A LADY IN EVERY SENSE OF THE WORD

A STUDY OF THE GOVERNESS IN
AUSTRALIAN COLONIAL SOCIETY

by

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PREFACE

When Beverley Kingston remarked some years ago that the governess remained one of the 'most elusive figures in the whole of Australian history', she effectively exposed the gap in our knowledge about the lives of a relatively large body of women who had been employed as teachers in private families and ladies' schools for the best part of a century. In Australia the experience of women who spent part of their lives, or indeed, a whole lifetime, as a governess has remained obscure. This is not surprising, for governesses like most women, or perhaps it should be said more than most women, were not found in public places but lived out their lives in private places, the home, the nursery, and the schoolroom.

In examining the private sphere of life the writer of women's history is likely to question whether women's peculiar experience and needs might have causally affected development in the public sphere. As far as the governess in colonial society is concerned the question arises as to what extent she influenced women's education and the development of Australian women's social identity.

With the upsurge of the women's movement of the 1970's and the appearance of the interpretations of the origins of modern Australian women's social identity by leading feminists, Miriam Dixson and Anne Summers,
attention has focussed on the models for female identity formation in the early years of settlement in this country. Dixson made only a passing reference to the governess and omitted to mention her contribution to 'women's civilising mission' in colonial pioneering society yet it was one of the strongest arguments used in the governess's favour whenever the question of her assisted emigration arose.

In a reply to Dixson's thesis that Australian women have always occupied a subordinate status in public life and continue to do so, Patricia Grimshaw has drawn attention to the early and widespread adoption in the Australian environment of modern patterns of family life. Both patterns and ideologies, she has claimed, helped, on the one hand, to enhance the status of the wife and mother within the family, and, on the other, offered her a comfortable and personally-satisfying life-style, though, at the same time, establishing definite limits to women's participation in the public sphere. Accepting this view, this present study seeks to show that, whereas in the nineteenth-century English home the governess enhanced the status of the wife and mother by leaving her free to indulge her leisure more fully as befitted the 'perfect lady', in the colonies in the same period, the governess became the chief instrument whereby the over-worked mother was freed from her task as educator and relieved of some other household tasks. The governess's presence in the colonial family enabled the Australian mother to devote her attention to the many
other demands made upon her and enjoy a little leisure knowing her children's education was being capably supervised. In the governess she also had an adult companion to share her isolation and loneliness.

But the colonial governess was not only simply someone else's tool. In her own right she was the first workingwoman of the middle classes, and one claim here is that in the colonies she became an important role-model for young Australian women who needed to seek employment or who desired to become independent. Most significant of all, she was the leading pioneer in the improved education of girls and the movement for the higher education of women. Yet little has been known about her part in this.

Some years ago when Ailsa Zainu'ddin reflected on the history of Australian women's education she could not help remarking that women were noticeably absent in the standard histories of education in this country. Even the development of individual girls' schools were portrayed against the background of a 'male-oriented and male-dominated education system'. It is not surprising, then, to find that governesses who taught largely outside the framework of state education authorities were thought scarcely worth a mention. Yet, as nursery governess, the young middle-class woman was the forerunner of the modern trained kindergarten and infant school teacher, and as finishing governess, the predecessor of the graduate secondary school teacher.
However, in all fairness to past historians, one of the difficulties for those who might have wished to write about the governess, was, of course, the unavailability of sources. What has been written about women who sought employment as governesses in the Australian colonies in the nineteenth century has been largely fragmentary. Books about our pioneering families, biographies of Australian women, and histories of private schools for girls and educational institutions have each revealed a little about a number of isolated individuals who were governesses, but even when combined these sources failed to tell us much about governesses as a group, and left the role of the governess in colonial society undefined. What hampered research into the lives of governesses was the apparent absence of primary sources such as diaries, private correspondence or some other body of evidence from which serious investigation could begin.

However, the feminists' view that modern Australian women were victims of a patriarchal culture added impetus to the already urgent demand for information about sources from which studies of women's lives in the present and the past could be made. The most valuable single source relating to governesses in Australia to be found in the National Research Program's publication of Women in Australia: an annotated guide to records (1977) was the Women's Migration and Overseas Appointment Society records of 1860-1901 which included the letters of women who emigrated under the assistance of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society in the
period 1860-1883. Preserved in the Fawcett Library, London, copies of the original documents became available to Australian researchers on microfilm produced under the auspices of the Australian Joint Copying Project.

The first Australian historian to make use of this small but invaluable source has been A. James Hammerton. In his study, *Emigrant Gentlewomen* (1977), Hammerton's illumination of the major obstacles which English gentlewomen had to overcome when they decided to emigrate, has contributed substantially to our knowledge about middle-class women who sought employment in the Australian colonies as governesses. Hammerton cannot hide his admiration for these distressed gentlewomen who despite the severity and scope of their plight and the grim discouragement they encountered, displayed determination to solve their own problems through emigration. His presentation of them successfully reaching the colonies and finding employment makes them appear more victor than victim. They exhibit enterprise, courage, and adaptability, qualities which were not generally associated with the stereotypes of the 'perfect lady' and the 'downtrodden governess'.

Since the starting point in this study is the tracing of the social mobility of the English governess in the colonies I am indebted to Hammerton for his ideas and the insight he has provided into the problems that emigrant gentlewomen faced. Furthermore, since I am using the same collection of letters, I am grateful to
him for his impressions of several individual women's initial adjustment in the eastern Australian colonies.

This present investigation seeks to give a detailed account of the life of the English governess in Australia and also addresses itself to the experience of the Australian-born governess in the second half of the nineteenth century. Her role-model, of course, was her teacher, the emigrant English governess. Though fruitful in their way, the 112 letters from women who emigrated under the auspices of the F.M.C.E.S. to the Australian colonies comprised an insufficient amount of material upon which to build a thesis. One major difficulty which had to be surmounted was the location of a sufficiently large enough body of women who had been governesses about whom some reliable information could be found. This became possible since within recent years the Education Department of Victoria has released a number of its nineteenth century files to the Public Records Office. Thus material not easily accessible in the past became available.

My sample from which I selected material upon which to re-construct case-histories has been drawn from the applications made to the Education Department under the requirements of the Registration of Teachers and Schools Act of 1905, and numbered approximately 2,500. From these I extracted many hundreds of applications in which women declared they were governesses, or had, at some time of their lives, taught in the capacity of a governess. No attempt to quantify the material was possible in the time I had available though future researchers may find this source a considerable field for such work.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

So many people have been generous with their time and expertise in helping me in this study that space prevents all being mentioned personally, but I hope this general statement of thanks assures them of my appreciation. In particular I wish to thank the staffs of the La Trobe Library, Melbourne, the Mitchell Library, Sydney, and the National Library, Canberra. Members of staff of the following have also been most helpful: the Baillieu Library, University of Melbourne, the Archives of the University of Melbourne, Trinity College Library, Melbourne, the Coburg Campus Library, Phillip Institute, the Public Records Office (North Laverton), and the Public Statist's Office, Melbourne.

Throughout the course of my research I have been encouraged by the continuing interest of Professor R.J.W. Selleck and Ailsa Zainu'ddin of the School of Education, Monash University, and I have gained inspiration and enjoyed fellowship and hospitality on numerous occasions from Marjorie Theobald and Farley Kelly and the History of Education for Girls Groups of the same faculty.

To Dr. (now Professor) Graeme Davison, who suggested I develop the theme of mobility of the governess, I offer my thanks.
I wish to express my gratitude to Mary Boote and Maureen Saunders for the standard of typing and lay-out of the manuscript and to Susan Blackford who has given her time most generously for the completion of the work.

Finally, to my thesis supervisor, Patricia Grimshaw who has guided the work to its completion, offering constructive criticism at every point, I owe the greatest debt.

Gwen Jones
7 August 1982
INTRODUCTION

THE ENGLISH GOVERNESS

... Then we came to Birmingham
to see my uncle Edward ... and cousins.
I think Julia a very fine handsome girl
and Emma seems a nice girl. She has a
situation as daily governess for which
she receives £20 a year. Julia has
left her situation for about a month
but has asked Aunt Spencer to let her
know if there's one in London ...

JOSEPHINE DOCKER, from London, Feb 18, 1856
to her mother, Mrs. Sarah Docker,
Bontharambo Station (Wangaratta), Victoria.
INTRODUCTION

The English governess had been a part of the pattern of English family life long before the middle classes of the Victorian era claimed her as their own. Gentlewomen had been employed as governesses in English upper class households since the Tudor period. They taught girls to read and write, to converse in their mother tongue and in French, supervised manners and deportment, and assisted girls in cultivating skills and polite accomplishments such as needlework, drawing and painting, singing, playing the lute and dancing.¹

Governesses who were employed in aristocratic families in the late seventeenth century felt that a woman who held a position as a governess should be 'well-bred' and possessed of an 'attractive personality'. Essentially, a governess was a gentlewoman who provided a model of womanly behaviour.²


2. Bathusa Makin, Essay to Revive The Antient Education of Gentlewomen in Religion, Manners, Arts and Tongues (London, 1673), and Hannah Woolley, The Gentlewoman's Companion or a Guide to the Female Sex (1675), in Dorothy Gardiner, op.cit., p.256. Both Mrs. Makin and Mrs. Woolley were governesses.
Traditionally, in English society, the mother was the educator of her children and she carried out this role in addition to her function of home-maker. The governess's task was to assist the mother in educating her children and in preparing the older daughters of the family to enter society and make a good marriage. In eighteenth-century England, upper and middle-class parents were under no compulsion to educate their children nor was there any legal prescription regarding the manner in which children were to be educated. But since very few schools existed for girls most wealthy parents adopted the custom of employing a governess. It was only in the second decade of the nineteenth century that ladies' academies began to be established in any numbers in the cities and towns. Girls who attended these small establishments as boarders or journalières were educated in a family atmosphere and received instruction in languages, deportment and accomplishments.


Conveniently for the expanding middle classes in Industrial Britain, a model of the governess was already in existence for them to adapt to their particular requirements. As families of the nouveaux riches moved upwards in society they adopted the customs and manners of the aristocracy and gentry, including that of engaging governesses to educate their daughters. Dr M. Jeanne Peterson has suggested that the custom of employing a 'private governess' took hold among the middle classes not so much because parents preferred education in the home, but because of what the governess represented. A family's possession of a governess was a testimony to the economic success of the middle-class father. More significantly, in releasing the mother from her task of educator, the governess provided the final confirmation that her employer's wife was, in truth, a 'lady of leisure'. Thus the governess became a recognizable symbol of the movement

6. See J.F.C. Harrison, *The Early Victorians 1832-51* (London, 1973), Chapter 4, 'Patterns of Prosperity: The Middling and Upper Classes', pp.113-149; C. Kitson Clark, *The Making of Victorian England* (London, 1862), Chapter 3, 'The Increase in Population', pp.65-82, and Chapter 4, 'The People', pp.112-143. Throughout the nineteenth-century, the term, 'governess', referred not only to a gentlewoman who lived with the family she instructed and who became distinguished in the Victorian period as a 'private governess' or 'resident governess', but also to a woman who taught in a ladies' school. Women also worked in the capacity of a 'daily governess' or 'visiting governess'. Both of Josephine Docker's cousins took daily situations. See epigraph.
of the 'perfect wife' and mother from domestic to ornamental functions. 7

For the Victorians the ideal model of femininity was the 'perfect lady'. 8 Before marriage the middle-class girl lived protected in her parents' home un tarnished by the world. She was educated up to a conventional standard of literacy, but 'solid attainments' were considered 'disadvantageous' to matrimony, so that she remained intellectually unchallenged. 9 Ignorant of domestic affairs since servants were employed to run the household, the early Victorian young lady spent her girlhood gratifying her parents' vanity by adorning the parlour or the drawing-room with her 'accomplishments'.

Paradoxically, the only person considered suitable to instruct the perfect young lady was a gentlewoman.

7. M. Jeanne Peterson, 'The Victorian Governess: Status Incongruence in Family and Society', in Martha Vicinus (ed.), Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age (Bloomington and London, 1972), pp. 5-6, 10-11, and 13. With its complexities of levels, ranging from nursery governess who cared for the child in the nursery, to the finishing governess who accompanied the young lady to the drawing-room, governessing became such an elaborate system of child-minding and tutelage in Victorian England that a mother was enabled to enjoy more and more leisure and needed to see her children rarely. See Peterson, p. 4, n. 8.


But the Victorians insisted that a lady did not seek work. Of course, an exception had to be made in the case of the 'distressed gentlewoman'. Hence, the Victorian stereotype of the governess was that of a woman who was born and reared in gentility and comfort but who, through her father's death or financial ruin, was deprived of his support and was forced to earn her own living. Although it was generally conceded that the occupation of governess was sufficiently genteel for a gentlewoman, by becoming employed as a governess, a woman confirmed the inability of her own middle-class family to make provision for her protection and support, and demeaned her own social position. At the same time she contradicted the values she was hired to fulfil.

In examining the role of the governess within the context of the Victorian family, Peterson has reached the conclusion that whilst the occupation of governess with its low pay and long hours produced hardship and suffering, it was the ambiguity of her status in English society which caused the governess greater pain and anxiety. There is plenty of evidence to support the view. For the sociologist, the

13. Peterson, op.cit., p.9 et seq.
role of the governess in Victorian society provides a perfect example of 'status incongruence'. 15

In coming to terms with the incongruity of her social position in English society, the governess indulged in self-pity or reacted with pride and over-sensitivity to her neglect and disrespect. She tried to minimize the fact of her employment by advertising for a 'home', rather than a 'situation', and spoke of her employers as her 'friends'. 16 In order to allay the suspicions of employer's wives who might refuse her employment if she appeared attractive, the governess attempted to deny her sexuality and dressed plainly to disguise her femininity. 17

Thus one of the stereotypes of the ideal governess came to be a plain, severe, unfeminine type of woman. Many a governess was depicted in this manner in nineteenth-century English and Australian fiction. 18

18. See Katharine West, Chapter of Governesses: A study of the Governess in English Fiction 1800 - 1849 (London, 1949). West identified seven contrasting types of governess, - the downtrodden, the strict instructress or 'Dragon', the valued friend, the self-seeking adventuress, the snob-exhibit, the grotesque, and the villainess. See Chapter 6 of this study.
What aggravated the problem of incongruence for the governess in mid-century Victorian England, was the increasing difficulty of finding employment. Following the Napoleonic Wars many gentlewomen were left without financial support. In the 1830's and 1840's fluctuations in the British economy produced booms and depressions which brought wealth to some sections of society and a demand for competent governesses, whilst hastening financial ruin in others and increasing the number of women requiring employment. Furthermore, the steady migration of single men to the colonies, together with the tendency of men to marry later, and the differential mortality rate which favoured women, were factors which, when combined, resulted in a greater number of spinsters seeking work. The occupation of governess became strongly competitive and thousands of women were forced down into poverty.

Hammerton's study has shown how philanthropists and feminists sought to find reasons for the problem of the distressed gentlewoman whilst they offered solutions to alleviate her sufferings. The size of the problem was daunting. Space here permits only a brief discussion of

two of the schemes which emerged between 1841 and 1861, and which ultimately influenced the governess in Australia, firstly, the education of governesses and the early stirrings of the movement for the higher education of women, and secondly, the emigration of the English governess to the Australian colonies.

When the Governesses' Benevolent Institute opened in London in 1841 to aid unemployed governesses the committee was overwhelmed by the number of requests for assistance. Three years later the G.B.I. established a 'Home' in which governesses could live whilst unemployed. At the same time a free employment registry was opened. As more became known about the sufferings of unemployed gentlewomen it was realised that the occupation had a serious debilitating effect on women both physically and mentally. Such information embellished and exploited by the novelists helped to strengthen the stereotype of the governess as a helpless and pathetic woman, yet, at the same time, it inspired the feminists to re-double their efforts to assist women.


24. Ibid., p.21. In his discussion of the distressed gentlewoman stereotype, whilst he points out that the reality of economic distress can never be denied, Hammerton warns of the dangers of a too-ready acceptance of the helpless image of the governess. He suggests the feminists used it for their own ends to attack the cultivation of idleness and helplessness among middle-class women.
Lady Elizabeth Eastlake and Charlotte Yonge whose sympathies lay with distressed gentlewomen of the upper middle class, deplored the way in which women were crowding into the 'over-stocked profession of governesses'.\textsuperscript{25} To the complaint that upwardly mobile 'ill-bred' tradesmen's daughters educated in the style of ladies were seeking situations as governesses to the injury of "true gentlewomen",\textsuperscript{26} for whom the occupation of governess was the only possible employment, the feminists replied that the majority of middle-class women were unqualified for the narrow range of respectable well-paid work that was available. Maria Rye, Emily Faithfull and others were handicapped in their efforts to assist women move out of the overcrowded occupations of teaching and needlework because of women's lack of education.\textsuperscript{27}

What women needed was better education as an insurance against unemployment should they ever need to work. The feminists argued that whilst society clung to the stereotype of the 'perfect lady', and middle-class women remained 'educated' exclusively for marriage with progressively few opportunities for its realisation, women who needed to work would always experience difficulties in finding employment.\textsuperscript{28}

25. Ibid., p.27; Peterson, op.cit., p.8; Kamm, op.cit., p.172. Lady Eastlake was the most influential member of the committee of the G.B.I. She expressed her views in two articles which appeared in the Quarterly Review. See Hammerton, 'Bibliography'. Charlotte Yonge (1823-1910), author of Womankind (1876), wrote over 160 works including novels, one of which is The Clever Woman of the Family, in which the heroine protests, 'I do not approve of encouraging young women to crowd the over-stocked profession of governesses'.

27. Hammerton, op.cit., 32; 125.
28. Ibid., pp.32 – 38.
In 1848 the G.B.I. became instrumental in the foundation of Queen's College, London, where governesses could be educated. Although only the more privileged women could afford to attend and the large majority of governesses in London were scarcely touched by its opening, Professor Frederick Maurice commenced a course of free evening lectures for governesses already in employment. Following the establishment of Queen's, Bedford College was founded, indicating the popularity of the idea of improved education for women. Two of the original students at Queen's were Miss Beale and Miss Buss who subsequently played an important role in the movement for the higher education of women. As school principals, they pioneered an enlarged curriculum for girls.

Whilst the higher education of middle-class women was a goal requiring time to achieve, the London feminists realised more immediate solutions needed to be found to


30. Frederick D. Maurice in a letter to Miss G. Hare, February 10, 1849, 'I am going to give a lecture this evening to governesses, and generally on Saturday evenings. They are part of a gratuitous course which we are beginning at Queen's College for those who cannot come out in the day being already engaged in situations', in Frederick Maurice (ed.), The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice chiefly told in his own letters (London, 1884), p.502.


32. Ibid., p.172. Frances Mary Buss (1827-94) had a school of her own and could only attend evening classes, whilst Dorothea Beale (1831-1906) took the daytime courses.
relieve pressure on agencies attempting to alleviate the worst misery of the 'downtrodden governess'. As already mentioned attempts to introduce women to work outside teaching were hampered by women's inadequate education. But women's prejudice to work in occupations other than teaching presented almost as great a difficulty, and in order to entice women away from the occupation of governess, the feminist Society for Promoting the Employment of Women which was founded in 1859 worked hard to create an aura of respectability around occupations which middle-class women feared society might view as ungentleel. 33

Of course, the ideal way of escape out of governessing was marriage. 34 For the Victorians, marriage was the only respectable occupation for women. 35 But in an age of materialism, without a dowry, a poor governess's chance of marrying out of her occupation in England was slight. There remained one other 'respectable' course of action for the governess, emigration.

34. Peterson, op.cit., p.6.
The idea of emigration appeared an admirable solution to the 'Ladies of Langham Place', as Maria Rye and her feminist associates were known. When Lady Eastlake had recommended escape as a course of action for the governess who found her role insupportable, she had in mind a young woman going abroad to the Continent. 37 Going further afield to the colonies was a far more decisive step for the English governess. Yet the idea appealed to some women. A lady who needed to work might feel more comfortable if she could avoid the rigid definitions of English society. 38 Encouraged in the late 1850's by favourable reports that, in colonial society, status was less defined, there was a greater chance of a governess marrying, and what was most encouraging, there were plenty of opportunities for employment, women began to make plans to leave England. 39 But being neither the cheapest nor the easiest line of escape, emigration was a tremendous undertaking for the English governess.

Between 1849 and 1862 several organizations were established to promote emigration of governesses to the British colonies


37. Peterson, op. cit., p.16, n.34.

38. Ibid.

39. Hammerton, Emigrant Gentlewomen, Chapter 4, 'Emigration and Respectability', pp.92-117. Individuals, societies and several women travellers encouraged women to emigrate, viz., Edward Gibbon Wakefield, Caroline Chisholm, the Fund for Promoting Female Emigration (Herbert's society), Mrs Louisa Meredith, Notes and Sketches of New South Wales (1844) and My Home in Tasmania (1852), and Mrs Charles Clacy, A Lady's Visit to the Gold Diggings of Australia in 1852-53 (1963, Facsimile) and Light and Shadows of Australian Life (1854). An equal number of persons discouraged the idea of emigration.
and America, one of the most successful being the Female Middle Class Emigration Society.\footnote{40} Founded by Maria Rye and Jane Lewin and their committee, the F.M.C.E.S. was a feminist organization whose members held decided views on class, employment and marriage.\footnote{41} The Society's foundation in 1862 coincided with the controversy concerning the 'redundancy' of women in Britain, and sparked off debate on the dangers of promoting 'matrimonial colonization', and doubts about the demand for governesses in the Australian colonies.\footnote{42} Miss Rye's critics argued there was insufficient demand in the colonies for a large number of governesses, that it was unwise to send out women without some pre-arranged form of employment, and that only well-qualified governesses would be likely to succeed.\footnote{43} But the 'pioneers' of Miss Rye's scheme had already sailed to Sydney and Melbourne and the Society quietly awaited news of their impressions whilst it continued with its plans to help the next batch of women to reach Australia.\footnote{44}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[43] Ibid., pp.128-131; Hammerton, 'Feminism and Female Emigration', in Vicinus, \textit{op.cit.}, 56-60.
\item[44] Maria S. Rye, \textit{Emigration of Education Women: A Paper read at the Social Science Congress in Dublin, 1861}, Reprinted from 'The English Woman's Journal', (London, 1861), pp. 3-15: '... there are six ladies at this moment on the Atlantic bound for Sydney, and three others on their way to Melbourne.'
\end{footnotes}
In emigrating the English governess exhibited initiative, persistence and adaptability. Above all, she showed tremendous courage, for her confidence of finding employment in the colonies rested upon a number of assumptions and unknowns. She assumed colonial parents would wish to employ her and never doubted that they would be able to accommodate or afford to keep her. Research has shown that she had little idea of the nature of colonial households, or of the character of the colonial child. In a period when notions of gentility were intensifying in middle-class British society, the English governess's determination to achieve economic independence in a pioneering society in a totally unfamiliar environment is all the more admirable. It is also an indication of how difficult her position in Britain had become.

The opening chapter of this study is devoted to a discussion of the role of the English governess in the colonial period from the beginnings of settlement in the eastern colonies to the discovery of gold in the early 1850's. In the second chapter, a study of the first of the English governess's adjustments to a new environment is made. Her response to shipboard life offers insights into her notions of gentility, her attitudes to other women and classes, her potential for

adaptability in an environment in which she was subjected to discomfort and frequent danger, and the resources she possessed to solve her difficulties. In Chapter Three, a discussion of the English governess's initial adaptation to life in colonial society of the 1860's, 1870's and early 1880's, reveals her problems and difficulties in obtaining employment, her attitude to her work and her adjustment to loneliness and the tyranny of distance in the Australian environment.

In the second half of the nineteenth century the colonial governess became the most mobile of middle-class women in Australian colonial society. Whilst her gentility and respectability ensured her entrée into colonial families to the end of the century, her preparedness to acquire household skills, her readiness to adapt to rugged living conditions anywhere in the continent, and her involvement in the higher education of women in the later decades of the century, promoted her continuing success. In Chapter Four an analysis of the mobility of the governess is made.

Like most young women of their class in England, middle-class Australian women found that if and when they needed to become self-supporting the occupation of teaching was the only approved employment for them and the English governess a role model to which they could readily relate. In a later chapter, Australian women's emulation of the English governess affords an examination of the models of
gentility which existed in colonial society and the subtlety of a changing ideal of womanhood. It will be shown that there was a distinctive difference between the stereotype of the early Victorian governess and the later role model which evolved in the colonies. In emigrating, the English gentlewoman who sought employment as a governess re-defined the role of the English governess to meet both the requirements of her employment in a pioneering society and an emerging urban society as in Marvellous Melbourne. Research reveals that the colonial governess was a far more robust and attractive role model for Australian women than has been previously recognized.

Whilst some English governesses did not remain long in the colonies others married and established colonial households of their own in which they brought up their Australian-born children with the assistance of later emigrant governesses and a sprinkling of European teachers together with colonial-born governesses. Unfortunately, traditional sources

46. For example, in September 1863, Caroline M. Heawood, one of the first governesses to reach Melbourne in 1861 under the auspices of the F.M.C.E.S., wrote to Jane Lowin informing her that she had become Mrs Lofven and was living in Ballarat. See letters of Caroline M. Heawood, Mar 25 1862 and Sept 24 1863, Letterbook No. 1, pp. 16-17, 79; F.M.C.E.S. Records. The Ballarat College Register of 1879 reveals there were two girls attending the school in that year, named Caroline M. Lofven and Susannah L. Lofven. Later in 1884, Florence Lofven attended; in W. Gordon Mein, History of Ballarat College, (Ballarat, 1964), p. 180. Another governess, a widow, Mrs Lucy Phillips, brought her small son to Australia and sent him to school in Melbourne. She later remarried. See letter of Mrs L. Phillips to JL, 12 August 1873, and letter of Cecile Nagalle, 31 Dec 1873, in Letterbook No. 1, pp. 420-422; 430-435, F.M.C.E.S., loc. cit.
available to the historian, such as letters, reveal very little of the governess's sexual desires and needs and more modern sources such as the records in the possession of education authorities can only confirm that governesses did marry but cannot provide impressions of women's feelings in regard to love and marriage. However, in literary sources, the historian is able to gain insights into an otherwise hidden part of the governess's emotional and sexual life. Thus, in the final chapter, 'Images of the Governess in Australian Fiction', a confirmation of impressions gained in the more usual historical sources is found together with deeper insights into the life of the governess in colonial society.

The story of the governess in the Australian colonies is one of the single middle-class woman's first moves to achieve her identity as a person, of her search for understanding of her need of the Right to Work and the Right to Education. 47 What she achieved was to benefit women of all classes both married and single in later generations. The following study is devoted to this long-neglected nineteenth-century woman who should rank with those already recognized as Australia's pioneering women.

CHAPTER 1

GOVERNESSING IN THE AUSTRALIAN COLONIES:

The early colonial period

... We were educated principally by Governesses, many of whom were very incompetent ...

JANE MACK, "Reminiscences"
CHAPTER 1

GOVERNESSING IN THE COLONIES:

The early Colonial period

WANTED

An English lady, just arrived, is desirous of meeting with an ENGAGEMENT as GOVERNESS

Address, A.C., St. Kilda Hotel, Clyde Street.

The Melbourne Evening Mail, May 21, 1858.
CHAPTER 1

In the Australian bush in the first half century or more of European settlement there were children who grew up never knowing what a school was like but had all their 'lessons' at home supervised by their mothers and governesses. To the colonial child a governess was a lady who sat up very straight, spoke very correctly, and insisted on children behaving in a 'civilised' manner. She came from England or Scotland but sometimes only from Sydney or Melbourne or Geelong. Governesses were generally strict and severe and always correcting 'bad habits'. Some were ugly but others looked charming when they joined the grown-ups playing croquet on the lawn. Accomplished governesses played the piano nicely and painted and did beautiful embroidery. The kind ones helped in the house and were extra 'obliging' when the place was crammed with visitors. Some even took a turn in nursing the baby. But a governess

1. See a description of Caroline Newcomb, the first governess to come to Victoria with the family of John Batman, in C.M.H. Clark, A History of Australia III: the Beginning of an Australian Civilization (Melbourne, 1973), p. 121.


was pretty awkward on a horse and hated insects and got terribly lonely being in the bush.

In the early colonial period one of the first discoveries an English governess made upon her arrival was that the place was a wilderness and a colonial household vastly different from that to which she was accustomed. Most colonists put up with all kinds of privations, inconveniences and roughness. Only in Sydney and to a lesser extent in Melbourne in the 1840's was there anything like 'excellent society' with elegant drawing-rooms. Her pupil, hatless and sunburned, was wild and untamed and when not painfully shy, astonishingly frank and unco-operative, preferring an active, out-door existence to sedentary pursuits and book-learning.

Colonial parents welcomed the governess as teacher and companion, seeing her as an instrument whereby the influence of the rough and restless pioneering society in which their children were growing up could be halted or ameliorated. In a predominantly male society, mothers accepted the

5. Ibid., p.56. Miss Julia Gavan was thrown from a horse on the way to her first appointment.


governess as an equal in women's civilising mission.⁹
Both by her example and her instruction the governess was
to reinforce and perpetuate the standards and values which
parents feared were being lost sight of under the conditions
of pioneering.

In emigrating to the Australian colonies both well-to-do
and less advantaged families found themselves flung back
into a rural pre-industrial society in which men, women and
children needed to labour in order to make a home, gain
a living and achieve some kind of comfort.¹⁰ To become
established on the land or in a profession or business
took not simply weeks but years. However hard they worked
early settlers were challenged by the vast land, the different
climate, the dispossessed indigenous population, the immense
distance from home and the slowness of communication, the
sparseness of rural settlement and the rudimentary character
of the towns,¹¹ and without exception, colonial households
lacked the advantages of a good supply of trained and
experienced servants.¹²

9. Many nineteenth century writers and advocates of women's emigration
to the colonies saw women's role as a 'civilising mission', see references
to these in A. James Hammerton, Emigrant Gentlewomen (Canberra, 1979),
pp. 93-94.
10. See Patricia Grimshaw, 'Women and the Family in Australian History,
in Elizabeth Windschuttle (ed.), Women, Class and History (Melbourne, 1980),
pp. 37-52; see P. Grimshaw and Graham Willett, 'Family Structure in
Colonial Australia: An Exploitation in Family History', Australia 1888,
Bulletin No. 4, May 1980, pp. 5-27.
12. Mrs. Charles Meredith, Notes and Sketches of New South Wales during
a Residence in that Colony from 1839 to 1844 (London, 1844, facsimile
1973), pp. 162-163; see 'The Servant Problem' in Beverley Kingston, My
29-31.
While husbands and fathers helped by older sons cleared land, tended animals, sowed crops and harvested, or worked to establish businesses, wives and mothers, many of them gently-bred women, nursed their own children, cooked, cleaned, sewed and preserved food for their families.\textsuperscript{13}

They made furnishings for their rough homes\textsuperscript{14} and often established a dairy and vegetable garden selling excess butter, eggs and other produce to supplement the family's income.\textsuperscript{15} In the absence of servants, children from a tender age were called upon to make themselves useful and attempt tasks almost beyond their physical strength.\textsuperscript{16}

In town young boys helped about the house or ran messages for tradesmen and shopkeepers, whilst in the bush they assisted the men in a variety of farm and station work.\textsuperscript{17}

Girls helped mothers in the house, assisted with the washing, tended the flower and vegetable gardens, the hens and other young farm animals, and minded younger children.\textsuperscript{18} When the day's work was over, or at some other time when she

\textsuperscript{13} Numerous examples are to be found in Eve Pownall, op. cit., passim.
\textsuperscript{14} Georgiana's Journal, esp. p. 132.
\textsuperscript{15} Grimshaw and Willett, op. cit., p. 15.
\textsuperscript{18} See especially, Jan Mack, 'Reminiscences', MS La Trobe Library, Melbourne; Sarah Midgley, Diary, Sept 13 and Oct 29 1855; June 27 1857; in McCormell (ed.), op. cit., pp. 18, 20 and 40; Pownall, op. cit., see, for example, the experience of the Law family in South Australia, pp. 92-93; the Bussells in Western Australia, pp. 80-84.
had a little leisure, a mother attempted to teach her children to read and write or to supervise older children's lessons.\textsuperscript{19}

One unavoidable feature of a pioneering life in the Australian bush and one which influenced the most vulnerable and impressionable member of the colonial family, the colonial child, was that of 'roughing it'. However much parents deplored it, since housing was primitive and accommodation failed to keep pace with the rapid increase in immigration to the colonies, it was difficult for families both in town and rural areas to escape having to 'make do' or improvise.\textsuperscript{20} Most settlers including administrative families were obliged on their arrival to occupy wattle-and-daub cottages, or unlined huts or more commonly a tent.\textsuperscript{21} Only one of the Port Phillip gentlemen, Captain Pomeroy Greene, appears to have managed to transplant whole a Victorian household with its hierarchy of servants and gracious style of living.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{19} Mrs. Penelope Selby, letter to her mother, Mrs. Earles, in England, Nov 6 1844, Typescript, Letter VII, p. 29. MS, La Trobe Library, Melbourne.

\textsuperscript{20} See Pownall, op. cit., 'Mary of Maranoa'. p. 131.


\textsuperscript{22} Paul de Serville, Port Phillip Gentlemen (Melbourne, 1980), p.73.
Children very often bore the brunt of rough living conditions. The children of the Reverend Joseph Docker who overlanded from Windsor, New South Wales, to Bontharambo Station near present-day Wangaratta, slept in covered carts until a hut was enlarged for a temporary residence.²³ Often a family had little opportunity to extend or improve a dwelling for scarcely had the family settled than the father heard of better prospects elsewhere and decided to move. When the Selbys first arrived in Melbourne in 1840 they lived on a 'station on the "Yarra Yarra"' and later moved to Port Fairy. Mrs. Penelope Selby, the mother of two small sons, complained that each hut she occupied was less comfortable than the last. 'Every time we move our hut is worse', she wrote to her mother in England.²⁴

Declining fortunes frequently necessitated uprooting the family just as it was enjoying some degree of comfort. Andrew Murison McCrae was one of Melbourne's early solicitors²⁵ and after the failure of his financial ventures during the depression of the 1840's, Mrs. Georgiana McCrae was forced to give up her home, "Mayfield",²⁶ and live with her growing family in unfinished huts at the foot of Arthur's Seat, Dromana. A talented miniaturist and

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24. Mrs. Penelope Selby, letter to her mother, Nov 6 1844, loc. cit.
26. See description of the solid materials used to build "Mayfield" in Georgiana's Journal, p. 83.
artist, and a natural daughter of a Scottish duke, Mrs. McCrae became exasperated with all the packing and unpacking and delays in the family's latest move, and wrote in her journal, 'I am most unhappy . . . this scattered way of living in huts until the completion of our house has worn me out.'

In the cities and towns the search for accommodation to house a family whose numbers were increasing necessitated a series of moves which aggravated the colonial family's discomfort and restlessness. Arriving in Melbourne in the early 1850's the family of Thomas T. a'Beckett lived in a number of houses before becoming satisfactorily housed in East Melbourne. Eliza a'Beckett recalled that in more than one house 'there were no baths /and/ no hot water for washing', and that even in the coldest weather the children would put their heads 'under the pump in the yard.'

In 1839 Joseph Mack brought his wife and young family from Tasmania to the Wool Pack Inn at Geelong. After leaving the hotel the Mack family moved in and out of Geelong several times before coming to rest on a pastoral station near Lismore. Before the new homestead was

completed at Berry Bank, the Macks and their seven children and a succession of governesses squeezed into the original home station, two rooms of which were skillions.  

Mobility, isolation from families of similar social background, the harsh climate, heavy manual work and rough living conditions, all combined to produce a deterioration in standards of dress, speech and manners, and time-honoured customs such as church attendance. During the period a family was 'roughing it', the children led an active out-door life. On the hard ground shoes and boots wore out quickly and were not easily replaced so that children grew used to going bare-footed. Children devised new games which involved climbing trees; little Agnes La Trobe, the daughter of Victoria's first Governor, enjoyed playing 'Parrots Up a Gum-Tree' with the McCrae boys. In the colonies children rode a great deal. They wandered off into the bush and played with aboriginal children. All these pastimes combined with the factors of growing up and helping around the house meant that clothing wore out easily. Mothers were so busy they never seemed to catch up with all the sewing and mending.

32. Georgiana's Journal, p. 102 (Diary entry of 30 June 1943).
33. See Georgiana's Journal.
required. With parents' attention spread over a multi-
farious number of responsibilities and tasks it was easy
for young members of families to be neglected and to be
influenced by some of the worst habits of the adults in
colonial society. In the Port Phillip District, for
example, there were many gentlemen of breeding and
education, but boredom, the scarcity of women of their
own class, and the heat, led to the 'colonial vice' of
heavy drinking, and the development of careless habits.
In a period in which to be 'respectable' was to be tidy
and clean-shaven, gentlemen squatters became notorious for
dressing shabbily and letting their beards grow. Men
who worked hard in the bush lost track of time and
neglected the Sabbath.

Newcomers to Victoria such as Mrs. Kirkland and Mrs.
Selby considered that men who should have known better
failed to set a good example to the rising generation.
Mrs. Selby deplored the way in which men swore in front of
young children. 'Few children reared in the colony,' she
wrote, 'have hitherto had more than a Charity boys'

35. Georgiana Molloy, letter to Miss Margaret Dunlop, 12 January 1833,
in Alexandra Hasluck, Portrait with Background, a Life of Georgiana
36. See M. Kiddle, Men of Yesterday (1961; rpt 1963), Ch. 4, 'A Man's
World', pp. 46-76, esp., 53; Paul de Serville, op. cit., 'The
Gentleman Squatter', pp. 82-105; 44.
37. de Serville, op. cit., p. 89.
38. M. Kiddle, op. cit., pp. 112-113; Sarah Midgley, Diary, 8 Aug
1858, in The Diaries of Sarah Midgley, etc., p. 65.
39. Mrs. Kirkland, Life in the Bush, by a Lady (Chambers' Miscellany
1845), cited in M. Kiddle, p. 90; Full text in H. Anderson, The
Flowers of the Field, etc. (Melbourne, 1969).
education at home with the addition of being taught to swear, smoke and ride.\textsuperscript{40} Her neighbour's children aged six and four years had grown up in close contact with men at the 'Melting Establishment', Port Fairy, and both little boys had learned to swear and went to the local 'public house' where the elder one ordered anything he liked.\textsuperscript{41} Mrs. Selby said her boys had not yet uttered a 'bad word', but she wondered how they might be inspired by 'bad example'.\textsuperscript{42} Having several daughters to rear, Mrs. Joseph Mack felt relieved when her husband decided to give up his hotel business for she was convinced that a hotel was no place in which to rear a family. She had already discovered that her children's table manners were deteriorating. Jane had picked up the habit of calling out 'Whey!' when her drinking glass was being filled, and a governess had difficulty in breaking the little girl of this unladylike habit. Finally, after gentle persuasion failed she applied the cane.\textsuperscript{43}

In the early colonial period the decision by parents to engage a governess to teach their children seems to have been made more out of necessity than concern for the family's status although middle-class parents were ever mindful of their social position. The kind of life

\textsuperscript{40} Penelope Selby, letter to her mother, Nov 6 1844, loc. cit.
\textsuperscript{41} Penelope Selby, letter to her sister Mary, Mar 1 1845; loc. cit.
\textsuperscript{42} Penelope Selby, letter to her mother, Nov 6 1844.
\textsuperscript{43} Jane Mack, 'Reminiscences', MS, La Trobe Library, Melbourne.
experienced by the colonial family, as has been pointed out, produced an active, and often restless, self-reliant and independent child whose lack of concern for manners and impatience with restraint and authority gave rise to concern among parents. They regretted their children were losing contact with all they had learned in their own childhood and with what they respected and cherished in the traditions and social values of the Old World. There were few good schools in existence in the colonies before the 1850's and those which had been established were situated mostly in the towns. Teachers of refinement and steady habits were rare and many who taught in the Denominational and National Schools were almost illiterate. Schooling at home was preferable but education by the mother became an almost intolerable burden under colonial conditions.

Mothers realised their children were slipping behind in the rudiments of reading and writing and needed disciplining and many tried to establish the routine and discipline of the nursery and the schoolroom in their rough bush homes. But with constant interruptions, and without the help of trained servants or older children who were required elsewhere or with their fathers, mothers found their task as educators constituted a problem.

One major difficulty was that in the bush books were hard to come by for either adults or children. Parents were always pleased when relatives sent them books or when a neighbour passed on children's books. "Prid [Beau] is the image of his father in face, figure and walk," wrote Mrs. Selby of her elder son.

I must make him write you a letter soon, he gets on the best with figures, and though not at school is really not bad at his books, he will soon know all I can teach him and is constantly longing for books ..."47

She was grateful when a 'very good Scotch minister' in the district gave her husband 'some useful school books for the boys.'48 Children's school books remained scarce, and some twenty years later Dr. Daniel Curdie of "Tandarook" Station, near Camperdown, Victoria, wrote to the Rev. James Russell, of Campbelltown, thanking him on behalf of his 'better half' for the 'very suitable little books' he had sent to their children.

I have to assure you that they will highly value these and they are a great treat to them on the arrival of each mail. We get the British Workman and Band of Hope Review here, but the small books for children are not so easily got."49

46. Georgiana's Journal, p. 29.
48. Penelope Selby, letter Mar 1 1845, p. 33.
Most colonial children had only the Bible as a school text. However greatly he respected Holy Scripture, when Hugh C.E. Childers presented his report on schools in the colony of Victoria to Governor La Trobe in July 1851, he pointed out he could not commend the practice of making the Bible a common reading and spelling book. In most colonial homes when parents attempted some instruction there was no other book available from which to teach.50

In the early nineteenth century the mother was assumed to be the best teacher of her children and particularly of her daughters. But without books and with little education herself, and with so much to do, a mother reached a point when she could no longer carry out her role as teacher to her satisfaction and sought a governess. One of the first English governesses to arrive in N.S.W., if not indeed the first, was Miss Penelope Lucas, who came to Sydney on the Argo in 1805 with Macarthur on his return from exile. In her charge was his delicate eldest daughter, whose health prevented her remaining in England to be educated. Miss Lucas subsequently became governess to all the younger children of the Macarthur family and friend and lady-companion to Mrs. Elizabeth Macarthur.51

But few families could afford a superior governess and

only wealthy families such as the Macarthur's of Camden could support a governess over a long period.\textsuperscript{52}

Most governesses who followed Miss Lucas to N.S.W. and elsewhere in the colonies faced a future of constant travelling to and from inland stations. Conditions of life and travelling were hard and primitive and unattractive to most genteel women and mothers found it hard to engage teachers. A woman who understood the problems of both mother and governess in colonial society was Hannah Boyd. She had spent six years in Sydney where in the late 1830's she taught and conducted an agency to assist country parents seeking a governess.\textsuperscript{53} She appreciated the governess's reluctance to venture into the 'interior'.

Three hundred miles from Sydney is a distance sufficient to terrify the most courageous, as it involves the idea of bad roads, travelling by mail car, uncomfortable inns, and all the other annoyances attendant on a journey to the interior, with the difficulty of finding an escort back to Sydney in the event of not liking the situation.\textsuperscript{54}

Boyd, who had gained her ideas from a study of the writings of Hannah More, held very decided opinions about the mother being the ideal instructor of her children, and

\textsuperscript{52} See The Ladies Auxiliary of the Parramatta Trust, Women of Parramatta, n.d., 'The Life of Penelope Lucas, Governess.' See photograph of the house which became Miss Lucas's home in her retirement, in Frank and Judith Leary, Colonial Heritage (Melbourne, 1972), p. 123.


\textsuperscript{54} Hannah Villiers Boyd, Letters on Education; Addressed to a Friend in the Bush of Australia (Sydney, 1848), 'Letter 1', p. 1.
advised mothers who despaired of not being able to persuade a governess to come to their lonely station homes to spend twenty pounds on books to equip themselves for the task of educating their own families. The amount she pointed out was equivalent to half what they would pay a governess.\textsuperscript{55} She exhorted women to approach their task with confidence,\textsuperscript{56} and when she published her little book, \textit{Letters on Education}, she dedicated it to Mrs. Hannibal Macarthur who had brought up a large family of daughters 'with very little assistance from PAID TEACHERS \textit{sic}'.\textsuperscript{57} The book consisted of a series of letters addressed to 'Mrs. Adam' in which Boyd provided practical guidance in all aspects of education, intellectual, practical, moral and religious.

