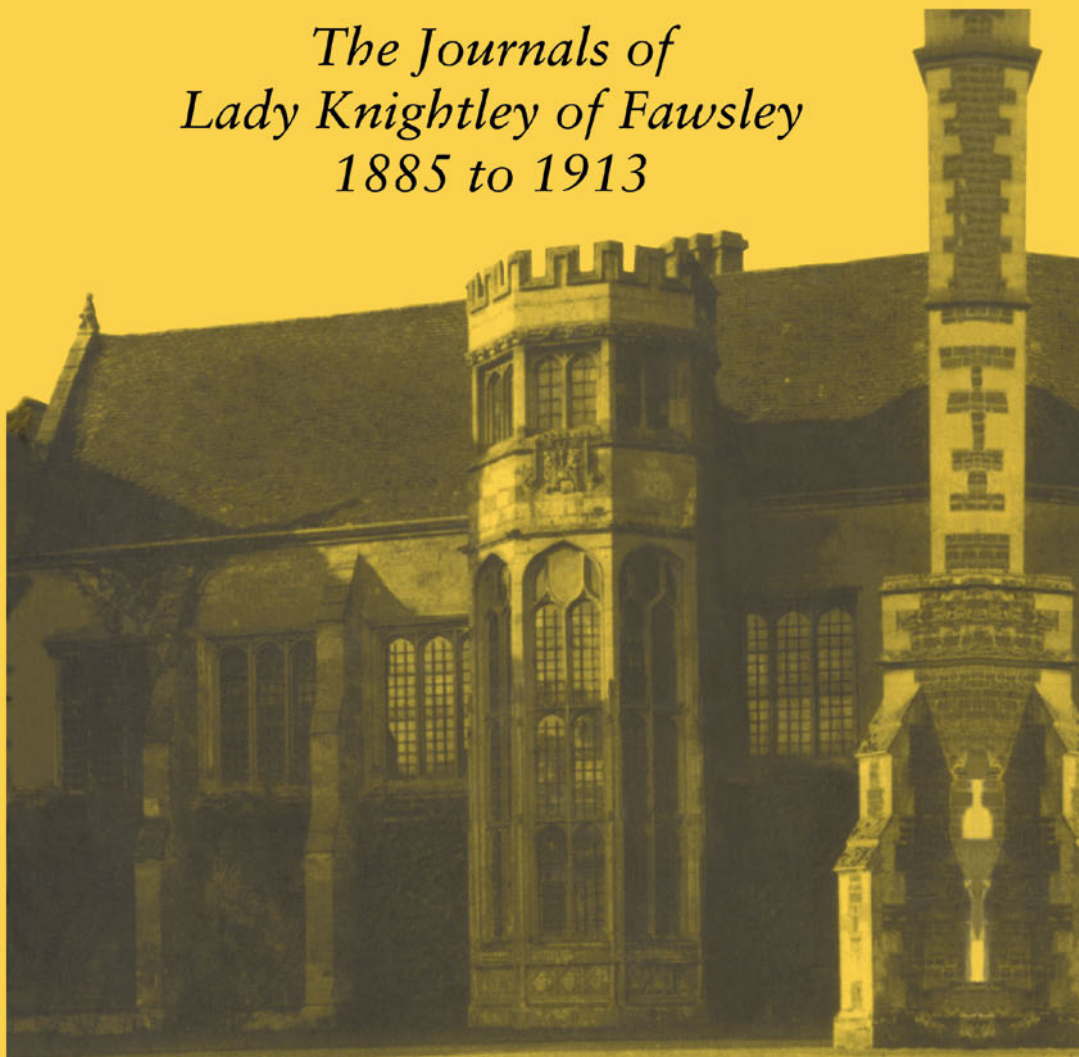


POLITICS AND SOCIETY

*The Journals of
Lady Knightley of Fawsley
1885 to 1913*



Edited by
PETER GORDON

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My first acquaintance with the Journals of Louisa, Lady Knightley, dates back to 1968 when I was researching a book on administrative aspects of nineteenth century education. I was immediately attracted by their lively style and the insights they provided into country Toryism in Northamptonshire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They also present a rare picture of the burgeoning women's movements at this time, in which Louisa Knightley played a leading part. Although not so closely involved in the high politics of the period as their neighbour at Althorp, the fifth Earl Spencer, Louisa's husband, Sir (later Baron) Rainald Knightley, served as Member of Parliament for exactly four decades, and his trenchant comments on colleagues and events were assiduously recorded in her Journal. Their frequent visits to the great houses of England, their close acquaintance with London society and her often acute observations on contemporary happenings make for entertaining reading.

The history of Lady Knightley's Journals is an interesting one. An edition of her early Journals had been undertaken by a close friend, Julia Cartwright (Mrs Ady), and the originals were temporarily placed with her for this purpose.¹ Consisting of some 46 volumes, they covered the years 1856 to the end of her life in 1913. Many liberties were taken in transcribing the text. The book was published in 1915² but the Journals themselves seem to have disappeared.

In 1928, a few years before his death, Sir Charles Valentine Knightley, the fifth baronet, deposited with the Northamptonshire Record Society an enormous quantity of Knightley papers. It consisted of some 3000 documents, ranging from the thirteenth to the nineteenth centuries, including about 400 charters and 1400 deeds relating to the Fawsley estate. Joan Wake, the founder and first Secretary of the Society, recalled Sir Charles bringing them over, a sackful at a time, when he came in to officiate at Quarter Sessions at Northampton.³ By the end of 1932, a team of volunteers had finished cataloguing the collection although another six years elapsed before an index of persons and places had been completed.⁴ But no papers of Lady Knightley or her Journals, which she had started at the age of 14, were found in the collection. However, some 36 years later, in 1951, Miss Phoebe Mills, a niece of the last baronet, Sir Henry Knightley, offered the Journals, then in her possession, together with some family letters, to the Northamptonshire Record Society. It was not until October 1965 that Miss Mills finally presented them to the Northamptonshire County Record Office at Delapre Abbey.⁵ Since then, they have been available for consultation at the Office.

1. Cartwright Journals, 3 Oct 1913, Cartwright of Edgcote Papers, C.E. 396, Northamptonshire Record Office (NRO).

2. *The Journals of Lady Knightley of Fawsley, 1856-1884* (1915), John Murray.

3. Joan Wake to Miss Phoebe Mills, 28 August 1951. Correspondence file, NRO

4. Northamptonshire Record Society 18th Annual Report for 1938, p. 4.

5. Patrick I. King, then Chief Archivist, to the author, 22 July 1977.

In the preparation of this book, I owe a large debt of gratitude to many people for their help. My grateful thanks are due to Mr. Ron Greenall, the honorary general editor of the Northamptonshire Record Society, for his valuable advice and comments on the manuscript and his patience in seeing it through the various stages of production. The staff of the Northamptonshire Record Office were invariably helpful over the years when I consulted the Knightley Papers, and Sir Hereward Wake, Bart, also provided generous help during my research for the book. Mr. Colin Eaton, Northampton Central Reference Library, was kind enough to read the Introduction and make useful suggestions, and Professor John Vincent gave encouragement during the long gestation of the project

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I would also like to thank the many individuals who have helped in various ways, particularly Mr. Robin Harcourt-Williams, Librarian and Archivist to the Marquis of Salisbury, Dr. Daphne Glick, Honorary Archivist to the National Council of Women, Mrs. Dorothy Jessup, Treasurer of St. Peter's Anglican Church, Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada, Mr. David Doughan, Reference Librarian, the Fawcett Library and Pauline Gordon for her assistance with the Index. Mr. John Rolton has been of invaluable help in undertaking extensive research in connection with the numerous annotations to the text and in checking the original Journal entries with the final manuscript. His tenacity and conscientiousness in carrying out this work is much appreciated.

Finally, I wish to thank my wife, Tessa, for her active support and advice from the earliest days of the project. I have greatly benefited over the years from our many discussions together of the life and work of the subject of the book, Lady Louisa Knightley.

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AJA</i>	<i>Girls' Friendly Society Associates Journal and Advertiser</i>
BL	British Library
BWEA	British Women's Emigration Association
CUWFA	Conservative and Unionist Women's Franchise Association
<i>DE</i>	<i>Daventry Express</i>
<i>EW</i>	<i>Englishwoman's Review</i>
FLD	Freedom of Labour Defence
GFS	Girls' Friendly Society
LGC	Ladies' Grand Council, Primrose League
LMK	Louisa Mary Knightley
NEC	Northamptonshire Education Committee
<i>NH</i>	<i>Northampton Herald</i>
<i>NM</i>	<i>Northampton Mercury</i>
<i>NP and P</i>	<i>Northamptonshire Past and Present</i>
NRO	Northamptonshire Record Office
NUWSS	National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies
NUWW	National Union of Women Workers
PL	Primrose League
<i>PLG</i>	<i>Primrose League Gazette</i>
SACS	South African Colonisation Society
SPEW	Society for Promoting the Employment of Women
WLG	Working Ladies' Guild
WLGS	Women's Local Government Society

COLLECTIONS CONSULTED

Manuscript Sources

Ardagh Papers	Public Record Office
Bath Papers	Longleat House, Wiltshire
Beaconsfield Papers	Bodleian Library, Oxford
British Women's Emigration Society Papers	Fawcett Library, Guildhall University, London
Cartwright Papers	Northamptonshire Record Office
Chamberlain Papers	Birmingham University
Darwin Papers	Cambridge University Library
Derby Papers	Liverpool Record Office
Gage Papers	Firle Place, Sussex East Sussex Record Office
Girls' Friendly Society Papers	Girls' Friendly Society, London
Grey Papers	Durham University Library
Hambleden Papers	W H Smith and Co, London
Harcourt Papers	Bodleian Library, Oxford
Knightley Papers	Northamptonshire Record Office British Library
National Union of Women Workers Papers	Greater London Record Office National Council of Women
Newdegate of Arbury Papers	Warwickshire County Record Office
Northamptonshire County Council Papers	County Hall, Northampton
Primrose League Papers	Bodleian Library, Oxford
Rosebery Papers	National Library of Scotland
Royal Archives Papers	Windsor Castle, Berkshire
St. Aldwyn Papers	Gloucestershire Record Office
Salisbury Papers	Hatfield House, Hertfordshire
South African Colonisation Society Papers	Fawcett Library, Guildhall University, London
Spencer Papers	British Library
Victoria County History Papers	Institute of Historical Research, London
Workers' Educational Association Papers	University of North London

Printed Sources

British Library

Institute of Historical Research

London Library

Northampton Reference Library

Fawcett Library

INTRODUCTION

In a review of the publication of the early Journals of Lady Knightley in 1916, *The Times Literary Supplement* noted that ‘she combined with her admiration of great people a judgement which was candid, though never ill-natured, and since she wrote well, the book offers as authentic and as readable an account of society and politics in the sixties and seventies as we are likely to get.’¹ It can be argued that the later Journals, starting in 1885, are of even greater interest, reflecting as they do her growing commitment to furthering women’s causes at a time when opportunities to do so were burgeoning and her active participation in politics following the Franchise and Redistribution Acts of 1884 and 1885.

Louisa Mary Bowater, who was born on 25 April 1842, enjoyed a privileged childhood. Her father, General Sir Edward Bowater, had had a distinguished military career, serving throughout the Peninsular War and saw action at the battle of Waterloo. Bowater was on good terms with the Duke of Clarence and he was appointed as one of his equerries when the Duke succeeded as William IV in 1830.² After Victoria’s marriage, he became equerry to Prince Albert and later Groom-in-Waiting to the Queen.³ Louisa’s mother, Emilia Mary, was the daughter of Lieutenant-Colonel Michael Barne, a former M.P. for Dunwich, and his wife, Mary Boucherett of Sotterley Park, Suffolk.⁴ Louisa’s early life was spent between Suffolk in the winter and the Thatched House Lodge, Richmond Park, granted to the family by Queen Victoria, in the spring and

1. ‘The Journals of Lady Knightley, 1856–1884, edited by Julia Cartwright (afterwards Ady), 1915,’ *Times Literary Supplement*, 6 Jan. 1916, p. 7.

2. After attending a dinner with the King and Queen at Kew in 1833, Lady Jerningham, a Lady-in-Waiting, wrote to her daughter:

Col. Bowater is a worthy, kind hearted man, and we talked the whole way there and back without weariness; he told me that his father being an Admiral, he had begun by the Sea, and sailed in the same Ship as his father, who never spoke to him, or saw him oftener than his fellow Mids. and this was such a painful restraint to him, afflicted him so much, that he begged to return to School. The King gave him his Commission in the Guards, and he served during the War. He never had a promotion to buy till the last. He said he had been most fortunate through Life. It is refreshing to My Spirits to meet with anyone who is Satisfied with his Lot, and grateful to his Benefactors.

E.Castle (ed.) *The Jerningham Letters, 1780–1843* (1896), ii, p. 384.

3. *Gentleman’s Magazine*, N.S., 12, Jan. 1862, p. 109–10.

4. The marriage was delayed until 1798, partly because of Barne’s inability to obtain leave from his regiment and partly to Mary Boucherett’s reluctance to commit herself. He wrote impatiently to her, ‘All the world knows that we are going to be married and the sooner it is over the better unless you know more than all the world and can say that we are not.’ J.Imray, ‘The Boucherett Family Archives’, *The Lincolnshire Historian*, 2, 3, 1955–6, p. 22. Louisa began some research into the Boucherett family which she did not complete, n.d., Newdegate of Arbury Papers, Warwickshire County Record Office, CR 136/B 3201.

summer. Lady Knightley later stated that her great love for the countryside sprang from her idyllic childhood at Sotterley.

As was customary with upper-class girls at the time, Louisa was educated at home. She was an only child and from the age of 13 and for the following five years, her governess was a young German woman, Agnes Lentz, who became a life-long friend. Lentz familiarised Louisa with current German politics and literature. As a result, she became fluent in the language⁵ and developed a deep interest in that country.

Louisa's links with the Royal family were strengthened when in October 1861 Prince Albert invited General Bowater, his wife and Louisa to escort his delicate eight-year old son, Prince Leopold, to Cannes for the winter. The family suffered a double tragedy on 14 December when Louisa's father died there, only a few hours before Prince Albert at Windsor. Louisa played an important part in distracting Leopold from his loss, which Victoria greatly appreciated.⁶ On the occasion of Louisa's wedding, the Queen sent her a locket of the young Prince as a reward for her kindness.⁷ During the next few years, Louisa was invited to stay at Osborne, Balmoral and Windsor, and attended functions at Buckingham Palace.

Her life was to change when on 30 March 1869 she joined a party at Firlie Place, Sussex, the home of the Gage family. There she met Sir Rainald Knightley, third baronet, of Fawsley Hall, Northamptonshire, whose sister, Sophia Selina, was married to Henry Hall Gage. It was, in her words, 'A day to be kept for all time'. Rainald was almost 50 and Louisa 27. Three days later she recorded 'I had much talk with Sir Rainald. I wonder if I begin to understand him? He strikes me as a very good average sort of man: clever without being a genius; good, without having a very high standard—in short, not unlike myself.' During Sir Charles's lifetime, Rainald had said that it was impossible to marry, for if he left Fawsley it would break his father's heart and if he took his wife to live there it would certainly break her heart.⁸ He had been M.P. for South Northamptonshire since 1852, when he inherited the seat from his father Sir Charles, who had himself represented the Division for 18 years. Rainald was the twelfth member of the family to have sat as Member of Parliament since Robertus de Knyghteleye in 1325. Julia Cartwright later quoted a newspaper description of Rainald: 'He was one of the few survivors of the old Tory country members who hated Sir Robert Peel and Dizzy and looked with horror on the rural democracy, and says how he lurked in his corner seat in the House, with his high aquiline nose and otherworld eyes, looking half-puzzled and half-contemptuous on the mob of new members all these 40 years.'⁹ He boasted that he was an independent Conservative and on the rare occasions when he spoke in Parliament, he expressed himself forcefully. In 1866, he had refused the post of Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies on the grounds that he had not 'sufficient confidence in Mr. Disraeli to justify

5. See, for example, her letters to Dr. Theodore Günter, who, as medical attendant to the Duke of Albany, was with Louisa at Cannes in 1861. RA Add. A 30/560–74, Royal Archives.

6. C.Zeevat, *Prince Leopold. The Untold Story of Queen Victoria's Youngest Son* (1998), pp. 31–4.

7. Queen Victoria to Louisa Knightley (LMK), 22 Oct. 1869, BL. Add. MS. 46360, f. 2.

8. Ady, *Journals*, p. 191.

9. Julia Cartwright Journals, 27 Dec. 1895, Cartwright of Edgcote Papers, C.E. 379.

my accepting.’¹⁰ as a young girl at Sotterley the charger used by her father in the Crimea. Rainald was enormously proud of his long ancestry—the achievement hanging at the end of the Great Hall at Fawsley had 334 quarterings—and he was once the butt of a quip attributed to Sir William Harcourt, Gladstone’s Chancellor of the Exchequer, quoting from Addison:

And (K)nightly to the listening earth
Repeats the story of his birth.

Louisa and Rainald met on a number of occasions during June and July 1869, but it was on a visit to Fawsley, on 13 August, that she wrote excitedly in her Journal: ‘I have plighted my troth to Rainald Knightley, and from the very bottom of my heart I pray God that he will help me to be a good wife to him. He is so good to me. I am sure we shall be happy together.’ Six months after their first meeting, Rainald and Louisa were married on 20 October 1869 at St Peter’s, Eaton Square, London. A few weeks later, they had settled at Fawsley, where they were to spend the rest of their lives. Situated some $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles south of Daventry, the Park is approached from Badby through a wood and a drive leads to the Hall. The Park, consisting then of about 700 acres, was well-stocked with deer and it offered, as it still does, good views of the hilly area of Northamptonshire and of the artificial lake. Another picturesque feature in the northern part of the Park is the so-called Dower House, built initially in the sixteenth century as a lodge, but it was allowed to fall into disrepair in the eighteenth century.¹³ Remains of deserted villages lie immediately south and east of the Hall.¹⁴ The Hall has recently been described in a Royal Commission on Historic Buildings publication as the largest and finest medieval house to survive in the county.¹⁵ It had been in the possession of the Knightleys since 1416, though the earliest surviving parts are from the sixteenth century. The Great Hall is the central feature of a plan made difficult to interpret because of the numerous alterations it has undergone over the centuries.

Rainald’s father had carried out a programme of gothicizing but at a modest cost. It was Rainald, with marriage in mind, who, upon inheriting the estate, engaged Anthony Salvin during the years 1866 to 1868 to carry out a large-scale redevelopment and layout of the house. Salvin provided a new range of ground floor public rooms, bedrooms and attic servants’ quarters and remodelled the north range and the Great Hall, in the Tudor revival style.¹⁶ The total cost was £13,300 and Rainald’s extravagance was to prove a

10. Derby to Sir Rainald Knightley, 3 July 1866 and Knightley to Derby, 3 July 1866, Derby Papers, 920 DER (14) 191/1 and 920 DER (14) 99/6, Liverpool Record Office.

11. W.W.Hadley, ‘Northamptonshire Memories’, *NP and P*, ii, 3, 1956, p. 123.

12. G.Paget, *The History of the Althorp and Pytchley Hunt, 1834–1920* (1937), pp. 118, 171.

13. Northamptonshire Archaeological Unit, *An architectural watching brief at the Dower House, August 1990* (1990), p. 1.

14. Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, *County of Northampton, vol 3. Archaeological Sites in North-West Northamptonshire* (1981), p. 88.

15. J.Heward and R.Taylor, *The Country Houses of Northamptonshire* (1996), p. 241.

16. A.R.Toleson, *Fawsley Hall, Genesis, Decline and Renaissance*, BA Arch. Dissertation, Mackintosh School of Architecture, Glasgow, 1990, pp. 71–7.

costly mistake in the decades to come. Louisa became fascinated with the history of Fawsley and its occupants over the centuries and carried out research based on the copious documents in the house as well as in the British Museum. Among the many outstanding Knightleys she admired was the Puritan Sir Richard, who in the autumn of 1588 secretly set up a printing press in a garret in the house where broadsides, known as the Marprelate Tracts, were produced, which attacked the Church of England. For this act, he was heavily fined and imprisoned.¹⁷ In the deserted village east of the house is Fawsley Church, containing the brasses and tombs of many Knightleys. Only a short walk away from the house, the church played an important part in the life of the estate.

