

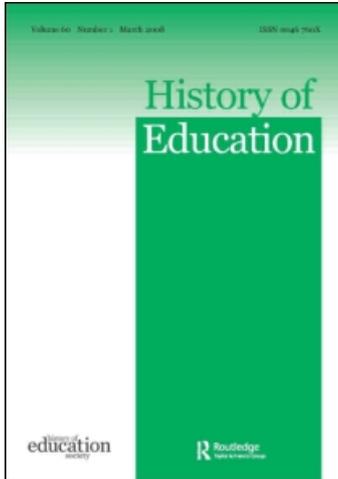
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# To Bring into Play: Miss Mary Richmond's Utilization of Kindred Networks in the Diffusion of Kindergarten Ideals into Practice

Kerry Bethell

*In the setting up of kindergarten systems in colonial New Zealand over the late nineteenth century, kindergarten founders such as Miss Mary Richmond in Wellington developed global links with kindergarten movements in a number of countries including England. This article examines the nature and significance of two key global interconnected networks underpinning Mary Richmond's work in kindergarten. The two networks addressed here—the Froebel movement in London and the Unitarian based network of family and friends—were characterized by a shared belief in the power of education to bring about change. This paper argues that such networks need to be understood not only through the lens of female collective action but also more specifically through a particular reforming outlook that sought to use education as a means to bring about broader social change.*

On 16 June 1896, Miss Mary Elizabeth Richmond, on a visit to England from the new colony of New Zealand, took action. The roots of this action were in her dissenting family's earlier rejection of much that represented mid-nineteenth-century Britain. They joined the mass migration of citizens that over the nineteenth century flocked to New Zealand, a semi-colony of Britain, 12,000 miles from home, united in the almost universal search for a better, more prosperous, more egalitarian life.<sup>1</sup> For the largely British migration, this system of progressive colonialism promised much whilst retaining the essence of what it meant to be British. As James Belich argues:

For a time, neo-Britons of the 'white dominions' also saw themselves as 'metropolitan': they were co-owners of the British Empire and of Old British culture and heritage. Living standards, egalitarianism and some other public goods were typically superior in the neo-Britains than in the Old, and it was often unclear as to who was exploiting who.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Belich, James. *Making Peoples*. Auckland: Allen Lane/Penguin Press, 2001. Between 1840 and 1882, colonization was rapid with a growth in population from 2000 to 500,000 people.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 12.

Like others who migrated over this time, the Richmond family not only carried with them the ideas and aspirations of a Greater Britain; they also established significant networks in which to transmit ideas and information across the world. Correspondence, newspapers and regular visitors provided the new colonists with important links to the known and familiar world they left behind.<sup>3</sup> What is interesting, given the length and difficulties of travel across the world, is just how many and how often individuals made the return trip between the new colony of New Zealand and Britain. Mary Richmond for example, visited England on at least five occasions, often staying away for lengthy periods of time.<sup>4</sup>

On the occasion of Mary's third visit to Britain, it was her action that day in June that set in place the direction she was to take over the next two decades. An action small in nature but one that effected change for Mary in ways seemingly not anticipated at the time. Later she recorded in her diary that day's events: 'To the Froebel Institute to see Madame Michaelis. Arranged to begin on the 22<sup>nd</sup> September and learn for a term. Bought two blouses with Mother.'<sup>5</sup> Three months later, in September, Mary, accompanied by her friend Lily Shaen,<sup>6</sup> enrolled at the Froebel Education Institute (FEI) in London. They were to begin a three-month course of study on the principles and practices of Friedrich Froebel, educator, philosopher and originator of the kindergarten system of education. On her return home to New Zealand in 1889, Mary became involved in the Colony's emerging kindergarten movement, becoming a leading figure in initiatives to reform the education of young children in her hometown.

In her work in kindergartens, Mary assumed membership of a loosely knit worldwide movement of volunteers, largely middle- and upper class women. Over the late nineteenth century, they found an active role for themselves in the dissemination of Froebel's teachings and in the establishment of kindergartens throughout the world. While the basis for the movement came from the work of Froebel, the promotion and global implementation of his teachings became the work of women supporters.<sup>7</sup> Elly Singer describes the work of these early Froebelians:

They wrote books, gave lectures, founded kindergartens, and organised training courses on Froebelian pedagogies for girls and mothers. Their horizons were broadened beyond the boundaries of their own countries. There was a great deal of travel and correspondence within Europe and between Europe and the United States, in order to exchange ideas.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Porter, F. and C. McDonald, eds. *My Hand Will Write what my Heart Dictates*. Auckland: Auckland University Press with Bridget Williams Books, 1996.

<sup>4</sup> Mary Richmond is known to have been in England in 1875, 1890, 1896, 1907, and the 1920s.

<sup>5</sup> Mary Richmond, *Diary*, 1896. 77–173–17, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

<sup>6</sup> Agnes Elizabeth Shaen, daughter of William Shaen, Kensington, London.

<sup>7</sup> For example, Read, J. "Froebelian Women: Networking to Promote Professional Status and Educational Change in the Nineteenth Century." *History of Education* 32, no. 1 (2003); Allen, Ann Taylor. *Feminism and Motherhood in Germany, 1800–1914*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1991.

<sup>8</sup> Singer, Elly. *Childcare and the Psychology of Development*. London: Routledge, 1992.

Singer argues women used the kindergarten as a vehicle in the feminist struggle to better the position of women and children. Through this, they wished to elevate humanity.

This paper explores the nature and significance of key global networks underpinning Mary's work in kindergarten; in particular, that between the Kindergarten Movement in Wellington and the FEI in London. Alongside this was the Unitarian-based network of family and friends and their shared belief in the power of education to bring about change. I draw on Kathryn Gleadle's work analysing progressive groups, in particular her argument that to understand such networks requires a focus 'not necessarily on female collective action, but the existence of a particular reforming outlook—one shared by men and women alike'.<sup>9</sup>

### The Froebel Educational Institute—London

The FEI arose in the 1870s out of mid-nineteenth-century liberal British interest in education and in education reform, as the means to bring about broader social goals. It was a time that saw significant changes in areas including a national state elementary education system for working-class children, improved provision for secondary education for children of the middle classes, and increased pockets of interest in the teachings of Froebel and the education of very young children.<sup>10</sup> What today seems commonplace was to many nineteenth-century eyes unheard of and radical. As Weston argues, Froebel 'turned commonsense upside down by arguing that the most important part of schooling was the pre-school period'.<sup>11</sup> News of Froebel's teachings spread, attracting the attention of individuals interested in liberal progressive approaches to education, leading to the formation in London, in 1874, of the Froebel Society for the Promotion of the Kindergarten System.<sup>12</sup>

By 1890, the kindergarten movement in England was well established with institutions set up to promote and to protect Froebelian ideas and methods, alongside substantial teacher training centres and supporting networks. In 1892, financial support was found to support a new institution, the FEI, with the aim of extending Froebel's teachings beyond the infant school, to promote a free kindergarten system and to increase the numbers of necessary teachers. Within its teacher education programmes, the FEI differed from the more subject-based and management-directed traditional models; it upheld a '*philosophy* of education and the *wholeness* of the total education process, based on the *observation* of individual children following

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<sup>9</sup> Gleadle, Kathryn. *The Early Feminists: Radical Unitarians in the Emergence of the Women's Rights Movement 1831–51*. New York: St Martins Press, 1995: 3.