Only a few years previously Mrs. Charlotte Barton had published anonymously \textit{A Mother's Offering to her Children},\textsuperscript{59} which was a question-and-answer type of reader along the lines of the popular Mangnall's \textit{Questions}.\textsuperscript{60} Only very recent research has established that the author was none other than Charlotte Waring whom Mrs. Phillip Parker King had chosen to be governess to the children of Hannibal and

\textsuperscript{55} H.V. Boyd, op. cit., p. 9.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., p. 2.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., see dedication.
\textsuperscript{58} Marcie Muir, \textit{Charlotte Barton: Australia's First Children's Author} (Sydney, 1980).
\textsuperscript{59} \textit{Charlotte (Waring) Barton}, \textit{A Mother's Offering to her Children: By a Lady long resident in New South Wales}, (Sydney, 1841).
Maria Macarthur. Miss Waring became engaged on board ship during the voyage to the colonies, married James Atkinson soon after her arrival in Sydney, and left widowed, remarried. Mrs. H. Macarthur had been left without a governess and of necessity attempted the education of her children rather than entrust it to inferior teachers. Both publications just referred to illustrate both the need and the demand by colonial mothers for reading material and guidance in teaching their families.

Mothers among Sydney's élitist families were prepared to struggle to teach their children rather than run the risk of admitting ex-convict nursemaids and and nursery governesses into their homes, or of employing an unreliable tutor 'of dishonourable and impure mind', or patronising a school also attended by tradesmen's children. Since it was not until the 1840's in New South Wales and later in the other colonies that there was anything like an appreciably-sized pool of governesses from which parents

62. Ibid., passim.
63. Several convict women declared they had been governesses. One whose father was a colonel in the Dragoons, was competent to teach drawing, music, singing, fancy needlework and French; in L.L. Robson, The Convict Settlers of Australia (1965; rpt 1976), pp. 84-85; see also Robson's article, 'The Origin of the Women Convicts Sent to Australia, 1787-1852', Historical Studies ANZ, Vol. II, Nos. 4-44, Nov 1963-April 1965, p. 52. Some ex-convicts became teachers in schools in early Sydney or were hired for private teaching, see John F. Cleverley, The First Generation: School and Society in Early Australia (Sydney, 1971), pp. 119-120.
64. Mrs. Calvert, nee Caroline Louisa Waring Atkinson7, Gertrude, the Emigrant: A Tale of Colonial Life by an Australian Lady, (Sydney, 1857), Chapter XIV, p. 92. Caroline Atkinson was the daughter of James Atkinson and Charlotte Waring, and became Australia's first Australian-born woman novelist.
could make a selection, they had to find alternative ways of providing for their children's education. Some families waited an opportunity to send their sons and daughters back to England to be educated. Anne Marsden, the daughter of the Reverend Samuel Marsden of Sydney was sent to England in 1800 and remained there for ten years. 66 Little Agnes La Trobe was only eight years of age when Madame La Trobe decided in 1845 to send her home to her grandmother to be educated. 67

Sometimes a father with time on his hands or a well-educated mother undertook the task. In Sydney Colonel George Grey taught his two daughters, 68 and Sir Richard Bourke the governor of New South Wales, closely supervised the education of his daughter, Anne. Edward Deas Thomson who married Anne Bourke in 1833 wrote to his father that he had found 'a person whose mind and accomplishments were congenial to ... (him), ... high principle, both moral and religious had been instilled into her mind ...'. 69

When parents had neither the inclination, the ability, nor the time for the role of educator, and good governesses were unavailable, aunts, older sisters, family friends and even visitors accepted the task of teaching the children.

66. Ibid., p. 112.
68. E. Windschuttle, op. cit., p. 112.
Anna Boswell, who lived first in Sydney in the 1830's, was taught for some time by her mother and later by her aunt, Margaret Innis, at Port Macquarie. In her turn, Anna heard her youngest cousin practise daily and assisted her with her lessons. When the Spence family arrived in Adelaide in 1839 Catherine Spence taught her sister, Mary, before going as a governess at sixpence an hour. In the Swan River colony, Western Australia, after Georgiana Molloy died after her seventh confinement, her friend, Charlotte Bussell, taught Georgiana's three little girls together with her own daughters.

In Victoria in the 1840's and 1850's it was a common practice for older sisters to teach younger members of the family. When Charlotte Docker, the daughter of the Reverend Joseph Docker of Bontharambo Station, left 'finishing' school in St. Kilda, she continued lessons with the younger children's governess, Miss Stewart. Besides helping her mother in the house she assisted the governess. After returning from boarding school in Geelong, Jane Mack taught her younger sister, Helen, and brothers, Frank and John, for two years.

70. Cited in Windschuttle, p. 113.
71. Ibid., pp. 112-113.
72. Cited in Grimshaw and Willett, op. cit., p. 12.
73. Charlotte Docker, at school in St. Kilda, letter to her mother, Mrs. Sarah Docker, 24 May 1856, Docker Papers, La Trobe Library Melbourne.
74. Jane Mack, 'Reminiscences'.
Sometimes a visitor took an interest in children's lessons and while parents' attention was directed elsewhere gave some encouragement. 'Heard Wattie and Johnnie their lessons while their mother saw to the dinner', wrote Georgiana McCrae when she rested at Captain and Mrs. Reid's station on her way to Dromana. At Tichingorook, the Reids had huts, haystacks, stockyards and well-pastured paddocks, but they were in no financial position to employ either tutor or governess.\textsuperscript{75}

Mary Macleod Banks recalled that when she was a child on her parents' station in Queensland, two elderly ladies once took her in hand 'for reading lessons on the verandah when the governess was away'.

\ldots\text{ and I looked forward to my short hours of instruction from them with delight.}^\textsuperscript{76}

But however effectively relatives and friends taught, mothers felt the need of a woman whose chief responsibility in the home was to educate the children and in particular supervise the development of older daughters for their future roles as wives and mothers. The tendency of gentlemen to return to England to choose their brides made parents aware of the necessity of having their daughters educated by governesses of some gentility.\textsuperscript{77} If women

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{75} Georgiana's Journal, p. 125.
\item \textsuperscript{76} Mary M. Banks, Pioneer Days in Queensland (London, 1931), p. 33.
\item \textsuperscript{77} de Serville, op. cit., p. 41.
\end{itemize}
were to become a 'civilising' influence on colonial men
their education needed to be moulded by a refined and
accomplished woman who realised the importance of her task.  
Mrs. Sarah Docker's female relatives in England were pleased
she had found such a good governess for her children
and assured her that if they all turned out like her
daughter, Josephine, who was a credit to her training,
she had no need for anxiety.

The difficulty was to attract suitable women of refinement
and accomplishments to be governesses in a pioneering
society. Lady Jane Franklin who accompanied her husband
to Van Diemen's Land in 1837 was a woman of decided views
concerning the education of women and women's 'civilising
mission'. Female society there was so uninspiring as to
arouse her enthusiasm to import teachers.
The qualities she listed for the kind of teacher needed
to promote a moral regeneration of female society in Van
Diemen's Land can, at this distance of time, be seen to
have provided a model for the colonial governess. Lady
Jane considered that women recruited for the school she
hoped to establish should be 'talented, benevolent,

78. E.G. Wakefield, A View of the Art of Colonization (London, 1849),
p. 156, in Hammerton, op. cit., 45; Hannah Boyd, as cited in
79. A.E. Bristow, England, letter to her sister, Mrs. Sarah Docker,
1 July, 1856. Docker Papers.
80. Ann Kaye, England, letter to her cousin, Mrs. Sarah Docker,
8 April, 1856. Docker Papers.
energetic, not daunted by difficulties, not easily disgusted, hopeful, fervent and steadfast.\textsuperscript{81}

These very qualities were those which a governess needed to possess if she was to succeed in a pioneering community facing hardship, discomfort, loneliness and monotony, and an absence of refinement and social discourse. What Lady Franklin feared was that if such 'very sensible and good women' could be persuaded to emigrate, if they passed through Sydney or Port Phillip, they would find such a warm welcome there they would never proceed to Van Diemen's Land, and if they did come, she feared they would not be happy and would not remain.\textsuperscript{82}

By the time Lady Jane Franklin reached Van Diemen's Land, Caroline Newcomb, the governess in the family of John Batman, had already left the island with the Batmans for the settlement in Melbourne. Born in London in 1812, Miss Newcomb had grown up in Spain where her father was British consul. Her mother had died while she was young and after her father's death, Caroline was educated by her grandmother.\textsuperscript{83} Her delicate health led her to emigrate. To what extent such a high-spirited and strong-willed young woman felt uncomfortable or demeaned in Batman's household,

\textsuperscript{81} Lady Franklin to her sister, Mrs. Simpkinson, Van Diemen's Land, 28 April, 1840, in G. Mackaness (ed.), Some Private Correspondence of Sir John and Lady Franklin (Tasmania, 1837-1845), (Sydney, 1947), pp. 95-98.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{83} C. Irving Benson, A Century of Victorian Methodism (Melbourne, 1935), p. 75.
where both the master and his wife were ex-convicts, remains unknown, but in 1837, just a year after her arrival in Melbourne, Miss Newcomb went to stay with Dr. Alexander and Mrs. Thomson in Geelong where she met Miss Drysdale with whom she went into partnership on a pastoral run.\textsuperscript{84} Caroline Newcomb remained a good friend of Batman's daughters but did not return to governessing, turning her attention instead to missionary work among the aborigines.

Miss Newcomb's experience illustrates that one of the risks likely to be encountered in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land in this period was for an English governess to find herself the 'subordinate instrument' in a colonial household with indifferent servants,\textsuperscript{85} - how much more embarrassing in one of a female employer who was an ex-convict. Even in the second half of the century English governesses found it difficult to adjust to households where their employers were of a lower social background from themselves.\textsuperscript{86}

Since highly accomplished women could usually find employment in Britain, the majority of those who sought employment as governesses in the Australian colonies in the 1830's and 1840's were 'distressed gentlewomen', who

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., p. 76; L.J. Blake (gen. ed.), \textit{Vision and Realisation}, Vol. I., pp. 5-6.
\textsuperscript{85} Lady Franklin to her sister, 28 Apr 1840, in Mackaness, op. cit., p. 94.
\textsuperscript{86} See notes 92 and 93, Ch. 3, this study.
could not reach their objective without assistance. As they usually possessed the least attractive qualifications the obstacles which confronted them were formidable. As Hammerton's study has shown, elaborate efforts were made by colonial and British officials to exclude middle-class women from obtaining assisted passages, since generally, colonists wanted women of the servant class. But governesses sufficiently desperate for work approached the authorities for help despite the stories they heard of the dangers of the long voyage, of the brutality and depravity of convict-founded settlements, and of the possibility of having to adjust to a society where all classes worked hard and suffered privations.

However, only rarely in the 1830's did the Colonial Office grant assistance to women from a superior background. One governess who received courteous consideration was Sophia Eyre who possessed a testimonial from aristocratic patrons. In 1833 a number of governesses furnished with a recommendation to Governor Bourke, sailed on the Layton, and in 1835 fourteen governesses travelled out in segregated accommodation on the poop deck of the Charles Kerr, thus becoming known as 'poop governesses'.

In succeeding decades a variety of societies were formed to assist working-class emigration, but it was not until the 1860's that a society such as the F.M.C.E.S. whose foundation has been described earlier in this work came into being to assist educated women from a superior social background.94

Under pioneering conditions colonial households were not employing servants on anything like the scale of those in urban Victorian England. When women reached the colonies they discovered the range of employment for domestic servants was not as wide as anticipated and the demand for genteel governesses limited.95

In 1837 Eliza Darling estimated that a large and well-run household in New South Wales would contain a cook, housemaid, nursemaid, lady's maid, laundress, sempstress and perhaps a dairymaid and a housekeeper. The kinds of servants and their numbers depended on the kind of household. For instance, in a newly-established family where there were young children one might expect to find a cook, housemaid, and a nursemaid, whose place in time would be taken by a nursery governess; some years later a 'finishing' governess would be employed. Later again a lady's maid might be substituted for the governess. 'Generals', or

94. See n. 41, 'Introduction', this study.
general servants, did some cooking, a little cleaning, laundering, child-minding and any other duties allotted.\footnote{Beverley Kingston, My Wife, My Daughter, and Poor Mary Ann: Women and Work in Australia (Melbourne, 1975), pp. 29-30.}

In the 1830's newly-arrived governesses discovered themselves competing with literate working-class women who seized the opportunity to apply for employment as 'nursery governesses' rather than accept heavy farm and domestic work. The urgency of employment upon arrival seems to have prompted genteel women to accept a post as an upper servant in a reputable family in which their gentility was quickly recognized.\footnote{Hammerton, op. cit., pp. 62-63.} It is quite possible that gentlewomen found it preferable to accept work as a servant to a well-respected family than take a position as governess in the interior with persons unknown. In itself, emigration was a traumatic experience added to which the problems of employment placed women under stress. Adjustment to colonial society was fraught with problems and the resulting strain caused some women to break down. Some governesses went mad.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 64-65.}

If governesses needed to be resilient to survive the 1830's the following decade tested their powers of adaptation to the limit. The year 1841 ushered in a period of depression in the eastern Australian colonies in which all sections of society suffered. Those
researching women's employment in this period have established that the 1840's were a particularly bad time for single middle-class women to arrive in Sydney. Among the recently arrived immigrants listed in the Sydney Morning Herald of 15 June 1841, were 35 governesses. With them there had arrived 61 domestic servants, 26 female cooks, 97 dressmakers, 313 female farm servants, 7 general servants, 517 housemaids, 26 housekeepers, 17 kitchenmaids, 28 laundresses, 12 ladies' maids, 2 midwives, 14 milliners, 138 nursemaids, and 40 needlewomen', and many of these women were unable to find situations.99 Newly-arrived families were sleeping in the parks, and a temporary shelter for single women was only gained by the persistent efforts of Caroline Chisholm.100

In the period 1840-41, Mrs. Chisholm collected about 600 'respectable females unemployed in Sydney'. Some of these girls had some education and claimed to have been governesses in England, but when Mrs. Chisholm questioned them she discovered they had been 'nursemaids' and were only "would-be" governesses'. Nevertheless, some of these were placed with 'good sensible women' in the interior where elementary teachers were badly needed.101

100. Ibid., p. 27.
101. Samuel Sidney, The Three Colonies of Australia: New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, etc. (London, 1852), Ch. XII, 'Caroline Chisholm', p. 140-147.
In the 1830's and 1840's the governesses circulating in the colonies were mostly very young women and many married. High demand and low supply produced a rapid turnover and influenced the salaries offered.\textsuperscript{102} As remarked, Catherine Spence began teaching when she was seventeen at sixpence an hour.\textsuperscript{103} Governesses received from £20 to £25 per annum on the average so Spence did well earning £37,16s.\textsuperscript{104} Like many children in the period, Jane Mack had a series of governesses. She remembered Miss Cowan, 'an Irish lady with dark curls', and Miss Odell who later married. Miss Odell taught the Mack children 'very thoroughly' but most of their governesses were 'very incompetent'.

... [they] thought their duties only consisted in hearing us our lessons and making us work at our sums till our tears washed out our figures.\textsuperscript{105}

Governesses varied in competence and temperament and children got to know some better than others. In Sydney in the 1830's Annabella Boswell who had many governesses thought Miss Willis 'excellent' and another, 'charming'.\textsuperscript{106} In Melbourne in the 1850's Eliza à'Beckett had experience of private governesses, of sharing a governess with the Jennings family, and of attending schools both in Melbourne and Sydney. But the 'lessons' were all the same, - there

\textsuperscript{102} Elizabeth Windschuttle, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 111.
\textsuperscript{104} Windschuttle, p. 110.
\textsuperscript{105} Jane Mack, 'Reminiscences'.
\textsuperscript{106} \textit{AnnaBella Boswell\textsc{'}s Journal} (M. Herman, ed.), pp. 7-16.
was writing in a copy book, reading, arithmetic, French, music, and Mangnall's Questions. Only later did Eliza learn German.¹⁰⁷

Until such time that parents could afford or accommodate a refined well-qualified governess they had to look to schools where their daughters might benefit from contact with ladies of some culture. Despite the depression of the forties in Sydney the demand by elitist families for governesses to teach the 'essential ornamental accomplishments' remained steady and parents who had no objections to sending their daughters to a school found a growing number of ladies' academies and seminaries from which to select. These were conducted by married and single women most of whom had been governesses and offered besides the basic 'useful' subjects a number of 'ornamental' subjects.¹⁰⁸

As these schools increased in popularity they absorbed governesses who wished for some reason not to take residential positions in private families.

In 1850 when Julia Gertrude Stewart¹⁰⁹ arrived in Sydney accompanied by her thirteen year old daughter she found employment in Miss Moore's Seminary for Young Ladies.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Eliza Chomley (née à Beckett), 'Memoirs'.
¹⁰⁸ Windschuttle, pp. 108-111.
¹⁰⁹ 'The Memoirs and Letters of Julia Gertrude, daughter of the Hon. James Stewart, of Stewart Castle, Parish of Trelawney in the Island of Namaica, B.W.I. Her experience as a Finishing Governess in France, and later in New South Wales, where she arrived in 1850, by the ship "Amity Hall", with her little daughter, aged 13 years. Written in her own handwriting in N.S.W.' Dallas, Stewart and Steel Families, Papers, Memoirs and letters by and concerning members of the Stewart family 1847-1962. Mitchell Library, New South Wales.
¹¹⁰ See Appendix I: Ladies' Seminaries and Academies, Day and Boarding or Both - N.S.W. 1806-1845', in E. Windschuttle, op. cit., pp. 129-132, esp. 131, for Miss Moore, Seminary for Young Ladies.
She was a highly accomplished and experienced governess who had taught in aristocratic circles in Paris before emigrating, and was remembered by Eliza a'Beckett as 'a lively, pleasant Parisian lady' who taught French in an interesting way.\textsuperscript{111}

In Melbourne, in the 'forties', Mrs. Brain was advertising that she was ready to receive into her family eight young ladies as boarders, whose improvement in all the branches of useful and ornamental education would form her anxious care.

In addition, she offered to teach French, Music and Drawing.\textsuperscript{112} Miss Blackmore's seminary offered instruction in English, Grammar, History, Geography, Writing and Arithmetic, with Music, French, Dancing and the 'Use of Globes' as extras,\textsuperscript{113} and there were several ladies' academies already established in St. Kilda.\textsuperscript{114}

At Mrs. MacArthur's school which became famous for turning out 'good wives',\textsuperscript{115} young ladies were received graciously, and the Rev. Joseph Docker and his wife were very gratified with the 'unvarying kindness and attention' which she showed to their two older daughters, Mary and Josephine,

\textsuperscript{111} In her memoirs, Eliza Chomley nee a'Beckett stated that after her father remarried she went to Sydney to Miss Moore's boarding school at Lyons Terrace, the 'best and most select in Sydney'. She occupied an 'ugly bare little room' and was 'never happy at school'. There were about 40 boarders. She enjoyed learning French and her description of the mistress fits Julia Stewart.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., p. 231.
\textsuperscript{115} Rankin, op. cit., p. 231.
whose progress exceeded their expectations. Flatteringly, the clergyman-pastoralist wrote:

I have only three daughters left and regret that I have not fifty, that I might have the pleasure of placing them all, in succession, under your charge ...

He promised that Mrs. MacArthur would have his three younger daughters for 'finishing' but that Mrs. Docker was not disposed to part with even one 'for the present'. 116 Charlotte and Fanny Docker eventually attended in 1853 when both succumbed to the 'Hooping Cough'. 117 Charlotte Docker subsequently attended the school again in 1856, when she enjoyed learning piano from Miss Forsyth, who became her favourite governess. The Dockers were by then in a more comfortable position to accommodate a governess and the younger Docker children were educated at home by Miss Stewart. 118

Lady Franklin feared that capable genteel governesses would not come to the colonies, and Samuel Sidney's statement in 1852 that governesses were not required in Australia and for those with the 'higher class of accomplishments' there was no demand 'worth crossing the seas to meet', was discouraging.

117. See Mrs. E. MacArthur, To Joseph Docker, 19 Aug 1853, Docker Papers.
118. See references to her education and to Miss Stewart in Charlotte Docker's letters of 1856, Docker Papers, loc. cit.
Their chances of employment are very slight, the remuneration very moderate, and their situation, unless provided with such introductions as will at once place them under the roof of some respectable family, will be both unpleasant and dangerous. 119

Yet, in the 1840's gentlewomen came of their own accord to Melbourne seeking positions as governesses, and exhibited remarkable potential for rapid adjustment to colonial society and a pioneering way of life.

In December, 1841, Mrs. Georgiana McCrae received a letter from a friend recommending Miss Julia Gavan and her sister to her 'good offices and protection'. 120 Both ladies wished to be employed as governesses. Unfortunately for Julia, on her way to her first appointment in Brighton she was thrown from a horse and had to remain with Mrs. McCrae for some weeks. 121 In the meantime, Emily Gavan made herself useful. Besides nursing her sister, she helped Mrs. McCrae move into her new home, "Mayfield", cared for her baby daughter, and assisted with the preparations for her sister-in-law's wedding.

Mrs. McCrae's portrait of the young governess is a charming one and reveals how both gentlewomen were adapting to the circumstances of their new way of life. 'Miss Emily Gavan, keys in hand, baby on arm, going

120. Georgiana's Journal, p. 52, (entry of 6 Dec 1841).
121. Ibid., pp. 56-57.
hither and thither getting everything ship-shape,' wrote Mrs. McCrae, and a few days later, "Miss Emily" most efficient, and cheerfulness personified. The young woman had clearly established her identity in the household. A few days later she completed the 'sewing and fitting of the carpet' which Mrs. McCrae had previously had in her English home, and later both women nailed it down on the dining-room floor. Here is definite evidence that gentlewomen could make adjustment to their changed environment in the colonies and both were not above doing manual work which back in England would have been unthinkable for women of their class.

Mary Anne Fitzgerald who was a migrant from County Wexford, Ireland, became governess to Governor La Trobe's children before her marriage in 1841 to Henry Bayles Ford who became the first superintendent of the Cape Otway Lighthouse. Mary bore seven children at this remote lighthouse, cared for shipwrecked sailors and tended the lighthouse herself when her husband's assistants deserted to the goldfields in the 1850's. This governess proved to be a truly pioneering woman of Australia.

For most governesses who had previously led relatively sheltered lives, their adaptation to colonial society and conditions was the first step towards the 'widening sphere'

122. Ibid., pp. 59-61.
of women's experience. Whereas in England a governess spent much of her existence within the confines of the schoolroom and her attic, in Australia she was camping out, riding long distances on horseback and travelling in open carts.

When Captain Hepburn, founder of Smeaton Hill, in central Victoria, went off to town in the early 1850's to bring up a 'new governess for the girls', he collected 'Miss F' in a cart.\textsuperscript{124} Since many parents felt the governess and the children could not be left in lonely homesteads when they were absent, they were taken everywhere the parents went, and the governess, as well as being seen in public frequently, saw all about her. Governesses grew used to sharing the table with their employers and the host and hostess on a number of occasions both formal and informal, and found themselves accepted as an equal. Among the large number of people who shared the Midgley's dinner on Good Friday of 1861, were 'Mrs. and Mrs. Stevens, their governess and little girl'.\textsuperscript{125}

In the early 1850's Mrs. Charles Clacy advised women to emigrate providing they could travel 'under suitable protection, possessed good health, and were not fastidious or "fine-ladylike"'. She thought the worst risk they ran

\textsuperscript{125} Sarah Midgley, Diary, Mar 29 1861, in \textit{The Diaries of Sarah Midgley}, etc., p. 110.
was of getting married, and 'finding yourself treated with twenty times the respect and consideration you may meet with in England'.

It is clear that female employers in colonial society valued the companionship and assistance of governesses who were prepared to work as hard as themselves to make life more comfortable under difficult conditions. Whilst providing some polish and refinement and a good influence in the home, a woman who could be relied on to help with the sewing and other incidental tasks as well as instructing the children was doubly welcome. Capable women had no difficulty in finding situations and their status as governesses underwent some revision. The embarrassment attached to the stereotype of the 'distressed gentlewomen' and the 'down-trodden governess' gave way to one of respect for the adaptable, mobile English governess. But however well they were received, governesses in this early period remained acutely self-conscious about their 'reduced circumstances'. They lived chiefly in Eliza Chomley's memory by the 'Copious' records they gave ... of their own personal history, and the untoward events which necessitated their teaching'.

127. Eliza Chomley, 'Memoirs'.
In the following chapters a more detailed account of the governess's adaptation to life at sea during the long voyage to the colonies is discussed together with their initial adjustment to colonial society and the Australian environment in the second half of the nineteenth century.
I often think of you, our Old Ship, the Voyage, and many other things and cannot yet believe I am 17,000 miles away from Old England.

I should understand well how to go to sea now.

GERTRUDE GOOCH, to MARIA RYE, in a letter of 14 February, 1861, from Ashfield, Sydney.
CHAPTER 2

Throughout the nineteenth century the long sea voyage to
the Australian colonies posed an endurance test for all
intending emigrants. Recent research into nineteenth-
century sea travel has shown that for most migrants the
passage proved to be a traumatic experience, less
perhaps for its hardship than the strangeness and
finality of the step it is taking represented. ¹ Be
that as it may, both men and women, unfamiliar with
ships, found life at sea unique, strange, and often
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ships on the Australian run had greatly improved by
1861, - the year in which the first party of
governesses assisted by the F.M.C.E.S. sailed to New
South Wales and Victoria, for gently-bred middle-class
women travelling alone, the voyage still remained a
terrifying ordeal. ² However, Miss Rye and her
committee could be confident that though the voyage
would not be without the elements of danger, the
gentlewomen they were assisting could be expected
to travel in some degree of comfort and would

1. Basil Greenhill and Ann Giffard, Travelling by Sea in
and Giffard, Women under Sail (1970); Geoffrey Blainey, The
Tyranny of Distance (South Melbourne, 1966); and also Don

2. B. Greenhill and A. Giffard, op.cit., pp.41-59; G. Blainey,
op.cit., pp.148-205.
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not be exposed to the humiliation of personal assault or rape that was often the fate of earlier female emigrants.  

In the following chapter the aim is to bring the reader closer to the real lives of a group of governesses under the unusual circumstances of being at sea. The adjustment of these middle-class women to an unfamiliar and fearful environment was, I suggest, but a prelude to their adaptation to life in colonial society. How these women, mostly unmarried, stood up to difficulties, reacted to change, solved problems, and endured discomfort, inconvenience and the many 'disagreeables', which the long voyage entailed is a revelation of their moral fibre and provided, in most cases, an accurate indicator of their future success in colonial society.

3. Hammerton, *Emigrant Gentlewomen*, pp.46-47, 53 and 96. In 1850, when reporting an episode in which crew members of a ship had assaulted female emigrants, the *Illustrated London News* had justifiably pointed out that where no provision was made for the protection of women aboard ships 'it were idle to expect virtuous females . . . to leave their native land'.

4. Several widows were among the governesses assisted by the Society. Mrs C. Barton who disembarked in Sydney in January 1864 was possibly a widow. Mrs Margaret Allen who came to Victoria in 1864 had a grown-up son in the colony, and Mrs Lucy Philips who arrived nine years later had her little boy, 'Jossy' with her. She re-married within twelve months. Mrs Wilson who emigrated to Queensland was accompanied by her husband and family, including her daughter who opened a small school. Mrs Ida White was accompanied by her husband. See Mrs C. Barton, letter to Jane Lewin, 18 January 1864; Mrs Margaret Allen to Jane Lewin, 21 October 1864; Mrs H. Wilson to JL, 18 February 1867; Mrs Lucy Philips to JL, 12 August, 1873, all in Letter Book No. 1, 1862-76' and Mrs Ida White, letter to Miss Bennett, 2 April 1881, in Letter Book No. 2, 1887-1882, F.M.C.E.S. (Microfilm, A.J.C.P.), La Trobe Library, Melbourne.
Apart from the unhappy evidence of how convict women behaved and suffered during transportation which historians have touched on,\(^5\) and the published impressions of much-travelled women like Mrs Louise Meredith and Mrs Ellen Clacy, together with the more recently published letters of Rachel Henning who made the trip twice in the middle decades,\(^6\) very little evidence has come to light about how the majority of women lived during the voyage to Australia. Governesses usually managed to elude fame and avoid notoriety, and being discreet and mostly inhibited women, they left no diaries for posterity. But the gentlewomen assisted by the F.M.C.E.S. were obliged to write to the Honorary Secretary if only to confirm they were forwarding money to repay their loan to the Society, and the voyage was a subject about which they could not resist writing. Though, at most, their impressions are fragmentary, a phrase here, or a line or two there, several women did write relatively at length about their impression of the sea trip. These letters, then, form a small but infinitely valuable collection of women's impressions of the voyage to Australia from 1861 to 1883.


When Maria Rye informed a public meeting in Dublin that six ladies had already left for Australia her tone was optimistic. It sounded a simple exercise to send gentlewomen to the Antipodes to become governesses in colonial families. Twenty or more years earlier her audience would have shuddered at the thought of genteel women making the voyage to the convict colony of New South Wales. To what extent was it any less hazardous or traumatic an undertaking in the period defined? How did a middle-class woman whose circumstances required her to seek employment as a governess fare at sea?

Under ideal conditions a ship could provide a microcosm of stratified Victorian society to which a middle-class woman could happily relate. But even under the best of conditions life at sea was so different from existence on land that it was a rare individual who did not have to make some adjustment physically, mentally or socially during the voyage. Moreover, this adjustment had to be sustained over a prolonged period of time, for the voyage was not simply a short ferry trip which might have been an experience already familiar to a number of women, but

8. See Mrs. Caroline Chisholm's warnings to young women in Hammerton, op.cit., p.96.
one which lasted, at the very least, about ninety days. 9

Life aboard ship caused a break in the pattern of a person's previous knowledge of day-to-day existence. 10 What gave rise to discomfort and irritation was that the conditions under which all persons lived involved alterations in each individual's learned and known routine of living one's life. Rising, dressing, eating, washing, resting, employing one's leisure time and so on, had to be carried out within the confines of a completely altered and unfamiliar milieu, that is, a small cabin or the deck of a vessel in constant motion. The effort an individual woman experienced in preserving previously established habits and expectancies of herself and of

9. Blainey, op.cit., pp.164-165; 213-215. From 1816 to 1820 the average passage was 140 to 150 days. By 1849 the time had fallen to 120 days from port to port. The Marco Polo in 1852 made the passage from Liverpool to Port Phillip Heads in 74 days. In 1869 the Thermopylae amazed the colonists by its fast trip of 61 days and 11 hours. One of the gentlewomen assisted by the F.M.C.E.S. sailed in her. See Annie M. Hunt, letter to Miss Rye, 11 October, 1869.


Women's history does not possess any methodological tools peculiar to itself. Whilst women's history seeks to uncover experiences which are manifestly feminine or unique to females, it is not an analytic device in itself. Therefore, when approaching a complex subject such as this, it is desirable and even necessary to make use of conceptual frameworks from the social sciences. Thus, in order to make some kind of interpretation of women's experience at sea, I have borrowed ideas primarily from Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman.
others, as well as adopting a number of necessary modifications in her code of behaviour, produced a degree of tension, as indeed it did in all persons aboard, but, it is assumed, this tension was experienced to a greater degree in a fastidious woman from the advantaged classes. Under some circumstances, a carefully-brought-up young woman who had learned to respect a strict code of behaviour involving modesty, reserve, cleanliness and sobriety, was shattered by the experience of shipboard life. Even with time, some women could not adjust favourably to the cramped conditions in which they were compelled to live nor could they accept with easy tolerance the companions with whom they were obliged to associate. There were few who did not complain of some thing or person. Letters were full of complaints and criticism concerning the Society's arrangements and organization, conditions aboard and fellow passengers. When the tension became unbearable, arguments developed, and unbelievably, in one case, three highly respectable governesses engaged in open conflict which led to two of them taking the matter to the captain. 11.

Of course, some governesses thoroughly enjoyed the voyage. It provided a welcome break from previous routine.

11. Mary Richardson to Miss Blyth, 13 February, 1863. Further details of the women's disagreement are given later in this chapter.
Whilst some aspects of life at sea could be decidedly 'disagreeable', new experiences were often pleasant and a long sea trip afforded a pleasant holiday. Those who were fortunate to have fair weather for the voyage or who were not too greatly affected by the motion of the ship and who remained in good health for the duration of the voyage arrived at their destinations refreshed and cheerful. In 1867 Isabella Rodgerson enjoyed a 'very calm and pleasant voyage' to Sydney.\textsuperscript{12} Edith Zadis delighted in wandering the decks of the 'dear old Anglesey' and would have liked the voyage to have been 'twice as long'. The trip of 1873 had been made in 'splendid weather'.\textsuperscript{13} Privileged to come out First Class in the Chimborazo in 1878, Eleanor Tindall had a 'very successful voyage'.\textsuperscript{14}

Only a few wealthy emigrants could afford to travel First Class and have accommodation in private cabins.\textsuperscript{15} Those who travelled as 'intermediate passengers', or as 'Second Class', which was, in general, the arrangements made for the governesses assisted by the F.M.C.E.S., had less space

\textsuperscript{12} Isabella Rodgerson to JL, 15 July 1867.
\textsuperscript{13} Edith Zadis to Mrs Sunter, 30 December 1873. Mrs Sunter was a member of the committee of the F.M.C.E.S.
\textsuperscript{14} Eleanor V. Tindall to Mrs Sunter, 20 May 1878.
\textsuperscript{15} Blainey, op.cit., p.158.
and privacy and were berthed below the main deck. But they did not suffer the congestion of those who travelled steerage which nine-tenths of emigrants did. On some ships the intermediate class accommodation reached a reasonable standard but overcrowding was common. But in either first or second class, passengers of both sexes were required to put up with countless inconveniences.¹⁶ From a persual of middle-class woman's impressions of life at sea it becomes clear that when women, unfamiliar with shipboard accommodation and organization, were subjected to restricted movements on or between decks and suffered inconveniences, they believed they were not being treated with sufficient respect.

Victorian middle-class women were sensitive to imagined slights and affronts to their pride and to anything that demeaned what they considered their 'social position'.¹⁷ The downward mobility of governesses aggravated their sensitivity to imagined slights of any kind. On board a ship bound for the colonies these women's confidence in themselves was shaken by having to put up with mixing with


¹⁷. See Peterson, op.cit., pp.9-11; Hammerton, op.cit., p.32, 'gentility'. See also Walter E. Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind 1830-1870 (1957), p.188. 'When duty and respectability combined to make gentility the goal of existence, the phenomenon of snobbery was pervasive'. The Victorians tended to pretend to be 'higher in the social scale than one really was, or to cultivate and flatter one's superiors while he despised and insulted his inferiors, without reference in either case to moral or intellectual merits'.
people from all walks of life, of not being treated as particularly 'genteel', and of being taken for granted as an assisted emigrant like the majority on board. When, out of necessity, a woman finally decided to leave England to find employment in the colonies and found she needed to seek financial assistance from a society, however confidentially conducted, her anxiety as to what other people thought of her much have greatly increased. If thoughts about her status worried her in England, they would have re-emerged in some strength when she found herself on a ship, separated from those she thought her social equals, and out-numbered by those she regarded as inferiors. It is difficult to discover how deeply a woman smaried under the sting of her reduced circumstances. The remarks which governesses made confirms the belief that women were unhappy in having to travel as they did.

On the whole the first batch of governesses sent out by the F.M.C.E.S. in 1861, Emily Streeter, Ellen Ireland, Gertrude Gooch, Mary Phillips, Miss Moundsen and Miss Butterfield, fared well during the voyage. Affectionately known to the women as 'Goody', Gertrude Gooch was the acknowledged leader of the group and she reported to Maria Rye that they had had 'a tolerably good passage
but a very slow one'. It had taken 100 days to reach Sydney. 18.

Emily Streeter who shared a cabin with Ellen Ireland agreed it had been a 'very favourable voyage'. Neither she nor Ellen had suffered at all from sea-sickness, and Emily declared she had 'never been in better health'. 19 Miss Moundsen created some excitement and not a little envy by receiving a proposal of marriage from one of the 'Gentlemen Passengers' shortly after her arrival in Sydney so obviously she had thoroughly enjoyed the voyage. Not before long she became Mrs Andrews and returned to England. 20.

If there had been difficulties Gertrude Gooch gave no hint of them, but obviously she had learnt something from the experience for she declared she was now 'an experienced traveller', adding wistfully she would 'understand well how to go to Sea now'. 21 But Mary Phillips who was less reticent than 'Goody', complained her

18. Gertrude Gooch to Maria Rye, 17 February 1862. The group sailed on the Rachel. Miss Gooch's letter sent 'per P.O.S.N.C. Steamer "Benares"," was not the first to reach London but was preceded by those of Emily Streeter and Ellen Ireland. A letter from Mary Phillips followed in June 1862. Neither Miss Moundsen nor Miss Butterfield wrote to the Society or their letters might not have survived. Some mail to the F.M.C.E.S. was rescued from the wreck of the Colombo in 1863.

19. Emily Streeter to Miss Rye, 18 January 1862. She told Miss Rye that Miss Gooch became known as 'Goody', because she was 'so kind to everyone'.

20. Ellen Ireland to Maria Rye, 18 February 1862, 'Miss Moundsen [sic] now Mrs Andrews'. Miss Gooch also referred to Miss Moundsen's marriage, 'Miss Moundsen [sic] is married to one of the Gentlemen Passengers who came out with us'.

accommodation was constantly wet from the time the ship rounded the Cape of Good Hope. Had it not been for the kindness of 'two of the First Class Passengers,' - an insinuation that they recognized her as one of their own class and came quickly to her aid, she did not know what she should have done.\textsuperscript{22}

But it was Ellen Ireland who could not get over the fact that the F.M.C.E.S. had not arranged for the governesses to travel First Class. 'Do not, Miss Rye,' she begged, 'send any more ladies out Second Class. I shall never forget the passage in my life.'\textsuperscript{23} Ellen Ireland fitted the stereotype of the pathetic, helpless governess perfectly. As later events proved, Miss Ireland was acutely sensitive to the fact that she was a lady 'in reduced circumstances,' and obliged to find her living as a governess. Her reaction to her accommodation on board possibly reflected the feelings of all the women in her party, but who, except for Miss Phillips, did not make their disapproval and discomfort known.

Like Ellen Ireland, the Atherton sisters disliked having to travel Second Class. They came out to Brisbane late in 1862 on the \textit{Young Australia} of the Black Ball line.

\textsuperscript{22} Mary Phillips to Rye, 16 June 1862.
\textsuperscript{23} Ellen Ireland to Rye, 18 Feb. 1862.
Their accommodation was very uncomfortable. Together with two other women they were jammed into a cabin smaller than those which usually contained only two persons. Having neither light nor fresh air they were unable to retire to their berths in any comfort for the greater part of the voyage. They were not much better off on deck. The ship which was carrying emigrants to Queensland on a bounty system was so overcrowded that the passengers had to huddle 'in a dense mob on the decks.' The noise, filth, drunkenness and swearing among such a tightly-pack crowd was 'altogether frightful.'

Understandably, what governesses disliked most of all was having to live in close quarters with people whose standards they considered were degrading. Rosa Phayne who reached Melbourne in 1869 regretted greatly coming Second Class. 'I landed in Melbourne,' she wrote to Jane Lewin, 'weary in mind and body.' She had 'detested' the passengers 'beyond

24. Maria Atherton to Rye, 2 September 1862.
25. See advertisement facing title-page of George Wight (Two and a half years Resident in that Colony), Queensland: The Field for British Labour and Enterprise, and the Source of England's Cotton Supply, (with Map) (London, \[1861\]). The Young Australia was one of eight ships of the Black Ball Fleet. The passage money was £18 and upwards and the notice stated, 'Free Grants of Land, value £30 are given to all persons paying their own passages by this Line'.

Maria Atherton's sister had obtained a land grant but Maria had failed to apply because she believed she was ineligible because she was over thirty years of age.

words'; they were 'so very low and horrid a set'. \(^{27}\) Two years later another governess complained that the passengers who were fortunately few in numbers were 'not very agreeable'. \(^{28}\) But none of the women who came to the Australian colonies expressed herself quite so snobbishly as Marion Hett, a governess who went to South Africa to teach. She found the presence of 'vulgar working class emigrants' on the ship 'unduly irksome'. She thought such people 'ought never to come out in a ship with mixed passengers, but if possible emigrants should have a ship to themselves...'. \(^{29}\)

Governesses became annoyed when they were treated as inferiors or on a par with those with whom they were accommodated, or totally ignored by those with whom they considered they were equals. Maria Atherton and her sister thought it unfair to be excluded from the Poop Deck where other women of their social background were free to move, and were staggered when Saloon Class passengers obstructed their way. \(^{30}\) Miss E.M. Ford, who was a highly qualified finishing governess and always fashionably dressed, found the Cabin Passengers on her ship 'extremely disagreeable', and had not enjoyed 'one pleasant day during the whole of the four months'.

27. Rosa Phayne to JL, 13 August 1869.
28. Miss M.A. Oliver to JL, 2 October 1871.
30. M. Atherton to Rye, 2 September 1862.
voyage'. 31 No doubt she was totally ignored or 'cut', a favourite middle-class device. 32

Under special circumstances Jane Lewin arranged for friends of the Society to provide a First Class passage for a woman. Mrs. Philips, who had her son with her, was a case in point, 33 and Annie Hunt was another. The reason for Miss Hunt's emigration appears to have been that her fiancé was dying, and Miss Lewin had considered she should have some privacy on the voyage. Miss Hunt deeply appreciated this kindness but the plan did not work out as nicely as planned. 'Had I travelled as arranged,' wrote Miss Hunt, 'I really do not think I should ever have reached Melbourne alive'. But


32. Women of the Victorian middle-classes were hedged around by a whole set of rigid conventions seemingly absurd to modern women. 'Gentlemen and ladies may form acquaintances in travelling without the formality of an introduction', stated the writer of one book on etiquette. But obviously there was need for great caution in this situation. 'Such acquaintances should be conducted with a certain amount of reserve, and need not be prolonged beyond the time of casual meeting. The slightest approach to disrespect or familiarity should be checked by dignified silence. A young lady, however, is not accorded the same privilege of forming acquaintances as is a married or elderly lady, and should be careful about doing so'. And elsewhere in the book the writer pointed out that 'if courtesy is met by neglect or rebuff, it is not for the courteous person to feel mortification, but the boorish one, and so all lookers-on will regard the matter'. See Australian Etiquette: Rules and Usages of the Best Society in the Australasian Colonies, together with their Sports, Pastimes, Games, and Amusements (Melbourne, 1885, facsimile), pp.37 and 156.

33. Mrs. Lucy Philips to JL, 12 August 1873. 'But first let me express my gratitude through you to Mr. Henry Green for so very kindly and unexpectedly giving me a First Class passage with my dear little Boy. It was not until I was actually on board on the Monday that I knew of my piece of good fortune and it was some time before I could rest satisfied that there was not some mistake in the matter.

However my doubts were dispelled when Mr. Green and Son [Sig] came into my cabin and told me himself about it'.
having escaped 'such a very inferior set of people,' she
found herself harassed by a very unpleasant man who taunted
her at every opportunity at meals.

... my voyage was extremely unpleasant...
One of the passengers found out that through
your kindness I was travelling First Class
and in consequence of this he took every
occasion to insult me by talking to others
about me before my face and not even sparing
my good name, seeming to think you employed
your energy and time to reformatory work and
that I was one of its objects. On many of
these occasions I had to rise and leave the
table because I would not speak to such a man
and knew it would be no use to cause further
words... 34

Fortunately Annie Hunt found a friend in Mrs. Tait, the only
other woman travelling First Class, and she could also confide
in the Doctor, who wanted to report the man's conduct to the
captain, but this she would not allow. Eventually the man
tired of his sport and tried to be polite.

Though all travellers agreed that First Class travel was
superior, accommodation varied considerably from ship to
ship and this fact largely determined the differences in
individual women's experiences of shipboard life. Some
women assured Jane Lewin that Second Class accommodation
surpassed their expectations.35 But it is clear that it
was not only the quality of the quarters which women
occupied that worried them, but the status of such

34. Annie M. Hunt to Miss Rye, 11 October 1869. Miss Hunt's reference
to such male harassment is the only one to be found in the collection of
letters of women to the Australian colonies. If governesses were subjected
to embarrassment they might not have felt inclined to mention it. Evidence
of male harassment is not easy to find and poses a problem for research
into the governess's sexuality.
35. Mrs. Margaret Allen to IL, 21 Oct. 1864. Mrs. Allen sailed on the
Dover Castle and spoke highly of the organization on board. See n. 88.
accommodation on the ship. It was a blow to a governess's pride that she was not provided with the best accommodation a ship could offer. Accommodation, then, posed a problem which governesses had to come to terms with individually, and its resolution influenced to a large degree a woman's adaptation and her enjoyment of the voyage.

On the whole it was the general style of life aboard ship that upset gentlewomen. On a nineteenth-century sailing ship there was incessant movement and constant noise.36 Space was limited, privacy was lacking,37 the diet was limited and unvarying, and there was no escape from other people. Sea-sickness was common and illness frequent, sanitation was primitive and smells were nauseating.38 With the coming of steam, though they were much larger and better constructed, ships were incredibly dirty. What bore most heavily on all was the monotony of existence on the long Australian run.39 As day succeeded day, tension between classes, groups and individuals mounted as people became irritated by the noise, dirt, smells, and lack of space, and with individuals with whom they were not compatible.

