



**Daughters of the Empire
and
Mothers of the Race:**

by
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Caroline Chisholm and Female

Emigration in the British Empire

"If Great Britain conquered half the world in a fit of absence of mind," one student of emigration claims, "she peopled it in a mood of lazy indifference."⁽¹⁾ While this may be facile, there is ample evidence to suggest that, on the whole, concerns relating to emigration were left to the private sector for most of the nineteenth century. It was the philanthropists⁽²⁾ who attempted to deal with the problems of the emigration trade, guided not so much by government policy, as by values common to the middle classes of Victorian Britain. The assumption that society was based on the family underlay all philanthropic efforts to shape emigration policy, and it was through promoting the existence of the Victorian family in the colonies that the colonies that the colonies were to be brought to maturity within the Empire.

The Victorian woman was the key figure in the Victorian family. Therefore, much of the work of philanthropists was concerned with female emigration. But there were serious contradictions in the situation which made this work difficult, contradictions stemming from conflicts between the physical and moral needs of the mother country and of the colonies.

Emigration was supposed to solve two problems of the Victorian period: the presence of surplus population in the British Isles, and the shortage of labour and population in the colonies. In addition to a general surplus of population, there was also a particular

surplus of women--"redundants," they were called. In the colonies, the need for women was acute, women to work as home and farm helps, and to become wives and mothers, founding the families which were at the basis of a sound colonial society. But while it was agreed that men of nearly every class could succeed in the colonies, given the right combination of skills, hard work and luck, prevailing social roles meant that:

. . . for women the demand was almost more exacting; for although there was an intense shortage of women in the Australian colonies, and a marked disparity between the sexes in Canada, . . . the supply of women as servants and as farm workers did not fully cover the need for women as wives . . . and as civilizing elements⁽³⁾

The women who could meet the moral needs of the colonies were thought to be those who resembled Coventry Patmore's "Angel in the house."⁽⁴⁾ Yet it was clear that women who were needed by the educated colonists and by developing countries as wives and mothers, and as stabilizing influences in the rough and tumble new societies, were likely to be those who were not fitted to endure the hardships of pioneer life.

Some philanthropists considered female emigration the most important area of Empire building echoing Edward Gibbon

Wakefield's feeling that "as respects morals and manners, it is of little importance what colonial fathers are in comparison to colonial mothers."⁽⁵⁾ Wakefield's writings on emigration and colonization were more explicit than most about the importance of women in the colonies. In his 1833 essay, "The art of colonization," he discussed the objectives of colonization and the role of women in meeting these objectives. The advantages of colonization were several. First, the extension of the markets of the home country for the disposal of surplus produce. Secondly, the provision of relief from excess population. Thirdly, the enlargement of the area in which capital could be employed.⁽⁶⁾ The main object of any emigration policy should be "to obtain as much labour as can find employment with good wages" in a colony, so the mother colony could sell goods and be provided with raw materials, thus creating what Wakefield termed a "community of interest."⁽⁷⁾

Women were a necessary component of this creation. Wakefield, unlike many of his contemporaries, stressed not only the moral importance of women in building the colonies, but also the economic aspects of their work. He explained the efficiency of the sexual division of labour in increasing production. Because of the necessity of women's work in production for use in the home as well as for market, a single man could not himself produce as much as a married man. If two men

were to work as a team, with one doing women's work full-time, and the other doing men's work, then production would be increased to that of a married man. But this was unnatural:

We need not stop to look at the moral evils of this excess of males. Economically speaking, it seems quite plain, the poor immigrants brought to the colony . . . ought to be men and women in equal numbers, and if married, so much the better.⁽⁸⁾

And although the material advantages of such a system were many,

. . . the moral advantages of such a selection of immigrants would not be few. Each female would have a special protector from the moment of her departure from home. No man would have any excuse for dissolute habits. All the evils, which have so often sprung from a disproportion between the sexes, would be avoided. Every pair of immigrants would have the strongest motives for industry, shrewdness, and thrift.⁽⁹⁾

Wakefield believed that moral evils in the colony (by this he meant prostitution) arose not from hunger but solely from the imbalance of the sexes. He asked, if the women of England loved their fellow Christians, "why do they not send some women...?" He explained:

If they will equalize the sexes, we offer a husband, plenty, and a virtuous life to every one of the miserable beings that they may

charitably withdraw from sin and misery.(10)

Although Wakefield's belief in the far-reaching consequences of the imbalance of the sexes was a commonplace, and all agreed that "decent" women were necessary for the establishment of a "decent" colonial society, there was some debate on how to procure suitable colonial mothers. Some of the earlier emigration manuals had even advised against gentlemen marrying before emigration. Savage's Observation on emigration to the United States admonished:

Can any young man of common feeling and spirit, when he is plight- ing his faith at the altar, 'to love and cherish til death' to an amiable and lovely young female, whose affections he had gained by assiduous attentions, look forward to plunging her into such a life of misery as the unhappy settler endures without feeling sensations of horror? No! Forbid it every manly feeling! They dictate to protect from the rude blasts of this world--as far as human power will permit--the tender and affectionate contributor to his comforts and happiness(11)