<sup>10</sup> Weston, Peter. *The Froebel Educational Institute: The Origins and History of the College*. London: Roehampton Institution, 2002. Liebschner, Joachim. *Foundations of Progressive Education: The History of the National Froebel Society*. Cambridge, Lutterworth Press, 1991.

<sup>11</sup> Weston, Peter. *Friedrich Froebel His Life, Times and Significance*. London: Roehampton Institution, 1998.

<sup>12</sup> Weston, *The Froebel Educational Institute: The Origins and History of the College*, 26.

philosophy based on the teachings of Froebel'.<sup>13</sup> His predecessors, Jean Jacques Rousseau and Johann Pestalozzi, also influenced FEI views. Furthermore, the FEI attracted enrolments from the middle classes, in contrast to other kindergarten teaching colleges. Saffron Walden and the British Foreign Schools Society, for instance, targeted students from the respectable working classes.<sup>14</sup> The Institute included a kindergarten teacher training college for those who wished to become educators of young children and two schools, a demonstration school and a practising school, taking children from three to 14 years.<sup>15</sup>

It was here that Mary Richmond and Lily Shaen spent the next three months. Both came to the college considerably older in years than most students and with some educational experience already acquired. Diary entries for this period are, for the most part, brief and factual, typically recording patterns of attendance or non-attendance. It is known for example that Mary and Lily were present for the 1896 visit of Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein, to open the new school hall.<sup>16</sup> FEI records are more informative, providing useful glimpses of curriculum and practices offered to students. From the Annual General Report for 1897, we know that opening addresses delivered to the students were given by Mr Arthur Berry on the subject of 'Galileo', Sir Arthur Milner on the 'Bustle' and Bosanquet<sup>17</sup> on 'Rousseau'. A further glimpse of the curriculum is provided in contemporary photographs, showing students engaged in nature study, gardening and drawing. Social occasions included end-of-year concerts and a visit from the patron of the institute, Her Imperial Majesty, the Empress Frederick of Germany.

While not part of the formal curriculum, Mary's learning would have included understanding of the operation of a voluntary society and the organizational leadership, management skills and structures needed to succeed. Such understandings were revealed in an account published later in the alumni magazine, *The Link*:

We often saw Mr C. G. Montefiore's carriage drawn up at the entrance. He was, in those days, as I expect he still is, a faithful friend and generous supporter of the college.... The whole atmosphere of the place was created by Madame Michaelis, her personality permeated everywhere, and she had an admirable staff under her. It is hardly ever possible to embody a free spirit in an institution yet, in this particular instance, the thing was achieved and the result was most inspiring.<sup>18</sup>

On 17 December, Mary visited the institute to say goodbye to Madame Michaelis, A year later and home again in New Zealand, Mary drew on her recently acquired

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<sup>13</sup> Weston, *The Froebel Educational Institute: The Origins and History of the College*; Brehony, Kevin. "English Revisionists, Froebelians, and the Schooling of the Urban Poor." In *Practical Visionaries: Women, Education, and Social Progress*, edited by M. Hilton and P. Hirsch. Harlow: Pearson Education, 2000.

<sup>14</sup> Weston, *The Froebel Educational Institute: The Origins and History of the College*.

<sup>15</sup> Weston, *The Froebel Educational Institute: The Origins and History of the College*.

<sup>16</sup> *The Link*, no. 17 (March, 1921): 22. Froebel Educational Institute, Princess Christian was the fifth of Queen Victoria's children.

<sup>17</sup> First name not given. Probably Bernard Bosanquet, the philosopher.

<sup>18</sup> "News of Old Students." *The Link*, no. 17 (March 1921): 22. Froebel Educational Institute.

knowledge from the FEI to embark on pioneering educational and social work for young children and women. Within months, she opened a private kindergarten school for young children, recording the event, again in her familiar factual prose: 'Began my kindergarten at Congregational schoolroom. 8 pupils.'<sup>19</sup> That same year she established a Froebel Society in Wellington similar to that operating in England, becoming its President. At some stage she opened a second school taking in older children. In 1905, she set in place the framework for her biggest task yet: the pioneering of a free kindergarten association to provide kindergarten education to the children of the poor in the city.

To understand the 'coming into being' of the kindergarten in Wellington, and in particular the actions taken by Mary Richmond, requires the exploration of religious, familial and friendship connections that operated at this time to assist the transmission of kindergarten policies and pedagogy into practice in colonial Wellington. The nature and influence of these networks also requires exploration of the cultural systems out of which, as well as against which, they came into being.<sup>20</sup>

### Mary Richmond—Formative Influences

Mary Elizabeth Richmond, kindergarten pioneer, poet, educationist, daughter, sister, friend and, above all, celebrated advocate for children, was born in 1852, just two weeks following her family's arrival from England in the new colony of New Zealand. The eldest daughter of Emily and William Richmond, who would later become one of New Zealand's Supreme Court judges, Mary was born into a large, close-knit middle-class family and into a very communicative, literate, letter-writing, articulate, nineteenth-century colonial world. This was a family characterized by strong female and friendship support networks, which would play a significant role in Mary's work in kindergarten. It was a world that, although 12,000 miles from 'home', maintained close and crucial links with Western, intellectual, artistic, liberal, Unitarian and Nonconformist educational movements of the day.<sup>21</sup>

Mary's family were Unitarian by belief and in action. As dissenters, they belonged to the broader group of religious Nonconformists united by the Unitarian belief in 'deed not creed', sharing a common interest in public service, education and politics, along with an openly expressed sense of community service. Mary's father, William Richmond, is described as a man of conscience 'not content to be merely a student of these theories; he felt the reformer's guilt for the social state of England

<sup>19</sup> Mary Richmond, Diary, Monday, 7 February, 1898. 84-056-1/10, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

<sup>20</sup> See Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1991.