37. See Blainey, p.159. Women travelling in Second Class would have enjoyed more privacy than those in steerage.
39. Rachel Henning, loc. cit., p.21. 'The voyage is wearisome. The noise is wearisome, the people are wearisome, and life is wearisome.'
...he did not take up much room..."

I am glad I had it all to myself with blocket's carpet.

Negretti, had a very nice but small cabin in second class.

Relatively spacious cabin, one government's c.c.t., the cabin was a premium on all ships. Two women were included. Rather dramaticality on a woman's consciousness.

The spatial structure of everyday life suddenly transformed on board a ship alone on the ocean.

Our world of everyday life is structured both spatially and temporally.

For some women than for others, totally unreal and distorted world was more difficult to make an ordered reality out of what appeared at first a world with an unstructured routine. The adjustment necessary to make an ordered routine out of an unknown world. When they went on board ships everyday living that government's experienced greater other emigrant."

In adjusting to being ignored or treated just like any status as ladies and on the diarreticus they experienced women viewed their accommodation with reference to that in the preceding pages the discussion has focused on the..."
On the Revenue Annie Davis had to share a cabin but the arrangements were very comfortable, 'the rooms being unusually large and airy'. When she transferred to a small 'Screw Steamer' in Melbourne to journey on to Sydney, everything provided by Henty and Company was 'first class', if expensive.  

Most women, however, like Ellen Clacy who came out to the gold digging in the 1850's, had to put up with very confined quarters.

To find oneself in a space of some six feet by by eight, instead of a good-sized room, and lying in a cot, scarce wide enough to turn round in, as a substitute for a four-post bedstead, reminds you in no very agreeable manner that you have exchanged the comforts of Old England for the "roughing it" of a sea life.

In such a confined space women found dressing and undressing and storing their personal effects a problem. Where two or more women had to share it was hard for the individual to preserve modesty and any kind of privacy. Under such conditions one untidy woman could create chaos. Since governesses were known to be very particular, untidiness could easily have been the cause of friction between them and women who tended to be careless about their possessions. Gentlewomen were sometimes surprised at the habits and behaviour of other women of their class at sea. Rachel

44. Annie Davis to JL, n.d. September 1863. See Eliza Walpole, letter to JL, 21 September 1863. Eliza said she had a berth in one of the 'largest and most airy cabins'.

45. Mrs. Charles Clacy, op. cit., p.11.

Henning travelled First Class, but had to share a cabin with an older woman who was careless and spent most of her time in bed. Mrs. Bronchordt could not do her hair 'fit to be seen, nor mend her clothes, nor keep her things in any sort of order.' For Miss Henning this was exasperating and she wrote to her relatives, 'I gave up the cabin to her and followed my own devices elsewhere'.

On board ship washing facilities and arrangements for ablutions were inadequate or primitive and women found they could not keep clean. On steamships soot covered everything and women's hands, clothes and possessions all became black. Though stewards and stewardesses were commonly employed by the 1860's to tidy and clean cabins and assist passengers, their work did not always measure up to middle-class women's ideas of cleanliness. Isabella MacGillivray, the daughter of a Scottish professor, shared a cabin with her sisters on the Result in 1862. She complained that their cabin was always dirty because of the stupidity of the 'conceited

47. Rachel Henning, letter of 15 May 1861, writing of her trip on the Great Britain, in Adams (ed.), op. cit. There was some advantage in having a companion who did not want to rise at the same time. As Rachel pointed out, 'Dressing with the ship at an angle of forty-five degrees is quite difficult enough for one person'. For conditions, see also Don Charlwood, op. cit., p. 111.

boy' who was their steward.\textsuperscript{49}

Under normal family conditions on land a frugal and monotonous diet might have been borne with patience but at sea it became a major source of annoyance. By the 1860's the food on board ship still tended to be unvaried and unappetising but generally there was plenty of it.\textsuperscript{50} But rations often gave out owing to mismanagement or because of the unanticipated length of the voyage. Mary Phillips who reached Sydney with the first group of governesses assisted by the F.M.C.E.S. in 1861 complained that the fare was bad. From the time the ship turned east into the Indian Ocean there was less food and the quality deteriorated.\textsuperscript{51} Two other governesses, Mary Richardson and Miss Quillon noticed that all the rice had been consumed before the ship reached Cape Town. They used to make a meal of two or three potatoes and a little pork.\textsuperscript{52} What governesses missed were little extras such as jam and chutneys which could be easily stored and added to food to make it palatable. Realising the ship's fare was ordinary, Jane Kidson and her companions showed some initiative by going ashore at Plymouth before the ship finally left England and purchased 'jam, eggs, potted

\textsuperscript{49} Isabella MacGillivray to Miss Rye, 24 Sept 1862.
\textsuperscript{50} See Blainey, pp. 159-160; Rachel Henning, loc. cit., pp. 22 and 51.
\textsuperscript{51} Mary Phillips to Miss Rye, 16 June 1862.
\textsuperscript{52} Mary Richardson to Miss Blythe, 13 February 1863.
meats, potatoes and onions.'

Thus these women supplemented their diet and assisted their adjustment to a more spartan-like existence.

By the 1860's some of the worst inconveniences suffered by passengers had disappeared, or were somewhat alleviated. Jane Kidson could not speak too highly of the Chief Steward who sent her and her friends so many things to add to their comfort that they felt they were 'very much favoured'.

But, on the whole, passengers still had to do many things for themselves, and for middle-class women this was something they found hard to accept. Brought up to expect men to be chivalrous and courteous when a woman needed assistance with baggage or obtaining objects out of reach, they suddenly discovered they could no longer expect the same attention on board an emigrant ship. Maria Atherton and her sister found there was no room for them at the table for meals and they were obliged to stand or sit on boxes which got in everybody's way. In the scramble which resulted when provisions were distributed men and women less inhibited

53. Jane Kidson to JL, 23 October 1863. Writing to Miss Lewin, Miss Kidson said that since living was so very different to what gentlewomen were accustomed, she thought women would be glad if the Society could let them know about taking a 'few little things... easily brought from home'. She, for one, would have appreciated being told about anything that would have added to her comfort at sea. See also Elisabeth Boake to JL, 23 March 1867. She advised women to take a supply of medicines, 'also some kind of pleasant drink such as raspberry vinegar as variety, one gets so tired of "lime juice!".' See Louisa Booty 1864, and Margaret Pyman, 18 August 1865. They complained they were not served wine although it appeared on Captain Deacon's 'dietary list' for 2nd Class passengers.

54. Ibid.
struggled to gain as much as they could, leaving them without their full supply of rations. Maria wrote to Miss Rye,

We were frequently deprived of water and rations as we were unable to fetch them ourselves and there was no one to get them for us. The last week we were almost starved (and our appetites were never very large) - we had neither flour or meat nor in fact anything at all but a few stale biscuits. The Stores were abundant enough but the others got the lion's share.  

One of women's chief concerns at sea was their health. Their chief fear was to be rendered helpless by sea-sickness. Sea-sickness was a problem common to all who travelled by sea, but women especially found the nausea that the ship's roll and pitch produced particularly distressing. Governesses wrote rather proudly to Jane Lewin that they had escaped being sea-sick or that they were not half so sick as they anticipated. Fanny Giles reported that although the voyage had lasted fourteen weeks, and after some beautiful weather the ship had encountered heavy gales and contrary winds, she had suffered but little from sea-sickness. Both Caroline Heawood and Maria Barrow suffered from headaches throughout the voyage but otherwise remained well.  

Another governess was certainly very ill at first but having recovered grew 'stouter'. Miss M. Crowley who

55. Maria Atherton to Miss Rye, 2 September 1862. This letter was endorsed 'saved from the wreck of the "Colombo"'.
56. Fanny Giles to JL, 10 Sept. 1864.
57. Maria Barrow to Miss Rye, 17 February 1862
58. Miss S.E. Hammett to JL, 28 February 1870.
experienced conditions both under sail and with steam, wrote, 'I came out in a Sailing Ship and did not suffer nearly so much from sickness as I did in a Steamer.' 59

During storms at sea women were in great danger of physical injury. As a rule lights were extinguished for safety and passengers were required to move about in total darkness. At other times, too, most ships were so badly lit that injuries were common. When Mrs. Louise Meredith sailed with her husband to New South Wales in the late 1830's she found that 'to a novice at sea, every hour, nay, every moment, brings some greater or less misery.' Even in her berth a woman could not escape many a bump or bruise. But when she began to move about she was fortunate to escape any serious injury.

When... you cautiously open the door, prepared to make a resolution to sally to the 'companion' stairs, ten to one but some unlucky bucket, lantern, or other obstacle, lies in wait to embarrass your wavering steps; or a sudden lurch of the ship plunges you headlong into that singular combination of unpleasantness, the steward's pantry! 60

Injuries as a result of falls caused by the constant motion of the ship were not easily avoided by women. Maria Barrow, who sailed to Melbourne in 1861, had an experience almost identical to that of Mrs. Meredith twenty years before. 'I put my foot into a can in the dark,' Maria wrote, 'and

fell head foremost into the cabin and sprained my finger rather badly. Six weeks later her finger was still painful enough to make writing 'awkward' and Maria admitted she had 'not recovered the use of it yet.' She shared a cabin with Caroline M. Heawood, another governess bound for Melbourne, and both were thrown about their cabin during the many storms their ship encountered.  

Mademoiselle Nagelle was unfortunate enough to fall down a ladder a few days previous to landing in Melbourne. The injury necessitated medical attention and handicapped her during disembarkation when she experienced difficulties with clearing her baggage through customs.  

碘 was obliged to go again on Board the Anglesey to get an order from the Captain, then to the Agents for endorsement of the same, again to the Station to claim my luggage — all this walking about had done me much harm, so／sic／ for that it increased both the pain and swelling in my leg which hurt very much ... I was forced to get medical advice and the Doctor ordered me to rest for one week, and to apply cold water to the bruise.  

At least one of the governesses took seriously ill during the voyage to Melbourne. Caroline MacGillivray, who was travelling with her sisters, caught a chill in the tropics and as her condition worsened even the Captain and his wife became concerned for the girl. 'Blistering,' the treatment in vogue in that period was not possible at sea, and besides, what Caroline needed was nourishing food, which, though the rations were abundant and excellent of their kind, was not

61. Maria Barrow to Miss Rye, ibid.
obtainable. Captain Dickenson, therefore, put on all sail, and passing the Mail Steamer, brought the Revenue through Port Phillip Heads 69 days out from Plymouth.\textsuperscript{63}

Governesses, however, often mentioned the voyage as being responsible for an improvement in their health. The sea air and the warmth of the tropics benefited some to the extend that they declared they had never been in better health. Despite her accident, Mademoiselle Nagelle,\textsuperscript{64} like Emily Streeter,\textsuperscript{65} said she never felt better, and Miss Hammett thought she was stronger than when she left England.\textsuperscript{66} One governess had been accompanied by her sister who came out to Australia for the good of her health. She improved to such an extent that she was able to take a situation with a family in Queensland where she continued to be very well.\textsuperscript{67}

At sea as on land, in times of crisis and great need, women turned naturally to each other for assistance, comfort, and mutual support. Although stewardesses like servants were deeply appreciated at such times, middle-class women could

\textsuperscript{63} Isabella MacGillivray to Miss Rye, 24 September 1862. Caroline MacGillivray had a long convalescence in Williamstown where her brother Dr. Paul MacGillivray had left his home open for his sisters. He had only recently taken up his appointment at Bendigo as Hospital Surgeon. See other details of MacGillivray's life in Sutherland, Victoria and Its Metropolis (1888), p. 489.

\textsuperscript{64} C. Nagelle to JL, 31 December 1873.

\textsuperscript{65} Emily Streeter to Miss Rye, 18 January 1862.

\textsuperscript{66} S. E. Hammett to JL, 28 February 1870.

\textsuperscript{67} Emilie A. Carlter to 'Madam,' 31 March 1876.
not confide in women who were not of their own social class. When an Englishwoman of the middle classes took ill, she sought the help of another genteel woman who, understanding her plight, usually hastened to assist her.  

A recent American study has revealed that eighteenth and nineteenth-century American women lived 'in emotional proximity to each other.' Friendships and intimacies followed the biological ebb and flow of women's lives and intense bonds of love and intimacy bound together those women who, offering each other aid and sympathy, shared such stressful moments. The conclusion that in such a relationship women 'enjoyed mutual dependency and deep affection,' I believe, has relevance and application in the study of the English governess at sea.


Mrs. Georgiana McCrae sailed on the Argyle to Melbourne in 1840. When her help was sought she assisted the doctor deliver Mrs. Bunbury's child, and 'did all that was needful.'


See Rachel Henning, p. 55. Rachel Henning noticed in 1861 that one of the older women on board the Great Britain, Mrs. Rankin, was 'very good and kind to the sick people.' She had made the trip five times, and spent her time nursing 'roaring babies whose mothers and nurses... were ill.'

In the conditions under which middle-class women lived on the long voyage to the Australian colonies, friendships similar to those described by Smith-Rosenberg were sought and developed by British women. Where single women were in daily fear of the elements and frequently ill, emotional ties with other women sustained their courage. Moreover, these friendships did not cease on disembarkation, but continued to be fostered to the mutual benefit of both women. Besides, English gentlewomen enjoyed the acquaintance of other women of their background to combat tedium and loneliness.

For those who were already acquainted, the bonds of friendship were more firmly cemented as they shared the unique experience of life aboard ship. Among the earliest groups of women espoused by the F.M.C.E.S. to come to the colonies, Ellen Ireland and Emily Streeter shared a cabin and became firm friends,\(^{70}\) as did Caroline Heawood and Maria Barrow who came to Melbourne.\(^{71}\) Mary Richardson and Miss Quillon were 'sworn friends' from the time they met in London just prior to sailing. 'We were always together on board ship,' Miss Richardson informed Jane Lewin with no little pride, 'it became quite proverbial'.\(^{72}\)

New friendships were appreciated and often proved to be of inestimable benefit to women who were all alone in the

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70. Emily Streeter to Miss Rye, 18 January 1862.
71. Maria Burrow to Miss Rye, 17 February 1862.
72. Mary Richardson to Miss Blythe, 13 February 1863.
colonies. The MacGillivray sisters became very fond of the Misses Young and found it hard to part from them.\textsuperscript{73}

Jane Finch and Miss Edwards arrived in Sydney on 8 July 1864 having travelled together 'in perfect safety'. They arrived late at night and Miss Edwards' problems of accommodation were solved when Jane's friends welcomed them both warmly.\textsuperscript{74} Margaret Pyman found a most helpful friend in Louisa Booty.\textsuperscript{75} Miss Booty and her brother assisted her when she broke her journey at Melbourne. Mary Bayly could not sail on the same ship as her friend, Elisabeth Boake, who was coming to Melbourne, but enjoyed a very pleasant voyage in the company of Miss Carlow. Not unusually, women who had sailed together kept in touch long after they had gone their separate ways in the colonies.\textsuperscript{76} Miss Bayly remained in contact with Miss Carlow when she went to Tasmania and Gertrude Gooch and Emily Streeter helped Ellen Ireland through many difficulties.\textsuperscript{77} Annie Davis was able to provide Jane Lewin with information about many governesses.\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{73} Isabella MacGillivray to Miss Rye, 24 September 1862.
\textsuperscript{74} Jane Finch to JL, 21 September 1864.
\textsuperscript{75} Margaret Pyman to JL, 18 August 1865. Margaret Pyman thanked Miss Lewin for the care and trouble she had taken to find such a 'pleasant companion' to share her journey. Louisa Booty disembarked in Melbourne and was met by one of her brothers. Together they helped Miss Pyman make arrangements for her transfer on to the coastal steamer and helped her find temporary lodgings. Miss Pyman's brothers were delayed in reaching Melbourne to help their sister.
\textsuperscript{76} Mary F. Bayly to Miss Rye, 21 December 1866; - to JL, 22 March 1867. Miss Bayly's father was still living in England and she had a brother in N.S.W. Her friend, Elisabeth Boake, joined relatives in Melbourne.
\textsuperscript{77} Emily Streeter to Miss Rye, 20 May 1862.
\textsuperscript{78} Annie Davis to JL, 21 February 1867.
Indeed, governesses seemed to have established a net-work of communication and mutual self-help.\footnote{\textsuperscript{79}}

But a more customary view of middle-class women in the nineteenth century is that, in imitation of the upper classes, women maintained a strict reserve towards others in public, and when travelling spoke only to members of their immediate family, ever mindful of their gentility, spoke only to one or two women of their own class. A governess at sea, then, approached others with caution, politely discovering as best she could something of their families and background before she committed herself to any kind of acquaintance, and generally allowed some interval of time before developing a regular friendship.\footnote{\textsuperscript{80}}

Caroline Lash and Eliza Walpole were two governesses who became friendly with non-British women who were obviously superior women. Caroline liked several of the 'other Ladies' on board, but in particular, remembered the 'very

\footnote{\textsuperscript{79}} It would be incorrect to assume that women who enjoyed a close friendship on board ship and later expressed concern for each other's welfare were deeply involved emotionally and sexually with each other. See C. Smith-Rosenberg, op. cit., p.8. Certainly, women enjoyed the friendship of other women from their social background under the conditions they shared at sea and these friendships often continued and proved to be a source of help and comfort when they reached the colonies. But this did not mean they sought only the friendship of females.

We know that at least one of the governesses assisted by the F.M.C.E.S. met her future husband on board ship on her way to the colonies. Just how many other governesses made the acquaintance of men during the voyage and later fostered a friendship which developed into matrimony cannot be determined on present evidence. Certainly governesses were not averse to the flattering attention of both the ship's officers and the captain.

A fuller understanding of Victorian women's sexuality in the nineteenth century still remains to be researched and a study of early Australian women's letters, diaries and journals similar to that made by Smith-Rosenberg in America, would be a project which must add more to our knowledge of women's lives in the Victorian period of colonization and the history of women in Australia.

\footnote{\textsuperscript{80}} See Greenhill and Giffard, op.cit., p.20. See Rachel Henning's attitude to her fellow passengers in D. Adams (ed.), op.cit.
nice Portuguese Lady' who was very kind to her. Eliza Walpole made friends with a 'Swiss Lady' who occupied the cabin next to hers. The woman was well-educated and had lived as a governess for some time in the Dean of Westminster's family and was coming out to be married. Eliza rarely spoke to other passengers but she had no qualms about being friendly with a woman with such a background of gentility.

But at sea relations between middle-class women did not remain all sweetness and light. People were thrown so very much into contact with each other that social friction, not to say open quarrels and estrangements were frequent. For all their gentility, middle-class women could not wholly contain their feelings on such a protracted voyage. In some instances, irritation gave place to quarrelling, something which respectable women had been trained to abhor as being beneath them. But it was difficult for women to hide their feelings. Ellen Ireland of whom mention has been made earlier became more quickly ruffled than the other women who sailed with her. She formed a dislike in particular for Miss Moundsen.

81. Caroline Lash to JL, 21 September \(\text{1864}\).
82. Eliza Walpole to JL, 21 September, 1863.
84. MS 9367, La Trobe Library, Melbourne. Ann Gratton, a gentlewoman who came out to be married in 1858, was at first full of concern for the young ladies on board and especially for the 'poor frightened creatures' below decks. But, after a time, her feelings towards them changed. 'I am thankful that I chanced to get into such a respectable mess,' she said rather loftily. 'It's impossible to describe the deceit and slander carried on amongst 280 single females.' She inferred respectable women like herself did not behave in such a fashion, adding, 'The Doctor says we are a credit to this corner of the ship.'
'If I had only seen Miss Moundsden [sic] now Mrs. Andrews I before I sailed, I should not have come,' she wrote to Miss Rye, 'a more disagreeable person I never met with.'\textsuperscript{84} Ellen's companion, Emily Streeter, agreed that Miss Moundsen did not live up to expectations.\textsuperscript{85} Was their disapproval occasioned by their jealousy of Miss Moundsen? After all, she had been able to attract one of the gentlemen sufficiently for him to propose.

A close friendship such as that shared by Mary Richardson and Miss Quillon could be somewhat formidable in a situation where a third woman was required to share a cabin with them. They formed an instant dislike for Miss Pool who was Irish and a Catholic. They thought she was a 'most improper character...and not fit for a family,' or in other words, was unsuitable to be a resident governess. They claimed she made life so unbearable in the cabin that finally they were obliged to make a formal complaint to the Captain.\textsuperscript{86}

\textsuperscript{84} Ellen Ireland, 18 February, 1862.
\textsuperscript{85} Emily Streeter to Miss Rye, 20 May 1862. In this her second letter to Miss Rye, Emily Streeter wrote: 'I suppose that long before you receive this Letter you will have seen Mrs. Andrews (Miss Moundsen [sic] that was). I have never seen her since we landed and never wish to meet that Lady again.'
\textsuperscript{86} Mary Richardson to Miss Blythe, 13 February 1863. According to Miss Richardson whose story is certainly tinged with drama, Miss Pool was put into a little closet by herself and was later locked up for 'misconduct.' She had been several times 'threatened with irons.' Unfortunately, we do not have Miss Pool's account of the incident. By the tone of Miss Richardson's letter it would appear that Miss Pool had been afforded some assistance by the Society but no correspondence appears in the letter-books from her.
When quarrels arose it was usual for Englishwomen to withdraw and avoid involvement. Some women kept strictly to themselves throughout the voyage but such a course of action could only be achieved if a woman had a cabin to herself and this was rare.

What mattered most at sea was a woman's personal safety. Once the ship left the coast of England and a woman found herself alone among strangers she tended to identify her destiny as did all, with that of the ship and all that concerned it. The Captain, naturally, ranked highest in a passenger's attention. Alone, as some governesses were for the first time in their lives, remote from fathers, brothers and the protection of a trusted employer, they gave not only their respect but even affection to the Captain of the ship.

Seen through nineteenth-century women's eyes, the Captain was a father-authority figure, a Victorian hero of high moral stature. When a Captain was not only capable but

87. M. Richardson, ibid. Mrs. Price, the Captain's wife, only once spoke to the two governesses.
88. Mrs. Margaret Allen to JL, 21 October 1864; See Rachel Henning in D. Adams (ed.), op. cit., pp.54-55 and 59. Mrs. Margaret Allen, a widow whom the Society assisted, shared a cabin on the Dover Castle in 1864, but throughout the day Mrs. Allen had the cabin entirely to herself and could use it as a retreat if the situation arose. Rachel Henning left the cabin mostly to Mrs. Bronchardt.
89. See Walter E. Houghton, op. cit., Chapter 12, 'Hero Worship,' pp.305-340. "To the Victorians a hero might be a messiah or he might be a revelation of God, but he was certain to be a man of the highest moral stature, and therefore of enormous importance to a period in which the alarming increase of both the commercial spirit and religious doubt made moral inspiration a primary need." (p.316).
also considerate of female passengers' comfort and welfare, his courtesy and kindly attention won the admiration of women.\textsuperscript{90} His character, his handling of the ship in all weathers, his discipline of officers, crew and passengers was noted. Gertrude Gooch who travelled on the Rachel in 1861, never forgot the 'old Ship.'\textsuperscript{91} The Captain and Mates were very kind and attentive to the governesses.\textsuperscript{92} Mrs. C. Barton praised Captain Hamson of the Blackwall for in his ship 'all "humanly speaking" felt secure.'\textsuperscript{93} Miss Kightley thanked Miss Lewin for mentioning to Captain Gibson that she would be travelling alone. He had gone out of his way to make her feel at home on his ship.\textsuperscript{94}

When a Captain was accompanied by his wife and, in some cases, members of his own family, gentlewomen felt doubly assured that the standards of the society they had left behind were being maintained and that the voyage would be a prosperous one. Sarah F. Webb who travelled with Miss Hughes, said they were both received with great kindness by Captain and Mrs. Grinblett.\textsuperscript{95} Isabella MacGillivray attributed the fast voyage of the Result to the prudence and caution of

\textsuperscript{90} One such was Captain John Gray, whose popularity became renowned. The way in which Rachel Henning wrote to her family of him indicates how attracted young middle-class women could be to such a man. See Rachel Henning, in Adams (ed.), op. cit., pp.49-50; 53, 54, 58, 60. See Blainey, op. cit., p.208.
\textsuperscript{91} See Gertrude Gooch in epigraph at the beginning of this chapter.
\textsuperscript{92} Emily Streeter to Miss Rye, 18 January 1862.
\textsuperscript{93} Mrs. C. Barton to JL, 18 January 1864.
\textsuperscript{94} M. A. Kightley to 'Madam,' 24 March 1865.
\textsuperscript{95} Sarah F. Webb to JL, 25 April 1863.
Captain Dickenson. Both he and his wife had been very kind and friendly and attentive to their needs when their sister took ill. Mrs. Allen considered Captain Ayles of the Dover Castle and his wife to be all 'kindness' and assured Jane Lewin that she need have no fears concerning women travelling Second Class in any ship commanded by him:

'I had a delightful passage in the "Dover Castle" and should occasion require you need never fear sending any Lady out by the Second Class while Captain Ayles has the Command. I cannot express the gratitude I feel to him and Mrs. Ayles for their kindness. Their own deal little girls slept in the next Cabin to mine, as soon as we left Plymouth the Captain ordered two berths to be taken out of my Cabin, so I had with me but one person... so I had plenty of room and every comfort possible.

As husband and father, Captain Ayles was obviously upholding all the virtues of Victorian middle-class family life and Mrs. Allen felt secure in a ship commanded by such a person.

On the long voyage to Australia a woman was often in danger. When faced with imminent danger of death, nineteenth-century women committed their souls and bodies to the mercy of the Almighty. Alone, ill, afraid, and separated by thousands of miles from their families and friends, English governesses turned to the prayer to be used 'in storms at Sea,' and

96. Isabella MacGillivray to Miss Rye, 24 September 1862.
97. Mrs. Margaret Allen to 'Madam,' 21 October 1864. Genteel women felt frightened when a Captain appeared incompetent in the face of danger, or when his officers experienced difficulties with truculent members of the crew or passengers. See Eliza M. Ford to JL, 1 Nov.1864. 'The Sailors took offence at some orders of the Captain and mutinied ... and threatened to murder the Captain and the Chief Officer. They were of course put in irons.'
gained strength and comfort through their faith in God. Women felt particularly reassured when clergymen were aboard. 'The Bishop had prayers twice a day,' wrote Mrs. Margaret Allen. Members of the clergy who were emigrating or returning from furlough in England, held services on board and organized pious entertainment. Mrs. Allen said the Bishop gave lectures on a variety of subjects and did all he could to instruct and entertain every week. 'We had a peaceful and pleasant time, - no serious illness or accident.' Governesses believed that their lives were in the hands of God their Saviour and that it was His Will that was guiding them to the colonies. Surrounded as they had been with such a reckless drunken mob on board the Young Australia in 1862, Maria Atherton and her sister felt that without divine intervention they would never have reached their destined port safely. They could only assume that Providence had

98. Prayer to be 'used in Storms at Sea' in the Book of Common Prayer according to the use of The Church of England: "O most powerful and glorious Lord God, at whose command the winds blow, and lift up the waves of the sea, and who stillest the rage thereof; We thy creatures, but miserable sinners do and in this our great distress cry unto thee for help; Save, Lord or else we perish." See Peter L. Berger, The Social Reality of Religion (Penguin, Ringwood, 1973), p.52. Berger explains that religion maintains the socially-defined reality by legitimating marginal situations in terms of an all-encompassing sacred reality. His study assists the historian to understand how the attitudes and beliefs of women helped them to make sense of the situation in which they found themselves, that is, alone in a small ship on a vast ocean thousands of miles from land and help. In his discussion of the relationship of religion and a person's experience of a 'marginal situation', Berger explains 'the confrontation with death (be it through actually witnessing the death of others or anticipating one's own death in the imagination), constitutes what is probably the most important marginal situation.'

99. Mrs. Margaret Allen to 'Madam,' 21 October 1864.
been 'very gracious' to them. Sarah F. Webb believed it was 'through the tender mercies of... (her) heavenly Father' that their 'good Ship landed all her passengers safely at Melbourne, and Eliza Walpole attributed the arrival of the Result with all on board later in the same year, to 'God's great mercy.'

Sooner or later the monotony of the long time at sea became tiresome for the majority of women. Governesses complained that the voyage was uninteresting or rather long or extremely protracted. Certainly some individuals enjoyed the rest the voyage offered. Others, especially those like Mrs. White, who was able to go ashore at the Island of St. Vincent and at Cape Town, enjoyed the sights to be seen.

100. Maria Atherton to Miss Rye, 2 September 1862.
102. Annie Davis to JL, September 1863, 'at the best a long voyage is very wearisome'; her journey to Melbourne on the Revenue took 13 weeks and two days; Jane Finch, 21 September 1864, 'long and tedious voyage'; M.A. Kightley, 24 March 1866, 'long and tedious voyage'; she added a postscript to the effect that the journey took over four months; Rosa Phayne, 13 Aug. 1869, 'voyage an extremely protracted one, so very long...'.
103. At least twenty-two women assisted by the F.M.C.E.S. found the trip very pleasant, viz., Misses Bayly, Boake, Geoghegan, Stone, Hammett, Zadis, Ollard, MacGillivray, Lash, Giles, Pyman, Nagelle, Oliver, Rodgerson, Walpole, Davis, Kidson, Booty, (whose ship was stranded!) and Mrs. Philip, Mrs. Allen and Mrs. White. Another two, Miss Carltar and Miss Dearmer, appear to have enjoyed the voyage. Oliver, Geoghegan, Boake, Finch, Lash, Kightley, Davis, and Bayly all remarked, however, how long or slow it was. Both Eliza Ford and Rosa Phayne disliked the voyage very much, whilst Laura Jones and Miss Penrose had an exceedingly 'rough voyage'. Some women either failed to comment or remained non-committal. Several women wrote short business letters to Jane Lewin and gave no personal details or impressions.
104. Mrs. Ida White to Miss Bennett, 27 April 1881.
One or two like Eliza Walpole and Louisa Dearner became involved in charities on board and time passed more quickly for women who had something purposeful to occupy their time.\textsuperscript{105} Other women made new friends and one or more met their future husbands. But it was difficult for many to make sense of such an unreal situation. Even under ideal conditions, lounging on deck in calm weather either drinking lemonade or lime-juice, or playing chess, backgammon or reading, was a 'sort of dolce far niente existence, 'which palled after a time. It was impossible in the best of company not to become 'weary of gazing.'\textsuperscript{106}

Strange to relate, the only governess to suffer the dreadful experience of being in a sailing ship which was stranded did not complain of the length of the voyage or the loss of her personal belongings. For Miss Crowley, thankful to have escaped without injury, it was all part of the larger experience of life.\textsuperscript{107}

In this study the researcher has been handicapped by the fragmentary nature of the evidence. In making inferences from such a small amount of material contained in the letters written by the women assisted by the F.M.C.E.S., there are risks involved, and greater dangers also exist in drawing conclusions from the tone of women's letters.

\textsuperscript{105} Eliza Walpole to JL, ibid.; Louise Dearner to 'Madam,' 14 Dec.1868. She had travelled out on the Anglesey commanded by Captain Muller and had become interested in the Merchant Seaman's Orphan Home.
\textsuperscript{107} Miss Crowley to Mrs. Henderson, 1882?.
One of the chief difficulties confronting the historian is the general reticence of governesses to record their impressions in length or in detail. In part this was due to the Victorian lady's up-bringing to refrain from talking or writing about anything that was unpleasant or unsavoury. If she did have to write about anything that displeased or offended her sense of propriety, the perfect lady veiled her impressions by the use of language which signified her meaning politely, if vaguely. In their letters governesses described any number of things as 'disagreeable', which in context can be interpreted in a variety of ways. Hence, the researcher is hampered by another problem, the problem of language.

Some women might have found the voyage such a painful experience that they did not write about it at all or only to their immediate family. Since we do not have any of these governesses' personal letters, it is purely conjecture that they wrote at greater length to relatives, but is it reasonable to suppose that women showed restraint when writing to Miss Lewin, who was a secretary of a public society. Besides, governesses might have considered that criticism of the accommodation aboard ship and other aspects of the voyage might give offence to those to whom they were indebted and prejudice
the chances of other women in the future.108 There is the possibility, too, that women did not mention the voyage in their letters because they had left it successfully behind them. Women who had heard or read about the voyage before sailing might have realised it would be an endurance test and were prepared for it.

My conclusion is that the unique experience of the voyage opened women's minds to the idea of the importance of adaptation to an altered environment. Possibly, at first, adjustment was a novelty, but which with time, came to make sense, and helped in further adaptation to altered living conditions. At least one governess, Gertrude Gooch, admitted the voyage had provided a valuable learning experience. If the voyage prepared one woman to feel confident about change it might easily have affected other women in the same way.

As I see it, the voyage was the first step in governess's adaptation to their new life. Furthermore, at sea, women had time to reflect on their altered role in society. Thus, in many respects, the voyage could prepare them for their participation in a young society in a lonely environment where adaptation was necessary for survival.

108. See Annie Davis to JL, 20 Jan. 1865. Miss Davis had to apologise to Miss Lewin for a letter she wrote to a friend in Liverpool. Somehow or other the contents reached the ears of Jane Lewin, who took exception to criticism made of 'the Society's working'.
To what extent the voyage prejudiced the outlook of women like Ellen Ireland, Rosa Phayne and Eliza Ford is not easy to determine. An unfavourable voyage might have made some gentlewomen more apprehensive about living in colonial society so far from home. Furthermore, it might have helped to prejudice them to the idea of change, so that, unhappy and dissatisfied, they longed for what they had known 'back home in dear old England'.

* * * * *
CHAPTER 3

EARLY IMPRESSIONS

'I have a most comfortable home - am with refined educated people, and have duties ... just suited to my powers.'


'Had I known the very isolated life I was to lead I do not think I should have been induced to come out.'

Miss M. A. Oliver, Neuarpurr, Victoria, to Jane Lewin, 2 October, 1871.
CHAPTER 3

The theme of the inhibiting influence of the governess's notions of gentility has already appeared in this work particularly in the discussion of the gentlewoman's adaptation to life aboard ship, and in the following examination of the governess's adjustment to colonial society, it recurs. In addition, a new theme is introduced, that of the supportive nature of kin in fostering adaptation to colonial life. One point frequently overlooked or entirely forgotten in discussions about the emigrant governess is that she was not necessarily completely alone in the world. Many governesses who came to Australia left behind fathers, mothers, and any number of sisters in England, and were re-united in the colonies with brothers, cousins and other kin who welcomed them warmly and proved to be supportive during a governess's adjustment to colonial society.

Since at least ten per cent of the governesses whom the F.M.C.E.S. assisted to Australia married within a year or so of their arrival, questions relating to the governess's sexuality arise. Did the English governess face the idea of emigration and the loneliness of the bush in the hope that there she might meet her future husband? To what
extent did her sexuality affect her chances of employment? Was she refused employment because she was too pretty or because she was not pretty enough? Was she ever sexually harassed and forced to leave a situation precipitately in order to save her good name? The governess's reticence to reveal much in her letters about her feelings towards the opposite sex leaves the researcher without sufficient evidence to make judgments on issues relating to her sexuality. Fortunately, literary evidence helps to throw light on this aspect of her life in the colonies, and although some reference will be made to the subject here, more detailed discussion will be left to Chapter Six.

One of the chief difficulties the English governess faced was having to adjust to living in a vast and lonely continent. At sea the monotony of existence bored and depressed women. In the Australian bush the governess found life so monotonous she sometimes feared for her reason. At sea women longed to escape from people. In the bush they longed for company. The theme of the loneliness of the life of the governess, together with those already mentioned, will be developed in the following account of the early experiences of the governesses who were assisted by the F.M.C.E.S. to the Australian colonies over a period of twenty years beginning in 1861.

In the early years of the period in which the Female Middle
Class Emigration Society assisted governesses to the Australian colonies, colonial society was only slowly recovering from the dislocation which occurred with the finding of gold. In Queensland, settlement was still in the raw pioneering stage of development with men and women competing in a mad rush for land, whilst in New South Wales and Victoria, society was for a time drained of a large proportion of its younger men who went north or left the colonies and only slowly moved back. The sixties were not an easy decade for those who were not yet well-established in the colonies. Conditions improved in the 1870's, and by the early 1880's, Marvellous Melbourne, the most populous city in the continent was booming. Unfortunately, when the F.M.C.E.S. began sending English governesses to the colonies employment was not easy to find.¹

However, while gold production declined through the period the pastoral industry was expanding.² In the newly-built station homesteads in Victoria's Western District and the Riverina, governesses were engaged to teach young colonial

ladies the fashionable 'accomplishments' and to assist them to acquire some polish before they joined their parents in polite society in the capital cities during the season. Well-to-do pastoralist families set the fashion in expanding colonial society, and parents with any kind of social pretensions followed their lead in favouring private education for their families, especially for their daughters.  

Education was a hotly debated issue in the colonies in the 1860's. Both in New South Wales and Victoria colonial authorities were re-organizing public education and introducing tighter legislation regarding the training and qualifications of teachers. In N.S.W. in 1866 Henry Parkes managed to persuade both houses of parliament to pass an 'Act to make better provision for Public Education'. In many of its details this piece of legislation did not please the Right Reverend Frederic Barker, Lord Bishop of Sydney, who was one of the persons whose encouragement fired Maria Rye to launch her scheme. Barker had agreed

6. C.M.H. Clark, op. cit., p.278.
that educated women of respectable character would be of inestimable benefit in the colonies, and if Miss Rye could assist women to emigrate, he felt certain there would be no difficulty in finding situations for them in colonial schools. English gentlewomen assisted by Miss Rye's society began to arrive in Sydney in the early 1860's just when Parkes and Barker were warming up to the debate of the clergy's role in the administration of schools and the part that religion should play in the curriculum in N.S.W.

Parkes's 'golden provision' in the 1866 Act became a stumbling block for emigrant English governesses. No person, man or woman, who was untrained for teaching could enter a government-run school. Hence, this field of lucrative employment was unavailable to women who could not furnish satisfactory evidence of training or who were not prepared to submit to an examination of their intellectual capacity to teach. In N.S.W., then, the majority of governesses could only seek private employment.

In Victoria, sectarianism continued to embitter any

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7. Maria S. Rye, op. cit., pp.10-11. The Bishop and Mrs Barker had written to Maria Rye, who quoted their letter when she addressed the Social Science Congress in Dublin in 1861.
10. But see Louisa Dearmer, Sydney, 14 December 1868 to [BL]. She was one of the few governesses fortunate enough to gain appointment to a National School.
discussion about education. The Common Schools Act of 1862 abolished the Denominational Schools Board, reduced the salaries of teachers and cut back the training program. Deprived of funds, denominational schools began to close and competition in the larger and older-established private schools increased. By the mid-sixties, ex-teachers from schools which had been closed, together with teachers who had failed to qualify to teach in the Common Schools, were struggling for employment and sinking into destitution. Newly-arrived English governesses found themselves in competition with colonial-born teachers in an employment situation which was daily growing more desperate. Depressed conditions aggravated the English gentlewoman's problems of settling into colonial society.

Gentlewomen who came with the idea of opening a school in Melbourne had to revise their plans because of the proliferation of small schools opened by those who had

failed in the Common Schools, and because of the rising costs of rents and property values in the expanding city.\textsuperscript{14} Governesses interested in teaching in the Common Schools found they needed to qualify but the cost of training and the idea of examinations discouraged them.\textsuperscript{15}

As information regarding the employment position in the Australian colonies reached Society in London, Jane Lewin and the committee of the F.M.C.E.S. felt it wise to encourage only the more well-educated and highly qualified governesses to emigrate.\textsuperscript{16} By the late 1870's only a handful of women were coming to the colonies, mostly to Victoria, and by 1883 the Society ceased its operations.\textsuperscript{17} Of course, English governesses and school-teachers continued to arrive in the Australian colonies, but like the Bruford sisters who founded 'Adamsdown' in Melbourne in the 1880's, they came privately or were assisted by some other organization.\textsuperscript{18}

The following pages present an analysis of the response.

\textsuperscript{14} Isabella MacGillivray, Williams Town \textit{[sic]}, Victoria to Miss Rye, 24 September, 1862, Letter Book 1, pp. 40-42.
\textsuperscript{15} See Chapter 4, this study.
\textsuperscript{16} Hammerton, \textit{Emigrant Gentlemwomen}, pp. 133-134.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., pp.140-142.
\textsuperscript{18} See my article, 'Governessing in the Colonies: The Mobility of Middle Class Women in Nineteenth Century Australia', Australia 1888, Bulletin No. 8 (September, 1981), p.16, n.12.
which the English governess made to the impact of a younger society in a vastly different environment to what she had known. Not unlike her experience of life at sea, her first encounter with life in the colonies was full of petty frustrations and situations which gave rise to anxiety and apprehension. But the same kind of courage and potential for adaptation which she exhibited at sea was demonstrated in the colonies, and enabled the governess to successfully overcome her difficulties. For all her outward frailty, the genteel Victorian governess possessed a resilience which promoted her adaptation to Australian colonial life.  

19. See Hammerton, op. cit., 'Conclusions', pp. 187-194. Throughout his work Hammerton has stressed the disparity between the stereotype of the pathetic downtrodden governess and the capacity of the gentlewomen who made a success of emigration.
The arrival of the governess in Australia and her disembarkation at the ports of Sydney and Melbourne, where most ships finally dropped anchor, was generally a matter of rejoicing. As the governess was re-united with her relatives some of her fears about emigrating fled. But, at the same time, taking leave of shipboard companions with whom she had formed close friendships was hard and could be an emotional wrench for some women. Single women especially, who had neither relatives nor friends in the colonies found the end of the voyage upsetting. Describing her arrival in Melbourne, Ellen Ollard wrote:

For the first time in my life ... /I was/ at the mercy of strangers, /and/ never while I live shall I forget the feeling of despair that took possession of me when I saw everyone on board talking to their friends who had come out in the Tug-Steamer to meet them.  

Not only individuals but families experienced a sense of loss when they parted from other family groups with whom they had shared the experience of life at sea. The MacGillivray sisters parted from the three Miss Youngs with regret.  

Disembarkation was a costly and tedious business which tested women's resourcefulness. Even before landing, passengers were obliged to clear their cabins of fittings and other

21. Isabella MacGillivray, loc.cit. See n.73 Chapter 2, this study.
gear which they had been required to take on board. Items such as mattresses, bedding, and eating utensils, which had been purchased at considerable expense in England had to be disposed of. Poor governesses could ill-afford to sell them below cost, but unused to bargaining they often parted with goods which they could have sold at a better price ashore or made use of once they were settled. Lucy Philips, a widow with a small son, who disembarked in Melbourne, had 'no alternative' but to sell her cabin fittings to the Chief Steward, a 'fearful rogue,' who offered her only thirty shillings for the 'whole lot.' 22 Cecile Nagelle sold her mattress at a ridiculously cheap price and disposed of her water-can, hook-cups, cups and saucers. But she had the sense not to part with her wash-basin, lantern, pillows and blankets, or her pet canary. 'I am so glad I got him with me,' she wrote of the little bird which helped ward off her loneliness during the long voyage, 'he was no trouble either going on board or on shore - he looks so handsome and sings so well.' 23

Not only could colonists familiar with port procedures expedite a woman's transit from ship to land smoothly and thus save her money, but their presence made her landing a happy occasion and an encouraging beginning to her new life. From the outset relatives and friends in the colonies played an important role in helping English gentlewomen

settle into colonial life successfully. Upon a person's arrival in port, baggage had to be transported ashore to the wharves and thence to a passenger's lodgings. In Melbourne, for example, the wharves were situated some distance from where ships anchored in Hobson's Bay and watermen charged exorbitant rates in the 1860's taking passengers and their luggage from the ships up the Yarra river to Cole's Wharf at the foot of Queen's Street.\textsuperscript{24} Colonists commonly adopted the custom of hiring a boat and taking their relatives and luggage off privately. Mrs. Margaret Allen was delighted that her son came in a boat to meet the ship before it had anchored. Whilst the MacGillivray sisters waited to go ashore at Williamstown they watched as Miss Cowan, a hard-featured Scottish governess, was taken away in a small boat which her sister brought alongside the Result.\textsuperscript{25}

Because of the cost of travel and the time involved, brothers who were living or working in the country were not always able to come to town to assist their sisters upon their arrival. Where family ties were sufficiently strong to induce men to make personal sacrifices to be at the port to welcome their mothers or sisters, their presence reassured women and enhanced their adaptation.

