

NURSES CHALLENGING SUBORDINATION
GENDER, CLASS AND RELIGION IN BRITAIN'S CRIMEAN WAR

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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Abstract

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Adviser: Professor Bonnie Anderson

Beginning in October, 1854, middle-class female volunteers, paid nurses, and members of Anglican and Roman Catholic women's religious orders left Britain and Ireland to work as military nurses in the Crimean War. Florence Nightingale has received thorough scholarly and popular analysis, but the rest of the contingent is understudied. The Crimean War was the first conflict in which British women worked as military nurses. I analyze their work through the perspectives of gender, class and religion, using nurses' correspondence, journals, contemporary letters, news articles and documents. I argue that military nursing provided women with a unique opportunity which they seized to widen their "sphere." This service allowed them to contravene the usual strictures on genteel female behavior and work against anti-Catholic bias.

Though the government needed the services of the nurses, who had worked in famine hospitals and cholera epidemics before the War, officials were nonetheless concerned about the presence of Catholic and high Anglican sisters on the wards of military hospitals. All agreed that their primary responsibility was care of the sick, yet the sisters also took seriously their responsibilities to minister to the spiritual needs of

soldiers. Throughout their working lives, the Anglican and Roman Catholic Sisters served their nation and advocated for the poor. My analysis of religious women who supported Britain's war effort breaks new ground in women's history in showing how seemingly traditional women renegotiate cultural norms, avoiding the censure a more overt challenge would cause. Roman Catholic sisters were doubly subordinated by gender and denomination. Their and the Anglican sisters' unpaid work of managing Church-sponsored institutions and revitalizing religious practice in the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches has too often been attributed to the work of prominent churchmen. My work illustrates the sisters' role in reshaping mid-Victorian religious identity. By placing themselves in harm's way, attending to wounded and dying soldiers, avoiding scandals and gossip, the nurses helped to forge paths out of the home for women in the later Victorian decades.

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Like many of the Crimean nurses, I am part of many nurturing communities. One of the unexpected benefits of having to fit some of my overseas research around teaching and other obligations is the pleasure of returning to London and reconnecting with people

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Introduction

Here we are sitting by our firesides, devouring the morning paper in luxurious solitude, lazily tracing the path of conquest on one of Arrowsmith's best maps, counting the days of Sebastopol.... To us war is a spectacle, and, if we happen to have no friends engaged in it, a very amusing spectacle. ... These poor fellows are going through innumerable hardships, to bite the dust at last in mortal agony before a Russian redoubt, not for any quarrel of their own, but to satisfy our high feelings of honour, and save us the trouble of a personal vindication. We indulge in all the sentiment of the affair; we revel in a chivalrous detestation of Russia and compassion for the Turk ; we are ruling the destinies of the earth ; we are weighing in the balance the mightiest Power of modern times, and pronouncing its doom. ... But, while we are all in the third heaven of martial ecstasy, there is one little consideration that must now and then abate the sublimity of our enjoyment. What are we doing for the cause we have so much at heart ? Is it right that these poor fellows should bear the whole of the burden?—
*The Times*¹

In October of 1854, a group of 38 women risked their lives, health and reputations by agreeing to nurse in the British military hospitals in Turkey during the Crimean War. The contingent was in many ways a microcosm of British society, composed of women from across the British Isles, drawn from both middle and working classes and different denominations. For some nurses, religious identity inspired their choice to go, their work in the hospitals and the ways they were perceived by others as several were members of Anglican and Roman Catholic religious orders. This first group would be joined by several others over the course of the war, most notably by a second group containing more Catholic Sisters, this time from Ireland. Given Britain's troubled relationship to Ireland and suspicion of Catholics at home as either agents of Rome or supporters of Irish rebellion, the increasing numbers of Irish Catholic nurses sparked fears and hostility in the press and Parliament.

¹ Editorial, *Times* (London), October 12, 1854, 6.

My dissertation: *Challenging Subordination: Gender, Class and Religion in Britain's Crimean War* analyzes what brought these women to take on the previously unknown role of British military nurses and what their decisions meant for them and for British society. I study the nurses' pre-war lives, the government's motives in recruiting them, their wartime work and its impact on their post-war lives and broader society. The Crimean nurses' work had ramifications far beyond the military hospitals. I therefore explore the strategies women used to negotiate new gender roles and the historical significance of their nursing service. Much has been written on the Crimean War and on Florence Nightingale's work in the hospitals to overcome grave mismanagement, but there is little scholarship available on the nursing contingent as a group. I place their government service in its historical context, analyzing the women's work, relationships with each other, with male authorities, the perceptions of their work, whether criticism or commendation, the impact of their wartime service on their post-war lives and how they recount and reflect on their experiences.

While Florence Nightingale certainly played a major role in the nursing contingent, I have chosen to focus on the nurses she and others recruited. Studying these nurses deepens our understanding of the issues and cultural perceptions shaping the lives of mid-Victorian women. This larger group is understudied because many of the nurses were poor women, lacking Nightingale's ability to leave her own written records or her social status which insured that accounts of her would be left by her family, newspapers, government ministers or grateful members of the public who joined in raising funds both for her wartime work and post-war tributes. For the Anglican and Roman Catholic sisters, religious values emphasizing community rather than the individual mitigated

against any sister's recording her particular experiences. Scholars have also neglected religion's role in shaping historical change. Finally, religious women are often ignored by feminist scholarship, which has tended to prize secularism. Despite these barriers, there are traces in the archives even of those nurses who were unable to read or write. Those who were literate published memoirs, wrote letters home, or kept diaries. Others were described in reference letters to the selection committee or in reports at the end of the war, were the subject of sometimes harsh political cartoons, featured in newspaper correspondents' war reporting, were mourned by family and friends, or were discovered and honored at various anniversaries of the war.

I will analyze the women's experiences using three facets of their identities which shaped them: gender, class and religion. Gender is in some ways the most obvious: all of the Crimean nurses sent out under government auspices were women. This means that all had to overcome beliefs that they were ruled by their emotions, incapable of making independent responsible decisions, would go to pieces in a crisis and be a hindrance to the male doctors when they fainted at the sight of blood or the sound of wounded men's screams. Yet some gender perceptions worked in favor of choosing women military nurses. Women were thought to be inherently nurturing, gentle, able to sense the unspoken needs of a sick person, and to check by their very presence such presumed male excesses as bad language or drunkenness.

Class also played a role in the work of the nurses. Middle-class women like Florence Nightingale were able to offer their services free of charge. Freed from financial need, they could present their work as service to their wounded countrymen and downplay any personal gain they might receive, whether in the form of increasing skills,

a sense of accomplishment or exposure to new experiences. Working-class women could not afford to focus exclusively on the service aspects of their nursing, but had to stress their individual financial need for these new jobs. Application letters from working-class women mention loss of a father or husband's income, the hunger of children or the difficulty of finding any other work, while middle-class women stress their experience as supervisors, willingness to learn and desire to be of service to fighting husbands, brothers, or other men they envision as in a sense standing in for those they knew.

Religion too affected how the nurses worked and were perceived. A religious framework accorded with Victorian ideals of women as pure, virtuous and moral guardians of family and nation, while allowing some to challenge their confinement to the private world of the home and family and to take on more public responsibilities such as running institutions, managing finances and providing for their own and others' economic security. Despite their circumspect attempts to broaden their sphere of activity, some of the Crimean nurses were criticized by clergymen of their own denominations and other male officials for transgressing gender norms and usurping male authority. Although British women operating from motives of Christian charity would seem to be beyond reproach, some particular expressions of Christian virtue were feared rather than welcomed. The government needed the practical experience of the Roman Catholic and Anglican sisters who volunteered their services, but worried about the implications of work done under vows and feared that the women in orders would attempt to convert patients outright or would influence them to adopt rituals associated with Roman Catholicism. The Crimean nurses were not unique in perceiving care for the poor or sick as their Christian duty, yet some went beyond traditional concepts of charity to dedicate

their lives to acting in solidarity with the poor or uneducated, attempting to address underlying causes of inequity rather than simply responding to individual need. Women who favored this radical Christianity posed a challenge to some of Victorian Britain's most basic beliefs about the proper ordering of society, since they lived out the Christian call to make no distinctions between rich and poor or male and female. While Christianity bolstered this new vision of society, it also lessened its novelty and made its radicalism appear conventional. Women who advocated for major social reform and the eradication of poverty and gender inequity presented themselves as simply serving Christ in the guise of suffering humanity.

None of these factors operated independently. It was part of the gender ideology of mid-Victorian Britain that a middle-class woman would supervise and instruct, whether in practical matters or moral precepts, her working-class counterparts. A middle-class Anglican laywoman and a middle-class Catholic sister would both have been able to work among their male patients without accusations of sexual impropriety simply because they were perceived as ladies, yet the Catholic sister's habit would have identified her as a member of a potentially disloyal minority who could exert undue influence on her male patients weakened through wounds or illness.

The women's Crimean service had several important results, for the troops, society and for themselves. Despite initial gender-based fears of sending women as nurses, once it was determined that they should go out, it was nearly universally agreed that their work was beneficial to the troops. Even if they could not always do all they wished for patients and reported being overwhelmed by the numbers of deaths, in the worst cases, they were at least able to insure that patients were fed, given clean clothes

and made comfortable. For society, the nurses broadened the scope of activity acceptable for middle-class women and helped to challenge perceptions of working-class women as inherently incompetent or uncaring. The women's work led to the professionalization of nursing, the development of nursing schools and the approval of female nurses by the Red Cross first in Britain and then throughout the world. Through their work in schools, preparing people to receive sacraments, running religious societies for laypeople, raising funds for church buildings or philanthropic works, Catholic sisters were crucial to the reinvigoration of Catholicism in nineteenth-century Britain. Likewise, the growth of women's religious communities is an often-neglected and often women-led aspect of the history of the Church of England. By contributing crucial services to their nation, which some equated with the services soldiers rendered, the members of Catholic religious congregations challenged perceptions of themselves as potentially disloyal citizens working for increased papal authority in Britain or supporting rebellion in Ireland. The war also had lasting effects on the lives of the individual nurses. Many continued to find ways both to work as nurses, but also to advocate for veterans or otherwise work in solidarity with the poor and marginalized of their day.

The increasing exploration of connections between gender and religion with an awareness of the impact of class deepens our understanding of important historical issues. The "devotional revolution," the revitalization of Catholic practices among the laity in nineteenth-century Britain and Ireland, is often ascribed to the work of prominent churchmen and linked in Britain with the restoration of the hierarchy in 1850. The increasing scholarship on Catholic sisters and their supporters among laywomen serves to alter this perception. Similarly, although most studies of the Oxford Movement within

the Church of England have focused on male clergy, studies of Anglican women have broadened our understanding of processes of change or reform, including their gender dynamics.

Connecting women's and religious history is essential for the questions I explore. In an era when middle-class women were seen as the moral guardians of their families, responsible for elevating the behavior of their servants and for insuring that their households ran smoothly and were pleasant retreats for men to return to from work outside the home, religion was crucial to maintaining these gender norms. Religion could therefore reinforce traditional gender roles, but its function in allowing for their expansion has received less scholarly attention, an omission I hope to rectify. Finally, most studies which do explore the intersections of gender, class and religion do so within a particular religious community or its broader denominational context. My study of Anglicans and Roman Catholics expands our understanding of the similarities and differences and allows for a deeper understanding of how challenges to subordination can be successful.

The next chapter will provide some background on the Crimean War and on the group of nurses and their communities. I will outline further the three components of their identity—gender, class and religion—which shaped their Crimean service.

Chapter Two will analyze the women's pre-war work as prelude to their Crimean service. Though their Crimean nursing was certainly new, it grew out of earlier experiences and drew on perspectives which many would hold throughout their lives. As in the Crimean War, the women's prewar work illustrates their attempts to renegotiate the boundaries of gender and class. These redefinitions were easier in times of crisis,

whether periods of economic distress or emergencies like cholera epidemics. For some, the establishment of religious orders in the Anglican Church and the burgeoning of active congregations in the Roman Catholic Church were means of doing public work without criticism. Some working-class women were able to increase their social status by either joining religious communities or by receiving training under their auspices.² The nurses' work before the war gave them practical experiences of treatment of specific illnesses and of hospital administration which made them valuable to the government once it was decided to send out a contingent of nurses. In addition, the women had gained valuable experiences in renegotiating gender dynamics as they worked with male medical and clerical authorities.

Chapter Three will explore in more depth these gender dynamics and the ways in which women and men transgressed traditional gender norms during the war. Even with the support of the government behind them, the nurses still had to contend with men's disapproval of their work and had to demonstrate proper womanly behavior at the same time as they exhibited the professional competence usually ascribed to men. Men too, particularly chaplains, were taking on roles not traditionally associated with men, especially men in positions of authority. While it would be typical for clergymen to lead prayer, administer sacraments, or offer spiritual advice or religious instruction, some of the Crimean chaplains took on more stereotypically female responsibilities of nurturing and comforting distressed men far from home and loved ones. This chapter will also

² Membership in a religious congregation did not necessarily eradicate class distinctions. Many distinguished between choir sisters, those entering with dowries and education who would be given more responsibility in the community, and lay sisters, women bringing no dowries and with less education who often did the housework which freed the choir sisters to do the more visible work of the community like teaching or nursing. Some communities did not allow lay sisters to vote and required them to wear different habits than the choir sisters. Yet for women who would have had few opportunities to earn a living beyond work as a domestic servant, domestic work done in a religious congregation would have had the appeal of at least providing job security and care in old age.

explore men's and women's experiences of "gender bending," speculating on why it was often easier for men than women.

Chapter Four will analyze the work the women did in the military hospitals. Because some of it involved blood, dirt, living in harsh conditions and seeing and touching the bodies of men outside their families—all activities not thought appropriate for respectable women—it is difficult to gain a full picture of the women's daily lives and routines. However, their diaries and letters reveal some of the grittier details their published accounts merely hint at. The published accounts are valuable sources too, since they illustrate the public face their authors wished to put on their work. In addition to their nursing work, the women were often advocates for their patients. The Crimean War is infamous for its red tape and for the failures of distribution of crucial supplies. Through their letters home and requests to hospital authorities, the nurses worked to insure that crucial supplies reached the sick and wounded. Another component of the women's work was prayer and religious instruction. While moral uplift and religious example are aspects of the traditional female role, this work was not without controversy. Influenced by popular perceptions and fears of Catholics, some worried that the nuns' real aim was to win converts, or believed that women were attempting to take on work properly done by male clergy.

Finally, Chapter Five is an analysis of the aftermath of the Crimean War on the participants. There are very few glimpses of average soldiers' worries about how they would reclaim their lives once they returned home. Writing in the winter of 1855, a particularly difficult time for the troops, one member of the 5th Dragoon Guards caught

his parents up on his news, after having been unable to write for some time because he had no stamps.

...I am not now the same fresh and ruddy countenanced boy I once was, the hot sun of Bulgaria and the frost and snow of the Crimea have done much to alter my appearance. Every man has been weakened and reduced by hardship and we are ... [in original] but we are fast regaining our strength and altho' I am nothing but bone and sinew hardened by exposure I am in perfect health, although being so young when I left home, the campaign has been hard on me, but I thank God, I hope yet to see my native England, and to wear with pride the honours I have worked hard for, and this thought has supported me thro' all my misery. I could tell you volumes if I had time. England does not know half what her soldiers have suffered for her! We expect to be relieved in spring and come home being cut up and useless for the field.

After signing himself “Affectionately Yours,” Winterborne added a postscript: “We thank England for what she has done for us, but we have done much for her.”³ The middle of the nineteenth century did not exhibit anything approaching present-day understandings of post traumatic stress and of the need for people suffering from it to be able to process their experiences rather than simply burying them. If men’s accounts of the war’s impact on their psyches are few, women’s accounts of the war’s aftermath and personal toll are even more rare. Many of the nurses’ published accounts end with their return home, with no discussions of their future work, or their reintegration into their pre-war communities. Though I have not found as clear an articulation as Winterborne’s of the war’s personal impact from a woman, it did cause several to make major life transitions. Sarah Anne Terrot and Margaret Goodman no longer felt at home in their religious communities, and Frances Taylor converted to Roman Catholicism and eventually founded a new religious congregation in order to devote herself more fully to the kinds of work the war had allowed. Most of the women’s descriptions of the

³ G. Winterbourne to his parents, January 30, 1855. Royal Army Medical Corps (hereafter RAMC) 436/3, Wellcome Library, London.

hardships of the war are from the perspective of their affect on their patients. Like the silences about the physical aspects of patient care, nurses only hint at the physical and emotional strain the work caused them. Anglican sister Clara provides one such rare and powerful trace.

They are worn out with exposure to cold and wet, without clothes or fire, and young lads die – 18 to 22 – will not stand it. They stretch out their hand and say sister, mother – they never groan, but most of them are scarecely [sic] sentient, and go off like animals, the mind gone before, and no apparent consciousness of what is about to happen. ... Thank God we are well as yet. To walk between beds in the corridors is as familiar as between rose trees in the garden. ... We have no time to turn and my nerves suffer, which wastes time; but please God, we shall pull through. The TIMES story is all true from December 23 to January 1. It is somewhat brutally said, but the facts cannot be denied. There is a wonderful combination of mistakes and fatal ones; a want of combination of departments.⁴

In addition to its personal consequences, their work had broad historical significance, as it helped to shape the development of the nursing profession in particular as well as contributing more generally to the increasingly heated debates over gender roles as the century progressed.

⁴ C.H.B. to Dear B., January 14, 1855. RAMC 436/2.

Chapter 1: Underlying Assumptions

When Mercy's plaintive voice we hear,
 With joy we leave our hallo'd
 home,
 Take *it* for passport, and appear
 'Neath peasant cot or princely
 dome.

And now, as o'er the Black Sea's
 waters,
 In accents strong and pity loud,
 Sweet Mercy calls upon her daughters
 To brave the wave, the camp, the
 crowd.

- Sister Mary Joseph Croke¹

Although the immediate cause of the Crimean War was a dispute over access to holy places in Turkey, its broader sources ran deeper. In Britain, memories of Napoleon's conquest of Europe and his final defeat at Waterloo in 1815 were still fresh in 1853. The government and public perceived the Tsar as posing a threat to Europe's balance of power and were particularly fearful that Russia would gain the strategically useful Dardanelles which controlled the eastern Mediterranean. By March of 1854, diplomacy, including a mission by British Quakers to the Tsar, failed and war broke out between the allied nations of Britain, France and Turkey and their opponent, Russia. Many of Britain's senior officers had not been on active service since the Napoleonic wars and observed the novelty of Britain's alliance with France after a centuries-old rivalry. Relations with the Ottoman Empire, Britain's other major ally, were ambivalent. Contemporary sources painted the Turks in racially charged language as lazy, incompetent or even uncivilized – characteristics more typically ascribed to an opponent

¹ [Austin Carroll], *Leaves from the Annals of the Sisters of Mercy*, vol. 2 (New York: Catholic Publication Society Co., 1883), 644.

in war than to an ally. The war was significant for the scope of conditions all branches of the service had to face. Infantry, cavalry and naval forces fought in sweltering heat and bitter cold, in fatal charges and in a siege of the Russian city of Sebastopol in which besieged and besiegers alike endured cold and lack of supplies.

The Crimean War, 1854-56, gave rise to a number of new developments in Britain including the presence of war correspondents, the employment of modern technologies such as the railroad and telegraph and, most importantly for this study, the use of government-sponsored women military nurses. Previously, sick or wounded British soldiers were cared for by their comrades, by orderlies who were often convalescent soldiers themselves, or by camp followers -- women who were traveling (with or without official approval) with the army. By October of 1854, about six months after war was declared, there was nearly universal opinion that these ad hoc arrangements were not adequate. Government officials, newspaper correspondents and writers of letters to editors contrasted the British experience with what they believed were superior arrangements for French soldiers who were cared for by the Sisters of Charity, a religious order providing hospital and military nursing and other social services to the poor since the eighteenth century. The result of these often very heated discussions was the government-sponsored nursing contingent headed by Florence Nightingale, which contained members from hospitals and religious institutions as well as those with less formal experience gained through family life, domestic service or individual philanthropy.

Living in the 21st century, we are accustomed to thinking of World War I, with its millions of casualties, as the beginning of a new era. The stalemate on the western front,

new technologies used to increase casualties, mobilization of civilians for total war and the cultural sense of a lost generation whose lives were utterly transformed by the war made the Great War seem a radical watershed and break from all previous wars.

However, like the American Civil War, the Crimean War anticipated much associated with World War I. In 1854, European young men went to war expecting to be home shortly, with no one imagining in the fall of that year that the siege of Sebastopol would last for months and the war for years. Although some objected to the presence of journalists on the grounds that their war reporting could assist the Russians and disagreed with their graphic, detailed accounts, correspondents like William Howard Russell of *The Times* insured that the harrowing details of battles, hospital conditions and long casualty lists were daily in the British public's consciousness.² This had the effect of making war more democratic: publicizing information previously restricted to the aristocratic warrior elite also ushered in a new era.

The most famous cultural production to emerge from the Crimean War was Alfred Lord Tennyson's "Charge of the Light Brigade," first published toward the end of 1854 shortly after the event took place. Tennyson celebrates men brave enough to risk their lives in a "wild charge" and the courage it took for such small numbers to stand against the Russian army. It is a quintessentially male virtue to support the nation by fighting and dying in its wars. In the face of evident mistakes by senior officers which he alludes to in the poem, Tennyson celebrates the nobility of ordinary soldiers following orders without question both to commend their bravery and to insure their continued fidelity to duty and to encourage future enlistments and strengthen public support for the

² Sir William Howard Russell, *Russell's Despatches From the Crimea*, ed. Nicholas Bentley (London: Deutsch, 1966); Alan Hankinson, *Man of Wars: William Howard Russell of the Times* (London: Heinemann, 1982).

war. Nurse and Anglican sister Margaret Goodman reports the impact of the poem on one of her patients, a soldier who failed to rally despite his physical health's improvement. After Goodman read the poem, he was eager to go back to the front, and Goodman and others worked to get copies to distribute to the men.³ The phrase "do and die" as shorthand for the willingness to persevere in what is right in the face of adversity is so much a part of modern usage that it is easy to forget that it comes from Tennyson's description of a disastrous charge early in the war.

"Forward, the Light Brigade!"
Was there a man dismay'd?
Not tho' the soldier knew
Some one had blunder'd:
Their's not to make reply,
Their's not to reason why,
Their's but to do and die:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

... Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon behind them
Volley'd and thunder'd;
Storm'd at with shot & shell,
While horse and hero fell,
They that had fought so well
Came thro' the jaws of Death,
Back from the mouth of Hell,
All that was left of them,
Left of six hundred."⁴

Tennyson wrote the poem shortly after the event, drawing on reports in the press for poetic inspiration. In starker language than Tennyson's poetic description, one eye witness bolsters the view of the charge as a disaster.

³ Margaret Goodman, *Experiences of an English Sister of Mercy* (London: Smith, Elder, 1862), 94-96.

⁴ Alfred Tennyson, *A Collection of Poems by Alfred Tennyson: Selected and with an Introduction by Christopher Ricks* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1972), 305-307. Before its publication, the British public were awaiting the poet laureate's comment on the war which was based on reporting on the war in the press. See for example, Epitome of News, *Christian Times*, October 27, 1854, 687.

Through a mistake of poor Capt Nolan, who was killed, Lord Lucan ordered the Light Cavalry Brigade. 11th, 8th, 13th, 4th Lght Dragoons and 11th Lancers to charge. Away they went most gallantly under awful cross fire of artillery and infantry and out of 800 only 200 returned the rest are utterly destroyed!!! The killed and wounded officers is terrible and some of the Regts are really no more. A sad blow to us I believe as many Russians fell and they retired so it was no defeat, but a dreadful mismanaged affair.⁵

Given the war's new developments and the fact that its victories, defeats, blunders and bravery were widely known, it is not surprising that Tennyson was not alone in offering contemporary reflections on the war. Charles Dickens commented on the war, and William Howard Russell of *The Times*' elegant prose clearly inspired Tennyson. In addition, several of the nurses published accounts of their experiences and professional artists like Gerry Barrett and amateurs among the nurses, soldiers and newspaper correspondents had their work featured in exhibits and the press. Barrett's painting *The Mission of Mercy: Florence Nightingale Receiving the Wounded at Scutari* (1857) features several nurses including Sister Mary Clare Moore in addition to Nightingale.⁶

Just as newspapers widely disseminated military disasters like the Charge of the Light Brigade during the Battle of Balaclava, so they also exposed the inadequate medical and hospital conditions in Crimea. In an article which mobilized the British government to establish a nursing contingent and the public, especially women, to send money and supplies for the troops and to flood the War Office with applications to be nurses, *The Times* condemned the conditions in the military hospitals and the government's response.

⁵ William Markham to his mother, October 27, 1854. Letters of Capt. William Markham, RAMC 436/1.

⁶ Matthew Paul Lalumia, *Realism and Politics in Victorian Art of the Crimean War* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1984); *The Illustrated London News* carried prints of engravings made by artists it commissioned to accompany its reporting.

The proportion of surgeons [in the military hospitals] falls still very far below the standard of any ordinary hospital. It is barely enough, if enough, for operations, and for the worst cases. It is not enough for that regular, close, and delicate attention which is absolutely necessary in many cases for the cure as well as for the comfort of the patient. Thus we are told of patients lying for hours, and even days, and making desperate attempts to catch the surgeon in his flying visits from ward to ward. This great deficiency, great as it is, can scarcely be called the greatest. There are no nurses at Scutari; at least, none for the English, though the French are attended by some Sisters of Mercy from a neighbouring convent. But what is almost incredible, but nevertheless true, there is not even linen and lint to bind wounds. It certainly reflects great disgrace somewhere or other, that a material as necessary to the cure of wounds as a hospital itself should have been forgotten, and that, while the Turkish Government has provided a palace for the reception of the wounded, the British Government has not even found linen to bandage their wounds. ...

... [T]he remedy consists of doing what we can ; and we can do a good deal. Here, then, good citizens of London, is the opportunity you profess to desire for showing how your hearts beat for your fellow-countrymen and your noble allies. ... The best and most thoughtful Government in the world cannot do everything, and there will always be much left to private kindness. ... Surely the gallant chiefs of the two armies will deserve the most handsome testimonials that taste and good feeling can devise from the wealthy British public. But that admits of postponement,—not so the sufferings of the sick and wounded in the hospitals of Constantinople and the Black Sea.⁷

The existence of qualified nurses and the need for their services were not on the minds of government ministers at the declaration of the war. Despite the terrible reports of the treatment of the sick and wounded and the public outcry they caused, the response was complicated. The obvious solution of sending out female nurses was itself a political act. Gender ideology of the period held that women's nurturing and morally uplifting natures would be necessary in military hospitals as they were in sickrooms and hospitals at home. Yet fears about women's exposure to danger, disease and consensual or forced sex, as well as concerns about the unwelcome aspects of the religious influence the members of orders might exert led to cautious acceptance of female military nurses.

⁷ Editorial, *Times* (London), October 12, 1854, 6.

In general, the war and its two most famous commanders, Lords Raglan and Cardigan, came to symbolize all that was wrong with the British army in the mid-nineteenth century. Officers past their prime had not kept up with the latest developments in military strategy or technology. The government sent ill-equipped troops into battle and soon mired itself in red tape. Wounded soldiers were left for days with unattended injuries in appalling hospital conditions.⁸

As World War I had its VADs, volunteer ambulance drivers many of whom were women, the Crimean War witnessed the “experiment,” as it was called at the time, of sending women as nurses to the military hospitals. The most famous of these is, of course, Florence Nightingale, whose name would become a household word by war’s end. For many, both at the time and in popular perceptions of the war since, Florence Nightingale is seen as the one positive good amidst a welter of mistakes and miscalculations. The image of the lady with the lamp gliding soundlessly through miles of corridors of sick and wounded providing comfort as well as meeting their medical needs became the standard for judging nursing care both during the war and afterwards.

For nurses and soldiers alike, it is often difficult to glean details of individual experiences from public accounts. Men writing home, especially if their letters were published in newspapers, hinted at difficult conditions but stressed their ability and willingness to do their duty and urged their loved ones, particularly their mothers, not to worry about them. It is even more difficult to recover women’s lives during the Crimean War. This is why the records and the images projected about Florence Nightingale

⁸ Historian Cecil Woodham-Smith explores these issues in her popular biography of Florence Nightingale, Cecil Woodham-Smith, *Florence Nightingale, 1820-1910* (London: Constable, 1950) and her analysis of the charge of the Light Brigade in Woodham-Smith, *The Reason Why* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960).

remain so important: both her glorification and her correspondence reveal a great deal not only about her own life, but also those of the other Crimean nurses. After Tennyson's poem, the most important British cultural icon to emerge from the war was the image of "the lady with the lamp." Projected primarily onto Nightingale, but also used for female nurses generally, the lady with the lamp trope reveals much about the Victorian beliefs that shaped women's wartime roles. First, the nurse should ideally be "a lady," a genteel member of the middle or upper class. As such, she was considered to be "above" sexuality and so evaded the problems of women nursing naked men without sexual impropriety. Carrying "a lamp," a duty seldom required of actual nurses, further stressed women's characteristic of moral uplift. It was she who would elevate the more physical, sexual and uncivilized male. This glorified icon of a maternal, genteel, silent, comforting nurse countered both the realities of Crimean medicine and the existing cultural views of nurses as elderly, incompetent drunks. Dickens' character Sairy Gamp, not only incompetent and drunk, but also displaying little concern for her patients, exemplified contemporary views.⁹

A cartoon from *Punch* entitled "How to Get Rid of an Old Woman" published during the war illustrates the pervasiveness of this stereotype. As a cover image, it had little text, so the cartoonist felt sure that the image would be readily understood by the public even with no accompanying dialogue. In an allusion to Dickens' Sairy Gamp, it depicts an older woman carrying an umbrella, but no medical supplies, aboard ship among boxes and barrels presumably being sent to the front. The implication is that she

⁹ Anne Summers, *Angels and Citizens: British Women as Military Nurses, 1854-1914* (London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1988); Carol Helmstadter, "The Passing of the Night Watch: Night Nursing Reform in the London Teaching Hospitals," *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History/Bulletin canadien d'histoire de la médecine* 11 (1994): 23-69; Monica E. Baly, *Florence Nightingale and the Nursing Legacy* (London and Dover, NH: Croom Helm, 1986).

is sent out to get rid of her, or that like some of the supplies, is simply being sent out with little thought to what is needed. The cartoonist challenges not only women's competence as nurses, but the government's purpose in sending them out. Another *Punch* article poked fun at the reports of meetings carried by the press by reporting on one of a group of women proposing to go out as nurses. They do not know what exactly to bring with them and are completely untrained.¹⁰

Countering such prevailing negative stereotypes led Nightingale to negotiate gender politics carefully. Her original idea was to go out with two or three nurses to assist the doctors. Nightingale's desire seems to have been to establish a small, private effort which would not attract public notice. At least in the beginning stages of the plan, her need to avoid criticism for transgressing cultural norms of proper behavior for middle-class women was more pressing than the need to provide assistance to the soldiers as quickly as possible. Nightingale's plan to go out with two or three nurses was shocking to her contemporaries reading accounts of high mortality rates and descriptions of seriously wounded and gravely ill men with no one to cook for them and too weak to feed themselves when hot food was available. Nightingale justified the low numbers of nurses by explaining that the sensibilities of Andrew Smith, senior medical officer, would not allow for any more.

If we go quietly & privately, his influence is all for us, but if we went with a great body of nurses to take possession of the Hospital he would decidedly oppose us. His own proposition was, that a few should go out at once, & that another detachment should follow in 10 days, if found desirable. ... One of his objections was, the troops may be moved from Scutari & you cannot follow the army about like Sisters of Charity. ... To me it would be infinitely easier to pioneer the way with 3 or 4 women than to march in, (even supposing it possible) with a great

¹⁰ *Punch*, October 28, 1854, cover; "Nurses of Quality for the Crimea," *Punch*, November 12, 1854, 193-194.

batch of undisciplined women not knowing what places to assign them, in so new a position as a military hospital.¹¹

The issue of cooperation with male medical authorities versus the assertion of the nurses' own professional knowledge caused tension among the group. Clare Moore, the superior of the Bermondsey community of Sisters of Mercy who led the first group of Catholic nuns to the hospitals, for example, seems to have understood and agreed with Nightingale's cautious position, while Francis Bridgeman, the superior of the Kinsale Sisters of Mercy and leader of the second group of Catholic nuns largely drawn from Irish convents, took a different stance.

On the most basic level, focusing only on Nightingale ignores the presence of the other women in the nursing contingent. On a deeper level, it obscures the gritty details of nursing men suffering from frostbite, malnutrition, cholera, dysentery and infected wounds in favor of a sanitized, sentimentalized portrait. Cultural norms constrained many women from describing in full their difficult experiences in overcoming views about suitable work for respectable women, let alone for proper Victorian ladies. Those at home would have been uncomfortable with women sharing soldiers' experiences of dirt, rats and messy illnesses like cholera. It would be still more shocking for them to speak of these difficulties or to acknowledge that they not only saw, but touched the naked bodies of men to whom they were not related. As some men spared the feelings of their mothers by not fully describing their privations, the nurses left much unsaid in their accounts.

In all, approximately 200 women served as Crimean nurses, with approximately 28 Catholic and 15 Anglican sisters.¹² The rest were either middle or upper-class women

¹¹ Quoted in Sue M. Goldie, ed., *Florence Nightingale: Letters from the Crimea, 1854-1856* (New York: Mandolin, 1997), 20-21.

like Florence Nightingale herself, or working-class women who had hospital experience or experience with more menial work such as domestic service. Although there certainly were differences in the worship and community life of women in Anglican and Roman Catholic religious orders, they did share important experiences and beliefs. Therefore I find it useful to use the term “vowed women” to refer collectively to the women in religious orders of both denominations. The vowed women were chosen because they, like some of the working-class women, had had experiences in cholera epidemics in England and Ireland. The presence of vowed women, especially the Catholic sisters, among the nursing contingent, though they constituted less than twenty-five percent of the total, caused a great deal of discussion in the press and among government officials. The impact of this presence on both the work in the hospitals and on British society more generally is a major part of this dissertation because it raises significant questions about the intersection of religion, gender and war work. Catholic sisters were conscious that their public service could allay fears of Catholics as a potential disloyal minority, while the Anglicans risked being seen as “Catholics in disguise” as they sought to create new roles and opportunities for women within the Church of England. The work of vowed women has not received adequate analysis from either women’s or church historians and their experiences illustrate important mechanisms for challenging both gender and religious cultural norms.

¹² A copy of the nurses register at the London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) lists the nurses alphabetically, sometimes giving some information about the training each woman had received, her address or otherwise commenting on her. Some of the notes are likely copied from the original register now held at the Nightingale museum, but some may be made by the compiler of the LMA’s copy. See Nurses Register, St. Thomas’s Hospital: Nightingale Collection (hereafter Nightingale Collection) H01/ST/NC/08/001, LMA. I have included some of the nurses from St. John’s House, an institution discussed later, in my estimate of the numbers of Anglican sisters. Although the St. John’s house nurses did not take vows, they did work in a religious context, with a structure and daily routine similar to the more formal sisterhoods.

The women who went out lived at the intersection of Victorian cultural ideas about gender, class and religion and negotiated some new roles for themselves within often very constraining perceptions. Even such traditionally female work as caring for the sick or reading Scripture to the soldiers or offering moral advice or spiritual comfort to them became contentious issues. Some observers worried that the women were attempting to transgress either the often-unspoken gender roles by taking on work normally done by the ordained, male clergy or were violating their explicit contract with the government by proselytizing. Some of the women simply refuted the charges, leaving the assumptions about proper work for women unchallenged, while others asserted that any broadening of their responsibilities was acceptable. In practical terms, some of the women gained valuable experiences through their supervision of other nurses or administration of the distribution of food and supplies. Others at home gained managerial experience as they became more systematic and formal in selecting nurses. This dissertation will attempt to uncover the daily experiences of the nurses, both lay and vowed, and soldiers and chaplains who served throughout the Crimean War, illustrating the intersections of class, gender and religion, demonstrating how these factors affected the work and the working relationships in the hospitals.