On 20 October 1870, Louisa wrote to her mother, 'One thing I am quite sure of—that no two people, at the close of a year of married life, can look back with more unalloyed happiness than we do. *One* thing is still wanting to complete it—but that we must leave in God's hands.'¹⁸ Like many other Knightleys before them, however, there were no children of their marriage, much to Louisa's regret. She now poured her considerable energy into a number of different projects and causes. One of her earliest literary endeavours was the editing of a series of letters from Madame de Maintenon to M. le Maréchal de Villeroy and to her niece Madame de Caylus, which she discovered amongst her father's papers; these were published by the Philobiblon Society in 1872.¹⁹ Rainald's cousins, Philip Story, rector of Fawsley, and Valentine Knightley, rector of Preston Capes, both of them bachelors and who had made their home in the Hall in Sir Charles's time, returned to their respective parsonages. Rainald and his sister had been brought up on strictly evangelical lines, which was reflected in the church services at Fawsley. Louisa, who was deeply religious, set about effecting changes in the form these services took.

She was inspired by a sermon on 'The poor have the Gospel preached to them', given on 1 March 1870 by Francis Thicknesse, then vicar of Brackley and later Bishop of Leicester. She wrote afterwards, 'As he spoke of close parishes and village schools, of bad cottages and the alarming aspect of affairs, warning us, the prosperous ones on earth, to fight against these evils lest our national greatness and virtue should crumble to decay, one felt nerved and encouraged to do one's very best.'²⁰

Her own experience with the Fawsley servants, visits to the poor of Badby and Charwelton and membership of various religious groups, convinced her of the need for some organisation to meet the needs of girls in domestic service. An opportunity arose when Mrs. Mary Townsend, in neighbouring Warwickshire, launched the Girls' Friendly Society in May 1874 at a meeting of Anglican ladies at Lambeth. Its objects were two-fold: 'to bind together in one Society ladies as Associates and working girls and young women as Members, for mutual help (religious and secular), for sympathy and for prayer', and 'to encourage purity of life, dutifulness to parents, faithfulness to employers, and thrift.' Members had to be unmarried, and no girl who had not a virtuous character was admitted ('such character being lost, the member to forfeit her Card').

17. See LMK, 'The Knightleys of Fawsley' (with O.Barron), *The Ancestor*, No. 2, July 1902, p. 11.

18. LMK to Lady Bowater, 20 Oct. 1870, Knightley Papers, K 2893, Northamptonshire Record Office.

19. *Miscellanies of the Philobiblon Society*, 13, Nos. 2 and 3, 1871–2.

20. Ady, *Journals*, p. 188. The religious motives of women participating in charitable work at this time are explored in F.K.Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England* (1980), pp. 118–21.

Louisa began work locally on behalf of the Society in 1876²¹ and it gave her the first insight into the possibilities of middle-and upper-class women co-operating in order to achieve a common end. After a branch meeting of GFS secretaries in 1878 she wrote, ‘It was a curious experience having a purely feminine meeting.’ Membership was strongest in country areas; within three years, the Society had established branches in Brackley, Daventry, Northampton and Oundle and recruited almost 600 members, mainly domestic servants.²² The Society had to prepare girls for some of the dangers arising out of moving to towns or cities. Louisa was the author of a pamphlet *Hints on the Work of the Girls’ friendly Society* which suggested the important role of Associates in keeping a friendly eye on such girls.²³

Incentives to join the Society included country holidays, training schemes, prizes for thrift, lodging houses and personal advice. GFS books containing suitable literature were given to girls and at Spratton, for example, a weekly class for sewing and general instruction was held throughout the year except at harvest time.²⁴ Garden fêtes were a welcome feature and Fawsley was the setting for many such events. As Brian Harrison has pointed out, the GFS, by promoting deference through recreation, pioneered Conservative techniques which became better known in the Primrose League and trained many of its workers.²⁵ Louisa was president of the Diocesan Council for the Peterborough Diocese of the GFS from 1879 following an opening meeting at Northampton chaired by Bishop Magee. Rainald refused to allow her to become president of the Society in 1882 but she remained in charge of the Diocesan Council for over a quarter of a century, finally resigning the post in 1904. Louisa was also active in the work of the Ladies’ Sanitary Association, established in 1857, which produced literature in a simple, attractive and cheap form on the domestic laws of health and sanitation for the poor, based on middle-class standards.²⁶ Louisa wrote a pamphlet, *Dress: Its Fetters, Frivolities, and Follies*, for the Society which was later translated into Dutch.

She was equally concerned with the provision of employment for educated women. ‘Certainly, in these days,’ she wrote, ‘when from the fluctuating nature, apparently, of all financial affairs, girls are constantly thrown upon the world without any provision for the future, it is essential that they, as well as their brothers, should be equipped for the battle of life with a practical knowledge of some employment which will ensure them an independent existence.’²⁷ Louisa was present at the inaugural meeting of the Working Ladies’ Guild on 8 November 1876, convened by Lady Mary Feilding, and she became a member of the Committee. Described as ‘a co-operative society of men and women of all

21. M.E.Townsend, ‘Memories of An Old Friendship’, *Girls’ Friendly Society Associates’ Journal and Advertiser*, Jan. 1914, p. 2.

22. P. Horn, ‘Domestic Service in Northamptonshire, 1830–1914’, *NP and P*, 5, 3, 1978, p. 272.

23. 1883, pp. 3–4.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

25. B.Harrison, ‘“For Church, Queen and Family”: the Girls’ Friendly Society, 1874–1920’, *Past and Present*, 61, Nov. 1973, p. 113.

26. For LMK’s description of the LSA and its aims, see Baroness Burdett-Coutts, *Woman’s Mission*, (1893), p. 437.

27. LMK, ‘New Employments for Educated Women’, *New Review*, 9, Dec. 1893, pp. 577–

8. Census returns between 1851 and 1911 showed that almost a third of all women aged 25 to 35 were unmarried.

ranks and professions', it sought suitable outlets particularly for unmarried or widowed gentlewomen's employment as well as providing assistance to those in need of help.²⁸ By the 1890s, Louisa was able to point to a range of occupations now open to women, from sanitary inspectors in Kensington to University Extension lecturers at Oxford.²⁹ She fully approved of women taking part in professional work 'so long as they do not usurp men's prerogatives and become unfeminine.'³⁰

Louisa developed a deep love for Fawsley and for the Northamptonshire countryside, whilst recognising some of the difficulties of living in a relatively remote area. She described the region in an article as follows:

If I were asked to mention the characteristic of the Midlands most likely to strike a stranger—especially one coming from the North—it would be their intensely rural character. On the borders of Northamptonshire and Warwickshire, you may ride for 14, 15 or even 20 miles without passing through a single village, or by any house save a solitary farm or 'lodge', as the lone cottages attached to farm buildings are designated. Very lonely places they are too, and I often wonder how the poor little children manage to struggle to school through the muddy gateways (mud is a very leading characteristic of the Midlands!—Horace Walpole describes Northamptonshire as 'a mud-pudding stuck full of churches'), or the deep snow-drifts which often lie for weeks under the hedges.³¹

As the Journals show, she took a great interest in the surviving customs and superstitions of country people, noting in 1889 that hiring fairs or mops for the hiring of farm-servants, both male and female, on an annual basis were still held in Northamptonshire. Mummers continued to flourish: 'about Christmas time there is hardly a night [at Fawsley] that a party of them does not march in, without any permission being asked, bedizened with ribbons and masked, and proceed to act their little play.'³² Louisa was also intrigued with the villagers' use of rare words, claiming that the language of the Midlands, much of which could be traced back to the time of Chaucer and Shakespeare, was purer than that of any other part of the country.

It was usual for the lady of the manor to play an active part in overseeing the welfare of villagers in and around the estate. Louisa carried out these tasks conscientiously, visiting the inmates of the workhouse and villagers who were ill or old in their old

28. E.A.Pratt, *A Woman's Work for Women* (1898), p. 47.

29. 'New Employments', *supra*, pp. 578, 580. See also D.Rubenstein, *Before the Suffragettes. Women's Emancipation in the 1890s* (1986), p. 70 ff.

30. *Women's Penny Paper*, 9 Aug. 1890, p. 493. One recent writer, in reviewing the activities of Lady Knightley and her colleagues, has remarked, 'Conservatism offered women not a feminine perspective but a seemingly gender-neutered activism.' P.Levine, *Feminist Lives in Victorian England. Private Roles and Public Commitment* (1990), p. 39.

31. LMK, 'The Midlands', *Murray's Magazine*, 25, 5, 1889, p. 99.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

homes. In 1895 she collaborated with Adeline Pym, who was closely involved in the work of the Navy Mission Society, in providing a reading room for the workers when the East and West Junction Railway was being built through the county.³³ Her compassion for the afflicted and disabled, based on firm Christian belief, extended outside of Northamptonshire to an unusually deserving case, Joseph Merrick, the so-called ‘Elephant Man’. Merrick’s plight was brought to the public’s notice in November 1886 when a letter from the chairman of the London Hospital appeared in *The Times*, appealing for subscriptions in order to admit Merrick as a permanent inmate. Frederick Treves, a leading surgeon who was responsible for Merrick, on hearing that his patient wished to have a holiday in the country, hoped to make this possible. Louisa offered suitable accommodation on the Fawsley estate and this was accepted.³⁴ Merrick spent three delightful holidays there in 1887, 1888 and 1889, and Louisa paid several visits to him. ‘Merrick has such nice brown eyes;’ she recorded in her Journal after one such visit. ‘I looked straight into them—but he is *very* awful to behold.’³⁵ Early in 1890, Merrick died in his sleep at the age of 27.

Louisa’s involvement with the GFS provided her with the opportunity to make speeches to a number of different groups. According to eye witnesses, she was a born speaker, with a simple and dignified manner, who effectively expressed herself.³⁶ Rainald disliked his wife’s appearances on public platforms. Julia Cartwright remarked that his old-fashioned notions and fastidious tastes were shocked by many of her activities, though she managed with patience and tact to overcome his opposition.

Politics had always been of great interest to her. Louisa had read her first debate in the Commons in *The Times* when she was 16 and subsequently rarely let a day go by without following events. In a later newspaper interview, she stated that she began as a Whig.³⁷ In October 1868 with a general election approaching, she wrote in her Journal, ‘I must confess the Rads. are the only thoroughly consistent people now—they know what they want, and they mean to have it.’³⁸ After her marriage, however, she became a staunch Conservative, though she remained a candid and effective critic of both major parties throughout her life. It was even claimed that at one time she was a frequent contributor to the *Northamptonshire Guardian*, a Radical newspaper, inspiring the editor Samuel Smith Campion in the 1880s to write leaders attacking both Whigs and Tories.³⁹

By the time Louisa began her Journal for 1885, Rainald had experienced no fewer than eight elections, three of which had been unopposed—1859, 1874 and 1880. Many of his campaigns had been characterised by disputes, not only with the Liberals but also with his own party. In his first contest in 1852, Rainald assumed that he would automatically

33. Entry, 28 Sept. 1895, and J.W. Anscomb, ‘Woodford Halse. The Village with a Heart of Steam’, *NP and P*, 6, 1, 1982–3, pp. 344–6.

34. Sir F. Treves, *The Elephant Man and Other Reminiscences* (1923), p. 33.

35. Entry, 9 Sept. 1887.

36. *Ady, Journals*, p. 293.

37. *Women’s Penny Paper*, 9 Aug. 1890, p. 493.

38. LMK, 2 Oct. 1868, K 2892.

39. *Journal of the Northamptonshire Natural History Society and Field Club*, Dec. 1913, p. 144.

succeed his father for one of the two South Northamptonshire seats. However, much to his chagrin, Colonel William Cartwright of Flore Hall had decided to stand and Rainald withdrew in a huff. With disaster looming, Cartwright was persuaded to stand down.⁴⁰ Rainald threatened once more to withdraw from the contest in 1868 because of a dispute with the other Conservative candidate, Colonel Henry Cartwright. A meeting of Cartwright's supporters took place at Blisworth to protest at Rainald's refusal to agree to a joint address to the voters. In reply, Rainald pointed out that both he and his father had fought all their elections at their own expense. 'I was quite prepared to do so again,' he replied in an open letter to the electors of South Northamptonshire, 'but to be forced into a coalition for the sole object of assisting a colleague, and then to be told that it "is clear that I have no claim or any share whatsoever of the subscription" raised for the purposes of the election, is an insult which no man of honour would submit to.'⁴¹ To the astonishment of fellow Conservatives, Rainald published the correspondence in the columns of the *Northampton Mercury* and Cartwright subsequently withdrew from the contest 'because of a serious dispute with Sir Rainald Knightley.' Up to the last moment, it seemed that Rainald would be the sole Conservative candidate against the Liberal, Lord Frederick FitzRoy. However, very late in the day Major Fairfax Cartwright of Aynhoe announced his candidature and was elected with only 17 votes fewer than Rainald, thus squeezing out FitzRoy.⁴² Cartwright retained his seat until his death in 1881. In his acceptance speech after the 1868 election, Rainald called the Second Reform Bill 'one of the most dangerous leaps in the dark ever taken by statesmen.' He had objected to lowering the qualification for the franchise in the boroughs⁴³ and in the Commons had spoken against extending the right to vote to the counties.⁴⁴ Rainald had raised the 'No Popery' and the 'Church in Danger' cry over the Irish Church Bill during the campaign and had earlier opposed the election of Jews as Members of Parliament. As Rainald himself told an election meeting nearly 20 years later, 'He believed he knew very well he was a Constitutional Conservative. They might call him an old Tory if they liked,

40. A good Tory, the Revd. Sir Frederick Robinson, objected to the votes being considered as 'heirlooms of the house of Fawsley. If they [the electors] are content to be handed over to Mr. Rainald Knightley, as a flock of sheep taken at a valuation by an incoming tenant, be it so.' NH, 26 June 1852, p. 3.

41. *NM*, 15 Aug. 1868, p. 5.

42. Rainald told his election agent, 'I found the wish so strong amongst my best friends that I should join Major Cartwright that I have agreed to do so ... It is a bitter pill for me to swallow but it would have broken up the party for ever if I had declined.' Sir Rainald Knightley to William Willoughby, July 1868, D3275, NRO.

43. Sir Rainald Knightley to Disraeli, 1 Feb. 1865, Beaconsfield Papers, B/XII/K/155.

44. Hansard, 3, 174, col. 928, 13 April 1864 and Hansard, 3, 174, col. 403, 14 June 1866. See also M. Cowling, 1867. *Disraeli, Gladstone and Revolution The Passing of the Second Reform Bill* (1967), p. 183. After attending a meeting of his party at the Carlton Club on 28 Feb. 1867, Rainald wrote to the fourth Marquess of Bath, a fellow opponent of the Bill, 'No two men agreed about anything and we separated without settling about any one point. I don't think the present Government will carry the bill. I think they will break up before long and if they do then will be the time to intimate to Gladstone that if he will be moderate and lean on the Cave instead of on Bright, that he will get a good deal of support from our side against Disraeli and the radicals.' Sir Rainald Knightley to the Marquess of Bath, 3 March 1867, Longleat Papers.

and he would not refute the appellation, but he hoped they would not call him a Tory Democrat as he had not the vaguest conception of what that was supposed to be.⁴⁵

When Gladstone's government was defeated on the Budget in the Commons in June 1885, Lord Salisbury undertook the task of forming a Conservative administration. Rainald wrote to Salisbury on behalf of 'the old experienced independent members' warning him not fall into the trap laid by Gladstone of accepting office at that time.⁴⁶ However, ten days later, Louisa noted: 'It is all settled—our people take office and R. is in despair. One can only hope it will turn out better than he expects.'⁴⁷ Parliament prorogued on 14 August, but the campaign for the general election had already begun in earnest.

The 1885 election was the first which Rainald had fought since the introduction of the secret ballot and he was also faced with a widened electorate. Rainald's opponent, Sir Maurice FitzGerald, was an Irishman with considerable estates as well as a castle in County Wexford. He was handicapped by the fact that he was a newcomer to Northamptonshire, in contrast to Rainald who, besides being a good landlord had been a representative of the county in Parliament for some 33 years. Nevertheless, Fitzgerald began his campaign as early as 24 April, holding meetings in most of the villages in the constituency. In contrast, Rainald delayed his appearance before the electorate until August. The Radical newspaper, the *Northamptonshire Guardian*, pointed out that during the whole of Rainald's parliamentary career

his intercourse with the Division has been so restricted—his visits, like angels' visits, have been so few and so far between—that to the great bulk of his constituency his personality has been an enigma. He has been a sort of political Buddha, for whom conventional worship has been encouraged by the Tories of 'the good old school', but whose existence has been veiled in the dim haze of the distance.

Knightley responded to this criticism by pleading that, as a most conscientious performer of parliamentary duties, it was impossible for him to be in two places at once, though he admitted to a questioner at a later meeting that out of 266 divisions taken in the House of Commons during the 1885 session, he had been present at only 24 of them.⁴⁹

Rainald had good reason to be apprehensive about his prospects in the constituency. The Franchise and Redistribution Acts of 1884 and 1885 had brought about important electoral changes. Household suffrage more than trebled in Northamptonshire and increased the occupational vote eightfold. With the franchise now given to the agricultural labourer, there was no automatic guarantee of loyalty to local landlords standing for election. In addition, the boundaries, as well as the names, of the four divisions in the county were changed. The Southern division, renamed South Northamptonshire (Towcester), a predominantly rural constituency with some of the

45. *Northampton Daily Chronicle*, 12 Aug. 1885, p.3.

46. Sir Rainald Knightley to Lord Salisbury, 13 June 1885, Hatfield House Papers, 3M/E.

47. Entry, 23 June 1885.

48. *Northamptonshire Guardian*, 15 Aug. 1885, p. 4.

49. *NM*, 26 Sept. 1885, p. 8.

poorest land in the county, contained market towns such as Brackley and Daventry, where Liberalism had a presence; from 1885 it included more villages in the south and parts of Banbury which were strongly Liberal. Up to this time, two members were returned for each division: now it was changed to one. There had been no contested election in the constituency since 1868 and although South Northamptonshire had long enjoyed the reputation of being a Conservative stronghold, the winning margins had been small when there was a Liberal candidate. A new element in this election was that the candidates found it necessary to make personal visits to numerous villages in order to introduce themselves to the new electorate. Faced with this situation, it is not surprising, as Louisa recorded on 7 August, 'R. went groaning off for the first of his meetings at Brackley.'

Rainald's poor state of health and his age (he was then 66) combined with his reluctance to make more than the bare essential number of appearances on public platforms during the election would have lessened his chances at the polls. Drastic action was called for. On 29 July, Louisa wrote in her Journal:

And now—tomorrow I embark on my electioneering campaign. Of course, to help my own darling husband is my *strongest* motive, but from the bottom of my heart, I do believe that the cause he will support is the cause of religion, of liberty, and of prosperity for this country and *every* class of its inhabitants, and with a perfectly clear conscience I can set about what to me is an utterly new and strange undertaking.

Fawsley became the centre of intensive canvassing of neighbouring villages in the next few months and by the end of October, Louisa had completed the canvassing of every village in the division. This was undertaken with some tentativeness as she recalled hearing from local ladies two years previously that many of the Charwelton men were followers of Bradlaugh. Louisa commented, 'Evidently, these wild communistic doctrines about the division of the land etc. have penetrated even into these villages, and what the result will be when the labourers have the vote it is very hard to tell.'⁵⁰ She was sometimes shocked by the living conditions of some of the poor on such visits. After a successful canvass of Towcester, she candidly noted, 'Some very radical shoe makers in some horrid little Courts down at the bottom of the town. I should be Radical myself if I lived in such holes.'⁵¹ The new forms of electioneering employed by both parties had an unintended effect on many of the electorate. 'Really, truly,' she declared on 14 November, 'I think the poor agricultural labourer is most anxious to do what is right, but he is so bombarded with leaflets and speeches on either side that knowing little about the matter, he is fairly bewildered.' Louisa quickly became aware of the unpredictability of people's voting habits. Four years later she wrote, 'There is often a curious antagonism between neighbouring villages, and one will vote "blue" almost to a man; while the next, under what seem precisely similar conditions, would be shrewdly surmised to vote "red" with equal equanimity.'⁵²

50. LMK, 13 Nov. 1883, K 2900.

51. Entry, 2 Nov. 1885.

52. 'The Midlands', op.cit., p. 100–1.