\textsuperscript{25} Mrs. Margaret Allen, Notham, Melbourne, to JL, 21 October, 1864, Letter Nook No.1, p.150; Isabella MacGillivray, loc.cit.
Sarah Webb's brother came down from Sandhurst (Bendigo) to meet her and persuaded her to return with him and open a small school on the diggings. Louise Geoghegan's brother travelled from Sale to see his sister for a few days before she went 'to the Bush', where a good situation had been found for her.26

Where it was impossible for relatives to meet the ship a friendship made on board often proved to be a source of mutual support and practical assistance to a woman. Mention was made in the previous chapter how Margaret Pyman was helped by Miss Booty, and how another governess gained accommodation in Sydney with a shipboard companion.27 Of course, it is clear that some governesses were self-reliant and did not expect to be met. Maria Barrow was so astonished at finding her relatives waiting for her that in the flurry of the reunion she lost sight of her cabin companion, Caroline Heawood. Maria's people hurried her off to South Yarra and insisted she live with them and 'not take a situation for the present.'28. But there were governesses who counted on being met and felt very miserable when they had to manage alone. Eliza Walpole was bitterly disappointed that her 'dear Brother' could not get down from the country to meet her. Although she had enjoyed

27. See Chapter 2, n.75.
every moment of the voyage her career did not get off to a
good start and her fortunes steadily declined.\footnote{29}

Governesses travelling alone and women whose relatives failed
to meet them experienced a number of difficulties. When Mary
Richardson and Miss Quillon arrived in Sydney just before
Christmas in 1862 they found themselves at the mercy of hard-
bargaining carriers. It cost them thirty shillings to have
their luggage removed from the ship to their lodgings and
another ten shillings for a boat to bring it ashore.\footnote{30}

Gentlewomen who arrived at night became frightened as they
trudged around strange cities in their search for a
respectable place to stay. In Melbourne those who eventually
found the Governesses' Institute and Melbourne Home found
they could not be admitted if they could not pay one week's
board and lodging, nor if they arrived at week-ends, nor
if they had children. Some governesses had either not been
advised to expect a number of incidental expenses upon
landing in the colonies or hopelessly lacked foresight.
Eliza M. Ford arrived in Sydney 'without a penny.' To the
disgust of the other governesses who knew she was extravagant,
she had to be assisted by the Emigration Agent from a fund

\footnote{29} Eliza Walpole, Musk Cottage, Ballarat, to JL, 21 September 1863,
Letter Book No.1, pp.80-83.
\footnote{30} Mary Richardson, "Willsbro", Rollands Plains, Port Macquarie, N.S.W.
to Miss Blythe, 13 February 1863, Letter Book No.1
at his disposal for cases of distress. Of course, even the best made plans went wrong and caused or incurred additional and unanticipated expense. Several governesses were obliged to transfer to the coastal steamer at Melbourne to go on to Sydney. Annie Davis complained about the cost of inter-colonial travel. The fare to Sydney was £7, of which she was required to pay £4, 'exorbitant for a two day's passage'. When Louise Dearmer broke her journey at Melbourne she found hotel expenses 'something we should think fabulous even in first-class Hotels in England.' Her stay, therefore, cost far more than she anticipated and when she reached Sydney she could not pay for her passage from Melbourne to Sydney. She had to borrow six pounds from the Dean of Sydney. He was very gracious and made himself answerable for her maintenance at the Sydney Home until she could find employment. She explained what had happened to Miss Lewin:

...my arrival was under rather painful circumstances. I knew the money you so kindly transferred for me would be at my command the moment I arrived in Sydney. I therefore spent more on board than I need have done and when we arrived at Melbourne I unfortunately lost the first boat which left for Sydney and had to stop at an Hotel for the next boat... The consequence was I had not enough to pay my fare from Melbourne to Sydney, but that did not trouble me as I knew the money was waiting my arrival. I would pay my passage at the end instead of the beginning of the journey. To my utter dismay when I arrived at Sydney

I found there were eight different Banking Houses. You did not tell on the paper which it would be. The Dean and Mrs. Cowper kindly went with me to every Bank but they all said they had no such name on their books... I felt so certain that the money was here somewhere that I went by myself the next day to all the Banks again and begged them to look over their books. To my great joy I found it at the Bank of Australasia.

Miss Dearmer went at once to the Dean's House to thank him and repay what he had so kindly advanced.33

Some governesses were embarrassed to find that the money they had arranged to be sent ahead by the mail steamer had gone astray or been lost.34 As a safeguard, Annie Davis suggested to Jane Lewin that women should be prepared for incidental expenses upon their arrival. She wrote, 'It should be impressed upon every Lady coming out, that she should be provided with at least £20 in her pocket when she lands in Australia.' But this would have meant women would have been forced to borrow a larger sum from the Society. Women were indeed fortunate to be like Miss Davis whose brother was at hand to forward her some money, but not all governesses were so happily circumstanced.35

34. Omerine Giraud, 27 June 1866.
35. Annie Davis, Sydney, second letter to JL, 17 June 1864, Letter Book No.1, pp.123-127. Miss Davis was still with the same family.
Once they had disembarked governesses had time to take note of their surroundings. Although Sydney was the oldest city in Australia in the 1860's it was no longer the largest, and when Gertrude Gooch and her companions reached N.S.W. in 1861, the city only contained about 95,000 people. Nevertheless, Sydney was a busy port and the city was crowded.

Governesses were amazed at what had been achieved in such a short time. A number of fine buildings gave the city an air of dignified permanence. 36 'It was only 74 years this January since it was colonised,' said Miss Gooch, 'and it is something quite extraordinary what has been accomplished in that time'. She thought Australia would one day become 'considerable among the Nations of the World'. 37

Of course, governesses could not help but be impressed by the city's great natural beauty. Views of Sydney Heads and the Harbour enchanted them. The beauty of the Australian sky amazed Mary Bayly. 'I never saw so beautiful a blue,' she said. Although a few Englishwomen found the hot weather oppressive, most agreed that the climate was incomparable. But the size, the extent, and

the aridity of the land was frightening. 38

As for colonial society, governesses could not help noticing how settlers were absorbed in growing rich. Gertrude Gooch gained the impression that all Australians rode like Arabs and loved luxury and money. Other women thought labouring people were able to gain money so easily that they became lazy, unenterprising and extravagant, and deserved to be described by their critics in Victoria as 'money-grubbers'. 39

What was most striking was the rapidity with which upward social mobility could be achieved. The feeling that one person was as good as another was clearly apparent and colonists took evident delight in bringing down those they felt to be superior. Louise Dearmer discovered that servants were the 'most insolent independent creatures imaginable'. She scorned Australian egalitarianism as having little depth and being rather hypocritical. 'Although the people profess to be as good as one another, it amuses me', she wrote, 'to see the ridiculous pride so visible on the face of their equality'.

Labouring people who would be unpretending people at home assume such airs here, they call each other Mr. and Mrs. So-and-So and speak of each other as ladies and gentlemen. The children call their parents "Papa", and "Mama".

Englishwomen observed that society was far more relaxed in the colonies than in Victorian England. Colonial women were often seen 'excessively intoxicated' in public, and morality was at a 'sadly low rate.' A governess in the bush regretted the intense selfishness of all classes, and thought there was little respect for truth, straightforwardness and frankness in society.

In Melbourne, the capital of gold and the 'Metropolis of the Southern Hemisphere,' governesses felt at home at once. The city was well laid-out with wide streets, some of which were already paved and gas-lit at night. Though the community was wealthy it was not yet ostentatious. 'Toorak House,' the residence of the colonial governor, was imposing but not lavish, and 'Como', in South Yarra set a fashion for town houses for the more successful of the squatters and those with wealth. In these homes, as in the station homesteads, an English governess was given a kindly welcome and a woman used to being snubbed in English society was gratified by the friendly reception she met with.

41. Ibid, p.323.
from her colonial employers. Indeed, the people of Melbourne had earned the reputation of being well-mannered, intelligent, unaffected, hospitable and kind-hearted.\(^{43}\)

In 1861 the population of Melbourne numbered 139,916. Over 37,000 persons were living in the city area and in residential Carlton and East Melbourne. Several of the governesses who arrived in the 1860's found their relatives residing conveniently close to the city in South Yarra, Hotham, Richmond and Collingwood. But Melbourne's population in 1861 was only 23 per cent of the total number of persons in the colony.\(^{44}\)

The majority of the people were scattered throughout the gold-bearing regions of central Victoria stretching from Ballarat to Bendigo or Sandhurst. In 1861 there were between 80,000 to 100,000 gold miners in the colony and this represented about one-third of the male workforce. Many of these were bachelors. Louise Booty, Sarah Webb and Miss Kightley had brothers on the goldfields, and when the MacGillivray sisters arrived they

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44. Victorian Year Book 1973: Centenary Edition, 'Historical Statistics' pp.1069; Grant and Serle, op. cit., p.77. See Graeme Davison, Marvellous Melbourne, pp.6-7; Geoffrey Serle, The Rush to be Rich, p.6. Miss Murrow's relations lived in South Yarra, Mrs. Allen's sister lived in Victoria St., Hotham, (now Nth Melbourne), Miss Boake's people were in Richmond, and Miss Store resided in Collingwood.
learned their brother, Dr. Paul MacGillivray had just taken up residence as surgeon at the Bendigo Hospital. Women from England were often pleasantly surprised to find how advanced some features of life were on the gold-fields. Sarah Webb was amazed at the shops in Sandhurst in 1863. They were 'equal to those in London'. The MacGillivray sisters decided to open a school in Ballarat where they thought they would have a greater chance of success than in Melbourne.

Maria Barrow, one of the first governesses assisted by the Society to arrive in Melbourne in the 1860's was not sure at first whether she liked the colony or not, although she had met some nice people and her relatives had welcomed her warmly. The summer had been a dry one and she liked the fine weather in Melbourne but the 'musquitoes' were 'venemous [sic] little creatures' and the flies were troublesome. Nostalgic for home, she missed the freshness of fine days in 'dear Old England'. She had only seen one garden to admire, and the flowers, violets, honeysuckle, sweet briars, heartsease and roses, were like 'old friends' to her. The size of the apples, pears and peaches amazed her. One evening a 'great party of Natives'

46. Sarah Webb, loc.cit.
47. See n.14, this chapter.
camped opposite the house in South Yarra where she was living and she felt rather afraid of them at first, for the old women looked very ugly but all were quite harmless.48

Twenty years later, Mrs. Ida White, who emigrated with her from Manchester, were simply delighted with Marvellous Melbourne. The city was a veritable garden with a 'wealth of flowers: roses and geraniums everywhere, the latter forming hedges, higher than the one storied verandahed houses.' In the shops Mrs. White found bananas, loquats, peaches and strawberries in the greatest abundance. She could buy delicious grapes for threepence a pound and pineapples at fourpence each. Collins Street was the most fashionable thoroughfare in the city and well-to-do women had established the custom of meeting their friends in the heart of town and parading the latest fashions in 'The Block.' "I think what struck us most on landing, was the beauty and tasteful dress of the Melbourne Ladies," she said. In the 1870's Cecile Nagelle had been somewhat dismayed when she discovered how fashionably governesses dressed in Melbourne and feared her slender means would not allow her to follow suit.49

48. Maria Barrow, South Yarra, to Miss Rye, 17 February 1862. In Sydney, Miss Gooch remarked on the pineapples, peaches and the finest fruit which grow in the open air without care, in G. Gooch, loc. cit.
49. Mrs. Ida White, Bowral, N.S.W., to Miss Bennett, 27 April 1881; C. Nagelle, 31 December 1873: '... the style of dress is really abominable to my eye - it seems to me women spend all their money on dress.' Compare Louise Dearmer's opinion that in Sydney the dress of all classes was 'absurd,' in L. Dearmer, Sydney to J.L., 14 December 1868.
But not every governess who arrived in Melbourne in the sixties and seventies formed a favourable impression of the city. Rosa Phayne had found the voyage particularly unpleasant and on her arrival in 1869 took an instant dislike to both place and people. She thought Melbourne was 'abominable in every respect', and deeply regretted her decision to come to the colonies. 'No one with the tastes, habits and feelings of a Lady should ever come out to Australia,' she wrote.

It may do for mediocre governesses who can put up with roughnesses, or I should rather say, vulgarity of mind and great want of intellect, but I never would advise a lady to try it. 50

She was glad to leave town and go to the bush where she believed life would be more to her taste.

Settling into colonial society took time. Few women experienced a smooth transition from English society to shipboard life and from sea to colonial society. The arrival in Sydney of the first party of women sponsored by the F.M.C.E.S., in 1861, was no trumpet-and-fanfare occasion but something of an anticlimax. Dr. Frederic Barker, who had promised Maria Rye co-operation in her scheme, failed to meet the party. Gertrude Gooch and the governesses were dismayed to learn that the Bishop

50. Rosa Phayne, 13 August 1869, L.B.L., pp.341-345. See also Cecile Nagelle, loc. cit. Miss Nagelle disliked Melbourne: 'I have not seen much of Melbourne yet, but I don't think I care for it - a second London in miniature - very dusty and crowded with people'.
and Mrs. Barker were 'from home,' and would not return for at least three months. Since their patron was out of town, Gertrude Gooch, Emily Streeter and their companions, their high expectations of a warm welcome and assured employment shattered, sadly dispersed. Miss Butterfield was handed over to her relatives and Miss Gooch reunited with her people only to hear her brother was close to death. Those without relatives went off in search of accommodation where they could stay until they could find employment as resident governesses.  

Some aspects of emigration which the organizers of the F.M.C.E.S's scheme needed to attend to in order to make the venture less of a hardship for women, gradually emerged as the earliest arrivals in the colonies wrote their impressions to Miss Rye and later to Jane Lewin. Where could genteel governesses who had no relatives stay upon their arrival and during the periods they were out of a situation? Finding accommodation was always more difficult in Sydney than in Melbourne. Sydney's housing problem in the 1860's was acute and remained that way for the next forty years. This posed problems for poor governesses. Good Boarding Houses

51. Emily Streeter, Jerry's Plains, Upper Hunter, N.S.W., to Miss Rye, 18 January 1862; G. Gooch, loc. cit.; Mary Phillips, Goulbourn [sic], to Miss Rye, 16 June 1862, L.B.I., p.23.
charged from two to three guineas weekly which put them out of the reach of most. Unfortunately the second rate ones were not considered au fait for an English gentlewoman. Reasonably-priced board was available at the Sydney 'Home', but governesses were advised against staying there because future employers did not like to think a governess they were hiring had been in contact with servants out of employment.\(^5^3\)

Women who sought positions as resident governesses could not afford to have their respectability doubted so they had to consider private accommodation. Fortunately for the first party and subsequently all governesses who arrived in Sydney in the 1860's, Emily Streeter knew Mrs. Augustus Dillon, the wife of the chief clerk at Sydney's G.P.O. She was a gracious, kindly woman who was on the committee of several institutions in the city and had wide contacts. She was able to assist Emily Streeter and her companions to get settled quickly in reasonably-priced private lodgings in town. But sometimes women had to go out a few miles from Sydney's central business district to find genteel accommodation.\(^5^4\)

In Melbourne governesses were able to stay at the Governesses' Institute and Melbourne Home which was opened in January 1864

\(^5^3\) Mrs. C. Barton, loc. cit.; Annie Davis, 17 June 1864.
\(^5^4\) E. Streeter, loc. cit. See N.S.W. Blue Book, 1862; Augustus Dillon was shown to be one of the highest paid clerks in the Post Office on a salary of £500 per annum. He became Postal Inspector at the G.P.O., Sydney. In 1862 he lived in Macquarie Street. See Mary Richardson, loc. cit.
and had Mrs. Rowe as Matron. She was a gentlewoman, the sister of an English Bishop, and a pleasant woman in whom English governesses felt they could confide. However, apart from keeping a register at the Home of vacancies for governesses and superior servants, she could not help them find employment.  

Having found temporary accommodation governesses faced the important problem of finding employment. Women who were living with relatives or friends did not experience the same urgency to seek employment immediately as those who were struggling to meet the high cost of lodgings. Furthermore, friends and relatives could make it known that a new-comer wished to take a situation. But, even so, what worried women who had been assisted by the F.M.C.E.S. was that they were required to repay their debt to the Society within two years and four months. To meet their responsibilities most governesses needed to become employed as soon as possible when they reached the

55. Moves to establish a home for governesses and superior servants in Melbourne were made early in 1863. See The Weekly Review, Melbourne, 14 February, 14 March and 18 April, 1863. The committee decided that persons not inmates of the Home 'out of situations', would be allowed to register their names in the book on payment of a small fee providing the committee were 'first thoroughly satisfied of their respectability'. The advertisement for a 'Lady Superintendent' for the Home was lodged by L. J. a'Beckett, Hon. Sec., in the Melbourne Argus, 22 October 1863. Letters to the editor were frequent in the following days. See Argus, 30, 31 and November 2 1863. Gifts for furnishing the Home were received from Melbourne's business houses and leading citizens, viz., Buckley & Nunn, donated five pounds, Mr. Crisp, Jeweller, provided a clock, Lazarus Bros., crockery and glass, McEwan and Co., a 'bag of sugar and a bag of rice', and Donaldson and Co., a pair of footstools; in Argus, 30 October 1863.
colonies.  

Women asserted themselves by seeking employment through the usual channels open to genteel women. They spent the first few days of their arrival, visiting those to whom they had been recommended, writing letters to eminent clergy and local personages, and attending church where they became known to the parish clergy. They were introduced to families with children. By using nom de plumes to preserve their anonymity and gentility, governesses lodged advertisements in the newspapers. Thus, in the early 1860's readers in Melbourne were accustomed to find notices such as the following:

Young LADY, competent to impart a sound English education, seeks ENGAGEMENT as DAILY or resident GOVERNESS. 
Address 'Education', Post-office, St. Kilda.  

Having advertised, a woman experienced a period of anxiety as she awaited a reply. In Sydney in 1861 Emily Streeter and Ellen Ireland waited up to five weeks before they received favourable replies. When such a notice failed to draw forth a response, a woman considered teaching in the country and advertised in country papers. If this

56. Some governesses' letters were concerned only with the repayment of the loan to the Society. See, for instance, Lizzie Cooler, Melbourne, to Mrs. Sunter, August 1873, L.B.1., p.425; L. Jones, Melbourne, to JL, 22 May 1868, L.B.1., p.304.  
57. Argus, 2 October 1863.  
58. E. Streeter, loc. cit.
also failed a governess widened her options whilst still confining her preference to what was considered respectable and genteel women's work. 'Respectable person wants re-engagement as nurse, needlewoman, or nursery governess,' ran one advertisement in a country paper in August 1861.\(^\text{59}\)

What were the governess's notions of success? Briefly, leaving aside the possibility of marriage which ranked high in middle-class women's scale of values,\(^\text{60}\) success related to the regularity with which a woman managed to find an engagement where she was offered a fair to good salary, and where the employers were genteel, well-to-do and highly respectable, were regular in their payments, and understanding and generous in their demands upon her time. Governesses definitely suffered a sense of failure when they seemed to have gained nothing from emigrating and when they had to consider going outside the field of teaching for employment. Well-qualified women were prepared to take a position as a nursery governess which was not as well paid as other governessing positions and was considered lower in rank. But beyond that most were not prepared to go. Employment as servants at a much higher rate was available but governesses felt it demeaned them.

Needlework was considered highly respectable but debilitating.

\(^{59}\) Mt. Alexander Mail, 21 August 1861. (I owe this reference to Patricia Grimshaw).

\(^{60}\) Peterson, op. cit., p.16.
Both Laura Jones and Susan Penrose were thankful to get needlework to help them on, but felt relieved when they returned to teaching. Maria Atherton expressed a willingness to do sewing until she gained a situation.\textsuperscript{61}

From the start women assisted by the F.M.C.E.S. expressed doubts about governesses finding success in the colonies. Caroline Heawood who gained a good situation in the family of the Registrar of the University of Melbourne within a week of her arrival thought the employment position for governesses was not encouraging in Victoria.

I would not advise any young person to come out unless they have friends to go to upon arrival in the event of their not meeting with engagements. This in Melbourne is not very easy to do and to go up the Country is very expensive.

She was receiving £60 in her position. She heard that salaries in the bush ranged from £80 to £100 per annum. Musical governesses were much in demand and unless a woman could teach music she was not likely to succeed in Australia.\textsuperscript{62}

Emily Streeter in Sydney had already written to Maria Rye saying that there was not the opening for governesses that had been supposed. Employment was hard to secure and women would need to be able to support themselves for at

\textsuperscript{61} Laura Jones, Melbourne, to JL, 13 August 1869, L.B.1., pp.339-341; Maria Atherton, Brisbane to Miss Rye, 2 September 1863, L.B.1., pp.34-5.\textsuperscript{62} Caroline Heawood, Barry Street, 'near The University', \textsuperscript{sic}, Melbourne, to Miss Rye, 25 March 1862, L.B.1., pp.16-17.
least two to three months until they found situations to suit them. Writing from Victoria, Isabella MacGillivray, whose sister had reluctantly accepted a situation at £40 a year, said salaries in town were disappointing and the high salaries which new-comers were told existed in the bush were never realised. Parents who advertised for a governess were being 'besieged with applicants.' Englishwomen who came to Melbourne in 1863 were discouraged when they read the long list of advertisements in the papers of governesses seeking situations, or noticed that the same advertisement appeared for weeks without meeting with satisfaction, or when they read that a 'Lady', wished for an 'engagement as governess in a family leaving this colony'.

When Mrs. Margaret Allen arrived in Melbourne in 1864 she found the city was 'too full' and hundreds were in distress. From Sydney a year later Annie Davis was advising Jane Lewin against sending governesses out in any numbers as there were already far too many 'Colonial second and third-rate governesses' in the colony. It was ill-advised to assist older women to Australia for nowhere was youth more highly valued than in the colonies. Thirty-five was the 'extreme age for anyone intending to cross the Ocean to this part of

63. E. Streeter, loc. cit.  
64. I. MacGillivray, loc. cit.  
65. Argus, 1 to 31 October 1863, included advertisements by persons under the nom-de-plume of 'Companion', 'Education', 'Ellen', and 'Experience', for several weeks. 'M.S.' advertised on 1 October 1863. 'A.P.' lodged a similar advertisement the following day.  
66. Mrs. Margaret Allen, loc. cit.
the world'. Miss Davis was twenty-six and was already preparing for the time when work was no longer to be had.\textsuperscript{67}

By the mid-sixties many teachers were in distress in Victoria. Early in 1866 one governess thought situations were as scarce in Melbourne as in London.\textsuperscript{68} When the McCulloch Ministry was challenged later that year and the 'Deadlock' occurred, civil servants did not receive their salaries. Many families could not pay their governesses; Elizabeth Boake was one who was unpaid during the crisis.\textsuperscript{69}

During the late sixties and early seventies educational reforms were in progress and the employment position of governesses in the metropolis improved very little. Jane Kidson, Elizabeth Boake and Ellen Ollard were all convinced that women who had relatives stood a far better chance of surviving their difficulties than those who were battling alone.\textsuperscript{70} But even with the backing of good friends a woman had to be persistent to find employment. Clara Stone exhausted every avenue in Melbourne and finally came to the

70. See Jane Kidson, Gertrude Street, \textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{1}}Fitzroy\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{2}}, Melbourne, to JL, 23 October, \textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{1}}1863\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{2}}, L.B.1., p.107; Elizabeth Boake, 1 January 1869, L.B.1., pp.329-331; E.H. Ollard, loc. cit.
conclusion she would have to consider other forms of employment.

I do not regret however that I have come to this country now, but some weeks back I was anything but sanguine of success - indeed I thought I should have been obliged to have turned my attention to other ways of obtaining a livelihood.

She was one of the few governesses who expressed a willingness to be adaptable to the point of leaving teaching for other forms of employment.71

Finally, even in the early 1880's in Marvellous Melbourne newly-arrived governesses did not find situations easily. After two months unsuccessful searching Miss Oberman moved to Sydney where at Manly she found a position at £50 a year.72 In 1881, Mrs. Ida White tried unsuccessfully for three months to gain employment in Victoria. The 'better classes' sent their children to the State Schools she said. Moving to N.S.W., she found a situation in a boarding school where she obtained £90 per annum. Mrs. White claimed that in Queensland she could have obtained £140 for a similar position and advised the Society, 'Let no one choose Victoria, it is quite over-done in every way. New South Wales is the place, and Queensland, better still.'73

73. Mrs. Ida White, loc. cit.
Twenty years earlier Englishwomen had found Queensland such a disappointing field educationally that after 1867 the F.M.C.E.S. did not assist governesses to that colony. When Maria Atherton and her sister reached Brisbane in September 1862 they received the impression that settlers were totally indifferent to education, and wrote to Maria Rye,

'I am sorry to say that there appears no opening for educated women in Brisbane. Schools abound and Governesses are not wanted... the people here are totally indifferent to education and the terms they offer to accomplished Governesses are from £20 to £40 per annum.'

Three years later Agnes M. Macqueen confirmed their view, stating that being a governess in Queensland was a precarious choice of employment. Experienced shop-women were in stronger demand and female servants better paid, receiving from £20 to £25 per annum. On her arrival Miss Macqueen was unable to find employment for some months. Respectable board and lodgings cost her at least thirty shillings a week, and her only income was a small sum derived from the sale of her drawings. From the time she decided to share a house with her brother, who gained a government appointment, her fortunes rose. Eliza Bernard suffered the greatest poverty during her two years there. The experience of adapting to colonial life 'wrought great changes' in her. After moving south to N.S.W. she worked

74. Maria Atherton, Brisbane, loc.cit.; See A.G. Austin, op. cit., Index, 'Queensland'.
75. Agnes M. McQueen, Brisbane, to JL, 18 April 1866, L.B.L., pp.222-225.
for nine months before she was able to send the first instalment of her repayment to the Society.\textsuperscript{76}

By 1867 whole families were in distress and Mrs. H. Wilson, whom the Society assisted, was unable to meet her debt because her husband remained unemployed for two years. Her daughter's school had fallen off considerably.\textsuperscript{77} The experiences of Mother Vincent Whitty, who founded the Order of Mercy in Queensland in this period, confirms the impressions of English governesses. In settling in, Mother Whitty's courage was sorely tested by the extreme privations suffered by her sisters, some of whom died at an early age. In summary, then, Queensland in the 1860's was a poor field for governesses and teachers.\textsuperscript{78}

Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century finishing governesses and well-qualified family governesses in N.S.W. and Victoria, were usually offered remuneration which ranged between $80 to $100 a year. Pastoralists, merchants, and legal families were usually able to offer these rates which included board and residence and laundry, which was an item of important consideration to a woman in

\textsuperscript{76} Eliza Bernard, c/o Buckhurst, Double Bay, Sydney, 17 December 1865 and 24 June 1866, L.B.1., pp.213 and 235.

\textsuperscript{77} Mrs. H. Wilson, "Parkside", Gregory Terrace, Brisbane, 18 February 1867, L.B.1., p.253.

the nineteenth century. Annie Davis and Mary Bayly in Sydney in the 1860's and Edith Zadis and Eleanor Tindall in Melbourne in the 1870's were each offered £80 a year with the promise of increased rates if the contract was mutually extended. Annie Davis was offered eighty guineas on two occasions by families residing in Glebe, Sydney. She was fortunate to be employed by George Wigram Allen, the son of one of Sydney's most influential figures in the 1860's. It is little wonder she said she was happy to be in such a 'comfortable home... with refined, educated people.'

Salaries varied considerably depending largely upon the range of subjects and 'accomplishments' a woman could teach. English governesses soon discovered that music was an 'indispensable qualification' in Australia. 'Music' was usually taken to mean learning the piano and governesses were usually obliged not only to give instruction but to supervise practice. It was one of the worst aspects of governessing and absolute drudgery.

A woman who was not musical was likely to find her salary reduced or was soon replaced. When Fanny Giles went to

teach at Morpeth, N.S.W., her conditions were ideal and she felt very much at home. But then her employers discovered her 'deficiency in music' and would offer her only sixty guineas. 81

Finishing governesses were expected to take languages as a matter of course. But a family governess was often expected to give some elementary instruction in a language to quite young pupils. French was the most popularly requested. In 1862 Emily Streeter went to Jerry's Plains in the Upper Hunter Valley in N.S.W., to teach Edward Parnell's five children ranging in age from five to eleven years. She had to relinquish her situation after six months because her slight knowledge of French proved to be her 'great difficulty'. Before seeking another position she sought coaching from Mrs. Dillon. 82

In Sydney in the mid-1860's there was a demand for German and a governess proficient in that language could expect to be offered £80 to £100 per year. But in Adelaide in 1874 Miss Cecile Nagelle who spoke both French and German fluently and was a professional musician as well, could only gain £60 a year 'and laundry' in Miss Sennar's Ladies' School in Hackney in Adelaide. 83

81. Fanny Giles, Morpeth, [N.S.W.], to JL, 10 September 1864, L.B.1., p.152. See n.62, this chapter. See Hammerton, op. cit., p.131, n.36. Many governesses mentioned that a woman who could not offer to teach music might find herself unemployed.
By clinging to their notions of gentility and preferring to seek employment only in the homes of the more genteel and older-established families in the colonies, English governesses limited themselves in their opportunities of employment and were frequently unmercifully exploited. Employers made handsome promises of high salaries which they seldom fulfilled. If they did they drove a hard bargain.

When a governess could not offer all the subjects which parents wished they often came to an agreement whereby a visiting master came to take a required 'accomplishment' and the governess accepted a lower salary. Mary F. Bayly became employed by Mr. Hills of "Marlenette," Cook's River, Sydney, and felt proud to be employed by a 'true gentleman.' 'If at the end of the year, we continue mutually pleased with each other,' she wrote in December 1866, "Mrs. Hills" will give me £100 for the next year.' But when her employers found she could not offer drawing, her salary dropped back to £80.

The post proved to be an exhausting one. She had six children to teach. The subjects she offered were English, French, German, Latin, Music and Singing. She seldom left the house except to go to church. She wrote all her letters late at night, had only one opportunity to visit her brother at Windsor, went into the city to shop once in two months, and rarely saw her friends except in
the holiday. 'I expect this year is as long as I shall remain here', she wrote after being with the family for fifteen months.

... it is almost more than my health can stand working from morning until night, without even time for a walk, and my only spare time being when I retire to my room for the night. 84

On the average, in the 1860's and 1870's salaries offered to resident governesses, in addition to their keep, ranged between £40 to £60 per annum. On the whole, pastoralists paid their governesses well and several recompensed them handsomely, 85 but some only offered the average rates. Nursery governesses only received from £20 to £40 a year and these figures and the above were still quoted as the average in the early years of the present century. 86 Some employers offered less than the above amounts and young women training to be governesses in city private schools received very small sums or nothing at all.

Whether she taught in town or in the bush the English governess's task of instructing the colonial child was

85. Clyde Company Papers, Vol.VII, 'Epilogue', 1859-73, p.347. George Russell of Golfhill raised Miss A.E. Bouly's salary from £80 to £120 in January 1867. Miss Bouly was already a governess to Russell's daughters in February 1862. When she married Hunter of Haddon Rig, N.S.W., about 1879, Russell gave her a 'very handsome wedding present' which she acknowledged in a letter in which she mentioned that 'Golf Hill has always seemed like a home to me.' (Letter of March 1879).
not easy. As outlined in the opening chapter, the Australian child was used to living largely out-of-doors, had rarely been strictly disciplined by parents and had not received regular competent tuition. 87 But, first, the English gentlewoman had to adjust to life in colonial households. After only a few weeks in Sydney in 1862, Gertrude Gooch discovered that the striking difference between English and Australian ladies was the way in which they conducted their households. Australian women were very 'indolent and untidy.' 88 She wondered whether this had something to do with the climate. Of course, few colonial families were able to retain the conventions of English society in everyday living under pioneering conditions, and when a governess took a situation she missed the strict routine of English households which rested upon trained and experienced servants.

The absence of servants or the lack of experienced ones posed problems for the English governess used to a hierarchy of servants, whose duties were strictly allotted and observed. 89 Despite the warnings of Maria Rye that adaptability was a requirement of emigration, 90 an English

88. G. Gooch, loc. cit.
90. Hammerton, op. cit., p.133. See No.40.
governess felt it an affront to be asked to take complete charge of younger children and be responsible for washing and dressing them, duties which in England would have been carried out by a nanny or nursemaid. But in colonial society where good servants were hard to obtain, governesses needed to adapt to colonial households and carry out duties nor formerly expected of them. Thus, in the first place, a governess had to adjust to being expected to stoop to menial tasks, secondly, to an entirely different routine in colonial households, thirdly, coping with living with newly-rich employers, and finally, face the problem of disciplining her pupils.

Not surprisingly, genteel governesses found it difficult to impossible to live in the homes of newly-rich colonists. On the Victorian border close to the Tatiara district, Louise Geoghegan met ' "would-be" gentry', who favoured 'thoroughly good Lady Governesses from Home', but she thought Englishwomen ought to be alerted to the conditions they would meet in such households.

The mushroom class pay largely but expect rather queer things, viz., that the Governess light the Schoolroom fire, and similar things. They have been accustomed themselves to manual exertions and don't understand not keeping it up.

She knew of two cases where ladies had found they could

91. See Mrs. Margaret Allen, c/o C.G. Doughty, Esq., Mount Gambier, South Australia, to JL, 16 January 1866, L.N.1., p.215.
not continue in such homes.\textsuperscript{92} Annie Davis left a family who offered her £80 a year because she could no longer stand the 'vulgarity of life' there.\textsuperscript{93}

Even in families where the parents were refined English governesses discovered Australian children were rude, spoilt, lazy and untidy. Older girls were pert and forward.\textsuperscript{94} Younger ones displayed neither energy nor application when confronted with tasks which required effort and patience. The difficulty was they were so very much indulged by their parents that any attempt on a governess's part to improve their habits only resulted in unhappiness for the governess. The situation discouraged Gertrude Gooch.

Australian children are just like vegetation here for neither appear to submit to much control, pine apples, peaches and the finest fruit grow in the open air without care and the children are equally wild and impetuous. You meet with very few quiet, patient girls here. They like no trouble nor will they take any about anything. The floor is the place for everything and it is no use making yourself unhappy because they will not acquire English manners for they do not like them.\textsuperscript{95}

To retain their employment English governesses found they had to refrain from imposing their standards on children


\textsuperscript{93.} A. Davis, 21 February 1867.

\textsuperscript{94.} Ibid.; Ellen Ireland, Newcastle, 18 February 1862; Market Square, Goulburn, 20 August 1863; Annie Davis, Sydney, September 1863.

\textsuperscript{95.} Gooch, ibid. Schoolmasters thought colonial children were 'over indulged', see Olive Wykes, 'Schoolmaster Turned Professor: E.E. Morris, 1843-1902, Melbourne Studies in Education 1966, p.143.
whose up-bringing in the Australian environment was so different to that of English children. Moreover, since Australian mothers were sensitive to criticism and disliked being made feel inferior by English gentlewomen, who paid meticulous attention to tidiness and good manners, they often obstructed a governess's efforts to discipline their children. But the governess felt this was her role and the reason for her employment. This situation created tension in not a few governesses and some women found the task impossible.

In 1862 Ellen Ireland's initial experience in an Australian household ended abruptly. She had scarcely settled in with the Butler family at Goulburn, N.S.W., when she decided that the climate was too hot for her. The real reason for her hasty departure was the uncontrollable behaviour of her pupils. 'I was glad I was...[able] to get away from them,' she confided to Maria Rye, 'I never met with such rude children in all my life.'

One of the reasons for Rosa Phayne's dissatisfaction was the freedom her employers, the Scotts, allowed their children. She did not approve of children having 'their own way in all things'. In the Hines family the children were 'uncontrollable to a degree,' and yet Miss Geoghegan

96. Gooch, ibid.
97. Ellen Ireland, 18 February 1862.
was not permitted to chastise them. The parents insisted her task was to 'civilize them', chiefly by example and by teaching accomplishments.  

In the wild Australian environment some allowance had to be made for children being indulged. Although the mortality rate among young children was not as high as in earlier decades or in England, it was still high in the colonies in the 1860's. Young children sickened and died within a matter of hours. Infectious diseases and other ailments carried off both young and old in the bush where medical attention could only be obtained from a distance and at great expense. Parents who had lost children tended to spoil the survivors of their families. While the Hines family mourned the loss of Bessie, their eldest daughter, lessons were suspended and it was weeks before the governess commenced teaching.  

Mrs. Margaret Allen thought a colonial mother unreasonable when she said she expected her governess never to let the

99. Louise Geoghegan, Neuarpurr, Victoria, to JL, 12 August 1868, L.B.L., p.311. But by the 1880's Englishwomen found their pupils better behaved and more amenable to intellectual pursuits while they still favoured the outdoor life. See letters of Mrs. Ida White, 27 April 1881, and Miss Crowley, Illabo, N.S.W., n.d. 1882?.
100. Patricia Grimshaw and Graham Willett, 'Family Structure in Colonial Australia: An Exploration in Family History', Australia 1888, Bulletin No.4 (May 1980), p.25, n.87, 'Infant Mortality Rate'.
102. Louise Geoghegan, 19 February 1867.
children out of her sight or mind. But dangers to which the colonial child was exposed in the bush were not always apparent to the English governess who had just arrived in the colonies.

Teaching in the bush on a station had a romantic appeal for English governesses. The idea of finding husbands and happiness in the bush was an attractive one fostered first by the emigration authorities and kept alive by both English and Australian writers.\(^{103}\) But taking a situation which was not always as handsomely paid as expected and adapting to life in the bush was singularly lacking in romance. The wide brown land repelled rather than attracted and some women thought it the ugliest country they had ever seen. Governesses were not surprised to learn that people went mad from the 'intense solitude of the Bush.' Louise Dearmer had been several times in the bush and was once for ten minutes lost. 'There seems one interminable growth of tea tree with here and there a large Gum or Iron Bark tree,' she explained, 'all of a dingy brown-green colour.'

... At home in the woods one hears the birds sing and chirp and a buzz of insect life, but here there is not a sound excepting towards evening when the locusts make a noise like the letting off of steam from a railway engine, and the buzz of mosquitoes.\(^{104}\).


\(^{104}\) L. Dearmer, 14 December 1868.
Until they had experienced it, governesses had no idea of how isolated a bush town or a squatter's house could be in Australia. Women who had grown up in London, Liverpool or Manchester, or in the neighbourhood of a small provincial town in England missed the sights and sounds and crowds of town life or the cosy gossip of the village. If governesses went for a walk in the bush they met no one and could easily become lost. Englishwomen's poor sense of direction became proverbial. The Shaw family joked about how their governesses became lost in the paddocks of Yancannia Station in north-west N.S.W. The McConnells of Queensland named a waterhole after a governess who, when lost, had the sense to stay near water.

Reaching situations in the bush entailed such danger, discomfort and expense that Englishwomen questioned whether the remuneration compensated for the risks involved. A governess who went to a station inland from Port Macquarie, N.S.W., in the sixties, thought a salary of £40 hardly justified emigration. She was comfortably settled but found Australian bush life 'very different from dear old England.' When Louise Geoghegan made her way to her situation her journey was like a great trek. She left Melbourne on Christmas Day 1866 and went by rail to Ballarat (via Geelong). At Ballarat she was met by Mr. McLeod, the brother-in-law of her employer and became one

107. Mary Richardson, 13 February, 1863.
of a party of twelve who left for Benayeo, north of Apsley near the South Australian border, the next day.

We drove up about 260 miles − used to start very early in the morning, rest in the heat of the day and make another start in the evening − the weather was very hot more so than has been felt for the last four years. We had all kinds of adventures in the shape of kicking horses and broken poles [shafts]. But we reached Ben [ä] yeo (the residence of Mr. McLeod)... the following Sunday. It is 14 miles distant from this place [that is, Neuarpurr].

When Miss Oliver who succeeded Miss Geoghegan made the same journey a few years later she travelled all the way by coach which she found 'very disagreeable for a lady alone.'

... I started by 300 miles up the country, such travelling in a vehicle one can only call a covered cart, across miles of uncultivated flat country diversified by ugly dark pine trees, heath and swamp, not a person to be seen, every twenty or thirty miles a station or a small township...

She felt salaries were not in proportion and that in consequence £100 was worth no more in Australia than sixty pounds in England when travel expenses were taken into account.

Becoming acclimatized to the aridity and heat of the inland, the rugged existence in some bush homesteads, and living conditions generally, quickly dispelled many a governess's dreams of an idyllic life in the bush. Even in the most genteel colonists' homes life was a strange mixture of 'roughing it' and refinement.

108. Geoghegan, 19 February 1867.
109. M.A. Oliver, Neuarpurr, Horsham, 2 October 1871. The nearest mailing centre was Horsham.
110. Geoghegan, 18 October 1867.
without ceilings, hastily-built homesteads were hot in summer and cold and draughty in winter. Miss Oliver noticed the cold in Australia even though it was not as bitter as in England.

... still I think I felt it quite as much, perhaps this was owing to the house being only of one story \textit{sic}, and the rooms all leading into the garden, so that it is almost like living in the open air.

Her employers, the Hines of Nyoarpurr, lived as comfortably as settlers could in the late 1860's but the food, though wholesome, was monotonous. Mutton formed the principal dish. Butter was sometimes unobtainable.\textsuperscript{111}

But, above all, teaching in the bush was a monotonous existence and women found the loneliness depressing. In the 1860's governesses likened the monotony of life to that of a convent, or being in exile, or being in prison 'only without the ignominy'. In the daily round there was nothing 'but conversation, scandal and gossip, - no books, no society, nothing improving, everything retrograde'.\textsuperscript{112} Louise Geoghegan found the life oppressive, although she admitted the freedom to please oneself more than compensated for monotony.\textsuperscript{113}

\textsuperscript{111} M. A. Oliver, \textit{ibid.}
\textsuperscript{112} Geoghegan, 10 August 1870; Oliver, \textit{loc. cit.}; R. Phayne, 18 May, 1871.
\textsuperscript{113} Geoghegan, 17 May 1868.
The routine is teaching from eight o'clock to dinner at one o'clock and again from two to three o'clock, after which you are your own Mistress, but your resources are limited solely to intellectual amusements.

Walking owing to the heat and wet is only possible a short time through the year - and then you must be brave enough to go by yourself - for here they think it laborious. Driving is inconvenient there being no roads, only tracks, and as Mr. Hines is now his own overseer, he seldom has time to take us out riding as he used to do - and a book, the piano or fancy and plain needle work occupy you until bed time - No one comes and there is no place to go to - I have never been unhappy here, and though I am sorry to part with Mrs. Hines I am not sorry to leave the Bush. 114

In Miss Geoghegan's opinion, the feeling of monotony and exile was apt to take 'forcible possession' of a woman unless she had the 'resource to shake it off.' Since there was a danger that a woman could be overwhelmed by the lonely life she was leading, she recommended that only women who were very determined about emigrating and only those who had relatives here should come to the Australian colonies and venture to the bush.115

Unfortunately a governess who had little money and no relatives was trapped. After living at Neuarpurr for only six months Miss Oliver felt like having a holiday but the costs made the project difficult.

If a governess has friends in Melbourne it is something like £20 if she takes a holiday, the transportation of luggage is fearful, only small portmanteaus are allowed, and if there is anything extra, it is heavily charged.

114. Ibid., 10 August 1870.
115. Ibid., 12 August 1866.
Unable to get away easily made Miss Oliver depressed. 'Had I known the very isolated life I was to lead,' she wrote, 'I do not think I should have been induced to come out.'

Although at first governesses often liked the novelty of the bush life, as time went on they became overcome by the loneliness and monotony. Rosa Phayne liked the less conventional style of life with the Scott family at Rich Avon in the Donald district, and enjoyed the privilege of meeting the wives of some of the leading pastoralists like Somerville Learmonth of Ercildoun. But she missed her family and failed to relate to any but her immediate circle. Doubting if she was suited to the climate, or the people, or an Australian life at all, when her contract with the Scotts expired she worked only for a short time in Tasmania before returning to London to the great disappointment of Jane Lewin.

Some governesses who went to the bush did not give up but their health broke down. Susan Penrose became ill whilst on a station and had to leave a well-paid situation which she later regretted. There were a number of reasons

116. Oliver, ibid.
118. Ibid, 18 May 1871; June 1872.
119. Susan G.B. Penrose, loc. cit. Several governesses suffered recurring bouts of illness, including Isabella Rodgerson whose courage was only sustained by the thought of her mother's arrival in the colony, and Ellen Ireland. See I. Rodgerson, Nepean Towers, Douglas Park, N.S.W., to JL, 15 July 1867 and 16 October 1867.
why young women might have left resident positions in the bush and not all might have been connected with illness or difficulties of adaptation. As already remarked one point on which governesses remained silent in their letters was their sexuality. Any problems of sexual harassment by male members of the family in which they were employed were never divulged. Cases were known in the colonies where young educated women were forced to leave their employment because of scandal. In the 1850's in Victoria a case came before the courts involving a nursery governess. In the 1890's in N.S.W., papers reported a 'shocking scandal'. 120 Most probably, a governess tried to seize an opportunity to escape before an embarrassing situation developed. Both distance and the climate were fair explanations for dissatisfaction in the colonies and could have concealed a more serious personal reason for a governess's vacating her situation. In the Victorian era the governess could not afford to lose her good name. Her respectability was her entrée to genteel employment.