Others were far more optimistic. In whatsoever rank of life a man is placed, it is so easy to support a wife and family, that every wise young man marries as soon as he can find a helpmate

suitied to him. In the lower ranks of life a wife is not only a blessing and a comfort, as in the higher, but actually increases a man's wealth by the value of her labour(12)

Some, knowing that women were often reluctant to face the hardship and loneliness of pioneer life advised men "how to manage refractory women," suggesting that, if no other argument would induce one's wife to undertake the great adventure, "the ultimate, 'I'll go without you,' if persevered in without any wavering, seldom fails."(13)

If a man could not find a "lady" to marry, hoping that she would be made of as stern stuff as was necessary, he could do perhaps as did one young man who was discussed in the January 1849 issue of The Emigrant. In Devonport, a 22 year old servant had been sent to the workhouse infirmary, due to illness; after her recovery, she decided that, although she had been satisfied with her position, she wished to emigrate. The Guardians agreed to advance her money for her outfit and passage. While at the depot, she was approached by a young man she did not know, of obviously a better class than she, who told her he liked her honest face, and asked if she were healthy and of good character. When she replied that she was, he proposed marriage to her. She agreed to have her character verified by her former employer; this concluded, he repaid her

debt to the Guardians, presented her with a fine new outfit, and after the marriage they sailed off to a new life together.(14)

Of course, her suitability stemmed in large part from the fact that she was a very respectable girl, of high morals and good character, in addition to possessing the combination of skills, work habits and attitudes of deference and gratitude towards her new spouse which would be supremely useful in a pioneer wife. In the more fluid atmosphere of the colony, she could in time be transformed into a "ladylike" enough personage to be a suitable mate for her husband in more traditional British terms.

The promotion of the idea that respectable girls of good character and strict morals could, under the right circumstances, become suitable as colonial mothers was an important part of the work done by the philanthropists involved in female emigration. They argued that it was necessary, to maintain "an influx into the colonies of a body of women infinitely superior by birth, by education, and by taste, to the hordes of wild uneducated creatures . . . hitherto sent abroad."(15) The "elevation of morals" was assumed to be the "inevitable result of the mere presence in the colony of a number of high class women."(16) Getting them continued to be a problem, despite the fact that by mid-century, the "distressed gentlewoman" was a widespread

phenomenon. Some of these gentlewomen went out as governesses, but the greatest need in the colonies was for home helps or domestic servants, and most ladies were unsuitable on account of pride or incompetence. There was, however, one skill at which Victorian "ladies" were thought to show some competence--supervising the lower orders. They did this in the capacity of matrons on emigrant ships.

It was partly through the presence of supervising matrons that the transformation of female emigrants into colonial mothers could take place. A matron was to be:

. . . a lady, or person of superior mind and intelligence, to command the respect of those below her. Such persons have invariably succeeded in maintaining order, while the matrons chosen from among the emigrants are of little or no use.(17)

Although matrons could be in distressed circumstances and often were, this did not lessen their efficacy. A colonization tract discussed an example of this type of candidate:

It were well if a family of the high respectability of Mrs. Jones and her daughters were to accompany every body of female emigrants. Mrs. Jones was a lady by birth and education, as were her daughters, though they had been reduced by circumstances to the greatest poverty. Unless such is the case, few ladies

would be found to undergo the annoyances and the difficulties which a matron on board an emigrant ship must encounter, except they feel the duty of sacrificing their own comfort for the sake of benefitting a number of their fellow creatures. Certainly, a Christian lady of energy and moral courage would prove a great blessing on board every emigrant ship.(18)

In order to ensure a supply of these admirable creatures, the British Ladies' Female Emigrant Society was formed in 1849. Its objects were to provide matrons to superintend and train women during the trip to the colonies, to provide a Home in London for matrons between trips, to visit emigrants at ports, "instructing, counselling, and assisting them, and placing the young and friendless under the matron's care."(19)At the ports, they were to distribute Bibles and other suitable reading materials to emigrants and also materials to work with during the trip, so that "the voyage might be made a season of industry and employment, and not of idleness and demoralization."(20)Corresponding committees to visit and assist the arriving immigrants were to be established in the colonies.

The matron on board emigrant ships worked in conjunction with a variety of land-based philanthropic groups, but at sea she had to rely upon the authority

of the captain and the surgeon, and, more importantly, upon the cushion of goodwill and respect which her charges were expected to feel for her. Her duties were varied; mainly, she was to be in charge of a moral and vocational training programme for the women she supervised. This programme was to provide the emigrants with the foundations of good habits necessary to their new life, as well as to keep them out of mischief on the trip lest their respectability and nascent gentility be damaged by a moment's carelessness. It was of "immense importance" to keep "strict discipline and industrious habits among emigrants, especially among the women," as "the idle and frivolous habits encouraged or contracted on board ship, utterly unfit many women for their duties in the colony."(21)

Some of these training schemes were indeed detailed; one ship's surgeon who fancied himself an expert described his scheme to the Reverend Thomas Childs, who visited a shipload of orphan girls from the Irish unions at St. Mary's, Devonport. The surgeon began by isolating them completely from the male crew and organised them according to "a sort of female military discipline" within which they would pray, sew, study reading, writing and manners, sing, do physical drill and learn country dances. In addition:

They should all learn how to wash; and I would have a row of washtubs on deck, and make them, under in-



HERE AND THERE;
Or, Emigration a Remedy.

