

**National University of Ireland.**

**Maynooth.**

**Title: The Organisational Work of Lady Ishbel Aberdeen,  
Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair. (1857-1939)**

**by**

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**THESIS FOR THE DEGREE OF Ph.D.  
DEPARTMENT OF MODERN HISTORY  
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND  
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**November 2001.**



**Ishbel Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair: Foundress and President of Women's Health Association 1907-1939.**

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to begin by thanking, most sincerely, the staff of the History Department of N.U.I. Maynooth who were so helpful and encouraging, both in my undergraduate days as a mature student, and subsequently as a postgraduate. I would like to say a special thank you to my supervisors over the past six years, Professor R. V. Comerford and Dr Dympna McLoughlin, without whose support and endless patience this work would never have been completed. To Dr Raymond Gillespie, who first mentioned the name of Ishbel Aberdeen, as I searched for a topic that would interest me.

There were many individuals who helped me along the way, some whose names I have unfortunately forgotten, therefore I would like to thank collectively the archivists and staff, firstly at Peamount Hospital in Newcastle Co. Dublin, who gave me free access to all their records. The staff at the National Library of Ireland; the Royal College of Physicians; the Royal College of Surgeons; the Civic Museum; the Gilbert Library; Trinity College Library and of course the library at N.U.I. Maynooth. I would also like to acknowledge the help and encouragement received from my friend John Connolly, who patiently and with great care edited this work.

My special thanks goes to the staff at Haddo House, Tarves in Aberdeenshire. The estate factor M.H.T. Andrew and particularly to the present Lord Haddo, Alastair Gordon, who very kindly gave me access to the archives, and took the time to give me a personal interview, which provided some interesting insights to Ishbel Aberdeen's family background.

My deepest gratitude goes to my husband Patrick, who has supported me unconditionally during the past ten years as I pursued my ambition to have a primary degree, and later as my postgraduate study went on from year to year. To my children, Claire, Aidan, Niall, Patricia and Derek who put up with my highs and lows, but who encouraged me nonetheless.

Finally, I would like to thank my Heavenly Father, who heard and answered my prayers for inspiration and guidance, and without whose help nothing could have been achieved.

## **Abbreviations.**

A.W.L.....The Associated Worker's League.

I.C.W.....International Council of Women.

N.C.W.....National Council of Women.

W.N.H.A..... The Women's National Health Association of Ireland.

I.I.A.....Irish Industries Association.

C.D.B.....Congested Districts Board.

V.O.Ns.....The Victoria Order of Nurses.

W.E.A.....The Women's Enfranchisement Association

W.C.T.U.....The Women's Christian Temperance Union.

I.T.G.W.U.....Irish Transport and General Workers Union.

N.A.P.T.B.....National Association for the Prevention of Tuberculosis.

## **Introduction.**

It is my proposal to base my thesis on the movements and institutions established by Lady Ishbel Aberdeen, and those other organisations to which she became affiliated. The Countess of Aberdeen was wife of the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, John Campbell Gordon, the 7th Earl of Aberdeen, Lord Haddo. They served in Ireland firstly and briefly in 1886, and more fully in the period 1906 until 1915. Politically they were Liberals and therefore supporters of Gladstone and his plans for Home Rule. Between these two periods in office in Ireland they served in many different capacities on behalf of the British government, including the post of Viceroyalty to Canada which they held from 1893-97.

There have been published three biographies of Lady Ishbel Aberdeen. The first by her daughter, Lady Marjorie Pentland, is entitled A Bonnie Fechter. Ishbel Aberdeen, Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair 1857-1939 and was written in 1952. It is a very uncritical and loving account of the life of her mother. Nevertheless, it gives an interesting insight into her character and family background, as Lady Pentland had access to Lady Aberdeen's personal diaries and papers, which were later destroyed. Having been to visit the family archives held at Haddo House in Tarves, Aberdeenshire, it is disappointing to discover just how few personal papers remain. Fortunately the archive did contain correspondence and papers relating to both periods of the Viceroyalty of the Aberdeens in Ireland.

The second biography of the Countess of Aberdeen, was written by Doris French in 1988, and is entitled Ishbel and the Empire. In this publication, French discusses the role of Lady Aberdeen as Vicereign both in Canada and Ireland, and the various other offices held by Lord Aberdeen particularly in Scotland. It is an interesting, if superficial look at the countess, and contains many references that are speculative. For example, she discusses the possibility of an intimate relationship between Henry Drummond<sup>1</sup> and Lady Aberdeen, which may be of interest to the general readership but are unscholarly in the context of a historical biography.

The third biography of the countess was written more recently, in 1999, by Maureen Keane, entitled Ishbel, Lady Aberdeen in Ireland. Keane gives a most interesting narrative account of the work undertaken by Lady Ishbel Aberdeen during the periods in which her husband was Viceroy in Ireland. She deals principally with the establishment of the Irish Industries

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<sup>1</sup> Henry Drummond was a Scottish evangelist and author, his most notable publication being Natural Law in the Spiritual World published in 1884. He became a great friend of the Aberdeens, and was godfather to their youngest son Archie.

Association, and discusses the role of the Women's National Health Association and what she perceives as their legacy. The narrative style and descriptive passages used by the author is meant to appeal to a general rather than an academic readership, making it accessible to all those interested in social history.

Lord and Lady Aberdeen have written a number of autobiographies and publications including two volumes entitled We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen, which were published in 1925. Lady Aberdeen followed this with Musings of a Scottish Granny, which was published in 1936. In relation to Canada, John T. Saywell edited in 1960, The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen. This covered the period the countess served as Vicereign to that country from 1893-97. Lady Aberdeen's own work, Through Canada with a Kodak, gives us an indication of the regard that the countess had for Canada and its people. As President of the International Council of Women, she edited, among other articles, the Reports of the Fourth Quinquennial Meeting of the International Council of Women held in Toronto in 1909. This large volume gives us great insight into the foundation and role of this organisation, and includes many interesting and varied reports from National Councils of Women from all over the world, on a variety of topics. In 1908, Lady Aberdeen edited a three volume work entitled Ireland's Crusade Against Tuberculosis. This publication is a summary of the lectures given at the first of the WNHA Health Exhibitions, held as part of the International Exhibition in Dublin in 1907. She edited 'Slainte.' Journal of the Women's National Health Association, in the years between 1909-1915. Lady Aberdeen also wrote numerous articles and pamphlets, many of which will be referred to in the course of my work.

It was never my intention, in spite of all of the material available, to write a new biography of the Countess of Aberdeen, although it became necessary to discuss her background and the influences upon her. These influences were common to many well educated upper class Victorian women, including religion, politics, and perhaps less commonly, science. What I do propose to discuss in detail are the movements, organisations, associations and institutions established by the Lady Aberdeen, both nationally and internationally. The motivation and idealism that led to their development, and the social, political and economic conditions that made such organisations necessary. The idealism, I will endeavour to demonstrate, will come from changes in thinking and attitudes, brought about by the new scientific discoveries of the period. There were also a number of new movements, that were the result of the profound social change which came about as empires were created, industrialisation and globalisation

began to take hold, and societies in the western world entered a period of transition. These will include the Evangelical movements, the Eugenics' movement, Darwinism, particularly Social Darwinism, institutionalisation, the suffrage and trade union movements, and in some cases even Socialism.

The main focus of my thesis will be centred upon the influence of Lady Aberdeen in Ireland, and the organisations and institutions established here. They will include the Irish Industries Association, the Women's National Health Association, The Housing and Town Planning Association, the Civics Institute of Ireland, and her greatest institutional legacy, the sanatorium at Peamount in Newcastle Co. Dublin. That the Countess of Aberdeen worked with 'Irish' people for 'Irish' causes is of course very relevant to my work. But it is important to understand, that had she been assigned to South Africa, India or any of the colonies of the British Empire, she would have worked within which ever system she found herself, for the welfare of those with whom she came into contact. The place is not important, Ireland, Scotland, London, Canada, her work and commitment to social change remained the same.

I propose to deal with the legacy of the Countess of Aberdeen in Ireland and of the organisations and institutions she founded here. I will also examine the attitude of decades of historians to that work and legacy. Instead of gaining recognition for her role in Irish history, Lady Aberdeen became caricatured, both in her own lifetime and up until the present time, as the typical Victorian do-gooder. The epitome of the upper class lady, trying to do her duty for social causes, while never coming to terms with the social difficulties of the period. The typical drawing room philanthropist of the type vividly portrayed in Oscar Wilde's play, 'A Woman of No Importance'.<sup>2</sup> To see the countess in this light is to do her a great dis-service. Her work and commitment to social change will show her as someone much more deserving of our recognition.

Finally, I propose to look at the legacy of Lady Aberdeen and the organisations she founded, or indeed those of which she was president, in terms not only of tangible results, but the paradigm changes that took place in attitudes to illness, poverty, housing and living conditions and the other social issues as a result of their existence. As far as possible I have avoided politics, except in the context of their influence on the mindset of the period. I have also avoided the more descriptive passages found in the biographies of the countess, and in

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<sup>2</sup> Wilde's play satirises Edwardian society by portraying, what might be termed parlour philanthropists, as busybody's and snobs.



her own writings, and instead keep to the more factual and historical accounts necessary for an academic work at this level.

I have divided my work into seven chapters, excluding the introduction and conclusion, and have decided as far as possible to keep developments in chronological order, allowing of course for overlapping of events. Lady Aberdeen while serving in many offices with her husband on behalf of the British government, was president of the International Council of Women, the National Council of Women in Canada, the Irish Industries Association, the Women's National Health Association of Ireland, the Housing and Town Planning Association, the Civics Institute of Ireland, the Dublin branch of the British Red Cross and many other auxiliary organisations. She was also an active member of a number of existing associations, including the National Association for the Prevention of Tuberculosis and the Mansion House Ladies Committee for the Relief of Distress. Therefore an exact chronology would be difficult. I propose to deal with the development of many of these movements and organisations, as far as possible from their inception to final legacy.

In order to conduct my research I have used the following archives:

- The Haddo House collection held in Tarves, Aberdeenshire, Scotland.
- The National Library of Ireland.
- The Gilbert Library.
- The Archives of the Royal College of Physicians.
- The Mercer Library
- The Archives of the Royal College of Surgeons.
- Peamount Archives at Newcastle Co. Dublin.
- The Municipal Archives at the Civic Museum.

## **Chapter 1.**

I will begin by dealing with Lady Aberdeen's background and the motivation that came from her family, her class, her religious, political and scientific background. The significance of her evangelical Christianity and her Victorian Liberalism will become evident as this work progresses. As will the influence of the scientific developments, in this period. This chapter will include an examination of many of the major and influential movements of the period. Also a summary of Ishbel's early philanthropic work in Scotland and England, and her marriage to Lord Aberdeen.

## **Chapter 2.**

I propose to discuss the Aberdeen's term of office as Viceroyalty to Canada. Amongst other philanthropic work and organisations initiated in Canada, Lady Aberdeen founded the Victoria Order of Nurses, which was established on the 18 May in 1892, to honour the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria. The role of the VON's was the provision of district nurses to serve the isolated areas of Canada, where there was little or no medical aid.

I will also discuss her role as President of the International Council of Women, and of the National Council of Women in Canada. Lady Aberdeen served for over twenty years as President of the ICW, and achieved an enormous amount in terms of the building up of this organisation. She encouraged the founding of National Councils in country's all over the world. Members of National Councils of Women were encouraged to work for the betterment of their communities, on a huge number of issues from health and child welfare, universal suffrage, to peace and arbitration.

The role of president of the ICW gave Lady Aberdeen a phenomenal interest in the development of many countries. The international reputation of the countess is very important to my work, as are her experiences in Scotland, England and Canada, all of which had a huge bearing on her approach to the situation that she found to exist in Ireland.

## **Chapter 3.**

This will include insights into the period of the First Viceroyalty of the Aberdeens to Ireland in 1886, which was to last for only six months, from May until October of that year, but which was to be the beginning of a life long commitment to this country. At this time the countess established the Irish Industries Association, an organisation founded at a garden party held at the Viceregal Lodge in May 1886, whose aim was the development of home based enterprises. It was an organisation that was to keep Lady Aberdeen involved with this country until her return in 1906. Through the Irish Industries Association, she initiated a number of sometimes controversial exhibitions, including an Irish Village at the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893, the International Exhibition which was held in Dublin in 1907, and *Ui Breasail*,<sup>3</sup> the National Exhibition which was held in Dublin in 1911.

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<sup>3</sup> Meaning 'Isle of the Blest' taken from the voyages of St Brendan.

#### **Chapter 4.**

The period of the second Viceroyalty began in 1906. The most ambitious project undertaken by Lady Aberdeen at this time, was the founding of the Women's National Health Association of Ireland, which was inaugurated on the 13 March 1907. The main purpose of the new organisation was to eliminate, as far as possible, the scourge of tuberculosis, and to bring about a reduction in the high infant mortality rates. The vision and wide experience of Lady Aberdeen, enabled the WNHA to initiate projects and develop programmes, that have laid the foundation of much of the public health reforms of the present day social services. Their work began with an exhibition on health matters, which was part of the International Exhibition held in Dublin in 1907. This led to travelling health exhibitions which, with medical lecturers, visited every part of Ireland, from 1908 until forced to stop in 1922, due to the dangers of the Irish Civil War. They also distributed a large array of pictures, posters and pamphlets in relation to health matters.

All of this was done with the intention of raising public awareness of the issues surrounding tuberculosis. Over 170 local branches of the WNHA were formed throughout the country, each of which initiated various local efforts to improve the health of their local communities, particularly in relation to 'the white scourge' and the welfare of children.

#### **Chapter 5.**

I intend to discuss the growth and development of the WNHA, and the laying down of the foundations of later work. This will include the establishment of 'Babies Clubs', Samaritan Committees, the provision of Jubilee nurses and health visitors and the formation of links to many other organisations. I will examine a number of other programmes which were introduced by the Association, from the provision of school meals, to the heating and cleaning of schools. Also the recommendations of the Viceregal Milk Commission, which was established as a result of lobbying by the WNHA for the introduction of a clean, pasteurised and tuberculin free milk supply. This would ultimately lead to the founding of milk depots by the organisation, for the provision of clean pasteurised milk, particularly to infants.

#### **Chapter 6.**

This chapter will show the changing role of the WNHA as it became involved in the provision of institutional facilities for those suffering from tuberculosis. This was as a direct

result of the Health Act of 1908 and the Insurance Act of 1911, on the ability of the WNHA to provide these services. Institutions founded by them, included the P.F. Collier Memorial Dispensary for the Treatment of Tuberculosis, the Allen Ryan Home Hospital for the Treatment of Consumptives, the Sutton Holiday Home and Preventoria, and eventually the establishment of Peamount Sanatoria and Peamount Industries. The latter two institutions were the final outcome, and most lasting legacy, of the WNHA campaign against tuberculosis.

### **Chapter 7.**

Finally, during the last days of the Aberdeen viceroyalty, the WNHA oversaw the inauguration of the Dublin Civic Exhibition of 1914, with the aim of improving the appalling living conditions in Dublin city, with the eradication of the cities slums. This led to the establishment of two sister organisations of the WNHA, the Housing and Town Planning Association, and the Civics Institute of Ireland. The latter organisation was to continue to play a role in Irish society until its closure in 1986.

As a result of the outbreak of the First World War, Lady Aberdeen was to invite the British Red Cross into Dublin, this led to the opening up of Dublin Castle as a military hospital and the establishment, nation-wide, of Voluntary Aid Detachments to train women in basic nursing and first aid skills, using the already established branches of the WNHA as a base.

### **Conclusion.**

I propose to discuss the formal leave taking of Lord and Lady Aberdeen from Ireland, in February 1915, and their return as private citizens just a short time later. This will involve a discussion of the dispute that transpired, over the taking of the title of 'Temair' when Lord Aberdeen was created Marquis in the New Years honours list, also in 1915. I will demonstrate Lady Aberdeen's continued commitment to Ireland until her death in 1939. For example, the couple spent thirty months fund raising in America, during the period of WW1, in an effort to keep the WNHA solvent, and to support the Civics Institute of Ireland in its endeavours to elevate living conditions in urban areas. I propose to conclude with an evaluation of the Countess of Aberdeen and the legacy of the organisations and institutions founded by her, in terms of their contribution to Irish society. And to examine the virtual exclusion of the Vicereign and her legacy, by Irish historians, from the foundation of the State until the present time.

## CHAPTER 1.

### **'Better to be active than to be orthodox'.**

I propose to use this introductory chapter to focus on Lady Aberdeen's background in terms of her family and its influence on her early development in relation to her religious and political beliefs. I propose also to cover the early years of her marriage to the Earl of Aberdeen, discussing her unorthodox approach to life and her interest in, and understanding of, the new scientific developments of the period. My main purpose will be to establish Lady Aberdeen's credentials as an idealistic social reformer, who would in later years, become a social revolutionary.

This process would begin with the countess working within many of the established philanthropic organisations, for example, the Sunday School Institute and many evangelical missions. More importantly it included the founding by Lady Aberdeen of other movements including the Onward and Upward Association, the Haddo House Association and the Associated Workers League. I will show that she was motivated by her Christian faith to have a deep conviction that the social ills of unemployment, poverty, ignorance, early mortality and injustice, were all matters to be overcome. She also had the conviction that such inequalities could be conquered, given the right set of circumstances. The countess would use any means at her disposal, and within her sphere of influence, to see that they were eliminated if at all possible. All that was needed, she believed, was for each individual, regardless of gender or class, to have the right to develop themselves physically, spiritually, intellectually, politically, and economically to the best of their ability. The holding of such egalitarian principles would set her apart and made her unpopular with many of her own class. Lady Aberdeen was an individual who engendered either great devotion from those who believed in her cause, or open hostility from those who saw her as a threat in an age when society was wholly stratified not only by class, but by wealth and prestige. Both support for and opposition to Lady Aberdeen will be dealt with in the course of this work.

There were three major influences on the countess throughout her life, Christianity, politics and science. I propose to examine the role each of these would play in developing her character and show that they were the motivating factors behind all of her efforts to enact social, political and economic reforms.

I use the term Christianity rather than religion mainly because, for the countess, religion was never going to be the divisive issue it was for many of her contemporaries. She had little time for the sectarianism or religious bigotry she was to find particularly in Canada and Ireland. Her own understanding of the role of religion within an individual's life was based, not on their denomination, but upon their Christianity. She felt the same about politics. In Canada for example, the French/Conservative, Protestant/Liberal divide were anathema to her, as indeed was the nationalist/unionist divide in Ireland. Politically Lady Aberdeen was a Liberal and a disciple of William Gladstone, firmly believing that it was only through the Liberal party that social justice would prevail. Like Gladstone himself she associated the Liberal cause with Christianity. Therefore, it was hardly surprising that when political and religious differences almost undermined many of the projects undertaken by the countess from the Victorian Order of Nurses in Canada, to the Women's National Health Association of Ireland, she became utterly frustrated by such barriers. She could not understand why, when it came to the good of a nation and its people, differences of opinion could not be put aside while all worked together for a worthy cause.

The countess also had a passionate interest in science since the days of her childhood. As a young woman she was to take a correspondence course in biology, complete with examination papers, under the tutelage of Edward Poulton then lecturer, but later Professor of Zoology at Oxford university. The experience of doing extremely well in her correspondence course was to have a profound effect on Lady Aberdeen. It left her with a feeling of deep regret that she had been denied a formal university education by her father on the grounds simply that she was female, regardless of her capabilities. Believing strongly that an injustice had befallen her in this matter, she was to work in both Edinburgh and Aberdeen for the admission of girls to university courses. She also led efforts to secure clauses in the University Bill for 1885 that would admit women who were by now being issued with certificates, into certain courses leading to graduation.<sup>1</sup> The countess had also come to the conclusion that science could only help, not hinder, religious development and therefore its study must be encouraged regardless of gender.

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<sup>1</sup> Pentland, Marjorie. A Bonnie Fechter. Life of Ishbel Marjoriebanks, Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair. 1857-1939. (London, 1952) p 51.

This interest in science was further fuelled by a Science Convention held in Aberdeen in 1885. Among those who stayed at Haddo House, the Scottish home of Lord and Lady Aberdeen, while attending the conference were Lord Rayleigh,<sup>2</sup> Sir John Lubbock,<sup>3</sup> Alexander Buchan,<sup>4</sup> Patrick Geddes,<sup>5</sup> and Francis Galton.<sup>6</sup> With these individuals from the scientific world, she was able to discuss the latest scientific discoveries and controversies, and come to an understanding of the importance and role of science in this age of transition. These issues will be dealt with in some detail in the course of my work. For the moment it is important only to note that Lady Aberdeen had a brilliant mind capable of understanding the intellectual aspects of science, religion and politics. According to Mrs Burnett-Smith <sup>7</sup>one of her outstanding characteristics was the extraordinary fertility of her brain.<sup>8</sup>

This fact will be of great significance throughout her life, as the countess found ways to reconcile the seemingly irreconcilable, such as the conflicts between religion and science; her class consciousness and her humanitarianism; her role as Vicereign both to Canada and Ireland and the need to remain a-political during her regular conflicts with government. Christianity was the main motivation behind her commitment to radical changes within society, while science and politics, she believed, had the potential to change the course of human history; in terms of social justice by legislative changes,

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<sup>2</sup> Lord William Struth Rayleigh was a physical scientist who made fundamental discoveries in the fields of acoustics and optics that were to become the basis of the theory of wave propagation in fluids. He served as Cavendish Professor of Experimental Physics 1879-84 at Cambridge university. Rayleigh received the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1904 and became Chancellor of Cambridge university in 1908.

<sup>3</sup> Sir John Lubbock the first Baron Avebury was a banker, and an influential liberal-unionist politician. He was elected to parliament for Maidstone in Kent 1870-74 and served as vice-chancellor of the University of London 1872-1880. He was also elected to parliament for the same university 1880-1900. Of interest here is his scientific research as a naturalist and particularly as a pioneer in the field of animal behaviour

<sup>4</sup> Alexander Buchan was a Scottish meteorologist, becoming secretary of the Scottish Meteorological Society in 1860. He was awarded the first Symons Medal in recognition of his position as one of the most eminent British meteorologists of the period.

<sup>5</sup> Patrick Geddes was recognised as a leading British town planner and political economist. His work and influence on the countess will be discussed in some detail in a later part of this work.

<sup>6</sup> Francis Galton was an English scientist, explorer, and anthropologist. He was a cousin of Charles Darwin. Galton coined the word 'eugenics' in the first edition of Enquiries into the Human Faculty published in 1883 using the word to denote scientific endeavours to increase the number of individuals with a higher than average genetic endowment through the selective mating of marriage partners, and he is widely acknowledged as the founder of the movement. The influence of Galton and that of this movement on the countess will be discussed in some detail in later chapters.

<sup>7</sup> Better known as Annie S. Swan.

<sup>8</sup> Pentland, Marjorie. A Bonnie Fechter. Life of Isabel Marjoribanks. Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair 1857-1939. introduction.

and good inclusive government; and the provision of better health as scientists found new ways to understand and treat disease.

I propose to show that as a result of these major influences and her aristocratic family background Lady Aberdeen was in many ways a contradiction, in that she was a peculiar combination of democrat - aristocrat.<sup>9</sup> She would work with individuals of all classes and she held views that bordered on socialism, being a firm supporter of trade unions, co-operative movements and universal suffrage. Nevertheless, she remained every inch the upper class noble and a woman of her period in history. Her daughter Lady Marjorie Pentland describes her mother as being admired by those who knew her well as

an example of aristocratic dignity and at the same time of tireless industry, someone with a forcible mind of her own along with a lively feeling for all other human beings and for their different points of view.<sup>10</sup>

To a great extent Lady Pentland was right, for her mother had a most enlightened approach to the potential of others from all walks of life based on her fundamental Christian beliefs. There was nothing unusual in this, as it was a distinguishing feature of the late Victorian era, that it was no longer believed that individuals were born into their place in life. Quoting John Stuart Mill<sup>11</sup> from The Spirit of the Age Houghton claims that within Victorian society individuals

...are free to employ their faculties and such favourable chances on offer to achieve the lot which may appear to them most desirable.<sup>12</sup>

This change in attitude had as much to do with economics, in an age of growing commerce and industry, with its newly formed elite who consisted of bankers and manufacturers, as it had to do with the rights of man.

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<sup>9</sup> Saywell, John. (ed.) The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen 1893-1898 (Toronto, 1960) .introduction

<sup>10</sup> Pentland, Marjorie. A Bonnie Fechter. Life of Ishbel Marjoriebanks. Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair. 1857-1939. p 6

<sup>11</sup> John Stuart Mill was a British philosopher, economist, publicist, logician and ethical theorist. In 1831 he had published a series of articles entitled 'The Spirit of the Age' in the Examiner newspaper. The articles were in 1843 republished along with other work by Mill into 2 volumes of writing Dissertations and Discussions. These and later writings were considered radical, almost socialist, in nature.

<sup>12</sup> Houghton, Walter. E. The Victorian Frame of Mind. 1830-1870. (Yale, 1985). p 60.



Nevertheless, the countess believed strongly in helping all individuals, regardless of class, to reach their full potential, believing also that those to whom much had been given much was expected. As an individual blessed with position, influence, education and means, Lady Aberdeen held that it was her duty to share her knowledge, experience and opportunities with those within her sphere of influence. She also had the conviction that this principal applied equally to all of those blessed with position, education, influence and wealth. This will become more apparent as this work progresses.

Lady Aberdeen's political and religious convictions, her whole personality demanded that whatever her role, wherever she was, she had to be more than an observer or figurehead, she had to be participator and a worker. That this was the case was further testified to by the poet Katherine Tynan<sup>13</sup> who worked with the countess on a number of occasions in Ireland, mainly within the context of the Mansion House Ladies Committee. She described Lady Aberdeen as an individual of incredible energy, and as one who had no understudy. There were few individuals according to Tynan who could compete with the countess in terms of her achievements. She also pointed out that Lady Aberdeen was 'at times too zealous, too overbearing and frankly too critical, but no one could deny the fact that she got the work done'.<sup>14</sup> It was undoubtedly the case that Lady Aberdeen was all of these things, and as such they need to be brought into focus early in this work. The countess was an authoritarian, who while trying hard to always apply democratic principals to the movements she founded, would conversely also use any means at her disposal to remove opposition, but not necessarily individuals, either by sheer force of personality or by use of her position and influence.

Throughout Lady Aberdeen's life her attitude and arrogance would cause confrontation with many agencies and individuals, from government representatives and civil servants, to medical organisations and industrial and social movements. However, it is my proposition that none of the criticisms levelled at her, whether real or imagined by contemporaries or by later historians, to be dealt with in the course of this work, take away from her greatness and even more importantly the greatness of her achievements.

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<sup>13</sup> Katherine Tynan was a writer of poetry and fiction was a great admirer of the Countess of Aberdeen and her work, she worked with the countess on many of her projects particularly the Mansion House Ladies Committee for the Relief of Distress.

<sup>14</sup> Saywell, John. (ed.) The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen 1893-1898. p xxvi.

It will be necessary to begin by placing the countess within a very significant period in British history, the late Victorian era. This was a period of transition when Christian orthodoxy under the rule of the church, civil government under the rule of the king and the aristocracy, and the fixed nature of class structures had all changed from earlier periods.<sup>15</sup> The changes introduced by science and modern thinking, which had criticised the old order as society in Britain began to move from being agrarian and feudal to democratic and industrial, led to much soul searching by many individuals. The contradictions that grew out of the Victorian era would play heavily upon the mind of the countess, and like many of her contemporaries she had to find her own way of coping in this rapidly changing world.

It was into this age of transition that Ishbel Maria Marjoribanks (pronounced Marshbanks) was born on the 14 March 1857, at 29 Upper Brook Street in London, into an extremely influential Scottish family. She was the third child of Dudley Coutts Marjoribanks, the first Lord Tweedmouth, and Liberal M.P. for Berwick-on-Tweed, who claimed ancestry back to Robert Bruce. Her mother Isabella was a daughter of Sir James Weir Hogg, originally from Co. Antrim. Ishbel's older brother was Edward and her elder sister Mary. Her two younger brothers were Coutts and Archie. Ishbel's mother claimed to be a descendant of Own Roe O' Neill, through the marriage of her uncle Edward Hogg to Rose O' Neill, the daughter of a Rector from Lisburn. Edward was a Quaker, therefore the couple were forbidden to marry. They were forced to elope, leading to Edward's expulsion from the Quaker community and Rose was disowned by her father. Happily in later years they were both reinstated and their eldest son became Ishbel's grandfather.<sup>16</sup> This family link to the O'Neills will gain greater significance as Lord Aberdeen is granted the title of Marquis at the end of their Viceroyalty to Ireland in 1915. The Aberdeens would cause huge controversy by choosing the title Marquis of Tara, claiming a link back to the high kings of Ireland. This matter will be dealt with more fully in a later chapter. Ishbel's mother also claimed a blood-line to Edward I, the first Plantagenet King of England and to the French aristocracy.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Houghton, Walter. E. The Victorian Frame of Mind. 1830-70 p 2.

<sup>16</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen. Vol. 1 (London, 1925). p 99.

<sup>17</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen. Vol. 1 p 101.

The young Ishbel believed that she had a lot to live up to in terms of her ancestors and their family motto which stated 'Advance with Courage' and felt she had to remain true to their example of courage and commitment. She would often, as a child, stand in front of the portraits of her ancestors, feeling in awe of their achievements, and worry about the debt of honour and loyalty she felt she owed to maintaining the family's good name, and living up to their expectations.<sup>18</sup> Ishbel's father was also the wealthy owner of Meux Brewery and held a large amount of shares in the Hudson Bay Company. His wealth was kept in the family bank, Coutts Bank at 59 The Strand in London, bankers to Queen Victoria.<sup>19</sup> The family owned a residence just outside London known as Dollis House, as well as their Scottish home, Guisachan House near Inverness-shire in Scotland.<sup>20</sup>

Ishbel was christened into the Presbyterian faith with the gaelic form of her mother's name, at the family's Scottish home.<sup>21</sup> This was in keeping with the wish of her father, as her mother was an active supporter of the evangelical wing of the Church of England. It was her mother's influence which moulded her early spiritual life, her particular brand of Christianity being more active and less theological in its application than her fathers.<sup>22</sup> Religion was not the only difference of opinion within her parents' marriage. Ishbel's father was a staunch Liberal, with William Gladstone and other great figures of Victorian Liberalism being regular visitors to their homes in London and Scotland, while her mother remained a loyal Tory, maintaining her links with the Conservative Party by inviting party members to dinner, including Benjamin Disraeli.

The couple also had other personal difficulties. While Ishbel had the greatest respect and admiration for her father, she felt that her mother needed protection from his overbearing personality, and she believed it was her role to be her protector. As a child she was perceived as being stubborn and unreasonable when she insisted upon going through particular rituals, for example taking a certain number of steps on the stairs at a time, in a certain order. In fact in her own eyes she believed that if these tasks were

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<sup>18</sup> French, Doris. *Ishbel and the Empire. A Biography of Lady Aberdeen.* (Toronto, 1998). p 60

<sup>19</sup> French, Doris. *Ishbel and the Empire. A Biography of Lady Aberdeen.* p 6.

<sup>20</sup> Pentland, Marjorie. *A Bonnie Fechter. Life of Ishbel Marjoribanks, Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair. 1857-1939* p 6.

<sup>21</sup> Pentland, Marjorie. *A Bonnie Fechter. Life of Ishbel Marjoribanks, Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair. 1857-1939.* p 6.

<sup>22</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. *We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen* Vol. I. p 114.

not completed in a particular order, then something bad would happen to her mother.<sup>23</sup> It was quite possibly a child's way of trying to get a hold on a situation that was beyond her control. The conflict between her parents was one that she could never reconcile throughout her life, and was one that caused her great anxiety and added to her serious nature. In later years she was convinced that she had a wretched childhood because of her parents' marriage, where her father was a tyrant and her mother far too strict.<sup>24</sup> Like many Victorians Ishbel's mother was a passionate advocate of the work ethic, work was everything and idleness inexcusable. Recreation was only to be used as a short period of rest, in order to strengthen the individual for the work ahead. She did not believe in holidays, as it was in these prolonged periods of idleness she felt, the devil would find work for idle hands. As the countess grew older, she would often work herself to the point of breakdown, suffering periods of depression and blinding headaches.<sup>25</sup>

From a young age Ishbel was sent around to the tenantry on her father's estate in Guisachan to deliver the medicines and nourishment, donated by her mother, to any who were ill. She also visited the local school listening to the children read or recite their tables. Going in and out of the cottage homes in the granite village of Tomich, she learned much from and about her nearest neighbours, in terms of their way of life, their problems and concerns, and their dependency upon the intervention and policies of their landlords and overseers.<sup>26</sup> During these contacts Ishbel became aware of further contradictions. It was as her mother dispensed surplus game from her father's shooting parties, as well as gifts of basic cloths and medicine, that her father refused to allow his tenants to hunt in his forests.

Likewise, while her father gave employment to those who lived in the village and he provided them with a school, shops, a smithy and a brewery, he evicted without conscience many of the crofters. It seems likely that due to her father's links with the Hudson Bay Company that locals were encouraged to settle in Canada, whether they left the estate voluntarily or not. As a child Ishbel's compassion was such that she 'hoped it [Canada] was cheerful and bountiful with churches near by to keep them

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<sup>23</sup> French, Doris. *Ishbel and the Empire. A biography of Lady Aberdeen.* p 60

<sup>24</sup> French, Doris. *Ishbel and the Empire. A biography of Lady Aberdeen.* p 21.

<sup>25</sup> Saywell, John. (ed.) *The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen.* xxvi.

<sup>26</sup> French, Doris. *Ishbel and the Empire. A biography of Lady Aberdeen.* p 18.

good'.<sup>27</sup> One can only presume that she meant 'good' in terms of their commitment to their Christian faith and high moral practices. Ishbel's first interest in Canada came as a result of her concern for the welfare of those she knew who had emigrated to that emerging nation, in this period and for many years to come. This can best be noted when we realise the extent of the countess' work on behalf of Canadian immigrants while she served as Vicereign to Canada. This will be discussed in some detail in chapter two.

By the time she married and came to be mistress of Haddo House, her attitude to her own staff, tenants and the community around the estate, would be quite different to that of her parents. At times of agricultural depression rents would be cut, often by half or more, at great financial cost to the family. From the beginning the welfare of her tenants and staff became paramount, as the young countess felt it her Christian duty to look after the health and education, the social, spiritual and economic progress of those within her community. This 'community' would extend outside of Haddo Estate to wherever the countess was called to serve as Vicereign. Lady Aberdeen tried very hard not to allow financial matters get in the way of her programmes. It was one of her greatest frustrations in life that she was forced to spend so much time continually fundraising, from the founding of the Aberdeen Association in Canada to thirty months spent in the United States during the First World War raising funds to keep the Women's National Health Association, particularly Peamount Sanatorium, in a solvent financial position. The commitment of the Aberdeens to so many causes often led to financial hardship for themselves. Their time in Ireland, for example, left them in an extremely embarrassing financial situation. A letter from the Bank of Ireland dated 23 June 1915 speaks of the great reluctance of the bank to institute legal proceedings against the Viceroy in Dublin, in spite of their immediate financial difficulties. However, the bank had only postponed its decision temporarily until they found a suitable Scottish solicitor and they would then take the necessary legal action in Scotland, thereby avoiding adverse publicity and much unpleasantness for the couple.<sup>28</sup>

This was a trend that was to continue throughout her life, as many of her projects proved costly and the countess endeavoured to personally raise the funds to supply a

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<sup>27</sup> French, Doris. *Ishbel and the Empire. A biography of Lady Aberdeen.* p 18.

<sup>28</sup> Correspondence from the Bank of Ireland, dated 23 June 1915. Haddo House archives

given need. While in Canada their expenses often came to double their salary, as the couple provided entertainment liberally, travelled extensively and were often generous benefactors of many of the schemes envisaged by the countess, at a time when their own income was declining due to the agricultural depression. It was Lady Aberdeen who carried the burden of worry concerning such matters, Lord Aberdeen taking most things lightly, his only true passion being trains and railways.<sup>29</sup> As a result of their financial circumstances much land, jewellery and family heirlooms were sacrificed, and this was to cause much resentment within the immediate family until the end of Lady Aberdeen's life.<sup>30</sup> The countess' belief in active Christianity would compliment her own basic humanitarianism, but it was often at great personal cost.

The countess' nature, her larger than life personality and her fearlessness in what she believed to be a righteous cause, left her open to criticism by those who opposed her views and/or her unorthodox methods. These same traits gained her great admiration from those with whom she worked, and who believed in what she was trying to achieve, in terms of social or political reforms. There were also those who saw the countess as radical disturber of the social order, and those who saw her as a brilliant source of inspiration to women everywhere. It is my belief that both of these assessments are true. These issues will be covered in some detail as this work progresses.

To fundamentally understand the countess and her motivation it is necessary to first understand her perception of Christianity and how it influenced her life. From a young age Ishbel believed, like many aristocratic Victorians, in a life dedicated to good works, and her enthusiasm for social and moral reform was to increase and dominate the rest of her life. The true worship of God she felt lay in service to mankind.<sup>31</sup> The early Christianity of the countess was based on very real experiences that came mainly from her family background. When Ishbel was fourteen years old her mother presented her with three religious books, *Light and Truth*, *Sacred Allegories* and a prayer book, to prepare her to take communion. Later came the warning from her mother that Satan was

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<sup>29</sup> It was a driving ambition of Lord Aberdeens to have a railway line built around the Haddo Estate. This project was never completed because of financial restraints due to an economic depression.

<sup>30</sup> Personal interview with the present Lord Haddo, Alastair Gordon, in March 1996. Lord Haddo claimed that the countess had replaced a significant number of the precious stones from the families collection of jewels with glass replicas. Hundreds of acres of Haddo Estate were also sold, thereby diminishing the value of the estate.

<sup>31</sup> Saywell, John. (ed.) *The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen 1893-98* p xvi.

ever at hand, therefore Ishbel was to fill up every smallest interval of time with 'prayer and holy meditation'.<sup>32</sup> It seems the young Ishbel took her mother at her word and became a very thoughtful, serious and prayerful individual. In 1875 for example, when she was presented and 'came out' in London society by attending her first dance, she was not at all impressed by the event. Referring to the occasion in her journal she wrote

.....tonight I went to my first dance at Lady Adelaide Cadogans - it was considered a very good one, no crowd, plenty of men etc. I got on well enough but did not find where the wonderful attraction lay, hopping around a room and talking about the floor, the weather and such like. I went wishing not to be carried away by it all, but without the slightest notion I should think it so very stupid.<sup>33</sup>

She had attended because it was her duty to do so, but the occasion only re-enforced for the young Ishbel her belief that anything frivolous and enjoyable was only self indulgent. This was indeed a sad reflection of her mothers opinion, but one she was pleased to nurture in her daughter. At eighteen Ishbel went to Buckingham Palace for presentation to Queen Victoria, but little had changed in her attitude to such events. It would be many years before she could overcome her seriousness and piety and begin to enjoy society, relaxing as she matured. This young lady preferred companions who would discuss political issues or the need for social welfare reforms. It is not surprising therefore, that she took an interest in a man ten years her senior and just as earnest, serious and religious as she was. She met Lord Aberdeen, while out riding in 1871. His diary also contained many references to his struggle against over indulgence in sleep, clothing and food, and his determined struggle against worldliness.<sup>34</sup>

Ishbel Marjoribanks<sup>35</sup> married John Gordon, Lord Haddo, the seventh Earl of Aberdeen, later to become the first Marquis of Temair,<sup>36</sup> on the 7 November 1877. The couple were married at St George's Chapel, Hanover Square in London, at a service conducted by Dr Tait, the Archbishop of Canterbury, a liberal and reformist, Canon Hamilton Gordon and an old friend the Rev. Francis Holland. They were to have five children, three sons and two daughters. Their first son George Gordon, Lord Haddo,

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<sup>32</sup> French, Doris. Ishbel and the Empire. A Biography of Lady Aberdeen. p22.

<sup>33</sup> Pentland, Marjorie. A Bonnie Fechter. Life of Ishbel Marjoribanks, Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair 1857-1939. p 16.

<sup>34</sup> Saywell, John. (ed.) Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen. p xiv.

<sup>35</sup> Appendix 1.

<sup>36</sup> Appendix 2.

was born in January 1879, followed by two daughters Marjorie Adeline, born December 1880 and Dorothea Mary who was born in March 1882, but died in the November of the same year. A second son, Dudley Gladstone, was born in May 1883 and finally Ian Archibald was born in October 1884. 'Archie' Lady Aberdeen's favourite son was to die tragically in a motor car accident in 1909, while they were serving their second term of office in Ireland. The Aberdeens were to remain married until the death of John in 1936.

Lady Aberdeen had an unusual interpretation as to her duty as a wife. Unlike, for example, Mrs Gladstone and Lady Rosenbury who saw their role as providing a secure background in their husband's private lives, the countess saw her role as one in which she would think and fight for her husband in all his affairs. She was there to provide a secure background but also to share with him all of his burdens and responsibilities.<sup>37</sup> From the very beginning of their marriage the Aberdeens were to display a sense of social justice and fair play that was so unusual it could almost be termed, in relation to the period of history, eccentric. They spent their honeymoon in Egypt visiting with Lord Aberdeen's cousin the famous General Gordon, Governor of the Sudan. He explained to them, in some detail, the evils of the African slave trade and the cruelties involved. Later on a trip down the Nile their boat was boarded by a slave dealer, with three boys for sale. To the astonishment of all present, Lord Aberdeen pointing to the British Flag, claimed the boys in the name of the Queen and insisted that they be freed.<sup>38</sup> What happened next was even more unusual in that the Aberdeens brought the three boys to a school in Cairo, where they could be baptised and brought up as Christians, and in a most unorthodox manner, they adopted them as their own legal children. At Cairo they met a fourth boy, Ahmed Fahny, who was threatened with death by his Muslim family when he became a Christian convert. They also adopted Ahmed and brought him back to Britain with them. His later career as a distinguished medical missionary to China was a source of great satisfaction to the couple.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Pentland, Marjorie. A Bonnie Fechter. Life of Ishbel Marjoribanks, Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair 1857-1939. p 44.

<sup>38</sup> Kendall, Avery Emmie. Quiver Magazine. July 1906. Peamount Archives.

<sup>39</sup> Kendall, Avery Emmie. Quiver Magazine. July 1906. Also in Pentland op cit. p 25.



In terms of her early philanthropic work Lady Aberdeen was introduced to the homes and needs of the 'poor folk' in London by Lady Frederick Cavendish,<sup>40</sup> whose husband had been called as Chief Secretary to Ireland, but was murdered in the Phoenix Park in 1882 by a group calling themselves the Invincibles. Lady Cavendish organised a programme caring for families in the Limehouse district of London, Ishbel was to become involved with it beginning in 1884.<sup>41</sup> These visits to this poor area of the metropolis were to open Lady Aberdeen's eyes to the reality of the many and varied social problems that affected the lives of so many of the lower-class in London. The other point was that they were often quite different to the problems encountered by those on her father's estate.

This work was to be taken a step further when in the years between 1884 and 1887, Ishbel busied herself with what was known as rescue work, among young prostitutes in the Strand district of London, working for the Strand Rescue Mission.<sup>42</sup> This mission arranged for two ladies to go out on certain evenings of the week, while people were still inside the theatres, and invite the girls to come into a warm comfortable room in a street off the Strand for a cup of tea. The 'missionaries' would talk to the girls about their lives and try to persuade them to make a new start. Ishbel's parents were horrified at her involvement in this project, asking their great family friend William Gladstone to dissuade her, but instead he encouraged her.<sup>43</sup> Ishbel's success, or lack it, in this endeavour has never been recorded. However, the experience was to have a profound effect on the young countess, who claimed to have learned much and was grateful for the friendship of 'some of these girls who had turned out to be splendid women'.<sup>44</sup> One of the women she had come into contact with wrote to the countess over forty years later, on the occasion of Lord and Lady Aberdeen's fiftieth wedding anniversary. The writer sent her a five pound note and some orange blossom, thanking her for her loving understanding at a time of deep torture and struggle, explaining how happy

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<sup>40</sup> Lady Frederick Cavendish was a niece of William Gladstones.

<sup>41</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen. p 148.

<sup>42</sup> Rescue Missions were also known as 'Inner Missions', they were first established in Glasgow in 1826 with the first London Mission coming into existence in 1835. The main aim of the missions was to rehabilitate the urban poor by evangelical means and by providing spiritual, physical and social assistance to those in need.

<sup>43</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen. p 148

<sup>44</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen. p 198.

she was to have become an independent individual without having to adopt such a life-style.<sup>45</sup>

It must be noted that in this early period in the life of the countess, the type of philanthropic activity in which she was engaged, was very similar to that which was carried out by many other women from the upper to the middle classes. Joan Perkin explained

From the beginning of the 19th. century there was a great outburst of philanthropic voluntary work,..... not just in local charities but in great humanitarian and reforming 'moral' campaigns.....religious beliefs gave many women the courage to tackle social evils and they gained wide experience and leadership skills in charitable organisations. Some spent their entire lives promoting important social reforms under the aegis of philanthropy.<sup>46</sup>

Therefore in the following early examples of the philanthropic work of the Countess of Aberdeen, we find nothing unusual in the nature of her work. Nevertheless, her unorthodox approach to the social issues of the period illustrate the beginnings of a thought process that would lead her on from philanthropy to social reform and more radical thinking.

In terms of her early philanthropic work, in the years predating her marriage Ishbel was greatly influenced by two members of the clergy. They were the local rector in Scotland the Rev. Keane, and more particularly, the Rev. Francis Holland of the Quebec Chapel in London. The latter was a widely famed speaker who addressed many of the social issues of the day.<sup>47</sup> From these she developed a longing to become a Sunday School teacher, in order to be able to influence a new generation with Christian values. Her ambition to have a Sunday School class was fulfilled in April 1874, when Ishbel was only in her mid teens. This was a cause that was then, and remained throughout her life, very dear to her heart. While attending chapel in London the Sunday School superintendent invited her to teach a class of boys, as the existing class was too large and had to be divided. This is not surprising as by 1851, 74 per cent of working class children in Britain between the ages of five and fifteen years were enrolled in Sunday School, and the importance of these classes continued to grow up

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<sup>45</sup> Pentland, Marjorie. A Bonnie Fechter. Life of Ishbel Marjoribanks, Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair 1857-1939. p 39.

<sup>46</sup> Perkin, Joan. Victorian Women (London, 1993) pp 216-17.

<sup>47</sup> French, Doris. Ishbel and the Empire. A Biography of Lady Aberdeen. p 30.

until the late 1880s. Many people from both the middle and lower classes, while not going to church themselves, sent their children to Sunday School to learn lessons on such varied topics as the value of hard work, duty to their family, the evil of drink and the perils of sinfulness.<sup>48</sup> Ishbel's father agreed to allow her to teach, and whenever she was in London, until she married, she had the classes at 10 a.m. and again at 3 p.m. every Sunday.<sup>49</sup>

As with all of her later ventures she filled this work with enthusiasm. Ishbel speaks of the great joy and splendid training she received while working with her class. Although the subject of the Sunday School lessons was prescribed by the Sunday School Institute of which she was a member, they still managed to have some great times together. She not only prepared the lessons well, but more unusually, she spent time getting to know the boys by visiting them in their own homes.<sup>50</sup> This Sunday School work was to continue as Ishbel, on her return to Guisachan, formed a class for the local boys. Beginning with a small group of 25, the number soon rose to over 60 and it became necessary for her to train the older boys as pupil-teachers.<sup>51</sup>

Lady Aberdeen's commitment to the Sunday school programme was based on a number of observations. She was aware of the fact that by the mid nineteenth century, England in particular had undergone a moral revolution as the significance of religion began to change over the century. This occurred for a number of reasons, including the neglect of the new town populations by the Church of England; prejudice against clergy, who were viewed as supporters of Tory and aristocratic principles; and a more radical way of questioning such matters as the existence of a merciful God in a world full of suffering.<sup>52</sup> There was also the emergence of science with its alternative philosophies and new orthodoxies, and the unprecedented interest it created in the nature of religion. A contributing factor developed in the 1860s to the 1870s when many newspapers and periodicals were now being used to discuss politics, religion, literature and science, side by side. The 'quality' press in particular became preoccupied with religious subjects.

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<sup>48</sup> Houghton, Walter E. The Victorian Frame of Mind. 1830-70 p 60

<sup>49</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen p 148.

<sup>50</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen. p 147.

<sup>51</sup> Pentland, Marjorie. A Bonnie Fechter. Life of Ishbel Marjoriebanks, Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair 1857-1939. p 14.

<sup>52</sup> Houghton, Walter E. The Victorian Frame of Mind. 1830-70. p 60

This was due mainly to an unprecedented interest in the nature of religion, as the general public became aware of the new scientific discoveries and the criticism of the Bible as a source of truth.<sup>53</sup>

The end result of these and many other factors was that church attendance numbers had been falling, especially in the large cities, among the working class.<sup>54</sup> It was left to Evangelism and Methodism to invoke a formidable combination of religion, ethics, and ideology which would govern ideals of behaviour, but more conservative religions were already in decline.<sup>55</sup> The countess, like many of her contemporaries, wished to see a moral regeneration in this very amoral age. Being herself from an evangelical background, it was these values that she wished to see passed down to the next generation. Lady Aberdeen's observation that her own social class did not as a rule send their children to be taught in Sunday School, led her to become involved with a new movement almost twenty years later in 1895. At this time the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Benson and the Bishop of London, Dr Temple, decided to hold a mission in London. The mission was based on the perceived need to improve the moral and religious standards of the children of the upper classes. It was felt that this group in society received little religious instruction from their parents, and as a result of this church attendance and Sunday observance had greatly diminished. This trend was leading to widespread moral deterioration within society, as many individuals put their material needs above that of the spiritual. Lady Aberdeen was to claim that the mission was aimed at those who

are supposed to have everything they could want at their command, and if they exhibit lack of faith and religious life and a readiness to go with the crowd and accept the world's standard of conduct...(it is because)....Children of the so-called upper classes do not often have the chance of attending Sunday Schools and very often receive no systematic religious instruction save for the few weeks preceding their confirmation. Soon after, the girls at any rate are relieved from the restrictions of the classroom, and enter a life in which "having a good time" is avidly the main object....<sup>56</sup>

Lady Aberdeen supported the view that this generation needed to move beyond this materialism. They needed to know that an individual's capacity to work towards a

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<sup>53</sup> Parry, Jonathan. Democracy and Religion. Gladstone and the Liberal Party. 1867- 1875. (Cambridge, 1989). p 6.

<sup>54</sup> Perkin, Joan. Victorian Women. p 239.

<sup>55</sup> Houghton, Walter E. The Victorian Frame of Mind. 1830-70 p 60.

<sup>56</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen Vol. I. p 198.

higher spiritual state, could only be promoted by developing individual responsibility, a sense of duty, and an inner spiritual life. Without these an individual would give into materialist impulses. Most of the evangelical missions that the countess was to become involved in, were founded to influence the mind of those it reached with this particular concept.

Personally Lady Aberdeen continued to have little time for the London social scene preferring instead the quiet solitude of Scotland, and performing what she believed was her own religious duty by means of the Sunday School programme. This was not only due to her mother's influence, but also to the influence of her many maternal uncles and aunts all of whom were devoted, like her mother, to the evangelical wing of the Church of England. In her diary at that time she refers especially to her uncle Quintin Hogg, as a source of Christian inspiration during times of doubt and conflict. Quintin had, along with many others within Victorian society, on reading Darwin's On the Origin of Species,<sup>57</sup> undergone a great spiritual crisis at what he saw as a challenge to Holy Scripture.<sup>58</sup>

Charles Darwin, the English naturalist, had demonstrated what he believed to be the principles of organic evolution, based upon natural selection and natural laws. His theories revolutionised human knowledge by purporting to show, firstly in The Origin of the Species, published in 1859, and later in many other works, that no species was immutable but had evolved from other species, many with a common ancestor. Due to a process of natural selection in nature, certain species would flourish while others would simply die out. Those who adapted best to their environment survived. Darwin's work was highly influential, and by 1872 it had gone through six editions in England and had been translated into almost every European language and later into Japanese.<sup>59</sup> Other works by Darwin, which elaborated upon his theories, included The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex,<sup>60</sup> published in 1871 which applied the principles of evolution to man, including his moral sense, by using the notion of sexual selection as

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<sup>57</sup> Darwin, Charles. On the Origin of the Species. (London, 1859).

<sup>58</sup> French, Doris. Ishbel and the Empire. A Biography of Lady Aberdeen p 23.

<sup>59</sup> De Beer, Sir. Gavin. (ed.) Charles Darwin Autobiography. (Oxford, 1974). p 49.

<sup>60</sup> Darwin, Charles. The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex. (London, 1871).

being complimentary to natural selection. Finally, Expressions of Emotions in Man and Animals<sup>61</sup> was published in 1872, and it dealt with matters of psychology.<sup>62</sup>

In all of his publications Darwin had, by the latter half of the nineteenth century, bombarded the upholders of the orthodox religions with a new and revolutionary way of looking at mankind and his place in the world. This was in direct opposition to Christian scriptures which taught that man was created by God, in His own image and likeness, was here for a purpose and was guaranteed eternal life and immortality. Whatever differences and schisms there may have been between and within the various denominations, the fundamental beliefs in one God and one Creator of the world remained the same for all orthodox believers in Christianity and Judaism. These theories of evolution coming from a former candidate for holy orders stood in opposition to all that had gone before.<sup>63</sup> Darwin now contended on the basis of science against what he saw as a false history of the earth which was contained in the Old Testament. This book of scripture, he claimed, was no more trusted than the sacred books of the Hindus or any 'barbarian'. The books of the New Testament fared little better, with Darwin claiming that the miracles contained within its pages were both impossible and incredible, when placed against the fixed laws of nature. He also believed it to be impossible that the gospels could have been written simultaneously with the events described within their pages, therefore he concluded that there was no truth in Christianity as a divine religion.<sup>64</sup>

Many individuals were placed at great unease by such claims, particularly by the implication that if the theory of evolution was true, then indeed the account of creation as given in the Old Testament was false, or at the very least, not literally true. They were also faced with the dilemma that if evolution did work by natural selection then there would be no need for divine guidance in the production of any living plants or animals, including mankind, upon the earth. Instead everything in nature was the result of a fixed set of scientific laws, as all creatures developed as the result of natural selection. Mankind and nature were reduced to a godless vast mechanism of physical laws.

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<sup>61</sup> Darwin, Charles. Expressions of Emotions in Man and Animals. (London, 1872).

<sup>62</sup> De Beer, Sir. Gavin. (ed.) Charles Darwin Autobiography. p 49

<sup>63</sup> De Beer, Sir. Gavin. (ed.) Charles Darwin Autobiography. p 72.

<sup>64</sup> De Beer, Sir Gavin. (ed.) Charles Darwin Autobiography. p 50.

This was in direct opposition to looking at nature itself in terms of its beauty and splendour and claiming that such creation must be the result of a divine plan, this view was dismissed by Darwin as nonsense. He also contended that the sight of so much suffering and cruelty, particularly during his travels around the world on board the ship *The Beagle* as a young man, had left him with the firm conviction that if a God did exist then he would not allow such suffering throughout almost endless time.<sup>65</sup>

Darwin continued to argue against any of the popular reasons put forward by individuals and churches which alleged to prove that there was a God. He claimed that the most usual argument for the existence of an intelligent God put forward by Christians, was that of a deep inward conviction which they called faith. He stated that these were merely feelings, which were experienced by most individuals, including Hindus, Muslims and others, claiming this as their reason to believe in the existence of one God, or many Gods, or as with Buddhists no God. These emotions, he maintained, were no more a case for the existence of God, than the powerful and often similar feelings induced by listening to music.<sup>66</sup> Finally, he concluded with the question, could the mind of man, which had developed from the mind of the lowest animal, be trusted when it drew such grand conclusions, as for example the existence of a supreme being? He put the case that this conclusion was more the result of cause and effect, and was one that depended on an inherited experience. The constant putting forward to children of a belief in God, producing an inherited effect on their brains, which were not yet fully developed, left adult individuals unable to throw off their belief in God, any more than 'a monkey [could] throw off his instinctive fear and hatred of a snake'<sup>67</sup>

Darwin also argued against those who maintained that without the morality taught and maintained by religion, or at least a belief in a higher order, that mankind and society would be reduced to anarchy. Mankind, Darwin believed, did not need the moral authority of religion, or a belief in divinity to maintain order and survive. Society would instead survive because mankind would learn to rule his life by following the impulses and instincts which were strongest and which suited him best. By using his cognitive process and by looking forwards and backwards he would find most satisfaction in

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<sup>65</sup> De Beer, Sir Gavin. (ed.) Charles Darwin Autobiography p 50.

<sup>66</sup> De Beer, Sir Gavin. (ed.) Charles Darwin Autobiography. p 79.

<sup>67</sup> De Beer, Sir Gavin. (ed.) Charles Darwin. Autobiography p 54.

following his social instincts. If he acted for the good of others then he would gain approbation and love from his fellow men, which would give him great pleasure, therefore he would be guided by his higher instincts and do what was right.<sup>68</sup>

This claim did little to calm the fears of those who felt that disbelief would lead to disorder. If the Christian sanctions of duty, obedience, patience under suffering and brotherly love were lifted, then this could only lead to revolution. For example, after the publication of Darwin's Descent of Man in 1871, he was censured for 'revealing his zoological (anti Christian) conclusions to the general public at a moment when the sky of Paris was red with the incendiary flames of the Commune'.<sup>69</sup> A friend of Lady Aberdeen and visitor to Haddo House, the scientist Henry Sidgwick, felt reluctant to publish his sceptical views on religion and immortality because of the loss of hope it might cause to the minds of 'average human beings' and the danger to the existing social order.<sup>70</sup> For generations after Darwin there was a whole paradigm change taking place, when individuals were forced to redefine their established certainties and find answers to some of the most fundamental questions regarding themselves, divinity, society and the role of science.

It was not only Darwin who was leading the way in terms of scientific naturalism in Victorian society. Others included T.H. Huxley, Professor of Biology at the Royal School of Mines; John Tyndall, Superintendent of the Royal Institution; Herbert Spencer, a philosopher of evolution; W.K. Clifford, a Mathematician from University College London; Sir Francis Galton, a cousin of Darwin, a eugenicist and advocate of professionalism in science; the anthropologists Edward Taylor and John Lubbock; the biologist E. Lankester; and the physician Henry Maudsley. While not all of these individuals were in agreement, they each wrote and spoke on behalf of naturalistic ideas.<sup>71</sup>

Ishbel, with her great interest in science, and faith in Christianity and its teachings, had to find her own way to cope with these seeming contradictions. It would not be long before she would find the answers for which she was searching. Beginning in 1882

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<sup>68</sup> De Beer, Sir Gavin. (ed.) Charles Darwin. Autobiography p55.

<sup>69</sup> Houghton, Walter E. The Victorian Frame of Mind. 1830-70 p 59.

<sup>70</sup> Turner, Frank Millar. Between Science and Religion. The reaction of scientific naturalism in late Victorian England (Yale, 1974). p 35.

<sup>71</sup> Turner, Frank Millar. Between Science and Religion. The reaction of scientific naturalism in late Victorian England. p 9.



Lady Aberdeen came into close contact with many of the influential evangelical preachers of the period, including the American preachers, Dwight L. Moody and Ira Sankey. They were visiting Britain in response to an invitation from representatives of all the main Protestant churches. Beginning in London, evangelical revival meetings - Missions - were held in most of the main centres around the country. The well advertised Moody and Sankey were greeted with enthusiasm and large crowds wherever they chose to speak. These meetings, which were attended by both men and women, were never of the hysterical nature expected of American evangelical preachers.<sup>72</sup> As such they were much more suited to Lady Aberdeen's serious temperament. By 1884 both Lord and Lady Aberdeen had become very involved with these missionary meetings, Lord Aberdeen being a guest speaker on a number of occasions. This close contact led to Moody coming to officially open and speak at the New Hall at Haddo House.<sup>73</sup>

It was not only Lady Aberdeen who felt strongly about the effect of the preaching and singing of Moody and Sankey. According to R.W. Dale, a contemporary of the evangelists, thousands of men and women declared that while listening to Moody preach they had passed from religious indifference and despondency 'into the clear light of God'.<sup>74</sup> Lady Aberdeen believed like many others that it was only through such missions that individuals would come to a knowledge of the gospel and would have the desire to live by the higher laws of morality and duty to God, to themselves, to their family and their community.

It was the second movement, based on the Scottish evangelist Henry Drummond that was to have the greatest impact on the life of the countess, eventually overtaking the more fundamentalist rhetoric of the former. Drummond himself was a product of the evangelical revival of Moody and Sankey, but his ideas, philosophies and radicalism became disturbing to the followers of such a fundamentalist group, leading to a separation. Drummond was also deeply affected by the new theories being put forward by Charles Darwin and other natural scientists and felt strongly the need to reconcile science and Christianity. He was well qualified to take on this task as he served firstly

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<sup>72</sup> Briggs, John. and Sellers, Ian. (eds.) Dale, R.W. 'Mr Moody and Mr Shankey 1875' in Victorian Non-Conformity. (London, 1973) p 147

<sup>73</sup> Lord and Lady Aberdeen. We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen. Vol. 1 p 201.

<sup>74</sup> Briggs, John. and Sellers, Ian. (eds.) Dale, R.W. 'Mr Moody and Mr Shankey 1875' in Victorian Non-Conformity. p 147.

as Professor of Natural Science and later of Theology, at the Free Church College in Edinburgh.<sup>75</sup> In 1884 he produced a very well received book entitled Natural Law in the Spiritual World<sup>76</sup>. It was a work that tried to show that the discovery of natural laws were not in opposition to a belief in God, but instead reaffirmed the role of a divine being in the regulation of the earth and indeed the universe. Drummond wanted to show that the link between religion and science was much more than a theoretical reality. Theologians found the book too close to the work of Darwin and scientists ridiculed him for trying to soften the doctrine of evolution and natural selection.<sup>77</sup>

For the purpose of this work it will be necessary to review briefly some of the major aspects of the philosophy and fundamental teachings of Henry Drummond, and thereby discover the reasoning and belief system of the countess. For example Lady Aberdeen, because of the influence of Henry Drummond, was able to free herself from many of the constraints of organised religion, the stifling Christianity of her mother, and develop in herself a life long commitment to the study of the scriptures and an open mindedness in terms of theology. She not only found Drummond's arguments both enlightening and comforting, she also felt that his brand of Christianity, which was one of humanity, service and personal evangelicalism, to be one that she could relate to and put into practice throughout her life.

Unlike Darwin, Drummond believed in the superiority of the spiritual individual over the existence of the simply moral individual. It was not enough to look to the high moral character of the natural man which was indeed the highest achievement of the organic kingdom, but in dealing with a spiritual man you were dealing with the lowest form of life in the spiritual world. Yet one which was without limits, an embryo containing a prophecy of some future glory.<sup>78</sup> It was not enough to be moral without being spiritual. The main premise of Drummond's book was to find an answer to the question, was the spiritual, at all levels, natural or unnatural?<sup>79</sup> His conclusion was to prove that it was natural, as both the spiritual and natural were based on the continuity of the law. That is to say the laws of natural science continued into the supernatural world.

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<sup>75</sup> Pentland, Marjorie. A Bonnie Fechter. Life of Ishbel Marjoribanks. Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair. 1857-1939. p 47.

<sup>76</sup> Drummond, Henry. Natural Law in the Spiritual World. (London, 1884)

<sup>77</sup> Saywell, John. (ed.) The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen. p xviii.

<sup>78</sup> Drummond, Henry. Natural Law in the Spiritual world. pp 385-6

<sup>79</sup> unnatural in the sense that it was outside the realm of natural scientific law.

In his opening chapter Drummond describes the discovery of Natural Law as the last and most magnificent discovery of science. It was truth, solid and unchangeable, an instrument in scientific research but also the surest source of human knowledge.<sup>80</sup> He claimed that natural laws had always existed, but now their discovery and use were a means of placing order and uniformity into the universe. Drummond then asked and answered a number of fundamental questions. Do these laws stop with the natural sphere? Is it not possible that they may lead further? Is it probable that 'the Hand which rules' gave up the work where most of all it was required? Did that 'Hand' divide the world into two, a cosmos and a chaos, the higher being the chaos?<sup>81</sup> His answer was that with nature as the symbol of all the harmony and beauty that is known to man, it was still necessary to talk of the supernatural, as a different order of world but nonetheless part of the cosmos. There was continuity, Drummond asserted, between the two.

He illustrates this by comparing natural laws to lines running through the universe, in the same way as parallel lines of latitude run around the globe to give us greater understanding of the earth. Like lines of latitude, these too are imaginary, but they are drawn for us to understand the part played by some 'Hand', the same 'Hand' that drew the whole. In other words, science only proved that God made a world that could make itself, a far superior concept than that of a ready made universe. Finally, Drummond stated

If there is any truth in the unity of nature, in that supreme principle of Continuity which is growing in splendour with every discovery of science, the conclusion is forgone. If there is any foundation for theology, if the phenomena of the Spirit World is real, in the nature of things, they ought to come into the sphere of law. Such is at once the demand of science on religion and the prophecy that it can and shall be fulfilled.<sup>82</sup>

Drummond asserted that there should be no separation between science and theology. When science had done all it could then theology, which was the highest of the sciences, would draw all discoveries together in a final perfect harmony.

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<sup>80</sup> Drummond, Henry. Natural Law in the Spiritual World. p 3.

<sup>81</sup> Drummond, Henry. Natural Law in the Spiritual World. p 6.

<sup>82</sup> Drummond, Henry. Natural Law in the Spiritual World. p 7.

The book was in essence an attempt to reconcile science and faith, and it proved to Drummond and his supporters that there was no conflict between the two. In this he was not disputing the scientific findings of Darwin, in terms of natural selection, conformity to type, etc. What he was arguing against, were the atheistic conclusions drawn by Darwin and his supporters. For example, he uses biology to further his point about the links between the natural and spiritual. The first law of biology being that which is mineral is mineral; that which flesh is flesh; that which is spirit is spirit. The mineral remains in the inorganic world until it is seized upon by something called life outside of the inorganic world. In the same way, he claimed, that the natural man remains the natural man, until a spiritual life from without the natural life, changes him into a spiritual being. In the biblical proposition 'that which is flesh is flesh, that which is spirit is spirit', it was Christ himself who formulated the first law of biological religion and laid the basis for a final classification.<sup>83</sup> Moral beauty was the product of the natural man, but spiritual beauty was a product of the spiritual man. If morality was divorced from Christianity then it was linked instead to materialism. High atheism, according to Drummond, was mistaken if it felt superior and more perfect than Christianity.<sup>84</sup>

Drummond was very reassuring to anyone having religious doubts when faced by the discoveries of science, while at the same time giving the thoughtful reader much to consider, both in terms of science and theology. He contends that while at that point in history, the spiritual world appeared to remain outside of the natural laws, theology which was the highest of the sciences in the order of evolution, would be the last one to fall into rank, as it was reserved for 'the final and perfect harmony'.<sup>85</sup> Theology must therefore, as with any other science progress from its ancient form through the necessary stages of growth and development, until it reached the pinnacle of truth.

The practice of religion itself does not escape Drummond's criticism, and he uses scientific terminology to make his case. In this way he also questions the value of organised religion, and the rightful place of institutionalised theology. Using the examples found in science, Drummond maintained that there were two main causes known to biologists that induce what he called the parasitic habit. One was the temptation to

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<sup>83</sup> Drummond, Henry. Natural Law in the Spiritual World p 381.

<sup>84</sup> Drummond, Henry. Natural Law in the Spiritual World p 381.

<sup>85</sup> Drummond, Henry. Natural Law in the Spiritual World. p 17.

secure safety, without the vital exercise of the faculties, and the other was the disposition to find food without earning it.<sup>86</sup> Any principle which secured food and safety for the individual without the expenditure of work lead, he believed, to degeneration and parasitism. The same principle applied to spiritual nourishment. Surprisingly, he claimed that two of the things in the religious world which most strongly induce the parasitic habit in individuals were firstly, going to church, and secondly the acceptance of theologians as the principal truth bearers of religion. He stated that while attending church might rightly be considered an invaluable act in the development of a spiritual life, and was in principle a good thing to do, it was nevertheless open to many abuses. It left congregations open to the temptation of what he called parasitism.<sup>87</sup> This is because in church one man, the preacher, is set apart to prepare spiritual truth or nourishment for his flock, and he simply passes on that information, with no effort on behalf of the listeners to participate in the process. This leaves the congregation with a lack, or an emptiness in their lives, as they depended entirely upon another individual to provide for all of their spiritual diet. Drummond strongly denounces these practices stating that

it denies the individual the faculty of selecting truth at first hand and appropriating it for ones self is a lawful possession to every Christian. Rightly exercised it conveys to him truth in its freshest form; it offers him the opportunity of verifying doctrines for himself; it makes religion personal; it deepens and intensifies the only convictions that are worth deepening, those namely which are honest, and it supplies the mind with a basis of certainty in religion.<sup>88</sup>

Drummond further claims that without the exercise of selecting of truth first hand, individuals who depend entirely on the church are not only undeveloped, but their whole view of truth becomes distorted. 'He who abandons the personal search for truth, under whatever pretext, abandons truth', his spirituality is replaced by ritual, and the individual becomes the 'pampered parasite of the pew'.<sup>89</sup> Consequently, he believed that churches did more harm than good, and instead of representing to the world the Kingdom of God on earth, the church becomes despised by the godly and ungodly alike as the refuge of fear and formalisation and the nursery of superstition.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Drummond, Henry. Natural Law in the Spiritual World. p 347.

<sup>87</sup> Drummond, Henry. Natural Law in the Spiritual World. p 350.

<sup>88</sup> Drummond, Henry. Natural Law in the Spiritual World. p 350.

<sup>89</sup> Drummond, Henry. Natural Law in the Spiritual World. p 352.

<sup>90</sup> Drummond, Henry. Natural Law in the Spiritual World. p 352

Finally, he claimed that formalised religion could never hold its own in the nineteenth century, and it would be better if it did not, it must either be real or cease to be. That brand of religion would not hold for another generation 'we must either give up our parasitism or our sons'.<sup>91</sup> This particular fact was one that Lady Aberdeen was well aware of, in terms of her own experience in both Sunday School and her own perception of the moral deterioration within society.

The second form of parasitism which Drummond discusses in the same vein was that of the system of theology. Again he believed that the study of theology was necessary, but open to abuse. Individuals with inquiring mind were being led to believe that if the greatest theological minds of generations had come to certain doctrinal conclusions, then their judgements must be accepted gratefully. The bible as presented by theologians tends to be guaranteed sound and wholesome, cut and dry, but Drummond asserts that this attitude is entirely wrong, as you cannot cut and dry truth. He particularly criticises those churches, for example the Roman Catholic church, which preaches infallibility on questions of doctrine, believing that infallibility always paralyses.<sup>92</sup>

In summing up his findings there is a paragraph that best describes the type of Christianity that Lady Aberdeen took to heart from her contact with Henry Drummond

Individuals must work, think, separate, dissolve, absorb, digest and most of these he must do for himself and within himself.....it is more necessary for us to be active than to be orthodox.....better far to be burned at the stake of Public Opinion than to die the living death of parasitism....better a little faith dearly won, better launched alone on the infinite bewilderment of Truth, than perish on the splendid plenty of the richest creeds....(it aims) at the deeper faith which believes in the vastness and variety of the revelations of God and their accessibility to all obedient hearts.<sup>93</sup>

The effect of such claims made by Drummond gave Lady Aberdeen an independence of thought and action, a faith that could step beyond formal religion and which was to remain with her throughout her life. She claimed such freedom of thought not only for herself, but for all individuals regardless of class or creed. People, she believed must be given the tools of education and opportunity if they were to grow spiritually and develop themselves to their fullest potential. Very important to the countess, was the

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<sup>91</sup> Drummond, Henry. Natural Law in the Spiritual World p 356.

<sup>92</sup> Drummond, Henry. Natural Law in the Spiritual World p 361.

<sup>93</sup> Drummond, Henry. Natural Law in the Spiritual World p 346.

claim that it was better to be active than to be orthodox, and the belief that she must do what she felt to be right, regardless of public opinion. This particular aspect of her personality led her into many conflicts with both individuals, organisations and governments, but also led to her greatest achievements.

Lady Aberdeen was so impressed with his work that she wrote to Drummond in 1884, never having met him nor yet heard him speak, thanking him for the inspiring message of his book and inviting him to her home.<sup>94</sup> As a result of this visit, Henry Drummond became a great friend to the family until his premature death thirteen years later. He visited with the Aberdeens both in Canada and Ireland and became god-father to their youngest son Archie. Up until this meeting with Drummond the countess' brand of Christianity was enthusiastic, but was hemmed in to a large extent by the orthodox doctrines with which she had been brought up, and by her own serious nature. She was to look back upon her contact with Henry Drummond as the most fortunate event, not only in her own life, but in the life of her husband, she claimed

It changed us so completely that on looking back to the first seven years of our married life we scarcely recognise ourselves in the prim goody young couple we were then.<sup>95</sup>

It was not only a case of Lady Aberdeen being able to relate to Drummond intellectually, she maintained that she felt the true spirit of Christianity from him. This was because of Drummond's own charismatic personality, but she also felt that she had gained a lasting testimony, or certainty within herself, that what he had to say about the role of Christianity within the lives of individuals was true. In explaining this the countess recalled

Henry Drummonds' power as a speaker was of a very exceptional character and was essentially of the spirit.....there was.....an originality of ideas clothed exquisitely chosen words, with a latent pathos and humour, charged with a simple intensity which made all feel that this man was speaking of that which he had personal and irrefutable knowledge ...whether he was speaking to a small audience, as in the chapel, to a theatre full of University students, or to an open air meeting of working men, there was always the spirit manifest which carried a message never to be forgotten.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen. Vol. 1. p 204.

<sup>95</sup> Pentland, Marjorie. A Bonnie Fechter. Life of Isabel Marjoriebanks, Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair. p 266.

<sup>96</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen. Vol. I. p 266.

This newly developed faith in God would mean for Lady Aberdeen not only a belief in piety and virtue, but also a belief in the importance of careful study; in fairness and in a commitment to social reform; of the right of every individual to develop to their fullest potential; and of service and hard work. The same conclusions were not drawn by all upper class Victorian women or at least not for the same reasons. Beatrice Potter Webb<sup>97</sup> stated

It seems to me that the two outstanding tenets were united in this mid Victorian trend of thought and feeling. There was the current belief in the scientific method, in the intellectual synthesis of observation and experiment, hypothesis and verification by which all mundane problems were to be solved. And added to this belief was the consciousness of a new motive; the transference of the emotions of self sacrificing service from God to man.<sup>98</sup>

We see therefore that different individuals found different ways of coping with the new scientific discoveries of the age, from physical science to social science. Whether 'self sacrificing' service was the result of an individual's religious beliefs, or out of humanitarian motives, or both, was for the individual to decide. Lady Aberdeen in going against the trend of declining Christianity among those of her class, chose the former.

As a beginning to what was to become a life long process, the countess felt that some type of organisation needed to be established, which would help guide and give opportunity to those who wanted to be of service to others. This was not unusual at this time, many of those linked to the evangelical movements believed that as Christians they had a spiritual mission or calling to serve God in a great battle against social evil and suffering. As a result a number of private charities were founded which complimented a long series of parliamentary measures, for example, prison reforms, sanitation, the slave trade, factory acts and acts for the prevention of cruelty to children.<sup>99</sup>

In keeping with this trend and their involvement in Drummond's evangelical movement, at a meeting presided over by Lord Aberdeen in London, the Associated Workers League was founded in July 1885, with a letter of commendation from the

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<sup>97</sup> Beatrice Potter Webb was co author with her husband Sidney Webb of many volumes of writings on matters relating to socialism, feminism and eugenics.

<sup>98</sup> Perkin, Joan. Victorian Women. p 218.

<sup>99</sup> Houghton, Walter E. The Victorian Frame of Mind. 1830-70. p 246.



Archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>100</sup> The AWL was to be a servant's registry for the unemployed of the West End, an exchange where members would learn of suitable employment to match their skills. Leaders helped with evening classes run by the London School Board, at clubs for boys and girls, as school managers, hospital and parish visitors and so forth.<sup>101</sup> At its inaugural meeting Henry Drummond spoke of the distinctive feature of the AWL, which was to be the recognition of the absolute necessity of bringing religion to bear in the lives of those it wished to influence. This of course would have been an essential ingredient in any movement founded by one having such a commitment to the evangelical movement in this the late Victorian era. According to R.K. Webb

Evangelicalism.....emphasised the sense of sin, the weakness of man without God, and the profound psychological experience of conversion, and dedication to service.<sup>102</sup>

Therefore it would have been essential that any such movement would have much to offer in terms of developing these traits and experiences, in those with whom they would come into contact. This movement like many others of its time, would of its nature be fundamentalist in its theology and active in 'good works'.<sup>103</sup> While the AWL itself did not come to public prominence and never really flourished, it did contain members who were very influential in political and social circles in London and throughout the country. From these came many plans for the expansion of the social services offered by the organisation, resulting in the branching out of the AWL with the formation in 1888 of the '88 Club' for girls with Lady Aberdeen as their president. For some years both the AWL and the 88 Club became closely identified with the Aberdeens, many of the meetings taking place in their home.<sup>104</sup>

The desire for active Christianity and the unconventional led Lady Aberdeen, even in the early years of her marriage, into conflict and controversy and made her unpopular with many of her own class. This point can best be illustrated by using the example of two groups, both instituted by the countess, in these very early years. One being the

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<sup>100</sup> Pentland, Marjorie. A Bonnie Fechter. Life of Ishbel Marjoribanks, Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair. 1857-1939. p 50.

<sup>101</sup> Pentland, Marjorie. A Bonnie Fechter. Life of Ishbel Marjoribanks, Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair. p 51.

<sup>102</sup> Webb, R.K. Modern England. From the Eighteenth Century to the Present. (London, 1980). p 128.

<sup>103</sup> Webb, R.K. Modern England. From the Eighteenth Century to the Present. p 129.

<sup>104</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. We Twa Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen Vol. 1 p 208.

'Onward and Upward Association' founded in 1881, the second being the more controversial 'Haddo House Club', founded in 1889. The first of these organisations was established when Lady Aberdeen began to be concerned with what was happening to many of the domestic servants in her locality in Scotland. She was particularly concerned about the young girls, many as young as thirteen, who went to work on the local farms. Their lives were less protected than those in the big estate houses, where strict codes of decorum and behaviour were expected and enforced. These girls usually lived in the servants' quarters near to the farm houses, while the male workers lived over the outhouses or in attic rooms. Their lives were less rigid, more free and easy, and were rarely monitored.<sup>105</sup>

On the servants annual holiday they would pour into the nearest market town and, according to one of the local clergymen, would indulge in the kind of 'drunken horseplay... that many.....innocent young servant girls would in due course have a life long cause to regret.'<sup>106</sup> This 'horseplay' often led to pregnancy and the dismissal of the servant girls, who once the infant was born, would find it almost impossible to gain secure employment. Therefore in her first year at Haddo House, Lady Aberdeen took it upon herself to try to break this cycle which often led to so much misery, with young girls finding themselves with little alternative but a life of prostitution or the workhouse. This was no idle fear, as we see from an 1880 police report which explained

4 out of 5 of Aberdeen's 180 prostitutes were former domestic servants, and most of them could expect to be dead within 4 dismal years of taking up their new occupation.<sup>107</sup>

For the countess her earlier contact with prostitution seems to have had a great effect on her attitude to what was happening to these young women. In order to initiate change, she simply invited every domestic and farm servant in the area to a garden party on the grounds of Haddo House as an alternative to the usual outings. She coupled this with a bazaar in aid of the Nile Valley Mission.

The idea of asking servants to a party while the local mistresses of stately homes and farms stood behind trestle tables handing out refreshments was highly unorthodox.

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<sup>105</sup> Drummond, James. (ed.) Onward and Upward. (Aberdeen, 1988) p 3.

<sup>106</sup> Drummond, James. (ed.) Onward and Upward p 3.

<sup>107</sup> Drummond, James. (ed.) Onward and Upward. p 4.

It was also the beginning of a approach to problems which was to become a feature of all projects undertaken in the future by the countess. It was not surprising that

Nearly 6000 of ...(the servants)... accepted the invitation and were served with lemonade and cakes by Lady Aberdeen and those of the mistresses, who, with some misgivings agreed to help.<sup>108</sup>

So unusual and notable was the occasion that newspapers in Aberdeen and Edinburgh devoted leaders to the event. It was a novelty in a period when the conflict between classes was very real. It must be noted that in organising this event, Lady Aberdeen also displayed a great ability to bring together very different sets of people. As a result she continued to use local ladies groups from the various parishes to work together for many good causes, from penny dinners for school children, schemes to improve the educational and developmental needs of the local workers, the founding of a cottage hospital and the provision of a district nurse. The working parties she gathered from the various parishes were made up of women who were often hostile towards one another, those cliques from the Established Free, United Presbyterian and Episcopalian churches. She also brought together those of various political affiliations, Liberal and Conservatives, those from big business and from the professions and trades.<sup>109</sup> This ability would be essential to the countess throughout her public life, and would stand her in good stead in all her dealings with both Canada and Ireland, two nations divided by politics and sectarianism. These issues will be dealt with in greater detail in later chapters.

The garden party for the local workers was, as with all projects undertaken by Lady Aberdeen, just a beginning. Not satisfied with just one annual event, she decided that more had to be done. Consequently the countess organised the building of a community centre in Methlick, a town outside Haddo Estate, and oversaw the setting up there of evening and Saturday courses in arithmetic, reading and geography for any belonging to the local community, particularly the local workers.<sup>110</sup> A large number of young men took advantage of the opportunities provided and the classes soon expanded, as a result more activities were included, both educational and recreational. Lady Aberdeen stated

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<sup>108</sup> Drummond, James. (ed.) Onward and Upward. p 4

<sup>109</sup> Pentland, Marjorie. A Bonnie Fechter. Life of Ishbel Marjoribanks, Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair 1857-1939. p 32.

<sup>110</sup> Pentland, Marjorie. A Bonnie Fechter. Life of Ishbel Marjoribanks, Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair. 1857-1939. p 32.

Our association with these lads made us realise what splendid materials for citizens were in the making, and what a waste it is that the farm servant class should be allowed to drift.<sup>111</sup>

But very few girls were becoming involved, according to the countess in a letter to her mother

The mistresses all and one agree that they cannot think of allowing their girls out, for they are sure to get into mischief.....the morality of the girls is something terrible.<sup>112</sup>

Never one to give up even in these early years, Lady Aberdeen felt that if the girls could not come to the classes, then a 'Home Study' class needed to be established to allow the girls to study at home in their own free time. Lord and Lady Aberdeen in 1879, formed the 'Haddo House Association' for this purpose. Those who wanted to join could become 'associate' members and were sent reading lists on two topics of their choice. Subjects included bible studies, history, geography, literature, domestic science, needlework and knitting. What made this system particularly effective was the far-sighted idea of organising district committees who were responsible for the giving of assignments and certification of those who completed the course.

The scheme was also to run on self governing principles with members electing committees, deciding programmes, paying fees and so forth. But the key figures in the association were the girls and their mistresses. They were expected to help the students with their studies, to see to it that they had the necessary reading materials and supervise examinations. The Haddo House Association was a great success in the area, by the end of its first year it had enrolled 800 girls and 500 mistresses.<sup>113</sup> According to Lady Aberdeen

University men who were among the examiners were wont to marvel at the excellence of the work produced and today after watching the progress made by the girls who stuck to the work year after year that their papers equalled those of many university students.<sup>114</sup>

The idea eventually spread throughout Scotland, and by 1881 the name 'Haddo House Association' was no longer appropriate. The name the 'Onward and Upward

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<sup>111</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen. p 195.

<sup>112</sup> Drummond, James. (ed.) Onward and Upward. p 4.

<sup>113</sup> Pentland, Marjorie. A Bonnie Fechter. Life of Isabel Marjoriebanks Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair 1857-1939. p 32

<sup>114</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen. Vol.1. p 195.

Association' was chosen as a replacement by Lady Aberdeen, who felt that it best summed up what they were about, the opposite of 'backward and downward'.<sup>115</sup> The ultimate aim of the association was to allow the members to rise above what could only be termed the mediocre and to develop their capacity for learning and personal growth.

In keeping with this philosophy Lady Aberdeen decided to publish a monthly magazine of the same name dedicated to the ideals of the association. This publication was to contain uplifting and edifying stories, ideas for material and spiritual progress, recipes and articles. In this way it was hoped the magazine, like the association itself, would create common interests between the mistress and servant and to show that it was in the employers best interest to protect the 'character' of employees. A children's supplement was also included in the magazine entitled 'Wee Willie Winkie' with a huge amount of input from Lady Aberdeen's daughter Marjorie. By 1897 there were 115 branches of the 'Onward and Upward Association', the vast majority of which were scattered throughout the Scottish countryside. However, at least four branches were founded in Canada where the magazine had been sent to recent immigrants.<sup>116</sup> In later life, as I propose to show in the rest of my thesis, this was to become the established pattern for all her work. Beginning with a small, often unorthodox idea or programme, she then developed it to its fullest potential in an effort to do all within her power and sphere of influence to institute change and development..

While the Aberdeens received great support for this particular project, it was their work with, and attitude to, the staff in their own homes that led to the real difficulties and misunderstandings that were to haunt them throughout their lives. In a greatly hierarchical society, extreme stratification existed not only between master, mistress and staff, but also within households from butler and housekeeper to scullery maid and boot boy. Under no circumstances could their roles be allowed to overlap. In many cases families of the day gave their servants standard names to suit their roles for example 'James' for the footman and 'Margaret' for a parlour maid.<sup>117</sup> Yet the Aberdeens while employing over a hundred servants between Haddo House and Grosvenor Square in London, knew all of their staff by their given names. They also felt that having engaged

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<sup>115</sup> Drummond, James. (ed.) Onward and Upward p 4.

<sup>116</sup> Drummond, James. (ed.) Onward and Upward p 3

<sup>117</sup> Drummond, James. (ed.) Onward and Upward p 2

in various philanthropic movements and trying to bring 'elevating influences to bear' on servants in other households, they were doing little for the members of their own household. <sup>118</sup>

In view of this concern the servants were called and asked if they wished to form a household club. This was agreed upon unanimously. The club would be arranged under the headings of 'Education' and 'Recreation' and it was to be called 'The Haddo House Club' formed in December 1889. Hardly surprisingly Lord and Lady Aberdeen were elected its first president and vice president respectively, nor is it surprising that the committees were all made up of upper servants. Nevertheless there was one innovation that set the Household Club meetings apart. In order to make the meetings themselves more socially integrated, rather than the usual pattern of the upper members being at the head of the table, working their way down, it was decided to use a number of small tables, making it easier for all to mix more freely. It is interesting to note here that following on from this innovation, Lady Aberdeen became the first London hostess to break up dinner parties into small groups of eight or ten and to seat them at separate tables. In this way she believed conversation could be more informal. According to James Drummond

Thanks to her the long dinner parties that were so often a weariness to the flesh no longer flourished. <sup>119</sup>

The Haddo House Club had many ventures to its credit, including a very successful singing class, led by the head forester; a carving class given by the governess; a drawing class given by the nurse; and a home reading class all of which took place in a new hall, purpose built by the Aberdeens next to Haddo House. <sup>120</sup>

Notwithstanding their successes, by the time the Aberdeens were called to serve as Viceroyalty to Canada in 1893, misunderstandings and misrepresentations had already begun. There were many rumours circulating about the couples behaviour toward their staff, particularly among the elite, fuelled by the British, American and Canadian press. In the Boston Sunday newspapers for example, the Canadians were being warned that

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<sup>118</sup> Drummond, James. (ed.) Onward and Upward p 3.

<sup>119</sup> Drummond, James. (ed.) Onward and Upward p 8.

<sup>120</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen. Vol. 1 p 6.

they would have a lady in Government House who had 'a bee in her bonnet' about the servants question. According to the countess they described her as one

...who was in the habit of playing hide and seek and such other games with the housemaids and footmen...more over it was stated as a fact that Lord Aberdeen and I dined habitually in the servants hall on certain days of the week...<sup>121</sup>

All of the stories and rumours were based, according to Lady Aberdeen, on the confusion between three movements, namely The Onward and Upward Association, the Haddo House Club and a Servants Union which had been formed in England at the same time but which neither the Aberdeens nor their household had any connection. They were advised by Dr Talmage, a well known American preacher and friend, to ignore such rumours. But this was a piece of advice they were later to regret taking.<sup>122</sup> These stories were to continue to appear for many years and in various forms. Lady Aberdeen explained the extent of the problem for herself and Lord Aberdeen by stating

So persistent did they become that some years later Queen Victoria requested Lord Rosebery who was then Prime Minister to ascertain whether it was a fact that whilst occupying the position of Governor-General, Lord Aberdeen, myself and members of our family and staff dined in the servants hall once a week. Of course we gave our good friend Lord Rosebery the necessary information as to the strictly orthodox character of our household arrangements whereby he was able to reassure her majesty on the subject - but when King Edward came to the throne he too made the same inquiries.<sup>123</sup>

The countess devotes a whole chapter in her memoirs We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen. Vol. 11<sup>124</sup> counteracting these rumours. Talk of anything beyond that which they were trying to achieve in supporting their servants in the development of their full potential as individuals, she found both upsetting and offensive. The countess also failed to see why other members of her class could not see the advantages to themselves in such a movement. The 'servant problem' she knew was a fashionable topic of conversation amongst the elite, one of the principal complaints being how stupid the servants were. Lady Aberdeen believed that if this was

<sup>121</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen. Vol. II. p 2.