At the same time how could a governess indicate to a prospective suitor that she wished her friendship with him to continue without creating gossip and trouble with her employer. It would seem it depended on the good sense of her employers, her relatives and her friends to assist

120. Examiner and Melbourne Weekly News (Melbourne, August, September, November, 1857); the case reached a higher court but then the woman lost the case. See Mt. Alexander Mail, 12 February 1891, which reported from a N.S.W. paper (I owe this reference to Patricia Grimshaw).
a woman form a genuine friendship with a colonist.\textsuperscript{121}

Women certainly had marriage in mind when they emigrated. In replying to a query of Jane Lewin's Annie Davis dismissed the idea that young and accomplished governesses soon married in Australia. From what she had heard it might have happened once but not any longer.\textsuperscript{122}

Caroline Haselton was surprised and not a little disappointed in 1877 to find so many 'unmarried ladies' in Australia. She felt it was time the 'fables about Australia were ended;' employment was not as easy to obtain as had been declared, salaries were disappointingly low and women did not find husbands easily.\textsuperscript{123} In 1881, however, Mrs. Ida White was certain that Australian men seemed to have quite a fancy for marrying governesses, and said that ladylike girls who were prepared to go to distant stations in Queensland had every chance of marrying well.\textsuperscript{124} In the late 1880's an English newspaper claimed that governesses in Australia were highly successful in enticing bachelors to the altar, and that one station homestead had provided a succession of four young ladies as wives for local gentlemen.\textsuperscript{125}

121. See Mrs. Henry Jones of Binnun Binnun, Broad Outlines of Long Years In Australia (London, 1878), pp.203-204. (News of the governess's engagement, p.210 et seq. (the wedding day). Though this book is classed as fiction this writer believes it is very thinly-veiled biography. Several governesses are described and could be based on English governesses that Mrs. Jones met in the Apsley district.
122. Davis, June 17 1864.
124. Mrs. Ida White, loc. cit.
Unfortunately, most of the claims that English governesses married well in the colonies provide only vague and usually unsupported evidence. However, statements made by women in the registration of teachers in Victoria in 1906 reveals firm evidence that a number of English-born women had been governesses in the colonies before their marriage. They married clergymen, teachers, clerks, pastoralists and merchants.¹²⁶

Before leaving this discussion of the success or otherwise of the English governesses who were assisted by the F.M.C.E.S. to the eastern Australian colonies, mention must be made to those few who opened schools. They seemed to have instant success. Within a month of landing Sarah Webb established her sub-primary school on the Bendigo gold-fields. She began with twelve 'respectable children' and charged them one shilling per week for tuition, and was optimistic of continuing success.¹²⁷ The MacGillivray sisters established themselves in Torquay Place, Lyons Street, Ballarat,¹²⁸ and Jane Barlow settled at Janefield on the outskirts of Melbourne.

Miss Barlow's school prospered beyond her expectations and

¹²⁶ See, for example, Mrs. Agnes Caroline Bath, Mrs. Annie Jane (née Horner) Wheelwright, and Mrs. Louise Isabel Watts, in Public Records Occie, File No.10061, Applicants Nos.303, 7322 and 7229.
¹²⁷ Sarah Webb, loc. cit.
¹²⁸ Margaret MacGillivray, Torquay Place, Lyons Street, Ballarat, to JL, 21 February 1865. By the same letter she forwarded £25 to the Society, the full sum she owed, an indication of success and possibly Scottish frugality.
her experience provides an excellent example of a governess who adapted successfully to the colonial way of life. She liked 'Bush life' very much, and though her remuneration was very small she found it a far more independent way of life than that of a Governess. She did all her own housework and although household scrubbing and rubbing tired her out at first, especially in summer, she declared she was becoming 'quite a Colonial woman,' and added that she feared she would not easily fit into English ideas again. 'I can scrub a floor with anyone, and bake my own bread and many other things an English Governess and School Mistress especially would be horrified at.' Jane Barlow was not snobbish and had made friends with the local blacksmith and the general storekeeper and his wife who were her nearest neighbours. They were 'truly kind' to her.129

But there were several governesses whom the Society assisted who failed to adapt successfully and lived close to poverty. Eliza Ford's continuing extravagance embarrassed both employers and friends.130 Eliza Walpole's quarrel with her relatives and later her brother's death left her to battle alone.131 Ellen Ireland had little success. She found the experience of emigration very traumatic and became a victim of intense loneliness. After leaving her first situation at Goulburn she took ill. Nursed back to health by Mrs. Dillon in Sydney, and encouraged by Gertrude Gooch and Emily Streeter, she tried another situation. Although her

129. Jane Barlow, Janefield, Melbourne, June 24 1863, L.B.1., p.76 et seq.
130. See reference to E. Ford in letter of Annie Davis, 21 Feb 1867, L.B.1, p.259.
teaching commitments sounded ideal at Newcastle, she suffered headaches and was obliged to return to Sydney. After another spell with Mrs. Dillon she returned to her original situation at Goulburn, having been assured that the children she had found so rude were better behaved. Befriendied by a clergyman and his wife, she began to write more cheerful letters. Like many governesses and other women in colonial society she turned to religion to help make sense of her painful reality. 'I have had trials since I have been in this Colony,' she wrote, 'but I must pray to God and He will help me.' In Sydney her plight was well-known among governesses and the last heard of her she was struggling against poverty on a very small income. 132

In summary, then, soon after their arrival in the colonies the governesses who had travelled together under the auspices of the F.M.C.E.S. spread far and wide throughout the colonies. Some, it has been seen, went at once to the bush as resident governesses in the station homesteads of the pastoralists, whilst others found situations to their satisfaction in the comfortable home of Sydney's lawyers and merchants, or with business and professional people elsewhere. A good

132. See letters of E. Ireland, 18 Feb, 28 May, 1862; 20 Aug 1863; see also reference in L. Dearmer, 14 Dec 1868, L.B.1, p. 320.
proportion married within a short time. Others, it has been revealed, lived with relatives in the capital cities or in towns on the gold-fields. Some with a little capital were able to establish schools successfully. Some individuals, like Laura Jones, Cecile Nagelle and Caroline Haselton were pleased to find positions as teachers in boarding schools. In Brisbane the Atherton sisters awaited an opportunity to take up land. Not to be defeated, Miss Maize who could not find employment to suit her in Sydney, sailed to New Zealand in the hope of better prospects, and from there to Melbourne. But Rosa Phayne was one, at least, who became lonely and disgruntled, and losing heart, returned to England as soon as her contract with her colonial employers expired.

Taking the gentlewomen assisted by the F.M.C.E.S. as being representative, becoming a governess in Australia in the middle decades of the second half

133. As stated at the beginning of this chapter at least 10 per cent of the women assisted to the Australian colonies married within three years of their arrival, viz, Miss Moundsen (Mrs Andrews); Caroline M. Heawood (Mrs Lofven); Mrs Lucy Philips remarried; Miss Louise Geoghegan and Maria Barrow. See Introduction, this study, n. 46; see also Ch. 2, this study, n. 4; and n. 20.
134. See n. 45, above.
135. For Miss Maize's movements, see Annie Davis, 21 Feb 1867, L.B.1, p. 261.
of the nineteenth century required considerable adjustment. On the whole the majority of English governesses experienced a warm welcome in colonial homes and felt appreciated as persons as well as being acknowledged as refined and accomplished teachers. Parents respected them and mothers on lonely stations, accepting them on the basis of equality, offered them their friendship. But as evidence suggests, English gentlewomen experienced a degree of tension in their relations with colonial employers and did not always feel comfortable in colonial households. Whereas Gertrude Gooch in Sydney in the early 1860's gained the impression that Australian women were made to feel inferior by Englishwomen's rather condescending attitude towards them, in Melbourne, some ten years later, Lucy Philips complained that English governesses were being discriminated against by colonial mothers, and by 1879, a correspondent of the F.M.C.E.S. was pointing out that an English governess could 'meet with as much cool hauteur in a Melbourne drawing-room as ... in an English one'.

Adjustment to colonial society took time to achieve and depended on many factors. But many a governess's

137. See n.96, above.
138. Lucy Philips, 12 Aug 1873, L.B.1, pp. 420-422.
successful adjustment founder because she clung so tenaciously to her notions of gentility. Despite fierce competition she persisted in searching for employment as a governess rather than venture into occupations which were more highly paid but which she viewed as being socially beneath her to the point of being demeaning. Emigrant governesses found it difficult to decide whether or not to become employed by parents who could pay them handsomely but whose social origins were humble. The letters of several women reveal that Englishwomen could not be happy in the homes of newly-rich settlers or tolerate the ignorance and roughness of a small isolated bush community.

As has been illustrated many an English governess's successful adjustment was due to the good fortune of having the emotional and financial support of kin in the colonies. Relations welcomed her and provided a moral boost and a safe refuge when things went wrong. The economic crises which shook the colonies during the 1860's and 1870's and the changing attitude to public education during those decades produced problems which aggravated a governess's difficulties in finding employment. Unfortunately, women like Eliza Bernard

140. Compare the impressions in the letters of Annie Davis, Louise Geoghegan and Rosa Phayne.
who was alone in Queensland tasted the bitterness of poverty in the initial experience of colonial life and found their courage sorely tested, and those like Ellen Ireland who failed to adjust to colonial society and the Australian environment but could not return to England and had no relatives in the colonies lived on the edge of poverty.

As mentioned in the first chapter of this study a major difficulty to be overcome by English governesses was their repugnance of the isolation of life in the bush, and further evidence of this dislike has come to light in this section. In rural districts in the 1860's and 1870's there was well-paid employment for superior and accomplished women but the high cost of travel, primitive living conditions and the loneliness and monotony of life discouraged women from applying. But in the cities competition was keen to desperate and those who remained suffered privations.

In the long run, despite the ruggedness of life in the colonies governesses who emigrated had no regrets. The English gentlewoman who became a governess in a pioneering

142. See n.132 above.
society discovered a greater flexibility in social relations, and experienced an increased sense of independence and of the need and dignity of her work. Most importantly the governess enjoyed a marked improvement in her health. This might have been in part both the reason for and the result of the more active life she led in colonial society.
CHAPTER 4

GOVERNESSING IN THE LATE COLONIAL PERIOD:

The Victorian Example

...[I] received my school education in England, my training as a Kindergartener in Auckland, New Zealand, and practical experience in Victoria.

ANNIE WESTMORELAND (1906)
Mobility was the most striking feature of nineteenth-century Australian colonial society. Everyone seemed on the move. In every decade more land was being opened up for settlement and another pioneering community sprang into existence. Properties expanded and amalgamated whilst others declined and split up. Fortunes were made or lost and there was just as much downward as upward mobility. The economic depression which followed the gold rushes of the early 1850's was lifted now and then by sporadic rushes with a major rush in the mid-sixties to Otago in New Zealand. In the 1860's settlers lured by land rather than gold moved into the Riverina or went to Queensland. In Victoria the steady growth of industry and commerce and the promise of employment in Marvellous Melbourne attracted a larger and larger population to the city. In the final decade, following the worst depression the colony of Victoria had known, there was a large-scale migration to the rich gold-fields of Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie in the West. Throughout this period wherever families became established governesses and schools were required. Like everyone else, governesses became caught up in the pattern of movement whether it was social or vertical mobility, or horizontal mobility or migration.²

¹ See Graeme Davison, 'The Dimensions of Mobility in Nineteenth Century Australia', Australia 1888, Bulletin No.2 (August 1979), pp.7-32.
In this chapter the focus is on the mobility of middle-class women who sought employment as governesses in the period 1850 to 1906. My principal hypothesis here is that horizontal mobility ensured success for the colonial governess. In asserting this, I interpret success to mean constant employment exclusively within governessing. Only regular employment could ensure a governess's success. Certainly, even with employment, emigrant English gentlewoman could fail to adapt to colonial society and the loneliness and monotony of the Australian environment, but without employment, a governess who had no well-established kin in the colonies could become very miserable and sink into poverty.

If a governess would not move, and employment in her immediate vicinity gave out, sooner or later she had to turn to other forms of employment. An English middle-class woman was intensely proud and would rather starve than sacrifice her gentility by accepting work which demeaned her. As remarked in the previous chapter, if a governess moved outside the field of teaching or other 'respectable' employment allowed gentlewomen, such as needlework or millinery, she rarely or never divulged the fact. 3 In being prepared to travel about the

3. See n.61, Ch.3, this work. Only one governess regretted not having been given a chance to train for pursuits such as millinery which would have stood her in good stead in the colonies. See letter of Ellen Cillard, 4 August 1876, L.B.2, p.500, F.M.C.E.S. Records. In the 1860's Nursery governesses were less loathe to widen their options to the extent of offering to work as barmaids. See Mt Alexander Mail, 10 May 1861, advertisement. (I owe this reference to F. Grimshaw).
colonies the governess had a greater opportunity of being always 'in a situation'. Therefore, further downward social mobility could only be prevented by geographical mobility.

From the time that governesses first came to the Australian colonies they realised they would be obliged to cover great distances to reach their situations. It has already been pointed out that early in the century, when inland travel was full of hardship for women, governesses resisted going to the country to teach and chose rather to eke out a precarious existence by taking low-paying situations in schools in the principal towns or turned to music teaching in their own homes. But in later decades of the century governesses were on the move. Although research has revealed that some resident governesses remained with families for periods of from eight to ten years, by far the majority, on the average, spent about two or three years in a situation before moving on to another. What I hope to illustrate is women's ingenuity in making the best use of every kind of situation open to them within governessing to remain constantly employed.

In the later decades of the century, whilst a small number of governesses managed to teach exclusively in private families, the majority of women alternated teaching privately with experience as assistants in private schools. Privately-conducted schools were increasing in numbers.
In Melbourne in the 1880's individuals and whole families of daughters set up schools for girls. Furthermore, the colonial governess did not only restrict herself to the private sector of education. Her mobility is further illustrated in the way in which she availed herself of the opportunity to be employed in the colony's elementary schools. Permanent employment, and the possibility of receiving salaries higher than those offered to governesses were powerful incentives for educated genteel women to overcome their prejudice against elementary school teaching. Whilst the main argument is devoted to an analysis of the remarkable horizontal mobility displayed by the colonial governess in the Australian colonies, a second hypothesis is concerned with women's upward mobility and its relationship to the higher education of women. It is my firm belief that it was the governess who paved the path to the professions for women in colonial society. I am prepared to assert that in Victoria, at least, the governess played a greater role in the improved secondary education of girls in the late nineteenth century than male historians have realised or have been prepared to admit.\(^4\) Governesses were among the earliest matriculants and graduates of the University of Melbourne. A number of middle-class women possessed a superior educational background and from being a 'finishing governess' it was an easy step to become a matriculant and finally a graduate. By becoming formally

qualified the governess was enabled to apply more widely for employment at the highest levels. Whilst she was able to experience greater occupational mobility within teaching, if she was still young there was the chance she could launch into other professions such as medicine.

By becoming a more highly and certificated teacher, the governess was able both by her example and her teaching to raise the sights of the young women who were her pupils. Successful employment and academic success brought newfound dignity to the working woman of the middle classes and stirred within her a deeper sense of her own identity. In Australia teaching became the most popular profession for women. From there it was a short though difficult step to higher professions previously closed to women. Quietly and unobtrusively, and not without difficulty, it was the Victorian governess who set women's feet on that upward path.

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By way of introduction to this discussion of middle-class women's mobility, a brief study of the demography of the colony of Victoria demonstrates there was in the period under review, an increasing number in the population of very young women and older single women, many of whom needed employment. However, most women married.
Secondly, a survey of the occupations of women as revealed in each of the successive censuses of the period illustrates that, as Melbourne expanded and secondary industries were developed, there was an increasing demand for female labour. New 'white-collar' occupations were becoming available to women. Yet the numbers of women attracted to teaching did not slacken, but, on the contrary, increased. Although the government system of education absorbed increasing numbers of women in the later decades of the century, women continued to seek work in private education. Since no provision had yet been made by the State for the provision of secondary education, the higher education of girls remained very much in the hands of governesses. But as I hope to illustrate, women's employment in the area of private education was highly competitive and fostered a high mobility rate.

In the first place, accompanying the mobility possible in the colonies was a greater opportunity for marriage for women. In Victoria in the years immediately following the gold rushes of the early 1850's and in the early 1860's it was easy for women to find husbands, and marriage and birth rates were both extremely high in the colony. The census of 1854 revealed an exceptional shortage of women of marriageable age in the colony. Governesses who arrived

7. Victorian Year Book 1973: Centenary Edition, p.39, In 1854 the proportion of females who were single was 53.68 per cent, compared with 68.97 per cent of males. Even married males were 31.03 per cent of all males compared with 46.32 per cent of females.
in the 1850's and early 1860's did not have to wait long before receiving a proposal of marriage. Even a confirmed spinster like Caroline Newcomb who had arrived in the colony with the Batman's in the 1830's decided to marry at the age of 49. In 1861 she married Rev. James D. Dodgson, the Methodist Minister of Drysdale. However, after the gold rushes, the colony of Victoria suffered a prolonged and painful period of adjustment in which all classes of society were involved. The population continued to be restless. From the 1860's to 1900 young men left the colony in thousands to seek their fortunes in other colonies, or joined the rush to New Zealand, or returned to Britain, often leaving behind them wives, mothers, sisters and sweethearts to manage as best they could. New young immigrants from Britain arrived to even up the gaps left by those departing. In Victoria the masculinity rate in the population fluctuated throughout the period, dropping in the years following the gold rushes, and again in the decade 1871 to 1881, and quite markedly during the depression which began in the early 1890's and continued until 1914.

In 1861 there were about 213,876 females in Victoria. By

10. Ibid.
11. Victorian Year Book 1973, pp.39-40. The rate fell to 101.7 in 1901, whilst in 1911 it dropped further to 99.34, the first census in which the number of females for the State as a whole was greater than the number of males.
1901 there were 601,464. Throughout this period not only was the fluctuating masculinity rate favouring the steady increase in the numbers of females in the colony but the life expectancy of females was increasing. More female children were surviving infancy and childhood and adult women were living longer, and longer, on the average, than males. Increased sunshine and fresh air, the plentiful supply of cheap meat and the availability of a variety of fruit and vegetables, all contributed to effect an improvement in women's general health, and governesses who came in the 1860's and 1870's remarked how well they felt here. In the 1850's the number of elderly persons in the colony was negligible. Thirty years later the census revealed a young and vigorous colony with one-half of the population under twenty years of age but there was an increasing proportion of people in the higher age groups, with an increase in the number of elderly female persons. Widows in the population had increased by nearly 3 per cent between 1854 and 1888. In the 1880's Melbourne's middle-class matrons discussed the 'marriage problem' and expressed concern about the difficulties their young daughters were

12. Ibid., 'Historical Statistics', pp.1069-1070.
13. Ibid., p.39-40. In the period 1881 to 1890 a female could expect, on the average, to live to 51 years. By comparison, between 1932-1934, a woman could expect to live to 67 years. See P. Grimshaw and G. Willett, 'Family Structure in Colonial Australia' etc. loc. cit., p.25, note 87, 'B. Life Expectation 1870-1881'.
14. See for example, the letters of Cecile C. Nagelle to Jane Lewin, 31 December, 1873, L.B.1., p.434; (from Gawler, South Australia), 5 November 1975; 26 February 1876; (from Angaston, Sth. Australia), 26 January 1877, L.B.2., n.p.; 14 May 1877, p.11, F.M.C.E.S. Records. Caroline Newcomb (See n.8 above) came to the colonies for the good of her health.
experiencing in finding suitable husbands. Unmarried women in the younger eligible ages, 15 to 25 years, quite outnumbered their prospective partners.16

To recapitulate, as the century advanced, although the majority of women were adult married women, there was a growing number of young unmarried women in the colony, balanced by an increasing number of older women who remained either unmarried or became widowed. Immigration, together with the natural increase in the number of women in the population, the fluctuating masculinity rate, the difficulties of finding a husband in a compatible marriageable-age group, the incidence of women's increasing longevity, - all these factors contributed to the increasing number of women in the colony seeking paid employment outside the home.

As already indicated, with the development of Melbourne as a large metropolis there were increasing opportunities for the employment of women. From 1862 to the early 1890's the city attracted more and more people until in the 1880's at least 33 per cent of the colony's total population was concentrated in Melbourne and its suburbs.17 Domestic service, the making of clothes, and teaching continued to be the usual avenues of employment for women as in earlier decades,18 with teaching clearly heading the list of 'light,
gentlel employment.' But there was a perceptible, slowly-widening variety of employment opportunities for educated and white-collar women. Those who were able to avail themselves of training to enter commerce found a demand for their services, and those who in earlier decades had crowded the ranks of governesses because there was so little else offering, now discovered a choice of 'respectable' occupations including that of female clerk, telephonist and saleswoman. Just as in governessing, in the field of commerce in the 1880's the personal element was a notable factor which operated in women's favour, and relatives commonly assisted women into paid employment in shops, offices and the public service.

With the expansion of secondary industries working-class women were attracted to work in the factories clustered in the suburbs of Collingwood, Richmond and South Melbourne. Colonial women preferred to work in factories rather than in domestic service. Statistically, there were always well over 20,000 domestic servants in the colony in the later decades of the century, and in 1891, the combined figure

21. Ibid., p.127.
22. Davison, op. cit., pp.6 & 45.
for domestic and lodging-house servants reached 29,700, but Melbourne's society matrons despaired of the shortage of trained and respectful domestics to the end of the century. If English governesses are to be believed, domestic servants in some households often received better salaries than some resident governesses and were more highly esteemed.

Millinery and dressmaking had always been regarded as genteel occupations for women and needlework continued to be a good stand-by for governesses when out of a situation. But competition kept salaries low. In 1871 the census declared 11,826 were employed in 'dress', and of these, 6,577 were milliners and dressmakers. Further down the social scale, tailoresses numbered 1,313 and another 1,814 women were employed as shirtmakers, staymakers and machinists, presumably in clothing manufacture. Well over 1,300 poor women found employment in laundry work and as washerwomen. By 1891 there were 17,316 milliners and dressmakers in the colony, and another 2,411 sewing machinists and seamstresses.

Between 1871 to 1881, some new occupations were attracting women in relatively substantial numbers. Nurses increased to over one thousand, saleswomen from 115 to 565, and drapers' and mercers' assistants from 279 to 305. The numbers of commercial clerks were rising (43), and so were telegraphists (61).\(^\text{29}\)

In the country, by comparison, many women remained employed in farming. On the gold-fields, in 1871, thirty-two women were still mining. In 1881, only five remained in gold mining. However, fourteen women were being employed by goldsmiths or at the Mint in Melbourne.\(^\text{30}\)

The census of 1891 showed the colony was thriving and more women were in employment than ever before. On the one hand, there was an increase in the number of women of 'independent means', and the category of 'Lady', showed 461 women. Another 903 women were 'landed proprietors', and 175, 'capitalists'. (But on the other hand, 114,229 women were 'bread-winners', as compared with 379,748 male bread-winners. There were 9,725 women in professional occupations and another 9,264 in commercial pursuits. The largest number of women at work were in industry, 28,662, while 42,431 were domestic workers and another 10,861, primary producers. The census officials classified 13,286 women as being in 'indefinite' occupations.\(^\text{31}\)

\(^\text{30}\) Ibid., pp.510, 515, 516.
\(^\text{31}\) Census, 1891, loc. cit., pp.571, 558, 557; See Table III, Section A. 'Bread-winners', p.549.
A highly respectable calling for women was house-keeping, and in Marvellous Melbourne of the 1880's when ladies were in a constant social whirl between their mansions in town and a home at Mt. Macedon or at the sea-side, house-keepers were in demand. In 1891 there were 2,877 house-keepers in the colony. Also reflecting Melbourne's matrons' need for help in the house was the inclusion of a new category in the census, that of 'Lady help, Lady's companion', which drew a response from 455 women. The numbers of washer-women and laundry workers had decreased but a new category, 'charwomen,' drew a response from 442 women who were most likely cleaning the new banking and insurance offices in the heart of the city. In 1891 domestic and lodging-house servants numbered 29,700, the highest recorded in the century, and another 4,535 women were working in inns, clubs, coffee-houses and restaurants.

Except for Annie Davis who intended returning to London to train as a 'sick nurse', no other governess evinced any interest in nursing as an alternative occupation. Conditions were known to be hard in nursing and the salaries no better than in governessing. By 1891 nursing was increasing in popularity in Victoria and there were 266 'hospital nurses' and 615 'sick nurses'. Nearly one thousand women were

monthly nurses and midwives.\textsuperscript{34}

In the late eighties more attractive work was found in 'white-collar' work. For example, seventy-eight women were in general and local government, 14 in banks, 414 were commercial clerks and 344 were post-mistresses. About 136 were in telegraph offices, and 37 in telephone service. Some 65 women were book-sellers, while 1,385 were saleswomen. \textsuperscript{35} In 1888, in N.S.W., women were preferring work in shops rather than be bound by the 'semi-serfdom' of governessing.\textsuperscript{36}

Yet, however favourably society regarded these new occupations for women, teaching maintained its popularity and continued to be considered as the ideal occupation for genteel women. In 1871 there were 3,678 female teachers in the colony of Victoria. Of these, 957 were employed in government schools and 876 in private schools which included Catholic and other denominational schools, whilst 747 women said they were governesses. Among another 864 women who did not specify the type of school

\textsuperscript{34} Letter of Annie Davis, to JL, 21 February 1867, L.B.1., p.261, F.M.C.E.S. Records; Census, 1891, loc. cit., Table VI, 'Distinct Callings', p.555.

\textsuperscript{35} Census, 1891, op. cit., pp.546-572. Twenty years earlier in the census of 1871, only three women were clearly in offices, — one law clerk, one female commercial clerk and one woman municipal officer. Three other educated women were listed as authors, editors or writers. Twenty-nine women kept servants' registry offices, the most respectable of which would have been patronised by governesses. See Census, 'Occupations', 1871-1881, loc. cit.

in which they were teaching, there might, in all probability, have been a number of governesses. Thirteen women declared they were 'teachers of accomplishments', which included 'foreign languages', dancing, drawing, drill, etc. Music mistresses numbered 219 and another 51 women were musicians or vocalists. There were 27 artists or painters, some of whom might have done some teaching in schools. 37

Between 1871 and 1881, the number of women who were teaching in schools and privately in the colony increased to 4,175. In addition there were 732 music teachers. Among the 75 female musicians and the 143 artists were women who might have given instruction in schools or privately. At least 831 of the total number of teachers definitely declared they were governesses. Teachers of 'accomplishments' had increased to sixty, and many were 'visiting teachers'. 38 In 1891 in Victoria there were 4,597 women involved in education. At least 2,171 were teaching in government schools. A larger number, 2,268, declared they were governesses and 1,417 women were music teachers either in schools or in private practice. 39

Unexpectedly, the steady increase in employment stopped dramatically. In 1887, the colony of Victoria experienced its biggest boom ever. (But in 1891 the land market collapsed and bank shares and stocks began a downward slide

38. Ibid.
In 1893 the banks closed and the whole colony was plunged into depression. Employees of every kind were thrown out of work. Governesses and tutors were among the first to lose their employment. Many private schools closed.\(^{40}\)

After the most terrible privations and suffering among all classes of society to which reference will be made later here, the colony slowly recovered.\(^{51}\) With the foundation of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901 and the choice of Melbourne as the temporary seat of the Federal government, employment in Victoria received a welcome boost and within a short time half a million persons were at work. The chief gainers were the professional classes. Private schools regained and increased their enrolments \(^{42}\) and new schools opened. Governesses were in as great a demand as ever, both in families and in schools.

The appointment of Frank Tate to the position of Director of Education in 1902 led to a re-organisation of education in Victoria.\(^{43}\) One of his first moves was to urge the registration of all teachers and schools in the State.\(^{44}\)

\(^{40}\) Davison, op. cit., Ch.2, 'The Old Spirit...Has Gone Out', pp.41-71; M. Cannon, Land Boomers, pp.15-21.
\(^{41}\) Victorian Year Book, 1973, pp.181, & 326.
\(^{42}\) M. Theobald, Ruyton Remembers, p.53
\(^{44}\) Ibid., p.321.
After some opposition the Victorian parliament passed the Registration of Teachers and Schools Act on the 12th December 1905.\footnote{Ibid., pp.321-2. The Act authorised the establishment of a Registration Board of ten members to keep registers of teachers and schools and to provide for the inspection of school buildings. This Act led ultimately to the closure of many schools which failed to meet the regulations of the Health Department.} In 1906 well over 8,000 teachers hastened to submit applications to the specially-created Registration Board for registration either as Sub-Primary and Primary Teachers, Secondary Teachers, or Teachers of Special Subjects. Some women obtained registration in all categories. Private governesses and music teachers teaching at home who had fewer than five pupils, were not obliged to register, but these, together with women who had already retired, as well as married women who had not taught for years, sought to safeguard their future by registering. Some applications were made from women interstate, from New Zealand, and even from London.\footnote{For the first time in the colony, and perhaps in history, a large body of women who were governesses and those who, at some time of their lives, had been a governess, revealed evidence of their teaching experience to a government authority. Their applications for registration, though largely fragmentary in character, have left a remarkable collection of data on how women in the later decades of the nineteenth century gained their livelihood as governesses and teachers in the colony of Victoria and elsewhere. It is largely on this evidence that much of the remainder of this chapter, and indeed, this thesis, rests. Some applicants for registration failed to become registered. Others failed to gain registration in the category for which they made application but gained registration as a teacher 'prior to the Act', or as being 'employed before the Act'. The applications for registration made in 1906 are found in File No.10061: Application Forms for Registration of Teachers and Schools Act 1905, Public Records Office, North Laverton, Victoria. See also 'Note on the Sources', G. Jones, 'Governessing in the Colonies' etc., op. cit., p.19.}
From the preceding brief study of the demography of the colony together with the survey of women's occupations in the second half of the nineteenth century, it is clear that more and more women were finding employment in teaching and that the numbers who were governesses were continuing to rise. Emigrant English gentlewomen and colonial-born governesses were finding work in the homes of established settlers in the country as well as in the new urban communities, or were seeking employment in ladies' academies and private schools for girls, or setting up their own schools. Some were overcoming their fear of a loss of gentility by accepting situations in colonial elementary schools.

In the nineteenth century girls seldom received consistent private instruction or attended school regularly. Few went to school week in week out for a whole year, or contemplated an unbroken stretch of six years at secondary school as schoolgirls do to-day. Only when examinations became the target for achievement towards the end of the century did parents recognize the need for steady attendance at school.

Therefore, when a woman applied for a situation as a resident governess, the period for which she was hired

47. See Vision and Realisation, p. 321. An Education Act passed the same day as the Registration of Teachers and Schools Act, was another of many attempts by the authorities to enforce compulsory attendance at school.
varied considerably. It could be for a few weeks or for several years. Some women were prepared to accept a temporary position now and then for a period as short as three weeks whilst a family governess was ill or had been called home for some reason, but usually they preferred a situation where the contract was made for twelve months at least. As the previous chapter revealed, distances were so great and travel so expensive in Australia, that an English governess who went to the bush questioned whether the effort was worth-while if the salary offered was only £40. Whether English or colonial-born, if a woman found a situation to her liking she tried to extend her contract over two or three years for then it became a more profitable and satisfying venture all round.

Governesses appear to have been accustomed to accepting both short-term situations and the more common yearly contracts to remain in employment. Certainly this offered them variety. Those who tired of the city liked a year or two of quiet bush-life, whilst those who became bored and depressed with the lonely life of the bush, applied for situations in town for a change.

In Victoria the homes of the pastoralists of the Western District absorbed many governesses over a period of fifty or more years. The length of time a governess spent with these families varied but, on the average, extended over two to three years. In the Toomath family of Carlton
there were four daughters and three of them spent some
time in employment in the Western District between 1884
and 1906. They taught the families of the Macks,
(Lismore), Russells (Carngham), Bostocks (Woolsthorpe),
Rutledges (Warrnambool), and the Manifolds of Purrumbete.
Each of the Misses Toomath stayed more than a year with
these families. As well as the usual subjects, each
taught music, whilst Henrietta Toomath offered Drawing
and Painting, and Irene Toomath was prepared to present
pupils for the examinations of the Melbourne Institute of
Advancement of Needlework.

When Lucy Tindale who had been senior resident governess
for ten years at "Ormiston" Ladies' College in East
Melbourne, went to the Western District she taught in the
home of the Hon. W. Robertson from 1881 to 1883, and from
there moved to the family of Peter McArthur of "Meningoort",
Camperdown, for three years. But some women were fortunate
to stay for longer periods; later in the century, Frances
E. Barnes remained in the family of Emily O. Broughton of
"Kout Norien", Harrow, for ten years, whilst Juliana
Attridge became a nursery governess for four and a half
years with Mrs. M. Silvester of "Merino Vale", Merino.

48. See applications for registration under the terms of the Registration
of Teachers and Schools Act 1905, File No.10361, Public Records Office,
North Laverton, Victoria, hereafter, 'RTS, loc. cit., Applicant No....';
Applicant No.6912, Toomath, Ada Winifred; No.6913, Toomath, Henrietta Mary;
No.6914, Toomath, Ima Georgianna May; and No.6915, Toomath, Irene Kathleen.
49. M. Kiddle, Men of Yesterday. See 'Index' for the various pioneering
pastoralist families.
50. RTS, loc. cit., Applicants Nos.6913 and 6915.
51. Ibid., No.6881, Tindale, Lucy.
52. Ibid., No.249, Barnes, Frances E.
53. Ibid., No.151, Attridge, Julianna.
By contrast, country girls often enjoyed coming to the city to teach, and Kate Jenkins of Warrnambool spent five years with Mrs. Alex Urquhart of the E.S. & A. Bank, Collins Street, Melbourne.  

Governesses who accepted situations on stations in the Riverina and elsewhere in N.S.W., usually stayed several years with a family. Eliza Jane Barrow of Malvern went north to Yirilambona, N.S.W., where she taught Mrs. Lowe's two children for eight years. Maude Archer of Ballarat spent fifteen years as a governess in the Riverina, but in 1902 one governess stayed only the winter term at Carobobala, N.S.W.  

Beatrice E. Beaver's early experience of teaching was gained in situations of short duration. The daughter of a Church of England minister at Tallangatta, Beatrice was educated to matriculation standard at Miss Harper's Ladies' College in North Melbourne under H.J.L. Batten. When she became a governess she offered to teach 'English in all its branches, French, Arithmetic, Geography, Music (Piano), Singing, Drawing, Painting, Plain and Fancy Needlework, and all the usual subjects of a general education to pupils ranging from eight to eighteen or nineteen years.'

54. Ibid., No.3530, Jenkins, Kate Maude.
55. Ibid., No.268, Barrow, Eliza Jane.
56. Ibid., No.890, Archer, Maude.
57. Ibid., No.6747, Talbot, Evelyn Maude.
From February 1894 to 1895 she taught in Tasmania at "Bushy Park", Macquarie Plains, and completed the year with a term at "Moriang", Ryrie Street, Geelong. Then she went to Poowong, Gippsland, for a year and lived close to the Murray River at Goon Station via Kerang in 1897. From May 1898 to December 1905 she taught the daughters and a niece of Mrs. Susan Smith of "Boorool", via Mirboo North in Gippsland. She proved to be an 'excellent companion' for the girls whose ages ranged from eight to 18 years. In 1906 she became governess to Mr. R. Cameron's family at Coleraine.  

Sometimes young unqualified women agreed to go considerable distances for a year to gain teaching experience. They were encouraged when they received a good reference. The Beeston sisters, who were both musical, provide a good illustration. Constance who played the violin, went to New Zealand, while Effie went in 1901 to Goon Station where Beatrice Beaver had taught some years previously. Although Effie Beeston had not passed any examinations, her teaching of English subjects, Music (Piano), French, Needlework and Dancing pleased her employer, Mrs. S. Dennis, who considered her a 'thorough and painstaking teacher'. Effie adjusted well to station life and became a favourite with everyone.

58. Ibid., No.338, Beaver, Beatrice Edith. Other governesses who remained with families for longer than five years included Marjory Graeme Burnett (No.834); Annie G. Blundell (No.538), and Martha J. Bruford (No.752), who was 'greatly loved' by the Moody family of Camberwell to whom she taught piano.
59. Ibid., No.361, Beeston, Constance, and No.362, Beeston, Grace Ethel (Effie).
In the 1860's women were covering great distances moving inland and north from Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide to pastoralist stations in N.S.W., and Queensland, or going to Tasmania or across to New Zealand. Later they were going off to the West. Such mobility posed its own problems. Having arrived safely after a long and fatiguing journey a governess must have been disconcerted to discover her employers did not reside in one homestead permanently. For instance, annually, in the spring, the Chauvel family moved off from Tabulam to Canning Downs South. When they made this trip the governess followed them in a buggy driven by the overseer. A second group included the governess's pupils on horseback.\textsuperscript{60}

When Arthur and May MacKenzie moved north to Queensland from the lower Hunter valley in N.S.W., 'poor Miss Foy', their newly-acquired governess who was never seen without her gloves, lived in fear of stinging insects, snakes, the Chinese, the blacks, and the Kanakas, 'and of the children too'. She was glad when the family gave up the venture.\textsuperscript{61} The members of the Durack family lived in homesteads scattered between the southern Queensland border and Western Australia. Their governesses among whom were Miss Cameron, Miss Curtis and Miss Frances Quirk, a 'prim little Irish governess', travelled for

\textsuperscript{60} A. J. Hill, Chauvel of the Light Horse: A Biography of General Sir Harry Chauvel (Melbourne, 1978), p.4. See description in full.
weeks to take up their situations and their return to the city was often delayed by floods and high temperatures. 62

Later in the century one of the many governesses employed by the Quin family at Tarella, 56 miles from Wilcannia, N.S.W., was Katharine Susannah Prichard. The return trip from Tarella entailed a three day coach trip by Cobb and Co. to Broken Hill, thence by rail to Adelaide and from there to Melbourne. 63.

Once installed in a remote homestead a governess could not return home or move to her next situation without some help from her employers. In the 1860's Miss Hay was governess to the Murray-Priors in Queensland and had as her eldest pupil, the future novelist, Rosa Praed. There was only one access road into Marroon station and it passed through lonely, rugged ranges. 64. Few governesses who became unhappy in their situations could walk home. But in N.S.W. in 1878, Henrietta Greville, née Wyse, the veteran Labor pioneer, who had obtained employment at the age of seventeen as an 'under-governess' in a private school where she had

62. See Mary Durack, Kings in Grass Castles (London, 1959), p.159; the elder Miss Curtis was a 'reserved, rather prim girl'. When the Curtis family moved north to Roma, Mrs. Curtis and her daughters opened a small school; p.262; Miss Quirk was at Thylungra station where she was considered to be 'all prunes and prisms'; pp.312, 327, 337, and 353.
to do housework and teach for £20 a year and her keep, became dissatisfied, left, and walked the eighteen miles home. She gave up governessing altogether, and became a dressmaker in Temora.\textsuperscript{65}

Some English governesses had already travelled widely before coming to the Australian colonies. Helen Alex-Jones had been born in Shropshire and educated in Germany from 1884 to 1889. She had studied for several years in each of Paris, Geneva, Florence and Rome before teaching in the U.S.A., where from 1890 to 1892 she was Principal of Music at the Marion Ladies' Seminary, Alabama, Wisconsin. She joined the staff of "Girton", Bendigo, in 1902.\textsuperscript{66}

Eleanor Agnes Thomas was a finishing governess who had been educated in California before studying French and German Literature at the University of Otago, New Zealand, for two years. Arriving in Melbourne about 1900 she found employment in Toorak and Hawthorn in well-to-do families.\textsuperscript{67} Colonial women from New Zealand too swelled the numbers of women moving about Australia as governesses.

\textsuperscript{66} RTS, loc. cit., Applicant No.3895, Jones /\textit{for Alex-Jones}/, Helen Alex. See also for example, No.7724, Cornwall, Mabel E.K., who had been educated in London, spent three years in Germany c.1882, and at least 20 years as a governess in New Zealand and Australia; No.6630, Stewart, Elizabeth; No.677, Brent, Clara L., educated Folkestone, England, travelled Germany, Geneva; No.6703, Summerhayes, Madame Cecilia (Mrs. Nicholls, R.P.N.), trained in London, taught in New Zealand, Tasmania, Sydney, etc.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., No.6814, Thomas, Eleanor Agnes.
Emily Jaggers received her education at the Southland Girls' High School in Invercargill, sometime before December 1880, and found employment in outlying districts of Melbourne as a private governess.68

Two well-known English-born kindergarten teachers in Melbourne, the Misses Westmoreland, reached the colony via New Zealand. Miss Annie Westmoreland summed up her teaching career and her mobility neatly, saying,

"I received my school education in England, my training as a Kindergartener in Auckland, New Zealand, and practical experience in Victoria."

Both women taught at "Adamsdown" and at "Ruyton".69

In the 1890's women from the eastern colonies were attracted to Western Australia to teach in private families or to open schools on the gold-fields. Ruby Bowman went to Perth in 1897 and taught in two families.70 Two daughters of the Rev. Mr. Kelly of Winchelsea, Victoria, went to teach in the Girls' High School, York, which was

68. Ibid., No.3501, Jaggers, Emily Frances. She taught for six years at Mrs. Graham's "Lynch Park", Epping, taking Latin, French, Drawing and Music. She had been in Victoria for at least ten years. See also, for example, No.924, Mrs. Callaghan, Charlotte A.; No.632, Brady, G. McN.; No.3467, Ingram, Edith L., educated at Girls' High School, Dunedin, N.Z. Women moved the opposite way across the Tasman Sea, see No.7606, Mrs. Sim, Catherine, née Goodlet, who went from Casterton, Victoria, where she had a Ladies' Seminary from 1882 to 1894, to Rangiora and later to Queen's College, Auckland. She married the Rev. George Innes Sim.
69. Ibid., No.7304, Westmoreland, Annie and No.7305, Westmoreland, Elizabeth Crossley.
70. Ibid., No.603, Bowman, Ruby Shearer, of Windsor, Victoria.
the nearest railhead to the gold-fields of Coolgardie, and where they trained senior pupils for the entrance examinations of the University of Adelaide.  

Jane A. Stewart, a 'lady in every respect', who taught the family of the Rev. J. Wagg at Mortlake, Victoria, in 1896, had matriculated in Melbourne in 1881. Moving to Western Australia in 1898 she taught first for six months in Fremantle and became acclimatized before going to Kalgoorlie, where she established her own High School in 1899. Three years later she sold her school to the Sisters of the Church. She resumed private governessing at "Bullengong", The Rock, N.S.W.  

When they were not moving about the country governesses were hurry ing about the suburbs or towns where they usually worked as 'daily governesses'. If a woman could not gain full weekly employment she agreed to be hired as a 'morning governess', or, at a slightly cheaper rate, as an 'afternoon governess'. The four Becher sisters who moved to Sale early this century had been educated in Melbourne and their teaching experience exhibits urban mobility over a period of twenty years. The eldest, Alicia S. Becher, was  

71. Ibid., No.3686, Kelly, Edith Gertrude Ernestine, of The Vicarage, Winchelsea, trained at Mrs. Bolam's Private School, Kew, in 1896. She had some experience in schools and as private governess in N.S.W. Her sister, Irene, No.3696, had taught at the Echuca Grammar School before going to W.A.  
72. Ibid., No.6636, Stewart, Jane Anne.
educated first by private governesses and then at Mrs. Budd's school in Brighton. She began teaching in 1881 as a morning governess at Dr. J. J. F. Strong's in Hawthorn, where she remained two years. Then, successively, she taught as a morning governess in four private homes for periods of two to three years. In each she taught two children. Later, she took positions as a resident governess, first in the north-east at Longwood with Mrs. G. Chomley where she taught five children aged from four to fourteen years of age, and from 1898 to 1899 at Mr. Hamilton's in the Tambo valley at Ensay. 73

Both her younger sisters were educated and trained at Mrs. Webster's "Shipley House", South Yarra. Frances S. Becher trained for kindergarten teaching with Miss Templeton in 1898 and became principal of a kindergarten which she conducted in the mornings in Christ Church Schoolroom, St. Kilda, from 1901 to 1903. Each afternoon she taught at Mrs. Drought's, "The Vicarage", Balaclava. Before joining her sisters in Sale she took a residential position with Mrs. George Officer of Heidelberg. 74 Helen Louise Becher, who taught at secondary level preferred residential positions. Even in South Yarra where she taught for six years in the family of Mrs. E. A. Smart

73. Ibid., No.342, Becher, Alicia Susan. The Becher's choice of teaching subjects provides a good illustration of individual specialization within a family, which proved an advantage when they later opened a school.
74. Ibid., No.343, Becher, Frances Sophia.
of "Dene", she 'lived in'.  

Blanche Becher who had married and been teaching music in Sale, Rosedale and Stratford since 1902, encouraged her sisters in their venture, "Fernleigh" Ladies' College at Sale. She had begun her career at "East Leigh" in 1883, when Edward Hippias Bromby was headmaster. In the following six years she taught as a 'visiting governess' at a number of Melbourne's more successful schools for girls, - Miss Chambers' "Fairleigh", in East St. Kilda, "Ruyton", and M.L.C., at Kew, and Miss Connolly's, Miss McComas's, and "Shipley House", in the Toorak-South Yarra district.