Martha Nicol's description of the assistance she and other nurses received from French fisherwomen on their arrival in Boulogne reveals the multi-layered political world of women's war work. Her account of a conversation with a fisherwoman serves as a microcosm of the difficulties of the nurses' work: their religious convictions were the subject of sometimes very heated debate; they and observers worried about class status, and they had to contend with male authorities' desire to enforce traditional notions of

gender roles which at times threatened their ability to work as they wished. “I entered into conversation with one of them,” Nicol remembered,

who asked me if I was *vouée* [*a nun*]. I answered ‘no’; I was simply a British woman who had little to do at home, and, having no fear of disease, was willing to be of what use I could to our poor soldiers. She said we were ‘*braves femmes*’ and were doing a grand thing; and that French ladies would not act as we had done. I said, ‘pardon; your Sisters of Charity did such things long before we thought of them.’ She answered, with an indescribable air, ‘Ah! But they are *vouées!*’ which she evidently seemed to think quite a different affair. ... These poor fisherwomen were most kind in carrying up our luggage, and shewed themselves eager to assist us in every way they could.¹³

Nicol’s assertion that the nurses were simply doing what was necessary was not a universally-held position in this era. Correspondents to *The Times* argued that women were not suited to the rigors of nursing in a military hospital and would likely become patients themselves.

The nursing contingent was made up of women from the middle and working classes, and in this era, work determined female class status. Unlike male class status, which is almost always based on income, a woman’s status depends on marriage, her father’s or husband’s social position and income or her own work, especially if paid labor outside the home such as domestic service in another’s household. In this period, women often become the guardians of their families’ social status, negotiating the societal elements – manners, language, household furnishings, clothing and behavior – of their families’ economic position.¹⁴

Working-class women worked for money; upper and middle-class women could not do so without losing their gentility. For these, it was important that they were known to be serving without payment. Hospital nursing was a low-class job, viewed with a great

¹³ Martha Nicol, *Ismeer or Smyrna and Its British Hospital* (London: James Madden, 1856), 2-3.

¹⁴ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

deal of suspicion. Yet concerns about women's work for pay extended beyond nursing. Culturally, there was anxiety that any work done for money verged on prostitution, the most feared thing women might do for money. If fears did not extend this far, they did cause worries that paid employment would compromise women's primary role as the moral guardians and uplifters of family and nation.¹⁵ Rhetorically, pay rendered the nurse an unconcerned hireling lacking the compassion essential to the virtuous woman's role of selfless caregiver. This role could be preserved only if women were able to assert their willingness to do the work as a calling and stressed the moral influence they might have on patients. Of course this idea of women following a calling rather than working for pay was risky too; pursuing a vocation might be acceptable, but pursuing one governed by religious vows, as Anglican and Roman Catholic nuns did, caused other worries for writers to newspapers and government officials which sometimes made the women's work more difficult.

Working-class women who could not volunteer their services had to contend with contemporary perceptions that receiving wages meant their motives were suspect. Men were allowed to seek jobs with economic security, but working-class women's need for wages did not lessen the perception that they would be more respectable if they provided their services without pay. Genteel female poverty was valued more than women's economic independence. Few recognized the skills which some of the paid nurses brought, focusing rather on their status as in need of supervision and moral uplift.¹⁶

Many nurses agree that Sidney Herbert advised them all that they went out on an equal

¹⁵ Judith Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

¹⁶ Anne Summers, "Pride and Prejudice: Ladies and Nurses in the Crimean War," *History Workshop* 16 (Autumn 1983): 32-56 and Carol Helmstadter, "'A Real Tone': Professionalizing Nursing in Nineteenth-Century London," *Nursing History Review* 11 (2003): 3-30.

footing and that none should think herself superior to the others, but there were sharp differences about how his remarks should best be interpreted. Martha Nicol, a nurse at the hospital at Smyrna, argued that Herbert's remarks should not erase what she believed to be inherent distinctions between ladies and other women.

The argument for the levelling system was, that the work of all was the same. On that plea, all ranks might be confounded; soldiers and officers are engaged in the same work, but I have never heard it advocated that their several ranks should be levelled. The error, I believe, originated in an amiable and enthusiastic idea, which I can understand, but ... can hardly feel. It seemed to those, who deserve all praise for the kindness and zeal with which they carried out the plan they believed would be of such use to the hospitals in the East, of sending out ladies, people who by education and habit ought necessarily to have more forethought and power of meeting emergencies than others not similarly circumstanced, that as these ladies were undertaking an unusual work, they ought, as it were, to lay aside their position, habits, and feelings, and descend to the level of servants. Now there would, perhaps, not have been much harm in this, ... [b]ut the real evil was done to the nurses, who fancied that according to our descent in the social scale, was to be their ascent, ... but many of them were too sensible not to see things very soon in their proper light.¹⁷

Frances Taylor's Crimean account reveals ambivalence about the issue of preserving traditional class distinctions. As her later life illustrates, she favored acting in solidarity with the poor, but her Crimean account reveals sentiments similar to Nicol's.¹⁸ Finally, Jane Williams who assisted Elizabeth Davis in editing and publishing her account worried that paid nurses like Davis would be ignored because they needed the wages. Williams argued that Davis and the other working-class nurses had the same concern for the soldiers as the "lady volunteers."¹⁹ Sisters, whether Anglican or Roman Catholic, escaped this particular criticism, since as unpaid workers, their status as ladies remained intact. However, they faced allegations of proselytizing,

¹⁷ Nicol, *Ismeer*, 7-8.

¹⁸ Frances Taylor, *Eastern Hospitals and English Nurses: The Narrative of Twelve Months' Experience in the Hospitals of Koulali and Scutari* (London: Hurst and Blacket, 1857), 20.

¹⁹ Elizabeth Davis, *The Autobiography of Elizabeth Davis: A Balaclava Nurse, Daughter of Dafydd Cadwaladyr*, Jane Williams, ed. (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1857), vol. 2, 295-296.

and, in the view of some clergymen, of transgressing their proper sphere by giving religious instruction to patients even of their own denominations.

The period of the women's pre-war public work as well as their work during the war itself coincides with an era of cultural transition in the religious life of Britain. Emancipated in 1829, Roman Catholics were permitted to sit in parliament by the 1840s. Frederick Lucas, a convert to Catholicism and future member of Parliament, began to publish his weekly Catholic newspaper *The Tablet* in 1840. The Sisters of Mercy arrived in Bermondsey in 1839, with some of the first members of the new convent being converts from prominent English families. The borough of Southwark, in which Bermondsey is located, also featured in this national revival of Catholicism. St. George's Cathedral was opened in Southwark in 1848 and Cardinal Nicholas Wiseman preached a sermon from the cathedral celebrating the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy in 1850. While some degree of celebratory language might be expected, Wiseman's portrayal of England being restored to its former glory, not to mention his provocative reference to the "diadem of St. Peter" caused some observers to worry that he was claiming temporal powers. Possibly because Wiseman preached close to Guy Fawkes Day, November 5, the annual observance of the thwarting of a seventeenth-century plot to blow up Parliament featuring bonfires and the burning of effigies, Wiseman was himself burned in effigy, his carriage surrounded by a hostile crowd hurling mud and stones at the windows.²⁰ Wiseman attempted to diffuse tensions by asserting that he made no claims to secular authority, but only claimed jurisdiction over Catholics in spiritual terms, wishing only to serve in the poorest parts of London.

²⁰ Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church* (London: A. & C. Black, 1970), 283-284, 294.

Because London is at the convergence of so many contemporary developments in nineteenth-century Catholic history, it provides a good focal point for understanding some of the cultural issues connected with the changes in the social status and public presence of Catholics in England. Throughout his tenure as editor of *The Tablet* Frederick Lucas was concerned that Catholics be treated with dignity and that their spiritual needs be recognized by the government. This became more obvious during the war with his advocacy of additional military chaplains and condemnation of the disparity in pay between Anglican chaplains and those of other denominations, especially Catholics, who were the lowest paid. In his history of St. George's Cathedral, Southwark, Bernard Bogan analyzes the increasing status of Catholics by highlighting the importance of the cathedral as a visible symbol of their new position. He reminds readers that the first chapel on the site of what would become the cathedral lacked physical attributes of Catholic Churches familiar to his twentieth century readers such as confessionals and permanent holy water fonts, in order to keep a low profile. Though there is something charming about the description of people lining up for confession in a priest's room, some nineteenth-century British Catholics clearly needed to have more formal religious structures and equipment.²¹ Just as New York's St. Patrick's Cathedral was a statement by its Irish immigrant population of their right to a public presence in the city, St. George's was a means for some of London's Catholics, many of them Irish immigrants, to assert their public presence and their unwillingness to continue to worship unobtrusively. The issue of when and how to assert their rights to public status caused tension between Catholics and others and within the Catholic community during the war.

²¹ Bernard Bogan, *The Great Link: A History of St. George's Cathedral, Southwark, 1786-1958*, 2nd ed. (London: Burns and Oates, 1958), 19-20, 24-25.

The Bermondsey Sisters of Mercy were crucial to the increasing public devotion of English Catholics and to the reinvigoration of the practice of Catholicism among their working-class neighbors. In an 1844 article celebrating the final profession of vows of some Sisters of Mercy, *The Tablet* reported that

It is truly cheering, consoling, and edifying to see the disinterestedness, zeal, and courage with which these generous females renounce the world and devote themselves to the service of their heavenly spouse in the persons of his poor representatives. . . . If we contrast the present state of religion in Bermondsey with past years, motives for gratitude, congratulation, and hope crowd upon the mind. A few years ago Bermondsey was obscure and unknown; its chapel small, retired, and hidden, so that even the *Catholics* of the parish could scarcely find it. One clergyman alone served this extensive and densely-populated district. But *now* there are three clergymen; *now* there is a very spacious and commodious church, not *hidden*, but standing in the high way; *now* there is a presbytery, an honour and an ornament to any parish; *now* there is a large handsome convent, whose inmates are consecrated exclusively to deeds of charity. A beautiful spire and belfry have lately been added to the convent, so that once more may be heard (as in days gone by) at morning, midday, and at eve, religion's voice (the convent bell) summoning to prayer. In fine, when we look at Bermondsey, we are astonished at the much which has been done in so short a time, and with means so small at command.²²

Yet despite the increasing public presence of Catholics, it is important to remember that differences in religion were still influential national factors. Modern, secular readers may find it difficult to understand how much was attributed to differences of religion and how little Anglicans and Catholics mixed socially. “Mixed” marriages were rare; denominations projected stereotypes upon each other; converts risked social and financial exclusion by family and friends; religious identity determined most aspects of life. Even the choice of newspaper could be determined by denominational affiliation. In addition to carrying church-related news such as ordinations, reports of parish fundraising efforts, accounts of special liturgies or of clerical appointments, the religious press of all denominations carried international news, developments in parliament, local

²² “Convent of Our Blessed Lady of Mercy, Bermondsey,” *Tablet*, October 26, 1844, 679.

events such as weddings, crimes, or road accidents. Readers who wished to be informed about their churches could thus save money by purchasing only one paper, but the financial gain might bring with it a loss of national unity. Religious divisions could have lessened if all interested in specific denominational news nonetheless got their secular news from the same paper.²³

An anecdote from the war itself highlights the lack of contact across religious lines. Sarah Anne Terrot, an Anglican sister whose account of her nursing work is particularly useful, reports on her experiences with Catholic nuns. She is clear that she liked and respected some of the Sisters of Mercy, but when the group reached Paris, some of the French-founded Sisters of the Faithful Virgin who had left from London with Terrot and the Sisters of Mercy changed their clothing to their habits. Using humor to soften a serious criticism, Terrot states that she first could not recognize the women clad all in black, but then realized that they were in fact the nuns whom they had been traveling with. In language very similar to modern debates over the Muslim veil, she says that she finds the habit unattractive and conveys that she is uncomfortable with the women's choice to adopt it, though she does not really specify why.

Another Victorian cultural fear about Catholics was that they were more loyal to the Pope than they were to the Queen and were praying and working for the conversion of England. Wiseman's rhetoric, in the sermon delivered at St. George's Cathedral to celebrate the restoration of the hierarchy and his elevation to cardinal, with its flowery language implying connections between England and Rome, likely heightened such fears.

²³ For a discussions of the impact of newspapers on the growth of nationalism, see Benedict Anderson *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991). For a comparative perspective, one treating the impact on national unity of education and military service, see Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976).

Theological and liturgical developments in the Church of England beginning in the 1840s known as the Oxford Movement justified these fears to some who worried that Catholic practices were infiltrating the Anglican Church. The Oxford Movement was intended by its supporters to be a renewal of the Church of England, restoring it to original practices and emphasizing the connections between present-day clergy and the early Christians. Prominent Oxford Movement thinkers like John Henry Newman wrote a series of *Tracts for the Times* in which they explored doctrinal questions as well as more political ones such as the way that a Catholic could in fact subscribe to the thirty nine articles which were usually seen as denoting membership in the Church of England. Observers feared that, rather than striking a middle road between Catholicism and evangelicalism as they professed, the Tractarians were actually secretly Catholics. Pamphlets and newspapers alleged that because of their attempts to bring the two Churches closer together on a few points some of the prominent Tractarians were even undercover agents of the Pope. Some might have dismissed this kind of thing as rhetoric with out any need to challenge or worry about it, but cultural fears were heightened when men like Newman actually did convert to Catholicism.²⁴

Gender issues are intertwined with the growth and official recognition of Catholicism. In addition to supporting the church through their often unpaid work, whether as lay or vowed workers, women also donated money and jewelry to raise funds for Church buildings or projects.²⁵ Some fears about the secret influences Catholics, and

²⁴ “The Oxford Movement,” *In Our Time*, BBC-Radio 4, April 13, 2006 (December 15, 2008), http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/history/inourtime/inourtime_20060413.shtml. The program’s contributors include scholars of Victorian-era cities and religion. The program raises interesting questions about social concerns of members of the Oxford Movement previously seen as strictly theological and sometimes dismissed as only changing the appearances of worship.

²⁵ See Bogan, *Great Link*, especially the chapters dealing with Thomas Doyle’s fundraising and letter-writing to benefactors. Also see, “St. George’s Church, London,” *Tablet*, February 21, 1846, 121.

particularly the Catholic clergy, were having on English society also drew on traditional anti-Catholic stereotypes. It is a long-held European suspicion that women were more susceptible to priestly influence than men and might be more attracted by incense, embroidered vestments and candles, or that priests, especially in the confessional, might promote inappropriate emotional attachments with their female parishioners. Although the specific reasons are not clear, it seems that Jesuits were particularly targeted in English anti-Catholic writings. In summarizing the portrayal of Jesuits in popular culture, one writer remarked that:

The features of the stage Jesuit are well known. He generally makes his appearance in some Jacobite play, it being the tradition that he should be always implicated in the treasonable designs of those days. He is a dark gloomy man, with grave but insinuating accents. He is usually clad in a 'sad coloured' suit, or perhaps 'a riding-dress of the period,' with a flowing wig and jack boots. There is always some mysterious despatch about which he is interested. He is wont to have influence over the ladies of the play, especially the mistress of the mansion, the wife of his 'honoured patron,' but at the same time treats her despotically, addressing her sternly as 'daughter,' and bringing spiritual terrors to play upon her for divers mundane purposes. He has a trick of introducing himself, at awkward moments, through '*the sliding panel*' in preference to the door, and usually pitches his voice in a bass key.²⁶

These images were clearly in the minds of Catholics serving during the Crimean War, particularly the chaplains. The Sisters of Mercy had several Jesuits as chaplains, and a collaborative chaplain could help their work and their negotiations with officials. Sidney Woollett, a Jesuit who was based near the front, was a partner and friend to some of the sisters and other nurses. Throughout, Woollett valued cross-denominational working relationships and worked to combat misperceptions of Jesuits and Catholics more generally.

²⁶ [Percy Fitzgerald], "The Jesuits. London: Religious Tract Society," *Dublin Review*, September 1856, 66-85; quotation from 68-69.

He [Father Woollett] met at dinner 3 or 4 other superior officers & it was not long before the question of the Jesuit order was introduced. For two hours did they put a variety of questions & seemd no less pleased than astonished when they learnt the true spirit & object of a order which they had never known except under the grossest mean presentations.²⁷

In a letter home, Woollett indicates that he had more individual discussions about himself and religious matters generally, revealing the growing trust between him and some of the officers.²⁸

Though chaplains like Woollett would have had more access to authorities with the responsibility of appointing chaplains and nurses and thereby controlling their denominational proportions than would the nurses, nurses too commented on their experiences of combating misperceptions. As I will discuss in Chapter Four, the women's war work provided some with the novel experience of working with and getting to know women of other denominations, and these cross-denominational working partnerships sometimes developed into friendships.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, the numbers of women entering Catholic orders rose exponentially, and the newly-established Anglican religious congregations of men and women were attracting members and gaining support from some of the clergy, though any support of Anglican orders was tempered by fears of "Romanism." The idea of working in often women-run institutions and doing meaningful work to combat some of the social problems of their day such as hunger, lack

²⁷ Sidney Joseph Woollett, S.J., *Diary, Annual Letter 1855-1856*, 2, Archives of the English Province of the Society of Jesus (hereafter SJA). This is an edited transcription of Woollett's Crimean journal contained in the draft of the letter the province sent annually to Rome. It was required that the letter submitted to the Vatican be in Latin, so the archives also hold a draft in Latin, but I have used the English version. Given Woollett's overseas work after the war, it is uncertain where his original journal is.

²⁸ Sidney Joseph Woollett, S.J., "Crimea—Extracts from Letters of Father Joseph Woollett when Chaplain During the Crimean War," May 1, [1855?], *Letters and Notices* (October 1893), 259.

of education and unemployment appealed to many middle-class women.²⁹ Yet the increasing numbers of women taking vows and thus gaining a degree of personal fulfillment and economic independence while avoiding marriage worried many observers. Interestingly, even the Catholic newspaper *The Tablet* made a point of saying that a woman professing her vows in the Sisters of Mercy at Bermondsey was doing so of her own free will. Throughout the middle and later nineteenth century, there were efforts in Parliament to require the investigation of convents based on fears that young women were being held there against their will and justified on the grounds that factories and other institutions were similarly inspected.³⁰ The coerced young nun was a staple of Victorian art, fiction and pornography.³¹ Fears of conversions to Catholicism increased when prominent Anglican clergymen like John Henry Newman and middle-class women like the writer Georgiana Fullerton converted. Fullerton's conversion influenced her friend Frances Taylor, a Crimean nurse. Taylor's experiences of nursing and conversion

²⁹ For thorough discussions of numbers of women entering religious orders and analyses of the work of these communities, see Susan O'Brien, "Terra Incognita: The Nun in Nineteenth-Century England," *Past and Present* 121 (November 1988): 110-140 and O'Brien, "French Nuns in Nineteenth-Century England," *Past and Present* 154 (February 1997), 142-180.

³⁰ For a description of a profession ceremony, see "Miscellanea. Domestic. Convent of the Sisters of Mercy, Bermondsey," *True Tablet*, April 16, 1842, 248. After a disagreement and the theft of the subscription list, Lucas's partner published his own version of the *Tablet* so Lucas published his periodical as the *True Tablet*. The bound volumes preserve the numbering system of both Lucas's publication and the short-lived rival publication. For the rise of women's religious orders in the Church of England, including discussions of women's reasons for entering, see the work of Susan Mumm especially *Stolen Daughters, Virgin Mothers: Anglican Sisterhood in Victorian Britain* (London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1999). For an analysis of the debates over the investigation of convents, see Walter L. Arnstein, *Protestant Versus Catholic in Mid-Victorian England: Mr. Newdegate and the Nuns* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1982). For a discussion of Frances Taylor's longing to do socially useful work and her friendship with Georgiana Fullerton, see Taylor biographies: Sr. Mary Campion [Troughton], S.M.G., *Life of Mother Foundress* (Poor Servants of the Mother of God, privately printed, 1972); Francis Charles Devas, *Mother Mary Magdalen of the Sacred Heart: Foundress of the Poor Servants of the Mother of God, 1832-1900* (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne Ltd., 1927); and Eithne Leonard, *Frances Taylor, Mother Magdalen S.M.G.: A Portrait, 1832-1900* (Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire: E. Leonard, 2005). The convent as a vehicle for women's work in combating poverty will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 2.

³¹ Susan P. Casteras, "Virgin Vows: The Early Victorian Artists' Portrayal of Nuns and Novices," *Victorian Studies* 24:2 (Winter 1981): 157-184.

were very different from those of her fellow Crimean nurse Rebecca Lawfield, and the differences between their lives are crucial to my dissertation. Both women had had some nursing experience before the war, though Taylor's was as a volunteer and then briefly as a member of an Anglican religious community. Lawfield too worked under the auspices of the Church of England, but she was a paid nurse in a Church-sponsored nurses' training institution. Both women converted to Roman Catholicism during the war, and Taylor continued to seek ways to work among the poor in a religious context eventually founding a new Catholic congregation, the Poor Servants of the Mother of God. Lawfield's post-war life is difficult to find in the historical record. Once she converted, she left the training institution, with its security of a place to live, steady wages and a pension in old age and, rare for Victorian working-class women, a written record of her life and work. Most of Lawfield's life is told by others, mostly her employers, while Taylor published novels, essays, an account of her war work, edited a journal, and was a part of a community that recorded the group's work and memories of Taylor. Despite her historical presence, Taylor's life and work are absent from many studies of Church and women's history, though her Crimean account is an important source on the nurses work during the war. Women like Lawfield, much less nurses unconnected with an institution which preserved written records, are even shadowier figures in history.³²

³² For material on Rebecca Lawfield, see Admission Registers with Evidence of Baptism, St. Thomas's Hospital: St. John's House (hereafter SJH) H01/ST/SJ/C/01/001, 101, LMA; Register of Nurses Sent to Private Houses, SJH H01/ST/SJ/C/03/001, 81, 95, and 113. Also see Nightingale to My Dear Sir [C. P. Shepherd], August 16, 1855, Nightingale Collection H01/ST/NC3/SU/35 and SU/182-191. There is also a letter in the Westminster Diocesan archives asking if Cardinal Wiseman could be of assistance to a widowed recent convert to Catholicism and former Crimean nurse trying to get her children into Catholic school who is having difficulty paying the school fees and facing some hostility from her employer. The woman is not named, so it is not certain that this is Lawfield, but it is an intriguing possibility. See Wiseman Papers, Westminster Diocesan Archives (hereafter WDA) W3-33/126.

Mary Poovey has characterized Florence Nightingale as a “housewifely woman” and the term reveals a great deal about the intersections of class and gender with which the nurses had to contend.³³ Upper-class women like Nightingale, Charlotte Canning, Elizabeth Herbert, Mary Stanley and Charlotte Willoughby-Moore, all of them involved in selecting nurses for the Crimea, would have had experience in running households and hiring and firing servants. Some of the women they interviewed had in fact had little hospital experience, and came only with recommendations from houses in which they worked or from clergymen or their wives who knew them as parishioners. Elizabeth Davis was one whose jobs with families had taken her all over the world. Like many senior housekeepers, Davis was confident that her work was valued and she reports that she did not very much like her brief stint at Guy’s Hospital, leaving there to return to service. Davis’s account reveals a no-nonsense woman who did not stay long in positions she did not like. Yet even she was constrained by her class. An employer left Davis his entire estate, and when she called this to his family’s attention, they simply did not honor his will, leaving Davis destitute. Needing both the financial benefit of good references, and the social one of being thought a servant who “knew her place,” Davis did not object to her treatment. Davis does criticize her employer’s family very obliquely by presenting her behavior as honorable and truthful while not commenting on theirs. When she describes her interview for the position of Crimean nurse, all she says is “Miss Stanley wrote down all about me,” and says nothing of the kinds of questions she was asked or the kinds of things she most wanted to convey to the committee about her

³³ Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 164-198.

qualifications. Perhaps this is because being inspected was such a part of her life that it did not warrant any discussion.³⁴

St. John's House, a Church of England-sponsored residential nurses' training institution illustrates some of the class dynamics at work within the nursing contingent. Members of St. John's House were either middle-class women who did not receive wages and had some supervisory responsibilities or working-class women who were receiving training and wages. Working-class women entered St. John's to gain practical experience in one of London's hospitals and through their work assisting more experienced nurses caring for people in their homes. They also received moral and religious instruction from the chaplain and the middle-class members of the institution. After a period of probation, the women were assigned cases of their own and might either work in hospitals or be sent out to care for people in their homes. They received wages, which increased over time, and were eligible for pensions.

Elizabeth Woodward provides a good illustration of the working of the institution, experiences of working-class women in general and of a member of the nursing contingent in particular. She entered St. John's in 1849 and received a book described as "Taylor's Holy Living and Dying" to commemorate her five years of service on the night the first group of St. John's House nurses was preparing to leave for Scutari. Woodward left herself on Dec. 2, 1854 and was part of the second group of nurses led by Mary Stanley. Like the religious orders, St. John's House was known to provide good training, and as an early member of the institution, Woodward had experiences and references valuable to the selectors. Most of the accounts of her work are good, with references to her attentiveness and kindness to patients. Yet there were also instances where lines

³⁴ Davis, *Autobiography*, 82-96.

between the work of a nurse and that of a domestic servant seemed to blur. In one case, that of a Miss Parry who died, there is quite a lot of correspondence between the patient's friends and Mary Jones at St. John's House. The letters are generally complimentary, praising Woodward for her willingness to be called to the patient's room even during her meals, they nonetheless criticize her behavior in class-based terms. She is described as having a loud tone of voice and as making too much noise with her needle and thimble. While this might be put down to frayed nerves caused by sitting up with a loved one who was dying, there was a more serious allegation. One letter to Jones says that although the family granted permission for Woodward to be absent for a time, they felt that she perhaps stayed away too long from the case. There is no evidence that Woodward either saw what was being written about her or that she had the chance to respond to the allegations, but it is clear that Jones did not accept them simply at face value and did not hold them against Woodward too much. Had she simply been competing for jobs on the open market, rather than having the institutional support of St. John's House, such references might well have been difficult for Woodward to counter.³⁵

The idea of a professional versus a personal reference, especially one for a working-class woman, was not common in the 1850s. Modern readers might be tempted to dismiss as fussy or irrational the comments from Miss Parry's friend's that Woodward clicked her needle too loudly, yet this ignores the widespread belief that it was a duty of middle-class people, particularly women, to help elevate the character and refinement of working-class people. This would be especially important for people working in the home. Susan Cator, another of the Crimean nurses, had a nearly disastrous experience of a recommender not fully understanding the implications of his writing. In the interests of

³⁵ Register of Nurses, SJH H01/ST/SJ/C/03/001, 15-16, 42, 65, 86-87, 106.

full disclosure, a clergyman recommending Cator felt it his duty to report that there had been allegations of misconduct against her, though he himself did not know the circumstances and did not investigate before passing the information to the committee selecting nurses. As it turned out, the charges were groundless, but Cator's appointment was nearly rescinded before she was cleared.³⁶

In addition to the religious debates at mid-century, there were also discussions and cultural fears surrounding gender ideology that had an impact on the Crimean nurses. At mid-century, ideas about men and women occupying separate spheres had crystallized. Men were envisioned as inhabiting the public worlds of paid employment, government service, politics and finance, while women were described as concerned with private matters such as raising children, managing households, creating comfortable retreats for men to return to from their public lives and engaging in private philanthropy. The concept of separate spheres was always more an ideal than reality. Many women, including working-class women and vowed women, did not in fact live up to it, and many middle class women, the group most expected to adhere to the private sphere, contested their confinement to it very strenuously. Anna Jameson, who was a staunch advocate of property rights for married women, also wrote extensively on women's need for economic independence in general. Jameson expressed her support for single women's employment carefully and on religious grounds which it would be difficult for her critics to refute. Yet assuming the mantle of moral authority contradicted cultural strictures about women's innate subordination. The tension between these two competing systems shaped women's negotiations of their independence.

³⁶ Nurses' Testimonials, War Office and Predecessors: Secretary-at-War, Secretary of State for War, and Related Bodies, Registers (hereafter Nurses' Testimonials) WO25/264 bundle C, National Archives, Kew, London.

Once let it become the established feeling of society, that a virtuous and benevolent single lady deserves to be as much respected as a matron,--let a single life be regarded as a state which a lady may select in preference to marriage,-- ... in order to give her undivided heart to God, and to devote her whole life to the duties of sisterly love towards those who have no nearer claim upon her than that they have been made in the image of God, Let it be established that the highest aim of woman is not to get a husband, but to serve God; ... and God will be glorified, society benefitted, and many a noble nature now sunk in despondency and darkness, will, like the sun-flower, when it feels the genial beams of the morning turn towards its God and open into renewed vigour and loveliness.³⁷

Jameson's celebration of the single life struck a chord with many women of her circle and beyond. Her celebration of the love of God and service to the poor as a higher calling than marriage would have resonated with images of Catholic nuns as the brides of Christ and their work among the poor in whom they and Anglican sisters were called to see the presence of Christ. Some of the Crimean nurses were working in just such philanthropic works based on solidarity with the poor as Jameson called for, and these efforts would increase as the century progressed. Women, including some to whom Jameson was a mentor, pressed for better working conditions for "distressed needlewomen" and called attention to the desperate plight of retired governesses whose employers often did not provide any kind of pension or other support when the women were no longer able to work.

Although Jameson's praise of Catholic sisters was necessarily cautious, given British fears of the Catholic hierarchy and of women's work under vows, she was well aware that vowed women, whether Catholic or Anglican, were doing just the sort of work she described. Women wishing to become Sisters of Mercy, for example, went through several years of training in which they were given spiritual direction and supervised

³⁷ [George Crolly], "Sisters of Charity Catholic and Protestant, Abroad and at Home By Mrs. Jameson," *Dublin Review*, (June 1855), 445.

training in nursing or teaching before taking their final vows. They were also guided and mentored in less specific ways which would equip them for whatever work-- teaching, nursing, school or hospital administration, founding new houses -- the order might need. The career of Elizabeth Moore (superior of the Limerick Sisters of Mercy and no relation to Mary Clare) illustrates well that entering a religious community could have given women a chance to develop confidence and administrative skills. Catherine McAuley, founder of the Sisters of Mercy, initially found her painfully shy but felt she showed a good deal of potential and would make a good leader if encouraged in the beginning:

As to Sister Elizabeth, with all her readiness to undertake it, we never sent forward such a faint-hearted soldier, now that she is in the field. She will do all interior and exterior work, but to meet on business, confer with the bishop, conclude with a sister, you might as well send the child that opens the door. I am sure this will surprise you. She gets white as death, and her eyes like fever. She is greatly liked, and when the alarms are a little over, and a few in the House, I expect all will go on well.³⁸

McAuley helped Moore cultivate her talents and left her a letter written in verse giving advice about how to be a good superior. This document shows McAuley's concern for a woman who would eventually be a close friend and her stress on the importance of compassion for members of the community as well as her belief in the need to temper one's criticisms with humor and to praise another's abilities whenever possible:

My dearest Sister M. E.
 Don't let crosses vex or teaze [sic]
 Try to meet all with peace and ease
 notice the faults of every Day
 but often in a playful way
 ...
 Attend to one thing at a time

³⁸Catherine McAuley to Mary Francis Warde, October 25, 1838, in *Letters of Catherine McAuley: Commissioned by Mother Mary Regina Cunningham*, ed. Sister Mary Ignatia Neumann (Baltimore: Helicon, 1969), 140.

you've 15 hours from 6 to 9
 be mild and sweet in all your ways
 Now and again bestow some praise
 ...
 Turn what you can into a jest
 and with few words dismiss the rest
 ... Shew [sic] fond affection every Day ... The parting advice of your ever
 affectionate M. C. M.³⁹

McAuley's description of Moore as a "faint-hearted soldier" and her stress on the need for a superior to correct faults and set the tone for the community notwithstanding, she clearly believed that her sisters were to preserve traditionally female behavior. A man charged with running an organization would not be advised to be "mild and sweet." Moore seems to have lived up to the hopes McAuley had for her. The two became close friends exchanging affectionate letters and looking forward to McAuley's visits to Limerick which McAuley felt were too infrequent. McAuley was also right in predicting that Moore would become a good superior, since her time in Limerick was marked by the growth of the community, different types of work such as nursing, caring for orphans, teaching in schools, helping people acquire skills and then find employment and establishing a number of new foundations. As she had done in Dublin as a postulant, Moore now worked in a cholera epidemic of 1849 as the superior of the community. The Sisters' concern for the sick and their nursing skills were highly praised at the time.⁴⁰ Moore must have valued the relationship too, since she came to Dublin to be with her friend in McAuley's last illness and has left a moving account of her death.⁴¹

³⁹Catherine McAuley to Elizabeth Moore, December 9, 1838, in Mary C. Sullivan, *Catherine McAuley and the Tradition of Mercy* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 249.

⁴⁰Mary Therese Kourtney, RSM, "Fearless Mother Elizabeth Moore," *The Limerick Leader*, October 15, 1988; and Kourtney, "Cholera Ravages Limerick," *ibid.* These articles were written to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the foundation of the Limerick Sisters of Mercy. They include references to and quotations from archival material from the community's archives and other sources in Limerick, and I am very grateful to Mary Sullivan, RSM, for sending me photocopies of these.

⁴¹Sullivan, *Catherine McAuley*, 247-252.

Despite their religiously-inspired modesty or assertions that they were only doing what any woman would do by joining the nursing contingent, the women who left England and Ireland for the unknown dangers and hardships of the British military hospitals were extraordinary women. Unlike many of their countrymen and women, they were conscious of many of the underlying and often unspoken assumptions of their society. Rather than simply recognizing or railing against the cultural strictures of gender, class and religion, many of the nurses sought ways to challenge them and carve out new space for their work. Preserving the respectability and benefiting from the financial security of middle-class status, some of the Crimean nurses were able to broaden the scope of activities acceptable for middle-class women. Rather than engaging in charitable work only when family responsibilities permitted, many sought ways to work among the poor and under-educated as their main life's work. In addition, they moved beyond traditional notions of assistance in times of crisis like epidemics or periods of economic distress to a belief in the need to combat underlying causes of inequity.

Working class women were of course more constrained by their own financial insecurity than their middle-class sisters and therefore had less time to devote to work for social reform. Yet they too broadened notions of acceptable female behavior. By demonstrating both a willingness to care for their sick and wounded countrymen and the skills to do so, they challenged widely-held beliefs that work for pay was inherently unwomanly. Like middle-class nurses, the working-class women helped to insure that future generations of women would have more opportunities for jobs that were both financially secure and culturally acceptable.

The Crimean nurses also confronted religious assumptions of their day. While all women would be expected to act from motives of Christian charity and the belief that all people are created in God's image, they challenged fears and misperceptions of Catholic and Anglican sisters. Through their support for their nation's war effort they demonstrated that Catholics could in fact be loyal British subjects. This was particularly useful for the Irish Catholics among the vowed women. The Anglican sisters too contributed both to the religious revival within the Church of England and to the growing recognition of work done under religious vows as consistent with English values of free will. The vowed women, whether Catholic or Anglican, used their religious framework to increase their own opportunities for meaningful work and to benefit their disadvantaged counterparts as providers of training and advocates for improved conditions.

Before women could volunteer as nurses, however, they needed to have achieved both the mentality and the experience to challenge the cultural assumptions which shaped and limited Victorian women's lives. Chapter Two explores how they achieved that experience and mindset.

Chapter 2: Learning How to Nurse: Women and Social Reform in the 1840s

In mercy, as the friend of the suffering and deserted poor, do say something [in your columns] for the Irish poor of Southwark. Their terrible wretchedness (starving, sick, dying as they are) makes me in despair turn to you, that some generous souls may be made acquainted with their forlorn state, and be moved to befriend them.—Father Thomas Doyle¹

Thomas Doyle, Parish priest of St. George's Church, Southwark, wrote these words in a letter to the editor of *The Times* in 1832, a year in which cholera reached epidemic proportions in London and other European and American cities. Doyle played a major role in the history of English Catholicism, raising money for the building of St. George's Cathedral on the site of the older Church and eventually becoming its provost. Once the English Catholic hierarchy was restored in 1850, Southwark became one of the newly-established dioceses, and St. George's was the church from which Cardinal Nicholas Wiseman preached his famous and controversial sermon celebrating the restoration of the English hierarchy. Throughout his working life, first as parish priest and then as provost of St. George's Cathedral, Doyle would be a staunch advocate for the increasing civil rights and public presence of Catholics in English society. Thanks to his weekly contributions to *The Tablet*, a national Catholic paper begun in May, 1840, he was known throughout Britain and Ireland for his vigorous fund raising efforts on behalf of St. George's and other visible means of increasing public Catholic devotion. Throughout the Crimean War, for example, Doyle repeatedly protested the pay inequities between Anglican and Catholic chaplains, raised funds to equip priests going out to the East with Mass kits and kept readers of *The Tablet* informed about the work of the Sisters

¹ Bogan, *Great Link*, 37.

of Mercy and priests from Southwark working as nurses and chaplains.² Yet Doyle was much more than an institution builder. Throughout his life, beginning with the letter quoted above, Doyle combined support for the increase of Catholic devotion and the building of Catholic Churches with untiring advocacy for the poor.