<sup>122</sup> Aberdeen., Lord and Lady. We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen. Vol. II p 1.

<sup>123</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen. Vol. II. p 2.

<sup>124</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen. Vol. II.

truly the problem then the obvious answer was to allow the servants to develop their abilities through education and training.

Regardless of the ridicule that came from many quarters, the countess believed that she ran her estates in a most orthodox manner and that there was no eccentricity on her part. She declared

Of one thing we are very sure, and that is that the existence of our household club is in no way tended to deteriorate the services rendered either to ourselves or to our guests, nor did it interfere with the discipline which must exist in every well ordered household.<sup>125</sup>

It is Lady Aberdeens next remark that sets her apart and shows her innovative and somewhat unorthodox approach to class, and to individuals, within all ranks of society.

Speaking again of the Haddo House Club she claimed

.....it did introduce the element of deep mutual regard and understanding and sympathy for one anothers lives, and a basis on which to build a common fellowship for all true and noble purposes, which should surely be the aim and desire of every thoughtful householder.<sup>126</sup>

This left her vulnerable to the type of rumours that received a large amount of credence in Canada and Ireland as well as in Britain. The idea that the Aberdeens were eccentric and had an overtly liberal attitude to the accepted order of things caused damage to their social position. It was about this time that they also gained an unfounded and unfortunate reputation for being mean. The opposite in fact was the case, this will be shown more clearly as I examine their work, particularly in Ireland. Nonetheless, this negative reputation was to follow the Viceregal couple to Ireland where many jokes were made about their 'thriftiness', which got 'irretrievably connected with our entertainments'.<sup>127</sup> Lady Aberdeen claimed to have entertained a larger number of people, and to have given a greater number of dances than previous incumbents of the Viceroyalty to Ireland. This assertion was based on the figures compiled by Sir Anthony Weldon their Lord Chamberlain. Therefore the countess grew frustrated as every year the same stories about their 'niggardliness, started up again'.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen. Vol. II p 10

<sup>126</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen. Vol. II p 10

<sup>127</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen. Vol. II p 179.

<sup>128</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen. Vol. II p 179.



The Aberdeens also became the butt of many music hall jokes and at least one play, The Admirable Crichton by J.M. Barrie.<sup>129</sup> The play was based upon an upper class couple who treated their servants as equals, and was said to be based on the Aberdeens and their radical notions. Lord Aberdeen asked for and received a public denial and apology from Barrie.<sup>130</sup> This attitude to the Aberdeens was to continue to such an extent that ultimately King Edward VII refused to stay at the Viceregal Lodge when he visited Lord and Lady Aberdeen in Dublin, for fear 'he found himself obliged to take a parlormaid to dinner'.<sup>131</sup>

While it was her mother and her mother's family who were to have a profound effect on Ishbel's early religious beliefs, it was her father who was to develop in her a life long devotion to politics and the Liberal cause. As already stated, Gladstone was a regular visitor to her family home, and she became his devoted admirer. As with her interest in religion and science, politics became an issue for the countess at a very young age. By the time she was thirteen Ishbel had already begun to take an active interest in public affairs and politics. She followed with great interest the news from the Franco-German war, an account of which she kept in journals beginning in September of 1870. Her journals from this time, and for the next seventy years, became a record of current and personal events at a very interesting period in history. It is most unfortunate that for personal and family reasons, on completion of her mother's biography, Lady Marjorie Pentland had most of these journals destroyed.<sup>132</sup> The only complete journals remaining are the journals kept during the countess' period as Vicereign to Canada. These give us a fascinating insight into the political and economic life in Canada at a vital period in that country's history.

There were other, more concrete reasons, why Lady Aberdeen was attracted to the Liberal party. There was a clear link in this Victorian age between religion and politics, particularly Liberal party politics, which was viewed as the party that was more open to non-conformity and democracy. Non conformists were overwhelmingly represented within the Liberal party in a ratio of between eight and twelve to one, in the latter half

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<sup>129</sup> Barrie, J.M. The Admirable Crichton. (London, 1902)

<sup>130</sup> French, Doris. Ishbel and the Empire. A Biography of Lady Aberdeen. p 52.

<sup>131</sup> Drummond, James. (ed.) Onward and Upward. p 3

<sup>132</sup> Doris French in her biography of Lady Aberdeen, claimed that these records were destroyed because of an alleged affair between the countess and Henry Drummond. French also alleges that Archie Gordon was in fact Henry Drummond's child.

of the nineteenth century. For Gladstone and his followers the task of politicians, and politics, was to be firstly educative and secondly, to guide public opinion and to 'establish conditions in which spiritual progress could be generated'.<sup>133</sup> If this were not the case it was feared that the consequences would mean a degeneration into revolution and anarchy. Lady Aberdeen had the greatest respect for Gladstone's moral vision and considered his influence on public opinion to be both uplifting and civilising. As with religion and science, politics were very real for the countess, and in the broadest sense she felt that all politics contained a spiritual dimension. Politics were simply an appendage to her Christianity.

Lady Aberdeen's commitment to the Liberal Party was wholehearted and was one that was to lead her down many different paths. When she married she brought her quiet and gentle husband into the Liberal fold away from his Tory roots

Committed to the Liberal Party, which she believed had a monopoly of good admirable men and sound argument, she listened passionately as Gladstone and his colleagues sought in the early 80s to gain power again. Her first contribution was of course to move the Earl of Aberdeen, nobleman of considerable rank, from the Tory benches to the better side.<sup>134</sup>

This was only one aspect of the huge influence Ishbel was to have in the life of her husband from politics to religion to her many projects, she carried her husband along with her. She was a very intellectual, enthusiastic and strong-willed individual, while her husband was quiet, reserved and was not nearly as cerebral. He was, nonetheless, to become almost as committed to her many projects as the countess herself. Lady Aberdeen was never going to be satisfied, as many Victorian upper class women were to wield political power from their drawing rooms, working through and on behalf of their husbands, brothers and fathers. Instead Lady Aberdeen became as actively involved in politics as it was possible for a woman to become in this period. For example she was invited by Gladstone to address an audience of almost 5000 at the Liberal Party Annual Conference at Birmingham Town Hall in 1888, thereby becoming one of the first women ever to be invited to speak on such a platform.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Parry, Jonathan P. Democracy and Religion. Gladstone and the Liberal Party 1867-1875. (Cambridge, 1989) p 5

<sup>134</sup> French, Doris. Ishbel and the Empire. A Biography of Lady Aberdeen. p 58.

<sup>135</sup> Pentland, Marjorie. A Bonnie Fechter. Life of Ishbel Marjoriebanks. Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair. 1857-1939. p 73

As a keen supporter of Gladstone and his policies her topic was one that was to gain greater significance in her life than she could ever have imagined at this time, Home Rule for Ireland. Furthermore, during her periods in office here she felt acutely the disappointment of the Irish, as the British establishment time and time again refused to give to the Irish that which she believed was their right. The result of this commitment to the Home Rule cause was to have a profound effect on the Viceroyalty of the Aberdeens during both their terms of office in this country. It led to both strong support and strong opposition, from those at each end of the political spectrum. These issues will be dealt with in later chapters.

The countess was to try to take her interest in politics a step further after the passing of the Local Government Act of 1888. This Act allowed for women rate payers to vote for members of County Councils. Lady Aberdeen inquired whether she could stand for election herself, only to be informed that she was disqualified on the grounds that she personally was not a rate payer. She was disappointed, not only for herself but for other women barred in this way. The countess reasoned that the majority of institutions and programmes under the control of County Councils affected women, for example, reformatory schools, music and dance hall licences, baby farming, artisan dwellings, asylums, open spaces and other such matters, therefore women should be included in the decision making process. The basic right of women to hold such office was necessary if they were to be allowed to perform their duty towards society. Lady Aberdeen stated

The right we claim is to be allowed to perform our duty. We are told that we have done nothing but carry soup cans and give pennies to good for nothing beggars. Well our mothers and grandmothers worked nobly along the lines open to them. But the world grows wiser. We begin to understand that we must go back to the causes of poverty, think for the hard pressed working women who has no leisure for thought, no chance for action. Yet upon whom comes the hardships caused by defective laws, soul crushing competition and low public standards.....<sup>136</sup>

These were issues that she would raise time and again as president of the International Council of Women. Her role in this organisation will be discussed in some detail in

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<sup>136</sup> Pentland, Marjorie. A Bonnie Fecther. Life of Ishbel Marjoribanks Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair. 1857-1939. p 75.

particularly the great discoveries that seem to point the way towards a better and more healthy society and contain the answers to many of life's dilemmas.

Before finishing this introduction to the Ishbel Aberdeen, and the influence of many of the major movements of the period, I shall in the next chapter look at the international profile of the countess as she served as Vicereign to Canada, and as President of the very influential organisation the International Council of Women.

## CHAPTER 2.

### **'Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you'.**

In 1886 William Gladstone on his reappointment as Prime Minister of Great Britain had called Lord Aberdeen to the position of Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Due to the instability of the political situation in Britain, this was to be a short lived period in office, lasting only six months. Nevertheless, it was to remain an extremely significant time in the lives of both Lord and Lady Aberdeen, and in their relationship with this country. This first Viceroyalty of the Aberdeens in Ireland will be dealt with in some detail in chapter three of this work. I propose that before discussing the role of the countess in Ireland, and the organisations and institutions founded here, to look at her international profile, firstly as Vicereign to Canada and secondly, as president of the International Council of Women. It is only by examining these roles and her subsequent experiences that a fuller picture of the countess emerges, one that goes far beyond the provincial, narrow and often negative perspective that has developed of her in terms of Irish history.

After the general election of 1892 at which the Liberals were returned to government, again under the leadership of Gladstone, it was presumed by many that the Aberdeens would be returned to the Viceroyalty of Ireland. In 1886 they had won much support, at least among nationalists, for the Home Rule cause and had continued since their departure to forge links with the country through their support for the Irish Industries Association, an organisation which was founded by countess in an effort to develop Ireland's indigenous industries. They were anxious themselves to return to Ireland. Lady Aberdeen believed they had much to offer in terms of the experience they could bring to bear on the affairs of Ireland, in a period of change and growth. She also believed there was much that could be done to introduce worthwhile social, economic, and political reforms in a country where the majority lived in abject poverty within both rural and urban areas.

The Aberdeens were not to be given the opportunity to return to Ireland for another fourteen years as John Morley, the Chief Secretary decided that this would not be in

Ireland's' best interest, as he believed that the 'new Viceroy must be one without history or opinions'<sup>140</sup> Lord and Lady Aberdeen with their well known Liberal sympathies and outspoken support for Home Rule were viewed by Morley as particularly unsuitable. This was a huge blow to the countess, she recalled the news given to her by her brother Edward Marjoribanks the Chief Whip, as 'that stunning blow dealt us by John Morley'.<sup>141</sup> Gladstone, by way of appeasement, instead offered Lord Aberdeen a choice of positions including Secretary for Scotland, Lord Chamberlain, Viceroy of India, or Governor-General of Canada when Lord Stanley completed his term of office in September 1893. Lord and Lady Aberdeen felt the latter choice to be the most suitable for many, including personal reasons, not least of which was their love for Canada. The couple were to serve in Canada from 1893 until 1897, at a time of consolidation and growth for this newly emerging nation.

I propose to show in this chapter, that this time in Canada was also to be a period of growth and learning for the countess. Within this short few years she had founded a number of organisations including the Victoria Order of Nurses of Canada, a legacy which exists to the present day. A second very significant organisation founded by Lady Aberdeen particularly for the benefit of women, was the National Council of Women of Canada. This group was affiliated to a growing, world wide network of women's councils through the International Council of Women of which Lady Aberdeen became president in 1893.<sup>142</sup> It was the presidency of this latter organisation which was undoubtedly to place Lady Aberdeen on the international stage, and gain for her the respect and support of many from all social classes. The founding of these organisations and their role will be dealt with in the course of this chapter. For the moment it is important to note that during her days as Vicereign to Canada, the countess had to develop not only great organisational skills, but also learn to overcome very real and powerful opposition as she tried to introduce social change in a nation where social Darwinism seemed to be the only basis of survival. Whether in political or social terms,

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<sup>140</sup> Pentland, Marjorie. A Bonnie Fechter. Life of Ishbel Marjoribanks, Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair. 1857-1939. p 100.

<sup>141</sup> Pentland, Marjorie. A Bonnie Fechter. Life of Ishbel Marjoribanks, Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair. 1857-1939. p 101.

<sup>142</sup> The Countess first held this office from 1893 until 1898. She was re-elected to this position in 1904 and held office until 1914. After the first world war she was again re-elected president in 1922 and remained in office until her retirement in 1936.

placing a claim on land or a gold mine, it was the survival of the strongest, the fittest or the first that mattered.

Opposition was not always personal to the countess, but was also the result of the very tense religious and political divide within Canadian society. These divisions, Catholic versus Protestant, and Liberal versus Conservative, were the result of rising French and English brands of nationalism as Canada struggled to establish itself as a nation. By the 1870s Canada had united its old and new territories, yet huge divisions remained which would take generations to overcome. For example, in Quebec the ultramontanes believed that only there was a French Canadian fully a citizen.<sup>143</sup> Therefore Quebec remained a French province with a clerical/nationalist, Conservative government. This doctrine of papal infallibility was associated with sharp conservative and clerical attacks on all forms of Protestantism or liberalism.<sup>144</sup> Ontario on the other hand remained Protestant and anti clerical, with strong support for the more radical aspects of liberalism. Within the nation as a whole the ultramontanes were at one end of the spectrum, confident of keeping the Conservative government in power, while at the opposite end were societies such as the Protestant Protective Association. This anti-Catholic, anti-clerical organisation were by 1894 claiming a membership of over 50,000 throughout Canada, many of whom pledged not to employ Roman Catholics and to do all in their power to prevent their employment by the government.<sup>145</sup>

Lord Aberdeen during his period in office was to be served by five different prime ministers as both sides struggled for power. It was only in the latter half of their term in office that the Aberdeens were to witness the disintegration and defeat of the Conservative party in Canada, and the rise of a strong Liberal government that was to dominate Canadian politics up until the 1930s. The crushing defeat of the Conservative party who had dominated post-confederation politics, was in no small part due to the rise of the Liberal Party leader Wilfred Laurier. An individual of French-Canadian origin, he pleased the nationalist sentiments of the French Canadians, and was viewed as less radical by those of the conservative centre who wished to break with the ultramontanes.<sup>146</sup> Laurier during his period in office had to overcome the traditional anti-clerical

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<sup>143</sup> Kilbourne, William. Canada Unity and Diversity. (Canada, 1967). p 349.

<sup>144</sup> McNaught, Kenneth. A Pelican History of Canada. (London, 1978). p 8.

<sup>145</sup> Saywell, John. (ed.) The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen. p 62.

<sup>146</sup> Kilbourne, William. Canada. Unity and Diversity. p 349.

policies of the Liberal party in an effort to bring both sides together. This was no easy task as he relied upon moderation, tolerance and compromise, to reconcile that which seemed irreconcilable.<sup>147</sup>

In this period of great religious division, trying to work in a non-sectarian manner with Protestants, Catholics, Jews, Unitarians and other non-conformists made the Aberdeens singularly unpopular with extremists of all persuasions. In the midst of such division, as Morley had claimed for Ireland, the Viceregal couple were expected to remain neutral on all matters both political and religious. This they were unable to do as they became more and more embroiled in Canadian politics, a stand which was to leave them open to much criticism particularly from the Tory officialdom with whom they had to come into daily political and social contact.

Ever a Liberal, it was only natural that Lady Aberdeen should throw herself behind Laurier and her journal and letters show that she gave him all the support she could by use of her substantial influence. Her journal also indicates that her involvement in Canadian politics became quite extensive. The countess could never have remained an observer, with the country going from crisis to crisis. Her political and religious convictions and her personality, saw to it she was a participator. According to Saywell, editor of the Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen,

She above all was not, could not be, content to be a figure head, the captive of Canadian society - almost at once she seized the initiative and retained it for the five years they remained in Canada. Aberdeen often followed where she bravely led.<sup>148</sup>

This was not an easy role for the countess. In her personal life she had to overcome difficulties as she suffered from blinding headaches and periods of depression when home sickness overcame her, and her husband even in his official duties as Governor-General leaned on her constantly for support and direction. Saywell also claimed that while the constitution may not have allowed it, it would not have been unreasonable to grace Lady Aberdeen with the title Governess-General. 'Like Victoria's Albert she had a power that could not be overlooked'.<sup>149</sup> In spite of this role is not Lady Aberdeen's obviously political involvement in Canadian affairs that is important for the purpose of

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<sup>147</sup> Kilbourne, William. Canada. Unity and Diversity p 398

<sup>148</sup> Saywell, John. (ed.) The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen. p xxiv.

<sup>149</sup> Saywell, John. (ed.) The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen. p xxvi



this work, therefore I will limit my text to her involvement in social reform, within the context of political developments. For the countess it seemed there was much social reform needed in this newly emerging nation. There were many social problems in Canada as railway companies, land speculators, and increased industrialisation and urbanisation created problems for which neither enterprise nor government made any effort to find solutions. While this nation was moving on economically, it seems that in reality neither Canadian Liberalism nor Canadian Conservatism had developed a social conscience.<sup>150</sup>

Lady Aberdeen's Canadian journal gives us great insight into Canada at the end of the nineteenth century. This period was to be a time of learning that would benefit the countess greatly on her eventual return to Ireland. The Canada of the 1890s had a lot in common with the Ireland of the period, in terms of its sectarianism and religious divides, economic, social and political unrest, and need of reform. In a pattern that would be repeated with the founding of the Women's National Health Association in Ireland, and eventually Peamount Sanatorium, Lady Aberdeen was to run into strong blocks of opposition when she founded the Victorian Order of Nurses in Canada and the National Council of Women in Canada. In both countries she also had to deal with the anti feminists as she tried to increase the influence of women in public life at time when a women's role in society was still strictly limited. The countess' journal also describes to us the many thousands of miles travelled in Canada, by Lord and Lady Aberdeen. One of the major reasons that she accompanied her husband on his journeys, was to use the opportunity provided to meet many of the most influential members of the Dominion. In this way she endeavoured to gain support for the establishment of sections of the National Council of Women all over Canada and for the establishment of the Victorian Order of Nurses.

Before discussing these issues it is important to note one outcome of Lady Aberdeen's early travels. This was her realisation of the absolute bleakness and isolation of pioneer life in rural Canada and the great many needs of the settlers. With its vast expanse of almost four million square miles reaching from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast, and northern and southern Canada being divided by thousands of miles of rocky highlands

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<sup>150</sup> Saywell, John. (ed.) The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen. p xxvi.

and the Canadian prairies, the isolation of settlers caused huge difficulties. Even after the completion of the Canadian Pacific railway in the 1880s the thousands of miles north of the Great Lakes remained thinly populated, with trappers, railway workers and scattered mining settlements. In the western regions, the rise in agricultural prices and the enlargement of the British market after 1896, lead to a wave of prosperity which drew in millions of immigrants, all hoping for a better life. Wishing to take advantage of this prosperity the Canadian government set out to encourage this tide of immigration by sending elaborate propaganda to the United States and Europe concerning the advantages of settling in Canada and facilitating the transportation of new immigrants into the West.<sup>151</sup> In spite of the influx of settlers there remained vast regions where individuals and families found themselves living many miles from civilisation or even their nearest neighbour. In the north west for example, there existed areas like the Klondike in the Yukon valley, which had opened up suddenly in 1898 with the gold rush, precipitating a flood of gold prospectors and their followers, but which was many miles from any type of civilisation.

Other immigrants remained in the urban areas, beginning in the more established cities like Ontario but eventually moving to the rapidly growing towns such as Winnipeg, Regina, Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver.<sup>152</sup> Few were to find the prosperity and life style they hoped for and were promised. Many Europeans in particular lacked the necessary industrial skills and therefore the means to support themselves or their families. Whether living in isolated rural communities, or in appalling conditions in urban slums, the government left the immigrants to fend for themselves, or to depend on the benevolence of church missions, believing that their duty was done once they had provided transportation to Canada.<sup>153</sup>

On her extensive travels Lady Aberdeen visited hundreds of such communities, many with little or no amenities, in terms of their physical needs. It was not only this or the geographical isolation of these individuals that affected the countess, but their social and cultural isolation, in areas that had little communication with the outside world.

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<sup>151</sup> Kilbourne, William. Canada. Unity and Diversity. p 398.

<sup>152</sup> Kilbourne, William. Canada. Unity and Diversity. p 193.

<sup>153</sup> Kilbourne, William. Canada. Unity and Diversity. p 194.

Seeing this deeply affected Lady Aberdeen, she asked

What is a practical thing to? Could you not get the names of newcomers from the immigration agents and forward to them from time to time such papers, magazines books as you can get together.....a reminder of this sort from home - a picture of some sort to brighten the walls, the competitions in the magazines, would often be a real interest in the little bare homestead so far out in the world. And if you could add packets of flour seeds you would foster the love of beauty which can lift up lives engrossed in material needs.<sup>154</sup>

Therefore to bring some comforts and mental stimulation particularly to pioneer women the countess founded the 'Lady Aberdeen Association for the Distribution of Literature to Settlers in the West'. The aim of the 'Aberdeen Association', as it later became known, was to forward from time to time papers and magazines as well as small luxuries to those living mainly on the prairies of the North West. The Aberdeen Association proved popular and branches were formed all over the country, and many thousands of parcels of literature were distributed.

Individuals interested in joining the association were asked to fill in a questionnaire stating the type of material they required, and the subjects that were of greatest interest to them. The only limitation placed on the material being sent, based on the religious sensibilities of the country, was that it not be of a proselytising nature. Branches were also established in Britain, with the aim of gathering used material and parcelling them for shipping to Canada. Within a short time of the association being founded arrangements were made with the Dominion Shipping Line in Liverpool to carry the magazines and literature free of charge. Many French groups also became involved in gathering and distributing literature on behalf of the French speaking members of the Aberdeen Association. Additional support came when, W.T. Stead publicised the organisation in the 'Review of Reviews' and as a result further distribution centres were formed in the United Kingdom. Both the Allen Line and Canadian Post Office granted very favourable concessions for transportation costs on any material on behalf of the Aberdeen Association.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Pentland, Marjorie. A Bonnie Fechter. Life of Ishbel Marjoribanks. Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair 1857-1939. p 87.

<sup>155</sup> Saywell, John. (ed.) The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen. pxxii.

In reality this was just a small beginning to the work that was to be carried out on behalf of the Canadian people by the countess. It was a simple answer to a major need. Nevertheless it demonstrates Lady Aberdeen's understanding of the isolation of these pioneers and her ability to do something practical, no matter how small, about what may have seemed an insurmountable difficulty. She worked on the principle that just because you could not do everything, this did not mean you should do nothing. By 1912 there were eleven branches of the Aberdeen Association from Halifax to Victoria.<sup>156</sup> But much more needed to be done in order to provide for even the basic physical needs of the settlers.

One of Lady Aberdeen's principle causes and one that was to have its greatest manifestation in Ireland was that of health. She knew from her travels that there was an appalling lack of medical support for those living in both rural and urban areas. For example in Dawson, the first city of the Klondike there were only two minor hospitals to provide for the needs of both the city and the vast region round about. Neither hospital had any government sponsorship. The first hospital, St Mary's was founded by a Jesuit, Father W.H. Judge, and staffed by the sisters of Ste Anne of Lachine. The second hospital, the Good Samaritan was founded by a Presbyterian missionary, Dr Andrew Grant. Both institutions accepted patients regardless of means or religion, and both were totally dependent on fees and donations to survive.<sup>157</sup> It was to these hospitals that the first four of the Victorian Order of Nurses were sent in 1898. Many more nurses were to follow in their footsteps, for many generations to come.

The founding of the VONs was the result of a number of factors, as already stated the countess had witnessed for herself, and had been appalled by, the lack of medical services for both rural and urban settlers. Lady Aberdeen believed that the introduction of a system of travelling nurses, or the establishment of cottage hospitals, would alleviate the plight of the many women she met who suffered greatly as a result of the lack of basic medical care, particularly during pregnancy and child birth. This belief in the need to provide such services was reinforced for the countess, at the annual meeting of the National Council of Women in Montreal in 1896. At this event a resolution was put forward by the representatives of the Council in Vancouver, asking the NCW to draw

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<sup>156</sup> French, Doris. Ishbel and the Empire. A biography of Lady Aberdeen. p 103.

<sup>157</sup> Zaslow, Morris. The Opening of the Canadian North. 1870-1914. (Toronto, 1971). p 127.

the attention of the Dominion and provisional governments to the suffering endured by women and children in the outlying districts of Canada, due to the lack of medical services. The answer they felt was to provide a way whereby medical men and nurses could be induced to settle in these districts.<sup>158</sup> Lady Aberdeen suggested that this would best be accomplished with the introduction of a nation wide plan for district nurses, based on the pattern of the British Institute of Queen's Nurses that had been established in Britain ten years earlier, on the occasion of the golden jubilee of Queen Victoria. By 1897 a formal proposal had been drawn up by the NCW to establish a district nursing scheme as a commemoration to the Queen on her diamond jubilee. The Governor-General, Lord Aberdeen, was to become patron of the fund with Lady Aberdeen as president of a board to establish the VONs. This met with the approval of Prime Minister Laurier, who agreed to give a parliamentary grant towards its establishment, provided the opposition agreed. This seemingly obvious cure to a social ill and answer to a serious need, was surprisingly to meet with bitter opposition, and was to lead within a short time to the withdrawal of Laurier's support.

The medical profession were the strongest block of opposition that the countess and her board had to face. Doctors believed that their authority would be undermined and their incomes reduced by such measures, both of which were quite legitimate concerns. Fuel was added to the concerns of both doctors and nurses when it was proposed by the countess that 'home-helpers' be included in this programme of care and that they would be allowed to act as midwives, as they did in Britain, when the need arose. Saywell points out that

Ishbel thus with one stroke, managed to offend the graduate nurses, fearful of the undercutting of their hard won professional fee, and the doctors who were doing their best to keep all the nurses in a handmaiden role, and would not tolerate any threat to their own monopoly in obstetrics. In those days many doctors were indeed struggling to make a living; there were not enough wealthy patients.<sup>159</sup>

Consequently this scheme was almost crushed while in its infancy, as Lady Aberdeen upset many members of the medical establishment. This was not only the result of her seemingly revolutionary proposals, but her often forceful manner and her inability to understand the concerns of those who believed that she was trying to undermine their

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<sup>158</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. *We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen*. Vol. 1, p 114.

<sup>159</sup> Saywell, John. (ed.) *The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen*. p xxx.

fledgling profession. The countess could not comprehend such opposition when the needs of the community were so great. Further opposition came from conservatives, who would simply not listen to any suggestions put forward by the countess and her female counterparts. At this time the conservative press 'almost automatically criticised anything to which the Aberdeens were connected'.<sup>160</sup> The Prime Minister felt that under the circumstances he could no longer endorse the proposed parliamentary grant and it seemed that the project had little chance of success. While she was in Boston on a visit, the committee from the NCW wrote to Lady Aberdeen stating

.....that the attacks on the order and those promoting it had become so virulent, that they felt the Governor-General and his wife should not be exposed to such opposition, and that they advised them to suspend operations for the present.<sup>161</sup>

Not to be defeated, Lady Aberdeen decided to put the scheme on a more professional footing, if the medical establishment would not listen to her and her colleagues, perhaps they would listen to other members of the medical profession. To this end while in Boston the countess visited the Waltham School for the training of district nurses where she met the training schools founder, Dr Alfred Worcester of Harvard University and Miss Charlotte McLeod the schools Superintendent. She invited both of these individuals to visit Ottawa, and had Dr Worcester speak at a dinner given by her to over two hundred regional doctors. The evening was a great success, and Miss McLeod was invited to organise the setting up of the VONs with their own training school, the first being established in Ottawa itself, and she was to become the VONs first Superintendent.

This was the beginning of a programme to successfully convince the medical profession that they had nothing to fear from the establishment of the VONs, in terms of their own incomes nor a lowering of professional standards. Many concessions had to be made in order to bring about agreement. The Order would take only nurses from accredited nurse training schools which were to become part of the mainstream hospital system. The idea of homehelps had to be removed and midwifery left to the doctors.

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<sup>160</sup> Saywell, John. (ed.) The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen. p xxx

<sup>161</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. We Twa Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen. Vol. 1. p 121.

On the 7 November 1897, Lady Aberdeen speaks jubilantly of this breakthrough

A Miracle has occurred! the Ottawa Medical Profession as a body, has owed itself converted to the scheme for establishing the Victorian Order of Nurses.....<sup>162</sup>

The countess faced head on all opposition to the founding of the VONs, as she travelled throughout the country. She made her case by taking it directly to the seat of opposition, the medical establishment, and with all of the means at her disposal, including dealing with all of the fears surrounding the order and with hours of painstaking compromise, succeeded in her goal. Along the way she gained the respect and support of many individuals. One of her strongest opponents at this time was Dr William Osler of Ottawa who later became one of her strongest allies in her work in Ireland for the eradication of tuberculosis. The backing of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Toronto, Bishop Walsh, helped greatly to reduce any lingering opposition. The Victorian Order of Nurses was therefore founded by Lady Aberdeen and established by Royal Charter as a memorial of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee on 18 May, 1898.

A second cause that was equally as important to the countess, was the establishment of a National Council of Women for Canada affiliated to the already existing International Council of Women, an organisation of which she was president. The ICW was a federation of national councils, or unions of women, formed in various countries for

the promotion of unity and mutual understanding between all associations of women, working for the common welfare of the community.<sup>163</sup>

The ICW was formed in Washington in 1888, due to the efforts of a group of American women in consultation with other women in England and France. They decided to convene a representative number of delegates from as many countries as possible in Washington, to consider the possibility and practicality of organising an ICW with affiliated national councils. This was never going to be an easy task. It was 1893 before the first formal meeting of the ICW was held in Chicago, at the invitation of the women's branch of the World's Congress held in connection with the Chicago World's Fair in that year. The conference was attended by women workers representing over 30 nationalities, as a

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<sup>162</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. *We Two. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen.* p 436.

<sup>163</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. (ed.) *The International Council of Women. Report of the transactions of the fourth quinquennial meeting held at Toronto Canada. June 1909.* (London, 1910). p 26

result of which many returned to their homes with the aim of establishing national councils within their own countries. It was in Chicago in 1893, that the countess was first elected president of the ICW with an American, Mrs May Wright-Sewall as vice-president.<sup>164</sup>

It was hardly surprising therefore that within a month of her arrival in Canada on the 27 October 1893, Lady Aberdeen addressed a meeting of over 1500 women in the Toronto Pavilion and became president of the newly formed National Council of Women of Canada.<sup>165</sup> Both presidencies would become extremely significant in the life of the countess, and her role as president of the ICW will be discussed in some detail in the course of this chapter. For the moment I propose to deal only with the NCW in Canada.

It seemed at first there could be no opposition to the establishment of a women's council, Lady Aberdeen believing that a feminine role would greatly enhance society and would bring necessary reforms for the benefit particularly of women themselves. At the time of its formation she writes

It is wonderful to feel and see the intense desire and readiness of the women for some such movement as this, and it is awe inspiring to find this work just prepared all ready to my hand - a work to which no one can take exception, as it is intended to combine all sections of thought and work, secular, philanthropic and religious.<sup>166</sup>

But many did take exception and opposition came not only from individuals but from a number of established institutions, some of them quite surprising. The organisations very independence and non sectarian stance immediately caused offence in this divided nation. The Women's Christian Temperance Union for example, refused to support the NCW, wanting the new council to advance their cause of temperance and prohibition, and most importantly, a middle class Protestant ethic. The WCTU was the largest, most powerful and most nation-wide of women's organisations, with its easily identified call for the prohibition of alcohol. They were located in both small towns and large urban centres, with most of its members belonging to fundamentalist Protestant churches.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. (ed.) The International Council of Women. Report of the transactions of the fourth quinquennial meeting held at Toronto Canada. June 1909. p 26.

<sup>165</sup> Saywell, John (ed.) The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen. p xxix.

<sup>166</sup> Saywell, John. (ed.) The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen. p 24.

<sup>167</sup> Cross, Michael. and Kealey, Gregory. (eds.) 'Canada's Age of Industry 1849-1896' in Readings in Canadian Social History, 1849-1896. Vol. 3. (Ontario, 1982). pp 190-204..



Executive members were middle class women, married to lawyers, businessmen, doctors, journalists and clergymen. Their opposition to the establishment of the NCW was a serious threat to the new organisation, almost causing its downfall.

This outright opposition of the WCTU was based, not only on the lack of support by the NCW to their demand for temperance, they were also opposed the tolerance of the Council which was, like the ICW itself to be wholly non-denominational and non-sectarian. The WCTU wanted a Protestant Christian society, and for most of its members faith and temperance went hand in hand, and the fight for prohibition was part of a religious battle.<sup>168</sup> On the other hand, the NCW was striving for unity and openness, and a recognition that societies ills could not be overcome by measures such as prohibition. Social ills were the result of much more fundamental causes, that could only be overcome by the radical rethinking of the role of individuals, institutions and governments within society. The countess endeavoured to explain to the membership of WCTU the role of all councils affiliated to the ICW, by referring to the organisations constitution which stated that their aim was to

Organise opportunities for women of all nations, creeds and races to meet together for the interchange of views and opinions regarding their work for the welfare of their communities and to foster friendship and good feelings between nations.<sup>169</sup>

Lady Aberdeen had a vision of the NCW as a organisation of Canadian women who would work tirelessly, regardless of race, class or cultural background, for the betterment of their own communities. They would work in areas of health, welfare and the rights of women, not in narrow political terms, but in terms of improved living conditions and educational opportunities, and who would fight discrimination on the grounds of gender, class, religion or race. That overall aim, however radical, was more important than any one particular agenda, but was one that members of the WCTU failed to grasp.

Regardless of the best efforts of the executive of the NCW, the religious divisions that were so prevalent in Canadian society often filtered through the council membership, much to Lady Aberdeen's dismay. It is to the countess' credit that she managed to

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<sup>168</sup> Cross, Michael. and Kealey Gregory. (eds.) 'Canada's Age of Industry 1849-1896' in Readings in Canadian Social History, 1849-1896. Vol. 3, pp 190- 204.

<sup>169</sup> Bulletin. Magazine of the International Council of Women. May 1939. No. 8 p 59.

persuade all local councils, firstly in Canada and later throughout the world, to begin their meetings with a silent prayer. As a result of this Christians, Jews and non-conformists, those of a strong religious belief or none, could attend meetings and without offence being taken. Nor could the Council degenerate from their original aspirations and become denominational or sectarian. This was a very significant development, the countess in describing the difficulties stated

I tremble when I think of the careful handling it will need among strict and narrow sections.....some of them have given it to us hot over our rule of opening with a silent prayer. They say we are 'shirking' in order to satisfy Roman Catholics, Jews, Unitarians, and Quakers. After volumes of agonised correspondence they have now agreed to it; to my mind there is nothing more impressive than these few moments of silence. The Quebec Council would never have been formed unless for this plan. Of course women who have worked only on a church basis find it hard to grasp at the broader national side; the idea of an organisation simply designed to get all workers to know and appreciate one another, and to unite for common purposes has been difficult to inculcate, however it has been done.<sup>170</sup>

In Montreal therefore, in spite of objections from the Catholic bishop and the Protestant Protection Society, members of the Jewish community became very active participators within their local council.<sup>171</sup>

Further opposition to the establishment of the NCW was to come from the Women's Enfranchisement Association, Canada's national suffrage organisation which was based in Toronto. They wanted the NCW to fight for female suffrage, Lady Aberdeen replied that this was too controversial and would damage the council at this early stage of its development. The WEA therefore withdrew its support for the establishment of the NCW, believing that without a role in bringing about female suffrage the organisation could not be truly representative of women. Individual members of the WEA would also refuse to support the council.

It is ironic that by 1909 at the fourth quinquennial meeting of the ICW which was held in Toronto, head quarters of the Canadian suffrage movement, that the ICW began a process that was to do much to draw the attention of governments world-wide to the cause of female suffrage. It was decided by the ICW to join forces with the International

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<sup>170</sup> Pentland, Marjorie. A Bonnie Fechter. Life of Ishbel Marjoribanks Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair 1857-1939. p 112.

<sup>171</sup> Saywell, John. (ed.) The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen. p 87.

Women's Suffrage Alliance in framing a women's charter. This would be done by asking each National Council to prepare a report on the existing unequal laws within their respective countries, in relation to the role of women within the home, the family, the municipality and the state. These reports would then be combined as an international report which would be presented to the various governments drawing their attention to the need for the betterment of many of these laws, and the 'desirability of women taking part in the deliberations equally with men on such laws, the International Council basing its support for women's suffrage upon the facts shown in the reports submitted' The ICW affirmed its commitment to the right to vote being given to all women within countries where representative government existed.<sup>172</sup>

After a meeting between these two groups, the WEA and the WCTU, with the countess, she stated

Affraid neither were very satisfied with their reception, as I told one set that I could take no part in their movement in Canada as the subject though not touching party politics was of a controversial character; and the others while at one with them in their desire to promote temperance that I could not say I was in sympathy with their methods.<sup>173</sup>

Her bluntness was based on her frustration with the sheer narrow-mindedness of those opposed to the NCW of Canada and their inability to see beyond their own provincial and often sectarian needs.

Notwithstanding the difficulties, support for the NCW continued to grow in Canada and its local councils began to press for social welfare measures at municipal, provincial and federal levels, and it became a significant political pressure group. For example, the council secured the appointment of women inspectors for all factories where females were employed. They obtained the extension of the provisions of the Factory Acts to include the supervision of women workers, and conducted an inquiry within all of the provinces into the laws for the protection of women and children. As a result of this the Council made recommendations to the Minister for Justice, which he adopted when bringing in amendments to the criminal code.<sup>174</sup> This role too almost led to the downfall

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<sup>172</sup> Bulletin. Magazine of the International Council of Women. May 1939. No 8. p 24.

<sup>173</sup> Saywell, John. (ed.) The Canadian Journal of Lady Aberdeen. p xxix.

<sup>174</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Isabel. (ed.) The International Council of Women. Report of the transactions of the fourth quinquennial meeting held at Toronto Canada. June 1909. p 70

of the organisation, as many of their male counterparts became suspicious of this Council of very vocal woman. It was Lady Aberdeen's strong will and perseverance that helped the NCW of Canada to survive the onslaught from very strong opposition. By 1909 it had become a federation of twenty four local councils, extending from Prince Edward Island in the east to Vancouver Island in the west. There were affiliated to the Council over 300 societies, including the National Association for Coloured Women, societies and organisations 'formed for every conceivable object which makes for good citizenship'.<sup>175</sup>

Using its links with the ICW, the Canadian council did more to enhance the role of women and to overcome prejudice and ignorance, using education and political pressure than either of their opponents. Addressing candidates from the NCW in Canada in 1909, Lady Aberdeen was to speak of their achievements

has not your National Council brought together the workers for public good in your various provinces in a way which they never dreamt possible before? Do they not understand each others difficulties and needs, various as they are in this vast dominion, in a manner which induces them to stand together for common action, and also to adopt the more difficult *attitude of refraining* from action for the sake of one another?.....<sup>176</sup>

Remembering the reasons for opposition to the establishment of such an organisation the countess concluded

It is *because* we are wedded to no one propaganda, it is just *because* we impose no restrictions and no shibboleths on those who join us, it is *because* we welcome all to our sisterhood of what ever creed, party, section or class in the whole world..... it is *because* of this that we are strong to help forward all that tends to be for the good of mankind.....(this has) brought us into a union so strong that we can help forward the great movement of our generation without being bound by them and without imposing them on any of our councils whose countries are not yet ready for them.<sup>177</sup>

Time would continue to show the truth of this visionary statement. It was indeed because of its very nature that the ICW was able to withstand, and survive in tact, even the ravages and divisions between nations and individuals during and after the First

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<sup>175</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. (ed.) The International Council of Women. Report of the transactions of the fourth quinquennial meeting held at Toronto Canada. June 1909. p 70

<sup>176</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. (ed.) The International Council of Women. Report of the transactions of the fourth quinquennial meeting held at Toronto Canada. June 1909. p 81.

<sup>177</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. (ed.) The International Council of Women. Report of the transactions of the fourth quinquennial meeting held at Toronto Canada. June 1909. p 81.

World War. It is only when we look more closely at the aims and objectives of the ICW that we see why the countess should be so passionately committed to this organisation and its development. Therefore I propose to look at the role of this organisation and the enormous part played by Lady Aberdeen in introducing radical ideas and programmes for the welfare, not only of women, but society in general.

By 1893 when the countess was first called to the presidency of the ICW the constitution had already been framed and adopted. Their aim was the promotion of unity and mutual understanding between all the associations of women, who were working for the common welfare of the community. The ICW would do this by providing a means of communication and of common action between women's organisations in all countries. Also by the provision of opportunities for women to meet together from all parts of the world to confer on questions relating to the welfare of nations, the family and individuals. The preamble to the Constitution gives us an indication of their aim and scope. It is as follows

We, women of all nations, sincerely believing that the best good of humanity will be advanced by greater unity of thought, sympathy, and purpose, and that an organised movement of women will best conserve the highest good of the family and of the state, do hereby band ourselves together in a confederation of workers, to further the application of the Golden Rule to Society, Custom and Law. - the Golden Rule - 'Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you'.<sup>178</sup>

There were many ways that the organisation believed this could be achieved, but firstly it would be necessary for women to become organised. Therefore, in the first years of her presidency the immediate need the countess felt, was the formation of as many national councils as possible, based upon the constitution, and to have these closely federated to the international body. While some progress had been made to this end, there was still much needed to be done. Lady Aberdeen was to push this aim forward by advertising the ICW, using volunteers to distribute a number of useful leaflets and pamphlets that she had produced in three languages. The countess also gathered and had published the reports of the full council sessions of the ICW, in order to bring its aims and scope to a much wider audience. At the same time there began a period of heavy secretarial work under her close personal supervision.

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<sup>178</sup> Bulletin. Magazine of the International Council of Women. May 1939. p 59.

For example, every National Council in its application for affiliation had to submit their proposed constitution, and Lady Aberdeen personally examined these to see that they were in keeping with that of the International Council. Often there was much correspondence before agreement was reached. By the 24 June 1899 at a meeting of the Congress of the ICW at the Queens Hall in London, eight new national councils had been affiliated to the ICW.<sup>179</sup> In the previous five years National Councils had been formed in Finland, Holland, Australia, Tasmania, joining groups from Germany, Sweden, Britain, the United States and Canada. Delegates from these countries were also joined in London by observers from Belgium, Italy, Russia, France, Norway, India, South Africa, the Argentine, Palestine and Persia, making the occasion the first truly international affair for the council.<sup>180</sup> In conjunction with the London meeting of the ICW an International Congress of Women was also held. The countess subsequently edited a series of seven volumes, comprising of the reports of the councils transaction, and the addresses and papers delivered at the London Congress. By this means she endeavoured to bring the message of the ICW, in relation to the wider role of women within their communities, to a much larger audience.

As the ICW grew in importance the countess was to do much to use the councils' potential for good from many different aspects. These varied from raising the standard of living within individual homes, to working for world peace. In between these came issues of health, poverty, the legal position of women, issues related to emigration and immigration, white slave-trafficking, and moral standards in entertainment. With each of these issues the countess was to take an active and energetic role. The presidency of the ICW was to be hugely influential in the life of Lady Aberdeen, it is from here that she develops her organisational skills, her understanding of the need for social reform, and a greater grasp of the medical and scientific theories of the period. Here the countess also develops an empirical view of society, on an almost world-wide scale, at a level which only became available to the majority of individuals when multi-media communications brought insights into countries and cultures outside of their own. It was because of her role as president of the ICW that she was also freed from the parochial and sectarian restraints of many of her contemporaries.

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<sup>179</sup> French, Doris. Ishbel and the Empire. A biography of Lady Aberdeen. p 265.

<sup>180</sup> French, Doris. Ishbel and the Empire. A biography of Lady Aberdeen. p 265.

At the 1899 meeting in London, Lady Aberdeen passed on the presidency of the ICW to the United States as represented by Mrs May Wright-Sewall. By 1904 the countess had been urged to resume the office of president and her driving spirit became inseparable for the work of the ICW until her death in 1939.<sup>181</sup> The London Congress of the ICW also marked the organisations coming of age, as Standing Committees were formed to deal with particular subjects of international importance such as 'Peace' issues, the 'Legal Position of Women', 'Suffrage', the 'Rights of Citizenship' and 'Health and Child Welfare'. It was this latter committee that was to have the countess as its convenor for over twenty years. Having lost her own infant daughter in tragic circumstances, it was a topic close to her heart. In her practical way one of the first tasks the countess assigned for the Health Committee was to ask for reports from the various countries on

- a) the housing conditions of its people;
- b) the conditions under which working women carry out their work;
- c) the measures in force against the disease of tuberculosis.<sup>182</sup>

By the time of the first 'Public Health' meeting of the ICW in Toronto in 1909, Lady Aberdeen had already gathered many such reports from various countries, and with her committee published a resume of what was being done in different countries to promote public health and combat disease. She stated

and now in this little volume we are taking definite steps towards a constructive policy in connection with the subject applies to all countries of the world, whatever may be their stage of civilisation.<sup>183</sup>

The countess pointed out that there was in fact already much international concern regarding these matters, as witnessed by the many international medical and sanitary congresses which were being held in increasing numbers. Lady Aberdeen noted

What are these Medical and Scientific Congresses, these International Conferences on TB, infant mortality, school hygiene, temperance and the like doing? Are they not bringing the worlds thinkers and workers into line for the preservation of life, for the future of a high and vigorous type of life based on knowledge, principal and self-

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<sup>181</sup> Bulletin. Magazine of the International Council of Women. May 1939.

<sup>182</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. (ed.) The International Council of Women. Report of the transactions of the fourth quinquennial meeting held Toronto Canada June 1909. p 180.

<sup>183</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. (ed.) The International Council of Women. Report of the transactions of the fourth quinquennial meeting held in Toronto Canada. June 1909. p 180.

control, for international action in the interest of the world's health? Here is the work which concerns all women in all countries in which every society has an interest. <sup>184</sup>

It was a work that Lady Aberdeen would unceasingly call upon the women of Ireland to undertake when she next returned here. Tuberculosis, infant mortality, school hygiene and much more were to become part of her life's work for radical changes within Irish society. Even more strikingly, the countess during her time as president of the ICW developed the great ability to see the problems as they existed, and while searching for solutions, to come to grips with where the responsibility lay to put any solutions to their most practical use. She understood that with rights came duties, duty to yourself, your family and your fellow man. She also understood that ignorance in all areas of life, whether it was at an official or individual level, was a scourge that could and must be overcome.

This was to be a major theme of Lady Aberdeens, and it led her on a crusade to overcome ignorance wherever it manifested itself. Speaking of the reports given on health issues by the various countries she concluded

As we read the reports and note the causes assigned by the writers to the unsatisfactory condition of things described - must we not admit the responsibility is in a very large measure due to IGNORANCE and THOUGHTLESSNESS and WANT OF TRAINING of the women who become wives and mothers, without realising the responsibility attached to these callings to the SELF-CENTEREDNESS and WANT OF THOUGHT of women who sheltered from all dangers in their own comfortable homes will not give their service to the Public Boards of Health and education in Local Government where the knowledge and experience of housewives and mothers is required for the countries welfare. <sup>185</sup>

Lady Aberdeen wanted for the women of all nations to realise their duty with regard to the health of their families, particularly the children. The uneducated in these matters needed to learn, the educated needed to teach or lead by example. She believed that women were the supreme guardians of homes all over the world, and as such had an enormous potential for good, particularly in the area of health. This was not as it may first seem, an ultra conservative view of society. It was instead a realistic view of contemporary society, which in this case, she used to show women in a most positive role

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<sup>184</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. (ed.) The International Council of Women. Report of the transactions of the fourth quinquennial meeting held in Toronto Canada. June 1909. p 180.

<sup>185</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. (ed.) The International Council of Women. Report of the transactions of the fourth quinquennial meeting held at Toronto Canada. June 1909. pp 181-2.



within that society. These were themes she was to return to and develop to their fullest potential during her time in Ireland, as she put into practice much of what she would learn during this time as convenor of the Health Committee of the ICW. For example, Lady Aberdeen learned from medical and scientific research that tuberculosis was a communicable, preventable disease, bred of bad air, bad food, dirt and ignorance. In this she was influenced by the work of Dr Koch, the bacteriologist who discovered the tubercle bacilli, and extended the knowledge of disease bearing germs and their behaviour under all sorts of conditions affecting human health. In 1904 Dr Koch was given the Nobel Prize for Science, and the countess and many of her contemporaries would have been greatly influenced by his theories. She was also well aware of the many disputes regarding the work of Dr Koch among the scientific community. It was their reports that she was to have published in Slainte. Journal of the Women's National Health Association in Ireland.<sup>186</sup>

Another subject which also came under the heading of bacteriology, that was brought to Lady Aberdeen's attention at this time was the science of eugenics. In 1909 at the Canadian Congress of the ICW, a guest speaker was Dr Agnes Bluhm from Germany, who spoke of the scientific adage that 'prevention is better than cure' taking this to mean that the living generation should be protected from disease. The doctor was to claim that this was putting too much emphasis on infection, and too little to the constitution with which the individual was born. Scientific men in Germany, she stated, were now propagating the new science of eugenics, based on the belief that the best protection for public health was to prevent those weak and defective in body or mind being born. Dr Bluhm claimed that certainly science was there to protect the weak, but their fundamental goal was to prevent the weak from increasing in numbers. She also stated that the Women's Rights Movement in Germany was working towards the aim of teaching this responsibility to the coming generation, and were supporting those searching for the scientific facts related to inheritance. Some were going as far as requiring in the case of marriage a certificate of health to be required by both partners

We know with absolute certainty that special infectious diseases and alcoholism of parents injure the offspring. From this point of view the workers on Eugenics are strongly fighting against these fiends of mankind.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Slainte. Journal of the WNHA of Ireland 1909 - 1915.

<sup>187</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. (ed.) The International Council of Women. Report of the transactions of

In applying eugenics to tuberculosis and other infectious diseases, and its application for the ICW, Dr Bluhm stated

I hope that the day will not be far off when this Golden Rule will be understood by men and women also in the meaning of Eugenics, do unto others as you would others should do onto you..but....do unto your children as you would that your parents had done unto you.<sup>188</sup>

There were Eugenic Societies in Belfast and Dublin during Lady Aberdeen's time in Ireland, from where she may have learned more about the possibility of producing a more healthy and vigorous race. Her involvement in these will be discussed in some detail in a later chapter. Suffice to say for the moment, that she of course never lived to see this theory being taken to its nth degree by Hitler and the Nazi movement, in these early days it seemed there was much truth in what was being advanced by the eugenics movement. All science and even pseudo-science it seemed, was there for the benefit of mankind, when such were only in their infancy. What is important to note here is that from a list of eminent physicians, scientists, social workers, philanthropists, theorists and idealists, Lady Aberdeen not only learned a great deal, beyond the scope of many men and women of her day, she also displayed a great ability to be discriminating. Taking from each what she felt to be best and putting these lessons into practice, as far as possible, wherever she found herself to be. An example of this is found in the remarks of the countess to the ICW in relation to health matters, when she calls on the members of the council to verify, amplify and tabulate the knowledge provided by medical science. She stated

there are CERTAIN FACTS WHICH BY COMMON CONSENT of medical men and social workers are WELL ESTABLISHED and accepted in all countries; secondly there are others in the EXPERIMENTAL STAGE, which have to be TESTED and vary according to climate, race and other circumstances and thirdly there are other factors bearing on health which seem altogether OBSCURE AND UNCERTAIN.....our main responsibility as lay people lies with the facts which are ESTABLISHED.....<sup>189</sup>

Lady Aberdeen uses the example of tuberculosis its origin, treatment, and prevention to make her point, a disease which she claimed was the most prolific cause of death in

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the fourth quinquennial meeting held at Toronto Canada. June 1908. p 188.

<sup>188</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. (ed.) The International Council of Women. Report of the transactions of the fourth quinquennial meeting held at Toronto Canada. June 1909. p 188.

<sup>189</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. (ed.) The International Council of Women. Report of the transactions of the fourth quinquennial meeting held at Toronto Canada. June 1909. p 181

most countries. Science had taught, since the discovery of the tuberculin bacillus, that this wastage of human life was preventable by the adoption of the most simple and ordinary rules of good health, fresh air, sun-shine, good nourishing food and healthy housing. Furthermore, prevention was made possible by the segregation of advanced cases and by all patients being taught certain precautions, which if observed would prevent their being a source of danger to others. In addition all sources of the milk supply needed to be monitored and inspected and radical improvements made. Therefore there need be no fear in relation to this disease, but rather a sense of hope for a 'final victory'. The medical and scientific world had provided the answers. It was up to them now to learn from medical science, and to further systematically put an order on what they had learned and to spread this knowledge by every means at their disposal.<sup>190</sup> In Ireland the countess would use this programme in an effort to eradicate tuberculosis, this matter will be discussed in later chapters.

We also see this discriminating attitude very clearly in relation to the issue of women's suffrage, a highly emotive issue in this period. In using this example in relation to the countess' work on behalf of the ICW, I propose to show her pragmatism and her ability to take a strategy, based on the requirements of those with whom she worked, while truly - keeping her own council. In 1904 at the quinquennial meeting of the ICW in Berlin, the forming of a committee on 'Women's Suffrage and the Rights of Citizenship' was unanimously adopted by the council. This committee was chaired by the Rev Anna Howard-Shaw. A public meeting was then held on the matter in Convocation Hall in Toronto Canada on the 21 June 1909. At this two resolutions were unanimously passed, firstly

That the ICW strenuously endeavour to place women on all Boards now open to women, and to secure the inclusion of women on all other authorities or special committees dealing with public work.<sup>191</sup>

and secondly

That the ICW reaffirm its belief in the desirability of women having a right to vote in all countries where representative government exists.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. (ed.) The International Council of Women. Report of the transactions of the fourth quinquennial meeting held at Toronto Canada. June 1909. p 183.

<sup>191</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. (ed.) The International Council of Women. Report of the transactions of the fourth quinquennial meeting held at Toronto Canada. June 1909. p 209.

<sup>192</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. (ed.) The International Council of Women. Report of the transactions of the fourth quinquennial meeting held at Toronto Canada. June 1909. p 221.

Both of these resolutions were, naturally accepted and supported by Lady Aberdeen, yet she believed there was something lacking in the focus of these proposals. She believed that within a few short years suffrage would be granted to the women of most countries of the world having representative government. But suffrage to the countess when it came had to be used to put women of all classes, in the position where they could do their duty for the sake of their homes, communities and countries, along-side their male counterparts. It had little to do with equality with men, it was instead a call for universal suffrage, Lady Aberdeen explained, 'I detest these women's questions putting men and women against each other as if their interests and duties could be apart'.<sup>193</sup>

On speaking of 'Equality' the countess goes on to say, while addressing the ICW

Oh, my dear friends, is it not really time that this phrase should be given up? Is it not enough that we should realise that as women we have a great and wonderful mission to perform? And it is just because we are women that we want to be able to fulfil that mission in its fullness side by side with men....you women are here as women workers in one sphere of activity or another, and I ask every one of you whether it is not due to the fact that we all have men at our sides - our husbands, brothers, fathers and sons- that we get a great deal of inspiration and the power to be able to do what little we are trying to do.<sup>194</sup>

Lady Aberdeen believed that women's suffrage must be linked to universal male suffrage, so that all men and women could work together for the good of their communities and countries. In this she demonstrates a great understanding of the role of politics in bringing forth social legislation, for the benefit of all classes. In viewing the role that women could have in creating such legislation, she remembered those who would be most affected by social change. She reminded the women present in Toronto that

one of the main reasons why women workers must desire to hasten forward this movement is not so much on account of those like ourselves who are here tonight, who, in our sheltered homes, have much power and influence, but it is for the sake of the working women on whom all such social legislation bears so severely and so harshly; it is for them that we desire especially to claim the power of voting.<sup>195</sup>

It was in this truly unorthodox manner that the countess came to the crux of the issue of women's right to vote. The granting of the female franchise was not to be used for the

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<sup>193</sup> Correspondence addressed to Robert Morley from Lady Aberdeen 20 May 1889. Haddo House archives.

<sup>194</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. (ed.) The International Council of Women. Report of the transactions of the fourth quinquennial meeting held at Toronto Canada June 1909. p 219.

<sup>195</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. (ed.) The International Council of Women. Report of the transactions of the fourth quinquennial meeting held at Toronto Canada. June 1909. p 219

benefit of the upper or middle classes to play politics, but to bring forward social reform for those who were underprivileged. This had to be considered even more urgently than the issues of property rights or status for the upper classes. In a second letter to Robert Morley dated 20 May 1889<sup>196</sup> Lady Aberdeen reaffirms her belief that women's suffrage must not be allowed to come, only for the advantage of the upper class, women of property. These she claimed already had their fair share of influence and they were a group to whom having the vote would make very little difference. But it would make a great deal of difference to working class women who were the ones who suffered most from any defective legislation

They and their children and their homes...they have no means of having their voices heard....and the most intelligent of them feel this keenly. <sup>197</sup>

It was this attitude to and understanding of the working class that made Lady Aberdeen's approach to the issue of suffrage all the more unorthodox. In raising these issues with the ICW the countess was to state

I do not think that we would care to have it (the vote) if it were only granted to women of property. It is the women of the working class, whose position in the industrial world necessitates the power of voting, to whom these things come home most. It is they who should possess the power of expressing themselves through their votes. <sup>198</sup>

From Lady Aberdeen's work in Scotland, Canada, the ICW, but mainly in Ireland, I propose to show that the countess had an empathy with all from the upper to the lower classes. Unlike many of her contemporaries, she also believed in the right of individuals to receive help from the state, when they were no longer in a position to help themselves. These are themes I will return to with regard to Ireland.

Whatever her role, Lady Aberdeen took the constitution of the ICW very seriously, particularly the goal of fostering friendship and good feelings between nations, which were fundamental to the Council's agenda. As early as 1893 she had signed a petition in favour of arbitration as a means of solving international disputes. This petition was the outcome of the first meeting of the ICW, which had taken place in Chicago. Women

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<sup>196</sup> Correspondence addressed to Robert Morley from Lady Aberdeen, dated 20 May 1889.

<sup>197</sup> Correspondence addressed to Robert Morley from Lady Aberdeen, dated 20 May 1889.

<sup>198</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Isabel. (ed.) The International Council of Women. Report of the transactions of the fourth quinquennial meeting held at Toronto Canada. June 1909. p 221.

representing forty countries attended this event, including a large number from the United States and Canada. By the time of the 1899, ICW Congress in London there was the unanimously adopted resolution

That the ICW ..... take steps in every country to further and advance by every means in their power the movement towards International Arbitration.<sup>199</sup>

This message was sent to the first Peace Conference held at The Hague in the Netherlands on the 18 May 1899. But this was only the beginning, as the determination of Lady Aberdeen and the ICW to work for peace found renewed expression in Berlin in 1904, Toronto in 1909, and again when a deputation, led by the countess, was received by the members of the second Peace Conference, also in The Hague from June to October 1907. On speaking of peace and the second Peace Conference, Lady Aberdeen claimed

We were able to speak for the women of the world...in earnest support of the principal of arbitration, our deputation being the only body received by the President besides that representing the United Churches. Our International Council must indeed be of necessity the strongest peace society that can exist, for if the homes of the different countries of the world are brought in touch with one another and understand and believe in one another, there can be no more war.<sup>200</sup>

From 1899 onwards the countess and the ICW were encouraging every country to support, by all means in their power, the movement towards international arbitration. These issues were very serious at a time when military alliances were building up, not only throughout Europe, but throughout the world, and the threat of war was becoming an ever present reality. Nevertheless, the practical work undertaken by the ICW at this time was quite phenomenal. For example, at their Congress held in Canada in 1909 the ICW passed resolutions calling upon their National Councils to firstly, seek representation at national and international congresses for peace held within their own countries. Secondly, for the ICW to be represented at any of the forthcoming Peace Conferences held in The Hague, as the outcome of such conferences 'affected the whole world'.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. (ed.) The International Council of Women. Report of the transactions of the fourth quinquennial meeting held at Toronto Canada. June 1909. p 28.

<sup>200</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. (ed.) The International Council of Women. Report of the transactions of the fourth quinquennial meeting held at Toronto Canada. June 1909. p 28.

<sup>201</sup> It was envisaged at this time that Peace Conferences would be held in the Hague at least every eight years. Plans for a third conference to be held in 1915-16 were already underway at the outbreak of the 1st. World War.

Thirdly, as not all members could attend major conferences, the ICW stated that 'inasmuch as the creation of substitutes for war and armaments was most inadequately understood', they asked that National Councils study earnestly these questions, and to supply an outline of their findings that would be brought together and published in their own languages.<sup>202</sup>

The inclusion of women in such research was highly unorthodox, but for Lady Aberdeen and the ICW it was women who would, and could, bring fresh insights into such crucially important matters. At a truly practical level, and with great insight into the root cause of many of the difficulties being experienced at the hands of extreme nationalism, particularly within Europe, the ICW also recommended that

National Councils... promote the observance of annual peace days by schools and universities and churches, and the holding of special assemblies and festivals in the interest of pacific methods of settlement of differences.....and to promote the use of such text books and reading books in schools as will present historical facts with the least possible bias and endeavour to arouse a living interest in the modern methods of peaceably settling international differences.<sup>203</sup>

The work of the ICW for world peace was to continue in the period before, during and after the First World War. In 1913, on the eve of war, the ICW reaffirmed their pledge to the cause of peace. This was ongoing in the years when Lady Aberdeen was not only president of the ICW, but was also convenor of their Peace Committee. Regardless of the incredible events of the Great War, which must have caused much sorrow and anguish to all who supported the cause of peace, the countess tried not to lose faith, in spite of the difficulties. She told members of the ICW at their congress in Edinburgh that there must be 'Faith not Fear'.<sup>204</sup> She also reminded them that

United work for great and inspiring causes is hallowed by passing through dark days of opposition, danger and disappointment as well as through days of glorious achievement.<sup>205</sup>

While the war continued women of the ICW did their best to maintain some of the links which had bound them together. In co-operation with the Information Bureau at

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<sup>202</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. (ed.) The International Council of Women. Report of the transactions of the fourth quinquennial meeting held at Toronto Canada. June 1909. p 107.

<sup>203</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. (ed.) The International Council of Women. Report of the transactions of the fourth quinquennial meeting held at Toronto Canada. June 1909. p 107

<sup>204</sup> Bulletin. Magazine of the International Council of Women. May 1939. p 6.

<sup>205</sup> Bulletin. Magazine of the International Council of Women. May 1939. p 6.

Lausanne in Switzerland, founded by women, many members of the ICW were able to act as intermediaries, helping to keep separated families in touch with each other forwarding money, letters etc. Through the councils of the Scandinavian countries members were able to continue communicating with Lady Aberdeen. After the Great War in 1919 at the Versailles Conference, Lady Aberdeen again led a delegation of the ICW to support a lasting peaceful settlement of post-war issues.

By 1924 Lady Aberdeen had presided over a conference held at the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley in London, and attended other similar conferences to study the means of preventing the events that had led to the First World War. She also tried to support with her authority and enthusiasm, the aims and work of the League of Nations, visiting Geneva many times. President Wilson of the United States agreed to Lady Aberdeen's request for a submission by the ICW delegation to one of the first plenary sessions of the League of Nations in 1921.

The post war period was a time of tremendous growth, change and challenge for Lady Aberdeen and the ICW. To keep both the National Councils and the International Council not only in tact and working well, but making progress, the countess had to overcome ignorance, prejudice and opposition in the face of rising nationalism and disunity in the aftermath of the war. In her efforts to unite the women of all nations, and to keep them working for many causes, the countess now set about the reorganising and regrouping of the councils membership. She worked tirelessly to develop the themes of education, health, the formation of public opinion, and most of all, the themes of mutual understanding and mutual aid. There were now, in this post war period, newly founded states particularly in middle and eastern Europe and South America, who were gradually forming new NCW. They also wished to become affiliated to the International body. For example, since the war the Serbian NCW had grown and become the NCW of Yugoslavia. This group had grown initially out of an informal gathering 30 years earlier, when an Irish lady and a great supporter of Lady Aberdeen, had invited the various women's organisations in Belgrade to meet Mrs Sanford, the countess' deputy in the Balkans. As a result of this meeting, other Balkan National Councils were also established. According to one of her contemporaries in Yugoslavia, Annie Christitch, members saw Lady Aberdeen as



.....an international leader who linked their own endeavours for the betterment of human conditions with those of her sisters throughout the world.<sup>206</sup>

In view of the changes brought about by the geography of the new states, and the growing numbers of national councils, the need was felt for more frequent meetings of the International Council. This would enable recently federated councils to become more familiar with the older groups, and with the general workings of the ICW and its committees. This was to make considerable demands on Lady Aberdeen's time and commitment.

Nevertheless, by 1936 on the occasion of her retirement as president when the ICW met in Dubrovnik, there were thirty four National Councils, all active in their many causes for the betterment of humankind. The countess had presided over the ICW during a period of tremendous growth, development and change. It was also a period of learning, growth and enlightenment for Lady Aberdeen personally. This ever active woman was always open to new ideas, and during her presidency she encouraged fresh initiative, even when she was not always in agreement with everything that was being proposed. She understood well, that with members belonging to so many different countries, races and religions, that diversity of opinion had to exist. Although she held very strong and definite opinions on many issues, that did not prevent her from appreciating and respecting the opinions of others.

Lady Aberdeen applauded a National Council for

steadily endeavouring to be truly representative and to include women from all classes and creeds and sections of society..... to be truly national and to carry out the Council idea we must be able to unite the most conservative women of each country together with the most progressive, not forgetting the great body of middle and average opinion.<sup>207</sup>

It was this attitude of toleration along with her commitment and sincerity that led her to be highly respected by those with whom she came into contact. Maria Olgivie Gordon spoke of the great impression made by Lady Aberdeen when the ICW was

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<sup>206</sup> Bulletin. Magazine of the International Council of Women. May 1939. p 60.

<sup>207</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. (ed.) The International Council of Women. Report of the transactions of the fourth quinquennial meeting held at Toronto Canada. June 1909. p 180.

officially welcomed on its visits to the various states or cities.<sup>208</sup> She describes the following scene

That imposing figure of a great lady stood before a large audience and behind her and by her side were the rows of presidents from the various countries with the National Councils, and the Convenors of Committees and officers of the ICW. Whatever the particular burden of her message none in the audience could fail to recognise in her an overwhelming devotion to good causes and a loving kindness towards humanity.<sup>209</sup>

There were many messages and many burdens that Lady Aberdeen had to lay before the ICW in order to keep with her those who could give service with the many problems facing society at this time. It is the Lady Aberdeen who was well recognised on the international stage, and whose commitment and energy were so all consuming that we must recognise, if we are to understand the work and motivation of the countess in Ireland. I will endeavour in the following chapters to fit her work for social reform here into the context of what I have briefly tried to show of the international role of Lady Aberdeen in the preceding chapter.

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<sup>208</sup> Appendix 3.

<sup>209</sup> Bulletin. Magazine of the International Council of Women. May 1939. p 58.

## CHAPTER 3.

### **‘The very last post we would have chosen.’**

The Royal Irish Industries Association was founded by Lady Aberdeen on the 22 May 1886, against a background of deindustrialisation and rural decline in Ireland that lasted throughout the nineteenth century. This decline was the result of many different factors. These included the failure of state sponsored schemes for alleviation of poverty, namely the Irish Poor Laws, which beginning in 1838 were established under the non-interventionist policies of the British government, to a period of sustained agricultural depression in the years from 1879 until 1896.

I propose to discuss the political, social, and economic conditions that led to the founding of the Irish Industries Association, in terms of the urgent need for industrial development in a period of unprecedented poverty within this country. I will endeavour to place the aims, objectives, successes and failures of the Irish Industries Association in context, in terms of later state aided schemes for the development of indigenous industry. These will include the Congested Districts Board which was established five years after the Irish Industries Association, in 1891, and the introduction of the Department of Agriculture and Industrial Development thirteen years later, in 1899. The Irish Industries Association worked closely on joint ventures with both the Congested Districts Board and through Horace Plunkett, with the Dept. of Agriculture and Industrial Development.

This chapter will include references to the many Industrial Exhibitions held both at home and abroad under the auspices of the Irish Industries Association, beginning with a garden party in the Viceregal Lodge, to the provision of an Irish Village at the Chicago Worlds Fair in 1893, and to ‘Uí Breasail - the Great Health, Industrial and Agricultural Show’ held in 1911. Each was introduced in an effort to make Irish goods fashionable, and to provide markets for quality goods produced in the homes and small industries of Ireland. It will be necessary also to include a discussion on the founding of the Irish Lace Depot Ltd, a subsidiary of the Irish Industries Association, established firstly in Dublin, then later in London and throughout Europe, with one branch in the United States.

I will deal with the influence of Lady Aberdeen upon those with whom she came into contact, from the founding of the Irish Industries Association in 1886, until its decline in the years following the outbreak of the First World War. Her supporters will include those from many different backgrounds including Horace Plunkett, a Unionist and founder of the co-operative movement in Ireland; Father T.A. Finlay S.J., also one of the founder members of the co-operative movement. Finlay was Professor of Metaphysics at the Catholic University College and was a fellow of the Royal University. He later became Professor of Political Economy in UCD a post he held until 1930. Among her other patrons are numbered T.S. Rollerstone, better known as a poet than as an entrepreneur, T.D. Sullivan an ardent nationalist, journalist and Lord Mayor of Dublin; and W.L. Micks. The latter was the first secretary and later member of the Congested Districts Board,<sup>210</sup> an office he was to hold for almost 23 years from 1891 under the British administration and until 1924 under the government of Saorstát Éireann.<sup>211</sup>

Lady Aberdeen's opponents, included Sir Henry Robinson Bart., vice Chairman of the Local Government Board from 1898 until 1922. He believed that the countess in all her endeavours overstepped the boundaries of acceptable philanthropy. And in an effort to achieve her own goals, she ignored or bypassed the wishes of those in authority, her male counterparts from the Treasury to the Castle authorities, and members of the various government boards. He particularly resented what he saw as the Vicereign's efforts to direct and dominate both the Local Government Board and the Chief Secretary, Augustine Birrell. For the Lady Aberdeen, Sir Henry represented the type of bureaucracy that she most resented and found difficult to understand. One of the first complaints the countess had on her arrival in Ireland was not about the country or the people, but the practical observation that the officials working in Ireland were 'all done up in red tape'. It was Joseph Chamberlain who described Dublin Castle and its boards, which were staffed mainly by Englishmen as

A system as completely centralised and bureaucratic as that by which Russia governs Poland, or as that which was common at Venice under the Austrians, an Irishman cannot lift a finger in any parochial, municipal or educational work without

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<sup>210</sup> The Congested Districts Board was established in 1891 by Arthur Balfour, who acknowledged in a practical way the levels of universal poverty to be found in the west of Ireland. Its introduction was also related to the requirements of the Land Act of 1881 which recognised that it was the duty of the state to attempt to relieve widespread poverty

<sup>211</sup> Micks, William L. History of the Congested District Board. An account of the Constitution, Administration and Dissolution of the Congested District Board for Ireland from 1891-1923. (Dublin, 1925). p 161

being confronted, interfered with, controlled by an English official appointed by a foreign government and without the shadow or shade of representative authority.<sup>212</sup>

It was indeed true to say that Ireland was presided over by a formidable bureaucracy, dealing with every issue from law and order, control of patronage to public relief and the administration of grants. By 1906, Chief Secretary Augustine Birrell presided over sixty seven boards and departments, employing over 100,000 individuals.<sup>213</sup> Lord MacDonald of Swinford in an address delivered on the 23 Feb. 1891 at Queen's University Belfast complained

I doubt whether in any country of the civilised world such a chaotic system of administration exists as we have today in Ireland. The dominating influence is that of the Treasury in Whitehall over which the Irish government has no sort of control; which is irresponsive to Irish opinion and apathetic to Irish feeling; which is at once niggardly and profuse in its management of Irish finances; which interferes at will in every department of Irish administration. Individual Treasury officials are among the ablest men I have met, but the machine works with the spirit engendered by a century of arbitrariness and mistrust and now exercises a demoralising influence on the Irish public services and Irish public life.<sup>214</sup>

Lady Aberdeen was a pragmatist who detested the restrictions of bureaucracy and therefore clashed with individuals like Sir Henry Robinson and on occasions with whole government departments, a particular example being the Treasury. I also propose to discuss the various sectarian divides, both political and social, that inhibited the work of this association. Finally, I will deal with the issues surrounding the lack of recognition by historians, up to the present time, of the role of the Irish Industries Association. Notwithstanding the associations role in making a significant contribution to the economic development of whole communities at a time of great financial hardship, when there was little support from any other quarter.

The Act of Union of 1801 had intended to link Ireland to Britain not only politically but economically. Links that were to be strengthened by the introduction of full free trade within the British Isles in 1825, and the assimilation of British and Irish currencies in 1826. In spite of these economic ties and the political union between Britain and Ireland in the period 1801 until 1922, Ireland was no more a part of the British economy

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<sup>212</sup> Shannon, Catherine B. *Arthur J. Balfour and Ireland 1874-1922*. (Washington D.C., 1998). p 17.

<sup>213</sup> Barrington, Ruth. *Health Medicine and politics in Ireland. 1900-1970*. (Dublin, 1987). p 18.

<sup>214</sup> Micks, William L. *History of the Congested District Board. An Account of the Constitution, Administration and Dissolution of the Congested District Board for Ireland from 1891-1923* p 161.

than the similarly imposed union between Algeria and France made that country a part of France.<sup>215</sup> Irish industrial and agricultural decline was in fact in direct contrast to the opposite British experience of tremendous industrial growth and urbanisation.

Cormac O'Grada contrasts Ireland's position with the British experience by using the example of the 1851 exhibition held at the Crystal Palace, where Great Britain celebrated its industrial success and claim to be the workshop of the world, with the Irish Industrial exhibition of 1853, held in Merrion Square in Dublin. The London Exhibition was a celebration of the success of British industry, the Irish exhibition, while modelled on the Crystal Palace exhibition, had very little to report in terms of Ireland's industrial success. Instead it was a display of Ireland's industrial decline.<sup>216</sup> For example in the textile area most of the manufacturing exhibitors were British, the same was true of the agricultural machinery and implements which came from cross-channel engineering firms and other heavy duty industries. Indigenous industries in contrast displayed sheep netting by the Irish peasants, nets for confining sheep in pasture made from shreds of bog deal, and many cottage industry products such as lace and crochet. Most of the Irish exhibitors were therefore either small time producers or importers of British goods.<sup>217</sup> This remained the situation for Irish industry at the time of the establishment of the Irish Industries Association in 1886 and for many decades to come. This need not have been the case, taking the example of the Irish cotton industry, which was in the early 1800s a thriving business, producing in 1810 twice as much as its Flemish counterpart. Yet by mid century the cotton industry had gone into steady decline, until by the end of the century there was only one cotton mill left in Belfast.<sup>218</sup> What were the reasons behind Ireland's industrial decline? What was it that the Irish Industries Association tried to do to reverse this situation?

The failure of Irish industry in general was said to be due to many factors, often depending on which side of the political divide one stood. Blame was readily attributed across a varied range of reasons. These included the Act of Union of 1801; the threat of Home Rule; the imperialism of free trade; the lack of natural resources; or the lack of private enterprise; the Protestant work ethic and the lack of a Catholic work ethic, to

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<sup>215</sup>Hobsbawn, E.J. Industry and Empire. An Economic History of Britain since 1670. (London, 1977) p 252

<sup>216</sup> O'Grada Cormac. Ireland-A New Economic History. 1870-1939. (Oxford, 1994) p 309

<sup>217</sup> O'Grada Cormac. Ireland-A New Economic History. 1870-1939. p 309.

<sup>218</sup> O'Grada Cormac. Ireland-A New Economic History. 1870-1939. p 315.

mention but a few. In reality the failure of the Irish economy and the resulting poverty and distress, existed for more complex reasons, particularly in a country that depended almost entirely on agriculture as its principal industry.

The Ireland to which Lord and Lady Aberdeen were to come to in 1886 was one that was in a transition period. Much remained to be achieved in terms of the economic development of the country. For this reason Horace Plunkett sought through the introduction of the co-operative movement,<sup>219</sup> the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction<sup>220</sup> and the Irish Agricultural Association which was founded in 1891, to strengthen the economic base of the country. Farmers in possession of their own land, or at least with security of tenure, now had the incentives necessary to develop their land holdings. Horace Plunkett hoped to be able provide the training and expertise necessary to do so. Lady Aberdeen at the same time sought, through the Irish Industries Association, the development of other Irish enterprises by introducing a system of co-operation and education on a nation-wide scale. Both wished to create a sense of community in the countryside.

The Irish Industries Association was established in a period of great political and social unrest, as well as acute economic distress. Ireland in the period 1886 to 1887 was, and had been for many decades, a major political issue for the British government. This was the age of Parnell and land agitation, rising nationalism, unionism and sectarianism as the Home Rule issue polarised Irish politics and society. For the British government it was also a time of conciliation and coercion, in an effort to solve the problem that was Ireland. In the election of 1885 Parnell had sided with the Conservatives when Gladstone indicated that he was not yet ready to pursue Home Rule. The resulting election saw the return of 335 Liberals and 249 Conservatives, with 86 members of the Irish Parliamentary Party. This meant that Parnell could keep either party out of office, but he could only keep the Liberals in power.

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<sup>219</sup> The Co-operative movement was founded in 1889 in the middle of a period of agricultural depression. The transport revolution had brought unto the world market large quantities of cheap produce from the new world. This led to a sharp drop in agricultural prices. It was also founded at a time when the various Land Acts had begun the process of changing tenant farmers into peasant proprietors

<sup>220</sup> The Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction was founded by the government in 1899 and was given responsibility not only for agriculture and technical instruction, but also for fisheries, veterinary work, the collection of statistics, the prevention of animal and plant disease, the geological survey of Ireland, the administration of government grants and the supervision of certain institutions including the National Library.

Gladstone accepting the inevitable, was now to return to power with the support of the Irish Parliamentary Party, by pledging Home Rule for Ireland. He immediately called Lord Aberdeen, one of his staunchest supporters, to the office of Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, to take over from the Conservative Earl of Carnarvon. In Ireland, while the Aberdeens would be viewed with misgiving by the nationalists, as a representative of the British crown, the unionists were suspicious of any Viceroy chosen by Liberals and who was a known supporter of Home Rule. According to Charles O' Mahoney, a contemporary of the Aberdeens

The position of a Lord Lieutenant nominated by a Liberal Prime Minister is the most anomalous and difficult in the government. He is selected because he is a member of the party in power, and asked to fulfil a post in which, as a representative of the king he must not display any political leanings.....even in this attempt he must needs lay himself open to the charges eagerly laid against him, of showing favour to either political party...(he) cannot help being aware of the politics and religion of some of those on whom he bestows office.....<sup>221</sup>

The new Viceroy and his wife were well aware that they were going to be at a great disadvantage in Ireland, that they could not please all sides of the political and religious divide regardless of any, or every, effort on their part. Joseph Robins, in speaking of the Irish Viceroyalty at the end of the 19th century, claimed that the main dilemma facing the Lord Lieutenant was how to keep both sides reasonably happy or at best unprovoked.<sup>222</sup>

Lady Aberdeen in particular was appalled at being asked to come into such a situation, believing that she was needed at home with the Associated Workers League and her many other commitments. She also felt a strong dislike for a country she believed to be a troublesome backwater of the Empire. This was a negative image she had inherited from her father, who had a great dislike for all things Irish and particularly militant Irish nationalism. The countess wrote to Henry Drummond from London expressing her displeasure at an assignment that was as unwelcome as it was unexpected. She wrote

Don't you think that I ought to be very offended at not being consulted, I who have registered a solemn vow never to set foot in Ireland?...it is a giving up of all ones liberty to be like state prisoners, and how shall we ever be able to endure months of this, I know not. We are not dwelling on the danger - we do not think of it - but all seems dark ahead and I just feel overwhelmed. Perhaps it is

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<sup>221</sup> O'Mahoney, Charles. The Viceroy's of Ireland. (Dublin, 1912) p 327.

<sup>222</sup> Robins, Joseph. Champagne and Silver Buckles. The Viceregal Court at Dublin Castle 1700-1922. (Dublin, 2001) p 151.



because of the perpetual gloomy yellow fog and the poor mobs of unemployed rioters....it was the very last post we would have chosen.<sup>223</sup>

The danger the countess feared may have come from her close contact with Lady Frederick Cavendish, wife the Chief Secretary to Ireland and niece of William Gladstone, whose husband was murdered in the Phoenix Park in 1882 on the day he came to office. Regardless of her strong misgivings, Lady Aberdeen made a great effort to put aside any prejudice she may have felt towards this country. She demonstrated this on the day of her arrival here by special boat at Kingstown, on the 20 February 1886. For the occasion the countess had her four young children, all under seven years old, dressed beautifully in white Irish poplin, while she wore Irish lace. A symbolic gesture implying her acceptance of Irish culture and Irish industry, and more importantly, to demonstrate her need to find acceptance, for her family and herself, in a country she believed to be hostile.

Within weeks of her arrival, on seeing firsthand the terrible living conditions in Dublin and the poverty of the west of Ireland, the countess simply wanted to know why the government did not do something about the problems. One of Lord Aberdeens first official duties was to call on the government to provide at least £1,500 for the provision of seed potatoes for the west of Ireland, and so avert another famine there. When this was not forthcoming Lord Aberdeen provided the whole sum himself on condition that his name was not associated with the bequest, fearful that he might be seen as trying to buy the loyalty of the Irish people.<sup>224</sup> This was not the case, the experience of the Aberdeens in Ireland in 1886, brief as it was, had opened their eyes to the reality of the countries poverty and its political and economic situation. This knowledge will lead Lady Aberdeen in particular, to have a life long commitment to the economic development of the country, as this became clearly linked in her mind with the health and welfare of the inhabitants. Her negative opinion of Ireland and Irish people had changed completely. She understood that the 'unemployed mobs' were the result of an almost total lack of economic activity and that there was therefore a very real need for the development of indigenous industry at all levels.

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<sup>223</sup> Pentland, Marjorie. A Bonnie Fechter. The Life of Ishbel Marjoribanks. Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair. 1857-1939. p 55.

<sup>224</sup> Pentland, Marjorie. A Bonnie Fechter. The Life of Ishbel Marjoribanks. Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair. 1857-1939. p 57.

Faced as she was then with the reality of poverty and emigration and the ever decreasing population particularly in the west of Ireland, the countess was to write of the

....poorness of the soil, the constant recurrence of bad seasons with their accompanying starvation, and the lack of all other employment save that connected with agriculture, which force the children away to a country where already so many of their kith and kin have preceded them.....<sup>225</sup>

This made her all the more determined to forward the movement for the creation of employment. To this end she was to devote much of her energy and resources, believing as she did that better economic conditions would lead to a higher standard of living for all.

Lady Aberdeen's involvement in Irish industry and its difficulties was to begin immediately on taking office. The day after the countess' arrived in Dublin she was approached by Lady Hamilton, wife of the Under Secretary, to take over the presidency of a committee formed by her predecessor, Lady Spencer. This committee was endeavouring to organise a display of Irish goods for an 'Irish Home Industry' exhibition at the forthcoming International Exhibition to be held in Edinburgh in 1887.<sup>226</sup> This was going to be the first attempt of its kind. It would prove to be a time consuming and difficult task to make contact with the small cottage industries scattered all over the country, by using whatever local networks were available. As with the 1853 exhibition in Dublin there would be few large industries represented, nevertheless the plan was to show Irish industry in a more favourable light. Committees had to be organised at all levels and in most geographical areas, if the exhibition were to be a success. Due to the hard work of these committees an impressive, if lightweight exhibition was finally completed. The exhibition was shown in Dublin before moving on to Edinburgh. According to Lady Aberdeen the exhibition consisted of

Mainly a collection of laces, crochet, embroideries, painting and carving, hand made linens, woollens, poplins, knitting, hand sewn lingerie, gloves, boots, matches, tobacco, fishing nets and flies, ropes, soap, paper, mustard, brushes, straw work and baskets.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. The Irish Village of the Irish Industries Association. (Dublin, undated) p 2. Peamount archives

<sup>226</sup> Fitzgerald, W.G. (ed.) Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel.. 'Health and Happiness in the Homes of Ireland' (Dublin, 1920) p 434. Peamount archives.

<sup>227</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. Health and Happiness in the Homes of Ireland. p 434 .

The scope of the work produced for the Edinburgh exhibition opened up the possibility of developing cottage homebased, or small industries. Lady Aberdeen had learned much while on her travels around the island in connection with this exhibition, particularly with regard to the social conditions of the labouring class. She realised that the problems created by the lack of any type of industrial revolution here was on a grand scale affecting the whole island, especially outside of the north-east. She was also enough of a realist to know that this situation was not going to change in the foreseeable future. The problems associated with poverty and emigration could not be solved overnight, but that did not mean nothing could be done. The development of small industry would at least contribute something to the economic welfare of the country.

It was clear from the example of industrial development in the northern regions that the use of homeworkers would have a lot to contribute to the economic growth of the nation. That Lady Aberdeen and her husband, in spite of their very influential position in society, did little to develop Irish industry on a grander scale is understandable. They had to work within the major constraints caused by the very under-developed Irish economy and the British governments approach which, for the present at least, was keen to develop the agricultural rather than the industrial base of the country. The countess decried the lack of understanding of the situation in Ireland by Westminster, for it was her view that the development of Irish agriculture alone would not be enough to sustain the country or its people. She believed that if only she could have persuaded some of the Cabinet ministers to come to Ireland and see things for themselves, both the poverty and potential, the results might have been different.

Speaking at the Home Industries section of the International Exhibition held in Dublin in 1907, Lady Aberdeen claimed that the development of some of the larger industries that they would 'fervently desire' to see established in Ireland, was not within the remit of the Irish Industries Association. Instead she asked those interested in developing indigenous industry to consider the transformations that could be achieved if every parish in the country had subsidiary industries that could be carried on in the home. In addition the countess called on the government to provide proper cottages designed with

the inhabitants in mind, cottage hospitals with district nurses and the provision of a village hall which would become the centre of social life to the local communities.<sup>228</sup>

Lady Aberdeen also believed that the general public had to be made aware of the potential and importance of these initiatives. They would transform Irish society and add to the health and education of the wider community. The countess stated

All these supplemental industries which are or can be carried out in the homes of the workers, such as the making of lace or crochet, embroidery, the weaving of homespuns, the raising of poultry or bees or the cultivation of early flowers and vegetables have a particular interest, inasmuch as they cannot fail to have great influence on the lives and characters of those who cultivate them, training them in diverse ways and imbuing them with new hopes and ambitions as they begin to realise the results of their labours.<sup>229</sup>

The necessary changes in public attitude and government thinking were not going to happen overnight. Lady Aberdeen knew of the lack of response from the British establishment when it came to the question of Ireland. She was familiar with Archbishop Whately's report of the 1840s on the Poor Law system in Ireland, which had strongly advised against imposing the English system on this country. The countess supported Whately's recommendations for the promotion of Irish industry and the opening up of the country on an extended scale, as this would be best for the country in the long term. Lady Aberdeen also made herself familiar with the new report of the Viceregal Commission of 1907, presided over by W.L. Micks, Secretary of the Congested Districts Board, in which readers were reminded that the imposition of the Poor Law took place in spite of the Whately recommendations. She claimed that Micks had revived many of the progressive ideas in the new report, and demonstrated how the whole position of Ireland could be transformed by the wise expenditure of one million pounds. She was later to write

The very idea of asking for a million for such object was jeered at. Alas! How many millions might have been saved if an enlightened social policy had been adopted then, and if above all, the scandalous slums of Dublin and other Irish towns had been cleared away, decent housing substituted and encouragement given to the establishment of industries providing permanent employment...(but)

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<sup>228</sup> Macarthy, W.T. (ed.) Irish Rural Life and Industry with suggestion for the future. Issued in connection with the Home Industries section of the International Exhibition of 1907. Forward by Her Excellency the Countess of Aberdeen p xxi (Dublin, 1907). Peamount archives.

<sup>229</sup> Macarthy, W.T. (ed.) Irish Rural Life and Industry with suggestions for the future. Issued in connection with the Home Industries section of the International exhibition 1907. Forward by Her Excellency the Countess of Aberdeen p xii.

we strove to do what we could, believing that all along these lines lay the true vocation of a Viceroy in Ireland. But money was scarce and Ireland was considered a nuisance and so these matters had to wait.<sup>230</sup>

Micks also had experience of trying to work with the British Treasury, in connection with his work on behalf of the Congested Districts Board. He was critical of successive British governments who handed over power to the Treasury in matters relating to Ireland. This led to delays as individual members of the Treasury remained unsympathetic and uninformed as to the real needs of the country. He claimed that Chief Secretaries were either unwilling or unable to press the Treasury regardless of how unjust, or even illegal, the decisions made by the permanent officials. Politicians and the general public were ignorant of such matters as estimates given to the House of Commons were to show only the financial arrangements approved by the Treasury. Nothing was shown of those proposals turned down, with or without the sanction of the relevant ministers.<sup>231</sup> Micks felt so strongly the injustice of this state of affairs that he wrote

Personally I was in favour of the institution of legal proceedings.....in order that public attention should be called to what appeared to be the improper, if not unconstitutional action of the Treasury in not carrying out the explicit directions of an Act of Parliament.<sup>232</sup>

It had been envisaged by Micks and the newly formed CDB that they would be in a position to aid the development of a number of industries by the use of loans and grants. Besides cottage industries, the queue for assistance included small factories for the production of glass, bottle making, pottery, paper leather tanning, bootmaking, sugar beet, sugar refining, the spinning and weaving of flax, wool, silk, tobacco production, as well as the industrialising of peat and timber. All would have needed far more capital than the CDB had at its disposal.<sup>233</sup> There was no doubting the potential for growth but, unfortunately, the provision of the necessary resources for development were missing. Without forthcoming support from the British government, there were still more immediate problems to be overcome. Lord and Lady Aberdeen set out to see what could be

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<sup>230</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. *We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen Vol. 1.* p 186.