<sup>21</sup> Scholfield, G., ed. *The Richmond-Atkinson Papers*, Vol. 1, 1960. Wellington: Government Printer, 1989; Porter, Francis. *Born to New Zealand: A Biography of Jane Maria Atkinson*. Wellington: Allen & Unwin in association with Port Nicholson Press, 1989.

and was moved to cooperate in remedying it'.<sup>22</sup> Mary Richmond described them later as:

... highly educated people, practical idealists, [and] suitable leaders for any forward movement ... as full of the social welfare idea as the best of us today. They had read Tom Paine and Benjamin Franklin, knew all about the 'Rights of Man', and had lived through 'the hungry forties'.<sup>23</sup>

But social reform was a task that, by the 1840s, was becoming increasingly difficult to achieve and the family began to look seriously at immigration.

In 1850, the family, having struggled against the restrictions placed on them because of their religious beliefs and despairing of the perilous state of life in England, made the decision to leave England to emigrate to New Zealand. Push and pull factors combined in the Richmonds' decision to give up all that was familiar and known to travel 12,000 miles to the other side of the world.

The blank outlook in England for intellectuals and middle-class professional people was a significant factor and the family had already bid farewell to friends migrating to places that were more conducive. Then there were personal concerns regarding health and employment. The early death of the head of the family saw this responsibility shift to the older sons, William and James. William's ongoing struggles with asthma necessitated regular shifts to warmer climates, affecting his attempts to build his legal practice in England, as well as increasing his overall fragility. Other family members had their individual struggles to find satisfying employment in a world of social conventions that denied opportunity on the basis of gender and religion. Twenty-six-year-old Jane, William's sister, had almost resigned herself to becoming a governess, the only profession it seemed that was open to ladies of refinement and education. James sought to become an artist but felt obligated to find employment to contribute to support of the family. Furthermore, their capital was limited and it could not obviously be increased, or even conserved, if they remained in England.<sup>24</sup>

However, the pull to migrate was also strong. Other family members already settled in the new colony reported favourably on the educational, social and employment prospects being offered. The proposed Wakefield scheme, with its plan for systematic colonization, sought to export Britain's excess labour and capital to the colonies: 'at once improving the lot of the emigrants, strengthening imperial power and relieving the domestic situation'.<sup>25</sup> It was a scheme that, with its egalitarian aspirations and humanitarian assurances, appealed to the family's liberal and democratic beliefs.<sup>26</sup> Maria Richmond summed up the family's acquiescence and hopes in a letter to a friend written just before their departure in 1852:

<sup>22</sup> Scholfield, *The Richmond-Atkinson Papers*, Vol. 1: 27.

<sup>23</sup> Hocken Library, Richmond E., ed. *Family Letters of the Richmond and Atkinsons 1824-1899*, IV.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>25</sup> Belich, James. *Making Peoples: A History of the New Zealanders*. Auckland: Penguin Books, 1996: 183.

<sup>26</sup> Mary Richmond, 'A Talk to Teachers' 1907, 91-262-6, Alexander Turnbull Library, 4.

I see no reason why we should not go in a body to a new land where we should have a wide field of usefulness, leaving behind old disappointments and finding new anxieties and interests to make us forget ill placed and chilled affections and hopes.<sup>27</sup>

On 8 December 1852 a party of 10, including the newly married William and Emily Richmond, parents of the unborn Mary, set off, travelling 12,000 miles by sea for six long months to the new colony. On 30 August 1853, Mary Elizabeth Richmond was born—the first child of the new immigrants.

By the end of 1853, over 20 adult members, some with families, had settled in and about the township of New Plymouth.<sup>28</sup> Scholfield describes their arrival as a ‘movement of related groups from the Old World to the Antipodes which somewhat resembled the preparatory hekes of Maori communities from one district or island to another’.<sup>29</sup> Intermarriage and the regular birth of children saw the groups expand to form what became a network of influential families.

As Unitarians, they upheld belief in education as the key to changing society: ‘knowledge was power’.<sup>30</sup> Unitarian faith in the force of education to effect change arose out of the eighteenth-century work of philosophers and educationists such as Locke, Rousseau and, later, Pestalozzi. Unitarians rejected the widely held notion of original sin, arguing instead the significance of the environment as a key influence in shaping development. Differences between individuals were argued as not innate and unchangeable but, as Watts, explains, ‘based on education in its widest sense, encompassing upbringing and formal schooling’.<sup>31</sup>

Part of the hoped-for transformation involved examination of the role women were to play in the new society. If the new colony was to be freed from the influences of the ‘old-world evils’, middle-class society reasoned that women’s moral influence was imperative.<sup>32</sup> Unitarian progressive belief in education for all brought more enlightened attitudes towards the education of girls and women than available to the female population as a whole. Watts argues that ‘they were more inclined to equate the male and female intellectual capacities and to see the need for women to be well educated both for their own moral and spiritual development and to fulfil their traditional maternal and caring roles’.<sup>33</sup> While what form this education was to take in the new colony remained a matter of contestation and subject to gendered notions of propriety, there existed in early colonial society (and within the extended Richmond clan

<sup>27</sup> Letter from Jane Maria Richmond to Margaret Taylor, 4 September 1848, in Scholfield, *The Richmond Atkinson Papers*, Vol. 1: 50.

<sup>28</sup> See Scholfield, 1960 and Porter 1989 for details of the families and the links that connected them. Associated families included the Atkinson, Hursthouse, Stephenson Smith, Wilson, Ronalds and Richmonds.

<sup>29</sup> Scholfield, *The Richmond Atkinson Papers*, Vol. 1: 5.

<sup>30</sup> Watts, Ruth. *Gender, Power and the Unitarians in England 1760–1860*. London: Addison Wesley Longman, 1998.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>32</sup> Robertson, Yvonne. *Girdle Round the Earth: New Zealand Presbyterian Women’s Ideal of Universal Sisterhood, 1878–1918*. Presbyterian Historical Society of New Zealand, Annual Lecture, 1993.