The roots of Catholic social teaching, or what twentieth-century theologians and others would come to call “the preferential option for the poor” are often seen in Leo XIII’s 1890 encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, a document celebrating the dignity of workers and their right to such things as a living wage. Yet the work of Doyle and of the vowed women with whom he and other like-minded members of the Anglican and Roman Catholic clergy collaborated shows that its origins are much earlier.³ Cardinal Henry Edward Manning, who knew and corresponded and worked with many of the Crimean nurses including Frances Taylor and Florence Nightingale, is famous for speaking publicly on workers’ right to a minimum wage and for intervening in a major dock strike of 1881 on the side of the dockers, but it seems possible that Manning (who influenced

² Thomas Grant, Bishop of Southwark from 1850 until his death in 1870, was very concerned with the issue of providing adequate numbers of Catholic chaplains for the British army and navy. It was Grant who negotiated with the government to send Catholic sisters as part of the nursing contingent, and Southwark also sent many priests as chaplains, including Doyle’s brother James, who died while serving in the Crimea. Grant’s relationship with the Sisters will be more thoroughly explored in subsequent chapters. See Grace Ramsay, *Thomas Grant, First Bishop of Southwark* (London: Burns and Oates, 1874). For a modern biography of Grant, focusing on his relations with the British government and the Vatican see: Michael Clifton, *The Quiet Negotiator* (Liverpool: Print Origination (NW) Ltd., 1990).

³ As I noted in my introduction, I have chosen to use the term “vowed women” as a way of including Catholic and Anglican members of religious communities. I have tried throughout to also use the term “sister” rather than “nun,” since the Anglicans did not refer to themselves as “nuns,” but used “Sister” and occasionally “eldress.” In addition, in Catholic usage, “nun” is likely not canonically correct to describe the Crimean nurses, since they were uncloistered and took simple rather than solemn vows. Finally, although it was not the custom in the nineteenth century, I will use their last names when writing about sisters rather than using the title with their first name, unless of course in quotations. In keeping with recent trends in scholarship, I believe it is important that vowed women be fully included in the study of women’s history. Therefore, I think it important to use modern conventions when speaking of them as we would of other women.

Leo XIII's thinking in *Rerum Novarum*) might himself have been influenced by the earlier work of activists like Doyle and the Sisters.⁴

The Crimean nurses, both lay and vowed, were doing work unexpected for women of their time. Although the war did mark a new development in work for women, because there had been no recognized contingent of military nurses accompanying the British army before 1854, the work did not just emerge with the declaration of war. In fact, the work done by women and the ideas they expressed in private correspondence and more public documents in the 1840s and early 1850s laid the groundwork for it. The idea of charity or philanthropy can be seen as typical for middle-class women in particular. Novels feature women distributing food and clothing to poorer people on their estates or to neighbors in working-class districts of their cities. In an era when prescriptive literature emphasized that men and women occupied different spheres, with men in the public realm of politics and paid employment and women in the private one of childcare, housekeeping and entertaining, philanthropy was one way in which women could continue to cross such hardening boundaries. While many would give occasionally to tenants or servants, the women who became Crimean War nurses took these impulses further than was culturally expected by both the amount of time they devoted to them and by systematizing the work.

Florence Nightingale herself felt that nursing was her calling from God and resisted family opposition to obtain some training and then to work in an institution for ill middle-class women in London. Though after the war Nightingale spent little time actively nursing (though a great deal in researching best practices and lobbying the

⁴ Shane Leslie, *Cardinal Manning, His Life and Labours* (New York: P.J. Kennedy, 1954); William Jeffrey Fellows, "The Development of the Principle of the Just Wage in Official Catholic Social Teaching," (Ph.D. diss., Marquette University, 2003).

government for crucial reforms), her intention was clearly to pursue a path different from the one that was traditional for a woman of her class and family connections. She declined a marriage proposal for reasons which went beyond personal affection,; feeling that she and Richard Monkton Milne would not have been able to work as partners.⁵ The vowed women, too, made a conscious effort to devote their lives to nursing and providing other crucial social services that went beyond what would be expected of middle-class women. In letters and memoirs reflecting on their Crimean service, several place it in the context of their lives' public work.⁶

While both Anglican and Roman Catholic women religious needed to work within the structure of their churches and so relied on clerical support, they were different from other philanthropic women in that they ran the institutions in which they worked. Both groups faced criticism from the clergy: Anglican sisters were suspected of being disguised Catholic nuns, and some of the Catholic sisters were criticized for acting in ways unacceptable for women.⁷

Thomas Doyle's letter to *The Times* poses a challenge to traditional Victorian attitudes toward the poor, held both at the time and as studied by scholars. He does not

⁵ Cecil Woodham-Smith, *Florence Nightingale*, early chapters; Mary C. Sullivan, *The Friendship of Florence Nightingale and Mary Clare Moore* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 2-12.

⁶ See especially Margaret Goodman, *Experiences of an English Sister of Mercy*; Sarah Ann Terrot letters to Florence Nightingale, BL, Add. MSS 47742, British Library, London; Francis Bridgeman, "Guide to Superiors" in Maria Luddy, ed., *The Crimean Journals of the Sisters of Mercy: 1854-56* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), 119-246. Interestingly, Bridgeman is only talking about her Crimean work here and is not giving any additional guidance drawn from others of her experiences, yet her title clearly indicates that the work was intended to be instructive to other Sisters of Mercy in leadership positions.

⁷ Scholarly studies of Anglican sisterhoods by Ansen and Mumm suggest that Anglican sisters may have had a bit more freedom than Catholic sisters since it was possible for individual women to found their own communities without clerical approval. Some of the early communities did have male co-founders, so possibly some women felt, as some Catholic founders did, that any cultural difficulties would be smoothed by the presence of a clergyman as co-founder. Peter Frederick Anson, *The Call of the Cloister: Religious Communities and Kindred Bodies in the Anglican Communion* (London: S.P.C.K., 1955); Susan Mumm, *Stolen Daughters, Virgin Mothers: Anglican Sisterhoods in Victorian Britain* (London: Leicester University Press, 1999).

speak of “the deserving poor” and advocates “befriending” the poor rather than pitying or helping them. Though the editor did praise Doyle’s work and therefore in some ways supported his efforts at alleviating the affects of poverty, he did not respond to Doyle’s call to fellow-feeling or solidarity with the poor. In fact, he urged those of his English readers who held land in Ireland to encourage their tenants to stay in Ireland rather than come to London where he felt they would have no choice but to live in the conditions Doyle described.⁸ Clearly, such ideas as Doyle’s resonated with many of the women who worked as Crimean nurses as part of their life-long commitment to social reform. Like Doyle, they too at times went beyond charity to solidarity. This chapter will focus particularly on the thinking and practical experiences of these women. Having already challenged, though usually very circumspectly, the gender perceptions of their society, they were both desirable candidates to fill the government’s need for nurses and willing participants in this new work for women.

In many ways, the 1840s were a period of cultural transformation in England. The debates over the corn laws and over factory conditions, chartist agitation and the huge numbers of starving Irish fleeing famine heightened fears of class conflict and caused some to think more explicitly about the relationships between classes and the responsibilities of the economically privileged in British society. Religion too was undergoing some transformations. The Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 had removed the last remaining legal disabilities on Catholics, though some of these had fallen out of practice long before their formal legislative ending. Religious life for women in the Catholic Church was undergoing a major transformation as the numbers of women entering religious congregations grew exponentially, and many new congregations were

⁸ Bogan, *Great Link*, 37-38.

being founded. The Sisters of Mercy, the order to which most of the Catholic Sisters who went out to the Crimean War belonged, were part of this new development.⁹

In 1827, Catherine McAuley, her cousin Catherine Byrn and a friend Anna Maria Doyle began to work to meet the various needs of the poor, and especially of poor women in Dublin. By 1828, there was a small community of women living in a house built using McAuley's inheritance running a school for poor girls and providing shelter and employment assistance for poor or homeless women. New members joined the group rapidly and their work was both praised and criticized by members of the clergy, political figures and in the press. Although it was not her original intent, McAuley eventually came to feel that the association would need some official recognition in order to continue its work. Therefore, she and two others entered the Presentation Order, a cloistered congregation of nuns, for a novitiate and then established her own active religious community, the Sisters of Mercy, in 1831. The order's Rule was approved in 1841, the year of McAuley's death. Throughout its history, the order expanded rapidly and today is one of the largest congregations of women religious with members around the world. The Sisters have continued their ministry to the poor with an emphasis on meeting the needs of women and children.¹⁰

The Anglican Church too was undergoing similar transformations. Many prominent churchmen, such as John Henry Newman, were drawn to the increased

⁹ For a biography of Catherine McAuley, the founder of the Sisters of Mercy, see Bertrand Degnan, R.S. M., *Mercy unto Thousands: Life of Mother Mary Catherine McAuley, Foundress of the Sisters of Mercy* (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1957). For a more recent biography of McAuley which also studies the work of early members and includes reprints and analyses of significant early manuscripts in the order's history, see Mary C. Sullivan, *Catherine McAuley and the Tradition of Mercy* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995).

¹⁰ Clare Moore, who would eventually lead the group of Sisters who left for the Crimea from Bermondsey, has left an account of the beginnings of the Sisters of Mercy and of McAuley's feelings about founding an order. See Sullivan, *Catherine McAuley*, 85-97.

emphasis on ritual and would eventually convert to Roman Catholicism. In speaking of the growth of ritual in the Anglican Church, John Shelton Reed has described the movement as counter-cultural, consciously making parallels between it and the youth movement of the 1960s.¹¹ Reed and other scholars have discussed the new opportunities for women in the Anglican Church, particularly once religious congregations of women were established in the 1840s. This new phenomenon, modeled on Catholic women's religious orders, caused much cultural anxiety, but was also very attractive to some middle- and upper-class Anglican women.

Catherine Elizabeth Chambers, the Assistant Superior of one of these new communities, has left a description of their life and work. Writing to Sarah Cook, who had inquired about joining the community, she says:

I hope I may be able to give you such particulars of the happy life here, as you are wishing to know: it is indeed a great privilege to be allowed to lead it. Our work is for about six hours daily, visiting and working for the sick and poor, teaching in the schools, and the care of the orphans, etc. This is broken by times for private and social prayer, rest, and our meals. ... Each Sister has that work apportioned to her for which she is best suited, and health is strictly considered, for those who are not strong or fitted for much outdoor work, being occupied with orphans at home.¹²

Peter Anson's history of religious orders in the Church of England provides some context for Chambers' description. In the face of cultural fears of Anglican communities harboring secret Roman Catholics, holding young women against their will, or being unnatural places where women exercised petty, tyrannical authority, Chambers' description could have been useful beyond the particular purpose of answering the

¹¹ John Shelton Reed, *Glorious Battle: The Cultural Politics of Victorian Anglo-Catholicism* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1996). For discussion of women's involvement in the Anglo-Catholic movement see John Shelton Reed, "'A Female Movement': The Feminization of Nineteenth-Century Anglo-Catholicism," *Anglican and Episcopal History* 57, no.2 (1988): 199–238.

¹² Thomas J. Williams, *Priscilla Lydia Sellon, The Restorer After Three Centuries of the Religious Life in the English Church* (London: S.P.C.K., 1965), 30–31.

specific inquiry.¹³ Reed too has studied the Anglican orders, including those for women, and might easily have been speaking of the Catholic Sisters too, since they also articulated attitudes which were often against the grain of mainstream British society.

Frances Taylor, a middle-class Anglican laywoman who served in the Crimean War, illustrates similarities of women's experiences and the blurring of denominational divisions for reforming women. Taylor converted to Catholicism while working in the hospitals there, a fact she omitted from her published memoirs of her nursing experiences. The third edition of her book, published only a year after its first, contains an epilogue in which Taylor calls on her readers to do something about the poverty in which many who had enlisted in the army lived.¹⁴ On her return to England, she continued her work among London's poor, eventually founding a new Catholic congregation, the Poor Servants of the Mother of God.¹⁵

In some respects, such work as caring for the sick and orphans, teaching in schools and helping to foster religious devotion among the laity might be seen as unquestionably female work. Such things would fall into the traditionally female purview of moral uplift. However, the vowed women I am studying, those members of Roman Catholic and Anglican sisterhoods, were clearly extending the traditional female sphere and were in some instances, actually stepping outside of it to suggest policy

¹³ Peter F. Anson, *The Call of the Cloister*, 220-232. It is interesting that allegations of holding women against their will were also made about Catholic congregations. Anson suggests that both would have been subject to inspection, had a campaign to require the inspection of convents been successful in Parliament. Some of the fears were based on traditional gender ideas that women were not suited to be in leadership positions, so that any authority they were given would inevitably be unjustly exercised.

¹⁴ Frances Taylor, *Eastern Hospitals*, 355-56.

¹⁵ I will cite accounts of Taylor's work in the Crimean War and as the founder of the SMGs in more detail later in this and subsequent chapters. Here, I wish to express my thanks to the congregation's archivist, Paul Shaw, for his assistance in finding Crimean letters, and to Sr. Rose Joseph Kennedy for generously sharing her own research with me and for her thoughts on Taylor's life-long commitment to work among the poor, both before, during and after her Crimean service.

changes. Practically speaking, they had the time to work for social reform, which most of their lay sisters did not have. Freed from the responsibilities of marriage and motherhood, the members of women's religious orders could devote much of their working lives to their communities' ministries. Yet something in the personalities of the individual women suggests that they sought to carve out a life for themselves which transgressed societal expectations for women. Such attitudes can be seen in brief biographies of some of the Sisters of Mercy who served as nurses.

Born on March 20, 1814, in Dublin, Georgiana Moore was the daughter of a prosperous Anglo-Irish family. Mrs. Moore and the children became Catholics when Georgiana was ten years old.¹⁶ Moore was drawn to the new charitable association formed by Catherine McAuley, and in December 1831 was professed as a Sister of Mercy, taking the name Mary Clare.¹⁷ Sr. Mary Clare must have received a good education before entering the Order, since she was involved with Catherine McAuley in writing the rules and constitution for the new congregation. Also, when she was sent as superior of a new convent in Cork, her bishop described her as one of the best Latin scholars he had ever known.¹⁸ In 1839, Moore went to Bermondsey, England to help establish a convent and was appointed superior there in 1843. Her anonymous biographer says that her work in Bermondsey illustrates her sympathy with the poor, her good judgment and administrative abilities, all of which would prove useful in the

¹⁶ Sr. Mary Bertrand Degnan, ed., *Charleville and Bermondsey Sisters in the Crimean War* (Silver Spring, MD: Archives of the Religious Sisters of Mercy, 1946), text fiche, 120-121. This is a bound volume of photocopies of microfilmed documents, including extracts from the Bermondsey annals, an anonymous life of Mary Clare Moore, and the Crimean War diary of Sr. Mary Joseph Croke, of Charleville, Ireland. They were filmed in 1946 by Sr. Mary Bertrand Degnan, who arranged that the copies be produced, bound, and housed at the Archives of the Religious Sisters of Mercy, Silver Spring, MD. The original manuscripts are in Kinsale, Ireland and Bermondsey, England.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 121-122.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 123.

Crimean War.¹⁹ Moore's biographer stressed that in her work in the hospitals, Moore fulfilled her nursing and religious responsibilities in an exemplary manner, always remaining obedient to her ecclesiastical superiors.²⁰ She died on December 14, 1874.²¹

Joanne G. Widerquist, a nursing profession historian, has analyzed the correspondence between Florence Nightingale and Mary Clare Moore and believes that it reveals a different side of Nightingale than some of her biographers explore. Widerquist argues that the letters between the two illustrate a close relationship in which Nightingale was able to show some vulnerability and warmth, which her biographers say she was unable to do in other relationships.²² Widerquist believes that Nightingale's insensitivity to others' needs or her harshness when criticizing others' failings is due to her own desire for perfection, which she felt she could never achieve, and her imposition of this drive on others.²³ Nightingale clearly viewed nursing as a secular profession and although she did believe that one might choose it out of religious convictions, religion was a personal matter for her. She was, therefore, sometimes uncomfortable with nurses who made an explicit and public link between their religious beliefs and nursing duties.²⁴

Clare Moore had worked in cholera epidemics in Dublin and London and had been the superior of the convent at Bermondsey for about 15 years when she left for the Crimean War. Nightingale, on the other hand, had only had a year's nursing experience

¹⁹ Ibid., 123-125.

²⁰ Ibid., 125-126. This is important since some of the Irish Sisters in the second group to go to the war as well as some historians of their work imply that Moore was too conciliatory in her relationship with Florence Nightingale. There are implications in other accounts that Moore might even have neglected her own and her patients' spiritual needs in her attempts to please Nightingale.

²¹ Ibid., 127-128.

²² Joanne G. Widerquist, "Dearest Rev. Mother," in *Florence Nightingale and Her Era: A Collection of Recent Scholarship*, eds. Verne L. and Bonnie Bullough (New York: Garland Press, 1990), 288-289. As will be discussed later, Sullivan's edited volume of this correspondence supports and amplifies Widerquist's analysis.

²³ Ibid., 291.

²⁴ Ibid., 293.

in a home for upper-class women, so she needed Moore's help, both administratively and because Moore had had practical experience with the kinds of illnesses the nurses would encounter in epidemic proportions in the hospitals at Scutari, Balaklava and Koulali.²⁵

The two women seem to have had a great deal of respect for one another. Nightingale wrote to Moore that it might have been better for the work if Moore had been the superior, but that Nightingale was unable to change the arrangements. For Moore's part, she wrote to Nightingale that she and the Catholic Sisters and soldiers admired her for her abilities and for her religious convictions. She felt that, despite some doctrinal differences, their faiths were the same on the essential points. This ecumenical sense must surely have been a factor contributing to their close relationship.²⁶

Like Clare Moore and Florence Nightingale, Joanna Bridgeman wanted to find a way to do meaningful work that would improve the lives of the poor. Joanna Bridgeman was born in 1813 in County Clare, and she and the three younger children went to live with their maternal grandfather after their mother's death. Joanna had a close relationship with her grandfather, from whom she learned the history of the family and of Ireland.²⁷ Her education and cultural pastimes were similar to those of Florence Nightingale and her circle. Joanna and the other Bridgeman children were educated at home by tutors, and their aunt conducted a kind of salon in which family friends gathered for evenings of literary discussions, which Joanna thoroughly enjoyed. She also loved exploring "wild and lonely places" as well as the more accepted feminine pastimes, although her biographer indicates that some of Joanna's friends wished she were more attentive to

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 298-299.

²⁷ Mother M. Evangelist Fallon, "Life of Mother Mary Francis Bridgeman, 1813-1888: Compiler of the Guide for Religious," 1-2, Archives of the Religious Sisters of Mercy, Silver Spring, MD.

current fashion trends.²⁸ She was uncomfortable with the emphasis on material things she sometimes noticed in her friends and decided to join a group of young women working in the schools and workhouses formerly staffed by the Presentation Sisters. These institutions were eventually taken over by the Sisters of Mercy, whose new community in Limerick Joanna entered because of its emphasis on nursing in 1838.²⁹

Now Sister Mary Francis, she went to Kinsale in 1844 with a small group of Sisters from Limerick to start a new community. The area was devastated by the famine, the worst years being 1847-1849. The Sisters were able to provide two meals a day to their 600 school children and ran an industrial school where women were taught lacemaking and repairing fishing nets to supplement their families' incomes.³⁰ During the cholera epidemic in 1849, the Sisters took charge of the local fever hospital, nursing their patients both during the day and at night.³¹ In 1854, the community at Kinsale sent Sisters to the British military hospitals in Turkey. Bridgeman served as the superior of the nursing contingent of Sisters from the Kinsale community and other houses throughout Ireland.³²

Many of the women clearly didn't fit the conventions of their day, though some were more able to find a niche than others. Joseph Lynch, one of the Irish Sisters of Mercy who had, among other things, served as Francis Bridgeman's secretary, was one who had a great deal of trouble fitting in.

²⁸ Ibid., 2-3.

²⁹ Ibid., 3-6.

³⁰ Ibid., 12-13.

³¹ Ibid., 13. The practice of night nursing would later be a point of contention between the Sisters of Mercy and Florence Nightingale during their work in the Crimean War.

³² Ibid., 14-19. Fallon does not describe Bridgeman's experiences during the war, except to say that her health was greatly affected, because Bridgeman's own account of the Sisters' work had presumably already been distributed within the Order.

Another who struggled to find meaningful work to do, but who seems to have had an easier time than Lynch, is Sarah Terrot. The daughter of the Episcopal bishop of Edinburgh, she was one of the first members of the Park Village Sisterhood. Her father seems to have been concerned both about the new communities and about his daughter's desire to work as a nurse, so he contacted his friend Edward Pusey, one of the clergymen associated with the Oxford Movement. Pusey recommended the new Park Village Sisterhood which he was helping to establish, and it seems that this recommendation eased Bishop Terrot's mind and smoothed the way for Sarah Anne's entry into the community in London. Terrot did not remain there for her entire working life, though I have not yet been able to find the exact date she left. She returned to Scotland and combined periods of caring for family members with periods of more public work such as work in an orphanage. She corresponded with Nightingale for about fifteen years after their work together, often recalling nurses and soldiers whom they both knew and frequently reflecting on the importance of nursing both to patients and nurses alike.³³

Although many of the nurses from St. John's house who went to the Crimean hospitals were working-class women and therefore would not have had the same constraints to contend with as the middle-class women like Terrot, they too were carving out new roles for women. They were among the first paid professional nurses. They received specialized training at London's hospitals, were supervised for a period of professional development and were advanced from probationers to nurses with satisfactory recommendations. These, as well as the class-bound factors such as their

³³ For some information on Sarah Anne Terrot from her descendant Charles Hugh Terrot, see Sarah Anne Terrot, *Nurse Sarah Anne: With Florence Nightingale at Scutari*, ed. Robert G. Richardson (London: J. Murray, 1977), 5-8. For background materials on the hospitals, nurses and on Terrot's religious community, see pages 13-63. For Terrot's correspondence with Florence Nightingale, see Terrot letters, BL, Add. MSS 47742, British Library, London.

religious instruction, made St. John's House a well-respected and widely sought-after source of nurses for work in families.

Often, Londoners stopped by the house to arrange for a nurse to be sent, but the Lady Superintendant also received letters and telegrams from all over the country. In addition, women from St. John's House went to poor sections of London to care for people without charge or were requested to assist poor parishioners by local clergymen. As will be seen later, some of the work the St. John's House nurses did and the attitudes toward it that they faced were similar to the experiences of domestic servants. Although this was common to the early days of nursing, the St. John's House women were clearly helping to distinguish nurses from servants. They were allowed a degree of autonomy in that they traveled independently and had paid vacations. Unlike servants, they also had pensions and security in their old age.³⁴

In many instances, the people with whom the women did the work they so valued were marginalized by their broader societies. Bermondsey, the site of the first Convent of Mercy in England from which a number of Sisters left for the Crimea, was the model for the bleakest locations in *Oliver Twist*. Dickens has also left a vivid nonfiction account of Bermondsey.

'What *is* this smell?' 'oh it's the leather.' -- 'But what is that *other* smell?' 'Oh, that's the glue!' ... Bermondsey, thereupon, acquires a dubious character in the minds of those who fly through it on the top of those enumerable brick arches[of railway bridges], and who have not time to inquire into its more solid characteristics.

If the reader will make one in a tour to Bermondsey, we will start from London Bridge, which may be taken as the extreme north-west limit of that region. We

³⁴ Register of Nurses, SJH H01/ST/SJ/C/03/001; Mary Jones, Lady Superintendant's Diaries, SJH H01/ST/SJ/A20/1-3; Henry Giraud, Master of St. John's House, letter to the editor, *Times* (London), April 20, 1857, 10, describing St. John's House nurses' work at King's College Hospital and pensions provided to nurses.

begin betimes in the morning, and at once encounter on the bridge sundry men and women, laden with large, sturdy bundles of bags and baggings, with which they are trotting along at a tolerably smart pace. The who, the what, and the what for, respecting these people and their bags, show that Bermondsey and its vicinity have need of more canvas bags than any other district in the Metropolis. . . . There are so many corn-merchants on both sides of the Thames, so many hop-merchants in the Borough, so many wool-merchants in Bermondsey, and so many bags and sacks are required for the corn and hops and wool, that the making of these adjuncts gives employment to a very considerable number of poor people.³⁵

Bishop Thomas Grant of Southwark often made just the sort of visit to Bermondsey as Dickens describes. His friend and superior of the Bermondsey Sisters of Mercy, Mary Clare Moore, commented that the bishop often walked from St. George's (near London Bridge) out to the convent for his visits to the Sisters. Grant took a pastoral interest in the local people as well as in the Sisters, bringing bundles of clothing for them to distribute to the poor of the parish. On one visit, Grant inobtrusively stopped into the parish church which adjoined the convent. On noticing a workman by the door, Grant expressed pleasure at seeing him come to church after a long day's work and offered him some money. The man told another parishioner with some surprise about the gift "that little gentleman" had given him and was surprised to learn that his benefactor was the bishop.³⁶ Although Thomas Doyle does not mention Bermondsey specifically, many of his accounts of poor people are drawn from Southwark where the conditions would have been similar.

In a spiritual sense, vowed middle-class women had a perspective not shared by their broader society. Though Christianity was certainly widely practiced in Victorian England, and although many believed Christian principles should infuse public discourse and policy, few lived these values to the extent that vowed women did. They and other

³⁵ Charles Dickens, "Overland Tour to Bermondsey," *Household Words*, January 29, 1853, 462.

³⁶ Anonymous [Mary Clare Moore?], "Life of Thomas Grant," Thomas Grant Papers, Archives of the Religious Sisters of Mercy, Bermondsey, London.

committed members of religious organizations lived Gospel values to their full, radical extent. In the way they lived their lives and did their work, they took such oft-heard messages as “in Christ there is neither male nor female, neither rich nor poor...” at their word. Throughout his work as editor of *The Tablet*, F. C. Lucas articulated such a radical Christianity and challenged his readers to live up to it. He made his position in solidarity with the poor explicit in an early editorial, one of many he would write on the corn laws, factory conditions, minimum wages and other social concerns of the 1840s.

However, thank God ! *our* clients are neither rich land- lords nor rich manufacturers. In denouncing the Corn-laws we are not concerned to uphold the interests of the *mill-ocrats*, any more than in lending our feeble aid to Mr. Ferrand, we are concerned to uphold the interests of the *aristocrats*. Our clients are the poor—*pauperes Christi*— Christ's poor—who ever since the Reformation have been most infamously neglected, plundered, and down-trodden by all classes of rich men, and whose rights, against all opposers, we are bound within our small sphere to make good by every means within our power. The Catholic religion has been well styled the religion of the poor. Bring back the old habits of doing justice to the poor, and base these habits on the old feelings as to the intrinsic religious dignity of poverty, and you have well nigh restored the Christianity which once made this land a land of saints and heroes.³⁷

Vowed women believed that the gospel and such formulations of Christian principles as Lucas's were literal guides to daily life and not merely metaphors, or indications of what some later time would be like. Margaret Goodman, one of the Devonport community of Anglican Sisters who went to the Crimea recounts her thoughts on biases against the poor in her published memoirs of her Crimean experiences. A sister told Goodman that she had entered an Anglican Church and sat in the front. Someone, not knowing who she was and believing she was not dressed appropriately to occupy the seat for which a fee was generally charged, insisted she move to a small bench attached

³⁷ “Mr. Ferrand and the Manufacturers,” *True Tablet*, March 26, 1842, 195-196. After a disagreement and the theft of the subscription list, Lucas's partner published his own version of the *Tablet* so Lucas published his periodical as the *True Tablet*. The bound volumes preserve the numbering system of both Lucas's publication and the short-lived rival publication.

by a hinge to the door of another pew. The Sister had repeatedly to get up to allow the occupants of the pew to pass in and out.

Goodman then compares this story with her experience in a Catholic Church in Malta on her journey back to England from the Crimea. There, unlike the Anglican Church, no fees were charged and seats were not assigned according to perceived social status.

As there will be no second heaven provided for the poor might it not, therefore, be well for the rich to accustom themselves to some little contact with their poorer brethren; lest, being forced, in heaven, into a collision to which they are totally unused, they should be made uncomfortable in a place where they have all come expecting to be happy. ... It would seem that our Lord took as much thought for the dignity of the poor as for that of the rich. He himself was a poor man amongst his brethren when He came to redeem the world, and they were poor men whom He sent forth for its regeneration. Perhaps, judging from some congregations, it might be thought that the Church of England lacked one of the marks of the Church of Christ, -- "And to the poor the Gospel is preached."³⁸

Despite Goodman's experiences, there is some evidence to suggest that some Catholic Churches did charge pew-rentals. In addition, as a convert to Catholicism from the Society of Friends, Lucas may well have acquired some of his beliefs in equality and in the dignity of the poor from the Friends, whose beliefs and work (particularly in the Irish famine) he continued to value after his conversion.

Though Lucas's *pauperes Christi* article does contain a criticism of the Church of England on the grounds that it is not as mindful of the needs of the poor or concerned for their dignity as the Catholic Church, evidence from Anglican sources can serve to refute this. Henry Edward Manning, who would eventually become a cardinal in the Catholic Church renowned for his advocacy of workers' rights, began this work in his days as an Anglican archdeacon. In addition, Lord Sidney Godolphin Osborne (also an Anglican

³⁸ Goodman, *Experiences*, 25-27.

clergyman) spent much of his life protesting the conditions of the poor, in particular agricultural laborers. Like Thomas Doyle, he was a voluminous correspondent, writing to *The Times* under the name SGO. Possibly because of his reputation and his family and governmental connections, Osborne was accepted as a voluntary Crimean War chaplain and a kind of unofficial observer of the conditions in the hospitals. His vivid account of the terrible conditions of the men won Nightingale and the other nurses some crucial support and will be analyzed in subsequent chapters.

The Rule of the Devonport community gives a practical example of the way such attitudes as Goodman's and Lucas's might have had an impact on the daily lives of the Sisters.

The Sisters who serve [the Lay Sisters] were by no means to be treated differently from the others, but all should live together in equal love. Any orders given them were to be seasoned with charity. All the Sisters were to call them "Sister", mindful that although these were servants in outward circumstances, they were still the daughters of God, and with them in hope co-heirs of Jesus Christ.³⁹

Amelia Warren, who came to care for Priscilla Sellon during an illness and who stayed on to help with the cholera epidemic in Plymouth is a good source of information on the Devonport Sisters' work in cholera. Several letters to her family give vivid descriptions of the work she and others did, as well as of her perceptions of that work. An early letter,

³⁹ Thomas J. Williams, 24-25. The issue of lay sisters is a complex one, and an area which has yet to receive adequate scholarly analysis. These were women who generally did the domestic work of communities rather than the specific work of the order such as teaching. In some communities, lay sisters wore different habits, did not vote in community elections, and sat separately from the choir sisters, who were generally middle-class women who did the specific work of the congregation. Some of the failure to fully study the institution of lay sisters is due to the fact that they likely did not leave accounts of their own work, and to the sensibilities of congregations now to an issue in their past which causes some present-day members discomfort. In addition, there are debates about how the institution should properly be seen. On the one hand, distinctions in religious congregations would seem to contradict the emphasis on community life and the Scriptural charge "You are all one in Christ." On the other hand, lay sisters were generally working-class women who would very likely have had few if any opportunities for the kinds of professional work done by the choir sisters. Therefore, working as a lay sister provided these women a higher social status and greater degree of economic security than they would have achieved if they simply took ordinary jobs as domestics.

written two days after her arrival to the cholera hospital, gives an indication of her solidarity with the poor.

My choice is deliberately made to remain here and nurse in turn with the rest so long as needful ... thankful that I am permitted to do some little thing for the Saviour to whom I minister when I wait upon His poor members....⁴⁰

Before going out to the Crimea, many of the women who became military nurses had worked during cholera epidemics. In fact, it was this experience which made their services so necessary. Cholera is associated with poor sanitation and with impure water, so is often most prevalent in poor communities. In addition, it runs its course quickly and is highly contagious. Symptoms include fever, severe cramps, vomiting, diarrhea and dehydration. One nurse asked prayers for the victims of cholera whom she described as being “hurried into eternity on so short a notice.”⁴¹ Throughout the nineteenth century, it reoccurred in Britain every few years. The outbreaks of 1832 and 1849 were particularly severe, but there was also an outbreak in 1853 in which several of the Crimean nurses worked just before their departure.

The Devonport Sisterhood was very active in combating cholera in Plymouth in 1853. Both Margaret Goodman and Sarah Anne Terrot, who went out to the Crimea and left vivid accounts of the conditions in the hospitals there, worked in the 1853 epidemic. Amelia Warren, who would eventually become a Devonport Sister of Mercy, also worked in the Plymouth epidemic and gives the following description of the early days of the community’s work.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 50. (ellipses in original) Miss Warren was 50 years old when she came to help the community and eventually joined as a sister. Although Williams does not provide much information on Warren’s background, it seems reasonable to assume that, since she was not married and was sent for especially to care for Sellon, that she likely was already working as a nurse in one of the local hospitals. This experience makes her accounts of the details of the cholera epidemic that much more valuable.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Till I found that the awful ... state of Plymouth was in the public papers, I did not like to try your feelings. The cholera is raging in the most fearful form in one district in Plymouth. Houses and streets are depopulated. The clergy and medical men are devoted to the poor sufferers, and the Sisters of Mercy [of Devonport] under the superintendence of the clergy also visit them, and endeavor to alleviate their sufferings both mental and bodily. We are recognized as a body, and act as such. We relieve one another at regular intervals, and night and day attend the Hospital, ... the tents (...set up out of the town in a field near the Hospital) ... and the district where no tongue can describe the scenes I write to tell you how well we are in health, and supported in spirit and mind. We take every precaution, good food, perfect rest when at home, etc. We have not the slightest fear⁴²

The work of the Devonport sisters earned them a glowing tribute from Mr. Hetling, described as pastor and medical expert. He praises their work but also invokes some of the gender perceptions of the time.

In London, Paris, and Bristol, ... I have beheld many acts of devotion ... yet never have I witnessed anything that surpassed or even equaled the self-abandonment of these humble Sisters. It was not merely the nursing and tending the sick ... it was the doing of these acts in that spirit of love and sympathy ... which characterized their exertions.... I have seen the sick and dying encompassed with their arms, their cramped limbs ... chafed, their heads resting on their [the sisters'] necks; now wiping ... the fatal dampness from their sunk faces, now with affectionate entreaty pouring the medicine into their mouths; and then ... with lips close to their half dull ears, whispering some kind words of love, hope, ... or ... prayer, ... taking their hasty necessary meal from the common stock in the centre of the room, often at the bedside, often leaving it unfinished to perform some menial act.... There was a halo of sanctity around the persons of these calm Sisters, which inspired hope and ... confidence, and which ... checked ... that irreverence and unseemly merriment ... too common in the wards of an hospital.⁴³

The combination of womanly sympathy, moral uplift to check (presumably male) irreverence, and the unexpected risking of women's health along with the performance of "menial tasks" will be recurrent themes in the nurses' accounts of their Crimean service and others' tributes to it.

Although their annals do not always reflect this, the Catholic Sisters too were at the forefront of the cholera epidemics in London. The Sisters of Mercy in Bermondsey briefly mention cholera in their annals, but do not provide accounts of particular cases or

⁴² Ibid. (ellipses in original).

⁴³ Ibid., 54 (all ellipses in original).

descriptions of their daily work during epidemics. This may be due to the fact that an entry for a given year was written at year's end, thus making it difficult to recount events with the vivid detail of letters or diaries. It may also be due to beliefs about the sisters' proper modesty, whether held by individual sisters or by their ecclesiastical superiors. Members of Anglican communities may have been less susceptible to these strictures, since they were newer communities, and were not subject to the same rhetoric of renouncing the world as were Catholic sisters. The Sisters of Mercy can nonetheless be glimpsed in accounts of others. Also, since they were working in an area often ravaged by cholera and many other diseases, and since they had worked in the epidemic of 1832 in Dublin, they surely must have been very involved in the care of the sick when they faced yet another bad epidemic in Bermondsey in 1849. It is easier to hear the Sisters' own voices in accounts of the Crimean War, since during that work, they did send letters home and did write, and sometimes publish, memoirs.

Like Dickens, the social investigator and chronicler of the lives and work of London's casual laborers Henry Mayhew portrayed Bermondsey and Southwark more generally as emblematic of the conditions of the poor and their constant danger of disease.

Indeed, so well known are the localities of fever and disease, that London would almost admit of being mapped out pathologically, and divided into its morbid districts and deadly cantons. We might lay our fingers on the Ordnance map, and say here is the typhoid parish, and there is the ward of cholera; for as truly as the West-End rejoices in the title of Belgravia, might the southern shores of the Thames be christened Pestilentia. As season follows season, so does disease follow disease in the quarters that may be more literally than metaphorically be styled the plague-spots of London. If the seasons are favourable, and typhus does not bring death to almost every door, then influenza and scarlatina fill the workhouses with the families of the sick. So certain and regular are the diseases in their returns, that each epidemic, as it comes back summer after summer, breaks out in the self-same streets as it appeared on its former visit, but with this

slight difference, that if at its last visitation it began at the top of the street, and killed its way down, this time it begins at the bottom, and kills its way as surely up the line of houses.