<sup>231</sup> Micks, William L. *History of the Congested District Board. An account of the Constitution, Administration and Dissolution of the Congested District Board for Ireland from 1891-1923.* (Dublin, 1925) p 161

<sup>232</sup> Micks, William L. *History of the Congested District Board. An account of the Constitution Administration and Dissolution of the Congested District Board for Ireland 1891-1923.* p 157

<sup>233</sup> Micks, William L. *History of the Congested District Board. An account of the Constitution, Administration and Dissolution of the Congested District Board for Ireland from 1891-1923.* p 66.

achieved to develop Irish industry, not only within the financial limitations or the attitude of the British government to Ireland, but within the divisions, political, religious and social, that were also hindering economic progress.

The Aberdeens, ever the idealists, believed that the Viceroyalty should be able to bring leaders and organisations together and pool resources, regardless of class, politics or creed, when the cause involved was important and the venture worthwhile. Instead of co-operation on the issue of industrial development, social ills, or any other matter, political, social, economic or philanthropic, they found that in Ireland's case the opposite was true, there was no unity only division. Any lack of success in the projects undertaken by the Association, were as much to do with the political situation prevailing in the period as it was to do with the economic climate. In spite of the Irish Industries Association being non-political and having the active support of unionists M.P.s like Horace Plunkett, nationalists like T.D. Sullivan and clergy of both denominations, many from both traditions viewed the movement with suspicion. Nationalists saw it as a British ploy to pacify the Irish, an extension of the policy of conciliation. Unionists, obsessed with their fear of Home Rule and Roman Catholic domination, saw this as another step in Ireland's economic, and eventual political separation from Britain.

An example of the latter can be seen in a letter in the Northern Whig<sup>234</sup> dated the 3 August 1893 from the Rev R. Keane of Christ Church Rectory in Belfast, a unionist and Orangeman.<sup>235</sup> The Rev Keane had been invited by Lady Aberdeen to join the Irish Industries Association and to use his influence to get others to do the same. His reply was to thank the countess for her great interest in Irish industry but he felt the need to decline the invitation as

I have noticed some matters in the proceedings of the Association which oblige me to ask for an assurance that it ..... works solely for the benefit of Irish industry and not at all in the interest of the so called Home Rule policy of the present government which is so hated and dreaded by the Irish people who are without any appeal to the charity of the world. I assure you I ask for this assurance in the interest of Irish industry, the very existence of which in the opinion of two million Irish people is threatened by the policy which Mr Gladstone has so shamelessly adopted.<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> Northern Whig 3 Aug. 1893.

<sup>235</sup> Northern Whig, 3 Aug. 1893.

<sup>236</sup> Northern Whig 3 Aug. 1893.

These sectarian trends led to the governmental authorities, which were by their very nature Protestant, philanthropic organisations, and the different churches working in isolation from each other. While this remained the case no one group was in a position to solve the real and fundamental problems of poverty, bad and congested housing, ill-health, unemployment and under-employment. Each of which was an inescapable fact of life during the Viceroyalty of the Aberdeens, both in 1886 and again twenty years later. All would have needed to work together to fully develop Ireland's economy and to uplift Irish society in general.

This level of co-operation was unheard of within the religious and political confines of the period. The Aberdeens were to learn that for many years the Dublin municipal authorities and the Castle authorities, studiously ignored each other as had the Lord Lieutenant and the nationalist Lord Mayors of Dublin. The nationalist/unionist divide was seen in all aspects of life in Dublin, and it would be no easy task to break down such barriers. An example of this was clearly visible on the day of the arrival of the Aberdeens in Ireland. Immediately an anti-Home Rule address was given to Lord Aberdeen by the mainly unionist Chamber of Commerce. In reply the nationalist Lord Mayor T.D. Sullivan was to state that this address

Was a compound of monstrous misrepresentations of the state of the country, elaborate libels on the Irish people and a fraudulent argument designed to show that Ireland was greatly prospering under the Act of Union and needed only the firm enforcement of 'Law and Order' to make her people loyal, content and happy.<sup>237</sup>

Writing to Lord Aberdeen the nationalists requested an opportunity to state their opinion, similar to that which had been granted to the unionist Chamber of Commerce. This request was granted, with Lord Aberdeen wisely stating that he would not give his personal opinion on the matters involved, but would send copies of both addresses to the King himself.

In an attempt to bring an end to this deadlock, at least within the Dublin political arena, Lord Aberdeen sent to the Lord Mayor, requesting the setting up of a meeting in the Mansion House in March 1886, for the cause of relief. While Lord and Lady Aberdeen would be present, the Lord Mayor would preside. The heads of all the political parties and churches were invited to attend.

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<sup>237</sup> Irish Independent 2 Feb. 1906.

One of the most notable events of this meeting was the sight of Michael Davitt, ex - political prisoner and ardent nationalist, shaking hands and chatting with the Lord Lieutenant.<sup>238</sup> Lady Aberdeen herself as a result of this meeting, became involved in the founding of the 'Mansion House Ladies' Committee for the Relief of Distress' working with many nationalist women who would never have entered Dublin Castle. It is interesting to note that the secretary of the Mansion House Committee was a Miss Alice Crosby, a district nurse, who later became Mrs Rushdon and a life long friend and supporter of the work of the countess. She would serve for many years as general secretary of the Women's National Health Association.

With these women of the Mansion House Ladies Committee, Lady Aberdeen was to learn much about Irish industry, particularly in relation to home based industries where the workers were mainly female. While pleased with the excellence and creativity to be found amongst home workers, it became obvious that much time and labour were being wasted on producing goods for which there was a very limited market, and minimal financial return. It was noted also that owing to a lack of resources, beautiful work was often wasted and viewed as inferior, when for example excellent embroidery was placed on mediocre materials<sup>239</sup> These problems existed because no one organisation had ever tried to market these products on a grand scale, or to provide the type of financial support that would lift the industry above individual effort. In terms of marketing most of the goods were sold by word of mouth, based on the quality of the product. Obviously this was a haphazard means that only worked for a select few. Also a lot of the work was devoted, especially within the convents to ecclesiastical work, priestly robes and altar cloths. There was little alternative demand, as things Irish had yet to become 'fashionable'.

There were several other major problems to be overcome in connection with the development of Irish industry. According to E.J. Riordan, secretary of the Irish Industrial Association and an economic historian, writing in 1921 of these problems in the 1880s, the vast majority of Irish people were ignorant of the fact that apart from the linen, woollen, brewing and distilling industries, that there were other smaller industries in existence. Those who did know of their existence, made no effort to support them,

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<sup>238</sup> Pentland, Marjorie. A Bonnie Fechter. Life of Ishbel Marjoribanks. Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair. 1857-1939. p 58.

<sup>239</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. Health and Happiness in the homes of Ireland. p 434.



mainly in the belief that Irish products could not be as good a quality as those made elsewhere.

Irish traders both wholesale and retail gave little support to Irish made goods and in the early days of the industrial movement, instances occurred where firms, when forced by customers to stock Irish goods charged excessive prices for these articles and in this way endeavoured to create the impression that Irish goods were not as good value as similar commodities imported into Ireland.<sup>240</sup>

Regardless of these very real difficulties, Lady Aberdeen acknowledged two other important factors. Firstly, that there was great talent and potential for growth in this area of home industry, particularly if homeworkers were efficiently organised. An example being the Irish lace industry, which was producing magnificent work in centres as far afield as Limerick, Carrickmacross, New Ross, Kenmare, Kenmore, Killarney, Kinsale, Blackrock in Dublin, with Youghal as the leading centre.<sup>241</sup> By 1891 the CDB had also introduced lace making into the west of Ireland through the introduction of Lace Schools. It would be the Irish Industries Association and the Irish Lace Depot Ltd, that were to be of the greatest service to the CDB in finding purchasers for lace, crochet, embroidery and home spun tweeds on their behalf.<sup>242</sup> Nevertheless, the countess felt that there remained much more to be accomplished in terms of developing these cottage industries.

Secondly, the countess realised that the extra incomes earned throughout the country would lead to a decrease in the terrible poverty that existed, and this would lead to improved diet and better health for the population in general. It would also mean betterment in the lives of lower to middle class women, who could enhance the standard of living of their families and themselves, with the extra incomes from the development of home based industries. This had proved to be the case in the northern counties. In the case of the north-east of Ireland

A feature of homework from its early beginnings, and throughout the period, was that it was not confined to working class women.....There were also women in better circumstances.....This social and economic diversity was largely due to the perception of homework as a relatively respectable occupation.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> Riordan, E.J. Modern Irish Trade and Industry. (Dublin, 1921). p 265

<sup>241</sup> Appendices 4-7

<sup>242</sup> Micks William L. History of the Congested District Board. An account of the Constitution, Administration and Dissolution of the Congested District Board of Ireland 1891-1923. p 68.

<sup>243</sup> Holmes, Janice and Urquhart, Diane (eds.) Coming into the light. The work, politics and religion of women in Ulster. 1840-1940. (Belfast, 1994). p 12.

Under such circumstances therefore it was hoped to be able to aid both those on or below the poverty line and those wishing to supplement their family income, sustain or raise their family's standard of living, or contribute to a better education for their children. It was also hoped that the extra incomes would stimulate growth within regions as the extra incomes were spent within the localities and so raise the general standard of living.

Lady Aberdeen decided that a step in the process of finding a solution to the first problem, that of a lack of demand, was to try to stimulate it. Firstly, everyone needed to be made aware of the existence of small scale indigenous industry, and to know about the quality of goods that could be provided. To this end it was decided to hold a garden party at the Viceregal Lodge, at which all of the guests would be required to dress in 'Irish Wear'. They were also invited to bring their children in fancy dress costumes made from Irish material. The theme of the fancy dress would be the showing of peasant costumes from all over the world. At first it was thought this plan would be impossible to achieve, as there would not be enough Irish materials and goods for everyone.<sup>244</sup> Therefore to meet these requirements before the event, Lady Aberdeen and her organising committee had the foresight to hold an exhibition of Irish materials at the Tennis Court of the Viceregal Lodge. Among those present at this small exhibition was Michael Davitt who decided as a result of this to establish the Irish Woollen Company.<sup>245</sup>

By the time of the Garden Party<sup>246</sup> on the 22 May 1886, there was a good display of Irish linens, embroideries, woollens etc. from all present.<sup>247</sup> Newspapers printed supplements to mark the occasion. Large crowds gathered to see the guests arriving in their Irish linens and lace, as well as in the more traditional homespuns and woollens instead of top hats and morning suits.<sup>248</sup> This event demonstrates an unorthodox approach by Lady Aberdeen in an age when clothes were an all important external manifestation of class. For many this may have seemed an indication of overstepping the class boundaries, and for whatever the cause, this would have made them feel uncomfortable. However, to Lady Aberdeen the idea of the upper classes in such garb and challenging the social

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<sup>244</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. Health and Happiness in the Homes of Ireland. p 434.

<sup>245</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen. Vol. I. p 55.

<sup>246</sup> Appendix 8

<sup>247</sup> Irish Times 24 May 1886.

<sup>248</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. Health and Happiness in the Homes of Ireland. p 434.

boundaries was never a problem. Personally for the countess, the success of this venture and that of the Edinburgh Exhibition gave credit to her organisational skills, and persuasive abilities.

It was at this gathering in the Viceregal Lodge that the Aberdeens inaugurated the Irish Industries Association. As with all the countess' other ventures the garden party was never to be an end in itself, but only the beginning. With this new association the hope was that Irish goods could be given a higher profile, and shops would begin to stock them as a matter of routine as demand was created for Irish products. The aim of the Irish Industries Association was therefore to organise and develop the many scattered industries in the country, to make them known both nationally and internationally.<sup>249</sup> In this way Irish goods would continue to become more socially and economically acceptable.

The Association would try to develop all types of industry from poplin and cotton to lace making, crochet, weaving, spinning and all other crafts, also to develop dairying, poultry, rabbit and bee keeping. It was decided by Lady Aberdeen and the Irish Industries Association, which consisted mainly of the same individuals who had organised the Irish contribution to the Edinburgh Exhibition, that this was an aspect of the work that could not be left to chance. Therefore a Central Council was formed of sixteen representatives of men and women, each of whom were obliged as members to use and promote all Irish manufacture, and agree to distribute information that would help the movement. There would also be individual inspectors from each province, who would in turn keep in touch with local committees representing all of the various industries, who then reported back to the central committee.<sup>250</sup> It was a well planned venture, suitable for the needs of the various regions. Dr William Sullivan, President of Queen's College Cork was to give valuable assistance in the new scheme, as did the promoters of the Artisans Exhibition which was held in Dublin in the same year.<sup>251</sup>

As a result of this advice the Irish Industries Association set themselves three major goals;

- a) the planting and developing of industries on a commercial basis
- b) the education and training of workers
- c) to make Irish industry accessible and to make them known to and put them in touch with the great markets of the world.<sup>252</sup>

<sup>249</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen Vol. I. p 259.

<sup>250</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. Health and Happiness in the Homes of Ireland. p 435.

<sup>251</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. Health and Happiness in the Homes of Ireland. p 434.

<sup>252</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen . Vol. I. p 259.

To aid them in achieving their goals they turned to learning lessons from the development of industry in other countries, and by gathering facts about markets, fashion, materials etc. They also bought tools and materials at wholesale prices for distribution to workers, while at the same time set about finding markets for the finished products. The Association would bring in lecturers, teachers, and designers, some of whom were paid and some of whom worked as volunteers, to train workers in their own communities. Grants from the authorities were sought to cover travelling expenses for lecturers and trainers, to fund the educational side of the work and to help with other aspects of industrial development.<sup>253</sup> These were high aspirations but did they have practical applications?

To demonstrate just how this system was put into practice on a more practical level, I propose to use the example of the Irish Lace Depot Ltd, a by-product of the Irish Industries Association. This was founded in 1893 when Mr Ben Lindsay, a well known authority on Irish lace and an individual who held a near monopoly on the lace industry in Ireland for many years, had died as the Aberdeens were due to leave for Chicago and the World's Fair. They were informed that a syndicate of Jewish businessmen were to buy the goodwill of this Grafton Street company. It was felt by Lady Aberdeen and the Board of the Irish Industries Association, that any party of entrepreneurs, owning such a monopoly, would not have the welfare of the workers as their primary concern. This was a time when wages were low and workers had few, if any rights. The countess firmly believed that workers within the aegis of the Irish Industries Association should have fair rates of pay. She wanted to see that the benefits went to those on whose behalf the work was being created.

Before coming to Ireland, Lady Aberdeen had served as president of the 'Women's Industrial Council in London' and of the 'Women's Protective and Provident League' in Glasgow where she received 'much valuable though painful education regarding the conditions under which so many women workers earned their living'.<sup>254</sup> She also learned of the terrible exploitation of women workers in particular, whether as homeworkers or in factories. In industrial Britain women worked long hours for little money, often in appalling conditions. The Irish Industries Association wanted to see that this did

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<sup>253</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. Health and Happiness in the Homes of Ireland p 435

<sup>254</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen. Vol. I. p 275.

not happen within the homes, convents and small factories of Ireland, within this particular industry. Here was an opportunity for the Irish Industries Association to bypass the business sector and to take the industry out of the hands of financiers and to see that the money made from Irish lace was returned to the workers who produced it. With the acquisition of the Irish Lace Depot Ltd, it was hoped to lead the way with fair rates of pay for the lace workers and others connected with this business sector. It was also an opportunity to take over and develop at least one Irish industry by keeping it within their control. They also felt that the purchase of such a venture would put the Irish Industries Association on a sound footing not only financially, but would show other entrepreneurs what could be accomplished given the right set of circumstances and adequate financial backing.

As there was not enough finances available within the Irish Industries Association to buy the Irish Lace Depot Ltd, the Aberdeens took the major step of buying Ben Lindsay's business themselves. While in Canada they left the venture in the hands of three friends, Fr T.A. Finlay S.J., R.A. Atkins from Cork and Mr Brennan, Master of the School of Art in Cork.<sup>255</sup> These individuals, along with four others, formed a limited company each contributing £1 and guaranteeing all liabilities. Under their directorship the wholesale side of the business prospered selling annually £10,000 worth of lace.<sup>256</sup> Much of lace, crochet and embroidery was supplied by the CDB classes, bringing much needed employment into these regions.

The Irish Lace Depot Ltd had a very effective Managing Director in R.M. Martin until he left to join the British army in 1914. As a result of the director's efforts the company was extremely successful. The highest recorded turn-over in one year up until 1900 amounted to £11,000 made up of £7,000 wholesale and £4,000 retail. From 1900 they were to look to wholesale distribution in order to achieve the widest expansion. From 1902 until 1912 retail sales were abandoned and turn over expanded at a fairly even pace, an annual average being £25,000, reaching a peak of £40,000 in 1912.<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> Aberdeen., Lady Ishbel. Health and Happiness in the Homes of Ireland. p 436 .

<sup>256</sup> Correspondence from R.M. Martin. 16 College Green, to Lady Aberdeen dated 22 Jan. 1935. Haddo House archives.

<sup>257</sup> Correspondence from R.M. Martin, 16 College Green, to Lady Aberdeen dated 22 Jan. 1935.

According to Martin in a letter to the countess

The position attained was the outcome of fresh and imaginative minds being brought to bear on the subject, the professionals previously involved in the industry appear to have lacked the courage and enterprise essential to success, and the amateurs acted as amateurs. Your organisation afforded scope for both. It enlisted the invaluable support of the ladies of fashion and gave professional minds a solid ground on which to build.....It may be said with conviction that no ordinary commercial company could have attempted this programme at this period but your organisation was able to do so because it had a constitution which was singular, its labours paved the way for others to take advantage of the created market on a wide scale.<sup>258</sup>

Lady Aberdeen and the Irish Industries Association had made the right decision in buying the Irish Lace Depot Ltd and their principal aims had been achieved. Profits from this very successful venture were spent in several ways. Firstly, on the capital fabric of the company; secondly by the building up of grants and aid to the industry workers throughout the regions, thirdly by the provision of training in various crafts, and finally, the provision of fair rates of pay. It must also be remembered that this was a unique example of voluntary work by people of vision, and its success was completed without once calling on the government for aid. The decline in the lace industry was to come only after 1914 as the market for luxury goods fell dramatically in the face of the First World War. There was little hope of a revival of the industry in the post war period as lace of a similar quality was being produced in countries like Syria and China at about one fifth of the cost of the Irish product. The Dublin Depot closed down in 1915, while the London Depot continued for a number of years later.<sup>259</sup>

The buying of the Lace Depot was an ambitious scheme and considering the economic climate of the period, it was in many ways a substantial success. Had it been more wholly successful, on a nation-wide scale it would have been a most welcome development. Unfortunately it never became the nation-wide success that both Lady Aberdeen and the members of the Irish Industries Association had hoped for. For the moment what is important for us to note is that the scheme for the development of the Irish lace industry was a completely modern venture, both in its thinking and its planning.

Products were found and continually upgraded through research and development, markets were created, advertising was used, education and training were given and

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<sup>258</sup> Correspondence from R.M. Martin, 16 College Green, to Lady Aberdeen dated 22 Jan 1935.

<sup>259</sup> Correspondence from R.M. Martin, 16 College Green, to Lady Aberdeen dated 22 Jan 1935.

centres for distribution opened. The Lace Depot Ltd accomplished this by placing selling agents in London, Paris, Vienna, Berlin and Brussels, and eventually into major cities in the United States and in South America. The agents were individuals who were familiar with the lace trade and who had connections with trade buyers within their own countries. They also visited the fashion houses of Europe and America reporting back to Dublin with regard to new designs. Agents often visited Ireland in an effort to ensure that they understood what the lace industry here could or could not undertake.

On the production side of the business the depot established a staff of skilled workers, spread throughout the country, whose time was employed solely in the piloting prototypes. They also issued grants for the training of both workers and designers. Using their own photographic department and printing plant the Depot printed daily 300 or 400 reproductions to be sent to the trade abroad. Each print bearing a registration number which was used for the placing of orders.<sup>260</sup>

The Irish Industries Association tried to incorporate into many other ventures the skills they had learned through the development of the Irish Lace Depot. For example, in July 1893, Lady Aberdeen as president of the Irish Industries Association, suggested that they join with the CDB in an effort to improve the manufacture of homespun tweeds in the Ardara district of Donegal. The improvement scheme included the inspection of tweeds at the monthly fair in Ardara. Those rolls found to be of a high quality were stamped, and given a bonus of three half pence per yard, an extra penny a yard for the owner and a half penny to the weaver. As a result of these incentives the quality and price of the tweed improved greatly. The Irish Industries Association also began collecting traditional tweed patterns and so widening the scope of goods produced. Their efforts led to an increase in the number of individuals taking up the art of weaving. This was a skill that was dying out by the end of the century. The scheme that had begun in Donegal began to spread through out the west. The Irish Industries Association joint action with the CDB, sought to support as far as possible all indigenous industrial ventures.<sup>261</sup> By the time the Aberdeens left Ireland on the 3 August 1886, the demand for Irish goods was already on the increase. This can be witnessed in the development of the new distribution centres for Irish goods.

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<sup>260</sup> Correspondence from R.M. Martin, 16 College Green to Lady Aberdeen dated 22 Jan. 1935.

<sup>261</sup> Micks, William L. History of the Congested Districts Board. An account of the Constitution Administration and Dissolution of the Congested District Board of Ireland from 1891-1923. p 68.

The Central Council of the Irish Industries Association was now headed by Professor Percival Wright M.D. and Professor O' Reilly. As joint secretaries they oversaw the opening of a distribution centre in Dublin's Dawson Street, to which all industries could send their finished products. A move to larger premises in Grafton Street<sup>262</sup> followed,<sup>263</sup> from here all goods could be distributed for sale, both wholesale and retail. The role of this centre or depot was to keep a display of Irish goods that were easily accessible to those who were in the market for high quality products, and to continue to provide markets for these goods. Finally a similar depot was opened in London, to which even the Royal Family gave their patronage. From this base in London, on two occasions throughout the year, a 'Great Irish Sale' was held firstly, on St. Patrick's Day and again in the autumn when they toured provincial towns and cities.

The total of these sales and of the London Depot between 1886 and 1914 amounted to over £230,000, most of this went into the pockets of our Irish workers, many of the Cottage Industries relied on these sales as a means of carrying out their business.<sup>264</sup>

In terms of what Lady Aberdeen and the Irish Industries Association set out to do, this was quite an achievement. Yet nothing that the countess did or worked for in Ireland was ever accepted at face value, there were always those looking for a hidden agenda. The issue of opposition to Lady Aberdeen in all her ventures will be dealt with in later chapters. Nonetheless it is important to note here that the Aberdeens did not manage every situation well, and often left themselves open to severe criticism that was not always undeserved. An example of this comes from an article found in the newspaper the Labour Leader of the 16 June 1906.

This article links the visit of the Lord Lieutenant to Belfast and his 'betrayal' of the case of the women workers in the textile industry in the north of Ireland. A delegation of these workers had gone to Dublin Castle requesting the support of Lord Aberdeen in a pay dispute with their employers, 'inviting him to intervene, with the object of securing a conference between the employers and the work people with a view to arbitration'.<sup>265</sup> They were received by both Lord and Lady Aberdeen who were informed that the average wages of weavers and winders did not exceed 9s 6d per week and in the greater

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<sup>262</sup> Appendix 9.

<sup>263</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. Health and Happiness in the Homes of Ireland. p 435

<sup>264</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. Health and Happiness in the Homes of Ireland. p 435.

<sup>265</sup> Labour Leader. 16 June 1906.



number of cases 7s was the highest wages obtained. They were also informed that those who would be meeting with and entertaining the Aberdeens while in Belfast, were some of the most notorious sweat shop employers in the region. So hopeful were these individuals that Lord and Lady Aberdeen would do all they could to help their case that they formed a procession of over 10,000 women to cheer the couple into the General Assembly Hall. Over 5000 men and women congregated at the Cooke Statue to form two parallel lines for the cortège to pass through.

Lord Aberdeen upset many when the deliberations of his first conference with the leading employers in Belfast were kept private. At a luncheon held later in the day it seemed to those who had put their faith in him that he had sided entirely with the employers. He told the workers

Having heard the main facts of both sides, he felt bound to offer the opinion that under the present circumstances nothing could be gained by any delay on the part of the workers in returning to the factories.<sup>266</sup>

The Viceroy tried to point out that this opinion was not prompted by any lack of sympathy. It was prompted by the belief that the employers would raise the standard of wages, when a more reliable state of trade justified such a increase. That was in itself, he explained, a good reason for a return to work. His reply was a great blow to those who had hoped for more support. They were disappointed that there was

Not a word as to the terrible conditions under which his fellow guests were working the women and children of Belfast, not a word as to the need for a higher standard of living, and not a word as to the trade not being able to bear the increase. No; only an admonition to the workers to return on the employers terms and when the employers chose to open the gates.<sup>267</sup>

As a result of the position taken by the Lord Lieutenant, and his lack of support for the Belfast workers, the majority were forced to return to work almost immediately. The author of this article compares Lord Aberdeen's speech with that of Lord Cadogan who as Lord Lieutenant had visited Belfast, at a time when the engineers at the Harland and Wolff, and Workman Clarke, were in the midst of a major lockout.

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<sup>266</sup> Labour Leader 16 June 1906.

<sup>267</sup> Labour Leader 16 June 1906.

At a luncheon given by Mr Perrie head of Harland and Wolff

Earl Cadogan took occasion to refer to the comparison between the pinched and drawn faces with which the streets of Belfast had been peopled and the lavish hospitality poured out upon him, and he urged the employers not merely to re-consider their position with the men, but expressed the hope that some approach for peace would be made.....thus obviating further suffering and hardship. <sup>268</sup>

The speech was a great boost to the workers and the lockout was brought to a swift settlement. Lord and Lady Aberdeen, I believe, adopted a more cautious approach in view of their own political position, and their tenuous relationship with the unionists, particularly in the north east. There was nowhere else in Ireland where the Viceregal couple had to thread more carefully. They were already unwelcome and unpopular in the eyes of those who feared supporters of Home Rule and Gladstone in residence in Dublin Castle. The Lord Lieutenant felt he was left with little choice but to call upon the workers to return to work, in the hope that in the provision of an improved and more stable economic climate, the position of the employees would also improve.

Lady Aberdeen would spend the rest of the Viceroyalty visiting all corners of Ireland and learning first hand of the conditions of the workers and trying to find solutions to the very obvious economic difficulties of the country. Lord Aberdeen seems to have learned much from his experience in Belfast, and he will take a much more cautious approach when dealing with the difficulties facing the workers during the 1913 Dublin lockout. This matter will also be dealt with in a later chapter.

In July of 1886 Gladstone was to lose his battle for Home Rule, his first Home Rule Bill being rejected in the House of Commons by 343 to 313 votes, therefore he had little alternative but to resign from government. In the subsequent general election this vexed bill, and therefore Gladstone himself, was rejected. It was the Tory leader, Lord Salisbury who came to power, with a majority which included former Whigs and Liberals who had deserted Gladstone over Home Rule.<sup>269</sup> This political change in England would lead to an abrupt end to the short lived Viceroyalty of the Aberdeens for the next twenty years. But not before the Irish Industries Association with its various councils had been fully organised. Lady Aberdeen had on her first brief stay in Ireland, set a process in motion that was to gain a momentum of its own after her departure.

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<sup>268</sup> Labour Leader 16 June 1906.

<sup>269</sup> Shannon, Catherine. Arthur Balfour and Ireland. 1874-1922. p 29

She had the organisational ability to see that work was delegated to such an extent, that her projects never had to depend for long on any one individual, not even herself.

The leave-taking of the Viceregal couple from Ireland was to be quite a different event to their arrival. Although political excitement was riding high in the country and the nationalists were in a hopeful mood at the appointment of a Liberal Lord Lieutenant, there had no popular demonstration at their arrival. It was to be a case of waiting to see the merits of the Home Rule Bill before committing themselves to give full support to the new Viceroy. When Lord and Lady Aberdeen left Ireland it was to cheering crowds, both citizens and officials were anxious to show their support for those who had given them such hope that Home Rule could be achieved. The Freeman's Journal stated

Since Dublin was built no such spectacle has been witnessed in its streets on such an occasion.....nothing like it will be seen soon again.<sup>270</sup>

'The End of a Chapter' was the title of an article in Parnell's weekly paper, United Ireland. It read

The thickest Tory intellect cannot misunderstand the meaning of the tremendous outburst of Irish feeling amidst which Lord Aberdeen departed. The problem that has brought hecatombs of failure to British statesmen was solved. A brief golden bridge was flung over the chasm of race hatreds that seven woeful centuries have hollowed out.<sup>271</sup>

There was no escaping the political meaning of such a mainly nationalist demonstration. They were willing to display their loyalty to the crown, when the crown was willing to grant them their 'ancient and constitutional rights' of self rule. Unionists were unlikely to be over enthusiastic about such a couple. The nationalists gathered in a huge procession to bid farewell to the Aberdeens, with speeches and delegations from the length and breadth of the country singing their praises. The unionists were more reticent. The Dublin Evening Mail of 31 July 1886 in an article entitled 'Pomp and Vanities' gives us an indication of unionist feelings at this time in relation to the Aberdeens

We shall no longer allude to the persistency with which the nationalists in the glory of their local strength have ousted the loyalists of Dublin in this matter, and have determined to make the occasion the pure glorification of Gladstone and Home Rule.....The nationalists of Dublin refuse to consider the feelings of the loyalists.....<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> Freeman's Journal July 1886

<sup>271</sup> United Ireland. July 1886.

<sup>272</sup> Dublin Evening Mail . 31 July 1886

The paper goes on to explain that the unionists would have been glad to participate in such an event, had it been a simple expression of esteem for the Aberdeens personally and the interest they had shown in the welfare of the Irish people. Instead the nationalist disregard of the wishes of the unionists was proof of what Home Rule would mean to those who remained loyal to the Queen. Nevertheless, there was a great measure of support and appreciation shown to Lord and Lady Aberdeen when immediately on leaving Ireland they travelled to Australia, New Zealand and Tasmania. They were greeted everywhere they travelled by Irish supporters. The scene was repeated as they travelled across America. This began in San Francisco, where they were greeted in their hotel by a four foot Irish harp made of flowers.<sup>273</sup>

Lady Aberdeen's attitude towards the Irish and Ireland had changed dramatically since the time of her arrival. Her letters to Henry Drummond had quite reversed their tone, she now writes of her disappointment at having to leave the country

The mention of Ireland sets me on fire. Yet I must drill myself not to speak not to look. It seems impossible for anyone here to comprehend that one can really care about the Irish people.....<sup>274</sup>

The countess' care for the Irish people, once established, was to be the driving force behind her commitment to the health and welfare of this country. It was a commitment that would cost her much in terms of her own health and family, and in financial terms. The Aberdeens had left Ireland by the 3 August 1886, yet between this time and the couple's second term of office in 1906, the countess continued to support measures for the development of Irish industry. She sought opportunities when and wherever she could, to promote the cause of industry in Ireland. An example of this came when the Aberdeens were on a visit to America in 1890/91, and they tried to interest as many as possible in Irish goods. To this end they gained a concession to open an 'Irish Village' in the midway of the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893. With the support of the Irish Industries Association the countess set up a fund to finance this venture both in Ireland and in the United States. Much of this funding was done through guarantees of a

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<sup>273</sup> Pentland, Marjorie. A Bonnie Fechter. Life of Ishbel Marjoribanks, Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair 1857-1939. p 67.

<sup>274</sup> Pentland, Marjorie. A Bonnie Fechter. Life of Ishbel Marjoribanks, Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair 1857-1939. p 65.

return on investment, with many Irish sympathisers securing the guarantees to much more than the required \$15,000.

The event was to be organised by Peter White,<sup>275</sup> secretary of the Irish Industries Association. He died quite suddenly just weeks before the World's Fair, and much to the relief of the committee and to the countess, his place was very ably taken by his widow.<sup>276</sup> Others very much involved in the project included the Hon. Horace Plunkett M.P. In 1888 Horace Plunkett, had already formed his co-operative movement in Ireland, he was also a committee member of the Irish Industries Association. Lady Aberdeen found him an invaluable help, as he knew the United States well, and she was grateful for his approval of her latest undertaking. The main purpose of this project was to establish a permanent depot similar to those available in Dublin and London in different parts of the United States. This was achieved at least in Chicago when, after the World's Fair, an Irish Industries Association Depot for the sale of Irish goods was opened in that city.<sup>277</sup>

Other supporters of the Irish Village in 1893 included Lady Ferguson, Lord Dunraven, Miss Margaret Stokes, antiquarian, Miss Josephine Sullivan, Professor of the Harp from the Dublin Academy of Music. Lady Aberdeen used her influential connections with individuals like Cardinal Gibbons of Chicago, and Gordon Selfridge of the famous American department stores, to support the Irish Village. It was the latter who provided the wax figures and glass cases for the exhibition.<sup>278</sup>

Beginning with the idea of an Irish cabin, the scale of the project grew to that of a complete Irish Village consisting of twelve cottages grouped around a green, with a replica of a Celtic Cross at its centre.<sup>279</sup> The work involved in this venture by Lady Aberdeen and her committee must not be underestimated. This project, even in today's terms, was on a huge scale, the logistics alone seem daunting. Firstly, there was much organising to be done and arrangements had to be made for the 45 Irish girls who were brought from Ireland to sing, dance, spin, and weave, knit, make butter, etc. and to sell the vision of the superiority of Ireland and Irish goods. Altogether there were, including restaurant staff and a band, 106 individuals employed on the project. There would be

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<sup>275</sup> Peter White was also manager of Michael Davitt's Woollen Company.

<sup>276</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. Health and Happiness in the Homes of Ireland. p 435.

<sup>277</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. Health and Happiness in the Homes of Ireland. p 435.

<sup>278</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. Health and Happiness in the Homes of Ireland. p 435.

<sup>279</sup> Appendix 10.

much competition from other such exhibits from all over the world and from a rival Irish Village. Lady Aberdeen speaking of the difficulties stated

I draw a veil over our early trials in the muddy grounds competing with hosts of others all trying to get workmen to unpack their wears.....Our Chicago Committee stood by us nobly, and in spite of a rival Irish Village being started and all manner of crisis threatening the very life our enterprise, the best results were obtained.<sup>280</sup>

The entrance to the village was copied from the north doorway to the chapel built by Cormac, Bishop of Munster, in the early part of the twelfth century, the ruins of which stood on the Rock of Cashel in Co. Tipperary. This impressive doorway led to a replica of the Tower of Blarney Castle, and to a replica of the cloisters at Muckross Abbey. The cottages themselves were complete with turf fires and potatoes boiling in a large black pot. Each cottage had a theme, the women spinning, weaving, knitting, making butter, and all types of homespuns. Craft work including lace, crochets and knitting were produced and sold. Connemara marble and bog oak carvings, woodwork and metalwork were also on display. The village contained a music hall where members of the Dublin Academy of Music played the harp, traditional songs were sung and Irish dancing was a popular feature of the occasion. Finally, the village boasted a museum where pieces of Irish antiquity were placed on display along with exhibits of photographs of items found in Irish museums and stately homes. A library, with work from the great Irish writers was the final feature.<sup>281</sup> The countess was to note in her journal

.....I shall not describe the charms of our village. It was as real a bit of Ireland as we could put up. And the old Irish folk who came from all over the States, wept over the settles and dressers. Nor could they refrain from dancing a jig on the platform with our Irish dancers! These impromptu dances of the old folk were a great attraction to visitors.....Moreover the village familiarised the American public with the excellence of Irish goods far more effectively than if we had confined ourselves to the sober exhibits in the main building.<sup>282</sup>

This venture proved to be highly successful. It netted gross profits of £50,000, half of which was taken by the Exhibition authorities. The remainder went pay off all the guarantees, and to open the Irish depot in Chicago while £20,000 went for the sale of Irish goods.

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<sup>280</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. Health and Happiness in the Homes of Ireland. p 436.

<sup>281</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. The Irish Village of the Irish Industries Association. p 10

<sup>282</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. Health and Happiness in the Homes of Ireland. p 436.

An interesting insight into the character and forcefulness of Lady Aberdeen emerges from this event. When the President of the United States, President Cleveland, attended the World's Fair in Chicago, he did not have time to visit all of the exhibits and missed out on the Irish Village. In her quest to familiarise all of the U.S public with Irish goods, from the President down, Lady Aberdeen refused to allow an opportunity to pass. On hearing that the President had left for the railway station, she rushed with six of the girls to the station and having caught up with the President, presented him with gifts of Irish produce including a Limerick Lace handkerchief and a blackthorn stick.<sup>283</sup> She was nothing if not persistent.

Lady Aberdeen was a visionary but also a realist, therefore she was anxious to make known the other side of Ireland. In the brochure she prepared to accompany the Irish Village Exhibition, the countess invited the visitors to transfer themselves to 'that distressful country'.<sup>284</sup> She spoke of the need for aid, the lack of industry and the problems caused since the Famine by emigration. She referred particularly to the young and of the continuing poverty which threatened future famines. While the emigrants might find success and prosperity in new lands, it was those who were left at home who would continue to suffer unless something was done. Unemployment and poverty was often the common lot of those left behind. She asks the question, need these things be?

Is there no possibility of manufacture and industries growing up in Ireland...? yes, there is every possibility of such a future for Ireland, when her splendid resources of water power will be utilised, when the riches of her fishing grounds will be explored and developed, when her poor outlying districts will be opened up and brought into communication with centres of commerce and trade, and when the quickness and natural expertness of her people will be made use of for their own benefit and that of the world. But are we to remain idle in the meantime, when we have ample proof of what may arise out of very small beginning?  
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Lady Aberdeen uses the success of the shirt industry around Londonderry to demonstrate what could be achieved. This industry was established in the City of Londonderry in the 1840s. By the 1860s it had extended into the county of Londonderry as well as into Donegal and Tyrone.<sup>286</sup> By 1889 the industry had an annual turnover of £1,000,000,

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<sup>283</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. We Two. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen. Vol. I p 333.

<sup>284</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. The Irish Village of the Irish Industries Association. p 2

<sup>285</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. The Irish Village of the Irish Industries Association. p 3.

<sup>286</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. The Irish Village of the Irish Industries Association p 5.

one quarter of which had been paid out in wages.<sup>287</sup> This was an example of how individuals working from home, could have an income that gave them the security to know that during times of bad harvests and even famine, they had the means at their disposal to survive. She notes that the same could be said of the knitting industry in many parts of the country.

While berating the low rates of pay she realised that a mother and daughter could earn enough to 'keep the wolf from the door', and allow whole families to survive.<sup>288</sup> The countess had a grasp of the situation of the poor and underprivileged, and an understanding of their fight for sheer survival, in a way that was quite remarkable for a woman of her class. In an interview in the Irish Times of the 23 Feb. 1906, the countess speaking of the work of the Irish Industries Association sums up the situation by stating

.....amongst the class for whose benefit the association was originally organised the employment which it affords is heartily appreciated. The remuneration derived from the work add very substantially to the scanty incomes of many of the workers, who without it would find it difficult, if not altogether impossible to get away from a condition of chronic poverty.....it trains the workers in various branches of industry giving them a facility in using their hands skilfully and thus qualifying them to earn a support for themselves without being a burden on others.....<sup>289</sup>

There were many, especially among the women of Ireland, who had good cause to appreciate the help and support of Lady Aberdeen and the Irish Industries Association in improving their lives. This gratitude was recognised by those of all classes. For example, in Limerick, the home of a major branch of the lace industry, the countess had conferred upon her unanimously, by the municipal authorities, the Freedom of the City for her support in its development.<sup>290</sup>

Lord and Lady Aberdeen, as already stated, went on to serve as Viceroyalty to Canada from 1893 until 1898 and then spent eight years in retirement mainly owing to the political situation in Great Britain. This was to change with the resignation of Arthur Balfour's ministry and the subsequent election of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman in

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<sup>287</sup> Holmes, Janice. and Urquhart, Diane. (eds.) Coming into the Light. The work, politics and religion of women in Ulster. 1840-1940. p 8

<sup>288</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. The Irish Village of the Irish Industries Association. p 5

<sup>289</sup> Irish Times. 23 Feb. 1906.

<sup>290</sup> 'Royal Irish Industries Association - Sale of Work Limerick. Opening address by the Countess of Aberdeen.' (Undated) Peamount archives.



1905. By early 1906 the Aberdeens were back serving in Ireland, as Viceroyalty. A contemporary author describes their return by reporting

Only veterans could recall the doings of the Lord Lieutenant of 1886, but both Lord and Lady Aberdeen's names were household words, as they had been no strangers to Ireland during these twenty years, but had identified themselves very much with the work for the benefit of her industries.....the new Viceroy and his wife received a sympathetic welcome. They were anxious to mark their term of office by social reform.<sup>291</sup>

The term of the second Viceroyalty of the Aberdeens was to allow the countess to pursue the work begun in 1886, and which she had continued, to a greater or lesser extent, in the intervening years. It is important at this point to compare briefly the situation in Ireland at this time, with that pertaining during the period of the first Viceroyalty twenty years before.

Historical developments in Ireland at the turn of the twentieth century were a direct result of the impact of nineteenth century economic, social, demographic and political developments. The Ireland of 1906 was a different country, politically, to that of 1886. While Ireland still depended on the Liberal Party for the granting of Home Rule, the cohesion of the Home Rule Party under Parnell was gone, the supporters divided into four factions. In 1894, Gladstone had been replaced by Earl Archibald Rosebery as Prime Minister, and the party lost much of its commitment to the cause of Home Rule. While the powerful unionist majority in the House of Lords made the prospect of Home Rule very slender.

Constructive Unionism had taken over somewhat, with an increase in the policy of 'killing Home Rule with kindness'. In rural areas, by the early 1900s, Roman Catholics had benefited from the extensive system of land purchase which dated back to the many Land Acts introduced between 1870 and 1903. The country's agricultural development was being given priority by the state and by the people, as tenant farmers became peasant proprietors. There were now rising numbers of middle class Catholics, not only in rural areas but in towns and cities, who, as they prospered in business became a growing social and economic force. In Ulster dissenters such as Presbyterians were in a similar position. Nevertheless, some things remained the same, mainly the Catholic/Protestant divide, and the unionist/nationalist divide. At one end of the political spectrum were the

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<sup>291</sup> O'Mahoney, Charles. The Viceroy's of Ireland. (Dublin, 1912). p 331.

nationalists still calling for self government, maintaining that the Act of Union that was the cause of all of Ireland's social and economic difficulties. Some unionists took a diametrically opposing view, blaming all of the countries difficulties on Catholic Emancipation. They had a jaundiced view of Home Rule, believing that it would further undermine their position of ascendancy, as Catholics (who made up the vast majority of nationalists) would, should Home Rule be introduced become a considerable majority in parliament. Although there were of course various shades of opinion in between, nevertheless, it was within this basic structure that the Aberdeens would have to continue to work, regardless of the other issues involved.

With regard to Lady Aberdeen's work for Irish Industry, we see the emergence of further political, nationalist/unionist tensions. The following case study is just such an example, and one that demonstrates the countess' ability to raise above party politics, to achieve an end that she believed, was in the best interest of Irish industry and the country at large. As had happened in 1886, before the arrival of the Aberdeens in 1906, plans had been discussed to hold a major industrial exhibition, this time in Dublin itself. A letter on this matter which was sent from an official at Dublin Castle to the Aberdeens, spoke of the political and sometimes practical problems of holding such an exhibition. I propose to show that these problems were very real and had gone on for many years and were the result of the tense political atmosphere. Yet Lady Aberdeen, with characteristic great stubbornness and single-minded forcefulness, felt that nothing should be allowed to stand in the way of such a great event. She believed the only course open to the Irish Industry Association, was the holding of an international exhibition, due to the countries inability to prove itself as an industrial force. Rightly or wrongly, she set out to make the international exhibition a reality and it was in any terms, a great success. The following is the basis of the report given to the countess, mainly by Horace Plunkett, on the subject of the many difficulties involved in undertaking such a project.

Lord Castletown, and Mr Dennehy, the then editors of the Irish Daily Independent, arranged a meeting which was held in the Shelbourne Hotel in Dublin on the 4 February 1903, three years before the Aberdeens returned to Ireland. It was called to discuss the possibility of holding an industrial conference based on non-sectarian and non-political lines. It was decided to form a committee, as the majority of those present were in

favour of the proposed event. By the 15 August 1903, a conference was held at the Royal University and a large number from all political persuasions attended.

Unanimously the conference agreed to the establishment of an Institute of Commerce and Industry and for the promotion of an international exhibition to be held in Dublin in 1906.<sup>292</sup>

However, even before the conference had begun there had been division, the question being whether this Dublin exhibition was to be purely an Irish national event, or an international one. At a meeting of the Port and Docks Board on the 5 March 1903 the then Lord Mayor of Dublin, T. Harrington M.P. opposed the conference on the grounds that the exhibition was being organised as a counter move to the up and coming Land Conference. At a meeting of the Gaelic League in early April, presided over by Fr Finlay S.J., a strong resolution was passed condemning the proposed international exhibition. This decision was taken on the grounds that such an exhibition would merely become a huge advertising platform for foreign goods. The Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction were also opposed to the project. Sir Horace Plunkett was of the opinion that if such an exhibition were to be held, it would be disastrous to the work of his own department and to others engaged in the Irish Industrial revival, including that of the Irish Industries Association.<sup>293</sup>

On the 17 April 1904, the Daily Independent<sup>294</sup> announced that the King had approved of the proposal to hold an International Exhibition and stated that the organising committee might rely upon the support and patronage of His Majesty. The Freeman's Journal was totally opposed to the holding of an international exhibition and the provincial press followed the Freeman's lead. Meanwhile papers like the United Irishman and other advocates of Sinn Fein policy, openly condemned the holding of any exhibition, national or international, under the patronage of the King. A meeting of the organising committee of the International Exhibition was held in Great Brunswick Street, but due to the strength of opposition on the part of the Gaelic League supporters, it broke up in confusion. Nevertheless, the members of the Committee were determined to carry on with their proposed project, while their opponents went into action to take steps to

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<sup>292</sup> Correspondence between Sir Horace Plunkett and Lady Aberdeen regarding the Industrial Exhibition of 1907. ( April to September, 1905) Peamount archives.

<sup>293</sup> Correspondence between Sir Horace Plunkett and Lady Aberdeen regarding the Industrial Exhibition of 1907.

<sup>294</sup> Daily Independent 17 April 1904.

counteract them. The discussion in the press on the relative merits of national versus international exhibition, were mainly on the opponents side. Many were convinced that this was in the countries best interest. Four Catholic archbishops and many bishops, as well as John Redmond and the Irish Parliamentary Party, all expressed approval for a national exhibition, and promised to give such an event their full support. By the 15 July 1904 the Executive Committee were forced to concede, and agreed to rigidly restrict the exhibits to the industry and manufacture of Irish goods.

In September 1905, Horace Plunkett was writing to Lady Aberdeen, in reply to a letter she had written, regarding her own support for an International event. The countess was well aware of all that was happening with regard to this matter, even before her return to Ireland. Plunkett had furnished her with a full history of the issues involved, as stated above. When speaking of the stance of the Freeman's Journal Plunkett claimed

Ireland has nothing to gain at this stage of her industrial development by an International Exhibition, which would be utilised by outside exhibitors for advertising their wares and so to strengthen their position as competitors with Irish manufacture while a National Exhibition led by the Gaelic and industrial revivals would be better calculated to promote those movements.<sup>295</sup>

In addition, Plunkett's advice to Lady Aberdeen was that the time was not yet right for getting another such project under way in Dublin. Since 1900 alone, Ireland had already taken part in the Glasgow Exhibition of 1901, the Cork Exhibition of 1902 and the St Louis Exhibition of 1904. He also claimed that it was an 'awkward' time to plan such events, as many nationalists would oppose with the sole objective of protesting against the patronage of the King in connection with this matter. His department felt that no project could be successful 'unless it was freed from the curse of political controversy',<sup>296</sup>

Plunkett was to explain that he wished, because of his post, to remain a-political, but his final and highly confidential advice to Lady Aberdeen was clear. She was to tell those who had asked for her patronage for such a project, that she felt there had been enough such events in recent years and that she was not satisfied whether another event being held so soon in Dublin would be wise. He also advised the countess to state that she

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<sup>295</sup> Correspondence from Horace Plunkett of the Dept. of Agriculture and Technical Instruction to Lady Aberdeen dated 22 Sept. 1905. Peamount archives.

<sup>296</sup> Correspondence from Horace Plunkett of the Dept. of Agriculture and Technical Instruction to Lady Aberdeen dated 22 Sept. 1905.

awaited the outcome of a report from the new Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, before deciding whether or not to become involved. While at all times she was to avoid any mention of the political 'squabbles' which had taken place, in order to keep herself clear of the whole controversy.<sup>297</sup>

Lady Aberdeen took only one piece of advice in this matter from Sir Horace Plunkett. With total insensitivity to the opinion of others, pertaining to this matter, she ignored the political 'squabbles' completely. Opposition to the project was tremendous, politics, economics and even emotions were involved. Yet with great single-mindedness and an idealism that made her inflexible, the countess gathered around her those who supported her own preference for an International Exhibition. This made her unpopular with many on both sides of the political divide. Here was a lack of empathy with those who held opinions different to her own, including well respected individuals like Horace Plunkett. This, coupled with a disdainful unwillingness to deal with bureaucracy, displays an arrogance in the countess that goes beyond the normal haughtiness of her class and station. It was both a flaw in her character, and one of her greatest assets, that she would not be dictated to by any individual in the same way that she perceived her mother to be dictated to by her father. Her attitude angered many and stifled their support, yet was also an asset, in that she let no-one stand in her way when she felt the cause to be just. As far as was humanly possible the countess would take neither orders nor instruction from any man. This was also the reason she married someone as timid as John Gordon, who, throughout their lives, gave way to Ishbel in everything.

Notwithstanding all that had gone before, and the plethora of negative advice given, the state opening of the Irish International Exhibition<sup>298</sup> took place on the 4 May 1907, there being, by way of compromise, a large Irish industries section. Rather than be left outside such an event, many from all sides of political opinion agreed to participate in the event, including Horace Plunkett and the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction. There remained strong opposition to the exhibition, Arthur Griffith referred to it as 'an anti national bazaar' and as a place 'which no Sinn Feiner or Gaelic Leaguer .....would under any circumstances enter'.<sup>299</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> Correspondence from Horace Plunkett of the Dept. of Agriculture and Technical Instruction to Lady Aberdeen, dated 22 Sept. 1905.

<sup>298</sup> Appendix 11

<sup>299</sup> Sinn Fein 11 May 1907.

Regardless of such opposition, the exhibition was well attended and became the means of promoting the continued development of indigenous industry. The prophets of doom, in this case, had been proved wrong. The one terrible cloud that hung over the exhibition was the stealing of the precious Irish Crown Jewels from Dublin Castle in the days proceeding the state visit of King Edward and Queen Alexandra. This was a huge blow to the Aberdeens, and the disappearance of the jewels remains a mystery to the present day.<sup>300</sup> During the last month of the exhibition space was provided for another interest that was close to Lady Aberdeen's heart, the first of many Tuberculosis Exhibitions organised by the newly formed Women's National Health Association. This organisation and related material will be dealt with in some detail in the following chapters.

By 1911 the countess believed that Irish industry had developed to a point where it could now hold a solely national exhibition of its own. Therefore an exhibition was developed under the title 'Ui Breasail', a title based on the poem by Gerald Griffins of the same name, meaning 'The Isle of the Blest'. The poem speaks of a wonderful place seen by St Brendan on one of his voyages, a mythical island containing a Garden of Eden.<sup>301</sup> Sub titled 'The Great Health, Industrial and Agricultural Show', Ui Breasail<sup>302</sup> opened at the RDS in Ballsbridge, from the 24 May until the 7 June 1911. On a very optimistic note Lady Aberdeen wrote in the forward to the Programme for Ui Breasail

Visit the exhibits.....listen to the happy tales of Irelands' increasing wealth and industry; see for yourselves how the riches that mother nature bestowed on Fair Erin are now being developed by her own sons and daughters; hear how her children are crowding to the technical schools to learn the practical art of life, and see what they produce; watch how the industrial schools are training the children of the state.....fully equipped for the work of life, trace the story of increased health, better food, better homes, and a bright and confident outlook for the future.....<sup>303</sup>

In spite of her shortcomings, Lady Aberdeen was nothing if not a visionary, with sincere religious convictions and she saw potential everywhere. She had a vision of what could and should be achieved in terms of Ireland's economic development. The countess believed that every generation should 'dream dreams and see visions, and that they must

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<sup>300</sup> Robins, Joseph. Champagne and Silver Buckles. The Viceregal Court at Dublin Castle 1700-1922. p 159

<sup>301</sup> This was in keeping with the Irish literary and Gaelic revival taking place at this time, under the guidance of individuals like W.B. Yeats and Lady Gregory.

<sup>302</sup> Appendices 12-16.

<sup>303</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. Programme for Ui Breasail. (Dublin, 1911) Peamount archives.

labour with all their might to convert their dreams into the actualities of every day life'.<sup>304</sup> Yet she was also a realist, she tried to introduce changes and developments in very practical terms, with the setting of achievable goals. Things had improved to some extent since the 19th century, particularly in rural areas, and she foresaw only progress as the new century progressed.

The countess had matured in her attitude to the opinion of others by the time of the Ui Breasail exhibition. She claimed that the idea of this exhibition was to demonstrate what could be done to provide a better and happier condition of life for the people of Ireland. She used the example of the WNHA and the Irish Industries Association to show what could be achieved by being non-sectarian and non-political, with all members working for the common good of the country. Harking back to the earlier difficulties with the formation of the 1907 International Exhibition, she claimed that this time, all she was asking for was that

All classes, creeds and politics to come and help make this show the representation of Ireland....(as) it ought to be.....We are showing no diseased conditions, none of the sores of our country, but are holding up the ideal of life for all to see and ponder.<sup>305</sup>

While this remark was addressed to all, the countess was also trying to soothe nationalist feelings, this time there was to be no royal patronage instead she explained

We are standing on our own feet appealing to no great names for our patronage or support, but the support we do ask is for the help and co-operation of all our countrymen and women in this work.<sup>306</sup>

This exhibition did get the necessary support, and it was in any terms a great success, with over 170,000 visitors. The main portion of the event was given over to Irish industrial exhibits, manufacture and commercial enterprise. There were exhibits by many of Irelands already well established industries, for example Bantry, Dublin and Foxford all had displays of woollens. Limerick and Kildare had displays of lace, and from the four corners of the country, the array of products were very impressive in there quality and scope and included, furniture and carpets, paints and chemicals, bacon and butter, biscuits, confectionery, matches and motor cars. This was quite different and far more advanced than the exhibitions held in the 19th century.

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<sup>304</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. Programme for Ui Breasail.

<sup>305</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. Health and Happiness in the Homes of Ireland. p 10.

<sup>306</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. Health and Happiness in the Homes of Ireland p 10

The timing of this opportunity to display Irish products and services was quite unique, as at this same time there were many American and colonial visitors in London due to the Colonial Conference, 'Festival of Empire' taking place at the same time. Arrangements were made to have large numbers of these visitors come over to the Dublin exhibition. The hope was that once connections between Ireland, America and the Empire were made, they would never be broken.<sup>307</sup>

At the exhibition the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, illustrated their work in connection with agrarian development and technical instruction, which was being carried out with the co-operation of local authorities. Their offering was mainly educational, dealing with such issues as soil cultivation, the management and improvement of live-stock husbandry, dairying, poultry keeping, fruit growing, forestry etc. Numerous photographs and diagrams were displayed showing the Department's institutions and the work they carried out and the operation of its various schemes throughout the country.<sup>308</sup>

A large section of the exhibition was given over to Industrial schools<sup>309</sup> where children and young adults from all over Ireland, were given the opportunity to demonstrate the different trades and industries which they were being taught. These included laundry work, cooking, weaving, spinning and knitting, lace making, crochet and embroidery for the girls, with bootmaking, carpentry, toolmaking, carpet making, fret work etc. for the boys. The children from the Industrial schools also provided entertainment with bands, singing, Irish dancing, gymnastics and 'theatricals'. This was a very important outlet for the work of the Industrial schools, and an opportunity to show the potential for development of a well trained Irish workforce, turning such youth from a perceived liability to an asset. At this period in history there were in Ireland 66 Industrial schools, 20 for boys, 18 Catholic and 2 Protestant, with 44 for girls, 41 for Catholics and 3 for Protestants. The number of children on the rolls of Industrial schools on the 31 Dec. 1910 were 8416, - 4006 boys and 4410 girls. The role of institutions within Irish society will be dealt with in some detail in a further chapter.

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<sup>307</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. Programme for Ui Breasail.

<sup>308</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. Programme for Ui Breasail.

<sup>309</sup> Appendices 17-19.



Entertainments at the exhibition were also provided by adult Irish singers and dancers and by visits to a Japanese Garden, four tea-rooms and two dining rooms. The major portion of the WNHA exhibits were given to health matters. This portion of the exhibition will be dealt with in a later chapter, when dealing with the work of this Association. The town planning aspect of this exhibition will also be dealt with in subsequent chapters. Suffice it to say that much attention had again been drawn to the capabilities, potential and quality of Irish Industry. Long after her husband's second term of office had come to a close, Lady Aberdeen continued to support any efforts that would benefit Irish industry.

Nevertheless, in spite of the undoubted success of the Irish Industry Association, it remains ignored and unmentioned in historical terms and it would appear that this omission is deliberate. As far back as 1921 in E.J. Riordan's<sup>310</sup> book on Modern Irish Trade and Industry<sup>311</sup> covering the period 1850 until 1920, and all aspects of Irish industry from agriculture to spinning and weaving, he never once mentions the Irish Industries Association and their role in the development of industry in Ireland. There is no mention of the markets created, the industries developed, the training given, the exhibitions organised both here and in America. Likewise, the opportunities given by the provision of distribution depots both in Dublin, London and Chicago, particularly to home workers and small industries, and the many other schemes developed by this organisation. Those involved in the Irish Industries Association, had a different view of their own achievements and felt they were worthy of note. T.W. Rolleston, Managing Director and secretary to the Irish Industries Association describes their achievements as follows

1. It has made known the products of Irish industry and introduced them to fashionable centres.
2. It has opened depots in Dublin, London, Chicago and in two years work from 1892 was able to purchase Irish goods to the value of \$185,000.00
3. It established the Irish Village at Chicago at which \$100,000.00 of Irish goods were disposed of. Irish industry obtained a worthy and national representation.
4. It is maintaining the wholesale trade in Irish lace and crochet in London and on the continent. In the year 1894 over \$40,000.00 were paid to Irish workers through its depots.
5. It is endeavouring to further improve and develop the designs for lace and crochet and keep them up to date in both pattern and workmanship.
6. Aided by the CDB it is working out successfully a scheme for the improvement of the Donegal homespun industry.

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<sup>310</sup> Riordan was Secretary to the Irish Industrial Development Association.

<sup>311</sup> Riordan, E.J. Modern Irish Trade and Industry. 1850-1920. (London, 1921)

7. It has made arrangement with agents in Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto and Halifax who will supply their customers with Irish goods.
8. It has opened a depot for the manufacture of Irish ecclesiastical vestments.<sup>312</sup>

Members of the Irish Industries and its governing body represented all political and religious sections of the community.

While Riordan ignores the contribution of the Irish Industries Association, what he does mention as 'valuable' work, was the establishment in 1893 of the 'Gaelic League' which made the support of Irish industries 'one of the most important planks of its programme'.<sup>313</sup> He fails to say just what it is they achieved in practical terms in this regard. He also mentions the establishment in Dublin of a weekly journal entitled The Leader which was published to encourage Irish men and women to support native industry.

It was to take until 1903, eighteen years after the establishment of the Irish Industries Association, before the first Industrial Development Association was established by members of the Cork branch of the Celtic Literary Society. This organisation claimed to have come to the realisation of the need for an industrial organisation, capable of attracting Irish men and women, of every shade of political and sectarian opinion into the fold. They claimed they wanted

An organisation that would confine itself solely to the advancement of Irish industry and ignore all extraneous matters; an organisation whilst availing itself of the natural sentiment of the people in favour of anything that would uplift their country, would conduct its proceedings on strict business lines.<sup>314</sup>

In this they were simply replicating the work being carried out by the already existing Irish Industries Association. That is not to say that the Industrial Development Association did not do much for the development Irish industry. This they undoubtedly did. Nevertheless, questions must be asked as to why a publication, written so close to the same period in Irish history, chose only to write of the organisations founded by the Gaelic League and the Celtic Literary Society, to the exclusion of the Irish Industries Association. It also raises the question as to why every publication I have examined in the course of my work to the present day, also ignores the significant contribution of this Association. This in spite of the fact that, in its period in history, this organisation was

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<sup>312</sup> Rolleston, T.W. 'The Irish Industries Association' (undated). Peamount archives.

<sup>313</sup> Riordan, E.J. Modern Irish Trade and Industry. p 265.

<sup>314</sup> Riordan, E.J. Modern Irish Trade and Industry. p 265.

supported by many of the leading figures of the time. It is true to say that the Irish Industries Association, was in fact, a forerunner of both of the main developments mentioned by Riordan. Yet for Irish historians it is as if the organisation, and all of its work on behalf of Irish industry, had never existed. It is my opinion that no history of the Irish industrial movement is complete, if such an oversight remains unchallenged. Furthermore, it is my belief that such an oversight would not have occurred had the Irish Industries Association been founded by the Gaelic League, rather than the Vicereign. It is also true to say that the type of industry developed by the Irish Industries Association applied mainly to what could be termed as women's work, and was therefore viewed as insignificant by economic historians.

The fact that much needed income was brought into working class homes through this organisation, working with the women of Ireland, is ignored. Even though such incomes helped whole families to survive, raised their standard of living and enabled women to make a significant economic contribution to their communities. This summary dismissal of the contribution of women and their role in Ireland's industrial development mirrors the exclusion of women from many aspects of modern Irish history. I will reveal this policy of exclusion to be particularly true in terms of all and any work associated with the name of Ishbel Aberdeen in Ireland.

## CHAPTER 4.

### **‘Tuberculosis.....a morally neutral, ubiquitous infection beyond official intervention.’**

In the following chapter I propose to give an overview of the early work of the Women’s National Health Association of Ireland which was founded by the Countess of Aberdeen, on the 13 March 1907. This will include a study of the role of the WNHA, its origins, constitution, membership and very early objectives and results. I also intend to consider those major scientific and social movements that led to the Association’s development. I will show the level of commitment and the unorthodox insight, not only of Lady Aberdeen, but of those who worked with her in this organisation, at both a national and local level. Initially the Association was involved in the care and treatment of tuberculosis sufferers, in educating individuals in the prevention of this dread disease, and in all aspects of child care that would lead to the prevention of the extremely high infant mortality rates.<sup>315</sup> Initiatives included ‘Tuberculosis Exhibitions’, which travelled the length and breadth of Ireland by horse drawn caravan.

Delegations lobbied the government seeking support for health and social reforms, and better housing conditions. Mother and Babies Clubs were formed in a further effort to reduce infant mortality rates. This led to the introduction of many related programmes. These included restaurants supplying penny dinners; the provision of school meals; programmes for the heating and cleaning of national schools; the establishment of playgrounds and boys and girls health guilds. An assertive campaign for clean tuberculin free milk was backed up by the provision of pasteurised milk products. Specially trained tuberculosis and Jubilee<sup>316</sup> nurses and health visitors were provided to support sufferers of tuberculosis and their families within their own homes. The WNHA formed Samaritan Committees and After-Care Guilds to provide practical support to those in need. A wide variety of circulars were printed and distributed in an effort to educate the public in health matters.

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<sup>315</sup> The first annual report of the WNHA in 1907 show that ninety-five children out of every 1000 children born in Ireland died before they reached the age of one year.

<sup>316</sup> Queen Victoria’s Jubilee Institute for nurses was incorporated by Royal Charter in 1889 in honour of her Diamond Jubilee.

Between 1907 and 1909 over three million leaflets, pamphlets, pictures, posters and literature had been distributed, plus a series of three volumes entitled Ireland's Crusade Against TB, which was edited by the countess. The volumes contained transcripts of lectures given by the leading authorities on subjects related to the prevention and treatment of tuberculosis. Copies of these volumes were sent free of charge to any individuals or organisations the WNHA believed were in a position to help promote their campaign. Their mailing list included the chairmen, secretaries and clerks of local authorities, dispensary doctors, members of parliament, Irish peers, the bishops and clergy of all denominations, all of the presidents and secretaries of local branches of the WNHA, also their lecturers and members of various committees. Much of the funding for this particular publication and its distribution came from the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction.<sup>317</sup> With the same broadly based aims in mind, a monthly magazine entitled Slainte. Journal of the WNHA of Ireland was published between 1909 and 1915.

The institutions founded by this organisation included a number of tuberculosis dispensaries, the Sutton Preventorium, and the Peamount Sanatorium. These institutions and the move of the Association from educators to primary care providers for those suffering from tuberculosis, will be dealt with fully in later chapters. Suffice it to say for the moment that having accomplished so much, the WNHA was never likely to get the type of support they needed from government, and particularly the exchequer, to bring about the necessary social reforms that might prevent the conditions leading to the scourge of tuberculosis. In the light of this failure they were forced to take the medical option and open dispensaries and sanatoria, to provide the services and treatment for those already infected with the bacteria.

Within weeks of Lord Aberdeen's appointment as Viceroy in 1906, events took place which led to the founding of the WNHA. The Lord Lieutenant was approached by officials from the Department of Public Health and by leading men of the medical profession. Many of the latter were members of the National Association for the Prevention

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<sup>317</sup> 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the WNHA'. 7 Oct. 1909. Peamount archives.

of Tuberculosis<sup>318</sup> They came to Dublin Castle to ask Lord Aberdeen to consider what steps could be taken to institute an educational campaign with regard to tuberculosis.<sup>319</sup> They informed him that death rate from the disease had greatly increased in the previous decades, and that far from there being any sign of improvement, matters were deteriorating. At the passing of the Registration Act of 1864, it was discovered that Ireland contrasted favourably with England and Scotland in respect of deaths from tuberculosis and infant mortality. This was no longer the case. By 1906 Ireland had the highest rate of these three areas, with Ireland's rate at 2.7 per 1000,<sup>320</sup> Scotland was next with 2.1 per 1000; and England with the lowest rate at 1.7. per 1000<sup>321</sup> In England and Scotland, the efforts of local authorities and voluntary organisations had brought about a decrease in mortality rates of at least 50 per cent.

However, in Ireland the incidence of death from this ailment was on the increase, and apart from Norway which had a slightly worse record, this was at variance with the experience in the rest of Europe and America where the disease was in decline.<sup>322</sup> Here tuberculosis was the most common cause of death within the population accounting for nearly twice as many deaths as all of the other infectious diseases combined.<sup>323</sup> The annual death rate from this disease alone, without including infant mortality rates, was 11,600 out of a total death rate of 70,000, or 15.8 per cent of the population.<sup>324</sup> Moving away from mortality rates Professor William Osler, Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford, pointed out that for every one death that occurred there were at least ten cases of active infection.<sup>325</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> The NAPTB in Ireland was founded on 12 Sept. 1899 at the Royal College of Physicians in Dublin. Their role in working with the WNHA will be discussed in the course of this chapter.

<sup>319</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. A Dream Coming True With Your Help. p 3.

<sup>320</sup> The mortality rate of 2.7 per 1000 in the early 1900s, in real terms demonstrate that tuberculosis claimed the lives of 11,500 individuals per year.

<sup>321</sup> Fitzgerald, W.G. (ed.) Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel.. 'Health and Happiness in the Homes of Ireland.' in The Voice of Ireland. (Dublin, 1920)p. 437.

<sup>322</sup> Smith, F.B. The Retreat of Tuberculosis. 1850-1950. (New York, 1988 ) p 219.

<sup>323</sup> Barrington, Ruth. Health, Medicine and Politics in Ireland. 1900-1970. (Dublin, 1987) p 13.

<sup>324</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel.. The Woman's National Health Association. Its Objects. Its Results. Its Future. (Dublin, 1913) p 2.

<sup>325</sup> Osler, William Dr. Ireland's Crusade against Tuberculosis. Vol. 1 (Dublin, 1908) p 21.

There were several types of tuberculosis, with pulmonary tuberculosis being the most common

The various types of TB are most easily divided into: Pulmonary (disease of the lungs) and non-pulmonary (affecting bones, joints, spine, and including tubercular meningitis) Pulmonary cases accounts for 75-85% of all TB deaths, with most non pulmonary cases being in children.<sup>326</sup>

The most serious aspect of these figures are best understood when it is realised that the greatest incidence of death from tuberculosis, was amongst those in the age range of 15 to 35 years. This reality was one that Lady Aberdeen was well aware of, as well as its consequences. She remarked

this is important from the nations point of view.....(it is) the same period of age which suffered a yearly drain of over 300,000 young men and women from emigration.<sup>327</sup>

This was a tragedy that could no longer be ignored, and we see from the figures available that its aftermath, like that of the Great Famine, was to effect Ireland's demographic trends for many decades to come. If we include other respiratory diseases, the death toll was a quarter of the population in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

According to F.B. Smith

In a population of 5,000,000 subject to heavy emigration of its younger, healthier, people the further loss occasioned by tuberculosis mortality and morbidity amounts to a major hurt to the economy and public morale.<sup>328</sup>

Reports were showing that many more women died of tuberculosis in Ireland than men, and this figure also compared unfavourably with England and Scotland.

Female death rates generally..exceeded male rates ...and more so in Dublin and Belfast.....In Belfast until the late 1920s women had reported 50 percent higher morbidity and 30 percent higher death rate than men in the same and older age groups.<sup>329</sup>

This tendency demonstrated the fact that particularly among the lower classes it was women who lived most of their time in the home, and so its was women who suffered

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<sup>326</sup> Twomey, Padraig. 'Tuberculosis in Ireland 1907-1921' in Retrospect. Journal of the Irish History Students Association 1989. p 16.

<sup>327</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel . A Dream Coming True With Your Help. p 3..

<sup>328</sup> Smith, F.B. The Retreat of Tuberculosis. 1850-1950. p 219.

<sup>329</sup> Smith, F.B. The Retreat of Tuberculosis. 1850-1950. p 219.

most from bad housing, unsanitary surroundings and a lack of fresh air. It was also women who, as the main carers of those who suffered from tuberculosis, were the most likely to become contaminated by the disease.

This was also true of children, the most important determinant of a child's health was his or her social class. Mortality rates from 1905 in Ireland, show that for children in the one year to five year age group, mortality rates among the professional classes was 0.9 per 1000, in the middle classes the figure was 2.7 per 1000, for artisans and petty shop keepers the figure rose to 4.8 per 1000, rising dramatically to 12.7 per 1000 in the case of hawkers, labourers and porters.<sup>330</sup>

It was the poor in urban areas, individuals of both sexes and all ages, who would suffer the most from the ravages of tuberculosis. This was the result of overcrowding and interaction in confined spaces, causing contaminated droplets to spread the disease. It was also this section of the community who were excluded from the limited care available in hospital and sanatoria. Furthermore, in the final stages of the disease, they tended to be excluded from the workhouses in favour of out-door relief. What care was available was confined to those in the early stages, because they had the best hope of recovery. That is not to say that tuberculosis was not also endemic in the rural areas. According to F.B. Smith

it was not simply a product of overcrowding and poverty in the towns. Overwork, strain, pregnancy and bad health.....might light up the disease anywhere.<sup>331</sup>

The representatives who came to Lord Aberdeen felt that immediate action was essential in order to combat the effects of this disease. William Osler described the situation as catastrophic and claimed that anything less than a concerted national effort would end in failure. He also called for a complete reorganisation of the public health service, for the compulsory notification of all cases of tuberculosis, and for the disinfection of all homes affected by the disease.<sup>332</sup> Most importantly the medical representatives felt it would be necessary, to enlist the support of the general public behind any measures taken.

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<sup>330</sup> Daly, Mary E. Dublin the Deposed Capital. A social and economic history. 1860-1914. (Cork, 1984) p 220.

<sup>331</sup> Daly, Mary E. Dublin the Deposed Capital. A social and economic history. 1860-1914. p 220.

<sup>332</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. (ed.) Ireland's Crusade Against Tuberculosis. Vol. 1. p 10.



There was considerable apathy to be overcome, with many individuals simply accepting the inevitability of tuberculosis. There was great ignorance, fear and stigma attached to the disease. This was due to many factors, including the belief that it was poor man's disease, and that it was hereditary and therefore reflected badly on families. In many areas where tuberculosis was known as 'decline' or 'consumption' the people became lethargic looking upon the disease as incurable. Often it was seen as the will of God and no effort was made to seek treatment. Instead the disease was hidden while family and friends waited patiently for death.<sup>333</sup> Pdraig Twomey in his publication on the disease in Ireland 1907-1921 states

The disease was generally regarded as being a shameful and divinely ordained malady.....Until about the 1890s sufferers, kin, philanthropists and legislators were resigned to it as a morally neutral, ubiquitous infection beyond official intervention.<sup>334</sup>

These beliefs persisted in spite of the numbers of medical professionals and scientists who were claiming the disease was not hereditary, but contagious. They also declared that if the 'Laws of Health' i.e. cleanliness, fresh air, healthy diet, temperance etc. were faithfully observed for 30 to 50 years they could rid Ireland of tuberculosis entirely.

The German scientist Robert Koch had demonstrated in March 1882, to the Physiological Society in Berlin, that tuberculosis was caused by a bacterial infection which could attack many parts of the body. This discovery brought tuberculosis into the realm of preventable diseases.<sup>335</sup> These scientific developments were a new concept for most, and international disputes remained among scientists and members of the medical profession. Nevertheless we find that there was much consensus among the medical establishment in Ireland, in accepting the theory that bacteria was responsible for the disease of tuberculosis in all its forms. At the first meeting of the National Association for the Prevention of Tuberculosis, held at the Royal College of Physicians on the 12 Sept. 1899, we note the passing of the following resolution

that in view of the widespread prevalence and great mortality of pulmonary consumption and other tubercular diseases and of the fact that these maladies have

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<sup>333</sup> Thompson, William Sir. 'The Tuberculosis Campaign in Ireland' in Journal of State Medicine. vol. 11. 1929. p 2.

<sup>334</sup> Twomey, Pdraig. Tuberculosis in Ireland. 1907-1921. p 20.

<sup>335</sup> Hooper, A.C.B. (ed.) 'The Centenary of the Discovery of the Tubercle Bacillus' supplement to Irish Journal of Medical Science. Vol. 154. May 1985. p 5.

now been proved to be in a great measure preventable, an organised effort should now be made to stamp out all forms of tubercular disease.<sup>336</sup>

Nonetheless, those who did wish to spread the message of infection and prevention found it impossible to reach a nation-wide audience. For example, following on from the establishment of the NAPT in Dublin, a Belfast branch was formed in the same year, and one in Cork came into existence in 1903. The Dublin NAPT met in rooms in the Royal College of Physicians and represented Dublin's medical elite. The same was true of the other branches, where the driving force would be the emerging medical experts in the field of tuberculosis.<sup>337</sup> Therefore their role was very limited. This in spite of the fact that the NAPT in Dublin had asked that

arrangements should be made for the delivery of popular lectures on 'The cause and Prevention of TB' in all of the towns throughout the district under the influence of the society.<sup>338</sup>

Unfortunately, this organisation had neither the support nor resources to fulfil this task and the Countess of Aberdeen was well aware of these shortcomings. While addressing the Royal Institute of Public Health she spoke of the great discoveries of doctors and scientist which led to the acceptance of certain medical principles by those in the profession. However, she claimed that the failure to bring the general public along with them would ultimately led to defeat. Lady Aberdeen explained

The doctors had done their best for many years to preach their gospel, the Registrar General published figures calculated to arouse the public, the Local Government Board had introduced books and circulars of advice and suggestions, and philanthropist held meetings to discuss the question and to consider schemes of remedy. But little effect can be produced by either legislation or by official work unless you have public opinion behind you, and public opinion is formed in the homes of the people.<sup>339</sup>

It would take a mass movement on a grand scale to undermine the negative beliefs, to overcome the ignorance and fear, and to bring about the profound change necessary in

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<sup>336</sup> Minutes of the first meeting of The National Association for the Prevention of Tuberculosis, dated 12 Sept. 1899. Archives of the Royal College of Physicians in Ireland.

<sup>337</sup> Jones, Greta. 'The Campaign against Tuberculosis in Ireland 1899-1914' in Medicine, Disease and the State in Ireland 1650-1940. (Cork, 1999) p 160.

<sup>338</sup> 'Minutes of meeting of the National Association for the Prevention of Tuberculosis' dated 4 Dec. 1899. Archives of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland.

<sup>339</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. 'The Sphere of Women in Relation to Public Health' in Dublin Journal of Medical Science. Sept. 1911. p 164.

the public perception of tuberculosis, its causes, effects and consequences. It was for this reason that the WNHA of Ireland was established.

It was hardly surprising that these key members of the medical establishment and those concerned about this scourge came to the Aberdeens so soon after their arrival in Dublin. They would undoubtedly have heard of the Countess of Aberdeen's interest in health matters, and her work in Canada with the establishment of the Victoria Order of Nurses. As already stated William Osier was a strong opponent of the countess in her efforts to establish the VONs in Canada, but was later to become one of her greatest allies in Ireland. Many would have known of her commitment to the Irish Industries Association and the work accomplished on a nation-wide scale by this organisation. If the anti-tuberculosis campaign were to succeed, this delegation realised that they would need an individual with the qualifications, the drive and the authority of the countess. Yet even they could not have foreseen the events that would follow the founding of the WNHA of Ireland.

It was at a very representative gathering that the inauguration of the WNHA was carried out by the Viceroy, Lord Aberdeen. At a somewhat formal affair held on the 13 March 1907, in the prestigious location of the Hall of the Royal College of Physicians in Dublin, the motion for its formation was moved by the Moderator of the General Assembly, the Rev Dr McKean of Belfast. His proposal was seconded by the Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin.<sup>340</sup> Lady Aberdeen was elected the first President of the newly formed organisation with Sir William Thompson<sup>341</sup> as Treasurer, and Mrs Alice Rushdon<sup>342</sup> as Honorary Secretary. The countess would begin her work by gathering around her those with the necessary expertise to advise and help.<sup>343</sup>

This first step left her open to the allegations made at the time, and in recent years by Alun Evans, that she 'summoned advisers who gave way to her in everything'.<sup>344</sup> In fact we will see that the countess elicited support from a wide spectrum of opinion. The list of those who gave their active support to the WNHA was first class. For example, in its early years members of the executive committee included the following; Sir Robert

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<sup>340</sup> Freeman's Journal 15 March 1907.

<sup>341</sup> Sir William Thompson was a past President of the Royal College of Physicians in Ireland.

<sup>342</sup> Alice Rushdon was a community nurse for many years in Dublin city.

<sup>343</sup> Appendices 20-22.

<sup>344</sup> Evans, Alun Professor. 'The Countess of Aberdeen's health promotion caravans' in Journal of the Irish College of Physicians and Surgeons. July 1995. p 211.

Matheson, Registrar General for Ireland along with Lady Matheson, Sir Charles Cameron, the Health Officer for Dublin, and Professor Mettam. They were joined by Professor McWeeny, Professor of bacteriology and pathology at the Catholic Medical school, pathologist at the Mater Misericordiae hospital and bacteriologist to the Local Government Board, T.J. Stafford, Medical Commissioner of the Local Government Board, Surgeon-Colonel Flinn also of Local Government Board. Among others numbered in this impressive roll call were Sir William Thompson M.D, Dr Lily Baker,<sup>345</sup> Dr Ella Webb,<sup>346</sup> with Dr Alfred Boyd,<sup>347</sup> president of the NAPTB in Dublin.<sup>348</sup>

Lady Aberdeen soon became a busy correspondent. For example she wrote to Dr Alfred Boyd on the 15 May 1907 to discuss two major topics. Firstly, there was the possibility of using travelling caravans for educational purposes in the fight against tuberculosis and she asked that the NAPTB help the WNHA in this by providing suitable literature for distribution by these touring exhibitions. Secondly, she raised the possibility of opening a sanatoria to provide care for those living in the Dublin area.<sup>349</sup> The countess also wrote requesting support from members of the Royal College of Physicians, the Royal College of Surgeons, the Royal Academy of Medicine and the Irish Medical Association, asking that each organisation appoint two of their members to act on a consultative committee to the WNHA.<sup>350</sup> Therefore the claim by Professor Evans that the countess chose supporters who would give way to her in everything are unfounded.

Joanna Bourke's<sup>351</sup> claim that the WNHA represented only the Anglo Irish elite is also unfounded. By its nature, it was inevitable that the central committee of the WNHA would consist largely of establishment types from the upper classes and the medical

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<sup>345</sup> Dr Lily Baker was an gynaecologist who worked in anti-natal care at the Bristol hospital and had served for a time in the RAF. She had a passionate interest in the welfare of mothers and infants and attended the first meeting of the newly formed WNHA of Ireland and was committed to its programmes.

<sup>346</sup> Dr Ella Webb was one of the earliest female medical graduates in Ireland. She worked in the Adelaide hospital in paediatrics and was very interested in matters relating to public health

<sup>347</sup> 'First annual report of the Council Meetings of the WNHA 1908'. Peamount archives.

<sup>348</sup> There is also evidence to prove that the countess was herself a life member of the NAPTB and fully supported its aims and aspirations i.e. correspondence found at the archives of the Royal College of Physicians dated 15 May 1907 from Lady Aberdeen to Dr Alfred Boyd.

<sup>349</sup> Correspondence dated 15 May 1907, from Lady Aberdeen to Dr Alfred Boyd. Archives of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland.

<sup>350</sup> Correspondence dated 23 July 1907, from Lady Aberdeen to Dr Alfred Boyd. Archives of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland.

<sup>351</sup> Bourke, Joanna. 'The Health Caravan: Female Labour and Domestic Education in rural Ireland 1890-1914.' in *Eire/Ireland* 1989. pp 21-38.

profession. However, later chapters of this work will prove that at a national level the Association would have support from all strata of Irish society, encompassing both nationalists and unionists. The organisation would consist of men and women of all classes, creeds and political affiliations, who would use the opportunities provided by the WNHA to improve the health and living conditions of the people of this country.

The countess could not be present at the inauguration of the WNHA due to ill health, but in an address read out on the occasion by her husband she displayed a very diplomatic flair. In underlining the role of the WNHA, she was careful to reassure others of their desire only to serve. It was important that the Association's role, especially at this early stage, was viewed as acceptable in terms of the role it assigned to females, and that it was seen to complement, not exclude, the philanthropic and voluntary organisations already in existence. The Association had to fit into the conservative Roman Catholic/Edwardian perception of what was and was not suitable for women to undertake. The countess was also careful to link the role of the WNHA to the equally important part played by other statutory bodies. While calling for help and support from all quarters, she was careful not to undermine the powers that be, or those who were already involved in work of this nature. Lady Aberdeen declared

We do not seek to entrench on the domain of any of the valuable societies that have been formed to combat disease and promote health by diverse means, but we do desire to make use of these societies. As we believe that the care of public health is within the province of women's work...but it has (also) been found by experience that properly equipped sanitary inspectors, health visitors, district nurses, as well as members of Boards of Guardians, district councils and lecturers can have a more powerful influence in reducing infant mortality etc. For they are able to drive home the truth of health principles which we wish to promulgate everywhere.<sup>352</sup>

In this way Lady Aberdeen positioned the WNHA's role in Irish society in a non-threatening and non-invasive manner. It was also true that if the issues surrounding tuberculosis and its spread were to be dealt with fully, then there would need to be co-operation between both official and unofficial agencies in matters relating to its prevention. The countess had learned that this was the most successful approach in both America, particularly in New York, and in Germany where this had been the practice for a number of years.<sup>353</sup>

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<sup>352</sup> Freeman's Journal. 15 March 1907.

<sup>353</sup> Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Vol. 1. July 1909. p 132.

More importantly the countess set about enlisting the support of the general public behind the movement, especially women. The Association would appeal to women in their own homes, as it was believed that it was they who held the key to solving these problems, and to a large extent this was true. Lady Aberdeen acknowledged this when she stated

If they (women) could be shown that open windows, oatmeal and milk, with cleanly habits and temperance were the best defence for their children against disease, we felt the battle would be more than half won.<sup>354</sup>

It must be noted that Lady Aberdeen, and other women involved in philanthropic reform movements, often come in for criticism for their attitude to working class families, particularly by present day historians. Middle and upper class women who had from the 18th century involved themselves in women's issues, were classified as seeing themselves as superior, with a duty to help the socially inferior lower classes.<sup>355</sup> An attitude which, it was believed, caused consternation among those they tried to assist. Their desire to teach lower class women 'a better way', when so many lived in abject poverty and deplorable conditions, led to the development of the 'Lady Bountiful' stereo-type. And yet in this generation, we classify as 'professionals' those who would educate individuals living in abject poverty in Third World countries on matters relating to good dietary habits, good hygiene, disease prevention and other life saving skills, and accept this as the norm.

It has long been recognised by the non-governmental organisations in these regions that it is women who, with the proper instruction, are the ones most likely to initiate change and take primary responsibility for the everyday welfare of their families. Nor do women in the First World see it as a slur upon their ability as mothers to be given advice by those with education and experience in matters relating to child rearing. Therefore, I believe, that such criticism of organisations like the WNHA is unwarranted and unfair to those members of the Association who worked tirelessly in their roles as educators and in many cases, service providers.

The countess envisaged a structure within this new organisation that would lead to the mutual co-operation of all classes, based on the model provided by the International

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<sup>354</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. Health and Happiness in the Homes of Ireland. p 437.

<sup>355</sup> Cullen, Mary. and Luddy, Maria. (eds.) Women Power and Consciousness in 19th Century Ireland. (Dublin, 1995) p 15.

Council of Women. This approach would be vital to the survival of this fledgling movement, as in a direct appeal to women lay the best chance of achieving their aims. The WNHA was not at any level, nor was it ever meant to be, an exclusively women's organisation. Lady Aberdeen in recognising the need for support from those with the political, social, and institutional authority to bring about fundamental changes, stated

It is a women's association because it is admitted that the remedies and reforms we desire are mostly in the hands of women in charge of the home. But to this association men are also welcomed and we tell them that women can only carry out this work if they are supported by their fathers, husbands and brothers. So they join our councils, and although working committees are composed of women, yet these can in nearly all cases depend on the close co-operation of the local medical men and clergy and members of their urban councils.<sup>356</sup>

Women would indeed need the support of their male counterparts if they were to succeed. Mary Cullen as editor of Women, Power and Consciousness in 19th. Century Ireland states

The central issue for women was that of autonomy, the power to direct one's life to ends of one's own choosing. Conventional thinking backed up by law, regulation and custom, laid down axioms for the behaviour deemed appropriate for women. Society was then always ready to define women's 'nature' to fit the required behaviour.....the underlying paradigm saw women as essentially subordinate to men and subject to male authority in decisions about their lives<sup>357</sup>

This was an era when a women's role, regardless of her class, was still within the home. Women were very much on the fringes of politics, medicine, science and of careers in general. There was very little white collar or even semi-professional work for women regardless of their background. Society's perception was that women were there to be wives and mothers. This was in spite of the fact that by the turn of the 20th century, there were increasing numbers of articulate and well educated upper and middle class women. For those at the lower end of the social scale, for whom education meant very little, they too were expected to fulfil the role of wives and mothers in a wholly domestic setting. In urban areas of Ireland there was little factory work often the only available employment was in domestic service. Therefore, regardless of class, a women's role was mainly confined to caring and nurturing.

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<sup>356</sup> 'Report of the work of the WNHA to the Tuberculosis International Congress in Washington D.C. 1908.' p 9. Peamount archives.

<sup>357</sup> Cullen, Mary. and Luddy, Maria. (eds.) Women, Power and Consciousness in 19th. Century Ireland. p 15.

From this standpoint we can better understand why Lady Aberdeen and the WNHA were to put so much responsibility on women in the home. Viewed from a modern perspective this may seem rather severe. But when considered in the context of a period when the establishment was largely inactive on matters related to health, the countess understood the need to use the role of women to the greatest advantage. The WNHA was also ready to give women of all classes, more credit than many of their contemporaries in terms of what they were capable of achieving. In 1911 Lady Aberdeen was invited by the Royal Institute of Public Health to speak at their Third Annual Congress and to become both the President and a Fellow of the Institute. In her opening remarks, she stated

The truth is if you desire to have any great movement popularised.....you must have the women with you or you will fail. If you wish to dislodge deep seated prejudice, if you wish to carry out a great reform, if you wish to introduce successfully some method of education, you must gain the women over to your side.....and when it comes to matters of health, there indeed you come across a stone wall if you wish to introduce reforms regarding food and dress, fresh air and children's training without taking the mistress of the house with you.<sup>358</sup>

The WNHA wished to become a mass movement for eradication of tuberculosis, and for a reduction of the excessive infant mortality rates. To do this they would need the full commitment of the homemakers and child rearers of the nation, for without their support the Association knew there was little chance of success. Therefore the first given objectives of the WNHA were

1. To arouse public opinion and especially that of the women of Ireland to a sense of responsibility regarding the public health.
2. To spread the knowledge of what may be done in every home to guard against disease, and to eradicate it when it appears.
3. To promote the upbringing of a healthy and vigorous race.<sup>359</sup>

The first two objectives were closely related. This was based on the firm belief that tuberculosis was conquerable, and that the infant mortality rates could be greatly reduced even under the prevailing social circumstances. In relation to the first objective, as already stated, there was much fear and stigma associated with the disease, and this had to be overcome.