Louisa's activities, not surprisingly, attracted criticism from Liberal and radical quarters. The *Northampton Mercury* stated that 'a phenomenal degree of pressure has been exerted upon the agricultural voter—the canvassing of Lady Knightley—often in the presence of the man's employer, has been an important factor.'⁵³ Commenting on the satisfactory results of Louisa's canvassing, one correspondent wrote, 'I do not doubt it, but the question is, dare the poor people in these villages answer the wife of Sir Rainald in other than a satisfactory manner?'⁵⁴ However, much of her success was due to cultivating places such as Daventry and Brackley rather than the known safe Conservative areas.⁵⁵

Louisa was also responsible for putting her husband's election address into shape⁵⁶ and he praised her electioneering achievements at various meetings. Somewhat patronisingly, Rainald told the electors of Helmdon that 'she was also well known amongst them, as she was often to be found among the poor, shedding a ray of light and making their lives more pleasurable in many ways.'⁵⁷ On one occasion, Louisa's work was spectacularly challenged by Thomas Judge, the Radical Brackley grocer. At a meeting at Silverstone in October, Judge, referring to the notorious Westminster Election of 1784 when Georgiana, wife of the fifth Duke of Devonshire, was supposed to have given kisses to those who promised their votes to Charles James Fox, asked, amidst uproar, 'How many butchers had Lady Knightley kissed, or how many does she intend to kiss?' The *Northampton Herald's* report continued:

The Chairman (indignantly): I appeal to you whether after this gross insult, you will allow this man (pointing to Mr. Judge) to go on. (Loud cries of 'No', 'Chuck him out', 'Butterine', and 'Old weigh sugar'.) The meeting was now at the highest pitch of excitement, and some supporters of Sir Rainald moved towards Mr. Judge with the intention of carrying him out of the building. This attempt, it is understood, would have been resisted by Mr. Judge's admirers, who, it is stated, with good authority, came armed with clubs. When comparative order had been restored, Sir Rainald, addressing Mr. Judge, said: 'No man in Northamptonshire until this evening has been such a gross blackguard as to insult my wife' (Cheers).⁵⁸

Conservative sympathisers turned out in large numbers at subsequent election meetings and were frequently reminded of this incident. On election day itself voting was heavy, with a poll of almost 85 per cent. of the electorate in the division. The counting took place at Towcester Town Hall on 28 November and after a recount, the result was declared. It was a narrow victory for Rainald—4074 as against FitzGerald's 4012—and one which would probably not have been achieved without Louisa's assistance. Writing

53. *NM*, 5 Dec. 1885, p. 5.

54. *NM*, 29 Aug. 1885, p. 3.

55. M.Pugh, *The Tories and the People, 1880–1935* (1985), p. 110.

56. Entry, 20 Nov. 1885.

57. *NH*, 17 Oct. 1885, supp., p.2.

58. *NH*, 24 Oct. 1885, supp., p. 2.

in 1893, W. Ryland Adkins, himself a Liberal, said of her, 'Lady Knightley is almost the only lady in the county who has gained in influence and consideration by active political work. Her energy and ability are widely known, and it is the fashion to say that to her Sir Rainald owed his seat in 1885 and 1886.'⁵⁹

Much of the success of the campaign can be attributed to the efficient organisation of the canvass, a direct consequence of the founding of the Primrose League. After the general election of 1880, when Conservative fortunes were at a low ebb, Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, one of the group of M.P.s belonging to the Fourth Party, after seeing Conservatives wearing primroses on the anniversary of Lord Beaconsfield's death, conceived the idea of forming a League which was to 'embrace all classes and creeds except atheists and enemies of the British Empire', whilst its creed was 'the maintenance of religion, and of the Constitution of the realm, and of the Imperial ascendancy of Great Britain'. On 17 November 1883, the Primrose League was founded. It consisted initially of Wolff, Randolph Churchill, Sir John Gorst and Sir Alfred Slade. The Corrupt Electoral Practices Act of 1883 had limited the amount of money which a parliamentary candidate could spend and it effectively eliminated paid canvassing.⁶⁰ The League, therefore, would encourage the enrolment of friends into small groups, called 'habitations', which would promote Conservative principles and become active bodies during election campaigns. Upon payment of a half a crown, the male recruit received a diploma of Knight Harbinger and together with 12 other 'Knights', could form a habitation.

An election for a Ruling Councillor was followed by the appointment of secretary, treasurer and wardens. Lord Glensk, one of the early members of the League, stated that 'the most remarkable, however, of this stirring political development has been for the first time in our history, women have taken an active part in the controversies hitherto reserved for men.' Glensk attributed the League's immediate success to Radicalism and Fenianism:

Women, with an instinct peculiarly their own, divined at once the dangers involved in the new doctrines and theories—perceived that if churches were to be overthrown, education divorced from religion, property held to ransom, the Constitution to be riven asunder, England must be in the presence of as serious a revolution as ever threatened social order or preceded the Reign of Terror. The women of England speedily adopted the Primrose banner, and the dames, armed with sweet influence and persuasive eloquence, boldly came forward to take their share in the labours of the organisation.⁶¹

From its beginnings, the League admitted women as honorary members and Louisa was enrolled as a Dame of the Primrose League at Buckingham Palace House by Lady Wimborne, Randolph Churchill's eldest sister. Ever a realist, Louisa remarked, 'It all sounds rubbish but the objects are excellent, and I can quite believe that the paraphernalia

59. W.R.D.Adkins, *Our County* (1893), pp.20–1.

60. J.H.Robb, *The Primrose League, 1883–1906* (1942), p. 96.

61. Lord Glensk, 'The Primrose League', *Nineteenth Century*, 20, July 1886, p. 37.

helps to keep the Conservatives together; means, in short, an army of unpaid canvassers.⁶² The League mobilised upper-class women who had previously channelled their energies into philanthropic, religious and educational work. By the time of the 1885 general election, many women were involved in canvassing, preparing electoral registers and distributing party propaganda.⁶³ It was probably Louisa's contact with the Primrose League which inspired her in August 1885 to establish the Daventry Ladies' Committee which included about 30 wives of the leading tradespeople in the town. They agreed to divide Daventry into districts 'two to go with me in each', thus ensuring a thorough coverage. A further incentive to join in these activities was an invitation to a large dinner party at Fawsley to celebrate the creation of the Committee; amongst the guests were some of the leading helpers, including the Lowndes, Collyers, Gilbertsons, Athertons and Forsters.

The initiative for establishing the Daventry (Knightley) Habitation also came from Louisa.⁶⁴ Its inaugural meeting did not officially take place until 8 October, although according to Primrose League records, it was registered on 2 September. The five weeks' silence between the founding and the opening of the branch may have been deliberate in order not to draw the attention of the Liberals to this new development. At the inaugural meeting of the Knightley Habitation, held at Daventry, the speaker, who had been sent from London for the occasion, warned the audience of the scoff and derision to which the League had been subjected (The *Northampton Mercury* renamed it The Rural Intimidation Society').⁶⁵ He claimed, however, that there were as many as 60,000 men and women in the movement and expressed the hope that 'each member of the habitation might become the centre of a bunch of primroses'.⁶⁶

By the time of the general election of 1886 which followed Gladstone's defeat on the Irish Home Rule Bill, the influence of the Primrose League was making itself widely felt, especially in rural areas. The widespread apathy of the agricultural workers on the Irish issue and their concern at the worsening agricultural situation also helped the Conservative cause. In the comparatively brief election campaign in South Northamptonshire, where a Scotsman, Sir James Carmichael, was nominated by the Liberals to oppose Rainald, Louisa once more organised canvassing in the division. She reported on 29 June of 'hearing in every direction of disgusted Liberals who intend to help us'.⁶⁷ On the following day she made her first electioneering speech, chiefly about boycotting in Ireland, at a friendly, informal meeting of Charwelton people. At the end, in her own words, 'One man, after promising his vote, begging me not to say he had done so, gave me a great prod with the end of his pitchfork to reiterate his wish for

62. Entry, 12 May 1885.

63. J.Lovenduski, P.Norris and C.Burness, 'The Party and Women,' in A. Seldon and C.Burness (eds), *Conservative Century* (1994), pp. 617–18.

64. See the address of Col J.H.Lowndes, the Habitation's Ruling Councillor, NH, 10 Oct. 1885, p. 3.

65. *NM*, 5 Dec 1885, p. 5.

66. *Northampton Daily Chronicle*, 10 Oct. 1885, p.3.

67. Entry, 30 June 1886.

silence.’ On 7 July, Rainald was returned with an increased majority, attracting 4003 votes to Carmichael’s 3687.

Although Louisa’s electioneering venture had resulted in success, she had learnt some of the difficulties facing the traditional squire in rural areas now that the nature of the electorate had changed so dramatically. In a Primrose League address in 1888, she gave her considered reply to calls by the *Spectator* to ban canvassing:

To endeavour to prohibit it, open, avowed canvassing would be most useful to the Conservative party, already heavily handicapped by the fact that in every village the Radicals have the advantage of a resident canvasser, going in and out among the people continually, often one of themselves, whose influence is constantly being exercised for the benefit of that party—I mean the Dissenting minister. Rightly or wrongly the clergy, with few exceptions, say that they are the clergy of the National Church, which belongs to no party, and therefore they refuse to take part in any directly political work, with the anomalous result that the party on whose banners Church defence is inscribed gets comparatively little help from the officers of the army for whose maintenance they are contending. But the Dissenting minister has no such scruples.

Louisa also expounded on ‘the importance of sound, wholesome political literature,’ reflecting on the importance of the readership of local newspapers, obviously with Northamptonshire in mind:

As far as rural districts are concerned, the local press is of far more importance than the London press. For one cottage where you see a London weekly, you find twenty where the local journal is taken in—and the circulation depends a good deal more on the price than the politics. It is a real misfortune when the Conservative paper is 2d. and the Radical one 1d., and I cannot help thinking it is a misfortune which a little energy and public spirit might easily remedy. May I venture to suggest that we should ourselves make a point of studying the local Radical organ? It is of great importance to know what, week by week, is being told to and read by those whom we are anxious to influence, and who, alas! are not likely to see the needful contradictions unless we take pains to supply them either by disseminating leaflets or in some other way.⁶⁸

The idea of forming a central organisation, the Ladies’ Grand Council (LGC), equivalent but subordinate to the all-male Grand Council, whose Grand Master was Lord Salisbury, the Prime Minister, originated from a meeting of society women convened by Lady Glenesk and Lady Wimborne almost two years after the League was founded. Its object was to

68. *Women’s Penny Paper*, 23 March 1889, p. 6.

69. R. Bennett, ‘The Primrose League’, *lady’s Realm*, 1897, p. 571.

increase the income available for the expensive work of the League. The only entry qualification was the annual payment of a guinea. By 1896, the Council was contributing some £800 a year to the funds of the League.⁷⁰ Although never a large body compared with the total number of League members, it nevertheless played an important role in furthering the Conservative cause by producing and distributing leaflets, financing Primrose speakers and vans equipped with magic lanterns for rural areas. In May 1890, Louisa was invited to address the Council's annual general meeting, where she suggested that county meetings should be organised to discuss political and social questions of the day.⁷¹

An Executive Committee of the LGC was established to carry out these tasks. Consisting of 15 members rotating every third year, the Committee was elected by the LGC as a whole. Louisa, who was a member of the Executive for the rest of her life except for a gap between 1907 and 1910, relished these elections and her triumphs over rivals, as the Journals show. She also became a member of the Joint Literature Committee which supervised the publication of the League's pamphlets and leaflets. Louisa was the author of one on Registration, and it was planned to translate it into Welsh.⁷² When the annual meeting of the LGC complained of the unattractiveness of the League's official publication, the *Primrose League Gazette*, it was Louisa who was deputed to attend a meeting of the Gazette Committee to represent their views.⁷³ The *Primrose Herald*, a monthly journal first published in 1892, was intended to appeal to a wider audience than the *Gazette*. At Louisa's suggestion a 'Local News Sheet' was inserted into issues of the journal and she took the opportunity of frequently reporting on events taking place in the Fawsley Habitation. The Executive Committee highly commended her for this initiative,⁷⁴ and though she urged others to follow, few did so. The *Herald* ceased publication within five years.⁷⁵ One other important body on which she served was the Joint Consultative Committee, consisting of three men and five women, which was established as a result of friction between the Grand Council and the LGC over their respective areas of responsibility.⁷⁶

The League was phenomenally successful in attracting women members. In 1885 the number of Dames was 1381: by the following year it was 23,381 and at the end of the century, 62,942. By 1899, the total membership of the League was almost one and a half million.⁷⁷

Fawsley was frequently the venue of Primrose League fêtes, which attracted large numbers from the villages in the area and from Daventry. These meetings were a useful source of recruitment to the movement. In August 1898, four habitations,—Knightley (Daventry), Dryden (Canons Ashby), Beatrice (Byfield) and Southam (Warwickshire)—

70. *PLG*, 1 July 1896, p. 6.

71. *PLG*, 24 May 1890, p.3.

72. *PL*, Ladies' Grand Council Minute Book, 15 June 1894, *PL MS 13*, pp. 33–4, Bodleian Library, Oxford University.

73. *Ibid*, 31 May 1889, *PL MS 11*, p. 224.

74. *Ibid*, 14 June 1895, *PL MS 13*, pp.54–5.

75. The journal changed its name to the *Primrose Herald and Patriot* in 1896. It closed in July 1897.

76. Robb, *op.cit.*, p. 111.

77. *PLG*, 1 Sept. 1899, p. 9.

joined together to hold a fête at Fawsley. The *Primrose League Gazette* later reported on its success:

The attendance was numbered by thousands, the large majority intelligent toilers; and the dainty primrose—emblem of a vast and influential organisation—shone conspicuously on almost all present. Nor were Primrose League decorations—prized as honourable recognitions of honest and conscientious service—scarce, or confined to one class: and the pride with which they were worn and treasured is a sufficient answer to the paltry Radical gibe regarding their worth. Everyone was happy, the classes were brought together under the happiest auspices, and the good feeling prevailing was as striking as it was characteristic of Primroseism. Agencies for amusement were as numerous as varied, almost every taste being catered for, and the result was a general satisfaction. In one part of the field a programme of sports, with items amusing as well as athletic, commanded the attention of a large number; those interested in practical adaptation of a new invention rode about on motor cars supplied by Messrs. Sleath, Leamington; others patronised roundabouts, swings, shooting galleries, and etc; while still others roamed enchanted through the beautiful grounds so kindly lent by Lady Knightley of Fawsley, or enjoyed the pleasures of social chat. There was also a large audience to hear two clever comediettas—played in fine style by Mr. Reginald Bennett and Miss Mary Johnston—and to see Professor Herman's (Leamington) clever conjuring performance; while a reading, given by Lady Knightley of Fawsley, was not less appreciated. Another source of amusement largely indulged in was dancing, to the strains of the Daventry Band, which, in addition to playing for dancing, gave very creditable selections.⁷⁸

These occasions were also marked by speech-making on political topics of the day and Louisa was a regular contributor.⁷⁹ She was active in the establishment of a Divisional Council, a forum for the various habitations of the county, at Towcester in November 1887. Although each habitation at first was governed by a male Ruling Councillor, Louisa's endeavours for the movement were recognised when she was awarded the League's Grand Star (second grade) in 1888, when the Knightley Habitation consisted of 850 members. In the previous year, she had been elected Dame President of the habitation. With changes in the League's constitution which recognised the important role played by women, Louisa was able to succeed Colonel John Lowndes on his death in 1909 as the Knightley Habitation's Ruling Councillor. By this time, however, the

78. PLG, 1 Sept. 1898, p. 7. Music played an important part in the League's activities. Choirs were established to perform at habitation meetings and at national gatherings. The ladies of the Hastings and St. Leonards Habitation formed a band in 1889 and gave concerts at one meeting 'with pleasing effect and amidst much applause.' *Women's Penny Paper*, 9 Feb. 1889, p.3.

79. The Primrose League provided the opportunity for many women to become accomplished platform speakers. For details, see Lady Greville, *The Gentlewoman in Society* (1892), p. 161–2.

Conservatives were out of office and enthusiasm for the League diminished. Nine years later, after women first got the vote, the organization no longer attracted large numbers to its ranks.

Louisa saw the young as a potential source of future recruits and she encouraged the promotion of a cadet group in her habitation. From 1889, Primrose Buds, juvenile branches of the Primrose League, made their appearance in various parts of the country. Recruited from the age of seven, boys and girls indulged in a variety of activities ranging from maypole dancing to appearing in tableaux of Britannia and the Colonies. Quizzes were held on 'subjects of historical and national importance' for which prizes were awarded and lectures on patriotism were given at branch meetings. In 1903, the 50 members of the Juvenile Branch of the Knightley Habitation were taken by brakes to Towcester for boating and other amusements, followed by a picnic and the inevitable speeches.⁸⁰ Not all such occasions were pleasurable. After entertaining to tea in the riding school 30 Primrose Buds from Daventry, Louisa remarked that they were 'ill-mannered little toads enough.'⁸¹

Another useful aspect of the League's activities was the Primrose Cycling Corps whose members acted as messengers at committee rooms in general elections and who called on voters.⁸² Louisa's skills as an orator were developed at the many fêtes and Primrose League meetings which she attended during her 28 years in the movement. Only a few weeks before her death, she addressed a large audience at Daventry on the topics of Home Rule and Welsh Disestablishment⁸³

There was one issue on which Louisa strongly disagreed with the League: votes for women. As late as March 1907, the *Primrose League Gazette* stated, in reply to a request from a correspondent for a debate in its columns on this issue, that 'Women's suffrage is outside the scope of the Primrose League, and in no way affects our three principles.'⁸⁴ Louisa had been an ardent supporter of the movement for women's suffrage since January 1867 after a discussion with her two cousins, Louisa and Jessie Boucherett, both of whom were active in the field of women's rights. Louisa recalled at a suffrage meeting in 1912 that 'she would never forget one Sunday afternoon in an old Lincolnshire country house [when] she first received their arguments with incredulity and astonishment, but it did not take long to convince her of the justice of the cause.'⁸⁵ In her Journal at the time she wrote:

Willingham, January 5, 1867. They told me some curious facts—the right of women to vote in Yorkshire under the House of Lancaster, their present right to vote in Sweden and Austria (much good has it done them there!), their right to vote in parts of France before the Revolution—a right of which they have since been deprived. Apparently aristocracies are more

80. PLG, Oct. 1903, p. 16.

81. LMK, 8 Sept. 1901, K 2914.

82. *Primrose Herald and Patriot*, Sept. 1896, p. 136.

83. NH, 15 Aug. 1913, p. 3.

84. PLG, March 1907, p. 20.

85. *NM*, 7 June, 1912, p. 4.

favourable to women's rights than democracies. I am not quite sure about it, and fear that in Roman Catholic countries female franchise would only give more votes to the party of the priests. Women are such fools, I believe even here half of them would vote as their parson or apothecary bade them. Jessie says, 'Enfranchise them, and they will obtain a better education.' I should be tempted to get the education first.⁸⁶

Rainald loyally supported Louisa in her views and became an advocate of women's suffrage, first voting for it in the Commons in 1872.⁸⁷ Several bills failed to reach the statute book and there was a strong anti-suffrage campaign mounted by women. They used a variety of arguments to undermine the cause, claiming that governing the country was best left to the stronger sex, that as women were incapable of becoming soldiers, this made them ineligible to vote, and that if they were given the franchise it would disrupt home life. Louisa scathingly dismissed these criticisms at a speech on women's suffrage in Northampton in 1893:

It had been said that the ultimate source of power is force, and that women ought not to have the vote because they are incapable of bearing arms. If they were going to eliminate from the ranks of the electors everyone who was incapable of bearing arms, there would be a much less crowd at the polling station at the next election... People talk a great deal about it being unwomanly to have the franchise. When they considered that possessing the franchise and recording the vote required nothing more formidable than a drive or a walk to the polling-booth once in four or five or six years, they could see nothing in the slightest degree unwomanly in that. It did not take a woman from her house further or longer than a tennis party. Moreover, the experiment had been tried. Women had already voted for County Councils, municipal elections and School Boards, and her ladyship had not yet ascertained that any of those dire and dreadful circumstances had followed their having their share in the government of the country.⁸⁸

An earlier setback to the movement had followed the judgment in the case of *Regina v. Harrold* (1872) where it was decided that only unmarried women could have the vote at municipal elections.⁸⁹ Louisa was moved to remark, as she accompanied Rainald to the polling booth at Badby in November 1885 and saw there the recently-enfranchised agricultural workers, 'Then he [Rainald] voted for himself while I waited outside and felt, for the first time personally, the utter anomaly of my not having a vote, while Joe Bull has!'⁹⁰

86. Ady, *Journals*, pp. 129–30.

87. The second reading of the Women's Disabilities Bill was defeated by 222 votes to 143. Hansard, 3, 211, col. 70, 1 May 1872.

88. *NM*, 10 Nov. 1893, p. 7.

89. P. Hollis, *Ladies Elect. Women in English Local Government, 1865–1914* (1987), p. 7.

90. Entry, 27 Nov. 1885.

A more optimistic pointer to the progress of the suffragist cause was the fact that a clause in the 1884 Franchise Bill, introduced by a Liberal William Woodall, and which was aimed at granting suitably-qualified women the vote, achieved a majority in the Commons for the first time though it failed to reach the statute book.⁹¹ Louisa had attempted to rally support for the clause by calling drawing room meetings in favour of women's suffrage. 'If only we could get some Conservative ladies to come forward', she wrote at the time.⁹² By the 1890s, widening representation of women on publicly-elected bodies, such as school boards, poor law boards and parish, rural and urban district councils, strengthened the case for a parliamentary vote. Many leading Conservatives, including Lord Salisbury, were sympathetic to granting the vote but stopped short of envisaging women M.Ps.