The 1870's and 1880's were the high era of the female academy, the girls' school and the ladies' college in Marvellous Melbourne. Well-to-do colonial families and some who could scarcely afford the fees, indicated their support of the Victorian code of gentility and their determination to assert their superiority by patronising

75. Ibid., No.344, Becher, Helen Louise. In the Western District she taught the Ritchies of Port Fairy and the Affleck family at Minjah.
76. Ibid., No.3478. Mrs. Irving, née Becher, Blanche Maria (Mrs. Frank Irving, "Fernleigh", York Street, Sale). Contemporaries of the Becher family were the Sparrows, (Nos.6527, Sparrow, Alicia Deborah; 6528, Sparrow, Eliza; 6530, Sparrow, Jane), all of whom taught in the city but another sister was a resident governess in the country and in Sydney; the Ivines (Nos.3473, Irvine, Fanny and 3474, Irvine, Henrietta) who founded "Woodcote", in High Street, Malvern, and gained all their teaching experience in the suburbs; and the Wymonds, who founded "Clarence" Ladies College in Kew, c.1892; see Nos.7572, Wymond, Blanche Selina; 7573, Florence Lavinia, and No.7574, Minnie Louisa. See No.572 Boulter, Alice, whose employment was exclusively in the suburbs.
governesses and private schools both large and small. Middle-class parents wanted their daughters to be educated after the fashion of genteel young ladies in England, with a view to making a good marriage within their own circle or higher. As the century advanced, more and more single women with a little capital, families of daughters and widowed gentlewomen aided by their daughters who were either still too young to marry or had failed to find a husband, established themselves successfully as proprietors of schools for girls. 77 Present day "Ruyton" in Hawthorn began in Mrs. Anderson's home in 1878, 78 and countless others which have since disappeared, had a similar beginning. These schools ranged in size. Some never had more than eight to ten pupils, whilst others catered for from forty to sixty young ladies, some of whom were aged between sixteen to eighteen years. 79

As school enrolments increased goveresses were added to the staff. But only the more financial schools could afford to employ a number of well-educated women permanently. As school enrolments fluctuated a good deal in the nineteenth century, the custom of hiring 'visiting goveresses' for a variety of subjects as the demand required, was adopted and continued into the first decade of the twentieth century.

77. There is not space here to provide an exhaustive list of the schools conducted by women, but many are mentioned incidentally throughout this and the following chapter.
Most resident governesses in private schools taught some basic literacy, a little numeracy, offered one or more 'accomplishments', and as remarked elsewhere in this work, spent a great deal of their time supervising and chaperoning their pupils.

Many of the more well-known schools of the eighties had been founded in earlier decades and had changed hands several times in the intervening years. Since the 1850's there had been a cluster of schools at St. Kilda for the education of the daughters of Melbourne's 'gentle' folk. All offered the same kind of education. When Charlotte Docker was at Mrs. MacArthur's school a second time in 1856, she became a 'parlour boarder' and took tea and breakfast with Mrs. MacArthur. She received instruction in Music, French, Drawing and Singing, and spent her time practising her music, going for walks, bathing in the sea, attending church, visiting relatives and friends, and dancing at balls. "I indulged in having a delightful bathe this morning besides practising an hour", she wrote to her 'dear Mamma'. Since Charlotte learnt singing from Mr. Vitelli, either Mrs. MacArthur or Miss Forsyth, Charlotte's piano teacher, would have been present during the lesson.

81. Charlotte Docker's letters to her mother, Mrs. Sarah Docker, 25 February, 1 March, and 8 March 1856, in Docker Papers MS 1342/4 (1856), La Trobe Library.
82. Mrs. D.G. MacArthur to Mrs. J. Docker, 'Account Rendered', 31 March 1856, Docker Papers, loc. cit., 'Singing Lessons from Mr. Vitelli.'
In the 1860's, besides Mrs. MacArthur's school, there were at least seven other private schools for girls in St. Kilda. 83 "Oberwyl" was one of the first to be established, flourished well into the 1920's. A progression of French proprietors in its early years, - Monsieur and Madame Forissieur, Madame Pfund, and later Madame Mouchette, gave it a name for gentility which it dispensed in conversational French and a high standard of music. 84 At the junction of Princes and Barkly Streets, stood Miss Tuckwell's "Bungalow", famous for the number of young ladies who quitted its school forms 'to march straight to the altar'. 85

Further south in Elsternwick there was Mrs. Birchall's Ladies' College, and at Caulfield, Miss Inkersole's. In Brighton, the a'Beckett and Chomley families patronised Mrs. Bird's Ladies' 'Select Boarding School' in "Seaview House". Other families sent their daughters to Miss Cory's "Pellew House". 86

Among the best known ladies' schools in Melbourne in the 1860's was "East Leigh", which was conducted by Mrs. Elizabeth Tripp née Leigh in Prahran. Mrs. Tripp was an

83. Charlotte Docker, 25 February 1856; Charlotte wrote that St. Kilda was 'filling with schools and very many of the pupils had no seat in church'. See Argus, 1 October 1863; 2 October 1863; 5 October 1863; advertisements of schools. Compare D.H. Rankin, op. cit., p.231. Rankin's details are sometimes inaccurate. See also Melbourne Directory, 1864.
84. Rankin, op. cit., p.231. See Graeme Davison, 'Walking Tour of St. Kilda', typescript handout, History Department, University of Melbourne, 1977; Tom Roberts painted Mme. Pfund.
85. Ibid., p.232.
86. Argus, 1 October, 5 October, 1863, 'Educational' Advertisements.
Englishwoman remembered by Eliza Chomley as a woman of 'superior culture and ability'. 87 In succeeding decades several schools kept alive the name of "East Leigh" in their choice of name, - there was "Hadleigh", "Westleigh", "Edgarleigh", "Fernleigh", and of course, "Penleigh", which is still in existence in Essendon. 88 Men as well as women established schools for girls, and well-patronised in the sixties were Richard Budd's Educational Institute for Ladies and Mr. and Mrs. Vieuxsous's East Melbourne Ladies' School which were both comparable in size to Melbourne Grammar, Scotch and Wesley, the largest schools for boys in Melbourne. 89 But parents who preferred a school conducted by a woman for their daughters found plenty to choose from in East Melbourne, including Miss Nimmo's "Ormiston", in Grey Street and further along, Miss Evans' Day and Boarding School. 90 In Upper Hawthorn, Miss Parry conducted her school in "Karsfield Villa", whilst in the city itself several gentlewomen conducted schools in Collins

88. "Edgarleigh" was conducted by the Misses Farrell in Elsternwick, c.1888; "Hadleigh" was in Malvern; the Misses Westgarth opened "Westleigh" c.1886, in 212 Clarke Street, Northcote; "Fernleigh", Sale, see n.76, this chapter.
89. M. Theobald, op. cit., p.16; Argus, 1 October 1863, advertisement, 'Ladies College, Clarendon Street, Fitzroy Gardens /sic/, Principals Mr. and Mrs. Vieuxsous'...
Street. In West Melbourne there was the Grammar School.\textsuperscript{91}

Every country town had its generous quota of private schools run by women. In Portland, the oldest town in the colony, a number of small schools flourished for years. Miss Anne Clarke arrived in 1855 and two years later opened her school which supported her throughout her life. The school finally closed in 1889. Miss Clarke died in 1892 at the age of 78.\textsuperscript{92}

In the sixties Geelong supported an astonishing number of small schools conducted by both married and single women. Encouraged by the successful establishment of the Geelong Grammar School for boys, Mrs. Arnold and Miss Hoskins opened "Herne Hill House", a Collegiate Institute for Young Ladies in 1858. Patrons were informed that it was planned to offer a 'diversified and extensive Education which in England is deemed essential to a Gentlewoman'.\textsuperscript{93} Three years later the proprietors moved closer to the main business centre of Geelong and re-established the school as "Knowle House" Ladies' Academy in Skene Street. Although the school was more ideally situated it faced plenty of competition. In all there were over thirty-three

\textsuperscript{91} Argus, 1 October 1863; 17 October 1863; Miss Glenn was at Number 115, and Miss Eccles' Ladies' Seminary at Number 133. Mrs. Peake's 'Educational Establishment' was at 159 Collins Street; Argus, 9 October 1863.


\textsuperscript{93} M. Theobald, op. cit., p.17.
schools varying in size and competency.\textsuperscript{94}

In Newtown-Chilwell, a fashionable suburb of Geelong, there were a number of ladies' schools. In Hermitage Road, Mrs. Bruford was assisted by her two young daughters whose later careers exhibited amazing mobility.\textsuperscript{95} In Prospect Road, Mrs. Walters and Miss Hastie each had a school, whilst in Retreat Road, the Misses Dawson had already established their school which they later named "The Priory".\textsuperscript{96}

Many of these private schools in the colony were too small to admit much competition. Since only well-off parents could afford to keep their older daughters at school the upper levels usually contained only a handful of pupils. Charlotte Docker was unhappy at school because she missed the companionship of girls her own age,\textsuperscript{97} and Jane Mack disliked school for the same reason:

\textsuperscript{94} See The Geelong 'Chronicle' with which the 'Communal Advertiser and Looker On' is incorporated: 'Geelong: General directory 1861'. pp.1-6; Manning and Bishop's Geelong and Western District Directory for 1862-93. (Geelong, 1862). In 1861 Mrs. Turner was teaching music and dancing in Great Myres Street West, whilst Mrs. Wilmot taught at the eastern end. Miss Blackmore had a school in Belle Vue House in Bellerine Street, and Eliza Carter was in Sydney Place. In addition there were Mrs. Wheatland (Kilgour Street), Mrs. Hocker (Pakington Street), and Mrs. Cuzens (King Street, Kildare), whilst in Villamanta Street there were two schools, one run by the Misses Vines and Rees, and the other by Miss Ewing. The Misses Huie were in Virginia Street, while Mrs. Nash had her school in Fyfe Place off Corio Street, Mrs. Richardson who had Jane Mack as a pupil in 1849 or 1850, was in Malop Street. Other schools in the sixties were being conducted by Mrs. Peppers and Miss Toy, Miss Brew and the Misses Rigney and Ogston.

\textsuperscript{95} For a description of the Bruford sisters' careers from 1862 to 1906, see G. Jones, 'Governessing in the Colonies, etc., op. cit., pp.15-16.

\textsuperscript{96} See No.90, above. Compare Geelong Directory 1861 with 1882.

\textsuperscript{97} Charlotte Docker, to her mother, 8 March 1856, Docker Papers.
When I was 16 I went to a boarding school in Geelong held by Mrs. Boyce and her daughters who were refined and had been educated in France. The first year was on the whole profitably spent, but at the end of the second upon being asked if I wished to remain another year or go home my answer was that if I could not be sent to a school where there were some advanced pupils I would leave.  

Moreover, most of the women who opened schools could not afford to employ well-trained governesses and instruction was given without much understanding of how children learn so that school was often a painful and embarrassing experience for the young child and boring for the adolescent. When Jane Mack attended Miss Richardson's school in Geelong, the principal, a 'tall angular lady' was unsuccessful in her efforts to teach the eight-year-old Jane to dance.

I remember making her very angry by refusing to bend and spring when learning to dance, she took hold of my shoulders and tried to force my stubborn back down but all to no purpose...

Finally, to conclude this section on private schools in the 1850's and 1860's, in particular, whilst there is very little firm evidence on which to make generalizations, teaching in private schools was generally believed to be a precarious livelihood, and governesses appear to have been poorly paid and offered less in schools than in private homes. There was very little improvement in later decades for untrained, unqualified governesses, so that women needed to be mobile.

98. Jane Ceverhill nee Mack, 'Reminiscences of her Childhood: 1840's-1850's; MS H 15903 Box 102/1, La Trobe Library, Melbourne.
99. Ibid.
to find the best paid situations. 100

In the second half of the nineteenth century the regularly
paid school-teacher in government schools could hold her
head high. The certainty of a regular income however
small was a consideration which any woman who had to work
for her living could not afford to despise. If the
working woman of the middle classes was to become financially
independent and could not gain well-paid employment in
private education it was in her best interests to overcome
the notion that elementary school teaching was ungenteel.
Of course, what held most women back from applying for
situations in the National Schools, and later, the State
schools, was their inadequate education and lack of formal
qualifications and training.

In the 1850's elementary schools in the colony were staffed
largely by inadequately educated men and women. The average
salary was scarcely one to attract persons of ability when
fortunes could be made more quickly on the gold-fields. 101
But, in 1853, the newly-constituted Board of National
Education submitted to Governor La Trobe a revised scale
of salaries, together with a proposal of a training scheme

100. In 1906, the wages for females teaching in private schools at
elementary level were shown to range, on the average, from £20 to £40,
and, at the advanced level, from £50 to £150 per annum. These rates
were quoted as being paid in addition to board and lodging. See Victorian
Year Book 1906-7, p. 641. See n. below.
101. J. Alex. Allan, The Old Model School: Its History and Romance
1852-1904 (Melbourne, 1934), p.3.
for teachers. 102 Furthermore, it was proposed the Board conduct examinations in order to classify teachers for eligibility for the new salaries in the National Schools. 103.

In the first classification examination for teachers held in Victoria in 1856, women performed well. 104 Of the twenty-three who were classified, Jane Pullar, a governess who had only recently arrived in the colony, topped the list. Since the eight teachers who did commendably were offered situations at the Model School and received doubled salaries, Jane Pullar found herself appointed Assistant Teacher on the staff of the Infant School on a salary of £270 per annum. 105 After further examination in 1857 she was admitted to the First Division of the First Class. 106 Becoming a classified teacher Jane Pullar taught for ten years before marrying Patrick ('Paddy') Whyte, the Headmaster of the Model School. Her daughters were among the most brilliant of the early women graduates of the University of Melbourne. 107

103. J. A. Allan, op. cit., p.123 et seq.
104. Ibid., see table on p.142. See Chapter IX, 'Teachers: Conditions, Classification, and Training', pp.118-150. See names of women who attended training classes at the Model School in 1856, pp.126, 133, 138.
105. Ibid., pp.127-128; 46.
106. Ibid., p.46.
107. Ibid., pp.44-47; 51, 53, 70, 177. See her daughters' careers later this chapter.
With the passing of the Common Schools Act of 1862 the salaries of all teachers were greatly reduced. Women teachers were the hardest hit and their revised salaries were eighty pounds per annum for 'mistresses of schools', providing they were in the 'First Division of Competency', and sixty pounds if they were in the 'Second Division.'

These salaries were commonly paid to finishing and family governesses who received them in addition to their keep. Therefore, there was little incentive in the 1860's for governesses to enter the Common Schools except that employment was more regular than in governessing.

During the 1860's at least two of the English governesses who came to Victoria with the help of the F.M.C.E.S. were attracted to employment in the Common Schools. Miss Kightley taught in Maldon and elsewhere, and encouraged by reports of inspectors and school committees decided to qualify for a better salary. 'I am now going to work for a Certificate which must be obtained, and hope to be successful', she wrote to Jane Lewin. Although in Melbourne Elisabeth Boake had experienced no difficulty in gaining offers of both residential and daily situations she was disappointed to be offered on occasions only £50.

108. Board of Education (Victoria), First Report, 1862-3, p.12, 'Fixed Salaries'. See Judith Biddington, 'The Role of Women in the Victorian Education Department 1872-1925' (M. Ed. thesis, University of Melbourne, 1977), p.5. She sees this piece of legislation as being discriminatory against women, - all women were reduced to the rank of assistant.

per annum, and determined to leave governessing.

I am anxious to go up for the Examination for Teachers for Government Schools. I shall feel very independent if I succeed in passing. It is hard work but quite worth the trouble to get a certificate, one is then sure of employment - and good pay. 110.

In a school, besides the advantage of becoming permanently employed, an educated woman could not be humiliatingly compared with domestic servants. 'I heard a Lady say', wrote Elisabeth Boake, 'I would willingly give my cook £40 if she would stay', - at the same time the same lady could not afford to pay her governess more than £50 and the poor girl had to do all the needlework for five children, besides housekeeping, teaching and the children were far advanced and very clever'. 111 More and more women began to view teaching as a profession. They realised that if they had to teach to earn a living they might as well teach where they would gain remuneration for instruction without having to be obliged to 'live in' and do a myriad of menial tasks in order to hold employment.

But the decision to become certificated posed problems for a governess. If she had no relatives, - and because

110. Elisabeth Boake, Richmond, Victoria, letter to JL, 1 Jan 1869, L.B.1, pp. 329-331, loc.cit.
111. Ibid.
she needed a home applied mostly for situations as a resident governess, she would have found insufficient time to prepare for examinations. Both Miss Kightley and Miss Boake lived with relatives and Elisabeth Boake was fortunate in being able to stay with her sister-in-law in whose school she could gain experience of class teaching. Unless a governess was extremely gifted, if she had no one to help her in her studies, she had only a slight chance of success.

To obtain a Licence to Teach in government schools, candidates were required to pass in Reading (oral), Writing, Composition, Grammar, Geography and Arithmetic. Female candidates had also to present in 'Needlework for Girls'. In addition a pass was required in the Art of Teaching which involved a practical examination conducted in the class-room. During the 1860's the failure rate among pupil teachers and newcomers to the colony appears to have been high, but candidates were allowed to re-present for examination. Having gained a Licence to Teach a woman could attempt the Certificate of Competency. The subjects were almost the same but the standard was more advanced. If a candidate wished to qualify for a position in the First Division for Head Teachers of Schools, she had also to present in the Art

112. Ibid.
of Teaching (Part II) which involved composing the notes of a lesson, drawing up a time-table, and giving a collective lesson in the presence of the inspector of schools.  

The exam for 'honours' favoured male candidates whose education was often more rigorous and included mathematics and science, for, except for English, Music and Drawing, the subjects offered were far removed from the genteel 'accomplishments' with which the average governess was acquainted. Even French, so popular in girls' schools was not included.

Some of the women who registered in 1906 enjoyed longevity, and their careers help to illuminate women's mobility over a long period. Miss Elizabeth Pearcey South taught in Common Schools before opening a school of her own in Richmond. After ten years she moved to Northcote where she conducted a private school for thirty years.

Mrs. Annie Hanley Walsh enjoyed continuous employment from the time she had become a 'Workmistress' in the Education


117. RTS, loc. cit., Applicant No.6516, South Elizabeth Pearcey, 20 Helen Street, Northcote. 'I have a Second Class Certificate with "Failed in Geography" from Common School, but it is so long ago I cannot put my hand on it now', was her response to the question regarding her qualifications.
Department in 1878. At one stage she had taught needlework for a year in the Training College. In 1890 she opened a private school in Caulfield.\textsuperscript{118}

Some versatile women availed themselves of every opportunity to qualify in order to remain in employment. It was possible to obtain a Licence to teach 'special' subjects such as music or drawing, and Marion Wood of Hawksburn obtained a licence to teach Drawing in state schools in 1890. She had also qualified for Matriculation in six subjects. During the 1880's she was a resident governess in Mansfield, Stawell and in Melbourne, but after World War I, she turned to commercial subjects and in 1916 was teaching Bookkeeping at the Working Men's College.\textsuperscript{119}

While some women moved out of the Education Department into private education, others moved into government schools and later returned to private teaching. Miss Edith Sprigg was a governess before she trained in 1869 at the St James and St Paul's Training Institution and subsequently taught in the country in state schools at Campbell's Creek near Castlemaine, at Gravel Hill, Bendigo, and at Ararat where she was in charge of the infant school.\textsuperscript{120} When she moved to Flemington School in 1872 she was a Certificated First

\textsuperscript{118. Ibid., Applicant No. 7144, WALSH, Mrs Annie Hanley, licensed 22 May 1879. See 'workmistress' in Vision and Realisation Vol. I, pp. 58, 120, 151, 214.}
\textsuperscript{119. Ibid., Applicant No. 7532, WOOD, Marian.}
\textsuperscript{120. Ibid., Applicant No. 6544, SPRIGG, Edith.}
Assistant on a salary of £95.5.8d and by 1874 was receiving £108.10.0d per annum.\textsuperscript{121} By February 1878 Edith Sprigg had completed all the requirements for the Certificate of Competency as a Trained Teacher. Two years later she obtained a Licence to teach Drawing as a special subject. In 1886 Miss Sprigg left the Education Department and while teaching in a college in Surrey Hills began to study for matriculation. During her time at the Carlton Ladies' College from 1888 to 1890 she passed the Matriculation examination with honours in English and French. Early this century she moved to Chaucer Street, Moonee Ponds, where, with two young relatives, Eleanor and Mabel Sprigg who had matriculated in 1898, she established the Ascot Vale High School.\textsuperscript{122}

In the brief discussion of the English governess in the introduction it was shown that in London the need for the provision of training courses for governesses led to the foundation of Queen's College in 1848. In England the movement to provide improved secondary education for girls and the higher education of women was closely associated with the movement for the emancipation of women.\textsuperscript{123} In

\textsuperscript{121} Victoria PP, 1875-76, Vol.III, Appendix C, 'List of Teachers who are classified under the Department of Education with their Classification and the Schools in which employed on 1 July 1875', and Appendix D (with salaries shown).
\textsuperscript{122} See n.120. See RTS, loc. cit., Applicants Nos.6545, Sprigg, Eleanor, and 6546, Sprigg, Mabel A.
time the influence of these movements were to be felt in the Australian colonies and New Zealand. In London the feminists and the authorities at Queen's felt that examinations would help train women in disciplined study, and as some college women intended to work in girls' schools, a standard comprehensible to the public such as a diploma was desirable. At the same time a widening of the curriculum in girls' schools was essential. Miss Buss and Miss Beale, both graduates of Queen's, pioneered modifications in the curriculum in their respective schools. In 1858 when Miss Beale became Principal of the Ladies' School, Cheltenham, she retained Latin in the subjects offered to pupils but introduced history and the study of German. At the North London Collegiate School Miss Buss had already introduced French, history and natural sciences, and since her school was a day school it became a model for the Public Day Schools' Company in England. But despite these excellent models improvements in women's education were hampered by the short supply of well-educated women teachers.

In London in 1865, Emily Davies, who later founded Girton College, and who was one of the Langham Place circle, managed to have girls' schools included on the agenda of

enquiry of the Royal Commission into Secondary Education. 127
She and her supporters hoped that the inefficiency of ladies'
seminaries would be exposed and lead to widespread changes
in the curricula offered to young women in schools and in
the training of teachers. As the feminists expected, the
Taunton Commission's report revealed that the education of
girls in England was characterised by 'showy superficiality,
inattention to rudiments, [and], undue time given to
accomplishments...'. 128

As early as 1862 Miss Davies had been making informal
enquiries at both Oxford and Cambridge regarding the
attitudes of the university authorities towards opening
their local examinations to school-girls. She realised
that, by not being permitted to compete with men academically,
women were hindered in their chance of challenging male
monopoly of public life and the professions. The equality
of opportunity for girls to present for the preliminary
examinations for entrance to universities became a matter
of concern not only to those who saw such tests simply as
a gauge of young women's scholastic prowess, but also to
the feminists who wished to demonstrate women's equality
with men. 129

127. Kamm, op. cit., p. 189; see esp. Chapter XIV, 'The Schools'
128. The Taunton report, in Ailsa Zainu'ddin, 'The Admission of Women
to the University of Melbourne, 1869-1903', S. Murray-Smith (ed.),
Miss Davies' persistent efforts led to permission being granted for girls to sit for the Cambridge Local Examinations in 1865. In 1869 women were admitted to the entrance qualifying examinations of the University of London and to those of Oxford a year later. Ten years later the London University admitted women as degree students and the recently-founded Victoria College of the University of Manchester followed suit. Eventually, a small number of English graduates and certificated women emigrated and their success in the Australian colonies will be briefly illustrated later.

In the Australian colonies it was not a feminist consciousness which informed the movement to gain permission for women to be admitted to the matriculation examinations of the colonial universities. But the London feminists had brought about some respectable English precedents to which parents and teachers who were bringing pressure to bear on the authorities of Sydney and Melbourne could refer. By 1871 seven 'young ladies' presented themselves for the Senior Public Examinations in N.S.W. and in Melbourne three were permitted to sit for the Matriculation examination. By 1881 when women were admitted to courses at Melbourne there were already 270 women qualified to sign the matriculation

130. Ibid., p. 197; Curtis, op. cit., p. 173.
roll although only thirteen did so in that year. The University of Adelaide which had opened in 1876 was already accepting women students.¹³²

As parents began to favour the idea of allowing their daughters to present for the matriculation examination, though they did not necessarily want them to go to university,¹³³ the demand for more highly-educated teachers increased in Victoria. In the 1870's governesses began to find it an advantage when applying for situations in schools to indicate evidence of ability to prepare girls for examinations. In many cases principals of schools suggested to staff they should consider qualifying for matriculation and trained them for the examination themselves. Jenny Fischer, Principal of the Geelong Ladies' College, persuaded one of her staff, Harriet Blake, a twenty-two year old English governess not long arrived in the colony, to attempt the examination. 'At my request she submitted to the ordeal of passing the University Matriculation in both subjects [that is, French and German] and gained "well" in each'.¹³⁴


134. See copy of testimonial given by Jenny Fischer to Harriet Blake dated 19 July 1878 in RTS, loc. cit., Applicant No.514, Blake, Harriet. Harriet who had made the copy referred to Miss Fischer as the 'late Principal, Geelong Ladies' College.'
Miss Blake passed in October 1876 having declared on her entry form that 'Jenny Fischer sent me'. Only a year before, Miss Fischer had sat successfully for the examination, becoming at the age of 42 the eldest among the early candidates.

As in England, in Victoria there were doubts whether women's health would stand up to the strain of presenting for examinations and academic competition. Some women faced examinations with some trepidation and as the above illustration reveals clearly saw them as an 'ordeal'. Lily White, who, with her sisters founded 'Bifrons', a girls' school, in Malvern about 1894, had passed the matriculation exam in seven subjects in 1888, then attempted to gain honours in Mathematics, English and French, but her health 'broke down before the examination'. When a young woman was found drowned in the river near Studley Park, Kew, the coroner's finding was that she had taken her own life 'in a fit of depression induced by overstudy'.

But many girls prepared for exams with enthusiasm and attempted matriculation when quite young. In Sydney,

135. See 'Matriculation Entries', University of Melbourne (Archives), October 1876. Miss Blake would have been aged 22 when she sat.
136. See Zainu'ddin, op. cit., p. 69, n.61.
138. RTS, loc.cit., Applicant No. 7350, White, Lily, 'Bifrons', McKinley Ave., Malvern. She did not conduct a matriculation class in her school.
139. See Newspaper Extract, Argus, 16 Nov 1911, 'Victim of Overstudy', included in application No. 750.
Jane Millicent F. Taunton who later became a governess, passed the Junior Public Examination of the University of Sydney in September 1887 at the age of fourteen, gaining First Class Honours in English and English History, and Second Class Honours in Geography, French and Arithmetic. Her father took her to England where she passed the University of Cambridge Examination for Senior Students with Distinction in English at the age of seventeen. Returning to Australia she eventually taught at Toorak College.\textsuperscript{140} In Melbourne there were equally young successful candidates. However a good proportion were in their late teens or early twenties and already teaching when they presented for matriculation.\textsuperscript{141} Maude Archer, a most successful governess, was twenty before she finally qualified. Her father was dead and her guardian first presented her for the examination in Ballarat when she was eighteen. In her first attempt she passed only French and English. Two years later, she gained honours in those and passed the remainder.\textsuperscript{142}

By the mid-1880's a small but steadily increasing number of able, clever and brilliant women were qualifying for matriculation, proceeding to university, and successfully

\textsuperscript{140} RTS, loc. cit., Applicant No.6766, Taunton, Jane Millicent Frances.
\textsuperscript{141} Zainu'ddin, op. cit., pp.68-70.
\textsuperscript{142} RTS, loc. cit., Applicant No.890, Archer, Maude; see 'Matriculation Entries', loc. cit., 1883 Ballarat Candidates; Miss Archer was educated at Mt. Pleasant State School. See also 'Matric Entries', November 1881.
graduating. Some of these women were quickly absorbed into colonial society by marrying and became anonymous as they devoted their energies to household duties and the rearing of families. Others who married, however, returned eventually to teaching and can be easily traced. Those who remained single found a demand for their services either as governesses in private families or in schools which began proudly to announce they conducted a 'matriculation class'. In the final decade of the century, many women qualified to matriculate, as well as graduates, established themselves as proprietors of schools. It was common to find highly-qualified sisters as well as whole family groups with diversified talents, conducting schools in which a matriculation class featured successfully. But not a few of the more successful unmarried graduates displayed a new independence by setting up their own private coaching classes in the city or suburbs and even conducted correspondence courses for young women in the country. Higher education for these young women opened up distinct possibilities of upward mobility.

Annie Rohs, the daughter of a Bendigo merchant who was educated in state schools, delighted those who believed women could compete favourably with men in academic study when she carried off the classics exhibition in 1883. She entered Melbourne University in 1884 and upon graduating established a school in Geelong. After marrying she continued to teach and had a long teaching
career. Many governesses gained experience in her schools.\(^{143}\)

The brilliant daughters of Patrick and Jane Whyte of the Central Model School, Melbourne, engaged in private school teaching and coaching upon graduation. Elizabeth Whyte, M.A. (Melb.), Dip. Ed., displayed tremendous energy by becoming the principal of the Girls' High School in Williamstown while still a resident teacher at Toorak College. For a year she was also a visiting teacher at "Naresb" College. When Miss J.B. Paterson retired from the "Sydenham" Ladies' College, Moonee Ponds, Elizabeth Whyte and her sister, Nellie, became joint-principals. Elizabeth taught Arithmetic, Algebra, Geometry, French, German, English, Latin, History, Botany and Physiology all at Matriculation level.\(^{144}\)

Her more brilliant sister, Ellen (Nellie) Whyte, was also an M.A. graduate of Melbourne. She had first distinguished herself in 1891 when she took the mathematics exhibition at the matriculation examination.\(^{145}\) Whilst still at P.L.C., Nellie was engaged in private teaching and coaching others for matriculation. In 1896 she was coaching boys in the Toorak district. Since her own clever mother had been a governess, Nellie was unashamed of the term, and subsequently became a 'resident governess' at P.L.C.,

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143. Zainu'ddin, op. cit., pp. 84 and 87.
Croydon, N.S.W., for five years. Returning to Melbourne in 1902 she joined her sister as joint-principal of the family school. Also at "Sydenham", was Jane Wilkinson Whyte, who had trained under the artist, McCubbin, at the National Gallery, and had taken various prizes in drawing and painting. She conducted private classes in Melbourne in 1891, and taught at Auburn Ladies' College, at "Appin" (Miss Adderley), and at Williamstown.

Prior to its closing in 1907 "Sydenham" had 80 day pupils and 4 boarders and comprised a Kindergarten, a Lower school and an Upper School in which the matriculation class featured. Since the principals' strength lay in the academic subjects, they employed visiting teachers to take French, Elocution, Dancing and Gymnastics. The permanent staff included four generalist teachers and eight 'specialists'. When the school closed Miss Nellie Whyte proceeded to coach in Maths in Queen's Buildings, Carlton.

About the turn of the century among the sisters who conducted schools and of whom at least one had graduated or attempted matriculation, were the Misses Card of

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146. RTS, loc. cit., No.7383, Whyte, Nellie, M.A.
147. Ibid., No.7378, Whyte, Jane Wilkinson.
149. See n.145, above.
"Astolat" Ladies' College, Auburn, the Misses Burke of "Milverton" of Camberwell, the Misses Watkins of Hawksburn, the Spriggs of Moonee Ponds and the Adderleys of "Appin". In the country there were the Misses Berge of Bendigo whose school became amalgamated with "Girton", and the Bechers of Sale, and so the list might continue.

Women graduates were able to obtain good employment teaching at matriculation level or as administrators. Mrs. Ernest Wood became an examiner for the University's matriculation exam and a lecturer in the university colleges, besides teaching at the Church of England Girls' College, Auburn. 

150. RTS., loc. cit., Nos.986, 987, 988, 989, and 991, the Misses Alice, Harriet Susan, Isabel, Mary, and Rosina Card. No.990 was a sister-in-law, Mrs. Maud Emily Card née Stephens. Mary Card presented for the Matriculation examination in 1879 (Oct.), Rosina in 1882, Isabella in 1883 and Alice in 1892.

151. Ibid., Nos.813, 115, 819 and 823, the Misses Caroline Ethelwynne, Effie Hannah Josephine, Frances Helena, and Maria Lovica Burke. Miss Effie Burke had presented for Matric in 1890, and Caroline also.

152. Ibid., Nos.7203, 7205, the Misses Eileen and Kathleen Bailey Watkins, of 26 Cromwell Road, Hawksburn. John Watkins of the same address was assistant organist at St. Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne. Both sisters had gained honours in French at matriculation.

153. See n.120 above. See RTS, loc. cit., No.6545, Sprigg, Eleanor, passed English, French and Botany at matric; No.6546, Sprigg, Mabel, presented in five subjects for matriculation in May 1898 and for Latin in November 1898.

154. RTS., loc. cit., Applicant No.26, Adderley, Emily, Principal of "Appin" Ladies' College, Williams Road, Windsor. Her mother, Mrs. Rita C. Adderley passed matriculation in 1881 in seven subjects. See 'Matriculation Entries', loc. cit., February 1881.

155. Ibid., Nos.426, 427 and 429, the Misses Annie, Maria and Minnie Berge. Another sister became a nun.

156. See notes 72, 73, 74, 75 and 76 above.
Grammar School (Merton Hall). Mrs. Thorn, née Remington, was Senior Teacher at "Tintern" from 1891 to 1896, during which time she prepared candidates for university entrance. Bessie Wingrove taught French and English at "Ruyton" for seven years and at "Harbledown" (Auburn), and at "St. Duthus" (Canterbury). Miss Tendall, M.A. (Melb.) ad eudem held the Master's degree of the University of New Zealand. She had taught in girls' schools in Wanganui and Nelson in New Zealand before coming to Melbourne where she became Vice-Principal of "Tintern".

Understandably, women science teachers were rare in the colony. One of the earliest, Edith O. Waugh, passed matriculation in November 1878 and taught Botany, Physiology and Anatomy at "Milverton" and "Fintona". One of her pupils, Miss McGowan, gained an Exhibition in Physiology and Botany. Since science teachers were scarce, young medical students and graduates were employed to teach science. Dr. Georgina Sweet lived not far from the University in Brunswick and taught Physiology and Botany at "Glenthorpe", Ascot Vale, from 1897 to 1899, and travelled during 1902 to 1904 to St. Kilda to teach the same subjects at "Oberwyl", to Toorak.

158. Ibid., No.6859, Thorn, Mrs. Frances Elizabeth Mary Remington, B.A., (1898).
159. Ibid., No.7502, Wingrove, Bessie, (M.A., 1898).
161. Ibid., No.7234, Waugh, Edith Olivia.
to "Merton Hall", and to East Melbourne, to P.L.C.\textsuperscript{162}

Gradually the term 'governess' began to pass out of usage as the highest academically-qualified women began to refer to themselves as 'coaches' which, indeed, they were, being largely self-employed in preparing schoolgirls and young women for matriculation and university course examinations. Indeed, the term 'coach', or the male term, 'tutor', might be seen to signify these women's upward mobility.

At the turn of the century Jessie Stobe Webb who later became a member of the History Department of the University of Melbourne conducted coaching classes in the 'Block Arcade', Melbourne. She found capable associates in Janet Greig, Eleanor M. Tobin (B.A., Melb.), and later Annie Rattray Rentoul.\textsuperscript{163}

Lilian A.H. Webster who did brilliantly in Classics and Mathematics at Melbourne, became a 'private coach'. For a short time she taught at "Clarendon", Ballarat. In Melbourne, she coached privately in maths at "Oberwyl", and took classes at "Lauriston", "Hadleigh", (where she also took English), and the Malvern Ladies' College.\textsuperscript{164}

\textsuperscript{162} Ibid., No.6729, Sweet, Dr. Georgina, D.Sc.(Melb.).
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., No.7244, Webb, Jessie Stobe Watson, M.A. (Melb.).
\textsuperscript{164} Ibid., No.7259, Webster, Lilian Alice Henderson.
Following graduation both Marie Bernadou,\textsuperscript{165} and Constance Tisdall did some coaching,\textsuperscript{166} and in addition to her daily teaching, Bessie Wingrove found time to coach first year Arts students in maths.\textsuperscript{167} Mabel A. Wilson eventually gave up teaching to join with Edith McConachy to run a University and Public Examinations coaching class.\textsuperscript{168}

Florence P. Bennett described herself as a 'coach in Greek and Latin', and her sister, Margaret, who, as a visiting teacher taught maths at Garthé, devised a correspondence scheme of tuition in matriculation subjects for women living in Warragul and Bairnsdale in 1905.\textsuperscript{169}

Although there were favourable opportunities in Melbourne several women with Master's degrees sought work in the country, or interstate. Before she established "Rosbercon", Constance Tisdall gained experience in class teaching at the Alexandra College, Hamilton, from 1903 to 1905.\textsuperscript{170}

Emilie Sonnenberg (later Mrs. Freeman) taught for six years in North Fitzroy before going to Shepparton and later to Stawell where candidates for matriculation had been enrolling since the early 1880's.\textsuperscript{171} Mrs. Agnes D. Thom

\textsuperscript{165} Ibid., No.432, Bernadou, Marie Louise (M.A., 1899).
\textsuperscript{166} Ibid., No.6885, Tisdall, Alice Constance Muriel, M.A.(Melb.).
\textsuperscript{167} See n.159 above.
\textsuperscript{168} RTS., loc. cit., Applicant No.7490, Wilson, Mabel Aileen, (M.A.1903).
\textsuperscript{169} Ibid., No.400, Bennett, Florence Penelope, M.A.(Melb.); No.405, Bennett, Margaret Emily, M.A.(Melb.)
\textsuperscript{170} See n.165 above.
\textsuperscript{171} RTS, loc. cit., Applicant No.6218, Sonnenberg, Emilie, M.A.(Melb.).
who lived in Camperdown had a Bachelor's degree, and did some local teaching occasionally.\footnote{172}

Schools in Queensland and N.S.W. attracted Melbourne women with the offer of good employment in teaching girls at the higher levels. Mabel A. Wilson (M.A., 1903), taught at the Church of England Collegiate School for Girls, Brisbane, before coming to M.L.C., Melbourne in 1900.\footnote{173} After teaching at the Castlemaine Ladies' College, and Queen's, Ballarat, Nancy Jobson went to the Cambridge School in Sydney to teach in 1903, and after two years moved to "Ascham", Darling Point, Sydney, before returning to Melbourne to join the staff of P.L.C.\footnote{174}

As mentioned briefly earlier young English and Scottish women who had successfully passed the entrance examinations of the British universities found a warm welcome in private schools in the closing decades of the century. Their careers illustrate rapid horizontal mobility. Gertrude L. Bendelack sought employment as a 'finishing governess'. She had gained Honours in French in the Oxford University Senior examinations in 1889, and had qualified for the A.A. degree (that is, the Associateship of Arts) of the Oxford University. She had obtained three certificates in Drawing, held a certificate of the College of Preceptors,

\footnote{172}{Ibid., Thom, Agnes D., nee Thomson, B.A. (Melb.).}
\footnote{173}{See n.167 above.}
\footnote{174}{RTS, loc. cit., Applicant No.3549, Jobson, Nancy, M.A. (Melb.).}
'Third Class', and had passed in History in the exams conducted by the London Society for the Extension of University Teaching. She had scarcely arrived in the colony when she was invited to accompany a family home to England and having fulfilled her duties returned, having been assured of a situation in Melbourne.  

Another woman who had qualified in French with Honours in the Senior Oxford Local Examinations and the Oxford University Examinations for Women was Victoria M. Wright who was teaching at M.L.C. in 1906. She had also qualified in Languages at St. Andrew’s L. L. A., Scotland, and gained teaching experience in a ladies' school in Basingstoke, England. Going first to Queensland in 1899, Miss Wright taught at the Brisbane High School for Girls before teaching at Milton College for a year, after which she taught at Gympie Girls' High School for twelve months in 1905.

Mary A. Vaile trained at the Roan School for Girls, Greenwich, London, and presented successfully for the London University's Matriculation examination in the early 1880's in languages, maths and science. Shortly after her arrival in Melbourne in 1890 she taught the matriculation class at "Studlands", Toorak, for five years. Her younger sister, Mabel, was one of her pupils.

175. Ibid., No.393, Bendelack, Gertrude Leonard.
176. Ibid., No.7564, Wright, Victoria Marie.
and joined the staff of "Tintern". Leaving "Studlands", Miss Vaile taught at Miss Sprigg's school for a few months before opening a school of her own in Wellington Parade, East Melbourne, where she prepared pupils for matriculation. Giving up her school she spent the first twenty years of the present century teaching senior girls in no less than eight of Melbourne's fashionable private schools. By 1921 the ageing Miss Vaile was content to do some private teaching and coaching at home. \(^{177}\)

In educational circles the training which teachers received in Scotland was considered thorough and was highly respected in the colonies and Scottish teachers quickly gained employment. When Miss Jessie Russell Stewart came to the colony in 1891 she impressed her employers in Melbourne. She held a certificate in English Literature granted by the Edinburgh Association for University Education for Women for the session 1884-5, and, in addition, the University of St. Andrew's L. L. A. Certificate in French and German (1886), and History (1890). Her residence in France and South Germany had developed

\(^{177}\) Ibid., No.7046, Vaile, Mary Agnes. Between 1901 and 1920 she taught at -


See her sister, Mabel Phelps Vaile, No.7045.
her fluency in languages. Another cultured Scotswoman was Miss Elizabeth Stewart who founded Shirley College at Brighton Beach in 1890. She had gained First Class Honours in the Local Examinations of the University of Edinburgh. She had passed in 'five German subjects and Pedagogics' at the Examination of the Imperial Commission at Vienna during her residence there and in Dresden from 1874 to 1884. Before coming to Melbourne she taught for two years in Paris and two in London.

Not so accomplished but thoroughly grounded was Henrietta C. Taylor, who became a private governess in the colonies after one year's experience at Miss Malcolm's School for Girls, Hillhead, Glasgow. She had passed the Senior Certificate of the Glasgow University with honours in English, Scripture, History and French, and obtained a pass in 'five Common Subjects'. After teaching in Queensland and Tasmania she took a situation at Yielima, via Picola, in Victoria, where the community in which she taught was strongly Methodist and Presbyterian in religion.

In the 1890's and the Edwardian period well qualified principals of schools and governesses were disappointed

178. Ibid., No.6637 Stewart, Jessie Russell.
179. Ibid., No.6630, Stewart, Elizabeth.
180. Ibid., No.6777, Taylor, Henrietta Christine. See William H. Bossonce, Kyabram Methodism (Melbourne, 1974).
to discover that society as a whole had not yet accepted the idea of higher education for women. In some sections of well-to-do Melbourne parents showed little enthusiasm for girls to take examinations. Grace Spyer was a retired teacher who had for twelve years kept a ladies' college in Toorak. In all that time she prepared only one pupil for Matriculation. She explained that her patrons had 'not desired their children to go in for University examinations', and since she could only offer one example of her success she could not be registered as a secondary teacher.\textsuperscript{181}

At the "Astolat" Ladies' College in Auburn, the senior form in the school was always referred to as the 'Matriculation class', but it was something of a misnomer. There was no demand for high scholastic achievement from the parents of Miss Mary Card's pupils. 'The pupils rarely wished to go up for examinations', she said, 'they not being of the class that needs the examination as a means of getting employment'. Nevertheless, in case there ever was a demand she employed several highly-qualified graduates on her staff.\textsuperscript{182}

Of course, many colonial governesses who passed the matriculation examination did not proceed to university. They continued, in many cases, to teach in a style reminiscent of the early Victorian governess, taking resident situations or being daily governesses in

\textsuperscript{181} R.T.S., loc. cit., Applicant No.6556, Spyer, Grace.
\textsuperscript{182} Ibid., No.989, Card, Mary. She employed Ada Chaplin, B.A., Mrs. Watson-Lisle, B.A., and Miss E. Muntz, M.Sc.
suburban homes and schools. In many cases, too, they offered the same kind of accomplishments that earlier generations had demanded, except that, in addition, they were capable, if required, to offer older girls academic subjects at a standard which would assist them to proceed smoothly to boarding school where they would attempt matriculation, or alternatively, they prepared them for university entrance in their own homes.

Bessie W. Whan of Port Fairy, who was educated at "Clarendon", Ballarat, prepared for the matriculation examination in Latin, French, English, Algebra, Euclid, History, Geography, and Arithmetic, and passed all eight subjects doing 'well' in French and History.183. As a resident governess she travelled extensively in the next twenty years, teaching at Coolamon and "Bald Hills", Grenfell, N.S.W., before going to Queensland about 1893 where she taught at Windermere Plantation, Bundaberg for a year. Returning to Victoria she taught at Kergunyah and at Penshurst before becoming Principal of the Port Fairy High School in July 1901.