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<sup>358</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. 'The Sphere of Women in Relation to Public Health' in Dublin Journal of Medical Science. Sept. 1911. p 136.

<sup>359</sup> Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Vol. 1 July 1909. p 131.



Lady Aberdeen was to pose the question

But how could we materially help? This was the question for women...until sanatoria are built to meet our needs and until unhealthy houses have been rooted off the land, is there very much to be done?<sup>360</sup>

In fact, there was much that could be done, and indeed much was achieved by the WNHA, including the building of sanatoria. This success came because of the desire and industry of a wide range of women, from Lady Aberdeen herself to the members of the local branches, all of whom worked hard to pursue their aims.

The second and just as serious an issue that was brought to the attention of the Aberdeens at this time, was that of the high infant mortality rates, particularly among the working and lower classes in urban areas. This was a cause of major public concern, in all of Ireland's cities. The Belfast Evening Telegraph of the 14 March 1907 stated in relation to this problem

It is a powerful thing to be told on the authority of Sir Charles Cameron (Chief Health Officer of Dublin) that the chance of a gentleman's child living through the first year of its existence in Dublin was about 14 times greater than the chance of a child belonging to the labouring population.<sup>361</sup>

Figures forwarded at her own request to the countess from the Registrar General bore out this claim, and show in stark numerical terms the great difficulties that were apparent in the very high infant mortality rates, particularly in Dublin. The figures were both exceptional and outrageous, and showed that 13 per cent of all deaths in the city of Dublin were of children under 5 years old, while 60 per cent of this group died before they reached 12 months old.<sup>362</sup>

The countess concluded, after reviewing conditions for the previous 50 years, that there were three obvious danger points. Firstly, that since the Great Famine there had been a tendency for the healthier sections of the community to emigrate. Secondly, there were the ongoing problems associated with the wretched housing conditions of so much of the indigent urban population, especially in the Dublin slums. Thirdly, many of these same people subsisted on chronically bad diets, consisting of bread and black tea and

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<sup>360</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. 'Report of the work of the WNHA of Ireland to the International Tuberculosis Congress in Washington D.C.' p 9.

<sup>361</sup> Belfast Evening Telegraph. 14 March 1907.

<sup>362</sup> Thompson, Sir William J. M.D. 'The Tuberculosis Campaign in Ireland' in Journal of State Medicine. Vol. XXXVII. No 11. 1929. p 8.

little else.<sup>363</sup> The very high rates of infant mortality and the spread of tuberculosis in cities and towns, in comparison to rural areas, could be laid at the door of this fundamental deficit in the basic requirements of food and shelter. They were an inevitable result of poverty, over-crowding, poor nutrition and an appalling lack of sanitary services.

These circumstances informed the Associations ultimate ambition, that of the “upbringing of a healthy and vigorous race”. This third aim needs to be examined more closely in terms of the eugenics movement that had become prominent in the second half of the nineteenth century. As the very phrase ‘the upbringing of a healthy and vigorous race’ has connotations for this popular philosophy of the period, and therefore must be dealt with in this context. The movement was based on two convictions, firstly on the belief that the human species could be ‘perfected’ and secondly, as already stated in a previous chapter, a growing belief in science as the most dependable and useful form of knowledge. This particular discipline was based upon a group of sociological theories, known as Social Darwinism<sup>364</sup>; i.e. the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest. Therefore the constant selection of the ‘better’ rather than the ‘worse’ elements within society, would lead to the continuing improvement of humankind.

Darwin speaking in biological terms of his Theory of Evolution had stated that

This is the doctern of Malthus applied to the whole of the animal and vegetable kingdom. As many more individuals of each species are born than can possibly survive; and as consequently there is a frequently recurring struggle for existence, it follows that any being, if it vary however slightly in any manner profitable to itself, will have a better chance of surviving.<sup>365</sup>

Notwithstanding its origin in biology, this idea came to dominate the social, political, and scientific thoughts of the last decades of the 19th century. This in spite of Darwin’s own doubts about the relevance of his hypothesis to human society.<sup>366</sup> Nonetheless, the widespread acceptance of this theory as being applicable to human society, led to the development of eugenics, as a means of applying the principals in sociological terms.

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<sup>363</sup> Aberdeen., Lady Ishbel. Health and happiness in the homes of Ireland. p 437.

<sup>364</sup> Social Darwinism was a vastly influential structure of ideas which used as its basis Darwin’s ‘Theory of Evolution’

<sup>365</sup> Darwin, Charles. On the Origin of the Species (1859). (London, 1909) pp 15-16.

<sup>366</sup> Shaw, Christopher. ‘Eliminating the Yahoo. Eugenics, Social Darwinism and the Five Fabians’ in History of Political Thought Vol. VIII. no. 3 Winter 1987. pp 522.

There were two general aspects to this movement “positive eugenics”, which concentrated on the means of increasing the breeding potential of ‘fit’ individuals, whilst “negative eugenics” emphasised the need for restricting breeding by those deemed to be ‘unfit’.<sup>367</sup> Annual Congresses to spread the gospel of eugenics were held in rotation in all of the major cities in the British Isles, coming to Dublin in 1911. At the Dublin conference problems of national fitness and public health were discussed, and the views expressed would not have been out of step with public opinion in this period. For example the following resolution was passed

That in the opinion of the members of the conference, the feeling of individual responsibility towards the race should be fostered by all systems of education and that training should include preparation for parenthood; that, in social reform the underlying principles of biology should be recognised and that the study of human heredity should be encouraged.<sup>368</sup>

The opening remarks in particular were in keeping with the aims of the newly formed WNHA. In that same year the London Eugenics Education Society sent its president Leonard Darwin, to address the Belfast Natural History and Philosophical Society, where he urged society to ‘consider whether...all was being done that could be done to improve the racial vigour of the British and Irish population’.<sup>369</sup>

In view of Lady Aberdeen’s keen interest in science, and her involvement in the International Council of Women, there can be no doubt that she was well aware of these views long before they were introduced at the Dublin Conference. As already stated the countess had entertained Francis Galton, the founder of the eugenics movement, at Haddo House during a science convention held in Aberdeen in 1885.<sup>370</sup> She was also a member of the Eugenics Society in Belfast, and was no doubt extremely interested in this movement which was finding support firstly in Europe, and later in countries all over the world. Nevertheless, there are several reasons why the Countess of Aberdeen would have rejected the fundamental ideology of the eugenics movement, while at the same time espousing some of the movement’s more idealistic approaches.

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<sup>367</sup> Jones, E. ‘Eugenics in Ireland. The Belfast Eugenics Society, 1911-15’. in Irish Historical Studies xxviii No 109 May 1992. p 89

<sup>368</sup> Jones, E. ‘Eugenics in Ireland: The Belfast Eugenics Society, 1911-15’. in Irish Historical Studies xxviii. No 109. May 1992. p 83.

<sup>369</sup> Jones, E. ‘Eugenics in Ireland. The Belfast Eugenics Society 1811-15’. in Irish Historical Studies. xxviii. No. 109. May 1992.p 84.

<sup>370</sup> Francis Galton was to gain such widespread support that in 1907 he founded the Eugenics Education Society who published their own magazine The Eugenics Review.

Firstly, the most radical of the eugenisists often denigrated the aristocracy of Edwardian Britain as a 'sham' claiming that their inherited wealth simply encouraged selfish idleness,<sup>371</sup> an idea with which the countess may have had some sympathy. However, to further claim that this weakened the healthy racial instinct was not something she could accept for her own class. Furthermore, the eugenisists claimed that it was the members of the professional middle classes, medical men, scientists and academics who had a central role to play as guardians of the racial health. This belief led to the exclusion, not only of the aristocracy and a 'degenerate' lower class, but also manual workers and trade union officials, with very few members from business, commercial or financial backgrounds.<sup>372</sup> This exclusive mentality would not have met with Lady Aberdeens approval, and was not in keeping with the role that she had assigned herself as a philanthropist and social reformer. It is not feasible that she with her aristocratic background, and open support for individuals of all classes, could have given her whole hearted support to such a movement. Galton's own belief that the innate qualities of man were established at birth as a result of heredity, and not as the result of environmental factors was also alien to Lady Aberdeen.<sup>373</sup> Her own efforts to improve the lives of all individuals regardless of class or environment illustrate her own belief in external factors having a huge influence on the lives of all individuals.

I propose to show in later chapters the lengths to which Lady Aberdeen was prepared to go in order to improve the health and living conditions of the urban poor. This was to be carried out in a manner that left no doubt as to her understanding of the need for reform, as a means of enabling every individual to overcome disadvantage that was environmental rather than genetic. Finally, aficionados of eugenics maintained that the principles of selective breeding should be applied in order to maintain certain desirable characteristics, and that the quality of race in Edwardian Britain appeared to be in decline.<sup>374</sup> However, the countess believed that improvement in the living conditions of individuals, was a far more constructive means of dealing with any perceived decline.

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<sup>371</sup> Searle, G.R. Eugenics and class in biology, medicine and society. 1840-1940. (Cambridge, 1978). p 219.

<sup>372</sup> Searle, G.R. Eugenics and class in biology, medicine and society. 1840-1940. pp 219-220.

<sup>373</sup> Woodhouse, Jayne. 'Eugenics and the feeble minded: the parliamentary debates of 1912-14 in History of Education. Vol. II no 2. 1982 p 127.

<sup>374</sup> Woodhouse, Jayne. 'Eugenics and the feeble minded: the parliamentary debates of 1912-14 in History of Education. Vol. II no 2. 1982 p 127.

It is my belief that Lady Aberdeen had a very consistent and pragmatic approach to scientific theories and findings. She would always try to make an informed decision and take from them what she felt was reasonable, thereby leaving extreme views to others. For example, just as the countess would have been aware of Koch's discovery of the tubercular bacillus, she was not blind to the appalling poverty and other social problems that led to the spread of the disease. She was also cognisant of the debates raging on the merits or otherwise of sanatoria treatment, but believed that while it was not the ideal answer, it was the only sensible alternative in the absence of radical social change. In the case of Darwin, while understanding the concept of his theories, she was able to keep in clear focus her own religious belief in a higher authority being involved in the creation of humankind.

Therefore, at least in this case, the upbringing of a healthy and vigorous race had more to do with life-style, diet and immunology than with genetics. Likewise, the building up of the constitution of the individual would make them less susceptible to disease. The views of Dr Michael F. Cox, a supporter of, and advisor to the WNHA, would have been very influential with the countess, particularly as he spoke of those who would be the future mothers and fathers of Ireland. In outlining the measures that must be adopted to ensure the health of that generation of children, Cox maintained they must not only be protected from disease, but would have to be taught how to look after their own health as adults, and that of their future offspring. Emphasising that those in authority had a duty to fulfil to the children of the country, Dr Cox stated

Let me figuratively say that we have the voice of the children crying to us to come and save them - to stand between them and this plague of tuberculosis which threatens them and all of our people so much, that we are determined, so far as in us lies, to come and stand between them and this dreadful plague - not only this plague but other plagues of vast importance to our people.<sup>375</sup>

The issue therefore, for the WNHA in the upbringing of a healthy and vigorous race was to more to do with the protection of children from the ravages of disease than any form of social Darwinism. The development of the WNHA, and its sister organisations, will undoubtedly show that their third goal was primarily concerned with welfare of a nation

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<sup>375</sup> 'Minutes of the proceedings of the Deputation of Medical Corporations, Societies and other Associations working against Tuberculosis, to his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant, the Chief Secretary and the Department of Agriculture'. dated 29 Nov. 1907. p 18. Peamount archives.

that had suffered the devastation of its population, particularly of the young, in the previous century. The theories of the eugenicists were secondary to these goals.

I propose to continue in this chapter by giving an overview of the early accomplishments and failures of the WNHA, as the organisation worked towards its three main objectives. Events were to lead to the WNHA taking on a much more diverse set of commitments over and above, but closely related to, these aims. As early as 1908 the WNHA would also give whole-hearted commitment to the resolutions adopted at the International Tuberculosis Congress held in Washington D.C. in that year. These included the call for all governments to introduce laws leading to the compulsory notification and registration of incidences of tuberculosis, so that health authorities might be enabled to put into operation adequate measures to prevent further diffusion of the disease.<sup>376</sup>

A second proposal resolved that the greatest efforts be maintained in order to thwart by all possible means the spread of the infection, whether from one person to another or from cattle to humankind. The Congress also urged the use of special hospitals for advanced cases and the establishment of sanatoria for curable conditions, both types of institutions to be supported by dispensaries, to reach those within the community. Preventative measures were also called for, including the regulation of factories and workshops and the securing of sanitary dwellings. It was felt that these measures would increase the power of the community at large to avoid tuberculosis and other diseases, where there was a direct relationship to adverse working and living conditions. In terms of education, it was recommended that instruction in personal and school hygiene and sanitation be given in all such establishments. If possible, this should be carried out by properly qualified medical instructors. In colleges and universities similar courses should be introduced. Finally, the Congress recommended the establishment of playgrounds as an important means of preventing tuberculosis through their influence on exercise and general well being.<sup>377</sup>

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<sup>376</sup> The debate on compulsory notification of TB was to continue for many years, with those who believed this was the only way of truly dealing with both the individual sufferer and those who came into contact with the disease, and those who feared that compulsory notification would lead to an individual passing from the world of the healthy into the increasingly separate and shunned world of the tubercular.

<sup>377</sup> Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Vol. 1. July. 1909. p 131.

I propose to show that with a multitude of schemes, unceasing hard work and by many unorthodox methods, the WNHA would try with great enthusiasm, but varying degrees of success, to implement all of these measures. Each of these will be touched on in the course of my work.

The constitution of this new Association was arranged to enable local branches throughout the country become affiliated to the Central Council in Dublin, who would hold an Annual General Conference. This was based upon the model of the International Council of Women and its affiliated National Councils. All women living in Ireland could become members provided they pledged themselves to do all in their power to carry out the aims of the Association, both within their own homes and by personal influence. The WNHA was to be entirely non-sectarian, non-political and democratic. It would be funded by membership payments, fund raising activities and donations. One third of the funds raised by the branches would be donated to the Central Committee in Dublin to be redistributed for various projects, the other two thirds being used for local projects. Fund raising for the work of the WNHA was always an urgent priority with so many schemes and projects being undertaken.

Financial statements from Dr William Thompson, Treasurer of the organisation show that income came from a variety of sources. These included annual subscriptions from local branches,<sup>378</sup> regular donations from supporters, and special donations for specific projects. The United States, particularly Boston and New York, was an excellent source for such funds. An annual Blue Flag Day was held, and there were also profits from both the WNHA refreshment van and milk depots, as well as fund raising entertainments.<sup>379</sup>

The practical work of the WNHA began when they obtained without cost, a space to hold their first large 'Health Exhibition' at the Irish International Exhibition of 1907, which ran from 12 October until 7 November of that year. It was decided to split the exhibition into six major sections, with a number of sub-sections.

1. The Statistical Section had different charts, prepared by the Registrar General, Sir Robert Matheson, showing the death rates from all forms of tuberculosis in Ireland, England, and Scotland and highlighting the great differences in mortality rates

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<sup>378</sup> It is interesting to note, using 1909 as an example, that there were 155 branches of the association in Ireland with 17,543 members of whom only 558 were subscribing members, the remainder were affiliated members who contributed 1/2d. annually to the organisation. The lack of an enforced subscription was due to the WNHA's reluctance to exclude any who would become part of their crusade. 'WNHA Third Annual Council Meeting 19 April 1909'.

<sup>379</sup> WNHA. Financial Statement 31 December 1909 in the report of the 'Third Annual Council Meeting of the WNHA of Ireland. 19 April 1910'. Peamount archives.

- between the three. These also included illustrations showing the decrease in death rates where active work had been carried on for some time against the disease.
2. The Literary Section included Municipal and Poor Law Exhibits, with diagrams and photographs and other miscellaneous papers on all matters relating to the care and treatment of tuberculosis. These were not only from Ireland, but from many cities in Britain and from New York. A major part of this was literature and pictures produced by Dr Alfred Boyd to show what was being done by the anti-tuberculosis campaign in Dublin.
  3. Professor McWeeney undertook the provision of a Pathological Section with suitable exhibits showing the disease at various stages, with healthy and unhealthy organs being displayed along side each other.
  4. Professor Melton, Principal of the Royal Veterinary College, presented a display including a collection of exhibits which demonstrated the effects of the disease upon livestock. It is interesting to note that in light of the appalling state of many Irish byres that the organisers of this exhibition went to the trouble of housing a healthy cow in comfortable well ventilated surroundings, and a tubercular cow in badly ventilated unhealthy conditions. This matter will also be dealt with more fully in later chapters.
  5. Sir William Thompson designed an Appliance Section including mock-ups of sanatoria, shelters, and chalets, as well as various disinfection appliances etc. This part of the exhibition clearly demonstrated the necessity of fresh air and well ventilated and clean surroundings, it included two models of both hygienic and unhygienic rooms, highlighting the dangers of the latter.
  6. A Food Section dealing with the value of good nourishment was organised by Doctors Ella Webb and Lily Baker. Special attention was given to the food of infants and children, especially cows' milk. This also included advice on a simple and relatively inexpensive invalid diet.<sup>380</sup>

It was Lady Aberdeen and Dr William Thompson who undertook to arrange lectures and literature for distribution. Professor William Osler gave the keynote address at the exhibition. In his opening remarks the Professor was to advocate that, through the press, the pulpit, by private effort, by lectures and pamphlets - in short, in every way, a campaign of incessant unending activity must be waged against the ravages of tuberculosis. Osler also indicated that this would require two important and indispensable factors, firstly *enthusiasm* and secondly *perseverance*. The first would emerge when individuals began to see results, and the second would be required as the battle against tuberculosis would have to continue 'in season and out of season' for very many years.

Other internationally distinguished medical men and scientists also spoke at this first exhibition. These included Sir Robert Philip of Edinburgh; Dr Hope, the Medical Officer of Health from Liverpool who was one of the honorary secretaries of the Royal College

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<sup>380</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. (ed.) *Ireland's Crusade against Tuberculosis. Vol. 1.* (Dublin, 1908) - contains a full catalogue of exhibits.



of Physicians in Ireland; Dr Chalmers, Medical Officer from Glasgow; and Dr Herman Biggs, Medical Commissioner for New York City.<sup>381</sup> The scope of their subject matter was vast and public interest great, the evening lectures were so well attended that many had to be turned away. The organisers estimated that at least 145,000 people visited the exhibition.<sup>382</sup>

The information provided by Professor Osler and the many other lecturers over the weeks of the Exhibition became a three volume work, edited by Lady Aberdeen, entitled Ireland's Crusade Against Tuberculosis.<sup>383</sup> We see from all of the above the wide scope of the exhibition. We can also understand the level of commitment coming from the Irish medical community and the WNHA, in their joint desire to educate the public and to institute changes in relation to attitudes to the disease, in a clear, understandable, and above all for the period, scientific manner. In this they had some measure of success, but it was the long term repercussions of this first tentative step that were to have the greatest effect in achieving the aims of the Association. The WNHA would soon move beyond its educational role, as members became active political lobbyists armed with the knowledge necessary to make a stand against the ravages of tuberculosis.

On the 29 November 1907, Lord Aberdeen received a deputation, comprising of representatives of the WNHA, and an impressive group of other individuals and organisations. All of the delegates had the common aim of eradicating the scourge of tuberculosis from Ireland. They had come to put pressure on politicians in general, and the government in particular, to bring about the necessary changes and to introduce the resolutions adopted at the Washington Conference. The deputation headed by Lady Aberdeen was made up of medical corporations, charitable societies and other associations. The list of those present to put their case to the Lord Lieutenant, the Chief Secretary, Augustine Birrell, the Vice President of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, Mr Russell and the Vice President of the Local Government Board for Ireland was quite impressive. It included Dr J.M Redmond, President of the Royal College of Physicians; Sir H. Swanzy, President of the Royal College of Surgeons; J.S. McArdel, President of the Irish Medical Association; Mrs Rushton Honorary Organising

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<sup>381</sup> Thompson, Sir William. 'The Tuberculosis Campaign in Ireland' in Journal of State Medicine. Vol. II. 1929. p 2.

<sup>382</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. (ed.) Ireland's Crusade Against Tuberculosis. Vol. I. p 27.

<sup>383</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. (ed.) Ireland's Crusade Against Tuberculosis. Vol. I.

Secretary of the WNHA; Doctors F. Cox and A.E. Boyd of the Committee of the Tuberculosis Exhibition; E.P Culverwell FTCD of the NAPT B in Dublin; Robert Brown of the NAPT B in Belfast; Sir Stanley Harrington of the NAPT B in Cork; Professor Mettam MRCVS of the Veterinary Medical Association of Ireland; N.J. Synnott J.P. of the Irish Workhouse Association; A.M Fullerton of the Philanthropic Reform Association; Dr J. McCaw President of the Ulster Medical Association; Dr P.J. Cremen of the Cork Medical Society and finally, Major Courtney of the Dublin Sanitary Association.

The delegation were present to ask the following:

1. That special legislation should be introduced without delay with the object of making it compulsory that all cases of pulmonary tuberculosis should be notified, while taking care at the same time to protect consumptive patients from undue interference with their liberty.
2. That the adoption of more stringent and uniform measures for the regulation of milk and food supplies is urgently required.
3. That County Councils in Ireland should be enabled to erect and maintain such hospitals, sanatoria and dispensaries for the treatment of consumption as they think fit.
4. That there be urgently established a system of medical inspection of schools and school children.<sup>384</sup>

In an open address Lady Aberdeen spoke of the many individuals and their represented organisations who had been working tirelessly to bring about the eradication of tuberculosis over many years.

They (those present) prove to us with authority that it is a preventable disease, and that within a measurable number of years it can be stamped out, if the Irish Government, the local sanitary authorities, the educational authorities and the people themselves will combine for the purpose.<sup>385</sup>

In an effort to establish these programmes, Dr Redmond, speaking in his capacity as President of the Royal College of Physicians, was present to raise the issue of compulsory notification of the disease. In his address he called for new legislation to be enacted to bring this about, stating that the existing legislation i.e. the 1879 Public Health (Ireland) Act was totally inadequate and inappropriate in dealing with the eradication of tuberculosis. For whilst poor law funds could be used for the construction of hospitals for infectious diseases, including sanatoria, the Act did not list tuberculosis as a

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<sup>384</sup> 'Minutes of the proceedings of the deputation of Medical Corporations, Societies and other associations working against tuberculosis, to His Excellency the Lord Lieutenant, the Chief Secretary and the Dept of Agriculture'. dated Nov. 1907. p 18. Peamount archives.

<sup>385</sup> 'Minutes of the proceedings of the deputation of Medical Corporations, Societies and other associations working against tuberculosis, to His Excellency the Lord Lieutenant, the Chief Secretary and the Dept of Agriculture'. 29 Nov. 1907. p 2.

notifiable disease. Furthermore, the Notification of Diseases (Ireland) Act also excluded tuberculosis. Dr Redmond indicated that the members of the Collage wished the government to give legal effect to the compulsory notification of all varieties of communicable forms of the disease, including pulmonary, renal, urinary, discharging glands, abscesses etc. However, they did not want tuberculosis patients dealt with in the same manner as those suffering from small-pox or the plague. Instead every case should be brought under the care of a tuberculosis dispensary. Each individual should, as a result, be offered appropriate advise and instruction, not only for their own welfare, but for the welfare of those with whom they had, or might yet, come into contact.<sup>386</sup>

Sir Henry Swanzy, representing the Royal College of Surgeons, concurred with the sentiments expresses by his distinguished colleague. He believed that one of the chief aims of all involved in this eradication programme, had to be the protection of the healthy members of the community. It was the keystone of the arch without which any other measures to eliminate the disease would fail. He also reassured those concerned with such notification, that those sufferers who were declared to the authorities, would not be removed from their homes and forced against their will into a consumption hospital or sanatorium. He best sums up the reason for notification by stating

Each case must be dealt with according to the stage in which the disease is found, according to its surroundings and general conditions, and in many instances it will be quite sufficient to teach the patient to treat himself and in what way to avoid infecting those with whom he lives and comes into daily contact, and at the same time also to teach those who are associated with him how to protect themselves. These measures and others...will be rendered possible through compulsory notification, which will enable us to discover all the cases of pulmonary tuberculosis if it is properly applied.<sup>387</sup>

Sir Henry also recommended that great care be taken to ensure the good will of the medical profession and the general public, to assure the success of the scheme and in order to avoid concealment.

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<sup>386</sup> 'Minutes of the proceedings of the deputation of Medical Corporations, Societies and other Associations working against tuberculosis, to his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant, the Chief Secretary and the Dept of Agriculture' 29 Nov. 1907. pp 5-6.

<sup>387</sup> 'Minutes of the proceedings of the deputation of Medical Corporations, Societies and other Associations working against tuberculosis, to His Excellency the Lord Lieutenant, the Chief Secretary and the Dept. of Agriculture'. 29 Nov. 1907. p 7.

One the second issue that of the adoption of more stringent and uniform measures for the regulation of milk and food supplies, it was Professor Mettam, President of the Veterinary Association, who represented the views of the delegation. He stated that the tuberculosis found in people and that of the lower animals, were, to all intents and purposes, one and the same disease. Therefore any crusade against the disease in people would be unsuccessful, unless it included those animals supplying meat and milk for human consumption. This would mean that all animals intended to be used for human consumption be inspected, and public abattoirs alone should be used as slaughter houses. Furthermore, an official trained in morbid anatomy, pathology and bacteriology, and preferably a veterinary surgeon, should carry out an examination of each carcass and viscera, marking the flesh that had been checked. There needed to be the periodic inspection of animals producing milk, with the power to seize where infection came to light. Compensation should be paid to those whose livestock were apprehended or destroyed. Finally, special arrangements needed to be made for the carriage and storage of milk while *en route* to the customer.<sup>388</sup>

The third issue, that County Councils should have the power to erect and maintain hospitals, sanatoria, and dispensaries for the treatment of consumption, was addressed by Dr P.J. Cremen of the Cork Medical Society. He claimed that such establishments had proved their worth in other countries, and had shown to be a most important link in the chain of remedial measures for the prevention and cure of consumption. It would be necessary, according to Dr Cremen, to put such organisations particularly hospitals and sanatoria into the hands of the County Councils. He believed that the change would popularise the institutions, as most people objected strongly to the use of workhouses. Since there foundation work houses had been associated with extreme poverty, deprivation and fear, and were therefore viewed as an option of last resort. Surgeon J.S. McAr-del, President of the Irish Medical Association, referred to the study by Micks, vice-president of the Local Government Board, in which he suggested that existing work-house hospitals be transferred immediately to the county councils and transformed into sanatoria.<sup>389</sup> This would be achieved by transferring all other cases to local hospitals,

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<sup>388</sup> The issues surrounding these matters, for example opposition from the farming community, will be dealt with in a later chapter dealing with the establishment of milk depots by the WNHA.

<sup>389</sup> Minutes of the proceedings of the deputation of Medical Corporations, Societies and other Associations working against tuberculosis, to His Excellency the Lord Lieutenant, the Chief Secretary and the Dept of Agriculture. dated Nov. 1907. pp 13-14.

thereby utilising the vacated buildings exclusively for the treatment of tuberculosis. This was necessary because it was very difficult at that time, to persuade voluntary hospitals to admit tuberculosis sufferers, as the prognosis was poor for these patients and they occupied hospital beds for very long periods of time.<sup>390</sup> Nevertheless, it would be very difficult to persuade individuals that a change of management, or use of the buildings, would make the institution any less of a workhouse. Such a change in attitude would require many confidence building measures, if the general public were to be convinced of their efficacy.

Finally, Dr John McCaw, President of the Ulster Medical Society, spoke of the necessity of developing a system of medical inspection of schools and pupils. He spoke of the need for the medical inspection, not only of children, but of the buildings in which they were educated, many of which were in a deplorable condition. He asked for the provision of better schools, for their regular cleaning, for playgrounds and for proper ventilation in classrooms. Dr M.F. Cox concluded the representations on behalf of the delegation, by calling for the provision of mid-day meals for school children, so that their energies would not be exhausted during class time, by the absence of food.

It is to these matters particularly that I will devote much of the following chapter. What is significant for the present was that the deputation was so conspicuously representative of the professional and scientific community in Ireland, and all were lending their support to the work, aims and aspirations of the WNHA. The Royal College of Surgeons, the Royal College of Physicians and other well-known Associations would lend their authority to the WNHA, through the reporting of this event in the Press. One of the more tangible results of the deputation sent to the Viceroy, and by the lobbying of both the NAPT and the WNHA, was the passing of the Tuberculosis Prevention (Ireland) Act of 1908. This Act authorised County Councils to provide sanatoria, hospitals and dispensaries, and to employ any necessary staff to deal with the problems related to the disease. The Councils were also to provide bacteriology and veterinary services, the latter to control meat and milk, and to conduct education programmes on the prevention of tuberculosis.<sup>391</sup>

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<sup>390</sup> Jones, Greta. and Malcolm, Elizabeth. (eds.) 'The campaign against TB in Ireland. 1899-1914' in Medicine, Disease and the State in Ireland. 1650-1940. p 162.

<sup>391</sup> Hooper, A.D.C. (ed.) Deeney, James. 'The development of the Irish TB Services' in supplement to Irish Journal of Medical Science. May 1985. p 30.

What the 1908 Act set out to do, was to get away from the Poor Law system, entrusting instead the care of sufferers to the County Councils. It was envisaged that the various County Councils would provide for the treatment of tuberculosis patients and that this would be paid for out of public money, by setting a rate of 1d in the pound. As an alternative, local authorities would be allowed to pay for beds in voluntary hospitals. Patients could also be means tested, and if it was felt they were capable of doing so, might have to pay at least a portion of the cost of treatment.<sup>392</sup>

To the disappointment of many, the Act did not include compulsory notification. Instead notification was to be realised on a voluntary basis, by medical practitioners reporting to local health officers. A fee of one shilling applied for notification from the workhouse or public hospitals, and 2s 6d from elsewhere. The sufferer would then be referred to a tuberculosis dispensary and the home would be disinfected.<sup>393</sup> This latter measure was not always welcomed, particularly if forced upon the individual. A letter from Sir Charles Cameron to the NAPTB in Dublin confirms this

Since last October (1900) 65 cases of phthisis have been notified chiefly by dispensary physicians. In the majority of cases disinfection of infected rooms was refused by the patients friends. In all cases of deaths from TB of the lungs, application for permission to disinfect the infected abode is made and in about a quarter of the cases it is acceded to.....<sup>394</sup>

This was a major issue both for those wishing to stop, or at least limit, the spread of infection, and those who preferred at all costs 'to keep the thing quite and run all the risks' by refusing all offers from the officers appointed, to disinfect their homes. It would take more than legislation to overcome these negative attitudes. It would take education in matters relating to the spread of the disease, and a change in the perception of the disease as something to be ashamed of and hidden.

There were other more serious shortcomings of the 1908 Act. Firstly, it was left to County Councils to decide whether or not to implement the act in their area, and secondly, there was also no central directing authority. Thirdly, voluntary notification was ineffective, as was the funding that was made available. Therefore very little was

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<sup>392</sup> Hooper, A.D.C. (ed.) Deeney, James. 'The development of the Irish TB Services' in supplement to Irish Journal of Medical Science. May 1985. p30.

<sup>393</sup> Greta, Jones. and Malcolm Elizabeth. (eds.) 'The campaign against tuberculosis 1899-1914' in Medicine, Disease and the State in Ireland. 1650-1940. p 165.

<sup>394</sup> Correspondence from Sir Charles Cameron to the NAPTB in Dublin, dated 4 June 1901. Archives of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland.

achieved by the passing of the Tuberculosis Act of 1908. As a result of this failure by the authorities to make proper provision for the eradication of tuberculosis, it was the WNHA who did most to see that any of necessary measures were introduced. It would be many decades before the establishment of the day would take the procedures begun by the WNHA, and envisaged by the 1908 Act, to there final stages.

A significant development came in relation to the care of those suffering from tuberculosis, with the founding of the Dublin Hospital's Tuberculosis Committee in November 1907, at the instigation of the WNHA. The new group was to consist of ten medical representatives, one member being appointed by each of the medical clinical hospitals in Dublin, and four members from the Poor Law Medical Service. The Committee was formed principally to supervise the work of the thirty-nine extra district nurses who had been appointed by the WNHA in the Dublin area. They included two specially trained tuberculosis nurses, thirty-one Queen Victoria Jubilee Institute nurses, four health workers and two Babies Club nurses.

The majority of these nurses were part of a scheme for the home treatment of consumptives who had no other access to medical aid. It was envisaged that a system be put into place, which would depend upon voluntary notification, through the medical staff in the Dublin hospitals and the Poor Law dispensaries. It was believed that if a better service of care was offered to patients, that they would be more predisposed to coming forward for help. The nurses would visit the individuals and families referred to them, and with the assistance of the WNHA's Samaritan committee, would offer many and varied supports. Their work was also complimented by a medical doctor who was there to give advice and instructions. To give an example of how this system worked in practice, a supplement to the January 1914 Slainte. Journal of the WNHA tells us the following

362 patients were visited by the nurses, 7.275 separate visit were paid. The latter figure represents 140 average weekly visits. 87 (or 24% of the whole number) have shown signs of improvement. 24 patients....have been able to return to their ordinary work during the year. 100 patients chiefly through the exertion of the nurses have been admitted into sanatoriums, hospitals or similar institutions (i.e. hospices) 87 children of parents suffering from TB have been sent to the country through the Fresh Air Fund. 20 cases who had been exposed to the infection of TB, but which were certified by their doctor to be free from the disease, were sent to the Holiday Home in Sutton. 16 families have been removed to more healthy houses. 36 insanitary houses have been reported to the public housing Authority . 126 rooms have been disinfected. 616 patients or members of their

family have had work procured for them.....through the Samaritan committee during the year. 107 families received nourishment milk, eggs meat etc. 17 families are having their rent paid for them while the breadwinner is at the Royal National hospital at Newcastle, or in the Dublin Unions.<sup>395</sup>

It is not the figures involved in this demonstration of the work carried out by the nurses and Samaritan committees in the course of a twelve-month period that are important. Rather it was the recognition of the need for a more holistic approach to the care of tuberculosis patient and their families. Furthermore, it was an appreciation of the fact that district/visiting nurses could not be successful if left to work in isolation. In an article entitled 'Nurses - in the public health' in the Nursing Mirror the author claimed 'she (the nurse) is powerless to mend thoroughly bad situations...the truth is that the district nurse ought to be but one link in a chain of complete assistance to the sick'.<sup>396</sup> The article commends the work of the WNHA and the Dublin Hospitals Tuberculosis Committee in this regard, and asks other cities to use this model as an example of what could be achieved.

Nursing aid was needed and freely bestowed....rent was paid for families whose breadwinner was under treatment in hospital. Children in danger of contamination from infection their own homes were sent to the country.....nourishment was given, clothes, bedding and shoes were also supplied...The campaign was conducted systematically and in the houses visited by the nurses were indicated on a map of the district so that the whole town was embraced by the organisation.<sup>397</sup>

This holistic approach to caring for individuals suffering from tuberculosis, and their families, is one that will take on ever greater significance as the work of the WNHA continues to grow and develop, and the great and seemingly endless needs of those effected by tuberculosis manifests themselves ever more clearly.

The first Health Exhibition was only the beginning of a work that was to continue, almost with a momentum of its own, for the idea of holding such events had taken hold and was a product of its own success. Lady Aberdeen had heard, through her role as President of the International Council of Women, of successful itinerant health exhibitions from countries as far a field as the United States, Germany and Scandinavia.

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<sup>395</sup> Supplement to Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. January 1914.

<sup>396</sup> Article from the Nursing Mirror reprinted in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Vol.2 May 1910. p 95.

<sup>397</sup> Article from the Nursing Mirror reprinted in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Vol.2 May 1910. p 95.



The exhibitions had accomplished much in terms of educating and ripening public opinion on matters of health. It was therefore decided by the WNHA, to use this concept here and to take a health exhibition on the road by caravan. Copies of the same charts, diagrams and paintings, as those exhibited at the international exhibition were taken around by the caravan, together with other interesting exhibits, including plans for improved cottages, for shelters and inexpensive sanatoria. On the motion of Dr Healy, archbishop of Tuam, and seconded by Lord Monteaigue, in August 1907, it was recommended that this travelling exhibition be arranged, and most importantly, that all local authorities in Ireland would strive to make it effective in their various districts.

The first of three caravans used for the purpose, was the 'Eire',<sup>398</sup> it was purchased and equipped by a grant of £500 from the Pembroke Irish Charities fund, and was organised by W.T.B Walker of the Congested Districts Board. The caravan itself gives us an interesting insight into the type of Victorian idealism that was at the basis of this venture. The outside of the caravan was painted blue and was covered various mottoes and slogans related to the message of the exhibition. In order to reach as many individuals as possible, the slogans were printed in both English and Irish. In English it read 'Fighting the White Plague'; 'Hope and Courage Will Win the day'; 'Our Enemies Are Bad Air-Bad Food-Bad Drink-Dirt'; 'Our Weapons Are Pure Air-Pure Food-Pure Milk and Cleanliness'; 'Victory is Certain if we Unite and Persevere'.

Inside the exhibition carried with it pictures, diagrams, literature for distribution, lantern and slide shows, and included sections on food, housing, general nursing, infant care and anti-tuberculosis measures. As with the original exhibition there was a lighter side as a gramophone was played and locals often gave impromptu concerts. The first Caravan Company consisted of T.P. O' Connor, a young medical lecturer, who had the added advantage of being fluent in both Irish and English, Miss Manderson a cookery demonstrator, Mr Fitzpatrick the custodian and Mr Cunningham the driver.<sup>399</sup>

Basically the main messages of the lectures given were these

1. That Tuberculosis was not hereditary,
2. Tuberculosis was infectious, and
3. Tuberculosis could be prevented and arrested.<sup>400</sup>

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<sup>398</sup> Appendix 23.

<sup>399</sup> O'Connor, JP. 'Travels of 'Eire' the Tuberculosis Caravan' in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA Vol. 1. Jan. 1909. p 32.

<sup>400</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. The Women's National Health Association. Its Objects. Its Results. Its Future. (Dublin, 1913) p 2.

It was essential therefore to understand how to avoid the dangers of contamination. In order to prevent any panic being caused, particularly by the idea that tuberculosis was infectious, at a time when sufferers were already treated like social lepers, they confirmed also that there was no danger from close contact with tuberculosis, if very simple precautions were taken. For example, speakers like Dr Steedo of the Rostrevor sanatorium explained that germs were confined to expectoration and were carried in dust particles. Therefore, if patients were careful about sputum, kept rooms as free as possible from dust and dirt, and fresh air was recognised as the great purifier, then with cleanliness and proper care, a consumptive should not be a source of danger to those around them.<sup>401</sup> The fact that medical men now agreed that tuberculosis could be cured added impetus to the work.

The inaugural trip of the 'Eire' in November of 1908 lasted a full week and took in Kilcoole, Newtownmountkennedy, and Newcastle in County Wicklow. After a short stopover in Dublin, the caravan proceeded by rail to visit large audiences in many parts of the north of Ireland, beginning in Donegal. One medical lecturer indicated that this participation and interest was a measure of the success of the concept. Subsequently, it became necessary to divide the travelling exhibition into two different circuits, northern and southern, taking in almost every corner of the island. It is important to note that it was never a question of the exhibition visits being made to an area unsolicited, or being forced unwillingly upon a local community. This is contrary to the opinion given by Lady Fingall and Alun Evans in their references to Lady Aberdeen and the WNHA. Lady Fingall when speaking of Lady Aberdeen states

She did succeed in making the Irish open their windows and that is something tangible that remains.....Perhaps Fingall was right when he said to Horace (Plunkett) that you should not give to the Irish anything that they did not ask for.<sup>402</sup>

The fact was that the Irish population was eager for help to overcome the terrible 'white scourge' that was tuberculosis. This can be understood when we realise that the exhibition caravan never just arrived in an area. The whole event was highly organised

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<sup>401</sup> At times the advice given to consumptive individuals by the WNHA, for example the use of a sputum flask while out in public, could lead to social embarrassment and so were met with a negative response. Other more general advice with regard to open windows and fresh air would meet with greater success.

<sup>402</sup> Hinkinson, Pamela. The memories of Elizabeth. Countess of Fingal. Seventy Years Young. (Dublin, 1937) p 164.

and had to be by invitation from the local community. In order to have the exhibition to visit a town or an area, there had to be an invitation by some leading citizen, for example, a local Bishop or Parish Priest, the Mayor or Chairman of the Urban Council. Local committees also had to be put in place and it was they who then communicated through the chosen official, the wish for a visit to the central committee of the WNHA in Dublin.

The central committee had to be sure of a number of things before the caravan would go to an area. Firstly, the local committee was expected to consist of members from all classes, creeds and sections of the community. Secondly, the local doctor was required to be willing to lecture and the local clergy had to be involved. Thirdly, funds would be raised for local expenses. Finally, before the caravan ever came into the town, members of the local community would distribute leaflets advertising the event. If practicable, a hall was to be provided. On arrival, as well as lectures being delivered to the community at large, the female lecturer would hold special meetings for mothers, factory girls and children, visiting schools both national and secondary. Having been formally opened by some local dignitary the exhibition would remain normally for three days. According to Lady Aberdeen these formal openings were very valuable, as they gathered individuals together who belonged to every form of political and religious faith, and people in all conditions of life, in a way that was rarely known in Ireland.

An example of this can be seen in an article in the Cork Examiner<sup>403</sup> of the 22 Jan. 1908, which referred to a meeting held in Skibbereen to decide if the Travelling Health Exhibition should be invited to West Cork. The meeting was called and held in Skibbereen Town Hall, on the initiative of a Dr Brown, the Local Government Board Inspector, and two other locally based medical colleagues, Doctors Jennings and O' Meara. All of the local dignitaries, including Lady Coghill, were present and the clergy represented all strands of religious faith in the area. The consensus of opinion was that the exhibition, which was such a great success in Dublin, Belfast and Cork City, should be invited to the area. It was hoped that as a result, individuals would be better educated in matters of hygiene and that all could work together to eradicate the disease. As in all cases subscription lists were opened and the necessary funds raised, while the local doctors, the backbone of the exhibition in many cases, agreed to give lectures.<sup>404</sup>

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<sup>403</sup> Cork Examiner 22 Jan 1908.

<sup>404</sup> Cork Examiner 22 Jan 1908.

It must be noted that in many parts of Ireland the roads were in a very poor state and in areas like Donegal, Mayo, West Cork and Kerry, the caravan had to travel under very difficult conditions. From November to February, the period of the first tour, when weather might include hail, rain, sleet or snow and bitter cold, the 'Eire' often became bogged down and needed practical help from locals.

...at times a formidable Donegal mountainous roads presents obstacles which are only overcome by the whole population acting as good Samaritans putting their shoulder to the wheel...or...lifting the van out of the bog road into which it had sunk.<sup>405</sup>

Even under such conditions, between the middle of November 1908 to January 1909, the Caravan and its party on its northern circuit, visited areas as far apart and as isolated as Kilcoole, Newcastle, Newtownmountkenedy, Killeshandra, Trillick, Kesh, Pettego, Castlecaldwell, Belleek, Kinlough, Grange, Cliffoey, Bundoran, Ballyshannon, Ballintra, Laghey, Donegal, Mountcharles, Dunkineely, Bruckless, Killybegs, Kilcar, Carrick, Ardara, Glenties, Dungloe, Burtonport, Bunbeg, Middletown, Dunfanaghy, and Carrigart.<sup>406</sup> It is to her credit that at least six of the lectures in this period were given personally by Lady Aberdeen. In all cases the countess was eager to link tuberculosis with poverty and unemployment, in an effort to draw attention to these social issues and so bring about change in these circumstances, by force of public opinion.

The caravan personnel had by now given 152 lectures and the total of individuals who attended the lectures in the local areas, came to 46,200 up to February 1909 alone. It was necessary that the touring be stopped for the summer months, as for most rural people this was their busiest at this time of year, while many more would have left home for the harvesting.<sup>407</sup> The conditions under which the 'Eire' travelled and the large turn out for attendance at the lectures, in spite of the inclement weather, gives us just some indication of the concern caused by the subject of tuberculosis and its prevalence. There were many who were desperate to hear a message of hope and concern from those involved in the exhibition, regardless of the circumstances. The importance of visiting

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<sup>405</sup> O'Connor, T.P. 'Travels with the Eire the TB Caravan' in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA Vol. 1 Jan. 1909. p 33.

<sup>406</sup> O'Connor, T.P. 'Travels with the Eire the T.B. Caravan' in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA Vol 1 Jan. 1909. p 33.

<sup>407</sup> O'Connor, T.P. 'Travels with the Eire the T.B. Caravan' in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA Vol. 1 Jan. 1909 p 33.

areas like the north-west of Ireland in particular can be seen from the following article in the Strabane Chronicle

The necessity for the lecture and the caravan visiting Donegal will be understood when it is known that in many parts of that county the people have no idea of hygiene at all. Cows and other animals are often housed under the same roof as the people and the sooner they are taught that such "homes" are a misnomer in every sense, and urged to adopt cleanly habits the better..... where the people consented to learn to substitute a garden for a manure heap ....they had been able to convert homes otherwise unpleasant into places where anyone, be his station what it might, might well consent to pass the night.....They would teach them hygiene, the science of preserving health, through the principles which Lady Aberdeen had so well laid down.<sup>408</sup>

In many cases the meetings had to be held in the open air due to the large numbers in attendance. It was just as well, as there was much to be taught and much to be learned by those present. Over an eight month period in 1908, sixty seven towns were visited, hundreds of thousands of leaflets were distributed, three hundred lectures were given, with over a thousand given to children in schools and other local groups.<sup>409</sup>

At the same time lectures were continuing in the urban areas. For example, a tuberculosis exhibition was held in Rathmines on the 20 and 21 May in 1909. Children were addressed at the Rathmines and Dartry Road National Schools, in the belief that in the children lay the best hope for the future. The sisters in the convent school in North William Street, invited Dr Thomas Donnelly to speak to local women on the subject of infant mortality. It was hoped that he could provide the means to prevent the epidemic of infantile diarrhoea that caused such havoc, particularly in the summer months in the city. This formed an introduction to health talks which were given by Margaret Rushton, fortnightly, at several convents throughout Dublin, to woman from the poorer areas of the city who would not have been able to attend the grander exhibitions. Another group of women who were in no position to attend the exhibitions, were also included in the lecture circuit. A programme was introduced whereby health lectures were provided for women prisoners.<sup>410</sup> With the approval of the Prison Commissioners and at the

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<sup>408</sup> Straban Chronicle. 'The Campaign against Consumption'. 21 Nov. 1908.

<sup>409</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. 'Report of the work of the WNHA to the Tuberculosis International Congress in Washington D.C. 1908'. p 9. Peamount archives.

<sup>410</sup> It is interesting to note that in a letter from Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington to Lady Aberdeen, the author thanks the countess for the provision of Christmas dinner for all of the prisoners in Mountjoy following on from a visit to the prison by Lady Aberdeen. The author requests that this practice be continued, stating that this act was worth a hundred sermons on peace and good will'. Undated letter from Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington, Mountjoy Prison, to Lady Aberdeen. Haddo House archives.

invitation of the prison visiting committees, Miss Allen of the WNHA, commenced lectures for the Protestant women prisoners in Mountjoy, while Miss McNeill met with the Catholic prisoners.<sup>411</sup>

Parallel with the exhibitions arranged by the Central Committee, and as a result of the travelling exhibitions, local branches of the WNHA were being set up all over the country and they were also arranging health lectures in their own areas.<sup>412</sup> The lectures and demonstrations were addressed mainly to women and children. They were held in convents and Christian Brothers' schools, the objective of the WNHA being to reach all members of society. In North Kildare, the local branch of the WNHA arranged for lectures in ten districts in January of 1909 alone. Even the native Irish speakers of the Gaelteacht areas were not forgotten. The Gaelic League provided funds and Dr Seamus O' Beirine of Leenane, fluent in the language, made presentations in Irish. The WNHA provided lantern slides and literature printed in Irish for distribution in Gaelteacht areas. According to James Deeney the hardships suffered by Dr O' Beirine with the travelling caravans led to his early death.<sup>413</sup>

The 'Eire' was accidentally burned at Lifford in County Donegal on the 15 March 1909, and a new caravan appropriately named the 'Phoenix' was obtained. There is some speculation, particularly by Alun Evans<sup>414</sup> that the blaze may have been started deliberately. To support this claim he cites several groups who may have been angry enough to do such a thing. These include the anti-suffragette movement, who would have been opposed to the WNHA. Secondly, due to a natural antipathy to health promotion on these islands, there were those who did not want improvements imposed on them from an outside source. Thirdly, there may have been individuals who were upset by premature 'victim blaming' by certain members of the Association. Finally some sections of the community, including the Irish Parliamentary Party, were opposed to the introduction of the Tuberculosis Bill. There were other sources of opposition quoted by Alun Evans, none of which are of a substantial nature. Evans is forced to concede, reluctantly, that everything points to an accidental cause of the fire, and there is no

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<sup>411</sup> 'Minutes of Meeting of Executive Committee of WNHA'. 14 - 15 Oct. 1910.

<sup>412</sup> Appendix 24.

<sup>413</sup> Deeney, James. 'The development of the Irish TB Services' in Irish Journal of Medical Science. May 1985, p 30.

<sup>414</sup> Evans, Alun 'The Countess of Aberdeen's health promotion caravans' in Journal of the Irish College of Physicians and Surgeons. July 1995

mention of anything more sinister in the Association's minute books.<sup>415</sup> The 'Phoenix' continued to tour in the north, and made its way over a two year period through the western and southern counties. By May of 1909 the 'Phoenix' team had given 357 lectures, visited 135 places, with a total attendance of 105,500.<sup>416</sup>

The great success of these ventures resulted in similar exhibitions being formed in Great Britain. At the request of a number of British cities, the 'Phoenix' went to Edinburgh and Glasgow as well as visiting many English and Welsh towns. In 1908 the WNHA was lauded on the world stage for its work, when they shared joint first prize of \$1000 with a voluntary group from New York, at the International Tuberculosis Exhibition in Washington D.C.<sup>417</sup> The award was given to the WNHA because it was viewed as the voluntary organisation doing the most effective work against tuberculosis, by attacking the problems caused by the disease in very many ways. The Association was praised and given international status by this conference in the United States.<sup>418</sup> At the same time the work of the Association was being shown appreciation nearer home, in the report of the Local Government Board for 1908. When dealing with Public Health Statistics it stated

In the instruction of the public, the WNHA has taken a leading part, and the visits of their tuberculosis exhibition to various parts of the country have aroused widespread interest, and will we feel sure, be productive of beneficial results.<sup>419</sup>

While being both nationally and internationally recognised for their great success, there were those who through public meetings and newspapers voiced their concerns and opposition to the work of the exhibitions and the WNHA. The Sinn Fein leader Arthur Griffith, for example, wrote an article in the Sinn Fein Daily, under the derogatory title 'Viceregal Microbe'. In this article he displays his opposition to the WNHA, when he claimed that their campaign

.....has conveyed the impression abroad that we dwell on an island reeking with tuberculosis whose inhabitants are foredoomed to a lingering and hopeless

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<sup>415</sup> 'Minutes of Annual General Meetings of the WNHA of Ireland'. 1908-1915. Peamount archives.

<sup>416</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. A Dream coming true with your help. p 8.

<sup>417</sup> Appendix 25.

<sup>418</sup> Pentland, Marjorie. A Bonnie Fechter. Life of Ishbel Marjoriebanks. Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair. 1857-1939. p 163

<sup>419</sup> 'Extracts from the report of the Local Govt. Board for 1908'. Public Health Statistics.

disease and whose products are calculated to convey the germs of the fatal scourge wherever they are distributed<sup>420</sup>

This claim was totally unfounded and was based on Arthur Griffith's antagonism towards the Castle and the Viceregal Lodge, not on the real facts of the case and the accomplishments of the WNHA. Therefore it was left to Lady Aberdeen to answer at least three of the main charges laid against the anti-tuberculosis campaign.

1. That "scaremongering" was seriously affecting tourist traffic to Ireland.
2. That it had injuriously affected the sale of Irish industrial products, especially to the United States and Canada.
3. That it had been the means of preventing a number of Irish people, especially servants, from obtaining employment in England and elsewhere.<sup>421</sup>

This was also the type of opposition which led to rumours that the fire in the 'Eire' had been started maliciously, even though this was never proven. In reply to these charges, on behalf of the WNHA, the countess was able to show that according to Messrs Thomas Cook and Son, Travel Agents, that the anti-tuberculosis campaign had no effect whatsoever on tourism. The Chairman of the Great Southern and Western Railways stated that trade was in fact up by 16% on the previous year. The people of the United States and Canada were even more interested in Ireland since the WNHA had won first prize in Washington.

The second objection was based on the unfounded fear that Irish lace, wool and Linen were seen to be carrying dust containing tubercular germs, and this was stopping visitors from buying Irish produce. This particular rumour began with an article in the Irish Times of the 11 September 1909 from the Congested Districts Board of Ireland at 23 Rutland Square in Dublin. In the letter they were drawing attention to a report that had come to them, from the Bantry Rural District Council, to the effect that as a consequence of the scare caused by the WNHA's campaign, tourists were avoiding the county. They also claimed that an English tourist who had visited the Lace Class in Glengariff, had been anxious to purchase some lace. However, he had been afraid to do so owing to the fear that the lace might be contaminated.<sup>422</sup> On the 4 October a letter in the same newspaper from the clerk of the Bantry Rural District Council indicated that

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<sup>420</sup> Sinn Fein Daily. 8 Sept. 1909.

<sup>421</sup> Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Vol. 1 Sept. 1909. p 148.

<sup>422</sup> Irish Times 11 Sept. 1909



after having made the fullest enquiries, he had been able to ascertain that this allegation was entirely without foundation. He was most apologetic for any distress caused to members of the WNHA. In short, this case had been proved untrue. Furthermore, Lady Aberdeen was able to show that the Irish Lace Depot Ltd, the Linen manufactures and the Irish Woollen Company, had all reported increases in trade with the United States and Canada in the previous year.<sup>423</sup> Nevertheless, as tends to be the case with rumours, once circulated it is difficult to put a stop to the belief that they are true. Issues and claims such as these were to haunt much of the work of the WNHA for many years to come.

Finally, with regard to the servants not being able to find employment, the countess while stating that there was no evidence to substantiate such claims, added

It is very desirable that all health workers should emphasise the fact that the adoption of simple precautions make it comparatively easy to guard against the infection of TB - and that a country where people are taught these precautions where all classes of people are combining in an effort to prevent disease should be considered the safest and best.<sup>424</sup>

There was more to the opposition to the campaign against tuberculosis than might at first be apparent. There were those who felt politically challenged by Lady Aberdeen and her crusade and their reply was to demonise the challenger. Two nationalist who recognised this were T.D. Sullivan and Maurice Healy, both of whom gave their full support to the WNHA.

Healy wrote to the countess after a meeting between himself, Sullivan and those whom he described as the 'uncompromising members of Sinn Fein'.<sup>425</sup> At this meeting, they had put the case on behalf of Lady Aberdeen and the WNHA. Sullivan had asked them not to extend their hostility towards the countess for calling attention to this 'great evil in their midst'. Rather, the object of their attack should be all other nations who preferred to hide this evil.<sup>426</sup> In conclusion, Healy reluctantly told the countess that they had been unsuccessful in their efforts as 'while it is easy to overcome ignorance, it is

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<sup>423</sup> Irish Times 11 Sept. 1909.

<sup>424</sup> Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Vol. 1 July 1909. p 158.

<sup>425</sup> Correspondence from Maurice Healy, North Circular Road Dublin, to Lady Aberdeen. dated 1 Oct. 1909. Haddo House archives.

<sup>426</sup> Correspondence from Maurice Healy, North Circular Road Dublin, to Lady Aberdeen. dated 1 Oct. 1909

impossible to fight this prejudice'<sup>427</sup>. The extent of this intolerance can be seen in the efforts Alice Milligan, <sup>428</sup>one of the first individuals to try to discredit the countess by very public means. In a letter written in Sinn Fein, 1 Feb. 1908, Milligan connects all of Lady Aberdeen's work with her husband's role as Lord Lieutenant stating

It is not to be wondered at if she undertakes and carries out successful political missions, nor is it reprehensible that she should seek to win popularity and prestige by wisely planned philanthropic undertakings.<sup>429</sup>

Alice Milligan also claimed Lady Aberdeen's role was only to conciliate the Irish people and to undermine nationalism, and they as nationalist, could accept nothing from the countess under such circumstances. In order to bring this point of view to the attention of the general public, Milligan wrote a poem entitled Lady Bountiful and had it published.

You who bring with lavish hand  
gifts to the poor through out the land  
Before we bid them bless your name  
In any town to which you came  
or any dreary country place  
In which you showed your smiling face  
Or here where last your bounties spread  
What are you asking in its stead.

When we hear your voice appealing  
for purer air and light and healing,  
We could bless you on our knees  
Combatant of foul disease,  
And we could think as forth you ride  
Of one who fell by the wayside.  
The wounded robbed- beaten man  
Rescued by the Samaritan  
When none of his own faith and nation  
Had pity on his desolation.

But Lady we have heard it said  
that where you give you ask instead,  
a price more precious far than gold;  
Into your hands is honour sold  
Before your feet is homage tendered

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<sup>427</sup> Correspondence from Maurice Healy, North Circular Road. Dublin, to Lady Aberdeen. dated 1 Oct. 1909.

<sup>428</sup> Alice Milligan was both a poet and a playwright, and for a number of years was organiser for the Gaelic League. A Protestant, she belonged to the radical republican tradition that united all creeds in a fight for independence.

<sup>429</sup> Sinn Fein. 1 Feb. 1908.

And Patriot fault to you surrendered  
Therefore we think not of the man  
rescued by the Samaritan.

Our memories picture forth another  
Esau when tempted by his brother.  
Yielding his God given birth-right up  
In base return for food to sup  
Or of that play we think again.  
In which the demon merchant men  
In famine days brought bags of gold  
for which immortal life was sold.  
This old has meaning new  
And some are false but many are true  
And though your gifts be fair to some  
Remembering in whose name you come;  
We shall not yield their price to you.<sup>430</sup>

It was Alice Rushdon who replied to the charges made by Alice Milligan, reminding her that the statistics detailing the high mortality rates from tuberculosis had always been readily available, and yet 'this patriotic duty' to do something about it had never been utilised, until it was taken up by the countess.<sup>431</sup> Milligan had conceded this when she wrote 'When none of his own faith and nation, Had pity on his desolation'. The arguments between the two were to continue in the press for a number of days, without resolution.

There were others who voiced concerns that were perhaps less politically motivated, and were of a more practical nature. I will give just two examples of from several letters to newspapers, both taken from The Wexford People<sup>432</sup> of the 15 February 1908, on the occasion of the travelling exhibition to that county. A 'disgusted' writer, while praising the good intentions of those promoting the health lectures, felt that the venture would be of little or no practical use. What could be done, the writer asks, in the face of men chewing tobacco and spitting on the ground, of houses no cleaner than a pigsty with poultry in and out of houses, with the cesspools from farm animals immediately outside back doors, with windows shut tight? Describing the filth and squalor of many homes and individuals, the writer expressed the opinion of many who felt that the exhibitions could achieve nothing, in the face of these conditions.

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<sup>430</sup> Milligan, Alice. 'To A Lady Bountiful' in Sinn Fein 18 Jan. 1908.

<sup>431</sup> Sinn Fein 21 May 1908.

<sup>432</sup> Wexford People 16 Feb. 1908.

There was the additional problem of the lack of government provided sanitary services. It was claimed by the author, that in many streets in Wexford, there were six or seven houses without a water closet of any kind, and that the roads themselves ended up being repositories for the waste. The poor had no one to whom they could turn in the face of neglectful landlords and local councillors. The call for the building of sanatoria all over Ireland to treat tuberculosis, was also viewed as a waste resources, if individuals were returned to the same conditions from which they had contracted the disease in the first instance.<sup>433</sup>

The second letter signed simply 'X', began by praising the motives of those who wished to eradicate tuberculosis. The author simply wondered how their schemes could apply to those who were living in appalling conditions of poverty, without sufficient food, and in a constant state of stress. This was something of which the Association were all too aware. Lady Aberdeen wrote

The conditions consequent on persistent poverty among large numbers of the city people is the greatest obstacle to success, and that mothers who are badly housed and almost constantly underfed cannot be expected to give a robust physique to their children, or to possess the physical and moral strength which is required to effectively surmount frequently recurring difficulties.<sup>434</sup>

Regardless of their best efforts, social conditions would continue to be such, that other measures taken by the WNHA must continue to be viewed in that context.

It was not only individuals who were opposed to the Lady Aberdeen and the WNHA. There were also organisations who wished to distance themselves from the Association, mainly on the grounds of political affiliations. An obvious and classic example of this was that of the United Irish Women,<sup>435</sup> an organisation founded on the 3 November 1910, three years after the founding of the WNHA. They were very closely allied to the Irish co-operative movement of Sir Horace Plunkett, and was principally based in rural areas. Like Lady Aberdeen, Plunkett believed that when it came to 'better living' in rural Ireland, women were the best ones to institute the necessary changes.

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<sup>433</sup> Wexford People. 16 Feb. 1908.

<sup>434</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Isabel. 'The WNHA of Ireland and Infant Welfare' in The Child Magazine. June 1911.

<sup>435</sup> Founding movement of the present Irish Countrywomen's Association.

Echoing the aspirations of the countess, Plunkett was to state

As things are today, we shall not get very far, either with better farming or better business, unless we can show better living as a bait, and this stimulates the desire for more. And this the women can do best, in fact they alone can do it.<sup>436</sup>

The countess was calling for the women of Ireland, both urban and rural dwellers, to work together to achieve better living conditions for all. However, the nationalist newspaper Bean na hEireann, while supporting many of the aims of the WNHA, criticised Lady Aberdeen's claim to represent, or to speak on behalf of, the women of Ireland as 'pretentious', arguing that she could only represent British interests in Ireland. This nationalist newspaper believed that the interests of Irish women, could only be served by an organisation of Irish women, led by Irish women. It was against this background and based on this belief that the United Irish Women was formed, its first national president being Anita Lett. The organisation also set out to unite all Irish women in a common cause, a cause very similar to that of the WNHA.

Lady Aberdeen believed rightly, that both associations had a great deal in common with their shared aims and aspirations, which was to promote a better and healthier environment in all districts. The countess felt that it would be in everyone's best interest if the newly formed United Irish Women became affiliated to the WNHA, along the lines she was familiar with, in the International Council of Women and its affiliated National Councils. With this aim in mind Lady Aberdeen requested a meeting with Alice Pilkington, the societies first organiser and great grand-daughter of Henry Grattan, to discuss the matter, stating that

Under the rules and proposals of the United Irish Women I cannot see at all why the two associations could not be the greatest possible help to one another, always provided that they worked in alliance and on definite understanding.....<sup>437</sup>

This was not to be, for while Lady Aberdeen tried to rise above political factionalism, the United Irish Women, unfortunately, fell back on the familiar pattern of division. At a meeting between the sub-committee of the United Irish Women and Lady Aberdeen, the countess put her case for affiliation, the United Irish Women would retain autonomy, whilst reporting to the WNHA at Annual General Meetings.

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<sup>436</sup> McNamara, Sarah. Those Intrepid United Irish Women. (Limerick, 1995) p 13.

<sup>437</sup> 'Report of the 3rd Annual Conference of the WNHA' 19 April 1911. p 179. Peamount archives.

The countess stated

If a suitable arrangement to that effect could be made, rather than risk any misunderstanding or friction by the formation of branches of two societies in country districts with aims and methods so similar that it would be almost impossible that they would not clash.<sup>438</sup>

After consultation with its Executive Committee, the United Irish Women, through its Honorary Secretary Constance Pim, responded to Lady Aberdeen. They expressed thanks to her for the honour she had bestowed upon them. However, they had decided to become affiliated, not to the WNHA, but to Horace Plunkett's Irish Agricultural Organisation, because a great deal of their work consisted of actively promoting agricultural co-operation in all of its branches.<sup>439</sup> The countess was also informed that only Irish women, of at least first generation, would be admitted to the United Irish Women, excluding any opportunity for her to become associated with their work. In a far less parochial and far-sighted manner, Lady Aberdeen was to reply to the executive of the United Irish Women stating

I think the work of the WNHA has proved how the women of Ireland can unite together all sections, all creeds and parties for a great purpose.....if we can speak with a united voice we can bring more influence to bear when it comes to some special point such as the heating and cleaning of schools....I am quite sure that it is not necessary for the Council of this association to assure our sister workers that they will have our best wishes and support in all that they do for the welfare of Ireland.<sup>440</sup>

The countess was asking that, notwithstanding their differences, when it came to the basic issues within local communities that the two organisations might still co-operate. Lady Aberdeen, in spite of the early difficulties, asked the members of the WNHA branches in rural areas, to see to it that there was no possibility of overlapping or friction between the two groups.<sup>441</sup>

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<sup>438</sup> 'Report of the 3rd. Annual Conference of the WNHA' 19 April 1911. p 180

<sup>439</sup> Correspondence to Horace Plunkett from Constance Pim dated 10 April 1911. Peamount archives.

<sup>440</sup> 'Report of the 3rd Annual Conference of the WNHA' 19 April 1911 p 180.

<sup>441</sup> It is interesting to note that on the initiative of Lady Aberdeen as President of the International Council of Women, in June 1933, at a conference held in Stockholm, an international organisation was formed to which the Irish Country Women's Association, the predecessor of the United Irish Women, was to become affiliated 'The Associated Country Women of the World'. The countess was to remain honorary secretary to this association until her death in 1939. The ICA would also for many years, compete with other nations to make active use of the 'Lady Aberdeen Scholarship Fund' established in her honour. The ACWW created the scholarship because of her role in endeavouring to raise the standards of rural living, and because they believed that 'It is probable that no women of this century had a greater influence on the development of social work and effort for the betterment of women and children.'..... 'Associated Country Women of the World. Lady Aberdeen Scholarships.' Reprinted from the Farmers Gazette 4 Feb. 1961.

Those in favour of the work of the WNHA by far outnumbered those who were opposed. This can be witnessed in the support for the work of both the central organisation and at local level. As early as 1908, medical inspectors from all over Ireland, attested to the success of the campaign by the WNHA. It had aroused great interest and provided education on health matters, and had also raised public awareness of the truth about, and hopes for, the eradication of tuberculosis. The situation was further improved when a branch of the WNHA was set up in any district or locality. In an effort to continue the work and reach more areas of the country, a third caravan was introduced from Belfast on the 11 August 1911. It was called the 'Blue-Bird'. The 'Phoenix' had begun to come to the end of its many travels, this time due to nothing more harmful than wear and tear.<sup>442</sup> The travelling exhibitions lasted until the early 1920s, when the political situation in Ireland meant that they were no longer safe to travel in the face of the increasing dangers due to the Civil War.

Between 1908 and this time the three caravans in turn, had visited every corner of Ireland, in their effort to reach all the people. In their wake improvements were made in many aspects of prevention and hygiene. Some were as simple as white washing houses, improved diet, the removal of dung heaps from outside the door, and the opening of windows. In other cases, as in Roscrea in Co. Tipperary, whole rows of unhygienic dwellings were removed and replaced with more sanitary houses. The caravans reached people who would otherwise never have been taught regarding these essential matters.

A number of lessons were learned from this campaign, mainly that it was most important to get the people to learn something about the disease, and to bring to the attention of the local authorities, their responsibilities regarding matters of health. With regard to the general public, according to Dr Thompson it was found that

Once they come to know that this disease is, first preventable, secondly not hereditary, and thirdly, that if contracted, a reasonable prospect of recovery may be entertained when taken in the early stages, they will do everything possible not only to save the lives of their children, but to bring them up strong and healthy to be able to resist the disease.<sup>443</sup>

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<sup>442</sup> 'Minutes of Meeting of the Executive Committee of the WNHA of Ireland.' 10-11 Nov. 1911. Peamount archives.

<sup>443</sup> Thompson, Sir William. 'The TB Campaign in Ireland' in Journal of State Medicine Vol. II. 1929. p 5.

As with the international experience it was found that the more the individual knows about health matters the more readily they would they co-operate with all measures of prevention and arrest of tuberculosis. The same proved to be the case in Ireland.

The formation of 170 local branches of the Association nation-wide, also testify of this, as each one initiated local efforts for the improvement of its community, for the treatment and prevention of tuberculosis and for the health and welfare of the children. The WNHA in their efforts as educators, used every means at their disposal to bring to every individual throughout Ireland, in as simple as way as possible and in both languages, the messages contained in the newly discovered sciences. From Koch's discovery of the tubercle bacillus, to the breakthrough of immunology, findings such as these were disseminated widely.

The Association was able to reach out in a way that those within the scientific and medical establishments, would have found impossible. Nevertheless, it would be very difficult to measure the success of these early efforts of the WNHA in terms of statistics, except to show how well attended these exhibitions were and to note the number of branches founded. Whether or not they changed people's lives on a grand scale is open to debate. At this time of poverty, ignorance and fear, when living conditions for many were appalling, dramatic changes in life style or diet would have proved extremely difficult. Nevertheless, James Deeney mentions the travelling exhibitions and describes the work of the WNHA as

The first phase of the development of the Irish Tuberculosis services. It marked the participation of Ireland in an international awareness of the problem of tuberculosis and was an enlightened and compassionate awakening of the middle classes, hitherto little responsive to the sufferings of the vast multitude of the poor in Ireland<sup>444</sup>

I propose in the next chapters to discuss how the WNHA moved on from the role of educators, to that primary of care providers, in ways that had a more measurable effect on individual lives, and a more significant impact on government policy towards tuberculosis and its effects.

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<sup>444</sup> Deeney, James. 'The Development of the Irish TB services' in supplement to Irish Journal of Medical Science. May 1985. p 30.



## CHAPTER 5.

### **'Give the children of the people the chance of living happy and healthy lives'**

In the Women's National Health Associations efforts to deal with the problems of tuberculosis and high infant mortality rates, several areas came in for close consideration. These included the provision of infant care, support for mothers within their homes and communities, the care of children, particularly within the Irish national school system, and the provision of a clean tubercular free milk supply. As the Associations agendum broadened it would lead to their move from educators to primary care providers, which I will endeavour to show began as a gradual but necessary process. It is this transition period between the travelling caravans and the founding of hospitals, dispensaries and sanatoria, that I intend to discuss in the course of this chapter.

The reports coming back to the central committee of the WNHA from the localities were describing the need for the provision of basic care within local communities, if their anti-tuberculosis campaign was to be successful. In order to mobilise individuals to fight the disease, and to provide a role for the newly formed branches of the Association, it would be necessary to provide support and encouragement to those involved and to allow them to see the concrete results of their efforts. More practical measures needed to be introduced. The need was to reach every mother and infant and to support them through at least the first year of their baby's lives. Statistics demonstrated the need for this, as infantile mortality rates were showing that 95 of every 1000 children born in Ireland, died before they had reached the age of one year. The figure in urban areas being much higher, at 150 deaths per 1000 infants born.<sup>445</sup> Therefore, to be at the forefront of the WNHA goal of reducing these unacceptably high rates, it became necessary to bring as many children as possible into their sphere of influence.

The WNHA began their efforts to reduce infant mortality rates with programmes to provide care for infants through the establishment of many 'Babies Clubs' throughout the country. The first of these clubs open its door at 37 Divis Street in Belfast on the

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<sup>445</sup> 'First Annual report of WNHA' April 1909. Peamount archives.

2 March 1907, founded by the Belfast branch of the WNHA.<sup>446</sup> It was no coincidence that the first of these clubs were founded in Belfast. In 1906, soon after the arrival of the countess in Ireland, she was invited to address a conference in that city, under the auspices of the Christian Civic Union. Lady Aberdeen's topic was on the subject of the responsibilities of citizenship.

In her address the countess claimed that modern science asserted no less positively than Christianity, that 'No man liveth unto himself and no man dieth unto himself'.<sup>447</sup> The old individualism under which a person felt that nothing more was required of him than to live a moral life, to govern his household well and be friendly to his friends had, she believed, been discredited. Lady Aberdeen wanted to see in its place the development of relationships in which an individual was associated with the wider community. More than this, she wished to see developed a corporate responsibility regarding the communities in which the individual lived. She believed that if individuals continued to ignore those links then there would, sooner or later, be a penalty to pay. Using the sheer waste of lives of children within Belfast,<sup>448</sup> as a painful example of a price that was too high to pay.<sup>449</sup> The countess was to claim that children were dying unnecessarily, and this was only one of the more obvious results of poverty. The mortality rates were, to a large extent, the direct result of the neglect of the poor by those within the wider society. Her meaning was clear and was addressed mainly to the women attending the conference. It was they, the countess stated, who must find the high infant mortality rates a 'slur upon their womanhood that could no longer continue' calling on those present to ask the following questions.

What then was being done to counteract these evils? What were they doing to give the children of the people the chance of living healthy and happy lives? .....What were they doing to save the waste of young life which they saw everytime they went out on the streets - hundreds of children picking up a precarious living selling this or that, begging where they could have no idea of home, escaping from all education...fitting themselves only for the great army of the unemployed?<sup>450</sup>

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<sup>446</sup> 'The Babies Clubs of Belfast. Report of Infantile Mortality Sub-Committee of Belfast Branch of WNHA of Ireland.' in *Slainte. Journal of the WNHA* Vol.1. Jan 1909 p 11.

<sup>447</sup> *Northern Whig*. 18 Oct. 1906.

<sup>448</sup> The infant mortality rate was lower in Belfast than in other Irish cities, nevertheless, there were still very significant rates of infant mortality.

<sup>449</sup> *Northern Whig*. 18 Oct. 1906.

<sup>450</sup> *Northern Whig*. 18 Oct. 1906.

Lady Aberdeen was appealing to her upper class audience on behalf of the children of the street. She went further to claim that as a class, they stood self condemned if they allowed their poorer sisters to grow up and marry and bring children into the world, without the social supports they needed in terms of education in the care of children, and without the proper nourishment to feed them. Upper class women, she claimed, had the leisure and means to take part in public affairs and in public government, and they had an even greater responsibility to do so than their male counterparts. It was also the bounden duty of all women to bring up their own children with a sense of duty and commitment to their own communities. Concluding her address the countess appealed to the young men and women present stating that

It was they who saw visions and dreamed dreams of what the world might be, of what their own country, their own city might be and it was they above all who could make these visions real if they were not too engrossed in having a good time themselves.<sup>451</sup>

The countess was using her own belief in the Liberal party principals of solidarity with the working classes, by the upper classes, into a concrete form. Thereby creating an opening for those who were interested, to put into practice those principals in what she believed to be a righteous cause, that of the rights of children. She was not, it must be noted, addressing working class individuals, within either urban or rural areas, for whom a sense of community was already well established and without which many would not survive. This issue will be dealt with more fully in a later chapter.

By the end of 1906 there were four other such institutions opened in the city of Belfast with over 1000 babies in attendance. Many more were to follow not only in Belfast, but in Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Waterford and many small and large Irish towns.<sup>452</sup> In Dublin for example, the Dublin City branch of the WNHA called a conference on the subject of infant mortality, inviting the Masters of the Dublin maternity hospitals, medical men from the city dispensaries and many social workers, all who were more than willing to attend. The outcome of this conference was support for the establishment of 'Babies Clubs' in many of the working class areas of Dublin, beginning with

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<sup>451</sup> Northern Whig 18 Oct. 1906.

<sup>452</sup> 'Summary of report of Babies Clubs in Ireland, submitted to the Council of the WNHA of Ireland' April 1910. Peamount archives.

Saint Monica's Club in Augustine Street.<sup>453</sup> This club was opened on the 12 June 1907. At least seven others followed in quick succession, including St. Bridget's on the Irishtown Road, St. Uresla's in Blackrock, St Joseph's in Dundrum, the Gordon Club in Clanbrassil St, St Andrew's in Lower Mount Street and the Aberdeen Club in Kingstown. Within a year Babies Clubs<sup>454</sup> had been formed in all of the major cities and towns of Ireland.<sup>455</sup>

In all areas the clubs opened twice a week, and for the small fee of 1/2 d, mothers could have their infants under one year weighed by a district nurse and examined by a doctor free of charge. Ante-natal clinics were also provided for the mothers. The doctor was available to give advice, and where possible give health talks to the mothers, on the care and feeding of infants. Nurses tried to see that the advice was understood and carried out. Breast feeding was always encouraged, but where this was not feasible milk vouchers were provided to supply mothers with a guaranteed supply of non-tubercular milk in sealed bottles for their infants.<sup>456</sup> There were also boot, dental and coal thrift funds organised to help the mothers provide small savings for family necessities. Individual clubs introduced extra amenities, for example St Monica's club had a playground attached, and as far as possible all clubs endeavoured to provide day nursery facilities. In 1916 the first school medical clinic in Ireland was opened in conjunction with St Patrick's club in Whitefriar St.<sup>457</sup>

On each club day a lady who was a member of the committee, took responsibility for the smooth running of the club, and defrayed the cost of providing tea and cake for the club members and visitors. Along with the tea and cake, cookery and sewing classes were also provided. In this case the classes were not cookery demonstrations, as had been the case with the travelling caravans or other exhibitions. Instead members themselves were asked to prepare dishes that would provide cheap, nutritious meals for their families, under the direction of the lecturer. In this way it was felt the lecturers and supervisors would not make the members feel inferior, but would give them confidence

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<sup>453</sup> 'Summary of the report on Babies Clubs in Ireland submitted to the Council of the WNHA of Ireland.' April 1910. Peamount archives.

<sup>454</sup> Appendix 26.

<sup>455</sup> 'Dublin Campaign Against Infant Mortality' from records of the WNHA Infantile Mortality Committee, 16 Feb. 1910. Reprinted in *Slainte .Journal of the WNHA* Vol. 2. 1910 p 23

<sup>456</sup> The subject of milk depots opened by the WNHA to provide clean tuberculin free milk particularly for mothers and children will be discussed in some detail later in this chapter.

<sup>457</sup> 'Souvenir Booklet of WNHA of Ireland'. Dublin 1946. Peamount archives.

in their own ability. It was believed that the members themselves would have a better grasp of what they could realistically hope to provide within the home.

At sewing classes the mothers learned to make clothes for their children, for only the cost of the material. They were also encouraged where possible to make extra clothes, with a view to selling them for themselves at a small profit. What was most important in the eyes of Lady Aberdeen, was to promote a feeling of belonging in the club, to make the mothers feel that this was their own institution in which they could have a say and a social life, 'a change from their monotonous lives of toil and worry'<sup>458</sup> To this end parties were held from time to time, which added not only to the popularity of the clubs, but of fostering a social life for many who had little opportunity for such ventures.

There were a number of other by products of the Babies Clubs, including the establishment of 'Little Mother's Clubs'<sup>459</sup> where young women were taught the basics of child care. In Dublin for example, in the summer months, it was the convents in Upper Gardiner Street, North William Street, Seville Place, at the St Francis Xavier school in Lower Dorset Street, the national school in Great Brunswick Street and at the Sisters of Charity in Donnybrook,<sup>460</sup> which invited the WNHA to talk to the young women in their areas. This led to simple lectures being given, on such matters as the domestic prevention of death and disease among infants and children. It was believed that by teaching these lessons to the rising generations, before they became mothers themselves, much could be achieved in terms of fostering proper infant care, and reducing infant mortality rates. Dr Ella Webb speaking to the Infantile Mortality Committee of the WNHA in 1910, laid stress upon the fact that it was 'ignorance and not the want of affection in the mothers that was at the root of most of the evils'.<sup>461</sup>

Dr Webb also claimed that it was this 'inevitable ignorance' which the Babies Clubs had to fight against. Education was to play a key role in reducing infant mortality rates, as many children died, not of deliberate neglect, but as the result of ignorance on the part of whole generations of mothers, who had never been taught basic child care skills. It was hoped that by braking this cycle, many infant lives could be saved.

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<sup>458</sup> 'First annual report of the WNHA of Ireland' April 1908.

<sup>459</sup> Appendix 27.

<sup>460</sup> 'Report of the meeting of the Executive Committee of the WNHA of Ireland'. Oct. 1909. Peamount archives.

<sup>461</sup> 'The Dublin campaign Against Infant Mortality' from records of the Dublin Infantile Mortality Committee Feb. 1910. Reprinted in *Slainte. Journal of the WNHA* Vol. 2. 1910 p 25.

There were of course other equally fundamental difficulties to be overcome. For example, realising the need for expectant and nursing mothers to have proper nourishment, many of the Babies Clubs began to provide meals for a very small sum. Friends and supporters of the association also purchased meal tickets, and gave them back for distribution to those in most need. Eventually dental care was provided to the mothers at low cost.<sup>462</sup> As had been the case with all of Lady Aberdeen's ventures, it seems the 'holistic' approach was one that she both favoured and encouraged.

The needs of those in attendance at the Babies Clubs were so great, that it became necessary to further the scheme by reaching out to individual mothers and children in their own homes. The same nurse who attended the baby club in an area, therefore made home visits to those who would benefit from this. Eventually it became necessary for the Association's branches throughout the country, to employ Jubilee nurses to provide this service, as well as using the health visitors recommended by the Jubilee Institute. The nurses and health visitors not only visited the sickly infants and mothers, but in over 1000 visits in Dublin alone up until 1910, they also through the WNHA 'Samaritan Fund'<sup>463</sup> and the use of other charitable agencies, distributed food, milk, coal, clothes, tried to find work for fathers and encouraged children to attend school. Where possible they saw to the payment of rent for those in dire need, while putting pressure on the Relieving Officers to provide more government aid. Due to the enormity of the social problems in Dublin at this time, regardless of their best efforts, the WNHA and their nurses and staff were limited in what they could achieve, nevertheless their achievements were impressive. This fact was recognised by any involved in the scheme.

On the 16 Feb. 1910, a meeting was held at 23 Fitzwilliam Square in Dublin to discuss the question of infant mortality and the work and future of WNHA schemes, such as the Babies Clubs. In a statement by Sir Andrew Horne M.D. ex-President of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, and Chairman of the 'Central Babies Clubs Committee of the WNHA' in Dublin, he praised the development of these institutions, and calls

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<sup>462</sup> 'Dublin Campaign against Infant Mortality from records of the Dublin Infantile Mortality Committee' 16 Feb. 1910.' reprinted in *Slainte. Journal of the WNHA* Vol. 2. 1910. p 25.

<sup>463</sup> 'Samaritan' or 'Nourishment Funds for the Relief of Necessitous Patients' especially TB patients, were established nation-wide by the WNHA beginning in 1908.

for their establishment nation-wide.<sup>464</sup> By 1918 Sir Andrew Horne was further praising the work of the Association by stating that

he wished to bear testimony to the great boon that these clubs have already conferred on the working mothers of Dublin.....We have established 9 baby club centres in the most crowded parts of the city, with an influential Ladies Committee attached to each, also a trained nurse, always available to give aid and assistance. As a result the membership has enormously increased .....The preventative work for infant and maternal welfare should be strengthened and extended until every town in Ireland possesses a child welfare centre..nothing should be considered more important.<sup>465</sup>

It would in fact be 1947 before a Health Act of that year proposed a service of health care be provided for mothers and children This act would provide for the substantial provision of compulsory school inspection, and the education of mothers in child welfare matters. This was also the result of concern over the continuing high levels of infant mortality.<sup>466</sup> The success of the WNHA scheme was reflected in the fact that in 1916, Dublin Corporation gave a grant to the WNHA, for the development of its Babies Clubs and the clubs were later to become part of the government's City of Dublin Infant Welfare Scheme. In 1925 the Central Babies Clubs Committee, became a sub-committee of a new Child Welfare Committee established by the Association in Dublin. Through this committee the salaries of nurses and other expenses were defrayed by the corporation grant.<sup>467</sup>

Of course just as there were varying degrees of success in the branches of WNHA in different localities, with some branches being very successful and expanding, while others simply ceased to exist, there were also varying degrees of success in relation to the Babies Clubs. Rural schemes often running into far more difficulties than those in the large urban areas. Lady Edith Gordon, President of the local branch of the WNHA in Killorglin, County Kerry, gives us an example of at least one of these clubs that failed miserably in its aims. Having in their initial enthusiasm introduced an 'Infant Welfare Centre and Babies Club' to the town, according Lady Gordon, both she and her committee failed to realise that in Irish towns there 'are as many classes as there are castes

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<sup>464</sup> Horne, Andrew Dr. in 'Report of the Central Babies Clubs Committee of the WNHA of Ireland' 11 Sept. 1918. Peamount archives.

<sup>465</sup> Horne, Andrew Dr. In 'Report of the Central Babies Clubs Committee of the WNHA of Ireland' 11 Sept. 1918

<sup>466</sup> Horgan, John Noel Browne. Passionate Outsider. (Dublin, 2000) p 92.

<sup>467</sup> 'Golden Jubilee 1907-1957.' Souvenir Booklet of the WNHA of Ireland. p 7. Peamount archives.

in India'.<sup>468</sup> This meant that babies and infants who lived in the 'Square' could not mix with babies and infants who lived in the 'Lane', with poorer children being accused of passing on infections to the better off. The problems and disagreements that resulted led to three nurses giving in their notice, and the committee was forced to discontinue the club.<sup>469</sup>

Nevertheless, in spite of the dilemmas and the difficulties that arose, many of which were associated with breaking the traditions of child care as they had been practised here for generations, a large number of the babies clubs proved to be a great success. The town of Tullamore being a particularly successful example. It seems the clubs flourished where the need was the greatest, and that was in the large cities and towns. It is true to say that in urban areas in particular, there was a real need for such intervention on behalf of mothers and babies. As has already been stated, Ireland's overall infant mortality figures at 95 deaths per 1000 children born here, compared favourably with Great Britain, while the urban figures remained extremely high, at 150 deaths per 1000 children born.

Alice Rushdon, while addressing the associations Infantile Mortality committee in Dublin, outlines just a few of the difficulties that led to such a differentiation. She referred to Sir Charles Cameron's<sup>470</sup> reports, which spoke of poverty, destitution, insanitary housing, unemployment and many other major social problems in urban areas, while some progress at least was being made to overcome these difficulties in rural areas. The 1909 report of the Registrar General, J.B. Dougherty<sup>471</sup> for example, showed that 11,500 babies were born in the Dublin registration area, and 1,683 of these babies under 12 months died in the same year, 1,028 died before the age of five, with a total death rate from all causes and at all ages in the city of 8,634, 2,711 of them in children under 5.<sup>472</sup>

Yet Dublin babies had an advantage over urban children in Great Britain for example, in that there was an absence of factory life and its inherent dangers to motherhood. The Masters of the Dublin maternity hospitals also claimed that there was a very low

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<sup>468</sup> Gordon, Lady Edith. *The Winds of Time*. (London, 1934 ) p 167.

<sup>469</sup> Gordon, Lady Edith. *The Winds of Time*. p 167.

<sup>470</sup> Sir Charles Cameron was Chief Medical Officer of Health for Dublin.

<sup>471</sup> Presentation copy to Her Excellency the Countess of Aberdeen of the 46th. Annual Report of the Registrar General for Ireland, 1909. Peamount archives.

<sup>472</sup> 'The Dublin Campaign against Infant Mortality' from records of the Infant Mortality Committee Dublin. 16 Feb. 1910 in *Slainte. Journal of the WNHA* Vol. 2. 1910. p 25.



proportion of congenital diseases in the city, compared to other cities with a high rate of infant mortality. Finally, the vast majority of babies in Dublin were breast fed by their mothers and therefore should have been stronger.<sup>473</sup> However, the infant mortality rate here remained at 150 per 1000, while the figure stood at only 131 in the 75 largest towns in Britain, in spite of industrialisation. The reality was that the infants died due to the problems associated with extreme poverty and depravation, the figures illustrated this by showing that of the total number of deaths, 3,884, or 42 per cent of the infants, died in either workhouses, lunatic asylums, hospitals or prisons.<sup>474</sup>

The infantile mortality figures could not of course reflect, according to Alice Rushdon, the lack of quality of life for those who were sick and suffering, weakly infants who were seen every day in the dispensaries and hospitals of the city.<sup>475</sup> She was also amazed that no combined effort on the part of 'more fortunate citizens'<sup>476</sup> had been made to bring about more radical social change. It was true to say that neither the British nor Irish establishment, the nationalist or unionists, had made any concerted effort to deal with the enormous amount of social problems in Irish urban areas, nor to deal with excessive infant mortality rates.

It was the WNHA who were opposed to the fact that in the 'Notification of Births Act' 1907, notification was made optional for the various county councils. As a result, Dublin Corporation for example, decided to opt out of the Act, in spite of recommendations to the contrary made by the Public Health Committee, under Alderman Thomas Kelly, and a deputation from the WNHA. The Corporation feared that the implementation of the Act would prove too costly, but because of their reluctance many infants slipped through the net of what care there was available. Regardless of the difficulties, and the opposition, in the years 1909-10, the Dublin Branch of the WNHA were to carry on such an active public campaign in an effort to force the hand of Dublin Corporation, that in 1910 the Act was finally adopted in Dublin city.<sup>477</sup>

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<sup>473</sup> 'The Dublin Campaign against Infant Mortality' from records of the Infant Mortality Committee. Dublin. 16 Feb. 1910 in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA Vol. 2. 1910. p 23.

<sup>474</sup> Cameron, Sir Charles. How the Poor Live. (Dublin, 1904).