An anti-suffragist protest petition, organised by Mrs. Humphry Ward and signed by 104 ladies, was published in the *Nineteenth Century* in June 1889, claiming that women already exercised considerable political influence and that direct participation in national decision-making was impossible 'either by the disabilities of sex, or by strong formations of custom and habit, resting ultimately upon physical difference, against which it is useless to contend.'⁹³ The motive underlying this petition was the fear that, in the face of Gladstone's opposition to women's suffrage, a Conservative government might favour granting the vote.⁹⁴ Louisa was one of the signatories of a counter-resolution printed in the *Fortnightly Review*. The accompanying statement commented that it was precisely because of 'sex differences' that women had the strongest claim to representation. 'If men and women were exactly alike, and thought and felt alike on all subjects, if their work in the world were exactly the same, women would not suffer, and the State would not suffer from the non-representation of one part of the homogeneous mass. But being different, that wherein they differ remains unrepresented.' Their experience of home and domestic life and other matters would be valuable in considering legislation. The petition also remarked on the conspicuous absence of working women among the anti-suffrage signatories.⁹⁵

No parliamentary bills on women's franchise were put forward between 1897 and 1904; this led to frustration and calls for direct action. The Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) established by Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters, Christabel and Sylvia, in 1903 adopted a more aggressive stance. Named 'suffragettes' by the *Daily Mail*, its members later sought publicity by attacks on politicians and property, leading often to arrest, imprisonment and forced feeding. The non-militant suffragists, of whom Louisa was one, had united their different organisations in 1897 to form the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), led by Millicent Garrett Fawcett and

91. M.Pugh, *Votes For Women* (1994), pp. 22–3. Louisa witnessed the event from the gallery of the House of Commons. See LMK, 10 June 1884, K 2901.

92. LMK, 30 May 1884, K 2901.

93. 'An Appeal Against Female Suffrage', *Nineteenth Century*, 25, 148, June 1889, p. 781. For details of the anti-suffrage campaign, see B.Harrison, *Separate Spheres* (1978), p. 116.

94. B.Campbell, *The Iron ladies* (1987), p. 36.

95. 'Woman's Suffrage: A Reply', *Fortnightly Review*, 46, 211, July 1889, p. 125.

divided into 17 different local areas. Drawing members from across the political spectrum and committed to achieving the vote by constitutional means, the Society was readily acceptable to Louisa. She addressed branch meetings of the NUWSS on its aims. She urged the vote for women home workers and remarked that the movement was a non-party one. 'They had many strong Radicals, and a great many Conservatives ones, like myself,' she told an audience, 'who felt equally strongly on the subject, and she had not the slightest doubt that when they did get the franchise the voters would be equally divided between the two parties.'⁹⁶

Emulating their American counterparts,⁹⁷ the anti-suffragists formed two societies, one for men and one for women, in England in 1908. A letter written that year by Miss Hutchison Wright to the *Woman's Franchise* suggested the need for a Conservative viewpoint on suffrage, and a League was swiftly formed. This grew into a larger organisation following a meeting in Belgravia of interested ladies on 6 November 1908, at which the Conservative and Unionist Women's Franchise Association (CUWFA) was born.⁹⁸ The driving force behind the Association was the Countess of Selborne, Salisbury's daughter. Louisa, who attended the meeting and agreed with its objectives, became its first president and addressed the group on its future strategy.⁹⁹ Whilst on the one hand the Association would never oppose a Conservative candidate even though he may not support women's suffrage, on the other a number of those present complained of being bullied by Conservative Associations and Primrose League habitations for supporting the suffrage cause.¹⁰⁰

Louisa served on the Association's Executive and chaired and spoke at meetings in different parts of the country, devoting much effort to this work. Only a short time after the official launch, she could claim that members were enrolling at a rate of 100 a week.¹⁰¹ Louisa regretted the divisions between the different bodies representing women. In March 1909, she remarked that 'everyone is either a suffragist, Right, which is us, Centre, which is Mrs. Fawcett and Lady Frances Balfour, or Left, which is Mrs. Pankhurst, or else AntiSuffragist.'¹⁰² Louisa was sensitive to the criticism that the CUWFA was concerned with preserving the interests of one class of voters only. She wrote to the *Daventry Express* refuting this, stating, 'Working women, if duly qualified, have as good a right to vote as working men, especially in the present day when so much grandmotherly legislation aims at interference with the interest of working women—legislation in which they have no voice.'¹⁰³

Louisa was convinced that the militants were doing harm to the cause, but met with resistance from members of the Association when she attempted to table a motion

96. *South Buckinghamshire Standard*, 20 March 1908, p. 8.

97. C.Bolt, *The Women's Movements in the United States and Britain from the 1790s to the 1920s* (1993), p. 192.

98. *CUWFA Review*, Nov. 1910, p. 60.

99. *DE*, 12 Dec. 1908, p. 2. See also G.E.Maguire, *Conservative Women. A History of Women and the Conservative Party, 1874–1997* (1998), pp.52–3.

100. Entry, 6 Nov. 1908.

101. *East Berkshire Gazette*, 11 Dec. 1908, p. 5.

102. Entry, 19 March 1909. Louisa wrote two 2d. pamphlets for the Association: *Appeal to Conservative Voters* and *Women and the Vote*. See *CUWFA Review*, Jan.-March 1914, p. 357.

103. *DE*, 13 Feb. 1909, p. 3.

condemning these tactics. The difficulty of drawing strict dividing lines between the suffragists and the suffragettes was demonstrated when a number of the Executive opposed Louisa's motion. These included people such as Lady Betty Balfour, whose sister, Lady Constant Lytton, had been in prison.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, shortly before her death, Louisa wrote a brief letter to *The Times*, holding firm to her own views:

‘The end justifies the means’ is a Jesuitical doctrine which we have all been taught to reprobate. The end—the suffrage for women—is most desirable, and will be attained in time, but the means adopted by the militants are most reprehensible, and have put back the cause for many years. It can never be right to do wrong that good may come.¹⁰⁵

Louisa, ‘with the greatest regret’, decided to resign as president of the Association in 1910 because of her increasing involvement in Empire migration, though she remained a vice-president¹⁰⁶ and retained a close interest in women's suffrage.

Life at Fawsley with Rainald was never dull. She was party to the latest political news and rumours which Rainald brought back from Westminster and she recorded them in detail in her Journal. Both Louisa and Rainald would have preferred Goschen to Salisbury as Conservative Prime Minister in June 1885. In the hope of delaying the formation of a new Cabinet, Rainald voted with 30 other older Members against amendments on the Distribution Bill from the Lords, though Louisa did not approve of this action. When it seemed likely that Salisbury could not take office because of Gladstone's actions, ‘Rainald came in and danced a *literal* hornpipe in my room at 1.30a.m., saying the whole thing was busted up.’¹⁰⁷ Rainald further incurred the wrath of his Party when he refused to go up to Parliament to vote on Jesse Collings's ‘three acres and a cow’ amendment in January 1886 which led to the downfall of the Government.¹⁰⁸ Rainald had been advocating land reform and allotments in his election address and he was strongly supported on this matter by Louisa. Increasing frailty did not deter Rainald from speaking out on matters of principle. For example, at a party meeting at the Foreign Office in February 1887, Rainald favoured the use of the closure by a proportional majority in the Commons and reprimanded the Government for supporting in office what they had violently objected to in Opposition.¹⁰⁹ A fellow M.P. noted that the meeting was spoiled by ‘two garrulous elderly gentlemen’, Sir Rainald Knightley and Sir Richard Paget: ‘a meeting like this did not want to hear them. So they were a good deal interrupted.’¹¹⁰

104. Entry, 27 Oct. 1909.

105. *The Times*, 30 June 1913, p. 10.

106. *CUWFA Review*, Aug. 1910, p. 43.

107. Entry, 20 June 1885. See also A.B.Cooke and J.Vincent, *The Governing Passion* (1974), p. 267.

108. Julia Cartwright recorded on 28 Jan. 1886, ‘Went back from Byfield where the people were angry with Sir Rainald for being absent from the division and he is mentioned as the one Conservative absent without reason in all the papers.’ Julia Cartwright Journals, Cartwright of Edgcote Papers, C.E. 370.

109. LMK, 25 Feb. 1887, K 2902.

110. Sir R.Temple, *Letters and Character Sketches From the House of Commons* (1912), p. 231.

In October 1890, Rainald announced that because of advancing years he would not seek re-election to the Commons at the next general election. He wrote to Salisbury in January 1892:

As an old political friend and steady supporter of *yours*—though not always of your predecessors—I may just mention that having always taken great interest in politics I should be sorry to be quite ‘out of the hunt’—and should rather like to have a seat in your House. It would only be a Life Peerage for one very short life as I am seventy-two years of age and have no children.¹¹¹

When the Conservatives left office in August the same year, Rainald’s wish was granted and he took the title of Baron Knightley of Fawsley. The announcement took people by surprise as it was well-known that his father, Sir Charles, had twice turned down the offer of a peerage. The journal *The World* claimed that Rainald’s acceptance was ‘in order to please his clever and popular wife.’¹¹² Ryland Adkins, in a sketch of Rainald published about this time, offered a more generous explanation. He argued that ‘as a *habitué* of Westminster for forty years, exclusion from that fascinating arena would have been insupportable.’ A seat in the Lords provided a suitable alternative.¹¹³

Like many other Tory squires, he was deeply suspicious of the 1888 County Councils Act which transferred responsibility for the operation of local government from county magistrates to elected County Councils. As a magistrate of long-standing, Rainald addressed the issue at Northamptonshire Quarter Sessions in April 1888, urging county magistrates to put themselves forward as candidates and warning that ‘if county magistrates, who had time at their disposal and had had experience should hold aloof, he was greatly afraid that affairs would get into the hands of a very inferior class of persons, who pay little or no rates themselves, and no doubt, will be anxious and quite ready to spend other people’s money.’¹¹⁴ Rainald was elected alderman for the first Northamptonshire County Council in January 1889. Three years later, he was once more nominated and in the event tied with two Liberal candidates for the last remaining seat. When Lord Spencer, the Liberal chairman, gave his casting vote to one of the Liberals, there was a great outcry from the Conservatives on the Council. Rainald regained his seat in March 1895 following the death of Samuel Dunkley, the Liberal alderman¹¹⁵ but, as with his parliamentary career, he was an irregular attender and made few contributions to the proceedings.

One of the most pressing problems facing Louisa and Rainald during this period was the loss of income resulting from the agricultural depression which began in 1879. This had come about because of the low prices of corn, beef and mutton due to foreign imports. As the Assistant Commissioner to the Royal Commission on Agriculture who

111. Sir Rainald Knightley to Lord Salisbury, 30 Jan. 1892, Hatfield House Papers, 3M/E.

112. *The World*, 31 Aug. 1892, p. 4.

113. Adkins, *op.cit.*, p. 21.

114. *Northamptonshire Guardian*, 7 April 1888, p. 5.

115. J. Bradbury, *Government and County. A History of the Northamptonshire County Council, 1889–1989* (1989), p. 16.

surveyed Northamptonshire stated in his report, ‘With few exceptions everyone engaged in agriculture has lost money.’¹¹⁶ The area between Daventry and Northampton consisted of good arable and the pasture was of high quality, but both owners and tenants had suffered, the former by a steep drop in property values and the latter through depreciation in working capital and loss of reserves. Louisa described the situation at Fawsley in September 1879:

Lambourne and Bolton both talking of giving up their farms was the very serious news which Mr. Waters [Rainald’s agent] brought us this morning and which has occupied us entirely ever since. To have three (including Sheppard’s) of the best farms let, one at £1000 (Lambourne’s), one at £786 (Sheppard’s) and Bolton’s at about £800, together over £2600 on one’s hands at such a time as this, is indeed a very heavy blow, and unless they can be relet at something like the same price, we cannot possibly continue to live here, for large as the *nominal* rent roll is (£13, 800), the *margin* is so small that in the best of times we can only just manage to get along.¹¹⁷

Two years later, at Louisa’s suggestion, Rainald invited all his tenants to the Hall and announced his intention of giving a remission of 10 per cent rent for three years. The announcement was received in almost total silence. ‘Not a symptom of cordial, genial feeling of any kind—oh, what a change since 12 years ago ... I cannot disguise that we are both deeply, bitterly mortified and disappointed,’ she wrote afterwards. On the following day, Rainald felt obliged to give an additional 10 per cent remission.¹¹⁸ In 1884, Louisa remarked that ‘the extraordinary absence of rain for so many months has told severely on the water supply, and wells and pools are running dry in every direction ... low prices are despairing. We sold wheat this week at 29 shillings and beasts are fetching £18 and £19 after 17 months’ keep.’¹¹⁹

Rainald’s earlier extravagances added to the burden of debt. One casualty of the campaign to economise was the sale of their London house, 4 Grosvenor Crescent. Rainald discovered on a visit to his Daventry solicitor in August 1890 that the debt on the Fawsley property was almost £100,000, the interest on which, £4000, represented half their income. He was also obliged to execute a fresh mortgage of £31,000 in December, resulting in the postponement of Louisa’s jointure and pin money.¹²⁰ At one stage, they contemplated closing Fawsley, discharging the servants and going away for a year, but this never happened.¹²¹

116. Royal Commission on Agriculture. Report of Mr. Hunter Pringle, Assistant Commissioner, on the Counties of Bedford, Huntingdon and Northampton, dated 1 Oct. 1894. P.P. 1895 xvii, p. 16.

117. LMK, 8 Sept. 1879, K 2898.

118. LMK, 16 and 17 Sept. 1881, K 2899.

119. LMK, 24 Nov. 1884, K 2901. In 1883, Rainald owned 8041 acres in Northamptonshire. J. Bateman, *The Great Landowners of Great Britain and Ireland* (1883 edn.), p. 256.

120. LMK, 6 Aug. and 17 Dec. 1890, K 2905.

121. In 1895, at nearby Althorp, Lord Spencer economised by closing down the house and making a world trip. ‘Rents are very bad and tenants are calling out for further help,’ he informed Rosebery. ‘It will be a relief to shut up shop here for six months.’ Spencer to Rosebery, 15 Sept. 1895, Rosebery Papers, 10062, f. 224, National Library of Scotland.

On 8 April 1891, Louisa went to London and ‘Visited my poor darling in his little lodging in 36 Duke Street. It is so hard on him to have no home.’¹²² Louisa herself had begun to use the ladies’ clubs which had opened in the last two decades of the nineteenth century and which were mainly situated in and around Piccadilly. She first of all joined the Alexandra in Grafton Street, the premier ladies’ club in England with a membership of 900, including representatives of the leading families. A contemporary described it thus: ‘Strictly speaking, the Alexandra is the club which carries out the idea of such institutions for women most consistently; it is the only ladies’ club which has a rule making it impossible for members to entertain visitors of the sterner sex, and although not actually boasting of the motto “No man may enter here on pain of death”, it nevertheless enforces the rule most rigidly, and, save for the porters and footmen, no male being over the age of seven is allowed to cross the threshold.’¹²³ Louisa eventually became its president.

A close competitor was the Green Park, a club which included in its rules that ‘no lady is eligible who has been, or would probably be, excluded from attending Her Majesty’s Drawing Room.’ Less exclusive and only a few houses away was the Pioneer. Its doors were open to all classes of society with the common aim of furthering the advancement of women. One interesting feature of the club was its Thursday evening debates on current issues and social welfare which attracted many eminent speakers. Founded by an advocate of temperance, the club strictly prohibited alcohol, though a smoking room was provided for its members.¹²⁴ Clubs increasingly catered for special interests; the Green Park mounted musical and dramatic entertainment given by such celebrities as Melba and Sarah Bernhardt, the Writers’ Club catered for the needs of journalists and authors, the University Club for Ladies for graduates and diploma holders, and the Sandringham for women golfers, who were also offered billiards and could receive coaching from a lady professional who was in attendance.¹²⁵ A somewhat different club was the Rehearsal, which provided a temporary home for ladies of the chorus and other minor actresses who were resting between engagements. Through her own involvement with the Colonies (see below) she also joined the Ladies’ Empire Club in Grosvenor Street which was opened by Joseph Chamberlain in May 1902. Initiated by the ladies of the Victoria League, it was organised on non-political lines and provided a centre for visitors from the Colonies and those from the provinces visiting London.¹²⁶

Both Louisa and Rainald visited Firle Place frequently and she always regretted when it was time to leave. Rainald’s sister, Sophia Selina, and her husband, Henry Gage, had no home of their own and so lived part of the time at Fawsley, partly at Whitehall Gardens, London, and partly at Firle. One of Sophia’s admirers was Sir Thomas Munro of Lindertis, and a friend of Henry. As Sophia’s grand-daughter stated in her memoirs, ‘He remained unmarried all his life for her sake. She was known, in fact, as the “lady with two husbands”, but it was all perfectly respectable and no scandal attached to their

122. Entry, 8 April 1891.

123. E. Willis, ‘Ladies’ Clubs in London’, *Lady’s Realm*, 1899, p. 310.

124. *Ibid.*, pp. 312–13.

125. *The Lady*, 21 Nov. 1901, p. 834.

126. *The Times*, 14 May 1902, p. 9.

names.¹²⁷ In her later years, Louisa often attended family occasions at Firle (see Plate 12) and was delighted when the future sixth Viscount Gage was given the name of Rainald. Augustus Hare, the author, after a visit there in 1884 recalled, ‘It is a large house, like a French chateau, close near the downs, but as my kind but singular little host, Lord Gage, likes every window open in these bitter winds, the cold is ferocious.’ A house party of 20 people was in residence, including Rainald and Louisa, and she was fond of exploring the area, particularly the houses of old families. ‘On Wednesday,’ he wrote, ‘I got Lady Knightley to walk with me (the inhabitants of this place had never heard of it!), two and a half miles across the marshes to Laughton Place, the ancient and original residence of the Pelhams.’¹²⁸ She also relished the story of how the Gages inherited Hengrave Hall, the magnificent Tudor mansion in her native county of Suffolk. Lady Penelope Darcy, granddaughter of the builder, Sir Thomas Kytson, had had the estate settled on her by her mother in 1643. Penelope had three suitors at the same time, Sir George Trenchard, Sir John Gage and Sir William Hervey, and promised in time to marry all three. Her first husband, Trenchard, died and shortly afterwards she married Sir John Gage, by whom she had nine children. After his death in 1642, she married Hervey, thus keeping her promise.¹²⁹

As Rainald suffered from frequent attacks of gout and rheumatism, he had been advised by his doctor to drink the waters and take the baths at Homburg and Wildbad. Homburg was particularly popular with the English and Louisa and Rainald, together with the Gages, often stayed there at the end of the London season. (Typically, Rainald refused to learn German, ‘The grinding gibberish of the garrulous Goth’, as he called it.) Political news, rumours of happenings at both the English and German Courts and the stories behind the latest events in international diplomacy were freely circulated, and Louisa recorded many of them in her Journal. As she wrote, ‘And so we go on, chattering and idling, but there are so many people here, distinguished in some way or other, the chatter is well worth while.’¹³¹ One of the great attractions was the frequent presence of Royalty, particularly the Prince of Wales, later Edward VII. One commentator noted, ‘The mad whirl of gaiety comes on in August, after the arrival of the Prince, when all the hostesses try to outshine each other, each succeeding entertainment becomes more extravagant, and the struggle after originality is often quite comic.’¹³² Louisa mentioned a lunch party attended by the Prince, after which he played cards with Rainald. ‘He came to see Lady Ventry off the next morning,’ she wrote, ‘and brought me a lovely bouquet of violets, whereat I was pleased, as also being lunched by Lord Spencer (which made the Prince say to Rainald, “What will Northamptonshire say?”).’¹³³ The visits abroad became less frequent as financial problems mounted.

127. Yvonne R.Gage, *Firle* (1928), unpublished MS, Gage Papers, Firle Place, Sussex.

128. A.Hare, *The Story of My Life* (1900), v, p. 407.

129. A.Oswald, *Firle Place* (1972), p. 19.

130. A.Hare, *The Story of My Life* (1896), i, p. 405.

131. Entry, 26 Aug. 1891.

132. ‘Society in Homburg’, *Lady’s Realm*, 1898, p. 422.

