Westernised ... It is a disappointing thought that the V.L. should dash itself to pieces on this rock and that at the instigation of a crank, Theodore Morison, who has got hold of the secretary Midge Talbot who like all Talbots has a very cranky side. I am going to fight until the last ditch and then resign when I am beaten. But I shall make them summon the Council first'.¹⁷

From her South African diary, Talbot does indeed seem to have been comparatively liberal in race matters and unusually optimistic about African potential. 'The really intellectual [Africans] - at present only a small number, being barred from education

¹³Executive 27 June 1907. Lady Helen Munro-Ferguson asking if the Committee 'would be willing to give the Victoria League's name to a stall at a Bazaar' in aid of 'a Union or Club for Indian students at the University of Edinburgh', it was agreed to support this and similar schemes.

¹⁴Details from *DNB*.

¹⁵Executive 7 November 1907

¹⁶Executive 27 June 1907.

¹⁷Violet Cecil to Lord Edward Cecil 10 November 1907 [Violet Milner C705/23].

here go to S. America [the Southern States of America?] where they get excellent diplomas and imbibe republican ideals' she noted, deploring the folly of the government in not providing 'natives' with the 'right kind of education'. At the first Union parliament she remarked with interest 'the one native member - the only direct representative of the millions of coloured people - the vast majority of this country's inhabitants'. And visiting an Englishwoman market gardener near Johannesburg Talbot commented, 'one striking thing she is proving is that white and black will work together'.¹⁸

Violet Cecil also consulted her old friend Curzon, ex-Viceroy of India, on the Indian student question. 'Your question is not an easy one to answer' he replied, 'the more so as I am uncertain of my facts. You speak of 'entertaining' natives and of 'hospitality' to them. This seems to imply temporary relations spontaneously offered by one party and entered into without payment by the other'. This, he said, was no doubt suitable for Colonial visitors paying brief visits to Britain,

'But the Indian visitor ... comes to study and to stay for a not inconsiderable time and the difficulty has always been to place him in good healthy moral surroundings where he will not fall a victim either to political intrigue or to social corruption. This is a very serious question. He must lodge somewhere and he does lodge with English middle-class families as it is - on the whole he conducts himself there with decorum; and any arrangement that widens the area of respectable families or brings the Indian into close relations with them is of great public advantage.

But there is not either 'Entertainment' or 'Hospitality' as I imagine you to use these terms.

Another point arises. You speak of your League as a committee of women. If it be so composed entirely I think that a considerable responsibility would be incurred making the necessary arrangements for men though I suppose that the Northcote [*sic*] Society would lighten this for you as much as possible.

As regards the morals of the men. You write as if they would in the main be Mohammedans [but] ... the number who come to England must be small in comparison with the Hindees. The question whether these latter should be allowed to mix with English ladies is one of the most difficult that arises in India. It is a question mainly of age and education. The high-born young Indian of the small class that have had a sound European upbringing is all the better for such contact. The cultured Hindu of position and experience can also be trusted not to abuse it. The *average* young Indian of 17 to 20 is much more likely to misjudge the position and to acquire contempt for a social freedom which suggests to him moral laxity or worse.

It comes then to this: that everything turns upon the class and age of the individuals for whom you are asked to cater and that the experiment should not be taken except with great caution and the most stringent guarantees'.¹⁹

This reasoned discussion of class and cultural background was more positive than

¹⁸Talbot Diary, Bloemfontein 6 October 1910; Cape Town 4 November 1910; Johannesburg 21 November 1910 [Talbot U1612 F222].

¹⁹Curzon to Violet Cecil 11 November 1907 [Violet Milner C251/9].

Violet Cecil would have wished and probably expected. Her opposition was clearly not based on any great knowledge of the matter: only a little contact with those who did know about it would have sufficed to inform her of the students' probable religion.

But Curzon's warning of the need for 'caution' and 'guarantees' would not have been lost on her. There is no mention of his letter in the Victoria League records but Cecil surely circulated it - or the gist of it - to her friends on the executive before the next meeting on 5 December. At this meeting a resolution was read embodying the views of Wyllie and Morison:

'That the Victoria League through a specially appointed sub-committee are prepared to receive from the National Indian Association and the Northbrook Society (and any other trustworthy source) the names of such Indian ladies and gentlemen as those societies would themselves desire to have introduced to individual members of the Victoria League: and after considering their names the subcommittee should recommend them to the individual members of the Victoria League willing to offer hospitality'.

Hordern produced an amendment: 'That the question be referred to an impartial committee for enquiry and report', the committee to be made up of 'men, not necessarily connected with India'. The implication was that Morison and Wyllie had been biased by long service in India, and that common sense and ignorance would be better qualifications for deciding the matter. He also 'expressed his conviction that the proposal to offer hospitality as suggested was distinctly dangerous and would lead to the League being involved in serious difficulties'. The views of those members of the executive not able to attend had been canvassed with results cautious at best. Mrs Birrell's opinion - 'after consulting one or two people of great experience she would vote for the resolution if present, provided great care was taken in regard to individual introductions' - is the most positive one on record. Most were either wholly against the idea or in favour of the amendment (which was probably seen as a more tactful route to the same end).

From Alice Balfour came the opinion 'that if done with care hospitality might be offered but that it might be as well to have an impartial committee to enquire and report'. From Violet Markham: 'she very much hoped the Executive would appoint such a committee'. From Lady Helen Munro-Ferguson: 'that she would not be in favour of offering private hospitality to Indian men, but that everything possible should be done for Indian ladies'. Violet Cecil predictably backed Hordern. It was, however, left to a man, and one outside the executive, to provide the most damning response. 'Mr Rudyard Kipling having been invited to become a Vice President had written to say that should the League undertake to offer hospitality to young Asiatics

residing in England he could not accept any connection with the League'.²⁰ Kipling, a zealous advocate of British rule in India, regarded educated Indians as 'hybrid university-trained mules' and probably nationalist agitators.²¹ He was also a friend and neighbour of Violet Cecil, who likely encouraged him in his ultimatum.²²

Eventually the matter was closed by Edith Lyttelton who, 'in order to stop further discussion ... which she considered was doing harm to the League outside' proposed a resolution 'that without pronouncing an opinion on the merits of the case, the Executive Committee ... owing to widespread feeling against it which exists among friends and well-wishers of the Victoria League should drop the proposal'. The resolution was seconded by Alicia Cecil and agreed to - probably with some thankfulness - unanimously.²³ It was never reopened. Nothing further was heard of hospitality to Indian women. In 1911 Sir Theodore Morison enquired hopefully 'if any individual members would take an interest in the house for Indian Students'. Sir James Dunlop Smith (a retired Indian civil servant and Wyllie's replacement on the Executive) declared that 'the matter needed much careful consideration' and it was allowed to drop.²⁴ Later, in the run-up to the Coronation, and again at Morison's prompting, Dunlop Smith agreed that 'if important [Indian] individuals needed attention and hospitality he would bring the matter to the attention of the Victoria League'.²⁵ Apparently they did not.

One of the most striking features of the Indian students episode is the clear distinction made between Indian women - who were, in principle, accepted almost with enthusiasm - and Indian men. By the turn of the century British feminists had come to see Indian women as their particular imperial responsibility: the 'white woman's burden'. They agitated for the removal of the Contagious Diseases Acts in India, for better education for Indian women, for an end to child marriage.²⁶ Lady Helen Munro-Ferguson's mother, Lady Dufferin, had led a campaign to provide female doctors for zenana women (high-caste women kept in purdah) during her time as Vicereine of India. Not all of the Victoria League's executive would have aligned themselves with the feminist cause, but this feeling of responsibility no doubt

²⁰Executive 5 December 1907.

²¹Lord Birkenhead, *Rudyard Kipling* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson: 1978) p223.

²²Viscountess Milner, *My Picture Gallery*, p166; Charles Carrington, *Rudyard Kipling* (London: Macmillan: 1978) p479.

²³Executive 5 December 1907.

²⁴Executive 19 January 1911.

²⁵Executive 16 February 1911.

²⁶Antoinette Burton, 'The White Woman's Burden: British Feminists and the "Indian Woman" 1865-1915', and Ramusack, 'Cultural Missionaries', both in Chaudhuri & Strobel (eds.), *Western Women and Imperialism*.

contributed to the comparative readiness with which the League agreed to welcome Indian women.

Why, then, the hostility to entertaining men? Sir Curzon Wylie's strange fate - shot dead by a Punjabi student at a 1909 National Indian Association entertainment at the Imperial Institute²⁷ - suggests one possible answer, fear of nationalist attacks. But the string of murders (all of which, except Wylie's, took place in India) stemming from the partition of Bengal in 1905 did not begin until April 1908, several months after the League's decision.²⁸ Though Curzon was clearly aware of the political implications of the contacts made by Indian students while in London (no doubt with knowledge of the London 'India House' nationalist movement with which Wylie's assassin was associated),²⁹ such fears were never mentioned during the Victoria League debate. Rather, the distinction made between Indian men and Indian women demonstrates that the issue was not one merely of race, but of race and gender - or, to be precise, sex.