<sup>475</sup> 'The Dublin Campaign against Infant Mortality' from records of the Infant Mortality Committee. Dublin. 16 Feb. 1910 in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA Vol. 2. 1910. p 23.

<sup>476</sup> 'The Dublin Campaign against Infant Mortality' from records of the Infant Mortality Committee. Dublin. 16 Feb. 1910 in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA Vol. 2. 1910. p 23.

<sup>477</sup> Souvenir booklet of the WNHA (Dublin, 1946). Peamount archives.

Alice Rushdon was to claim that having worked with the Dublin poor as a nurse for over 14 years, she had come to realise that the people of the city desperately wanted to work, to raise their families standard of living, and improve their living conditions. It was the lack of employment that was at the root of all their misery and the high infant mortality rates followed from such poverty<sup>478</sup> Lady Aberdeen was also acutely aware of the social problems, and the need for a concerted effort in order to deal with the fundamental issues at the core of these difficulties. In relation to poverty the countess claimed

...the conditions consequent on persistent poverty among large numbers of the city people is the greatest obstacle to success, and that mothers who are badly housed and almost constantly underfed cannot be expected to give a robust physique to their children, or to possess the physical and moral strength which is required to effectively surmount frequently recurring difficulties.<sup>479</sup>

This was a modern and enlightened point of view, coming from both Lady Aberdeen and Alice Rushdon, and through them from the WNHA. Their attitude and perception of the situation was quite different from many of their contemporaries. Even among those who were seemingly in favour of the work of the Association, there were individuals who were ready to blame those at the receiving end of their aid.

At the inaugural meeting of the WNHA, a motion was placed by the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church which included the need for 'a law to be passed for the purpose of bringing about compulsory cleanliness'<sup>480</sup> This remark is best understood in the context of further statements found in some of the newspaper editorials of the period. For example, the Belfast Evening Telegraph of the 11 Feb. 1907 stated

If all the mothers were as they ought to be mortality amongst infants would not be as great as it is, nor would TB hurry to a premature grave every year so many promising young persons as it does.<sup>481</sup>

The Dublin Evening Mail of the 14 May 1907, has a similar position to take

Many cases will require utmost firmness. Most dirty people do not consider themselves dirty, and resent any such imputations as a grievous insult.<sup>482</sup>

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<sup>478</sup> 'Dublin campaign against infant mortality' from the records of the Infant Mortality Committee. Dublin 16 Feb. 1910 in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA, Vol. 2. 1910. p 24.

<sup>479</sup> Aberdeen., Lady Ishbel. 'The WNHA of Ireland and Infant Welfare' in The Child. June 1911 p 9.

<sup>480</sup> The Daily Mail. 10 Feb. 1907.

<sup>481</sup> The Belfast Evening Telegraph. 11 Feb. 1907.

<sup>482</sup> The Dublin Evening Mail 14 May 1907.

Finally, and reflecting the wider point of view the Irish Independent of the 14 March 1907, while discussing the role of teachers in the work of the WNHA in combating dirt and disease, comments that

They [the teachers] cannot transform the filthy home from which many a bright little one has to trudge often hungry to school, but they can if they are kind and tactful make a child realise that dirt can be a terrible enemy within the home, and perchance shame the slovenly mother into cleaner habits.<sup>483</sup>

I believe that it is because of their more realistic attitude to the problems of poverty and disease, that the Countess of Aberdeen and the members of the WNHA, would move from philanthropy to a movement of social reform, The Association would also introduce many measures to aid and support the victims of poverty, illness and distress. They realised that such an array of social problems were the fault of society and its lack of support for the poor, who were striving against great odds to survive in an extremely hostile environment of poverty, ignorance, lack of all types of facilities and other deprivations. This is a matter I intend to discuss further in future chapters.

Notwithstanding the great need for many types of social reform, opposition to the WNHA remained constant. Firstly, from those who felt that they were wasting their time, the Irish were inherently indolent and lazy. Secondly, from unionists who were opposed to any apparent success on behalf of a Liberal Government, and finally from the nationalists who saw the establishment of Babies Clubs as nothing more than 'Political Souperism'. Nationalists believing that helping the infants of Ireland when so many were dying, was no better to them than the work of the evangelical Protestant 'Soupers' at the time of the Great Famine. The WNHA involvement in the heating and cleaning of schools and travelling caravans did not meet with the same level of nationalist opposition as did this seeming encroachments into Irish, particularly working class homes.

A poem dedicated to 'exposing' this matter, by Brian O'Higgins<sup>484</sup> was, like many others from the same source, nothing short of nationalist propaganda. This particular piece was written for Sean Connolly, who was killed at the time of the 1916 Rising, and

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<sup>483</sup> The Irish Independent 14 March 1907.

<sup>484</sup> Brian O'Higgins, was a writer, poet, and ardent nationalist, writing mainly propaganda pieces for the Sinn Fein Newspaper.

read by him at an Aeridheact held in Ringsend in 1912.<sup>485</sup> It was Connolly's wish that Lady Aberdeen's 'propaganda' should be nipped in the bud and O' Higgins, in his own words, was 'asked to do his worst'. In this he was very successful.<sup>486</sup> The piece entitled 'The Ringsend Babies Club' was supposed to be a narrative of events as told by a native from the area.

O have you heard the news at all? How Mrs Aberdeen-  
The Dame from Dublin Castle that they call the Vicerene-  
Came down and walked among us - aye! Without a thrace o' fear,  
An' smiled on us an' sludhered us, an' nearly shed a tear.  
At the way those dirty microbes had us pesthered night an' day  
Dancin' waltzes on our bit o' meat, an' bathin' in the tay.  
An' sthрутtin' all around the place, like monkeys' in the Zoo,  
An' we not seein' one o' them nor knowin' what to do.

There were microbes all about us- on our fingers and our toes,  
An' every man had millions o' them climin' up his nose;  
There were billions o' them livin' with us mornin' noon an' night,  
There were trillions o' them floatin' there between us an' the light.  
An' no one ever saw them until Mrs Aberdeen,  
Came down with some suggestions an' a blessin' from her queen.  
She saw the awful state of us an' spoke to us most kind,  
An' turned the matthers over in her philanthropic mind,  
An' mutthered most melodiously - an' fingered with her gown-  
" 'Twill take me all my time to make them loyal to the Crown;  
I wondher what'll fetch the women - that's the bloomin' rub! -  
Och! I'll chuck the Sanatorium an' start a Babies Club.

So the Babies' Club was started in a real Viceregal way,  
With a feast o' cakes from Scotland an' a mighty flood of tay;  
An' Mrs Aberdeen was there in her disinfected best,  
An' swallowed with her tay as many microbes as the rest.  
An' all the grand nobility an' gentry o' the town'  
In hobble skirts an' harem hats an' wigs at half a crown'  
With Pugs' an' Pomeranians' an' Poodles' by the score,  
That scattered crowds o' microbes on the tables an' the floor.  
There were speeches on bacteria, on Billy goats an' beans  
On the King an' Queen of England an' the noble Aberdeens;  
On the glories of the Empire that was never beaten yet'  
That made the Yankees dhrink its tay, an' walloped auld De Wet;  
On how to make ends meet on twenty thousand pounds a year,  
When beef is dear in Dublin, an' there's taxes on the beer;  
On how to disinfect you windpipe every time you speak,

<sup>485</sup> O'Higgins, Brian. The Wolfe Tone Annual. 1916 before and after. Historical episodes of 42 years. Together with 107 songs and ballads and the Soldiers Song of Easter Week. (Dublin, 1950). p 40.

<sup>486</sup> O'Higgins, Brian The Wolfe Tone Annual. 1916 before and after. Historical episodes of 42 years. Together with 107 songs and ballads and the Soldiers Song of Easter week. p 39.

An' how to rear a family on half-a-crown a week.  
On Governments an' Cabinets an' changes in the moon'  
On how to sink a liner an' burst a new balloon.  
On Sanatoria, destroyed by Beelzebub  
But no one spoke of Babies at the Ringsend Babies Club.

The Club is workin' now like mad an' forgin' right ahead,  
There's nearly twenty members - only some o' them are dead.  
An some o' them are gone to fill the jobs they nobly won,  
When they sold their Nationality for the "bitties" in the bun.  
An' the meetin' men are wonderful - they always start with prayers,  
For the King an' Queen of England an' their heiresses an' heirs  
With some for Mrs Microbes, an a few for Aberdeen,  
An' three or four for Dublin Castle sprinkled in between.

Then Mrs Tom Three-Ha'pence nods her head at Mrs. Wing,  
Then the room gets disinfected, an' they all begin to sing.  
(And the microbes leave the place an' swarm in the sthreet,  
Where they fling disloyal sneers at every bobby on his beat.)  
An' then they take the babies from the hampers an' the bags,  
An' wrap them up in Union Jacks an' Coronation flags,  
An' comb their hair with curry combs, an' stuff their ears with silk'  
An' give them half a spoonful o' disinfected milk;  
an' then they dedicate them to service o' the Crown,  
An' while they sing "God save the King" they jig them up an' down  
They pasteurise them, sterilise them, steep them in a tub,  
An' hang them on the line to dhry - in the Ringsend Babies Club.<sup>487</sup>

The satirical nature of this work attempts to show the countess as a scheming individual with no better motives for her philanthropic work than to keep the Irish loyal to the Crown, in the mode of the nationalist perception of constructive unionism. It is similar in tone to the work already quoted, by Alice Milligan entitled 'To a Lady Bountiful', and to other poetry by the same author.

The opinion of the nationalists in this matter was, for all its misinterpretation, understandable. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, due to Ireland's failure to urbanise and industrialise or to grow economically, and in the face of political unrest, a number of state aided measures were introduced which were described as 'Constructive Unionism'.<sup>488</sup> The initiative for constructive unionism came from Arthur Balfour, who was Chief Secretary to Ireland 1887-91, and was the result of concern over the political

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<sup>487</sup> O'Higgins, Brian. The Wolfe Tone Annual. 1916 before and after. Historical episodes of 42 years. Together with 107 songs and ballads and the Soldiers Song of Easter Week. p 40.

<sup>488</sup> Aalen, F.H. 'Constructive Unionism in the shaping of Rural Ireland. 1880-1921' in The Shaping of Rural Ireland. (Cambridge, 1993) p 138

and security situation in Ireland from the time of Parnell. In Balfour's plan firm government, was to be linked with a policy of 'killing Home Rule with kindness' in an effort to stabilise the situation in Ireland, by forcing the Irish to recognise the necessity of maintaining full links with Britain. According to Aalen, the policy was generally suspect in Ireland '...it was identified as Irish legislation with an ultimately British and Imperialist purpose'.<sup>489</sup> It was George Wyndham, Irish Secretary from 1900-1905, just before the arrival of the Aberdeens, who did much reform the situation in Ireland and to bring this policy to its full potential. For example, he introduced the Wyndham Land Act of 1903, which gave impetus to land purchase for tenants in rural Ireland. It was this policy which upset the unionist population in the country, and contributed to the downfall of the Conservative government in 1906.<sup>490</sup>

To many on both sides of the divide, it seemed that the efforts of the countess to introduce social reform in any shape or form, was a continuation of Conservative policy. Therefore it would be difficult for nationalists in particular, to believe that there could be any Christian or humanitarian motives coming from the wife of the Lord Lieutenant or her supporters. In Higgins' poem opposition to the countess takes on a future dimension, in that those Irish individuals who worked with Lady Aberdeen were accused of sycophancy. This particular weapon of implying that an individual would keep in with the Castle for jobs or favours, was an insult to all nationalists. According to Charles O' Mahoney, this weapon had proved very powerful in the hands of nationalist writers and journalists. He makes the point that not since the mayoralty of T.D. Sullivan twenty years earlier, during the previous viceroyalty of the Aberdeens, had a Lord Mayor of Dublin invited a viceroy to the Mansion House. Some from conviction, but others were afraid of the 'Bogie' of sycophancy.<sup>491</sup> Joseph Robins claims that no self respecting nationalist in this period, would be seen entering the portals of Dublin Castle.<sup>492</sup> Many unionists stayed away from the Castle as long as there was a Liberal Government in power in Britain for the same reason.

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<sup>489</sup> Aalen, F.H. 'Constructive Unionism in the Shaping of Rural Ireland 1880-1921' p 138.

<sup>490</sup> Aalen, F.H. 'Constructive Unionism in the Shaping of Rural Ireland 1880-1921' p 138.

<sup>491</sup> O'Mahoney, Charles. The Viceroy's of Ireland. p 327

<sup>492</sup> Robins, Joseph. Champagne and Silver Buckles. The Viceregal Court at Dublin Castle 1700-1922. p. 133

Robins on speaking of the unionist near boycott of Castle functions explained that

attendance at the Castle was widely disdained by the gentry and the nobility....The list of 2000 participants at the St Patrick's Day Ball in 1907 shows that only fifty or sixty titled persons were present, a reflection of the extent to which Aberdeen's espousal of Home Rule had made him anathema to loyalists.<sup>493</sup>

A practical example of this can be seen in a letter from Lady Arnott<sup>494</sup> to Lady Aberdeen, dated 11 Feb. 1909. In this she speaks of her great personal affection for the countess, and gives assurances that she was willing to help in any way possible in the campaign for the eradication of tuberculosis. Nevertheless, Lady Arnott was also to state that 'as unionists we shall be unable to attend any official entertainments at the Castle'.<sup>495</sup>

It is interesting to note that the very people who criticised Lady Aberdeen for her work on behalf of Irish children, both nationalist and unionist, did little themselves to alleviate their suffering. It was a number of years after the WNHA had brought to the attention of the general public, the plight of Irish school children, that Maud Gonne and the 'Daughters of Eire' began a scheme to provide school meals for children. It was 1919 before St Ultan's hospital was opened to aid tuberculosis ridden children by Madaline Ffrench Mullen<sup>496</sup> and Dr Kathleen Lynn.<sup>497</sup>

The WNHA had from its foundation, united all classes and creeds to an extent never before witnessed in Ireland. Before 1907 the vast majority of the philanthropic and charitable organisations and associations were organised along sectarian lines. Catholics and Protestants working in isolation from each other. As had happened twenty years before with the development of the Irish Industries Association the needs of the poor and underprivileged, were in second place to the maintenance of religious and political divisions. The WNHA, on the other hand, believed that efforts to reduce infant mortality rates would only progress wherever Babies Clubs were formed, information on child-care was given, literature distributed, milk supplies improved or school children

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<sup>493</sup> Robins, Joseph. Champagne and Silver Buckles. The Viceregal Court at Dublin Castle. 1700-1922. p 155

<sup>494</sup> Lady Arnott was wife of the unionist, Sir John Alexander Arnott, a businessman and chairman of the Irish Times.

<sup>495</sup> Correspondence from Lady Arnott to the Countess of Aberdeen, dated 11 Feb. 1909. Haddo House archives

<sup>496</sup> An ardent nationalist Madeline Ffrench-Mullen became the hospital's chief administrator.

<sup>497</sup> Dr. Kathleen Lynn was Chief Medical Officer to the Irish Citizen Army during the 1916 rising. She devoted her career to paediatrics and public health.

aided, with no discrimination on the grounds of religious or political sympathies, class or gender.

It was only a matter of time before the WNHA were forced to look outside of the home to the next environment where children were spending most of their days. This area was, of course, the local national schools. The WNHA were to learn that in spite of what were high figures, in the matter of mortality from all causes, Ireland showed to the best advantage in the age period under five. In the case of tuberculosis this inferred of course that Irish children were not, as some supposed, born with any predisposition or particular susceptibility to tuberculosis. However, in the age region of five to ten years the mortality rates in Ireland, were still higher than those found in England. Ruth Barrington substantiates this claim, stating

Morality among children of school going age was especially depressing when compared with England - deaths per 100,000 among children age 5-15 years in the period 1901-1910 was nearly 25% higher in Ireland than in England.<sup>498</sup>

The question for the WNHA in their search for a reduction in mortality rates was, is there any particular cause for the high rates? And if there was a cause, could it be removed? It was important therefore to explore at the reasons behind such statistics before a solution could be found. The need arose to look at where it was children over five years spent their time, with whom they came into contact and other circumstances that would bring about such dramatically high incidence of tuberculosis. The obvious place to start was with the national schools in both rural and urban areas.

It soon became clear that children were attending schools in which were found such appalling conditions, that the spread not only of tuberculosis, but of all manner of infectious diseases was inevitable. Next to the homes of Ireland, schools it seems had the most pressing need in terms of the levels of hygiene, living conditions, overcrowding, and sanitation problems. They were in fact, a reflection of the levels of poverty and depravation found in many working class homes. It would be important then for the Association to examine the actual circumstances under which schooling was carried out in Ireland. The reports given to the WNHA came from very many sources, all confirming the same seemingly insurmountable difficulties and appalling circumstances within Irish schools. The Education Commissioners, for example, reported on the state of the

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<sup>498</sup> Barrington, Ruth. Health, Medicine and Politics in Ireland 1900-1970. p 75.



wretched school buildings, the overcrowding, the lack of ventilation, and of good sanitary arrangements. They berated the lack of any provision for the heating and cleaning of school, and the 'extraordinary custom' of children working from 9.30 a.m. until 3.30 p.m. with nothing or very little to eat.<sup>499</sup> Mary Daly describes the conditions to be found in the Dublin schools of the early 20th century.

Of the cities 167 national schools in 1907, 104 had no lavatory accommodation, while 21 lacked playgrounds. Despite poor attendance many were seriously overcrowded.<sup>500</sup>

The problems associated with the national schools in Dublin were simply a reflection of a nation-wide problem. This was best summed up by F. North in an article on 'Irish Schools and Health' in the Feb. 1909 edition of the Slainte magazine. Firstly, he spoke of the non existence of sanitary conveniences in the case of at least 1000 Irish national schools. This meant that there were no toilets facilities at all in 12 and a half per cent of all state aided public elementary schools. The Board of National Education had made repeated requests of the Treasury to provide for the erection of these necessities, but without success.<sup>501</sup> Even where toilets were available, there was no adequate provision made to have them cleaned or kept in good repair, therefore they were often run down and in a poor state.

Sanitary inspectors did visit these 'out offices' and made very unfavourable reports, but as no one had ultimate responsibility for there up-keep the matter went no further. According to Mary Daly, in Dublin, neither the Corporation or the Local Government Boards, had the means or authority to improve the schools which were totally outside all municipal control. They were instead the responsibility of the school managers, generally clergymen, and ultimately to the Commissioners for National Education.<sup>502</sup> The Treasury paid for care-takers in the 30 'Model Schools' around the country, while the other 8000 national schools were left to look after themselves.<sup>503</sup>

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<sup>499</sup> 'Report of the work of WNHA of Ireland as it bears on Tuberculosis' submitted by the Countess of Aberdeen as part of the report from Ireland to the TB International Congress in Washington D.C. 1908.

<sup>500</sup> Daly, Mary E. Dublin the Deposed Capital. A social and economic history 1860-1914. p 265.

<sup>501</sup> North, F. 'Irish Schools and health' in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Vol. 1. Feb. 1909. p 52.

<sup>502</sup> Daly, Mary E. Dublin the Deposed Capital. A social and economic history. 1860-1914. p 265.

<sup>503</sup> North, F. 'Irish schools and Health' in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Vol. 1. Feb. 1909 p 52..

It was not only the school sanitary facilities that were neglected, often the schools themselves were in a very poor condition. The outward appearance of the school houses by the beginning of the twentieth century, did little to suggest a thriving system of education, with buildings that were designed with minimum spending in mind. In many cases school houses were only just large enough to hold the number of children who attended, and were repaired only when the teachers took it upon themselves to carry out the repairs. In the majority of cases, particularly in rural areas, the floors were earthen and with roofs that leaked. There was no local aid, as was the case in England and Scotland, for the keeping of school houses in good repair, nor for the heating, cleaning or equipping of schools. The majority of schools being described by the Local Government Board as 'mere hovels', totally unsuitable for teaching purposes.<sup>504</sup>

It was also noted by members of the WNHA within various branches, that children often had to walk long distances to school in all weathers. On arrival they would sit down in wet clothes with only a small fire in the corner of the room with dust, dirt, and germs everywhere, sticking to their wet clothes. They believed rightly, that these conditions were contributing greatly to the spread of tuberculosis. North speaks of visiting such schools in mid-winter, to find a room full of children with scarcely room to move about and a ceiling so low that effective ventilation was practically out of the question.<sup>505</sup>

Sir William Whitla, M.D., Professor at Belfast University, confirmed this when he claimed that each pupil in the class room should have a minimum air space of 500 cubic feet, but in some schools in his own area of Belfast, there was only one tenth of the minimum allowed. Dr John McCaw, President of the Ulster Medical Society, on the occasion of a deputation to the Viceroy and the executive of the WNHA, confirmed that if a child were forced to breath in such a vitiated atmosphere, it reflected upon the child's mental powers, led to stunted growth and lowered the children's general health.<sup>506</sup> The Chief Inspector of Irish schools Mr Purser was to state

It is not an extravagant supposition that a large part of the sickness among the children of the country is brought on by badly ventilated schoolhouses, combined with want of due warmth in wet and cold weather. It is down right

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<sup>504</sup> Atkinson, Norman, *Irish Education a History of Educational Institutions*. (Dublin, 1969), p 90

<sup>505</sup> North, F. 'Irish Schools and Health' in *Slainte. Journal of the WNHA*. Vol. 1. Feb. 1909. p 52

<sup>506</sup> North, F. 'Irish Schools and Health' in *Slainte. Journal of the WNHA*. Vol. 1. Feb. 1909. p 52

cruelty to have a school room for poorly clad children so cold that the inspector, even with a heavy over coat on feels chilled in hands and feet.<sup>507</sup>

This statement brought attention to the third outstanding difficulty, that there was no adequate provision made for the heating of Irish schools, again with the exception of the 30 'Model Schools'. In rural parts of the country pupils were forced to carry sods of turf under their arms to school, in order to help provide fuel for the tiny class-room fire. In other areas the cost of providing heat was met by means of concerts, subscriptions and other fund raising events. In many cases it was the teachers themselves who were forced to meet the schools heating costs.

None of the information given to the WNHA, regarding the condition of Irish schools was new or surprising. A special commissioner writing on the matter in the medical journal the Lancet as early as 1900, in an article on the sanitary conditions in Dublin in general, was to write of Dublin National schools.

School rooms..... ill ventilated; gas burning in the day time; no recreation ground; no break from 10 until 2 o'clock; no lavatory for the boys; manure heaps against the walls of the school; dark brown liquid manure oozing from it forming stagnant pools, saturating unpaved ground; emanations drawn into school; garbage, dust heaps, black mud, fish heads, offal etc. in the lanes and yards about.<sup>508</sup>

This description paints a vivid picture of conditions in Dublin schools, the same could be said of most urban schools, with the rural schools faring little better. There was no doubt, that the schools were the medium for the fostering and spreading of tuberculosis and all manner of infectious disease. North in his article confirms this when he explained

Here we have it. The Irish child is educated in an unsanitary, ill-heated, badly cleansed barracks, where he inhales vitiated air, to the injury of his health and the endangerment of his life<sup>509</sup>

The Local Government Board had arrived at the same conclusion as North. They claimed that there was good reason to look with suspicion on the school incidence of tuberculosis, as from school age the first signs of an increase in the death rate was apparent.

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<sup>507</sup> North, F. 'Irish Schools and Health' in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Vol. 1. Feb. 1909. p 52.

<sup>508</sup> Lancet. Sept. 1900.

<sup>509</sup> North, F. 'Irish Schools and Health' in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Vol. 1. Feb. 1909. p 52.

This was the result of unsanitary conditions and over-crowding in badly ventilated rooms.<sup>510</sup> The Local Government Board recognised that the tendency of the tubercle bacilli was to become latent, and develop at a considerable interval after the original infection. This explained why the incidence of tuberculosis did not increase from the moment the children began their school careers, but increased so dramatically in those over five years at school making a further case, if one were needed, that the primary schools were the obvious source of infection.

The realisation of the difficulties experienced daily in Irish schools was brought home forcefully by T. Clarke LL.D. at the first annual meeting of the Dublin branch of the WNHA in 1908. In his report we see the reality behind the statistics. It was pointed out to those present by Clarke, himself a school teacher, that there was no limit to what the WNHA could do to improve the conditions, with regard to health of the children, in the national schools of the period. He outlined the work that needed to be done, and improvements to be made, by first illustrating the conditions prevailing in schools at that time. He began by outlining what was the common daily practice within these institutions. The picture painted by Clarke is a vivid one, with all sorts of repercussions for the health of the children.

The teachers would open up the schools, in all weathers, at 9.30 in the morning. In rural areas the children would then arrive, having tramped often over a mile or more through fields, hills and bogs. The class-rooms, in both city and country, were always freezing cold on winter mornings with little warmth added when the small class-room fire was finally lit. Some of the children were shoeless adding to their misery. The dust from the previous evenings sweeping, which settled on the desks and other furniture in the room, would stick to the damp clothes of the children. At the same time dust full of germs rose from the floor, where spitting was often the practice, or passed from the children's breath. In the confined space with closed windows and doors, germs were breathed in by all the occupants of the room. The summer heat brought with it its own share of problems. It was the teachers alone who were left with the tasks of cleaning and heating the schools with the help, usually on a rota basis, of the children.<sup>511</sup>

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<sup>510</sup> North, F. 'Irish Schools and Health' in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Vol. 1. Feb. 1909. p 52.

<sup>511</sup> Clarke, T. 'What the WNHA can do to advance the cause of school hygiene' in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Vol. 1. Jan. 1909. p 9-10.

With regard to nutrition, only the better off children were in a position to bring bread to school, the rest remaining hungry until they returned home after five hours in the classroom. In an address given to the WNHA by Philip Hanson and reprinted in Slainte he stated

It is obvious that insufficient or proper food is one of the most powerful causes tending to weaken the constitution.....Children whose strength is thus impaired, if they survive to maturity, reach it with diminished powers of resistance to disease; .....if a substantial improvement could be made in the food given to children the result would show itself in the lowering of the death rate.....<sup>512</sup>

In the opinion of Clarke it was 'inhuman cruelty and a crime against the nation to compel our children, the future hope of Ireland, to attend schools under the conditions that prevail in many parts of the country.'<sup>513</sup> He also makes the interesting point that it was

Better the primitive summer school of our great-grandfathers on the lee-side of a friendly hedge, with their own firesides in winter, than many a publicly sanctioned school which our young people are now compelled to attend - far better at all events for their health and their comfort.<sup>514</sup>

It was not only the pupils, but teachers, who were suffering as a result of the appalling conditions under which they were forced to work. The author himself having ten colleagues stricken by tuberculosis in the previous six months alone. In describing their working conditions he stated

Worry, overwork, school staff being insufficient, and prolonged school hours necessitated by an over laden curriculum, with unsanitary surroundings, and the scavenging of schools and offices at a time of the day when vitality is naturally at its ebb, are among the risks to which we are exposed.<sup>515</sup>

Moral was also low as wages for teachers remained at half the rate of their English and Scottish counterparts. By way of answering these needs, Clarke was to make a number of practical suggestions that would be taken up and developed, as far as possible, by the WNHA. He wished for the WNHA to help prevent the spread of disease by the introduction of simple common sense measures, that would make and keep the schools in a

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<sup>512</sup> Clarke, T. 'What the WNHA can do to advance the cause of school hygiene' in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Vol. 1. Jan. 1909. p 12.

<sup>513</sup> Clarke, T. 'What the WNHA can do to advance the cause of school hygiene' in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Vol. 1. Jan. 1909. p 12.

<sup>514</sup> Clarke, T. 'What the WNHA can do to advance the cause of school hygiene' in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Vol. 1. Jan. 1909. p 12.

<sup>515</sup> Clarke, T. 'What the WNHA can do to advance the cause of school hygiene' in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Vol. 1 Jan 1909. p 12.

sanitary condition. The question remained as to what could be done by the WNHA to change what was a hugely difficult, nation-wide, problem?

In her usual practical manner Lady Aberdeen had the WNHA look at basic everyday solutions, in terms of what could be achieved in the immediate future, and what they could do to provide more long term results. To do this they would need the backing and financing of school managers, churches and both local and central government. They would begin by looking for solutions that could be implemented immediately by assessing the everyday running of the national schools, with the aid of both teachers and inspectors.

As a result of what had been learned, it was decided by the WNHA leadership that the minimum requirement was for all schools to have at least one care-taker, who would see to the cleaning of the schools. While performing this task, the caretaker would remove, each morning, all dust by wiping the furniture with a damp cloth wrung out in disinfectant. He would be expected to keep the whole building regularly cleaned, from the toilets to the cloakrooms. The caretaker would also see to it, that in cold weather a fire was lit in each of the class-rooms, at least half an hour before the children arrived at the school. Systematic disinfecting of the school was the next requirement, this would entail the spraying of 'efficient germicide' at regular intervals. Much it was felt, could be achieved by the proper use of sanitation methods. If these measures were carried out, it was believed, that they could limit not only the spread of tuberculosis, but many other infectious diseases. Several other areas came in for consideration by the WNHA, including the provision of school meals, the heating of the schools and supplying the apparatus necessary for disinfection purposes. The cause of Irish school children was one that the Association was to take on with great vigour.

The first and most practical measure that could be undertaken by them, was that of seeing to the nutritional needs of the pupils. Proper nutrition would help the children overcome their susceptibility to germs and disease, and it was something that could be achieved almost immediately and relatively cheaply. Consequently, a plan was introduced nation-wide by local branches of the Association, to give penny or half penny dinners to school children. School managers and teachers were approached outlining the position of the WNHA in this matter. The work would begin when a woman was engaged by the Association to prepare school meals.

In schools where no facilities existed for the cooking of meals, a lean-to with a stove would be provided. This scheme was rapidly introduced in many parts of the country, with the strong approval of the school managers, teachers and the Commissioner of National Schools.<sup>516</sup> In order to have the means to provide these meals, farmers and other members of the local community, would be asked for any contributions they could make to the project, in terms of providing potatoes, vegetables or meal. Any further purchasing of food stuffs would be undertaken by a committee of the Association. The menu would consist of such forms as; potato soup and bread, lentil soup and bread, pea soup and bread, fig or date pudding, suet pudding with golden syrup, or roly-poly pudding.<sup>517</sup> Each child would bring in their own mug, plate and spoon, and would be charged one penny or one half penny a week, as the organising committees saw fit.<sup>518</sup>

It would be important that the teacher knew those children who could not pay and see to it they too were taken care of, without drawing attention to those in that unfortunate position. This was mainly done with the use of books of 'Dinner Tickets' given to each child at the beginning of the week. Where possible better off members of the community would be asked to purchase books of dinner tickets, which would be distributed to those unable to pay. Where this was not possible the WNHA would meet the costs. In this way all children became entitled to a school meal.

As with even the most benign endeavours undertaken by Lady Aberdeen, there were some voices raised in opposition to such a programme. The main objections were that in providing food for the children, the WNHA would diminish parental responsibility. Mothers of children cared for in such a manner by the community, would be encouraged to still further neglect their duties towards their families. It was felt that such mothers would lose their chief motivation for becoming good and efficient house-keepers. The issue of the provision of school meals, even in the darkest days of the Dublin Lockout in 1913, when children were literally starving, challenged what were deeply held beliefs about the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor. Sarah Harrison<sup>519</sup> argued that if state

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<sup>516</sup> 'Plan for giving penny or half-penny dinners for school children' in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Vol. 1. Feb. 1909. p 21.

<sup>517</sup> 'Plan for giving penny or half-penny dinners for school children' in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Vol. 1. Feb. 1909 p 21.

<sup>518</sup> Appendices 28-29.

<sup>519</sup> Sarah Harrison was an Independent Nationalist Councillor for the South City Ward.

agencies played a significant role in providing relief for school children, it would increase the danger of 'indiscriminate assistance'. Quoting Archbishop Walsh, she stated

He advises that the giving of meals be kept as far as possible away from school-rooms, that the children who do not need them, especially those on the border line, should not be confused with those who do.<sup>520</sup>

Regardless of such objections, Lady Aberdeen continued to personally visited many Irish schools in her efforts to draw attention to their plight, when national and local newspapers reported on these visits. This practice too left her open to criticism, particularly from nationalist sources. The poet Brian O'Higgins claimed that these occasions were only there for slavish address and bouquets, and 'other manifestations of toadyism' in which the 'innocent children of Ireland' were forced to take part. He refers to the countess' gesture of kissing the children when she was presented with gifts, as nothing more than a 'performance',<sup>521</sup> and wrote the following piece of poetry to show the gesture for what he believed it was, the work is entitled "The Great Cure-All"

For all the woes of Eireann the fresh ones and the stale ones,  
The Landlords and the bailiffs, and the ailments of the poor-  
For overdone taxation, for slums and emigration,  
Viceregal Osculation is the grand new cure!  
For microbes young and aged, for microbes late and early,  
The round ones and the square ones, the big ones and the small,  
For coughs and constipation, of long and short duration,  
A kiss from Dublin Castle is the great Cure-All!

We hear of respiration, of proper sanitation,  
Of food and ventilation and of other things as well,  
We've leagues and federations and queer associations,  
To save us from the nations that know how to sell.  
They're all hallucinations; our sure and sole salvation,  
Is just an invitation to a Grand Viceregal Ball.  
For every ill and ailment that ever man complained of  
A kiss from Dublin Castle is the Great Cure- All!

Let statesmen try to lead us, and Shylocks try to bleed us,  
And others try to feed us on the food our island grows;  
Let rhymers still remind us of days we've left behind us,  
One Castle kiss can blind us to our countries woes!

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<sup>520</sup> Yeates, Padraig. *Lockout. Dublin 1910.* p 310.

<sup>521</sup> It is interesting to note that O'Higgins never met nor ever had any type of personal contact with the Countess of Aberdeen, but was writing at the request of those opposed to both the countess and the WNHA.



For blight upon the praties, for Irish, Erse or Gaelhilg;  
Disloyal bits of paper speaking treason from the wall;  
For signs of inflammation in this misguided nation,  
A Kiss from Dublin Castle is the Great Cure-All. <sup>522</sup>

Indifference to the objections to the proposals for the improvement of schools, in the face of such pressing needs, led the WNHA to over-rule any opposition. Within a matter of weeks local branches of the Association, were reporting on the success of their projects to provide school dinners, and in some cases, breakfasts and dinners, for the children attending national schools.

The scheme, which was most successful in rural areas, was unfortunately practically non-existent in urban areas, where poverty and particularly the problems of malnutrition were often the greatest. That is not to say that no improvements were made in the urban areas in the longer term, but the immediate needs were very much harder to meet. By 1916 for example, Dublin city centre schools had begun providing mid-day meals for their pupils, as other charitable groups<sup>523</sup> followed the lead set by the WNHA. Nevertheless, there remained no state or municipal funding for the provision of school meals and the schemes remained haphazard.<sup>524</sup>

In 1910 Dublin Corporation were requesting that Irish members of parliament take the necessary steps towards having 'The Feeding of the Poor School Children' Act, which was already in force in England, extended to Ireland.<sup>525</sup> Without parliamentary approval this would be impossible. At a meeting called in the Mansion House by Maud Gonne, under the auspices of Inghinidhe na hEireann in 1911, the members of the City Council had passed a resolution to strike a special rate in order to provide meals for national school children. This resolution came to nothing as the law agent present claimed that the Council were acting beyond their powers. It would take an Act of Parliament to introduce state sponsored school dinners to Ireland.<sup>526</sup>

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<sup>522</sup> O'Higgins, Brian. The Wolfe Tone Annual. 1916 before and after. Historical episodes of 42 years. Together with 107 songs and ballads and the Soldiers Song of Easter Week. p 60

<sup>523</sup> For example, in 1911 Maud Gonne established a Ladies School Dinner Committee, providing meals firstly in St Audoen's National school and a year later in John's Lane National school.

<sup>524</sup> Daly, Mary E. Dublin the Deposed Capital. A social and economic history. p 226.

<sup>525</sup> 'Minutes of the Municipal Council of the City of Dublin 1910.' No 794 p 512. Civic Museum archives.

<sup>526</sup> Yeates, Padraig. Lockout. Dublin 1913. p 308.

In spite of the overwhelming difficulties the means to provided school meals was in many cases an achievable goal. The problem of heating, cleaning and the proper maintenance of national schools, was one that could not be solved without the proper resources. They were far greater than anything the WNHA could hope to remedy alone, or even with the help and support of school managers. Lady Aberdeen now believed that having achieved as much as possible in the short term to alleviate the immediate needs of the children, it was now time for government intervention to deal with the more substantial difficulties. It was decided therefore to organise a deputation to the government, to put the case forward on behalf of the school children.

On Monday the 24 May 1909, the deputation from the WNHA which was led by the countess, went to see the Chief Secretary, Augustine Birrell at Dublin Castle. They were there to represent the members of the then 173 branches of the WNHA, and as a result of the unanimously passed resolutions of the General Council of the WNHA of Ireland which were

1. That the WNHA of Ireland do organise a deputation representative of its Branches in all parts of Ireland to wait on the Irish government and the Prime Minister, in order to urge on behalf of the mothers of Ireland the pressing necessity for provision of for the heating, cleansing, ventilation and general sanitation of the primary school buildings of Ireland. The total lack of such provision constitutes a grave danger to the health of the children of Ireland, and the fact that the death rate from TB shows a high incidence during childhood and early adolescence indicates that most of the causes predisposing to this disease can be traced to the period of school life.
2. That the Commissioners of National Education be approached for the purpose of devising a scheme whereby a system of daily disinfecting could be carried out in the schools, and that the support of the Local Government Board be asked for in this connection.<sup>527</sup>

The case was then put for the proper heating, cleansing and ventilating of Irish primary schools. Lady Aberdeen, in great detail, described the sorry state of the schools and of those in attendance. She also outlined the efforts made by the WNHA, not only to provide school meals, but to supply the means for the disinfection and cleaning of schools. But she claimed, it had to be realised that only with government intervention could any real and lasting improvements be made. It was up to the authorities to give the welfare

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<sup>527</sup> 'Report on the heating and cleaning of Irish schools' deputation from the WNHA, led by Lady Aberdeen to Chief Secretary, Augustine Birrell at Dublin Castle. Reprinted in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Vol. 1. June 1909. p 116.

of children of the state its proper priority. There was no other way to bring about a solution to the problems. It was impossible, as the WNHA had found, to raise enough money by voluntary means, and the suggestion of a municipal or district rate to fund schooling met with strong opposition in all areas.

This was indeed the case, as early as 1868 a Royal Commission led by Lord Powis, and composed of seven Protestant and seven Catholic members, had concluded that it would be absolutely necessary for the principle of local contributions to meet state grants be enforced. Local authorities would then be given the power to erect and maintain schools by levying a rate not exceeding 3d in the pound. The National School Teachers (Ireland) Act which followed in 1875, also allowed for the imposition of local rates, which were to be used to help the Imperial Treasury provide for the upkeep of primary schools. Both the recommendations of the Powis Commission, and the 1875 Act met with failure, as any attempt to levy an education rate met with strong opposition. Not more than 73 out of the 163 Unions ever became contributors at any time.<sup>528</sup> By 1897 there were only 25 Unions which continued their payments, and once the contributions were divided to include technical instructions even these contributions ceased.<sup>529</sup>

It was also noted by the deputation that the primary schools in Ireland received annually from government funds, £500,000 *less*, than that received from the same funds by Scotland. A country which had a population in its school system very similar to Ireland's. This realisation was nothing new, in 1904, while discussing matters relating to the need for sweeping reforms within the Irish school structure, Chief Secretary Wyndham referred to the financial difficulties faced by national schools. Nevertheless, he claimed that it was the task of parliament to 'to go over them, through them or around them.....in any case to get beyond them'<sup>530</sup> In 1907 Dublin Corporation, in a similar vein, were also calling for Irish schools to be funded equally with that of schools in Britain. A motion passed by Councillor Sherlock, and seconded by Councillor Crozier J.P. asked

That this meeting declares that the financial assistance so urgently needed in connection with Irish primary education, should no longer be withheld. This is money frequently admitted by successive governments to be legitimately due to

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<sup>528</sup> Balfour, G. The Educational systems of Great Britain and Ireland. (Oxford, 1903) p 98.

<sup>529</sup> Balfour, G. The Educational systems of Great Britain and Ireland. p 99.

<sup>530</sup> Atkinson, Norman. Irish Education, a history of educational institutions. p 120.

primary education, have been constantly diverted to other purposes; it is the duty of the government to make adequate provision without further delay to meet....the pressing claims in connection with the improvement of the education of the children of the masses; we call on the representatives of Ireland to insist that the financial assistance necessary be provided for in the forth coming estimates and furthermore that the sum so allocated should not be less than the corresponding sum given in the case of Scotland<sup>531</sup>

Yet by 1908 at the beginning of the WNHA campaign on behalf of national school children, nothing had changed. There were many reasons for this, one being the nature of the political and religious divisions within the Irish school system, at this period in history. The nationalist members of government led by John Redmond, would not accept any centralising agency, and found it difficult to deal with any educational developments which would be seen as further extending the control of the Imperial parliament over Ireland. At the same time the churches guarded jealously their role in Irish schools, where denominational education was sacrosanct, in spite of the best efforts of the Board of Education to have mixed schools within the national school system. This also led to clashes over funding. The Board of Education would not fund any institution outside of their control.<sup>532</sup>

The chosen role of the WNHA to see to it that the money due to Irish children was forthcoming, so that they could enjoy the educational advantages of British children, would be a difficult one. They would again need the support of the general public if changes were to be brought about. To do this it was felt imperative that the Association

awaken the conscience of the country and have it proclaimed aloud that the Irish child must not be starved at school intellectually or physically, must not be poisoned by school mal-sanitation, all must and shall have the educational advantages that can be provided by the outstanding half a million a year of which schools are now so unfairly deprived.<sup>533</sup>

The WNHA pledged to use any means at their disposal to see to it that this money was provided. Unfortunately, in reply to the WNHA deputation, Birrell was to explain that both he and his colleagues had known for many years the condition of Irish schools. He claimed that the National Board of Education had been asking for at least fifteen years for a grant of £40,000 per year, not on health grounds, but on educational

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<sup>531</sup> 'Minutes of the Municipal Council of the City of Dublin 1907'. No 702. p 522. Civic Museum archives.

<sup>532</sup> Atkinson, Norman. Irish Education a history of educational institutions p 120

<sup>533</sup> Clarke, T. 'What the WNHA can do to advance the cause of school hygiene' in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Vol.1. Jan. 1909. p 12.

grounds. The Board had made the case that the slow rate of educational progress and irregular attendance at school, were due mainly to the bad condition of the schools. The Irish National Teachers Organisation, through Dublin Corporation, had also urged that an Irish Education Bill be introduced which would provide for the heating and cleaning of national schools, the free supply of books and other school supplies and for the establishment of free secondary education.<sup>534</sup> On each occasion when this matter was brought before the Treasury, the money had been refused on the grounds that in the absence of school rates or of any contributions of an enforced nature, in the localities, the Treasury did not feel obliged to grant aid. The Treasury's answer was clear

No, it is an unreasonable demand; you have no school rate, you are safe from the heavy burdens which press on the other patrons of the UK and the least you can do for yourselves is to see to it that the school houses are in a proper condition to receive the children.<sup>535</sup>

Nevertheless, Birrell pointed out that the cause was not without hope. There was at the time a Bill before Parliament which proposed that the Treasury would pay half the cost of the proper running of Irish schools, if the local authorities levied a rate sufficient to meet the other half the expenses. Chief Secretary Birrell's final advice to the delegation was therefore, to ask the Irish people to raise half the finances each year for the venture, as the Treasury might then look more favourably on the case. Birrell also claimed that school managers would be afraid of such a development, as local control would be required by those funding the schools, and this would be something school managers would be reluctant to relinquish.

In this assessment Birrell was very accurate, in the Ireland of the period north, south, east and west, Catholic and Protestant, there was the belief that if there was local money there must be local control, particularly in relation to rates. It was a managerial system that would create difficulties in relation to fund raising for such a venture. For the project to succeed, it was absolutely necessary that Ireland was seen to support the Bill, as it was not supported by the Treasury. It would only be passed if a concerted effort were made to force it through. It was hoped that even in the absence of such an act the Treasury might still look more favourably on Ireland's case if the people of Ire-

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<sup>534</sup> 'Minutes of the Municipal Council of the City of Dublin 1909' no. 249. p 174. Civic Museum archives.

<sup>535</sup> 'Report on the heating and cleaning of Irish schools' deputation from the WNHA led by Lady Aberdeen, to Chief Secretary Birrell at Dublin Castle. Reprinted in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Vol. I June. 1909 p 116.

land were seen to be making an attempt to achieve results themselves. Birrell also felt that the WNHA was looked upon with much regard by clergy of all denominations, by teachers and by the Board of Education, and this fact might put them in a position to have a set of proposals accepted. If that were the case and funds were raised then Augustine Birrell would be only too glad to bring their case again before the Treasury.<sup>536</sup>

The story of the work of Lady Aberdeen and the WNHA for the improvement of Irish national schools is one of perseverance, persistence, of an understanding of a grave situation, and a determination to see it remedied. Immediately the WNHA approached the Managers Associations of each church, asking them to provide the needed one half of the necessary expenses, again Lady Aberdeen put the case very forcefully on behalf of Irish school children. It seems that Augustine Birrell had assessed the situation well, and was right about the influence of the WNHA in this matter. Within five months of the deputation on behalf of the schools to Chief Secretary Birrell, the Association were able to announce that the Irish National school managers, of all denominations, had pledged themselves by resolution, to raise one half of the costs for the heating and cleaning of the schools. As a result of this development the following resolution was passed by the Executive Committee of the WNHA

The Executive of the WNHA...have learned with great gratification that the school managers in connection with the Roman Catholics, the Church of Ireland, the Presbyterian Church of Ireland and the Methodists have expressed their readiness to make themselves responsible for one half of the cost of heating and cleaning of national schools, in accordance with a scheme to be worked out in consultation with the Chief Secretary and in response to his suggestion made to the deputation from the WNHA....May 24th.....the WNHA.....pledge themselves through their branches to co-operate with any local efforts that may be used to raise the required sum.<sup>537</sup>

Within eighteen months of this announcement, the WNHA had finally secured an interim grant of £21,000 from the government, through the Chief Secretary, matching pound for pound, up to a certain limited amount that raised by the school managers. The amount given to each individual school would be on a sliding scale depending on the number of pupils in the school. This sum would from April 1912 become an annual

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<sup>536</sup> 'Report on the heating and cleaning of Irish schools' deputation from the WNHA led by Lady Aberdeen, to Chief Secretary Birrell at Dublin Castle. Reprinted in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Vol. I. June 1909. p 116.

<sup>537</sup> 'Report of the meeting of the Executive Committee of the WNHA' 7 Oct. 1908. Peamount archives.

grant towards the heating of school rooms, the white washing and cleaning of the exterior of schools, and the upkeep of the toilets. The school managers would have to keep a record of the moneys spent and report back to the Treasury every year before further grants were issued, making sure that the money was used for its allotted purpose.<sup>538</sup>

The Irish National Teacher's Organisation, through its Central Secretary, Michael Doyle, gave its grateful thanks to the WNHA on its great success.<sup>539</sup> Augustine Birrell was to write to countess

.....but for the hard work you and your Association did in securing the financial co-operation of the School Managers, I must have failed in my parliamentary efforts, and it is , therefore only fair that credit should be given where it is due. Please accept my heartiest thanks and congratulation.<sup>540</sup>

Lady Aberdeen and the WNHA did not cease to work for the further improvement of Irish schools, calling immediately for the provision of regular medical inspection of school children. By 1919 the compulsory inspection of national schools was finally placed on the statute books.<sup>541</sup>

This progress did not of course solve all the problems associated with Irish schools, some which existed long after the founding of the Irish Free State and later the Republic of Ireland. In the case of secondary schools for example, the provision of medical inspectors was to take on an added dimension after 1947 with the proposed introduction of the 'Mother and Child Scheme' as envisaged by Dr James Deeney, the Chief Medical Officer and Dr Noel Browne, Minister of Health, a programme which led to the resignation of the minister and insurmountable opposition to the scheme.<sup>542</sup> Nor did the amount received come near to bridging the shortfall between that which was allocated Irish schools and that of the schools in Scotland. It was, nonetheless, for its time no small achievement in the face of such difficulties and it was a major concession worthy of note. The influence of Lady Aberdeen and the WNHA of Ireland was already being felt in the corridors of power, and their ceaseless work for social change was reaching into many aspects of Irish life.

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<sup>538</sup> 'Memorandum for the information of Managers of National Schools and the WNHA' 1-2 June 1911. Peamount archives.

<sup>539</sup> 'Minutes of meeting of the Executive Committee of the WNHA of Ireland.' 14-15 Oct. 1910.

<sup>540</sup> Correspondence from Augustine Birrell to Lady Aberdeen. (undated) Haddo House archives.

<sup>541</sup> Horgan, John. Noel Browne. Passionate Outsider. p 93

<sup>542</sup> Horgan, John. Noel Browne. Passionate Outsider. p 93.

An equally important issue in relation to tuberculosis and infant mortality rates was that of the problem of milk supplies nation-wide. The milk supply in Ireland at this time was unpasteurised and often contaminated with all manner of germs and bacteria. The lack of pasteurisation led to the milk supply being a carrier, not only of bovine tuberculosis but of typhoid fever, diphtheria and other disease spreading germs. Many children, particularly during the warm summer months, died as the result of drinking contaminated milk. If the number of diseases carried in milk were to be eradicated, then there was a real need for a pure milk supply. In order to achieve this, it would be necessary that there be efficient control of farms, dairies, and places where milk was distributed. This was a period when milk production from start to finish was often carried out in appalling conditions, from dirty cow-sheds to unhygienic distribution outlets.

In a letter published by Professor E.J. McWeeney M.D.,<sup>543</sup> a supporter of the work of the WNHA, he spoke of the many hundreds of typhoid fever, diphtheria and many other germs, including tuberculosis, which were found in unpasteurised milk and the dreadful effects this had especially on young children. He claimed that there were in Ireland many thousands of diseased milch cows, which occasionally or habitually delivered tubercle bacilli in their milk. The Professor also spoke of the advantages, particularly to undernourished or delicate children, if these germs were cleared out of its food rather than the child having to struggle with the germs themselves.<sup>544</sup> In the face of such contamination, it was hardly surprising that so many children died when milk was probably their main source of nourishment, if not the child's staple diet, at least until they reached two years of age.

Another problem of almost equal importance was that the milk supplied to those in poor areas was often watered down and had a very low nutritional or cream content. As milk was never in plentiful supply the small amount taken, with its low nutritional value, led to the development of rickets which caused bowed and twisted limbs and misshapen chests and so disabling and disfiguring many.

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<sup>543</sup> E.J. McWeeney was Professor of Pathology in the Catholic University School of Medicine, and in University College Dublin from its inception in 1908. He was assigned as Ireland's first Professor of Pathology by the Royal University in 1891. McWeeney was also bacteriologist to the Local Government Board and State Analyst.

<sup>544</sup> Lumsdon, Dr J. 'Why children's milk should be pasteurised' in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Vol. 1. March 1909. p 40.



Lady Aberdeen and her associates in the WNHA, wanted the system of providing and distributing milk improved and controlled with a view to protecting not only infants, but the population at large, from all manner of germs and disease. They held that the only ideal milk was one that came undiluted and uncontaminated from perfectly healthy cows, housed in well ventilated cow-sheds and milked by clean hands, before being pasteurised. Pasteurisation alone would never be enough, the milk could never be heated to the temperature required to eradicate all germs present in the pasteurisation process. They were also realistic enough to know that such a supply of milk was practically impossible at that time. It was not an issue that the WNHA could tackle alone, it being a nation-wide problem and one that would not easily be solved. A basic requirement, they believed, was that all dairy owners must earn a certificate of compliance from a veterinary surgeon. The certificate would be presented once a number of specific criteria had been met. A minimum requirement would be that their cowsheds were clean and healthy and that their cows had passed the tuberculin test. Only then should dairy farmers be allowed to sell milk or butter, or to sell their cattle for grazing or slaughter. Heavy penalties would be required to enforce these measures, and every animal found to carry tuberculosis would have to be destroyed. These were lofty, if impractical ideals, coming from a predominantly women's organisation, to the farming and business community of the country.

Any measures to change the system as it existed, would meet with a huge amount of opposition. The problem of the Irish milk supply could never therefore be solved except at government level, by the use of new and forceful legislation. Local Government Boards were already well aware of the problems. They had, on the 1 May 1908, brought in a new 'Dairies, Milkshops and Cowsheds Order' in the hope, that if properly enforced it would do much to secure a cleaner milk supply. An article in the newspaper The Northern Whig on the 5 July 1908, under the heading of 'The Tenant Farmer and the Tuberculosis Crusade' gives us a flavour of many of the articles in local and national newspapers given over to opposition to such an order. The writer speaks of the need to eradicate the disease of tuberculosis, but notes the grave mutterings of opposition to the Dairies, Milkshops and Cowsheds order. The farmers main objection to the Order was the introduction of guidelines which stated that in future cowstands must be

ten foot long, five feet wide and ten foot high, or any three measurements that when multiplied together produced 500 feet.

The existing structure of most cowsheds at this time, consisted of very narrow buildings, built of stone with little or no mortar in between. Side walls were no higher than six foot, with scarcely two feet for individuals to get by behind the cattle. Any manure gathered was simply thrown from a hole in the floor to a manure heap near by. The introduction of the Dairies, Cowsheds and Milkshops Order therefore would mean re-building for most farmers, who were in no position financially to do so, when in so many cases their own dwellings were in as much need of improvement as the cowsheds.<sup>545</sup> Jas Gregg MRCVG, in an article in the Ulster Guardian on the July 11 1908 on 'The Care of Milch Cows' writes of the average small farmer being simple in his own requirements, and could not be expected to provide 'palaces' for their cattle.<sup>546</sup> The farmers therefore would not be forced to comply with such an order, and would refuse to do so, in spite of the threat of prosecution. They were willing to clean up their cowsheds, by putting in chimneys in the roof for ventilation, white washing the walls and keeping the sheds and roofs swept clean, but were not open to the provision of 'excessive' air space.<sup>547</sup>

This was of course a reasonable argument, but not fully the true position. An article in the Lisburn Standard<sup>548</sup> on the 20 July 1908 entitled 'The Anti TB Campaign' gives us another glimpse at what was really going on in terms of opposition to the new Order. The writer speaks of his astonishment at the position taken by the various rural and urban Councils with regard to the Order. Their opposition, he believed, was based on the fact that these Boards were to a great extent, composed of owners of cattle and sellers of milk and butter. The writer claims that when these are asked to keep cowsheds and distribution centres clean and well ventilated, they either postpone the enforcement of the order, or simply tore it up. Other boards were less blatant, but appointed retired untrained coast-guards or local farmers sons, who would not be too hard to please, reaching the same result as those who simply dismissed the Order. There was no doubt among scientists that bovine tuberculosis was spread to humans through

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<sup>545</sup> Northern Whig, 5 July 1908

<sup>546</sup> The Ulster Guardian, 11 July 1908.

<sup>547</sup> Northern Whig, 5 July 1908.

<sup>548</sup> The Lisburn Standard, 20 July 1908.

contaminated milk and butter, and that many cows in Ireland had the disease. Yet the board members and the farming community at large, were more concerned 'about their own pockets than they are about the health of the people to whom they sell their cattle, milk and butter'.<sup>549</sup>

It was indeed true that contaminated milk was a principal cause of the spread of germs, and that Irish herds were contaminated by the disease. It had been well established by this time, that the bovine strain of tuberculosis could be communicated to man, at a time when anything between 20 to 40 per cent of Irish herds were infected with the tubercle bacillus.<sup>550</sup> It was believed that the disease, once contracted, then lay dormant until triggered later in life, adding greatly to the number of tuberculosis victims of all ages. Professor McWeeney called for further government legislation to ensure that all of the milk provided to consumers be pasteurised. This would introduce an immediate start to cleaning up of the Irish milk supply, pending further developments. In the interest of education, the WNHA chose to arouse awareness of these matters by putting the facts before the public in all further campaigns linked to the travelling Health Caravans. They would use their education programmes in the hope that it would make whole communities demand a pure milk supply and the efficient control over milk production and distribution.

At a higher level, there was a Vice Regal Commission established in 1909<sup>551</sup> to examine the Irish milk supply, which was appointed as a result of petitioning by the countess and the WNHA. The deliberations of the Commission took two years to complete, but their findings were unanimous. It is interesting to note that the Commission's findings and recommendations were those which a deputation from the WNHA had laid stress upon, before the commission had even begun their work. Some of the major proposals included the following

1. That Urban Authorities be given power to contribute from the rates towards the cost of establishing and maintaining milk depots for infants.
2. That Rural District Councils should be empowered to acquire or rent land for the purpose of pasturing cows for the supply of labourers.

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<sup>549</sup> The Lisburn Standard, 20 July 1908.

<sup>550</sup> Lumsdon, Dr J. 'Why Irish milk should be pasteurised.' in Slaintc. Journal of the WNHA, Vol. 1. March 1909. p 41.

<sup>551</sup> Appendix 30.

3. That the recommendations of the Commission which would enable Urban Authorities to obtain a better control of their milk supply, and to insist on precautions being taken which would protect the community from various diseases usually disseminated by milk, either through actual contagion, or from typhoid carriers, be adopted, and that the provisioning of the Dairies and Cowsheds and Milk Shops Order be strictly enforced.
4. That further powers be given to inspectors with regard to taking samples of milk for sale.
5. That the Local Government Board and the Department of Agriculture should work together and that animals should be under the Department of Agriculture, and that the health of people should be under the Local Government Boards. So that the two boards might come together, the commission recommended a Co-ordinating Board.<sup>552</sup>

Nevertheless, the WNHA felt that the Commission, and through them the authorities, did not go far enough with their recommendations. In spite of the Milk Commission's proposals that milk depots be set up to provide infant milk, they did not require that the government set up state aided milk depots. It was also only infants who were viewed as needing the care of the state in this matter. While supporting the need for milk depots in small towns, these were to be opened on by private enterprise, preferably by groups like the WNHA and the United Irish Women, and not by the urban councils, if that could at all be avoided. The Commission recommended that both milk and its by products come under the 'Cow Sheds and Dairies Act', and that all milk vendors be licensed. Yet this has proved to be extremely difficult to enforce. Finally, the Vice Regal Milk Commission noted that the population needed it be informed of the nutritional value of milk, and it was recommended that school children in particular be made aware of the value of milk as a food.<sup>553</sup> It was left to the WNHA to fulfil this task.

Practical measures needed to be introduced so that the WNHA could lead the way in this matter, not only through education, but by a practical example of what could be achieved. It was Margaret McNeill<sup>554</sup> who first brought word to the Association of a very successful and simple scheme for the pasteurisation of milk, that had been introduced in New York by Dr and Mrs Nathan Strauss. Miss McNeill had come into contact with the couple as a member of the WNHA delegation to the International Tuberculosis Congress in Washington in 1908. Dr and Mrs Strauss were to have a large sup-

<sup>552</sup> 'Report of the Vice Regal Milk Commission'. Reprinted in supplement in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Vol. 5. Nov. 1913. pp 719-20

<sup>553</sup> 'Report of the Vice Regal Milk Commission'. Reprinted in supplement to Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Vol. 6. Jan 1914. p 7.

<sup>554</sup> Margaret McNeill was sister to James McNeill who later became Governor-General of Ireland.

porting and financial role to play in the scheme of the WNHA in relation to the milk supply in Ireland, especially in Dublin.

For many years Dr and Mrs Strauss devoted themselves, beginning in New York and later reaching many of the major cities in the US, to reducing infant mortality rates and the prevention of disease due to defective milk supplies. They began the work when their own child's death was traced back to an infected milk supply. The couple realised that if their child could die from milk supplied by a particularly clean farm, then the danger to working class individuals and children was all the greater in the absence of any real standard of cleanliness.<sup>555</sup> In 1893 Nathan Strauss opened a Milk Depot in New York with the aim of distributing clean, pasteurised milk, at a reduced rate in poorer areas. It was established mainly to supply this milk to infants and to those with a note showing ill health or disability from a doctor or health worker. But the milk was also sold at a reduced rate where ever there was poverty. The milk was pasteurised at farms which were inspected by the State and shown to produce high quality milk. It was then brought to the city in special wagons, covered in ice. In the city there were eight 'stations' from which the milk was distributed. Similar projects had been undertaken in Jersey City in Philadelphia and in Chicago, amongst many other large cities and towns. For any who were sceptical about the prospect of such ventures being established in Irish cities, Margaret Mc Neill used the following case studies as an example of why such a scheme was essential, particularly to the children of Ireland.

At the Foundling Hospital at Randall's Island in New York, the infant death rate stood at 44 per cent in 1898. The pasteurisation of milk was then introduced to the hospital by Dr Strauss, who was at that time a member of the municipal body responsible for the children. The death rate for the following year fell to 19.80 per cent, although no other change to the diet, or in the hygiene of the institution had been made. In practical terms this meant that the death rate had been reduced from 2,592 to 1,349, a reduction of some 1,243 infant deaths. The same was true of a factory village called 'Sandhausen' made up of almost 4000 individuals, to which Dr Strauss had donated a 'Milk Kitchen' and the mortality rates fell from an average of 46 per cent to just under half of that rate

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<sup>555</sup> Mc Neill, Margaret 'Impressions of Public Health Work in the US. Report to the WNHA' in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Vol. 1. Feb. 1909. p 23.

in a five year period. McNeill was in no doubt that the case could be the same for Irish cities.<sup>556</sup>

As a result of the Associations contact with Dr Strauss, he offered them the free gift of a pasteurised milk plant. This was to be erected in Dublin, and used as an example of what could be achieved when a clean milk supply was introduced to a city or locality. He also sent the doctor who had been in charge of the milk depot in New York to help the Association inaugurate the depot. The offer was taken up by the Dublin Branch of the WNHA, who were grateful for the opportunity to accept the challenge. It was of course realised by all that pasteurisation was only part of the answer, and was no permanent solution to a dirty milk supply. There were only so many germs that could be killed by this process, clean milk was also an essential ingredient. Nevertheless, in the face of a highly contaminated milk supply, pasteurisation was a small but significant beginning. In order to make further improvements, very strict guidelines were laid down by way of an agreement between the WNHA and any contractors who would supply milk to their depots. They would include the following

1. The farm and its buildings, water supply, drainage, dairy and cattle to be opened at any reasonable time to the inspection of any person duly authorised by the Association.
2. The cows to be carefully selected, periodically selected inspected and tuberculin tested, if required by a veterinary surgeon to be appointed by the Association, so that only healthy cows to be used for milking and those that are any way unfit - diseased, newly calved, shall at once be weaned out.
3. The cows to be pastured during the summer and fed during the winter with such food as a veterinary surgeon as aforesaid shall approve of and as will prevent any taint being imparted to the milk.
4. The cows to be groomed and the udders wiped with soft damp cloths prior to milking and the byres to be cleaned out daily.
5. The milk to be cooled to 56 degrees over a 'Lawrence' or other cooler of approved pattern at once after milking prior to delivery.
6. The milk to be pure, fresh, clean, wholesome, well cooled free from added preservatives or colouring matter (chemical or otherwise) with a minimum average 3:32 butter fat and 9:5 solids fat.
7. The cream to be pure, fresh, sweet, wholesome, smooth, free from lumps, free from preservatives or colouring matter and with a minimum average of not less than 50% butter fat
8. The milk to be delivered to the depot daily before 6 a.m. by special delivery in sealed churns or cans with a warranty ticket attached to each churn or can guaranteeing its contents.

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<sup>556</sup> Mc Neill, Margaret. 'Impressions of public Health work in the US. Report to the WNHA' in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Vol. I. Feb. 1909. p 23.

9. All pails, streamers and others vessels to be kept scrupulously clean, being first washed with cold water and afterwards with boiling water each time after use.
10. Strict personal cleanliness to be enforced in the case of all milkers and attendants on the farm who are brought into contact with the milk or cream. Such attendants to wash their hands before milking and to wear clean white suits or dresses.
11. No milk or cream to be supplied from the farm if there is any case of infectious disease connected therewith.
12. The representative of the WNHA have the right to sample the milk or cream at any-time at the farm or in the course of delivery.<sup>557</sup>

It is impossible to know just how successful the Association were in enforcing such measures or how well their requirements were adhered to, nevertheless the aims and aspirations of the WNHA are worthy of note. There can be little doubt that the quality of milk supplied to the Association for pasteurisation and distribution would have been far in advance of that supplied to many of the ordinary distribution centres throughout the country.

The first Irish Milk depot was open at 62 Sitric Road, near the northern gates of the Phoenix Park, in Dublin in June 1908.<sup>558</sup> At the depot milk was not only pasteurised but was also used to modify cows milk to bring it as close as possible to mothers milk, for the benefit of babies whose mothers were unable to breast feed. It's purpose was initially to supply pasteurised milk on medical prescription. Therefore the infants who were sent to the depot were those who were most delicate and in need of pure nourishment. Doctors and nurses were also given books of milk tickets for distribution to the mothers and infants they felt were most in need.

Dr J. Lumsden, the Chief Medical Officer at the St James' Gate dispensary of Guinness Brewery reported<sup>559</sup> that in spite of the delicate state of a number of infants in his care, his statistics would show that from the first year of the depots existence, infant mortality rates amongst those babies who used the milk from the depot, stood at just four and a half per cent, compared to the Dublin infant mortality rate of fourteen and a half per cent.<sup>560</sup> Dr Lumsden claimed that each infant detailed in his report was ill or

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<sup>557</sup> 'Form of Agreement between WNHA and those supplying milk to the depots and other areas'.

Peamount archives

<sup>558</sup> Lumsden, Dr J. 'Supplementary report regarding results of Dublin pasteurised milk depot during 1909' dated 6 April 1910 from Medical Department St James' Gate. Peamount archives.

<sup>559</sup> Appendix 31.

<sup>560</sup> Lumsden, Dr J. 'Supplementary report regarding results of Dublin Pasteurised Milk Depot during 1909'. dated 6 April 1910 from Medical Department St James' Gate.

delicate with many who were dangerously ill, and mothers who were unable to breast feed. He stated

It is therefore remarkable that only two infants died, one of acute pneumonia and the other from infantile atrophy, a mortality of 4% against the Dublin infant rate of over 14%.<sup>561</sup>

Dr Lumsden's figures show that the average time in which the infants received milk was 6.3 months with an average weight increase of 7lbs.<sup>562</sup> The results were similar to those found under the same circumstances in the United States.<sup>563</sup> Within six months of the Depot opening they had supplied 8,863 gallons of milk in the Dublin area, the number of plain pasteurised pint bottles of milk was 39,149, with the number of bottles of modified infants milk standing at 56, 415. The Association also sent their milk supplies for frequent examination, not only to establish its cleanliness, but to ensure that the standard of fat never varied between 3.8 to 4.5 per cent.<sup>564</sup>

Although the depot had been supplied by Dr Strauss it was a very expensive venture for the WNHA to undertake, and was one that would always be a liability financially. Nevertheless, both Lady Aberdeen, Dr Ella Webb and Dr Lily Baker, felt that the reduction in the infant mortality rates made it worth the investment. The gain to the community of healthy rather than sickly infants was evident to all.<sup>565</sup> Within eighteen months the supply of milk going through the depot was such that distribution depots were established in different parts of the city, at which pasteurised milk was sold to the general public.

While pasteurising depots could not be established nation-wide by the WNHA, at a branch level much was still being accomplished in their efforts to provide clean, pure milk within local communities. For example, the Carlow Branch<sup>566</sup> of the WNHA rented a suitable house for the distribution of clean milk, and to ensure its clean handling.

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<sup>561</sup> Lumsden, Dr J. 'Supplementary report regarding results of Dublin Pasteurised Milk Depot during 1909'. dated 6 April 1910 from Medical Department St. James' Gate.

<sup>562</sup> Lumsden, Dr J. 'Supplementary report regarding results of Dublin Pasteurised Milk Depot during 1909' dated 6 April 1910 from Medical department St James' Gate.

<sup>563</sup> McNeill, Margaret 'Report of the Pasteurised Milk Depot and Infant Mortality Committees to the WNHA of Ireland'. (Dublin, 1911). Peamount archives.

<sup>564</sup> McNeill, Margaret 'Report of the Pasteurised Milk Depot and Infant Mortality Committees to the WNHA of Ireland'.

<sup>565</sup> McNeill, Margaret. 'Report of the Pasteurised Milk Depot and Infant Mortality Committees to the WNHA of Ireland'.

<sup>566</sup> Appendix 32.



They also bought their milk only from dairies that had been inspected by local veterinary surgeons. There was an interesting development related to this experiment, apart from the improvement in the milk supply. It was that profits from this scheme in Carlow were substantial enough to allow the organisation to provide porridge for breakfast in the local schools; give £10 to the WNHA Nurses fund; and along with the Rev Dr Foley, Bishop of Kildare who matched their funds pound for pound, allowed milk to be provided freely or cheaply to at least 48 of the most needy families in Carlow. In addition over 500 children were treated to a huge Christmas tree and tea party every year.

Each month 60 gallons of milk was given free of charge to the two local convents for the benefit of poor children attending the schools. A second milk depot was opened in Graigue, catering for a smaller population, but with equally successful results. A further by-product of the Carlow initiative was the establishment of a Clothing Club into which members would contribute 2d a week, and at the end of each year a bonus of 2s-6d was granted out of the fund for each individual member. There were in 1910 over 200 names in the Clothing Fund books.<sup>567</sup> This brief case study of Carlow is given to make the point that it was not only the central committee of the WNHA in Dublin that achieved results and effected changes. Local branches of the Association had a huge role to play in the nation-wide success of the organisation.

A further initiative was taken in an effort to alleviate a recurring problem in many rural areas, which was the added difficulty of a reduction in the milk supply particularly in the winter months. In order to meet this need and to establish a pure supply of milk, the WNHA established the Irish Goat Society, in May of 1912.<sup>568</sup> They encouraged many, in the face of much prejudice, to keep goats as it would be an economical and healthy way for to ensure a regular supply of milk. Goats were known to be almost totally free from tuberculosis. The prejudice was mainly based on the perception of the goat as destructive, and the difference in taste and texture to cows milk. Annual Goat Shows were held with the aim of introducing individuals to the benefit of keeping these animals.

The problem of the Irish milk supply was on going for many years, but the leaders and members of the WNHA made a major contribution, at a practical level, to alleviating

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<sup>567</sup> 'The Story of the Carlow Milk Depot' in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Vol. 5. 1913. p 537.

<sup>568</sup> 'The Irish Goat Society.' in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA Vol. 5. 1913. p 538.

the problem with the establishment of milk depots. Even more importantly they brought the reality of the situation to the attention of the authorities and the general public. In spite of the undoubted success of the Dublin Milk Depot, in 1914 the Local Government Board ordered that the depot be closed owing to the diversion of voluntary subscriptions to war purposes.<sup>569</sup>

The WNHA had in these early years tried to overcome many of the obvious social and economic difficulties facing Irish women and children in particular. Their efforts were to influence the lives of many. Beginning with the wide ranging role of the Babies Clubs and the education of both mothers and young women. This led to schemes for the improvement of conditions in national schools, particularly in relation to the nutritional needs of the children, and school sanitation. The Association's role in the provision of clean tubercular free milk, and their awareness campaigns in relation to all three, meant that they had by now become a major influence in social and political terms. By 1910 they were calling for a number of measures under three headings, general legislation, municipal legislation and voluntary work. Under the heading General Legislation was the following

1. The compulsory adoption of the Notification of Births Act.
2. The compulsory notification of all still births.
3. An amendment to the Insurance Act, which would make it obligatory on the claimant of Maternity benefit to notify their claim three months before the birth was expected in order that suitable care and advice could be given to the mothers through the approved societies.
4. That grants in aid would be given to Babies Clubs, maternity centres, schools for mothers, infant welfare centres, as was already the case in England where such grants were distributed through both the Board of Education and the Local Government Boards.
5. That the compulsory medical inspection of school children also be extended to Ireland
6. That proper provision be made by the state 'for the care and education of all classes of defective children, including the blind, the deaf and dumb, the tuberculous and crippled children and the feeble minded.'
7. That the principal recommendations of the Vice Regal Milk Commission were introduced 'for the protection of the community and so as to secure an adequate and clean supply of milk for the children.'<sup>570</sup>

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<sup>569</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. 'The Sorrows of Ireland' in Yale Review. Autumn 1918.

<sup>570</sup> 'Preliminary programme for Child Welfare campaign in Ireland' adopted by the WNHA of Ireland.' in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA Vol. 6. Aug. 1915. p 15.

Municipal Legislation included a call for the following

That powers be given to local authorities to establish and subsidise municipal milk depots, municipal playgrounds, day industrial schools and that extended powers be given in connection with the Feeding of Necessitous Children Act.<sup>571</sup>

Under the heading Voluntary Work, the WNHA were asking that a systems of training become established by which voluntary workers could be taught to work effectively in co-operation with official staff in all sections of public health work. Particularly when such work included special efforts to decrease infant mortality rates or the promotion of child welfare schemes, or anti tuberculosis campaigns.<sup>572</sup> In calling for this type of support the countess appealed directly to the medical profession by asking

May I be allowed to enter an appeal to members of the medical profession.....not to despise these popular methods because they are not the methods of the profession, but, on the contrary, to act as our officers and direct us, and make use of us. If we can look to them for guidance and depend on their support while at the same time pursuing our own homely plans to get in touch with the people - and especially with the mothers and children-<sup>573</sup>

Through these and other campaigns and by social and political pressure the WNHA were hoping to change the way poverty, and the treatment and understanding of disease were viewed by society at large and by those in authority in particular. By 1910 the WNHA had grown dramatically in its aim and scope and had laid the foundation for a movement that was to grow in strength and influence, and one that was to leave a legacy that exists to the present time.

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<sup>571</sup> 'Preliminary Programme for Child Welfare campaign in Ireland' adopted by the WNHA of Ireland. in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA Vol. 6. Aug. 1915. p 15.

<sup>572</sup> 'Preliminary Programme for Child Welfare Campaign in Ireland' adopted by the WNHA of Ireland.' in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA Vol. 6. Aug. 1915. p 15.

<sup>573</sup> Aberdeen., Lady Ishbel. 'The Sphere of Women in Relation to Public Health.' in The Dublin Journal of Medical Science. 1 Sept. 1911 p 165.

## CHAPTER 6.

### **'Restored to health and happiness?'**

In the following chapter I propose to discuss the changing role of WNHA as their focus on the environmental factors in the spread of tuberculosis, led to the provision of medical services as a next logical step in their campaign for the eradication of this disease. This would be a necessary but uneasy step for a organisation consisting mainly women to take, and their new role would lead to a considerable amount of debate among both the medical and political establishment. What would begin as a simple request by the WNHA for the provision of suitable care for those already affected by tuberculosis and living in the workhouse, would lead to the establishment of dispensaries, a hospital, preventoria and sanatoria. I will endeavour to place these in the context of the period, in terms of other institutions established in the preceding decades in particular. I also propose to examine the achievements, failures and final legacy of the various institutions inaugurated by the WNHA.

From the early years of the nineteenth century and for the next one hundred years Irish society was becoming more and more institutionalised. The Poor Law Act of 1838 had become the root of the Irish social services, beginning with the introduction of the workhouse system. These institutions were expected to deal with the worst of the countries social ills, from extreme poverty to mental illness. The Great Famine was to show the shortcomings of this system and some forms of out-door relief were introduced. There would also be provision made by the late nineteenth century, for a new hospital function for the workhouses. The workhouse was expected, alongside this new role, to cater for all types of special needs, for the sick, the handicapped, the deaf, dumb and blind, the mentally ill and retarded and meet the needs of young children. By the early twentieth century there were linked to these state run institutions a nationwide dispensary service that had its basis in the Medical Charities Act of 1851.<sup>574</sup>

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<sup>574</sup> The Medical Charities Act of 1851 was enacted 'to provide for the better distribution, support and management of medical charities in Ireland.' It brought the hospitals and medical dispensaries under the care of the poor law while, while maintaining a semi- autonomous role.

The system was totally inadequate to meet the needs of those they aspired to cater for, the poor, the destitute and the sick. Yet rather than trying to change this practice of using institutions to fill a social need, by the introduction of radical social change, the trend was to expand the system. In order to do this not only the state but religious orders, particularly nuns, played major role in this institutionalising process. The religious sisters while becoming involved in the field of education, nursing and other philanthropic activities, contributed more to this trend than any other single group on a scale never before witnessed in Irish history. Their work was simply an extension of the workhouse system as it existed until that time. One of the only recognisable differences being the denominational nature of the new institutions, as the sisters applied their own criteria to those in need. For example in many cases the children of destitute parents who were encountered on visits by the various Catholic charities then in existence, were sent to orphanages or industrial schools run by the religious. In former times the whole family would simply have been sent to the workhouse. Both cases were an easier option than trying to provide for the needy in their homes, or to take on the establishment in an effort to change the social system that led to such levels of poverty.

It was not only Roman Catholic organisations who established denominational institutions. As already stated in previous chapters sectarianism led to the work of the various groups, Catholic and Protestant, conducting their activities in isolation from each other and therefore their institutions were of their nature denominational. This trend had become the norm by the early twentieth century, but it had its roots in the mid nineteenth century. T.P. O'Neill stated

Set against the background of emancipation and Roman Catholic reorganisation this movement (the Protestant Evangelical movement) intensified the clash between the various religious groups. It was this conflict which was in part religious, and in part political and in part a struggle for influence in Irish society that caused relief agencies to be organised along sectarian lines.<sup>575</sup>

There was more to this trend than simply a power struggle and this can best be understood by examining the background to the establishment of voluntary hospitals and other voluntary institutions throughout the nineteenth century.

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<sup>575</sup> O'Neill, T.P. 'The Roman Catholic Church and relief of the poor 1815 - 1845' in Arch Hiber, XXXI 1973 p 137.

In the early part of the century voluntary hospitals were predominantly Protestant, but from Catholic emancipation onwards as a result of the introduction of many new religious orders, of both Irish and continental origin, most of the Irish voluntary institutions became dominated by Catholics. This trend was in keeping with Roman Catholic mistrust of Protestant missionary activities, particularly within the workhouses. This can be witnessed in the establishment of the first Foundling hospitals which were built under the Workhouse Act of 1838. Within these institutions children were taught to read and write but they were also taught scripture and the principals of the Protestant religion.

J.A. Robins explains

This policy of the foundling hospitals to bring up the all the children in the Protestant faith, irrespective of the religion of their parents, caused considerable animosity and concern in the Roman Catholic community. This was to be an ongoing cause of conflict and bitterness in Irish society for many years to come, right into at least the first sixty years of the 20th century the vast majority of the voluntary social services for children were set up along strict denominational lines.<sup>576</sup>

In fact the vast majority of all voluntary social services, not just for children but for adults, were established and organised along strict denominational lines and this was indeed to remain the case into the mid-twentieth century.

The depth of hostility and division between those at both ends of the political and religious spectrum was based on distrust, misunderstanding and fear. An example of this can be seen when we consider the visit in 1907 of Lord Aberdeen to Rome. A visit which was made without making any reference to the unionist community in Ireland. They were in turn horrified to discover that the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland had been received in audience by the Pope Pius X. They feared mainly that the Viceroy had gone to discuss the imminent passage of the Home Rule Bill with the pontiff and they were being sold out to Rome<sup>577</sup> 1907 was also the year in which the pope issued his decree 'Ne Temere' affecting marriages between Catholics and non Catholics, requiring that within such a marriage the parents must undertake to bring up any children born to them exclusively as Roman Catholics.<sup>578</sup> Both of these events, coming so close together caused major difficulties for the unionist population.

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<sup>576</sup> Robins, J.A. in 'Religious Issues in the early workhouses' in *Studies* 1968. p 594.

<sup>577</sup> O'Mahoney, Charles. *Viceroy's of Ireland.* p 327.

<sup>578</sup> Boyce, George D. *Nineteenth Century Ireland. The Search for Stability.* (Dublin, 1990) p 223.

There was also much consternation caused within the Catholic community when it was suggested that during the dark days of the 1913 Lock Out in Dublin that the strikers children, the vast majority of whom were Catholic, be sent to England to live with English, mainly Protestant, families until the dispute was over. The Catholic clergy and hierarchy were horrified at the thought of Irish Catholic children being 'corrupted' in British Protestant homes and therefore only a very small percentage of children ever made it to Britain.<sup>579</sup> For the social development of Ireland these divides were to adversely affect any efforts to deal with the major social issues of the period. In opposition to this trend WNHA and its institutions, remained always non-denominational and non-sectarian, and were therefore quite different to all that had gone before. That is not to say that the WNHA did not believe that their work have a religious significance, Lady Aberdeen was to claim with her usual evangelical vigour that

This uniting of all classes in Ireland in our work is considered by many the best part of our work, and it is one for which we cannot be too profoundly thankful. It invests our mission already sacred in its aim, with a new sanctity, and stamps it with the impress of that spirit of faith, hope and love which we trust and pray may ever be our distinguishing characteristic and our guarantee that our work will never die, for in its very essence it must be divine and divinely blessed.<sup>580</sup>

Nevertheless, such claims or aspirations do not represent sectarian divisions. As with the uniting of all classes the WNHA remained entirely non-denominational. In terms of the historical period the Association had a totally unorthodox and modern approach to many of the social issues confronting society. While the religious and political system of the period chose to institutionalise society's problems, putting those aspects of society they found unpalatable into institutions, the WNHA tried to bring aid to individuals in their homes. They also endeavoured to change fundamentally the attitude of others to the deprivation that existed within so many homes.<sup>581</sup> In this they were to a large extent fighting a losing battle, considering the extent of the problem in Dublin alone. However, it is to their credit that they were to try an experiment that few others would have even considered.

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<sup>579</sup> Lyons, F.S.L. Ireland Since the Famine. (Dublin, 1978) p 283.

<sup>580</sup> 'First Annual Council Meeting of WNHA' 14 April 1908. Peamount archives.

<sup>581</sup> This issue will be dealt with more fully in a later chapter.

Where institutions were used by the WNHA, for example the Sutton Preventorium or Peamount Sanatorium, they were only to be used to return individuals to their families in better health, and where possible, better trained and qualified to raise their standard of living. They were never established with the intention of permanently putting away from societies gaze those who were ill or infirm. Their institutions were based on the most enlightened of contemporary thinking. Peamount Sanatorium was based on the work of Dr Varrier-Jones who founded the Papworth Sanatorium in England, and who incorporated into his sanatoria the first workshops and industries for the training of sufferers in a trade that would improve their likelihood of finding employment on their discharge.<sup>582</sup> More than this, the WNHA would try to improve the life of the sufferers by improving the home environment to which individuals were to return after treatment.<sup>583</sup> This was done in the hope that they would not be faced with the same situation that had led to the illness in the first place and in an effort to protect the family members from the same fate. It was not at all uncommon for several members of the one family to become victims of consumption, often as a result of poverty, mal-nourishment, overcrowding and filthy living conditions.

Tuberculosis was not of course exclusively, although it was primarily, a disease of poverty. Many upper and middle class families fell victim to this extremely infectious illness. A classic example of this can be found in the life of Dr Noel Browne, former Minister of Health, and activist on behalf of tuberculosis sufferers in Ireland in the 1940s and 1950s. Browne belonged to a lower middle class family, yet in the first three decades of the twentieth century he had lost both his youngest infant sister, and his parents to the disease. Browne's older brother suffered from tuberculosis of the spine and was left terribly deformed as a result. By 1939 both Noel Browne himself and his young wife were also diagnosed with the disease and spent over four decades undergoing long periods of treatment in various sanatoria.<sup>584</sup>

However, while tuberculosis was no respecter of rank, F.B. Smith explained that the more wealthy members of society, at every stage of the life cycle beginning at birth, had a better chance of escaping infection or of having a remission or cure, than their poorer

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<sup>582</sup> Smith, F.B. The Retreat of Tuberculosis. 1850-1950. p 86.

<sup>583</sup> This aspect of the work of the WNHA will be dealt with in some detail later in this chapter.

<sup>584</sup> Horgan, John. Noel Browne. Passionate Outsider. pp 5-31.



counterparts. He stated 'poverty begat TB but TB also begat poverty'.<sup>585</sup> For this reason many of those who contracted the disease, often at the height of their earning capacity, found themselves either living in the community in abject destitution or with their families in the workhouse.

In the early stages of the organisation the WNHA tried to work within the system as it existed by trying to improve conditions for tuberculosis sufferers forced by circumstances into the workhouse. This they felt was vital to their aim of reducing the tuberculosis rates, by stopping the spread of the infection and hopefully reducing the number of fatalities from the disease brought about by pure neglect. This was no easy task due to the appalling conditions within the Irish workhouses, which had not improved since their introduction to Ireland seventy years earlier. The policy of the WNHA was to prevail upon the Boards of Guardians and hospital authorities to erect inexpensive annexes for tuberculosis patients in an advanced stage of the disease, pending the hoped for provision of sanatoria by the local authorities.<sup>586</sup> There was a precedent for this as in the 1840s fever annexes were introduced during this period of famine and disease. As early as 1901 the Local Government Board, had asked Boards of Guardians for the tubercular in the workhouses to be segregated, as far as possible, from the non-tubercular. In 1903, the NAPTB had written to the Board asking if this had been accomplished. They were informed that of the 159 unions surveyed only 72 had made provision for separation.<sup>587</sup> In many cases the level of segregation was only nominal with individual sufferers mixing openly with others around fires and in the many communal areas found in the workhouses.<sup>588</sup>

An example of the Associations efforts to improve conditions for those in the workhouses, and the difficulties they faced, can be seen in the following report of a delegation sent by the WNHA in December 1908 to the Lurgan Board of Guardians. The delegation were present to urge the Board to provide separate wards in the workhouse infirmary for consumptive patients. As there was no separation it was often the case that in the female infirmary, mothers with their new born infants were in close contact with

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<sup>585</sup> Smith, F.B. The Retreat of Tuberculosis 1850-1950. p 13.

<sup>586</sup> 'First Annual Report of the WNHA of Ireland '1909.

<sup>587</sup> Jones, Greta. and Malcolm, Elizabeth. (eds.) Medicine, Disease and the State in Ireland, 1650-1940. p 163.

<sup>588</sup> Jones, Greta. and Malcolm, Elizabeth. (eds.) Medicine, Disease and the State in Ireland, 1650-1940. p 164.

advanced cases of tuberculosis. Other individuals already run down due to illness hardship and under-nourishment were, in this vulnerable state, placed with consumptive patients and exposed to infection. Consumptives themselves were also vulnerable to other infections, which lessened to a great extent any chance of recovery.<sup>589</sup> It is hardly surprising then that according to Sir Charles Cameron in 1903, 39.7 per cent of deaths from tuberculosis, not only in the city of Dublin but in the surrounding suburbs, died in the work-houses, hospitals, lunatic asylums and prisons.<sup>590</sup>

In reply to the WNHAs request for separate wards, the Lurgan Board of Guardians stated that their proposal would be costly and there were no funds available for such a project. The well prepared delegation explained to the Board that £600 was all that would be required and this amount could be borrowed at a fraction of a penny in the pound. Nevertheless, the final reply from the Board was that it would be better to build a sanatorium outside of the workhouse altogether and this was a matter entirely for the county councils. This was at a time when most county councils believed that tuberculosis amongst the poor must be dealt with by the workhouses. Therefore no progress was made and change would not come about until it was forced by a groundswell of public opinion. Not all workhouses ignored the problem in such a fashion. For example in the South Dublin Union, the Board of Guardians made provision in the workhouse grounds for the isolation and treatment of consumptive patients.

It was not only the WNHA that were calling for change within the workhouse system. Dr Bigger, a Local Government Board Inspector, gave some further suggestions for use of the existing workhouses, most of which were never taken up. Bigger made the case that due to the need for the segregation of cases of tuberculosis, and the failure of Boards of Guardians to provide for this, the need was for a comprehensive scheme, that would be applicable nation-wide to deal with the isolation of sufferers. He proposed that many of the existing workhouses be taken over and converted into hospitals or sanatoria, as this could be done at a reasonable cost. Dr Bigger also stressed that it would be important that converted establishments be disassociated from all connection with the workhouse administration. In this way they would become more acceptable to the population at large. It was also his optimistic belief that although extensive

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<sup>589</sup> 'Consumptives in the workhouse. Pressing problems for Guardians. Discussion at Lurgan Board' in *Slainte. Journal of the WNHA*. Vol. 1. Feb. 1909. p 31

<sup>590</sup> Cameron, Sir Charles. *How the poor live.* p 1.

provision for tuberculosis sufferers would be needed for a number of years, they would be required less and less as the disease was 'ultimately stamped out'<sup>591</sup>.

In drawing this conclusion history was to show that Dr Bigger was quite wrong, with tuberculosis remaining a major killer and disabler in Ireland well into the first five decades of the twentieth century. Change was only to come with the introduction of antibiotics and other medical interventions, and improvements in living and working conditions as the century progressed. He was also wrong about the conversion of workhouses into hospitals or sanatoria, this was never achieved. This was not only due to a lack of commitment by the Boards of Guardians and county councils. Many individuals because of the appalling conditions within the workhouses and the stigma attached to such establishments, would not be influenced by the simple change of name and management to go there to seek treatment. They recoiled from the thought of a workhouse infirmary.<sup>592</sup> Therefore, it remained the case that at a time when there was a total lack of facilities of any other type for tuberculosis patients, with the exception of a very small number of private or semi-private sanatoria, little or nothing was being done to answer their needs.<sup>593</sup>

Due to the failure of the WNHA and others to improve the workhouse care for sufferers of tuberculosis, medical staff, nurses and Samaritan committees of the WNHA found themselves with nowhere to send individuals where they could receive treatment. There were also few facilities for dispensary care for those living in their own homes. In relation to what they were trying to achieve, this was a cause of great concern to the WNHA, and they were supported by many others exercised with this issue both inside and outside of Ireland. In a message of support sent to Lady Aberdeen by Dr Hermann Biggs, Medical Advisor to the Board of Health in New York City, he stated

It is I believe, now almost the universal opinion of those most competent to speak on the subject that the removal of advanced cases of TB from their homes is easily the measure of first importance in the prevention of the disease.....a very large increase in the accommodation available for advanced cases is absolutely necessary in the campaign against disease.<sup>594</sup>

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<sup>591</sup> Cork Constitution, 4 Aug. 1908.

