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Citation

McDonald, L. (2007). Florence Nightingale and European wars: from the Crimean to the Franco-Prussian War. *Leidschrift : Ten Oorlog! Europese Oorlogen 1789-1919*, 22(September), 145-160. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/72680>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)
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Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Florence Nightingale and European wars: from the Crimean to the Franco-Prussian War

Lynn McDonald

Florence Nightingale (1820-1910) is known as the heroine of the Crimean War (1854-1856) and the major founder of the modern profession of nursing. This article will relate how Nightingale's experiences of that war, in which seven soldiers died of disease for every one who died of wounds, contributed to her conceptions of war, and how she used that knowledge to prevent unnecessary deaths thereafter. Her experiences of the Crimean War affected her attitude to the next European war in which she was significantly involved: the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871). After this war she received honours for her work from both sides. Finally this paper will consider Nightingale's views on militarism and the effects of war on society, to end with speculation as to how her views compare with those of the peace movement that emerged at the end of her life.

This article is based on the Nightingale material stemming from the *Collected Works of Florence Nightingale*, a 16-volume series of which ten volumes have been published as this article goes to press.¹ The material excerpted here is identified by its archival source; that on the Crimean War will appear in Vol. 14 of the *Collected Works*, that on other wars in Vol. 15.

First involvement: the Crimean War (1854-1856)

Britain was not the instigator of the Crimean War but followed Emperor Napoléon III of France into it. It was the first war Britain fought against a strong enemy, Russia, since defeating the French at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. The British Army's subsequent victories had all been over smaller, badly-equipped armies in Africa and India. As a result Britain was less than ill-prepared for the Crimean conflict.

Nightingale's contribution to army reform was prompted by striking inadequacies in the British Army's provision of food, clothing, shelter and

¹ Lynn McDonald ed., *Collected Works of Florence Nightingale* (Waterloo ON 2001-). The project website is <http://www.sociology.uoguelph.ca/fnightingale>. Thanks to Dr. Richard Rempel for commenting on an earlier draft of this article.

medical supplies for the soldiers. Nightingale was herself posted to the 'Barrack Hospital', in Scutari, Turkey. This barrack was on loan from the Turkish government, and wholly unfit to be a hospital, and hardly more fit to be a barrack. This was Britain's first war hospital (Britain had had only regimental hospitals at home, and temporary field 'ambulances' at war). The Barrack Hospital proved to be a costly mistake, its preventable death rate enormous. Of course the soldiers who arrived there, after crossing the Black Sea from the Crimea, were often near death on arrival, and many died in the crossing.

The preparation of the British Army for the war left much to be desired. Their temporary quarters *en route* to the war had been in a disease-ridden part of Bulgaria. Soldiers were required to leave their kits behind on proceeding to the Crimea, and when supplies were lost these were not replaced. Winter came without the soldiers being given warm clothing. The practice of the British Army then was to provide rations to the soldiers, not prepared food: soldiers had to cook their own food, build a fire, grind raw coffee, etcetera. No wonder that the men were ill from scurvy, cholera and diarrhoea before the first shot was fired. The nursing that Nightingale provided in the army hospitals of the East was the first by British women during wartime. Few of the nurses were trained and many were, for various reasons, unsuited to the work.

Immediately on return from the war, in August 1856, Nightingale set to work to prevent such massive deaths from ever recurring. She got a royal commission appointed to investigate the causes of the high mortality in the Crimean War and to recommend preventive measures. The commission was chaired by her friend, Sidney Herbert, who had, as secretary for war at the outbreak of the war, invited her to lead the nursing team there. Nightingale did much of the work behind the scenes, including briefing witnesses before their appearance. She herself gave written evidence to the commission, and worked assiduously on the preparation of graphs to illustrate her point, thus creating one of the world's first 'pie charts', in 1858.²

Nightingale also prepared a summary statement of the relevant correspondence about conditions in the field and in the hospitals, published as an appendix to the report. This makes it possible to track who did what

² *Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Regulations affecting the Sanitary Condition of the Army and the Treatment of the Sick and Wounded* (Her Majesty's Stationary Office, London: 1858).

when. It relates a sorry story of field doctors reporting dire lacks in supplies and terrible conditions suffered by the soldiers, with the complacent responses on the part of the authorities who could have provided remedies.