Out of the 12,800 deaths which, within the last three months have arisen from cholera, 6,500 have occurred on the southern shores of the Thames; and to this awful number no localities have contributed so largely as Lambeth, Southwark and Bermondsey, each, at the height of the disease, adding its hundred victims a week to the fearful catalog of mortality.⁴⁴

Mayhew's article, published in September 1849 before his famous series of social investigations on London laborers, highlighted Bermondsey as an area particularly conducive to cholera. He describes the location itself as poisonous, but goes beyond traditional nineteenth century equations of environment with illness. Rather than simply asserting that "bad air" caused disease, Mayhew bolstered his argument with chemical analyses of the water, and with medical descriptions of the symptoms common (in times of cholera as well as routinely) to residents of Bermondsey. As with his later, more famous work, Mayhew relied on informants both for information about their own health and experiences, but also to help him find others to interview, or locations to inspect.

Interestingly, Thomas Doyle, whether writing as himself or in his *Tablet* persona of "Fr. Thomas," did not describe cholera in as much detail as his vivid letters asking for donations or describing events in Southwark and the conditions of the poor of his parish would lead readers to expect. Perhaps he, like the Sisters of Mercy, was too busy with sick calls and arrangements for orphans to write about his work. It does occasionally figure in brief postscripts to his *Tablet* contributions. For example, in the final paragraph of a letter describing the opening of the Jesuit Church at Farm Street, with no transition from his description of the music and ceremony, Doyle writes:

⁴⁴ Henry Mayhew, "A Visit to the Cholera Districts of Bermondsey," in *The Morning Chronicle Survey of Labour and the Poor: The Metropolitan Districts*, vol. 1 (Firle, England: Caliban Books, 1980), 31-32.

The cholera has cooled down very much, thank God; but we have had much distress of mind; for more than a week it was growing very serious. The night-bell—ominous sounds—ever in our ears—the death bell I call it—ringing and ringing and ringing us out of our beds to go we knew not where. Dreadful times—times of sickness and death; but it is better, much better, thanks to God.⁴⁵

In addition, others at St. George's left accounts indicating that the area was hit particularly hard. Readers of *The Tablet* were mobilized by the account of one case in Southwark. F. Oakley, a priest at St. George's with Doyle, asked their assistance for a twelve-year-old girl orphaned by cholera.

Possibly because it was such a recurrent threat, and because mortality was high, cholera was not merely a medical concern but was in fact a cultural fear, the source of a "social panic." Writing in the early stages of the outbreak of 1849, the editor of and correspondents to *The Tablet* used language of more than simply clinical analysis. They spoke of it as a "scourge" or a "visitation" and suggested that perhaps more prayer was needed in order to survive. They also were conscious of the need to give thanks if they should be spared by "the destroying angel". In Ireland in 1832, a County Kilkenny school master, Humphrey O'Sullivan, reports members of the community running from house to house dividing a piece of turf believed to have preventative properties among their neighbors. Interestingly, part of the charm appears to have been the sharing with others. O'Sullivan is quite dismayed by the behavior, putting it down to superstition and a lack of education.⁴⁶ Yet one can understand the desire to do something when even the most well-educated medical minds of the day were not always able to cure those with the disease or to prevent its spread.

⁴⁵ Father Thomas [Doyle], "Father Thomas's Letter About the Openings," *Tablet*, August 4, 1849, 483.

⁴⁶ S. J. Connolly, "The 'Blessed Turf': Cholera and Popular Panic in Ireland, June 1832," *Irish Historical Studies* 23, no. 91 (1983): 214–232. Also see Humphrey O'Sullivan, *The Diary of Humphrey O'Sullivan*, trans. Michael McGrath (London: Simkin, Marshall, Ltd., 1936-37).

The coverage of cholera in *The Tablet* is an interesting mix of this kind of almost pre-industrial, communal perspective with a thoroughly scientific view. At the height of the epidemic, Lucas publishes weekly accounts of the mortality from the disease taken from the official board of health returns. In addition, he publishes medical advice on avoiding infection.

Those who treated cholera cases of course risked infection but also might in some ways capitalize on their risk for other ends. In a fictional account of one woman's conversion from Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism, the heroine of the novel is first impressed by the work of a Catholic priest. Throughout much of *Geraldine: A Tale of Conscience*, Geraldine discusses religious questions with friends and family. The novel's author, E. C. Agnew, had some experience with these debates. A convert to Roman Catholicism herself, she published the first volume of *Geraldine* in 1838. Subsequently, she joined the Sisters of Mercy and was briefly the superior of the Bermondsey community. She received special permission to finish the novel after her entry into the order, so subsequent volumes reflect her interpretation of the life and work of Sisters of Mercy.

At the beginning of the novel, many are skeptical about the arrival of a new Catholic priest to the area. Geraldine points out that one thing very much in his favor is his daily rounds of the parish visiting the sick, bringing them spiritual comfort, but also food and whatever medical attention he can. The local vicar too would visit his parishioners during the outbreak of cholera, but is dissuaded by his wife's tearful plea that he not risk his own life or the life of their young child, whom he might inadvertently infect. Interestingly, there is perhaps some basis in reality for the fictional account of

cholera. For people who could not afford a doctor, their medical help beyond the family might well have come from the visiting clergy or religious women, whether vowed or not.

Throughout his work in Southwark, whether on sick calls, administering the last rites, or soliciting funds for the building of St. George's Cathedral, Thomas Doyle demonstrates a concern for and commitment to improving the conditions of the poor of his parish. Early in his public career, he wrote to the editor of *The Times* soliciting help for those he believed to have no other means of assistance. Later, in response to a work of the French writer and politician Jules Michelet's criticism of the worldliness of the Catholic clergy, Doyle set forth his own vision of the daily life and responsibilities of a parish priest.

The ladies of the Borough are not like the Parisian dames and demoiselles, for whom the incomparable Michelet feels so deeply interested. Oh! dear, by no means; not at all. These ladies of the Borough while away their vacant hours on the curbstone in gazing on Seville oranges, sheeps' trotters, and baked potatoes, which articles they sell, but do not eat. Other classes of these ladies prepare rabbit and cat-skins, carry loads on their heads, or sift ashes in the dust yards. For these dusky dames of the South (the Borough) our philanthropist feels not any interest; neither does he for the poissardes and chiffonnières of his Paris.

His are not the poor, the ugly, the care-worn, or the miserable. Michelet thinks only of the *ladies*, and of *the ladies only*: of the ladies *pretty*, and of the ladies *young*. ... Yet it is with the poor women, the wretched, careworn, old, and ugly (and none the worse for that) that the priest passes the long, long hours in the confessional. ... The Priest does not now sit in his chestnut box in a corner of St. Denis, or in St. Roche, but by the bed-side, or, as often happens, by the heap of rags, straw, or shavings on the floor, where lies the sad remnant of humanity. Come, Michelet, sit down with "Father Thomas" and hear the sad secrets of this half-dead, half-putrid child of sorrow. Come, Michelet, none of your vapouring about Priests, women, and families; sit down, never mind the smell, don't think of the contagion; here is the pinch, Michelet—this and here the every-day work of the Priest. With this moving mass of poor humanity, fetid and foul, I must pass some time. What, you find the place insupportable—you must leave—you go—ah, Michelet, away with all your romance, come down from the clouds, and come to real life. Write something about the Confessional in the hospitals, sick rooms,

cellars, and workhouses; tell the world something about the confessions of the poor, ragged, dirty, and sick. Say of the influence of Priests on the outcast, desolate, despairing; the troubled in mind and broken of heart.⁴⁷

Other members of the Catholic clergy attempted to alleviate the sufferings caused by cholera, using the pages of *The Tablet* as an important aid to their work. In addition, many made it clear that they worked in partnership with women religious. Peter Collingridge, one of the priests assigned to the Catholic church in Bermondsey indicates that a family devastated by the disease would have gone completely uncared for, but for the daily visits of the Sisters of Mercy.

Knowing that your excellent paper is devoted to the cause of charity and religion, I have ventured to solicit a small corner. On Tuesday, the 19th inst., I was called to administer the last sacraments to a young female, living in East-lane, who had just taken the cholera. The whole family, consisting of father, mother, the girl, and a boy eight years old, occupied a room not more than ten feet square. The poor mother, who had been very ill on the previous day, was obliged to yield their only miserable bed to the dying girl, and to exert herself about her. The father was blind (having lost his sight through an accident) and therefore totally dependent for some years on the labors of his wife and eldest girl and the occasional charitable assistance of those who knew something of their extreme poverty. The poor girl attacked with this fatal disease would most probably have sunk under it if timely aid had not been afforded, but that aid came too late for the afflicted parents. Destitution and sorrow and fatigue had prepared them for the infection; and pent up in that little room they could not escape it. The mother was seized with the cholera on Friday night; the neighbours were afraid to enter the wretched abode, and at twelve o'clock that night the ... father was obliged to seek out a little girl, the schoolfellow of his sick child. She was the only one who had courage to render them any service. On Saturday morning the poor woman received the last sacraments, stretched on the ground beside the bed where the

⁴⁷ Thomas Doyle, "Priests, Women, and Families: A Word to M. Michelet: From St. George's Church," *Tablet*, April 25, 1846, 264. This letter is a rare instance of Doyle's writing to the paper as himself, rather than as "Father Thomas." He preserves the pseudonym though, beginning by saying that Father Thomas was too busy to write for a time. Perhaps, as with his letters to *The Times*, Doyle wanted to be sure that his readers would know to whom to respond. Doyle was critiquing Michelet's "Le Prêtre, la femme et la famille." In this pamphlet, Michelet argues that French men do not exercise proper authority in their homes and families, because their wives and daughters are under the control of priests. In the confessional, priests can give women advice or direction of which their husbands are unaware. For a discussion of Michelet's career and this pamphlet, see James F. McMillan, "Opposition to Women's Suffrage, 1815-1850," *Enfranchising Women: The Politics of Women's Suffrage in Europe 1789-1945*, TLTP History Courseware Consortium, <http://www.gla.ac.uk/centres/tltp/history/training/advanced/custom/coredocs/coredoc2.htm> (February 2008).

daughter was now raving in the delirium of fever which had succeeded to the cholera. On the same night the father was taken with the cholera, and carried to the workhouse, where he lived only a few hours. The mother expired before eleven o'clock on Sunday morning. ... There was no one to say a word of comfort or to help the woman (who had been sent from the workhouse the evening before to nurse them) except the Sisters of Mercy, who had daily visited the poor family, and who had arrived just then in time to console the afflicted girl and to prepare her to be taken to the workhouse, where she was immediately removed.... The girl still survives, and I think will eventually recover, Thus by this dreadful visitant has a poor, aged, virtuous family been deprived of father and mother; and in saying father and mother, all is said. Four destitute children—two girls and two boys, one only eight years old—stand alone in the world. Perchance this short sketch may meet the eye of some who know how to soothe the sorrow of the orphan and alleviate his misery.⁴⁸

Collingridge was called in to administer the last rites, and was instrumental in insuring that the surviving children were placed in an orphanage.

One thing which the accounts of individual doctors, nurses and priests reveal which the mortality statistics, shocking as they are, do not make clear is the broad-reaching societal affects of cholera. Many writers describe specific cases of children orphaned by the disease and sketch the breadth of the impact on families. Amelia Warren described being “permitted to speak words of comfort to bereaved husbands and wives, and many a little orphan has thrown her arms around my neck and sobbed herself to sleep on my breast.”⁴⁹ Fr. F. Oakley, working with Doyle at St. George’s, brought the case of an orphaned girl to national attention through his appeals in the columns of *The Tablet*. He recounted the circumstances of her parents’ deaths and of her own illness and solicited funds from the readers of *The Tablet* to place her in an orphanage run by the

⁴⁸ Peter Collingridge, letter to the editor, *Tablet*, June 30, 1849, 404. Though Collingridge does not specifically identify himself as a priest, it would only be a priest who could administer the last rites, and Peter Collingridge’s name appears on the census returns for Bermondsey identified as a Roman Catholic Priest. The rectory and convent appear from the census returns to have been around the corner from each other, making the partnership in the epidemic easier.

⁴⁹ Williams, 52.

Sisters of the Faithful Virgin.⁵⁰ Underlying Oakley's and others' descriptions of Catholics affected by the disease is the fear that children who went to workhouses would be subject to proselytism and lose their faith, just at a time when the public profession of Catholicism was becoming acceptable. Oakley was overwhelmed by the response to his appeal. Not only did he receive funds for the year he hoped for, but received enough to place the child with the Sisters for two years.

He then recounts the case of another child, not orphaned but certainly neglected, whom he knows of and would like to place with the sisters too. Influenced by Oakley's letter and the response to it, another London priest writes in support of the orphanage. He too has sent children to the Sisters of the Faithful Virgin and describes the house. He is particularly impressed by the fact that each child has her own toothbrush and cup, a comfortable bed, clean clothes and a peaceful environment in which she can grow, be educated and be strengthened in her Catholic faith. Lynch in fact says that many boarding schools for proper young ladies do not have as good accommodations as the orphanage at Norwood. Displaying the class fears of his day, he adds that respectable tradespeople need have no fears in sending their own children to the sisters to be educated, as they insure that the orphans are respectably dressed and well-behaved.

By October 1849, the worst of that epidemic had passed. In one of his postscripts, this time to a letter describing the funeral of the King of Sardinia and his contributions to St. George's Cathedral, Doyle writes:

⁵⁰ This community also sent sisters to the Crimean War, though they were only there for a short time. I am grateful to Sister Micheline for generously sharing her knowledge of the community's history and for a tour of the convent and grounds including the sisters' cemetery where Bishop Thomas Grant is buried. I was unable to access archival material on the community's Crimean service as the relevant materials were then in France in use by the order.

The cholera is, after much sadness, passing—many an orphan, widow, and widower, will remember August and September, 1849. God be forever blessed, we still live: to those who have fallen,--light, rest, and peace.⁵¹

Such peace and rest as there may have been was short-lived. Cholera would return, though less severely, in 1853. In the periods without epidemics, vowed women continued to visit the sick in their homes and in hospitals and workhouses, to care for orphans and to run schools. Frances Taylor began a school for children others thought either not needing, or even incapable of, an education.⁵² The Sisters of Mercy (like other Catholic congregations of women) would play crucial roles in the efforts of members of the hierarchy and wealthy laymen in establishing the Catholic Poor School Committee. This committee coordinated the inspection of Catholic schools, insuring that they received the government grants which were already available to Anglican schools.

As the Crimean accounts discussed in later chapters will reveal, all of the vowed women relied on their pre-Crimean experiences both to do the work required of military nurses and to give them the confidence to assert their beliefs about the best way to accomplish it. Though government officials, medical men and chaplains welcomed and relied on the women's knowledge of appropriate treatment of diseases like cholera and typhus, which would reach epidemic proportions in the Crimean hospitals, they were not always receptive to the women's opinions (also gained from their pre-war work) on the best ways to arrange hospital wards or to foster religious devotion among the men. These working relationships with male authorities, sometimes partnerships or sustaining friendships and sometimes battles of will which seemed more concerned with reaffirming traditional gender roles than with saving lives, would also shape the women's Crimean

⁵¹ Father Thomas, "The Late King of Sardinia," *Tablet*, October 6, 1849, 638.

⁵² Devas, *Mother Mary Magdalen*, 17-18.

experiences. As with cholera epidemics before the war, the war itself will highlight the intersection of class, religion and gender.

In some ways, Florence Nightingale exemplifies both the difficulties faced by many middle-class women and also the convergence of gender and religious anxiety. In her privately printed *Cassandra*, Nightingale lamented that a middle-class woman could only occupy herself with something she could drop at a moment's notice if asked by others to do something else. She also railed against the frivolous life she believed she was confined to. In a fragment of a journal, Nightingale imagines a dialogue between herself and her mother in which she asks her mother to think of her as a son in order to be free of the pressure to marry and free to live her life with a degree of financial independence.

At this time too, Nightingale began a correspondence with Henry Edward Manning, the Anglican priest who converted to Catholicism and eventually became a cardinal. Manning was for a time a close friend with whom she seems to have fallen out. In one early letter in their correspondence, Nightingale pours out her longing to do meaningful work, explores the possibility that the Catholic Church would allow her this opportunity and hints that she faces some fairly strong family opposition to her ideas, though it seems she hasn't shared with them all she has with Manning. Though this level of trust would suggest that the two had corresponded over a long time, Nightingale asks Manning to excuse her writing to a virtual stranger and to treat her as if she were a

Catholic, presumably an allusion to his obligation to keep anything heard in confession confidential.⁵³

Nightingale was not alone in feeling constrained by the gender ideology of her day. Several of the Anglican and Roman Catholic sisters who would eventually join the nursing contingent had similar struggles, eased by membership in their religious communities. Particularly for the Catholic sisters, for whom the religious life was a longer-established option than for Anglican women, public work like hospital nursing, running schools and orphanages, or supervising the religious and practical training of new members of the community -- which might be criticized as inappropriate for women -- was legitimized by its being done out of religious conviction. In addition, membership in a religious community worked against the loneliness and feelings of not being understood which so troubled Nightingale. Even if living in community had its tensions and conflicts, members at least knew and worked with others who shared their experiences.

The Catholic and Anglican sisters would have had regular opportunities for reflecting on their work and their feelings about it, whether as preparation for receiving the sacrament of confession, discussions with spiritual directors, on their retreats, or in private spiritual journals which some communities encouraged members to keep. This reflective turn of mind, coupled with the women's sense that their work was new and important clearly influenced several to keep journals of their wartime experiences and led some to publish accounts either at the time or toward the end of their lives.

⁵³ Florence Nightingale to H. E. Manning, July 15, [1852?]. Letters from Florence Nightingale to Cardinal Manning, from the collection of St Mary of the Angels, Bayswater (hereafter Nightingale-Manning letters) MS 9095, Wellcome Library, London.

Chapter 3: New Women?: Gender Dynamics during the Crimean War

Although the office of nurse is one of great responsibility, and it sometimes happens that the life of a patient depends, humanly speaking, on the vigilance and probity of a nurse; and although there are few few [sic] professions in which the influences of Christianity are more necessary or more effective than in that of a nurse, yet it can hardly be said that they who discharge that office in this country have hitherto received, as a class, any training, moral or religious, in order to qualify them for their duties. ...

To mitigate this evil was the aim of this Institution [St. John's House]. ... It proposed to carry on this work [of training nurses] in a house superintended by a Master, a Clergyman of the Church of England, who ... might watch over the moral and spiritual welfare of the inmates, and would impart a religious character to the Institution by means of spiritual instruction and the exercise of domestic worship. And, in order that the character of the nurses might be elevated in a social respect, and might receive a religious tone from the practice of others, it was provided that they should also be placed under the care of a Lady Superintendent, assisted by other ladies associated with her, who might bear their part in domestic management and in the training and religious instruction of young women to be nurses— *The Times*, March 5, 1854¹

The Crimean nurses met the challenges of life and work in the British military hospitals by drawing on their practical experiences of innovative work in cholera epidemics and in institutions providing longer-term social services to the poor. Given the newness of the work and the skepticism sometimes verging on outright hostility with which some doctors and members of the public viewed it, the nurses' skillful negotiation of the gender politics of their day was as crucial to the success of the work as their medical skill. Imbedded in their class and culture, the nurses were also shaped by the gender ideology of Victorian Britain. Others' descriptions of their work and their own accounts often emphasize their proper womanly or ladylike behavior, downplaying the novelty of the work or its grittier details which would likely shock those at home. Their

¹ *Times* (London), March 6, 1854, 4. This is an appeal for funds from the council of St. John's House to offset expenses from a recent move and affirming the clerical and medical support the institution has already received. No author is given in the article, but the council's minutes suggest that C.P. Shepherd was often directed to write such appeals and arrange for them to be published in various periodicals.

critics were right in asserting that a military hospital was no place for ladies. Without fully overturning their gender norms and sometimes without seeming to question them at all, the Crimean nurses broadened concepts of appropriate work for women, laying the groundwork for the professionalization of nursing.

Although fighting during war has traditionally been a quintessentially male experience, political scientist Joshua Goldstein views the “war system” as dependent on both men’s and women’s participation. Women’s traditional roles of raising sons to be citizens and soldiers, of caring for sick and wounded men and even of opposing war, he argues, support or bring men’s roles of declaring wars or actively fighting in them into sharper focus.²

During wars and other times of cultural crisis, gender distinctions are often initially blurred when women take on new roles, but then tightened as societies strive to move out of the crisis and back to the status quo.³ Women like the Crimean nurses or their counterparts at home who knitted mittens for the troops, manufactured and sent bundles of lint for bandages, or collected and shipped donations of food and medical supplies were clearly aware of the financial, physical and psychological costs of the war. They acted as though they were doing nothing out of the ordinary and presented their work and beliefs as completely in accord with traditional notions of female behavior.⁴

² Joshua S. Goldstein, *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

³ During the French Revolution, for example, republicans welcomed women’s support in challenging royal and aristocratic authority, but they were excluded from revolutionary clubs when they called for female suffrage. See Olwen H. Hufton *Women and the Limits of Citizenship in the French Revolution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).

⁴ The next chapter will describe women’s war work, both in the hospitals and at home in more detail. The images of the total separation of the front and homefront and of women’s inability to understand men’s wartime experiences are well-known features of World Wars I and II, but have antecedents in the Crimean War. For analyses of women’s war work and the perception of the dichotomy between the front and the homefront in the world wars, see Margaret R. Higonnet et al., eds., *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two*

Ironically, the Crimean nurse described most frequently in terms of adherence to traditional middle-class female behavior is Florence Nightingale. Published descriptions of her during the war emphasize her gentleness, beauty, graceful figure and movements, calm and comforting presence and her risking of her health to support the men. One account even suggested that the men were heartened or even made physically better when Nightingale's shadow fell across their pillow. The editor of the Jesuit chaplain Sidney Woollett's journal commented on the public image almost amounting to hagiography growing up around Nightingale whom he, with some asperity, described as "that blessed virgin of the protestants."⁵

Both Martha Nicol and Frances Taylor describe the nurses as having a moderating affect on soldiers' behavior. The portrayal of the nurses as fulfilling traditional middle-class notions of lady-like behavior probably contributed to the favorable public and critical reception her book achieved. This passage, published in the *Illustrated London News*, demonstrates both Taylor's position and the way the newspaper chose to present her work to the public.

... [N]ever did a word which could offend a woman's ear fall upon ours. Even in the barrack-yard, passing by the guard-room or entrances, where stood groups of soldiers smoking and idling, the moment we approached all coarseness was hushed; and this lasted, not a week or a month, but the whole of my twelvemonth's residence, and my experience is also that of all my companions.⁶

World Wars (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987). For a study of the Crimean War experiences of women, including nurses, soldiers' wives and women at home, see Helen Rappaport, *No Place for Ladies: The Untold Story of Women in the Crimean War* (London: Aurum, 2007).

⁵ Annual Letter, 1855-1856, 21, SJA.

⁶ Taylor, *Eastern Hospitals*, undated cutting, *Illustrated London News* in portfolio of cuttings, mainly from the *Illustrated London News*, re Medical Services in the Crimean War and re Florence Nightingale (hereafter Nightingale Cuttings) RAMC 27, Wellcome Library, London.

Martha Nicol too described elevating men's behavior. When she heard a soldier swearing outside the room in which she was working, Nicol told another nurse that she was going out to tell the man to be quiet. Despite her friend's warning that the man would not respond well to the intrusion, Nicol reports that:

I went, however, and said very quietly—'C, I am sorry to hear you speak in that manner. You are the only man in the division I have ever heard swear, and I hope you will not do it again.' 'Well, mem, I'm sure I won't do nothing to offend you, for ye're a rale leddy, and a very well-natured leddy too, and I ax yer pardon; but I raly did'nt know ye was in there, or I wouldn't have done it.' 'It ought not to make any difference to you, C, whether I was there or not; it is equally bad.' 'Thru, for ye, mem—; but faith, it's very difficult for a soldier to give up the habit of swearing, he's so used to it; but I'll thry.

Another day, Nicol hears another of the nurses reprimanding C sharply for his language. He responds:

'Report me, then, if ye like, and go to the divil!' So it was evident that whatever style suits them best from their commanding officers, our only chance of securing obedience was by using mild persuasion. But they really were most obedient when we were present; and we thought it, perhaps, wise frequently to ignore certain little derelictions which went on in our absence.⁷

Taylor and Nicol both give the traditional gendered role of women's checking male behavior a slightly different interpretation, based on their assumptions about that behavior. Though Taylor accepts a lady's responsibility to make men more polite and respectable, much of her account relates the innate decency of the soldiers by pointing out that she and other nurses never heard anything which offended them or which they felt needed to be corrected. Throughout, Taylor refutes traditional views of soldiers as immoral or uncivilized. Nicol also modifies the gender role a bit. While she does believe

⁷ Nicol, *Ismeer*, 161-2.

it her duty to stop the men from swearing, she asserts that any reproof must be given with kindness and respect.

Another aspect of middle-class women's gendered work during the war was their public enactment of the traditional women's role. Middle-class vowed women had an added responsibility, since they had to affirm their status as both good women and good and respectable nuns who did not let their wartime service alter their values. Sr. Joseph Croke, a Sister of Mercy from Kinsale, Ireland, whose journal is a valuable source for the work and daily lives of the nurses, illustrates this point. Some unexpected visitors arrived to the Sisters' hut just as they were sitting down to dinner.

There was at once a general rise and a rush, each with her plate, into an [?] apartment wherein six Sisters reposed by night and generally two by day. The distinguished visitors appear and everything around wears the look of repose, usual to conventual reception rooms and Revd Mother meets them with as clean a hand as if she had never touched a greasy platter.⁸

In keeping with Florence Nightingale's complaint that a middle-class woman must be ready to drop whatever she was doing if someone wanted her to do something else, the Sisters neither asked the visitor to come later, nor even let him know they were in the midst of dinner. Even more remarkable, they upheld the traditional conventual practice of keeping some parts of the convent cloistered from public view, even though their Crimean convent was a two-room hut.

Like the middle-class volunteers, some of the paid women did work more in keeping with their working-class backgrounds, pre-war experiences and others' perceptions of them. Some British women were hired as cooks or laundresses, and some of the soldiers' wives, as well as Greek or Turkish women the nurses met in the course of their work, were hired to help with patients' laundry and the nurses' housework. In

⁸ Sr. Mary Joseph Croke, October 24, 1855, in Luddy, *Crimean Journals*, 84.

addition, the controversy over what Nicol termed “the equality system,” the tensions surrounding interpretations of Sidney Herbert’s remarks about all nurses going out on an equal footing, was resolved in part by some of the working-class women agreeing to focus more on domestic work than on nursing. Though she does seem to have done some nursing, Elizabeth Davis’s account reveals more of her managerial responsibilities for a large kitchen and her work in linen distribution. Davis describes the discomfort of long hours on her feet, but she seems to prefer this domestic work to nursing, believing it gave her more independence and control over her life and work than nursing would have done. For some less comfortable with a class-based role than Davis or who wanted to take Herbert’s remarks more literally than some of the middle-class women preferred, Mary Stanley seemed to smooth things over. She was able to restore some degree of harmony between the ladies and the working-class nurses by urging all to do the work for which they were most equipped. Though she shifted the reasons from innate characteristics to previous experience, Stanley’s compromise still meant that paid nurses were more likely to scrub the floors than the lady volunteers.

The fact that many Crimean nurses were recognized as “real ladies,” as Martha Nicol’s patient and other soldiers and medical authorities remarked, allowed them, as well as the “good nuns” and “respectable women,” to lessen some of the criticisms they faced. Their public affirmation of Victorian gender norms, even in a warzone, also allowed them to challenge those norms even if very privately and cautiously. Challenging cultural norms is difficult both because of the criticism an individual faces, but also because it is often difficult to find language with which to pose the challenge. One of the interesting aspects of Ellen Jordan’s study of Victorian women’s work is her

analysis of such linguistic difficulties. Jordan points out that gender ideals are sometimes difficult to analyze because they are usually unstated. They are such deeply held cultural beliefs that they are just assumed to be understood by all members of a particular society.⁹

The Crimean nurses and other mid-Victorian women illustrate Jordan's point. Bessie Rayner Parkes, who would eventually become a founding member of the Langham Place Group and editor of its journal calling for changes in women's status, began tentatively to question received gender ideals in the 1840s. She wrote to her friend Kate Jevons confiding that she thought that women could have responsibility for bookkeeping and other financial matters. Parkes must have known that such ideas were rare and would cause her to be at best laughed at or worse could lead to social ostracism as a strong-minded bluestocking. Parkes did not speak in terms of women's rights or even their financial need to work and asked Jevons to keep her letter between the two of them.¹⁰ Florence Nightingale had a similar experience to Parkes in identifying, and then trying to solve, the problem of her resistance to cultural norms. Writing in her diary, Nightingale laments, "Oh God what is to become of me." At a later date, she records an imagined conversation between her and her mother where she asks her mother to treat her as if she were a son.¹¹ *Cassandra*, an essay which Nightingale did not publish, is a more well-thought-out critique of the gender ideals under which Nightingale lived, but also contains some of the same emotional power of the diary. Throughout, Nightingale

⁹ Ellen Jordan, *The Women's Movement and Women's Employment in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, (London: Routledge, 1999).

¹⁰ Bessie Rayner Parkes to Kate Jevons, n.d., Bessie Rayner Parkes Papers, Girton College Archives, Cambridge, U.K.

¹¹ Florence Nightingale, journal fragment, December 24, 1850, BL, Add. MSS 43402, 53, British Library, London; Florence Nightingale journal fragment, December 7, 1851, BL, Add. MSS 43402, 66.

portrays the daily routine of middle class women as frivolous and unfulfilling. Women are unable to use their talents fully since they must only pursue things which they could drop at a moment's notice.¹² Throughout the essay and her journal fragments, Nightingale rails against the tedium and purposelessness of the daily rounds of visiting, social engagements, polite correspondence and accomplishments like drawing, needlework and singing meant to assert respectability which she argues were a upper-middle-class woman's lot in life rather than to be economically useful. It was discomfort with family and societal expectations which motivated Nightingale and other women, including some of the vowed women, to work for social change before the war and then to join the Crimean nursing contingent.

Although they often did not write as clear indictments of women's prescribed roles as Parkes or Nightingale, nuns too challenged the gender ideals of their day. In the case of Catholic sisters, their vocation had a long tradition that allowed them to remain single and to do work involving administration without being labeled as "unnatural" by Catholics. Some non-Catholics respected the work done by Catholic sisters, but their celibacy and the psychological and even physiological problems it was believed to cause were the basis for much anti-Catholic sentiment of the nineteenth century. In England, such public debates as those in Parliament over the need to investigate convents and discussions of the problems inherent to groups of unmarried women living and working together discussed in Chapter Two indicate that some who were not Catholic were critical

¹² Florence Nightingale, *Cassandra: An Essay*, (Old Westbury, NY: Feminist Press, 1979 [1852]). Virginia Woolf discussed *Cassandra* in her *A Room of One's Own*, making Nightingale a foremother of modern feminism. Though Nightingale's criticism of the constraints placed on women would seem to have been a rallying cry, the work remained unknown for much of the time since it's writing. Nightingale herself does not seem to have wanted to participate in any of the movements such as the married women's property rights agitation or the early calls for suffrage.

of nuns' carving out new gender roles.¹³ Possibly the rhetoric of nuns as brides of Christ helped to facilitate the acceptance of the nontraditional activities of active women religious. Vowed women do not generally emphasize bridal metaphors for their lives; typically, they do not refer to themselves as "brides of Christ." Yet the imagery and allusions were there at formal occasions such as clothing ceremonies in which women received their habits and rings after first appearing publicly in the ceremony in formal attire resembling bridal gowns and in obituaries in which a deceased sister might be described as having devoted her life to her heavenly spouse. These metaphors would be useful in combating allegations that nuns were rejecting marriage by allowing them to assert that they supported the institution and were choosing a bridegroom far above any man.¹⁴

Although both middle- and working-class women had prewar work and experiences which equipped them for their Crimean service, only the middle-class women had the opportunity to think about doing meaningful and interesting (as opposed to financially secure) work. Class was similarly a crucial factor in successfully challenging gender norms. Women like Nightingale and Parkes, discussed above, as well as the vowed women who have left similar statements were fortunate in being able to articulate their frustrations, even if they did so only in private. For women like Elizabeth Woodward or Rebecca Lawfield, with little education or leisure time in which to reflect

¹³ For a discussion of the tensions in English society caused by the growing numbers of women entering convents as well as the bills before Parliament calling for convent inspections, see Walter L. Arnstein *Protestant Versus Catholic in Mid-Victorian England: Mr. Newdegate and the Nuns* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1982).

¹⁴ For a discussion of Church teachings on nuns' celibacy and the advantages it accorded them see Jo Ann Kay McNamara, *Sisters in Arms: Catholic Nuns Through Two Millennia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1996), 1-6. I am grateful to members of the email lists, "The History and Contemporary Concerns of Catholic Women Religious" and "Consecrated Women: The History of Women Religious of Britain and Ireland," for email discussions and conference presentations and discussions exploring women's rejection and strategic use of the bridal imagery.

on such things, the constraints must have been harder to bear. In a sense, working-class women had to challenge the double burden of class and gender: they faced perceptions of themselves as mercenary for accepting pay for what middle class women could do as volunteers. If they attempted to present themselves as operating from motives similar to those of middle-class women, they were often not believed.

Given the double burden, it is understandable that so much was made of the distinctions between women and ladies in the middle of the nineteenth century. As will be seen later, many tried to separate “lady” from its class associations, arguing that it should describe behavior rather than economic status. The experiences of some of the working-class Crimean nurses would prove useful in these debates. Particularly in the case of working-class women who died, many felt it important to honor their wartime service as though it had been voluntary and wanted to downplay the fact that they had been paid. Jane Williams was motivated to help Elizabeth Davis record and publish her experiences in part because she believed that Davis and other paid nurses were in danger of being forgotten. In part because she worked closely with Nightingale, Mrs. Roberts is one of the most well-known of the paid nurses. Even with her Nightingale connections and highly-commended hospital work before and after the war, her advocates worried that she would be ignored simply because she had received wages.¹⁵

In the fall of 1854, there was much coverage in the press of the shocking conditions of the British sick and wounded troops. *The Times* and its chief war correspondent William Howard Russell were particularly concerned to report these to the

¹⁵ Elizabeth Davis, *Autobiography*, 295-296; John F. South, *Facts Relating to Hospital Nurses; in Reply to the Letter of “One Who Has Walked a Good Many Hospitals” Printed in The Times 13th of April Last; Also Observations on Training Establishments for Hospital and Private Nurses* (London: Richardson Brothers, 1857), 14-15. Roberts is one of the nurses in Gerry Barrett’s painting *Florence Nightingale Receiving the Wounded*.

public and to find and hold accountable military and governmental officials they believed responsible for the mismanagement of the war. They criticized both military mistakes like the charge of the Light Brigade immortalized by Tennyson and the failures of the Commissariat resulting in food and supplies not reaching either the men at the front or the sick and wounded in the hospitals. In a famous letter to the editor which also received responses both from *The Times* and others of its readers, the situation of the French and English troops was contrasted, with the provocative question “Why have we no Sisters of Charity?”¹⁶ The cultural fears caused by the religious implications of this letter will be analyzed later. It caused discomfort to those favoring traditional gender roles too. Although the fact that Nightingale’s offer to lead a contingent of nurses crossed with a letter from Sidney Herbert asking her to do the same thing would suggest that her work had widespread governmental support, it was not without controversy. One writer to *The Times*, using the name “Common Sense,” objected to the idea of sending women out as nurses. He argued instead that groups of male orderlies or dressers, convalescent soldiers who assisted surgeons by bandaging wounds or amputations, should serve as nurses as they had in previous military campaigns. He also argued that ladies would not be able to set aside their upbringing in order to endure the hardships of military hospitals and were not equipped to do the work required. Finally, he worried that nurses would be more of a hindrance than a help, because they were susceptible to hysteria and fainting and would become more patients for the overtaxed doctors to handle. C. P. Shepherd, the master (as he was called at the time) of St. John’s House, countered these arguments, drawing on his work as chaplain at St. John’s and experiences of admitting prospective nurses to the institution and evaluating their recommendations

¹⁶ A Sufferer by the Present War, letter to the editor, *Times* (London), October 14, 1854, 7.

from patients and doctors. In fact, though neither clergyman would have been considered controversial, Shepherd and the Bishop of London helped women challenge notions of appropriate work for women by collaborating with the War Office to send nurses from St. John's House to the military hospitals. Several were in the first group under Nightingale's direction, and St. John's House channeled women to the military hospitals throughout the war.