<sup>33</sup> Watts, *Gender, Power and the Unitarians in England 1760–1860*, 8.

itself) a contested space in which alternative positions could be heard and where change became a possibility.<sup>34</sup>

From a young age, Mary was thus imbued with distinctively radical views on contemporary social, political and educational issues and family beliefs in individual and community responsibilities. Indeed, her own birth in 1853 occurred less than a year after Froebel's death, and two years following the Prussian banning of his kindergartens as revolutionary and an arm of the socialist movement, an event of which the dissenting families and advocates of Froebel's antecedents, Rousseau and Pestalozzi, would have been well aware. Family letters and journal entries show a high level of self-education amongst family members. Education was viewed in its widest sense, encompassing upbringing and formal schooling. Mary, through necessity<sup>35</sup> as much as custom, educated at home by tutors and family members, received a liberal, religious education, rich in literature, history and philosophy.<sup>36</sup>

Literature (in a broader sense to include essays and social tracts) was highly valued in the intellectual society as a tool for change. It played an important role in shaping Unitarians' understanding of their world, and its potential function as a repository of truth. In tandem with their opinion that society would be transferred through the triumph of the mind, they claimed that writers possessed the capacity to express the wants and needs of the age and to envisage and make possible the formulation of new solutions.<sup>37</sup>

From an early age, Mary and her siblings were exposed to 'good literature' read aloud by their parents around the dinner table, so that the midday meal became a function, as well as a feed:

My father was full of fun and vivacity, and humour played a large part in our readings; kind, cheerful humour, that loves what it laughs at, and mocks only what is mean, pretentious or false.<sup>38</sup>

Education also gave Mary representations of womanhood, reflecting broader Unitarian belief in the value of women's maternal role. Later in life, Mary displays her devotion towards her paternal grandmother, Lely Richmond, and her Aunt Maria, by describing both in terms reminiscent of Froebel's mother-teacher: 'Women's love and children's love, children's life, childcare and the female mind are one, according to their essence.'<sup>39</sup>

Granny Lely was most sympathetic, but firm as to right and wrong. Gentle and imaginative, she was the ideal companion and teacher for very young children. She taught me to

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<sup>34</sup> Belich, *Making Peoples: A History of New Zealand*.

<sup>35</sup> Little public education provision existed in colonial New Zealand for the middle classes in the 1850s and '60s. Furthermore, the immediate family moved at regular interval in accordance with William Richmond's work as a lawyer, a Member of Parliament and later a Supreme Court judge.

<sup>36</sup> Scholfield, *The Richmond-Atkinson Papers*, Vol. 1: 27.

<sup>37</sup> Gleadle, *The Early Feminists*, 55.

<sup>38</sup> Alexander Turnbull Library, Mary Richmond, My first eight years 1853–1861, An Autobiographical fragment, M.S papers 5358, 12.

<sup>39</sup> Froebel, 1922:29, cited in E. Singer, *Child-care and the Psychology of Development*, 53.

sew and to knit, and beguiled my tasks by reading aloud all sorts of wonderful stories. Aunt Maria too was full of motherliness and benignity.<sup>40</sup>

Yet, neither woman fitted Froebel's model in its entirety, especially his belief in women being subordinate to men. The Unitarian view held that women, like men, must be educated to be rational people and be active in society, not set apart from it.<sup>41</sup> 'I want my girls to have a boy's education because it is a better education than is what is called a girl's, since it better exercises the faculties God has given girls as well as boys', wrote Maria Richmond in 1870.

My experience in the Colony shows me that the most solidly educated women are the most useful in every department of life, and that the so called 'feminine refinement' is fatal to female usefulness.... I believe the more we are educated, the higher we aim intellectually, the better we shall discharge our own special functions in the world.<sup>42</sup>

For girls, education was to promote skills useful for women who would take their rightful place in society and, as such, Mary received 'lessons' in community responsibility, usefulness and duty. 'What a life of usefulness you may look forward to, the eldest of such a family', wrote Mary's grandmother following the birth of Mary's seventh sibling.<sup>43</sup>

Possibilities for Unitarian women extended also beyond the domestic into public life as shown in the work of key nineteenth-century Unitarian reformers such as Harriett Martineau, Florence Nightingale, George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell. Reforming work and thinking of leading Unitarian role models, both male and female, would have been part of the background tapestry of Mary's early world, providing the young erudite Mary with a sense of expectation and of the possible.<sup>44</sup>

Closer to home in the new colony, the young Mary experienced at first hand the family's struggles to reform education and social systems. Freed, as hoped, of some but not all of the barriers they faced in England, leading members of the first generation involved themselves in a range of campaigns over the 1860s and '70s. William Richmond, his brother James and their cousin Harry Atkinson entered public office with the aim to seek change through national politics; the latter becoming premier in 1876. Female members too could exert political influence. Opposing the education offered to girls emphasizing 'female refinement', Maria Richmond and her sister-in-law, Emma Richmond, entered local politics and reform campaigns to bring about educational and social change for women and children. Maria, assisted by Mary's mother, Emily, headed a campaign for girls' secondary education school in Nelson and Emma became the first woman elected to Taranaki Education and Hospital Boards.<sup>45</sup> Family members set up their own schools and sought schools offering non-

<sup>40</sup> Richmond, *My First Eight Years 1853–1861*, 9.

<sup>41</sup> Watts, *Gender, Power and the Unitarians in England, 1760–1860*.

<sup>42</sup> Letter Jane Maria Atkinson to Margaret Taylor, Nelson, 23 March 1870, in Scholfield, 300–01.

<sup>43</sup> Alexander Turnbull Library, Box of miscellaneous letters, letter from Maria Richmond to Mary Richmond, 15 February 1867, MS 85–50.

<sup>44</sup> Gleadle, *The Early Feminists*; Watts, *Gender, Power and the Unitarians in England, 1760–1860*.

<sup>45</sup> Scholfield, *The Richmond-Atkinson Papers*, Vol. 1.

conformist education over more traditional models in their bid to find satisfactory education provision.

However, the hopes for a 'Greater Britain' and a more progressive education system were too slow to come about. In the early 1870s, growing dissatisfaction with the colonial education system spurred three family groups to leave temporarily, to travel overseas in search of more appropriate educational provision for the expanding new generation. Advice on educational provision was sought from family and friends in England with an emphasis on the provision of a 'useful' education for girls that would allow them some independence:

I am about to write to ask you and your brother to write to me ... about teaching for my girls.... I have thought of foreign schools and more particularly of Dresden, but accept the general idea that they are less slipshod than English ladies schools, and therefore less likely to breed up little butterflies, and also of the advantage of learning living languages in their native homes I have no knowledge of their merits.... I also want her [his daughter] to have some art or profession by which if necessary she may earn a living and at all times feel as much independence as mortals have a right to feel.<sup>46</sup>

The first group of family members left in 1873 and was followed, in 1875, by Mary Richmond's family, all nine children and both parents. The older of Mary's siblings undertook university study in England, favouring universities supportive of Unitarians; the boys at the Unitarian University of London and her sister Margaret at Newnham College, Cambridge. The youngest children were educated in Europe: the boys at a school in Hofwyl in Switzerland based on Pestalozzian principles, the girls at a private school in Dresden.