Curzon's advice was a balanced warning of the need to recognise cultural differences. The Victoria Leaguers - few of whom had any direct, or even indirect, knowledge of India³⁰ - were not so sophisticated. Behind the talk of 'danger', 'serious difficulties' and the need for 'great care' lurked, not a fear of entertaining assassins unaware, but the idea of 'native' men as sexually voracious and irresistibly attracted to white women.³¹ Indian men, particularly Bengalis, were considered to be 'effeminate' - weak, voluptuous and lacking in 'manly self-control' - and the Raj based its legitimacy partly upon this.³² In the later nineteenth century the charge came to be laid specifically against 'Western-educated Indians, a large majority of which were Bengali Hindus' and politically discontented middle-class Indians in

²⁷DNB; *Times* 3 July 1909.

²⁸H.H. Dodwell (ed.), *Cambridge History of India Volume VI* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1932) p551-554; Michael Edwardes, *British India 1772-1947* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson: 1967) p288-289.

²⁹*Times* 3 July 1909. After Wylie's murder, a letter to the *Times* called upon Indians resident in London to form a 'Vigilance Committee' to 'find out exactly what every young Indian is doing, what company he keeps, and what his political views are', informing his parents in India if he was found to be getting into 'dangerous company' [*Times* 5 July 1909].

³⁰Excepting Georgina Frere and Lady Helen Munro-Ferguson (and perhaps Lady Jersey, who had visited India in 1888-89) the executive seem to have been profoundly ignorant of Indian affairs.

³¹See A. Inglis, *The White Woman's Protection Ordinance: Sexual Anxiety and Politics in Papua* (London: Chatto & Windus for Sussex University Press: 1974) on the fears of white men about the designs of indigenous men on white women. Undoubtedly some white women at least did share these attitudes: see Mrinalini Sinha, "'Chathams, Pitts, and Gladstones in Petticoats": The Politics of Gender and Race in the Ilbert Bill Controversy, 1883-4' in Chaudhuri & Strobel (eds.), *Western Women and Imperialism* for an example of white women's activism produced by racist fears.

³²Thomas R. Metcalf, *The New Cambridge History of India: III 4. Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1994) p107.

general.³³ It was of course unthinkable - or at least unspeakable - that white women could be attracted to 'natives'. The issue under consideration by the League was 'personal hospitality', that given by women in their own homes. Within London 'Society' it was understood that 'the roof is an introduction' - that is, that introduction to the home denoted social acceptance.³⁴ In India such contact would have been seen as violating the 'social distance' necessary to maintain Imperial authority, and the maintenance of which was white women's special duty to preserve. Even in Britain the introduction of young Indian men under an Englishwoman's roof was a dangerous intimacy.

After 1907 the League remained largely untroubled by the problems of race. Such dilemmas as did arise came from one of two directions: the Jamaican branch or the scheme for 'Personal Correspondence' between school children. Soon after the commencement of the personal correspondence scheme in 1909 'the question of pupils in Eurasian and Burgher schools in India and Ceylon' being included was raised.³⁵ 'It was decided that they should not be linked at present', the matter was referred to Sir James Dunlop Smith for his 'expert' opinion (the usual method of dealing with awkward questions) and unostentatiously dropped.³⁶

The League in London was intermittently embarrassed by the comparative liberalism of the Jamaica branch. In 1910 the Acting Secretary, Miss Percy Taylor, reported an 'interview with the Archbishop of the West Indies, President of the Branch of the Victoria League in Jamaica'. Enon Nuttall, first Archbishop of the West Indies, spent most of his life in Jamaica, 'intimately concerned in the daily welfare of the islanders'.³⁷ He now asked the League

'whether the Hospitality Committee would be prepared to offer some form of hospitality to the less educated coloured people who visit this country from Jamaica - In his opinion such hospitality would be of great value in increasing the good feeling between Jamaica and this country'.

The executive 'felt the great importance as well as the great difficulty of this work'. As usual further enquiries were to be made of various men: three past or present West Indian Governors, Sir Henry Blake, Sir Charles Bruce and Sir George Le Hunte, plus a Sir H. Dawson. 'The Acting Secretary was desired to write to the Archbishop and say

³³Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: the 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press: 1995) p16.

³⁴Leonore Davidoff, *The Best Circles: Society, Etiquette and the Season* (London: Croom Helm: 1973) p42.

³⁵Executive 30 September 1909.

³⁶Executive 20 January 1910; 19 May 1910.

³⁷*DNB*.

his suggestion should be remembered' - which it was not, the matter being deferred at the next meeting before dropping into oblivion.³⁸

Eventually both issues came up together. The rules for the personal correspondence scheme specified that participants should be 'children of British subjects and of European parents' (subsequently 'of British nationality and European descent' after it was pointed out that the original phrasing 'would keep out a large number of those it was intended to include').³⁹ In 1911 the League received a letter from 'Mrs Roots of Jamaica on the question of "Colour"'. Mrs Roots, honorary secretary of the League's Jamaican branch, 'explain[ed] the difficulties which had arisen in connection with the Executive's decision that children for Personal Correspondence must be of European parentage and descent'. She was given a decidedly disingenuous answer, 'expressing gratitude for the tact and discretion shown in dealing with the difficult subject and ... the Committee's pleasure that other work could be carried on. The letter to point out that questions of "colour" are not referred to in printing papers of the League'.⁴⁰

Two years later, however, a personal approach produced a far more positive response. In 1913 it was reported that

'Mrs Roots ... had come to England and reported serious difficulties caused in Jamaica by the rule for personal correspondence that such correspondence should only be arranged between children of European descent. The matter had been fully discussed by the Education Committee, who sent the following recommendation to the Executive: - "That the words 'and of European descent' be omitted from the Correspondence scheme leaflet; but that great care be taken to ensure that no correspondence with a coloured child be arranged without full knowledge of the fact on the part of the Home child and the child's parents or guardians"'.⁴¹

In the ensuing discussion Sir James Dunlop Smith remarked revealingly that 'it was important that the Victoria League should not differentiate between races in their published papers, whatever might be done in practice'. He was supported by Violet Markham, who 'strongly urged the same point of view, having as she said changed her opinion on the general subject'. She subsequently proposed 'that the words in question be deleted from the Personal Correspondence leaflet', and the Executive agreed unanimously.⁴¹

³⁸Executive 20 October 1910; 17 November 1910. Blake was Captain-General and Governor-in-Chief of Jamaica 1889-97; Bruce, Governor of the Windward Isles (1893-97) and Mauritius (1897-1904); Le Hunte, Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Trinidad and Tobago (1908-15).

³⁹Executive 17 November 1910; 19 January 1911.

⁴⁰Executive 17 March 1911.

⁴¹Executive 17 July 1913.

Violet Markham's attitude to race questions within the Empire, unusually well-documented as it is, provides a useful insight into the mindset of the Victoria League. Even in the midst of the crisis leading up to the Boer War Markham was certain that the real 'problem [in South Africa] is *colour* not Dutch and English'.⁴² She devoted substantial sections of *South Africa Past & Present* (1900) and *The South African Scene* (1913) and a chapter of *The New^{Era in} South Africa* (1904) to the subject. A shift in attitude and a certain mellowing is discernible between 1904 and 1912 in Markham's views on black Africans. To judge from her autobiography (published 1953) there were no further developments in her thought after this, perhaps because her attention was diverted mainly to British and European rather than African matters after 1914.

The first indications of Markham's opinions on the 'native question' can be found early in her 1899 visit to South Africa.

'After a month's residence in S. Africa I find myself more able to understand the why and wherefore of race ... Civilisation apparently acts in the most injurious manner on these primitive races ... representative institutions are right enough for races disciplined in such principles of government, but among coloured races the facts are quite different and however much one is obliged to depart from the theoretical views of government in dealing with these people, the necessity of doing so remains ... The noble savage at home is an object lesson which would be wholesome for some of our silly philanthropists in England. I am not speaking against philanthropy or any attempt to better the condition of these poor creatures but knocking about the world I am more and more struck by the unfortunate results which ensue from misdirected energy and indiscriminate zeal...'.⁴³

Paternalism and properly directed philanthropy based on a recognition that 'black cannot be placed on an equality with the white' constituted Markham's recipe for governing the 'primitive races'. Despite visiting Lovedale, the United Free Church of Scotland missionary station in the eastern Cape which educated around 1,000 black Africans with some white children taught alongside them, Markham was exceedingly dubious about the value of black education. She felt it could only arouse impossible ambitions, political and intellectual, changing 'a thoughtless happy child into a thoughtful discontented man', for 'the element of development which characterises the Aryan races is apparently wholly lacking in the Ethiopic peoples'.⁴⁴ *The New Era in South Africa* re-emphasised these opinions, damning the 'desire on the part of the educated natives to acquire control of native churches and schools' as 'nothing more

⁴²Violet Markham to Rosa Markham, 23 August 1899 [Markham 27/49].

⁴³Markham, Diary 3 July 1899 [Markham 17/5].

⁴⁴Markham, *South Africa Past and Present* p285-286.

nor less than an anti-white crusade'⁴⁵ - a common fear dramatised in John Buchan's *Prester John* (1910).⁴⁶

Markham in this period considered 'race feeling' as inevitable: 'argument as to this deeply rooted instinct is hopeless'. It was founded - as 'people who have never been brought into personal contact with natives entirely fail to grasp' - not on a love of tyranny but on irritation with 'the limitations and stupidity of the Kaffir'.⁴⁷ Julia Bush detects 'a deep personal revulsion at the physical proximity of Africans, clearly evidenced in [Markham's] diary' for 1899,⁴⁸ but evidence for this seems limited. Markham's early views on Africans arose less from physical revulsion than from solid Social Darwinist theory. She quoted Huxley, whose 'sturdy common-sense' she approved, to defend her thesis that black and white were not, and could never be, equal:

'It is simply incredible that when all his disabilities are removed ... [the Negro] will be able to compete successfully with his bigger brained and smaller jawed rival in a contest which is to be carried on by thoughts not chews'.