The process of selecting nurses and the discussions of responsibility of various groups illustrates again the intersection of class and gender and the importance of ladyhood. First, those most directly concerned with selecting nurses did not have much relevant experience in the medical profession. Nightingale herself had some, but she left with the first party of nurses and then entrusted future selections to Elizabeth Herbert, Charlotte Canning and Mary Stanley, who were her friends and were from similar backgrounds to Nightingale. Stanley had written a book on various hospitals and systems of nurses' training, but it is not clear how much supervisory experience she had had. All of the women would most certainly have had experience running households, directing servants and caring for ill family members.

In conceiving of the jobs they were offering and applying for and evaluating potential candidates, selectors and applicants alike operated on assumptions which had worked in the past and drew on previous experiences. Some of the selectors and working-class applicants envisioned their Crimean service as similar to the work of a domestic servant in peacetime. An important component of choosing ladies for Crimean nursing duties was evaluating their ability to supervise teams of workers and to instill proper morals in the working-class women. As the war continued and more nurses were

needed, some assumptions were modified and new experiences shaped the work of the selectors and nurses. The selectors were themselves gaining additional experience in evaluating nurses' qualifications and assessing their relevance for the demands of work in military hospitals. This new professional development for middle-class women would be useful as the war continued and in the post-war attempts to set up nurses' training schools. Initially, there was little sense of the kinds of skills most useful for work in hospitals. Application letters simply asked to be considered, and any references provided spoke to the woman's character, sometimes with no mention of the kinds of work the woman had done.¹⁷ Later, applicants were required to submit a standardized reference form including details of how long the recommender had known the person, in what capacity and the applicant's relevant work experience. While recommenders still did comment on the applicant's character and morals, they were also asked to focus on applicants' relevant experience likely to be useful in the military hospitals. The form advised recommenders to bear in mind that the work would be dangerous for the nurses and would involve life and death issues for the patients. They were asked to think about whether the candidates could handle such responsibility.

It is fascinating to think about the networks of people channeling women to the main selectors in London. St. John's House was a particularly useful conduit. Its clerical and medical council members gave it important status and name recognition and the institution had already achieved a reputation for sending qualified nurses to hospitals and

¹⁷ We are fortunate to have a box of application letters from women, some with indications of whether or not they were selected. Some also have supporting letters from doctors or clergymen, but often the supporting letters do not always indicate whose application they are supporting. The writers at times simply say they are supporting "Mrs. Jones", or even just mention the family name in passing so it can be difficult to match the applicant with her supporters. See Nurses' Testimonials WO25/264 in National Archives, Kew.

difficult cases in families all over the country. The women they recommended to Herbert, Stanley and Canning had documented work histories. In addition, St. John's House provided its members both medical and religious instruction, insuring that women recommended by its directors had the requisite combination of medical and moral suitability. Of course the working-class women would have been more subject to questions about their moral fitness for the work than their middle-class counterparts, as evidenced by the flurry of correspondence regarding Susan Cator's appointment discussed in Chapter One.

As the tensions and debates surrounding the "equality system" discussed at the beginning of this chapter reveal, many felt there could be difficulties when ladies and women worked together in new circumstances. Sidney Herbert, secretary of war and the government official with ultimate responsibility for the nurses, had tried to insure that class and religious divisions were lessened so that all could focus on caring for their patients, but his remarks were not understood in the same way by all his hearers. There was agreement that Herbert stressed to all that they were doing work crucial to the war effort and that they were to be under the direction of the superintendent (Nightingale) and medical and military authorities. It was also clear that if any nurse violated the terms of the agreement they all signed that she would be sent home and might, if a paid nurse, forfeit her wages. The compromise Stanley helped to broker did not satisfy everyone. Even though some of the working-class women were restricted to the kinds of jobs they would have had at home, they achieved a higher social status through their association with Nightingale and support of Britain's war effort. In the end, arrangements were not as egalitarian as some would have liked, but the objections were taken seriously enough

to warrant the publication of rules for nurses which people would receive before going out.¹⁸ Sidney Godolphin Osborne, an Anglican clergyman who went to Scutari to observe and report on the conditions of the sick and wounded troops and served as a part-time volunteer chaplain, commented on the need for distinctions among nurses.

In my own opinion it would be most advisable that the hired professional nurses, should wear some dress distinguishing them from the sisters. There are many offices about the sick and wounded which the surgeons would at once require, and with reason, of a hired hospital nurse, which nothing could induce them to ask of a 'sister'. I am also quite satisfied this is no field of usefulness proper for young English women. We are very apt to confound the duties and the office of these volunteer ladies, with those of the sisters of charity in the French hospitals. From what I saw and could learn at those hospitals, the several positions in life of the respective parties; their training, the obligation of the religious vow, &c.—make a very wide distinction between them.¹⁹

The next chapter of this dissertation will explore the specific work the nurses did, and it is their work which illustrates their challenges to prevailing gender norms. Therefore, I will focus in this chapter on the ideas or perspectives which enabled them to pose these challenges and to work in unconventional ways. Without the willingness to adapt to new circumstances and the openness to new ideas, the nurses would have had great difficulty in their work and in their relationships with male authorities. The following analysis of the nurses' work from Frances Taylor gives more of the context for her assertions about the men's respect for the nurses quoted earlier in this chapter. Taylor is clearly ambivalent about the gender and class ideas of her time and culture, ideas

¹⁸ Martha Nicol was one who was firmly convinced that allowing full equality was a mistake. Nicol, 7-8. Elizabeth Davis seems to have felt that Herbert did mean that they were all equal, but that practically this could not be fully carried out. She believed that working class women had to do the housework since the ladies simply were not experienced enough with it to handle it. Mary Stanley seems to have tried to smooth things over by urging all to do whatever work they were assigned out of a spirit of charity. While she did not say that the ladies had to take their share of the housework, she did suggest that the women should be treated with respect. This position seems to have lessened the friction and satisfied Davis. Davis, *Autobiography*, 107-119. In addition, regarding the agreement, strictly speaking, the Catholic nuns did not sign individually. Thomas Grant entered into the agreement on behalf of the Bermondsey Sisters of Mercy and Francis Bridgeman signed on behalf of the nuns in the second group of which she was Superior.

¹⁹ Sidney Godolphin Osborne, *Scutari and Its Hospitals* (London: Dickinson, 1855), 28.

which she would renegotiate for the rest of her life. Taylor's use of "woman" rather than "lady" and her implication that the men did not need the elevating influence of the nurses challenges Victorian class ideals, while her belief that women should not be exposed to certain language or behavior accepts her society's gender norms.

Our life was a regular routine of work and rest [except on occasions of extraordinary pressure] following each other in order; but whether in the strain of overwork, or in the steady fulfillment of our arduous duty, there was one bright ray ever shed over it, one thing that made labour light and sweet, and this was the respect, affection, and gratitude of the men. No words can tell it rightly, for it was unbounded, and as long as we stayed among them it never changed. Familiar as our presence became to them, though we were in and out of the wards day and night, they never forgot the respect due to our sex and position. Standing by those in bitter agony, when the force of old habits is great, or by those in the glow of returning health, or walking up the wards among orderlies and sergeants, never did a word which could offend a woman's ear fall upon ours. Even in the barrack-yard, passing by the guard-room or entrances, where stood groups of soldiers smoking and idling, the moment we approached all coarseness was hushed; and this lasted, not a week or a month, but the whole of my twelvemonth's residence, and my experience is also that of all my companions.²⁰

Sarah Terrot too talks about the gender dynamics at work in the hospitals. One example of her favoring more traditional views is her discussion of orderlies. She rejects some of her wounded patients' belief that the orderlies, working in hospitals and away from active service, are less brave than the soldiers at the front. Terrot's defense of the orderlies, often convalescent soldiers themselves, nonetheless affirms conventional gender ideals. Because they have taken on the role of assisting the doctors and nurses, Terrot believes that the orderlies are doing unnatural work for men. Taking orders from a superior would be acceptable for an enlisted soldier because his class or experience would naturally put him in a subordinate position, but a soldier of any rank is still performing the masculine role of fighting and potentially dying for his country. Orderlies

²⁰ *Illustrated London News*, April 26, 1856, Nightingale Cuttings, RAMC 27. The bracketed text is in the original.

cannot demonstrate this manly behavior, and Terrot believes that when orderlies took on traditionally female tasks like scrubbing floors, cooking and feeding patients, they experienced a loss of dignity and masculinity. She also accepts ideas of women's role as moral guardians or uplifters, since she believes the nurses could exert a positive influence on the orderlies by encouraging politeness and deference and by combating drunkenness and swearing.²¹ Of course these gender ideas are connected with class perceptions, since orderlies are portrayed by all accounts as coming from working-class backgrounds. Terrot does not, for example, discuss ways in which nurses could have helped to improve the morals of officers or doctors, who would have been of a higher social status.²²

Although they are generally quite oblique, there are references throughout Sarah Anne Terrot's and Margaret Goodman's accounts which illustrate that they believed themselves to be competent medical professionals. Each asserts that her experience in cholera epidemics before the war has equipped her to deal with the illnesses raging throughout the hospitals. Terrot also hints that occasionally doctors gave unnecessary advice on post-surgical treatments. Goodman recounts her treatment of patients who were delirious, arguing that an important component in their recovery was the ability to allow the nurse to, in a sense, take over their rational thought processes. Patients should be encouraged to tell the nurse about any disturbing dreams or thoughts they are having so that the nurse can sort out which are real and which the products of fever or anxiety. This idea of a patient's surrendering some of his rational faculties challenges notions of middle-class men's role as decision-makers with responsibility for themselves and others and that they are more rational than women. Goodman spends much time demonstrating

²¹ Sarah Anne Terrot, *Reminiscences of Scutari Hospitals in Winter 1854-55*, (Edinburgh: A. Stevenson, 1898), 37-40.

²² *Ibid.*

the importance of this shift in responsibility based on her nursing work before and during the war²³.

Historian Mary Ellen Doona has studied in depth the career of Sister Mary Joseph Croke, an Irish Sister of Mercy who left England with the second group of nurses. Doona argues that the writings of Croke and Frances Bridgeman, the group's superior, illustrate that the sisters had definite ideas about the best way to care for patients and held to a coherent plan in the face of criticism. The sisters' ideas differed from those of Florence Nightingale, and this difference will be analyzed in greater detail in the next chapter.²⁴ Like Terrot and Goodman, Croke and the Irish Sisters asserted their professional knowledge gained through their training in the order and in hospital work before the war.

Whether or not the women involved were conscious that they were doing so, they were behaving in ways that people at home would find unexpected. Men too were doing things not usually done by men, though in this period of British history, we more often find women criticized for transgressing gender norms than men.²⁵ In an era when women had no political rights and few opportunities for economic independence, any attempt to renegotiate gender roles could threaten men's authority. For people operating in the Victorian religious framework, no matter of which denomination, women's subordinate status was believed to be ordained by God.²⁶ Culturally, men are envisioned as active

²³ Goodman, *Experiences*, 130-132.

²⁴ Mary Ellen Doona "Isabella Croke: a Nurse for the Catholic Cause During the Crimean War," in *Gender Perspectives in Nineteenth-Century Ireland: Public and Private Spheres*, ed. Margaret Kelleher and James H. Murphy (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1997), 148-156; Mary Ellen Doona "Sister Mary Joseph Croke: Another Voice from the Crimean War, 1854-1856," *Nursing History Review* 3 (1995): 3-41.

²⁵ With the rise of such movements as "muscular Christianity" later in the nineteenth century, it is possible that men began to face criticisms that they were not being "manly".

²⁶ For discussions of women's economic status see Candida A. Lacey, *Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon and the Langham Place Group* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987); Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); and Jane Lewis, *Women in England, 1870-1950: Sexual Divisions and Social Change* (Brighton,

shapers of their own and others' destinies. Women are expected to be more focused on private concerns of creating a safe haven for men to return to from their public work. Rhetorically, women are also seen as responsible for moral uplift, and this role was part of the underlying attitudes of Crimean nurses.²⁷

Thomas Grant, Bishop of Southwark, was instrumental in arranging for Catholic nuns to go out as nurses and was involved in the government negotiations to send Catholic chaplains to the hospitals. Accounts of his work illustrate his role in managing others' work, but also the ways in which men's and women's responses to Grant differed.

That same afternoon, September 19th, he had a visit from the Rev. Mr. Bagshawe, and in the course of conversation he mentioned what was uppermost in his mind, his distress at having only one chaplain to send to the Crimea. "Really, my Lord," remarked his visitor, "I can't understand why you should be in such difficulties about it; your Lordship has only to order any priest in the diocese to go, and he will obey you." "But do you think," rejoined Dr. Grant, "that a Bishop has a right to impose such a command on a priest?" "I don't know about that," was the reply, "but I certainly think that if a Bishop did give such a command it would be the duty of the priest to obey." Dr. Grant made no further comment, but, the moment Mr. Bagshawe was gone, he sat down and wrote him a letter in which he requested him to put his theory into practice, and get ready to start at once for the Crimea. On returning home a few hours later, the self-doomed missionary found the mandate lying on his table. Without a murmur, and probably with a smile at the ready wit which had caught him in his own trap, he packed up his *impedimenta*, and went off the next morning to get the Bishop's blessing on his impromptu campaign.²⁸

Throughout her work, Grant's biographer portrays Grant as modest, pastoral and thoughtful of others needs. Yet he was a Bishop and one who was closely associated with Church politics in Rome, so Bagshawe was right in asserting that priests of the

Sussex: Wheatsheaf Books / Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984). For the religious justification of men's and women's roles see "Paper read to the Council May 9, 1856" SJH H01/ST/SJ/A26/2 in which the author (unidentified but presumably C. P. Shepherd, who was the master at the time) equates St. John's House with a traditional family with the master in the role of the father, divinely ordained to be the head of the family.

²⁷ See Catherine Hall, *White, Male, and Middle-Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), and John A. Tosh, *Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

²⁸ Ramsay, *Thomas Grant*, 101-102.

diocese were expected to obey Grant's requests. The Catholic Church is a hierarchical institution and descriptions of it often rely on military metaphors. With the exception of the Pope, all Church officials, cardinals, bishops, priests, monks and nuns, are expected to be obedient to their superiors. A monk is obedient to his abbot, a priest to his bishop and a bishop to a cardinal. While nuns may have more status in the Catholic Church than laywomen, in terms of official Church hierarchy, nuns are the lowest ranked. As with the military, the idea of obedience for men is further complicated by gender ideology allowing men freedom of action and requiring them to make decisions for others. A priest was required to report to his bishop and to obey his directions on diocese-wide matters, but would be left free to manage the day-to-day running of his parish. Nuns helped to shore up men's concept of their authority since even a priest who was not in charge of a parish could attempt to exert control over nuns in the parish. It is important to remember that like other women, nuns were able to carve out their own authority within the hierarchical structures and that within the convent and convent-run institutions nuns could exercise authority and ignore priestly attempts at control more often than the official Church rhetoric would suggest.²⁹

Grant's biographer portrays women responding with more meekness and none of the humor of the priests. Interestingly, though she often observed rhetorical conventions in keeping with the relationship between a nun and her ecclesiastical superior, Clare Moore did challenge traditional gender roles in her work. As will be seen in the next

²⁹ Mary Peckham Magray, *The Transforming Power of the Nuns: Women, Religion, and Cultural Change in Ireland, 1750-1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). Magray thoroughly analyzes the role of nuns in shaping nineteenth-century Irish society and culture and the complexity of gender politics within the Catholic Church. She argues that despite their officially subordinate status, it is inaccurate to view nuns as helpless victims of male control. She demonstrates both the constraints in which nuns operated and their ability to carve out new responsibilities for themselves and raises important points about nuns' role in revitalizing Catholicism in Ireland.

chapter, she and Grant had a collegial relationship and he occasionally treated her in ways more usual for male colleagues.

The Jesuit Sidney Woollett's appointment as chaplain is seen by the writer of his obituary in a similar humorous light as Bagshawe's appointment.

Early in 1855, he happened to be in a house of Ours where the Provincial was staying, very likely on visitation. At recreation, after dinner, the war which had just broken out in the Crimea was mentioned, and Father Woollett casually remarked that he would be very glad if he were selected to go and help in the double capacity of priest and doctor. After some lapse of time, that is, on March the 4th, 1855, he received the following letter from Father Johnson, then Provincial:

‘Rev. and dear Father, P.C. [Pax Christi (Peace of Christ)]
I write in great haste to inform you that I hope to have an opportunity of enabling you to fulfil your pious wish of assisting the poor soldiers at the Crimea. I shall write again, but I did not wish to lose a day's post. I am, Rev. and dear Father,
Yours ever in Christ,
J. JOHNSON.’

Father Woollett's comment on receiving this letter was: ‘So you ought always to be very careful what you say at recreation when the Provincial is present.’³⁰

Evidence from the clergymen, both Anglican and Roman Catholic, who served as chaplains during the Crimean War suggests that in this period, men were able to “get away with” behaving in less traditionally male ways. As in other periods of cultural crisis, the strictures on proper male and female behavior were loosened, but opponents of this new flexibility would attempt to reestablish the status quo as an affirmation that the crisis was manageable. As we will see later, nuns' habits sometimes shielded them from some of the criticisms faced by other women; ordination allowed men flexibility not possible for others, as it officially sanctioned their care-taking roles of pastors, spiritual counselors, or comforters in times of illness or bereavement. On a very simple level, at

³⁰ Obituary of Father Woollett, *Letters and Notices* (April 1898), 419.

mid-century, women were supposed to be nurturers and comforters, while men were providers and protectors. Any redefinition or broadening of these roles, whether by men or women, would meet with less criticism if such renegotiations were viewed as motivated by the call to do God's work than if they were simply desired by the individual. Because they faced more cultural risks, women do not explicitly reveal their reconceptions of gender relations, while men, having less to lose, are more comfortable in redefining their roles. A nurturing clergyman was not rejecting what some would call his primary responsibility to make sure his parish was run efficiently, but was adding to his duties by showing pastoral concern for his parishioners. A vowed woman who managed finances well or ran an efficient school or hospital could be criticized for displaying stereotypically male behavior or accused of neglecting her more typically feminine role of caring for children or distributing alms. With little self-reproach and without any accusations of being unmanly, some of the chaplains freely acknowledge that they could do very little to control the situation in which they found themselves and little even to alleviate the worst conditions of the soldiers. C. E. Hadow wrote: "When the other clergy come, we may have something like system in our work; at present, all that we can do seems night after night as but a drop in the ocean."³¹

Throughout the War, *The Tablet* protested the circumstances of Catholic chaplains: their numbers, pay and status within the military. On the one hand, some argued, using traditional ideas of masculinity, that more Catholic priests were necessary. They were needed to do particular jobs such as saying Mass, hearing confessions, administering the last rites, conducting funerals. Yet some of the chaplains themselves as

³¹ C.E. Hadow to unknown, Scutari, November 19, 1854, in *Guardian* (Church of England), December 6, 1854, 950.

well as people at home talked about the need for more priests in terms that went beyond particular skills or functions they would perform and talked about the kinds of people they were, or character traits they would exhibit. This is particularly evident in letters reporting on the deaths of chaplains. Published obituaries of chaplains often describe their sympathy for the men and their ability to speak words of comfort to ease a soldier's passing.

In his published account of his time as an observer and unofficial chaplain, Sidney Godolphin Osborne conveys some of these gender ideas too. In describing the conditions of the men, he is particularly concerned with how difficult diarrhea would be for a person's dignity. Osborne arrived shortly after the first group of nurses when staffing arrangements and distribution of supplies in the hospitals were still in disarray. Men were not yet routinely bathed or given clean clothes or bedding. In addition to serious dehydration, the uncontrollable diarrhea and vomiting associated with cholera must have caused the men to feel embarrassed, especially if their only caregivers were women or chaplains. Doctors might prescribe some remedies for cholera, but were generally too busy to provide for more than the men's pressing medical needs. Osborne also presents himself as intuitive and able to sense what a person might have been feeling or what a patient might have needed.³²

Some of the public discussions of women's war work used humor for a different purpose than the accounts of men's work described above. Men were described by observers and described each other in either teasing or affectionate, comradely terms. The idea of a "war buddy" whom a man could joke with to release tension, commiserate with at the loss of friends and always count on is a stock image of male military

³² Osborne, *Scutari*, 16-21.

narratives. Crimean accounts illustrate that this included medical men and chaplains as well as soldiers at the front. The deep friendship of Fathers John Butt and Denis Sheehan was widely known during the war and remembered long after its end. It is not clear how well the men knew each other before going out as chaplains, but they were both priests in the Southwark diocese under Thomas Grant's supervision. Both wrote to Grant occasionally updating him on news of the other in their letters, so they must have visited or corresponded with each other during the war. The relationship between the two men went beyond that of colleagues, and its depth was revealed when both were dangerously ill. Sheehan had been sick several times and was finally persuaded by doctors to return home, or at least to take some extended time to convalesce. As he was about to leave the hospital for an extended rest, he learned of Butt's illness and returned to the front to insure that the Catholics whom Butt was ministering to would not be left without a chaplain. On learning of the seriousness of Butt's illness, Sheehan administered the last rites. Butt recovered, but when he realized how long he had been delirious and in and out of consciousness, was concerned that he might not have received the last rites, given the shortage of Catholic priests. Assured that Sheehan had administered the sacrament and learning that Sheehan was himself thought to be near death, Butt insisted on being carried to Sheehan's tent across a snowy stretch of ground. Butt needed a soldier's help to give Sheehan the last rites, being too weak to lift his hand to anoint his friend. Sheehan died soon after Butt's visit, and his fidelity to duty was praised in the Catholic and secular press. Butt survived the war, and his friendship with Sheehan and their administering of the last rites to each other, as well as Butt's overall concern for others, featured in his obituary fifty years after the war was over.³³

³³ "Death of the Rev. Denis Sheehan, Catholic Chaplain With the Army Before Sebastopol" *Tablet*,

Though women were assumed to be caregivers and to have sisterly affection for one another, when in single-sex groups, they were more often seen as petty than as buddies. Rather than revealing women to be comrades to each other, or to be clever enough to recognize a worthy adversary, *Punch* portrayed the idea of sending women out as nurses as ridiculous and most of the women as incompetent. Drawing on contemporary debates about “surplus” or “redundant” women, one cover illustration, depicting women aboard ship with luggage and umbrellas, tapped into fears of nurses, especially working-class ones, as unfeeling and incompetent. In an article parodying lengthy reports of meetings often carried in Victorian newspapers, *Punch* portrayed the nurses as unfamiliar with even the most basic of medical procedures. One of the speakers at the imagined meeting proposes that the group might want to bring along “stuff to rub on bruises and things.”³⁴

Fraser's Magazine is similar to *Punch* in that it is more a journal of opinion or of social commentary than of news. It differs from *Punch* in that it carries editorials and literary works and is not a satirical journal. Like *Punch*, *Fraser's* gave much space to the Crimean War. Several articles in *Fraser's* deal with the war from a gendered perspective, including one short story (whose author is anonymous) entitled “The Hospital Nurse: A Story based on Fact”. This is a narrative of Mary Vaughan’s preparation for work in the military hospitals ending with her departure for Turkey. Unfortunately, there seems to be no continuation of the story which would describe Vaughan’s work in the hospitals and no indication of whose story or published account

April 7, 1855, 218; Crimean Chaplains’ Letters, R13/21, Southwark Diocesan Archives (hereafter SDA), London; “From the Diocese of Westminster,” *Catholic Standard*, April 7, 1855, 10; obituary of John Butt, *Tablet*, November 1, 1899; letters to the editor, *Tablet*, November 8, 1899.

³⁴ *Punch*, October 28, 1854, cover; “Nurses of Quality for the Crimea,” *Punch*, November 12, 1854, 193-194.

the author was drawing on. While it does echo nurses' experiences, it is not similar enough to any one in particular to allow for speculation. Its author must have been very familiar with the debates about nurses, since the story reflects many contemporary views of the gender, religious and class ramifications of women's military service. In addition, the story received fairly wide readership since it was excerpted in *The Guardian* and possibly other religious periodicals of the Church of England.

A brief summary of the plot will help to explore some of the story's gendered elements. Mary Vaughan is unmarried and has done a lot of philanthropic work in her village. Before the story opens, she has already been to London and been accepted as one of the nurses. The story recounts her preparation for the work, including the whole family's work sewing, gathering supplies and packing Mary's boxes. The main action of the story takes place the night before Mary is to leave, but through flashbacks, readers learn that Mary's parents and her fiancé are dead, and that Mary herself has worked during the cholera epidemic which seems to have killed her clergyman fiancé.

The story reveals interesting elements of Victorian ideas of gender. Presumably it was more respectable for a middle-class woman to go out to the Crimea only if she had no responsibility to husband or children. Mary is presented as fulfilling the traditional female role of benevolence to those less fortunate. Throughout the weeks leading up to her departure, we are told of a steady stream of villagers to the house to say good-bye to Mary and to bring her gifts and supplies for the soldiers. Though she clearly thinks that some of the gifts will not be very useful to her or the soldiers, Mary is portrayed as receiving all graciously and as finding just the right phrase to comfort someone whose loved one is in the army, or who feels ill-at-ease in "the big house." Yet Mary's

character is drawn with a bit more complexity than this description would suggest.

Clearly, the author of “The Hospital Nurse” was aware of the sometimes heated debates in the press about the advisability of sending ladies out to military hospitals. Mary is not the sort of Lady Bountiful some commentators worried about. She has had experience in cholera epidemics and seems to routinely visit and care for sick people in her village as well as within her family. Unlike the portrayal of nurses in *Punch*, Mary is packing useful things like lint and medical supplies.

In keeping with traditional gender norms, it is clear that Mary cannot go without her brother-in-law’s approval. At first, he declines to let her go and is fairly dismissive of the idea. Yet Mary does not meekly take no for an answer as ideals of womanly deference to male authority might suggest. Rather, she argues her case. She tells George that in times of war, all are called on to make sacrifices, with the implication that by allowing her to go, he too might be fulfilling his obligation to support the war effort. In response to his fairly condescending argument that ladies like Mary won’t be all that useful and might even just get in the way, Mary reminds him of her work in cholera epidemics and her training in London. In the end, Mary wins not merely grudging approval, but George’s blessing.

For the work to be successful, it was necessary for women and men to find ways of expanding their gendered responsibilities. Nurse and Sister of Mercy Clare Moore and Catholic chaplain John Butt were two whose broadening activities gained some public notice. Both Butt and Moore display sentiments which their time and culture would have more naturally ascribed to the other. In a letter home which was published in *The Tablet*, Moore wrote:

Fancy me in Asia! It seems very like a dream still. ... To-day I burnt and bandaged an amputated leg for the first time. ... [P]lain gunshot wounds I can manage very well now, but I don't so well dress shell wounds; lance and shell wounds seem the most painful. I am quite surprised at myself; the smells are all I feel, and that I shall doubtless soon get used to.³⁵

Her letter exemplifies more traditionally male experiences and perspectives than female.

Mainstream Victorian readers would have expected a young surgeon—invariably male in this era—to discuss growing accustomed to the treatment of gunshot wounds, and would likely not even have considered that such a statement could have come from a woman.

Also, Moore is willing to acknowledge the novelty, even the excitement and adventure of her work. Victorian readers would have been more accustomed to the idea of men celebrating their growing skills, professional detachment from pain and bad smells and having adventures abroad.

John Butt too takes on unexpected gender characteristics. His description of his friend and fellow chaplain's illness and of his concern for Father Canty is in keeping with traditional ideas about women's role in a sickroom.

I know the kind interest that the Cardinal takes in all that are under his jurisdiction will make him anxious to know how Canty is, and I therefore trouble you with a line to say that since I last wrote he has appeared to me to be getting very much worse, and that I was very glad to avail myself tonight of a few minutes of consciousness to administer the Last Sacraments to him. Nevertheless, the physician thinks he is over the worst, and that he will do well. I am much afraid that he will not recover, but my opinion is not worth so much as that of the doctor. ... The apprehensions that I entertained of the fatal termination of poor Canty's illness have been too soon proved to be well founded. He was almost constantly

³⁵ "Sisters of Mercy in the East," *Tablet*, December 16, 1854, 789. The letter is dated "Scutari, November 13." The published letter is only attributed to a Sister of Mercy from Bermondsey, but the tone and circumstances suggest its author was Clare Moore. The style, chatty and matter-of-fact, is similar to other letters Moore wrote home. Also, she was the Superior of the Sisters of Mercy from Bermondsey, so would have been someone *The Tablet* would have been interested in publishing. Moore herself is conscious in other writings of the importance of preserving an account of the Sisters' work, so it seems logical to suppose that she would have written both about the work she was doing and how she felt about it so close to their arrival at Scutari.

in a state of delirium, from the time when I last wrote to you, till six o'clock yesterday, when he expired.³⁶

Butt's sitting up with Canty in the periods between the doctors' visits would have resonated with the experiences of nearly all Victorian women. In addition, his self-deprecating tone, combined with his willingness to act on intuition rather than on medical judgment would have been more expected of a woman. If such "gender bending" can still be difficult in the twenty-first century, it was even more so in the nineteenth. The crisis of the war and membership in supportive communities made such challenges to cultural norms easier. Particularly for Roman Catholic priests and nuns removed from familial expectations, behaving in ways counter to traditional gender norms was inherent to their daily lives.³⁷ Yet men and women, whether vowed or not, had very different experiences of gender norms. For women of this era, they were more constraining than for men. A woman would be criticized for transgressing her traditional role, whereas a man would be allowed to adopt "feminine" attributes without criticism. A father who was a good provider would be praised for also showing tenderness toward his children, while a mother who supported her children financially would be seen as potentially compromising her role as their primary caregiver and their moral guardian. Male clergy who fed or comforted patients in addition to their work of conducting services were not criticized, while women whose religious instruction to patients was perceived as taking on a clerical role were. In short, it was easier for men to broaden their sphere of acceptable activity than for women.

³⁶ "Death of the Rev. Michael Canty, Catholic Chaplain in the East," *Tablet* Feb. 24, 1855, 120. The article excerpts two letters from John Butt dated January 21 and February 3.

³⁷ McNamara, *Sisters in Arms*. A central point of McNamara's argument is that by entering religious communities, nuns and priests lived in ways that challenged the gender norms of their times and cultures.

This chapter has explored how women and men made use of the gender ideals of their day. When it was important for women to be viewed as respectable and conventional, they behaved as though they were not in a warzone and spoke and wrote in stereotypically feminine terms. This grounding in respectability allowed women to broaden their sphere of activity and to challenge gendered notions of appropriate behavior. Others may have been less conscious of the changes they were creating, but were nonetheless helping to bring about new cultural perceptions of proper behavior for men and women. The next chapter will explore in more detail the kinds of work the nurses did and the difficulties and criticisms they faced when their attempts to broaden the scope of acceptable female activity were resisted.

Although it is certainly true that gender norms can be hard to analyze because they are deeply held and often unarticulated cultural beliefs, they often come into sharp relief at times of crisis like wars. The ways in which women and men carve out new roles for themselves during wartime has been analyzed for later wars, but is evident in the Crimean War as well. Women like Sarah Terrot and Fanny Taylor strike the balance between traditionally female roles of moral uplifter and comforter in a sickroom and the more traditionally male role of active shaper of their own and others' destinies. They, and men like John Butt and Sidney Woollett, were often shielded from criticism for their transgressions by their membership in religious communities. As will become clear in the next chapter, these kinds of communities could be crucial for the success of the hospital work. In addition, the partnerships formed between women and men who challenged the gender norms of their time and place both furthered the work, but also gave one another support. There are of course some striking examples of authorities who

rejected such challenges, even if their rejections could have had disastrous results for the twin goals of the nurses: saving lives and souls.

Chapter 4: Saving Lives and Souls: Nurses' Work in the Crimean War

We [wives, mothers and children] sit at home trying to picture the last moments of those dear to us, and our agony is increased by the fear that all was not done that might have been done to relieve their sufferings, or, may be, to save their lives. The question will arise with regard to some one who has fallen—"Was there no one near to relieve his sufferings, to speak a word of kindness or hope, to receive some last message, perhaps, for some dear ones at home, or even to support his head or give him a drink of water?"

The strongest man becomes helpless and dependent like a child in his hour of need, and we all know how, in such a case, a humble nurse, with no other recommendations than a kind heart and skilful hands, appears to the sufferer as a saving angel.—A Sufferer by the Present War¹

Women's Crimean nursing reveals the same sorts of tension between ideal and reality that their negotiations of gender roles illustrates, with the added, complicating factor of religious traditions and biases. All nurses had to deal with Christianity's insistence on female subordination. Roman Catholics faced suspicions that their primary allegiance was to Rome and their primary goal to proselytize and convert. Some contemporary observers and nurses articulated women's suitability for the work in idealized terms, stressing their gentle, nurturing and morally uplifting natures. Implications in their published accounts, commendations nurses received during and after the war and some rare but vivid descriptions of nurses' hardships reveal a more complex picture. Balancing the competing requirements of ideal and reality must have caused stress and did make the work more difficult, but women would not have been able to achieve as much as they did without being skillful negotiators.

The work the nurses did during the Crimean War was a new endeavor for them, for the men they worked with and for their communities back home. Yet it was not without precedent. The Crimean nurses and other observers were conscious both of the

¹ A Sufferer by the Present War, letter to the editor, *Times* (London), October 14, 1854, 7.

novelty of their work and of the ways in which their pre-war experiences had prepared them for it. It was also a multifaceted work, including medical care of patients, assistance with religious instruction, or what modern thinkers might call pastoral care, as well as administrative tasks necessary for running the hospitals. Throughout, they were in touch with people at home and their work was the subject of correspondence to editors of newspapers, newspaper editorials and leading articles, reports from war correspondents and parliamentary commissions. Yet despite all the talk about the nurses, there are surprising silences in the sources. This chapter will analyze the medical and spiritual work of nurses in the Crimea and their relations with male authorities and with communities at home. I will also speculate on reasons for gaps in our knowledge of their experiences.

Though the war began in March of 1854, the worries about the medical care of the troops did not reach the level of public outrage until the fall of that year. This was after many had seen the poor conditions under which men lived in camps and had witnessed first-hand the violence and speed with which cholera carried people off and the way the disease spread quickly, devastating regiments.

We have harder work to fight against the cholera, dysentery, and Lake fever, than we should have had against five times our number of the enemy in Russia. ... Dear mother, you cannot give me a better example as regards the 'frailty of life' than many of my comrades have offered me of late; that of being in robust health one hour, and the next hour groaning in the agonies of death;....²

The growing unease caused by letters home from soldiers, nurses and chaplains (some of which were published in newspapers), press reports from war correspondents and speculations from experienced medical personnel about the likelihood of contagious

² H.B. to his mother, August 22, 1854, in H.B., *Letters from the Crimea, During the Years 1854 and 1855* (London: Emily Faithfull, 1863), 27-28.

disease reached critical mass in October 1854. In more private circles, there were also discussions about the issue among people who would become crucial players. Sidney Herbert, Secretary at War, wrote to his friend Florence Nightingale asking if she would take charge of a group of nurses at just about the same time as Nightingale herself wrote to Elizabeth Herbert offering her services and asking if Mrs. Herbert would speak to her husband about her offer. The idea that Nightingale and Herbert were of one mind and the belief that their letters crossed have become a crucial component of the Nightingale legend. The idealized view holds that the plan to send out nurses was assured of success when two who would be key players were so in accord as to each raise the question independently.