<sup>592</sup> Jones, Greta. and Malcolm, Elizabeth. (eds.) Medicine, Disease and the State in Ireland. 1650-1940, p 165.

<sup>593</sup> Thompson, William Sir. 'The TB Campaign in Ireland' in Journal of Medical Science. Vol. xxxvii. No 11. 1929. p 37.

<sup>594</sup> Biggs, Dr Hermann. Medical Advisor for the Board of Health New York City. 'A message to the supporters of the A. Ryan Home Hospital for Consumptives' in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Vol. 2. Sept. 1910. p 192

This was also the repeated opinion of the medical professionals on the Dublin Hospital's Tuberculosis Committee, who represented all of the clinical hospitals in Dublin. This committee was established as the direct result of Lady Aberdeen correspondence with each of the ten clinical hospitals in Dublin. She asked that a representative of the medical staff be nominated to form a committee to consider the whole question of tuberculosis in the city. As a result the following list of eminent physicians and surgeons were nominated including Sir Arthur Chance, who represented the Mater Hospital; Michael F. Cox of St Vincent's; Henry C. Drury of St. Patrick Dun's; Percy C. Kirkpatrick of Dr Steven's; J.Lumsden of Mercers; Sir John Moore of the Meath; Joseph O'Carroll of the Richmond, Whitworth. and Hardwick hospitals; Alfred R. Parson of the Royal City of Dublin; George J. Peacock of the Adelaide, and Sir William Thompson who became honorary secretary of the committee represented Jervis Street hospital.<sup>595</sup> One of the major roles of the Dublin Hospitals Tuberculosis Committee was to encouraged the voluntary hospitals to take a more proactive policy towards tuberculosis, at a time when most were reluctant to admit tubercular cases<sup>596</sup>

Even with the support of so eminent a body it would take six years from its founding and a number of legislative changes, before the WNHA were in a position to do anything of real substance to fulfil the need for institutional facilities for those suffering from tuberculosis. The WNHA main contribution to the sanatoria cause would be the founding of Peamount Sanatorium in 1912, this will be dealt with in later in this chapter. For the moment I propose to deal with the Associations earlier attempts to provide care for those in need, with the founding of preventoria, dispensaries, a hospital, sanatoria and the nature of their support for sufferers within the community.

The institutional work of the WNHA began with the founding of the 'Sutton Holiday Home and Preventorium'. This project was one that was, and to a great extent still is, very much ahead of its time. The preventorium was never going to succeed to any large extent at a time when governments, both central and local, either would not or could not deal with those who were already ill and even dying, let alone with prevention. It was also a time when the social problems of poverty, unemployment and bad housing

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<sup>595</sup> 'Home Treatment and Nursing of Pulmonary TB carried on in Dublin.' Statement for the press (undated) p 7. Peamount archives.

<sup>596</sup> Jones, Greta. and Malcolm, Elizabeth. Medicine, Disease and the State in Ireland, 1650-1940. p 162.

were already making great demands on both the establishment and philanthropic organisations. Yet the Sutton preventorium demonstrated the quite revolutionary thinking of Lady Aberdeen and the WNHA, who had a vision of what could be achieved with preventative measures. In Lady Aberdeen's own words

It is a sacred work to care for the sick and the suffering and the dying; but is it not still a more inspiring task to go to the very source of the trouble and prevent waste of life - to come to the rescue of persons who are liable to sink into invalidism, and hopelessness, through the result of illness and poverty, but who can be restored to health and happiness again if taken in time.<sup>597</sup>

The members of the WNHA were all too aware of the great social problems of the day, knowing that holidays were far from being a priority for most. But the Sutton Holiday Home was in its concept a forerunner, for example, of today's schemes to bring the children of Chernobyl to Ireland for fresh air, good food and a healthy environment. The huge problems could not be solved in the near future, but precious time could be bought for, and aid and support given, to the very vulnerable.

The Sutton Holiday Home and Preventorium was founded, when soon after the WNHA came into being, it was brought to their attention that it was possible to obtain the use of some disused coast guard stations around the coasts of Ireland. It was felt that these could be put to good use as 'Health Homes', places where a policy of prevention could be put into practice. At the request of the WNHA, it was eventually agreed by the Admiralty and the Irish Board of Works to rent a number of these former stations to the Association.<sup>598</sup> The Coast Guard station at Sutton in north Dublin was the first to be taken over by the WNHA and was opened as the Sutton Holiday Home and Preventorium on 4 August 1909. It was an ideal location for the purpose, overlooking Dublin Bay it provided access to fresh air and exercise, in a quiet tranquil environment.<sup>599</sup> Seven of the granite cottages, former coastguard homes, were put into immediate use with sixteen residents. Within seven months the number of cottages in use had increased sufficiently to accommodate almost 100 residents.<sup>600</sup>

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<sup>597</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. (ed.) The Sutton Holiday Home and Preventorium. First Annual Report 1910. p 25.

<sup>598</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. (ed.) The Sutton Holiday Home and Preventorium. First Annual Report 1910. p 23.

<sup>599</sup> Appendices 33-35.

<sup>600</sup> 'Minutes of the Third Annual Council Meeting of the WNHA of Ireland.' 19 April 1910.

Individuals were admitted to Sutton who were in a delicate state of health,<sup>601</sup> and particularly those who had been exposed to the danger of infection from tuberculosis within their homes or communities. A medical certificate had to accompany applications for admission to the home, stating that applicants were free from tuberculosis and any other infectious diseases. To ensure that this was the case, the countess asked the Executive Council of the WNHA to see to it that every individual admitted to Sutton 'have a competent medical examination in order to make sure there was no danger of exudins tuberculosis'.<sup>602</sup> This was to be very important, not only for the aims of the home, but also to appease opposition to the venture particularly from the residents of Sutton. This opposition was mainly due to the word sanatoria being used mistakenly about the Home, rather than Lady Aberdeen's word Preventorium.

The fear was that such an institution would be a source of danger to the community, and/or would devalue property in the area. Lady Aberdeen had to go to great lengths to reassure those in opposition that no individual would be admitted to the preventorium without such medical certificates of health. Individuals requesting access to Sutton also had to give reasons for wanting admission to the Home, for example family circumstances. Men were not admitted except in very exceptional cases, for example that of an elderly gentleman who celebrated his 100th. birthday in the home and boys under fifteen were also admitted.<sup>603</sup> It was to be a Home for women and children, these it was felt by the WNHA were the most vulnerable individuals in society and on the whole its establishment was welcomed. The Evening Herald stated that

...object of the Home is not to cure disease, but to eradicate predisposing causes...prevent any serious illnesses developing.....building up the constitution of its inmates in such a manner as will enable them to be happy and healthy working members of the community.<sup>604</sup>

In just one year from 1909 to 1910 the Holiday Home had 125 individuals to stay from a baby of five weeks, to the man of 100 years old. The visitors came from various social classes at a proposed charge of 10s. per week. In fact very few paid this full amount,

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<sup>601</sup> Classification of 'delicate state of health' included those with anaemia, those convalescing after pneumonia or influenza, gastritis, spinal weakness or swollen glands.

<sup>602</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. (ed.) Sutton Holiday Home and Preventorium  
First Annual Report 1910. p 3.

<sup>603</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. (ed.) Sutton Holiday Home and Preventorium.  
First Annual Report 1910. p 3

<sup>604</sup> Evening Herald 1 Sept. 1910.

with many paying only a fraction of this charge.<sup>605</sup> The Matron of the institution was a Nurse O'Brien. There were three doctors in attendance, Drs Ahern, O'Donahoe and Conroy who supervised the health of the patients. The local clergy of all denominations accepted the WNHA invitation to look after the spiritual welfare of the residents.

The women who stayed at Sutton were mainly housewives or working women who could only stay one or two weeks. Others who were not strong, particularly if there was tuberculosis in their homes, remained for longer periods. Lady Aberdeen and the WNHA felt that it was important to take a step further back from dealing with the early stages of consumption and try to prevent it altogether. The countess encouraged those involved in this project by stating

We have been accustomed to look on Coast Guard Stations as centres for guarding and saving life, but I am sure that no coast guard station has ever been more effectual in its purpose than this one in Sutton.<sup>606</sup>

I am quite sure that the many children, factory workers, hard working house-wives, carers and elderly who took refuge in Sutton, and may have had their only holiday in this institution, had reason to agree. It was unfortunate, that as with many other ventures begun by the WNHA, the concept was never to reach its full potential mainly due to a lack of resources and commitment from others, circumstances outside of their control. Once again the financing of any new initiatives from the humblest to the most extravagant was always going to be a problem, with government and local authority funding remaining unavailable.

The Preventorium was equipped and maintained in its first year largely by friends of the WNHA in Boston. The contributions of Irish-Americans was to play a major role in the funding of the WNHA for many years. During the period of the First World War for example, the Aberdeens were to continue to fund raise in America and to send funds to the Association at a time when they were in danger of not being able to continue their work, as finance from Ireland and England virtually came to a full stop.<sup>607</sup> It would be essential to the existence of the WNHA that they receive private funding from wealthy individuals and Irish-Americans were to provide much needed capital both then and in

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<sup>605</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. (ed.) Sutton Holiday Home and Preventorium. First Annual Report 1910. p 3.

<sup>606</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. (ed.) Sutton Holiday Home and Preventorium. First Annual Report 1910. p 25.

<sup>607</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. The Results of Thirty Months Work in America. (Dublin, 1918).

the future.<sup>608</sup> The organisation survived on donations both from Ireland and the United States. Particularly from Boston, where there were many first and second generation families of Irish decent, who had prospered in business and manufacture and were willing to provide support for worthy causes in their homeland. In the case of funding for the Sutton Preventorium for example, benefactors included Lt. Col. Edward F. McSweeney who was chairman of the Public Health Committee in Boston; Governor Draper, the Governor of Massachusetts; Mayor Hibbard, the Mayor of Boston. The list also included individuals who were interested in matters of health and philanthropy in whatever country came to them for help, one such individual was Abraham Shuman, President of the Boston City Hospital. Shuman became involved in Irish affairs when asked to support the Irish Village in Chicago in 1893, he later became Chairman of the Boston Irish Health Committee in 1909.<sup>609</sup>

It was Lady Aberdeen, while on a short visit to the United States in 1910, who was able to raise the necessary funding to take a first step on the path to providing hospital accommodation for tuberculosis sufferers. In New York the countess met with a committee of 'generous minded Irish gentlemen'<sup>610</sup> who were willing to help the Association with its work. One member of this New York committee was Allen A. Ryan, a wealthy businessman of Irish descent. He offered the WNHA the sum of £1000 per year for five years to use for institutional work in a way that the Association felt would be most helpful to their anti-tuberculosis campaign.<sup>611</sup> It was agreed by the Association that a hospital for those in the early stages of the disease was their first priority. To this end they asked the Dublin Corporation for the use of part of their existing isolation buildings on the Pigeon House Road, Ringsend in Dublin.<sup>612</sup> In their efforts to be seen to be doing something positive with regard to the treatment of tuberculosis the Association's request was agreed to by Dublin Corporation, but not without having some strings attached. The final agreement being that in return for the use of these buildings

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<sup>608</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. - P.F. Collier correspondence. 1909-10. Peamount archives

<sup>609</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. (ed.) Sutton Holiday Home and Preventorium

First Annual Report 1910. p 19.

<sup>610</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. (ed.) 'The A Ryan Home Hospital for Consumptives. Pigeon House Road Dublin. The story of its origin' in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Vol. 2. Sept. 1910. p 192.

<sup>611</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. 'The A Ryan Home hospital for Consumptives, opening statement at the inauguration ceremony' 23 Aug. 1910. Peamount archives.

<sup>612</sup> According to a local historian Larry Pullen the building given over to the WNHA was formerly known as St Mary's, after Mother Mary Akenhead who brought it with the financial help of Richard More O'Farrell who had a sister in the order in 1882.



the WNHA would pay the nominal rent of one shilling per week, on the understanding that should the building be required in the case of a serious epidemic they be prepared to vacate the premises within twenty four hours. <sup>613</sup>It was Sir Charles Cameron, superintendent Medical Officer of Health, who gave most support to this project. <sup>614</sup>

From the outset, this institution was to be based upon the most enlightened of contemporary thinking. For example, Lady Aberdeen had since her first arrival in Ireland maintained links with the Royal Hospital in Donnybrook which had opened its doors in 1743. This was a hospital which remained steadfastly non sectarian, non denominational, and non political. In 1905 the hospitals chairman William Fry. Jr explained at their annual meeting

.....the hospital was perfectly non-sectarian and non-political, suffering and sickness are the only qualifications required.....that the governors endeavour to benefit the wage earning classes as far as possible; poor people who had been attacked by incurable diseases received the aid of the hospital, where they could pass their remaining days in the peace and comfort the Institution afforded.....no fee or reward was accepted by the institution for electing any patient..... there were no paying patients. <sup>615</sup>

On a visit to the Royal Hospital Lady Aberdeen wrote in the Visitors Book

It has been a great pleasure to find old friends in the same inmates <sup>616</sup>who testify to the unvarying kindness and consideration which they experienced during all the twenty years since we were last here in this home-like home. <sup>617</sup>

The lessons learned from her close association with Donnybrook were to make a lasting impression upon the countess. The Allen Ryan was to be a 'Home Hospital' not a place where individuals were sent to be dealt with in some way by society, not a place of hopelessness like the workhouses. Lady Aberdeen stated that she wanted the Allen Ryan Home Hospital to be as much of a 'Home' and as little of an 'Institution' as possible. <sup>618</sup> In order to make the Allen Ryan more acceptable to the general public the name would have great significance. According to Dr Hermann Biggs, Medical advisor

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<sup>613</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. 'The A Ryan Home hospital for Consumptives, opening statement at the inauguration ceremony'. 23 Aug. 1910.

<sup>614</sup> Aberdeen., Lady Ishbel. 'The A Ryan Home Hospital for Consumptives. Pigeon House Road Dublin. The story of its origin'. in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Vol. 2. Sept. 1910. p 192.

<sup>615</sup> Burke, Helen The Royal Hospital Donnybrook - A Heritage of Caring 1743-1993. (Dublin, 1993). p 167.

<sup>616</sup> In 1886 Lady Aberdeen had invited patients and some of the nursing staff to tea at the Vice Regal Lodge she was to do so again in 1910.

<sup>617</sup> Burke, Helen The Royal Hospital in Donnybrook- A Heritage of Caring 1743-1993 p 169.

<sup>618</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. Editorial in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA Vol. 5. April 1913. p 560.

of the Board of Health of New York City and friend to both Allen Ryan and the WNHA, there were more pressing reasons for calling this institution a home rather than a hospital. He claimed that in order to be effective, the institution must be attractive in its character and its surroundings, if it was to create a desire or demand for admission. Therefore an element of hope of recovery had to be introduced, the patient must believe that their chances of recovery were better in this institution, than under any other circumstances. The value of treatment needed to be strongly emphasised. Consequently it was better to use the word 'Home' rather than hospital or sanatoria in order to make this point.<sup>619</sup>

The Association were also anxious to make the hospital as effective as possible in its treatment, by the introduction of the principals recommended by the Dublin Hospital's Supervision Board, with regard to medical care and sanitary methods. It was the role of the Board to encourage all voluntary hospitals to take a more pro-active approach to the treatment and care of those suffering from tuberculosis.<sup>620</sup> The new home hospital was to be used not only to treat patients, but through the Association's Samaritan Committees and nurses, support their families at this extremely difficult period in their lives. It was often the case that while the main bread winner or mother of a family was being cared for the family were left in dire poverty and isolation. Furthermore, an idea that was to be taken up more fully when Peamount Industries came into existence, was that the home hospital would try to provide suitable employment for patients who were able to take part in such a programme. It was unfortunate that neither the resources nor the political or social will, allowed this idea to be developed to any great extent at this time.

The Allen A. Ryan Home Hospital, was opened in 1910 with only eighteen beds, but this number quickly rose to fifty. Four additional shelters were provided by Lord John Lonsdale,<sup>621</sup> by way of a gift through the North Kildare Branch of the WNHA. He had the shelters shipped to Ireland from England and erected at the hospital site by the maker.

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<sup>619</sup> Biggs, Dr Hermann. Medical Advisor for the Board of Health New York City. 'A message to the supporters of the A Ryan Home Hospital for Consumptives' in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Vol. 2. Sept. 1910. p 192

<sup>620</sup> Jones, Greta and Malcolm, Elizabeth. (eds.) Medicine, Disease and the State in Ireland. 1650-1940. p 162.

<sup>621</sup> Sir John Lonsdale was a Conservative and Honorary Secretary of the Irish Unionist Party.

£700 of the first year's grant from Allen Ryan was then spent on other alterations, including equipment and the installation of electric light, the provision of furniture etc.<sup>622</sup> It was important to the WNHA that the Allen Ryan be well equipped as possible, with the best provision of care available. The list of medical and nursing staff who undertook to take charge of this new institution is quite impressive and included Sir John Moore and Dr Cox who were the Consulting Physicians; Sir John Lentaigne, Consulting Surgeon; Professor McWeeney, Consulting Bacteriologist with the visiting physicians being Dr Frank Dunne and Dr Alfred Boyd. The Matron, Miss Brennan, had come from the Richmond hospital, having first gained much experience in the treatment of consumption by visiting several of the leading institutions for the treatment of tuberculosis in Britain.<sup>623</sup>

The idealism that was so evident at the establishment of this institution was soon overtaken by the political reality of the lack of resources for tuberculosis sufferers, which were highlighted by the introduction of the National Insurance Act of 1912.<sup>624</sup> Sir William Thompson claimed that the coming into force of the Insurance Act had considerably altered the role of the institution.<sup>625</sup> The Allen Ryan became approved by the Local Government Board for the provision of care of tuberculosis patients within a month of the introduction of the new Act in August 1912. This was due mainly to the lack of any alternative provision being made by the county councils or by Dublin Corporation for those now entitled to sanatorium treatment. The new Act led to a huge increase in the number of patients requesting admission.<sup>626</sup>

The first insured patients were admitted to the Allen Ryan six months after the first patients were sent to Peamount. Sir William Thompson pointed out that just before the introduction of the Insurance Act there were 28 male and 4 female patients admitted to the Home, within a year 308 newly insured patients had been admitted.<sup>627</sup> The considerable increase in numbers led to the hospital being used as a receiving facility for those

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<sup>622</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. 'The A Ryan Home Hospital for Consumptives Pigeon House Road, Dublin. The story of its origin' in *Slainte. Journal of the WNHA* Vol. 2. Sept. 1910. p 192.

<sup>623</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. 'The A Ryan Home Hospital for Consumptives Pigeon House Road, Dublin. The story of its origin'. in *Slainte. Journal of the WNHA* Vol. 2. Sept. 1910. p 191.

<sup>624</sup> The 1911 Insurance Act will be dealt with in some detail later in this chapter.

<sup>625</sup> 'The P.F. Collier Memorial dispensary' in *Slainte. Journal of the WNHA*. supplement June 1913. p 10

<sup>626</sup> 'The P.F. Collier Memorial dispensary' in *Slainte. Journal of the WNHA*. supplement June 1913 p 10.

<sup>627</sup> '6th Annual Council meeting of the WNHA' 15-18 April 1913. Peamount archives.

*en route* to Peamount from all areas of the country. After admission when suitable cases were transferred for treatment to Peamount only those in the most advanced and mainly untreatable cases of tuberculosis were left behind, those in the second and final stages of the disease. Therefore, in December 1914, as Allen Ryan's commitment to the project was coming to an end and it became a burden to the Association, it was taken over by Dublin Corporation. The role envisaged for this Home Hospital had changed completely, as the corporation, with few additional resources extended the facility to take over two hundred patients.<sup>628</sup>

It was unfortunate that the prospects for the Allen Ryan Home Hospital as visualised by the members of the WNHA, were never to reach their full potential, quite the opposite was the case. Instead it was taken over by the Sisters of Charity in 1918, with very little by way of resources for its maintenance.<sup>629</sup> It is interesting to note that local historian Larry Pullen claimed that for many decades, up until the 1950s, this area of Ringsend was known as the place where the hearses originated,<sup>630</sup> such was the regularity of death within the institution. This was a far cry from the aspiration of the WNHA for their home hospital, a place of healing and care for those in the early stages of the disease. Nevertheless, the work of the WNHA in dealing with the founding and administration of the Allen Ryan gave them experience that was to be an essential basis for their achievements in providing further sanatorium care for sufferers of tuberculosis.

The Secretary and Treasurer of the New York Committee visited by Lady Aberdeen was a Mr Robert Collier. He like his counterpart Allen Ryan also gave £5000 towards the anti-TB campaign in Ireland, in payments of £1000 per year for five years. It was Collier's request that a dispensary be established in Dublin in honour of his late father and that it should be named the P.F. Collier Memorial Dispensary for the Prevention of Consumption.<sup>631</sup> The institutions aim was to be both curative and preventative based on a similar, very successful institution run by a Dr R.W. Philip<sup>632</sup> in Edinburgh, Scotland.

The gift from Robert Collier was too great an opportunity for the WNHA to miss, therefore a suitable site for the dispensary was found at Charles Street, Upper Ormond

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<sup>628</sup> 'Minutes of the 6th. Annual Council Meeting of the WNHA' 15-18 April 1913.

<sup>629</sup> Pullen, Larry. NewsFour. Sandymount, Irishtown, Ringsend Community Newspaper. Summer 1997

<sup>630</sup> Pullen, Larry. NewsFour. Sandymount, Irishtown, Ringsend Community Newspaper. Summer 1997.

<sup>631</sup> 'Minutes of the 3rd. Annual Council Meeting of the WNHA of Ireland' 19 April 1910.

Peamount archives

<sup>632</sup> Dr Robert Philip's Royal Victoria Dispensary founded in Edinburgh in 1887 remained unique for almost 20 years.

Quay in Dublin. Old buildings on the site were completely demolished and a new building put in its place. This was done to ensure that the new building would be well planned out and up-to date, purpose built for the work for which it was intended.<sup>633</sup> Along with examination rooms, waiting rooms and dressing rooms, the building also contained its own pharmacy, bacteriological laboratory, board room, doctors room, staff nurses apartments, and living rooms for the caretaker. The roof was flat and covered in asphalt, with access from the first floor, so that patients could rest there during the fine weather.<sup>634</sup> In addition all of the internal wall surfaces were finished with 'polished' cement that could be easily cleaned down. All angles where skirting met the walls or walls met the ceilings were round, leaving no area available for the lodgement of dust. According to Lady Aberdeen

The P.F. Collier Memorial Dispensary [is]...thoroughly well equipped and one of the most up-to-date special dispensaries in the United Kingdom...which will help reduce still further the death rate from tuberculosis, not only locally but also throughout the country.<sup>635</sup>

This was quite different to any of the existing general dispensaries for the population at large which nation-wide were in a state of disrepair and deterioration, linked as they were to the Poor Law. According to Barrington none of the faults in the state run dispensary services were beyond remedy. Yet while there was a willingness to maintain the system

the commitment to developing it to the standard required by a new generation seems to have been lacking, reluctance to increase rates was an obstacle as was the low priority afforded in Irish public life to medical relief of the poor.<sup>636</sup>

A visiting medical commentator describes the conditions he found in Irish Poor Law dispensaries in the following terms

Anything more cheerless than the average Irish dispensary fabric, it is difficult to imagine, even in the towns, but the outlying depots in dispensary districts in the remote parts of the unions are, as a rule, wretched, comfortless and unfit for the examination of patients....it is pitiful to see their air of discomfort.<sup>637</sup>

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<sup>633</sup> The P.F. Collier Memorial Dispensary. Charles St. Dublin. (Undated) Peamount archives.

<sup>634</sup> Appendices 36-39.

<sup>635</sup> The P.F. Collier Memorial Dispensary. Charles St. Dublin.

<sup>636</sup> Barrington, Ruth. Health, Medicine and Politics in Ireland 1900-1970. p 11

<sup>637</sup> Barrington, Ruth. Health, Medicine and Politics in Ireland. 1900-1970. p 11.

Therefore the P.F. Collier dispensary was a major innovation in terms of the care and facilities it was ready to provide for tuberculosis sufferers. It was the very poor of Dublin who were to benefit most from the its establishment. During the dispensaries first years work, between 1911 and 1912, it dealt with over 1,100 families, 680 of whom lived in one room tenements. In 1913, out of a total of 7555 visits paid by the dispensary nurses, 4,831 persons were brought under their direct influence, with 508 of the home visits being paid by doctors. A large number of the families referred to the clinics were practically destitute in consequence of the illness of the bread winner and the lack of employment for other members of the family.<sup>638</sup>

It is interesting to note that in a summary of the report of the work completed by the tuberculosis nurses from the dispensary, during the twelve months ended the 18 February 1911, are the extra details which include such items as; 'families removed to more healthy homes'; 'families in who receive nourishment'; 'patients who receive clothes, shoes, bedding, etc.'; 'families for who rent is being paid while the bread winner is in Newcastle or in the Dublin Unions'; 'children of patients suffering from tuberculosis sent to the country through the Fresh Air fund'.<sup>639</sup> The WNHA were trying to deal, not just with the sufferers of tuberculosis, but also their extended family, their husbands, wives and children This was a holistic approach that many in the social services could learn much from, even today. Their understanding that there was more to the illness than the symptoms was quite phenomenal.

The WNHA had spent £2500 for the erection and equipping of the dispensary in Charles Street, and £1,500 had been spent on its maintenance up until 1913, all of which had come from Robert Collier. The remaining balance of his donation £1000, was eventually used towards the building of one of the pavilions at Peamount, called the Collier Pavilion. It was always the hope of the WNHA that the institution once established would be taken over by the municipal authorities. Collier himself believed that in this way it would become of most permanent use.<sup>640</sup> The WNHA realised that it was only by getting these types of facilities up and running themselves, that they could hope force the authorities to do something about the major issue of a lack of facilities for

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<sup>638</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. 'The WNHA of Ireland. Its Objects. Its Results. Its Future.' p 16

<sup>639</sup> 'Report to the WNHA from P.F. Collier Memorial Dispensary' for the year ended 18 Feb. 1911. Peamount archives.

<sup>640</sup> 'The P.F. Collier Memorial Dispensary.' supplement to Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. June 1913. p 5.

tuberculosis sufferers. They were openly demonstrating the standards that could be achieved, by those who should have been providing these services, had the political will for such developments existed. The opposite proved to be the case.

In 1913 the P.F. Collier Memorial Dispensary was purchased by Dublin Corporation to be used as its chief tuberculosis dispensary in the city. It was taken over under very specific conditions including the following

That the sum to be paid for the Collier Dispensary be not more than the actual cost as proved by receipts, less an agreed sum for depreciation and that no existing officer be appointed for a longer period than two years and at salaries not greater than they have received during the past year.<sup>641</sup>

One can only presume that the Charles Street dispensary was allowed to fall into the same state of disarray and neglect following its take over by the municipal authorities, as had happened with the Allen Ryan Home Hospital. By March 1913 the matter of the Collier dispensary had been discussed at a meeting of the Dublin Corporation Municipal Council held in City Hall. At the meeting the Lord Mayor claimed that the Corporation had been “diddled”<sup>642</sup> with regard to the expense of running the Collier dispensary. He claimed that having bought the dispensary for £2000 out of rate payers money they were now obliged to pay for its maintenance. This in spite of the fact that the name Collier remained over the door of the institution giving an individual philanthropist credit that would now be due to the Dublin Corporation. The Lord Mayor claimed that the cost of the upkeep of the dispensary was going to be enormous and he suggested that

The Public Health Committee should consider the possibility of minimising the expense. They might be able to do with one doctor now.<sup>643</sup>

The Corporation took charge of the dispensary on the understanding that the Insurance Commissioners would contribute to its maintenance. Instead the City Treasurer stated that there was no money available from this quarter for the payment of wages or salaries. The attitude of Dublin Corporation to the costs involved in the maintenance of the dispensary were not surprising. According to Professor Mary Daly there is no doubt that the Corporation, in the first decades of the twentieth century, were faced with serious financial difficulties. Low and only slowly increasing rateable valuations left funding

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<sup>641</sup> ‘Dublin Corporation Public Health Committee report re Tuberculosis’ submitted to Council 2 Sept. 1912. Report No. 161.

<sup>642</sup> Irish Times 4 March 1915.

<sup>643</sup> Irish Times 4 March 1915.

in short supply and reduced their borrowing powers.<sup>644</sup> Yet much of their financial difficulties were self inflicted. For example, by 1900 Dublin Corporation were faced with a choice, between revaluation and an increase in the city's rates, and so improve their financial position, and alienating those who were their members and supporters. These were mainly publicans, shop-keepers and tenement owners. They chose the former option and twice rejected motions put forward in favour of revaluation.<sup>645</sup> Consequently, the lack of finances in the city's coffers to support this or any other venture put forward by the WNHA was always going to run into difficulties.

In 1914 Dublin Corporation were still calling on Dublin Castle to bear the greater proportion of the city's financial problems. Daly also claimed that the evils of British rule became a regular theme in the scapegoating methods of the Corporation when faced with their inability to tackle Dublin's many health and sanitation problems. Daly explained

At base therefore Dublin local politics was grounded in sectional interests. Loyalty to either nationalism or unionism, class or creed took priority over the welfare of the city or its people. In this respect the most obvious offender was Dublin Corporation.....<sup>646</sup>

A further example of the attitude of the Corporation to those in need in the city and their inability and unwillingness to deal with issues related to poverty can be found in the following case study. In 1905 Dublin Corporation refused to adopt the Unemployed Workmans Act. Under the terms of this Act it was proposed that Distress Committees be established to compile a register of the unemployed with a view to providing relief work. The Corporation objections to the Act were politically based, they resented having to supplement local charitable sums from their rates, but claimed that the costs should be carried by central funds. It was only in 1906 when the Liberal government made a parliamentary grant of £200,000 towards the administration of the Unemployed Workmans Act that the Corporation put the Act into effect.<sup>647</sup> Their policy, according to Daly, was purely reactive applying for government funds if they existed on a purely *ad hoc* basis.<sup>648</sup>

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<sup>644</sup> Daly, Mary E. Dublin the Deposed Capital. A Social and Economic History 1860-1914. p 271.

<sup>645</sup> Daly, Mary E. Dublin the Deposed Capital. A Social and economic History. 1860-1914. p 239.

<sup>646</sup> Daly, Mary E. Dublin the Deposed Capital. A Social and Economic History. 1860-1914. p 239.

<sup>647</sup> Daly, Mary E. Dublin the Deposed Capital. A Social and Economic History. 1860-1914. p 103-4.

<sup>648</sup> Daly, Mary E. Dublin the Deposed Capital. A Social and Economic History. 1860-1914. p 113.



The problems that resulted from opposition to the Corporations take-over of the P.F. Collier Dispensary were so great, that in reply Lady Aberdeen was to state that the WNHA would be quite willing to take back the dispensary on the same terms that they had sold it to the Corporation, if they were not satisfied with the purchase. This did not happen, the Corporation knew that they had received a state of the art dispensary at a fraction of what it would cost to build and equip a new dispensary from scratch.

The continuing need for the provision of care for the tubercular led to the establishment by the WNHA of a major sanatoria at Peamount in Newcastle Co. Dublin. Sanatoria had become popular in Germany in the 1860s and by the 1900s there were many such institutions throughout Europe. Sanatoria were a particularly welcome development in Ireland where there was no public hospital special provision for consumptives.<sup>649</sup> The experience gained by the WNHA in the development of institutional care would be a great asset to them at this time.

The site at Peamount was chosen as it already contained a large house on 120 acres of land and it was located in a sparsely populated area. The locality itself was particularly suitable for a sanatorium as it was 300 feet above sea level, and while only 11 miles from Dublin. Peamount House, the former home of a Mr Hogan, became a residence for the doctors and nurses. The land surrounding the house was used both to house tubercular free cattle and to provide light out-door work for patients as they began to recuperate. The patients accommodation consisted of a number of pavilions each of which provided accommodation for 32 individuals. The pavilions were divided into two sections one for male and one for female patients, separated by an administrative department. They were light wooden structures lined with plaster on the inside and just one story high. In each case the wooden roof was supported by uprights resting on the floor. The units included an open air shelter, a dining room and recreation hall.<sup>650</sup> The role of fresh air, good nourishing food and social activities were to be a major part of the sanatoriums regime. According to Smith the role of sanatoria was quite specific and different to hospital care

Sanatoria were places of hope deferred. Their rationale was simple. They were medically supervised refuges from bad air, crowded households and wear of industrial life, set in well drained breezy but mild countryside. Consumptives could rest there, freed from business and family cares. They were to be well fed and

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<sup>649</sup> Smith, F.B. *The Retreat of Tuberculosis. 1850-1950.* p 103.

<sup>650</sup> *Irish Times* 23 July 1912.

take measured exercise. Thereby the lungs might be recuperated to build fibrosis around the points of infection and then wall of bacilli which could not be killed and perhaps rebuild old cavities by encouraging further fibrosis.....patients could walk and take carriage rides, all under medical direction.<sup>651</sup>

Peamount Sanatoria was to be based on the show piece village settlement at Papworth, twelve miles from Cambridge. The Director of Papworth Dr Pendrill Varrier-Jones was an individual who rejected any pretensions to cure tuberculosis, but based his programmes on the need to contain infection by changing the lives of consumptives in terms of their own personal well-being and that of their families. From the outset he admitted only patients who were in the first or second stages of the disease. Patients were accepted initially for one year, of six months treatment and six months training. The treatment was 'holistic', lots of eggs, milk, cocoa, porridge and potatoes, tuberculin injections and fresh air and sunlight. Patients were housed in demountable shelters linked by telephones and bells. <sup>652</sup>

The story of Peamount is the greatest achievement of all of the institutional ventures of Lady Aberdeen and the WNHA. It is also their most lasting legacy, and a project that was to keep the countess involved in Ireland until her death in 1939. The founding of Peamount was based on the changes brought about firstly by the passing of the Tuberculosis Act of 1908,<sup>653</sup> which gave power to the local authorities to levy rates for the erection of sanatoria, and for the maintenance of patients within such institutions. It did not allow for compulsory notification of tubercular patients. Notification had to come from the medical practitioners to the medical officer of health. This was encouraged by a set fee being paid, for example, one shilling for notification from the workhouse or public hospitals, two shillings and six pence was paid for notification of those in the community. <sup>654</sup> This Act had been urged on by rising public pressure, which demanded that something be done about the 'White Plague'. The WNHA exhibitions both large and small, played a major role in providing the necessary information and raising such public awareness and expectations. Secondly, and more importantly for the members of

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<sup>651</sup> Smith, F.B. The Retreat of Tuberculosis. 1850-1950. p 86.

<sup>652</sup> Smith, F.B. The Retreat of Tuberculosis. 1850-1950 p 87.

<sup>653</sup> The 1908 Insurance Act was the direct result of lobbying firstly by the NAPTB from 1906, they were joined in this campaign a year later by the WNHA

<sup>654</sup> Jones, Greta. and Malcolm, Elizabeth. (eds.). Medicine, Disease and the State in Ireland. 1650-1940. p 165.

the WNHA, the 1911 National Insurance Act, when it came into force gave further impetus for the erection of sanatoria to provide for insured patients who contracted tuberculosis. This act was one that applied to the whole of the United Kingdom, and brought about further measures in the prevention of tuberculosis. It also gave the Local Government Boards the power to inspect and approve of any schemes put forward for the care of the tubercular or for the eradication of the disease. A sum of £1,500,000 was set aside by way of sanatorium grants for the construction of tuberculosis hospitals, £145,623 of which was earmarked for Ireland.<sup>655</sup>

Under the 1911 Insurance Act suitable provision had to be made for patients as the insured wage earner paid a small contribution to the State in order to receive free medical attention, should it be necessary, including hospital care. It must be noted that it was only a small proportion of the Irish workforce who were eligible under the insurance scheme. Those outside of this system continued to endure the poor law institutions or to avoid hospitalisation altogether, of the 2,016 beds reserved for the tubercular in Ireland in 1911, - 79 per cent were in the workhouses.<sup>656</sup> The advisory committee appointed by the government on how best to put this Act into operation, recommended that it should not be left to the local authorities alone to implement.

Opposition to the 1911 Insurance Act was to come from the most conservative and often reactionary groups within Irish society, nationalists and unionists alike. According to Ruth Barrington the Irish Parliamentary Party caught up as they were in the politics of Home Rule had little interest in the poorer classes. She cites the case of the Irish Party joining with the Catholic hierarchy in opposition to certain sections of the 1911 Insurance Act as they applied to Ireland.

The bishops baldly cited the interests of those larger farmers, shop-keepers and publicans and ignored those of the 800,000 industrial workers and domestic servants who stood to benefit from the Bill.<sup>657</sup>

To ease the burden on those represented by the Irish Party and the hierarchy, the Tuberculosis Commission stated

The Committee are...of the opinion that so far as it may be found practicable aid from the grant may be offered to those voluntary institutions which are found to

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<sup>655</sup> Barrington, Ruth. Health, Medicine and Politics in Ireland 1900-1970 p 166

<sup>656</sup> Barrington, Ruth. Health, Medicine and Politics in Ireland 1900-1970. p 167.

<sup>657</sup> Barrington, Ruth. Health, Medicine and Politics in Ireland 1900-1970. pp 25,29.

be doing good work in the treatment and prevention of TB, and which are willing to provide further accommodation for the treatment of TB patients.<sup>658</sup>

The reality for those trying to enforce the 1911 Insurance Act was that the requisite number of beds needed to provide for the number of insured workers did not exist. There was no possibility of councils or health boards, being in a position to provide them by the date promised the public by the British Prime Minister, Lloyd George. The only sanatoria to date throughout the country were the National Hospital for Consumptives at Newcastle Co. Wicklow, Heatherside Sanatorium at Doneraile in Co. Cork, Crooksling in Co. Dublin and the Allen Ryan.<sup>659</sup> If even emergency accommodation was to be ready in time, it could only be provided by grants being given to voluntary associations such as the WNHA.<sup>660</sup> The commitment of local authorities to the provision of care for the tubercular was simply not there. From the time of their establishment, members of the NAPTb, were calling upon local corporations and councils to provide Homes for the advanced cases of tuberculosis and small neighbourhood sanatoria for more treatable cases, to no avail<sup>661</sup> In 1902 the Sisters of Mercy and the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr William Walsh, through Sir Christopher Nixon of the Mater hospital and the NAPTb, offer a site free of charge in Beaumont for the erection of a sanatoria and the provision of nursing sisters for the unit. There were only two conditions attached. Firstly, that the sanatorium be built and fully furnished and secondly, that expenses be defrayed for the maintenance of the patients and the proper working of the institution.<sup>662</sup> This sizeable offer was never taken advantage of by the municipal authorities.

The WNHA were of course one of the first associations to apply for the grant under the 1911 Insurance Act. In the scheme submitted by the Association for the purpose of making effective the sanatoria benefits to insured individuals, they put forward many far-sighted recommendations. Most of which were accepted and came to fruition. These included the provision of sanatoria for those in the advanced, but not hopeless stages of

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<sup>658</sup> 'Interim Report of the Tuberculosis Commission 1912.' Peamount archives.

<sup>659</sup> Burke, Helen. *The Royal Hospital Donnybrook. A Heritage of Caring 1743-1993.* p 178.

<sup>660</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel 'Peamount the Irish Papworth' in *British Journal of Tuberculosis*. July 1937. p 2.

<sup>661</sup> 'Minutes of the Executive Meeting of the NAPTb' held at the Royal College of Physicians 18 June 1900.

<sup>662</sup> Correspondence from Sir Mary Keenan to Sir Christopher Nixon dated 12 March 1902 and correspondence also from Dr William Walsh, Archbishop of Dublin to Sir Christopher Nixon dated 12 March 1902. Archives of the Royal College of Physicians.

the disease, those considered suitable for treatment. Places in the sanatoria would be too precious to use for those for whom home or hospice care was considered a more suitable option. The WNHA would also where possible provide home treatments for those considered treatable. They would furnish small shed like shelters or lean-to's, where the patient could benefit from fresh air treatment be kept them from vulnerable members of the family. Nursing and medical care would be provided where necessary. It was also hoped to build special sanatoria for children. This was not possible, due mainly to a lack of resources, but a special section of Peamount hospital was set aside for children, incorporating the first official open air school in Ireland. The WNHA would continue with their preventative work and introduce an after-care service for former patients and their families. Postgraduate courses would be made available for doctors at the P.F. Collier Memorial Dispensary, while special training courses for both doctors and nurses would be held at the dispensary and at the Allen Ryan Home Hospital. Finally the WNHA were willing to organise tuberculosis dispensaries all over Ireland and support them until the county councils were ready to take them over.<sup>663</sup>

The WNHA had come of age and was willing and confident enough to take on a major role in Irish society. On application the Association was given a grant of £25,000 from funds collected by the insurance committees, for the building of hospitals and sanatoria out of the total of £145,623. <sup>664</sup>£20,000 of the WNHA grant was to be used to purchase the land at Peamount and for the building and equipping of its first pavilions, while £5,000 was to be used towards a sanatorium at Rossclare near Enniskillen.

Lady Aberdeen and the WNHA had known opposition in all of their endeavours but on this occasion, the founding of Peamount sanatorium, opposition was to match the scope of what they were trying to achieve. It was also to come from many different quarters. To begin with, the idea that one sixth of the total funding available went to the WNHA, led various county councils to complain that the reason the Association received the grant was linked to Lady Aberdeen's political position more than to any practical considerations.<sup>665</sup>

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<sup>663</sup> 'Scheme submitted by the WNHA of Ireland for the purpose of making effective the sanatoria and TB benefits available to insured persons under the Insurance Act of 1911' July 1912. Peamount archives.

<sup>664</sup> May, Anna The Turn of the Tide. The Story of Peamount. (Dublin, 1987). p 49.

<sup>665</sup> May, Anna The Turn of the Tide. The Story of Peamount. p 50.

The fact was that the site at Peamount had been examined by several medical men and experts, as was the scheme submitted by the WNHA and were deemed to be the best and most practical proposal, standing on their own merits. In spite of their opposition, by the middle of 1912, fifteen county councils had contributed capital towards the building of Peamount. In return for this contribution each council could reserve beds at the sanatorium, permanently, for the accommodation of tuberculosis sufferers.<sup>666</sup> Thereby absolving them of the need to provide sanatoria in their own areas. By the end of 1912 the following counties had already availed themselves of the sanatorium facilities provided by the WNHA; Armagh, Carlow, Cavan, Clare, Donegal, Dublin, Fermanagh, Kerry, Kildare, Kilkenny, King's County, Leitrim, Limerick, Londonderry, Louth, Meath, Monaghan, Roscommon, Tipperary, Tyrone, Waterford, Westmeath, and the County Boroughs of Dublin and Limerick.<sup>667</sup> Most of the opposition was based, as in the case of Sutton, both on ignorance of the disease, and the fear of property being devalued. Several local bodies and individuals argued their opposition case in the pages of Irish newspapers. In the case of Peamount there was the additional fear that tourists might be afraid to come into the area, including the Spa at Lucan.

In support of the WNHA and the placing of a sanatorium at Newcastle, a Robert T. Herren M.D. wrote in the Irish Times of the 20 July 1912 stating that

The object of sanatoria is to have the patients collected together under intelligent control, to treat them in such a manner that their resistance to disease will be raised, and also to educate them in proper methods, each will act as a focus for information for others, who, when they become infected may take such precautions that they will not be a source of danger to their neighbours.<sup>668</sup>

In spite of the reassurances of Dr Herren and many others, further issues were raised by those in opposition to the site, particularly within the Newcastle area. Issues that evoked strong emotional reactions that would be far more difficult to overcome. A deputation was sent to the weekly meeting of the Celbridge Board of Guardians, which included a number of influential members of the locality, for example, W.G. Dease, a Justice of the Peace, a Captain Connolly and Colonel Claude Cane. They were present to protest against the erection of the sanatorium at Peamount. Fr Dunne P.P. at Celbridge also sent his objections. They claimed that the district was densely populated and

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<sup>666</sup> May, Anna. The Turn of the Tide, The Story of Peamount p 50.

<sup>667</sup> 'Report of the special council meeting of the WNHA of Ireland'. 5-6 Dec. 1912.

<sup>668</sup> Herren, Robert T. M.D. writing in the Irish Times 20 July 1912.

the health of the locals would be seriously endangered. They also claimed this to be scientific fact, with the towns of Lucan, Clondalkin, Rathcoole, Newcastle, Leixlip, Saggart and Celbridge all within a radius of three miles. The truth was that Lucan was the nearest town and it was a full two miles away. It was also true that the population in this area was one of the lowest in Ireland with just one person per 15 acres, even Galway, which was considered sparsely populated at this time, had one person per 5 acres.<sup>669</sup> Therefore fear of contagion was never the real issue. There was already a private sanatorium within a similar distance at Crooksling, with many local hospitals such as the one at Celbridge with a consumptive ward next to ordinary hospital wards.<sup>670</sup>

There were many other reasons why opposition existed, some of them containing much merit and justification. It was felt by the local community that they should have been consulted before the site at Peamount was chosen and bought. It seemed to them that all buying, planning and organising was being conducted in secret. Even more importantly 250 acres of land, in land hungry Ireland was, it was felt, being taken from the grasp of locals and used for schemes thought up by Lady Aberdeen and the British establishment. The land had been purchased by the Estates Commissioners and it was claimed by the committee established to oppose the sanatorium that this land should therefore have been redistributed under the Evicted Tenants Act. It was after all some of the best land in county Dublin. They felt it would be better to build labourers cottages on the land. One individual, a Mr Montgomery claimed

Lady Aberdeen wanted sanatoria all over Ireland, but she did not want labourers cottages. If this thing went on the people would have no place else to go accept sanatoria.<sup>671</sup>

It was not too many decades since the Irish had won the right to own their own land. Now they wanted a say in how this land was going to be used, rather than having this imposed on them by the establishment. Resentment and emotion could and did run very high. At first the arguments for and against the building of the sanatorium at Peamount was carried on in the columns of the Press, but they were soon to take on a more sinister aspect.

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<sup>669</sup> Letter to the Celbridge Guardians from Lady Aberdeen published in Irish Times 30 July 1912.

<sup>670</sup> Letter to the Celbridge Guardians from Lady Aberdeen published in Irish Times 30 July 1912.

<sup>671</sup> Irish Times 23 July 1912.

Regardless of opposition, the work of building the pavilions carried on and hostility became more intense. These feelings came to a head on Sunday 22 June 1912, when about 50 men came together to demolish the pavilions already in place at Peamount. By twisting ropes around external uprights and pulling hard, the pavilions collapsed to the ground. The men involved were mainly labourers from Hazelhatch and Celbridge. Lord Aberdeen was outraged at what had happened, and failed to understand why in such a sparsely populated area anyone should object to the WNHA proposals. Lady Aberdeen was equally outraged, but was not so surprised at the level of opposition, which she claimed had existed in every country at the founding of the sanatoria movement. The strength of opposition, she believed, would disappear as individuals became more educated in matters relating to tuberculosis, and the sanatoria was given the opportunity to prove its worth.

It is interesting to note that the objections to the placing of sanatoria in other places in Ireland, by those who were not members of the British establishment, but members of the Irish community, also met with fierce opposition. In 1903 for example, the Cork branch of the Association for the Prevention of Consumption proposed to build a sanatorium for the people of both Cork city and county which would provide its services free of charge. To do this they first had to get the consent of 28 urban and rural district councils. As the result of many deputations and much lobbying, this was finally achieved. They then applied to parliament for an order to allow the establishment of the sanatoria, which they also duly received. The Association for the Prevention of Consumption was then forced to choose site after site, while inquiry after inquiry was held, with specialists called in from both Ireland and England to prove or disprove the suitability of a given site. It took four years before a site was finally approved and the work begun.<sup>672</sup>

A second example of this attitude is witnessed in 1909 when William Fry Jnr. of Donnybrook Hospital, after much consultation with Lady Aberdeen and Dr Andrew Horne, President of the Royal College of Physicians, recommended the building of a one hundred bed pavilion in the grounds of the hospital for the treatment and care of

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<sup>672</sup> Cremen, Dr P.J. Cork Medical Society. 'Report of a deputation of Medical Corporations and Societies working for the eradication of TB, to His Excellency the Lord Lieutenant, the Chief Secretary and Vice-President of the Dept. of Agriculture'. (undated). p 13. Peamount archives.



tubercular patients.<sup>673</sup> Almost immediately signed petitions came from local residents protesting against the proposal. William Fry was unable to fight against the sheer volume of letters sent to both the governors of the hospital, and the press campaign. A special meeting of the management committee from the hospital, held on the 25 March 1911, received a deputation from many prominent citizens of the area who explained

they were of the opinion that the erection of a large hospital for consumptives in the hospital grounds would seriously depreciate the values of property in the neighbourhood; houses they feared would be vacated and rents would have to be reduced to induce people to occupy them.<sup>674</sup>

The turning point in the campaign against the provision of facilities for tubercular patients in Donnybrook came in 1911 when a large protest meeting was held at the town hall in Ballsbridge with the Rev Dr Donnelly, an auxiliary bishop and parish priest at Haddington Rd in the Chair. He claimed that the protesters had no opposition to the crusade against tuberculosis, and praised the 'noble' work of the countess and the WNHA. But they felt that the grounds of the hospital were not sufficiently isolated for the care of tuberculosis sufferers there to be acceptable to the local community. On the 15 February 1912, at a special meeting of governors, it was decided by 96 to 49 votes not to proceed with the project.

These are just two examples of the opposition to the erection of sanatoria in all parts of Ireland, regardless of who were initiating the projects. Under these circumstances opposition to the Peamount project was inevitable. There were others, both from among the medical establishment and from the Treasury, who were strongly opposed to this aspect of the work of the WNHA. Up until this point the Association was mainly involved in what could loosely be termed 'women's work', an acceptable level of philanthropy and administration that was similar to that expected of female religious for example. Now the Association seemed to be stepping beyond those limits. In a letter from Sir Henry Robinson, a vice president of the Local Government Board, writing to the Treasury, the government department under which all public health works had to be carried out and without whose approval the government grant could not be given, stated

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<sup>673</sup> Burke, Helen. The Royal Hospital, Donnybrook. A Heritage of Caring. 1743-1993. p 180.

<sup>674</sup> Burke, Helen. The Royal Hospital, Donnybrook. A Heritage of Caring. 1743-1993. p 182.

I trust it is not true that my Lords of the Treasury intend handing over a considerable money grant to an association composed of irresponsible women.<sup>675</sup>

In a similar vein Sir Henry Robinson, writing in retrospect in 1923, and speaking of these matters observed the following

The masterful vice-reign whose intentions were of the very highest,..... and in her burning desire to further public health reform she wanted to direct and dominate the LGB. She was so insistent upon her wishes that I think the Chief Secretary found her rather exhausting, as he realised that the legally constituted public health authority could no be subordinated to a voluntary and irresponsible WNHA.<sup>676</sup>

This was an age when women were unable to vote in general elections, women like Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington and Maud Gonne McBride were being cast into prison for seeking equal rights for women. It was five years before Dr Kathleen Lynn and Madeline Ffrench Mullen would open St Ultan's hospital to cater for malnourished and tuberculosis ridden children, in a hospital that was staffed exclusively by women. This was a time when women were below men in a hierarchical, male dominated society. No women of any class were to be encouraged to take on a leading, or major role, in societies development, at either a local or national level.

More serious opposition can be found in correspondence between a conjoint medical committee of the British Medical Association,<sup>677</sup> and the Irish Medical Association, to the WNHA of Ireland. Arthur White,<sup>678</sup> Honorary secretary of the National Insurance Committee of the former organisations writes

While fully appreciating the great work already accomplished by the WNHA we express our strong disapproval of the methods adopted by the Association to usurp the functions and powers of the statutory local authorities in carrying out the provision for sanatorium benefit of the National Insurance Act and the TB Prevention (Ireland) Act in regard to the establishment of sanatoria and TB dispensaries, and that such action is calculated to divert sympathy and co-operation of the profession in Ireland in working the sanatorium benefit.<sup>679</sup>

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<sup>675</sup> Correspondence from Sir Henry Robinson vice- president of the Local Government Board to the Treasury. (undated) Peamount archives.

<sup>676</sup> Robinson, Henry. Sir. Memories Wise and Otherwise. (London, 1923). p 199.

<sup>677</sup> In 1908 after the WNHA had won the prize in Washington the same British Medical Association had elected the countess as their first female Honourary Member; the International Medical Association of France gave her its 'Medal of Honour' and the Institute of Public Health had elected her as its President.

<sup>678</sup> Arthur White was Professor of Pathology and Bacteriology for the diploma in Public Health granted by the Irish Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons.

<sup>679</sup> Correspondence from Arthur White, Conjoint Medical Committee to the Central Committee of the WNHA. Dublin. 10 Aug. 1912. Peamount archives

It is clear that the Medical Associations objected principally because they perceived the WNHA were interfering with the principals of private medicine. Lady Aberdeen decided wisely to allow this matter, which was becoming overtly political, to be handed over to the capable honorary secretary of the WNHA, Alice Rushton. As president of the WNHA the countess was placed in the precarious position of having to remain neutral in matters that might lead to confrontation with any part of the medical establishment. In reply to the Medical Associations, Mrs Rushton stated that the WNHA scheme for the establishment of sanatoria had been gladly and willingly accepted by a special Health Conference held in May of 1912.<sup>680</sup> This conference had been attended by both county councils and local authority representatives, as well as by members of the medical profession. At this meeting the following resolution was passed

That this conference of representatives of local bodies in Ireland recommends the county councils to accept the offer of the WNHA to give provisional assistance to the care of TB patients coming under the National Insurance Act.<sup>681</sup>

The result of this agreement was the provision of 133 permanent beds, contracted out for the payment of £1 per week per bed by a number of county councils, who would also be represented by a sanatoria management committee. An additional 78 beds were ordered for provisional use by other County Councils, while 60 beds were for the use of school children from 5 to 15 years old.<sup>682</sup> In this way the Councils were freed from any obligation to build and provide sanatoria in their own areas, saving them great expense and inconvenience. Councils were in fact reluctant to become involved in the building of sanatoria or hospitals despite the financial incentives and suitable legislation. According to Barrington

If it had not been for the Women's National Health Association the health committees would not have been able to fulfil their obligations to insured persons. The Association had, despite considerable opposition, built a large sanatorium at Peamount Co. Dublin with 140 beds (later rising to 200 beds) and a smaller one at Rossclare in Co. Fermanagh which were ready in time to receive patients on behalf of the health committee...councils.....contracted beds in these and other privately run institutions in preference to building their own.<sup>683</sup>

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<sup>680</sup> Correspondence from A. Rushton to the Conjoint Medical Committee 12 Aug. 1912.

<sup>681</sup> 'Minutes of the Special Council Meeting of the WNHA'. 5-6 Dec. 1912. p 8.

<sup>682</sup> 'Minutes of the Special Council Meeting of the WNHA'. 5-6 Dec. 1912. p 8.

<sup>683</sup> Barrington, Ruth. Health, Medicine and Politics in Ireland 1900- 1970. p 71

By the end of 1919 the institution was still charging local authorities at the rate of £1 per patient, a rate that had remained unchanged since 1913. Due to this low rate of payments the sanatorium soon came into serious financial difficulties

In spite of these advantages, as far as White and his colleagues were concerned, the individuals at the special health committee meetings, referred to by Mrs Rushton, had no authority to make such major policy decisions on behalf of their county councils. Furthermore they were angry that the local authorities had, without consultation, been deprived of £25,000 out of funds set aside by parliament for their use.<sup>684</sup> Consequently, issues surrounding this matter were raised in the House of Commons by many leading members of parliament including Sir John Lonsdale. He wanted the Chief Secretary, Augustine Birrell, to explain why Peamount was purchased by a grant given to the WNHA, when as a result of this grant every other county in Ireland would be proportionately reduced in their grant.<sup>685</sup>

The fundamental issue for the medical associations was that the final result of the WNHA scheme would be to give that Association an interest and input into things they considered were outside of their realm, while infringing on that of the medical establishment. Mr White was also to claim that this condition of affairs was not in the interest of either the public or the profession. As there was little alternative to the care being provided by the WNHA coming from any other quarter, it seems that as had happened in Canada, the medical profession were concerned, not for the public, but to protect their own interests. The conjoint committee of medical representatives not only wrote to the WNHA, but also had their correspondence with the Association printed in the Press, in an effort to stir up public opinion against the scheme. As a result of this, the row between this group and the WNHA was to continue for many weeks.

Notwithstanding of all of the opposition, discouragement and hindrance, the work continued and Peamount<sup>686</sup> became not a temporary, but a permanent reality, opening on the 27 October 1912, on the same day as the Rossclare sanatorium. The property was vested in five trustees nominated by the WNHA, with the approval of the government.

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<sup>684</sup> It must be noted that up until 1915 only one third of the grant money allocated to Ireland had been taken up by local authorities, the commitment to the cause of tuberculosis by the authorities remained low in spite of the desperation of those in need of care.

<sup>685</sup> *Irish Times* 26 July 1912.

<sup>686</sup> Appendices 40-42.

The trustees included Lady Aberdeen, President, Sir James B. Dougherty, Sir Joseph McGrath, William Martin Murphy,<sup>687</sup> and Michael F. Cox M.D.<sup>688</sup> The management committee for the sanatorium would consist of one representative from each county council or county borough contracting for permanent beds. The WNHA would provide a number equal to one half of such county representation. With the addition of the five trustees the management of the sanatoria remained in the hands of the WNHA. 1912 was also the year in which the WNHA became incorporated under the Board of Trade. The Association could now enter into every class of business transaction in this incorporated capacity and they were now also obliged to enforce certain subscriptions on their members.<sup>689</sup>

For Lady Aberdeen and the WNHA establishing the sanatorium at Peamount was only the beginning, as was the case with all of their other projects. They had learned from the medical profession that three things were essential for any successful campaign against tuberculosis. Firstly, early diagnosis was essential, secondly, the provision of prompt and efficient treatment and finally, good after care. Through the use of nation-wide dispensaries and by other means the WNHA had tried to assist in the first two, but knew that if the final factor was missing then the first two would be less effective. In the first flush of enthusiasm concerning sanatorium treatment, it was believed that individuals could be completely cured of the disease. Time was to show that this was true only in a certain percentage of cases. There remained a large number of patients who could only hope for improvement in their general health and an arrest of the disease. Many who returned home to poor living conditions soon relapsed and suffered a further deterioration in health.

Therefore it was important that help was given to maintain the health of the patient and to prevent others from becoming infected. The WNHA realised that it was often the case, particularly when the bread winner returned home, that due to the stigma of the illness he was unable to find employment. Consequently his wife was forced to go

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<sup>687</sup> William Martin Murphy, was one of the wealthiest magnets in Ireland. He was a pioneer of tramways and electric railways in many counties, he owned the Imperial Hotel in O'Connell St, Dublin as well as a large department store and was owner of Independent Newspapers. He was also through the Employers Federation one of the leading opponents of James Larkin and the Irish Transport and General Workers Union of Ireland.

<sup>688</sup> May, Anna. Turn of the Tide. The Story of Peamount. p 74

<sup>689</sup> Supplement to Slainte. Journal of the WNHA Jan. 1914. Reporting the details of the Incorporation of the WNHA of Ireland under the Board of Trade.

out to work, leaving her husband living in the same conditions that had led to the illness in the first place. Furthermore, the sufferer was now looking after the rest of the family while taking no precautions to prevent the spread of the disease. It was obvious that poor individuals could not provide a suitable environment for themselves or their families without outside help. As late as 1930 Dr Varrier-Jones of the Papworth Sanatorium in England was asking

what is the use of telling a man what he needs if he cannot get it.....the poor person cannot provide a suitable environment for himself and until it is provided, the scourge of tuberculosis will continue.<sup>690</sup>

On 22 October 1918 the Peamount After-Care Guild was established by the WNHA to deal with these issues. The first Chairperson being Mrs Michael Murphy, and first secretary Miss Eva Murphy. The objects of the Guild were firstly, to facilitate the arrangements for patients going to sanatorium, for example they would supply suitable clothing and other necessities for the stay at Peamount. This was an essential, if basic provision, for those who could not afford anything beyond rags. Secondly, in the absence of the breadwinner, the Guild would try to find work for other members of the family, or to get increased funding from voluntary or official sources.<sup>691</sup> In the case of the mother being sent to Peamount, the After Care Guild would make arrangements for the care of children in the mother's absence. Finally, provision was made for the disinfection of the home and the medical examination of all those who came into everyday contact with the sufferer.

On their return home the Guild would try to find suitable employment for the patient. They would also supply at least one pint of milk daily, a food order weekly and additional clothing for the family. The secretary of the Guild would see to it that cases remained on their books for at least three months after discharge from the sanatorium, and for longer if necessary. After a short period, if circumstances remained difficult

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<sup>690</sup> WNHA of Ireland. Peamount 30 Jan 1931 p 10.

<sup>691</sup> From the early days of the founding of the WNHA it became necessary, to work with other agencies and institution in order to provide the best and broadest spectrum of care for those who came to the Association for help and support. Particularly for those in attendance the dispensary service nationwide and who came to the branches for support. The Association worked with these other institutions in order that through its own Care and Samaritan Committees they could provide the broadest range of facilities to those in need of aid. They would use established institutions regardless of denomination, not allowing religion or politics come in the way of humanity. These organisations were to become even more essential when the Peamount After Care Guild was formed in 1918.

former patients were allowed to reapply for help. Members of the Guild would visit homes and give advice on preventative measures, cleanliness, fresh air and home treatments. They tried as far as possible to provide wooden shelters, consisting of a small bedroom and an extended veranda where the patient could be isolated from the family and thus reduce the risk of infection. Where this was not possible, as a minimum requirement, they supplied a separate bed for the sufferer. The Guild always insisted that the patients attend the tuberculosis dispensaries regularly in order to enable them to be kept under medical supervision. In this way the Association dealt with both environmental issues and continued access to medical treatment.

Funding for the Guild derived solely from voluntary contributions as they received no grants from the government or local authorities. Consequently much time was taken up with fund raising, the main fund-raising event being the ball held annually in the Aberdeen Hall of the Gresham Hotel. They also ran bridge tournaments, and many other ventures. They organised 'Guild Days' on two days each week, Tuesday and Friday.

Petronella O'Flanagan describes these in an article in the Irish Independent

On these days the Guild Premises at Ely Place bore absolutely no resemblance to an office. On one wall ....a huge cupboard its doors wide open to display pots of jam, candles, soap, tins of milk, packets of sago, tapioca, semolina, bags of raisins or sultanas, boxes of matches, flakemeal, squares of jelly and so forth. Against another press stood another enormous press its shelves filled with coats frocks, shirts, trousers, jumpers, underclothes, hats shoes in fact every shape and size of garments imaginable.<sup>692</sup>

The After Care Guild tried to help sufferers from tuberculosis in a way that was quite unique. It concerned itself with patients, and their families, before and after admission to the sanatorium, in every way possible. It was the only After Care Guild in Dublin, and it was often approached by ex-tuberculosis patients from other institutions. According to Anna May, although officially unable to help, often individual members out of their own resources aided urgent cases. Those not eligible for help were referred to other caring societies. Any individual who was ever a patient at Peamount had access to the resources of the Guild until it disbanded finally in 1970, having served sufferers and their families in many ways for 62 years.<sup>693</sup>

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<sup>692</sup> Irish Independent. 5 May 1948.

<sup>693</sup> May, Anna. Turn of the Tide the Story of Peamount. p 27.

For a number of years the WNHA Executive and the Committee of Management at Peamount, considered the possibility of founding an Industrial Settlement on the grounds of Peamount Sanatorium. They had found, as was the case with other sanatoria, that many patients who had improved while in their care, returned as a result of the stress caused by their inability to find employment. This was often due to the situation of general unemployment but was also due to firms unwillingness to employ tuberculosis sufferers. Further problems emerged as during the individuals stay at Peamount there was a difficulty in providing occupation and interest which would take the patients mind off their own health and future outlook.

To find solutions to these and other problems Lord and Lady Aberdeen, Dr Alice Barry and Sir William Thompson visited Papworth in England where Sir Pendrill Varrier-Jones had established an industrial settlement at his own sanatoria. The three visitors were very much impressed with what they found at Papworth. Lady Aberdeen was to later to write about the deep impression made on her when she saw the busy work shops and the village settlement with its rows of attractive cottages. The Village settlement also had a village hall and recreation grounds, shops run by ex-patients, a school and a church. The countess claimed that

Everywhere there was evident the spirit of contentment and industry.....a striking contrast to the dull darkness of existence in an ordinary sanatorium and ...the prevailing feeling of anxiety regarding the future .....<sup>694</sup>

This was the vision which had caught Lady Aberdeen's imagination, and it was one she wanted to see transferred to all Irish sanatoria. But in spite of their initial enthusiasm it was to take, due to financial restraints, until 1929 before the executive of the WNHA were able to begin the programme, with the establishment of Peamount Industries. It was envisaged that this would become the flagship for other sanatoria in Ireland. At the same time they adopted the aim of working towards the establishment of a village settlement, and so turning Peamount from an institution to a community. Sir Pendrill Varrier-Jones was to become the honorary director of the Industries for a number of years and it was under his guidance and influence that the first workshops were established. Mr Eric Hall, an Irish ex-patient trained at Papworth, became the resident manager.<sup>695</sup> Three men began building their own workshops at the beginning of 1930, with a

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<sup>694</sup> May, Anna. Turn of the Tide. The Story of Peamount. p 36.

<sup>695</sup> May, Anna. Turn of the Tide. The Story of Peamount. p 37.



capital sum of £230. By the end of that same year the size of the workshop had doubled, and the number of men being employed there had risen to 40, with an annual turnover of £1550, almost eight times that of the original sum in its first year.<sup>696</sup> It is important to note that the General Secretary of the Irish Union of Distributive Workers and Clerks, visited Peamount Industries and were very much impressed with what they found there. As a result they gave a favourable report to the annual meeting of the Labour Party and Trade Union Congress.<sup>697</sup>

Within seven years the aggregate turnover of the Industries had risen to £68,818 and the wages, paid at trade union rates, amounted to £4,573 compared to £1,015 in 1930.<sup>698</sup> I quote these figures to show that the Peamount Industries were indeed a great financial success, in spite of the prophets of doom who foretold disaster. They had claimed that no one would be by wooden or other material treated and handled by those with tuberculosis, in the belief that the products were carrying the infection. Instead the opposite was the case, men built their own workshops, machine shops and hostels, later they were to build houses for the use of medical staff on the land and an open air school for the children, the first of its kind in Ireland, which accommodated up to 80 children. For those unable to participate in heavy work there was a shoe making and shoe repair workshop, printing and cabinet making.<sup>699</sup>

A glove factory was built for women workers. The industries glove factory was also a great success trading under the name the 'Red Gauntlet'. The factory ultimately had thirty machines used for the stretching and sewing of gloves. When this part of the industry closed in the early 1940s, it was Eric Hall who bought the business and brought many of its workers with him to Abbey Street in Dublin, where it traded for many years under its original brand name.<sup>700</sup> For those outside the institution, Peamount Industries produced greenhouses and all manner of wooden buildings and sheds, including isolation buildings for those being treated at home.<sup>701</sup>

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<sup>696</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. 'Peamount, the Irish Papworth' in British Journal of TB. July 1937. p 3.

<sup>697</sup> The Papworth Industrial Scheme for TB patients and its adaptation to Peamount. Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress. Report of the National Executive 1928-1929.

<sup>698</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. 'Peamount the Irish Papworth' in British Journal of TB. July 1937. p 4.

<sup>699</sup> May, Anna. Turn of the Tide. The Story of Peamount. p 39.

<sup>700</sup> May, Anna. Turn of the Tide. The Story of Peamount. p 39

<sup>701</sup> The Golden Jubilee of the WNHA of Ireland (Incorporated) 1907- 1957 p 9. Peamount archives.

The success of Peamount Industries<sup>702</sup> was of course much more than financial success, it was also to do with the hope it brought to sufferers from tuberculosis, even among those who could not work themselves. The skills and crafts learned and the confidence gained there, would be a great advantage on the patients return to a more normal life. Many were better qualified, on leaving Peamount than they were on admission and therefore had a greater chance of gaining employment.

It was hoped by the WNHA that both Peamount sanatorium and Peamount Industries would be the model for other sanatoria to follow. They had in their own terms marked the way forward. Time was to show that this was not to be the case, under British nor Irish governments. As a result tuberculosis was to remain a scourge to the Irish population for many decades to come. Nevertheless, the achievements of the WNHA were the result of support from those, both within and without the organisation, who were committed to the vision they put forward, of holistic care for those suffering from tuberculosis. It is true to say that they succeeded not only due to hard work and vision, but because those who supported this cause far out-weighed those in opposition. While the supporters may have been less vocal than the opposition, their work and success are a testament to their commitment to the aims and objectives of the WNHA.

By the early 1960s the role of the WNHA had changed considerably, as had the needs, both social and medical, of those it had been established to serve. Therefore the WNHA wound up its affairs on the 29 March 1962,<sup>703</sup> after 55 years of service to the nation, and it was taken over by the Peamount Sanatorium Board of Management and its executive committee. Nevertheless, it is the continued existence of Peamount both as a sanatorium and as a centre for mentally handicapped adults, who continue the tradition of Peamount industries, that is the most tangible legacy of the WNHA to the present day.

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<sup>702</sup> Appendix 43.

<sup>703</sup> 'Minutes of Extraordinary General Meeting of the WNHA (Incorporated)' 29 March 1962. Peamount archives

## CHAPTER 7.

### **'A healthy home in a healthy locality'**

In this chapter I propose to begin by discussing one of the final major projects undertaken by Lady Aberdeen as Vicereign, which was the organising of the 'Great Civics Exhibition' in Dublin in 1914. An event which led to the founding of the Irish Housing and Town Planning Association, and more significantly, the Civics Institute of Ireland. The Civic Exhibition is of particular importance as it shows clearly the WNHA depth of understanding of the fundamental problems facing the mainly large urban areas of Ireland, especially that of Dublin, and the need for social reform. The work of the WNHA in all its aspects had shown clearly that any real and lasting improvement in the health of the nation would require fundamental social change. Cities and large towns would need drastic improvements in the living conditions of the working classes and of the many still living below the poverty line. To deal with these issues and to initiate change would require great innovation in the face of seemingly insurmountable difficulties. That the WNHA made a concerted efforts to rise to this challenge must be acknowledged if we are to understand their role, and that of the Countess of Aberdeen, as social reformers and not merely as philanthropists or service providers.

The First World War and the impoverished beginning of the Free State dashed completely any hope of progress towards social reform, in terms of living conditions for the working class, in the first decades of the 20th century. Nevertheless, the efforts made by the Association at this crucial stage in Irish history are worthy of note. I also propose to deal with the outbreak of the First World War and the WNHA response to this event. Beginning with an invitation to the British Red Cross to establish itself in Dublin, the founding of Voluntary Aid Detachments to be of service in this major crisis, and finally the opening of Dublin Castle as a hospital for those returning injured from the war, and by 1916, to victims of the Easter Rising.

The period between the founding of Peamount in 1912, and the opening of the Civic Exhibition in 1914, was a time of great difficulty for the Aberdeens in the face of rising social unrest. The popularity of the Lord Lieutenant and his wife fluctuated in the face of growing criticism from nationalists, unionists, suffragettes, the Labour movement and the Employers Federations. Nevertheless, this final major scheme was a last effort by

Lady Aberdeen and the WNHA to bring about long over-due and fundamental social reforms. To understand the background to the Civic Exhibition of 1914, it is important to first understand the Dublin of the period. Everything that can be said about Dublin could be applied, simply on a lesser scale, to every other major Irish city and large town, with the exception of Belfast.

Throughout the period of the Aberdeen's viceroyalty and beyond, Dublin's housing problems were recognised as a major contributor to the cities high mortality rates. This position was in contrast to rural Ireland where, in the fifty years leading up to 1914, great strides had been made in the improvement of living conditions there. Small and large farmers were making progress as the owners of their own land. There were also programmes of state investment and aid in the form of loans for land purchase and other measures, including that of improved housing. According to Alderman G. Hadden of the Association of Municipal Authorities in Ireland<sup>704</sup>

It was know to everyone what splendid work had been done in the rural districts in the direction of housing. That work has been done owing to special facilities offered by Act of Parliament for building cottages for rural workers. No such facilities were offered to urban workers. The cottage that might be let at 1s. 7d. a week in the county had to be let at 3s. 4d. in the town.....<sup>705</sup>

The countries agricultural development was now being given priority by the State. Local authorities, through state grants had built over 50,000 cottages for farm labourers and their families, replacing many of the hovels that had once been part of the Irish landscape. Chief Secretary, Augustine Birrell stated that

the government had done much in regard to Labourers' cottages as necessary appendages to the scheme of land purchase in Ireland - but if he were asked to apply these principals to the great cities and for all time, to build houses at rents which would involve a great loss from the beginning, such a request required some consideration....But he was sure the Chancellor of the Exchequer would be satisfied it would be very difficult.<sup>706</sup>

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<sup>704</sup> Under the auspices of the Housing and Town Planning Association, the sister organisation of the WNHA, a conference of urban authorities was held in the Autumn of 1912. This resulted in the founding of the Association of Municipal Authorities. By 1914, 80 of the 96 municipal bodies in the country were represented in the Association

<sup>705</sup> 'The Association of Municipal Authorities of Ireland' reprinted in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA, Vol. 5. June 1913.

<sup>706</sup> Irish Times 17 April 1914.

Such building schemes, grants and loans were therefore unavailable to urban dwellers. Rural Ireland was benefiting from other projects to promote its development. Under the auspices of the Department of Agriculture, the County Agricultural Committees and Sir Horace Plunkett's Irish Agricultural Organisation, there was much economic growth through co-operation. There was also by now, the well organised political strength of the farming community in contrast to the political weakness of the urban working class. Further contrast can be noted when we see the great strides being made by the United Irish Women in progressing the quality of Irish rural life for women at many levels, while no progress of note was made in urban areas. This fact only added to the great difficulties that had to be overcome if the position were to change for the urban working class.

It was envisaged that the Housing of the Working Classes (Ireland) Act of 1908 -the Clancy Act- would see an improvement in the living conditions for urban dwellers on a par with their rural counterparts. The Act was passed to enable the Commissioners of Public Works, to lend money to local authorities for a period not exceeding 80 years, at a minimum rate of interest. The Clancy Act for the first time introduced a fund known as the Irish Housing Fund, to assist local authorities in the repayment of loans contracted after the passing of the Act. It also removed the general limitation on the borrowing powers of local authorities in regard to money borrowed for the housing of working classes. The Housing Fund amounted to £180,000. Yet in the financial year ending the 31 March 1913, Dublin city had received, out of the fund since its inception, only £867.7s.3d. This amount was totally inadequate to provide any substantial aid to local authorities for the provision of housing.<sup>707</sup>

The greatest difficulties for the WNHA in their work for the eradication of tuberculosis and the reduction of infant mortality rates, lay in the almost insurmountable problems of the Dublin tenement living conditions and life style. To understand these difficulties it will be necessary to deal briefly with the Dublin of the period, only from the point of view of the living and working conditions of the working classes. To see how their housing and living conditions, coupled with poverty and ignorance, led to major health problems not only of tuberculosis, but all manner of infectious diseases. This was still

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<sup>707</sup> 'Housing Conditions of the Working Class' report of the Departmental Committee appointed by the LGB for Ireland to inquire into the housing conditions of the working classes in the city of Dublin 1913'. p 11. National Library archives.

the Dublin of upper and middle classes, with their wealth and prestige, but change was apparent in the social and demographic make up of the city. By the late nineteenth century the 'respectable' classes had moved to the suburbs. This followed on the heels of the movement of many, especially those involved in politics, back to Britain after the Act of Union. Dublin was still the capital of Ireland, therefore retaining its role as an administrative and professional centre, but it was no longer the glorious second city of the Empire that it had been in the eighteenth century.<sup>708</sup>

As a result of this demographic trend, entire districts became slum areas. Property deteriorated from single family homes, often to small hotels, offices or institutions, to tenement housing. In the city centre, prosperity and poverty lived side by side in sharp contrast to each other. Houses originally designed for one family, would now contain one family per room. Stable and coach houses at the back of these larger houses were also sub-divided by poor families, and overcrowding became a traditional feature of the inner city. Notwithstanding the exodus of many from the city, Dublin's overall density of 38.5 persons per acre, was nearly twice that of the twenty largest cities in Great Britain. In the worst areas it could be as many as 800 individuals per acre and up to 100 individuals in one house.<sup>709</sup> The population had risen from 318,000 in 1851 to 382,000 in 1901, a growth rate of almost 20 per cent.<sup>710</sup> This rise in population was due mainly to migration from rural areas, as well as from natural increase. It's growth in terms of area was mainly unplanned, overcrowded and unhealthy, as the city centre fell into further decay while the suburbs grew in affluence.

This was the Dublin of James Joyce's Strumpet City,<sup>711</sup> where by 1900, there were over 6000 tenement houses lived in by at least one third of the population. Buildings were not only over crowded, they were often decaying and dangerous and had on several occasions collapsed, killing and injuring the occupants.

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<sup>708</sup> O' Brien, Joseph V. Dear Dirty Dublin (Los Angles, 1982) p 34.

<sup>709</sup> Kearns, Kevin. Dublin Tenement Life. A Oral History. ( Dublin, 1994 ) p 12.

<sup>710</sup> Aalen, F.H. 'The working class housing movement Dublin 1905-20' in The Emergence of Irish Planning. 1880-1920. p. 280

<sup>711</sup> Joyce, James. Strumpet City. (London, 1969). In this novel Joyce depicts conditions for Dublin slum dwellers in stark terms, in the period during the strikes and lock-outs of 1913 and the beginning of WWI.

Lady Aberdeen herself tells us

One day the whole side of a street fell down killing and maiming some of the inhabitants and drawing public attention both here and abroad to the state of Dublin.<sup>712</sup>

While this was a terrible tragedy, the countess was to use this event as a means of focusing public attention on the problems of Dublin's tenement life. Certain parts of the city were particularly noted for their squalor. For example, the slums in Church Street, Cumberland Street, Railway Street, Gardiner Street, Corporation Street, St Mary's and Coles Lanes. Some of the very worst of the tenement slums were around the Liberties and the Coombe areas, for example, in Francis Street, Cork Street and Kevin Street.<sup>713</sup> Unlike rural areas, there were little or no financial incentives for private developers, or Dublin Corporation, to build new homes for the working class. With the large amounts of unskilled labour, very little industry and poor pay and conditions, most could ill afford to buy or even to rent their own houses. In the same period, between 1901 and 1926, the number of families living in single rooms increased from 21,464 to 23,655, and the number of families with six or more persons living in one room rose from 2837 to 3693.<sup>714</sup>

Some effort had been made to provide alternative housing. In 1876, the Dublin Artisan Dwelling Company<sup>715</sup> was the first private group to build working class housing, with the aim of providing improved homes at a reasonable cost. However even these small dwellings were out of reach for the majority of slum dwellers, and by 1907 the Artisan Dwelling Company had already ceased building due mainly to the high interest rates, making house prices even less affordable.<sup>716</sup> The only major philanthropic housing trust worthy of note, was the building of the Iveagh Trust flats, off Patrick's Street, by the Guinness company. These were to have been the model for all future developments, a plan which unfortunately never came to fruition.

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<sup>712</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen. Vol. 2. p 188

<sup>713</sup> Kearns, Kevin. Dublin Tenement life - An Oral History. p 8

<sup>714</sup> Census of Ireland 1926 Vol. IV Housing, Dublin 1929 p 51

<sup>715</sup> In three decades the Artisan Dwelling Co. had constructed over 3,300 houses leaving a distinctive imprint on the appearance of older areas of the city.

<sup>716</sup> Daly, Mary E. Dublin the Deposed Capital (Cork, 1984.) p 55

Others attempts at providing working class homes, both commercial and philanthropic, included the following

Artisan Dwelling Co.	3081
Iveagh Trust	586
Iveagh House.	1
Association for the Housing of the Very Poor.	157
Industrial Tenements Co.	50
City and Suburban Workmen's Dwellings.	288
Great Southern and Western Railway.	149
Midland Great Western Railway.	83
A. Guinness & Co.	87
Watkins & Co.	87
Dublin United Tramway Co.	165
Mesrs Pile.	90
Mr. Patterson.	36
Vance Buildings.	180
Earl of Meath.	93
Alexandra Guild	60
Social Service Tenement Co.	77
Dublin Corporation	1385
Lodging House Benburb St.	1
Total	6656 <sup>717</sup>

These figures were insignificant in the face of such wide spread need. By 1913 the Departmental Committee formed by the Local Government Board, estimated that there were only 1,516 tenements, housing 8,293 families or over 27,000 individuals that could be classified as structurally sound, capable of being put into good repair.<sup>718</sup> Of the rest, a total of 1,562 tenements housing 6,831 families, were seen as unfit for habitation and incapable of being rendered fit. The small houses of another 1,130 families were also in a bad condition, and 2,288 houses which were lived in by 10,696 families were so decayed or badly constructed they were boarder line unfit for human habitation.<sup>719</sup> The Committee also agreed that the general existence of the Dublin slums was a national disgrace.<sup>720</sup> The Corporation returns for 1913 gave a startling account of the reality behind these figures. They indicated that 78 per cent of lettings in the city of Dublin,

<sup>717</sup> 'Housing Conditions of the Working Class'. report of the Departmental Committee appointed to inquire into the housing conditions of the working class in Dublin 1913. p 2 Civic Museum archives.

<sup>718</sup> 'Housing Conditions of the Working Class'. report of the Departmental Committee appointed to inquire into the housing conditions of the working class in Dublin 1913 p 3.

<sup>719</sup> 'Housing Conditions of the Working Class'. report of the Departmental Committee appointed to inquire into the housing conditions of the working class in Dublin 1913. p 3.

<sup>720</sup> Irish Times. 17 April 1914.



were only one room lettings. Some 20,108 families lived in one room, with an average of 6.5 individuals per room.<sup>721</sup> This was only part of the problems faced by any wishing to deal with the health issues and high infant mortality rates in Dublin city.

Following close on the problems of bad and overcrowded housing, came the severe difficulties caused by insanitary living conditions. Thousands of families had few opportunities to wash, either themselves or their clothes. There was only one wash house in the city, and one public baths at Tara Street, to serve the needs of the entire city's poor. Instead many were left with only a primitive toilet and a water tap in the backyard both of which were expected to serve all of the families in the house.<sup>722</sup> O'Brien claims that

Two of the most intractable social problems Dublin has had to face throughout the 19th and well into the 20th century were a high death rate and insanitary housing. These were in fact one problem, for it was widely maintained that the death rate of the city could never be reduced so long as great numbers of the inhabitants continued to dwell in abominable tenement houses.<sup>723</sup>

This complete lack of sanitation is noted in the report of the Dublin Housing Enquiry of 1913, based on the findings of the members who visited houses to see the situation for themselves. They stated

We have no hesitation in saying that it was no uncommon thing to find halls and landings, yards and closets of the houses in a filthy condition, and in nearly every case human excreta is to be found scattered about in yards, and on the floor of closets and in some cases even in the passages of the house itself. At the same time it is gratifying to find on a number of incidences that in spite of the many drawbacks an effort is made to keep their rooms tidy, and the walls are often decorated with pictures.<sup>724</sup>

Because of these living conditions tenements had become a never ending battle with disease.<sup>725</sup> The Departmental Committee also claimed that the Corporation had failed to enforce its sanitary authority and that some of its members were owners of the worst kind of tenement property. The members of the Corporation were also the small business or tradesmen in the city who, as already stated, wanted to keep their rates and taxes at the lowest possible levels.

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<sup>721</sup> 'Housing Conditions of the Working Class' report of the Departmental Committee appointed to inquire into housing conditions for the working class of Dublin 1913. p 3.

<sup>722</sup> Kearns, Kevin. Dublin Tenement life an Oral History. p 12.

<sup>723</sup> O'Brien, Joseph V. Dear Dirty Dublin. p 15.

<sup>724</sup> 'Housing Conditions of the Working Class' report of Departmental Committee appointed to inquire into the housing conditions of the working class of Dublin 1913. p 5.

<sup>725</sup> The most prevalent diseases affecting the poor as a result of their living conditions were TB, diphtheria, smallpox, typhoid, pneumonia, whooping cough and repository and diarrhoeal diseases

According to Mary Daly, 'those who ran the Corporation also ran the tenements'.<sup>726</sup> At a local level, the fact that Dublin Corporation itself was comprised of one of the largest groups of slum landlords in the capital, caused major difficulties for any individual or organisation who wanted to change these conditions. Dublin Corporation inevitably vetoed any moves to force landlords to improve living conditions in the tenements. Therefore the problems of the tenements and related public health issues were not receiving the priority they deserved.

Lady Aberdeen was to claim that when dealing with the Corporation, whenever they were accused of a lack of action, on this or any other issue, they would claim that such criticism was politically motivated. They portrayed themselves as a beleaguered nationalist Corporation in the midst of, but alienated from, the British administration in Ireland.<sup>727</sup>

Individuals, philanthropic organisations and charities tried to alleviate such circumstances, but it would require major institutional change to overcome such overwhelming difficulties. It would also require careful planning and huge financial investment, neither of which was forthcoming. The British government itself had shown little interest in urban development in Ireland, and were now pre-occupied with events in Europe. Nevertheless, the findings of the Departmental Committee report led to several major debates on the question of Dublin's housing conditions in the House of Commons. For example, on the 16 June 1914 J.J. Clancy, author of the Housing of the Working Class (Ireland) Act of 1908, and member of Dublin Corporation, stood to defend the record of the nationalist Corporation, who he believed had achieved much success since 1908, in the face of great opposition and few resources. It was time now for Parliament to act to solve the problem.

In contrast Sir A. Griffith Boscowen, a prominent Tory member, made the comparison between unionist Belfast and nationalist Dublin. He quoted figures from the last census demonstrating that the number of one room tenements in Dublin was 339, in Glasgow 200, in London 134, in Liverpool 54, in Manchester 18, in Birmingham 10 and in Belfast only 6.<sup>728</sup> The number of persons per 1000 living in tenements of one room within these cities were in Dublin 229, in Glasgow 132, in London 59, in Edinburgh 56,

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<sup>726</sup> Daly, Mary. *Dublin the Deposed Capital* p 91.

<sup>727</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. *We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen*. Vol. I. p 275.

<sup>728</sup> *Irish Times* 17 April 1914.

in Liverpool 23, in Manchester 7, Birmingham and Belfast 3. Sir A. Griffith Boscowens used these figures to show what he believed, was the inadequacy of the nationalist Corporation in Dublin. He also used them as an example of the state of things to come in Ireland, should Home Rule be introduced. At the same debate in the House of Commons the nationalist T.P. O'Connor, claimed that if there was a Parliament sitting within the walls of Collage Green, the problem of Dublin's slums would not exist.<sup>729</sup>

Lady Aberdeen's own particular opinion of the role of the British government in Ireland was quite extraordinary, even for a Liberal supporter of Home Rule, and she shows complete agreement with the statement made by T.P. O'Connor. The countess was later to make a similar case to an American audience in an article in the Yale Review of 1918 entitled 'The Sorrows of Ireland' claiming that

...those who do not come into contact with the conditions of life in Ireland little realise how the grip of English rule and English misunderstandings makes itself felt, not only by the constant supervision of the police, but also through the influence of the innumerable officials connected with the Boards and Departments without number, who are governed by English ideals and a supreme sense of responsibility to the British Treasury, rather than by what is needed for the health of the people of Ireland and the development of the country's resources. The County and Borough Councils and the Municipalities of Ireland have done fine work, in spite of the abuse which is often levelled at them, amongst their officials will be found well trained men with experience and knowledge to fit them to take a useful part in the future government of Ireland under her own Parliament.<sup>730</sup>

Regardless of her disagreements with the nationalist corporation of Dublin, the countess was all too aware of the difficulties they faced. The Housing Committee had recommended the provision of three and a half million pounds by the Treasury, as a first essential to finding the solution to the housing problems in the city<sup>731</sup> The nationalists claimed that the government in London were putting off dealing with the issue of the provision of any finance, until the passing of the Home Rule Act, when it would no longer be their problem but that of the already hard pressed Dublin rate-payers.<sup>732</sup> While life in the tenements of Dublin continued to deteriorate, the issue was treated as a political football with little being done, by either side, to remedy the problem. In reality with

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<sup>729</sup> Irish Times 17 April 1914.

<sup>730</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. 'The Sorrows of Ireland' in Yale Review Autumn 1918. p 68.

<sup>731</sup> Irish Times 24 April 1914.

<sup>732</sup> Irish Times 24 April 1914.

or without Home Rule conditions for those surviving in city tenements would remain unchanged.

It was not that Dublin Corporation did nothing, as they became fearful of the problems associated with overcrowding. It was Chief Secretary Birrell who claimed that the task before the Corporation was huge, but they had achieved much in terms of drainage schemes, electric lighting, paving the streets and some schemes for housing the poor. He also claimed that 'In these matters ....Dublin had done more than any other city in the United Kingdom'.<sup>733</sup> By the early twentieth century the Corporation had destroyed many of the worst of the tenement districts, for example an area around the Coombe, but nothing was done to replace what had been torn down, and whole streets were left derelict. This led to further overcrowding in other areas. Mary Daly points out that families displaced by these clearance schemes, found it almost impossible to find satisfactory alternative accommodation. They were also faced with the realisation that they would not be rehoused in the dwellings which eventually replaced their homes.