For Mary, now in her early twenties and established in her role as 'daughter of the house', such formal educational opportunities came too late. Denied the opportunity and freedom to study given to her younger sister, Margaret, Mary as the eldest daughter, was increasingly expected to take on familial responsibilities, built around assumptions of prevailing feminine qualities of usefulness and protection of children. For the most part, Mary acquiesced to such expectations consistently, finding in her domestic responsibilities a sense of personal satisfaction: 'I was a dreamy child with a turn for books, if I had not been trained early I should never had [have] learned the [undecipherable] best part of a woman's aptitude, how to prize and handle children.'<sup>47</sup>

Mary spent the next four years in London, Oxford, Dresden and Lausanne, in her role as 'daughter of the house'. While her dedication to her familial duties was generally acknowledged and valued, it was at times taken for granted. In 1879, Mary's mother, Emily, having resisted William's many requests for her to return her home, wrote suggesting he 'let Mary or Anna [Mary's sister] take the best care of you they

<sup>46</sup> Letter J.C. Richmond to Miss Ann E. Shaen, Blackheath, 22 August 1873, in Scholfield, 351.

<sup>47</sup> Alexander Turnbull Library MS77.173, Speech given by Mary Richmond, "How to make children lovable", 1933.

can. They like to manage, and as they do not marry, what can they do better than your housekeeping.<sup>48</sup>

At times, Mary did experience tension between unrealized possibilities and the confines of late nineteenth-century, gendered society. Frustration occasionally spilled out, as in a letter to her sister in 1876:

Words cannot express how much I dislike this lively cage, this enchanting basin in which we dwell. I am as discontented as a cat in water and as blue as the deep sea. I want badly to be free ... this minding of the family is bad for the spirit and the body.<sup>49</sup>

Did her kindergarten aspirations, triggered by a yearning for a 'life beyond domesticity', emerge during this period? Certainly there was opportunity. Mary's stay in Europe and England coincided with the expansion of kindergarten ideas throughout the 1870s. It is highly likely that she would have been aware of the growing Unitarian interest and involvement in the establishment of kindergartens in England. For example, William Herford opened a day school in 1873, becoming one of the first in England to translate Froebelian ideas into practice.<sup>50</sup> Unitarian women such as Caroline Bishop, Maria Grey and Emily Shirreff took on key roles in the kindergarten movement and in the establishment of the Froebel-based schools, the Froebel societies and training colleges.<sup>51</sup> The Unitarian networks would have almost certainly been circulated accounts of such activities amongst its members.

Of greater significance is the close relationship that existed between members of the Richmond family and the Shaen family of Kensington in London.<sup>52</sup> Two long-term friendships stand out in particular; those between Mary and Margaret Josephine Shaen and their respective fathers; William Richmond and William Shaen. A leading radical liberal non-conformist in the 1860s and 1870s and a committed advocate of education for women, William Shaen had direct links to the early kindergarten and women's movements of the 1870s. Ruth Watts counts him amongst the radical Unitarians who emerged from the group centred on William Johnson Fox, Unitarian minister at South Place, London.<sup>53</sup> In education, William Shaen was involved in the founding and running of Bedford College for woman, an early training centre offering kindergarten teacher training. Furthermore, he acted as solicitor to the Girls' Public Day Schools Company, from its foundation in 1872, key figures in which included

<sup>48</sup> "Emily Richmond to William Richmond, 22 October 1878." In *My Hand will Write what my Heart Dictates*, edited by F. Porter and C. McDonald, 292.

<sup>49</sup> Alexander Turnbull Library, Mary Richmond-Anna Richmond, 23 March 1876. Box of Miscellaneous Letters. 85-50.

<sup>50</sup> Weston, *The Froebel Educational Institute*.

<sup>51</sup> See Hilton, M., and P. Hirsch, eds. *Practical Visionaries: Women, Education and Social Progress 1790-1930*. Harlow: Longman, 2000; Read, J. "Froebelian Women: Networking to Promote Professional Status and Educational Change in the Nineteenth Century." *History of Education* 32, no. 1 (2003): 17-33.

<sup>52</sup> Note earlier references to Lily Shaen (William Shaen's daughter) and Anne Shaen (Williams's sister).

<sup>53</sup> Watts, *Gender, Power and the Unitarians in England, 1760-1860*, 203-04. See also Gleadle, *The Early Feminists*.

prominent Froebel Society members Frances Buss, Dorothea Beale, Maria Grey and the aforementioned Emily Shirreff.<sup>54</sup>

Gleadle identifies a pattern in which the radical Unitarians ensured continuity within reform movements, through the efforts of many of their offspring who went on to make their own mark in the campaigns. This was true of William Shaen's daughter and Mary Richmond's long-term friend, Margaret Shaen, who like her father was active in the struggles for women's rights, continuing her father's interest in Bedford College. The friendship between Mary and Margaret Shaen was, as with their families, built around shared Unitarian convictions and a sense of social duty.<sup>55</sup>

Given the two families' shared interest in education and the frenzy of kindergarten activity taking place at this time, it is likely that discussion of kindergarten took place during these visits, especially given the closeness of the Shaen home in Kensington to the FEI.<sup>56</sup> It is certainly possible that Mary took a keen interest in this movement. She may have attended one of many public meetings promoting kindergarten held during this time. If not in the late 1870s, did such meetings occur later, perhaps on her next visit to England in 1891?

These early formative experiences would have provided Mary with a sense of social responsibility and duty, knowledge of possibilities for education provision outside the state sector, and some awareness of how to, and the means to, bring about change. Mary maintained this familial sense of social duty throughout her adult life.

Mary's search for something beyond conventional domesticity was one common to women across time and cultures—how to pursue interests in the public world of work whilst still fulfilling their domestic responsibilities within the private world. Eventually this universal gendered question led Mary to follow a path similar to that of female family members such as Maria Atkinson. They used legitimized maternal interest in children and education to introduce social and educational change. Gradually Mary extended her strong sense of duty and obligation towards family members to serving women and children, through involvement in a range of philanthropic and educational organizations and institutions.

### **Return to New Zealand—To Domesticate or to Liberate?**

Mary Richmond returned to New Zealand in 1878 to a changed society with aspirations to become a reforming country. Having rejected the earlier ideology of progressive colonization in favour of a new ideology of re-colonization, the colony now sought not just to become part of greater Britain, but to create a Better Britain. It would become the world's social laboratory.<sup>57</sup> Social, educational and political reforms over the late nineteenth century were to bring many improvements affecting

<sup>54</sup> Gleadle, *The Early Feminists*.