Yet the image of the two letters crossing ignores connections between Nightingale and the Herberts, gender norms of the day and the existence of a second letter from Sidney Herbert, different from the one often quoted and which was eventually published in several newspapers. It seems more plausible to suggest that there was some unofficial correspondence between Sidney Herbert and Florence Nightingale, and that Nightingale therefore wrote to Elizabeth Herbert as her friend rather than directly to the government, in the person of Sidney Herbert. His public letter offering her the job comes after one where he asks her to think about the circumstances. Even with this public offer, the two corresponded to work out the details of the new experiment. Though this was an unprecedented plan, the way it was achieved was very much in keeping with traditional gender norms. In Victorian ideology of men's and women's spheres, men occupied the public worlds of work, government, electoral politics and policy-making, while women cared for children, supervised the running of households, created pleasant retreats for

men to return to and were expected to infuse morality, or specifically Christianity, into family life and through quiet influence on their husbands and sons, into the public life of the nation. Therefore it was perfectly reasonable for Florence Nightingale to write to Elizabeth Herbert, a close friend for some years, despite her formal address to “Mrs. Herbert”, knowing well that Elizabeth would surely share the letter with Sidney. This way, if arrangements could not be worked out satisfactorily, then the idea need never reach the public, or if it did, could be put down to the compassionate, if misguided, thinking of two women unaware of the workings of government.³

Beginning in October, 1854 in response to the harrowing press coverage of the hospital conditions, and increasing once news of Florence Nightingale’s appointment as superintendent of nurses became public, applications from women hoping to be selected for future groups of nurses flooded in from all over Britain and Ireland, and from even as far away as New Orleans. Women like Elizabeth Herbert and Charlotte Canning recruited and interviewed women, clergymen, doctors, their wives and hospital matrons, helped parishioners and employees by writing recommendations and by making donations. Newspapers continued to carry advertisements and leading articles soliciting applications, changing the text as news from the hospitals warranted. Many institutions and individuals served as conduits or means of training in preparation for the work. St. John’s House, a Church of England-sponsored nurses’ training institution, for example, sent six of its members in the first group with Florence Nightingale, and continued to refer promising candidates to Charlotte Canning, Elizabeth Herbert, Mary Stanley, or more generally to the War Office throughout the war. The referral and selection of nurses operated within Victorian gender norms. Mary Jones the “Lady Superintendent”

³ Goldie, *Nightingale Letters*, 1-10, 23-27, 29.

of St. John's House was instrumental in training prospective nurses, yet upon completion of their training, the letter to the War Office for appointment seems usually to have been written by C. P. Shepherd, the "Master" of St. John's. The War Office signed contracts with nurses and arranged for their travel credentials and payment for transportation and wages, but the women selectors read initial application letters, evaluated recommendations and reports of training from institutions like St. John's House and corresponded with applicants about the details of training and travel. Although the women were usually listed in newspaper ads as the appropriate contact for applicants, some men offering to arrange for groups of women to go out or who wanted information or to check the status of a particular woman's application wrote directly to Sidney Herbert.⁴

For all concerned, this was a new experience. Initially, selectors seem to have been working in ways they would have been familiar with: approaching the task of choosing nurses as they would that of hiring servants. Women, especially middle-class ones who were likely to be given some supervisory responsibility, were recommended by word of mouth. Charlotte Taylor illustrates how networks were useful in forming the nursing contingent.

⁴ Mary Jones' diary (SJH H01/ST/SJ/A20/1-3) gives a vivid account of the daily life of St. John's House with details ranging from the clergyman who took the morning service, to which nurses were home and which out on cases, to visitors to the house in need of nurses, to the need to buy more beds to accommodate women receiving special training for Crimean service. The Nurses Testimonials file in the National Archives, Kew does not usually contain the selectors' decision on a particular application (usually only noting that a letter was answered) but does contain follow-up letters to applicants and letters asking for further information from recommenders or those attempting to determine the recommenders' own qualifications. See for example the correspondence relating to Susan Cator's application, WO25/264, bundle C. Finally, for an example of men's choice to communicate with the war office directly, see Gamblon to My Dear Sidney, Nurses' Testimonials WO25/264, Miscellaneous nurses, cooks and laundresses bundle. Mr. Gamblon recommends a woman whom he does not name, but says that if Sidney Herbert is interested he can give more details.

May I ask you kindly to give me a note of introduction to Kings College Hospital in order that I may learn there among the other ladies preparing to go to Scutari? Miss Stanley bid me apply to you, when she was starting on Saturday – My sister [Frances Taylor] who has gone with her, had with myself almost the entire charge of Miss Sellon's hospital at Bristol at one time and I have also nursed the sick and dying in the cholera hospitals at Plymouth by night and day – ... I say this to show you I have had some little experience in nursing – and shall feel much obliged if you will give me the opportunity of learning more.⁵

Some of the reference letters have no address as if they were brought by the applicant herself. Recommenders too were clearly more accustomed to operating in a system of personal connections than a nation-wide recruiting drive. They did not always indicate their relationship to the applicant or the basis of their recommendation in their letters and some were written recommending a woman without a given name, challenging for those evaluating “Mrs. Smith” or “Mrs. Jones”. Faced with a flood of letters in response to the war news and advertisements recruiting nurses, the selectors quickly mobilized their networks and their gendered professional skills of evaluating women who would do work resembling housework. They also acquired new professional skills of formulating job descriptions and questions on reference forms, cultivating relationships with agencies and individuals likely to refer good candidates, and meeting with hospital officials to recruit more nurses or obtain missing references.

Despite the fact that some of the selectors and those they chose or hired did acquire new skills, they did so within their familiar gender and class norms. Some of the working-class women were recommended in ways they would have been for other positions in households: they would obey, do any hard work, were strong or “good

⁵ Charlotte Taylor to My Dear Madam, December 5, 1854, Nurses Testimonials, WO25/264 bundle T, National Archives, Kew.

scrubbers.”⁶ Yet even in these kinds of applications or references, there was a recognition that this work was different and required different skills than a post as charwoman or scullery maid. Though they either clearly could not comment on nursing abilities or were not sure how to, some writers did know that something more was needed and attempted to convey something to make the applicant stand out from the crowd. One woman working in an unspecified capacity at Children’s Hospital, Great Ormand Street, London was described in a fragment of a reference letter which has survived as

... a remarkably nice looking young woman her age 24, her desire to go out to the East in the capacity of nurse very strong. ... The neatness and purity of her person is much in her favour, ... and in the same pleasant humour from morning to night -- ... She is a superior servant, no pretensions to be a lady.⁷

Yet there were also instances where women stepped outside traditional norms in order to strengthen their applications. Anne Warde Morton, who would eventually have some supervisory responsibilities, was eager to join the nursing contingent and concerned that she receive adequate training to be a useful member of the group. In describing her training to Mary Stanley, one of those selecting nurses, she first asks Stanley’s understanding of the need to break with convention and discuss details of surgical procedures that ladies normally would not, on the grounds that they are both professional women needing to do the best job possible.

Working-class women attempted to support the ideal of service while coping with the daily reality of economic need. Mrs. H. Bowler, a doctor’s widow, who was hired, conveyed her valuable experience, need for the work and desire to be of service.

⁶ In addition to some of the working-class applicants, Nurses’ Testimonials contains a bundle identified as “miscellaneous cooks and laundresses” which reveals both the desperation which led some to apply for jobs far from home in potentially dangerous circumstances and the hope that some might gain a bit more status or adventure while doing their usual work.

⁷ Letter fragment, n.d., Nurses’ Testimonials WO25/264 bundle B, 377-380, National Archives, Kew.

...having in his [her husband's] life time had to assist him very frequently in his Surgery in dressing wounds and likewise in bleeding and other duties in his profession therefore I should be no stranger to some of the duties you would require of me. The reason I had to assist him he had a very extensive practice and very unfortunately for me he sometimes got into a most dreadful habit of drinking for weeks together that was why I had to undertake to assist him. ... It will be three years on Thursday since he died and I am sorry to say he left myself and four Daughters totally unprovided for. ... I will assure you I have indeed had a very hard struggle for the last three years to endeavour to obtain a respectable living for myself and family what I have been doing for that time has been working at my needle but it has indeed been a bare subsistence. ... Why I feel wishfull to go out with you I think that everyone that is capable of rendering assistance ought not to hesitate a moment to do so. ... Your early reply will extremely oblige.⁸

Like the middle-class women, some working-class nurses were able to broaden their opportunities by asserting their professional skill and respectability, combating the Sairy Gamp image—Dickens' caricature of a drunken, stupid harridan—which so shaped cultural perceptions of them. Mary Marks was able to present a printed packet of excellent testimonials from her employers which she had presumably prepared as part of her application to be a hospital matron. Susan Cator is perhaps the clearest example of a professional woman's difficulties in overcoming the Gamp image. She had had extensive experience and supplied good references attesting both to her skill and her kindness to patients. One recommender had heard a rumor that Cator had once been found drunk, and felt it his obligation to mention this to the selection committee. He had not seen Cator drunk himself, or even been told of her lapse by a witness, but had heard something of the story, which in the end turned out to be unfounded. Only when he heard that Cator's appointment was in jeopardy, he reported on his subsequent investigations which

⁸ Mrs. H. Bowler to Madam, October 22, 1854, Nurses Testimonials, WO25/264 bundle B, National Archives, Kew.

revealed that the rumor was groundless and urged that she be appointed. Cator was hired, but the incident demonstrates working-class women's vulnerability.⁹

Some working-class applicants mentioned relevant experience but stressed their need or cited non-medical qualifications for the position. Anne Taylor identified herself as an experienced nurse, but did not indicate specific experiences and no recommendations or certificates detailing her qualifications have survived. She must have hoped that her willingness to go would work in her favor. "I am a married woman but can leave my children in the hands of those at present protecting them and could be ready to start at a day's notice."¹⁰ There is no record of their decision or of their discussions of Taylor, but the selectors must surely have wondered about what Taylor left unsaid. Why was her husband unable to support the family and who was caring for their children?

Members of the public as well as the selection committee and government officials had ideas about essential qualifications of nurses. The letter to *The Times* quoted for this chapter's epigraph captured well the general goals some readers believed the nurses were to fulfill in gendered terms. The writer wanted nurses to meet the specific medical needs widely reported in the press and to exemplify traditionally female attributes of kindness and comfort.

Because of the newness of the work and its potential to upset conventions for proper female behavior, Florence Nightingale believed she had to tread carefully. Her friend Sidney Herbert and other government ministers in London might support the "experiment," but gaining the approval of medical men who would work with the nurses

⁹ Letters regarding Susan Cator, Nurses Testimonials WO25/264 bundle C.

¹⁰ Anne Taylor to Madam, October 28, 1854, Nurses Testimonials, WO25/264 bundle T, National Archives, Kew. Anne Taylor is not related to Frances and Charlotte Taylor.

on a daily basis was another matter. Nightingale wrote of the senior medical officer

Andrew Smith:

If we go quietly & privately, his influence is all for us, but if we went with a great body of nurses to take possession of the Hospital he would decidedly oppose us. ... One of his objections was, the troops may be moved from Scutari & you cannot follow the army about like Sisters of Charity.¹¹

The Sisters of Charity were founded in eighteenth-century France and had a longstanding tradition of battlefield nursing. Smith's assertion that the Crimean nurses were "not like Sisters of Charity" ignored the fact that there were in fact vowed women among them and highlights differences among some of the Sisters of Mercy. Clare Moore, superior of the Bermondsey Sisters of Mercy, agreed with Nightingale's position and worked well with her throughout the war. Francis Bridgeman, superior of the second group of Sisters of Mercy assembled from several convents mainly in Ireland, disagreed with Nightingale's position and nursing methods. Moore and Bridgeman also held different views of their role as Sisters of Mercy. Moore was comfortable working under Nightingale's direction in organizational matters, while Bridgeman believed that the Sisters should be more of a distinct group within the nursing contingent. Moore and Bridgeman both faced criticism for their positions: Moore for collaborating too much with secular and Protestant officials, Bridgeman for being too rigid and for putting Catholic rights ahead of the war work.¹²

Nightingale's cautious stance caused some tension among the nurses, with some agreeing with Nightingale's position and some eager to do the work they had come out to

¹¹ Quoted in Goldie, *Nightingale Letters*, 20-21. For a fuller quotation of this letter including Nightingale's original plan, see Chapter One of this dissertation, p. 20.

¹² For accounts of Moore's and Bridgeman's positions see Evelyn Bolster, *The Sisters of Mercy in the Crimean War* (Cork: Mercier Press, 1964), 106, 112. The criticisms they faced will be discussed later in this chapter.

do. On her arrival, Anglican sister Sarah Anne Terrot, who had travelled in the first group with Nightingale, felt that she and the nurses could be of more use to the patients, but understood Nightingale's choice to only do work specifically requested by doctors. Elizabeth Davis, a hired nurse who came out in the group led by Mary Stanley, accepted Stanley's proposal that each woman do the kinds of work which she was used to. She did not object to doing more cooking than nursing, but did protest, strenuously and to Nightingale herself, about not being as useful to the patients as she could have been. Davis even went so far as to threaten to return to England and to take her criticisms of Nightingale's management to the press. Once the casualties from the November 5th Battle of the Inkerman reached Scutari, necessity overcame the scruples of men like Andrew Smith. Davis was happier when she was given responsibility for a kitchen, feeling that she was doing work more directly related to patient care and in keeping with her previous expertise.¹³

The first group of nurses had arrived just a few days before the wounded from the Battle of the Inkerman would arrive at Scutari, the soldiers having endured a difficult passage across the Black Sea often with undressed wounds and little food and water. Necessity meant, therefore, that the nurses simply had to do whatever needed to be done without time to worry about the sensibilities of medical or clerical authorities.

¹³ For Terrot's description of the beginning of her Crimean hospital work and the tension between wanting to do useful work and the need to win doctors' support for their presence on the wards, see Terrot's diary entries for November 5th through November 8th in Terrot, *Nurse Sarah Anne*, 81-87. In these early days, Terrot recounted lack of supplies, men's exhaustion and malnutrition and alludes to Tennyson's poem through references to "the valley of death" and "the remnant of the 600." The change in work is reflected in the journal itself. On November 9, the wounded from the battle of the Inkerman arrived, and Terrot became much busier and worked more directly to meet the patients' medical needs, Terrot, *Nurse Sarah Anne*, 87-89. After November 10, the press of work prevented Terrot from recording a day to day account of her work. Also see Davis, *Autobiography*, 148-162.

Several accounts reveal the helplessness of those early days. Elizabeth Wheeler, one of the Anglican sisters who went out with Florence Nightingale and worked closely with Sarah Anne Terrot, wrote a letter to her family a few days after the first battle the nurses witnessed. The letter was published in *The Times* and elsewhere, and conveys the vastness of the nurses' work.

I have come out here as one of the Government nurses, and the position in which we are placed induces me to write and ask you, at once, to send us out a few dozens of wine, or, in short, anything which may be useful for the wounded or dying, hundreds of whom are now around us, under this roof, filling up even the passages to the very rooms we occupy. Government is liberal, and for one moment I would not complain of their desire to meet all our wants; but, with such a number of wounded coming in from Sebastopol, it does appear absolutely impossible to meet the wants of those who are dying of dysentery and exhaustion; out of four wards committed to my care 11 men have died in the night, simply from exhaustion, which, humanly speaking, might have been stopped could I have laid my hands at once on such nourishment as I know they ought to have had. ...

At the time, alcohol was believed to be a stimulant, so the wine Wheeler asked for would have been used to revive patients on their arrival or to bring them out of anesthesia in the rare cases where chloroform was used after surgery.

I know not which sight is most heartrending—to witness fine strong men and youths worn down by exhaustion, and sinking under it; or others coming in, as many hundreds did yesterday, [five days after a major battle] fearfully wounded. ... The best plan I can think of is to write this letter, requesting you to send us a box of things for the use of the sick. ... Wine, and bottles of chicken broth, preserved meat for soup, &c., will be most acceptable. ... I expect to find two more [patients] dead on going round this morning; that will be a proportion of 11 to 30 in two days. Wine would be of immense service to some of the nurses, just before going into the wards. ...

Given the prevalence of the stereotype of the drunk nurse, it is somewhat surprising that Wheeler would specifically ask for wine for the nurses. This may reflect Wheeler's status as both vowed and probably middle-class. Working-class women were assumed to need monitoring to prevent them from drinking, but ladies could have access to patients'

stimulants and possibly even to need some for themselves without criticism. Wheeler described spoiled food and asked for

Flannel, and anything that would serve as pocket handkerchiefs for the men, so many of them having lost their bags; chocolate in cakes, gelatine, and brandy, would be most desirable. Warm clothing, too, of all descriptions, for the convalescents, now the winter is so fast advancing, would be thankfully received.¹⁴

These last few requests, with the exception of the warm clothing, also seem surprising. Perhaps Wheeler asked for the sweets to make the spoiled food more palatable or to cheer or comfort the patients. Despite Wheeler's repeated assurances that she intended no criticism of the government, her letter had far reaching and unintended repercussions. It obviously displeased some at home, because Wheeler was questioned by an early parliamentary commission charged with investigating the conditions of the troops. Presumably at their recommendation, Wheeler was dismissed and sent home at the end of December, 1854, a couple of weeks after her letter was published. Wheeler's experience is recounted by Sarah Anne Terrot, her friend and fellow Anglican sister. The tone of the examination was hostile; Wheeler was not treated as a valued witness whose first-hand experience would be useful, but as a dishonest one who had potentially violated her government contract.¹⁵ It is difficult to know what the commission and others found objectionable, since many accounts bear striking similarity to Wheeler's. Another Anglican sister wrote home describing similar experiences and in a similar style

¹⁴ [Elizabeth Wheeler] to unknown, Scutari, November 11, 1854, in *Times* (London), December 8, 1854, 8. The letter is ostensibly a private one written to Wheeler's relatives, but the fact that she begins by describing herself as a government nurse suggests that she intended it to be made public.

¹⁵ For an unpublished description of Terrot's feelings about Wheeler's departure see Ms. Account of Nursing During the Crimean War, RAMC 532, 115-116; for her published account see Terrot, *Nurse Sarah Anne*, 128-129.

with the sentence structure conveying her stress and lack of time to fully organize her thoughts.

We work on amidst this sorry sight, 4,500 sick and wounded countrymen around us: ... 1,000 in general hospital ¼ mile off, 2,500 here. Most of the wounded are well and gone; these are sick, pale, emaciated phantoms so unlike the ruddy bright-eyed men of Alma, Inkerman, and Balaklava, who never groaned or complained. Today, I stood by a Highlander, and an Irishman, laid on the beach on stretchers to be borne up; and I gave them wine into the mouth, they looked up dimly; Sawney turned, but Pat said, 'God bless your honours'. When they get into ward, Mrs. Roberts or Mrs. Clark gives them arrow-root [to treat diarrhea]and wine with a spoon; 16 milk pails full. F. Nightingale has sent out every evening with 1 ½ to 2 bottles of wine in each – 8 or 10 are the average. The Doctors cannot succeed in stopping Dysentery, whatever drugs they try. They are worn out with exposure to cold and wet, without clothes or fire, and young lads die – 18 to 22 – will not stand it. They stretch out their hand and say sister, mother – they never groan, but most of them are scarecely [sic] sentient, and go off like animals, the mind gone before, and no apparent consciousness of what is about to happen. 1,106 were buried from October 1 to January 1. 300 only died of wounds, and of the 1,106, 500 died in December after the camp living told on them. ... To walk between beds in the corridors is as familiar as between rose trees in the garden. ... We have no time to turn and my nerves suffer, which wastes time; but please God, we shall pull through. The Times story is all true from December 23 to January 1. It is somewhat brutally said, but the facts cannot be denied. There is a wonderful combination of mistakes and fatal ones; a want of combination of departments.¹⁶

Also, the published accounts agree that the early conditions were terrible, that the nurses had few resources to make them better and that the men arriving at the hospital from the front were not only often badly wounded but also dirty, lacking much of their gear and often malnourished. Perhaps Wheeler's letter was objectionable because it was early in the new work and the first. By punishing Wheeler for her candor, officials also asserted their ideas of proper gender roles. Nurses served at the government's pleasure, and women were not supposed to comment on hospital arrangements or seem to question male authority.

¹⁶ C.H.B. to Dear B., January 14, 1855. RAMC 436/2. Because the letter is written from the Sisters' Tower at Scutari, and because Sarah Anne Terrot mentions a Sister Clara several times throughout her journal, it seems reasonable to attribute this to Sister Clara.

Perhaps the nurses all learned the lesson of reticence from Wheeler's experience since there are very few letters from them published by the press. Yet this would not explain why their published accounts, most written after the war was over and the nurses had returned home, give few details of their work. They carry descriptions of their voyages, the hospital's arrangements, their living quarters and many stories of men's bravery, endurance of terrible pain and their respect for the nurses, but very little clinical detail of their daily work and medical procedures. There are a few accounts which sketch a daily routine or attempt to describe the kinds of tasks the nurses did. Martha Nicol reported that:

We went to the hospital, at nine o'clock in the morning, and generally remained there until half-past five or six in the evening, when, if we had time, we took a short walk before dinner, which was at seven. But in general we were so tired after our days work, that we had little inclination for walking or any thing else. We had not a single seat at the hospital, and were strictly forbidden from sitting on the beds. ... It was not thought advisable we should fast all these hours; and we generally brought a biscuit or sandwich in our pockets, but many often brought theirs back untouched, not having found time to think about it at all. Sometimes we ran up to the house for half a hour, in the middle of the day, to rest or have a morsel of luncheon;¹⁷

A Sister of Mercy at Scutari described her day as follows:

we wash the wounds, and get them ready for the doctors to examine, and then poultice or dress according to orders; stumps or bad wounds they do themselves. I never presume even to unbandage splints or stumps; then we make beds, wash faces and hands, comb hair, wet the water dressings, and return here at four o'clock p.m.¹⁸

In the same letter in which she asked for supplies from home, Elizabeth Wheeler described the overall work of the nurses and praised the project generally:

There are 50 nurses, most of them exceedingly skilful, and we find our efforts so appreciated by the soldiers, as well as by the medical officers, that there is every

¹⁷ Nicol, *Ismeer*, 38-39.

¹⁸ "Sisters of Mercy in the East," *Tablet*, December 16, 1854, 789. The letter quoted is dated from Scutari, November 13, 1854.

hope that the experiment on the part of the English of sending women out to do the part which God so evidently assigned to them will be blessed. ... The whole of yesterday one could only forget one's own existence, for it was spent, first, in sewing the men's mattresses together, and then in washing them, and assisting the surgeons, when we could, in dressing their ghastly wounds, and seeing the poor fellows made as easy as their circumstances would admit, after their five days' confinement on board ship, during which space their wounds were not dressed.¹⁹

Some of the accounts of nurses' work both describe specific tasks and convey the individual nurse's sense of professionalism, though of course none used that term to describe her work. Sarah Anne Terrot had worked in cholera epidemics before the war and drew on this experience, asserting her knowledge in her published account if not to the doctors at the time:

Sister M. de Gonzaga, who seemed to have a sort of general charge of the nurses here, showed me my division, which was half of D Corridor and two adjoining wards, and introduced me to an orderly, who on the doctor's entrance presented me as the nurse. He was a little man, quick in perception, and rather so in temper. He gave me directions as to washing the wounds and dressing the slighter ones, forbidding rather needlessly the use of a sponge. I used a bit of tow [a plant fiber], and of course burnt it, and took a fresh bit after each wound. There was a good supply of warm water, and I emptied and rinsed out my basin every time it was used.

The men rejoiced to have a nurse, and told me I was much cleaner and gentler than the orderly, who used, when the doctor was engaged, to wash several patients' wounds in the same water.²⁰

We have already seen (in chapter three) Margaret Goodman's beliefs about the important role a nurse could play in helping a patient sort out which thoughts and fears were caused by delirium and which were real. Sr. Mary Aloysius Doyle reported Sister Francis Bridgeman's method of treating cholera based on Bridgeman's experience, which had been successful. Many of the accounts speak of the appreciation shown by the men.

¹⁹ [Elizabeth Wheeler] to unknown, Scutari, November 11, 1854, in *Times* (London), December 8, 1854, 8.

²⁰ Terrot, *Nurse Sarah Anne*, 104-5.

One published letter from a private in the 8th Hussars reveals this as well as his pleasure that the nurses were combining their new work with some lady-like sensibilities.

... Last week there came here twenty Sisters of Mercy, and some matrons from some of the London infirmaries and hospitals. They are, indeed, angels as well as Sisters of Mercy, and happy are the wounded who are under their kind care and treatment. No matter what the wound is, they dress it, or rather superintend, for, besides the matrons mentioned above, there are four men who go round with them and prepare the wounds for their inspection, and hot water, and in any bad case they will dress the wound even themselves. They visit the General Hospital regularly, and four of the number sit up all night and attend upon all those requiring their aid. These ladies have stores of their own, consisting of wine, bread, porter, arrow-root, sago, flannel, and shirts, and they distribute these comforts with no niggard hand. In fact, more recover under their treatment than under the doctors.²¹

Another element of the work not often explicitly discussed in public accounts is the risk to the nurses. Clearly all knew that it was dangerous because of the nurses' exposure to disease and harsh physical conditions, but few discussed specific precautions or provisions which might be made in case of nurses' deaths. However, the recommendation form did hint at the stakes involved by asking recommenders to think about the life and death issues the nurses would face. When nurses did become seriously ill, their fellow nurses took turns sitting up with them and administering treatments throughout the day and night. For two of the Sisters of Mercy who died, other Sisters combined medical care with keeping vigil and praying as a community during the Sisters' final illness. Then, they helped insure that each had the opportunity to speak with a priest and receive the last rites and was buried after a requiem Mass.²² When nurses died, others took it upon themselves to be sure that whatever might be comforting to their families was done and that their final wishes were honored. Martha Nicol recounts the death of

²¹ *Herald of Peace*, January 1855, 148.

²² Croke describes the death and funeral of Sister Winifred Sprey, Luddy, *Crimean Journals*, 83-84, 86, 88 and 91. She recounts the death of Sister Elizabeth Butler with a bit more about the personal impact of the loss, Luddy, *Crimean Journals*, 100-101.

Drusilla Smyth, a nurse with her at Smyrna who had some connections to St. John's House, giving some sense of the impact of the death on the hospital community.

The Protestant burial-ground is a dismal-looking, neglected spot. It was chosen from an idea that Drusilla's friends at home might prefer it to the open hill where the soldiers lay; but if there had been time for consideration and inspection, it would have been otherwise arranged; ... [during the funeral, the grave began to fill with water so the nurses chose that if any of them should die, they would be buried on the hill with the soldiers.] Death seemed very near to us then; we had already lost two orderlies, and many of the nurses were lying at the gates of death. ... The first gap had been made in our immediate party; and who could tell whether she might not be the next? ... I shall never forget his [a purveyor's clerk who loved Drusilla and whom the nurses often found sitting on the stairs outside her room awaiting news] face when he came to my store-room, in accordance with his duty, to correct some inaccuracy in the diet-roll. He seemed utterly bewildered with sorrow; and Miss S----, who had also occasion to speak to him, said, she never saw grief so strongly marked in a human face. He insisted on following her remains to the grave, as chief mourner, and wearied himself carrying the coffin. No one interfered with him; for all seemed to think he had acquired the right, by his unmistakable affection, to perform these sad offices: and the lady superintendent, moved by his sorrow, allowed him to retain a ring of some small value, which she had been accustomed to wear.²³

Though Nicol's intentions were obviously compassionate and commendable, sadly, her concern for Smith's family at home might not have been as important as she thought. Smith's application indicated that she could go because she had no family ties in England.²⁴ Elizabeth Drake's relationship with St. John's House must have helped her family and friends cope with her death. In letters the community received from Florence Nightingale, they learned of Drake's bequests to members and her desire to send her final wages to her sister. In addition, they helped her father, as next of kin, see that these were carried out.²⁵ One nurse whose death seems to have been less well commemorated than

²³ Nicol, *Ismeer*, 54-57.

²⁴ Drusilla Smith to Madam, October 30, 1854, Nurses' Testimonials, WO25/264 bundle S, National Archives, Kew.

²⁵ Florence Nightingale to My Dear Sir [C. P. Shepherd], August 16, 1855, Nightingale Collection H01/ST/NC/03/SU/35; John Drake to C. P. Shepherd September 10, 1855, Nightingale Collection H01/ST/NC/03/SU/40.

Smyth's or Drake's was Mary Marks, a working-class nurse who had had extensive professional experience. Though she does not say so explicitly, the tone of her friend's letter to Nightingale, written after the war to confirm Mark's death, is one of outrage that she should have been sent a dry official notice of the death with no attempt at comfort: "Mary Marks late of Devizes went out with Miss Nightingale to the Hospital at Scutari and died there." After transcribing this note into her letter to Nightingale, Douglas adds "You will oblige me by informing me if the above statement is true if so when my dear friend died and what was the cause of her death."²⁶ A letter from Marks' sister to Nightingale reveals the nurses' role in helping those at home come to terms with the loss. After thanking Nightingale for confirmation of the death and for telling her about plans for a possible monument, Janet Carmichael writes: "... and if agreeable to you it would be a great gratification to me to have an interview with one who was near her at the time of her death. If convenient to you to see me any day at any hour will suit."²⁷

As much as the nurses who had had experience before the war clearly conveyed their professional knowledge, they seem to have had a different purpose in writing their accounts. Naturally, women religious would not want to appear to be in any way self-promoting, and all must surely have been conscious that if they were going to publish successful books, they had to think about who their audience would likely be. For several writers, this would have major consequences as they were publishing to ease difficult financial circumstances. Yet they also wanted to challenge underlying assumptions of their society. Frances Taylor and Mary Seacole wrote out of financial

²⁶ Mary Ann Douglas to Florence Nightingale, September 4, 1856, Nightingale Collection H01/ST/NC/02/v38/56. A note in a different hand than Douglas's, possibly Nightingale's, indicates that the letter was answered but not what the answer was.

²⁷ Janet Carmichael to Florence Nightingale, October 11, 1856, Nightingale Collection H01/ST/NC/02/v47/56.

need but also to assert their insider status. Seacole was a Jamaican woman who went out to the Crimea at her own expense when she was rejected from the official contingent on racial terms. Taylor's praise of the Sisters of Mercy helps further Catholic assertions of respectability and full membership in the nation. Elizabeth Davis was also in difficult financial circumstances at the end of the war, but she and her editor, Jane Williams, crafted the narrative to present a voice different from Nightingale's to celebrate the contributions of working-class women.

Work that does appear openly in both published accounts and in some accounts in the press is the nurses' work of providing comfort, or what modern usage calls pastoral care, to the men. This is understandable because it falls well within traditional visions of women as nurturers or moral uplifters. They read to the patients and wrote letters home for them. There are also examples of nurses being the ones to break the news of a man's death to his family. Mary Stanley wrote one of these letters to a soldier's sister, crafted both to convey the specifics of the death and to give comfort to the family, signing herself "Your sincere friend":

On Monday last, the 5th, I was going round the wards to feed those who could not feed themselves. There was one poor man who looked very bad indeed. I went up to his bedstead; I asked if I could write to his friends at home. He said he should be grateful, and then he told me he came from Macclesfield. It was your brother; he gave me your direction [address], and asked me to write to you, and you would tell the rest of his family that he was very ill, but he hoped to get better soon. I told him how my name was Stanley, and that my native place was Alderley, and that I felt we were like neighbours. He begged I would tell you of my being here and seeing him, and he said, 'if it was only a cat from the place you loved, you would be pleased to see it.' He seemed much pleased to talk with me over the places he and I knew so well I hoped to be able to see him often, and be a comfort to him. I sent the clergyman to see him in the evening, and he found him very grateful to have words spoken to him about his immortal soul. ... When I went the next morning, your dear brother was at peace. He breathed his last in his sleep, without pain. ... He is laid with his gallant comrades, in a newly-made burying-ground on the side of the hill which rises above the hospital. It is a

beautiful, peaceful spot; and it may be a comfort to you to know that his last hour was not on the battle-field or the cold trenches. I would say to you what the good chaplain here said to a poor soldier's widow as she took her last sorrowing glance into her husband's grave this afternoon when the service was ended. He bid her not mourn, as those who have no hope, for that her husband had died in the faith of Christ. He bid her carry away in her heart the blessed words he had just read over the grave: 'I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.' He bid her follow on to know Christ, and through Him to be enabled to join her husband in glory hereafter. I feel I can give you no words more comforting than these. May God bless them to you, and comfort you in this your great affliction.²⁸

Gonzaga Barrie, one of the Bermondsey Sisters who worked closely with Sarah Anne Terrot, also wrote a condolence letter which was published. The widow to whom Barrie wrote must have found her letter a comfort since she shared it with her minister who read it to his congregation. *The Times* reported the clergyman citing it as an example of the good work the nurses were doing, but "... he expressed his earnest hope that such interesting instances of Christian ministry might not be peculiar to the members of a church far less enlightened than Protestants."²⁹

As the minister's assessment of Barrie suggests, nurses reading and praying with patients prompted fears that they would try to convert them, a violation of their contract. The War Office records contain extensive material on charges of proselytizing, including a formal report on the issue and copies of letters from chaplains and nurses used to compile it. Reflecting the perspective of the time, the file focuses mostly on allegations made against Catholics, but it does include refutations of them and some indications that Protestant nurses and clergymen were also accused.³⁰ Chaplains and nurses (whether vowed or not) who operated in a religious framework skillfully negotiated a number of

²⁸ "Miss Stanley at Kulleli," *Christian Times*, March 23, 1855, 183.

²⁹ "A Precedent for Protestants," *Times* (London), December 19, 1854, 5.

³⁰ Crimea, charges against R.C. priests and nuns at Scutari and Koulu[l]i hospitals of proselytising Protestant patients, War Office: Secretary-at-War, Correspondence (hereafter Proselytising Correspondence) WO43/986, National Archives, Kew.

complicated issues. They took seriously their contractual obligation not to influence the religious beliefs of patients, but could not deny that for themselves, religion was an important component of their lives and work. The benefit of having a clergyman present when they were near death took on added significance for Catholics, because the last confession (when possible) and the anointing of the dying make up the sacrament then known as last rites. The Sisters of Mercy were in an awkward position if a soldier near death asked them about their beliefs or to see a Catholic priest. Some surely did so less for doctrinal reasons than for the assurance that someone would be with them at the end, offering a listening ear and the comfort of touch. Catholic chaplains defended the Sisters and themselves against charges of proselytizing by saying that if they were asked to come to anyone who might be in danger of death, they had an obligation to go. Politically, this was a difficult defense, since the image of a vulnerable Protestant tricked into conversion while delirious is a classic anti-Catholic fear.

The case of a Private Killaway was the subject of much discussion in the official report on proselytizing. Killaway was an Anglican but asked one of the nurses to send a Catholic chaplain to see him because “He said that he had never had any care taken of him and that he thought, when he lay in his bed, he was like a dog, or worse than a Turk,& requested her [Miss Smythe] to send for the R. C. Priest, which she did.” The chaplain, probably Father William Ronan, came and subsequently sent a Sister of Mercy to Killaway. After several visits, Killaway asked not to see them any more, and neither Ronan nor the sister came again. “The boy admits that he sent for the R. C. Chaplain, but says that he must have been mad when he did it.”³¹ Killaway’s case illustrates the

³¹ “A Letter from the Revd W. Ronan R.C. Chaplain Dated Koolalie Hospital 7th March 55,” charges and defense report, Section 4, Proselytising Correspondence WO43/986, National Archives, Kew.

intersections between religion and gender. Officials worried about whether or not Killaway was delirious, but also believed that the sister who was sent to him violated her contract by offering spiritual instruction while she was not his nurse. The sister does not seem to have been disciplined, but the issue of men's discomfort with women's taking on ministerial work persisted.

Mary Stanley, an Anglican liked and respected by nurses of all denominations, was called on to investigate the charges against the Sisters of Mercy. She talked with them and with other nurses, patients and chaplains, and corresponded with Cardinal (then Father) Manning whom she had known from his Anglican days. Stanley summarized the issues and asserted her own beliefs about women's role in a letter to J. E. Sabin the senior Anglican chaplain:

You say, under the impression that Killaway was delirious when he sent for the Priest, that neither under this 'or any other circumstances ought any Sister or Nurse be used to instruct either Romanist or Protestant.'

It is very important to have this point clearly defined

I should greatly deprecate unauthorized teachers, but I cannot be a party to any system which confines the ministrations of Christian Women solely to the temporal wants of the sick.³²

Though allegations of proselytizing would of course be made by clergymen of different denominations from the accused nurse, Stanley's letter to Sabin illustrates that nurses did differ with clergy of their own tradition. The disagreement which had the most serious consequences was between the Jesuit chaplain Patrick Duffy and the Bermondsey Sisters of Mercy. Because he disapproved of the circumstances under which the Sisters had gone out, he refused to have anything to do with them, even hearing their confessions. While he did not actually refuse them communion, it would have been

³² "An extract from a letter from Miss Stanley dated Kullullee March 10, [1855]" charges and defense report, section 7, Proselytizing Correspondence WO43/986.

difficult for Catholics of the time to receive communion without first having gone to confession.³³

Early in their work, the Sisters of Mercy had a kind ally in John Butt. A chaplain from the Southwark diocese, Butt took trouble with his letters home, recounting the kinds of things he thought Southwark's bishop Thomas Grant might especially like to know. In fact, he asked Grant to keep his letters private so that he would feel free to write his honest observations. The tone of his correspondence suggests that he and Grant were on comfortable terms:

Send me a line when you can, but write in preference to the good nuns at Scutari. They have a very trying position and will want the encouragement of a Superior, because I fear that obstacles will be put in their way which will prevent their doing much of the good they aim at, and being too humble to see what edification they are giving, they may think their mission has failed. I do not like Miss Nightingale: I think she is afraid of the nuns and would gladly keep them in the background. They are more deficient than they should be in worldly comforts but this I know does not trouble them. A word from you would please [Father] Bagshawe and keep up his spirits.