But Miss Eveline Agnes Trickett remained her whole teaching life in Melbourne. With her little black apron which she wore at all times in the classroom, she was a governess of

183. Ibid., No.7313, Whan, Bessie Wilson.
the 'old style', and created an image of a 'very good woman'. She was 'accomplished', and painted and taught music privately. But however conservative in dress and demeanour, Miss Trickett was a woman who was moving with the times. She was born in the colony in 1855 and completed her training as a teacher in the Education Department about 1873 when she joined the staff of the Central Model School where her sister, Ellen Trickett, certificated in 1868, taught Drawing and Needlework for over twenty years. Miss Agnes also taught drawing there for two years although she did not gain a licence to teach the subject until 1881. However in 1874 she was licensed to teach Gymnastics. In 1875 she gained credit in English, Algebra, Arithmetic and Geography and a pass in Geometry in the Matriculation examination. In her teaching the emphasis was on learning by rote and from the time of her appointment to the staff of the Presbyterian Ladies' College in 1877, her pupils successfully passed in Geography at the Matriculation examination. 184.

Finally, in this examination of the colonial governess an assessment of the effect that the depression of the nineties had on governesses is attempted. An historian of the period considers that it is difficult to form a complete picture of the extent of the unemployment and suffering the depression produced in Melbourne. Fifty thousand left the city and the thousands who could not escape were supported by others or survived on scraps and municipal handouts. As people weakened they succumbed to the epidemics of influenza, typhoid and measles which swept the city. When savings ran out so great was the suffering and destitution that charity could not cope with the numbers seeking assistance.  

The leading 'land boomers' who had patronised private governesses were among the first to give them up. Many of the boomers fled their creditors in a hurry, including James Munro, the Premier, who appointed himself Victorian Agent-General in London. In 1891, Mrs M.E. Munro, amidst the splendour of her home, 'Locksley', in St. Kilda Road, dispensed with Miss Eliza Sparrow who had been teaching her three young daughters. Giving her a favourable reference, Mrs Munro explained she was being asked to go not through any fault of hers but the family

185. See Davison, op. cit., pp. 64-60; 211-228; Canon, op. cit., pp. 21-28.
was 'leaving the colony very shortly'. But an English governess, Rebecca Vines, was more fortunate. She was retained in the family of C.J. Ham, of "Lalbert", Armadale, throughout the crisis.

The Bruford sisters who had been teaching since the early 1860's survived by finding situations elsewhere ahead of the worst times. Mary Bruford left Melbourne in 1891 and after teaching in Sale went to New Zealand where she remained until 1901. Martha Bruford went to Broken Hill where she became housekeeper for the Anglican minister and taught in one of the several schools he had recently established.

Sewing mistresses and workmistresses were among the lowest paid female teachers in the Education Department. Only with extreme frugality could they, like most governesses, manage to exist on the mere pittance they received. Helena M. Bennett had been a sewing mistress for many years and was at Magpie, near Ballarat, when retrenched in the depression of the nineties. Resourcefully, she opened a

187. RTS, loc.cit., Applicant No. 6528, Sparrow, Eliza, see testimonial, March 1891.
188. Ibid., No. 7080, Vines, Rebecca E. She was a privately educated woman whose parents were both highly educated at Oxford and St Cmer in France. She was uncertificated however. See Cannon, op. cit., for background of C.J. Ham, see Index.
189. Ibid., No. 753, Bruford, Mary Blake.
private school in the same premises and conducted this from 1893 to 1901. Revealing a further capacity for mobility she went off to Toowoomba, Queensland, to teach sewing at the Girls' High School from 1901 to 1902. Returning to Ballarat she became a sewing mistress once more.  

The Depression closed many private schools. Even the larger private schools like P.L.C. and M.L.C. suffered reduced incomes and were forced to reduce staff. "Ruyton" had to part with two long-serving senior members of staff and the Headmistress, Miss Bromby, had to carry on alone.  

Widows and spinsters who had speculated during the boom and lost everything in the crash joined the ranks of governesses and teachers in search of situations. Bankers and wealthy investors' daughters who had assumed they would marry and live a life of luxury found it necessary after the crash to turn to governessing, music teaching or keeping a school. Two members of the previously wealthy Balding family found employment in private schools, while Miss Partièure opened a school.  

Marian P. Cameron of Albert Park became a music teacher.

191. RTS, loc.cit., Applicant No. 401, Bennett, Helena Maud. 
193. Cannon, op. cit., p. 12; see pp. 121, 123, etc for references to Robert Lallam Balding; p. 168, Charles Partièure; see RTS, loc. cit., Applicants Nos. 211 and 212.
as a result of the bank crash. When her elderly father discovered himself in financial difficulties the family's minister advised Marion to turn her musical education to account.\footnote{194} But the plight of older and infirm women who could no longer teach was pitiable.
One of the most persistent applications for relief from the Queen's Fund in the 1890's came from a group of aged gentlewomen, ex-governesses, living in South Yarra, Prahran and St. Kilda. S.L. Hately who has researched the Queen's Fund, Melbourne 1887 to 1900 has revealed that one governess had to be assisted eight times in eight years preceding her death in 1899.\footnote{195}

Slowly the city recovered and the colony revived. Governesses returned to Victoria from other colonies and New Zealand. By 1895 new private schools were opening in premises vacated by those who had failed. A proportion of girls were staying at school longer and increased numbers were being allowed to attempt the matriculation examination and proceed to university. Retiring headmistresses and school proprietors were

\footnote{194. RTS, loc.cit., Applicant No.946, Cameron, Marion Paterson, 65 Merton Street, Albert Park. See letter accompanying her application in which she gives a full statement of her early life and education and her father's failing fortunes and her subsequent career.}

were replaced by young graduates who were prepared to offer a more academic kind of education to those girls who wished to take examinations and enter the professions. Middle-class women had learned from the depression how important it was to be able to support themselves and more and more took up teaching. Many joined the Education Department.\textsuperscript{196} In 1904, 270 degrees were conferred on women at the University of Melbourne,\textsuperscript{197} and many of these new graduates sought employment in the higher education of girls. They were joined by well-qualified, emigrant British teachers.

In the first decade of the present century, women teachers were still very poorly paid. Salaries in the Education Department had been up-graded slightly, with male teachers receiving £70 to £288 per annum, but women only received £56 to £130 per annum, and there was much exploitation, especially among young teachers.\textsuperscript{198} Sewing mistresses were receiving the same salary they had been offered fifty years before, – £30 a year.\textsuperscript{199} Governesses had not done much better. As mentioned earlier in this chapter tho

\textsuperscript{196} In 1907 there were more than 3,000 female teachers in government schools and in the previous year a few over 2,000 in non-government schools. See \textit{Vic. Year Book 1912}, 'Historical Statistics, Social Conditions: Victoria - Primary and Secondary Education', p.1098.
\textsuperscript{197} \textit{Vic. Year Book, 1904}, p.120.
\textsuperscript{198} Ibid., p.126; see salaries of pupil teachers and monitors listed, p.126; Beverley Kingston, op. cit., p.77.
\textsuperscript{199} See Table 1, in J. Alex Allan, op. cit., p.118.
wages currently paid in Melbourne in 1905 to governesses 'living in', ranged from far less than one pound a week to slightly more than that figure. Only in 1912 did these rates rise and the average salary for governesses in residence was then quoted as being not lower than £30 a year. 'Advanced' governesses were being offered £45 to £90 per annum. Teachers in private schools in that year were supposedly receiving from between £30 to £50, and for those teaching at advanced levels from £50 to £150, but these rates might have only applied to resident teachers. 200

In the newly-created States of the Commonwealth of Australia teaching became the leading occupation for educated women. Within ten years of federation the young woman graduate in Victoria was finding well-paid permanent employment in the Education Department's new secondary schools. At the same time, women who, as nursery governesses, in earlier decades had suffered the ignominy of being insufficiently educated to teach any but the youngest children in a family, were becoming well-trained infant and kindergarten teachers and enjoying the trust and esteem of the community.

From the time that girls were admitted to the matriculation examination the work of the governess had assumed greater importance educationally. In the closing decades of the nineteenth century the higher education of women was largely in her hands. As the governess improved her own education and qualifications she enhanced her chance of upward mobility. More importantly, she influenced the upward mobility of other young women both by her example and her instruction. With greater independence came the opportunity for greater self-determination.

Summing up, then, the lives of middle-class women involved in education in the second half of the nineteenth century in Victoria were characterised by an amazing mobility. The registration of teachers in 1906 revealed that, although thousands of women were being employed in the State schools in Victoria, a surprisingly large number of women were still governesses whose geographical mobility had by no means come to an end, although, with the steady growth of Melbourne despite its set-back in the nineties, it had become more contained.

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CHAPTER 5

MODELS OF GENTILITY FOR THE COLONIAL GOVERNESS

'... a lady in every sense of the word...'

- testimonial for Mary Harriet Irvine. (1881).
CHAPTER 5

When Miriam Dixson examined the role models associated with the upper social strata of Australian women in the colonial period, all of whom she grouped under the title of 'élite women', her conclusion was that they were 'more genteel than the genteel'.\footnote{Miriam Dixson, The Real Matilda: Woman and Identity in Australia 1788 to 1975 (1976, Penguin rpt 1978), pp. 200, 203.} Her use of hyperbole to make her point that these women were 'pre-occupied and part stifled' by English models is misleading.\footnote{Ibid., p. 203.} Now whilst it has been asserted throughout this thesis that middle-class women who needed to work for their living were inhibited by the social pressures and demands for respectability which stemmed largely from the influence of the notions of gentility derived from Victorian England, one point has always been conceded, that of women's adaptability and resourcefulness under pioneering conditions. Middle-class women were far more robust and resilient than Dixson's assertion allows.\footnote{See Patricia Grimshaw, 'Women and the Family in Australian History', Elizabeth Windschuttle (ed.), Women, Class and History: Feminist Perspectives on Australia 1788-1978 (Melbourne, 1980), pp. 37-49; and also P. Grimshaw and G. Willett, 'Family Structure in Colonial Australia', Australia 1888, Bulletin No. 4, May 1980, pp. 5-27.} It was impossible for an emigrant English governess to be as genteel as the English governess in English society in the Victorian period. In emigrating, the English gentlewoman left behind her the most stifling conventions which surrounded her role as governess and re-defined it as best she could under the
circumstances in which she found herself in colonial society. Having been re-defined within the colonial situation, the role of the colonial governess was further re-shaped in the hands of young colonial-born women who sought higher education within a changing educational climate in the later decades of the century.

From her vantage point as editor of several collections of research studies about women of the Victorian period, Martha Vicinus is sensitive to the struggle that women have experienced to achieve independence both economic and personal within the framework of traditional social values. Her conclusion is that nineteenth-century women were not always the passive, submissive and pure creatures who were so popularly idealized, but neither were they ever completely free of this stereotype. The stereotype's most pervasive and effective form of control was exercised through the 'social and individual demand for respectability'. Nowhere is this better demonstrated than in the models of gentility for the colonial governess.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century in Victoria, whilst a small but persistently increasing number of young

women fought the battle for the higher education of women, both men and women concerned in the struggle were, as Zainu'ddin has pointed out, hampered by the conventional stereotype of womanliness.\(^5\) When Charles Henry Pearson, the first headmaster of the Presbyterian Ladies' College, Melbourne, addressed parents in the year of the school's foundation in 1875, he assured his audience that whatever studies young women attempted, in being permitted to enjoy educational opportunities, they would become more 'cultivated and womanly'.\(^6\) Overall, Pearson's arguments appeared new and innovative but basically they had a conservative flavour. Whilst Pearson supported vocational training for young women who might have to live by their work as governesses, teachers in schools, or as writers for the press, and therefore ought to receive a thorough training for their work, he surprised his critics by not condemning the two most popular of the 'accomplishments' as useless skills, but suggested that music and drawing, subjects so frequently offered in ladies' academies and by governesses, had some merit. Second only to mathematics, he said, music trained concentration, and drawing was an asset to those studying Physical Science for it encouraged accurate observation.\(^7\)

7. Ibid.
P.L.C. became a success and was followed in the early eighties by the founding of the Methodist Ladies' College. These, together with a number of other schools for girls were preparing candidates successfully for matriculation examinations in increasing numbers, but many colonial well-to-do parents remained apprehensive about allowing their daughters to pursue studies too seriously, and a proportion clung to the class-based prejudices of English Victorians that, as far as young genteel women were concerned, idleness and dependence marked respectability, and paid employment or 'work' was 'unrespectable'. Some parents seemed to believe they had some kind of moral and social obligation to keep their daughters idle. Others were of the opinion that governessing was degrading. As a result, young women experienced great difficulties in achieving independence.

In some families the idea of a girl earning her own living never arose. Nancy Adams, née Mitchell, the author of Family Fresco, who later in life managed a family business said that as a child she never thought about earning money. She was educated by governesses and did not read a newspaper until the age of twenty. When schooling ended she had a

lengthy tour of the Continent after which she returned to Australia and eventually married.  

In the 1860's the daughter of Sir Henry Parkes desired above all at the age of twenty-five to enjoy freedom to live her own life. Menie Parkes sought her father's permission to leave home and set up a small school in collaboration with another sensible woman of about the same age, and failing that, proposed taking lodgings in Sydney and getting 'morning tuitions', or thirdly, becoming a [resident] governess, and lastly, 'going behind a counter', which she knew her father would most definitely oppose. He refused his permission to all proposals.  

In the last year of the century when S.G. McLaren, principal of the Presbyterian Ladies' College, Melbourne, presented a testimonial to a young woman about to seek a situation as a governess, he wrote that she was 'most diligent and successful and as regards conduct . . . a model to all'.

10. See Nancy Adams, Family Fresco (Melbourne, 1966), pp. 66-95. During her childhood and girlhood she led a 'cloistered purely feminine existence'. Parents in her family's social circles considered 'innocence' constituted 'charm'.
11. See Menie Parkes' letter to her father, 18 Jan 1863, in Sir Henry Parkes, Correspondence Family & Relatives, Vol I CY 85, Mitchell Library (I owe this reference to Dr A.W. Martin, RSSS, A.N.U., per favour Pat Grimshaw).
She has had the great advantage of having been brought up in a clergymen's home and is a girl of high principles and ladylike manners. 12.

This could just as easily have been written some thirty years or more before about a young woman who had attended a ladies' seminary or been educated at home by a governess as about someone who had just passed through Melbourne's most prodigious ladies' school which had an impressive record for matriculation successes. McLaren assessed the young woman within the framework of the traditional English Victorian notions of gentility and feminity. He did not emphasize her intellectual ability or academic achievement though both were very good, but placed the stress on her conduct, being no doubt aware that colonial parents who were assured a young teacher was well-brought up and high-principled would have no qualms about employing her. The underlying assumption is that the young woman conforms to the model of the 'womanly woman', the Victorian ideal. She could be introduced into a middle-class family with perfect safety. She has seen little or nothing of the world, and certainly knows nothing of its sexual side. She has been brought up to respect

12. S.G. McLaren, Principal, P.L.C., Melbourne, in a testimonial, 19 Feb 1899, for Ethel M. Cartmel Caffin, in RTS, loc.cit., Applicant No. 898, CAFFIN, Ethel M.C. She had passed the Matriculation examination in 1898 in six subjects, and had taught for a short time at Woodcote L.C., Malvern, and at Glenthorpe College, Ascot Vale. She had conducted small private schools in South Brighton and Cheltenham, and was a 'daily governess' at the time of her registration. Her sister was also a governess.
and submit to authority and the opinions of others. Her capabilities will make her an excellent governess or teacher and an influence for good in the family or school which employs her. A further assumption is that the daughter of a clergyman is a safe proposition as a family governess. She would at least have more than ordinary education and her manners and morals would certainly be above reproach. She would come close to the model of the perfect Victorian lady.

In nineteenth-century Australia the model of the colonial governess was clearly two-faceted. One facet reflected the governess's conformity to the model of the perfect young lady of the early Victorian period. The other facet of the model, in response to the demands of the colonial situation and the changing attitudes towards the higher education of women, mirrored the governess's flexibility within the bounds of respectability. The young colonial governess had as her chief model the emigrant English governess whose model was the truly English governess and the 'perfect lady'.

In her re-defined role in Australia, the English governess was more a 'perfect woman' than 'perfect lady' despite her frequent claims that she was the latter. She held chastity as an ideal, but she worked and sought higher education.

13. I am indebted in my interpretation here to a passage in Anne Summers, op. cit., p.296.
However, whereas in England the 'perfect woman' engaged also in the fight for legal and political rights, Australian middle-class women and governesses remained withdrawn from political life.\(^\text{14}\)

Both models, the 'perfect lady' and the 'perfect woman' incorporated the 'respectable woman', the chaste, well-behaved woman whether she was married or single. The governess was always one of 'God's police', and never one of 'those damned whores', \(^\text{15}\) although at times she ran dangerously close to being included in that category since she was generally single, and sometimes preferred to remain unmarried despite the social pressures on her\(^\text{16}\) to marry, was always on the move, improved her education, and, in the last decade of the century, had the temerity to enter university colleges much to the concern of Anglican prelates who saw her as a temptress for squatter's sons.\(^\text{17}\)

15. See Summers, op. cit.
17. Eva Figes has suggested that the male image of women has a tendency to split into two, including 'gentle companion and intolerable bluestocking', in Summers, op. cit., p.151; Maurice declared a 'female pendant' was 'one of the most disgusting sights one can witness'; when it was proposed to establish a female residential college for Anglican women Bishop Moorhouse 'remained uneasy for he feared that wealthy squatters would cease to send their son to a place where they would be likely to meet and fall in love with penniless bluestockings'; See James Grant, Perspective of a Century: A Volume for the Centenary of of Trinity College, Melbourne 1872-1972, (Melbourne, 1972), pp.162 et seq.
A young middle-class woman in the colonies who wished or needed to work could argue that, ideally, in Australia, a governess was a refined, educated young woman, modest and highly virtuous, well-mannered and dignified, who set a good example for her pupils to emulate. If a young woman became a governess she was being employed in an occupation indeed the only occupation apart from marriage, that was considered highly 'respectable', for genteel women. Teaching was a worthy calling since it was an extension of a woman's mothering, supportive role.

In the colonies most parents and principals of schools hoped to be able to engage a 'good English governess', whom they believed would be thoroughly reliable in setting a good example in behaviour, speech and manners. Failing an English gentlewoman, they welcomed a 'foreign governess' especially if their daughters or pupils were at the stage of learning languages. If neither of these were available an accomplished colonial-born governess from a good family background such as that of a clergyman was considered. But in all cases parents needed assurance they were hiring a woman of some gentility and of absolute respectability.

When parents engaged an English governess the question they asked was what was the woman doing in Australia. They assumed the right to discover if the woman they were admitting to their home was highly respectable. What was
her background? What sort of a family did she come from? Did she have any relatives in the colonies? If not, what did anyone know about her? Was she simply a husband-hunter? Could it be possible she was not 'respectable'? Similar questions were asked about colonial governesses. Employers wondered why a genteel girl wished to work as a governess or why her parents allowed her to do so.

Above all, employers liked to think they were employing a 'lady'. Governesses who were described in their testimonials by such phrases as a 'lady of the very highest character', a 'refined, educated and cultivated lady', and 'well-connected', were certain to be employed. The acme of perfection in governesses, of course, was the woman who was recommended as a 'lady in every sense of the word'.

In the case of English governesses, parents expected to be presented with testimonials from reputable persons in Britain. Therefore, a governess was careful before

18. See NTS., loc. cit., testimonials included in the applications of the following: No.6556, Spyer, Grace, testimonial written by the Ref. Walter Fellows, Toorak, (1882); No.753, Bruford, Mary B., testimonial by Rev. Robert Potter, All Saints, St. Kilda: No.3595, Alex-Jones, Helen, testimonial from the Marion Ladies Seminary, Wisconsin, U.S.A.; No.3585, Jones, Ellena Grace, from the secretary of the Y.W.C.A., Sydney (1903); No.3476, Irvine, Mary Harriet, from Miss Forster, Principal (1881).
leaving England to obtain statements which testified to her respectability and at the same time gave some indication of her attainments and teaching ability. The following was written by the daughter-in-law of the late Bishop of London for Miss Hester Blake just before she left to join her sister in Victoria:

7 April 1879

Ilfracombe,
North Devon

Dearest Miss Blake,

It is a real pleasure to me to write you the testimonial you ask for before going out to Australia because I can do it sincerely with such perfect confidence.

The children always look back upon the four years spent with you as the happiest School-room days they ever passed, and as you must know our affection and regard for you were and are very good. Any lady who might wish you to undertake and finish the education of her children would find you perfectly able to do so. Your attainments are not only of a high order, but you have the power of imparting knowledge to others in an unusually pleasant and easy way. Your Music, French and German are excellent and you are capable of giving any girl a thorough English education; indeed I feel I cannot say enough for your strict conscientiousness and thoroughness in your work.

Anne Blomfield. 19

Without some written testimony of her respectability a governess could not expect to be employed. Newly-arrived governesses from England were often frustrated to find that owing to the delay of shipping, testimonials which they had arranged to be posted to them had failed to

19. Ibid., enclosed in No. 515, Blake, Hester.
arrive. In several instances women assisted by the F.M.C.E.S., had to request further copies to be sent to Australia. 'I was very disappointed on arriving at the Melbourne Home to find that I was not expected and that neither my money nor the copies of my certificates had been sent', wrote Omérine Giraud. Her distress prompted Annie Shaw, secretary of the Melbourne Home to write directly to the Society about the matter. Sometimes English testimonials proved worthless in Australia. In the late 1860's Lauranna Jones found it difficult to obtain employment because her letters of introduction had done her 'no service'.

Although French and German governesses found employment in the colonies and were always welcome in the homes of the wealthy squatters and the fashionable villas of Marvelous Melbourne, there was always a lingering suspicion that they were not wholly respectable. When Robert Simson heard that the Russell family had engaged a Parisian governess to educate the children and 'teach them the manners and style of the most pleasing people in the world', he hoped that Russell was being 'careful in taking a prudent person into the bosom of his family'.


No doubt knowing something of the suspicion which rested on women from the Continent, before coming to Australia, Miss Augusta Strauss taught in England for a short time and took the precaution of obtaining a reference there from a high ranking cleric, the Rev. M. Edward Blakeney, D.D., Vicar of Sheffield, Canon of York, who vouched she had 'lived as governess in two highly respected families' with whom he was acquainted and that they had always spoken of her as "having given the utmost satisfaction". When Miss Strauss made application in 1906 for registration she requested the Reverend S. Newport White, of Holy Trinity, East Melbourne, to certify that all the references she was sending to the Registration Board were correct copies of her testimonials, a procedure which in her opinion was obviously not so much an indication of her efficiency, but of her respectability.

The name of the House of Rothschild added a special glamour to her teaching career. German-born, and trained as a teacher of both French and German in her native Westphalia, Miss Strauss was proud to include among her testimonials a copy of a letter given her on 4 May 1878, by Emma de Goldschmidt, née Rothschild, of Paris. Madame de Goldschmidt had graciously written that Miss Strauss 'had discharged her duties to my entire satisfaction. She is an excellent teacher,... a woman of strict moral principles.' Strauss was
a capable teacher of language; but her having lived in the household of the fabulous Rothschilds could not have failed to impress future employers. She had about her that indefinable bon ton that nineteenth-century principals and Edwardians longed for on their staffs. Alice Millward, principal of "Girton" College, Bendigo, declared 'it was a great pleasure to have in residence a lady of the refinement and culture of Miss Strauss'.

Colonial governesses tendered testimonials from a variety of persons. These included the parents of previous pupils, especially those like the leading pastoralists who were well-known; their own teachers and school principals; relatives, especially those who held rank of some kind; professional men, including doctors, bankers and lawyers, and who in some cases had been their employers; and from members of the clergy particularly those whose high rank was likely to carry weight in gaining employment. Hence, we find Ethel M. Symons, cherishing a testimonial written for her by the Most Reverend Dr. Thomas J. Carr, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne:

The Archbishop of Melbourne has much pleasure in stating that he knows Miss Symons as an accomplished teacher of languages, and as a lady of superior refinement and taste. Without doubt the children placed under Miss Symons' care will be fortunate, and must make rapid progress. 23

[St. Patrick's Cathedral]

August 8 1905

22. NTS, loc. cit., Applicant No.6679, Strauss, Augusta. Blakeney's reference was dated 6 Aug. 1879; she was employed by Mrs. C.M. Simon of Toorak for nearly eight years, c.1894.
23. Ibid., Applicant No.6737, Symons, Ethel Mary.
Reference has been made to the belief that ministers' daughters became ideal governesses. Miss Dixon whom Dr. Daniel Curdie employed in the late 1860's was the daughter of a Church of England minister in Jamaica. Her teaching experience had been gained in England and on the Continent and she had mixed in 'good society'. Curdie was so impressed he brought his son, James, home from school in Melbourne during the winter to be instructed by Miss Dixon in Latin and French. Later in the century, Jessie Buley, the daughter of a well-known Methodist minister, was described as a 'lady in every sense of the term'. Her influence was 'healthful and beneficial'. Ministers' daughters or not, governesses were approved when they inculcated the highest moral principles. One mother of Albert Park, was pleased to note her son's 'moral training was well cared for'.

In schools which prided themselves on their tradition of educating girls in an atmosphere of refinement and cultivated society, an Englishwoman fresh from the 'Old Country', or an Australian woman recently returned from study overseas, was thought to lift the tone of the staff. Miss Wallis of Ascham Ladies' College, Sydney, employed

24. Daniel Curdie of "Tandarook", Camperdown, to the Rev. James Curdie, Gigha, 26 July 1866, Curdie Family Papers, 1846-1874, MS.8664, Box No. 942/2 (a), La Trobe Library, Melbourne.
25. RTS., loc. cit., No.786, Buley, Jessie. See testimonials given her by Margaret H. Butlor, Principal,"Glenthorpe"College, Ascot Vale, (1902), and Annie Dare, Principal, "Stratherne", Hawthorn.
26. Ibid., No.6830, Thomas, Mary Isabelle, Goulburn. See testimonial, (n.s.).
Jane M. F. Taunton upon her return from Exeter, England. She thought her a thorough gentlewoman, whose influence was of an 'elevating character'.

It was noted earlier that English governesses were inclined to denigrate their colonial-born competitors, declaring how poorly educated they were and suggested they could never compete with English finishing governesses. But a number of colonial-born governesses belonged to good families and had in some cases been educated abroad. They saw themselves as 'English governesses' and competed favourably with their English and Scottish-born counterparts.

For instance, Agnes Farquhar McCrae Thomas and Mary Davids Thomas, were nieces of Georgiana McCrae, the celebrated diarist and chronicler of early Melbourne. They were educated in Edinburgh, Germany and Paris. In Melbourne they attended Miss Matilde Murphy's school, "Wattle House", St. Kilda, where leading pastoralist families such as the Russells sent their daughters. The two Misses Thomas taught in the highest colonial circles.

27. Ibid., No.6766, Taunton, Jane Millicent Frances. See enclosed testimonial.
Madame Ethel van Assche, the daughter of Sir Edward Holroyd, Judge of the Supreme Court of Victoria, was educated in Germany and afterwards at the Chateau de Villiers in Paris. She became principal of the Beechworth Ladies' College and later moved to Normanhurst Ladies' College in South Yarra.30

Governesses were indignant, shocked and disappointed when women they knew were dismissed or found to be not as respectable or competent as they appeared. Mary Phillips, one of the first group of women to be assisted to Sydney by the F.M.C.E.S. in 1861, was asked to leave a situation after only being a month in Goulburn. The reason for her dismissal is not quite clear but Miss Gooch confided to Miss Rye that 'the worst sort to come are such as Miss Phillips, fit for nothing, and that will not do in Australia.'31

'Miss Sampson, I suppose, is still unoccupied', Isabella MacGillivray wrote to Maria Rye, 'for in today's Argus there is an advertisement - "a Lady recently arrived is anxious to obtain a situation in a respectable Hotel to sing and play every Evening" - I am certain it is hers'. A genteel woman would not have sought employment in a hotel however 'respectable' it was, and Miss MacGillivray

30. RTS, loc. cit., No.7052, Van Assche, Madame Ethel H.
31. Compare letter of Mary Phillips to Maria Rye, 16 June 1862, with that of Gertrude Gooch to M. Rye, 17 February 1862, L.B.L., F.M.C.E.S. Records.
could only view the advertisement with distaste.\textsuperscript{32}

It was not easy for Jane Lewin and her committee to predict how a woman would conduct herself when she arrived in the colonies. Any woman, therefore, who acted in a manner which would invite criticism of the F.M.C.E.S. and its aims, brought upon herself a stern admonishment. When Miss Lewin heard that Eliza Walpole had quarrelled with her relatives and had sought refuge with a shipboard friend who lived in town she feared the worst:

...And then the madness, I can call it no less, of throwing yourself without protector into such a City as Melbourne, I tremble to think what may have been your fate! and can only hope that God has been more merciful to you than you deserve - as He is to us all, and has preserved you from the villainy of wicked men and from the consequences of your own folly.\textsuperscript{33}

Eliza was deeply hurt and denied the accusation that she was 'on the Streets of Melbourne'. She furnished proof she had gained shelter and employment, - but without remuneration, with Mrs. Tripp of "East Leigh".\textsuperscript{34} Without the backing of her family and the Society, Eliza experienced little success.

\textsuperscript{32} Isabella MacGillivray to M. Rye, 24 September 1862, L.B.L., F.M.C.E.S. Records.
\textsuperscript{33} Jane Lewin, quoted in letter of Eliza C. Walpole to JL, 25 January 1865, L.B.L., pp.177-183, loc. cit.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
To recapitulate briefly, essentially, the role of the colonial governess necessitated respectability with a fair degree of gentility. But, as hinted earlier, in the Australian colonies, the role of the governess had another facet. Paradoxically, the role embraced not only conformity to the model of the 'perfect lady' but adaptability which involved the sharing of domestic tasks with the governess's female employer, an aspect of governessing absent from the English model. Such expectancies created problems for experienced emigrant governesses, but young Australian governesses readily adapted to the demands made of them.

Although before they emigrated English governesses were reminded that their concept of gentility would need to be revised to accommodate the fact that all women, including privileged and wealthy women, were required to do domestic work in the colonial environment, it was not until they had arrived in the colonies that they realised the full implications of the extension of their role. In the Australian colonies mothers of all classes were overworked. When Jessie Ackerman, the American representative of the W.C.T.U. visited Australia in the 1880's and later, she was struck by the way colonial women suffered the 'cruel lack of domestic help.'

35. See Hammerton, op. cit., p.63.
The entire supervision of the house, often the housework itself, including the washing, devolves upon the mother. Then there is the care of the children; the working and mending, not to mention the individual training which no real mother can neglect... Often the strain is more than flesh and bones can endure.  

In the 1870's Bishop Perry of Melbourne became alarmed at the disproportionately high rate of sickness and death among clergy's wives. He became convinced that the burden of housework was killing women. When Richard Twopeny visited the colonies in the eighties he observed that nurses or experienced nannies were more expensive than in Britain and that nurseries were 'few and far between'. Young babies were much more part of the family circle from a tender age than would have been the case in England.

"The baby is lashed into a chair by his mother's side at meals; he accompanies her when she is attending to her household duties, and often even when she is receiving visitors."

Since infant and child mortality rates were considerably less than in Britain, family planning not generally practised until the 1880's, and life expectancy for adults higher in the colonies than in Britain, the colonial mother had a large family to care for. Even when servants were available they were usually untrained and inexperienced and could only relieve a portion of a middle-class woman's

38. R. Twopeny, op. cit., 'Young Australia', p.82.
39. See Grimshaw and Willett, op. cit., p.16, esp. n.87.
daily round of chores. In particular the care of her children constituted a formidable burden.

Colonists who became aware of the strain which pioneering conditions were imposing on their wives tried to provide some relief for them as soon as their financial position made it possible. 'Whilst in Melbourne we engaged a governess to relieve Fanny of part of her duties; altogether too much for her', wrote Dr. Daniel Curdie of "Tandarook Station", Camperdown, Victoria, in 1866. With another child on the way, Mrs. Fanny Curdie could no longer cope with trying to educate her eldest daughter, Mary, and supervise the younger children to her satisfaction, as well as attend to all the work of the household.'¹⁰ Curdie, a considerate husband, realising his wife's health was not equal to the strain if she did not obtain assistance, decided to employ a governess.

Once installed in the Curdie household, Miss Dixon realised that Curdie wanted his children to learn skills which would save the family the expense of hired help, such as seamstresses and dressmakers. Besides teaching the children the usual subjects very competently, she introduced them to a variety of handicrafts. Curdie

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⁴⁰ Daniel Curdie to the Rev. James Curdie, 26 July 1866, Curdie Family Papers, La Trobe Library.
wrote again to his brother the following year that the children were 'all well and very industrious at their lessons as well as very useful industrial work'. He went on to observe, 'If they were a few years older we would be in a great measure independent of servants'. In the Curdie family the governess proved to be a highly valuable asset.

Suburban housewives in Melbourne were just as pleased as any woman in the bush when a governess fitted into their routine and gave help cheerfully. Mrs. Bertha Officer of Eaglemont, was gratified with the improvement her children made in reading and writing under her new governess whose discipline was good. She was painstaking and conscientious, and a great help in the house. 'She mends and sews very neatly', she wrote of Lilian I. Brougham, 'and is most obliging'.

In the testimonials they wrote for their governesses, Australian mothers revealed not only their appreciation but something of the tasks they set, the response women made and their adaptation to life in colonial households. Many a mother revealed a governess had been a 'good

41. Curdie to his brother, 25 June 1867.
42. RTS, loc. cit., Applicant No.705, Brougham, Lilian Ida. See enclosed testimonial 14 April 1905.
needlewoman', 43 who obviously helped by sewing, mending and adding some decorative pieces to the household scene. Governesses were described as being 'useful about the house', or 'obliging in the house'. 44 One mother in Gippsland praised Eve Sparrow for her 'happy knack of adapting to circumstances', 45 whilst another at Boisdale summed up her governess quite simply, but with feeling, 'She is so nice in the house'. 46

Assuming that a governess was well educated, highly respectable, ladylike and adaptable, if she adjusted quickly and cheerfully to the often primitive conditions of a pioneering settler's household in the bush, and made herself useful with her basic knowledge of cooking and sewing, she was bound to be a success. But, even so, something more was desired in the colonial governess. In the lonely Australian bush, the governess might find herself, apart from her employer, the only adult woman for miles around. Therefore, she needed to be a 'companionable' woman, of ready sympathy and warmth, one to whom her female employer and the family could

43. Ibid., see, for example, Applicants Nos.3530, Jenkins, Kate M.; 6529, Sparrow, Eve; 361, Beeston, Constance Eva.
44. Ibid., see, for example, Applicants Nos.3530, Jenkins, Kate M.; 235, Barbour, Agnes L.; 362, Beeston, Effie (similar wording); 7060, Vines, Rebecca E.; 840, Burnside, Norah M.
46. Ibid., No.1046, Carson, Elizabeth Mary. See testimonial of L. Foster, Boisdale, 1905.
look to for assistance and friendship, particularly in
times of crisis and danger. Time and again employers
mentioned how indebted they were to their governesses,
and what a 'pleasant companion' she had been. Mrs.
Jean Butler of Kilroy Station, Queensland, was sorry to
part with Ellena G. Jones who had been such a 'great
comfort' to her. Jane Duff on another lonely station
near Collarenebri, N.S.W., had also found her to be a
'most agreeable companion in the house, being cheerful
and even tempered'. When Edith E. T. Wade was a
resident governess in N.S.W., her employer found her 'a
most agreeable companion and in times of sickness, a kind
friend'.

What impressed Louise Geoghegan when she came to Victoria
in 1867, was how different life was for a governess in
Australia. Her employers who were well-educated, refined
people, treated her as an equal. She observed that a
governess in the colonies was

looked on as the Intellectual member of the
Establishment; you are the constant companion
and associate of the Lady, considered I might
say indulged in every way...

47. Ibid., for example see Applicants Nos. 338, Beaver, Beatrice Edith,
'an excellent companion'; 362, Beeston, Effie, 'a pleasant companion
to us', S. Dennis, 1901; 771, Buchan, Amelia Edith, 'a companion to
her pupil'; and so on.
48. Ibid., No. 3585, Jones, Ellena Grace. See testimonials, 6 February
1897; 17 July 1889.
49. Ibid., No. 7096, Wade, Edith Eliza Theodora. See testimonial, 11th
September 1900.
In her case her duties were not arduous. She was given a horse to ride and could do a little gardening if and when she pleased. She went to balls in the district with her employers and helped Mrs. Hines prepare for one in the house. In turn she was companionable and adapted to every emergency in the household. When serious illness struck the family she nursed the invalids, including Mrs. Hines and her eldest daughter. When the girl died Miss Geoghegan comforted her employer.  

Some English governesses quickly adapted to colonial conditions but as the century advanced the Australian girl's versatility made her the ideal governess. In Twopeny's opinion she compared favourably with her English counterpart, being lively, vigorous and entirely lacking in affectation but her education had suffered neglect:

The Australian schoolgirl, with all her free-and-easy manner, and what the Misses Prunes and Prisms would call want of maidenly reserve, could teach your bread-and-butter miss a good many things which would be to her advantage... Whatever her station in life, she is bound to strum the piano; but in no country is a good pianoforte player more rare, or do you hear greater trash strummed in a drawing-room. Languages and the other accomplishments are either neglected or slurred over; but, on the other hand, nearly every colonial girl learns something of household work, and can cook some sort of a dinner, yea, and often cut out and make herself a dress. She is handy with her fingers, frank, but by no means necessarily fast in manner, good-natured and fond of every species of fun...  

50. See the letters of Louise Geoghegan to JL. 19 February 1867; 18 October 1867; 17 May 1868; 12 August 1868; 10 August 1870; L.B.I., pp. 254-257; 285-286; 302-303; 310-312; 374-376, F.M.C.E.S. Records.  
51. R. Twopeny, op. cit., p. 84.
In order to compete with English finishing governesses the Australian girl had to contain her high spirits and attempt to conform more to the stereotype of the early Victorian English lady, especially when she went into the more refined colonial homes. Besides, she had to improve the standard of her 'accomplishments' and her knowledge of languages, and in particular give attention to her speech. 'Why don't you bring your daughters to England and leave them with me to attend an English school at Taunton and thereby escape that very unpleasant Australian accent which I notice in most Australian girls,' asked Margaret Percie, one of the relatives of the Chirnside family. 'The only remedy if they stay out here is to get a real English or French governess for them.'

Thus, if a colonial governess wished to be employed in the best circles in the colonies she needed to seek lessons in 'elocution'. In later decades of the century elocution teachers were on the increase in Melbourne and a number of governesses offered the subject.

Finally, a brief perusal of testimonials given to two women by employers and referees in the later decades of the

52. Ibid., see p.86.
54. Winifred Watsford was an M.A., who included 'Elocution' among the subjects she offered to teach. Gertrude Warnock, Mary L. Warren, Mrs. Kate Berglund and her sister, Queenie Burrowes, and Ellen Maud Champion Williams, who taught both music and elocution, were among the women registered as elocution teachers in 1906. See RTS files.
nineteenth century affords some reconstruction of the colonial governess's life and offers some insight into how women fulfilled their role as governesses. Maude Archer, for instance, was a most successful governess who spent at least fifteen years teaching on stations in the Riverina, N.S.W. She had passed matriculation and her references from former employers and Anglican clergy revealed her to be an accomplished first-class teacher. Bishop Julius of Christchurch, New Zealand, who had known her when he was in Ballarat, Victoria, where she was educated, thought her a 'lady', to whom the education of the young could be confidently entrusted. Her employers at Hillston, N.S.W., found her to be a 'very pleasant companion, interesting herself in the children's pursuits, and indeed, being always ready to help in every way'.

The Cudmores of Avoca Station, one of the larger stations in the Riverina, held a high opinion of her abilities. They employed her in 1890 and again in 1902 upon their return from overseas. Mrs. Cudmore considered Maude's French accent was 'unusually good for an English governess',

55. RTS, loc. cit., Applicant No.890, Archer, Maude (N.B. Her application is not filed alphabetically. She lodged it upon her return from a trip from England on 16 October 1906). She accompanied her application with a long letter, together with a fine collection of testimonials and a list of references.

56. The Cudmores were well-to-do and made handsome donations to the establishment of the Anglican church at Wentworth in 1871. See Laurel Clyde, op. cit., p.57.
and found much to praise in other aspects of her work.

In Music, her pupils have made great strides, and she is adept in all manner of fancy work and needlework, being very clever and dainty with her fingers. In the house we have found Miss Archer a very pleasant inmate, obligingly lively and companionable.

Miss Archer took a professional interest in her teaching. She considered herself a good disciplinarian. She attended vacation classes in order to keep up with modern methods and took a course in the 'Mackenzie Smith System of Musical Gymnastics.' The subjects she offered to teach included 'all English branches, Elementary Latin and German, Mathematics 2 [sic], Elocution, Calisthenics, Music and French.' But it was not simply because Miss Archer was a competent teacher but because she was a very pleasant companionable woman that made the Cudmores favour her services a second time.57

At the end of the century, Ruby Shearer Bowman, moved about the colonies from Tasmania to Perth, leaving behind her a very good impression of being most helpful to all her employers both in school and in private homes. She was trained to be a governess at the Banff Ladies' College, Box Hill, and specialized in French. When she was employed at the Church of England Girls Grammar School in Burnie, Tasmania, the principal noticed that she 'would

57. See n.55 above.
often assist in work quite outside her position.' When she was teaching in a family she was especially helpful when there was sickness in the house. Mrs. Urquhart of Larpent, in the Western District of Victoria, who had experience of engaging governesses was delighted how beautifully Ruby had taken care of the children's clothes. She was evidently a good needlewoman. As far as her teaching was concerned, she was a patient and good-tempered teacher, and 'endeared herself to her pupils by her kind and amiable manner.'

In the introduction of this chapter reference was made to Dixson's disparagement of elitist role models in the early period of Australia's history. Another of her conclusions is that Australian women developed low expectations of and for themselves. She found little or only sporadic evidence of a sisterhood among women, and asserted that privileged and intellectual Australian women tended to have their minds swamped by domesticity and therefore failed to present strong role models for future generations. But in a recent study of the family in the colonial period Patricia Grimshaw has dispelled some of the gloom created by Miriam Dixson's depressing picture of the paucity of robust role models for female identity formation in Australia's formative period. As far as sisterhood is

58. RTS, loc. cit., Applicant No. 603, Bowman, Ruby Shearer. She included eight testimonials with her application.


60. Ibid.

concerned, Grimshaw's research has revealed that middle-class women offered each other considerable neighbourly help and emotional support in the difficult period of adjusting to colonial society and in the recurring crises in women's lives such as birth, illness and death. This present study has uncovered further evidence of opportunities for the development of sisterhood among middle-class women. Among governesses themselves there was sisterhood, and many were so respected by their employers that long after they had been employed by a family they were welcomed back as friends.

In reply to the assertion that colonial women tended to have their minds 'swamped by domesticity', one point needing to be reiterated is that the relentlessly harsh environment in which the wife, daughter and governess lived, necessitated unremitting toil on the part of all to achieve comfort and cleanliness, but in the employment of a governess, a housewife made an attempt to prevent herself becoming overwhelmed by her familial and household responsibilities. By freeing her employer from some of her tasks thus enabling her to gain some leisure, the governess made it possible for the mother to participate in activities outside the home, such as church work, social work and a variety of organisations, and to play a wider role in society if she wished.

62. Ibid., pp. 11-12.
The conclusion, then, is that the colonial governess was a more robust and attractive role model for young Australian women than has been previously recognized. Initially, the emigrant English governess provided a role-model of the 'womanly woman' to the growing daughters of colonial families. But gradually the English governess re-defined her role in the Australian colonies and the emerging model of the colonial governess became two-faceted. Whilst, on one side, it still reflected the 'perfect English lady', the refined, well-mannered, accomplished, (hopefully) idle and sheltered young woman, the other side, revealing the peculiar needs of women in colonial society, showed an adaptable, domesticated, active, increasingly-independent and better-educated woman.

With her remarkable mobility the colonial governess made inroads on the stereotype of the swooning, helpless, fragile female of the early Victorian period and helped to produce a new image for the governess as a determined, intelligent, companionable and courageous woman. Most importantly, the colonial governess was a pioneer in the field of paid employment for the Australian middle-class woman, and as such, became a significant role model. With higher education she increased her confidence and emerged in the twentieth century as a professional working woman, yet remaining wholly respectable and losing none of her femininity. She remained always a lady in every respect.

* * * * *
CHAPTER 6

IMAGES OF THE GOVERNESS IN AUSTRALIAN FICTION
Mr. Reginald saw that his newly-introduced companion was pretty and ladylike, and evidently ill at ease in the motley assembly she was thrown amongst. Her face was so intelligent and expressive, and her manner so timid, that he wondered what strange chance had sent her alone, or with such a companion as Miss Waterstone, to South Australia.

Clara, in the two half glances she had given him, saw a gentleman tall and dark, with fine eyes and a singularly pleasant smile. His age seemed to be about thirty, and his accent was English.