Illustration from Punch, 1848. Courtesy Radio Times Hulton Picture Library.

spection of their monitors, go down on their knees and wash their clothes. I would keep them working away at it till they know how to do it properly. I would furnish each ship with a few sets of laundress' irons, and they should be taught how to iron properly; this knowledge would be of great advantage to them, providing the matron or some of the young women on board are accustomed to the work. They should also be taught to clean every part of the between-decks properly, and to use dusters; so, that when they go into service they may be up to housemaid's work. . . .(22)

Of course, this programme did not affect "ladies," only "females." As

Robert Louis Stevenson observed, "In the steerage there are males and females; in the second cabin, ladies and gentlemen."(23)

Getting the would-be mothers of the race to their destination properly trained was not the end of the philanthropic task. Once in the colony the emigrant had to be handed on to a network of protection and supervision until she was well-established in her new life. The importance of such networks was widely recognised by philanthropists after mid-century, but their existence was due to the pioneering work of only a few far-sighted and courageous women.

Caroline Chisholm was such a person. She worked in India, Australia and the

British Isles to improve the lot of women. She was an influence upon such widely divergent persons as Charles Dickens and Florence Nightingale. She was lauded as the epitome of a "PHILANTHROPIST! a word mighty in significance" whose name was imbued with "humanizing radiance." (24) Chisholm's success lay partly in her ability to combine feminine characteristics and decorous behaviour with determination and zeal; because she was so proper, she was able to involve herself in situations unthinkable for many other respectable women. (25)

Caroline Jones was born in 1808 into a well-to-do Northampton family which had strong leanings towards the liberal reformist spirit of the early decades of the century. Her father died when she was still a girl, leaving her to be educated by her mother under what she termed "easy circumstances." (26) She married Archibald Chisholm, a British Army officer, when she was twenty years of age. They were to work as a team for most of their lives together, he taking a supportive role towards her work and assisting as actively as he could in all her schemes. Their joint endeavours began when two years after their marriage she went to India with her husband. In India, she was horrified by the squalour of barrack life, and set about to reform it.

Deciding that the best approach to the problem lay in the provision of an adequate education for the female children

of the ranks of the army, she established a girls' school as a corrective. The school combined a regular classroom setting with a training centre for vocational and moral upgrading. Her methods were as advanced as her analysis. The way the school was established and administered illustrates a good deal about the form Chisholm's later efforts were to take. The head of the school was a matron who, while a good housekeeper, was illiterate. Her illiteracy was considered an asset in that it placed the responsibility for record-keeping and school reports in the hands of the young pupils. The girls ran the place by committee, did all the household management, assisted in every task and thereby gained practical experience as well as theoretical knowledge. They were guided in their studies by a mixture of strict rules, enforced mainly by shaming and moral pressures, by oft-reiterated praises for successes and a good deal of affection. They were periodically exhorted by the Patrons of the school, ladies all, in this vein:

I fancy I already hear your father say, in honest pride, that my girl can keep accounts, cook a dinner, and she is only fourteen years of age; and your mother says, yes, and make a shirt and cut it out as well if not better than I can. That you will be able to do these things I fully expect, and have no doubt that you will have a great deal of pleasure in doing so; and your being able to do them will give you a proper feeling of inde-

pendence, that is, if your parents should die, you would be able by your good conduct and management to support yourselves and little brothers and sisters, for God will never forsake the good.(27)

The inmates of the fledgling 'Home of Industry' were assured of posts as housekeepers and servants and, also, as wives for non-commissioned officers. In addition, the school was besieged by applications for admission from young wives who were untrained and incapable of managing their households. Mrs. Chisholm considered the venture an unqualified success, both as a school and as a means to effect lasting changes in society. She believed that: . . . a useful and virtuous direction of the mind of female youth tells powerfully ever afterwards in society, for the true education of future generations is ever centered in the maternal parent.(28)

She left India in 1838 when her husband was posted to Australia. In Sydney her attention was turned to the needs of immigrants and she became involved in social work. Although her husband was sent back to India in 1840, Chisholm and the children remained in Australia (for the sake of their health) and her work continued.

According to her own account, she had first become interested in emigration as a child as a consequence of meeting her father's guests who were often in-

involved in various schemes to do with the colonies. Of her own efforts, she said:

My first attempt at colonization was carried out in a wash-hand basin, before I was seven years old sailing doll families on boats made of broad beans . . . and strange as it may seem, many of the ideas which I have carried out first gained possession of my mind at that period(29)

Her interest in the plight of female immigrants to the Australian colonies was aroused by the lurid stories circulating about the abuses of the trade. Believing them to be exaggerations or lies, she investigated, and found that the stories were true. The depots were overcrowded, improperly run and offered almost no protection against fraud or exploitation. Unsuitable women were arriving, and those who were not unsuitable when they left England were liable to become so in Australia.