Nightingale's own analysis of what went wrong in the war, that is, the unnecessary suffering and high death rates, began with her being asked by the then war secretary, Lord Panmure, to write a 'précis', which she expected to take six months. This turned out to be a 567 page volume in regular pagination, plus substantial additional sections with Roman numerals, as new material became available.³ This was a 'confidential' report for the war secretary, printed at her own expense. She nevertheless circulated it widely, sending it out with a covering note explaining its not-to-be-quoted status. It is a devastating indictment of the conduct of the war from the point of view of the health and welfare of the soldiers. Clearly she wanted the full record to be available if need be. She would from time to time warn that if the right measures were not adequately put in place, another tragedy like Crimea could occur.

Nightingale's relatively short 'Answers to Written Questions Addressed to Miss Nightingale by the Commissioners', published in the royal commission report (pp 361-94), is tame in comparison. The 'Answers' scarcely mention a name, and certainly do not highlight dilatory and inadequate action. Rather Nightingale looked forward to the institution of better measures, proposals for which she laid out.

That the nursing profession was a product of the Crimean war was deeply pleasing to Nightingale, in hindsight. A devout, if perhaps unorthodox, Christian, she believed that good could come out of evil. The first regular training school for nurses, at St Thomas' Hospital, London, came out of the fund established in her honour at the end of the war. The liberation of the serfs in 1861 by the tsar of Russia, seen as a product of his defeat in the Crimea, was another example of good coming out of evil.

³ F. Nightingale, *Notes on Matters Affecting the Health, Efficiency and Hospital Administration of the British Army Founded Chiefly on the Experience of the Late War* (London 1858).

Slight involvement: Prussian wars against Denmark (1864) and Austria (1866)

Prussia's taking of Schleswig-Holstein in 1864, predating the 1866 Austro-Prussian War, received only passing comment by Nightingale. A letter she wrote to Harriet Martineau described criticism of the crown princess of Prussia, who was, like her husband, a liberal, 'for being German, *not* Prussian'.⁴ Here 'German' signifies the positive culture, while 'Prussian' refers to militarism.

Nightingale was only slightly involved in the Austro-Prussian War of 1866, which can be seen as the run-up to the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871 itself. To a leading military doctor, Thomas Longmore, she explained her growing involvement:

When war was first declared last year, I was applied to in my private capacity, by Italy, Prussia and Hesse Darmstadt, about the organization of field and other war hospitals, including nursing. I was *not* asked for any other help. But, after Königgrätz [3 July 1866], Mme Schwabe (a German and a frantic Garibaldian and Prussian), the best heart and the worst head I know, was mad to get up a subscription. I joined her, at her earnest request, in order to prevent mischief – but only on condition that all monies should be devoted to *all* sides.⁵

Nightingale told her acquaintance Mme Schwabe that 'forty-three of my old friends, the deaconesses of Kaiserswerth on the Rhine (near Düsseldorf), served in the war hospitals at Sadowa and near Königgrätz'. Further, that 'Princess Louis of Hesse Darmstadt' would joyfully accept the money Mme Schwabe had raised, and that it should be sent to the princess directly, 'for she, it appears, does these things herself'.⁶

⁴ Letter 30 May 1864; British Library London, ADD MSS (hereafter: ADD MSS) 45788, f.265

⁵ Letter to Thomas Longmore 14 February 1867; Wellcome Library for the History and Understanding of Medicine London (hereafter: Wellcome), MS. 7204.

⁶ Letter 21 September 1866, University of Alabama at Birmingham, Reynolds Historical Library, 5097. The Princess Louis was Princess Alice, like her sister, the crown princess of Prussia, a daughter of Queen Victoria.

The experience of that war gave warning of the sanitary defects in the care of the sick and wounded that occurred in the later Franco-Prussian War. Interestingly, the bad reports included the Kaiserswerth deaconesses with whom Nightingale had worked. The army doctors were ‘sanitary angels’ in comparison, a point which helps explain Nightingale’s scepticism about voluntary efforts in war relief such as by the Red Cross.

The princess royal told me *in confidence* that the agency provided by the Knights of St John at Sadowa was the most dirty, the most useless, the most untrained and unsanitary possible. She said the Prussian Army medical officers were sanitary angels in comparison. She said that it was impossible to conceive the worse than uselessness, the dirty, feckless creatures, male and female, accommodation, civil doctors, everything provided by the voluntary agency at Sadowa. And (which I have never told anyone) she said the deaconesses were just as bad.⁷

Nightingale’s draft letter to the crown princess in 1866, in response to a letter from her, is more circumspect about the deficiencies of the Kaiserswerth deaconesses. But Nightingale’s informant, an English lady, had had to beg for food for the sick and wounded. It took two days for the ‘Prussian wagons’ to arrive, ‘and then everything was right’. Altogether, Nightingale stated:

The system seems to me to have been admirably managed – especially the sending away the wounded in hundreds to towns where rooms and houses and nursing were offered for them.