Yrs very affectionately
John Butt³⁴

Unlike his female counterparts, Butt feels no qualms about directing his bishop to do things, writing to him more as a colleague than as his own superior. Mother Mary Clare Moore too had a collegial relationship with Grant, but their letters still exhibit far more formality and circumspection than Butt's does.

One of the most interesting examples of a clergyman interested in collaborating with the nurses is the Jesuit Sidney Woollett. In nurses' accounts, especially those of Sr.

³³ Mary C. Sullivan, ed. *The Friendship of Florence Nightingale and Mary Clare Moore* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 61-64; Luddy, *Crimean Journals*, 104-105, gives Sr. Joseph Croke's brief discussion of Duffy's refusal to provide spiritual assistance to the Bermondsey Sisters of Mercy and some of the Nightingale correspondence on the issue.

³⁴ John Butt to Thomas Grant, 88th Regiment Light Division, November 20, 1854, Crimean Chaplains' Letters R13/21/4, SDA.

Mary Joseph Croke and Frances Taylor, Woollett is a teasing friend and spiritual advisor. In her private diary, Croke refers to Woollett as “our little Jesuit,” describes laughing at his outlandish winter gear and reports that the sisters “never mind him, for he says things to tease us.” Behind the humor of the descriptions is the respite it provided Woollett and Croke from their daily experience of illness and death. Woollett bought the sisters a cat, which Croke describes as one might a pet, but was clearly intended to keep the rats down and thereby combat life-threatening disease.³⁵ Woollett also was interested in ecumenical partnerships. In a private memorandum preserved in her religious congregation’s archives, Frances Taylor recalls the support Woollett gave her before he received her into the Catholic Church. He also is conscious to refer to people of other denominations specifically, rather than with the generic “Protestant.”³⁶

Throughout their work in the hospitals, the nurses were part of webs of community: with those with whom they had come out, in new relationships with those they met there, and tied to communities of family, village, or religious community at home. These sometimes competing communities certainly could cause some friction, as illustrated by the fears of proselytization, but often were sources of comfort and support too. People at home were crucial for the success of the work since they sent out many of the comforts and even basic necessities the nurses provided to the men through the auspices of the Patriotic fund. What came to be called “the free gift store” was stocked

³⁵ Sr. Joseph Croke, December 5, 1855 in Luddy, *Crimean Journals*, 92. For her description both of the comfort of having daily Mass and other spiritual practices of traditional convent life, as well as the pleasure she feels in laughing at Woollett’s winter gear, see Croke, November 29, 1855, Luddy, *Crimean Journals*, 89-90.

³⁶ Frances Taylor’s Memo on the Crimea, Compilation of Documents Edited by Sr. Rose Joseph Kennedy, SMG, V/A7, Congregational Archives, Poor Servants of the Mother of God (hereafter SMGA), Brentford, UK. Taylor did not discuss her conversion or Woollett in her published account, and his letters and diaries say only that he received Taylor into the Church, but do not describe his conversations with her or recall, as she does in this memo written in her later life, walking with him in the moonlight talking of their pre-war lives.

with these gifts which included clothing and food stuffs, though not all of it could be used since there were initially difficulties coping with the public's generosity and sadly, some of the food spoiled in transit. One account mentioned people offering to send out tea and sugar (but reported that the army had enough of these) and cigars to "relieve the tedium and discomfort of many a winter night on the snow clad heights of the Crimea." The author also mentioned groups of women gathering to knit socks and mittens for the troops.³⁷ In fact, the public's generosity was overwhelming to some. "The Hon. Major Powys wished to bring under public notice the very inconvenient mode which the benevolent had adopted of affording relief, by sending large boxes of linen rags and other articles to his office, because, though those things would be most useful in an hospital, they were not so in his office. He had, at the present time, large cases of linen, which blocked up the way."³⁸ A report on the efforts of the Westminster Reformatory for Adult Male Criminals demonstrates that some of the poorest in the nation gave generously to support the troops and their families. By supporting Britain's war effort, perhaps they also asserted that they were now restored to full membership in the nation.

We, the undersigned inmates of the London Reformatory, have, with the kind permission of our governor, convened a meeting this evening in the lecture-room of the institution for the purpose of taking into consideration how we may assist the widows and orphans of our soldiers who are fighting their country's battles in the Crimea. Having no money, we have unanimously agreed to abstain from food on Monday next, the 27th (being one of our best days' food), and that our, noble friend the Right Hon. the Earl of Shaftesbury be kindly requested to forward the proceeds of that day's provisions to the Patriotic Fund; and that on the evening of the same day we should unite in fervent prayer for the restoration of peace.

Signed by all the inmates, 100 in number. Proceeds of the day's provision, 3l. 13s. 53/4 d.³⁹

³⁷ Epitome of News, *Christian Times*, December 8, 1854, 784-785.

³⁸ *Record*, October 23, 1854, [4].

³⁹ Epitome of News, *Christian Times*, December 8, 1854, 784-785.

Supplementing these nation-wide efforts to support the nurses, their individual communities also helped their work and through that help, bolstered their spirits. In addition to sending supplies, those at home also arranged that letters they received from the hospitals were published in the press. Particularly in the religious newspapers, this helped cement ties of friendship and religious identity, demonstrating that individual nurses or chaplains were not only part of the literal family to whom they might have written but also connected to a broader family of faith-tradition. For Catholics, this was especially important because government stipends to chaplains were significantly less for Catholics than for Anglicans (both overall and for individual chaplains), making the financial support the Catholic community could provide crucial. Editors also encouraged their readers to send out religious articles to insure that the men would not suffer spiritually.

It is important to note that despite the fervor with which the press supported the war in general or with which editors and individuals supported the troops and nurses that support for the war was not universal. *The Times* celebrated Britain's victories and criticized the Tsar, but had reported the declaration of war with some regret. As one would expect, the Society of Friends actively worked to prevent war, even sending a delegation to meet with the Tsar to try to resolve the conflict over the holy places. Perhaps the most concerted opposition was expressed by the journal *The Herald of Peace*, published by the Peace Society and a progressive newspaper. In language similar to modern anti-war arguments, the journal amassed statistics to argue that the government was spending money on an overseas war while crucial needs at home were going unmet.

They also carried articles conveying that the state of war was inconsistent with Gospel values and gender norms:

We do not hesitate to express our strong admiration of the spirit which gave birth to this proposal [by Frederica Bremer, published in *The Times*, to form an international alliance of women to work for peace]. It was a noble Christian thought; nor have we the smallest doubt, that if it were carried into effect, it would be of signal advantage to the general interests of humanity.

These general hopes were followed by a difficult section which attempted to use the current feminine stereotypes to bolster pacifism:

For our own part, we should rejoice extremely to see a larger infusion of feminine influence introduced into the administration of human affairs. We do not mean in the way of bringing women forward to take part directly in the coarse conflicts of politics, which would end, we fear, not in refining the man, but in debasing the woman. And in our judgment, no advantage whatever could compensate for the loss of that delicate bloom of modesty and tenderness, which forms so exquisite and powerful a charm of the female character. But we conceive that there is a way in which women may affect the great events of the world's history, precisely as the wise and thoughtful are wont to make their influence felt in private and domestic life. Who has not known instances of this kind, where some gentle spirit has watched like a guardian angel over a son, a husband or a brother, modifying the whole tenor of his life and character, and even of his worldly affairs; not by any rude attempt at dictation or intermeddling in business, but by a secret power touched to the finest issues, restraining impetuosities of passion, softening asperities of temper, moderating the sanguine delirium of speculation, insinuating calmer counsel in season of irritated feeling, and enveloping the whole life in an atmosphere of Christian and womanly sympathy, acting with as silent and yet as penetrative a power as the morning and evening dews which preserve to the earth some portion of its freshness and verdure even in the fiercest heat of the summer solstice. Why should this blessed and benignant influence, which few men, we hope, are so unhappy as not to have sometimes felt, be lost in reference to those great movements of society, which so vitally affect the universal weal of humanity?

Balancing women's supposedly innately pacific nature with their confinement to the home, the piece concluded with a religious peroration:

And if God in his mercy has provided in the deep tenderness of woman's heart, especially when refined by the compassionate genius of the gospel, for which her spirit has so beautiful a natural affinity, the means of preserving men from relapsing into mere barbarism, why should her influence be excluded from the

sphere where it is the most needed? Would it not be a spectacle, ‘which angels would stoop down to see,’ to behold the women of Europe, at a time when their husbands and brothers and sons are preparing to lay desolate the earth under the impulse of inflamed passions, lift up their hands unitedly in the name of Christ and of humanity, to deprecate the brutal folly?⁴⁰

One schoolmaster also wrote worrying about the affect of war on children and arguing that peace values needed to be instilled in children through their families and communities.

During several years, our school has been a delightful home,--a family of love,--a really happy band. Rarely has the ‘peace within our borders’ been disturbed by the fierce spirit. Neither cane, nor strap, nor instrument of corporeal punishment, has hitherto been deemed necessary. Violations of order, petty outbursts of temper, a hasty blow, or an angry kick, has sometimes been given and returned by high-spirited boys; but a calm appeal to the Bible in the gallery lesson has been found amply sufficient to repair the breach, and soften the offender, in many cases, to tears of contrition.

But since the flames of war have been enkindled in the South of Russia, a most distressing change has taken place. Formerly, the rural games of healthful innocence, in which boys and girls could take a part, were heartily enjoyed. But now, the boys must play at soldiers, and as they well know that ‘maister’ is a ‘peace man,’ and disapproves of such games, they retire a short distance from the school during the dinner hour and the evening, to ‘shoulder arms,’ and imitate the work of death; from which amusement they seldom return to school as heretofore, happy and cheerful, but too frequently the reverse. To counteract this, I have circulated that little gem, the ‘Kiss for a Blow,’ among the children, and worked the gallery most earnestly with the Bible Lessons; but I find that the mischief emanates from the homes of the children; and, being desirous to do what I can to cleanse the fountain in order that the stream may be purified, I have resolved to send out a number of tracts illustrative of peace principles, into every cottage home throughout the surrounding villages, from whence the ranks of the army have been frequently recruited.⁴¹

⁴⁰ *Herald of Peace*, October 1854, 111. Interestingly, the editor also suggested that Bremer’s proposal would likely not receive much support in the mainstream press. Although the journal was clear that its mission was to oppose war itself and often carried articles about the hardships war imposed on those asked to fight, it did take the controversial stance of opposing the patriotic fund. It urged readers not to contribute, believing that the fund allowed the government to avoid its responsibilities to war widows and orphans, and because those who contributed were supporting the “war system.” Finally, the author of the unsigned article argued that recruiters used the existence of the fund to help persuade those hesitant to enlist by attempting to assuage their worries about those they would leave behind. *Herald of Peace*, December 1854, 138-139. For Bremer’s proposal, see *Times* (London) August 28, 1854, 5.

⁴¹ *Herald of Peace*, December 1854, 146.

Peaceful rituals of home life were perpetuated in the war theater by nurses attempting to soften the harsh conditions of their Crimean existence. In the face of new experiences, harsh weather, often poor food, long hours of hard work and under the fear of illness and death themselves, it is no wonder that the nurses often sought to preserve some semblance of normal life. Though it seems stereotypical, there is evidence that an important gauge of normalcy was the presence or absence of tea. In the same letter in which she describes her growing comfort with surgical procedures, the unnamed Bermondsey sister reports the community's increased comfort.

For the first few days we slept on the floor, then we got iron bedsteads; we also had to sit *a la Turque* [on the floor], but now have a chair, two camp stools, and a table which is just big enough to hold our five cups, and a saucer of sugar. At first we had copper basins, but now we have teacups, and tin platters, an India rubber bucket for water, and a tin basin for washing in.⁴²

For one of the chaplains, tea was symbolic of a general state of well being. In summing up how difficult conditions were he points out that they couldn't have tea as if to say that things were really bad if such a basic necessity was unavailable. It was also easier for him to recount the lack of tea than to describe in full his work or the conditions the men endured.

Last Tuesday was a painful day here. The noble ship in which I came out (the Prince) has gone to the bottom with many others, and there has been an immense sacrifice of life. I was roused from dreams of my dear native land by my tent falling on me, and was completely drenched before I could get on my clothes. Even then no fires could be lighted, no tea or anything else could be procured—dry biscuit, and glad to get it, was the state of affairs. But all this mattered little to us who were in good health. When I got to my hospitals, a sight was before me which would have moved a heart of stone. The hospital marquees were all down, and the poor fellows, suffering from cholera, fever, and dysentery, were lying

⁴² "Sisters of Mercy in the East," *Tablet*, December 16, 1854, 789. The letter excerpted in the article is dated Nov. 13, 1854, and has been describing harsh conditions, wild dogs, numbers of deaths and getting used to tending gunshot wounds and smells, so having tea signifies that things are all right. It would be a natural impulse to try to put her community at ease by reporting some positive things in the midst of such difficulties.

exposed to that merciless storm, aggravated by the most piercing sleet I ever felt, benumbing all the faculties like paralysis. I saw more than one of our men stretch themselves out on that day, under that sleet, to die! God grant I may never witness such a scene again!⁴³

Tea also signified to some unfair treatment. The editor and transcriber of Sidney Woollett's journal points out that Woollett did not receive the same treatment while ill aboard ship as others. "Early in the morning the Fr had attack of diarrhoea, & called for a cup of tea if there were any made for other invalids but was refused altho' others had had some about the same time. Had to wait till breakfast nearly overcome with faintness, & exhaustion."⁴⁴ The editor does not openly give a reason for this refusal and Woollett's interpretation has not survived, but his journal's editor implies that Woollett could have been refused because he was a Catholic.

Some of this striving after normal life also had gendered components. By making things the way they were at home, women could live out their idealized role of creating a comfortable retreat for men to return to from difficult circumstances, since none could be more difficult than the life and death worries of a war zone. There is a danger, for example, to dismiss Fanny Duberley's account of travels with her cavalry officer husband as the thoughts of someone so bound by class and previous experience as almost to be unaware of the war around her. Her account does have far less about the hardships and

⁴³ *Guardian* (Church of England), December 20, 1854, 977. From an unnamed chaplain, the letter is dated from Sebastopol, November 20, 1854, and was copied by *The Guardian* from *The Press*.

⁴⁴ Sidney Joseph Woollett, S.J., August 24, 1855, Crimean journal, in Annual Letters folder 1855-1856, SJA. Annual letters are documents sent from the province to Rome containing important events of the year. They are drafted in English with the final version sent to the Vatican in Latin. The archives contain a copy of the Latin letter as well as drafts of the English version and a transcribed, and possibly edited version of Woollett's journal on which the final letter was probably largely based. This quote is from the transcribed and edited journal, not from the Annual Letter sent to Rome. As yet, there appears to be no extant copy of Woollett's journal in his own hand. Interestingly, the incident of the refusal of tea is not in the published versions of Woollett's Crimean letters. They and most of his journal are concerned with recounting the details of his work as chaplain and illustrating how well he was received by Catholic soldiers and Protestant officers.

privations than those of others, and often recounts things in the style of a travel narrative, yet there are certainly glimmers that Duberley made a conscious choice to express herself this way. Throughout, she is sensitive to the plight of the horses. Though of course it is impossible to fully know the thoughts behind her words, it is interesting to wonder whether Duberley writes of horses because her fear for her husband, his comrades and herself does not allow her to express the conditions of the men. Her accounts of cholera and of the terrible conditions in Balaclava are all the more valuable because their sad and almost bitter tone stand in sharp contrast to much of the book.⁴⁵

Other women too sought to preserve some of the cultural aspects of their prewar lives. One officer's wife wrote to ask if any of the nurses could join her for tea, commenting that it would be particularly lovely to have a moonlit gathering to allow for the greatest appreciation of the scenery. Yet for all that her letters seem as if they were written from a stately home in England rather than from her military residence; she is nonetheless using the tea party to mask genuine worry. Her daughter is far along in a pregnancy and Mrs. Cumberbatch also wants assurances that a nurse will be sent to attend the birth. Perhaps the chatty letters and invitations to tea are meant to foster a sense of community between the family and the nurses so that they will help even though this would probably be a bit outside their official duties. In the end, a nurse was sent and the baby delivered safely, though sadly the older daughter of the family died.

Sisters too attempted to maintain traditional conventual practice. They report on establishing expected routines of daily prayer and retreats and on the pleasure they feel on receiving religious articles from home or when the soldiers help decorate their chapel

⁴⁵ Christine Kelly, ed., *Mrs. Duberley's War: Journal and Letters from the Crimea, 1854-6* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

for Christmas.⁴⁶ Sister Joseph Croke's account of the unexpected visitor calling on the sisters while they were having dinner and their rush to hide in the next room so that Mother Francis Bridgeman could receive him in proper conventual fashion (discussed in chapter three) illustrates the lengths they went to to preserve a sense of cloister.

Despite the difficulties of weather, lack of supplies, long hours combating devastating disease and the gender and religious politics of their hospital work, the Crimean nurses accomplished a great deal. They saved lives, remained faithful to their religious commitments and broadened the scope of their activities while challenging received cultural norms. They negotiated the complexities of their memberships in intersecting and competing communities. The committed Christians among them, both lay and vowed, remained faithful to their traditions by providing for the spiritual needs of the men and by insuring that religious observances were as homelike as possible. Yet they did not simply reaffirm their own traditions. Many among them lived out the most radical implications of Christianity embodied in St. Paul's assertion that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, servant nor free, male nor female, but you are all one"(Gal. 3:28). Their accounts reveal a fellow-feeling for the soldiers, in contrast to many other contemporaries who viewed them as brutes. Although some of the nurses' attempts to abolish drinking, swearing and disrespectful behavior could be seen as reinforcing traditional class boundaries, they were remarkable within their own day for moving across those divides. They challenged the traditional religious barriers by reaching across denominational lines. Throughout her account, Anglican sister Sarah Anne Terrot values the skill of the Roman Catholic Sister of Mercy Gonzaga Barrie, implying that the two were friends

⁴⁶ Croke, diary entries for December 3, 1855 and December 24, 1855, in Luddy, *Crimean Journals*, 91, 94-95; Ramsey, 133-135.

rather than only professional colleagues. The Church of England clergyman Sidney Godolphin Osborne publicly commended Nightingale's (and by implication the other nurses') choice to provide medical care to all without concern for denomination and to respect the religious beliefs of all. Finally, the nurses challenged the gender norms of their day by asserting their professional competence and ministerial gifts, by supporting each other in the face of criticism from male authorities and forming some genuine partnerships with men. Attempting to save souls as well as bodies, they pioneered a new way for women to function in a previously all-male venue.

Chapter 5: Aftermath of Military Service

Every heart beat light, going home! After such scenes! And going home alive!
We looked at each other when we stepped on board and the look told much and
each one read it correctly.

- Sister Mary Joseph Croke¹

Victorian reticence about personal tribulations makes recovering the experiences of Crimean survivors difficult. The entire cultural ethos mitigated against self-pity. “Post traumatic stress disorder” was a concept which lay far in the future. Modesty, self-effacement and not telling tales out of school were supposed to characterize respectable gentlemen and ladies. For soldiers, strictures on betraying “weakness,” the harsh rules about military duty and, in the case of common soldiers, an inability to express oneself in writing contributed to the lack of ordinary memoirs about the war. For Roman Catholics, particularly the chaplains who served abroad, the desire not to betray any facts which might feed the fires of prejudice, combined with teachings recommending not “putting oneself forward” further inhibited free expression. These factors multiplied exponentially in women’s cases. Ladies were supposed to be modest, reticent and forgiving of others. Working-class women, far less literate than their male counterparts in this era, rarely could express themselves except in speech. For vowed women, strictures against being “singular,” and in favor of accepting some difficulties as God’s will, further increased the silence which surrounds their wartime experience and their returns to civilian life.

Even those nurses who did publish accounts of their experiences usually left little else in the written record. Of course most of the working-class women have left nothing in their own words, and our only accounts of them come either from the basic

¹ Croke, April 6, 1856 in Luddy, *Crimean Journals*, 109.

information contained in the lists of nurses who were sent out or in other people's recounting of their work. Elizabeth Davis's account is particularly valuable, being the only published record of a working-class nurse I have been able to find. Davis was fortunate in meeting Jane Williams, a middle-class woman concerned with insuring that Welsh women's experiences were fairly portrayed. She used her talents as a writer and access to publishers to turn conversations with Davis into a book. Though she did not use this term, Williams was conscious of the difficulties of oral history and the need to supplement Davis's memory with materials from the written records while remaining true to Davis's experiences.

To seize the first floating end of each subject that chanced to present itself, to draw it out, to disentangle it, to piece it, to set the warp straight and firmly in the loom, and to cast the woof aright, so as to produce the true and original pattern of such tapestry, has required sedulous application. The winding of silkworms' cocoons without a reel, is scarcely a task of more difficult manipulation.²

There are ways to find threads, even if quite slender ones, of other working-class women's post-war lives. Many wrote to Nightingale, for example, whose public presence insured that their letters would be preserved. Some nurses' letters are formal inquiries about Nightingale's health, while others suggest a correspondence which went beyond expected civilities.

In many ways, the post-war experiences of Anglican sister Sarah Anne Terrot serve as a microcosm for the experiences of the broader nursing contingent and issues facing Britain as a whole. Terrot struggled with how she herself would integrate her

² Elizabeth Davis, *Betsy Cadwaladyr: A Balaclava Nurse: An Autobiography of Elizabeth Davis*, ed. Jane Williams, introduction Deirdre Beddoe (Dinas Powys: Honno, 2007), v-vi. In addition to preserving Williams' original preface in which she discusses her work with Davis on the publication, Beddoe's new edition of Davis's account gives valuable background material on Davis and Williams, including a discussion of Davis's choice to adopt the name "Elizabeth Davis" rather than "Betsy Cadwaladyr" when working in England.

wartime work into her post-war life in a way which illustrates the debates about how the war and its participants were to be commemorated nationally. She and other nurses searched for ways to continue to connect with each other and to do the kinds of work they believed important. These middle-class women were relatively fortunate. Even if they faced criticism and struggled to find a purpose for their lives, they nonetheless had some degree of choice and some options. Many of the working-class nurses returned to the same issues they struggled with before the war: financial insecurity, class bias and gender discrimination. This chapter explores some of the issues Terrot's post-war work illustrates, paying attention to similarities and differences among the nurses.

Though Sister Joseph Croke is the only one who explicitly expresses the joy of going home alive, others too must have been aware of the reality that their work had involved risk. All would have known about the deaths of nurses and doctors and several faced serious illnesses themselves. Both Sarah Anne Terrot and Sr. Joseph Croke interrupted their accounts because of attacks of fever. In fact, Terrot seems not to have fully recovered and was sent home because of the illness.³

As they had arrived, so the nurses left in several groups and for a variety of reasons. In late December, 1854, when Terrot's friend and fellow Anglican sister, Elizabeth Wheeler was sent home because of her letter published in *The Times*, the Roman Catholic Sisters of the Faithful Virgin from Norwood were also dismissed. Terrot felt sorry for them, believing that they were doing good work even though their being cloistered meant that they had had no concrete experience with hospital nursing. Terrot did say that one reason for their dismissal was the religious habits they wore, which she

³ For the dates of Croke's illness and her comments on it see Luddy, *Crimean Journals*, 87, and for Terrot's comments on her illness and its lasting effects see Terrot, *Nurse Sarah Anne*, 157-160.

says even Catholics found disturbing, but she does not elaborate on this point. She also indicated that Nightingale felt that the Sisters of the Faithful Virgin needed to return home to keep the numbers of Anglicans and Roman Catholics in the proportions she desired, particularly since Mother Francis Bridgeman and the second group of Sisters of Mercy had arrived. The issues were resolved by mid-January, 1855, but the weeks surrounding the dismissals and arrivals were a painful time for the nurses. The new arrivals were eager to get to work, those dismissed and their friends felt unjustly treated and Nightingale and Bridgeman were at an impasse, with each asserting what she believed to be her government-sanctioned authority.⁴

For some of the nurses, the departure from the hospitals did not mean an end to their care for the troops. Often, nurses travelled home on ships carrying men too ill or too badly wounded to be sent back to the front. Therefore, nurses aboard ship were often caring for the most serious cases, and their efforts helped insure that some dangerously ill men survived the voyage home. One of the St. John's House nurses, Elizabeth Woodward, was one of these. She wrote to Nightingale, wishing her well, hoping her health was restored and thanking her for allowing her to nurse a wounded officer on his voyage home. Woodward also took the opportunity to assert her skill and to demonstrate its recognition by others:

often I nursed him in Fever then – as he became perfectly Paralyzed in a few days after he came on board the Saldana, and continued to grow weaker during a torturous voyage of eight weeks and four days – all that time for one hour either night or day I never left him. I know Madam how highly gratifying it will be to you to hear that Mr. Bowman and Doctor Todd [both doctors connected with St. John's House] did not hesitate to say that owing to my exertions Mr. Lawson's life

⁴ Terrot, *Nurse Sarah Anne*, 128-129. Also see the Bridgeman diary published in Luddy, *Crimean Journals*, 19, 143-144; and Mary Stanley to Catherine Stanley and Parthenope Nightingale Verney, Letters from Mary Stanley to Parthenope Verney, Ms 9059, Wellcome Library, London.

was preserved until he reached England, when the Lord blest they [sic] means these gentleman took for his recovery.⁵

One feature of the nurses' work, informing those at home of deaths among their numbers, continued after war's end. Although the telegraph was available, and although the press did carry reports of casualties and sometimes detailed reports of particular deaths, in addition to the long lists of those killed and wounded in a particular battle, evidence from nurses' correspondence makes it clear that information did not always travel as quickly as would have been desirable. The letters to Nightingale from Mary Ann Douglas and Janet Carmichael regarding the death of nurse Mary Marks discussed in Chapter Four demonstrates the nurses' role providing information and comfort to those at home.

Given the newness and significance of the work, it seems reasonable to expect that the published accounts would comment on the women's return to their prewar lives, how they were received and how they reintegrated into their communities and made sense of their wartime experiences. Much of this sort of discussion is in fact absent from published accounts. Sarah Anne Terrot, for example, simply ends fairly abruptly with her arrival home. Her fellow Anglican sister, Margaret Goodman, describes an effort to commemorate the deceased soldiers and to understand their experiences before leaving the hospitals.

After the proclamation of peace, Miss Nightingale sent the nursing-staff, a few at a time as they could be spared, to see Sebastopol. ... But our journey led us through scenes which called up sad reflections— many resting-places of such of our army as were destined to lay their bones far from those of their forefathers. A few days before we left the Crimea, fatigue parties erected for each little knot of mounds a rude wall of stone. ... After a slow drive through the town of Sebastopol, in which huge heaps of stones only showed us where the streets had

⁵ Elizabeth Woodward to Florence Nightingale, August 19, 1856, Nightingale Collection, H01/ST/NC/02/v17/56, 2-3.

once stood, we proceeded to the inspection of the trenches. So frequent and vivid had been the descriptions given us of them, that we expected them to prove quite familiar to us; but we had not realized them in their length and intricacies, neither were we prepared for the seeming frailness of the screen they afforded. Leaving our mules and carriage in the vicinity of the advanced trench, we crossed over to the Redan and Malakoff. Though the Russians had not been subjected to the hardships of nights in the trenches, they had by no means enviable quarters, dwelling as they did in subterranean passages where scarcely a ray of light could penetrate.⁶

In correspondence between the Bermondsey sisters of Mercy, it is clear that the community wanted to be sure to commemorate the war and the role of Catholics in it.

... [T]oday we went to the sea side and gathered a lot of nice shells to take home and make nice things in the garden Oratory—now mind you get some things to bring home as memorials of Sebastopol and the Crimea. ... Mind you get some bullets &c &c &c and some flowers off all the battle fields and graves—and if you can get some off Mr. Sheahan's and Wheble's [two Roman Catholic chaplains] graves—I'm quite in earnest in this request....⁷

Goodman also hints at her post-war experiences describing changes in the convent which made her feel unable to remain. Although nothing in her published account or in letters to Nightingale gives the specifics, Terrot left the community too. "From childhood I think I wished to serve the poor, and for that purpose joined the sisters in London, but the poor was not their first object and for more than 10 years, I was vainly trying to learn, but no one seemed able to teach me, and seemed far more anxious to torture me into a nun, which I never wished for, than to help me otherwise," she wrote Nightingale.

Except at Devonport where by practice something was learnt tho' there was no regular training. I was sorry to interrupt you on Monday tho' very grateful to you for letting me see you. When you have time to say whether you think you can employ me or not could you write one line to tell me, I do not want any particulars only if you think not, I should try to be resigned, and settle to something else, and if you think you will it will be something to want and hope for, either way I shall think [it] is for the best, for I do fear loving and trusting you

⁶ Goodman, *Experiences*, 226-227.

⁷ Mary Clare Moore to Sister Mary Anastasia, April 21, 1856, Letters of Some Sisters of Mercy, Ms 9104/5, Wellcome Library, London.

too much and it may be better not to be with you and either way I must remember you with deep and grateful respect and love.⁸

Other women clearly viewed the war as a transforming experience, but

Goodman's is the only published account to state explicitly that she no longer felt a part of her pre-war community:

Moreover, though we were glad to be on our journey home, painful retrospections crowded upon our minds; though, at the same time, we could not look back without seeing many causes for deep thankfulness. We landed at Southampton, and, taking the train, reached Plymouth at midnight; weary in body, but with fresh, joyous hearts, and expecting to meet old faces, and to resume old habits. Like many wanderers before and since, we were doomed to be disappointed; as, during the twenty months we had been absent, strict conventual rules had been developed. So, with heavy hearts, we, who had shared so many privations,— and nothing endears persons more to each other,— bade each other good-bye in the corridor of the Abbey; to meet henceforth as strangers, and to pass each other without even exchanging glances: for that would have been considered a breach of convent rule.⁹

Other women must have felt restless after the war. Martha Nicol too did not discuss the logistics of finding work on her return, but did express the value of her wartime work and some regret at its ending. Nicol writes

It was with great regret, that, on the 1st of December, I bade good-bye to Smyrna, where we had all spent so many pleasant days, and where, from being strangers to each other, we had become interested in one another, and some of us formed friendships which, we hope, will last all our lives; while from the medical men with whom we worked we had always experienced the most gentlemanly courtesy and friendliness. With the residents, also, we had some pleasant intercourse, which had made our sojourn amongst them very agreeable; and it gave us pain to think that, in all probability, we should see them no more. But there was no help for it; the 'nucleus' [of nurses assigned to stay until the end of the war] could not be increased, and we, like nebulas, must disperse; so Miss K, Miss P, and I, embarked in the 'Melbourn' steam-transport for Constantinople, and looked our last on 'Ismeer' the Beautiful, or the better-known dear old Smyrna.¹⁰

⁸ Sarah Anne Terrot to Florence Nightingale, [1856], BL Add. Mss. 47742, 8-9, British Library.

⁹ Goodman, *Experiences*, 234.

¹⁰ Nicol, *Ismeer*, 339-340.

As with other accounts, Nicol's contains descriptions of the voyages, scenery, people she encounters both during her travels and at the hospital and of customs different than those at home: descriptions typical for travel writing of the period which would have gained Nicol an audience. Yet she is careful to elevate her text from simply an account of a lady's experiences to a discussion of the significance of them both to her and to the nation.

On the 11th of December, Miss K, Miss P, and I, embarked in the 'Emeu' for England—not without many feelings of regret for the beautiful scenes we were leaving behind; for my own part, I must say, that notwithstanding the high expectations I had formed of the East, I have in no way been disappointed. I like the country, the climate, the people, their customs, and, more than all, the varied and deeply-interesting associations which surround them all; and if it should never be my lot to revisit it, it will ever remain a bright spot in my recollection. And as for the work we undertook for our poor countrymen, I have only to say, on behalf of myself and the other eight ladies who constituted our party when the hospital was broken up, that, although it is the furthest thing from our desire to have to witness such sorrow and suffering, there is not one who, in case of such a misfortune happening to our beloved country, would not readily and willingly again volunteer their services to Her Majesty.

Nicol ends her account with her arrival to Liverpool and reprints letters of farewell and commendation from medical and military officials.¹¹

Sarah Anne Terrot too valued the work she had done in the war and spent much of her life after her return working in hospitals and orphanages. Family responsibilities made it difficult for her to devote the time she wanted to the work and to fulfill her desire for more formal training. "... [I]f I could get a dispensation as to age & (perhaps on your recommendation it might be overlooked)", she wrote Nightingale

I find I would be really thankful to gain a year's such training, & Helen is I find kindly willing to postpone her wish to mine, for even if we could be both received we could not both leave home at once. ... If I cannot be received H. would be thankful to come and if I can she would be glad to do so afterwards if life is spared. My health is good; I have the remains of a naturally most robust

¹¹ Nicol, *Ismeer*, 347-48.

constitution, ... & you know I have had a good deal of rambling and scrambling experience though it has only made me feel the more the need of such training. I have been in private hospitals & cholera hospitals at home, but never had regular training. I enclose my application to Mrs. W- to be forwarded or not as you think best.¹²

Frances Taylor, a middle-class Anglican laywoman who became a Catholic during the war, spent some years after her return trying to create a new life for herself as a Catholic. Taylor's conversion in the hospital must have been a break with family expectations, and her biographers speak of the strain the decision and worries about how to tell her family caused.¹³ Yet Taylor went further than other converts of her day. For her, conversion marked a major life transformation since she moved from volunteering in Church-sponsored work, to considering entering a religious order, to eventually deciding to found one herself, believing that none of the existing communities would allow her to do the kind of work she envisioned for herself. Joseph Lynch, one of the Kinsale Sisters of Mercy also exemplifies the pioneering spirit of the Crimean nurses, a spirit which could sometimes make life in community difficult. She emigrated to Brooklyn, New York, assisting with the foundation of the Sisters of Mercy there and continued her work in Rochester, New York, Grand Rapids, Michigan and eventually died in 1898 in Portland, Oregon. Lynch seems now to be somewhat celebrated by the Sisters of Mercy as a significant figure accomplishing important work, but for a long time her good work was overshadowed by her conflicts with bishops and members of her community.¹⁴

¹² Sarah Anne Terrot to Florence Nightingale, September 17, [1861] BL Add. Mss. 47,742 30-31.

¹³ Devas, *Mother Mary Magdalen*, chapters on the Crimean War; Troughton, *Life of Mother Foundress*, chapters on Crimean War and immediate post-war work in London. Troughton's work is particularly valuable since she was a member of the community and knew Taylor in her later years.

¹⁴ Sr. Mary Lucy MacDonald, *By Her Fruits--: Sister Mary Joseph Lynch, Sister of Mercy* (Farmington Hills, MI: Religious Sisters of Mercy, 1981).

During the war, many nurses were conscious of the emotional effects that battle could cause for the men, though they hinted at this aspect of their care for them only obliquely. Sarah Terrot describes a man devastated by the idea that others might have thought that he stole something. Margaret Goodman reports the case of a soldier who just seemed to be declining despite all the doctors could do. On hearing Tennyson's poem, the man rallied. This is surprising, given that the poem recounts the disasters of the charge, but perhaps Tennyson's celebration of the soldiers' bravery raised the man's spirits.

The nurses continued to advocate for the men's wellbeing after the war. Terrot for example, took an interest in their subsequent lives and employment. "Your old patient young Henry was here last night", she wrote Nightingale,

.... He says you used to notice him on account of his youth. He is now a fine, frank, grateful young man of about 22 short and dark with a bright, handsome intelligent face. He almost begged me for a picture of you which I showed him and I have promised to get it copied for him. The picture itself was given to me by dear young Aslett [another soldier whom Terrot nursed] a few days before his death and I could not part with it on any account. Henry must have been only 16 at most when wounded. His mother told me when he first heard of your illness he sat for a long time silent, leaning with his face covered and she observed tears running down. She is a good feeling woman, if poor Aslett had had such a one to take care of him on his return I think his life might have been saved, but trusting he is better as it is I ought not to regret his early removal.

I thank you very much for your kindness with regard to William Donaldson. It would be a great benefit to him to have a more sheltered position and I believe he would do his duty and gain credit wherever he may go, and I trust your kind efforts for him may be successful. Perhaps when the 'Great men' return to London they may consider him and do something, but at all events I am equally grateful to you for kindly referring him to them.¹⁵

Donaldson had written a note to Terrot which she forwarded to Nightingale, describing his difficulties finding work and demonstrating the lack of information about available jobs or services for veterans:

¹⁵ Sarah Anne Terrot to Florence Nightingale, September 17, [1861], BL Add. Mss. 47,742, 30-31.