Therefore, 'the cleavage between the blacks and whites is complete and absolute'. The Kaffir might be 'quick' and 'intelligent' but 'at the best, if the doctrine of heredity is worth anything, what reserve funds of savagery must not exist in such a man's disposition! ... it is impossible not to feel ... that the feeble educational efforts of one generation will scarcely suffice to stem that devastating flood of savagery which may suddenly rise and overwhelm his little growth of civilisation'.⁴⁹ One thing was clear: 'the white man's burden is to rule Africa and rule it he must'.⁵⁰ Convinced of the 'natural' superiority of the white races, suspicious of education for Africans, hostile towards African institutions, and strongly antipathetic to black political power, Markham in the period 1899 to 1904 emerges as a dedicated white supremacist, verging at times on the unscrupulous.

During and after her second South African trip in 1912-13, however, Markham displayed a more liberal attitude. On the voyage out she met Gopal Krishna Gokhale, past president of the Indian National Congress, who was going to South Africa (where Gandhi was conducting a passive resistance campaign against the

⁴⁵Markham, *The New Era in South Africa* (London: Smith, Elder & Co.: 1904), p179-180, p183.

⁴⁶Paul Rich, 'Milnerism and a Ripping Yarn: Transvaal Land Settlement and John Buchan's Novel 'Prester John' 1901-1910' in Belinda Bozzoli (ed.), *Town and Countryside in the Transvaal* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press: 1983) p423.

⁴⁷Markham, *South Africa Past and Present* p243-244.

⁴⁸Julia Bush, 'Organising for Empire: Edwardian ladies and the 'race' dimensions of British imperialism', paper given at the Women's History Network Conference, September 1995.

⁴⁹Markham, *South Africa Past and Present* p245-249.

⁵⁰Markham, *South Africa Past and Present* p247.

restrictions imposed on Asians) to investigate the situation of British Indians there.⁵¹ Markham was much impressed by Gokhale and reported their conversation at length.

'All that he says about the waking to new life of the Asiatic people is deeply interesting if somewhat disquieting ... He has a passionate sense of nationality and wants to see his people fitted bit by bit for self-government ... I have never talked with a more fair-minded man and if he is in any degree representative of his class and race the attempt to exclude such men from participation in Government is as foolish as it is wrong'.

Her views on education for non-Europeans underwent a revision. 'Many Englishmen fear the spread of education [in India] will mean the spread of sedition: even so that phase must be faced and worked through'. In all, Markham concluded, 'it has been a great advantage to talk so freely and at such length with an Indian of Gokhale's education and standing. One talks on absolutely even terms without any sense of race separatism'.⁵²

In *The South African Scene*, Markham described Gokhale as 'a man of the highest culture' and drew the moral that

'whatever the gulfs of race there are bridges of courtesy and education by which they can be spanned. The racial problems of the future are well-nigh insoluble unless thoughtful men and women of all races can learn to show some sort of sympathetic appreciation of each other's varying standpoints'.⁵³

She stoutly defended the rights of Indians in South Africa as citizens of the British Empire. 'By what process of justice or logic' she asked, could 'any one section of the Empire ... treat the inhabitants of another as serfs and helots. Unless some adjustment can be arrived at on this point, Imperial citizenship becomes a mockery and a dream'.⁵⁴ The compromise solution she proposed - that the South Africans should drop their harassing restrictions, while the Indians in South Africa dropped their claim to the franchise - was perhaps somewhat one-sided.⁵⁵ But compared with the South African Immigrants Regulation Act of June 1913 - which maintained all the most objectionable restrictions on Asian residency while reinstating the colour bar in

⁵¹Benjamin Sacks, *South Africa: An Imperial Dilemma: Non-Europeans and the British Nation 1902-1914* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press: 1967) p241-2. See also M.K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa* (Madras: S. Ganesan: 1928) p394-411, and Robert A. Huttenback, *Gandhi in South Africa: British Imperialism and the Indian Question 1860-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press: 1971) p300-303.

⁵²Markham, *South Africa Diary*, 20 October 1912 [Markham 27/7].

⁵³Markham, *South African Scene* (London: Smith, Elder & Co.: 1913) p6-7.

⁵⁴Markham, *South African Scene* p375.

⁵⁵Markham, *South African Scene* p381. She also recommended (p380) that Indians be subject to stringent sanitary regulations, thus promoting public health while helping to prevent them undercutting white competition by accepting lower living standards.

immigration by restoring European languages for the education test⁵⁶ - it was positively generous.

The Indian problem, however, was only a side-show to the 'native question' proper. During her travels, Markham heard views on the question from all sides, except that of the Africans. The man whose views most impressed Markham was the Lovedale-educated Chairman of the Cape Colony Native Affairs Commission, Colonel Walter Stanford, whose influence is evident in *The South African Scene*. Stanford scouted segregation

'as quite impossible as a final policy for the native though native councils ... are very useful as a training ground and as a bridge for passing ... to the civilised state. [His] test is civilisation. His views are most liberal: he would open all doors to a native capable of passing through them. Is quite opposed to manhood suffrage and thinks it quite legitimate to make the native pass a real test of civilisation [as well as education and property tests] before being admitted to the franchise ... He spoke strongly against any policy which protects the white and exploits the black. Segregation might in practice become a bad instrument of racial oppression'.

Stanford was 'so convinced of the absolute superiority of the white man that any question of final supremacy seems absurd to him'.⁵⁷ From this standpoint Stanford could afford to be generous, and he and Markham were in 'hearty agreement' that 'a great governing race can only remain great by cherishing its ideals ... it is only through a high and right spirit that we shall arrive at a right policy on this most difficult question';⁵⁸ and further that 'the great governing race which exploits a weaker one in so doing signs its own death warrant'.⁵⁹

In *The South African Scene* Markham recanted many of her earlier pronouncements on the 'native question'. She now condemned those who saw the African as hopelessly inferior but useful as a labourer. 'Education, so this theory runs, corrupts and demoralises him, he becomes uppish and saucy, a nuisance to himself and a peril to the community' - but to keep him in 'cheerful and convenient ignorance' was 'a system of moral degradation'.⁶⁰ On the contrary, though 'the first-fruits of education are almost invariably disturbing and unsettling' this must be faced, for in the long run education was 'essential to social peace'.⁶¹

⁵⁶Sacks, *South Africa* p243.

⁵⁷Markham, *South Africa Diary*, 8 January 1913 [Markham 27/8].

⁵⁸Markham, *South Africa Diary*, 25 October 1912 [Markham 27/7].

⁵⁹Markham, *South Africa Diary*, 8 January 1913 [Markham 27/8].

⁶⁰Markham, *South African Scene* p232-234.

⁶¹Markham, *South African Scene* p290. She held similar views concerning the British working-classes.

On political matters Markham now took her stance from a saying of Rhodes - 'Equal rights for every civilised man' - buttressed by Milner's pronouncement that 'not race, not colour, but civilisation is the test of political rights'.⁶² She suggested dividing Africans into three classes: the 'raw savage', who needed good, personal, paternal government; the 'transition stage' African, literate and possibly Christian, for whom 'political segregation of the Glen Grey⁶³ type, with areas of local self-government' would be appropriate; and 'the civilised and educated native' living under European law and 'conforming in all respects to European standards' who should be admitted to 'political privileges of the European type' after some adequate test of civilisation.⁶⁴ Fifty years later Markham's scheme was commended as a 'well-thought-out plan for assimilating natives into an integrated community'.⁶⁵ Its main drawback would seem to be the 'test of civilisation', the vagueness of which would have left its administration wide open to abuse, but Markham had a good deal of faith in British officials.

Markham's conversion on the 'native question' should not be exaggerated. Like Stanford, she was convinced that 'in the end as in the beginning the white man must rule; but it will be the royal rule of fitness, character and capacity, honourable to himself and without humiliation to those he governs'.⁶⁶ She warned that 'social relations in the more limited sense it is undesirable to encourage between black and white' to minimise the possibility of miscegenation, though she considered the 'black peril' to be a product of 'racial degradation and mistrust', for which white as well as black were to blame.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, in calling for 'more courage and generosity' in dealing with the question, Markham was ahead of at least South African mainstream thought: her viewpoint, as she herself realised, and as events rapidly made clear, was 'not a popular one in South Africa'.⁶⁸ When the Apartheid system, the natural outgrowth of the segregation schemes she had opposed in 1913, was established by the Afrikaner National Party in 1948 Markham was horrified. 'In former years' she wrote in her autobiography, 'I have declared that I could live more gladly in South Africa than in any country outside England. But today I could not go back even as a visitor. There has been a moral recession all over the world, but in no place has that

⁶²Markham, *Return Passage* (London: Oxford University Press: 1953) p105.

⁶³The Cape Colony Glen Grey Act, passed by Rhodes' government in 1894, marked off native areas where natives could learn Western culture, with some local self-government, and farm under individual (i.e. not tribal) tenure [Sacks, *South Africa* p10].

⁶⁴Markham, *South African Scene* p342-343, p235. The 'test of civilisation' had already been suggested by Lord Selborne [Markham, *South African Scene* p353].

⁶⁵Sacks, *South Africa* p194.

⁶⁶Markham, *South African Scene* p292.