133. Entry, 28 Aug. 1889.

In the early 1890s, with increasing attacks of gout, Rainald's health deteriorated rapidly. He suffered temporary paralysis of the leg in November 1894 but slowly recovered. Louisa was due to speak the following month on behalf of Richard Greville Verney, later 19th Baron Willoughby de Broke, at a Primrose League meeting. Rainald had not yet come to terms with Louisa's skill at speech-making, as Verney's own account makes clear:

We were going to a Conservative meeting in the village in support of my own candidature for the Rugby Division of Warwickshire. Lord Knightley did not take part in the meeting, but his wife made an excellent speech. It seemed strange that this tall, thin grand seigneur, with his delicate oval face and high cheek-bones, redolent of exclusive Conservatism, should have been married to a lady of robust and vigorous mien who was one of the most eloquent pioneers of Woman Suffrage and Women's Rights. Yet so it was. The Conservative cause was to be expounded, and Lady Knightley showed us how to do it. I thought, being then of the ripe age of twenty-four, that her performance was masterly. My father, thought it was a dangerous *tour de force*. He knew his Boswell, and with regard to a woman making a speech, was on the side of Dr. Johnson: 'A woman making a speech is the same thing as a dog walking on hind legs. The wonder is not whether he does it well or ill, but that he does it at all.' But the most amusing commentary was the terse sentence of Lord Knightley. At supper, when the rest of the company had finished congratulating the noble lady, his lordship played the last and winning card, and brought the conversation to earth by saying quite shortly, 'My dear, you spoke too fast.'¹³⁴

It was whilst staying with the Carysforts at Elton Hall near Peterborough in April 1895 that Rainald suffered a stroke. He was too ill to be moved for a month and was confined to a invalid carriage for the remainder of his life. After a short stay in London which, Louisa remarked, 'looks odd from beside a bath chair', they returned to Fawsley at the end of July. The success of Conservative candidates for South and Mid Northamptonshire and the return of a Salisbury government was celebrated in September at a fête at Weedon, where Rainald received a warm reception. On Sunday 15 December, he became unwell and died peacefully four days later. Rainald had asked for a modest funeral. Only close relatives, a dozen male and female servants and a number of tenants from the estate, attended the funeral which took place at Fawsley Church on Christmas Eve.¹³⁵

It was a grievous blow to Louisa, but it strengthened her resolve to devote the rest of her life to advancing causes which deserved her support. A few weeks after Rainald's death she wrote in her Journal, 'Everybody has been good and kind, but naturally the world goes on, and to them it all passes away, but to me life can never be again as it has been.

But as Mr. Rowsell [vicar of Christ Church, Mayfair] said today, bury your grief

134. Lord Willoughby de Broke, *The Passing Years* (1974), pp. 65–6. For de Broke's subsequent political career, see D. Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (1990), pp. 520–30.

135. *NM*, 27 Dec. 1895, p. 6.

beneath the soil of work for others and it will sprout up and, I trust, bring forth good fruit.¹³⁶ She was pleased to take Rainald's place as churchwarden, but it was almost three years before she made another political speech.

Louisa had already taken on a new role in the sphere of local government in the previous year. The 1894 Local Government Act gave women the right to stand for election as Parish Councillors and Louisa put herself forward for the newly-formed Badby Parish Council. Neighbouring parishes settled their business in a variety of ways. Charwelton and Preston Capes decided not to have a Council and Everdon settled the matter without a contest. At Badby, however, there were 16 nominations for nine places, Louisa being the only woman candidate.¹³⁷ The Parish Council elections excited much interest in Northamptonshire where there were contests in 80 per cent of the parishes, often on class lines.¹³⁸ Rainald and Louisa held a private meeting with some of the leading men in the village, offering the Radicals three seats if they consented not to hold a contest, but this was refused. Despite the manoeuvrings of a staunch Liberal Nonconformist evangelist from Badby, Eli Thomas Sanders, Louisa was elected in joint second place, along with seven others. It was ironic that, though now a councillor, she was not entitled to a vote.¹³⁹ Louisa regretted that Council business of a non-political nature should be settled on a party basis. She was subsequently re-elected in 1899, being first out of 14 candidates, and was made vice-president of the county's Conference of Parish Councils.¹⁴⁰

Although there was no aspect of Council business which specifically required the help of women, nevertheless there were informal meetings of lady parish councillors in London which Louisa attended where papers were read and matters of common interest were discussed.¹⁴¹ Louisa was elected chairman of the Parish Council in 1901 and she carried out her duties with great thoroughness: this included an exploration of all the footpaths of the parish which she undertook on her own. By the time she resigned in 1906, rather fewer than 100 women in England had served as Parish Councillors.¹⁴²

Louisa had begun to take an interest in education when she was young and took an increasingly active role in its promotion in her later years. Shortly before her marriage to Rainald she wrote in her Journal:

I see I have not mentioned a book which I have lately been deeply interested, i.e. Matthew Arnold on *Continental Schools and Universities*. The comparison between our system, or rather no system, of Secondary Instruction, and that pursued in France and above all in Germany, is *by no means* satisfactory, and I trust this subject may be taken up in earnest by the new Parliament, though I very much fear that public opinion is yet by

136. Entry, 23 Jan. 1896.

137. *NH*, 22 Dec. 1894, p. 7. Six of the candidates were farmers and four were labourers.

138. J.Howarth, 'The Liberal Revival in Northamptonshire, 1880–1895: a Case Study in late Nineteenth Century Elections', *Historical Journal*, 12, 1, 1969, pp. 89, 109.

139. Louisa qualified on the basis of having resided within three miles of the parish for at least a year before the election.

140. At the conference, she advocated triennial elections, *NH*, 5 May 1899, p. 7.

141. Entries, 12 Nov. 1899 and 14 March 1902.

142. *Englishwoman's Year Book for 1906*, p. 233.

no means prepared for the radical reform which is required. The division of the very numerous public schools into classical and so-called 'real' studies enable those intended for trade or business to get a really good and *useful* education, the certificates of fitness required from every teacher whether in public or private schools, the leaving examination so arranged as to be, as it were, the crowning point of the whole course of study, not as they are here a mere cram, the manner in which the classics are taught, so as to impart the real spirit of ancient literature instead of being a mere question of verbal criticism, valuable to the scholar but forgotten before the end of the year by the ordinary pupil—all these things seem to me so infinitely superior to our plans that one cannot help thinking there must be some counterbalancing disadvantage, or we should have adopted them long ago.¹⁴³

For many years Louisa was one of the managers of Badby School, a Church foundation which had managed to avoid the creation of a school board in the district. She was suspicious of the 1902 Education Act which placed the administration and finance of voluntary schools such as Badby in the hands of the new Local Education Authorities (LEAs). Although continuing to enjoy the right to appoint the head and assistant teachers and to teach religious knowledge, such elementary schools became more closely identified with the State system. One-third of the managers were to be nominated by the LEA, but the school maintained a majority through its foundation managers, and Louisa was appointed as one of the four in this category in January 1903. After a hectic meeting in August she recorded glumly, 'I foresee we shall have a desperate struggle to save our school from ceasing to be a Church School, after all the years we have fought for it.'¹⁴⁴ The main problem was that the existing Badby School was in poor condition and a new building was therefore needed. Louisa, together with others, strongly opposed the proposal to build a replacement serving both Badby and Newnham, situated midway between the two villages.¹⁴⁵

She passionately believed in the importance of preserving regular religious teaching in schools and in rousing the pupils' enthusiasm for patriotism. Empire Day, a movement which had been introduced by Lord Meath in 1902, was celebrated annually at Badby, combining both religious and patriotic elements. Louisa, who regularly attended the ceremony, described one such occasion as follows: The children marched in, saluted the flag and sang Rudyard Kipling's *Song of the Children*. Mr. Scratton [vicar of Badby] and I made little speeches. We sang *God Save the King* and I distributed buns. The children have been learning the *Empire Catechism* (one King, one Fleet, one Empire) all the winter and took up my points in many places.' Much to her regret, the battle to save the school was eventually lost.¹⁴⁶ A new Council School was opened at Badby on 4 January 1913 but she retained her interest in the school by subsequently becoming one of its first managers.

143. LMK, 12 Dec. 1868, K 2892.

144. Entry, 10 Aug. 1903.

145. *DE*, 2 Nov. 1907, p. 4.

146. Entry, 24 May 1907 and *DE*, 1 June 1907, p. 3.

Louisa's views on the aims and content of education were essentially conventional. She believed that from an early age it was important to guide the child mentally, physically and above all morally and religiously. She also advocated the cultivation of a love of reading which would give a life-time of pleasure, the introduction of more music in the curriculum and the wider teaching of nature study in order that children could better understand their environment. Towards the end of her life, Louisa reviewed the recent changes in the object of boys' education, which was formerly to provide generations of clerks, little skilled in the

use of their hands; now, a better balance had been struck by schools helping to prepare boys for their future employment.

She also believed that 'every healthy, strong, and active girl should be trained thoroughly in domestic arts.'¹⁴⁷ An opportunity to implement such a scheme occurred following the Technical Instruction Act of 1889, which allowed local authorities to supply aid or technical instruction by means of the product of a penny rate. At a meeting of the Northamptonshire County Council in May 1891, a sum of £2000 was allocated for this providing cookery and dairy lessons for women cottagers and their children. Subsequently, the Council invited the co-operation of 'any association or committee of ladies in the county' who would undertake to assist in the scheme.¹⁴⁸ Louisa contacted Lady Spencer to persuade her to head an appropriate committee and a meeting took place at County Hall, Northampton, in September 1891 to decide the best way of organising the teaching. The county was divided into four divisions, each with its own vice-president, for the purpose of collecting information on the needs of each locality and to submit applications for the type of instruction required. Louisa was appointed vice-president of the Southern division and she began work with her usual vigour. Rural schools could not afford to teach cookery, and Louisa gave high priority to its teaching in her area. She described a cookery class which she had observed in Badby:

It was a picturesque scene in the low and timbered kitchen at Mrs. Montgomery's to see the earnest faces of the ten little maidens at work in pairs over bread—poor man's goose (composed of alternate layers of potato, liver, fat and sage and onions)—sausage roll and treacle pudding.¹⁴⁹

Within a short space of time, Louisa had organised similar classes at Blisworth, Deanshanger, Paulerspury, Silverstone and Towcester. Other classes were held in dairying, laundry work and home dress-cutting and making. One of the tasks of the ladies was to persuade the mothers of the benefits of the classes for their daughters. As Louisa told a meeting, 'If they could get hold of the girl between leaving school and going into service and teach them these things it would be of great service to them, and they would be doing a good and useful work.'¹⁵⁰ In 1896, the County Council established a School of Domestic Economy in Northampton which provided residential training for girls and instruction in a range of subjects in various parts of the county.

147. *DE*, 2 Dec. 1905, p. 2.

148. *NH*, 2 Oct. 1891, p. 6.

149. Entry, 23 Feb. 1892.

Louisa was also keen to promote other subjects and areas which were of particular interest to her, particularly health education, nursing and first aid. She had been one of the earliest members of the Northampton Centre of the St. John's Ambulance Association from its inception in 1878, organising numerous courses in the county and she became president of the Daventry section. Her work was recognised when in March 1900, Louisa was appointed by the Queen as a Lady of Grace to the Order of St. John of Jerusalem.¹⁵¹

Although Louisa's considerable energy had been applied to educational matters, its scope had been circumscribed by outside constraints. After the establishment of school boards in 1870, women had become eligible both to vote and to stand for election; by 1900 there were almost 200 women board members, many of whom made important contributions to the advancement of education.¹⁵² When the County Councils were formed in 1888, two women, Jane Cobden and Lady Sandhurst, both Liberals, were elected, but after a legal challenge it was ruled that women were no longer eligible. By the 1902 Education Act, which abolished school boards, women lost their elected status and could not serve on the new Local Education Authorities. They could, however, be chosen as co-opted members of the Education Committees, which were primarily advisory bodies to the LEAs, and they were able to exercise delegated powers apart from raising a rate or borrowing money.

The Liberal members of the Northamptonshire County Council, representing Nonconformism, and the Conservative members, representing Church of England interests, held bitterly opposing views on the 1902 Act. The legislation was a product of a Conservative government, and the Liberals, who were in a majority on the Council, were reluctant to see its provisions implemented and made for delays where possible. It decided that the new Education Committee should consist of 24 Councillors and six co-opted members, only one of the latter category being an explicitly Church representative.¹⁵³ The scheme was finally approved by the full Council on 19 March 1903. The co-opted members consisted of four male headteachers, Mrs. Pearce Sharman, wife of the Wellingborough Liberal politician and a Congregationalist, and Louisa.¹⁵⁴

The County Council was responsible for all elementary education in Northamptonshire as well as the development of secondary education (local authority grammar schools were established under the Act). There were four standing committees of the Authority and Louisa was initially asked to serve on the Elementary Education Sub-Committee but within a year she was appointed to the Higher Education body.¹⁵⁵ The first meeting of the Education Committee was in County Hall at which Edward Monckton, a Conservative with moderate views, was elected chairman. Louisa observed,

'It was very interesting to watch how men do things: it strikes me that they make speeches much more than we do.'¹⁵⁶ There was scepticism among the Conservative ranks

150.NH, 2 Oct. 1891, p. 6.

151.DE, 17 March 1900, p. 1.

152.P.Hollis, 'Women in Council. Separate Spheres, Public Space', in J.Rendall (ed), *Equal or Different. Women's Politics, 1800-1914* (1987), p. 193.

153.Bradbury, op.cit, p. 95.

154.NEC, Minutes, 25 July 1903, p. 1

over the appointment of two Inspectors in September. The advertisement attracted no fewer than 314 applications; one of these appointed was Davis Gotch, chairman of Kettering School Board since it was established 13 years previously.¹⁵⁷ Louisa was horrified at the Committee's proposal to deduct from teachers' salaries the time employed in religious education and she voted, in vain, against it.¹⁵⁸ This decision was rescinded two years later, though Ryland Adkins proposed to reintroduce such deductions whilst the legality of such payments were being considered in the High Court. Louisa now achieved a minor triumph. In her own words, 'Mr. Monckton was going to let it pass, but I challenged a division but we threw it out by 7 to 6. Cockle a doodle doo!'¹⁵⁹

One of the duties imposed on LEAs in 1907 by the Education (Administrative Provisions) Act was the medical inspection of elementary school children. Two School Medical Officers were appointed and Louisa drew the attention of the Committee to the Worcestershire scheme, whereby the Medical Officer identified children in need of aftercare and suggested that school managers should set up Local Aid Committees.¹⁶⁰ In February 1906 she spoke at a joint meeting of the Education Committee and teachers which was convened to discuss ways of making evening classes more attractive and later that year Louisa, together with Adkins, represented the Committee at a conference of the National Association for the Feeble-Minded on the after-care of defective children.¹⁶¹

Louisa also made her mark in the Higher Education Sub-Committee. She spoke out against the Board of Education's decision to terminate the grants for Science and Art Department's day classes at the Daventry Girls' School on the ground that it was a private institution: the Sub-Committee gave her its support in the matter. She was involved in a range of other issues: the question of preferential treatment for boys in rural districts in the award of scholarships, religious education in secondary schools, the provision of technical facilities in appropriate institutions as well as the long drawn-out negotiations to recognise Daventry Grammar School as an efficient secondary school. Louisa managed to persuade the Committee to approve a scheme whereby day and evening schools wishing to join the National Home Reading Union, which encouraged pupils to purchase and take home books at a low price, to have their fees paid by the Committee.¹⁶² The work, while of great interest to her, was time-consuming and Louisa was relieved to resign from the Education Committee in April 1913 after ten years' service.

155. *NEC*, Minutes, 18 June 1904, p. 1.

156. Entry, 25 July 1903.

157. *NDR*, 14 Seph 1905, p.2.

158. Entry, 23 Jan. 1904.

159. Entry, 27 Oct. 1906 and NH, 2 Nov. 1906, p. 6.

160. *NEC*, Minutes, 28 May 1910, p. 67.

161. *NEC*, Minutes, 1 April 1911, p. 44.

162. *NEC*, Minutes, 3 Dec. 1910, p. 323. Addressing an audience at a bazaar to raise funds for building a village reading room and library at Blakesley, Louisa stated, 'Now that everybody was taught to read, it behoved them to endeavour to produce good wholesome literature, and so to try to counteract the pernicious books which unfortunately at the present day found their way into the hands of the young.' *NH*, 14 Aug. 1886, p. 6.

Throughout her married life Louisa was a regular visitor to the local workhouse at Daventry. Like many other women of her generation, she was concerned that the welfare of a substantial number of old and young women continually passing through the wards, the care of girls, and the nurseries full of children, was determined by all-male Boards of Guardians. From 1872, women were admitted as Poor Law Guardians, the first to be elected being Miss Martha Merrington at South Kensington in 1875. As *The Lady* later remarked, The women who seek election are among the cultured and educated classes rather than those who are simply practical.¹⁶³ Among the reforms instituted by some of the early women members were the greater use of boarding out of children with private families, the establishment of Ladies' Visiting Committees, supervising the female inmates, selecting staff for the Infirmary, inspecting the workhouse schools and arranging for the emigration of suitable girls to the Colonies and Dominions.¹⁶⁴ At first, few women were elected; there were only 136 Lady Guardians out of a total of over 20,000 in 1892. However, the Local Government Act of 1894 which practically abolished the rating qualification, led to a greater number standing for election and by 1910 there were 1160 women Guardians.¹⁶⁵ Louisa, although never a Lady Guardian, was a keen supporter of the movement and was president of the Northamptonshire Society for Promoting the Return of Women Guardians. She was particularly pleased when in 1906 four more women were elected within the county, including her friend and neighbour, Beatrice Cartwright, for Brackley and Juliet Knightley, wife of the fifth baronet, Sir Charles, for Everdon.¹⁶⁶ But the success of the campaign was short-lived; finding it impossible to conduct the Society on non-political lines, Louisa was one of the prime movers for its dissolution the following year. She was a founder member from 1885 of the Association for the Advancement of Boarding Out of Pauper Children, whose main aim was to persuade Boards of Guardians to adopt the boarding out principle. By 1893, 231 Unions had done so.¹⁶⁷

Louisa first started to write her Journals systematically on her fourteenth birthday, 25 April 1856; there is some evidence that she began to record events even before this, but only a fragment now remains.¹⁶⁸ The shiny black notebooks into which entries were made accompanied Louisa to all parts of the world. There is little doubt that she intended them for eventual publication. The Duke of Argyll had been shown her Journal by Louisa during her stay at Balmoral in 1865 and he had pronounced it to be a valuable document for future historians of the nineteenth century.¹⁶⁹ She was an avid reader of other people's diaries and compared them with her own.¹⁷⁰ She wrote in 1894, 'I don't want my journal

163. *The Lady*, 23 Jan. 1902, p. 134.

164. F.H. Müller, The Work of Women Poor Law Guardians, *Westminster Review*, 67, Jan.-April 1885, pp. 388-9.

165. *Englishwoman's Year Book for 1910*, p. 189.

166. NH, 1 June 1906, p. 6.

167. Entry, 3 July 1885 and *The Queen*, 17 June 1893, p. 1036.

168. In the Knightley Papers at the Northamptonshire Record Office, there are two pages of notes headed 'An Account of my first ball, play, wedding, visits, January-May 1854', K 2826.

169. Ady, *Journals*, p. xv. In her Journal, Louisa records meeting Argyll at Balmoral on 28 Nov. 1865, K 2889.

170. 'Whenever I read other people's Journals,' she recorded in 1890, 'I always feel fired with ambition to improve my own.' LMK, 16 Dec. 1890, K 2905.

to become like Lady Waterford's, extracts from which Mr. Hare prints in his book *Two Noble Lives* [published in 1893, commemorating the lives of the two Stuart sisters, Louisa, Marchioness of Waterford and Charlotte, wife of Earl Canning] which we are reading, and a mere bald record of facts, so I must try to make something of such an uneventful week as this.¹⁷¹ Louisa was inspired 'with the wish to make more of my journal after reading A.C.Benson's essay on Authorship in *From a College Window*:

A diary need not be a dreary chronicle of one's movements; it should aim rather at giving a salient account of some particular episode, a walk, a book, a conversation. It is a practice which brings its own reward in many ways; it is a singularly delightful thing to look at old diaries, to see how one was occupied, say ten years ago ; what one was reading, the people one was meeting, one's earlier point of view.¹⁷²

A few years before, Louisa had had a long talk with Augustus Hare at Lady Penrhyn's on the disadvantages of keeping a journal. Hare told his host to begin at once for 'When you .are 90, it is the only book you will care to read.'¹⁷³ He had perennially encouraged Louisa to continue writing her Journals and had lent her the proof sheets of his *The Story of My Life* which was then being privately printed. She commented, 'He says himself that the story of *my* life written in full detail would be interesting, reminding me of what Gibbon says: "The pathetic almost consists in the detail of little circumstances."¹⁷⁴ Other published models were provided by Sir Mountstuart Duff's four volumes of *Notes from a Diary*, spanning the years 1851 to 1886, and the *Correspondence of Sarah, Lady Lyttelton*, letters from the elder daughter of the second Earl Spencer to William Henry Lyttelton, later third Baron. A slightly gloomy note was struck in the Preface to Lord Ronald Gower's *My Reminiscences*, which Louisa had purchased: 'I have compiled these recollections from my old journals diaries which will probably serve to light the kitchen fire when their author has departed.'¹⁷⁵ Louisa read with great interest Sir Walter Scott's Journals when they were published in their complete form in 1890, especially the opening entry written when he was 54: 'November 1825. I have all my life regretted that I did not keep a regular [Journal]. I have myself lost recollection of much that was interesting and I have deprived my family and the public of some curious information by not carrying this resolution into effect.'¹⁷⁶ However, she was disappointed to find in them little trace of the genius which was manifested in his novels.¹⁷⁷

In sharp contrast to this was the impact which the posthumously published *Le Journal de Marie Bashkirtseff* had on Louisa. Bashkirtseff was a talented painter who had died at the age of 24. When the translation of the Journal had appeared in England in 1890 it had caused a sensation. Louisa called the book unique and extraordinary and admired her

171.Entry, 21 Jan. 1894.