The sending of unsuitable women to the colonies created controversy in the British Isles as well as abroad. Social reformers did not always find the actions of officials acceptable and there were also instances of conflicts between various official bodies, and within them, about who should be sent abroad. The controversy which arose over the proposed shipment of ten female paupers to the Australian colonies by the Poor Law Commissioners of St. Marylebone parish is illustrative. An emigration agent had appeared before the Board and of-

ferred to take female paupers aged 16-26 to Australia on a fee-per-head basis. The committee which was appointed to consider the offer reported that the women were of bad character who would not have been selected as emigrants under other conditions. The Times reported the incident(30) and a wide discussion ensued. A letter from Messrs. Elliott, Torrens and Villiers was sent to Lord Russell objecting to the proposal. Among their concerns was the possibility that these women would be on a four-month trip with no matron, no surgeon and no supervision to keep them apart from the crew. They would be dumped at Adelaide and would surely become "immoral."

. . . while nothing can be more beneficial to all concerned than well-considered and well-selected emigration, the removal of parties in the present manner is not likely to be advantageous to themselves, and is calculated to be pernicious to the colony into which they are introduced.(31)

The Poor Law Committee's reasoning in the matter was somewhat different. The members expressed their desire to relieve the parish of the expense of supporting these women, realizing that it would be cheaper in the long run to pay their passage and be rid of them. Mr. Kensett explained that:

They could do nothing with them here, and it was his belief that a change of scene might tend to reclaim them and make them good members of society.(32)

The Reverend Mr. Scobell agreed that the proposal would indeed get rid of a "troublesome lot of girls" and give them a chance to reform. He reminded the committee that "these would not be the first that had been set out from that house." Mr. Perry pointed out that there was "almost a certainty of their engagement immediately" as domestics.(33)

The Board of Directors and Guardians of the Poor at St. Marylebone did not accept the recommendations of the Committee in this matter. They decided not to pay their passage. Most Boards were not so scrupulous.

Chisholm was well aware of situations of this sort. She commented:

You should bear in mind there are poor-rates in the mother country, and to suppose that the clergy and magistrates will send you their best and keep their worst is really giving them credit for an extraordinary share of kindness.(34)

Chisholm saw not only examples of England's worst in her visits to the emigrant depots in Sydney, but also observed conditions which could not have but led to the "ruin" or innocents. One case in particular troubled her: on her first visit she saw an unusually lovely Scottish girl (who had come with her mother) attended most assiduously by a gentleman. Subsequently she observed the girl sporting new finery.

Warning the mother, she was told not to worry. The girl "was all innocence--the mother all hope" that the courtship would end in marriage or respectable employment. (35) Chisholm investigated and learned that the gentleman was married and his intentions were dishonourable. She found that, although there were ladies' committees for the emigrant barracks, they never made their visitations; in short, there was no way of rescuing poor Flora. Chisholm was galvanized into action by this experience:

From this period I devoted all my leisure time in endeavouring to serve these poor girls, and felt determined, with God's blessing, never to rest until decent protection was afforded them. (36)

She began by taking some of the more pitiable and salvageable women home with her to help them find suitable jobs. She soon found herself with a house full most of the time. Concluding that her own resources were grossly inadequate to the need at hand, she decided it would be necessary to persuade the government to provide a proper shelter and referral agency for single women immigrants. This decision was not reached easily; Chisholm hesitated before becoming more deeply involved in Australian immigration because she, "as a female and almost a stranger to the Colony, felt diffident," (37) and as a convert to Catholicism, feared an additional adverse reaction.

However diffident Chisholm had been

about commencing her work, she had a keen sense of publicity as well as propriety. She consistently apologized for her presence in the public sphere, while proselytizing on the need for the work that she was doing. On the title page of an 1842 pamphlet, she quotes from a work entitled American Mother:

This is not women's work--but, when men are silent, tongue-tied, timid, fearful, I must try to rouse these neutrals, lest these poor maidens, forced by necessity to wander from their homes, fall into the hands of _____. (38)

Her pamphlet is an expose of evils accompanying the existing system of female immigration and an exhortation to the government to institute reforms (which are outlined) of benefit to the economy as well as the moral state of the colony. (39) She concludes:

Being, I believe, the first lady in Australia who has ventured before the public, this circumstance will entitle me to some indulgence; but I ask for no favor; all I have a right to expect is, a fair and just interpretation of my feelings and intentions. (40)

The pamphlet is dedicated to "the reverend the clergy of Australia," and describes her work as an offering of her talents to God, for the sake of which she had resolved to:

. . . sacrifice my feelings--surrender all comfort--nor, in fact, to consider my own wishes or feelings, but wholly devote myself to the work I had in hand. (41)



DINNER IN THE FORECASTLE.

Scene on board an Australian emigrant ship, 1849, courtesy of the Radio Times Hulton Picture Library.

She began by writing to Lady Gipps in January 1841. Lacking an immediate response, she decided it would be necessary to make use of the press. She visited the Herald office in Sydney and found support there, eventually persuading a number of editors that the issues were pertinent. The response of the government was less generous. She then decided to publish letters she had received, but was dissuaded on account of the damage it would do the colony. Instead, she called on prominent women and got expressions of interest but not of financial support. She was attacked by the clergy, accused of fomenting a "Popish plot," and obstructed and discouraged by Catholic and Protestant alike. She was at the point of retreat but was stiffened in her resolve by catching sight of Flora, the Highland beauty whose certain ruin she had observed earlier. Inspired afresh, she worked on, and soon after, convinced a Church of England priest of her good intentions; support from other clergy was soon forthcoming.