This was the inevitable consequence of a policy which set out to provide superior accommodation without a rent subsidy and both the philanthropic housing agencies and Dublin Corporation are equally guilty in this respect.<sup>734</sup>

There were other more fundamental problems to be dealt with, issues that could not be solved by the simple provision of a rent subsidy. As individuals and families sought alternative accommodation they were, unlike other cities, unable to move to housing in outlying districts for many reasons. For example, what little work there was existed within the city boundaries, in the docks and factories, and with low wages and insecure employment the cost of transport would be an additional unwelcome expense. Alderman Thomas Kelly, Chairman of the Dublin Corporation Housing Committee, explained that the larger portion of the working class were unskilled labourers whose wages did not exceed 18s per week, if they were to be compelled to live outside of the city their position would be made untenable. They depended on a odd days work here and there, and they could not afford to live at a distance from their only chance of employment. Even a constant workman, with a regular wage of 18s, would be faced with increased expenditure and no increase in wages. There were other reasons why it would have been unthinkable for those on such incomes to move outside the city, where there was

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<sup>733</sup> Irish Times 17 April 1914.

<sup>734</sup> Daly, Mary E. Dublin the Deposed Capital. p 295.

at least a chance of survival. Prices for food and household goods were more expensive in the suburbs, but more importantly, the life of the working class was only made tolerable by mutual help among the poor themselves.<sup>735</sup>

In fairness the housing crisis facing Dublin Corporation was enormous, the number of families needing rehousing was too great to find a quick solution. The comparison with Belfast, with its industrial base, was hardly a fair one. There were such fundamental social problems in Dublin that it would take well into the 1940s, before this problem would even begin to be solved. One solution would have been to build better, low cost housing. Yet neither private enterprise nor philanthropy, were interested in, nor could they afford, the resources to provide such alternative housing on a large scale. In the interim many public and philanthropic groups felt that more immediate measures needed to be taken by Dublin Corporation, including a better refuse and filth removal service. They should also close down many of the slaughter houses and other similar facilities in the city. There were many slaughter houses, cowsheds, pigsties, and chicken houses within the city boundaries, as individuals and families only slowly made the transition from a rural background.<sup>736</sup>

Regardless of the enormous difficulties, just a fraction of which I have outlined, the WNHA had a better vision of what could be achieved in Dublin, given the right set of circumstances. Following on from the success of the Uí Breasail Exhibition, with its lectures and exhibits devoted to the housing of the rural working class, the WNHA felt that they would not be true to their mission, that of improving the health and welfare of the nation, if they did not do something to alleviate the plight of the urban working class. In order to achieve their aims, the WNHA decided to form a new sister organisation to be known as the Housing and Town Planning Association, with Lady Aberdeen as president. This association was inaugurated at the Mansion House, Dublin on the 28 November 1912, with the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Lorcan Sherlock LLD presiding.<sup>737</sup> In the forward to the Housing and Town Planning Association of Ireland introductory booklet, the countess discusses the role of this new association.

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<sup>735</sup> Irish Times 27 May 1914 and Irish Independent 27 May 1914.

<sup>736</sup> 'The Housing and Town Planning Association.' Report of the first annual meeting reproduced in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Vol. 3. Dec. 1912. p 520.

<sup>737</sup> 'The Housing and Town Planning Association' Report of the first annual meeting reproduced in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Vol. 3. Dec. 1912 p 520.

The Housing and Town Planning movement has been organised, not merely to promote the erection of healthy, comfortable and attractive houses in the place of miserable, insanitary and unsightly dwellings but to stir civic and rural authorities and those who elect them, to a realisation of how much may be done to amend and to transform as well as create, by endeavouring to plan out, and recreate our towns and villages on a system which will give scope for the development of the latent possibilities too often lying dormant.....<sup>738</sup>

At the same time, the countess asked that individuals not only join the association which had been formed in Dublin, but that local branches were to be formed in all Irish towns and cities, in an effort to draw attention to both the local, and national issues, of the urban living conditions of the working classes. The Housing and Town Planning Association wanted to stir public opinion by proving that inadequate housing was at the root of many social evils. Lady Aberdeen wanted all of the facts of the case put before the general public in relation to tenements and their conditions. She retained her strong belief in the power of public opinion in bringing about change. The countess told the Housing and Town Planning Association members

.....if the facts were placed before the people public opinion would be so aroused that both the Dublin Corporation and other municipal bodies throughout the country would be placed in a position of being able to carry out reforms.....if they were backed by public opinion nothing could stop the movement .....<sup>739</sup>

This raised awareness and the consequent pressure that would be placed upon local authorities, it was hoped, would lead to legislative changes. The Association asking that

Legislation dealing with this and kindred matters should be adopted to the most modern principals of housing and town development, and be of such a practical speedy and simple character that the present generation may see and enjoy its fruition.<sup>740</sup>

At the first meeting of the Housing and Town Planning Association, the Lord Mayor addressed the issue of objections to the raising of the cities rates, to fund any new initiatives for housing development. This matter as has already been stated, was an ongoing issue with members of Dublin Corporation and their supporters. Those who objected, Sherlock claimed, should ask themselves the question, 'not if housing schemes would pay or not, but whether they would be for the good of the community at large,

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<sup>738</sup> Housing and Town Planning Association An introduction. ( undated.) Peamount archives.

<sup>739</sup> 'Housing and Town Planning Association ' First annual meeting, reproduced in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Vol. 3. Dec. 1912. p 520.

<sup>740</sup> 'Housing and Town Planning Association.' First annual meeting reproduced in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA Vol. 3. Dec. 1912. p 520.

directly or indirectly.<sup>741</sup> The mayor, in the wake of the failure of the Clancy Act, called for the financing of housing schemes to be in the form of loans from the imperial government given at a low rate of interest over an extended period. To this end a deputation from the WNHA and the Housing and Town Planning Association, headed by Lady Aberdeen went to put such a case to the Lord Lieutenant and Chief Secretary Birrell at Dublin Castle, in October 1913. Their request was clear and concise and is worthy of mention in full

That this council of the WNHA and the Housing and Town Planning Association records its conviction that there is urgent need for better housing of the working classes in the cities and towns of our country, the present conditions being a menace to the health of the people, and a reproach to our civilisation. They are the means of spreading consumption and other diseases and of reducing the vigour and vitality of our people and of raising the death rate to undue proportions. We are informed that a suitable sanitary house cannot now be built to let at an economic rent which the urban council could afford to pay, and that therefore private enterprise cannot solve the problem. As public health is a matter of imperial as well as local importance, we respectfully request the government to provide such assistance for urban authorities as will enable them to build comfortable and sanitary houses for the working classes, to be let at a rent within their means.<sup>742</sup>

The delegation also went on to record their added conviction that every batch of houses built should be provided with a play-ground for the children. The new Association advised the total abandonment of tenement buildings, a limitation on the number of houses per acre, and the necessity of a minimum of three bedrooms per family home.<sup>743</sup> Lady Aberdeen spoke passionately of the work of the WNHA, who through their Samaritan Committees, the provision of nursing care, and many other schemes tried to improve the living conditions and home lives of former sanatorium patients. She also spoke of how 'lamentable' it was to find so many patients who had greatly improved during their stay in sanatoriums, having a real chance at a prolonged life, only to return to those conditions that made another breakdown in their health almost inevitable.<sup>744</sup>

As would be expected, both the Lord Lieutenant and Chief Secretary Birrell, were sympathetic to the requests made by Lady Aberdeen, and the delegation from the

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<sup>741</sup> 'Housing and Town Planning Association'. First annual meeting reproduced in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA Vol. 3. Dec. 1912. p 520.

<sup>742</sup> 'Health and Housing' Supplement to Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Nov. 1914 p 9

<sup>743</sup> 'Housing and Town Planning Association' First annual meeting reproduced in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Vol. 3. Dec. 1912. p 520.

<sup>744</sup> 'Health and Housing' supplement to Slainte. Journal of the WNHA. Nov. 1914. p 9.

WNHA and the Housing and Town Planning Association. In reply the Chief Secretary also spoke of the terrible state of Dublin city and many other urban areas. He spoke of the houses that had been provided by private enterprise being occupied by clerks, skilled artisans and others who were glad to be able to get housing at a comparatively cheap rate. The poor unskilled labourers could not afford such rents. Therefore homes built for these could only be provided by charity, and would of necessity have to be erected at the expense of others. This brought the Chief Secretary to a very interesting point.

It was a far reaching thing if they (the government) got up and made an admission that the wages of large numbers of working people were such that they could not afford to be decently housed.....and that in order to provide them with houses, the rentals should be nominal. The question of wages would then arise and persons interested in the working class would say 'Is this a good state of things; is not this a scheme for keeping down wages?' <sup>745</sup>

These were real and important issues that had to be faced. Closely related to the problems of slum living were the problems of low wages, unemployment and underemployment in the city of Dublin. By 1905 there was a severe economic crisis that was endemic to the city. There was little or no economic growth, successful industries such as the Guinness Brewery had reached a plateau, and there were few new firms being established. This state of affairs was not helped by the continuing uncertainty of the passage of the Home Rule Bill, as the business community were hostile to this measure. <sup>746</sup>

Chief Secretary Birrell's belief that the problems of Dublin's slums were the result of the poverty of the city was supported by others, including Alderman Thomas Kelly who explained that

...the main cause of the social evils of Dublin is the dire poverty of the major portion of the working classes, which is the general barrier to social progress. If work and wages were plentiful and ample, the solution of the housing problem would be simple. <sup>747</sup>

However, Augustine Birrell and Alderman Kelly's claims were a means of providing a scapegoat for the Corporation. No doubt the corporation were also influenced by the new scientific theories of the period, particularly Koch's germ theory which, after cen-

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<sup>745</sup> 'Sixth Annual Council meeting of WNHA of Ireland. April 15-18' in Slainte. Journal of the WNHA Vol. 5. June 1913.

<sup>746</sup> Daly, Mary E. Dublin the Deposed Capital p 64.

<sup>747</sup> Kelly, Thomas. 'Memorandum by the Chairman of the Housing Committee.' in report of the Departmental Committee appointed by the LGB to inquire into the Housing Conditions of the Working Classes in the city of Dublin 1914. No 120 p 179.



turies of speculation, proved conclusively that the cause of the disease was infection by a specific micro-organism. Therefore, in the case of tuberculosis, without the seed of the tubercular bacillus there was no disease. In Europe it became accepted that social and environmental factors could be ignored, as disease existed because of the entry of germs into the body. The emotional, social, environmental, and psychological context of illness and disease could be removed. Rather than dealing with these issues the corporation were willing to put the problems in the city down to poverty, poor diet, and the spread of germs, each a matter which was outside of their control.

In reality it was as a result of low wages that so many lived at subsistence level in tenement conditions. With a major recession in the city it was the unskilled working class who were its victims, but even the skilled labourers, particularly those in the building trade, were feeling its effects. By 1907 the suburban housing boom had almost ground to a halt. In 1910 the Irish Builder was talking of a depression that had lasted for eight years.<sup>748</sup> Dublin's problems were compounded by the large amounts of casual labourers looking for employment. This was mainly due to the nature of transport and distribution work, which was of major importance to the city, and which reinforced the predominance of casual labour, keeping wages at a very low rate. Even the brewing and distilling industries employed casual labour in the busy periods, but there was very little extra work during slack times. This class of general labour numbered over 14,000 in 1901, representing between a quarter and one third of the workforce, this was not due to the needs of established trades but out of a lack of alternative industrial employment. Ten years later the number of general labourers had increased to over 17,000.<sup>749</sup>

This matter also concerned many females who were involved in casual work as char women, washer women or as providers of other domestic service. Dublin's weak industrial base meant there was comparatively less work for females. There were few large factories, with the exception of Jacob's biscuit factory, offering much escape from the drudgery of domestic service.<sup>750</sup> Again the size of the workforce kept wages low.

Seasonal fluctuations, agricultural depression, changes in the British economy, the illness or death of a family member, particularly the breadwinner, were among many events that could lead to a loss of employment pushing families to the point of ruin.

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<sup>748</sup> Irish Builder 8 Jan. 1910.

<sup>749</sup> O'Brien, Joseph V. Dear Dirty Dublin p 200.

<sup>750</sup> Daly, Mary E. Dublin the Deposed Capital. p 77.

By 1904, the position of many had already deteriorated to the point of being forced to take refuge in the workhouses. In November 1904, the Board of Guardians of the North Dublin Union, met with government officials to consider using the Linen Hall Barracks as an overflow workhouse.<sup>751</sup> In the Irish Times of the 26 Nov. 1904<sup>752</sup> the South Dublin Union Chairman, Mr W. Crimmins stated, 'not in the memory of any member was there so much distress in the city due to the lack of employment for the working class'.<sup>753</sup> By 1909 the same paper was stating 'Formerly the cry of unemployment was heard only in the winter months but now it is almost continuous'<sup>754</sup>

Circumstances were made worse between 1912 and 1914, the period in which Dublin was at the height of labour unrest, leading to strikes and lockouts. In spite of the best effort of the trade union movement, the life of the unskilled labourer was too poor, and his employment too temporary and precarious, for their efforts to be successful. During the lock-outs of 1913 trains, trams and firms were kept working with the use of black-leg labour. By January 1914 the General Strike collapsed with the members of Jim Larkin's, Irish Transport and General Workers Union, returning to work on their employers terms.<sup>755</sup> Moreover, during the strike many had been evicted for non payment of rent while their families went hungry. The work force were extremely vulnerable to the victimisation of employers, suffering long working hours for low wages. But they could do little to help themselves in a city where the loss of employment could mean the workhouse or emigration.<sup>756</sup>

Dockers and caters were hired mainly by the day and in this period with Dublin's population ever increasing, wages were driven even lower as competition for work increased. Lower wages led naturally to even further hardships for those at the bottom of the social ladder. The unskilled worker, up to a third of the industrial labour force, lived or rather survived, on very low wages. As a result his family were poorly fed and clothed and lived in some of the worst slums in Europe. There was also little respite from unemployment or low wages in public works. One of the more positive outcomes

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<sup>751</sup> Irish Times, 26 Nov. 1904.

<sup>752</sup> Irish Times, 26 Nov. 1904

<sup>753</sup> Irish Times, 1 Dec. 1904

<sup>754</sup> Irish Times, 26 June 1909

<sup>755</sup> Jim Larkin was an official of the National Union of Dock Labourers who came to Dublin in 1907. For the next seven years he was one of the main forces in the life of the city. In 1909 he formed his own Irish based union the Irish Transport and General Workers Union with a membership of over 10,000, using Liberty Hall for its Head Quarters.

<sup>756</sup> Granville, Gary (ed.) Dublin 1913. A divided city. (Dublin, 1985) p 102.

of the labour unrest, was that it drew attention to the root cause of the troubles.<sup>757</sup> It was now imperative that more attention be paid to improving health, housing and sanitary conditions in the city. It was clear that radical changes would have to be made.

Augustine Birrell claimed that he knew state intervention was necessary and must be sought in the face of such overwhelming difficulties, but his problem lay with the Treasury. If the Treasury made the bold assertion that it was indeed the duty of the State to recognise the fact that a large portion of its people, subject to its laws, could not afford to live without provision being made by the general taxpayer, then it was placing a great burden on the State, one that it could not afford to carry. Birrell could do no more then, than to promise that the whole case of Dublin and the other cities and towns in Ireland, would be at the forefront of the minds of those who had to deal with the problem.<sup>758</sup> There was little consolation in this for the individuals and families who had to live in the slums, nor for Lady Aberdeen and the delegates who accompanied her. It was recognised by any concerned with tenement conditions, that it would be necessary to develop the economic base of the city, if any improvement were to be made in the living conditions of the working class.

In the face of such inactivity on the part of the both imperial and local government, the Housing and Town Planning Association set about gathering public opinion behind them. This was essential in order to put pressure on the authorities to change their minds, and to persuade the business community both here and abroad of the advantages of a economically vibrant city. The countess recognised the fact that while state aid would be imperative for the work before them, yet state aid was only effective when it acted in co-operation with enlightened public opinion. It would be necessary that the public conscience see the vision of what it was needed to be done and what could be achieved, 'and had determined that it should be materialised'.<sup>759</sup>

Consequently, it was decided by the members of the Housing and Town Planning Association to hold a Civic Exhibition. They would use the occasion to explore the issues and alternatives, as a means of finding solutions to the problems of Dublin. The forming of the Civic Exhibition was not meant to be an end in itself. Therefore it was decided that a new nation-wide organisation, with a greater role than that of the

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<sup>757</sup> Granville, Gary. (ed.) *Dublin 1913. A divided city* p 109.

<sup>758</sup> 'Health and Housing supplement' in *Slainte. Journal of the WNHA* Nov. 1913.

<sup>759</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. *Irish Times* 12 March 1914.

Housing and Town Planning Association, needed to be established. It would be an organisation that would carry on the momentum it was hoped would result from the Civic Exhibition itself. This new association would be a significant development as the Civics Institute of Ireland came into existence.

The first general meeting of the Civics Institute of Ireland was held, not surprisingly, at Ely House, head-quarters of the WNHA, on the 15 April 1914. Lady Aberdeen was unable to attend the inaugural meeting, at which Lord Aberdeen was elected the Institute's first president. The countess was elected chairperson of the organisation's executive council. Vice-presidents of the Civics Institute of Ireland were to include many significant individuals from every part of the country, and from both sides of the political divide, Augustine Birrell; Sir Henry Bellingham; Dennis Coffey, President of University College; Lord and Lady Dougherty, James Dougherty was under-secretary for Ireland; Lord and Lady Everard, Nugent Everard was President of the Chamber of Commerce; Miss White of Alexandra College; Richard A. Sheehan, the Bishop of Waterford; Sir Bertram Coghill-Windell, President of Queen's College Cork; Lorcan G. Sherlock, Lord Mayor of Dublin; Dr Michael F. Cox and Sir William Thompson the Registrar General.<sup>760</sup> By 1920 Horace Plunkett would also join the list of vice-presidents of the Institute. The main objectives of the Civics Institute were

1. For the study and investigation of all questions and problems affecting the lives of the Irish public in their capacity as citizens or as inhabitants of a city or urban or rural area in Ireland.
2. To provide a centre and organisation through which all associations, bodies and societies established for the promotion of civil development and reform in any of these forms can be brought in to touch and co-operation one with another.
3. To establish, promote and maintain an exhibition to be held in the city of Dublin in the autumn of 1914 to be known as the Civic Exhibition, Ireland - having for its purpose to exhibit the history, growth, development and present conditions of all aspects and phases of civil and municipal life and activities, with suggestions for their future development.<sup>761</sup>

The Civics Institute decided that their first duty was to promote schemes whereby the Irish urban labourer was put on the same footing as his rural counterparts. They would study and investigate all of the problems related to housing conditions in Dublin and throughout the country. The results of these findings will be discussed in some detail

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<sup>760</sup> Minute book of the Civics Institute of Ireland Ltd. 14 April 1914. Civic Museum archives

<sup>761</sup> 'Memorandum of Association'. The Civics Institute of Ireland under the Companies Acts 1908-1913. Civic Museum archives.

later in this chapter. Beginning with the latter objective first, the more immediate aim was to aid the Housing and Town Planning Association in the organisation of the Civic Exhibition in the summer of 1914.

The idea of a civic exhibition originated in the United States, but Dublin would be the first city in the United Kingdom to make the idea its own. The organisers understood both the scale of the problems and the solutions in relation to holding this exhibition. They knew that they would have to cope with much discouragement, in the face of many difficulties and very little financial aid, but it was also felt that they needed to be ready to take any necessary action while so much was at stake.

As a starting point, the countess personally invited men of experience in such matters to become involved, in the hope that both the Housing and Town Planning Association and the Civics Institute, could use their experience and apply it in practical ways. For example, to organise the forthcoming exhibition the countess obtained the services of John Nolan of Cambridge, Mass; who was well known internationally as a town planner.<sup>762</sup> She also invited Professor Patrick Geddes to bring his City and Town Planning Exhibition to Dublin from England, personally guaranteeing him against loss. Geddes was part of the 'Garden City' movement in England under which various model villages were established. The better known of these included the Bournville Village in Birmingham, Letchworth Garden City in Herts, New Eastwick Garden Village, Port Sunlight in Cheshire and the Woodlands Colliery Village near Doncaster.<sup>763</sup>

A governmental committee was put in place at the request of the WNHA, to inquire into the incident mentioned by Lady Aberdeen when the one side of a Dublin slum street collapsed, killing and injuring many of the occupants. Professor Geddes came to Ireland to give evidence at this inquiry. It was while he attended at this commission, and staying at the Viceregal Lodge, that he witnessed the cities problems first hand. As a result the Professor agreed to bring his exhibition to Ireland.<sup>764</sup> Geddes contribution to the debate over Dublin would have a very significant effect on those interested, or involved in any way, with improving conditions in the capital. He was recognised as an expert in the field in Britain, where he had made an exhaustive study of the problems facing town

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<sup>762</sup> Irish Times 12 March 1914.

<sup>763</sup> Irish Town Planning Association. (undated) Peamount archives.

<sup>764</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen. Vol. I. p 189.

planners there. He had visited over 300 towns and cities throughout Britain and had, as a result, come to several interesting conclusions.

Firstly, Geddes stated that those who claimed that there was nothing to be gained by improving living conditions for the lower classes, were wrong. It was also not true that the poor lived in squalor and decay as a result of their own laziness and indolence. His own experience had taught him that 'the people will not injure the houses you give them provided these houses are sufficiently, good to enable them to live in decency and comfort.'<sup>765</sup> This proviso, Geddes explained was the very essence of the problem facing the city. It was the sheer inadequacy of the existing housing with its filth and squalor and hopelessness, that led to the ever deteriorating situation in Dublin. He believed that only through properly thought out town planning could a remedy be found. Much could be done in the short term in terms of repairs and the provision of better sanitary services etc. But ultimately new neighbourhoods would need to be constructed, which would combine as many types and scales of dwellings as were necessary to cater for all needs. Interestingly, Geddes points out that what must be avoided in Dublin was

the dull uninteresting unity of plan and structure which breeds monotony of style and tends to segregate our citizens in groups or castes with narrow interests and a more narrow outlook.<sup>766</sup>

This was a very farsighted and modern outlook, particularly when viewed against what actually transpired in later decades in Dublin's suburbs. Within working class areas like Crumlin, Ballyfermot, Finglas, Coolock and Tallaght, there was developed a monotony of style and social exclusion are evident even to the present day.

In matters of new housing Geddes was against the idea of providing multi-storey buildings, preferring instead two story homes or cottages. Individual homes should provide owners with small plots of land, which could be cultivated and so provide families with a portion of their weekly food supply. Finally, while calling for town planning which would build a new Dublin, Geddes wished to see preserved what he described as the fine town plan inherited from the 18th century, which gave the city its distinctive architectural heritage. The picturesque buildings which stamped it as the capital.<sup>767</sup>

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<sup>765</sup> The Church of Ireland Gazette. 19 April 1914.

<sup>766</sup> The Church of Ireland Gazette. 19 April 1914.

<sup>767</sup> The Church of Ireland Gazette. 19 April 1914.

This was also an observation which was to be ignored to a large extent in the 1960s, when large tracts of Georgian Dublin was destroyed.

At the exhibition itself and in the weeks preceding the exhibition, many other experts would be called upon to speak on all matters relating to the improvement of every aspect of life in the city. These issues included the housing of the people, town planning, the proposed civic survey, public health and the prevention of disease, sanitation, the abolition of city slums, lighting and cleansing, the upkeep of streets roads and parks, means of transport, the water supply, the milk and food supplies, and the care of the sick and the poor.<sup>768</sup> Lady Aberdeen was to state in an interview that the Civic Exhibition must be one which

Pictures the cities life from all points of view, its housing, its roads and streets, its sanitation, its lighting, its heating, its water supply, its milk supply, its food supply, its means of transport, its facilities for its workers getting easily to their work, its public buildings, its means of recreation, its open spaces and its playgrounds, its educational facilities and the co ordination of these, its art, its history, its charitable work, its official life, the opportunities it affords to its citizens to enter into relations one with another and to serve one another, its care for its children, for its infants, its care for its sick and suffering and the aged..<sup>769</sup>

The countess had covered in this statement almost every aspect of living in the city, and every aspect was in need of drastic improvement, if the city was not to continue to deteriorate at the rate it had in the preceding twenty years.

In the two years from the founding of the Housing and Town Planning Association to the Civic Exhibition of 1914, the Association had undertaken its own survey of Dublin showing certain types of dwelling in certain types of streets.<sup>770</sup> They did this for the benefit of both the general public and those experts who would visit Dublin at the time of the exhibition. Thereby enabling them to see the areas of depravation within the city boundaries. One of the principal aims of the Civic Exhibition was to bring all of the issues that had come to the fore, as a result of the Housing and Town Planning Association's survey, into focus and open discussion, by the use of demonstrations and lectures. The scope of the exhibition was both extensive and inclusive. Its purpose was to give the general public an opportunity to study the best methods of assisting the development and improvement of the capital city. The organisers also wanted to produce a

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<sup>768</sup> Freeman's Journal 4 March 1914.

<sup>769</sup> Freeman's Journal 8 Jan. 1914.

<sup>770</sup> Freeman's Journal 20 Jan. 1914.

considered plan, that would show how Dublin could be made more prosperous as a commercial and industrial centre. This would be achieved by the development of the existing industries, and the introduction of both new industry and new enterprises. These trends it was believed, would in the long term, improve conditions for the working class.

As part of the scheme to introduce new industry into the city, there was a widely advertised invitation to Irish businessmen living abroad to visit Ireland for the exhibition, and to study the industrial possibilities here. The hope was that they would be induced to stay in Ireland and either introduce new, or support existing industries. Therefore a great 'home-coming' event was arranged for the month of August, with the already well established Welcoming Club<sup>771</sup> being there to provide support and advice.

One of the first lectures given at the time of the exhibition, was one that brought economic and moral issues more strongly to the fore, it was given by Edward Filene of Boston. He was Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce of Boston, and vice-president of the International Chamber of Commerce.<sup>772</sup> His lecture was entitled 'Coming Changes in City and Business Development', and was aimed primarily at the businessmen of the city. Filene had an uncomfortable message to give to the employers of Ireland, at a time when any relationship between them and their employees was at best non-existent, and at worst totally confrontational. The workers were on one side fighting for better wages and living and working conditions, while the Employers Federation tried to keep the costs of production, mainly labour costs, at a minimum and the workers without power.

The main thrust of Mr Filene's argument was that cities and business had in the past developed as if there were no interrelation between the two. This attitude he believed would have to change, as the relationship between city and business was a real force in the modern world. He also pointed out that prosperity could not be achieved within the boundaries of a city, until the willing workman and his family were enabled to live in a healthy home in a healthy locality. Businessmen and political leaders needed to recognise that the human machine was entitled to at least as much consideration as any mechanical device. Good business required good health, good housing, and good food

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<sup>771</sup> The Welcoming Club had been established by the WNHA in 1910 in order to provide links between Irish people at home and Irish 'exiles' overseas.

<sup>772</sup> Freeman's Journal 30 April 1914.



for their employees. Mr Filene explained that vast changes were taking place in the conduct of business and of the city all over the world. He also maintained that the business and the cities that did not participate in the new movement, which amplified the old concepts of responsibility, would not progress.<sup>773</sup> The alternatives, Filene asserted, to caring for the workers were few. If they were not cared for then there was a high price to be paid in terms of higher rates for the upkeep of work-houses, jail, reformatories and other institutions. A situation which any good businessman should find intolerable.

Employers and businessmen, must learn that their businesses would not grow until the city grew, therefore it was their duty to attend to the development of the city. Nothing to do with sentimentality or morality, which was another issue, just good business sense. Mr Filene had a last warning for employers. While disavowing socialism, they must be aware that their employees outnumbered them one thousand to one. The workers were being told that the highest point which they had reached in civilisation was that they now had an adequate voice in making the laws that governed them politically. It was only a matter of time before they realised fully, that the next highest point was an adequate voice in the laws that governed them industrially. The power base in society was moving from the employers to the employed. Filene spoke of the growth of socialism in Germany, Italy and even in America, and made it clear that the workers of Dublin were already beginning to show an awareness of worker's power. Warning those present that when their employees realised the real extent of their power, it would be too late for compromise.<sup>774</sup> This was no idle threat as events in Russia and Europe would show in the coming decades.

Finally, Filene ended with a word of hope, praising firms like Jacob's biscuit factory for what they had done for Dublin in terms of providing employment. All the capital needed was more new and developing business, and the city would rise like a Phoenix. Dublin had all the fundamental material to become a great city, and the forthcoming Civics Exhibition would provide it with the start it needed. A similar exhibition had been held in Boston and out of that came the beginning of a new movement. The message was clear and was one that the organisers wanted everyone to hear, if Dublin had an

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<sup>773</sup> Freeman's Journal 30 April 1914.

<sup>774</sup> Freeman's Journal 13 April 1914.

industrial base, if work and wages were plentiful and ample and workers were well cared for, then the solution to the housing problem would be simple.

There were a number of similar lectures, on various topics, given in the weeks preceding the opening of the Civic Exhibition. They were aimed mainly at those in a position politically, economically, socially, through their expertise or by philanthropic means, to do anything to change the position of things in Dublin. Another of the experts called upon to lecture was Edward Culpin, Secretary of the Garden City Society of England. On the 24 April 1914, at the Royal Dublin Society, he delivered a lecture entitled 'How to organise the rehousing of the people'. In his address he made a number of points of particular significance to Ireland. He explained that the Liverpool Corporation had spent an enormous amount of money in rehousing its poor. They had raised the necessary sum by the addition of two and a half pence in the pound, on the cities rates per year. They had estimated that if the scheme had not been carried out, the additional costs on the rates would have been at least five pence in the pound, due to the expense involved in police supervision, medical inspections and additional expenditure in relation to the Poor Law.<sup>775</sup> This was the type of information, and understanding of the issues, that the Civics Institute were trying to put before the general public. The speakers were there to appeal to the hard headed businessmen as well as to the morality of the general public.

The Great Civic Exhibition was opened on the 15 July 1914<sup>776</sup> at the Old Linen Hall Barracks, the place which just a few years before, was put forward as a location of an over flow for the South Dublin Union workhouse. The barracks had been abandoned by the military a decade earlier and was in a state of complete deterioration. It was chosen to demonstrate how the site could be transformed from a state of dereliction, to a more than impressive exhibition, a living model of what could be achieved in Dublin. According to the Irish Times of the 13 May 1914

The transformation of that bleak building hidden in the heart of old Dublin into an exhibition grand, with its atmosphere of gaiety and joyousness is a striking illustration of what can be done with the city itself. If these gloomy barracks, with their lichen covered walls and weed grown squares can be made a pleasure place, there is hope for those who strive to turn our tenement areas into gardens and playgrounds.<sup>777</sup>

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<sup>775</sup> Freeman's Journal. 25 April 1914.

<sup>776</sup> Appendices 44-47.

<sup>777</sup> Irish Times. 13 May 1914.

The Linenhall buildings were also chosen because the site was comprised of two and a half acres, with four large tiers of buildings, two extensive open spaces and several smaller areas. In addition, the authorities at Kings Inn gave their permission for the use of the adjacent five acres, making a total of almost eight acres to devote to the exhibition.<sup>778</sup>

The ultimate objectives of the exhibition were many. Beginning with the opportunity for all to study the best ways of improving the capital, and other urban areas. Secondly, to find ways of bringing new industries and new business into Dublin, and through Dublin to develop further industry in the rest of Ireland. Taking the lead from Edward Filene and others, the exhibition would show that a healthy and well trained workforce was essential to commercial and industrial progress. It would also demonstrate how, under improved conditions, the commerce of the city would advance. Therefore they would need to show the many ways that the city could be improved, in terms of its buildings, streets, open spaces and recreation grounds, etc. It was hoped that by so improving the city, and with the use of other inducements, that an opportunity would be held out to Irish residence abroad to consider the industrial possibilities of the city and so finance new or existing industries.<sup>779</sup>

The opening of the Civic Exhibition was attended by a large number of municipal and other local authorities from all over Ireland, public opinion it seems, was waking them from their apathy. The visitors included 80 Mayors with the Lord Mayor and Corporation of Dublin attending in state. The Chief Secretary came from London for the occasion.<sup>780</sup> The courtyard at the entrance to the exhibition was transformed into a plantation of many different types of trees by the Forestry Society.<sup>781</sup> They would be used to illustrate how the cities streets, parks and playgrounds, could be transformed with the addition of trees and shrubs. This was just the beginning of what was to be a fully comprehensive and practical exhibition. It would deal with matters of public health, housing, industry and commerce. The principal objective of the Exhibition, according to the organisers, was to show Irish life as it really was with its advancements and achievements, and to point the way towards finding solutions to the

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<sup>778</sup> Evening Telegraph 12 May 1914.

<sup>779</sup> Irish Times. 13 May 1914..

<sup>780</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. We Twa Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen. Vol. II. p 189.

<sup>781</sup> Daily Express 13 May 1914.

problems.<sup>782</sup> They wanted to present civic life in both urban and rural Ireland. The urban life exhibits were not only devoted to town planning in all its manifold phases, as already mentioned, but special attention was paid to the type of commercial and industrial planning required, based on successful enterprises in Germany and the United States.<sup>783</sup>

The exhibits by the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, were to demonstrate the great progress being made in rural areas. The exhibitors from this section, maintained that in the preceding ten years, there were 77 new industries established all over Ireland. Beef, mutton and bacon exports alone had risen by £1,200,000 in the preceding twelve month period. Poultry, eggs, butter, margarine, condensed milk, flour, potatoes and other agricultural produce exports, which stood at £8,700,000 in 1911, had risen to £9,200,000 by 1912. Woollen goods, drapery and apparel exports had doubled in the 8 years to 1912, to £1,700,000. The value of linen goods exported in 1912 was £1,400,000 higher than that of 1911. Finally, the export of biscuits, whose value stood at £286,000 in 1904, had risen to £535,000 in 1912. Within the same period, manufactured tobacco exports had risen from £302,000 to £513,000.<sup>784</sup> The message was clear and positive, that there was growth in the Irish economy, and further potential remained, which needed to be developed and enlarged.

There were displays from the various technical schools from around the country, in the Technical Instruction section of the exhibition. Part of these exhibits outlined the progress of technical education in Ireland, this it was believed would be an essential factor in the development of Irish Industry. There were illustrations of the work undertaken in technical schools in terms of science, engineering, building construction, woodwork, cabinet making, domestic science and hygiene, rural science and horticulture. An arts and crafts section included examples of lace making, crochet, embroidery, knitting and many others skills. From a practical point of view, the technical students brought samples of such items as mural decorations suitable for public buildings, and samples of simple furniture suitable for workmen's dwelling.<sup>785</sup>

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<sup>782</sup> The Civic Exhibition. Dublin. July 15 to August 31. 1914.

<sup>783</sup> The Civic Exhibition. Dublin. July 15 to August 31. 1914.

<sup>784</sup> The Civic Exhibition. Dublin. July 15 to August 31. 1914.

<sup>785</sup> Daily Express 13 May 1914.

The main court of the of the Linen Hall was given over to 'Industries and Commerce'. The Rotary Club, an organisation of businessmen, made a Rotary Avenue which was one of the main features of the exhibition. On a lighter note there were competitions in Irish music, singing, dancing, gymnastics and physical culture. A pavilion capable of seating six hundred people provided light entertainment, including cinema displays. Opening off the central hall, was a large court area of five thousand square feet, which had been converted into a ballroom where children's, as well as adult dances, were held. The main focus of the event was of course town planning and housing, with exhibits from all over the world, including models of a Garden City, by Professor Patrick Geddes and examples of model cottages. <sup>786</sup>

There were many other aspects to the exhibition, the Congested Districts Board had exhibits that demonstrated the transformation that had taken place in western districts. The Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction gave practical demonstrations of the work carried on in rural areas all over Ireland. There was a Child Welfare exhibit, and a major food exhibit, organised by the WNHA. The long list of other organisations represented is impressive and is worthy of note, if only to outline the size and scope of the exhibition.

The Housing and Town Planning Association of Ireland  
The Women's National Health Association of Ireland  
The Association for the Housing of the Very Poor  
The Architectural Association of Ireland  
The Association of Municipal Authorities in Ireland  
The Dublin Industrial Association  
The Philanthropic Reform Association  
The Irish Nurses Association  
The Royal Dublin Society  
The Royal Horticultural Society of Ireland  
The Dublin University Social Services Society  
The Irish Forestry Society  
The Photographic Society of Ireland  
The Dublin Chamber of Commerce  
The Royal Irish Academy  
The Royal Institute of Architects in Ireland  
The Institute of Civil Engineers in Ireland  
The Institute of Bankers in Ireland  
The Insurance Institute of Ireland  
The United Irish Women  
The Rotary Club

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<sup>786</sup> Daily Express 13 May 1914.

The Irish Women's Reform League  
The Dublin Employer's Federation  
The WNHA Dublin Welcoming Club for Oversea's visitors  
The Dublin Methodist Council  
The Dublin Presbyterian Social Reform Committee.<sup>787</sup>

It was not only Dubliners who attended the exhibition, but the presence of a large number of visitors from the provinces, was assured by the arrangements made with the railways to provide special travel facilities for each week for different districts. For example, there was a Galway week, a Belfast week, a Kerry week etc.<sup>788</sup>

The principal objective of the Exhibition remained

To show Irish life as it is; to illustrate, simply, clearly and vividly, its significant recent advances and achievements, and to point the way toward the further solution of some of the problems of today and of the more immediate future.....it will present civic life in both the city and country and will include some outside exhibits of special interest to Ireland during this expanding period.<sup>789</sup>

This was not to be an exhibition that would show Ireland and its cities in an entirely negative light. But one that would demonstrate what was being achieved and what could be achieved given the economic and political will. Therefore in connection with the Exhibition, the Viceroy offered a prize of £500 for the best report and town plan for Dublin which would indicate the following

- 1) The work which must be taken in hand at once.
- 2) The work which must be taken in hand over ten years, and
- 3) The work which could be gradually taken in hand with special regards to the needs of the existing classes of working people.<sup>790</sup>

The organisers had planned that the exhibition would continue for six weeks and that the Civics Institute would then either purchase or lease the site. Their purpose would be to establish a Civic and Commercial Museum, with a meeting house for the various bodies concerned with civil welfare.<sup>791</sup> Unfortunately the shadow of the events in Europe hung over the exhibition. A special Council of Agriculture meeting was held at the concert hall of the exhibition, under the chairmanship of the Rt. Hon. T.W. Russell

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<sup>787</sup> The Civic Exhibition. July 15th to Aug 31st. Dublin 1914. pp 18 -19

<sup>788</sup> Irish Times 13 May 1914.

<sup>789</sup> Freeman's Journal. 21 August 1914.

<sup>790</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. We Twa Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen. Vol. II. p 189.

<sup>791</sup> Daly Express 13 May 1914.

M.P. Vice President of the Department of Agriculture, to discuss the effects of war on the agricultural industry and the food products from Ireland. They were concerned with ensuring the maintenance of livestock and the food supply during the war period.<sup>792</sup>

Within two weeks of the opening of the Civic Exhibition, the Great War had begun and within a month the exhibition had been forced to close. It is interesting to note that at the close of the exhibition which had been held in one of the poorest areas of the city, that Patrick Abercrombie,<sup>793</sup> described how Lady Aberdeen and members of the Housing and Town Planning Committee simply looked on as 'an enormous flock of people...began one by one to remove the chairs and tables and carry them off home until not a stick of furniture remained'.<sup>794</sup>

The exhibition was not a failure, notwithstanding its early closure, and the organiser's inability to deal with the immediate issues concerning urban development. The Civics Institute in April 1915 reported that financially, 'they had been enabled to pay all liabilities of the Exhibition'<sup>795</sup> More importantly, competitors continued to submit their reports, plans, and proposals for the 'New Dublin'. The entries were adjudicated by Professor Patrick Geddes, Dr John Nolan of Boston, and J. McCarthy, a Dublin architect. The prize of £500, funded by Lord Aberdeen, was eventually awarded to Patrick Abercrombie, Professor of Civic Design at the University of Liverpool.<sup>796</sup>

The Civics Institute of Ireland with Lord and Lady Aberdeen now as joint presidents,<sup>797</sup> resumed its activity after the war, in spite of the fact that they no longer had any direct role to play in Ireland. In the year after the departure of Lord Aberdeen from his post as Viceroy to Ireland in 1915, he and the countess arranged to have Professor Abercrombie's report and designs published in a very large and impressive volume entitled 'Dublin of the Future'.<sup>798</sup> Eventually, thanks to a visit by the Aberdeens to the United States, these plans were exhibited in Boston along with other submissions.

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<sup>792</sup> *Freeman's Journal* 21 August 1914.

<sup>793</sup> Professor Abercrombie's role in the Exhibition will be discussed later in this chapter

<sup>794</sup> O'Brien, Joseph V. *Dear Dirty Dublin* p 69

<sup>795</sup> 'Minutes of the General Meeting of the Civics Institute of Ireland.' 22 April 1915.

Civic Museum archives

<sup>796</sup> O'Brien, Joseph V. *Dear Dirty Dublin* p 69.

<sup>797</sup> 'Minutes of Civics Institute' dated 2 May 1919 indicate the election of Lord and Lady Aberdeen as joint presidents. Civic Museum archives.

<sup>798</sup> Copies of this very impressive manuscript are presently held at the archives in Peamount and in the Civic Museum archives.

They also arranged to have copies of the original plans exhibited at architectural exhibitions held in New York and Chicago. As a result, the exhibits received an honourable mention at the Exhibition of the Architectural League of New York.<sup>799</sup> They hoped, through the use of these exhibitions, to create in America, an interest in Ireland. This, they believed, would lead to support and co-operation from persons of Irish decent living in the United States, with regard to improving living conditions in Dublin.

In 1922 the Civics Institute also had Abercrombie's winning plan published as Vol. I of their publications in order to make its findings more widely available in Ireland.<sup>800</sup> As a result of this, also in 1922, the Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland, formed their own consultative Town Planning Committee, which included all of the local architects who had taken part in the Greater Dublin competition.<sup>801</sup> The second volume of work published by the Civics Institute, was the 'Dublin Civic Survey' report, which was dedicated to both Lord and Lady Aberdeen 'in respectful recognition of prolonged public services rendered to the City of Dublin.'<sup>802</sup> Professional men, architects and engineers prepared ten maps, including those showing the condition of housing with regard to hygiene, recreation facilities, traffic, industry and commerce, and education in Dublin. This survey was to be a 'statistical and geographical representation of things as they are in a community'<sup>803</sup> therefore it was quite a different undertaking to a town plan, which was to outline how the community of the future was envisaged. Lady Aberdeen trusted that the civic survey would be a forerunner of a developing town plan for Dublin, believing that,

....the material gathered will ultimately prove of real value and assistance to those on whose shoulders will lie the responsibility of making Dublin what it should be and could be.....'<sup>804</sup>

The introduction to the civic survey claimed that

.....with a civic survey before the town planner no serious mistake is likely to occur, as it educates both the expert and the citizen in the factors and conditions

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<sup>799</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. The Results of Thirty Months Work in America. (Dublin, 1918) p 20.

<sup>800</sup> Abercrombie, Patrick. and Kelly, Arthur. Dublin of the Future - The New Town Plan. Being the scheme awarded the first prize in the International Competition. Vol. I of the publications of the Civics Institute of Ireland.

<sup>801</sup> 'Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Civics Institute of Ireland.' 16 Oct. 1922.

<sup>802</sup> O'Rourke, Horace. and Dublin Civic Survey Committee of the Civics Institute of Ireland (eds.) The Dublin Civic Survey Report. Vol. II of publications of the Civics Institute of Ireland. 1925.

<sup>803</sup> O'Rourke, Horace and Dublin Civic Survey Committee of the Civics Institute of Ireland (eds.) The Dublin Civic Survey Report vol. II of publications of the Civics Institute of Ireland. 1925.

<sup>804</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen. Vol. 11 p 190.



governing his town life.....it enables an expert to present a forecast of future developments.<sup>805</sup>

In spite of fact that only a grant of £1,500 from the Carnegie Trust<sup>806</sup> saved the Civics Institute from bankruptcy at this time, it was believed by those involved in the project, that the Civic Survey was as necessary to the future of Dublin 'as a physicians diagnosis is in his prescription'.<sup>807</sup>

The work of the Civics Institute of Ireland did not end with the Civic Exhibition of 1914, nor with the survey's conducted on their behalf. The second objective of the Institute was to provide a centre where other organisations involved in the principles of civil development could be brought into contact with one another, and so co-operate more fully in bringing to pass similar goals and aspirations. For example, by 1916 the Housing and Town Planning Association had become formally affiliated to the Civics Institute, in a effort to bring as much pressure as possible to bear on the government to rebuild Dublin in a more considered manner in the aftermath of the Easter Rising, by placing on record their resolve

that in the rebuilding of Dublin, regard shall be had to the principles of town planning and that steps will be taken to secure that the rebuilding shall be carried out on lines which will make for the permanent improvement of our city .....and that in the special circumstances under which the destruction of Dublin streets was caused, that the government will afford such financial assistance as may be necessary to carry out such rebuilding in the manner indicated.<sup>808</sup>

This was a significant development, not only in the Institute's call for the careful and well thoughtout rebuilding of the city, but in its public appeal for funding in view of the situation that had led to the destruction of the city at that time. In 1922 a number of other organisations had become affiliated to the Civics Institute, including the WNHA, the Dublin Citizens Housing Committee, The Irish Women's Association of Citizenship, the Women's Local Government Association, the World Women's Christian Union, the Social Reform Committee of the Presbyterian Association and the St Banrnabas Utility

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<sup>805</sup> O'Rourke, Horace. and the Dublin Civic Survey Committee of the Civics Institute of Ireland (eds.) The Dublin Civic Survey Report. Vol. II. p xv.

<sup>806</sup> 'Minutes of the Organising Committee of the Civics Institute of Ireland' 20 Feb. 1925.

<sup>807</sup> O'Rourke, Horace. and the Dublin Civics Survey Committee of the Civics Institute of Ireland (eds.) The Dublin Civic Survey Report. Vol. II. p xvi.

<sup>808</sup> 'Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Civics Institute of Ireland' 30 June 1916.

Society.<sup>809</sup> By 1936 eleven new Public Utility Societies<sup>810</sup> were registered through the Civics Institute.

The work of the Institute in the coming decades would include, in 1924 a 'Dublin Housing Week', this would be the first of many practical projects to continue to promote slum clearance and better housing standards.<sup>811</sup> This was followed by the holding of a second Housing Week in 1925, which included a three day Housing Conference. Civic Weeks were held in 1927 and 1929, and on each occasion handbooks which included descriptive detail of the state of Dublin were published. In 1928 a Public Health Conference was held in Dublin, and in 1931 a mass meeting was held at the Mansion House to draw public attention to the housing needs, again trying to get public opinion firmly behind a programme for the reform of housing conditions in the city.

By 1931 the Institute became registered under the Department of Industry and Commerce, and in 1937 they were providing a course for a diploma in Social Studies in Trinity College Dublin.<sup>812</sup> The Institute had also arranged a series of six lectures, which were published into pamphlets entitled 'The Good Citizen', which were brought to both schools and community groups for the teaching of civics. One of the most important works of the Institute was their involvement in the provision of playgrounds. The three municipal playgrounds under their care included those at Hill St, Cabra and Broadstone. There were seven fully trained and paid supervisors in constant attendance, for about 1,800 children who used the playgrounds daily. These playgrounds had a very special role, in that the leaders were expected to provide 'wholesome' activities for the children, to know each of the children by name, also their family background. In cases of need they were expected to complete follow up activities, including 'home visits', acting as a social worker putting families in touch with the social and voluntary services that could best help them, and if necessary attend juvenile courts to support or give evidence on behalf of a juvenile offender.<sup>813</sup>

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<sup>809</sup> 'Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Civics Institute of Ireland' 16 Oct. 1922.

<sup>810</sup> Public Utility Societies were formed by the Civics Institute throughout Ireland, in urban and rural districts, in order to raise housing standards throughout the country.

<sup>811</sup> 'Brief History of 54 Years of the Civics Institute of Ireland' from Annual Report of the Civics Institute of Ireland 1966-68. Introduction. Civic Museum archives.

<sup>812</sup> 'A Brief History of the Civics Institute of Ireland' in Citizens of the future. Help to make them Good Citizens. The Civics Institute of Ireland 1936.

<sup>813</sup> 'A Brief History of the Civics Institute of Ireland' in Citizens of the Future. Help to make them Good Citizens. The Civics Institute of Ireland 1936.

The Civics Institute was not finally wound up until June of 1986,<sup>814</sup> having given service to the cause of better living conditions for Irish families, and a better lifestyle for Irish children, particularly through its nursery schools, for over seventy years. Other individuals and groups were willing to follow the lead given by the Civics Institute, and from the lessons learned from the time of the Civics Exhibition of 1914. The most prominent example being the Guinness company, who by the late 1940s had provided housing for a large number of its employees in the Dublin suburb of Terenure, incorporating into its plans, playground facilities in the immediate area, based on the model of those provided by the Institute. The company also provided a swimming pool, recreation hall and dispensary facilities close to the St James' Gate brewery. The housing provided was of a high quality, which took many families out of the slums of the inner city.

The countess through many organisations and by private means, succeeded in drawing public attention both at home and abroad, to the problems of housing and living conditions in Dublin.<sup>815</sup> Nevertheless, the problems associated with tenement living and poverty were to remain a major issue for many decades to come. When change did come it was not the ideals of a 'Garden City' that were introduced, but slum living did give way to more acceptable and affordable housing in the suburbs.<sup>816</sup>

In the interim the First World War intervened, and a new challenge came into existence for the members of the WNHA. While progress was being made in many areas, their work was to take on an added dimension in the face of the number of war casualties, and the additional strain the war was placing on already overburdened families. A special council meeting of the WNHA was held at the request of Lady Aberdeen, in the Royal Dublin Society in early December 1914. It was decided that it was an essential task to organise a Dublin City Branch of the British Red Cross, if the members of the WNHA were to have the opportunity to contribute to the war effort. The Association therefore invited representatives of all the societies in Ireland interested in working with the Red Cross Society to attend. In a rare display of unity, the large theatre hall of the

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<sup>814</sup> Clarke, Mary. *The Civics Institute of Ireland. A Descriptive list of its archives.* (Dublin, 1986) p v.

<sup>815</sup> The last recorded attendance of the countess at a Annual General Meeting of the Civics Institute of Ireland was in 1931.

<sup>816</sup> The suburbs which eventually filled the greater Dublin area created their own problems as planners ignored the recommendations of individuals like Patrick Geddes, or those who had higher expectations than those that eventually transpired in terms of uniformity, and lack of basic facilities.

Royal Dublin Society was on the day packed to capacity, with members of the St John's Ambulance Association; the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction; the Irish Volunteers Voluntary Aid Association; the Dublin Board of the Ulster Volunteers; individual members of Cumann-na-mBan and the United Irish Women; and leading members of the medical and nursing professions, who were also willing to co-operated with the WNHA. The Dublin Branch of the British Red Cross came into existence in December 1914 with Lady Aberdeen as its first President.<sup>817</sup>

The work began with the establishment of classes in first aid and basic nursing skills, which were held nation-wide in connection with a scheme run by the Department of Technical Instruction, under the auspices of the WNHA. Over 10,000 students attended these classes, with a large proportion of those taking part being awarded the Department's certificates, which were approved by both the British Red Cross Society and the War Office. The certificate were significant as they gave the holders the right to join any Voluntary Aid Detachments of the British Red Cross.<sup>818</sup> Lady Aberdeen was to state

We are confident that the 10,000 students who have followed the first aid and nursing courses with so much earnestness and enthusiasm will prove a great asset, not only to the present emergency, but the future developments and work for public health and social reform throughout the country.<sup>819</sup>

Ten Voluntary Aid Detachments were formed in connection with the city of Dublin branch of the British Red Cross, and they worked with many and varied enterprises. They began with the establishment of 'Social Clubs' in Dublin for the wives, mothers and other female relatives of soldiers and sailors fighting in Europe. The clubs were places where the women could go for support and to meet friends. They could also be supplied with, as far as it was possible, reliable information regarding the war. Cookery, and sewing classes, music and all forms of recreational activities, were provided in an effort to lift the spirits of those with loved ones fighting in the war. Because of their connection with the British Red Cross it was easier, through these clubs, to get letters and parcels to those serving at the Front. Seven such clubs were formed in Dublin, namely, The Sibail Club in Lower Gardiner Street, the Shamrock Club in Ringsend, the Aberdeen Club on Emmet Road in Kilmainham, the Colleague Club on the Coombe, the

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<sup>817</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. *We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen*. Vol. II p 320.

<sup>818</sup> *Slainte. Journal of the WNHA* Jan. 1915. p 2.

<sup>819</sup> *Slainte. Journal of the WNHA*. Jan. 1915. p 2.

Slainte Club at the Ormond Market, and finally in the Convent in Henrietta Street on Arran Quay.<sup>820</sup> In addition a 'Comforts Depot' was formed in order to collect fruit, vegetables, games, newspapers and magazines, tobacco and cigarettes for distribution amongst those in the hospitals.

A 'Bureau of Information' was set up at 7 Ely Place, which was used as the receiving centre for cloths and other essentials for use by the Red Cross. Working parties were formed to make garments, which were sent either to the military headquarters or directly to base hospitals. This was not an insignificant undertaking. The final report of the City of Dublin Branch of the British Red Cross stated

Records kept since May 1917 show that 2,930 Christmas Comfort bags were given to every soldier and sailor in the hospitals in the city and county of Dublin. From May 1917 to May 1919, 891 lbs of tobacco and 78,589 cigarettes were also distributed.....between May 1915 and May 1917, 3,411 hampers had been delivered to 17 hospitals.<sup>821</sup>

As demand grew the comforts depot outgrew the facilities at Ely Place, therefore Lady Aberdeen approached the Senate of the National University, asking for their support. The Senate agreed to give the Association the use of a house at Lower Fitzwilliam Square for the period of the war.<sup>822</sup>

Very soon after the inauguration of the Dublin City Branch of the British Red Cross, the countess asked the military authorities what kind of assistance would be most useful to them. The reply came that more hospital accommodation would be required, as it was proposed to bring in transport ships of wounded soldiers directly by sea to Dublin, if there were enough beds available in the city. Lord and Lady Aberdeen immediately requested from King George V that they be allowed open Dublin Castle for use as a hospital for the duration of the war. When the King's permission was granted, along with a donation of £100, a committee of management was formed by the Red Cross.

The Committee entered into possession of the Castle and deposited with the Board of Works a sum which was estimated to be the cost of carrying out the structural alterations, and providing the sanitary adjuncts which a committee of leading physicians and surgeons of Dublin thought necessary.<sup>823</sup>

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<sup>820</sup> Slainte. Journal of the WNHA Jan. 1915. p 2.

<sup>821</sup> 'Final Report of the Dublin City branch of the British Red Cross', 31 March 1921.

Peamount archives.

<sup>822</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen. Vol. II. p 233.

<sup>823</sup> 'Dublin Castle Hospital. Important Statement and Appeal for Funds'. Peamount archives..

The concept of using Dublin Castle as a hospital was based on both its size and suitability, in terms of converting its massive rooms and hallways into hospital wards. The Castle had an additional advantage, in that it was situated right in the centre of the city with easy access for the transportation of wounded soldiers from ships on the Liffey, to their beds, with minimum disruption.

The Castle Hospital was formally opened on the 27 January 1915<sup>824</sup> by Lord Aberdeen, with accommodation for 250 patients, including 19 beds for officers. Within six months the number of patients had risen to almost 300, when all of the small houses around the upper Castle yard were connected with the main hospital wards.<sup>825</sup> St Patrick's Hall was used as a recreation hall for the men, with billiard tables and other games provided. Every Thursday for three years, the Tivoli Theatre Group brought in artists from the different theatres and music halls around Dublin to entertain soldiers, not only from the Castle, but also those who were brought in from other hospitals throughout the city.<sup>826</sup> By the end of the war over 6000 men had been nursed Dublin Castle, the largest Red Cross hospital in Ireland<sup>827</sup>

It was not only the wounded of the First World War who were treated at the Castle hospital, in 1916 it was used by those from both sides of the divide, injured during the Easter Rising. Lady Aberdeen stated

There under the Red cross banner, lay soldiers from France, Sinn Feiners, civilians, police, and soldiers brought from England. Here too was James Connolly brought when he was wounded.<sup>828</sup>

The ex Lord Chancellor, Sir James Campbell wrote of this time

No one who did not witness it could realise the work done in the Castle Hospital during that period. During all hours of the day and night, the dead, the dying and the wounded were being brought in. The moment they reached the hospital they were at once taken in hand by the nurses. No questions were asked, the mere fact that a person was wounded was sufficient for the door to be thrown open at once.<sup>829</sup>

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<sup>824</sup> Appendices 48-50.

<sup>825</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. *We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen.* Vol. II. p 238.

<sup>826</sup> Pentland, Marjorie. *A Bonnie Fechter. Life of Ishbel Marjoribanks. Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair. 1857-1939.* p 176

<sup>827</sup> Pentland, Marjorie. *A Bonnie Fechter. Life of Ishbel Marjoribanks. Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair. 1857-1939.* p 176.

<sup>828</sup> Aberdeen, Lord and Lady. *We Twa. Reminiscences of Lord and Lady Aberdeen.* Vol. II. p 239.

<sup>829</sup> 'City of Dublin Branch of the Red Cross Society'. Reports presented at a public meeting held on the 4 June 1920. p 20 Peamount archives..

This would have been in keeping with the philosophy of the WNHA, as they had learned by experience to look beyond the mark, when it came to the suffering of those within the wider community. They realised early on that class structures, religion or political opinions were meaningless in the face of poverty, ignorance, disease, and ultimately war.

In the final year of the Viceroyalty of the Aberdeens, two new organisations had been instigated, the Housing and Town Planning Association and the Civics Institute of Ireland, as the WNHA sought to work towards their ultimate aims, the eradication of tuberculosis and the reduction of the high infant mortality rates. This they realised, could only be achieved by radical social change. A revolution in attitudes towards the underclass would have to take place, if their goals were to be met. The WNHA wished to be the instigators of such a transformation. Tenement living, with its accompanying poverty, deprivation and disease could no longer be accepted as the norm, nor as inevitable. The countess, through the WNHA and its sister organisations, had tried by every means available, to see that fundamental social reforms were introduced. Firstly, by raising public awareness of the difficulties and the solutions, and secondly, by pressurising both local and imperial governments, to provide the means to overcome major social and economic difficulties.

All efforts were thwarted by the outbreak of the First World War, as the WNHA worked with the British Red Cross to provide aid to casualties both at home and abroad. Nevertheless, the idealism that drove all of these organisations, whether they are perceived as being successful or failures, must not be overlooked, for to do so would be a great injustice to those individuals who worked tirelessly on behalf of this nation.

## **Conclusion. The Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair.**

Both Lord and Lady Aberdeen, having served in Ireland for almost nine years, believed that the Great War would be over quickly, that Home Rule would be introduced soon afterwards, and they would be the ones to hand over to a new Governor-General of the Dominion of Ireland. This was not to be the case, even if as expected, Home Rule had been enacted. In October 1914, the Aberdeens received a letter from Prime Minister Asquith, thanking them for their services in Ireland, and asking that Lord Aberdeen leave the post of Viceroy to Ireland, in February of 1915.<sup>830</sup> The couple were devastated at this news and were very reluctant to leave.

By way of consolation, in the New Year's honours list of 1915, Lord Aberdeen was awarded with the title of Marquis. It was decided by the couple to take the title of Marquis of Tara, in view of their close affiliation to Ireland, and the family ties of the countess through the O'Neills. This news was met with consternation by many who felt that it was inappropriate for a member of the British aristocracy, to use such an ancient Irish title. The Irish Times of the 20 Jan. 1915, called on the Aberdeens to reconsider the title stating

it is believed here that Lord Aberdeen must reconsider his intention to assume the title of Tara - no other question since the war itself has produced such unity among Irishmen. Lord Aberdeen's Irish friends admit that he has been ill advised and has shown an extraordinary ignorance of the Irish character and sentiment...<sup>831</sup>

In order to appease the sensibilities of those so concerned, and yet retain what the countess believed was theirs by right, it was decided instead to take the title Temair, the old Gaelic form of the word Tara.

It is not the purpose of this work to decided if the countess and her husband were entitled to this honour or not. Nor whether the Aberdeens, or any other couple should have been in Ireland at all, representing as they did the British Crown on Irish soil. It was never my intention, as already stated, to write a new biography of Lady Aberdeen nor to comment on the political aspects of the role of the British in Ireland, nor the

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<sup>830</sup> Correspondence from Prime Minister Asquith to Lord Aberdeen, dated 14 Oct. 1914. Haddo House archives.

<sup>831</sup> The Irish Times 20 Jan 1915.



opposition to it. These matters have already been well documented. What is essential to note in the context of the work outlined in this dissertation, is the commitment of Lady Aberdeen to Ireland and to the various organisations she had founded for the benefit of its people. A commitment which was to last until her death in 1939. At the time of establishing Ely House as head-quarters of the WNHA, Lord and Lady Aberdeen had bought the property, leaving half of the premises as living quarters, and soon after their state departure in February 1915, they were back in Dublin.<sup>832</sup> By this time both Lord and Lady Aberdeen, and the WNHA of Ireland, were almost bankrupt. It was the countess who, on St Patrick's Day of that year sold many of her precious jewels and other valuable items, in order to appease their own bankers.

Then in early 1916, having insured her own life in order that the Association might benefit in the event of her death, the couple set off fund-raising in the United States on behalf of the WNHA. This was a task which they expected would last for six months, but in view of the problems and shortages and calls for support from very many worthy causes, their trip took two and a half years. In May 1918, they had finally reached their target of \$20,000, and by the time they reached Ireland, further donations were received by the WNHA from the United States, of \$25,000.<sup>833</sup> As a result of the visit of the Aberdeens to America, both the WNHA and the Civics Institute of Ireland, were enabled to clear off their liabilities and continue with their work. Almost until her death in 1939 the countess was a very regular visitor Ireland, attending council meetings of the WNHA and the Civics Institute of Ireland, and was actively involved in Peamount Sanatorium and Peamount Industries.

Beginning in 1886 with the founding of the Irish Industries Association, the Countess of Aberdeen had worked tirelessly on behalf of the Irish people. Through this association much was achieved in terms of raising the standard of living in Irish homes, and drawing the attention of those, both at home and abroad, to the potential for development of indigenous industry within this country.

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<sup>832</sup> Pentland, Marjorie. A Bonnie Fecther. Life of Ishbel Marjoribanks. Countess of Aberdeen and Temair. 1857-1939. p 179

<sup>833</sup> Pentland, Marjorie. A Bonnie Fecther. Life of Ishbel Marjoribanks. Countess of Aberdeen and Temair. 1857-1939. p 181-2.

The list of welfare programmes provided by the WNHA and its members nationwide, in spite of sometimes relentless opposition, is quite phenomenal. What began with programmes for the eradication of tuberculosis and infant welfare, led to the establishment of a number of institutions, and the introduction of programmes for the care of tuberculosis sufferers within their own homes. The WNHA had impacted on every aspect of Irish community life. The organisation under the direction of Lady Aberdeen had taken a holistic approach to the care of individuals. They worked relentlessly to get to the root causes of the deprivation and suffering that led to the spread of death and disease. This led to radical measures which were initiated to draw public attention to the social and environmental factors involved in the high mortality rates, particularly in urban Ireland.

The Countess of Aberdeen was an immensely popular and significant figure in Ireland for very many decades. Not just because she was wife of the Governor-General, but in her own right, as the motivation behind so many movements that touched the lives of thousands of individuals. Yet few today would recognise the name of Ishbel Aberdeen.

Nevertheless, it would be difficult find Lady Aberdeens equal in any other figure of the period in Ireland, in terms of her energy, her vision, her ability, her commitment and finally her legacy. She could in fact compete with any of the leading philanthropists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Individuals like Margaret Aylward,<sup>834</sup> who founded religious orders of women to work in the fields of nursing, education and social work, but who also accepted and maintained the social order. Lady Aberdeen would take her altruistic endeavours at least one step beyond anything they were able to achieve, and became not just a philanthropist, but a social activist. She challenged the authorities, at both central and local government levels, to do something about the social problems of the day.

We see this in the founding of the Victoria Order of Nurses in Canada, the Women's National Health Association of Ireland and the Civics Institute of Ireland. The pressure placed on governments through these organisations was both relentless and provocative, often using public opinion to force the reluctant hands of those in authority.

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<sup>834</sup> Margaret Louisa Alyward 1810-1889, founder of the Sisters of the Holy Faith. A major philanthropic figure who committed herself to both social and Catholic causes.

Lady Aberdeen could also compete with any of the leading suffragettes of the period, including Hanna Sheehy Skeffington<sup>835</sup> and Anna Maria Halsam.<sup>836</sup> As President of the International Council of Women for over 20 years, she fought vigorously for the rights of women and children everywhere. The issues that came to her attention ranged from health and education, to the legal position of women, rights of suffrage and citizenship, and the problems associated with white slave trafficking. In terms of human rights, the International Council of Women, led by the countess, attended conferences on peace and arbitration in The Hague following the First World War.<sup>837</sup>

The disregard of Lady Aberdeen's achievements, both at home and abroad, by Irish historians, leads us to a number of unanswered questions regarding the writing of Irish history, particularly women's history. Only in very recent times has an awareness emerged of the limited perspectives employed by authors of Irish history, in terms of their subject matter. Unionist women in particular have received very little attention, despite being the largest organised group of women in their opposition to Home Rule. Instead historians, up to the present time, have tended to write of the great women of Irish history, [great being in inverted commas] who were invariably nationalist or political revolutionaries, or great religious figures. Therefore, to suggest that the wife of the 7th Earl of Aberdeen is worthy of research, is almost anathema.

This in itself says a lot about the way we view Irish history. One wonders if the countess had been Irish rather than British, a Sinn Féiner rather than a Vicereign, a Catholic rather than a Protestant, or a man rather than a woman, would Irish historians have favoured her more kindly. But as a woman, wife of the Viceroy, and representative of the crown, Lady Aberdeen would never be given the recognition she deserved by the historians of the Irish Free State. Therefore over time, her role in Irish history was eclipsed by that of the more historically acceptable, nuns and patriots. If women were to be recognised, historians found it easier to glorify nationalist women, among the favourites were Maud Gonne<sup>838</sup> and Countess Markievicz.<sup>839</sup>

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<sup>835</sup> Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington. She had been largely instrumental in forming the Irish Women's Franchise League, the strongest force in Ireland for obtaining votes for women.

<sup>836</sup> Anna Maria Haslam was a Quaker who worked tirelessly in Ireland and England on the issues related to women's rights.

<sup>837</sup> Aberdeen, Lady Ishbel. (ed.) The International Council of Women. Report of Transactions of the Fourth Quinquennial Meeting held at Toronto, Canada. June 1909.

<sup>838</sup> Maud Gonne was an extreme nationalist who married Major John McBride, who was executed in the aftermath of the 1916 Rising. She was founder of the nationalist women's organisation 'Inghinidhe na hEireann.

It would be more acceptable later in DeValera's Ireland, to recognise the philanthropic and social work of the Catholic Church and its religious inspiration, than to recognise the religious commitment of a Presbyterian member of the British establishment. Two of the great pillars of Irish society, church and state, were acknowledged by historians, to the seeming exclusion of all else. The assumption being that to have made any impact on Irish history, social or political, you had to be a nationalist and preferably Roman Catholic, or at least one of these two, to qualify for acceptance in historical terms. This inclusiveness has been detrimental to our understanding of our own history, if so much has been excluded. By ignoring the countess and her role in Irish affairs in this manner, history has also excluded the very many individuals, mainly women, of all creeds, classes and political affiliations, who worked with Lady Aberdeen in various organisations. It is in the eclipsing of the countess and in refusing to recognise her achievements, we have also eclipsed the role of all of those who worked with her for the betterment of Irish society.

In the publication by Leah Levenson and Jerry Natterstad on Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington the authors state

sometimes the neglect of significant figures after their deaths tells us more about a society than it is prepared to admit to itself. It is not simply an inability to perceive the contribution made to the society by such people, their neglect may conceal a deep rooted resistance to seeing the nature of their significance on the part of the community.<sup>840</sup>

This statement can be applied equally to Lady Aberdeen as an individual, and it is also true of every organisation and institution founded by her. It says much about our attitude as a society, when so much dedication and vision can be ignored, because it does not fit into the pattern of nationalist history. It is as if giving credit to such an individual, takes away from our own self image. To claim that the Vicereign had the concerns of Ireland in terms of its health and welfare, and even the economy, at the top of her agenda, showing her in the role of an Irish 'nationalist' in the broadest sense of the word, is also anathema to many. Nevertheless, it is a type of provincial prejudice that will have to be overcome, if we are to see the full picture of the development of Ireland as a nation.

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<sup>839</sup> Countess Markievicz was an unlikely member of the Irish Citizen Army and Sinn Fein. She came from an Anglo-Irish ascendancy family. She was also an active supporter of the women's suffrage movement.

<sup>840</sup> Levenson, Leah and Jerry, Natterstad. Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington. Introduction. (Syracuse, 1986)

Perhaps now, with the new openness that has developed over the last decade in terms of what may be loosely described as 'women's history', we are ready to discuss openly the role of all who have helped Ireland along the path to nationhood, regardless of class, politics, or religious persuasion

This dissertation was not intended as a piece of revisionist history, in the sense that it was an entirely new perspective, on a given event or period in history. It is simply an inclusive history, examining in some detail a part of Irish history that has largely been ignored, except at a most superficial level, and including all of those individuals involved in what were major movements and institutions which resulted in radical social change.

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**I feel it important to note that at the time I was using the many sources available at the Peamount archive, the material remained uncatalogued and incomplete. Most items were stored in large boxes or folders and were in no particular order. Therefore the bibliography in this section is without reference to catalogues or box numbers but is as complete as I can possibly make it under the circumstances.**

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Lafayette  
LONDON

*Ishbel Aberdeen*

**Lady Ishbel Aberdeen.**

Supplement to Slainte. Journal of the Women's National Health Association of  
Ireland. 1911.

*Appendix 1.*



*Aberdeen*

**Lord Aberdeen.**

Supplement to Slainte. Journal of the Women's National Health Association of Ireland.  
1911.

*Appendix 2.*



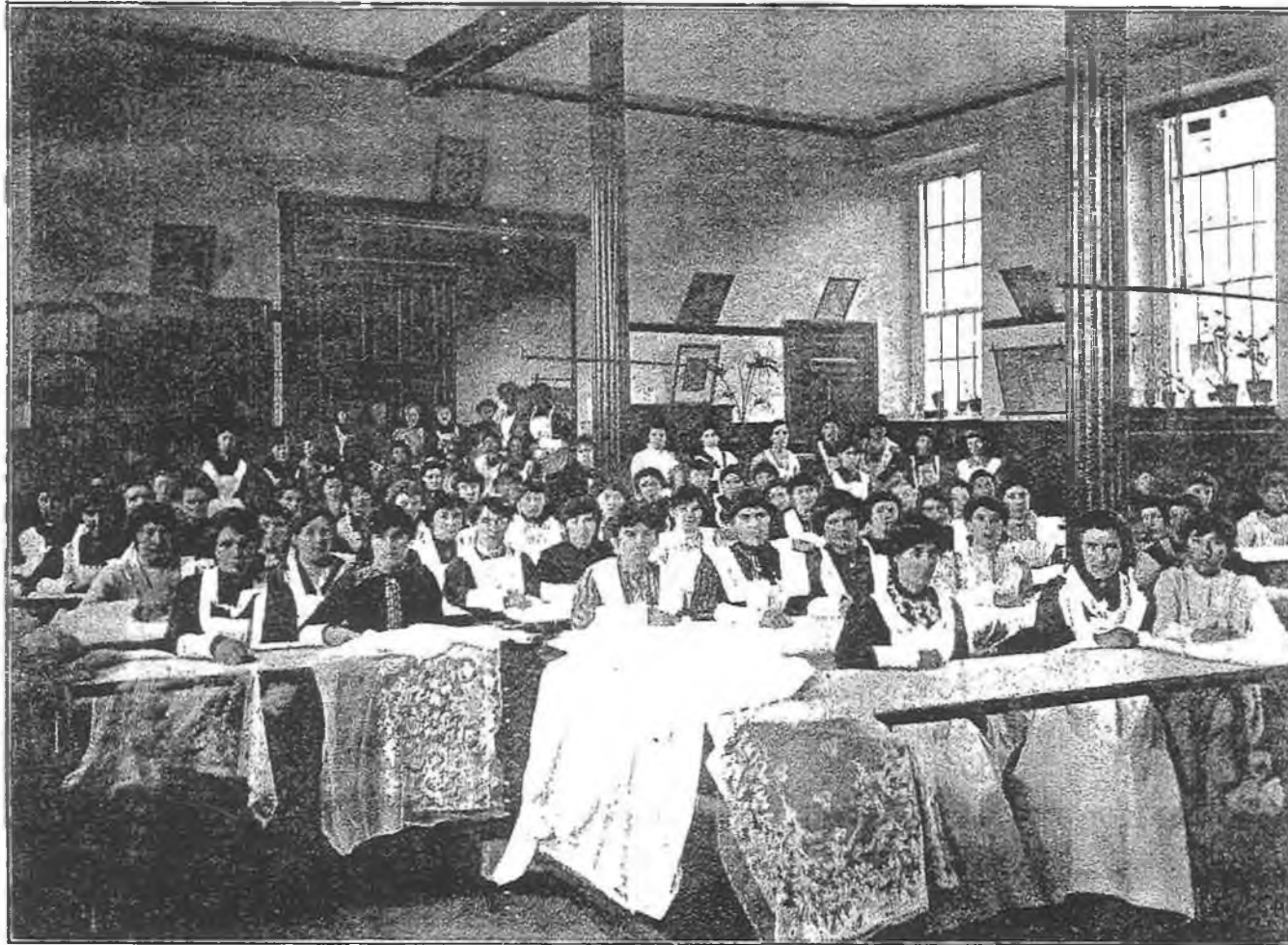
The I.C.W. Delegates -taken outside the University Buildings, Toronto  
Canada.

The International Council of Women. Report of Transactions of Fourth  
Quinquennial Meeting. June 1909. p 60. *Appendix 3.*



**Lace Workers from Clones, Carrickmacross, Youghal, Kinsale, and County Down.**  
Brought to Dublin by the Irish Lace Depot at the request of Her Majesty Queen Victoria and received  
by her at the Vice-Regal Lodge

**'The Irish Village of the Irish Industries Association Exhibition'.**  
*Appendix 4.*



Workroom of the Irish Lace School at St. Joseph's Convent, Kinsale. The Workers in front are making Limerick Lace.

**'The Irish Village of the Irish Industries Association Exhibition'.**  
*Appendix 5.*



A Group of Lace Workers (New Style).

**'The Irish Village of the Irish Industries Association Exhibition'.**  
*Appendix 6.*





Workroom at the Convent of the Sisters of Mercy, Sligo, where a number of Girls have been employed as day workers for many years making Trousseaux orders executed for the London Depot.

**'The Irish Village of the Irish Industries Association Exhibition'.**

*Appendix 7.*

**'The Irish Village of the Irish Industries Association Exhibition'.**

*Appendix 8.*



*Photo by*

**Irish Industries Garden Party at the Vice Regal Lodge, 1886.**

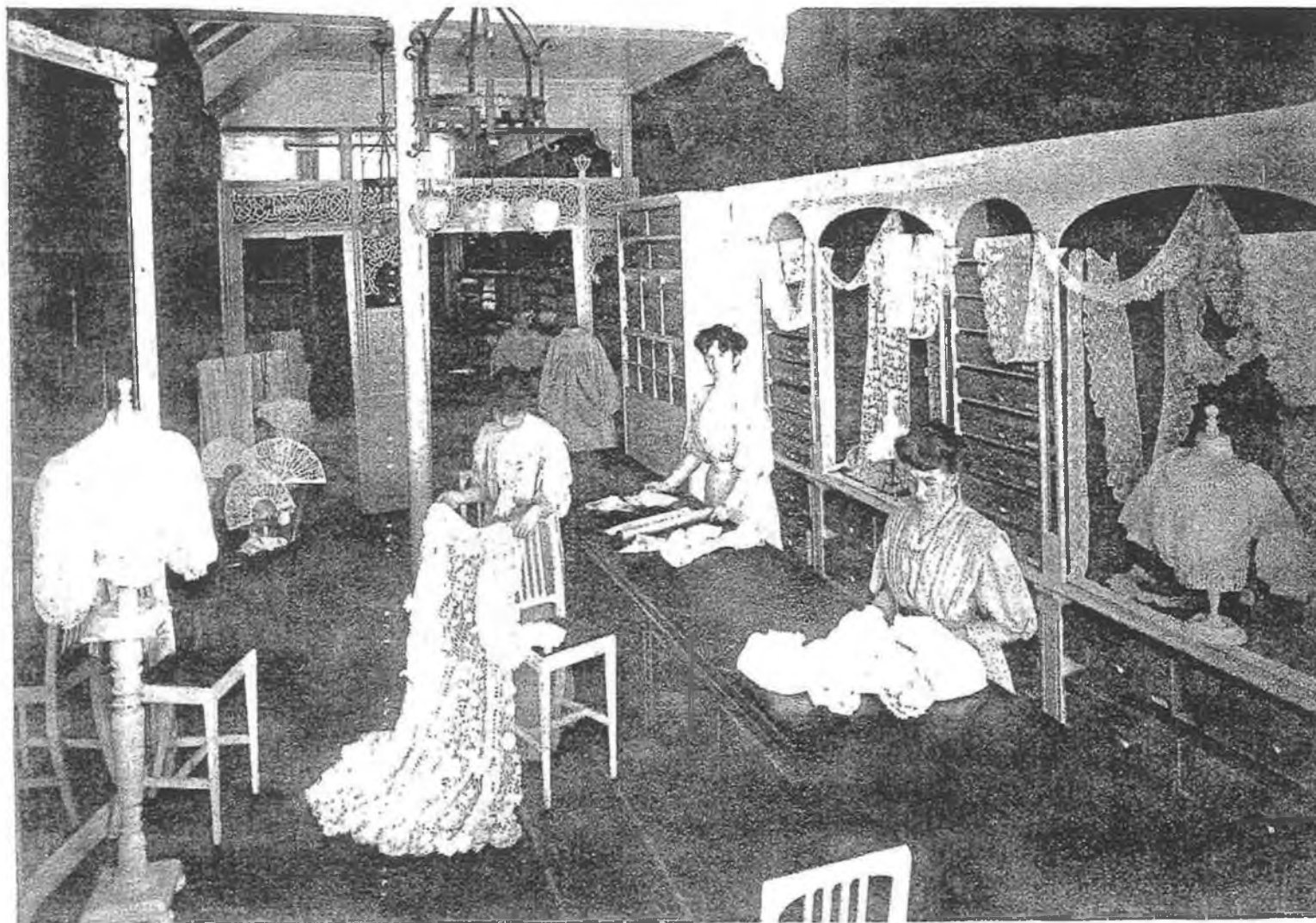
*Lafayette.*

All Guests were requested to use Irish material for their dress as much as possible. An Exhibit of Irish Industries was held at the same time in the Racquet Court.

**Names of Persons in Group.**

Their Excellencies and Lady Marjorie Gordon, Lord Hobbs and Gwyn Hamilton, Pages of Honour, Prince and Princess Edward of Saxe Weimar, Sir Robert Hamilton (Under Secretary) and Lady Hamilton, Lieut.-Col. Alfred Turner (Private Secretary), Sir William Kaye (Assistant Under Secretary) and Lady Kaye, Lieut.-Col. Hon. G. Canfield (Comptroller), Lieut.-Col. Dease (Chamberlain), Lieut.-Col. Forster (Master of the Horse), Captain the Hon. H. Ormsby Gore, Captain the Hon. C. Lambton, Captain J. Sinclair, Major Malone, Captain Matthews, Captain Fowler, Captain the Hon. T. Ashburnham, Captain St. Aubyn (A.D.C.), the Gentlemen in Waiting and Gentleman Usher, Professor Henry Drummond.

5.  
**'The Irish Village of the Irish Industries Association Exhibition'.  
Appendix 9.**

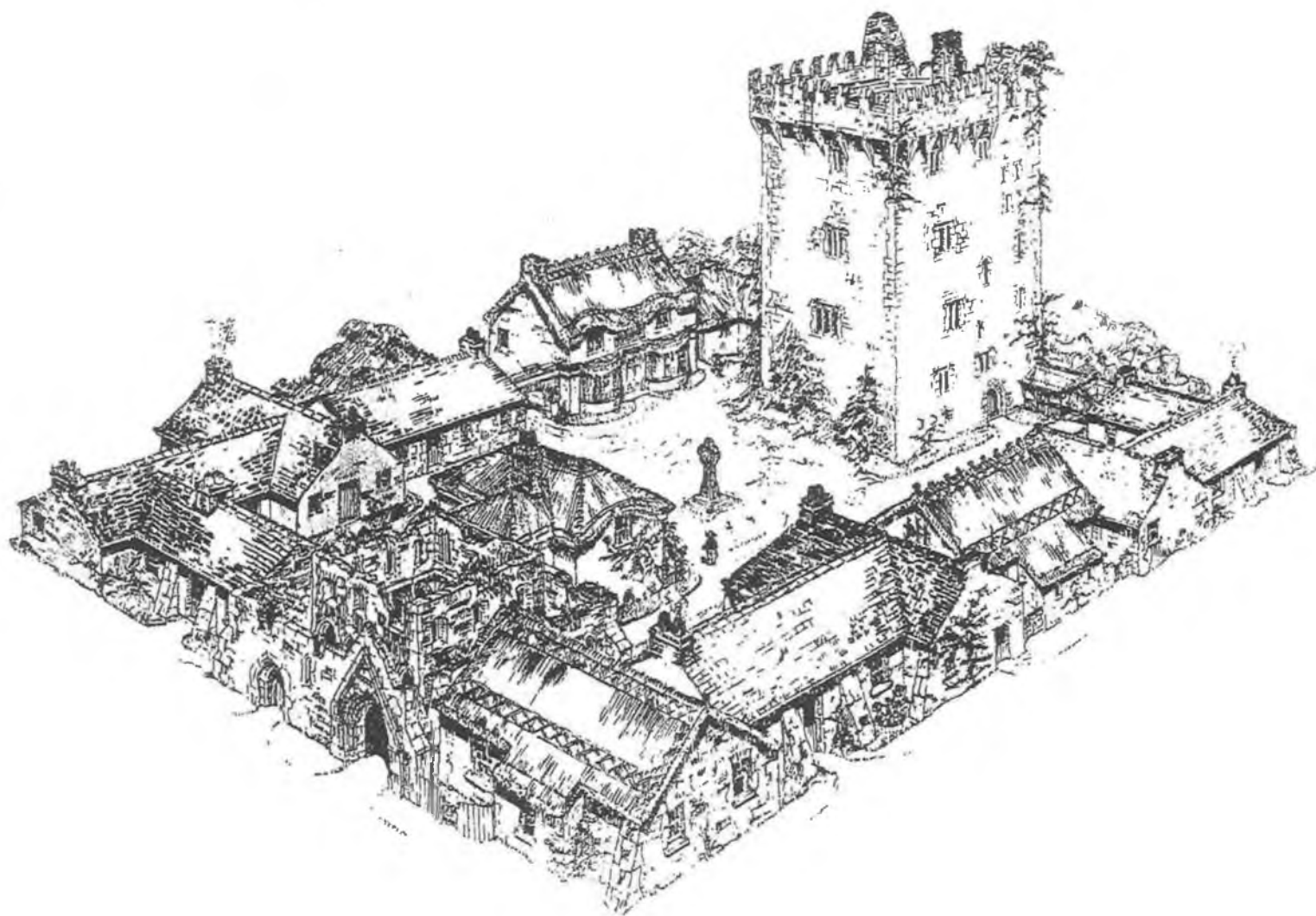


**Irish Industries' Depot in Grafton Street, Dublin.**

The Royal Irish Industries' Association established its first Depot in Dublin in 1887. The London Depot was opened in 1888, and through these Depots and the bi-annual Sales held under the auspices of the Association in Great Britain, have endeavoured to bring Irish Industries, and especially Irish Home Industries, before the attention of the public.



Ext.



Irish Industrial Village at the World's Fair.

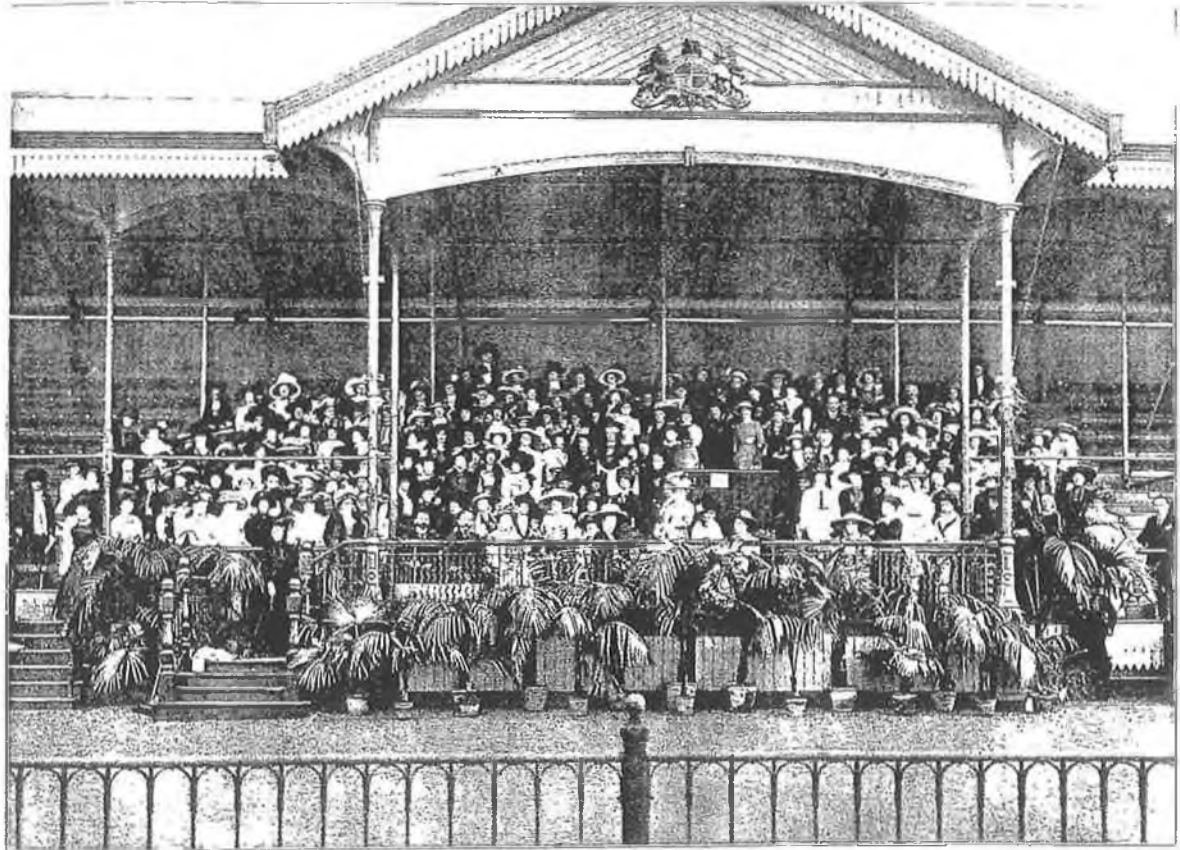
This Village was one of the three successful financial undertakings at the World's Fair, bringing in £50,000. Half of this amount had to be returned to the Executive of the World's Fair; £20,000 went to the workers in Ireland, and £5,000 was used by the Irish Industries' Association in establishing a Depot in Chicago, and in connection with other work of the Association.

**'The Irish Village of the Irish Industries Association Exhibition' p 1.**  
*Appendix 10.*



The Opening of the International Exhibition in 1907.

**'The International Exhibition 1907'**  
*Appendix 11.*



The Fourth Annual Council Meeting of the Women's National Health Association of Ireland, held in the Grand Stand at Ballsbridge, June 1st and 2nd, 1911



The Colonial Visitors to Uí Breasail



Their Excellencies Decorating the Ardmore Heroes



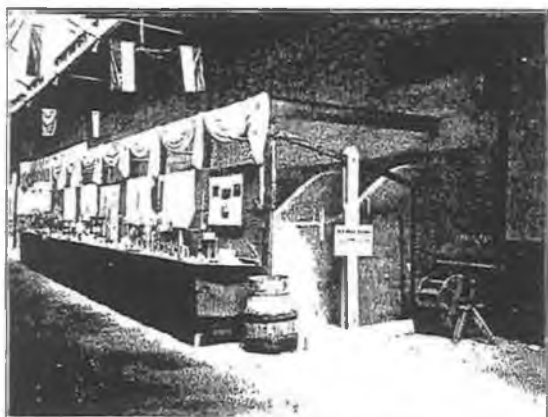
Father O'Shea and the Ardmore Heroes



The Belfast W. N. H. A. Branch Exhibits of Work Done in Belfast



Department's Exhibit Annexe for Classes in Cookery, etc.