<sup>55</sup> Richmond, Mary. "The Late Miss Margaret Shaen." *The Inquirer* 9 May 1936: 233.

<sup>56</sup> The Richmonds often used the Shaen home as a base when in London.

<sup>57</sup> Belich, J. *Paradise Reformed: A History of the New Zealanders from the 1880s to the year 2000*. Auckland: Allen Lane: Penguin, 2001: 76.

women and the provision of a space in which middle-class women were able to take on increased public roles.

Mary took advantage of the changing social norms and new employment prospects for women of her class. Over the next two decades, she increasingly challenged traditional gender norms and slowly gained ground in the contested space between the private sphere of domesticity and the public world. For example, along with other family members, she was involved in the suffrage campaigns of the 1880s, witnessing the 1893 passing of the Suffrage Bill giving all women voting rights, making New Zealand one of the first countries to do so.<sup>58</sup> William wrote to a younger daughter residing in England:

(w)oman is 'enfranchised' amidst huge acclamations. I want to send you a cutting ... of an account of a 'monster meeting' at Nelson to celebrate victory. The body of the hall was filled with ladies and men in the gallery. Aunt Maria was in great force—no more Jack Kerrs to be sent to parliament, no more Fishers, no more Seddons.<sup>59</sup>

Two months later, women voted for the first time in the general election; again William reports to Alice:

I have no doubt the family has to an appreciative extent contributed to the victory of the temperance ticket in Wellington. The great political event has been however the exercise by women of the parliamentary franchise. Mary and Alla were on Mr Bull's committee and attended on the day of election. Mary at Boulcott St., Alla at Clyde Quay, up to 7 o'clock. The women were most energetic.<sup>60</sup>

Earlier in 1884 Mary took a teaching assistant position in the newly formed Wellington Girls' College. The expansion of secondary education of girls brought increased demand for female teachers at a time when there was a lack of graduate women and teacher training provision. Whilst Mary lacked relevant formal teaching or educational qualifications, she held personal and social attributes deemed appropriate for teachers at this time. Given her family background, it is highly likely that members of Board knew her personally—or at least knew her father, now a Supreme Court Judge.<sup>61</sup> Mary remained at the school until 1890 when she left to travel to England to study at Newnham College.<sup>62</sup>

Later, she acted as her father's secretary, a role normally undertaken by men, as he travelled his circuit as a judge.<sup>63</sup> William:

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<sup>58</sup> New Zealand is commonly claimed to be the first national state in the world to allow women to vote. More recent historians argue international precedence depends on definitions of 'nation'. Women had voted in Wyoming since 1869 and in Utah since 1870. Colorado gave women the vote, with New Zealand, in 1893.

<sup>59</sup> Letter C. W. Richmond to Alice Blake, 26 September 1893, in Scholfield, 591.

<sup>60</sup> Scholfield, 592–3.

<sup>61</sup> Harding, Olga. *One Hundred Years: A History of Wellington Girls' College*. Wellington: Wellington Girls' College Centennial Committee, 1982.

<sup>62</sup> Porter, *Born to New Zealand*.

<sup>63</sup> Scholfield, *The Richmond-Atkinson Papers*.

I was conducted to the Court House by Ruthie<sup>64</sup> and Mary to the admiration of the jurors and witnesses assembled outside the Court House. No doubt they regarded my female secretaries as another sign of the times, but did not cheer. The men are taking the thing cheerfully and resignedly, as it is wise to do....<sup>65</sup>

In 1906, having gained the support of key public figures in the city, Mary took on another role to campaign and to win a seat on the Wellington College and Girls' High School Board of Governors; the first woman to do so. Comment came from a local paper, *The New Zealand Free Lancer*:

However, the election ought to engage unusual attention from the fact a lady of high intellectual attainments is out for the seat against two gentlemen.... The male competitors are worthy gentlemen, whose claims we should be very loath to dispute. But in our estimation, Miss Richmond's qualifications are superior and there are no reasons why a lady should not be given the preference if other things are equal. Miss Richmond is not only a woman of culture and of intellectual parts, she is an education expert.... There is no earthly reason why the Board of Governors for the Wellington Girls should be confined to the male sex. Quite the contrary.<sup>66</sup>

The death of her beloved father in 1895 along with diminishing domestic responsibilities brought both loss and new freedoms for the restless and driven Mary. She had a well-earned social position, connections across the city's education, social and political networks and was a published poet. On a personal level, financial independence freed her from the need to undertake paid employment or to marry for economic reasons. However, she had yet to find the direction for her considerable energies and skills.

### Emerging Kindergarten Movement in Colonial New Zealand

Colonial interest in kindergarten as a method of education for young children materialized as a public force in the 1870s and 1880s. It began in geographical pockets and was closely linked with the temperance and suffrage movements that also surfaced over this time. While some in education supported reform of the education system along the lines proposed by Pestalozzi and Froebel, such ideas gained little support within the wider community.<sup>67</sup> The community was far more interested in the prevailing debate as to education provision for the colony's children, whether or not universal education should be introduced and who should pay the cost of education. Instead, it was left to the voluntary sector to initiate and promote kindergarten, and to endorse the need for education of the very youngest children. It was an early Froebelian, Miss Learmouth Dalrymple, who successfully campaigned, both for a girls'

<sup>64</sup> Probably Mary's cousin, Ruth Atkinson.

<sup>65</sup> Letter C. W. Richmond to Alice Blake, 30 November 1893, in Scholfield, 592.

<sup>66</sup> "Is There Room for Mary There." *The New Zealand Free Lance*, Saturday 24 March 1906: 6.

