

To Florence Nightingale

25 Septr 1861

Dear Miss Nightingale

Your offered documents will be received with fervent gratitude at Washington, I am very sure. I write to accept them, & to say that we will write again in a few posts to say where the parcel had better be sent to in London. I have no means of forwarding anything bulky from this place: but one of the American publishers in London will no doubt undertake it.

Meantime, I will write by next mail to the Secretary at War [Cameron] at Washington, to prepare him for what is coming.¹ I know, nothing can exceed the anxiety of officials there to do right by the soldiery; & their welcome of what you offer will be hearty accordingly. – I'm sure I wish we could help the Southern leaders to keep their men alive too. But, even if I had access to them (which I have not) the case really seems desperate. That soldiery is at once barbaric & corrupt. Their bodily condition is shocking, – from drink, tobacco-chewing, & the vice which always rages where slavery is. Those “Mean whites” are the very lowest specimen of the white race, – almost of the human race.²

They are dying off fast now in cholera, fever &c. They ordinarily live in a state compounded of apathy & mad excitement, from drink & passion. Such material for troops! – & a very large proportion is of that sort.

I am so glad of your Midwifery scheme,³ & that every body seems to be doing so right about it! – More soon from your devoted

Harriet Martineau.

BritLibAddMs45788/Nightingale/hm146

1. ‘American Military Services: Army Hygiene’ (*DN*, 14 January 1859).

2. ‘Mean whites’ or ‘white trash’ were (and still are) regarded as the lowest class of whites in the South. Southern economy was based on wealthy white landowners and black slaves; poor whites were reviled for posing a constant reminder that skin colour had nothing to do – inherently, at least – with socio-political ascendancy or racial superiority.

3. Florence Nightingale aimed to reform the training and practice of midwives. A programme was instituted in 1862 at King’s College Hospital, London. See Florence Nightingale, *Introductory Notes on Lying-in Hospitals* (1871).

To Hon. Simon Cameron, United States Secretary of War

30 Sept 1861

(Private)

Sir,

I have the honour to announce the approach of a parcel of documents, which Miss Nightingale enables me to offer to you, as the Head of the War-office of the United States.

You are doubtless aware that our late lamented War-Secretary, Lord Herbert, applied himself, even to the sacrifice of his life, to the improvement of the British army, – & especially of its health & morality. His ablest assistant was Miss Nightingale; & their labours have reduced the mortality in the army to one seventh of what it once was.

I was furnished by them, a few years since, with special information which enabled me to write the volume called “England and her Soldiers,” which I perceive has attracted the attention of physicians in America. I told Miss Nightingale this last fact: & in reply, she proposes to send me for your Office the documents of which I enclose a list. The parcel will be forwarded from London this week, by the American Express, addressed to yourself.

As some of these papers cannot yet be known on your side of the water, & as their utility has been tested here, the offer may, we hope, be more or less acceptable. I should have addressed the Sanitary Commission, through Dr Howe, if the documents had been all Reports of fact: but the Regulations are more important; & they should undoubtedly be addressed to the Head of the War Department.

The Regulations No 2 on the list have been in operation for two years, & were tested by the China war,¹ – the result being a reduction of the mortality to six per cent, including the killed in battle & the wounded who died. The Morale of the force was also higher than ever before. These Regulations are considered throughout Europe as the best in existence: & Miss Nightingale has been applied to by various Foreign Powers for copies of them, & information about them.

The Report No 3 has not been presented to Parliament; but it has not waited for that sanction, & has been found adequate to its purpose.

The Report No 6 is only just out, & has, of course, not yet been presented to Parliament. It was almost the last work of Lord Herbert; & there could not be a better memorial of him.

I have put in my own volume, “England & her Soldiers”; & I shall be thankful if the sad story it tells, & the new hopes it indicates should be of the slightest service to any soldiery in the world. If one of your brave and patriotic soldiers should be saved by anything we can do or say, Miss Nightingale & I shall rejoice that I have taken the liberty of addressing you thus.

I am, Sir, your Obedient Servt

Harriet Martineau.

Sent by Miss Nightingale, and Harriet Martineau.

1. The Royal Commission Sanitary Report of 1858 written by the late Sidney Herbert.
2. The Army “Medical Regulations” issued by him in Octr 1859.
3. The Army Purveyor’s “Regulations,” issued by Sidney Herbert in Janry 1861.
4. The Report on the Army Hospital Corps & service of General Hospitals.
5. The Barrack & Hospital Improvement Commission Report of 186[1?].
6. The “Day Room & Soldiers’ Institutes” Commission Report.
7. “England and her Soldiers.” 1 vol.

LibraryofCongress/WashingtonDC & UBirmHM179

-
1. Second China or Opium War (1856–60).

To Florence Nightingale

[*October 1861*]

American War-Office

I had sent off my letter to the War-secretary before your remark on the Statistical forms reached me. But I shall soon have an opportunity of saying more. Perhaps also of sending the book of diagrams. Meantime, they have those in my volume; & some of the leading facts of the attendant letter press of yours.

Miss Dix. I think I had better say plainly that, not only do I know very little personally of Miss Dix, but that I do not very much like what I do know. Of her devoted benevolence I have no doubt: but I am not satisfied of her sense, discretion or delicacy. She may be much improved since I knew her: but I could not undertake to entrust to her anything so very secret & serious as your thick vol. I could not but hesitate to admit any foreigner to a sight of evidence so damning to named individuals; nor perhaps to the worst facts of a system which is not likely to exist in that foreigner’s country. – But I think (I will look at it again) the thin one has less of this personal damning, while it is full of matter which must be most useful in U.S. I can get Sampson Low to send it to Miss Dix through his friend Olmsted, who is in the Sanitary Commission. I can also refer her to the Evidence in the Blue Book, – your Evidence, – which you speak of, & which she can see at Washington.

Mrs S. C. Hall years ago forfeited all claim to be trusted as an honourable person. I wd never let her see anything I wd not see in print, – from the time of her behaviour about Miss Edgeworth. It was as rank a case of sordid & audacious treachery as I happen to know, – her publishing a Memoir of Miss Edgeworth, as an intimate friend, after every possible warning, & in spite of Miss E’s own last prohibition, & certainly under pretences of intimacy which the Edgeworth fam-

ily utterly deny. I have myself seen the family letter on the subject: & it simply confirmed the impression I derived from the Memoir itself.¹

Midwifery Nurses. What you say is very interesting. We are consulting & considering here, & should be most thankful to send up a suitable pupil. It is a thing very much wanted here, – such a nurse, & the doctors earnestly wish for one. But, in a town of 1500 people, & a populous neighbourhood, there is actually not a maintenance for one such nurse! The people spend any money in drink & dress; but get through, in confinement cases, without expense; – get in a neighbour to help, or hire a little girl to wait &c! We must try to mend this.

BritLibAddMs45788/Nightingale/hm154

1. Mrs S. C. Hall, *Miss Edgeworth at Edgeworthstown* (1843).