Department's Exhibit Secondary Schools' Section

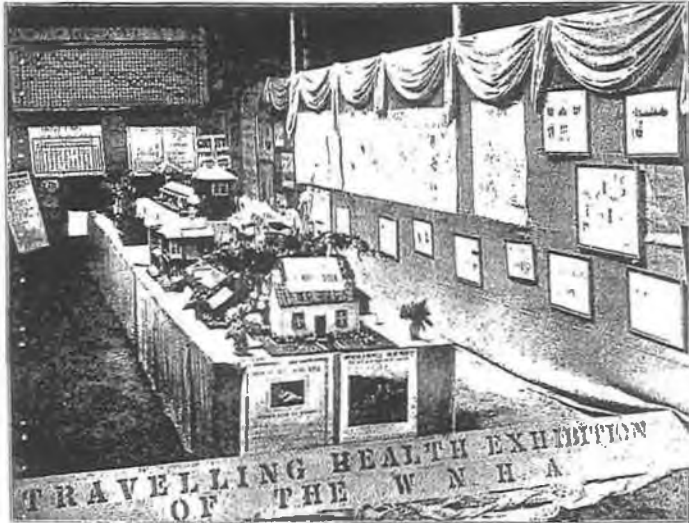


Department's Exhibit Part of Forestry Section





The Women's National Health Association Literature Stalls



Travelling Health Exhibition



The Travelling Health Caravan



Dress Cutting Made Easy



The Babes' Club Exhibit



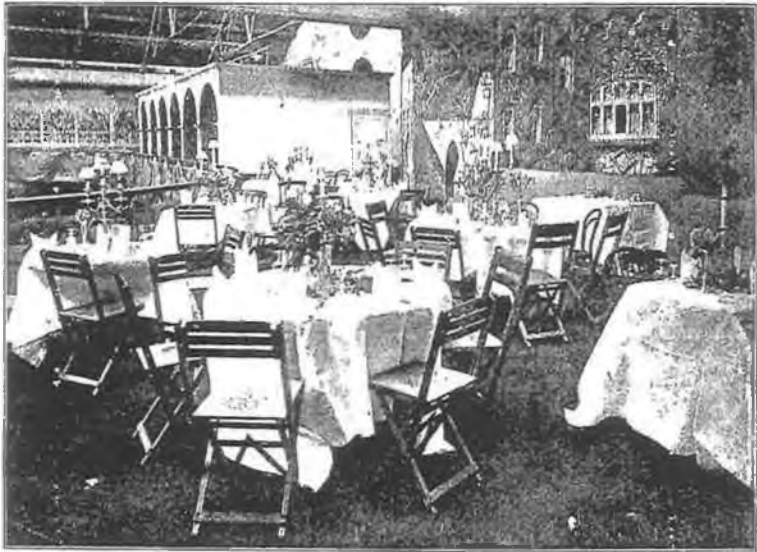
The Babes' Club Exhibit



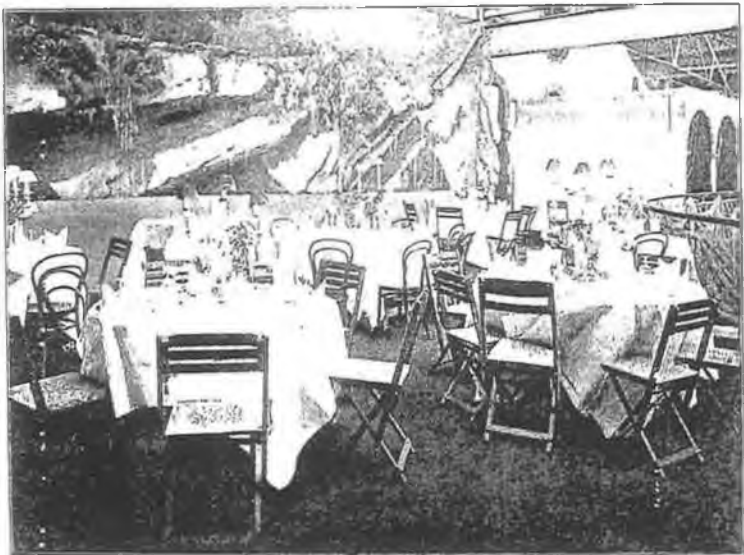
The St. Monica's Babies' Club visiting Ui Breasall



The "How to Clean a House" Exhibit



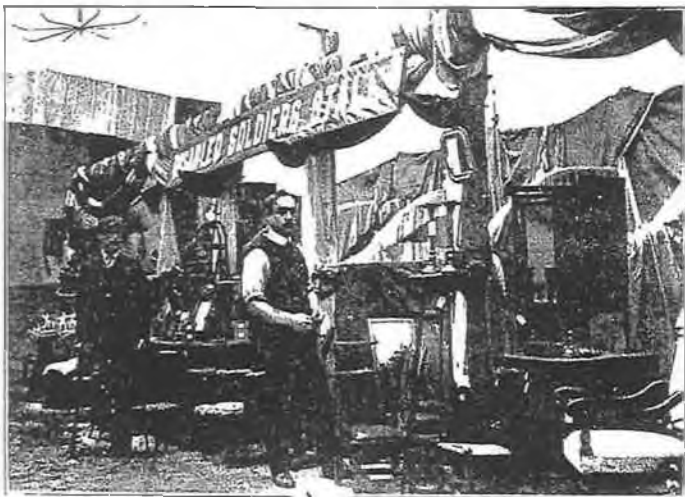
The Dining Room at the Uí Breasail Club.



Dinner Ready at the Uí Breasail Club



Lady Arnett, President of the Ul Breatail Club.  
Reproduced by kind permission of Messrs. Wilson, Harnell & Co., Proprietors  
of the "Lady of the House."



The Disabled Soldiers and Sailors Workroom Stall



Her Excellency The Countess of Aberdeen with the Choir Children of  
St. Ann's, Booterstown



Pupils of St. Joseph's Industrial School, Dundalk



The Little Workwomen of St. Vincent's Industrial School,  
Golden Bridge



How the St. Vincent's Industrial School, Golden Bridge, teach their  
pupils to be good housewives





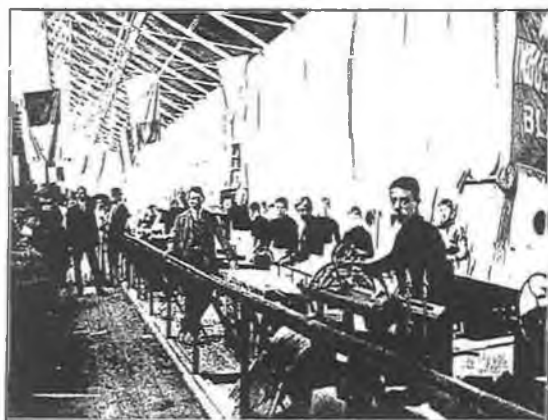
Department Cocks from St. Martha's Industrial School



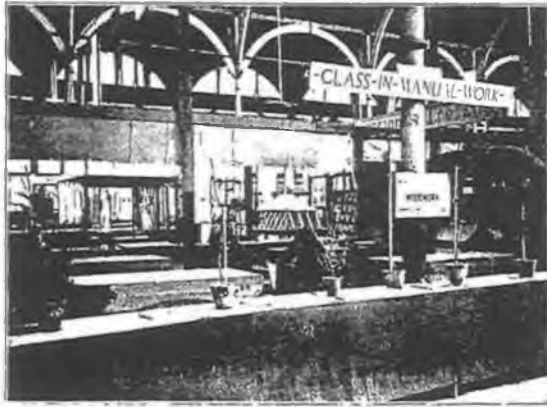
Meath Industrial School.—Needlework



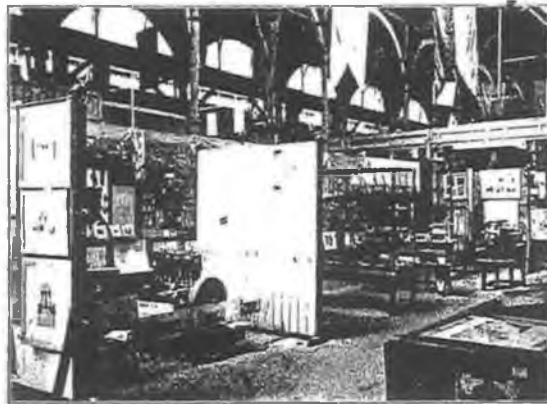
Meath Industrial School—Bootmaking



Meath Industrial School Wire Mattress Making



Department's Exhibit Annexe for Class in Manual Work



Department's Exhibit—Technical Schools Section

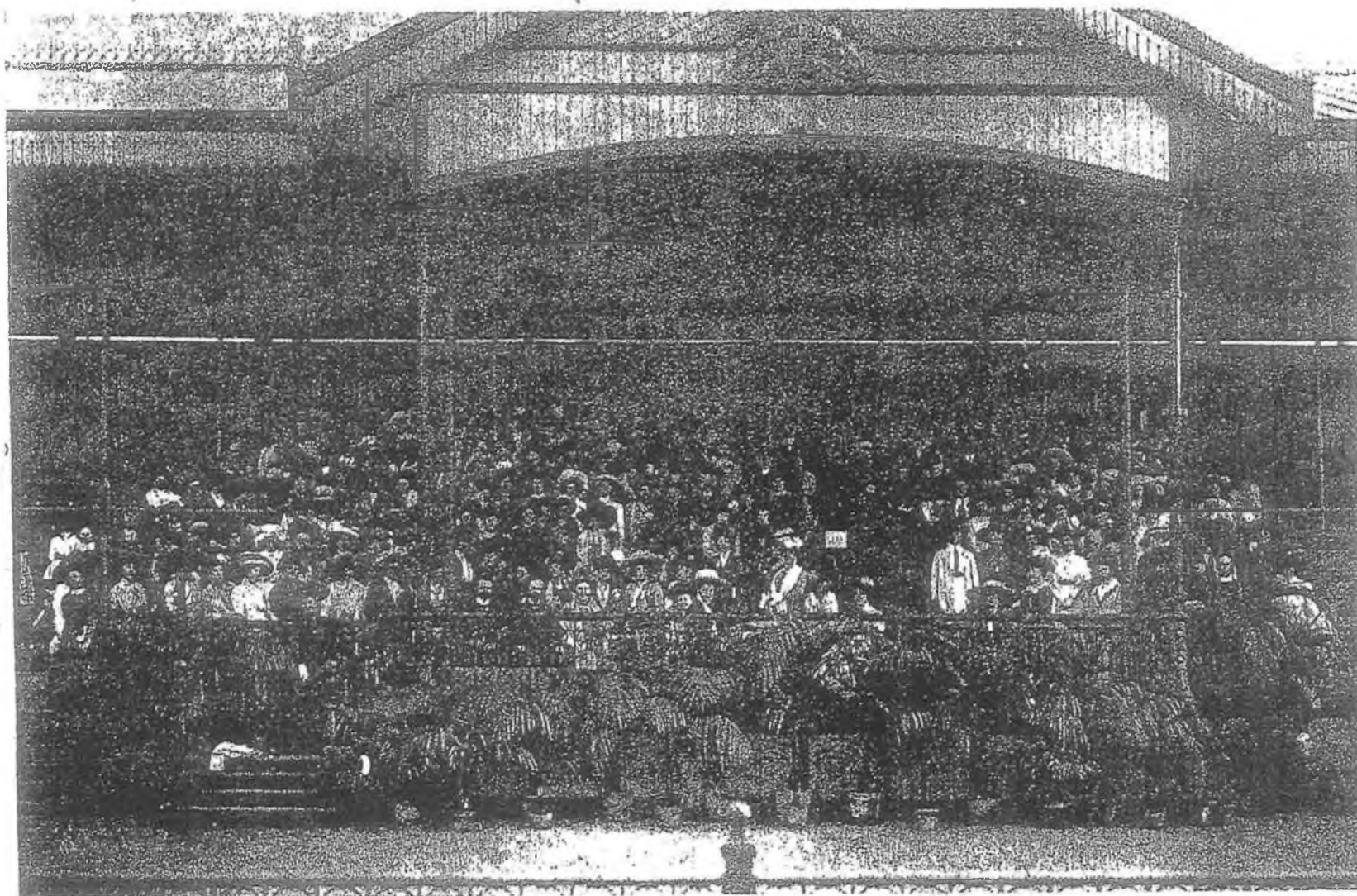
**Ui Breasail. Supplement to Slainte. 1911.**  
*Appendix 19.*



Department's Exhibit -Part of Agricultural Section



Busy Bees from St. Ann's Industrial School, Booterstown Stall



A Council Meeting of the Women's National Health Association.

Supplement to Slainte. May 1911.  
*Appendix 20.*



LEADERS OF THE WOMEN'S NATIONAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF IRELAND.



Supplement to Slainte. May 1911. ; OF THE WOMEN'S NATIONAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF IRELAND.  
Appendix 22



Appendix 23. Peamount Archives photographic collection.



**Co Antrim.**  
 Antrim  
 Muckamore  
 Ballymoney  
 Belfast  
 Randalstown  
**Co Armagh.**  
 Lurgan  
 Portadown  
**Co Carlow.**  
 Carlow  
 Bagnelstown  
 Tullow  
**Co Cavan.**  
 Killeshandra  
**Co Clare.**  
 Ennis  
 Lisdoonvarna  
**Co Cork.**  
 Cork  
 Innishannon  
 At Anne's Hill  
 Dunmanway  
**Co Donegal.**  
 Buncrana  
**Co Down.**  
 Banbridge  
**Co Dublin.**  
 Dublin.  
 The Alexander Guild  
 Blackrock  
 Castleknock  
 Blanchardstown  
 Clonsilla  
 Mulhuddard  
 Clondalkin  
 Palmerstown  
 Chapelizod  
 Dolphin's Barn  
 Dundrum  
 Sandyford  
 Milltown  
 Howth  
 Baldoyle  
 Kingstown  
 Dublin (Northside)  
 Pembroke  
 Rathgar  
 Terenure

Shankill  
 Cabinteely  
**Co Fermanagh.**  
 Belleek  
**Co Galway.**  
 Cliften  
 Ballinasloe  
**Co Kerry.**  
 Caherdaniel  
 Killarney  
 Listowel  
 Skibbereen  
 Tralee  
 Velencia Island  
 Waterville  
 Ballinskelligs  
**Co Kildare.**  
 North Kildare  
 Ballymore Eustace  
 Celbridge  
 Clane  
 The Curragh  
 Naas  
 Sallins  
 South Kildare  
 Moone  
 Ballintor  
 Crookstown  
**Co Kilkenny.**  
 Bennet's Bridge  
 Castlecomer  
**King's County.**  
 Tullamore  
**Co Leitrim.**  
 South Leitrim  
**Co Limerick.**  
 Limerick  
 Ardagh  
**Co Longford.**  
 Longford Town  
 Ballinalee  
 Edgeworthstown  
 Granard  
**Co Londonderry.**  
 Eglinton  
 Faughan  
 Colerain  
**Co Louth.**  
 Drogheda

Dundalk  
 Ardee  
**Co Mayo.**  
 Killeadan  
 Islandeady  
**Co Meath.**  
 Enfield  
 Gormanstown  
 Navan  
 Trim  
**Co Monaghan.**  
 Monaghan  
 Clontibret  
 Castleblaney  
**Queen's County.**  
 Maryborough  
**Co Roscommon.**  
 Roscommon  
**Co Sligo.**  
 Sligo  
**Co Tipperary.**  
 Carrick-on-Suir  
 Cashel  
 Clonmel  
 Nenagh  
 Thurles  
 Roscrea  
**Co Tyrone.**  
 Clogher  
 Omagh  
 Trillick  
**Co Waterford.**  
 Waterford  
**Co Westmeath.**  
 Mullingar  
 Castlepollard  
**Co Wexford.**  
 Enniscorthy  
 Ferns  
 Wexford Town  
 New Ross  
 Arklow  
 Gorey  
**Co Wicklow.**  
 Bray  
 Newtownmount  
 Kennedy  
 Newcastle  
 Kilcoole.



The International Congress  
on Tuberculosis

Washington United States of America

September 21<sup>st</sup> to October 12<sup>th</sup> 1908

This Certifies that one-half of the Grand Prize of One Thousand Dollars has been awarded to The Women's National Health Association of Ireland for evidence of effective work in the prevention and relief of tuberculosis by a Voluntary Association since 1905

Elmer Ellsworth Brown Chairman Board of Judges

Lawrence F. Flick Chairman Committee on Prizes

Charles J. Sanjines Chairman Committee on Awards

Henry B. Rogers, U.S.N. Chairman Committee on Exhibitors

Therese Roosevelt

John S. Fulton, Secretary General





The Aberdeen Babies Club, Kingstown.

**Dublin Campaign Against Infant Mortality - from records of the  
WNHA Infantile Mortality Committee, reprinted in *Slainte*  
Feb. 1910.**

*Appendix 26.*

... would show  
... cracking, the proper heat, the



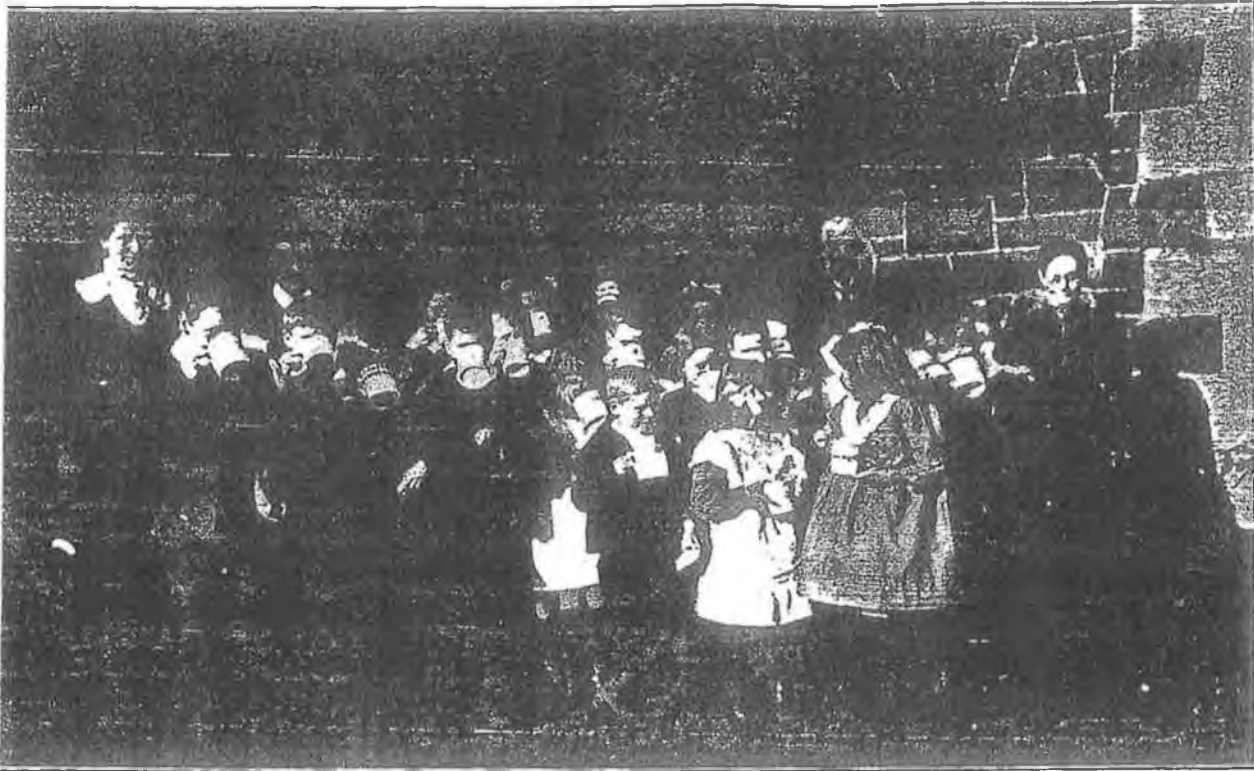
A LITTLE MOTHERS' CLASS IN CORK : WEIGHING THE BABY.

**Dublin Campaign Against Infant Mortality - from records of the  
WNHA Infantile Mortality Committee, reprinted in *Slainte*  
Feb. 1910.**

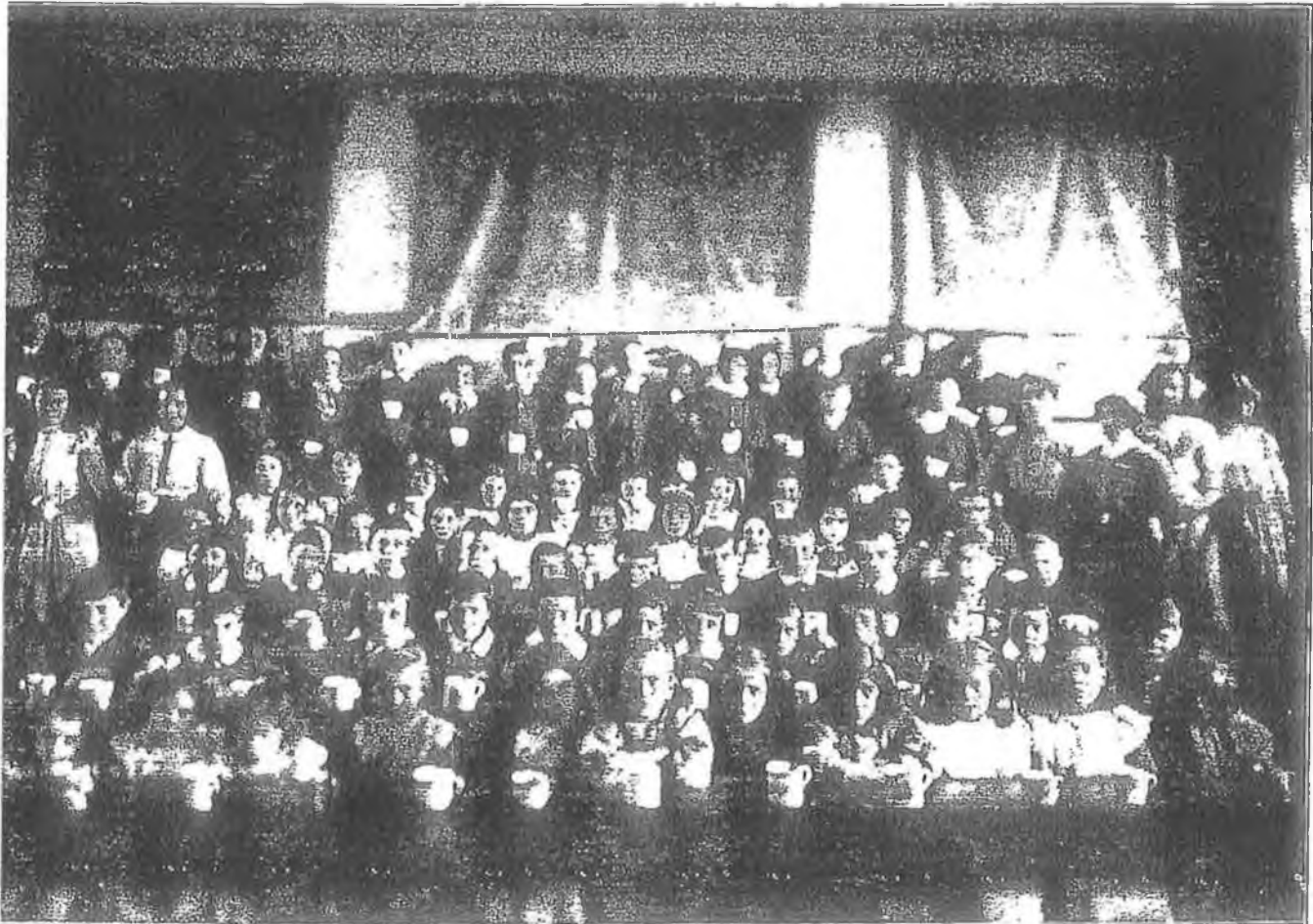
*Appendix 27.*

Plan for the giving of penny and half-penny dinners to school children. Slainte Feb. 1909.

Appendix 28.



Cocoa School Dinners at a Country School in County Antrim



School Lunches at Dromar School, Mallow, County Cork.

(These dinners are provided in about Ninety Schools at rd. a head per week)



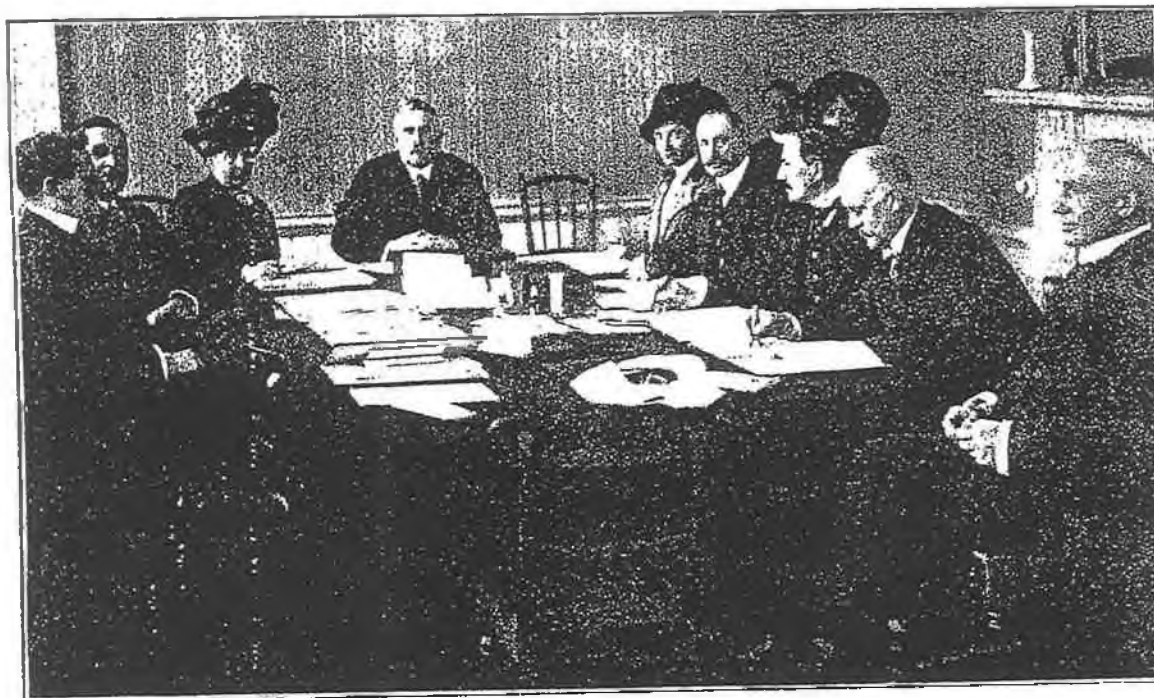
THE CHILDREN OF THE GALGORM SCHOOL, MID-ANTRIM, ENJOYING THEIR COCOA DINNERS.

*(From Snabshots taken by Lady Aberdeen.)*

NOTE.—It will be remembered that eight schools in Mid-Antrim enjoy these cocoa dinners, the children paying 1d. a week and bringing their own bread, and that the same system is successfully carried out at Ballinasloe and also at Faughan Valley.

**Plan for the giving of penny and half-penny dinners to school children. Slainte Feb. 1909.**

— *Appendix 29.*



Vice Regal Milk Commission on the Irish Milk Supply.

**Report of the Vice-regal Milk Commission. Re-printed in supplement  
to Slainte Nov. 1913.**

*Appendix 30.*

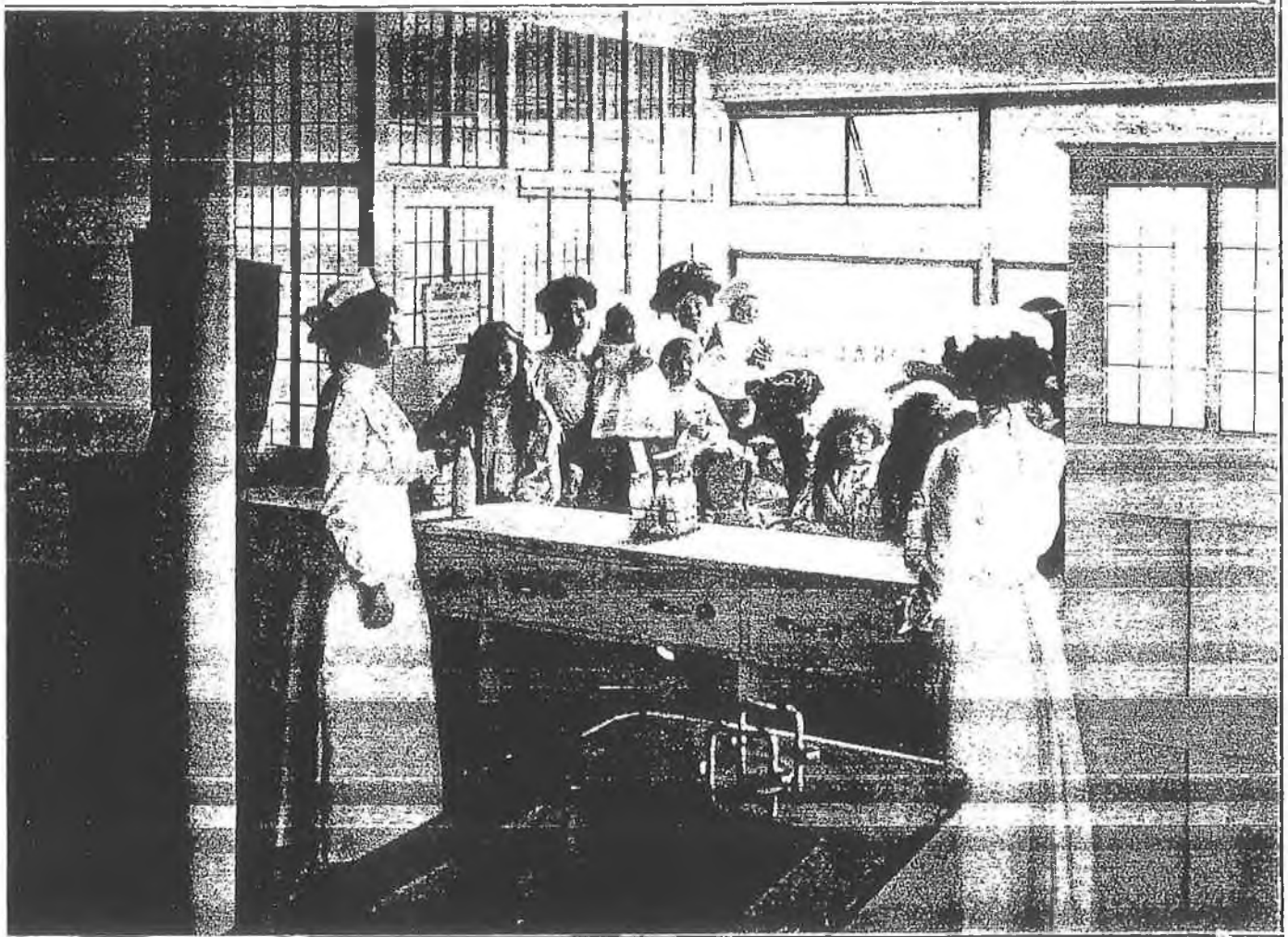
No.	Age weaned months	Why weaned by mother	Child's Condition When it was weaned	Condition At end of year, or close to treatment	Period receiving milk months	Gain in weight Lbs.
1	3	No milk	Very poor	Much improved	9	8
*2	2	Mother delicate	Very delicate	Very much improved	12	12 1/2
*2	2	do.	do.	do.	12	12
3	1/2	No milk	Seriously ill	do.	7	7 1/2
*4	5	do.	Very ill	do.	6	7 1/2
*4	5	do.	do.	do.	7	7 1/2
5	2	do.	Very delicate	do.	7	7
6	1	do.	do.	Much improved	7	3
7	1	do.	Delicate	Very much improved	7	13
*8	2	Sore breast	Wretched	Died of pneumonia	6	—
*8	2	do.	do.	Much improved	12	9
9	3	Mother delicate	Very ill	do.	7	6
10	3/4	Sore breast	Very delicate	do.	6	3
11	1/4	No milk	Wretched	Very much improved	7	10 1/2
12	1	do.	Practically dying	do.	9	14
13	At birth	do.	Delicate	Much improved	3	3
14	1	do.	Acute bronchitis	Very much improved	7	7
15	3	do.	Very delicate	Improved	6	2
16	6	Inflamed breast	Delicate	Very much improved	4	4
17	1	No milk	do.	Improved	8	4
18	1/2	Mother had scarlatina	do.	Very much improved	6	8 1/2
19	4	No milk	do.	Improved	3	1
20	6 1/2	Mother had enteric fever	do.	Much improved	3	2 1/2
21	1/2	Sore breast	Very delicate	Very much improved	10	11 1/4
22	3	Child sent to hospital	do.	do.	7	6
23	2 1/4	No milk	Delicate	do.	6	5 1/2
24	12	Weaning necessary	do. (rickety)	do.	3	4
25	13	do.	Very delicate	do.	5	5 1/4
26	9	Abscess on breast	Delicate	do.	4	5 1/2
27	1	No milk	Wretched	do.	3	2
28	2	Mother delicate	do.	do.	5	5 1/2
29	2	Not thriving	do.	do.	5	7 1/4
30	At birth	Mother died	Fair	do.	4	5 3/4
31	2	Not thriving	Wretched	do.	6	8
32	1 1/4	Sore breast	Delicate	do.	6	10
33	3	do.	do.	do.	7	8
34	1	No milk	Very delicate	do.	9	13 1/4
35	3/4	Sore breast	Delicate	do.	9	14
36	3	No milk	Wretched	do.	9	14
37	6	Mother delicate	Delicate	do.	6	7
38	At birth	No milk	Very delicate	Died of infantile atrophy	5	---
39	4	do.	Delicate	Very much improved	6	8
40	2 1/3	do.	do.	do.	7	7
41	At birth	Mother very delicate	Very delicate	do.	7	10
42	2 1/2	Sore breast	Wretched	Much improved	6	5 1/4
43	3/4	No milk	Delicate	do.	3	2
44	3	Mother sent to hospital	do.	Very much improved	6	6
*45	1	No milk	do.	do.	4	5
*45	1	do.	do. (rickety)	Much improved	5	3
46	2	do.	Wretched	do.	2	1 1/2
*47	---	Insufficient milk	Delicate	do.	3	3 1/2
*47	---	do.	do.	do.	3	2

\*Twins.

Particulars regarding babies supplied with humanised pasteurised milk during 1909 J.Lumsden MD

**Supplementary report regarding results of the Dublin Pasteurised Milk Depot from Dr J. Lumsden, Medical Department St James' Gate.**  
**6 April 1910.**  
*Appendix 31.*

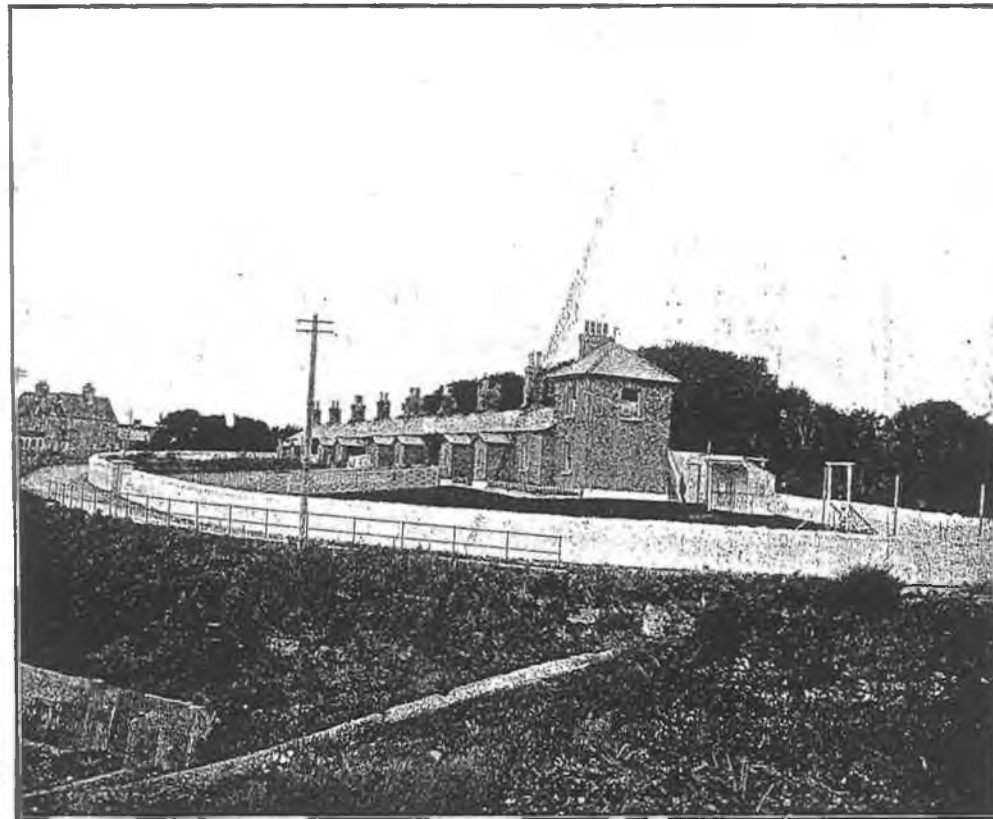




Our Superintendent serving customers at the Pasteurised Milk Depot



The Story of the Carlow Milk Depot. Slainte June 1913.  
*Appendix 32.*



The Sutton Holiday Home and Preventorium.

**'The Sutton Holiday Home and Preventorium. First Annual Report.  
1910'.**

*Appendix 33.*



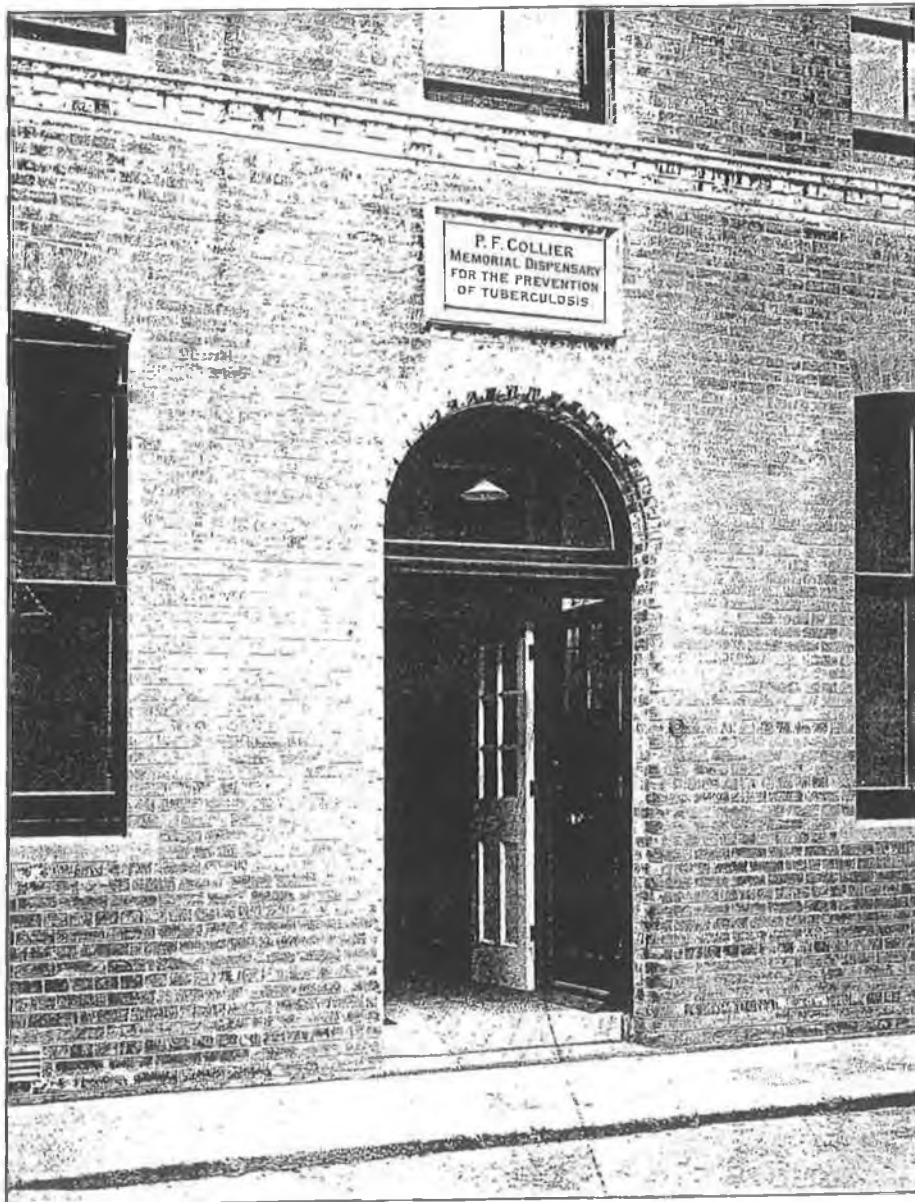
Their Excellencies the Earl and Countess of Aberdeen, Nurse O'Brien, and some of the friends of the Preventorium who attended the Meeting.

'The Sutton Holiday Home and Preventorium. First Annual Report. 1910'. p 22.  
*Appendix 34.*



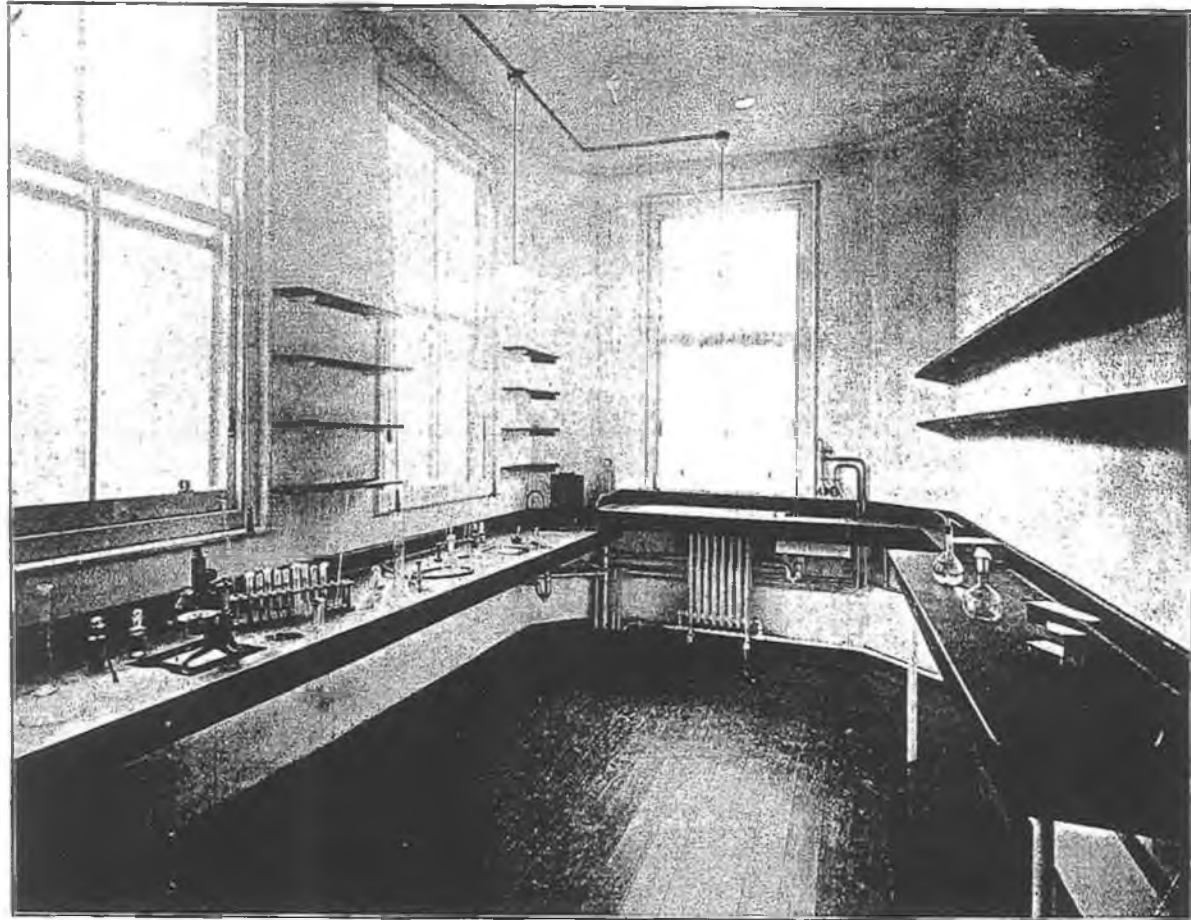
A GROUP OF THE RESIDENTS AROUND THE SHELTER.

'The Sutton Holiday Home and Preventorium. First Annual Report. 1910'.  
*Appendix 35.*



The Entrance to the P. F. Collier Memorial Dispensary.

**'The P.F. Collier Memorial Dispensary for the Prevention of Tuberculosis'.**  
*Appendix 36.*



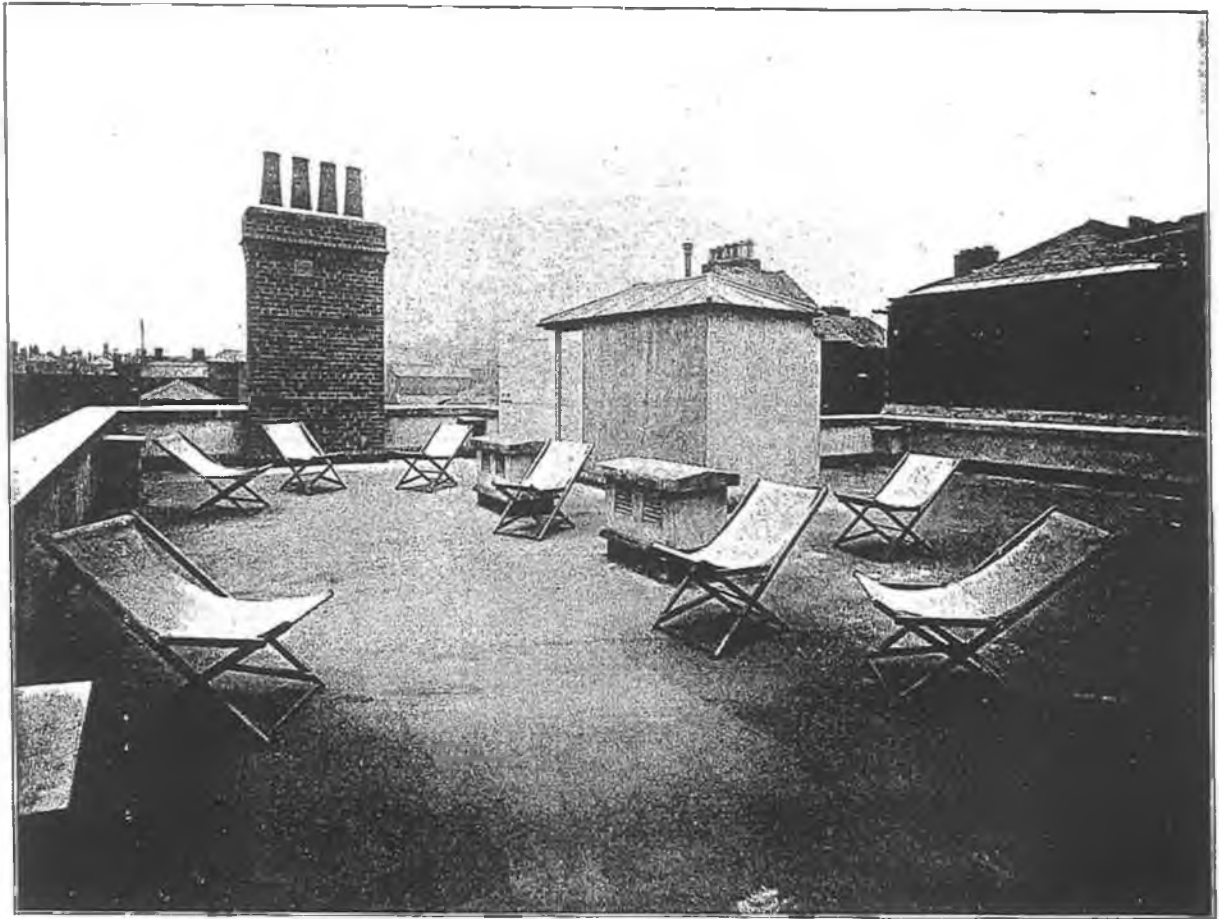
The Bacteriological Room.

**'The P.F. Collier Memorial Dispensary for the Prevention of  
Tuberculosis'**  
*Appendix 37.*



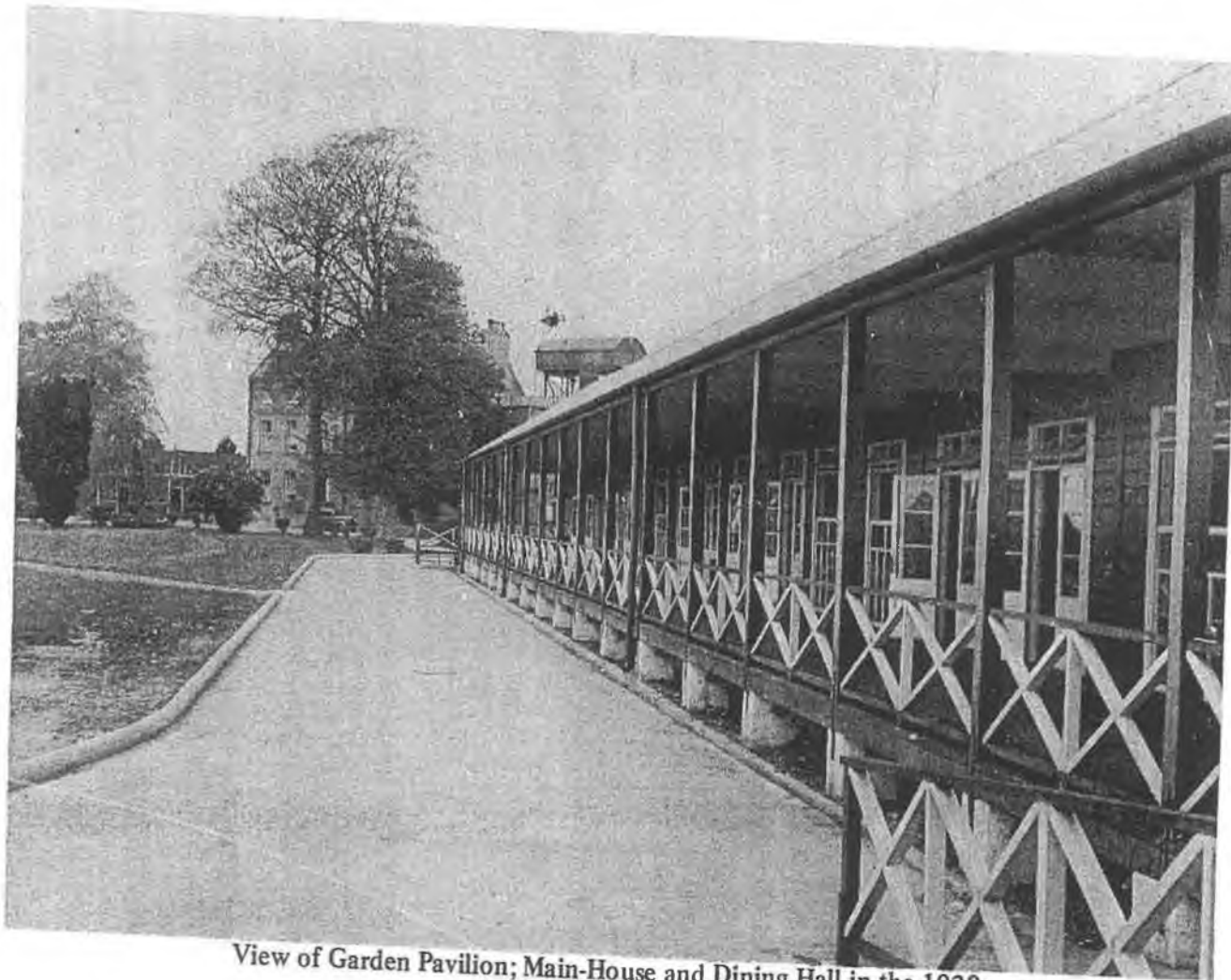
The Pharmacy.

**'The P.F. Collier Memorial Dispensary for the Prevention of  
Tuberculosis'.**  
*Appendix 38.*



The Roof arranged as an Open-air Camp for Patients.

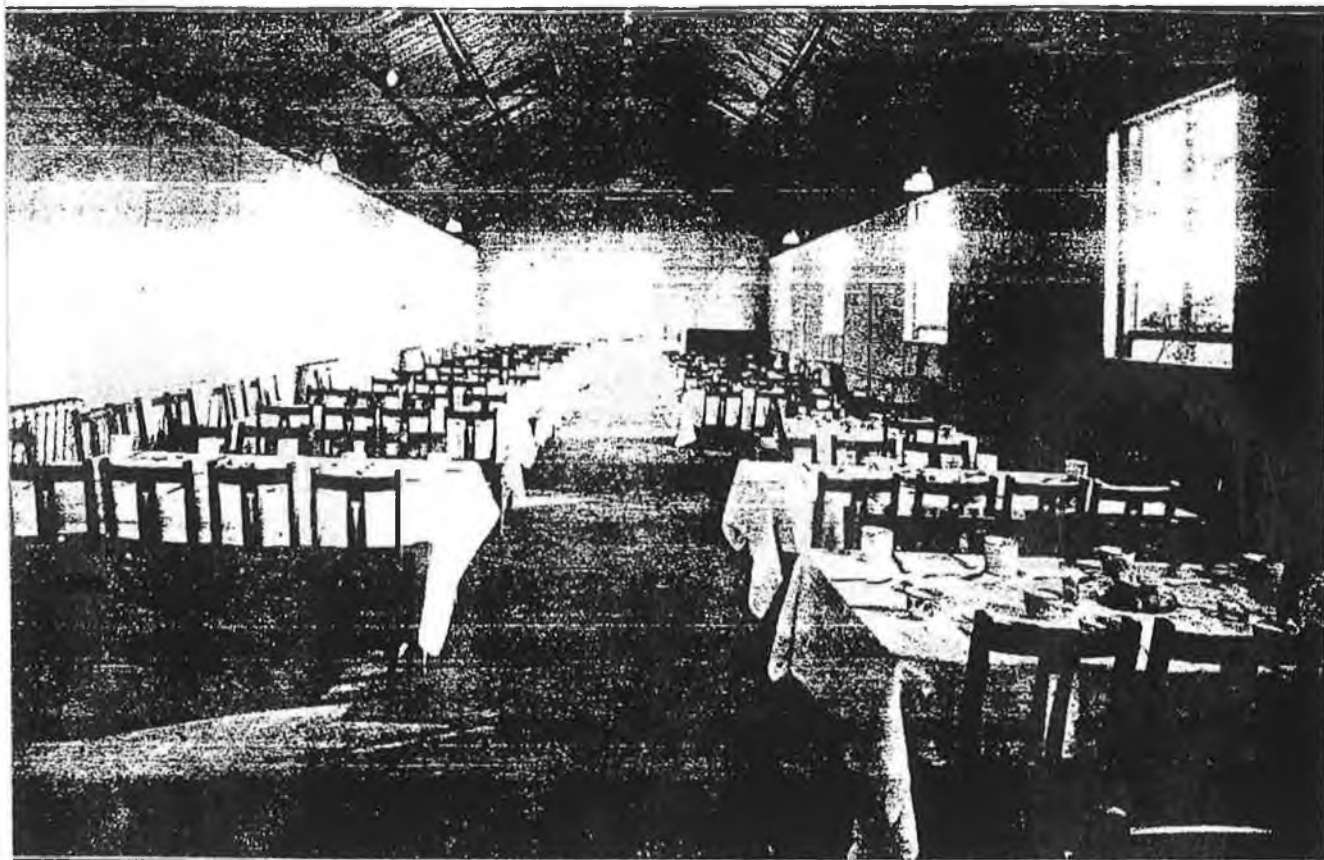
**'The P.F. Collier Memorial Dispensary for the Prevention of  
Tuberculosis'.**  
*Appendix 39.*



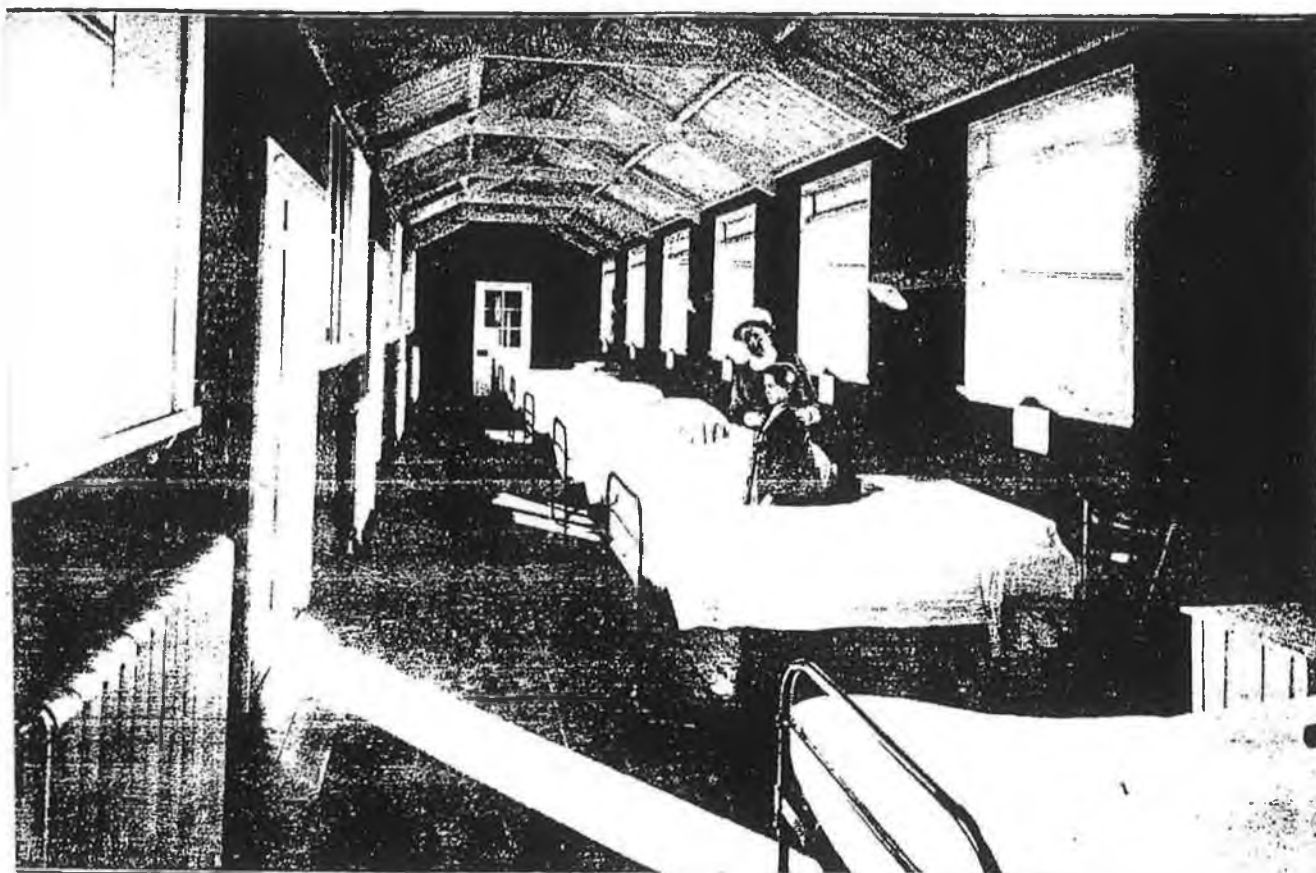
View of Garden Pavilion; Main-House and Dining Hall in the 1920s

**Turn of the Tide. The Story of Peamount.**  
*Appendix 40.*



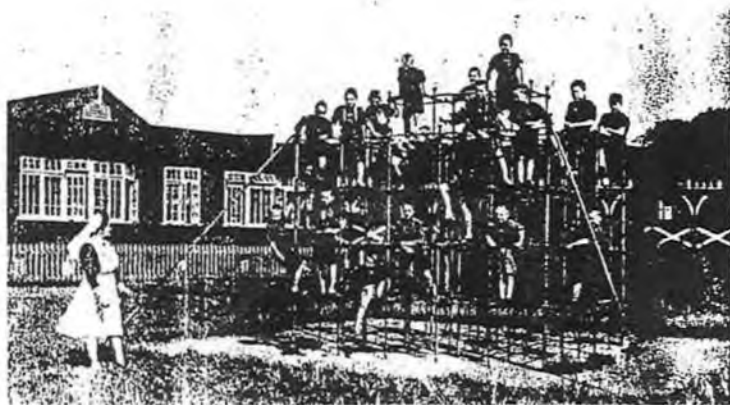


The Dining Hall at Peamount



The interior of one of the Wards at Peamount

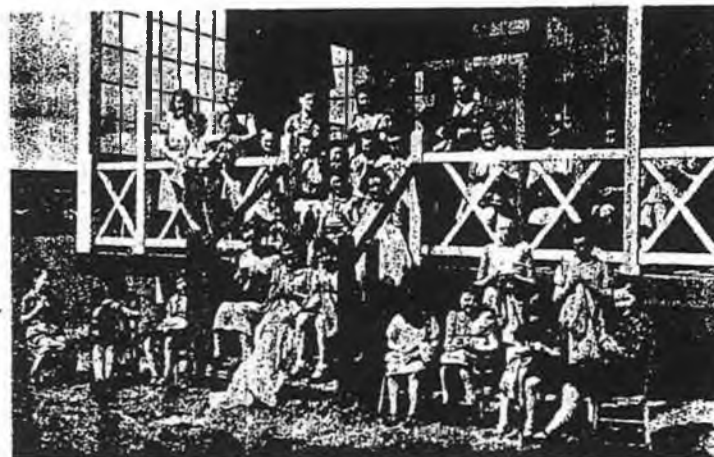
*Some of the Activities at Peamount*



Photo

SOME OF THE BOYS AT PLAY

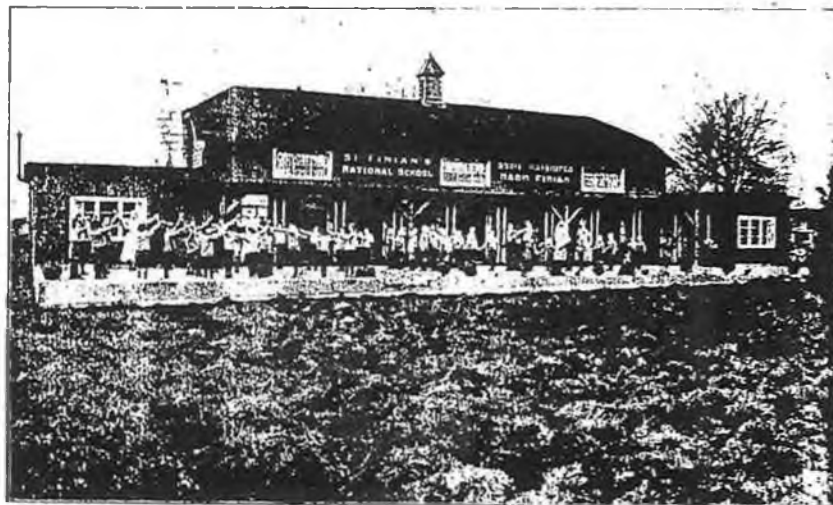
College Studios



Photo

MENDING TIME

College Studios



SCHOOL CHILDREN AT DRILL



CHILDREN PADDLING

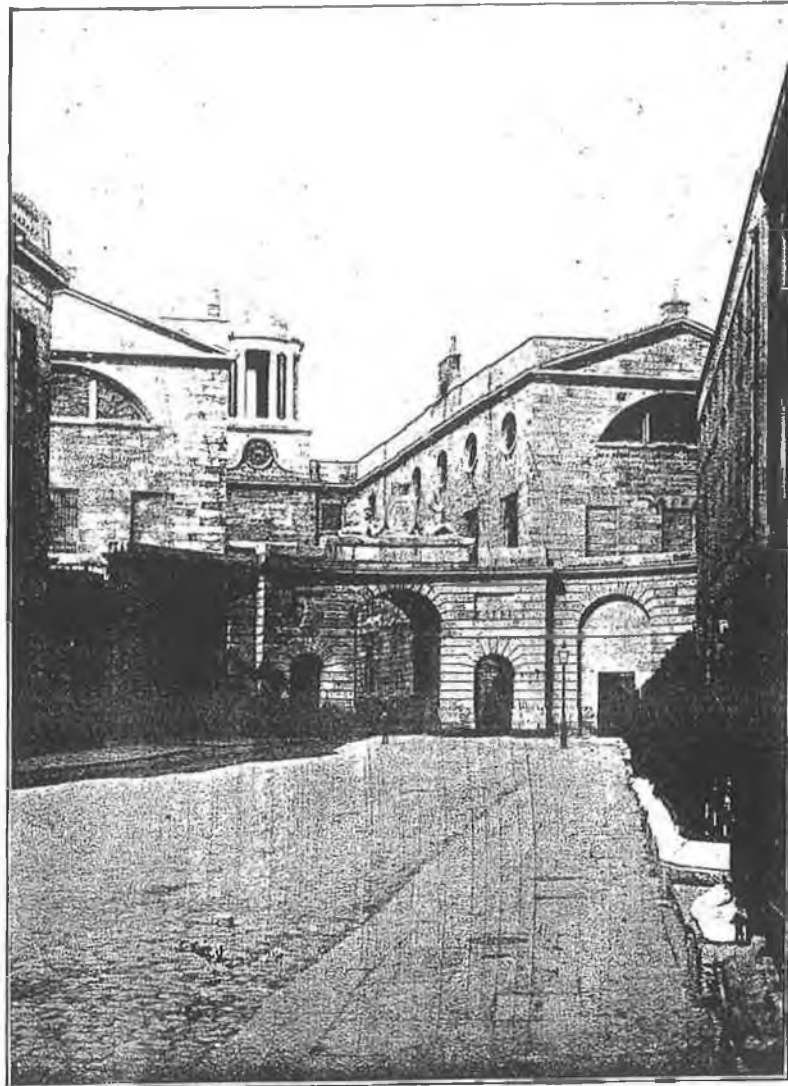
Twenty

Twenty-one



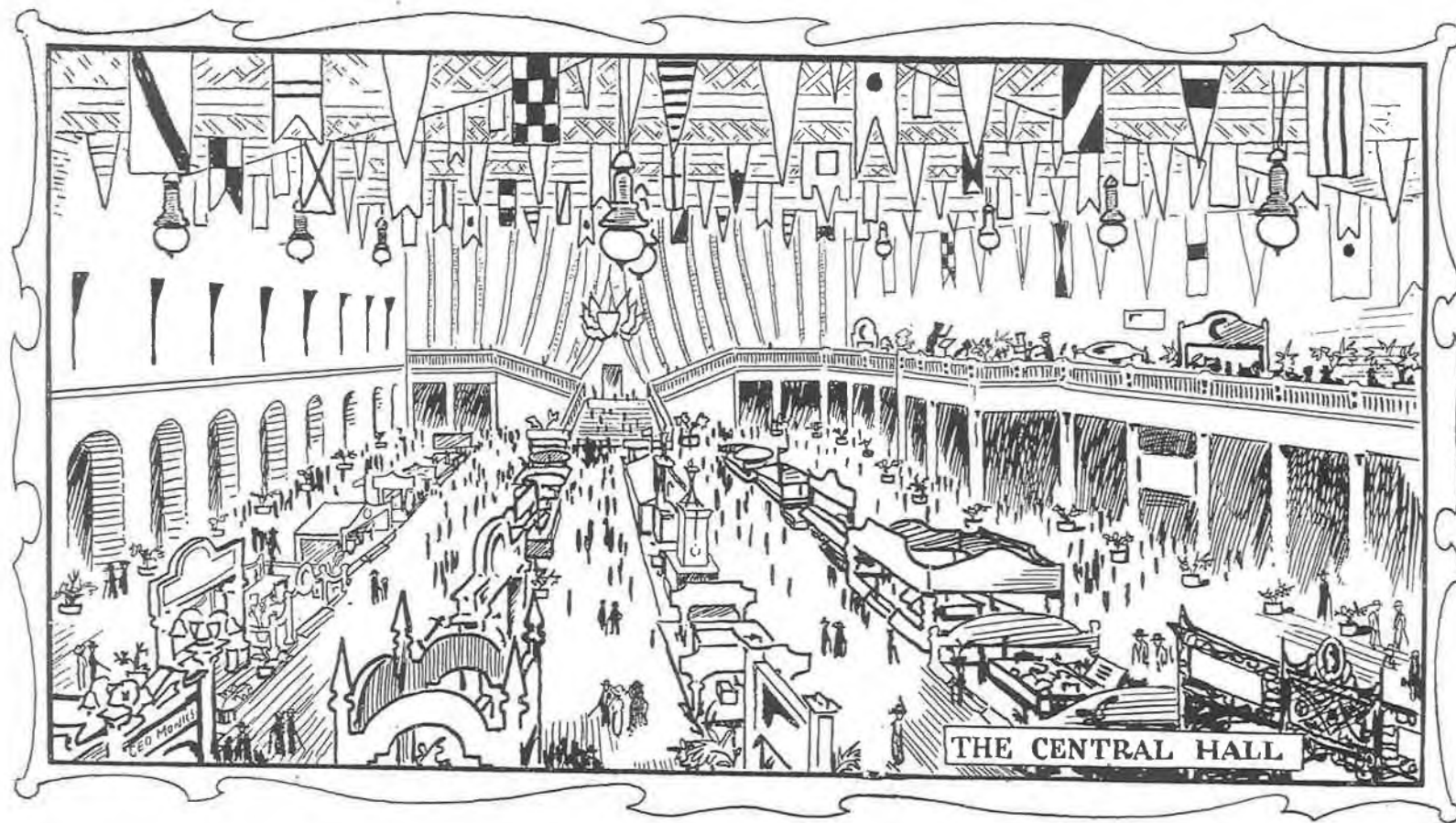
*Above:* Trade stand, Royal Dublin Society Spring Show in the 1930s  
*Below:* Workshop at Peamount Industries





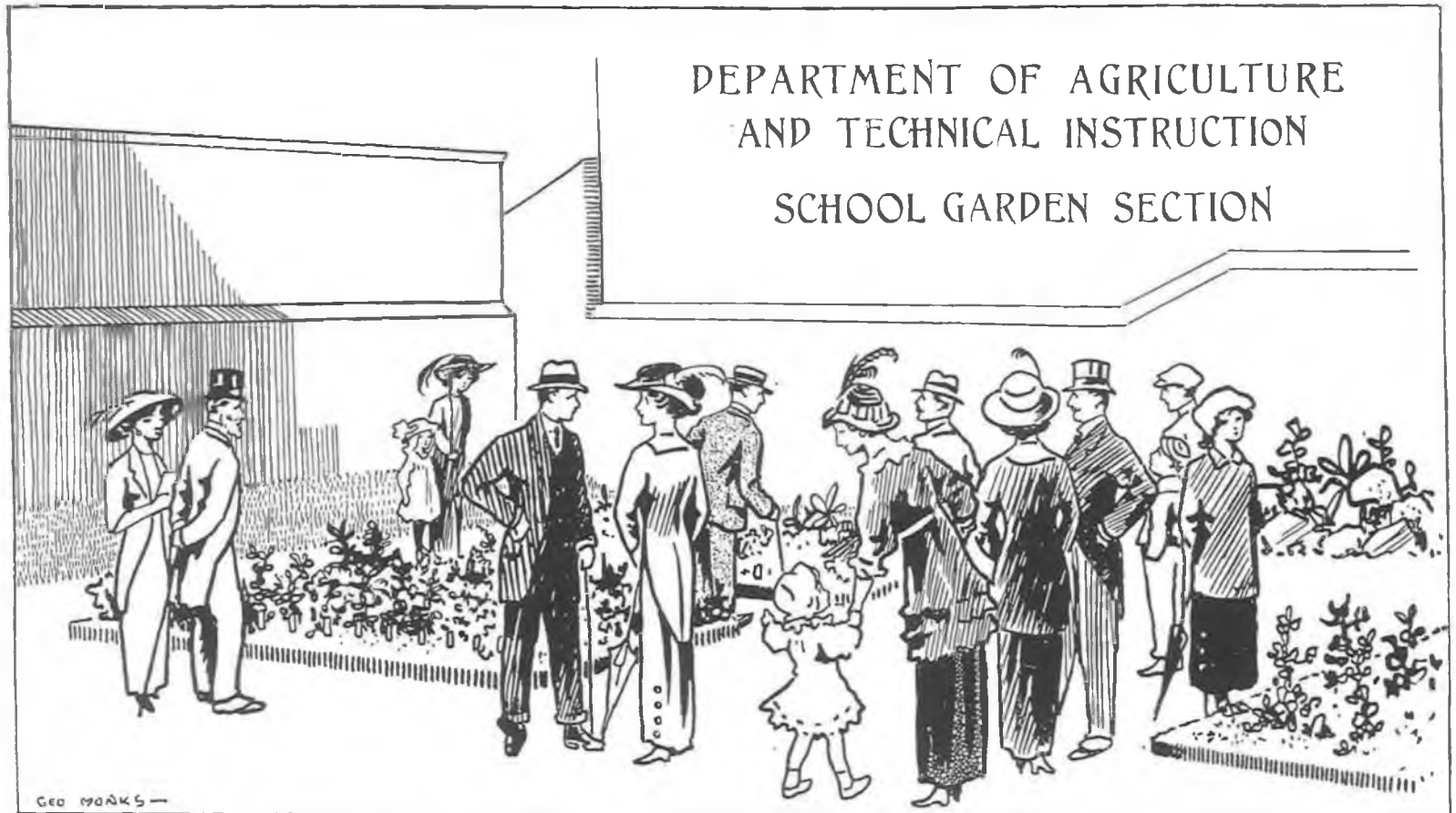
Entrance to King's Inns Gardens via Henrietta Street.

**'The Civic Exhibition. July 15th to August 31st. 1914'.**  
*Appendix 44.*

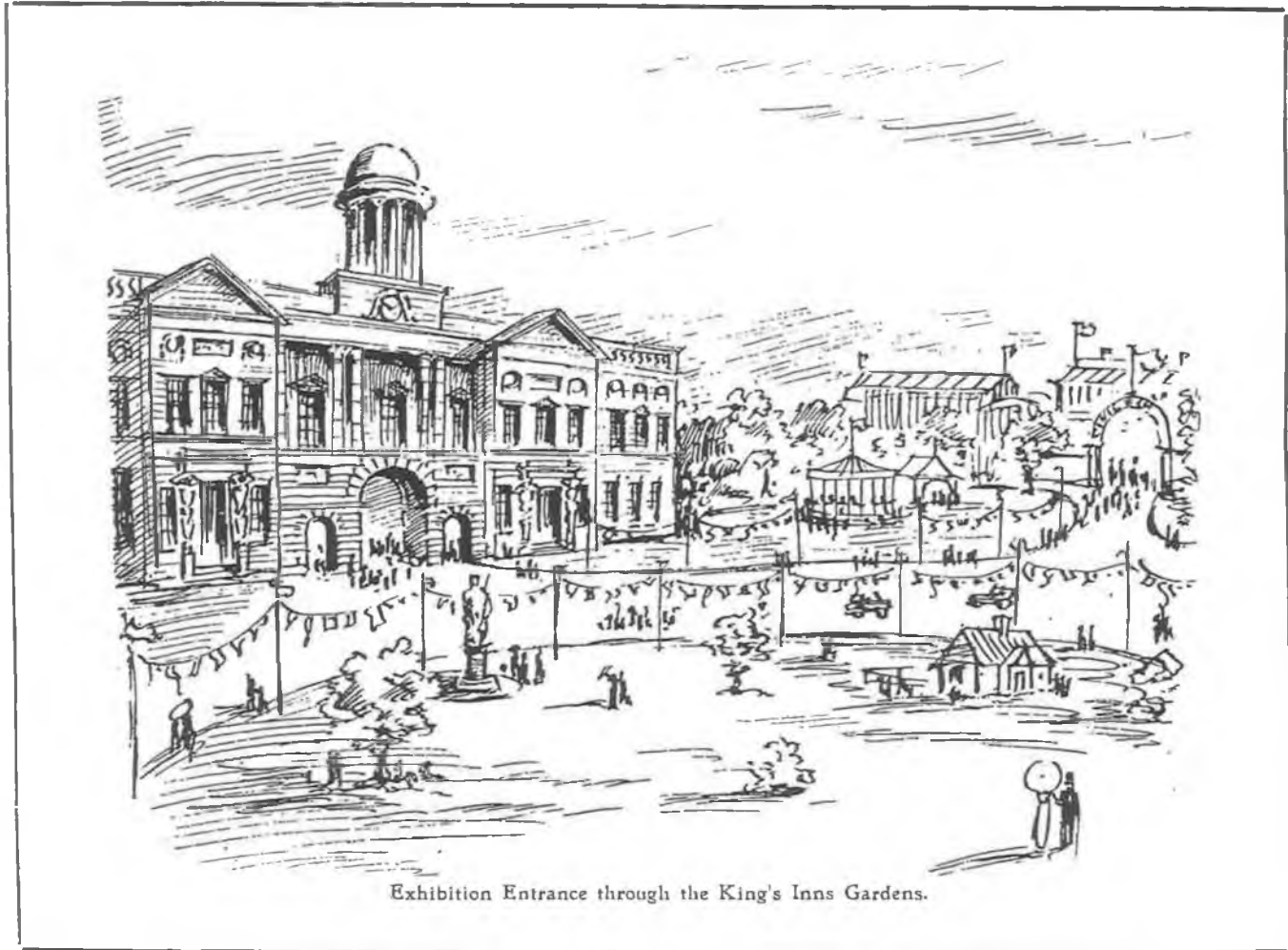


Industrial and Commercial Section.

**'The Civic Exhibition. July 15th to August 31st. 1914'.  
Appendix 45.**

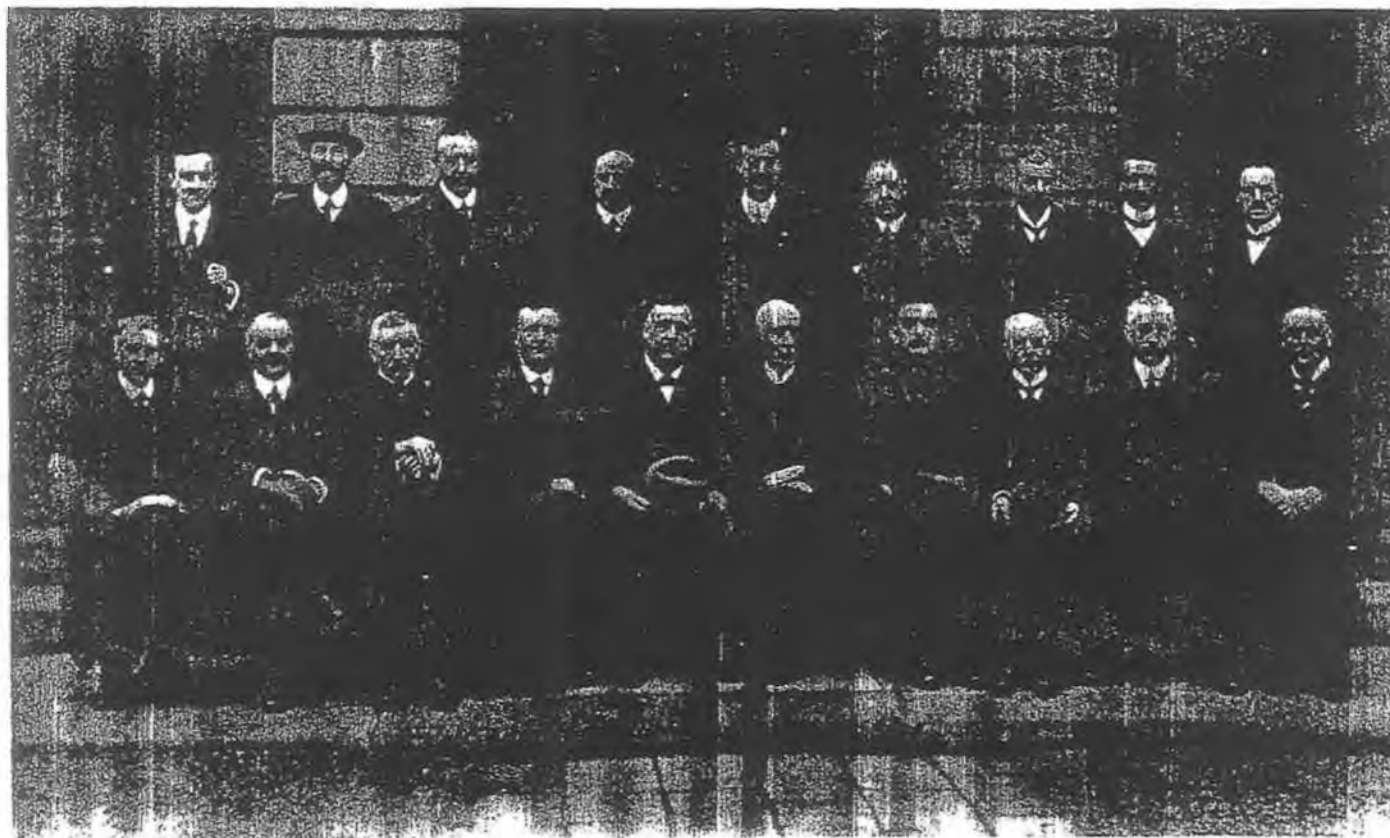


'The Civic Exhibition. July 15th to August 31st. 1914'.  
Appendix 46.



Exhibition Entrance through the King's Inns Gardens.

**'The Civic Exhibition. July 15th to August 31st. 1914'.**  
*Appendix 47.*



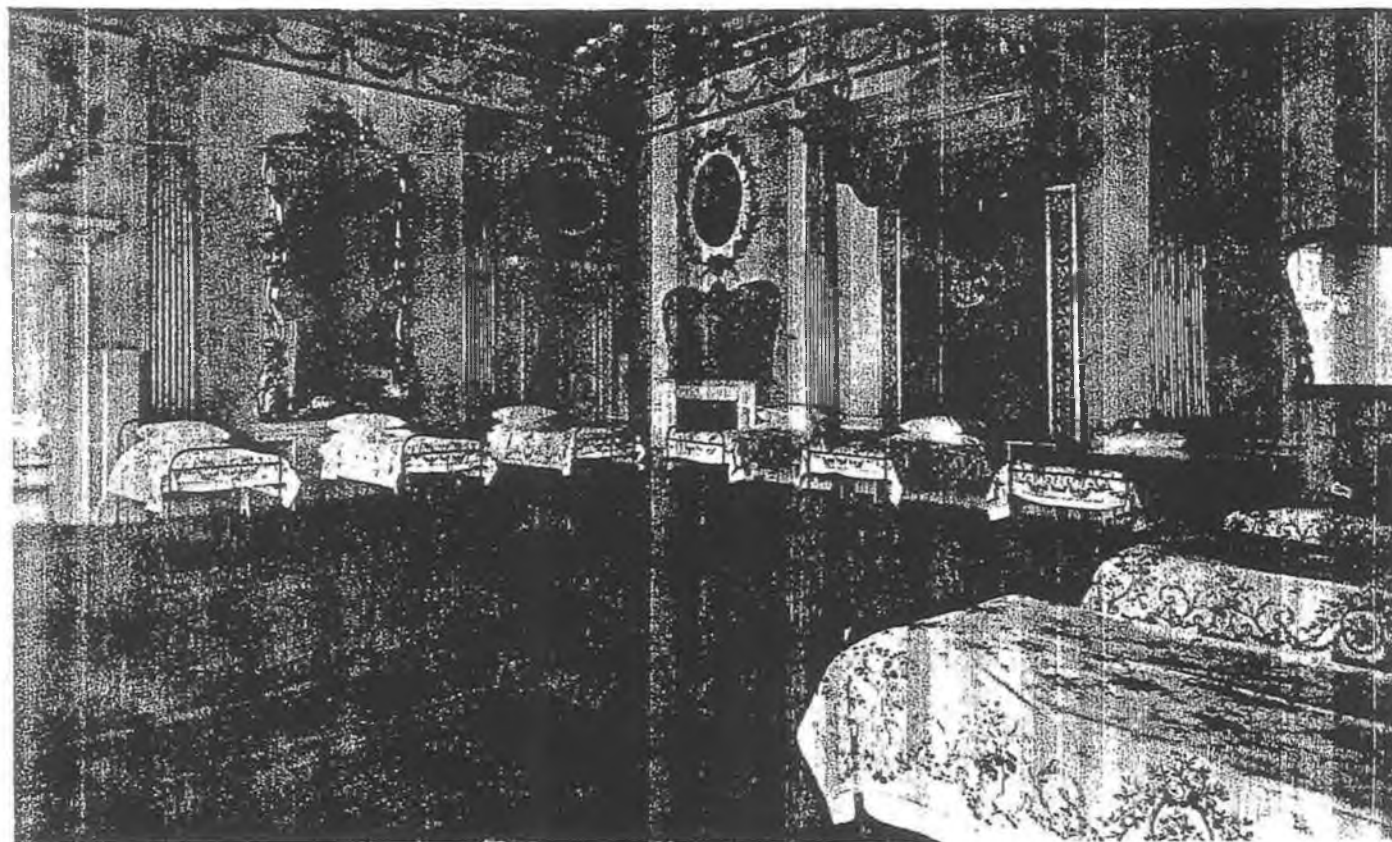
THE MEDICAL STAFF, DUBLIN CASTLE RED CROSS HOSPITAL.

**Dublin Castle Hospital - an important statement and appeal for funds.**

**Dublin 1914.**

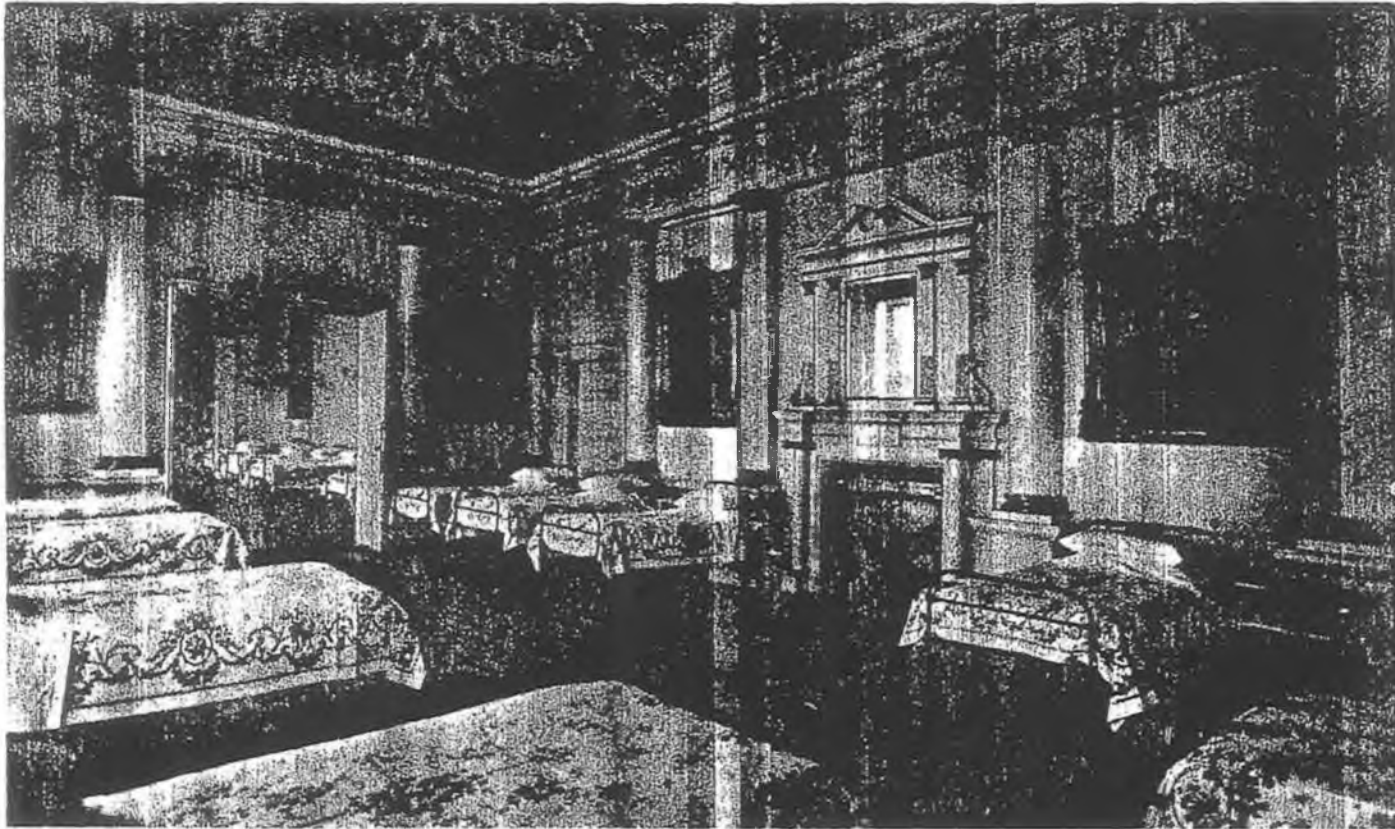
*Appendix 48.*





THE THRONE ROOM, DUBLIN CASTLE RED CROSS HOSPITAL.

**Dublin Castle Hospital - an important statement and appeal for funds.**  
**Dublin 1914.**  
*Appendix 49.*



STATE DRAWING ROOM, DUBLIN CASTLE RED CROSS HOSPITAL.

**Dublin Castle Hospital - an important statement and appeal for funds.**  
**Dublin 1914.**  
*Appendix 50.*