Once her cause became acceptable, officials and affluent ladies supported it as well. Lady Gipps found her space in the existing immigrants' barracks and an office of fourteen square feet was also hers.(42)

Mostly through her own hard work, she opened her first small and rather grubby shelter for female immigrants in 1841. The earliest days were difficult. There were skirmishes with rats, which she

poisoned, and eager "gentlemen," whom she lectured.(43) She was forced to send her own children to the country to a friend's home; the shelter was not suitable for babies. But she soon began to accumulate lost, strayed and homeless young women. She dealt with them in two ways. She established a system to match prospective employers with servants, which became a sort of servant placement agency with moral overtones. She also began the practice of taking groups of women into the country districts and placing them in suitable homes. On later trips she took families, single men and women and children.(44) She arranged transport for these groups in a variety of ingenious ways, including the use of empty drays returning upcountry. She accompanied almost all the parties herself on her white horse, "Captain," and organised food and shelter for her charges along the way. She continued this practice for many years and became so well known throughout the countryside that she was besieged for requests for women to help in country homes.

Her work in placement was of particular importance. It was prompted by her disapproval of the existing system which allowed women to be hired directly during the ten days they were permitted to remain on board ship. It was reputedly common practice for girls of tender age to find themselves sent to brothels as a consequence of this system. In Chisholm's system, this could never happen, as she personally supervised every

aspect of placement and carefully researched the market for her services. She began by sending out a letter to persons of note in country districts, explaining her intention to open an immigrants' home, and soliciting information about conditions of employment and prevailing pay rates in the area. She also inquired about employment possibilities for "girls who at home have merely been accustomed to milk cows, wash, and the common household work about a farm," a category of worker known in later times as "home helps."(45)

Although the immediate intent of her endeavours was the placement of female immigrants in jobs, Mrs. Chisholm had other long term goals in mind as well:

I should not feel the interest I do in female emigration, if I did not look beyond providing families with female servants. If I did not know how much they are required as wives, and how much moral good they may spread forth in society as wives.(46)

Chisholm classified the single women who had passed through her office into three sorts: first, there were those who were competent at working and eager to do so. "For these, the demand is very great, both as servants and wives." Of this group, she said, "not one girl has lost character."(47) They were considered to be "the only girls sent out that can meet, with good humour, the difficulties of the bush" and make the rough hardy bush settlers happy.(48)

Secondly, there were the "light handy girls who are willing to learn."(49) Lastly, the "do-nothings" who often came out as governesses but in fact could do nothing. Sometimes they were former domestic servants, sometimes women who had been or wanted to be "ladies." Chisholm also noted that very pretty women were difficult to place, regardless of how good their qualifications or characters; "they are not, it appears, liked as servants, though they are preferred as wives."(50)

Good character was very important, both to Chisholm and to the prospective employers. They, as well as she, looked beyond the servant to the wife. Requests for good character exceeded those for all other attributes. This strengthened Chisholm in her conviction that . . . great good . . . may be done by a well-selected class of female immigrants--they must be under the care of a lady at sea, and placed under government protection in Sydney until they are provided for.(51)

While she agreed that it was important for women to have jobs paying a living wage, she nevertheless believed that "the rate payable for female labour . . . should be proportioned on a lower scale than that paid to a man" because "high wages tempt many girls to keep single while encouraging indolent and lazy men to depend more upon their wives' industry than upon their own exertions, thus partly reversing the design of

nature."(52) Despite her acceptance of the idea that the ultimate function of the women she protected and placed in the new land was that of wife and mother, she did not ever respond directly to "orders" for brides. Instead, she placed single women in jobs as teachers, servants, home helps and the like in districts where the shortage of marriageable women was acute.

That I take pleasure on hearing when a girl is married is a fact, and I also like to see girls placed where they stand a fair chance of being well married.(53)

It may be argued that this method was merely a matter of form, but she was adamant in sticking to it. Discussing this problem later, she reiterated her earlier position:

It was on the principle of family colonization, and actuated by such feelings, that I carried out my matrimonial endeavours in the Australian bush. I, at times, took a number of single young females with me, in company of emigrant families, but then I allowed no matrimonial engagement to be made on the way, and at the same time I took care to place the young women in situations from which they might with that consideration due to the feelings of women, enter with propriety and respectability into the matrimonial state.(54)

Although sharing the ideas of many of her contemporaries about the role of women in society as that of wife, mother and repository of virtue and morality, Caroline Chisholm appears to have been rather more realistic than many about working with the materials at hand. She was not repulsed by the lower classes and saw in them possibilities for a decent and productive way of life.