172.(1906), pp. 188–90 and Entry, 28 Aug. 1906.

173.Entry, 19 July 1898.

174.Entry, 29 Jan. 1895.

175.(1883), i, p. iv.

176.J.G.Tait (ed), *Journal of Sir Walter Scott, 1825–6* (1939), p. 1.

177.Entry, 16 Dec. 1890, K 2905.

talent if not her cynical frankness. 'If it were a novel', she wrote, 'one would say it was preposterous and ridiculous but it is *true*: the absolutely true journal of a young Russian girl who spends her youth at Nice, Florence, etc. and who at 13, when she begins, talks and writes like a woman of 30.' Louisa contrasted her own Journals with those of Bashkirtseff 's:

Except Pepys, no one ever wrote so exactly in the *palais de la vérité*: and he wrote in a cipher which he believed undiscoverable while she writes expressly for publication. She is utterly *inaimable*, vain and selfish, self-absorbed in an incredible degree, but I wonder how most people's journals, mine for instance, would read if I wrote down *la vérité vraie* as she does—how I am often bored with looking after Mother, how often I wish for a great deal of money, partly that my darling might not be worried, partly for all the things I should like to do, among them holding a political salon, but then I must honestly add I also think and believe that God does not give us money because it is not good for us... Well, be it Marie Bashkirtseff's or anybody else's, there is nothing so interesting as a journal to read.¹⁷⁸

Louisa's own lively style and frankness of utterance make for a very readable narrative. Although she sometimes wearied of the task—she could write over 50 years later, 'Busy reading my Journal of 1862. Seems I have not made as much progress since those days as I ought'—she continued to keep a record of events until only a few weeks before her death. On New Year's Day 1908, Louisa began an autobiography which she had contemplated writing for some time, but she only produced a few pages relating to her childhood.¹⁸⁰

Apart from keeping her Journals, Louisa wrote comparatively little except articles for a range of magazines. These were mostly on topics connected either with the various movements with which she was associated such as women's work and emigration and pamphlets for the Primrose League and the Girls' Friendly Society. Louisa devoted much time to researching the history of the Knightleys and Fawsley itself, drawing information from the rich accumulation of documents in the Hall and from visits to the British Museum and the London Library.¹⁸¹ One of her most extensive essays was on the history

178. Bashkirtseff stated in the Preface: To begin with, I wrote for a long time without a thought of being read, and in the next place it is precisely because I hope to be read that I am absolutely sincere. If this book be not the *exact*, the *absolute*, the *strict* truth, it has no right to exist. I not only say all the time what I think, but I never contemplated hiding for an instant what might make me appear ridiculous, or prove to my disadvantage; for the rest I think myself too admirable for censure. Rest assured, therefore, kind reader, that I reveal myself completely, entirely (p. xxix). 179. LMK, 27 Sept. 1912, K 2922.

180. Julia Cartwright wrote in her Journal shortly after Louisa's death, 'Charlie [Knightley] sent me a fragment of her *Memoir* which she began at Rowfant (as she told me) on New Year's Day 1908. It tells the early part of her life and all about her old father who was actually at Harrow with Byron. I only hope that more may be forthcoming.' Julia Cartwright Journals, 23 Oct. 1913, Cartwright of Edgcote Papers, C.E. 396.

181. See, for example, her chapter, 'Fawsley', in A. Dryden (ed.), *Memorials of Old Northamptonshire* (1908), pp. 99–108.

and customs of her native county of Suffolk which was published in 1887 in the *Quarterly Review*.¹⁸² She lectured to the Northamptonshire Natural History Society on old country houses—her Journals from 1885 list over 90 different houses visited in Britain—and was the first woman to be elected president of the Society in March 1905. When Ryland Adkins drew up a list of possible members of the County Committee for the Victoria County History project for Northamptonshire in 1899, Louisa was the only woman put forward out of a list of 32 names.¹⁸³

Those friends who left an account of Louisa acknowledged her many outstanding qualities. The Hon. Mrs. Ellen Joyce, a clergyman's widow who together with Louisa was one of the earliest members of the Girls' Friendly Society, summed up her character: 'Her cultured thoughts were expressed in simple, strong, and courtly English. All who worked with her became impressed with the thoroughness, the integrity, and the sincerity of her purpose; the single-mindedness, the unselfishness, the righteousness of her daily life, made an atmosphere which fostered friendship and stimulated its reproduction. Her understanding sympathy with the difficulties connected with all associated effort enabled her to adjust to differences which might have obstructed excellent work.'¹⁸⁴ Describing a conducted tour by Louisa of Fawsley in 1891, the correspondent of *The Gentlewoman* ended her article: 'Well-bred, cultured, amiable, philanthropic and most charming, is the impression left upon you of your hostess as you quit Fawsley Park.'¹⁸⁵

In July 1884, when she was 42, Louisa attended the International Health Exhibition in London and amused herself by visiting the Anthropometric Laboratory. She discovered that she measured 5 feet 6 inches in height, weighed 12 stones 1 pound¹⁸⁶ (Three pounds less than last year'), and had slightly reduced hearing. Seven years later she wrote, 'One thing I must note as a warning that my life has taken the downward turn: I have begun to use spectacles, only for small print, but there they are.'¹⁸⁷

Louisa's curiosity in new scientific and mechanical advances was wide. She witnessed the earliest days of the cinema, was interested in improvements in the camera and was fascinated by the coming of the motor car and the aeroplane. Louisa also became a wellknown figure pedalling her tricycle around the Northamptonshire countryside.

She had a great interest in literature and the Journals report extensively on the latest three-volume novels, biographies and histories of recent political events which constituted the bulk of her reading. Louisa was particularly fond of the theatre—'How I do enjoy a good play', she wrote in 1905—and her comments on some of the leading actors and actresses of the day, as well as her views on the plays themselves make interesting reading. Louisa's knowledge of the arts is impressive. She was well-versed in painting and like most other contemporaries, attended the latest London exhibitions. Her

182. *Quarterly Review*, 164, April 1887, pp. 382–414. Louisa's name does not appear on the article.

183. Victoria County History, Preliminary Committee. Suggestions, W.R.D.Adkins, n.d., but 1899, Institute of Historical Research Archives.

184. *Imperial Colonist*, Nov. 1913, p. 182.

185. *The Gentlewoman*, 4 April 1891, p. 450.

186. LMK, 7 July 1884, K 2901.

187. LMK, 31 Dec. 1891, K 2906.

musical taste was wide and she was a good judge of talent. In September 1910, she attended a Promenade concert, 'all Wagner and most splendidly given. I don't think there is an orchestra anywhere to beat Mr. Wood's'.¹⁸⁸ Her account of The Ring' cycle which she witnessed at Bayreuth in 1899 is a detailed one and she was not deterred from attending concerts of what was then new music, such as Tchaikovsky's 'Pathétique' Symphony. Architecture was another of her great passions from an early age and with Rainald visited most of the major architectural sites in Europe. In 1903, she was able to announce in her Journal after a visit to Truro, 'I have now seen every cathedral in England.'¹⁸⁹

Louisa was particularly proud of her close connections with the Royal Family. Prince Leopold, whom she had looked after in Cannes following the death of his father, the Prince Consort, never forgot her kindness towards him. Leopold was created Duke of Albany in 1881 and in the following year married Helen, daughter of the Prince of Waldeck and Pyrmont. A few weeks before the wedding, he asked Louisa to become an Extra Lady-in-Waiting to his wife. The duties consisted mainly of accompanying her to dinner parties, balls and the Court and sometimes to their home at Claremont when there were guests.¹⁹⁰ Louisa readily accepted the offer and held the post for the rest of her life. After the tragic death of the Prince less than two years later, Helen and Louisa became close friends, the Duchess paying frequent visits to Fawsley and Louisa staying at Claremont with the family. Louisa was a special guest at the wedding of Alice, the Duchess of Albany's daughter, in 1904. Princess Beatrice, Victoria's fifth daughter, was associated with Louisa's charitable activities, participating in the organisation of the Working Ladies' Guild.¹⁹¹ Louisa was especially saddened at the death at the age of 35 of Alice, Princess of Hesse, Victoria's second daughter and Louisa's almost exact contemporary and she wrote a moving obituary of her.¹⁹² Louisa admired her for her efforts in Germany in organising the training of nurses and founding the Alice Association for the education and training of women. She was also on excellent terms with Helena, Princess Christian, the Queen's third daughter, who shared with Louisa an interest in the emigration of women. Their friendship spanned a period of 52 years.

One of Louisa's most time-consuming commitments from the opening years of the twentieth century was in the sphere of women's emigration. At the 1883 meeting of the Central Council of the Girls' Friendly Society, it was decided to establish a Department devoted to furthering the safe despatch of women to the Colonies. Mrs. Joyce was chosen as Correspondent to liaise with those countries who wished to participate in the scheme. Some smaller societies carrying out similar work joined with the GFS in 1884 to form a single body, the United Englishwomen's Emigration Society, later renamed the British Women's Emigration Association (BWEA).

188. LMK, 19 Sept. 1910, K 2921.

189. LMK, 26 Oct. 1903, K 2916.

190. Prince Leopold to LMK, 27 Feb. 1882, Knightley Papers, BL.Add. MS. 46360, ff. 88–9.

191. Princess Beatrice to LMK, 11 Oct. 1897 and 10 Oct. 1898, Knightley Papers, BL Add. MS. 46361, ff. 106, 112.

192. LMK, 'Her Royal Highness Princess Alice of Hesse', *EWB*, 15 Jan. 1879, pp. 1–4.

Louisa's interest in emigration dated back to the beginning of her work with the GFS and she realised especially the value of its Imperial aspect.¹⁹³ As Mrs. Joyce told a GFS Imperial Conference:

Why do we urge Imperialism? Not from selfish views, not from mere pride of race, but deep down in our hearts, we believe that God had set us to be not only pioneers or civilisers, but evangelists. The gift of the genius of Colonisation, which is so essentially English, must not be stifled, it is God given for Evangelisation.¹⁹⁴

From the 1890s, the BWEA turned its attention to encouraging emigration to the South African colonies. After the Boer War had ended, there was a rush of applications to settle there and in anticipation, a special South Africa Committee had been established in March 1900. Louisa, who was a vice-president of the BWEA, was one of the members who put forward a scheme for these Colonies later in the year. She had been struck by a phrase in an address she had heard—'the only use of Empire is to further the Kingdom of God'—and was convinced that it was her mission 'to go talking on the subject to people I meet.'¹⁹⁵ Louisa, together with twenty others, met at Lady Malmesbury's house in March 1901—shortly after Joseph Chamberlain's speech to the annual meeting of the Association in which he recommended a great expansion of its work—in order to form a larger body, the Provisional Committee of the South African Expansion Scheme, and she was elected its chairman. It became the South African Expansion Scheme Committee (SAX) and Louisa was one of three members charged with drawing up its own by-laws. In 1903, SAX broke away from the BWEA, establishing itself as a completely independent body, the South African Colonisation Society (SACS), with Louisa as its first president. Its objects were primarily to establish 'protected emigration', due regard being paid to the interests both of the migrants and the countries to which they were sent. The Society pledged itself to emigrate only women and girls of good character, to select men and families suitable to the requirements of each colony, to give proper protection on the voyage and adequate reception on arrival, to remain in contact for the first year or two after emigration and to raise a loan fund for necessitous cases.

From the beginning, both politicians and the military were quick to capitalise on the potential of female emigration as a useful instrument of Imperial policy.¹⁹⁶ Joseph Chamberlain, the Foreign Secretary, and Lord Milner, High Commissioner for South Africa, both praised the work of the Society and Louisa herself had a valuable interview with Chamberlain's wife on South African matters in May 1903.¹⁹⁷ Louisa chaired the

194. 'Thirty Years of Girls' Friendly Society Imperial Work', *Imperial Colonist*, Aug. 1912, p. 152.

195. Entry, 23 Oct. 1900.

196. A.J. Hammerton, *Emigrant Gentlewomen, Genteel Poverty and Female Emigration, 1830–1914* (1979), p. 162. In 1902, Major-General Sir John Ardagh, husband of Lady Malmesbury, outlined a scheme to Chamberlain for 'providing the British Uitlanders with British wives and providing the growth of a settled British population.' Ardagh feared that otherwise in a few generations South Africans would have 'a white population whose proclivities and traditions will be predominantly Dutch.' Memorandum, Female Emigration from the United Kingdom to South Africa, 12 June 1902, Ardagh Papers, PRO/30/40/18, Public Record Office. See also Susan, Countess of Malmesbury, *Sir John Ardagh* (1909), p. 441.

197. Entry, 8 May 1903.

meetings of the elected Executive Committee with firmness, but personality clashes could not be avoided. At one of the early meetings, Lady Helen Munro-Ferguson behaved ‘too abominably’ to Miss Balfour and Louisa believed that ‘if they had been men a 100 years ago it *must* have meant a duel.’¹⁹⁸ The all-female membership discussed the nature of clerical help that would be required and, according to Louisa, ‘A horrible idea started of a male Secretary.’¹⁹⁹

The volume of business handled by the Committee was impressive. Between March 1905 and March 1906, 1696 applications were received together with 13,931 other communications and, 20,123 pieces of correspondence were despatched.²⁰⁰ Louisa was chairman not only of the Executive Committee and the Literature Committee, ex-officio member of all the other sub-committees and chairman of the Cape Town Territorial Sub-Committee, but when in November 1901 it was decided to provide a monthly publication representing the BWEA and the then SAX, Louisa became its Editor, a post which she held for the rest of her life. Bearing the name the *Imperial Colonist*, the first issue appeared in January 1902. The *Northampton Herald* welcomed its appearance adding, ‘With Lady Knightley of Fawsley as Editor, it is almost unnecessary to say that the objects of the Association ... are attractively set forth, and the advantages of “Greater Britain” as a field for Colonisation duly emphasised.’²⁰¹ The financial basis of the journal was insecure from the outset. A sum of £10 towards the expenses of the *Imperial Colonist* was granted in 1902 though by the following year there was a deficit of £21.3s.5d.²⁰² From its beginning, Louisa regarded the journal as an opportunity for promoting the employment of British women in South Africa.²⁰³ Mrs. Joyce stated in 1912 that she believed that there were one and a quarter million too many women in Britain.²⁰⁴ Opportunities for self-improvement, including courses which potential emigrants could attend, were advertised in the *Imperial Colonist* and readers were regaled with first-hand accounts of successful work experience in a new land.

Louisa preferred the term ‘colonisation’ to ‘emigration’ and the Annual Reports of the SACS employed the word ‘colonists’ to those seeking work abroad through the Societies. She told a meeting of the Royal Colonial Institute that ‘the Society did not at all want to send “incapables to the colonies.” The Colonies would not thank you for “dumping” them there: quite the contrary. The Society was trying to send out well-trained and capable women of all varieties of occupation.’²⁰⁵ Sensitive to criticism on this account, Louisa emphasised, when giving evidence to the Departmental Committee on Agricultural

198.Entry, 6 May 1903.

199.Entry, 10 June 1903.

201.NH, 22 March 1902, p. 8.

202.SACS Executive Committee, 13 Jan. 1904, 1/SAX/1/1, p.201, Fawcett Library.

203.J.Bush, The Right Sort of Woman: female emigrators and emigration to the British Empire, 1890–1910’, *Women’s History Review*, 3, 3, 1994, p. 390.

204.Royal Commission on the Natural Resources, Trade, and Legislation of Certain Portions of His Majesty’s Dominions. Interim Report. Part 1. Migration. Minutes of Evidence, 11 Dec. 1912. Cd. 6516, Q. 891.

205.‘Women and the Colonies’, *Royal Colonial Institute*, 35, 1903, p. 339. See also W.A. Carruthers, *Emigration from the British Isles* (1929), p. 244.

Settlement in British Colonies (the Tennyson Committee) in 1905 the fact that 239 of those emigrating to South Africa were teachers, governesses, secretaries and mothers helps.²⁰⁶ However, this represented only a small proportion of the 2900 colonists who had settled there since 1901.

An opportunity to see the situation at first hand arose in 1905 when the British Association held its annual conference in South Africa. Louisa was invited to address the Economics Section and chose as the title for her lecture *The Terms and Conditions of Domestic Service in England and South Africa*.²⁰⁷ Delivered on 16 August at Cape Town and in competition with several other sections, it was one of the two most popular papers, attracting a large and lively audience. There were opportunities in the cities which the Association visited for Louisa to address GFS meetings, become acquainted with local officials, speak to colonists and visit hostels. The party proceeded by steamer to Durban, then by train to some of the Boer War battle sites, including Colenso and Ladysmith. Louisa disliked Johannesburg—‘so big and straggling and unfinished’. From there, she visited two Chinese compounds at a gold mine, Juniper’s Creek. In England at this time there was much opposition by the Liberals to the exploitation of Chinese labour in South Africa since Milner’s ordinance had been approved by the Transvaal Legislative Council in February 1904, allowing the flogging of Chinese labourers by mine managers.²⁰⁹ Louisa took great interest in the issue and after a full tour of the sites decided that where the management was firm and kind, the situation was quite tolerable.²¹⁰ She also visited a war cemetery at Pretoria, searching for the grave of a Northamptonshire soldier. From Kimberley, the party went on to Bulawayo and the Victoria Falls, finally sailing from Beira. Louisa arrived in England in October, having travelled 20,000 miles, ‘a truly wonderful experience.’²¹¹

In March 1907 she announced that she would stand down as president of SACS. The demand for emigration to South Africa had by then diminished dramatically, the Society receiving only 261 new colonists in the year March 1906 to March 1907. Louisa was elected an honorary member of the SACS Executive Committee and she continued to attend their meetings on a regular basis. In 1908 Louisa accepted the presidency of the BWEA. The Association had witnessed a perceptible shift in the destination of colonists. Canada was now the most popular, particularly the north-west and British Columbia, followed by the Australian states of New South Wales and Western Australia, and New Zealand.

If the prospect of giving evidence before the Tennyson Committee had alarmed Louisa, the cross-examination she received in October 1912 from members of the Royal Commission on Natural Resources, Trade and Legislation of Certain Portions of His Majesty’s Dominions was even more formidable. Among the distinguished members of the Commission was Rider Haggard, the novelist, who was the most incisive questioner

206. Departmental Committee appointed to consider Mr. Rider Haggard’s Report on Agricultural Settlements in British Colonies. Vol. 2 Evidence, P.P 1906 Ixvi, Cd. 2979, Q. 6289.

207. Reprinted in *Imperial Colonist*, Dec. 1905, p. 137–41.

208. *The Times*, 17 Aug. 1905, p. 4.

209. See J. Marlowe, *Milner, Apostle of Empire* (1976), pp. 163–4.

210. ‘A Trip to South Africa with the British Association, July–October, 1906’, *Northamptonshire Natural Historical Society and Field Club*, 13, 105, March 1906, p. 167.

211. DE, 11 Nov. 1905.

during the one and a half hour session. Louisa, in her capacity as president of the BWEA appeared with Mrs. Joyce, who represented the Emigration Branch of the GFS. Some of the answers given to Haggard and other members of the Committee were very frank.

Louisa remarked in reply to a question on how successful girls were as emigrants, 'I should say the general outcome is that almost all of them marry.' Mrs. Joyce explained that 'in these splendid young countries, there are no women for the men to marry. In every other place [except Victoria] the male population is very much in excess of the female population, and that is one of the causes of there being so very many, too many, women here.'

Haggard: Do you look upon this movement of the female population as being an Empire matter?

Joyce: Most emphatically.

Haggard: Do you say so, too, Lady Knightley?

Knightley: Yes, most emphatically.

Joyce: We have been working it from the Imperial point of view since 1882.

Haggard: And you think great good might be done by moving these superfluous women?

Joyce: I am quite sure of it.²¹³

The vexed question of encouraging the emigration of the highly-trained servant was raised. Much criticism had been directed at the scheme as fewer men and women were entering into service in Britain. The Commission was reassured that 'the very first class servants do not go. Their situations are very comfortable and they have always an underling.'²¹⁴ Milner in South Africa, a country which he described as 'miserably under-peopled', had called for more domestics, largely untrained, to be sent out. Canada and New Zealand wanted factory workers, especially women. Mrs. Joyce contrasted such opportunities with the lot of the working women in this country, who, because of the large numbers available, were being exploited.