⁶⁷Markham, *South African Scene* p290, p279.

⁶⁸Markham, *South African Scene* p334.

recession been more painful or fraught with such potential disaster as in South Africa'.⁶⁹

Like Markham's, the League's record on matters of race is ambiguous. Clearly it would have preferred, had the thing been possible, to ignore the issue altogether. Nevertheless, on two occasions at least, when approached by those outside, the executive felt it necessary to take seriously the idea that non-whites be admitted into the League's activities. In a sense, the attitudes revealed by the proposal to entertain Indians are less surprising than that the suggestion was taken seriously at all: the League could so easily have allowed it to vanish unobtrusively behind a screen of good wishes and expert opinions, the usual method for disposing of controversial questions. Though the record of the League's evasions on the subject of 'coloured' penfriends is certainly inglorious, nevertheless the race barrier was eventually dropped. It was, of course, easier to be broad-minded about school-children in Jamaica than about Indian men in English drawing-rooms. Like Markham, and partly through her influence, the League was prepared to alter its views over time. The Victoria League was no more racist than the society from which it came, nor were its women, on the whole, more racist than its men. Unlike many of their contemporaries some, at least, of its members appear to have had a conscience on the matter.

⁶⁹Markham, *Return Passage* p59-60.

Conclusion

Gender & Empire

This thesis set out to consider, through an examination of one female imperialist society, two related questions - what made Edwardian women imperialist, and how, within the limits of Edwardian society, could they express their imperialism? The first question is the simplest to answer. In her 1942 study of the Primrose League, Janet Robb suggested that

‘the Tory pleas for a far-flung Empire ... may well have had an appeal to the untrained feminine mind not only through their drama but because they were more closely intertwined with the roots of women’s emotions ... the romantic symbolism of imperialism must have had a special attraction for women. The charm of faraway places for those so circumscribed by their homes, the plea for the guardianship of native peoples to those already interested in foreign church missions, and the stirring accounts of frontier warfare calling for individual bravery by the British hero ... must have entered into the success of the Primrose League’.¹

This patronising approach will not do for the Victoria League. The League’s founders became active imperialists, not because of the ‘romance’ and ‘emotion’ of Empire, but, like many Edwardian men, because of their family backgrounds and their personal experiences in South Africa. Intelligent (though often not well educated), embedded in Britain’s social and political élite, and politically sophisticated, it was Milner’s influence and the crisis atmosphere of turn of the century South Africa that inspired them to imperial activism. Many undoubtedly felt some kind of attraction towards Milner, the hero of Empire. But it was not only women who fell under his spell - the founders of the Victoria League were the female precursors of the ‘kindergarten’, that group of able and impressionable young men marked for life by Milner’s vision of a British South Africa and the British Empire. The call of the Empire, in short, was not gender-specific.

The options available to the Edwardian imperialist, on the other hand, were clearly circumscribed by gender. Milner’s ‘kindergarten’, one of whom (Curtis) had already fought in the Boer War, began as colonial administrators and went on to become M.P.s, editors and governor-generals.² None of these options were open to women, and many of those that *were* open were heavily dependent on social position. ‘I wish I were a duchess or a millionaire’ sighed Violet Markham, ‘for then I could really do some good for the cause! I can honestly say that it is S. Africa alone which has ever made me long for the influence which comes from place or power’.³ For women who did possess these

¹Janet Robb, *The Primrose League 1883-1906* (New York: Columbia University Press: 1942) p136.

²Walter Nimocks, *Milner’s Young Men* (London: Hodder & Stoughton: 1970 (1st 1968)).

³Violet Markham to David Gill 15 February 1901 [Gill papers RGS].

gifts the well-worn feminine path of behind-the-scenes influence was open. Violet Cecil did not hesitate to use it, informing Balfour the day after her arrival in South Africa that 'the General here, Butler, has refused to carry out War Office orders and buy horses and stores for the special services officers saying, "War would be an outrage" ... send someone out to suppress Butler will you' she asked, 'because whichever way you look at it he is putting sand in the wheels'.⁴

The less well-connected imperialist had to take more circuitous routes to put forward her ideas. 'Social success' - which in this context meant political success as well - 'depends *primarily* on birth' Markham told her mother, 'After birth but a long way behind comes the power of wealth. The power of intelligence really hardly counts especially for a woman'.⁵ The masculine path from modest circumstances to politics via an Oxbridge scholarship and the law, used so effectively by Asquith (coming from a background similar to Markham's),⁶ John Buchan and Patrick Duncan, was one closed to her. Nevertheless intelligence *could* be put to good use even by a woman, as Flora Shaw had found as colonial editor of the *Times* from 1893 to 1900.⁷ Markham herself achieved a considerable reputation as a writer on imperial affairs. (J.L. Garvin told her that 'no woman I have known has written upon politics as well as you'.)⁸ She supported Milner and the 'forward policy' in South Africa with *South Africa, Past & Present* (1900); eulogised his reconstruction of the Transvaal and endorsed the adoption of Chinese labour in *The New Era in South Africa* (1904); and argued against the Transvaal constitution in her 1906 article, 'Lord Durham and Colonial Self-Government'.⁹

Markham did not attempt to disguise her gender, nor did she make any concessions to 'womanly' diffidence. Unlike Mary Kingsley, whose books brim with self-deprecation and excessive tributes to her male advisors,¹⁰ and unlike a host of lesser female writers (Violet Brooke-Hunt, for example, whose *A Woman's Memories of the*

⁴Violet Cecil to Balfour 26 July 1899 [SRO GD433/2/39/13]. Butler considered the whole affair a plot between Milner and the capitalists and that 'war would be [the] greatest calamity that ever occurred'. At Milner's insistence he was sent home [Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* (London: Abacus: 1992 (1st 1979)) p74-5, p84].

⁵Violet Markham to Rosa Markham 26 September 1899 [Markham 27/49].

⁶Roy Jenkins, *Asquith* (London: Collins: 1964) chapter 1.

⁷E. Moberley Bell, *Flora Shaw* (London: Constable & Co.: 1947); Helen Calloway & Dorothy O. Helly, 'Crusader for Empire: Flora Shaw/Lady Lugard' in N. Chaudhuri & M. Strobel (eds.), *Western Women & Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press: 1992).

⁸Garvin to Violet Markham 8 December 1906 [Markham 26/28].

⁹Violet Markham, 'Lord Durham and Colonial Self-Government', *Nineteenth Century* LIX June 1906 pp914-923.

¹⁰Katherine Frank, *A Voyager Out: The Life of Mary Kingsley* (London: Hamish Hamilton: 1987 (1st 1986)) p209, p232. Kingsley was given to insisting, for example, that 'every bit of solid, good work I have done has been through a man' [quoted Frank, pxiv].

War was explicitly dedicated to a female readership)¹¹ Markham simply ignored her gender, using an asexual, reporting style and making no apologies for tackling 'unfeminine' questions. Moreover, she succeeded in being accepted on her own terms. Though the *Spectator* declared that she was endowed with 'an evident power of observation and judgement much above the average of either sex',¹² Markham's evident ability (bolstered by her mass of hard fact gathered from colonial blue books and interviews, and the authority of having been there and seen that) impressed reviewers sufficiently that in the main they concentrated on the work and ignored the gender of the writer.

Julia Bush has suggested that Markham's work for the Victoria League was a method of 'cloak[ing] her 'masculine' beliefs with a more socially acceptable adherence to female imperialism'.¹³ But Markham's association with the League was not an alternative but an addition to her work in less 'feminine' spheres. Her third book on South Africa, *The South African Scene* (1913) again shows no diffidence in addressing the major political issues of the day: the 'native' question, the language question, the problem of white labour, and so on. On the contrary, Markham's position as a representative of the League gave her the opportunity both to promote her own ideas and to 'come into contact with the minds which are making history' around the Empire 'more or less on the footing of *work*'.¹⁴ Her work for the Victoria League provided Markham with a springboard from which to launch her later career as a public servant, and this is also true of others in the League, in particular Meriel Talbot. At the same time, work through imperial organisations presented an attractive option for those less able or less committed than Markham, or more constrained by family responsibilities.

Undoubtedly there were obstacles in the path of the female imperialist. Firstly, there was the question of authority: how far and in what ways a woman could pronounce on imperial subjects. While Markham was happy to *write* on the subject of Chinese Labour, she refused to *speak* in its favour because, she said, 'I think it sounds grotesque to hear a woman discoursing on such a subject and it doesn't carry the least conviction'.¹⁵

¹¹Brooke-Hunt offered 'a few more pictures of the war, which I want to depict as coming from a woman to women especially, and therefore representing those points of view on which, as it seems to me, women may care to rest their eyes and linger' [*A Woman's Memories of the War* (London: James Nisbet & Co.: 1901), p3]. There were advantages to this approach: in a review article hostile to any female interference with military affairs, the *Saturday Review* singled out Brooke-Hunt as one who had done 'what she conceived to be her duty' in an efficient and patriotic manner [20 July 1901 vol. XCII p80-81].

¹²*Spectator* 20 October 1900.

¹³Julia Bush, 'Lady Imperialists and the Cause of British South Africa', paper given at 'South Africa 1895-1921: Test of Empire' Conference, Oxford, March 1996.

¹⁴Violet Markham to Rosa Markham 22 October 1905 [Markham 27/58].

¹⁵Violet Markham to Milner 25 March 1904 [Milner 216/347].