<sup>67</sup> May, Helen. *The Discovery of Early Childhood: The Development of Services for the Care and Education of Very Young Children, Mid Eighteenth Century Europe to Mid Twentieth Century New Zealand*. Auckland: Auckland University Press; Bridget Williams Books with New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1997.

secondary school in the town of Dunedin and for women to enter university. She then surveyed the educational world in 1879 to ask the rhetorical question, 'what more is there wanting'? The answer, she argued, was 'kindergarten'.<sup>68</sup> The establishment of the Christian Women's Temperance Union in 1885 saw the question of kindergarten gain national interest. Interest expanded into action. A few infant schools introduced kindergarten methods into their curriculum, individuals opened private centres for younger children and a gathering of interest in provision of a free kindergarten system emerged in pockets of large settlements in the colony.<sup>69</sup>

Mary's early work in kindergarten, as with the FEI in London, was sited in the fee-paying private sector in accordance with Froebel's model of kindergarten as providing for children of the middle classes. An unidentified note attached to a family scrapbook explains:

Her original idea was to take only the children of her friends, but the popularity of the kindergarten spread to such an extent that she soon had 50 pupils, amongst them the children of the then Gv [*sic*] Lord Plunket.<sup>70</sup>

She then established a second private school for children, this time offering schooling from kindergarten to preparatory education, taking children from four to 12 years of age. Mary herself taught the kindergarten children aged 4–7 years. The older children were prepared for the College and High School, and, according to the prospectus, if enrolled for the full course of study, it would be found they could easily pass into the fourth form of any secondary school.<sup>71</sup>

The chance meeting with an unnamed, infant school teacher responsible for a large infant school of children aged 5–7 years in the city led to her next venture, a Froebel society for teachers in Wellington similar to that operating in London. Mary explained her involvement in a talk a decade later:

(H)ere is this woman doing *the most important work* in the world and apparently almost unrecognised by those whom she works amongst. So I decided to form a society in which primary teachers, secondary teachers, University professors, and outsiders interested in Education could all meet on a basis of equality, a sort of republic of education. The society was formed and called the Froebel Society and for several years we gave a series of lectures by members.<sup>72</sup>

From these beginnings, Mary turned her attention from the provision of a private fee-paying kindergarten to her biggest venture yet: the establishment of a free kindergarten system in Wellington. Convinced of the benefits of kindergarten teachings for

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<sup>68</sup> Dalrymple, Learmouth. *The Kindergarten: Being a Brief Sketch of Froebel's System of Infant Education*. Dunedin: Otago Daily Times, 1879.

<sup>69</sup> May, *Discovery*.

<sup>70</sup> Scrapbook, ACC91–262–3, Alexander Turnbull Library.

<sup>71</sup> Undated School prospectus. 77/173, Alexander Turnbull Library. Mary Richmond's name and address is given.

<sup>72</sup> Richmond, Mary. "A talk to teachers," 1907: 4. The teacher referred to may be Mrs Catherine Francis, the long serving infant mistress employed at Mt Cook Infant School. She was a known advocate of Froebel's teachings.

children and driven by Unitarian liberal, progressive aims, Mary sought to extend the benefit of kindergarten education to children of families unable to pay the necessary fee. While not part of Froebel's teachings, the notion of free kindergarten was not new. The FEI had proposed a free kindergarten scheme a decade earlier and although faced with opposition from those arguing against this shift, was actively working towards their goal.<sup>73</sup> Closer to home, in the town of Dunedin, a Free Kindergarten Association had formed in 1889 and by 1905 was operating two free kindergartens. Similar attempts to establish free kindergarten systems were operating in the other colonial townships of Christchurch and Auckland and globally in places such as North America.<sup>74</sup>

By 1905, Mary also was ready to launch a similar scheme in Wellington, encouraged perhaps by the recently announced state capitation scheme for free kindergartens. This scheme was interesting in the deliberate way Mary set out to ensure it would be a women's organization and that women would hold the power within the organization.

### **Kindergarten in Operation**

On 29 July 1905, Mary gathered a group, predominantly of women, for the inaugural meeting of the Richmond Kindergarten Union (named in honour of Mary's father). A union was formed with the aim, 'to collect funds to run a free kindergarten in the City of Wellington for children under the school age'.<sup>75</sup> The proposed union was to include a president, secretary and treasurer, an executive of six ladies (these were to be experienced teachers), subscribers and an Advisory Board composed of Gentlemen of Standing in the City. 'Their duties to consist in attending one Annual Meeting and giving Advice when asked to do so by any member of the Council or Executive'.<sup>76</sup> Mary held the position of Organising Secretary for over a decade.

Membership of the new association included many family members, Mary's sister, Margaret Fell, and two cousins in law, Lily Atkinson and Flora Richmond. Teachers, as well as many friends of Mary, were actively recruited into the association. Most were experienced teachers with standing in the community. Mary's close friend, Mrs Henry Smith, held a teaching position at a local private girls' school, while Elizabeth Helyer was the Headmistress of Mt Cook Girls' School. Phoebe Myers taught in a range of education institutions. Others such as Mrs Mary Gill and Margaret Fell held teaching positions before marriage.

Within a year, their aim was realized. On 2 April the committee opened its first kindergarten in the mission room behind the Baptist Church in Vivian Street. Interest in the movement grew and by 1910 four free kindergartens were established in

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<sup>73</sup> Weston, *The Froebel Educational Institution*.

<sup>74</sup> May, *Discovery*.

<sup>75</sup> Alexander Turnbull Library, Notebook Richmond Kindergarten Association, 1905. MS X-2516.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

Taranaki Street, Constable Street, Brooklyn and Kilbirnie, attended by some 200 children, all under school age. From London, Margaret Shaen wrote giving Mary her support:

... just received part one of your interesting talk about Progress and also interesting account of your [indecipherable] on women of Victoria College.... It is especially good to realise what a useful life you are living dear M, I often find it difficult not to waste what energy I have.<sup>77</sup>

Froebel's work provided a specific role for women as leaders and teachers within kindergarten. Kindergarten education was to serve as a bridge between the warmth of the home and the harshness of the school with its large classes and rote learning. Like Pestalozzi before him, Froebel thought women to be ideally equipped for this role, believing that they possessed an innate maternal tendency. Such ideas readily fitted Mary's desire to promote the distinctively female experience and its place in bringing about the liberal reform of society through education. This view held that, rather than women demanding equality with men, they should pursue separate but equal roles in the workplace and escape the constraints of domesticity that confined middle-class women to the home. Through these roles women would publicly legitimize the essential skills of femininity, such as caring and nurturing, thus acknowledging women's special role as educators of the world:

I honestly believe the future of the nation lies in our hands, because we [women] are the educators of the world. Man has gone as far as he can without our conscious effective help. Our business, our hope, is education.... The tender heart, the impressionable minds, the teachable bodies belong to us. Immense possibilities lie open before us if we are only able to walk worthy the mark of our high calling.<sup>78</sup>

From its inception, the Union held qualified teachers in high esteem. Teachers' innate capacity to uphold the virtue of the nation-state was seen to be crucial to society, and this quality contained potential for good in their work with children, a message clearly stated by Mary in a speech given to primary teachers in 1907:

It is my belief that teachers are the nation-makers; it is the highest vocation in the world and demands our heroic spirit. As we develop we shall continually hold our teachers in higher esteem, understanding that the uplifting of this possession means the uplifting of a whole person.<sup>79</sup>

### In Search of Teachers

However, how to staff the kindergartens with suitably qualified teachers proved to be a matter of ongoing concern. The newly formed association delayed the opening of the first kindergarten until a qualified teacher could be found. Eventually after a

<sup>77</sup> 77-173/30 Alexander Turnbull Library, Correspondence 1900-1908. Letter from M. J. Shaen to Mary Richmond, 27.7.08.