On the emigration of more educated women, both Societies had kept a low profile. This was attributed to the fact that educated women would be reluctant to have it known that they had applied to an emigration society. Louisa explained that 'girls of that class' were given training at a house, Stoke Prior, near Birmingham, where they were taught domestic science, bee-keeping, poultry-keeping, laundry work and so on.²¹⁵ Teachers and governesses were also in demand. The great majority of emigrants were likely to end up in low grade occupations. Separation of the different classes of women was ensured on the voyage by the second class travelling parties having their own educated chaperones, whilst the much larger third class parties were supervised by a qualified matron.²¹⁶ The possibility of the young women being led astray was a constant worry. Louisa penned a suitably cautious Preface to a pamphlet written by Mrs. Joyce entitled *Warning Signals For Young Women* which was handed to emigrants before embarking on their ship.

212. Royal Commission on Natural Resources, 1912, op. cit, Q. 941.

213. Ibid, Q. 986-9.

214. Ibid., Q. 1040.

215. Ibid., Q. 947.

216. Ibid, Q. 934.

In Louisa's final article, written in 1913, on the work of the BWEA, she praised 'the really great Imperial work' it was carrying out, ending with a quote from Mrs. Joyce:

Helping women of every grade to stand for all woman is worth, in Empire building, in evangelising work, in going where women are prayed for to make homes for good living men, where women can be mothers of quivers full, without fear of there ever being one too many, for there will be plenty of work for every hard-working boy of every class, and a Jack for every Jill.²¹⁷

The well-thought out emigration schemes of the main Societies had on the whole been a great success; by 1911 some 16, 000 women and girls were resident in the Colonies.²¹⁸ Louisa had played a considerable part in bringing this about.

Another important organisation with which she became closely involved was the National Union of Women Workers (NUWW) which was founded in 1895. It had stemmed from a Women's Conference on Woman's Work, the brainchild of Ishbel, Lady Aberdeen, which was held in 1888 and attended by over a thousand women. Seen from the beginning as a forum for the exchange of ideas, the Conference did not have the confidence to make too bold a case on behalf of its participants. One speaker stated:

We have now arrived at a critical turning point in the history of women's work and progress. Great changes have taken place in the world's opinion as to women's position in the world of work...However, there has been a mistake in the ideals. Women should not rival men and seek to be equal in all things but to complement men.²¹⁹

After holding a series of successful annual conferences in different cities, the Central Council of the Conferences of Women Workers decided in January 1895 to change its constitution and become known as the National Union of Women Workers. Its aim was to co-ordinate the work of promoting the social, civil and religious welfare of women, to collect and distribute information and to form local councils and unions of workers. From the time of its first conference at Nottingham in September of that year, the NUWW attracted women representing a wide spectrum of political, religious and social views, including individuals such as Lady Lucy Cavendish, Louise Creighton, Millicent Fawcett, Mrs. Humphry Ward, Lady Laura Ridding and Beatrice Webb as well as many philanthropic societies. The conferences lasted three or four days so that important issues could be fully explored. The term 'women workers' raised some anxiety as it was felt that the NUWW could be confused with a trades union organisation, the National Union of Working Women. The first conference attempted a definition of the phrase: 'Professional women and working women (in the strict technical sense of manual workers) may be and

217. *CUWFA Review*, July- Sept. 1913, p. 306.

218. *The Times*, 17 July 1911, p. 12.

219. Quoted in D.Glick, *The National Council of Women of Great Britain. The First One Hundred Years* (1995), p. 4.

often are “women workers,” but that phrase connotes the women who are occupied in one or another of the many branches of endeavour in which women are doing associated work for the improvement of life around them.²²⁰

Louisa went to the 1896 Manchester Conference, the first to be held after Rainald’s death. ‘I have always wished to attend it, ‘she wrote,’ but my darling never liked to spare me. It was interesting to hear subjects from different points of view to those one is accustomed to.’²²¹ Many of the topics discussed were close to Louisa’s heart: the employment of women, suffrage, the poor law, education, and young women’s leisure time. She was struck by the fact that ‘the Union belonged to no party, religious or political and herein, I think, lies one of the great advantages of the conferences, in that they bring together women of the most opposite opinions.’²²² By 1910, 169 national societies had affiliated to the NUWW and there were 1253 local societies and 42 provincial branches.²²³

At the 1898 Norwich Conference, Louisa read a paper on Home Work in which she deprecated the proposed legislation which would place restrictions on women’s labour in the home and thus limit their chances of earning a livelihood. She was not averse to unionisation, but with safeguards: Those who are trying to form Women’s Trades Unions are doing an excellent work; and difficult as it must necessarily be to organise these scattered units, still it is, I believe, to be done: but let them be *real* Women’s Trades Unions—not Women’s Unions managed by men.²²⁴ Louisa was equally outspoken as a delegate at the International Congress of Women held in London the following year. As the *Englishwoman’s Review* reported on its proceedings in the Legislative and Industrial Section:

Lady Knightley of Fawsley got up and in a few pregnant words put what she called the unpopular side in a nutshell. She asked the meeting to consider whether this perpetual legislation might not prevent women being employed at all, whether these constant restrictions would not worry employers into giving their work to men whose labour was not harassed by restrictions, and whether the wiser way would be to aim at getting proper wages and sanitary conditions for men and women alike.²²⁵

During a discussion on Girl Life in the Country and in the Town at the 1906 Tunbridge Wells Conference, Louisa was impelled to draw the audience’s attention to the work of the Girls’ Friendly Society ‘which was totally ignored, and which does so many of the things which the speakers said wanted doing.’²²⁶

220.EWR, 15 Jan. 1896, p. 8. See also S.Kelly, ‘A Sisterhood of Service: the records and early history of the National Union of Women Workers’, *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 14, 2, 1993, p. 169–70.

221.Entry, 27 Oct. 1896.

222.LMK, ‘Women in Council’, *PIG*, 1 Dec. 1898, p. 7.

223.The National Union of Women Workers’, *The Times*, 25 June 1910, p. 6.

224.LMK, ‘Home Work’, 26 Oct. 1898, Occasional Paper, p. 148, National Council of Women Papers.

225.EWR, 15 July 1898, p. 157.

226.Entry, 23 Oct. 1906.

The suffrage issue led to great upheaval in the Union because of the wide range of views represented in its membership. By 1910, the NUWW had clearly come out in favour of votes for women. Uncharacteristically, Louisa, at Millicent Fawcett's bidding, was a signatory to a letter on 9 February 1907 addressed to the Prime Minister, CampbellBannerman, requesting that they might be heard at the Bar of the House in support of a petition to remove electoral disabilities. This was refused. Relieved at the outcome, nevertheless she justified her alignment with the suffragist leader on the grounds that 'I felt I ought to have the courage of my convictions, especially as Rainald always supported the movement.'²²⁷ Louisa became a member of the Executive and a vice-president of the NUWW in 1905. The annual conferences presented her with a good platform for the promotion of the emigration of women. At the 1909 meeting at Portsmouth when the theme was Women and the Empire, she presided for the first time at one of the sessions. The subject was the conditions of life for women in the Colonies.²²⁸ Louisa had earlier proposed a resolution in favour of female emigration as tending to relieve the overcrowded labour market.

The NUWW operated through several sectional committees, such as Education, Industrial and the Employment of Women, and Louisa was a member of a number of them. On 30 November 1909, she requested the NUWW Executive Committee to establish a new sectional committee on emigration. She pointed out that there were many Societies then working separately for the emigration of women and girls and that coordination, through a single committee, would be valuable. Subsequently, she was asked to organise a conference where the matter could be discussed.²²⁹ As a result of her endeavours, in May 1910 representatives of no fewer than 49 British Societies met under the auspices of the Royal Colonial Society.²³⁰ A standing committee was subsequently constituted which drew up a report, making important policy recommendations, including the financing and official recognition of such Societies, the more careful selection and protection of emigrants and better formal arrangements for their reception on arrival in the new country.²³¹ The report was sent to Colonial prime ministers, governors, high commissioners agents-general and the bishops of the Dominions.²³² It led to the appointment by immigration authorities of woman selectors in England, of experienced matrons for the voyage and co-operation by Societies in opening more reception homes in the Dominions. Louisa's endeavours in this field were recognised when she was called as a witness in 1912 before the Royal Commission which took evidence on emigration, and which has been dealt with earlier. The NUWW sectional committee on emigration never came into being; instead Louisa represented the NUWW as well as the BWEA on the Royal Colonial Society standing committee until her death.

227.Entry, 14 Feb. 1907.

228.EWR, 15 Jan. 1910, p. 62 and Entry, 20 Oct. 1909.

229.NUWW, Executive Minutes, 30 Nov. 1909, p. 58, National Union of Women Workers Papers, Greater London Record Office.

230.NUWW, Executive Minutes, 5 July 1910, p. 86, National Union of Women Workers Papers, Greater London Record Office.

231.LMK, 'Emigration', Oct. 1912, Occasional Paper, pp. 7-8, National Council of Women Papers.

232.E.Joyce, 'In Memoriam', *Imperial Colonist*, Nov. 1913, p. 179.

Louisa's firm belief in providing opportunities for working women to gain employment led her to become associated with other organisations which furthered this cause. It has already been mentioned that she was present at the inaugural meeting in 1876 of the Working Ladies' Guild which catered for the needs of middle-class women. One of the very earliest of women's Societies in England was the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women (SPEW), established in 1859 by Louisa's cousin, Jessie Boucherett and two of her friends; it later became affiliated to the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science with Lord Shaftesbury as its first president.²³³ Boucherett had read an article in the *Edinburgh Review* that year which stated that three out of six million adult Englishwomen had to work for their living and she determined to assist in providing well-paid employment in occupations other than the two traditional ones, teaching and needle-work. Louisa in later years had great affection both for the Society as it was the first organisation which she had ever joined.²³⁴ The great emphasis which SPEW placed on training for occupations continued throughout its existence: by 1908 the Society had given interest-free loans to women for training in 69 different occupations.²³⁵ By the end of the nineteenth century, however, many other helping organisations had come into being, technical classes were becoming available, and the Society's activities had diminished. It was at Jessie Boucherett's prompting on behalf of SPEW that Louisa was persuaded to speak on Home Work at the NUWW Norwich Conference in 1898.²³⁶ Members such as Elizabeth Garrett Anderson praised the Society for impressing on parents that 'it was not enough to feed and clothe girls but that they must give them such a training that it would be comparatively easy for them to support themselves by their own efforts.' As an essentially upper-class organisation—the Society invariably had a peer or a peeress as its president—one of its concerns was the shortage of girls entering domestic service. At the Society's annual meeting in May 1900, Canon Robinson Duckworth, a former tutor to Leopold, Duke of Albany, reported:

Instead of finding girls who have received a good elementary education prepared to enter service on leaving school, not one in ten is willing to do so, but they choose rather some calling which will scarcely yield them the necessaries of life, preferring to spend their evenings with little or no control over them ... It is due to this that so many families are driven to live in flats, this being the only way of escaping the difficulty of getting servants to help them.²³⁷

Louisa responded in an article which appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* the following month entitled 'The Servant Problem', in which she blamed the attitude of 'people calling themselves ladies, and too often ladies by birth and education, though not in mind' towards their servants. "Be courteous" is a command which they do not appear to think in the least applicable to their relations with those who serve them.' She concluded:

233.N.C.Soldon, *Women in British Trade Unions, 1874–1976* (1978), p. 7.

234.Entry, 19 Nov. 1897.

235.EWR, 15 July 1908, p. 195.

236.Entry, 26 Nov. 1898.

237.EWR, 16 July 1900, p. 190.

Depend upon it, the golden rule, if carefully adhered to in our intercourse with our inferiors in station, will have a wonderful effect, and though servants, like other people, have their faults, and the best of mistresses will occasionally meet with disappointment and ingratitude, yet every household, be it large or small which is carried on on those lines, is a distinct benefit to the country generally, and will in time help to bring about a more healthy state of things in a department of life which so greatly affects the comfort and happiness of a very large portion of the community.²³⁸

By the end of the first decade of the present century, the Society's scope was more limited and its main function was reduced to the dispensing of loans to women.

Louisa greatly sympathised with Jessie Boucherett, a strong Conservative and a keen individualist, who organised a memorial to the Home Secretary to protest against the efforts being made through legislation to place restrictions on women working at home, which Louisa called 'a monstrous piece of tyranny'.²³⁹ When Jessie, together with Helen Blackburn, founded the Freedom of Labour Defence (FLD) in 1899 Louisa immediately joined the movement. At its first annual meeting at Westminster Town Hall in June 1900, Louisa took the chair. She told the audience that the proposed legislation required employers to produce a certificate stating that the rooms in which work was done were perfectly sanitary; if they were not, then women would not be allowed to be employed. That, she stated, 'frightened the members into forming the Freedom of Labour Defence'.²⁴⁰ The FLD were concerned that by 1901 four bills had been introduced into Parliament dealing with safeguarding the working conditions of women. As the chairman of the General Committee, William Thompson Sharpe, Conservative M.P. for North Kensington, commented, 'He held that grown up men and women should be perfectly free to do what they like with their own; surely the labour of their own bodies is their own property, and ought to be left to them.'²⁴¹ Louisa welcomed the freedom granted to both employers and employees by the Factory and Workshop Acts Amendment and Consolidation Bill, introduced by C.T.Ritchie, the Home Secretary, in March 1901.²⁴²

When the *Daily Mail* exposed the exploitation of women employed in nail- and chain-making in the forge sheds of Cradley and Old Hill in the Black Country, an FLD investigator, on the contrary, found the women 'healthy and contented, with brilliant complexions, athletic figures and a courtesy of manner combined with an independence of character that sets them distinctly above the average working woman.' These attributes were explained by 'the splendid air of the Staffordshire hills and the invigorating smell of iron.'²⁴³ Louisa opposed moves to discontinue the employment of the 75,000 barmaids

238.Reprinted in *DE*, 14 Oct. 1899, p. 1.

239.Entry, 11 Feb. 1898.

240.*EWB*, 16 July 1900, p. 190. As she wrote in her Journal, We had a very good discussion on the best way of getting at the working women.' LMK, 25 June 1900, K 2913.

241.*EWB*, 15 Jan. 1901, p. 25.

242.Ritchie stated that 'it is more than ever desirable that laws relating to the working-classes should be consolidated and made as simple as possible'. Hansard, 4, 92, col. 94, 28 March 1901.

243.*EWB*, 15 July 1903, pp. 107-8.

working in Britain though she did not wish to encourage further recruitment.²⁴⁴ Some of the arguments used to support freedom of employment were unconvincing. For example, attempts to turn women dust-pickers towards other occupations were met with the argument that the work, 'though rough, [it] is perfectly honest, healthy and even hereditary.'²⁴⁵ Similarly, the Employment of Children Act of 1902 which restricted their hours of employment, was greeted by the FLD with suspicion; work out of school hours, it was claimed, was actually beneficial, and relaxation from books was good for the health.²⁴⁶ As the first decade of the twentieth century drew to a close, the FLD noted 'with some anxiety' the increasing regulation of conditions in the workplace by legislation. Louisa was, like other members of the League, both puzzled by and disappointed with the dwindling audiences at meetings and the public reception of the League's activities. 'It is uphill work', she wrote sadly in 1906, 'and *not* a popular cause: people don't understand.'²⁴⁷

Whilst Louisa continued her hectic round of meetings, there were much greater personal worries which provided no easy solution. These arose out of the death of Rainald at the end of 1895. Various steps had been taken to ensure that Louisa had a sufficient income in the likely event of her surviving her husband. Under the marriage settlement of 1869, she would receive an income of £1200 per annum during her widowhood and in March 1877 Rainald had created a further annuity of £1000 per annum for her by removing a capital sum from the estate. By a deed of 27 March 1883, Rainald additionally gave Louisa the use of Fawsley Hall and Deer Park during her lifetime unless she married again; he also increased the amount she would receive to £3000 per annum which was in addition to her £1200 under the marriage settlement. At the same time he changed his will in order to leave all his furniture, personal effects and horses to Louisa for her lifetime.²⁴⁸ Rainald left gross personal estate of £23, 023.13s.5d., but against this had to be set the huge debts, amounting to £18, 773, added to which was the payment of the recently-introduced estate duty of £5338 and settlement duty of £358, totalling £5746.²⁴⁹ Timber was acceptable in part payment of death duties and Louisa helped in marking the oak trees in the Park for felling. However, in 1897 the sale of timber raised only £340.²⁵⁰ Drastic action had to be taken.

Under the existing arrangements the estate would, after Louisa's death, be inherited by Rainald's cousin, the Revd. Valentine Knightley, now the fourth baronet; but as the latter was now 83, there was a real possibility of the estate incurring a double succession duty within a few years. A few weeks later, therefore, Valentine signed a deed releasing his

244.*EW*R, 15 Jan. 1904, p. 24. This issue had been discussed at the annual meeting of the NUWW in 1903 and it was agreed that the employment of barmaids should cease. 60, 000 people in one year signed a petition supporting this move. Joint Committee on the Employment of Barmaids, *Women as Barmaids* (1905), p. 58.

245.*EW*R, 15 July 1902, p. 171.

246.*EW*R, 15 April 1904, p. 105.

247.Entry, 17 May 1906.

248. East Sussex Record Office, Gage Papers, SAS GA 1322.

249. Case for Opinion of Counsel, 1913. Knightley (Fawsley) Papers, Acc. 1967/174/203, NRO.

250. Entry, 10 Sept. 1897.

interest for life to his nephew, and Rainald's second cousin, Charles Valentine Knightley, who succeeded as the fifth baronet in 1898.²⁵¹ Charlie, as Louisa called him, had practised as a lawyer but he was also a keen agriculturalist and became the agent at Fawsley in 1885.²⁵² Louisa was anxious to make some provision for Charles and his wife Juliet so she signed a deed of partial release forfeiting £2200 out of her £3000 per annum, leaving her with a total income, apart from any personal fortune, of £2000.²⁵³ At the time of Rainald's death, mortgage interest and rent charges exceeded the annual rents and the entailed estates were losing money, so there was little income left over for Charles. In an attempt to improve her own situation, Louisa consulted her stockbrokers on the best way to invest her fortune of £24,000. In December 1898 estate property in Badby was remortgaged by Charles and her own jointure postponed in order to give her access to a little more income, amounting to £200 per annum.²⁵⁴ The continuing effects of the agricultural depression—rents in Northamptonshire fell by 41 per cent between 1874–8 and 1894–8²⁵⁵—combined with the poor state of Rainald's finances at his death made the future look bleak. As Louisa wrote sadly about this time, The right management of money is the most difficult thing I know²⁵⁶

An immediate and obvious saving could be effected by reducing the staff of servants though the number fluctuated over the years. At first a cook-housekeeper was appointed; in January 1898 Louisa was re-engaging former employees but by 1912 many had to be dismissed. One great loss to her was in late 1898 when her maid and friend Batten retired after serving the family for 25 years.²⁵⁷ Letting the House from time to time would be a useful source of income though Louisa was reluctant to do so. The place is looking *so* lovely,' she wrote, 'and I do so *dread* having to give it up, but my finances are in a most parlous condition.'²⁵⁸ Her first tenants, Frederick Farrer and his family, took possession on a short lease in July 1899. Louisa joyfully entered in her Journal on 14 October, 'A day long looked forward to, on which I return to my own dear, beautiful, but alas, lonely home.' The house was let to the Stanhope family in 1902 and Louisa later tried to persuade her Gage relatives to occupy it. The last recorded tenants were the Bourkes, who after some hesitation, took up residence in November 1908. Following a conducted tour of the house with them, Louisa noted, They are amusing, odd people and live in a very different world from mine. Still, they have family prayers, which is to me much in their favour.'²⁵⁹ The lettings involved a considerable rearrangement of rooms and furniture. Four days later she added, 'For the first time in my life I have left Fawsley with satisfaction. It has been a wretched and uncomfortable week.'²⁶⁰ Louisa had some

251. 13 Feb. 1896, Knightley (Fawsley) Papers, Acc. 1967/174/180, NRO.

252. *Herald and Mercury*, 25 March 1932, p. 9.

253. Entry, 16 June 1898.

254. H. Turner to Messrs. Burton and Bird, Daventry, 28 July 1898, K 179.

255. F.M.L. Thompson, *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century*, (1963), p. 310.

256. Entry, 10 Feb. 1898.

257. LMK, 26 Sept. 1898, K 2912. 258. Entry, 4 Aug. 1906.

259. LMK, 23 Nov. 1908, K 2920.

260. LMK, 27 Nov. 1908, K 2920.

difficulty in coming to terms with her reduced circumstances after Rainald's death. On 21 May 1901, she received a letter from her bank, 'says in peremptory terms that I *must* retrench somewhere and I must resolve to limit the hospitality I so much enjoy.'²⁶¹ Despite this warning, she hosted many gatherings at Fawsley, ranging from large Primrose League fêtes to Mothers' Union meetings, and she continued to enjoy holidays abroad. These included the British Association visit to South Africa in 1905, a Mediterranean cruise to visit the major classical sites in 1910 and journeys to the Continent. During the periods when the Hall was let, Louisa had many options. From time to time she stayed with Charles and Juliet at the Steward's House, an eighteenth century former rectory, not far from the Hall. Her clubs, the Alexandra, the Ladies' Empire and the Victoria, were convenient for her numerous London engagements and she received invitations from many friends throughout the country. But despite the financial difficulties, Louisa was able to spend her last years, as she had always wished, at the Hall itself.