In Australia as in India, Caroline Chisholm's work was among these more "squalid" sectors of society. Her efforts were aimed at the upper strata of the working class in the colonies. Her reasons were simple:

It was among this class that the girls married best. If they married one of the sons, the mother and father would be thankful; if not, they would be protected as members of the family--they slept in the same room with their daughters. I have been able to learn the subsequent progress in life of many hundreds of these emigrants. Girls that I have taken up country, in such a destitute state that I have been obliged to get a decent dress to put on them, have come to me again, having every comfort about them, and wanting servants.(55)

As her work in the protection and placement of female emigrants became more and more successful, Chisholm began to plan on a larger scale. To assist her,

Archibald Chisholm joined her in Sydney in 1845; they were to go on a tour of the colony to accumulate a series of biographies of the settlers. This collection was intended to convince people in the mother country of the need to form a Family Colonization Loan Society, and to elicit financial support for it. Their initial objective accomplished (ultimately they collected almost 700 biographies),(56) they sailed for England in 1846, leaving considerable popular support behind them in Australia. In England, Chisholm met a number of times with the Colonial Office officials and the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners, who were favourably impressed.

This was not her first contact with the reformers and officials of England. She had already figured in various reports from New South Wales as an expert on problems the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners had been concerned with for some time.

Chisholm's influence upon the local officials was considerable. The agent for immigration to New South Wales, Francis L.S. Merewether, wrote in his Report for 1842 that:

I cannot conclude this Report, without making known to your Excellency the grateful sense which I entertain, and which, I think, the public at large must entertain with me, of disinterested exertions made by Mrs. Chisholm in favour of the unpro-

tected and friendless females who have latterly been landed in such numbers upon our shores.(57)

Merewether explained that the problems were due to widescale flouting of the inadequate government regulations aimed at the protection of female immigrants during the voyage and the first few days in port. Chisholm's "singlehanded" efforts toward the protection and placement of these women had put the agent in her debt. "She has deserved my thanks in my official capacity, and I am anxious thus to record them."(58) He also pointed out that they were indebted to Chisholm for her work in creating public support for the establishment of a series of government depots throughout the colony to receive immigrants. These depots, supported locally, would be part of a network of associations through which large groups of immigrants could be conveyed from the ports to the interior where they would be employed. Merewether hoped that the "foundations of several such institutions" which had been laid by Chisholm would be the basis for such a system throughout the country.(59)

The benefits of Chisholm's work extended beyond New South Wales, Merewether reminded his superiors, and would assist the homeland as well. If emigration were to be "a great national measure for the relief of a distressed population at home, and for the establishment abroad of dependent communities," he

could not but anticipate from procedures established by Chisholm "the greatest possible advantage to the colony as the recipient of the redundant labour of the mother country."(60)

The importance of Chisholm's system of depots and associations in efficient and upright peopling of the countryside was considerable, but it could not be expected to solve the problems occasioned by widespread abuses in the emigrant trade, however well it lessened the resultant hardships. The extent of abuses and official concern over them was reflected in an 1842 inquiry into allegations of immorality against surgeons and captains of emigrant ships. A wide variety of abuses was revealed. Unsuitable women were frequently sent out and the conditions for 'ruin' of those who were still respectable upon sailing, were rife. The emigrant trade, never particularly pristine, had by the early 1840s become 'disgraceful' in the blatancy of its abuses.(61) Evidence of widespread fraud, violation of regulations, graft, and speculative practices was given by various officials. Considered to be especially troublesome was the flouting of "protective" regulations governing conditions under which women emigrated.(62)

In her testimony before the Select Committee on Immigration of the Legislative Council of New South Wales in 1845 Chisholm presented her carefully thought-out views on emigration,(63) including a

strong criticism of the conditions aboard emigrant ships. She began by pointing out that she believed that "immigration was mutually beneficial to the immigrant and to the colony." Her assertion that "the poorer classes considerably improve their circumstances by coming to this colony"(64) was supported by a large number of "voluntary statements" or biographies of settlers. Chisholm flatly refused to approve of any system of forced repayment for assisted passages. She felt that if an immigrant had worked in the colony for four years, the cost of the passage had been more than repaid. She suggested that, should a repayment scheme be put into effect, the immigrant's employer should repay half of the amount, saying, . . . indeed, I consider that money expended upon immigration is a profitable investment for the colony and for the mother country.

Speaking specifically to the system of female migration, she had a number of proposals. She advocated that single women be "sent under the guardianship of respectable ladies who would exercise parental control over them." Such ladies would be easily found as, say, widows of clergymen and military officers, and "might be desirous to make an addition to their income" while performing their duty. She suggested that matrons be gradually accustomed to their jobs, by supervising fifty women the first voyage, increasing on subsequent trips.(65)

She also proposed to exclude single men from emigrant ships carrying single women, preferring a system of strict sexual segregation to the prevailing system of attaching single women to families on board ship. She reminded the Committee that even under good circumstances, people entrusted with young girls "frequently neglect the girls and care nothing about them; they have no patience with the young women, and turn them off as soon as they can."(66)

Chisholm believed that under the present system, it was impossible to get enough women of respectable character to come to Australia, even if it had not been subject to the many abuses and frauds that it was. It simply did not offer respectable women enough protection. She claimed that:

. . . great numbers of young women of good character would be willing to come out, under the charge of a respectable lady, whose friends would not for a moment entertain the idea of placing them under the charge of families of whom they could know nothing until they met them on board ship.(67)

When asked again, "Do you think respectable girls would come out?" she responded with some impatience, "Certainly I do think so. There are thousands of young females in the United Kingdom, daughters of highly respectable persons, who must earn their own living, and they would come to the colony to better their

circumstances; under a good system the very best girls would emigrate.(68)

It is precisely upon these assumptions and recommendations that the work of the various groups and individuals aimed at relieving the plight of the distressed gentlewomen in Britain was carried out, throughout the last half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth.