Similarly, the Victoria League's first reaction to any particularly difficult question was to lay it before a man for consideration. When men were admitted onto the League executive their opinion was treated with reverence. Lady Jersey remembered that

'when after some lively discussion of a point raised, the Chairman would ultimately say, 'What does Sir Edward Cook think?', Sir Edward, who had meantime sat silent and attentive, would give a little shake of his head, and in one or two quiet sentences crystallise the whole matter and give a verdict with which all would agree ... We all felt that Sir Edward had understanding and therefore we accepted what we all knew to be his wisdom'.¹⁶

No doubt this stemmed in part from the Victorian attitude, recalled by Susan Tweedsmuir, that 'a man's judgement on any subject [was of] paramount value. It was a saying among us,' she remembered, 'that my mother [the female emigrationist Mrs Norman Grosvenor] and her sisters [including Lady Talbot of the League's Settlers' Welcome committee] would ask any man - say, a plumber who happened to be in the house - about the political situation, rather than seek the opinion of a highly intelligent and well-educated female relative'.¹⁷

The younger generation, however, less inclined to take male wisdom for granted, had another reason for treating the opinion of the League men with respect. The men members had been hand-picked as 'possessing expert knowledge which would be of great advantage to the work'.¹⁸ Thus Amery and Cook were authorities on journalism, Sargent and Mackinder on education, Wyllie and Dunlop-Smith on India, Goold-Adams on South Africa and so on. This was the age of the 'expert'¹⁹ and Edwardian experts on imperial matters were almost inevitably male. The status accorded to the men on the committee was proportionate to their knowledge and their usefulness to *the League*, not to their maleness as such. Nor, as the Indian students controversy illustrates, was their advice always taken. Though the League women might easily have been swamped when they admitted men onto the executive (by 1914 ten out of 26 members of the executive were men)²⁰ the Victoria League, unlike the League of the Empire, did not succumb to male domination but retained its original character almost untouched while consulting its 'experts' and benefiting from the enthusiasm and the imperial contacts of those men who proved useful. Six years of precedent helped. So did the dedication and competence of the League women ('I have seen a good deal of Committees and Societies in my time' wrote Cook, 'but never one which is better run than the League - and all its officers and

¹⁶J. Saxon Mills, *Sir Edward Cook KBE: A Biography* (London: Constable & Co.: 1921) p245.

¹⁷Lady Tweedsmuir, *The Lilac and the Rose* (London: Duckworth: 1952) p60.

¹⁸Council 20 April 1907.

¹⁹G.R. Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency* (Berkeley: University of California Press: 1971) p82.

²⁰Counting officers and chairmen of subcommittees who were members of the executive *ex officio*.

chairmen (except me) are women').²¹ The experiment was so successful that - in a period where organisations of any kind where men and women worked alongside each other were rare²² - the League campaigned for mixed societies and male/female co-operation throughout the Empire. 'It's obviously silly in work like this to divide the sexes' wrote Meriel Talbot on her South African tour. 'But the Colonials here as elsewhere are still deeper in mediaeval fog than we are in England'.²³

A further obstacle in the way of the female imperialist was the question of imperial ideology, in particular as expressed through the anti-suffrage campaign. A central tenet of the 'antis' was that women could not be allowed to interfere with the workings of the British Empire. Acceptance of imperialism certainly did not predetermine attitudes towards the suffrage and the 'woman question'. Antoinette Burton has demonstrated how, faced with the argument that women were not fit to govern an Empire dependent in the last resort on masculine 'physical force', suffragists retorted by proposing 'a "new and sane" imperialism ... based on feminine values and oriented toward peace rather than war', and by presenting themselves as the saviours of colonised, particularly Indian, women.²⁴ There were many feminists in the Victoria League. On her tour Meriel Talbot supported allowing women on church councils (under debate in the South African synod during her stay in Pretoria) and approved of a South African attempt to 'get the Govt. to include a women's section in the new agricultural college'.²⁵ She was also 'a suffragist of lifelong conviction' though 'grieve[d] at the ... political unwisdom of the militants'.²⁶ Other League suffragists included Lady Frances Balfour, Mary Emmott, Kathleen Haldane, Mary Arnold-Forster,²⁷ Lady Selborne, and (almost certainly) Alice Balfour.²⁸ There were suffragists at all levels - in 1911 Miss Nina Boyle wrote 'wishing to withdraw her connection with the League owing to the President's action in regard to the Anti-Suffrage Movement'.²⁹

²¹Quoted J.W. Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper* (London: Methuen: 1952) p333.

²²A notable exception was the Primrose League (to which Lady Jersey, Alice Balfour and Alicia Cecil all belonged) which at 'habitation' level was generally mixed, frequently with female officers [Martin Pugh, *The Tories and the People* (Oxford: Blackwell: 1985) p46, p49-50].

²³Talbot Diary Natal 22 October 1910 [Talbot U1612 F222].

²⁴Antoinette Burton, 'The Feminist Quest for Identity: British Imperial Suffragism and 'Global Sisterhood' 1900-1915', *Journal of Women's History* 3 (2) Fall 1991 pp46-77, p58-59.

²⁵Talbot Diary Pretoria 14 November, Johannesburg 21 November 1910 [Talbot U1612 F222].

²⁶Meriel Talbot to Lord Gladstone 8 March 1912 [BL Add. 46072 f201]. Her mother, Meriel Lucy Talbot (née Lyttelton) had signed the *Nineteenth Century* 'appeal against women suffrage' in 1889 [Sheila Fletcher, *Victorian Girls: Lord Lyttelton's Daughters* (London: Hambledon Press: 1997) pix].

²⁷Lady Frances Balfour, *Ne Obliviscaris: Dinnae Forget* (London: Hodder & Stoughton: 1930) vol. II p155.

²⁸Arthur Balfour, Salisbury and the Cecils all supported women suffrage [Pat Jalland, *Women, Marriage and Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon: 1986) p216].

²⁹Executive 26 October 1911.

For the League 'antis', though not perhaps more numerous, were more noticeable than the suffragists. Lady Jersey was the chairman of the Women's National Anti-suffrage League.³⁰ Georgina Frere and Lady Leconfield were both antis.³¹ H.J. Mackinder was a staunch supporter of the National League for Opposing Women Suffrage. Violet Markham was a feather in the cap of the 'anti' campaign, distinguished by her speech for the great anti-suffrage meeting in the Albert Hall in 1912. *Truth*, reviewing Markham's *The South African Scene*, remarked that she had made 'some months ago so admirable a speech against the enfranchisement of women that she nearly defeated her own cause'.³² Lady Jersey told Cromer that her son-in-law had 'particularised Miss Markham's [speech] as having excited great enthusiasm. I am so glad ... because the opinion of a woman who has *proved* her superiority carries such weight against the talking suffragists'.³³

A central anti-suffrage argument was that 'native' populations of the Empire would not respect a government with a female electorate, and that the suffragette unrest would lower British prestige, particularly in India. One 'anti' warned that 'no military foreign nation or native race would ever believe in the stamina and firmness of purpose of any nation that submitted even to the semblance' of 'forcible control by women'.³⁴ The explicit connection made between imperialism and anti-suffragism left imperialist anti-suffrage women in a particularly awkward position. Not only were they working publicly to prevent women's public work, they were denying other women the right to intervene in imperial concerns they themselves found absorbing. In fact, for Lady Jersey (though Brian Harrison notes her respect for Joseph Chamberlain)³⁵ the Empire seems to have been a side-issue in her anti-suffragism. A Primrose Dame and one of the last of the great political hostesses, it was reasonable, if unimaginative, of her to conclude that 'any woman who deserved to influence political events succeeded in doing so'.³⁶ For Violet Markham it was more complicated.

Markham did not refer to the Empire in her anti-suffrage speeches. At the Albert Hall she dealt mostly with the lack of women on local government bodies, from which

³⁰Brian Harrison, *Separate Spheres: The Opposition to Women's Suffrage in Britain* (London: Croom Helm: 1978) p118-119.

³¹See Georgina Frere to Violet Markham 6 March 1912 congratulating her on the Albert Hall meeting; and Constance Leconfield to Violet Markham 25 January 1912: 'I feel it is a duty to make an open protest against Woman Suffrage so I will come to the Albert Hall meeting' [both Markham 26/30].

³²*Truth* 19 November 1913, Literary Supplement pxii.

³³Lady Jersey to Cromer 2 March 1912 [PRO FO633/22/58].

³⁴Harrison, *Separate Spheres* p75-6; Sir Almroth E. Wright, *The Unexpurgated Case Against Woman Suffrage* (London: Constable & Co.: 1913) p33.

³⁵Harrison, *Separate Spheres* p94.

³⁶Violet Powell, *Margaret, Countess of Jersey* (London: William Heinemann: 1978) p173.