I don't think that I will ever be so fortunate as to get a Government situation as I have always been unlucky in my efforts to get one. There is a Darby Griffiths in parliament just now it is probable that he may be some friend of Darby Griffiths of the Greys [a Scottish regiment]. I will try and find out whether he is or not and if he is I will try and get the Colonel to speak to him about a situation for me, do you know if Government has any objections to employing men who want a leg in a situation such as Martin holds in Hampton Court[?]

Donaldson suggested that if she did not know the answer, Terrot might ask Martin who might know. He then assured Terrot that a photograph he had left for her was not too expensive, and concludes, "My health at present is pretty good I had a bad cold during the time of the cold weather and my leg was not well so I was confined to the house for a week."¹⁶ Though these efforts were somewhat ad hoc, there do seem to be some government attempts to provide for the men unable to work on their return. There were discussions at the War Office about providing a house and pension for a disabled veteran who would maintain a British cemetery in Turkey.¹⁷

There are also suggestions that the nurses too felt the lasting effects from their wartime service. Terrot's health may have been impaired by her Crimean fever. While at the ceremony to receive her medal, she appeared somewhat frail, needing her cousin's assistance to walk and having difficulty in rising from her curtsy to the queen. Though she was elderly at this point and some of this might be expected with age, her cousin, a contemporary, did not have such difficulties. She is also reported to have had some psychological strain in receiving the tribute. Her descendant Charles Hugh Terrot reports her being overcome with remembering the nurses and men who had died.¹⁸ Tradition says that Fanny Taylor too had some lasting emotional effects from the war. Her

¹⁶ William Donaldson to Sarah Anne Terrot, March 2, 1861 BL Add. Mss. 47,742, 28-29.

¹⁷ Crimean war cemeteries on the shores of the Bosphorus, War Office: Secretary-at-War, Correspondence, WO43/1032, National Archives, Kew.

¹⁸ Terrot, *Nurse Sarah Anne*, 164-168.

community preserves the account of her having nightmares of rats crawling in her bed for years after her return.¹⁹

Like the men, many of the nurses returned to very difficult lives. Some of them had received enough education or had had enough experience to write a clear, business-like letter to Nightingale asking for the monies due them:

Having observed in the newspapers that you have returned to England, I have taken the liberty of expressing a hope that you have arrived safely and in health from the East, and at the same time of directing your attention to my letter of the 15th or 16th May, (I forget which) dispatched to the same address as this, in which I sent you, in accordance with Mrs. Smith's directions a detailed account of my expenses from the time I landed at Southampton till my arrival at my own house in Edinburgh,"

wrote Ann Sinclair,

These expenses amounted to £4, exclusive of necessary diet on the way, for which I made no charge.²⁰

Susan Cator, the woman who very nearly was not selected to go because of allusions to an unfounded rumor of drunkenness in a reference, also wrote similarly. She too asked after Nightingale's health and sent greetings to her aunt, but like Sinclair, hinted that she was in need of work.²¹ Some of Nightingale's correspondents had had less formal education than Ann Sinclair's letter suggests she had had, and were also less able to merely hint at their needs in a ladylike way. Wartime service did nothing to address the underlying conditions of poverty which had prompted some to seek the work. Many of the immediate post-war letters to Nightingale from nurses discuss their job prospects.

Jane Harding wrote to say that she was working in a family whom the queen visited for

¹⁹ The story of Taylor's post-war nightmares is a tradition in the community she founded, The Poor Servants of the Mother of God, and I am grateful to some of the sisters for sharing with me their sense of how Taylor's story was passed on through oral tradition.

²⁰ Ann Sinclair to Florence Nightingale, August 18, 1856, Nightingale Collection, H01/ST/NC/02/v15/56, 1.

²¹ Susan Cator to Florence Nightingale, October 19, 1856, Nightingale Collection, H01/ST/NC/02/v48/56.

lunch. Harding was asked to bring the little girl whom she was caring for down to meet the queen and was herself presented:

Her ladyship told Her Majesty I had been one of your nurses when she very graciously stood & talk'd to me about the East she then ask'd my name and told the countess canning to remember My Name and she said I have often heard of Mrs. Harding from Mr. Percy. Her Majesty then said she would like to know what Miss Nightingale said of me. ... if its not asking to much will you please to send me a reference to forward to England and [about two words missing] Her Majesty or please to write to Her Yourself as I am sure a word from you Miss will get Me some permanent situation. I would not have troubled you if I had not been at this present time almost without a shilling and every thing is so dear that I do not know how to live if something does not turn up soon as I have not felt strong since the Fever but am much better since I came to London ²²

Some, like Ann Tainton were unable to find any work on their return and had to cope with the added difficulties of childcare or other family responsibilities.

I ham very thankfull to think that you have heard so good acount of me as i have not given you cause to bee Angry with mee I hope you are quite well and thank God he has brought you safe back a gain i hope Mrs Roberts is quite well if you please to give my kind love to her I ham still staing with my Brother as i have not heard of hiney thing to do yet My friends thinks that if i whent out a private Nursing it would be best for mee as i have still to pay for My Little Boy he is not Printiest yet But he is at Work at the trade and having 3 shillings a week as he is a Learning they Canot give him more and they whant 10 Pounds to binde him then he would be geting more if you please Miss could you tell mee if there is hiney truth about what is in the papers about the Sultan giving money for the Nurses.²³

Anne Elizabeth Clark seems to have corresponded relatively frequently with Nightingale, and her letters provide an invaluable perspective on the lives and work of mid-century domestic servants. After apparently receiving a copy of *Pilgrim's Progress*

²² Jane Harding to Florence Nightingale, n.d., 1856 H01/ST/NC/02/v59/56, 2-4. I have capitalized some words in this quotation which would be lower case in modern usage to reflect Harding's emphasis of these words, which she begins with an extra flourish not easily reproduced in printed text.

²³ Ann Tainton to Florence Nightingale, August 22, 1856, H01/ST/NC/02/v21/56, 1-2. I have chosen to preserve Tainton's spelling and punctuation since I believe that standardizing these would lessen the impact of the letter, clearly written by someone much more accustomed to spoken than to written English. Although this collection does not contain Nightingale's answer, a second letter from Tainton indicates that Nightingale had given information about the Sultan's gift. Tainton's situation was still difficult since she repeats her need for money and thanks Nightingale for keeping her in mind if she should hear of any positions. See Ann Tainton to Florence Nightingale, September 11, 1856, H01/ST/NC/02/v40/56.

from Nightingale, Clark wrote in 1857, describing her increasing responsibilities in the house and her inability to talk with a housemaid with whom she had become friends.

Despite the difficulties, Clark clearly struggled to carve out time and space for her own interests and took the opportunity to share these with Nightingale:

I assure you, I have very little time for reading since we came to town. I am out very much with the Children when they are abed I have to look to theirs [sic] clothes and my own & read a chapter in my Bible. I still hope to get through the Book by degrees. My Mistress keeps very unwell lately.

I wish you a happy new Year Dear Miss Nightingale, and many many happy ones.

In a postscript, Clark added: "I hope your Papa & Mamma is quite well."²⁴

Frances Taylor summed up the difficulties of some of the working class women as follows:

Warm eulogiums were lavished upon us, kindly feelings were cherished, and then people thought their part was done. They never enquired into our difficulties; never strove to understand the working of the plan; set it down as an established fact that it was right, and consequently left those who were engaged in it to struggle on as they best might. And when the paid nurses returned to their own country, many of them broken in health from the hardships they had undergone, they found their places filled up; and instead of their Eastern service being in any way rewarded or recognised by the authorities at home, they were, many of them, thrown into real distress, by being refused employment because they had been engaged in military hospitals. Rumours had reached England of the little work they had to do at Scutari, and matrons of English hospitals declined engaging women who must in consequence have acquired habits of idleness. Private families hesitated to employ nurses, who (in many instances with unhappily too much truth) they imagined must be demoralized by living in military hospitals.²⁵

Gender, class and religion affect the ways in which the nurses were compensated and commended for their work, as well as the ways they were remembered by individuals

²⁴ Ann Elizabeth Clarke to Florence Nightingale, January 13, 1857, H01/ST/NC/02/v60/56, 3-4. The last number of Clarke's date is not clear. She may have written 1856 and then corrected it to 1857. The archivist has included this in the 1856 letters but clearly from the early January date and the New Year greetings, Clarke must have meant 1857.

²⁵ Taylor, *Eastern Hospitals*, 340-341.

and the nation as a whole. Shortly after the war, the Sultan sent money to be used for gifts to the nurses. Middle-class women were to be given a brooch commemorating their service, and working-class women were to be given money. Interestingly, there is some correspondence relating to one of the nurses' preference for receiving the brooch rather than the money. The request was denied on the grounds that she had received wages for her work. Though none of the writers says this explicitly, it seems clear that there was some fear that the request was an attempt to transgress class boundaries and the response insured that the distinctions attributed to economic status were maintained.

Some women did not receive individual compensation. The Sisters of Mercy, for example, were not given either the brooch or money, but Bishop Grant was asked to disburse funds to each convent which had sent out sisters, with the amount depending on the number who went. The funds were to be used to support the work of the communities, and this was thought a way of recognizing that the sisters had not gone out expecting compensation, had taken vows prohibiting sisters from having their own money, and a way of recognizing that the sisters had done important work. This was a difficult situation to negotiate; the government could neither appear to willingly deny the sisters some recognition offered by the Sultan, nor would they want to appear to further the work of a particular Catholic institution.

The sisters, too, in particular the ones from Ireland, seem to have had some reservations about accepting the money. Grant seems to have persuaded them both by pointing out that the gift would be used for the poor and that the Bermondsey community had already accepted it. In general, the Bermondsey community was on better terms with officials involved in all aspects of the work, so it made sense that they should have felt

more comfortable with accepting the funds: they knew Grant more on a personal level than the Irish Sisters could have, and Clare Moore and others from the community were friendly with Florence Nightingale. In a sense then, they were able to accept the gift freely because it was arranged by people with whom they had good working relationships and with whom they had developed a level of trust. As evidence of Nightingale's respect for the community, she declined her portion of the Sultan's gift, asking that her share be added to the money to be given to the Bermondsey Sisters.²⁶ I do not know what arrangements were made for the Anglican Sisters.

Because the Sultan's gift was facilitated through the War Office and was discussed briefly in the press, it combines elements of individual and group, private and public tributes. Similarly, a commendation of the two le Mesurier sisters who had had supervisory responsibilities at Smyrna was published in the press and so is both a recognition of their work as individuals but also a reflection by the doctors with whom they worked closely on the value of the work as a whole: "It is difficult to put too high a value, Miss Le Mesurier, upon your labours. Many have doubted the usefulness of the gratuitous services of ladies in military hospitals. You have fairly solved that question. In remembrance of your labours in the Smyrna Civil Hospital, and as a trifling proof of the estimation in which they are held by the members of the medical staff who had the best opportunity of judging of them, we beg your acceptance of the accompanying silver 'Copa' and 'Zarves' [these are the words in the newspaper article, but I can't find what they mean] of Smyrna manufacture. With many most sincere wishes for the health and

²⁶ For the correspondence between the War Office and Grant and between Grant and Irish bishops, including copies of checks sent to convents, see *Nurses in the Crimea*, War Office: Secretary-at-War, Correspondence, WO 43/963, 206-214, National Archives, Kew.

future happiness of yourself and Miss Charlotte Le Mesurier, we beg to subscribe ourselves very faithfully and sincerely yours, [signed by several doctors]”²⁷

Nurses’ work was assessed on a more individual basis by Nightingale in her reports, sent home periodically throughout the war. Although some of these were sent to the War Office, their contents do not seem to have been made public, though they were sometimes referred to when questions of back wages, or eligibility for the Sultan’s gift or government pensions arose. As would be expected, given that Nightingale was often writing during the press of hospital work and administrative tasks more directly associated with patient care, her reports are sometimes a bit sketchy or formulaic. Possibly because of her own class perceptions, Nightingale did not always comment in detail on the work of ladies as if it would be understood that their work was of course perfectly acceptable. On a more practical level, it would be unlikely that any of the ladies would need a reference for future work, while the working class women very probably would. Some of her comments on individuals do stand out from the rest. Nightingale’s report on Jane Evans’ work does not reveal much of her nursing, but does illustrate more of the personal impression she made and something of her skills outside the hospital:

a most eccentric little Welsh woman – her manner makes many wonder whether she is a knave or a fool – but none have been more useful, laborious, honest, respectable, sober & trustworthy than Jane Evans. I am under great obligation to her for her active zeal – and from her farming knowledge, she was able to keep one of the Crimean Hospitals supplied with milk during the winter.²⁸

²⁷ *Illustrated London News*, August 16, 1856, Nightingale Cuttings, RAMC 27, Wellcome Library, London.

²⁸ Florence Nightingale, Reports on Nurses, BL Add. Mss. 43,402 report 2. Evans wrote to Nightingale after the war discussing her need for work. Although there is no discussion in the letter or in Nightingale’s report on Evans, Evans’ son wrote the letter to Nightingale, raising questions of whether Evans may have been more comfortable in Welsh than in English and adding to our understanding of the multi-national nature of the nursing contingent.

Earning 16 shillings per week, Mrs. McPherson was one of the higher-paid of the nurses, and Nightingale praised her work as being sober and respectable but added that she was “habitually indolent and given to flirting, although ancient.”²⁹ Nightingale does not seem to have taken any action based on these criticisms, and does seem to have distinguished between flirting and more serious cases of sexual misconduct. In reference to a Miss Jones she wrote: “I think it is wrong to keep her, wrong to send her home on the same footing as the other Nurses. But I see no punishment that I can inflict upon her, excepting that of only paying her wages to the day of her discharge. For, in mercy, one cannot ruin a woman, morally, by leaving her out here. As to herself, I have nothing to do with preventing her marrying her lover in England. The woman is recklessly false. So far is proved. And I have strong suspicions of another character against her. But no proof.”³⁰ Given the cultural stereotypes of working-class nurses as being habitually drunk, one might expect that Nightingale would dismiss any woman caught under the influence. While some certainly were dismissed for drinking and others were described as in need of supervision to keep them away from the alcohol used for patients, Nightingale and other women in supervisory positions did seem to make some allowances. In her report, Nightingale said she did not want to dismiss Nurse Hawkins for her intemperance because she struggled hard against it.³¹ Describing St. John’s

²⁹ Ibid. According to notes of individual women’s salaries contained in Nightingale’s reports held by the British Library, the rate of pay ranged from 12 shillings per week to 18 shillings per week, though the reports do not indicate how the individual rates were calculated. There did seem to be the possibility for women to be paid more as their service continued but, again, there is no indication of how the raises were given.

³⁰ Florence Nightingale, Reports on Nurses, BL Add. Mss. 43,402 report 1. I have been unable to identify Miss Jones more precisely, and do not know what happened to her after the war. Nightingale’s desire to “punish” Jones, combined with the recognition that some actions she might be considering could “ruin” her and her willingness to raise unproven allegations, illustrate the complex web of class and gender dynamics and the power relationships at work among the nurses.

³¹ Ibid.

House nurse Rebecca Lawfield, Nightingale wrote: “sobriety, honesty, propriety irreproachable – too much of a fine lady to be a good nurse. ... Lawfield is fonder of sketching! than of poulticing.”³² Since Lawfield received wages at St. John’s House and while working in the military hospitals, Nightingale’s use of “lady” was probably meant sarcastically. The fact that Nightingale had no qualms about putting barbed comments in documents which could have very significant consequences for working-class women is further evidence of the ramifications of class distinctions. Anne Warde Morton, a middle-class woman with some supervisory responsibilities also sketched while a Crimean nurse, but Nightingale does not seem to have objected to it in her case. There is no mention here of Lawfield’s becoming a Catholic although in other writings, Nightingale is concerned about it. Throughout her reports, Nightingale appears conscious of the need to document both expenses and to provide evidence for any actions she might take against nurses. She is concerned that all involved view the situation as respectable.

The whole of the above the Ladies & Nurses have been settled with & paid up to the day of their arrival in England – None have any farther claim on the War Office. All have been more than sufficiently paid—the value of the clothing, not drawn by them, I have given them in money (on the departure of each for reasons not involving misconduct, such as the breaking up of the hospitals). I consider this well worth the while of the War Office, in order to save our Regulation Clothing from being seen in the pawn broker’s shops in London.³³

Though the idea of the monarch’s caring for each subject as an individual might in many cases be more of a rhetorical ideal than an actual experienced reality, there is

³² Ibid.

³³ Florence Nightingale, Reports on Nurses, BL Add. Mss. 43,402 report 2. On the face of it, this worry about women pawning government-issue clothing might seem overly cautious or as though Nightingale accepted the idea of working-class women as only concerned with money. However, there is one example of a nurse accused of stealing hospital supplies. The tone of the reporting in *The Times* (September 11, 1855) conveys more of a sense of the desperation of some of the nurses than it does their desire to cheat.

some evidence to suggest that Queen Victoria tried to live up to this high standard. She visited wounded soldiers in hospitals on their return home, welcomed groups of Crimean veterans to Buckingham Palace and is described as taking a personal interest in the individual stories and particular medical conditions of many. She also helped arrange for some to be appointed to positions such as park workers. One report of such a visit occurring during the war raises the important question of how the wounded veterans, especially those with longterm disabilities, might integrate back in to British society and live fulfilling lives after the war. While inspecting the guards that have come home wounded and disabled, “the Queen addressed each man, asking particularly about his wounds, how long he had been ill, whether he still felt any pain, and other inquiries, all dictated in the most kind and gracious spirit,” reported the *Illustrated London News*:

Several of them, having been but a short time in the Army, will be entitled to only a small amount of pension; and the bare idea that men who have performed such feats of valour in the service of their country should be left to struggle with penury and destitution cannot be for a moment tolerated. Many of these men, although unfit for military service, are quite capable of duties where steady habits of discipline, trustworthiness, and obedience are required, and would rejoice in any employment that would enable them to maintain their independence. They are well suited to act as private watchmen, gatekeepers, porters, or warehouse-keepers, and as porters in attendance upon passengers at railways would be highly useful. It is to be hoped that the generous feelings manifested in innumerable instances by the public during the present war will not fail to find employment for these noble fellows. We are glad to learn that every opportunity of employing them in the Royal parks will not be forgotten.³⁴

The queen also met with Florence Nightingale at Balmoral, interested to hear her assessment of the war and what should be done next to improve conditions in the army hospitals. The exchange also reveals much about gender norms of the day, which

³⁴ *Illustrated London News*, March 10, 1855, 238. For a discussion of the Queen’s efforts to find employment for veterans see Walter L. Arnstein “The Warrior Queen: Reflections on Victoria and Her World” *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 30, no 1 (Spring 1998): 8-14; Stanley Weintraub, *Victoria: An Intimate Biography* (New York: Penguin, 1992) 238-241. Some of the nurses, including Sarah Anne Terrot, also helped veterans find government jobs.

Victoria upheld and embodied. She found Nightingale to be both ladylike and manly.³⁵ Since Nightingale's behavior and that of other nurses fell outside the accepted limits for proper women, the Queen's confusion over Nightingale's gender identity reflected her culture's inability to see such actions as womanly. Finally, the exchange between Queen Victoria and Jane Harding described earlier in this chapter does suggest genuine concern for individual nurses which went beyond the need to provide care for the troops. Nightingale's answers to Harding are not in the Nightingale collection, either as copies of letters sent or as draft comments written on Harding's letters. Therefore, it is difficult to determine if any concrete benefit came to Harding as a result of her meeting with Victoria. Yet, Harding was by no means a public figure, and Victoria would certainly have kept within protocol by simply acknowledging Harding's service. Certainly she went beyond expectations by both standing for Harding and asking Canning to note her name. Because Victorian gender ideals assumed that women would have someone to support them financially, their difficulties returning to civilian life received less notice than men's.

Though no doubt respectfully meant, some of the public attention the returning wounded soldiers received was not likely to do much to help them return to their pre-war lives. Some of it would have served to highlight the separateness of the soldiers' experiences and the labeling of the men as somehow different from the rest of society:

... a beardless youth, had his arm in a sling; another, scarcely older, was walking on crutches. Some were carried, and others were led on shore. Some hundreds of people were in the docks when the *Indus* arrived, and the most intense curiosity was manifested to see the heroes of Inkerman. A lane was formed by the spectators, who treated the wounded soldiers as they passed with the greatest respect. The pale appearance and maimed state of the officers prevented anything

³⁵ Arnstein, "Warrior Queen," 8-14; Walter L. Arnstein *Queen Victoria* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 95-102.

like cheering. The labourers and coal-heavers working in the docks and on board ships stopped their work and ran to look at the men who fought so gloriously in the Crimea.”³⁶

Though the queen did seem to take a personal interest in the conditions and future lives of some of the wounded soldiers, her position meant that any attention she paid to them would very likely be reported in the press, insuring that some had the uncomfortable experience of their disabilities being the subject of public comment or the simpler and less productive public stare:

Three men were photographed in a group, without so much as one leg among them. They seemed very healthy and happy, and occasionally raced together over the brick-yard amid the acclamations of their companions. Two of these poor fellows lost their limbs from frost-bite; the third was wounded by the splinters of a shell. One of them, Conner, of the 49th, has received a pair of mechanical legs—a present from her Majesty. With these he can cross the barrack-yard without the aid of a stick; but he finds it rather awkward to recover legs when he trips up. From the appearance of these poor men we may realize the frightful amount of human suffering that has been endured in the crowded wards in the Crimean hospitals. Imagine the case of Thomas M’Kavery of the 68th, who was wounded in the thigh The wound is healed up, and, by the aid of a thick-soled boot, the poor man walks; but his wasted face and hollow eyes tell a most sad tale.³⁷

Over the course of the war, London’s Surrey Gardens hosted events to raise funds and to allow the public to in some ways experience what their loved ones at the front were experiencing. The recreation of the siege of Sebastopol, including a model, nightly fireworks displays and wounded soldiers hired to reenact the battle and to answer questions from the public was particularly well-attended. This did give the veterans jobs, but also made them the same kind of spectacle as the model and fireworks.³⁸

³⁶ *Illustrated London News*, December 9, 1854, 575.

³⁷ *Illustrated London News*, May 24, 1856, Nightingale Cuttings, RAMC 27, Wellcome Library, London.

³⁸ See Various Newspaper Clippings, Playbills and Posters, Surrey Gardens files, Southwark Local History Library. I am grateful to the librarians for drawing my attention to this material.

Like the soldiers, the nurses had both to recapture their pre-war lives and work and to cope with their new situations. Mary Stanley continued her work among the poor after the war. In his biography of her, her brother reports that she set up savings banks for poor women and worked among families affected by the cotton shortages during the American Civil War. She also continued to exhibit the ecumenical spirit evident during the war with her relations with the Sisters of Mercy. This must have been a spirit in part drawn from her upbringing since it was displayed at the time of her death. Her passing was marked by both a requiem Mass in her local church but also by an Anglican service at which her brother officiated when she was buried in the family graveyard.³⁹

St. John's House, the Anglican nurses training institution run by Mary Jones and C. P. Shepherd, continued to attract members and to send nurses all over the country. In addition, they took charge of the nursing at King's College Hospital which both increased the quality of nursing care there, but also made members' probation more formal. Most of the Crimean nurses left St. John's either shortly after their return or within about ten to fifteen years after the war's end. Most simply do not appear in lists of members' names after this time or their names are annotated with remarks like "left the institution."

Two whose records do indicate reasons for leaving are Rebecca Lawfield, who became a Catholic, and Mary Anne Coyle, who left to marry. Elizabeth Woodward had initially left in order to continue to care for a Crimean patient whom she had nursed during his voyage home. She came back briefly, but never really stayed much beyond her wartime service. Mary Anne Coyle left the institution to marry, but there are no details given of her husband's background or much of her work after the war. Mary

³⁹ Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, *Memoirs of Edward and Catherine Stanley* (London: Murray, 1879), 342-355.

Jones remained the superior, though she continued to have some difficulties with the chaplain over the religious persuasion of St. John's. Eventually, it broke with its earlier traditions and seems to have become a more formal sisterhood along higher church lines than some of the chaplains associated with it favored. This change was something Jones wished, and it perhaps reflected her ability to prevail in the face of what was probably fairly strong clerical opposition. Despite their rather frosty beginnings, Jones and Nightingale continued to write each other and eventually became very close friends. After the war, they corresponded on details of hospital administration, their families, Jones' struggles over the religious nature of St. John's House and other more personal matters. They wrote to one another into old age, with their correspondence shifting from the formal address of "my Dear Miss ..." to "Dearest Friend". As with Clare Moore, Nightingale seems to have valued the friendship of others in the community. She was in daily contact with them during Jones' final illness, inquiring after her medical needs and expressing concern for the community and sorrow for their coming loss. She sent a wreath at Jones' death.⁴⁰

Because they had a more formal structure and vows from the beginning, the Sisters of Mercy who survived the war all remained in the order. Houses which sent Sisters out to the military hospitals continued to work among the poor at home and to send Sisters to make new foundations throughout Britain, America and Australia. Mother Francis Bridgeman's journal was circulated among the order as *A Guide To Superiors*,

⁴⁰ On particular nurses, see Register of Nurses, SJH H01/ST/SJ/C/03/001, and Mary Jones, Lady Superintendent's Diaries, SJH H01/ST/SJ/A20/1-3. For a discussion of both the work and significance of St. John's House and the relationship between Nightingale and Jones see Carol Helmstadter, "Robert Bentley Todd, St. John's House, and the Origins of the Modern Trained Nurse," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 67, no. 2 (1993): 282-319; and Joanne G. Widerquist, "'Dearest Friend': The Correspondence of Colleagues Florence Nightingale and Mary Jones," *Nursing History Review* 1 (1993): 25-42.

and Bridgeman remained superior of her local community for much of her remaining years. Father William Ronan, who had been chaplain to the Sisters, continued his connections with them, giving retreats to the community on several occasions. When it was thought that Bridgeman was near death, the Sisters sent a telegraph so that Ronan could be at her bedside.

The Bermondsey Sisters of Mercy also returned to work similar to what they had been doing before the war. They established hospitals and houses throughout England and overseas. On her return Clare Moore resumed her duties as superior, holding the position until her death in 1874. She and other members of the community continued to correspond with Florence Nightingale, who became both something of a benefactor and friend to the Sisters. She sent donations to assist in the work, letters of support when the Sisters faced difficulties, in particular in new foundations, as well as more personal gifts like greenery for Christmas, wine and game when Clare Moore was ill and eggs for the Sisters when Moore was on her deathbed so they would not have to worry about cooking. Moore and Nightingale also exchanged frequent letters for about 20 years in which they discussed work and how they felt about it. Nightingale borrowed spiritual books from Moore, so their letters were often analyses of various writers. Nightingale's letters often express feelings of isolation or of not being understood by family and friends, whereas Moore's reveal more of a sense of contentment. Possibly because her work was done in the context of an established community, she did not feel as isolated as Nightingale sometimes did. The correspondence between Nightingale, Moore and other Bermondsey Sisters reveals a longstanding relationship of mutual support and encouragement which continued after Moore's death. In a letter suggesting that she was in fairly regular

correspondence with Nightingale, Sister Mary Stanislaus Jones wrote describing her work in one of the order's schools in a new foundation. She described their work of teaching, including subjects likely to equip young women for jobs as domestic servants when they left school. Jones clearly also valued her ongoing connections with former students, and found Nightingale to be a supportive friend:

I hope my dear Miss Nightingale I have not tired you too much with this long letter, but it is a great pleasure to me to find a friend who takes an interest in this work – being in the country we have very few visitors. With grateful and affectionate love
I am yours very affectionately
S. M. Stanislaus⁴¹

The community, and Moore in particular, continued to work in partnership with Bishop Grant, assisting in translations, corresponding about the logistics of new foundations and of particular sisters seeking to enter. Despite their formal address, the letters between Moore and Grant reveal concern for each other and collaboration which went beyond simply the relation of a sister to her ecclesiastical superior. The archives hold a charming biography of Grant, believed to have been written by Moore, which illustrates his frequent visits to Bermondsey, his concern for the poor and interest in supporting the aspects of their work which benefitted the poor of the parish as well as a lively sense of humor. Others must have recognized that Moore and Grant were friends, since on his death, she was given his pectoral cross.

Sister Gonzaga Barrie, coworker and friend of Sarah Anne Terrot, is another who kept in touch with Florence Nightingale. During the tension surrounding allegations of proselytizing, Barrie made a joke of the criticisms of the Sisters and the speculations about Nightingale's own religious beliefs by referring to Nightingale as the Pope and

⁴¹ Sister M. Stanislaus [Jones] to Florence Nightingale January 24, 1889, Nightingale Collection H01/ST/NC/02/v2/89.

herself as the cardinal. Nightingale joined in, often writing letters to “my cardinal”. Barrie was sent to establish a foundation at St. John’s and St. Elizabeth’s hospital in London in part because of her administrative experiences in the Crimean hospitals. She also nursed Cardinal Nicholas Wiseman in his final illness, having received spiritual direction from him during several years. Like others of the Crimean nurses, Barrie had a reputation for speaking her mind, a trait which not everyone appreciated and which sometimes caused her difficulty. As with Anglican sister Elizabeth Wheeler’s dismissal because of her letter published in *The Times*, Barrie’s candor and authoritative manner were not always appreciated by male officials. The foundation she established ran into difficulty, and she returned to the community at Bermondsey, where she died.

Although she did not continue to work as a nurse after the War, Frances Taylor’s Crimean experiences nonetheless shaped the course of the rest of her life. As in the hospitals, she continued to advocate for the improvement of conditions of the poor and for the increased public position of Catholics in English society. The community she founded, the Poor Servants of the Mother of God, worked to establish institutions designed to provide particularly women a degree of economic independence. Through their schools and visits to the poor and sick in their homes, the sisters provided crucial social services unavailable elsewhere. Taylor herself continued to write and edit, with the community running its own publishing firm. Much of her work was designed to present Catholics as valued members of English society. Her *Irish Hearts and Irish Homes*, is a series of sketches of the work of various Irish convents, many of them houses of Sisters of Mercy. Throughout, Taylor illustrates the good works the Sisters were doing emphasizing their service to community and provision, as in the Crimean War, for the

corporal needs of all and spiritual needs of Catholics. Her *Tybourne* is a reworking of the stories of some of the early Catholic martyrs executed there. By focusing on a fictionalized recusant family Taylor wanted to combat the fear that English Catholics, through their connections to France, Britain's historic enemy and a country which had violently overthrown its monarch, were somehow a disloyal fifth column. As with her Crimean account, she presents Catholics as quintessentially British. Throughout her work of establishing the new community and in its early years, Taylor and the Sisters received support from the Jesuits, continuing an association begun in the Crimea. Taylor visited Father Woollett when he was living in retirement in the north of England at Stonyhurst, the Jesuits' school for boys. This may have been shortly before his death, and Taylor reported him to still be "full of fun", and urged him to in some way recount his own experiences to a broader audience. In fact, the society seems to have consulted her when preparing Woollett's obituary.⁴²

Several of the clergy who played significant roles in the lives of the Crimean nurses continued to have Crimean connections after the war. Bishop Grant was a staunch advocate for increasing the numbers of Catholic military chaplains, winning greater support for them in the army and raising issues unique to the navy after the war. Thomas Unsworth, a Crimean chaplain, helped to produce a prayer book designed for the use of Catholic soldiers, likely drawing on his experiences and assessment of the needs he met in the hospitals. In addition to doctrinal things one might expect soldiers to seek, or military chaplains feel the need to instruct such as preparation for death or how to achieve a state of grace before battle if the sacrament of confession were unavailable, it

⁴² Frances Taylor's Memo on the Crimea, SMG archives, V/A7, Brentwood, U.K.; obituary of Father Woollett, *Letters and Notices* (April 1898), 423.

also contained very practical advice possibly of use to those new to Catholicism, or whose practice of it was renewed in the army. Soldiers were advised that if the host stuck to the roof of their mouths, it would be more reverential to let it melt than to free it with a finger.⁴³

Sidney Woollett too continued his work among British troops while overseas. Shortly after returning from the Crimea, he left England for about forty years of missionary work in Jamaica and Demerara, present-day Guyana. As with his Crimean letters, the Society published excerpts from his letters home which reveal Woollett's concern for the spiritual wellbeing of the soldiers and sailors he served among. As he did in his accounts of his relationships with Crimean officers, Woollett stressed the cordiality with which he was always received by ships' commanders and the assistance he received in providing Mass and confession to officers and men. His letters home reveal a concern for detail, also evident in his Crimean journal. Throughout his Crimean reports home, Woollett recorded the number of troops receiving communion at his Masses at the front. After the war, he continued this practice by reporting numbers of baptisms he officiated, the number of miles he travelled in particular weeks, and costs of feeding and stabling his horse. As in his Crimean writings, there is very little about his relationships with others on the missions, whether fellow Jesuits, Sisters or laypeople with whom he worked. We do not know from his published letters, for example, what percentages of his congregations were white colonizers or what was his perception of and reception by black people.

⁴³ William Poynter and Thomas Unsworth, *The Catholic Soldiers' & Sailors' Prayer-book* (London: Catholic Publishing and Bookselling Company, Ltd., 1858), 96-97.

Although John Butt does not seem to have officially continued work among the army, his Crimean service nonetheless had an impact on the rest of his life. When he was made Bishop of Southwark, he was also given the honorary title of Sebastopolis. *The Tablet's* reporting of his death also recounts his concern for the troops and his fellow chaplains in great detail, dwelling in particular on his friendship with Fr. Denis Sheehan. Both were ill and feared near death in the Crimea. When Butt regained consciousness and realized how serious his fever had been, he asked whether or not he had received the last rites. On hearing that Sheehan had administered the sacrament, he asked to see him and was told that Sheehan was then dangerously ill, and possibly had even died already. Butt insisted on being carried to his friend's bedside, but needed help to raise his hand to anoint Sheehan. When the story of the two friends was reported at the time, Sheehan's death attributed to his sense of duty, which would not allow him to leave his post, particularly while Butt's illness meant that there was a real shortage of Catholic chaplains. It was clearly thought to be widely known in the Catholic community, since it was reported in the tone of an oft-heard story used as an example. Butt's friends went on to add other examples of his pastoral care, pointing out that his elevation to the episcopacy did not lessen his concern for the daily trials of a parish priest.

Yet for men like Butt, Woollett and the doctors, their reintegration would probably have been easier than the nurses' return. The men's post-war lives were of course different from their wartime experiences, but they were often returning to similar work and did not have to contend with cultural constraints against seeking fulfilling work as the women did. Though certainly women like Anne Tainton, a former nurse having economic difficulties, would not have had the luxury of choosing a career based on what

they enjoyed, many of the middle-class women spent much of their time trying to recapture something they valued and had lost. For Terrot, nursing was in keeping with her philanthropic principles. "I do often long to be back in a hospital, it is not only the nursing I am fond of, but to meet so many interesting people and read their character and learn by their experience, so much of comedy and tragedy and romance, to win their confidence and affection and be useful to them and learn of them often and help them in their weary pilgrimage."⁴⁴

Sarah Anne Terrot managed to continue her nursing life after the Crimean War. Along with her family responsibilities, she advocated for veterans, sought to improve her training and continued to work in hospitals and orphanages. Although Florence Nightingale's post-Crimean life is well-known and has been intensely studied, her contributions to nursing were organizational and theoretical, rather than practical and "hands-on." While Nightingale's contribution to founding nursing schools and disseminating requirements for the nursing profession, as well as her reports on sanitary conditions and improved army medical care were acknowledged in her own day, Terrot's recognition did not arrive until fifty years after the war's end. And yet it was Terrot and her fellow nurses who did much to advance the cause of female nursing in Britain from the 1850s on.

All of the nurses, whether they were conscious of it or not, successfully challenged the gender, class and religious perceptions of their time. Despite cultural strictures against women working for pay outside the home, against Catholics and Protestants working together, and against middle-class "ladies" rejecting the image of

⁴⁴ Sarah Anne Terrot to Florence Nightingale, June 9, 1868, BL Add. Mss. 47,742, 60, British Library.

“lady bountiful” by doing work considered appropriate to working-class drudges, they largely succeeded in their struggles. They reached across boundaries of gender, class and religion to do work that they enjoyed, that they were good at and that they and others valued. In the process, they altered both contemporary perceptions of appropriate behavior for women and the role of religion in British society. While official rhetoric and some of the nurses' public presentations of their work portrayed it as necessary in a crisis but not in keeping with normal life, many nurses' daily lives challenge this assumption. They had done practical work and had rethought cultural norms before the war so that they were prepared for their Crimean service. After the war, it was assumed that they would put aside their wartime experiences and step, untransformed, back into their old lives. But both private writings and public documents tell a different story. Like Terrot, many nurses perceived themselves not as women imbedded in particular denominational and social communities, but on "weary pilgrimages" with all humanity. By fighting to continue their wartime nursing experience, they changed the role of women in British society.

THE END

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