During Caroline Chisholm's stay in England, she became much involved with a number of reformers and philanthropists, and developed admirers in those circles, including Lord Shaftesbury and Sidney Herbert, who became patrons of Chisholm's Family Colonisation Loan Society. Others who shared her views advocated them publicly and privately. Sir George Stephen, testifying before the Select Committee on the Passengers' Act,(69) advocated the kind of practices preached by Chisholm. He discussed the persistent problem of protection of female migrants. Emigrants of both sexes were still subject to a wide variety of frauds and abuses in the seaport towns. Sanitary conditions on ships were often deplorable. Worse still, men and women who were strangers to each other were not infrequently berthed together in a space only a yard wide. There was no privacy.

Stephens suggested three measures to rectify the situation. The first was the establishment of a system of emigrant homes, under government supervis-

ion, with regular inspection and licensing. The second was the use of the Government Emigration Office as the sole authorised booking agency. Third was the establishment on board ship of a rigid system of sexual segregation, with the use of bulkheads or partitions below decks.(70)

Many of the kind of reforms Stephens and others advocated were associated with the colonisation movement flourishing in England in the 1850s. Caroline Chisholm was at the centre of the movement, and her methods were considered exemplary. Her Family Colonisation and Loan Society sent the first shipment of colonists to Australia in September of 1850; it was an occasion for rejoicing. The Society, like its founder, functioned as a model for emigration. The ships, some of which were especially built to Chisholm's specifications, had adequate ventilation, proper sanitary facilities and were adequately staffed and supplied. Consequently, the rate of sickness and mortality were lowered. One of the ships built for the Society by W.S. Lindsay, a ship-builder interested in social work, was named the "Caroline Chisholm."(71) Chisholm was widely lauded; among those singing her praises was an anonymous poet who hailed her as "a second Moses in bonnet shawl."(72)

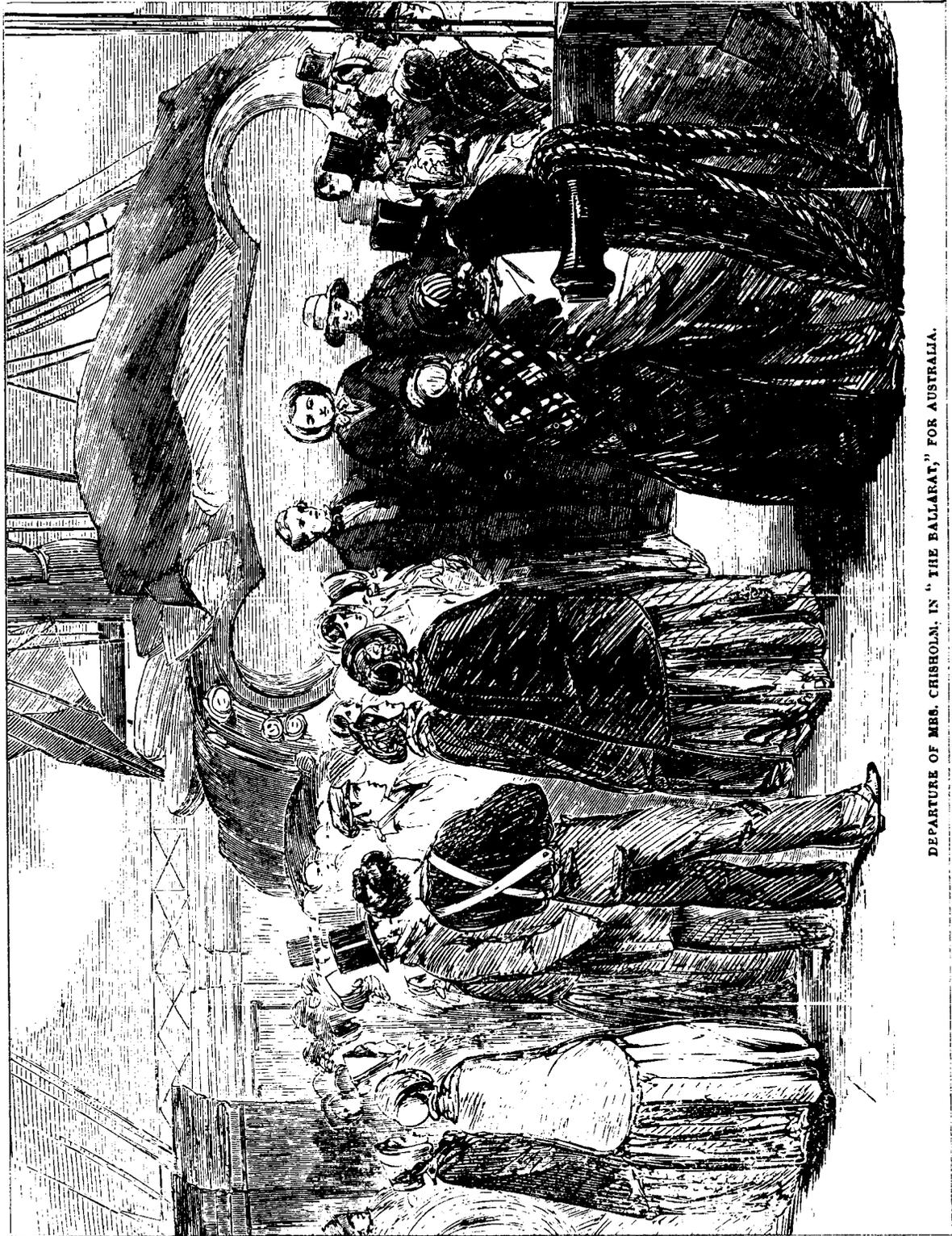
Throughout the 1850s and 60s, Chisholm continued her work in England and Australia, leaving Australia for the