(blithely ignoring the very real difficulties women faced even in local government) she extrapolated a general lack of interest in political affairs among British women.³⁷ But it is clear that Markham's imperialism was also a factor. She told Grey that anti-suffrage work was 'the most uncongenial task to which I ever set my hand. I love and honour my own sex, and it's odious to seem in opposition to them'. But, she said, 'adult suffrage means a majority of woman voters and I ask myself if that is going to make for the good Government of the nation and the Empire. I reply emphatically *no*. Franchise questions are questions of averages and the political capacity and experience of the average woman are less than those of the average man'.³⁸

Working against the suffrage also meant working alongside her imperial heroes. When Cromer initiated a correspondence with her in 1910 (sparked by her proposal for a 'woman's council' to advise the government on women's issues as an alternative to the suffrage), she told him 'how *very deeply honoured*' she felt that he had 'taken the trouble to write to me with so much sympathy, understanding and goodwill ... I cannot thank you adequately for your letter unless I can make you realise in however small a degree what its writer has meant to me for many years as an example of all that one values most in the great traditions of English government and English manhood'.³⁹ Markham never abandoned this reverential tone. Even when snubbed in her efforts (with Mary Ward) to promote the activity of women in *local* government as the 'constructive side' of the Anti-Suffrage League she assured Cromer that 'I can have but one wish, to co-operate with you and the committee in the most loyal wholehearted manner'.⁴⁰ 'I suppose it is one of the small ironies of late that a person who prates as loudly as I do about Imperialism should be thus occupied by the politics of the Parish Pump' she had complained to her diary in 1897.⁴¹ It was a larger irony that Markham, so taken up herself with imperial politics, should in the name of that imperialism be so anxious to confine other women to 'the politics of the Parish Pump'.

Lady Jersey and Violet Markham, despite their opposition to women having a direct voice in imperial affairs, implicitly approved the Victoria League version of female imperialism. Lady Jersey, similarly, drew a fine distinction between 'placing men in government and actually voting for them'.⁴² The language of the Victoria League

³⁷*Times* 29 February 1912. In her autobiography she also cited her mother's influence and her belief that Britain was not yet ready for full democracy as reasons for her anti-suffragism [Markham, *Return Passage* (London: Oxford University Press: 1953) p95].

³⁸Markham to Grey 7 February 1912 [Grey 207/8].

³⁹Violet Markham to Cromer 12 August 1910 [PRO FO633/18/58-59].

⁴⁰Violet Markham to Cromer 1 March 1912 [PRO FO633/22/251-2].

⁴¹Quoted Helen Jones (ed.), *Duty and Citizenship: the Correspondence and Political Papers of Violet Markham* (London: Historians Press: 1994) p27.

⁴²Pugh, *Tories and the People* p58.

emphasised its modest pretensions and implied that the League was a purely auxiliary body. The original aims and objects stated that the League would 'hold itself ready ... to support and assist any scheme leading to more intimate understanding' between Britain and her colonies. James Greenlee both accepts this rhetoric at face value and over-estimates Lady Jersey's influence on the League when he argues that the Victoria League, as a women's organisation, was unwilling to inaugurate large-scale projects; and that it genuinely saw itself as an 'imperial ladies auxiliary' to the all-male Royal Colonial Institute and the male-dominated League of the Empire.

'Throughout the Victoria League was content to play a lesser role in support of the other two institutions ... An explanation of the limited role assumed by the V.L. might be found in the fact that it was largely a women's club operating in what was predominantly a man's world ... [Lady Jersey's] attitude to the role of women in the life of the nation ... had a strong impact on the outlook of the entire V.L.'⁴³

This is not an impression confirmed by closer acquaintance with the Victoria League. Greenlee is concerned primarily with imperial education but even within this narrow frame his theory is clearly unfounded. The 1902 'Plan for Imperial Education' was a highly ambitious scheme thwarted not by female diffidence but by funding problems; while the League's later cinematograph scheme was significantly in advance of other imperial organisations, both government and voluntary. Nor was the League hesitant in organising the 1914 Imperial Health Conference, another large-scale project. Moreover, in its relations with the R.C.I. and the L.O.E., the Victoria League demonstrated an assertive, not to say aggressive, attitude (not only determined to protect its own methods of work but prepared to encroach on areas pioneered by the other societies) that hardly fits Greenlee's perception of it as a 'ladies' auxiliary'.

The Victoria League's largely female membership and its (self-) image as a women's organisation did undoubtedly influence its areas and methods of work, if not in the simplistic way Greenlee suggests. It effectively precluded any intervention in the more directly political methods of promoting imperial unity. An imperial parliament and 'organic unity', tariff reform, imperial defence and similar 'masculine' subjects were either elaborately avoided or totally ignored by the League as a body (though not by its members as individuals). Instead the League restricted itself to the 'organisation of sympathy' between the mother country and the white dominions, a vaguely defined but reassuringly female-sounding occupation. In practice it meant the promotion of schemes in which, unlike the 'big-sounding' plans for 'financial and other union',⁴⁴ the immediate effect on individuals was clearly visible, though predicting the long-term gain might have to be a matter of faith.

⁴³James G. Greenlee, *Education and Imperial Unity 1901-1926* (New York: Garland: 1987) p3-7.

⁴⁴Meriel Talbot, Diary 14 March 1910 [Talbot U1612 F221].

The ways in which the Victoria League attempted to unite the Empire - through philanthropy, education, culture, hospitality and social reform - were all aspects of life that even the most extreme anti-suffragists had accepted as belonging to 'woman's sphere'. The League's innovation was to take these methods and transfer them onto the imperial stage, demonstrating an early awareness of the idea that 'the personal is political'. Philanthropy to war victims, the tending of war graves, the education of children, the provision of literature and art, welcoming visitors coming 'home' or arranging for the welcome of travellers to 'another part of home', the exchange of information regarding social conditions and the welfare of children - all of these were suitably ladylike occupations transformed by the League into attempts to Anglicise South Africa, keep Canada British, unite the Empire, and ensure the maintenance of an 'imperial race'. Within strictly traditional language the League redefined areas of female competence and inconspicuously enlarged woman's 'separate sphere' to include the active propagation of imperialism.

Select Bibliography

Unpublished Papers

Leo Amery papers, by permission of the late Rt. Hon. Lord Amery of Lustleigh.
 Arnold-Forster papers, Trinity College Library, Dublin.
 Balfour papers, Scottish Record Office.
 Chandos [Lyttelton] papers, Churchill College Archives Centre, Cambridge.
 Cromer papers, Public Record Office, Kew.
 Fawcett papers, Fawcett Library, London Guildhall University.
 Sir David Gill papers, Royal Geographical Society.
 Gladstone papers, British Library.
 Albert 4th Earl Grey papers, Palace Green Library, Durham.
 Violet Markham papers, British Library of Political and Economic Science, LSE.
 Milner papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford.
 Violet Milner papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford.
 Rhodes papers, Rhodes House Library, Oxford.
 Streatfield papers, British Library of Political and Economic Science, LSE.
 Talbot papers, Kent Archives Office, Maidstone.

Official Papers

Report on the Concentration Camps in South Africa by the Committee of Ladies Appointed by the Secretary of State for War; Containing Reports on the Camps in Natal, the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal [Cd. 893] 1902.

Report of the Inter-departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration [Cd. 2175] 1904.

Society Records

Colonial Intelligence League for Educated Women, Annual Reports 1912-1914.

Report of the Good Hope Society for Aid to Sick and Wounded in War: South African War 1899 - 1902 (Cape Town: W. A. Richards & Sons: 1902).

Guild of Loyal Women of South Africa, *Federal Leaflet July 1911 Special Number* (Cape Town: 1911).

League of the Empire, leaflet n.d. [1903] [Grey Papers, Durham 234/9].

League of the Empire, Comrades Correspondence Branch leaflet n.d. [Grey Papers, Durham 234/9].

League of the Empire, *Report of the Negotiations for Amalgamation between the League of the Empire and the Victoria League* (August 1909).

League of the Empire, *Report of the Work done by the League up to the 1st July, 1911*.

South African Colonisation Society, Annual Reports 1903 - 1914.

Victoria League, Executive Minutes 1901 - 1914.
 Council Minutes 1901 - 1914.
 Annual Reports 1901 - 1914.
 Annual Reports (Edinburgh Branch) 1912 - 1914.
 Monthly Notes 1912 - 1914.

Victoria League of South Africa, *Report by Provisional Committee to the First Meeting of the Provincial Council of the League for the Transvaal Province held on 29 December 1912*.

Periodicals

Canadian Annual Review.

Canadian Magazine.

Contemporary Review.

Englishwoman's Year Book.

Fortnightly Review.

National Review.

Nineteenth Century.

The Scotsman.

The Spectator.

The Times.

United Empire.

Memoirs, Biographies and Collected Papers

Australian Dictionary of Biography.

Aberdeen and Temair, The Marquis and Marchioness of, *We Twa: reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen* (London: W. Collins & Sons: 1925) 2 vols.

Arnold-Forster, Mary, *Hugh Oakeley Arnold-Forster: A Memoir* (London: Edward Arnold: 1910).

Balfour, Lady Frances, *Ne Obliviscaris: Dinnae Forget* (London: Hodder & Stoughton: 1930) 2 vols.

Banks, Olive, *Biographical Dictionary of British Feminists volume II* (New York: New York University Press: 1990).

Barnes, John and David Nicholson (eds.), *The Leo Amery Diaries volume I* (London: Hutchinson: 1980).

Bean, Lucy and Elizabeth van Heyningen (eds.), *The Letters of Jane Elizabeth Waterston 1866-1905* (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society: 1983).

Begbie, Harold, *Albert, 4th Earl Grey: A Last Word* (London: Hodder & Stoughton: 1917).

Blouet, Brian W., *Halford Mackinder: A Biography* (College Station: Texas A. & M. University Press: 1987).

Chandos, Lord, *The Memoirs of Lord Chandos* (London: Bodley Head: 1962).

Chandos, Lord, *From Peace to War* (London: Bodley Head: 1968).