Thus Brünn closed its hospitals, and all the advanced hospitals are cleared. The overcrowding and massing together of large numbers of wounded is always more disastrous than battle itself. And terrible as have been the losses from cholera and typhus, they would have been much more terrible had it not been for this wise foresight in administration.

The letter reports also on funds and assistance provided from England:

Many English ladies asked me to send them out as nurses in the German war hospitals. But, as this did not appear to be the kind of assistance wanted – the Nursing Service was already so well

⁷ Note to John Sutherland ca. 2 December 1868; ADD MSS 45753, f.123.

organized – we did not accede to their wish. On the other hand, some surgeons there wrote to us that there was an actual dearth of surgical instruments. They could not be supplied fast enough in Germany.⁸

For Nightingale there was one decidedly good outcome from the Austro-Prussian War, the defeat of Austria, then overlord of the northern parts of what would become Italy (her first name came from the city of her birth). Austria was forced to cede Venice to Italy.

In 1868 Count Bernstorff, the Prussian minister in London (later the German ambassador) sought information from Nightingale about the organization of nursing in war. The approach was made through her brother-in-law, Sir Harry Verney, a Liberal MP. Bernstorff was acting on behalf of the Central Committee of the Prussian Society for Tending Soldiers Wounded in the Field or Sick in Consequence of a Campaign. Count Bernstorff wanted to know:

to what extent since the Crimean War nurses – voluntary or paid – are trained in this country [Britain, LMCD] through the agency of Miss Nightingale for the emergency of a war, and how these nurses are employed in times of peace, whether only for the tending of soldiers who have been wounded or have lost their health in the field, or for other purposes as well.⁹

By the next year, 1869, Nightingale was studying German geography. She was distressed by maps that had ‘all North Germany put down as Prussia, in blue’, implying the growing strength of militarism.¹⁰

Significant involvement: Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871)

The Franco-Prussian War, from July 1870 to May 1871, ended France’s domination of the Continent and began Prussia’s. There was a marked increase in fire power in that war with the introduction of Gatling guns and Maxims, which had been first used in the American Civil War.

⁸ Draft letter to the crown princess 22 September 1866; ADD MSS 45750 f.16.

⁹ Bernstorff letter to Verney 21 May 1868; Claydon House Bundle, 322.

¹⁰ Letter to Harry Verney 12 May [1869]; Wellcome (Claydon copy) MS 9003, no.105.

Nightingale's involvement was different this time. While in the Crimean War she was young and inexperienced, she was now an older and more experienced individual with a strong reputation. She of course tried to save lives on both sides out of ethical-religious convictions. Her political sympathies were pro-French, but the crown princess of Prussia was not only the daughter of Queen Victoria but an acquaintance with mutual concerns over nursing. Nightingale corresponded with both princesses through Buckingham Palace, using the diplomatic pouch known as the 'Queen's bag'.

War was actually declared by the French Napoléon III, who had stayed neutral in the Austro-Prussian War, and lost popularity as a result – which was important to an 'elected' emperor, which he was of sorts. Nightingale, however, understood that the emperor had been manipulated into the declaration of war by Bismarck. Nightingale was nevertheless no admirer of Napoléon III.

If there is any difference between the last six years' criminality of L.-Napoléon [Napoléon III] and Bismarck, is not Bismarck's the worst? 'the blacker devil he', and oh that we cannot say of any man on *either* side in this awful war, 'and the more angel he'¹¹ The world is darkened indeed...

And is there anything in the darkest times to transcend the base villainy, even taking Bismarck's OWN statement, of treacherously leading an ally, a friend, into writing him improper papers, and then publishing them to the enemy, to the world, to damage the betrayed friend?¹²

Testifying to her international standing Nightingale was approached for support by both sides in the conflict. In a letter to her brother-in-law she described the arrangements for relief:

To the French and Germans who apply for help to their hospitals, I reply that I will lay their applications before the central committee, as soon as it is in working order, which I will do, through you, if you will permit...

¹¹ A paraphrase from William Shakespeare, *Othello*, Act 5, scene 2, where the murdered Desdemona was the angel, and Othello the devil.

¹² Letter to Harry Verney 10 August 1870; Wellcome (Claydon copy) MS 9004/65.