final time in 1866. In 1867 she was awarded a civil list pension. She died at Fulham in 1877; her husband died five months later and was buried beside her.(73)

In assessing the meaning of her work, later historians have credited her with establishing "the dignity of womanhood in New South Wales."(74) Chisholm's work involved a curious combination of feminine dignity and the violation of behavioural norms for women of her position in society. Her devotion to the ideal of the family, the very basis of her society, allowed her to enter areas of life unthinkable for most ladies. Her belief that her activities were divinely inspired was also an important factor in allowing her to do this difficult and unorthodox work. While she never questioned the assumptions prevailing about the role of women in society, she said in one of her public lectures that she had indeed:

. . . felt the inconvenience of the Victorian attitudes towards women. It was that which prevented her from taking action during the days of doubt before the Home was established, and it also prevented her from making more active efforts to publish the voluntary statements in New South Wales.(75)

Moreover, she was a severe and effective critic of government emigration policy and its administration. Des-



DEPARTURE OF MRS. CHISHOLM, IN "THE BALLARAT," FOR AUSTRALIA.

Scene from the Illustrated London News, courtesy of the Public Archives of Canada, Picture Division.

pite her traditional social outlook, she became aligned with the radical cause of the underprivileged settlers in the colony, and was active in radical and reform causes at home as well. By the late 1850s she was advocating universal suffrage, voting by ballot and payment for Members of Parliament (as the only way to save the monarchy). At the same time, she was apologizing for violating propriety by speaking in public.

The ordinary men and women she helped offer additional testimony of the value of her work. As the voluntary statements indicate, they were on the whole pleased with their new circumstances, particularly the quantity and quality of the diet. As one settler assessed the situation, "I would not go back again--I know what England is. Old England is a fine place for the rich, but the Lord help the poor." (76) The availability of work in the colonies and the constant demand for women as wives and mothers as well as workers gave women of the working classes the opportunity to become upwardly mobile, not only materially but morally. In the eyes of the reformers and philanthropists and to some extent, the officials, the direction which women of the labouring classes should follow was towards the goal of the lady--a working, not an idle, lady, but a lady nonetheless, for who else could (by definition) be a proper wife and mother in the family, which was the cornerstone of Victorian society.

If society were based on the family, then building the Empire consisted of establishing the Victorian family in the far flung corners of that Empire in accordance with the Victorian ideal of emigration. In assisting female emigrants, Caroline Chisholm and her associates were indeed building daughters of the empire and mothers of the race, thereby laying the cornerstone of British cultural imperialism throughout the world.

NOTES

1. Monica Glory Page, A study of emigration from Great Britain, 1802-1860, University of London, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, 1931, p. 1.
2. 'Philanthropists' is used here in a broad sense, as it was in the period discussed. As David Owen's English philanthropy, 1660-1960 (Cambridge, 1964) explains, Victorians used the terms 'philanthropist' and 'humanitarian' almost interchangeably. Owen does not focus on emigration as a field of philanthropic endeavour, despite its popularity as a remedy for the evils of the day.
3. Page, p. 117.
4. An extremely sentimental poem "inscribed to the memory of her by whom and for whom I became a poet" which was quite popular. (London, 1892, 6th edition).
5. Although initially somewhat of a maverick, Wakefield's theories became important in the formulation of policy to a much greater extent in the Australian colonies than in the Canadian, especially by the 1830s. One contemporary writer attributed the prosperity of New South Wales to the use of the Wakefield system, while the neighbouring colony of West Australia was poor because it had not used it. See C.W. Dilke, Greater Britain: a record of travel in English-speaking countries during 1866-1867. (New York, 1869) p. 358. Edward Gibbon Wakefield, A letter from Sydney and other writings, (London, 1829), p. 7.
6. Wakefield, p. 112.
7. Ibid., p. 126.
8. Ibid., p. 173.
9. Ibid., p. 179.
10. Ibid., p. 252.
11. (London, 1819), p. 20.
12. William Kingston, How to emigrate, or the British colonists, a tale for all classes, with an appendix, forming a complete manual for intending colonists, and for those who may wish to assist them. (London, 1850), p. 37.