Catherine Spence, Clara Morison

In this early scene from Catherine Spence's novel, her heroine, Clara, is observed in the 'respectable' boarding-house to which she had been conducted only a few hours before. Earlier that day, together with her travelling companion, Miss Elizabeth Waterstone, she had stopped ashore from the Magnificent which had brought them to Adelaide from Scotland. When Mr. Reginald speaks to the young Scottish girl, his remark that the scene reminds him of a similar one in Dickens forges a bond between them at once. Clara is well-read and has a good memory and as their conversation develops her reserve eases a little.

Later Miss Waterstone upbraids her. 'Ah, Clara! ... I thought that you never flirted, and could not conduct a tete-a-tete. Well, if you never did in Scotland, you

came off amazingly well for a beginner. You monopolized the handsomest, the richest, and the most agreeable gentleman in the room. Miss Waterstone has learned that Reginald is a large sheep-holder and 'of good family, too'. Mrs. Handy, the boarding-house keeper, tells the ladies that Mr. Reginald is always polite and gentlemanly, and she knows no-one with finer manners.

This short scene from Clara Morison is productive of several impressions. The reader has met two contrasting types of governess, - the young, modest, ladylike Clara, and the older, loud-voiced, worldly Miss Waterstone. In emigrating Miss Waterstone has marriage clearly in mind, and accuses Clara of knowing more about attracting the attention of a gentleman than she has said. Miss Waterstone sees Mr. Reginald as a prospective husband; he is handsome, he is rich, and he is a gentleman. Being in a public place, a boarding-house, the governesses have a greater chance of meeting people than back home, and Clara has had the good fortune to meet a gentleman-settler. For his part, Reginald wonders what has brought such a young girl, obviously a gentlewoman, to the colony, and in such ungentleel company. He finds Clara 'charming'; her manner is quiet, and her present behaviour in the mixed company of the boarding-house is exemplary.

2. Ibid., pp. 28-29.
3. Ibid., p. 29.
In turning to Australian fiction the historian not only gains an opportunity of examining an array of images of the nineteenth century governess but also discovers an invaluable source from which to gain reinforcement of impressions concerning the role and occupation of the governess gathered from the more traditional historical sources. In the following chapter, novels and tales selected from the colonial period together with some well-known novels of the twentieth century yield a variety of characters and scenes which offer illustrations of the circumstances surrounding a young English gentlewomen's decision to become a governess and to emigrate, the preparations, the difficulties of leave-taking, the experience of the long and dangerous voyage, the suspicion attached to young females travelling such a long distance without close relatives in attendance, first impressions of Australia, the problem of finding 'respectable' accommodation, meeting the colonists and adjusting to colonial society, the struggle to gain employment, and the unrealistic and ambitious demands of colonial parents. Young colonial-born governesses also make their appearance and reveal problems with undisciplined children, uncomfortable accommodation, indifferent meals, their own family troubles, and their struggle to make ends meet. Most importantly, as indicated earlier, literary sources afford an opportunity for the social historian to come closer to the contemporary prevailing attitudes towards women in the colonies, and
of gaining insight into the governess's emotional and sexual life. Since many of the novels draw upon the conventions of the popular romantic novel and the social purpose novel they throw considerable light on the governess's opportunities for courtship, love and marriage, and reveal a side of her life which has remained either hidden from view or has not been easily discovered in documentary material.

Before proceeding, a brief recapitulation and an amplification of some points about the English Victorian women's upbringing which were made in the introduction of this study seems necessary. In the Victorian age there were three possible states for women in society - marriage, redundancy or sin. Marriage was, of course, assumed by the Victorians to be the ideal existence for women, and it was assumed all women wanted to marry. So great was the pressure on young women to conform that an unsuitable marriage seemed preferable to remaining single. But as we have seen, in mid-century Britain females so outnumbered males, that even that solution was difficult.

Unhappily, governesses seemed fated to remain unmarried and in the 'redundant' category. Instead of completing, sweetening and embellishing the existence of others, as

William Rathbone Greg who first defined the term explained, the 'redundant woman' was compelled to lead an independent and 'incomplete' existence of her own.⁶ Without a husband and a family, a woman could not know the complete fulfillment of woman's 'civilising mission'. Redundancy, then, seemed a fate only a little less worse than that of the ostracized 'fallen woman'.

But as those who wished to help the poor governess pointed out, in the colonies a free choice between marriage and profitable employment existed.⁷ There were many bachelors in the bush needing a wife to ease their loneliness and ensure their prosperity and women who wished to marry would not have long to wait for a proposal. But without the protection and advice of father, brother or guardian, how did a young emigrant governess know how to choose a good husband? Homeless, how and when could she meet and encourage the friendship of a suitable partner? In English society young women were used to being closely chaperoned and having their meetings with possible suitors arranged by parents or other relatives or their guardians.

As pointed out earlier, the up-bringing of the 'perfect young lady' was narrow and sheltered.⁸ A young woman was kept innocent and sexually ignorant. Women were

8. See 'Introduction', this study, p. 4.
trained to be loving and emotional without sexuality and were educated to believe they were morally superior to men in their lack of sexual drive but inferior because of their weaker natures. Victorian ideology presupposed a woman had little sexual feeling at all, although family affection and the desire for motherhood were considered innate. Women were trained to submit to authority, to defer to male opinions and to have none of their own.  

With such a background and education the question arises how a young governess who emigrated managed to stand alone. How did she conduct herself in colonial society? Did some governesses emigrate with the intention of marrying no matter who? The example at the beginning of this chapter illustrates how a young governess conducted herself upon her arrival in colonial society. The same extract provides evidence that Miss Waterstone had emigrated with the intention of marrying and would like a gentleman of means as a husband. But how did a woman choose a suitable partner and how did she encourage his interest in her without being thought to be 'unrespectable'? How often was the governess taken advantage of by selfish men who were already married or who quickly deserted her? Did a governess ever act foolishly and live to regret it? Did the nineteenth-century middle-class woman experience no passion at all?

With the social advantages enjoyed by married women, to what extent were older women prepared to make a poor marriage rather than remain single? How did men treat the carefully-brought up young governess? Were governesses looked on as 'fair game' or 'out of reach', or did the settler appreciate the value of a 'fine wife' and see genteel women as the standard bearers of civilisation who saved men from economic and moral ruin?  

Not all of these questions can be answered here even with a single example so that some selection has had to be made. Those that are dealt with, however, indicate that literary sources can throw considerable light on many aspects of the governess's life. Furthermore, seen by some acute observers of the colonial scene, literary evidence reveals much about the cultural development of society. The major premise here is that the governess played a significant role in that development.

Among the women authors in whose works valuable evidence of the governess has been located, only Catherine Spence and Henry Handel Richardson wrote from first-hand experience.

of the occupation. Spence's novel is highly regarded by critics as being what Spence claimed it was, a 'faithful transcript of life in the Colony'. At the time of its publication she wrote that

the domestic life represented in my tale is
the sort of life I have led - the people are
such as I have come in contact with ... the
opinions I give are what are floating about
among Australian society ...

and it might be safely assumed many of the details and impressions Spence has given about the experiences of governesses in the 1850's in South Australia are accurate. It is a good starting point for discussion. In the introduction of this chapter an early scene from the novel was discussed but Catherine Spence's story of Clara Morison properly begins in Scotland.

When Clara and her sister are orphaned, their uncle decides that Susan, the elder girl, will make an excellent governess to his family of seven, but Clara presents him with a problem. Although Susan is plain and has only a passable figure, her voice is exquisitely musical, and her uncle found much to admire in her:

Her manners were graceful and refined, and every accomplishment which she had cultivated was thoroughly acquired; she was a skilful musician, she drew admirably, and she understood more than one foreign language.

But Clara fails to conform to the early Victorian stereotype of the young lady graced by the approved 'accomplishments'. She is nice-looking, with her soft grey eyes, sunny brown hair, radiant smile, and graceful figure, but in her uncle's opinion she is 'without one accomplishment that had any marketable value'.

She neither played, nor sung, nor drew, but she read aloud with exquisite taste; her memory was stored with old ballads and new poems; she understood French, and was familiar with its literature, but could not speak the language; she could write short-hand, and construe Caesar's Commentaries; she played whist and backgammon remarkably well, but she hated crochet and despised worsted-work.¹⁶

Since it will be difficult to place her in a family in Edinburgh, her uncle decides Clara should emigrate. He assumes that accomplished governesses are not in demand in Australia and that Clara might be offered 'fifty or sixty pounds a-year and take a good position in society besides'. Moreover, he feels assured that such a good, pretty girl as Clara will be sure to marry well in a country where young ladies are so scarce, and where he has heard 'nobody looks for a fortune with his wife'.¹⁷

But Spence shows her heroine is shrewdly aware that her uncle with his social pretensions cannot bear to suffer the humiliation of having a relative of his occupy a situation of 'nursery governess' in his own neighbourhood.¹⁸

¹⁶. Ibid., p. 2.
¹⁷. Ibid., p. 3.
¹⁸. Ibid., pp. 3-4.
A nursery governess was often considered on a parity with the situation of nursemaid which was commonly offered to working-class girls.

In trying to cheer Clara and her sister who are unhappy about being separated, their aunt repeats the three most commonly-held beliefs about how much governesses are in demand in the colonies, what good salaries are being offered and the chances of governesses marrying well. She warns Clara not to take the first situation she is offered. Wealth is all very well, but respectability is to be prized.

> You should prefer forty pounds a-year, with a comfortable home, to sixty, where everything is not comme il faut.

She has heard that servants and distressed needle-women make 'brilliant marriages' in Australia and suggests that Clara might not have to wait very long before getting a proposal. 'But let your choice fall on a man of sound principles and religious feelings, if you mean to be happy', is her final word of advice to her niece. 19 Both Clara's aunt and uncle reflect mid-Victorian middle-class society's values and standards.

In the chapter entitled 'The Voyage Out' in this present work, the experience of the F.M.C.E.S. ladies during their voyage to the colonies was given in some detail.

19. Ibid., pp. 4-5.
yet Spence is able to throw light on several aspects of life at sea which did not emerge in women's letters. Like many other governesses, Clara is outfitted, arrangements are made for her to meet Captain and Mrs. Whitby and she meets Elizabeth Waterstone who is to share her cabin. Spence stresses the potential danger in a situation where a quiet, modest young woman is required to share accommodation for such a long period with a woman of quite different temperament and interests who could exert a bad influence.

Miss Waterstone was apparently about twenty-five. Her charms were fully developed; her complexion florid; her voice loud and her manner imposing.20

There is nothing of the downtrodden governess about Miss Waterstone who has rather the style of the adventuress, a stereotype popular in English fiction of the period.21 She is confident of her future success:

She was thoroughly competent to undertake anything in the way of education, though, as yet, she had had no experience; and she trusted to her letters of introduction bringing her at once into the best society in Melbourne.22

20. Ibid., p. 6.
22. Clara Morison, p. 27.
Spence illuminates the suspicion which rested on a young woman travelling alone without a member of her family and in the company of an older, unprincipled woman whose behaviour provokes disapproval. She shows how strongly social distinctions operated on board ship, and also indicates the ease with which the sexes could mix and how shipboard friendships with male passengers could be facilitated.

When they went on deck, they had no proper place allotted to them, and not being permitted to go aft with the cabin passengers, sat on a bench together, with the steerage passengers. If Miss Waterstone's voice had not been so loud, and her flirtations with Mr. Renton so undisguised; if she had put as much restraint upon herself as she had done in her visit to Clara's uncle, Mrs. Whitby, who was not ill-natured, would have pressed Mrs. Surford and Mrs. Hastie, the principal ladies in the cuddy, to have invited the girls to the poop; and really felt for Clara, who looked uncomfortable and unhappy. But to invite Clara without Miss Waterstone was impossible; Renton and Macnab would have followed them, and the exclusive society of the after-cabin would never tolerate such a wholesale invasion of their privileges.23

When the captain's wife tried to convince the ladies on board that Miss Morison had 'good connexions' and was a suitable person to be in their company it did little good, and Spence brings out clearly that once women's curiosity was aroused about a woman who was travelling alone any attempt to allay suspicion only resulted in the question being put more strongly why such a good girl from such a background was being sent

out alone to such a distance. When Clara reaches Adelaide and applies to Mr. Campbell for aid, a similar doubt crosses his mind and until he is better acquainted with the high-principled and independent Clara, Campbell wonders what she is doing in the colony alone and if Morison has sent her out to entrap him into a second marriage.

Later on in the novel when Clara is being interviewed for a situation, Mrs. Denfield asks for Clara's permission to question Mrs. Hastie about how Clara conducted herself on board. Clara is quick to reply that Mrs. Hastie knows nothing about her. This incident underlined the need of governesses to be forever vigilant of their behaviour and that they could not afford to mix too freely in case their respectability was called into question. The F.M.C.E.S. governesses often pointed out how important it was to travel First Class where they mixed with only the most genteel company.

But not all young governesses were 'sent out'. Some were sent for, whilst others decided of their own free will to emigrate. In Margaret Kiddle's story *West of Sunset*, Jane Lawrence who has lost both parents in a cholera epidemic, and whose brother has already gone to N.S.W., quarrels with her young guardian, her cousin, a girl not much older than herself, and impulsively goes

25. Ibid., p. 23.
to the Emigration Office and obtains an assisted passage for herself and another younger cousin, Harriet. Upon landing in Sydney, the two young emigrants are befriended by Mrs. Chisholm who places them with a kindly widow on Mirrabooka Station where they teach the children, help with the sewing, and generally make themselves useful.\textsuperscript{26}

When Alfreda Holme's step-father who emigrated some years before with his only sister and has since re-married, invites Freda to come out to South Australia and live with him and his wife and their growing children who are 'all running wild', she has doubts at first of the wisdom of accepting the offer. Elisabeth Boyd Bayly's heroine is an example of the 'perfect young lady'. She is very beautiful, well-connected, and has been carefully educated. At the beginning of the novel she is leading a leisured life. She is an accomplished pianist and enjoys going to concerts in London and listening to classical music. However, she does not despise a basket of 'sound plain sewing'.\textsuperscript{27}

Written some twenty-five years after Catherine Spence's novel, Bayly's heroine emerges as a 'new woman', demanding the Right to Work and self-determination. Though she is happy at home, Freda feels she leads an aimless existence, and being of a serious and religious turn of mind, what she really wants to do is become a

\textsuperscript{26} Margaret Kiddle, \textit{West of Sunset} (Melbourne, 1949).
deaconess or a nurse but she is too young to be accepted for either. Finally, Freda sees the invitation to emigrate as a mission, - 'This must be a call to work', and she decides to accept Martin Raymond's invitation. 28

More than half her relatives take it for granted she will be married within a few months after landing in Australia but her aunt, Mrs. Delincort, believes Freda is making a sacrifice leaving England and English society. But even if there is 'more of a servant's place' for the girl in Australia, if Freda wishes to go she will not oppose her. 29 Having been sent £150 for her outfit and passage, Freda spends the weeks before her departure shopping, sewing, farewell visiting, and - learning to cook. Since she has heard that ladies are required to do many things they would never dream of doing in London, she spends her days 'cleaning saucepans, washing greens, preparing meals, and worst of all, drawing fowls!'. 30

Freda Holme's experience of the voyage is in direct contrast to Clara Morison's. There is one point of similarity in that Freda travels out, as is the custom for young women travelling alone, under the care of Captain Logan. But unlike Clara who had to share

28. Ibid., pp. 20-23.
29. Ibid., p. 33.
30. Ibid., p. 36.
accommodation, Freda enjoys the privacy of a 'tiny cabin of her own'. On board she joins a daily reading party, sings in the choir, plays the piano, gives lessons on Sunday and three times a week, and takes part in a chess tournament being the only lady to do so, and surprises everyone by gaining third place.\textsuperscript{31}

Fiction provides clues on how a governess had to begin the search for a situation. Clara Morison faced many difficulties and disappointments. First, her letters of introduction were of little use and one which turned out to be addressed to a 'bad character' had to be destroyed.\textsuperscript{32} Many governesses complained that their testimonials carried little weight in the colonies yet the genteel custom of being furnished with letters-of-introduction died hard.

Next, Clara discovered that despite the glowing reports her aunt had heard in Scotland, there was little demand for governesses in the colony. Clara learned that parents sent their children to school because it was cheaper and more convenient, and there seemed a number of reasons why colonial parents would not wish to employ her.

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., pp. 47-49.
\textsuperscript{32} Clara Morison, pp. 21-22.
... some would like a governess, but had not accommodation, for the children had too little room already. Some wanted an elderly person, who had had experience in tuition; but could not think of entrusting their children to a girl of nineteen. But the want of music was the great drawback, for though most of these music-requiring ladies had no piano they could never think of getting a governess merely to teach reading and writing; they could teach these things quite as well themselves.33

As pointed out previously there was a firm demand for instruction in music especially the piano which amounted to an obsession. The piano became a symbol of a family's attainment of culture and refinement.34

Spence's novel made it clear that a governess should not expect a high salary, that she should realise that as well as teaching children she might be asked to wash and dress her pupils, and do some housework as well. But there were some advantages. Mr Campbell stressed a governess had a good chance of marrying, though a young woman needed to find out about a man's character. Some governesses who had no one to turn to in order to find out about their future husbands could easily make 'wretched marriages'.35

33. Ibid., p. 49.
34. See M. Kiddle, Men of Yesterday (Melbourne, 1961), p. 96.
Clara needs a situation urgently but Mr Campbell can only find one likely employer, a mother of seven children. He warns Clara that Mrs Denfield is a 'high-spirited' woman who dislikes any contradiction. When Clara reaches the Denfield property some of the children are in the garden but they make no attempt to welcome her. There is nothing attractive or lady-like about the eldest daughter, Caroline, who tells Clara her mother is 'fit for nothing to-day', and Clara is kept waiting three quarters of an hour before Mrs Denfield makes her appearance. In the sixties Gertrude Gooch received the impression that Australian ladies were 'very indolent' and colonial children, 'listless'.

Mrs Denfield prides herself on being lady-like and 'decided'. Since her efforts to teach her own children have been largely unsuccessful she has given up teaching them and has been employing a governess.

36. Ibid., p. 29.
37. Ibid., pp. 51-53.
38. See Ch. 3, this study.
She was anxious that her children should be as lady-like and as firm as she was, but neither precept nor example had hitherto succeeded in producing that result. She had at last adopted the opinion that mothers were not the best instructors of their darlings, but that they needed a subordinate educating machine, such as a governess, to act under their orders, and to cram the minds of children with useful knowledge, without either inspiring any of the respect, or winning any of the affection which was due to the mother, and the mother, alone.  

Mrs. Denfield is not impressed with Clara. She thinks she is too young and too pretty for a governess. Because she does not have a hard mouth she decides Clara lacks 'firmness'. After some preliminary questions she comes to the point. 'Miss Morison, I wish you to tell me exactly what you can and cannot do'. What follows provides some idea of a nineteenth-century interview between employer and governess.

'I can teach all the branches of an English education,' said Clara, 'and I understand French grammatically. I could give lessons in Latin for the first year to two, and I could instruct the young ladies in plain needlework.'

'No fancy work, knitting, or crochet?' asked Mrs. Denfield.

'No, ma'am.'

'No music?'

'No, ma'am; I only know the notes.'

'Don't you draw at all?'

'No, ma'am. '

'Cannot you teach dancing?'

'Oh yes, at least I can dance well; my master always said I was his best pupil.'

'Was he a Frenchman?'

'Yes, ma'am.'

Then Mrs. Denfield asked Clara's age.

'Nineteen, ma'am.'

'In what vessel did you come out?'

'In the Magnificent - in the intermediate.'  

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid., p. 55.
Mrs Denfield decides that since Clara has so few accomplishments and no recommendations she can only offer her fifteen pounds as a 'nursery governess'. Clara protests that such a sum could scarcely provide a lady with dress and contingencies. 42.

As documentary research has shown, governesses were poorly paid to the end of the century and nursery governesses received the lowest rates. In fiction the salaries offered to young and inexperienced governesses are generally low. In Ethel Turner's story, 'School at Jimbaree', Miss Emmerton jumps at the chance of a situation at £70 a year. In her previous employment she had only received £26 from people who used 'thick scented notepaper with a lately-found crest'. 43. But Turner suggested that in town salaries were higher, and in Little Mother Meg, Esther's conscience is pricked when she cancels another day's lessons for she knew the Major paid thirty pounds a year for the 'morning services' of Miss Burton. 44. In relation to these figures, Mary Mahoney's claim that her sister Zara

42. Ibid., p.56.
43. Ethel Turner, 'School at Jimbaree', in The Camp at Wandinong (London, 1898), p.178. See also Turner's A White Roof-Tree (1905), in which Brenda is offered the same figure. A lower salary is quoted in The Camp at Wandinong, pp. 23-24, - 'Mary taught six children English and Music and helped with the sewing and all household duties for £20 a year.'
would never accept a situation which offered less than 200 pounds a year is extravagant. Possibly Mary's admiration for Zara's abilities led her to exaggerate. Of course, Zara was a highly accomplished English finishing governess and her services were in demand in the highest social circles of Sydney and Melbourne where parents could afford to pay handsomely.

Returning to the novel Clara Morison, the reader finds that for fifteen pounds a year Mrs Denfield's previous governess, Bridget Dobson, has assisted her mistress with the family needlework, dressed two of the younger children every morning, and 'drew nicely, too'. Since Clara has no alternative she accepts the situation and Mrs Denfield becomes affable at once. But, unfortunately for Clara, at that moment Mr Denfield returns home, and his undisguised admiration for Clara is sufficient to persuade Mrs Denfield that she is unsuitable. Finding fault with Clara's pronunciation of Latin 'after the Scotch fashion', she decides not to employ her.

In the Victorian period suspicion tended to fall on a young and pretty governess who it was feared might prove

46. Clara Morison, p. 56.
47. Ibid., pp. 56-57.
a temptation for the father of the family and bring unhappiness and ruin upon all. The Victorians' fear of such an eventuality led to women being advised to admit only plain and older women into their households.  

Young women needing employment tended to dress plainly and severely to avoid attracting attention thus helping to strengthen the stereotype of the dull, severe governess. Of course, any woman who was discovered to be licentious was summarily dismissed. In *The Fortunes of Richard Mahoney* Tilly Ocock writes to Mary Mahoney in England bringing her up to date with the local gossip in Ballarat and mentions the following item:

... Louise Urquhart presented her husband with the eleventh. How she keeps it up so regular beats me. But there's ructions in that family at present. Willy's been unusual gay. This time it was a governess, a real young spark they had up to Yarangobily to teach the kids. She got bundled out double-quick at the end, ...  

Since a governess needed a character reference to gain employment the failure to be able to furnish a testimonial from one's last employer aroused suspicion.

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The interview scene in Caroline Atkinson's novel, *Emma, the Emigrant* which appeared three years after the publication of *Clara Morison,* evokes a very different atmosphere from that created by Mrs. Denfield's interrogation of Clara. Atkinson's heroine is a well-mannered and well-read young woman who has been employed as a superior kind of servant on a station but a set of unfortunate circumstances has brought her to Sydney. When she learns of a family wanting a nursery governess she decides to apply, and is taken to a large and elegant house 'situated on a height over-looking the waters of Port Jackson'. The garden is well-kept and a group of children are playing happily on the verandah. Once inside, Gertrude is further impressed.

The stands of beautiful flowers, the books glittering in azure, crimson, and gold, the choice engravings and the open piano, told of mental culture and refinement ...

Although the situation has already been filled Gertrude is received by the lady. Her concern for her children's education is revealed in the importance she attaches to the respectability of the governess who she stresses must set a 'good example'. There is no mention of ornamental subjects although the lady herself is clearly accomplished. Since the novel is now a 'rare book' the extract is quoted at length:

52. Ibid., p. 130.
53. Ibid., p. 131.
Mrs. Walton was reclining upon a sofa, as Gertrude was ushered into her presence, she was a beautiful woman hardly past 'youth, but the clear skin traced by blue veins, and the feverish flush on the cheek, and brilliant eye told their own tale.

'Be seated,' she said as Gertrude explained her mission. 'I am really sorry that I have just engaged a young person; are you an emigrant, or a native girl?'

'An emigrant, ma'am,' and she described the locality of her native village, and of Comb Ending.

'I know it well, I have been there, and sketched the old church - ... and you come from Comb Ending.' The invalid raised herself on her elbow; the mention of the old familiar place stirred her feeble pulse.

'I too,' she said, 'am English, a Kentish woman.' There was a little satisfaction in the latter words; '... and I have come here for my health.'

'You are not very strong I fear?' returned Gertrude.

'No not very, but I am better - much better than I was before we left home ... I wished for some one who could take charge of, and instruct my little ones, above a nurse, a respectable girl, who would be a good example to them.'

'And you have met with such a person,' returned Gertrude sadly.

'I have, I could almost say unfortunately, for I do not think the young person will suit me so well as you would have done.' ...

Disappointed in not being able to help the dying mother Gertrude leaves, reflecting on the woman's gentility which contrasted with the arrogance of most other colonists she had known.

In an earlier chapter the governess's difficulty in adjusting to households where the employers lacked gentility was mentioned. In her heroine's second attempt to gain a situation Spence provides an illustration of the governess's dilemma when offered employment by ignorant people of a lower social class.

54. Ibid.
With her supply of money growing steadily smaller and annoyed by the taunts of the young men at the boarding-house, Clara Morison decides to advertise for a situation. It draws a response from the Cawmrays. Mrs. Handy has known the Cawmrays since they emigrated steerage and when she learns they have answered Clara's advertisement she is shocked.

Really, Miss Morison, you must not go there; you are sure not to like it, and you will find it difficult to get a genteel situation afterwards.  

When Mr. Cawmray became a drunkard Mrs. Cawmray had worked for Mrs. Handy as a washerwoman. However, Mr. Cawmray signed the pledge and the couple's farm has prospered. Their increasing wealth has made Mrs. Cawmray socially conscious, and realising her daughter's education has been neglected, she wishes to employ a governess to help Jane become a lady. Pleased with having a genteel lady like Miss Morison as their governess the Cawmrays are prepared to pay her forty pounds a year. Financially, Clara cannot afford not to take a situation in their home but she will suffer socially if she does. The episode effectively illustrates the problem the middle-class governess faced in reconciling her notions of gentility with the availability of employment. Clara is saved having to make a decision for when the Cawmrays discover that Clara is boarding with Mrs. Handy, they fear the embarrassment when Clara discovers their humble origins and find an excuse to change their minds.

56. Ibid., p. 65.
57. Ibid., pp. 65-66.
Disheartened but philosophical, Clara decides she will be better off if she takes a situation as a servant. But Mrs. Handy points out that she will spoil her chance of marrying if she does. Clara takes an independent and surprisingly modern stand: 'I will keep out of debt and out of danger; and there is no necessity for being married'.

Obtaining a situation with Mrs. Bantam as a general servant Clara learns the art of house-keeping. Observing the neighbours, the Misses Elliot, Clara is encouraged and not demeaned when she discovers many colonial ladies do their own housework. Clara's becoming a servant reflects more Spence's advice to young governesses to be adaptable rather than a statement about a widely adopted practice.

Catherine Spence's novel is rich in the variety of governesses it contains. Besides the resourceful Clara, there is Miss Waterstone, the adventuress; Miss Dobson, the young governess who spends some time at the Denfields; Miss Sophie Werner, the German governess whom Max Haussen jilted; poor Miss Ker who made a disastrous marriage; Minnie Hodges who taught her own brothers and sisters; and Miss Withering, the 'Griffin'. Of them all, Spence's study of the emigrant English governess, Miss Elizabeth Withering, is the most entertaining.

58. Ibid., p. 67.
59. Ibid., p. 73.
60. Ibid., pp. 51-52, 56.
61: Ibid., pp. 311-313
62. Ibid., p. 159.
63. Ibid., p. 88.
64. Ibid., p. 120.
One aspect relating to the employer's problem of hiring a governess which documentary sources do not reveal is how a family reacted when they discovered the competent and accomplished governess they had acquired possessed a forceful personality which threatened to dominate the household. Spence poses this problem in her study of Miss Withering.

On her arrival in Adelaide Miss Withering is offered a home by Mrs. Bantam. She is neither pretty nor young, is very precise and easily displeased. She adopts a most superior attitude towards the colonists and colonial ways whilst remaining insensitive to the need for adjustment in a pioneering society. She is surprised and shocked at everything; the houses are small, the furniture shabby and the children, 'wild things'.

But when Miss Withering is in company in which there might be a prospective employer she is all affability. She appeared 'more like a being from another sphere condescending to enlighten and astonish inferior creatures than like the ill-tempered, domineering woman she really was'. The colonists are impressed by this cultivated woman who can talk grandly about education. To Minnie Hodges' father Miss Withering appeared 'lady-like'. When she heard he had a large family and required

65. Ibid., p. 91.
66. Ibid.
a governess, she drew herself up to her full height, and 'looked like the concentrated essence of all the virtues and accomplishments extant'. 67

To younger men Miss Withering appeared sour and severe. At a concert she was observed 'sitting up-right, tall, thin, bony, with a precise black silk dress, and virtuous bonnet', she appeared the 'approved mixture of whale-bone and vinegar'. 68 She is not a 'womanly woman' and has little interest in young children. Minnie Hodges found her so exasperating and unpleasant that she nicknamed her the 'Griffin'. 69

Unbelievably, Miss Withering married. Indeed, nearly all the governess in Clara Morison married. When Mr. Reginald first met Clara and learned that it was her intention to get a situation as a governess he visualized Clara's future in the occupation as being very unpleasant and assumed that she would be glad to marry any one to escape such an existence. We know that Clara married Mr. Reginald who was a gentleman 'sheep-farmer'. Miss Waterstone became Mrs. Patrick Fleming, the wife of a storekeeper in Melbourne, 70 and, for all her pretensions Miss Withering married a tradesman, but ashamed of such an alliance, lived more or less in semi-retirement. And Miss Ker made a disastrous marriage. 71

67. Ibid., p. 85.
68. Ibid., p. 102.
69. Ibid., p. 120.
70. Ibid., pp. 82-83.
71. Ibid., p. 186.
She married a man whom she knew nothing about; but poor little thing, she had no home, and could not get a situation. This man had a good deal of property; she was pretty inexperienced and thought that anything that would give her a shelter would be comparative happiness. He had a shocking temper; and was very unsteady; but that was not the worst of it, for about six months after he married Miss Ker, he went on some pretext to Sydney; and shortly afterwards, his wife and four children came out to Adelaide to join him. Of course, the true wife took possession of all his property here, and poor Miss Ker was left penniless, with a sickly baby and was forced to apply to the Destitute Board.  

The belief that young governesses who went to teach on inland stations soon married has already been discussed in this study. James Kirby who spent the whole of his life in the country and knew a great deal about life on the station properties, has related some anecdotes about governesses. He has suggested that the presence of a governess on a station was sufficient to attract squatters' sons from miles around and they increased the length of their visits if the governess was 'at all attractive'.

How did these friendships develop between a squatter's son and the governess? Kirby has told the following story of how it happened. Robert Thompson, for instance, always seemed pleased and in the best of spirits when he headed his horse in the direction of Robertson's Station where he liked to behold the graceful figure of Miss C.' He would remain two or three nights there being entertained with music, provided chiefly by the governess. In the daytime Thompson would

72. Ibid., p. 158.
74. Ibid., p. 159.
take long walks and rides with Miss C. and the
children, and was seen on some occasions walking
with her alone in the garden, and this led them
on to take rides without the children, and they
found they got on very well without them.

Next, Thompson and Miss C. became engaged. Kirby stresses
the point that Miss Cathcart was older than her fiance. 75

Whilst Kirby does not suggest that governesses were
all sex-starved spinsters who would marry the first man
who came their way, he does joke about the interest that
older women had in young men. He relates an amusing
anecdote about three 'middle-aged' governesses who took
a particular interest in a bachelor named Ingleby who
was not paying them attention but favouring Jessie Robertson,
the squatter's young daughter. Miss Benson thought that
if Mr. Ingleby said, 'Snip,' Miss Robertson would say,
'Snap', but she thought Jessie Robertson was 'too young
to be married' and Miss Hunter thoroughly agreed. Miss
Hunter thought that Mr. Ingleby could have found a 'more
suitable person for his wife', and Miss Benson would have
liked to see him 'marry a lady of (say) mature years, one
who had moved in society, and whose ideas would, of
necessity, have been more in accord with his own.' Both
Miss Hunter and Miss O'Connell agreed.

"If he had married one ...","here Miss Benson checked herself, blushed a little, and
changed the subject. 76

75. Ibid., pp. 159-160.
76. Ibid., p. 165.
Because older unmarried women sought to conceal their ages any reference to their correct chronological age became a source of amusement. A scene which reveals the sensitivity of an older governess's feelings concerning her age is found in Bayly's *Alfreda Holme*. Miss Grimsel, the Blackthorn's governess, is very disapproving and serious in manner and her looks suggest she is about forty rather than the twenty-five she pretends. When Freda was a guest at Marchfield she had to admit she was a total abstainer. This came as a shock to her host, Mr. Neville Blackthorn who was an up-and-coming wine-grower. He wanted to know why Freda had taken the pledge and suggested that she was not likely to take to drinking. Freda's reply was that she could not be sure.

'That implies that none of us can be sure,' said Miss Grimsel.
'You have had more time to be tested,' said Freda. Freda had put her foot in it by her last rejoinder. Miss Grimsel's tenderest point was her age. No one knew her birthday. No reminiscence from which a date could be inferred escaped her lips. She had lived five years at Marchfield, and three in a previous situation, and as any young woman may be a governess at seventeen, there could be no certain proof that Miss Grimsel was more than five-and-twenty although deluded victims of physiognomy were inclined to estimate her years at nearer forty. ... Miss Grimsel turned away her head, stuck her fork into a plum, and tore off the skin as fiercely as though the fruit were Miss Holme in effigy. Mr. Raymond hastily stuffed a great piece of orange in front of his mouth. Mr. Blackthorn was too well kept in order to think of laughing. His wife waited only till the representative plum was swallowed to rise majestically and move for the drawing-room, taking Freda's hand with slightly reproving patronage in her look.77

A leading writer* has remarked that some of the most revealing evidence is often found in incidentals, in a reference made in passing. The idea that however unsatisfactory a marriage might be it is the ideal state for women emerges in a scene in Henry Kingsley's *The Recollections of Geoffrey Hamlyn*. When Major Buckley's party decides to make camp for the night in the bush, the scene allows for a comparison of the responses made by three English gentlewomen to their new environment. They are Mrs. Buckley, a 'perfect lady', Mary Hawker whose husband has deserted her, and who, unknown to her has been transported to Van Diemen's Land, and Miss Thornton, the retired governess.

There sat Mrs. Buckley on a log, a noble, happy matron, laughing at her son as he toddled about, busy gathering sticks for the fire. Beside her was Mary, paler and older-looking ... with her child upon her lap, looking sad and worn. But a sadder sight for me was old Miss Thornton, silent and frightened, glancing uneasily round, as though expecting some new horror. No child for her to cling to and strive for. No husband to watch for and anticipate every wish. A poor, timid, nervous old maid, thrown adrift in her old age upon a strange sea of anomalous wonders. Every old favourite prejudice torn up by the roots. All old formulas of life scattered to the winds! 78

The new world shocks and frightens the old governess. The younger women are more able to adjust and their maternal ties help them to look forward rather than

* G.A. Wilkes, see n. 11 above.
back. The notion that to be unmarried was the worst fate for a woman is not stated but strongly implied. Even being deserted and left with a child to rear alone which is Mary Hawker's lot is here clearly presented as a superior fate.

Being 'left on the shelf' was a terrible prospect for the governess and the thought of teaching until old age, condemned to a lonely spinsterhood, insulted by children, persecuted by employers, becoming poor and destitute, led women to contemplate any marriage rather than endure such an existence. H.H. Richardson has revealed a sympathy for women facing such a future. In The Getting of Wisdom she presented a scene in which three governesses, Miss Snodgrass, Miss Zielinski, and Miss Chapman, a 'drab, elderly, apologetic governess' are eating their supper. Suddenly the boredom of their existence cannot be borne any longer by Miss Snodgrass who exclaims, 'Holy Moses, what a life'.

... I swear I'll marry the first man that asks me, to get away from it. As long as he has money enough to keep me decently.' 'You would soon wish yourself back, if you had no more feeling for him than that,' reproved Miss Chapman. 'Catch me! Not even if he had a hump, or kept a mistress, or was over eighty ...' 79

Miss Snodgrass might never have carried out her threat but Zara Turnham married a dying man rather than remain single.

Richardson's portrait of Mary Mahoney's sister, Zara, is the most dramatic representation of a governess in Australian literature. Zara was a woman of many moods, at her best when she could show off her exquisite gentility as, for instance, when she sang in French at Mary's salon in Ballarat, or when she went driving in a carriage with her pupils. In company she could be a fluent conversationalist and one bishop thought her 'charming'. But young children did not take to her, and her scornful look of disapproval caused her brother Ned to call her the 'Salamander'.

Although Zara had plenty of admirers she was coquettish by nature and declared none of them suited her taste. Besides, she earned a very good salary. But as Zara grew older she began to experience difficulties in gaining situations:

Even the posts open to her as finishing-governess were not, it appeared, what they had once been. Younger women, competent to teach the new-fangled "callisthenics", and dull, dry pieces by "Mosar" instead of the tuneful morceaux in which Zara excelled were now getting the plums.

81. Ibid., p. 440.
Finally she decided to marry the 'shrunken, emaciated Hempel', a poor Baptist minister, and only Mary was sympathetic. Their brother John thought her decision was madness at her age, but Mary Mahoney tries to make him see the decision 'from Zara's standpoint':

'the very natural desire of an ageing woman for a home and a husband; the dreaded stigma of old-maidism; the weariness and monotony of going on teaching other people's children year after year; the mortification of seeing younger women chosen over your head, and your salary steadily decreasing as you grew older.'

Richardson treats with sympathy the problem that faced older single women, especially the middle-class woman for whom governessing was one of the few respectable forms of work available and for whom with each year situations became more difficult to obtain. To many a governess any marriage must have seemed preferable to remaining unmarried and having to lead such a life. Even widowhood offered the social advantage of being Mrs.

Finally, and briefly, literary sources suggest that most Australian middle-class colonial families employed governesses to teach younger children in the home and to 'finish' the older girls. One entertaining and instructive scene which illuminates the reason why parents employed a governess is found in Mrs. Campbell

82. Ibid., p. 441.
Praed's novel *Sister Sorrow* which is largely autobiographical of the period when Rosa Praed was growing up in Queensland and being educated by governesses.

In the story, Clare, the step-mother, declares she has never yet found Miss Dolores Lloyd, the governess, good at ordinary commonsense matters.

'Not that you haven't other girls, Dolores,' Clare added hastily, ... 'Girls that are beyond me. Your work is to art up Bee and Bel [the twins] in languages and accomplishments. And it's certain there's more of us at Barolin than Bee and Bel who'd be the better for a bit of your "arting up"' - which was Clare's phrase for the comprehensive word, culture.83

Here the work and influence of the governess is expressed in a phrase - it consists of 'arting up' the girls of the family. But the step-mother has not finished speaking, and what she adds offers evidence of possibly many colonial parents' sub-conscious motivation for the employment of a governess. They felt they had been deprived in their childhood in the colonies or elsewhere and were determined their children would not suffer the same disadvantages:

'Well, [continues Clare] as I said, that's beyond me ... I never was artistic - which is the reason I've insisted on my girls being given advantages in the way of governess that my parents were not able to give me' ...84

84. Ibid., p. 20.
What was the response of the colonial child to the governess? Like teachers in any age, the governess was loved or hated or merely shrugged off. In the novel last referred to, Miss Lloyd endeared herself to the whole family. When the girls confided in her they called her 'Dody', and their mother who accepted her as companion often addressed her as 'Dolores'.

In the Pioneer of a Family Miss Jenny thought of young Kate Maysen as her 'dear governess', and in Mrs Henry Jones's book, when the children's governess, Marian Locksley married, her bridesmaids were her three pupils.

The young Lomax children in Ethel Turner's In the Mist of the Mountains thought Miss Bibby a little odd in her ideas about diet but they liked her, and the little girls suffered their music lessons right through the summer. Only Max became naughty and used 'language'. The ignorant M'Swats found Sybylla Melvyn an object of curiosity, a 'rale little bit of a thing' with 'teeny little hands, as white as snow', and Jane Cawmray whose education had been neglected regarded Clara Morison with awe when she thought of the French and Latin she was going to learn.

85. Ibid., p. 19.
90. Clara Morison, p. 63.
To girls brought up in the bush the governess represented restrictions. To young Norah Linton, who had been taught to read and write by her nurse, the idea of some day having a governess suggested not being allowed 'to ride astride, or go after the cattle, or climb trees, or do anything worth while doing', and of having to learn 'Latin and French, and drawing and geography and how to talk grammar'. For young children the appearance of the daily governess was too often the signal that all pleasure had gone from the day. In Little Mother Meg young Essie wondered if Miss Burton's aunt would fall down stairs again and the governess would have to stay home. 'Nothing'll keep her away', was her little brother's pessimistic reply.

In conclusion, a remark of E.M. Forster's comes to mind. He once stated that in the novel we can know people perfectly and can find in it a compensation for their dimness in life. The statement seems to have particular relevance to the colonial governess who has been thought elusive. Although the historian needs to observe caution in the use of literary sources, since the selections have been taken largely from the writings of women who

had experience of governessing or had been closely associated with those who had, then it can be assumed that the images of the governess which have just been examined possess authenticity, and have brought the reader closer to the real life of the governess. As far as details of the occupation are concerned novels have helped to provide confirmation and reinforcement of evidence based on the more usual historical sources. furnished in earlier chapters of this study.
CONCLUSIONS

In Australian colonial society the governess became teacher and companion in countless families. She was employed chiefly as a civilising agent, her principal responsibility being to provide a good basic education for the younger children of the family and to offer accomplishments to the older daughters and help them cultivate some refinement. Parents who experienced anxiety about the influence of the rough pioneering society in which their children were growing up hired an English governess, confident that both by her example and her instruction she would be able to reinforce and perpetuate the standards and values of the older society they had known, and which they felt were being disregarded or being lost sight of under the conditions of pioneering and the distance from established cultural centres.

In particular the governess was welcomed by the colonial mother whose burden of home and family responsibilities under colonial conditions was much greater than in English society. Significantly, the governess enhanced the status of the colonial wife and mother since she relieved her of her duty as educator, and by providing some assistance in the home facilitated the colonial mother's attainment of some leisure.

One task here has been to expose the difficulties which the occupation of governess presented in Australian colonial society. In a period when notions of gentility were intensifying in middle-class British society, the English governess's determination to achieve economic independence in a pioneering society in a totally unfamiliar environment indicated her personal courage and willingness and potential for adaptation. In the detailed account of the governess's response to life at sea during her voyage to the colonies and in the early years of her settlement in Australia, some idea of how she demonstrated these qualities has been gained. One point that has been remarked has been the inhibiting influence of the Victorian woman's notions of gentility and respectability and how these determined the
colonial governess's decisions and actions. In particular, the English governess in the colonies found it hard to adapt to life in a household where her employer's social background was lower than her own.

In the second half of the nineteenth century when the colonial population was increasing and state systems of education were being established, the colonial governess demonstrated a remarkable resourcefulness to remain in employment and retain her independence by her mobility. Without the willingness to be mobile the governess could have found herself unemployed and forced to seek other forms of employment.

A point to emerge in this investigation has been that some of the success of the young governess whether emigrant or colonial-born was due, to a large extent, to the supportive role her family played. It has been illustrated that those women who had no one to turn to when experiencing difficulties, suffered hardship and lived on the edge of poverty particularly in their declining years.

For the Victorian woman the ideal way out of the occupation of governess was for her to marry. Many emigrant governesses had marriage in mind when they emigrated, and of the women assisted by the F.M.C.E.S. it has been possible to provide evidence that at least ten per cent married within the first few years of their arrival. Possibly more eventually married including older women, for as sources have illustrated, older women sought the social advantage of a poor marriage rather than contemplate a lonely spinsterhood.

It has been suggested here that the colonial governess provided a valuable role-model for the young middle-class Australian woman who wished to become independent or needed employment. With improved education the poor gentlewoman forced by circumstances to become a governess proved that a lady could become a respectable and successful working-woman who had much to offer a changing society in which views concerning the education of women were undergoing rapid revision. By her example she established the Right to
Work for the young middle-class woman, a right which had far-reaching implications for all women.

The most important finding in this work has been that the governess became the chief influence and instrument in the improvement of the education of girls in the colonies, being among the first women to enter for the matriculation examination of the colonial universities and among their early women graduates. Thus it may be asserted confidently that the colonial governess paved the path to the professions for women in Australia.
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The Society was founded in 1862 as the Female Middle-Class Emigration Society. The name was subsequently changed several times until it became in 1962 the Women's Migration and Overseas Appointment Society.

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   ***N.B. Throughout my thesis I have referred to the second letterbook as 'Letterbook No. 2'.

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