Dahrendorf, Ralf, *L.S.E.: A History of the London School of Economics and Political Science 1895-1995* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 1995).

Dawson, R. MacGregor, *William Lyon Mackenzie King: A Political Biography* (London: Methuen: 1958).

Dictionary of National Biography.

Dictionary of South African Biography.

- Egremont, Max, *Balfour: A Life of Arthur James Balfour* (London: Collins: 1980).
- Ellenberger, Nancy, 'The Souls and London Society', *Victorian Studies* Winter 1982 pp133-160.
- Esberry, Joy E., *Knight of the Holy Spirit: A Study of William Lyon Mackenzie King* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press: 1980).
- Fawcett, Millicent Garrett, *What I Remember* (London: Fisher & Unwin: 1924).
- Fletcher, Sheila, *Victorian Girls. Lord Lyttelton's Daughters* (London: Hambleton: 1997).
- First, Ruth, and Ann Scott, *Olive Schreiner* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press: 1990 (1st 1980)).
- Haldane, L.K., *Friends and Kindred* (London: Faber & Faber: 1961).
- Headlam, Cecil (ed.), *The Milner Papers* (London: Cassell & Co.: 1931 and 1933) 2 vols.
- Henderson, Margaret Eadie, 'Canadian Celebrities No. 74 - Mrs Herbert Chamberlain', *Canadian Magazine* xxvii no. 5 September 1906 pp501-503.
- Horne, Alistair, *Macmillan: the official biography volume I* (Basingstoke: Macmillan: 1988).
- Jersey, Lady, *Fifty-One Years of Victorian Life* (London: John Murray: 1922).
- Jones, Helen (ed.), *Duty and Citizenship: The Correspondence and Political Papers of Violet Markham 1896-1953* (London: Historians Press: 1994).
- Lyttelton, Edith, *Alfred Lyttelton: An Account of his Life* (London: Longmans, Green & Co.: 1915, 1917).
- MacKenzie, Norman (ed.), *The Letters of Sidney and Beatrice Webb* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1982-85) 4 vols.
- MacKenzie, N. & J. (eds.), *The Diary of Beatrice Webb* (London: Virago: 1982-85) 4 vols.
- Markham, Violet, *May Tennant: A Portrait* (London: Falcon Press: 1949).
- Markham, Violet, *Return Passage* (London: Oxford University Press: 1953).
- Markham, Violet, *Friendship's Harvest* (London: Max Reinhardt: 1956).
- Marlowe, John, *Milner: Apostle of Empire* (London: Hamish Hamilton: 1976).
- Mills, J. Saxon, *Sir Edward Cook K.B.E.: A Biography* (London: Constable & Co.: 1921).
- ? Milner, Violet, 'Dame Edith Lyttelton: A Vivid Personality', *National Review* 131 October 1948 p354.
- Milner, Violet, *My Picture Gallery 1886 - 1901* (London: John Murray: 1951)
- Mitchison, Naomi, *Small Talk: Memoirs of an Edwardian Childhood* (London: Bodley Head: 1973).
- Morgan, H.J., *Canadian Men and Women of Our Time* (2nd Edition Toronto: William Briggs: 1912).
- Morgan, H.J., *Types of Canadian Women Volume I* (Toronto: William Briggs: 1903).

Oppenheim, Janet, 'A Mother's Role, a Daughter's Duty: Lady Blanche Balfour, Eleanor Sidgwick and Feminist Perspectives', *Journal of British Studies* 34 no. 2 April 1995 pp196-232.

Parker, W.H., *Mackinder: Geography as an Aid to Statecraft* (Oxford: Clarendon: 1982).

Pazdro, Roberta J., 'Agnes Deans Cameron: Against the Current', in Barbara Latham and Cathy Kess (eds.), *In Her Own Right: Selected Essays on Women's History in British Columbia* (Camuson College: Victoria B.C.: 1980) pp101-123.

Pinney, Thomas (ed.), *The Letters of Rudyard Kipling Volume III 1900 - 1910* (Basingstoke: Macmillan: 1996).

Powell, Violet, *Margaret, Countess of Jersey: A Biography* (London: Heinemann: 1978).

Rive, Richard, *Olive Schreiner Letters Volume I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press : 1988).

Roberts, Sir Charles G.D., and Arthur L. Tunnell (eds.), *A Standard Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto: Trans-Canada Press: 1938).

Robertson Scott, J.W., *The Life and Death of a Newspaper* (London: Methuen: 1952).

Rose, Kenneth, *The Later Cecils* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson: 1975).

Semmel, Bernard, 'Sir Halford Mackinder: Theorist of Imperialism', *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* XXIV (4) November 1958, pp554-561.

Strachey, Amy, *St Loe Strachey: His Life and His Paper* (London: Victor Gollancz: 1930).

Tweedsmuir, Susan, *The Lilac and the Rose* (London: Duckworth: 1952).

Tweedsmuir, Susan, *The Edwardian Lady* (London: Duckworth: 1966).

Van Reenan, Rykie (ed.), *Emily Hobhouse's Boer War Letters* (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau: 1984).

Who Was Who.

Wrench, John Evelyn, *Alfred, Lord Milner: The Man of No Illusions 1854-1925* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode: 1958).

Young, Kenneth, *Arthur James Balfour* (London: G. Bell & Sons: 1963).

Other Writings by Members of the Victoria League and their Contemporaries

Anon., 'An Imperial Club for London', *Spectator* 14 November 1903 pp802-803.

Aberdeen, Lady, *Through Canada with a Kodak* (1st 1893; reprinted Toronto: University of Toronto Press: 1994).

Amery, Leo, *The Times History of the War in South Africa* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Co.: 1900 - 1909) 7 volumes.

Amherst, Alicia, *A History of Gardening in England* (London: Bernard Quaritch: 1895).

Balfour, Alice, *Twelve Hundred Miles in a Waggon* (London: Edward Arnold: 1895).

- Barnard, Lally [Mrs Clare Fitzgibbon] 'The Ladies' Empire Club of London', *Canadian Magazine* XXIII no. 3 July 1904 pp194-199.
- Barnard, Lally [Mrs Clare Fitzgibbon], 'Victoria League's Luncheon to Colonial Ladies', *Toronto Globe* 1 June 1907.
- Brooke-Hunt, Violet, *A Woman's Memories of the War* (London: James Nisbet & Co.: 1901).
- Cecil, Alicia, 'The Needs of South Africa: Female Emigration', *Nineteenth Century* LI April 1902 pp683-692.
- Cecil, Evelyn, *On the Eve of War* (London: John Murray: 1900).
- Cecil, Violet, 'Part of Our Nation', *National Review* vol. 40 no. 238 1902 pp532-533.
- Cecil, Violet, 'The Johannesburg Voter', *National Review* vol. 47 no. 277 1906 pp100-104.
- Colquhoun, Ethel (Mrs Archibald), 'Women and the Colonies', *Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute* XXXV 1903-4 pp326-344.
- Fawcett, Millicent Garrett, 'Impressions of South Africa in 1901 and 1903', *Contemporary Review* LXXXIV November 1903 pp635-655.
- Hely-Hutchinson, Lady, 'Female Emigration to South Africa', *Nineteenth Century* LI January 1902 pp71-87.
- Hobhouse, Emily, 'Concentration Camps', *Contemporary Review* LXXX October 1901 pp528-537.
- Jebb, Richard, 'The Overseas Club', *United Empire N.S.* Vol. 6 no. 9 September 1915 pp650-655.
- Jersey, Lady, 'How to Conquer South Africa in Its Schools', *Spectator* 27 April 1901 p616.
- Jersey, Lady, 'The Victoria League', *The Queen* CX November 23 1901 pp802-803.
- Jersey, Lady, 'The Victoria League', *National Review* vol. 53 no. 314 1909 pp317-326.
- Mansbridge, Albert, *An Adventure in Working-Class Education: Being the Story of the Workers' Educational Association 1903-1915* (London: Longmans, Green & Co.: 1920).
- Markham, Violet R., *South Africa, Past and Present* (London: Smith, Elder & Co.: 1900).
- Markham, Violet R., 'British and Boer Refugees in South Africa', *Empire Review* vol. II no. 10 November 1901 pp501-522.
- Markham, Violet R., *The New Era in South Africa* (London: Smith, Elder & Co.: 1904).
- Markham, Violet R., 'The True Foundations of Empire: The Home and the Workshop', *Nineteenth Century* LVIII October 1905 pp570-582.
- Markham, Violet R., 'Lord Durham and Colonial Self-Government', *Nineteenth Century* LIX June 1906 pp914-923.
- Markham, Violet R., *The Factory and Shop Acts of the British Dominions* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode: 1908) with an introduction by May Tennant.
- Markham, Violet R., *The South African Scene* (London: Smith, Elder & Co.: 1913).

Markham, Violet R., 'Racial and Political Issues in South Africa', *Edinburgh Review* vol. 240 no. 490 October 1924 pp243-260.

Masterman, C.F.G., et al, *The Heart of the Empire: Discussions of Problems of Modern City Life in England* (London: Fisher Unwin: 1902).

Milner, Lord, *The Nation and the Empire* (London: Constable & Co.: 1913).

Murray, C. Freeman, 'The British Empire League', *United Empire* NS vol. 6 no. 6 June 1915 pp431-439.

Pollock, Frederick, 'The League of the Empire', *United Empire* NS vol. 6 no. 10 October 1915 pp736-741.

Rockley, Lady, *Wild Flowers of the Great Dominions of the British Empire* (Basingstoke: Macmillan: 1935).