<sup>78</sup> Richmond, Mary. "Woman and Her Opportunities." *The White Ribbon* 9, no. 102 (1903): 1-2.

<sup>79</sup> Richmond, *A Talk to Teachers*.

wide-ranging search, both local and overseas (including the FEI), a suitable teacher was found: Miss Ida Banks. Little is known of her background beyond that she held qualifications in primary teaching and had recently spent a year in England studying the latest infant methods.

Soon afterwards, the association looked to the FEI again, making two more appointments: Miss Connie Freeman and Miss Cicely Davies. Both were British-born FEI graduates and travelled to New Zealand in search of adventure and to work in kindergarten. Writing in *The Link*, Connie Freeman provides a glimpse of her experience in New Zealand:

If you know of anyone who wants a change of air and a great experience, do tell them to come and help us. From a money point of view it is not good at all.... But it is splendid training for a young teacher for whom to earn a living is not the first necessity.<sup>80</sup>

There were other FEI graduates such as Dorothy Bousfield and Winifred Maitland, who travelled to the colony, taking up teaching positions in the city's junior schools. However, the traffic flowed two ways between the FEI in England and New Zealand. Women travelled from New Zealand to the FEI to gain teacher-training qualifications, returning home to take up teaching positions with young children. Again, Mary's influence can be seen in the number of family members who appear on the lists: this time from the next generation of the extended family, including Rachel Richmond, Anna Fell and Dorothy Hursthouse. A member of the RFKU, Ethel Burnett, gained her teaching qualifications through the FEI.<sup>81</sup>

The association also called upon the FEI to assist with their newly formed teacher training programme. Ida Banks, the association's first teacher, was appointed as the first principal, replaced in 1912 by another overseas appointment, FEI-qualified Miss Nettie Riley. By this time, the association's programme covered all the subjects needed for completion of the National Froebel Elementary Certificate.

The new association brought together women with experience and involvement in the colony's more socially reforming women's organizations, forming yet another crucial network of shared ideas and interests. Mrs Henry Smith and Lily Atkinson served on the national body of the Christian Woman's Temperance Union and Council of Women. Phoebe Myers, Dorothy Finch and Elizabeth Helyer were members of the radical Wellington Teachers' Association.<sup>82</sup> Elizabeth Helyer acted as President of the National Body and in 1914 was the first woman to be appointed to the government's advisory council of education. Mary Richmond also played leading roles in groups such as the League of Mothers, the New Zealand Society for the Protection of Women and Children, and the Women's Social Progress Movement. From 1910 to 1915, she served on the Wellington Hospital and Charitable Aid Board.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>80</sup> *The Link*, March, 1911: 26.

<sup>81</sup> *The Link*, March, 1923: 23–5.

<sup>82</sup> Burton, F. "The New Zealand Women Teachers' Association—1901–1964." Research Essay presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master's Arts in History, 1986.

<sup>83</sup> Porter, Frances. "Richmond, Mary Elizabeth 1853–1949." *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, updated 7 July 2005. Available from URL: <http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/>; INTERNET.

Mary Richmond's active involvement in kindergarten in Wellington ended when in 1914 she left for a lengthy stay in England. Here she joined the Kensington Society for Female Suffrage and went on lecture tours for the British League of Unitarians and Other Liberal Christian Women.<sup>84</sup> However, she did not forget this work and throughout her life she maintained her interest in the movement and in Froebel's teachings. Her work in education was formally recognized on many occasions. In 1907, she represented New Zealand at the League of Empire's Imperial Education Conference in London where she joined leading women educationists, colonial ministers of education and heads of education department along with others 'engaged in the work of education in the various parts of the Empire'.<sup>85</sup> In 1927, she was made a life member of the Wellington Free Kindergarten Association and later, in 1949, was awarded an OBE for her work in education.

Mary died in 1949, aged 95. At her funeral the presiding minister described Mary as 'one of the most remarkable women New Zealand has ever known'.<sup>86</sup> Her work and the legacy she helped establish were earlier recognized by the FEI:

We feel the tie which unites us with New Zealand is exceptionally strong, for not only do we have staunch friends out there, but we are, we hope, making three more, who, when they return to their country next year will, we feel, add three strong strands. Some account of the work of Miss May [*sic*] Richmond was given in *The Link* for 1911; the fact that her work lay in the founding of Free Kindergartens in Wellington made it of special interest to us.<sup>87</sup>

## Conclusion

The establishment of kindergarten in Wellington came about through the pioneering work of Mary Richmond and the kindred Unitarian and Froebelian networks, both local and global, that supported and helped shaped its emergence. For Mary Richmond such networks were important, both in her work to implement Froebelian ideals and activities, and in broader questions of social reform relating to the place of women and children in society. Froebel's teachings aligned with her particular brand of philanthropy, based on social consciousness, and a belief in social and educational reform and in the promotion of the moral position of women as teachers.

The weight of prevailing nineteenth-century gendered notions of female propriety and the practicalities of colonial society provided both opportunities and constraints for women such as Mary involved in the establishment of kindergarten in Wellington. Kindergarten, with its legitimized maternal interests, offered a bridge between their private domestic world and the more public world of educational and political activities. Through the politics of maternalism, they were able to expand their public roles

<sup>84</sup> Porter, *Born to New Zealand*.

<sup>85</sup> Goodman, Joyce. "Their Market Value Must be Greater for the Experience they had Gained': Secondary School Headmistresses and Empire, 1897–1914." In *Gender, Colonialism & Education: The Politics of Experience*, edited by Joyce Goodman and Jane Martin. London, 2002: Woburn Press.

<sup>86</sup> Tribute to the memory of the late Miss Mary Richmond, 1949: 1.

<sup>87</sup> Froebel Educational Institute, "New Zealand." *The Link* no. 6 (March 1915): 14–15.

whilst maintaining their private duties. They promoted a message of maternal feminism in which work was defined as an altruistic act for the sake of a healthy family and state, thus promoting the status of women in society. They found opportunities to extend their political role. Certainly, they were able to capture and dominate the discourse on free kindergarten education as part of broader social and political reforms that occurred in both countries over the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In Wellington, New Zealand, as in England, Froebelians were supported by Unitarian-based networks of family and friends and a common belief in the power of education to bring about change.