On 25 April 1903, she had written in her Journal 'My 61st birthday—another year nearer joining my darling.' Such sentiments reappear in subsequent years though apart from minor illnesses Louisa continued vigorously to pursue her many interests. After delivering what was described as a splendid speech attacking the Liberal legislative proposals on Home Rule at a Knightley Habitation Primrose League meeting at Daventry in August 1913, Louisa went on a motoring holiday in Wales. She returned at the end of the month, apparently refreshed. She looked forward to an eight-day visit to Fawsley by her old friend, the Duchess of Albany, but on 14 September was suffering from a chill. She felt well enough the following day to accompany the Duchess to Althorp for lunch with the Spencers but fainted there and returned to Fawsley where she developed a patch on her lung. The Duchess remained with her for two nights. It had been planned that Queen Mary would visit Louisa on Wednesday 24 September during the manoeuvres at Althorp. Under the circumstances, the Queen spent only a few minutes at Louisa's bedside. At first the visit seemed to have been beneficial but by the following evening she had grown weaker. The last few days were described by Julia Cartwright: 'After Saturday she hardly spoke but just said "Goodnight" on Tuesday evening to Lady Gage and smiled and kissed her hand to her father's portrait, as if to say she was soon coming. She then became unconscious and died quite peacefully without any pain.'²⁶² It was on 2 October 1913 that Louisa died, aged 71.

Unlike Rainald's, Louisa's funeral at Fawsley Church a few days later was an elaborate affair. Apart from family members, the Knightleys, the Gages and the Barnes, there were representatives of the many organisations with which she had been associated as well as many friends. Louisa was buried, as she had long planned, in a simple marked grave next to Rainald.²⁶³

Louisa's estate indicates her poor financial position. She left unsettled property of a gross value of £4567, of which the net personalty was sworn at £3486. As late as 1909, when she redrew her will, she had stipulated that her favourite cousin, Philip Barne, who was also one of her executors, should receive income for life upon the sum of £7000, a

261.Entry, 21 May 1901.

262.Julia Cartwright Journals, 5 Nov. 1913, Cartwright of Edgcote Papers, C.E. 396.

263.NH, 10 Oct. 1913, p. 7.

wish which was unlikely to have been completely fulfilled. Louisa had been distressed by the death in 1912 of Henry Gage, the fifth viscount, and to his daughter, Irene Adelaide, she left a diamond and emerald necklace, two diamond and emerald brooches and a pair of diamond and emerald earrings.²⁶⁴ The residue was left to Charles. Her main thoughts, however, were with Rainald, whose memory she wished to perpetuate. In January 1898, she had visited her solicitors in Daventry to prepare a codicil to her earlier will 'leaving £1000 to endow a bed in Northampton Infirmary to be known as the "Rainald Knightley" bed. It is much the best memorial to my darling, and I am afraid it will be impossible for me to do it out of my limited income, so I feel justified in leaving the sum out of my own money.'²⁶⁵ This wish was repeated in her later will of 1909, and implemented by her executors in 1915.²⁶⁶

Louisa was the last member of the Knightley family to reside at Fawsley, after its continuous occupation for almost exactly 500 years. The precious contents of the Hall, including pictures, furniture and many valuable manuscripts were sold in May 1914 at a twelve-day auction held at Fawsley: the amount realised was £12, 758. On the death of Sir Charles in 1932, the Hall passed to Henry Rainald, the sixth Viscount Gage. Much of the building fell into disrepair. In 1948, it became a factory for timber products and in 1970 there were plans to convert the Hall into flats. It was not until some 60 years after Louisa's death that it was again sold and restored. In 1998, Fawsley Hall became a hotel.

The Times obituary remarked that Louisa was 'a woman of exceptionally wide interests, ranging over a variety of subjects—religious, educational, political, charitable and social.' At both national and local levels, she had contributed to the Conservative cause through her activities in the Primrose League. After a visit in 1898 to Brackley, she recalled the occasion when the South Northamptonshire poll was announced, especially 'the night of the dinner after '85 when he [Rainald] nearly broke down, talking of my help.'²⁶⁸ Outside the field of politics, she was driven by a strong religious conscience to help charitable organisations by serving on their committees, addressing meetings and writing pamphlets. The moral improvement of working girls and women was at the centre of the work of the Girls' Friendly Society, of which she was an early member. As a memorial to her endeavours to purchase sites for churches in the Dominions where emigrants settled, the GFS erected the chancel of St. Peter's Church, Regina, in Canada in 1928, containing a dedication to her.²⁶⁹ The British Women's Emigration Society perpetuated her memory by creating a loan fund for training young gentlewomen, the recipients to be called Knightley Scholars.²⁷⁰ Louisa was anxious to raise the status of women by widening the range of job opportunities at all levels by providing adequate

264.29 Nov. 1909, Knightley (Fawsley) Papers, Acc. 1967/174/197, NRO.

265.LMK, 23 Jan. 1898, K 2911.

266.Northampton General Hospital, List of Donors from 1743 to 1948, Northampton General Hospital Papers, NRO.

267.*The Times*, 3 Oct. 1913, p. 9.

268.LMK, 30 March 1898, K 2912.

269.M. Heath-Stubbs, *Friendship's Highway* (1935), p. 203.

270.*The Times*, 26 May 1914, p. 12.

education and training and she was an early champion of women's suffrage. As a person, she was full of curiosity about the world and was happiest in social situations. 'I enjoy the conversation of clever, remarkable people', she told a reporter in 1890. Two years after Rainald's death she confessed her need to 'go out into the world again': 'It is a great effort but I feel if I don't, I shall lose all my friends beyond my own immediate circle and I do *crave* so for a little *mental* food.'²⁷¹ The *Morning Post* succinctly summed up Louisa's qualities: 'Her character had a never failing fresh spring whence her persevering optimism and her patience were daily drawn ... [she] was beyond all her activities a great Imperialist, a great woman and a great lady.'²⁷²

271.LMK, 6 June 1898, K 2912.

272.*Morning Post*, 4 Oct. 1913, p. 6.

CHRONOLOGY

- 1842 25 April. Birth of Louisa Mary, daughter of Emilia Mary and Major-General Sir Edward Bowater.
- 1856 April. Louisa begins her Journal. June. She is presented at Court.
- 1861 November. Accompanies her father to Cannes with Prince Leopold. Death of General Bowater on 14 December, the same day as Prince Albert.
- 1864 January. Invited by Princess Helena to Osborne.
- 1865 May. Invited by Queen Victoria to Balmoral.
- 1866 May. Invited by Queen Victoria to Windsor.
- 1868 July. Accompanies Princess Christian to Germany.
- 1869 March. Meets Sir Rainald Knightley at Firlie Place, Sussex. 20 October. Marries Sir Rainald at St. Peter's, Eaton Square.
- 1876 Begins Girls' Friendly Society work in Northamptonshire. Attends inaugural meeting of the Working Ladies' Guild.
- 1879 Elected President of the Diocesan Council of the Peterborough Girls' Friendly Society.
- 1882 Appointed Extra Lady-in-Waiting to the Duchess of Albany.
- 1885 June. Enrols as Dame of the Primrose League. July. Canvasses for Sir Rainald in South Northamptonshire election. September. Formation of the Knightley Habitation of the Primrose League. October. Sir Rainald returned as M.P. for South Northamptonshire. Member, Executive Committee of the Ladies' Grand Council of the Primrose League. Member, Association for the Advancement of the Boarding Out of Pauper Children.
- 1886 7 July. Sir Rainald returned with increased majority, once again after heavy canvassing by Louisa.
- 1887 Provides accommodation on the Fawsley Estate for Joseph Merrick, the Elephant Man. April. Elected Dame President of the Knightley Habitation.
- 1892 Sir Rainald announces his resignation as M.P. after 40 years in the Commons. August. Created Baron Knightley of Fawsley.
- 1894 Louisa elected as Parish Councillor for Badby.
- 1895 15 December. Death of Baron Knightley.
- 1896 Louisa attends the Manchester Conference of the National Union of Women Workers.
- 1898 Delegate to the International Congress of Women.
- 1899 Joins the Freedom of Labour Defence.
- 1900 Appointed Lady of Grace, the Order of St. John and Jerusalem. Joins British Women's Emigration Association.
- 1901 March. Chairman. Provisional Committee of the South African Expansion Scheme. Editor.

Imperial Colonist.

- 1902 August. Attends the Coronation of Edward VII.
- 1903 Co-opted member, Northamptonshire County Council Education Committee. Foundation Manager, Badby School.
- 1904 Resigns as President of the Diocesan Council of the Peterborough Girls' Friendly Society.
- 1905 Attends British Association annual meeting in South Africa. October. Vice-President, National Union of Women Workers. December. President of the Northamptonshire Natural History and Field Club Society. Gives evidence before the Committee on Agricultural Settlement in British Colonies (Tennyson).
- 1907 March. Resigns as President of the South African Expansion Scheme. Resigns as member of the Executive of the Ladies' Grand Council of the Primrose League. Resigns as member of the Working Ladies' Guild.
- 1908 January. Begins autobiography. Elected President, British Women's Emigration Association. Elected President, Conservative and Unionist Women's Franchise Association.
- 1909 Elected Ruling Councillor of Knightley Habitation
- 1910 Rejoins the Executive Committee of the Ladies' Grand Council of the Primrose League. Resigns as President of the Conservative and Unionist Women's Franchise Association.
- 1911 January. Convenes Conference of Emigration Societies. June. Attends the Coronation of George V.
- 1912 October. Gives evidence before the Royal Commission on Natural Resources, Trade and Legislation.
- 1913 April. Resigns as member of the Northampton Education Committee. 2 October. Death of Louisa Knightley at Fawsley.

1885

Friday 9 January

Arbury, Nuneaton

In the evening a large party, Lord Norton¹ and Frances Adderley, Mr. and Mrs. Arden Adderley and Mr. Charles² (to dine), Mr. Sampson³ Lloyd, the newly elected for South Warwickshire, an intelligent man apparently; and Mr. Goodman, also a shrewd Birmingham merchant, Mr. L.V. Loyd (Lady Mary Hutchinson's husband), Mr. Potter and a Colonel Woolcombe. Lord Norton I found very pleasant: he told me Gladstone wrote to him in October to try to induce him to help bring about a compromise;⁵ and that he went up to town and tried to do so. Should never have thought him man enough for the job. I am glad he is not likely to be Colonial Secretary again. He is not at all so well disposed towards them as he should be.

Saturday 7 February

Fawsley

Public news has been most engrossing. On Thursday we heard of the safety of General Stewart's column,¹ after more hard fighting, in which Lionel Munro² has been wounded. They are on the Nile now and have joined hands with Gordon's steamers but there still remains much to be done. Then last Saturday simultaneous attempts were made to blow up Westminster Hall, the House of Commons and the Tower:³ considerable damage has

1. Charles Bowyer Adderley, 1st. Baron Norton (1814–1905), Conservative M.P., North Staffordshire, 1841–78, President of Board of Trade, 1874–8.

2. Frances Georgina, daughter of Baron Norton, Henry Arden, his second son and Charles Leigh, the eldest son.

3. Sampson Samuel Lloyd, Conservative M.P., Warwickshire, 1880–5.

4. Lewis Vivian Loyd, Conservative supporter, and his wife, Lady Mary, daughter of John Luke Hely-Hutchinson, 4th. Earl of Donoughmore.

5. Norton was one of the chief Conservative negotiators concerned with effecting a compromise on redistribution in the Franchise Bill of 1884. See W.S. Child-Pemberton, *Life of Lord Norton, 1814–1905* (1909), p. 262.

1. Maj.-General Sir Herbert Stewart commanded a camel-mounted force to relieve General Gordon at Khartoum but died of wounds, received at Abu Kru, on 19 Feb.

2. Nephew of Sir Thomas Munro of Lindertis, 2nd. Bart., and a naval officer.

3. On 24 Jan. by Irish bombers. For details see K.R.M. Short, *The Dynamite War. Irish-American Bombers in Victorian Britain* (1979), pp. 207–8.

been done but no irremediable mischief. It seems like Guy Fawkes' days, only nowadays nobody is caught and stranger still we seem to get used to it and not to care much.

Sunday 8 February

Fawsley

Then—most terrible news came on Friday morning from the Soudan. Khartoum has fallen after all these months, just two days before Sir C. Wilson¹ got there: apparently by treachery and what has happened to Gordon we do not know. What will happen next is impossible to surmise, but everybody must be filled with the gravest anxiety at the position of our 8000 gallant troops, cut up into 3 or 4 bodies, no base, no anything and unknown forces set free by the fall of Khartoum to swoop down upon them. Since the Indian Mutiny there has been no anxiety like it.

Wednesday 11 February

38 Beaufort Gardens, S.W.3

Left home by the 10.23 train and was met at Weedon by the horrible news of Gordon's death¹—I fear too true—and followed later in the day by the account of the fearful massacre, even of women and children which followed on the fall of Khartoum. One's imagination palls before it all. Well may the list of intercessions at the daily services now going on in the London Missions be a long one. The only comfort is the gallant way our troops fight—Lord Charles Beresford's² rescue of Sir C. Wilson *is* a thing to be proud of.

Went to see J.Fenwick.³ The line she takes is that if we had reached Khartoum long ago it would equally have been betrayed before we got there. *Never* was there such a position and we are powerless to turn the Government out and appeal to the constituencies *now* is impossible and a year hence it will be all forgotten. There was a horrible rumour tonight that our Afghan Commission⁴ has been massacred. I found dear Mary⁵ very poorly and Miss Parsons went with me instead of her to see the *School for*

1.Col. Sir Charles Wilson (1836–1905), chief of intelligence department in Lord Wolseley's Nile Expedition to Khartoum. He had reached the city on 28 Jan., too late to help.

1.On 26 Jan.

2.Capt. Lord Charles Beresford (1846–1919), R.N., staff officer to Lord Wolseley.

3.Jane Lutwidge Fenwick, née Cookson, a cousin of LMK, and wife of Henry Fenwick, Liberal, M.P., Sunderland, 1855–66.

4.The Afghan Frontier Commission, appointed by the British and Russian governments to determine the rival claims of the Turkoman territory acquired by Russian and Afghanistan.

*Scandal*⁶ at the Princes', with Mrs. Langtry⁷ as Lady Teazle. I do not think she has much improved and she is certainly losing her looks, but Farren as Sir Peter and Coghlan as C. Surface were both good. There was much *jeunesse dorée* and society faces generally, including Lord Hartington, who one thought might have been otherwise engaged at such a moment as this. Of *course*, Her Grace of Manchester too!⁸
5. Mary Wheatley, LMK's cousin, at whose house she often stayed.

Tuesday 17 February

Fawsley

And now tomorrow Lent begins. May God help me so to keep it as to be a real help. I propose: 1. To get up earlier, so as to have more time for reading; 2. To observe as far as possible the hours of prayer; 3. To spend nothing I can possibly help; 4. To try not to be impatient with deafness etc.; 5. To be faithful and constant in intercessory prayer.

Thursday 19 February

Fawsley

Buller's¹ force is retreating from Gubat instead of attacking Metemneh as the Mahdi is advancing from Khartoum—which makes us very anxious. The Guards have all started by now (Monday) and there are many sad hearts in England. Parliament met today and a vote of censure is to be proposed, but it is all far beyond party feeling now. Rainald says he has never known such an anxious state of things in his time. And if we should beat the Government how *can* we take office with a majority of over 100 against us, the Redistribution and the Crimes Bill to pass, and no power of appealing to anything but a constituency which is declared incomplete? One thing is certain. Mr. Gladstone *cannot* be the statesman he has been thought or he never could have allowed things to come to such a pass. He is a financier and an orator, but his foreign policy is beneath contempt. And Russia is thundering at the gates of Herat!²

6. A comedy in five acts, completed in 1777, by Richard Brinsley Sheridan.

7. Lillie Langtry (1853–1929), known as the 'Jersey Lily' after her birth-place. One of the great beauties of her time and a favourite of the Prince of Wales. See J. Cowles, *Edward VII and His Circle* (1956), pp. 149–52.

8. Louise, Duchess of Manchester, wife of William Drogo Montagu, 7th. Duke. Two years after her husband's death in 1890 she married Spencer Compton Cavendish, 8th. Duke of Devonshire, formerly Lord Hartington, thus the soubriquet, the 'Double Duchess'.

1. Col. Sir Redvers Henry Buller (1839–1908), Wolseley's chief of staff.

2. City in north-west Afghanistan.

Wednesday 25 February

Fawsley

Drove Mother over to Eydon.¹ Rainald returned by way of Northampton where he attended a Conservative Meeting at which he and Mr. Phipps² were finally selected candidates.³

Friday 27 February

Fawsley

Rainald and Harry Gage¹ departed to London to vote in their respective Houses for the vote of Censure² moved yesterday by Lord Salisbury in a weighty and statesman-like speech.³ Of course, he will have an overwhelming majority but there is little or no chance of carrying it in our House, though Sir W. Harcourt's open advocacy of the policy of 'slaughter and scuttle' has made some of the Whigs very shaky. Count Lutzow came to luncheon and made himself very pleasant. He is attached to the Austrian Embassy and hunts from Rugby. He spoke with the utmost contempt of Mr. Gladstone and his foreign policy, which as he truly says hinges on Madame Novikoff⁵ and the Greek Church. Oh, that fatal new departure in English politics in 1877!

1. Eydon Hall, near Culworth, the home of Col. Henry Cartwright.

2. Pickering Phipps, Conservative M.P., South Northamptonshire since 1881 and contesting the seat against Robert Spencer in the Brixworth division.

3. At the George Hotel, Northampton, Sir Rainald stated, 'He should have been very happy to retire. He felt, however, having enjoyed a quiet seat for seventeen years it would have been rather cowardly to have retired with a contest imminent'. *Northampton Herald, (NH)*, 28 Feb. 1885, p. 6.

1. Henry Charles, 5th Viscount Gage, of Firle, Sussex, nephew of Sir Rainald Knightley.

2. On the failure of the Sudan expedition and the abandonment of that country.

3. *Hansard*, 3, 294, cols. 1589–94, 26 Feb. 1885.

4. Sir William Harcourt (1827–1904), Secretary of State, Home Department, 1880–5. Liberal M.P., Derby, 1880–95.

5. Madame Olga Novikoff (1848–1925), a flamboyant Russian lady who influenced Gladstone on East European matters. See W.T. Stead (ed.), *The M.P. for Russia, Reminiscences and Correspondence of Madame Olga Novikoff* (1908), ii, pp. 132–50.

Saturday 28 February

Fawsley

Hunted all by myself from Badby Wood, where Captain Close¹ announced to me the numbers: Conservative majority in the Lords 121, Government majority in the Commons 14.² Couldn't have been better. Rainald and Harry returned in the evening, the air full of rumours but nothing known. They won't resign.

Saturday 7 March

Fawsley

Public events may be summed up in the fact that Ministers have *not* resigned, that Prince Bismarck has made a most extraordinary speech with a violent attack¹ on England or rather the English Government and that we are on the brink of war with Russia about the Afghan frontier and Herat—just what we have all been foreseeing for years. But Mr. Gladstone has ostentatiously broken up the alliance with Germany and Austria and we are powerless! The incredible thing is that he said yesterday in the House that he had not read Bismarck's speech which appeared on Thursday.² His ignorance of foreign policy is simply fabulous. He *cannot* be so clever a man as is supposed, though doubtless a great financier and orator.

These, briefly, are the events of the week. Besides, it has brought rather important decisions to us. Sir Maurice FitzGerald³ has consented (or all but) to stand for the Towcester division, and *we* have decided not to take a house in London! I really don't much mind, specially as we are to go for a bit to Whitehall, and I am *sure* it is a wise decision for money matters are *not* satisfactory. Prices and trade don't mend and I do so want Tiny⁴ to buy himself a horse. Besides we must be about to canvass.

1. Capt. Henry Vere Close of Roade.

2. On the previous day's vote of censure.

1. In the Reichstag on 2 March, advising against England annexing Egypt.

2. Hansard, 3, 295, col. 293, 6 March 1885.

3. 2nd. Bart, President of the Liberal Club, Daventry. Known as the 'Knight of Kerry', because of his estates in Co. Wexford.

4. LMK had two nicknames for Sir Rainald, Mite and Tiny.