Sargant, E.B., 'The Victoria League', *United Empire* NS vol. 6 no. 8 August 1915 pp588-594.

Selborne, Maud, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', *National Review* 63 1914 pp984-988.

Strachey, Amy, *A Masque of Empire* (London: Hutchinson & Co.: 1908).

Talbot, Meriel, 'Practical Imperialism: the work of the Victoria League Health Conference', *Britannic Review* 1 (3) July 1914 pp351-356.

Wallace, Lady, *The Story of the Victoria League in Scotland 1907-1957* (?Victoria League: 1957).

Wallace, Lady, *Eighty Years of the Victoria League in Scotland* (? : 1987).

Worsfold, W. Basil, *Lord Milner's Work in South Africa* (London: John Murray: 1906).

Worsfold, W. Basil, *The Reconstruction of the New Colonies Under Lord Milner* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co.: 1913) 2 volumes.

Other Works

Bell, Morag, "'Citizenship not Charity": Violet Markham on nature, society and the state in Britain and South Africa' in Morag Bell, Robin Butlin and Michael Heffernan (eds.), *Geography and Imperialism 1820-1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press: 1995).

Blakely, Brian, 'Women and Imperialism: the Colonial Office and Female Emigration to South Africa 1901-1910', *Albion* 13 (2) 1981 pp131-149.

Blakely, Brian, 'The Society for the Oversea Settlement of British Women and the Problems of Empire Settlement 1917-1936', *Albion* 20 (3) 1988 pp421-444.

Bolt, Christine, *Victorian Attitudes to Race* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul: 1971).

Bush, Julia, "'The Right Sort of Woman": Female Emigrators and Emigration to the British Empire 1890-1910', *Women's History Review* 1994 3 (3) pp385-409.

Bush, Julia, 'Organising for Empire: Edwardian ladies and the 'race' dimensions of British imperialism', paper given at the Women's History Network Conference, September 1995.

Bush, Julia, 'Lady Imperialists and the Cause of British South Africa', paper given at 'South Africa 1895-1921: Test of Empire' Conference, Oxford, March 1996.

- Bushaway, Bob, 'Name upon Name: the Great War and Remembrance' in Roy Porter (ed.), *Myths of the English* (Cambridge: Polity: 1992).
- Callan, Hilary and Shirley Ardener (eds.), *The Incorporated Wife* (London: Croom Helm: 1984).
- Callaway, Helen, *Gender, Culture and Empire: European Women in Colonial Nigeria* (Basingstoke: Macmillan: 1987).
- Cammack, Diana, *The Rand at War 1899 - 1902: The Witwatersrand and the Anglo-Boer War* (London: James Currey: 1990).
- Davidoff, Leonore, *The Best Circles: Society, Etiquette and the Season* (London: Croom Helm: 1973).
- Davin, Anna, 'Imperialism and the Cult of Motherhood', *History Workshop* Spring 1978 pp9-65.
- Eddy, John & Deryck Schreuder, *The Rise of Colonial Nationalism* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin: 1988).
- French, Maurice, "'One People, One Destiny" - A Question of Loyalty: the Origins of Empire Day in New South Wales 1900-1905', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 61 (4) December 1975 pp236-248.
- Girouard, Mark, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press: 1981).
- Gollant, William, *Image of Empire: The Early History of the Imperial Institute 1887-1925* (Exmouth: University of Exeter: 1984).
- Greenlee, James G.C., 'The A B C's of Imperial Unity', *Canadian Journal of History* 14 (1) 1979 pp49-64.
- Greenlee, James G., 'Imperial Studies and the Unity of the Empire', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth Studies* 7 (3) May 1979 pp321-335.
- Greenlee, James G., *Education and Imperial Unity 1901-1926* (New York & London: Garland: 1987).
- Hammerton, A. James, *Emigrant Gentlewomen: Genteel Poverty and Female Emigration* (London: Croom Helm: 1979).
- Harper, Marjorie, *Emigration from North-East Scotland* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press: 1988) 2 vols.
- Harrison, Brian, *Separate Spheres: The Opposition to Women's Suffrage in Britain* (London: Croom Helm: 1978).
- Holton, Bob, *British Syndicalism 1900-1914* (London: Pluto Press: 1976).
- Hynes, Samuel, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press: 1975 (1st 1968)).
- Inglis, A., *The White Woman's Protection Ordinance: Sexual Anxiety and Politics in Papua* (London: Chatto & Windus for Sussex University Press.: 1974).
- Inglis, K.S. and Jock Phillips, 'War Memorials in Australia and New Zealand: a Comparative Study', *Australian Historical Studies* 1991 24 (96) pp179-191.
- Jalland, Pat, *Women, Marriage and Politics 1860-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon: 1986).
- Jones, Greta, *Social Darwinism and English Thought* (Brighton: Harvester Press: 1980).

- Kealey, Linda (ed.), *A Not Unreasonable Claim: Women and Reform in Canada 1880s-1920s* (Toronto: Women's Educational Press: 1979).
- Kelloway, Deborah (ed.), *The Virago Book of Women Gardeners* (London: Virago: 1995).
- Kendle, John, *The Round Table Movement and Imperial Union* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press: 1975).
- Knapman, Claudia, *White Women in Fiji: the Ruin of Empire?* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin: 1986).
- Krebs, Paula M., 'The Last of the Gentleman's Wars: Women in the Boer War Concentration Camp Controversy', *History Workshop* 33 1992 pp38 - 56.
- Lewis, Jane, *Women and Social Action in Victorian and Edwardian England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press: 1991).
- Lumbers, Mrs W. G. (attrib.), *The Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire Golden Jubilee 1900-1950* (Toronto: 1950).
- Mackay, Jane, and Pat Thane, 'The Englishwoman' in Robert Colls and Philip Dodd (eds.), *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920* (London: Croom Helm: 1986).
- Mackenzie, John M., *Propaganda and Empire: the Manipulation of British Public Opinion* (Manchester: Manchester University Press: 1984).
- Mackenzie, John M. (ed.), *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press: 1986).
- Mangan, J.A. (ed.), *Making Imperial Mentalities: Socialisation and British Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press.: 1990).
- Matthew, H.C.G., *The Liberal Imperialists: The ideas and politics of a post-Gladstonian elite* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 1973).
- Mills, Sara, *Discourses of Difference* (London: Routledge: 1991).
- Mock, Wolfgang, 'The Function of "Race" in Imperialist Ideologies: the Example of Joseph Chamberlain' in Paul Kennedy and Anthony Nicholls (eds.), *Nationalist and Racist Movements in Britain and Germany before 1914* (London: Macmillan: 1981).
- Nimocks, Walter, *Milner's Young Men: the 'kindergarten' in Edwardian imperial affairs* (London: Hodder & Stoughton: 1970 (1st 1968)).
- Monk, Una, *New Horizons: A Hundred Years of Women's Migration* (London: HMSO: 1963).
- Moyle, R.G., and Doug Owram, *Imperial Dreams and Colonial Realities: British Views of Canada 1880-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press: 1988).
- Pakenham, Thomas, *The Boer War* (London: Weidefeld & Nicolson: 1979; Abacus: 1992).
- Pelling, Henry, *Popular Politics and Society in Late Victorian Britain* (London: Macmillan: 1968).
- Price, Richard, *An Imperial War and the British Working Class: Working-Class Attitudes and Reactions to the Boer War 1899-1902* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul: 1972).

Price, Richard, 'Social status and jingoism: the social roots of lower middle class patriotism 1870-1900' in Geoffrey Crossick (ed.), *The Lower Middle Class in Britain* (London: Croom Helm: 1977).

Pugh, Martin, *The Tories and the People 1880-1935* (Oxford: Blackwell: 1985).

Reese, Trevor, *The History of the Royal Commonwealth Society 1868-1968* (London: Oxford University Press: 1968).

Rendall, Jane (ed.), *Equal or Different: Women's Politics 1800-1914* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell: 1987).

Rich, Paul, 'Milnerism and a Ripping Yarn: Transvaal Land Settlement and John Buchan's Novel 'Prester John' 1901-1910' in Belinda Bozzoli (ed.), *Town and Countryside in the Transvaal* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press: 1983).

Sacks, Benjamin, *South Africa, An Imperial Dilemma: Non-Europeans and the British Nation 1902-1914* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press: 1967).

Searle, G.R., *The Quest for National Efficiency: A Study in British Politics and Political Thought 1899-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press: 1971).

Semmel, Bernard, *Imperialism and Social Reform: English Social-Imperial Thought 1895-1914* (London: Allen & Unwin: 1960).

Sinha, Mrinalini, *Colonial Masculinity: the 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press: 1995).

Spies, S.B., *Methods of Barbarism? Roberts and Kitchener and civilians in the Boer republics, January 1900 - May 1902* (Cape Town and Pretoria: Human & Rousseau: 1977).

Springhall, J.O., 'Lord Meath, Youth and Empire', *Journal of Contemporary History* v (4) 1970 pp97-111.

Strobel, Margaret, *European Women and the Second British Empire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press: 1991).

van Helten, J.J. and Keith Williams, 'The crying need of South Africa: the emigration of single British women to the Transvaal, 1901-1910', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 10 (1) October 1983 pp17-38.

Ware, Vron, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History* (London: Verso: 1992).

Warwick, Peter and S.B. Spies (eds.), *The South African War: the Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902* (London: Longmans: 1980).