I have received from Paris a *Journal Officiel* with all the names of the civil hospitals who have offered to take in wounded. I suppose it is sent to me to lay before you for help.

I have written a no-meaning letter to the crown princess, because I could no longer delay the expression of my deepest fellow feeling for her exertions (she is a person who *might* go in the paths of mischief *if not* of good) and stated that I hope soon to give her more definite information of the kind she wants (nurses)... God knows that they will require in the hospitals all the way from Frankfort to the line on (now behind) the Saar all the supplies we can send them. How I wish I were there! What thousands must be now dying of want.¹³

Nightingale joined the Ladies' Committee and worked hard at the provision of relief supplies and, to a lesser extent, nurses. She was impatient at the slowness of action, as another letter to her brother-in-law indicates:

I am glad to see a faint beginning of advertisements in *Times*. The 'Aid Society' printed sheet, with 'Resolutions of General Committee', is very good in itself, but quite useless for the purpose of raising an *urgent* subscription. *That* should be done by representing the urgent distress, the urgent necessities of the wounded – their numbers *every* day in *every* daily paper. You should have ladies' committees in every provincial town, as the French and Germans have.¹⁴

Nightingale's sympathies remained pro-French. One statement of hers suggests that she thought Britain should not remain neutral in the Franco-Prussian War (which it did). She worried what the 'consequences to Europe would be' if 'France were seriously weakened':

It is *not* on Schleswig-Holstein that we ought to judge and condemn Bismarck (I am and have been for Schleswig-Holstein, like you, before Bismarck was born). Europe has a very different score against him than that. And if England lends herself to be at the head of a neutrality league, with this result that Bismarck is to be left to work his will in Europe, Europe will rue the day yet more than this awful war. I think England is gone mad. To write down L.-Napoléon at

¹³ Letter to Harry Verney 9 August 1870; Wellcome (Claydon copy) Ms 9004/64.

¹⁴ Letter to Harry Verney 12 August [1870]; Wellcome (Claydon copy) Ms 9004/71.

such a moment as this – can anyone doubt what, if France were seriously weakened, the consequences to Europe would be?¹⁵

In September, Nightingale was appalled at the looming siege of Paris:

The frivolity of the newspapers in speaking of France as if she were a child to be whipped or a blackguard to be flogged has been base. Does not this threatened siege of Paris rather recall the words of Christ weeping over Jerusalem? And must we not suppose Him, in human figure of speech, ‘weeping’ far more over that ‘great city’ Paris?¹⁶

To her colleague, Dr John Sutherland, who had done postgraduate medical training in Paris, Nightingale again showed her sympathy for the French during the siege:

I do not agree with the disparaging criticism I am ordered to send onto you. I think if the conduct of the French *for the last three months* had been shown by any other nation, it would have been called, *as it is*, sublime.

The uncomplaining endurance, the ‘sad and severe self-restraint’ of Paris, under a siege now of more than three months, would have rendered immortal a city of ancient Romans. The army of the Loire, fighting seven days out of nine, hungry, barefoot, cold and frozen, yet unsubdued, is worthy of Henry V and Agincourt. And all for what? To save Alsace and Lorraine, of whom Paris scarcely knows.¹⁷

Paris was finally occupied by the Prussians after a devastating four-month siege. The king of Prussia, Wilhelm I, was declared emperor of Germany at Versailles. France lost Alsace and Lorraine (regained after World War I). An indemnity of one billion dollar was imposed, with the Prussian troops to remain until it was paid. Analysis as to the reasons for the French losses appears in many letters and notes. For example, ‘Napoléon I would have satisfied himself with his own eyes and his own judgment’ as to the

¹⁵ Letter to Harry Verney 11 August [1870]; Wellcome (Claydon copy) MS 9004/70.

¹⁶ Letter to J.J. Frederick September 1870; Florence Nightingale Museum (London Metropolitan Archives) H1/ST/NC1/70/1022. The biblical allusions are to Nineveh in Jonah 4:11, and Jerusalem in Luke 19:41.

¹⁷ Note to John Sutherland 20 December 1870; ADD MSS 45755, f.144-45.

readiness of the French Army for war. But Napoléon III was qualified 'neither by education, habit nor health for wresting such knowledge from those interested in concealing it'. As in the case of the Crimean War, administrative weakness, here termed the 'Intendance' was the culprit:

The main cause of the French disaster is the Intendance; the pillage and dishonesty has been quite beyond belief and is the cause of the terrible failure in the organization of everything in the French Army: stores, ammunition, clothing, guns, *everything* falling short... When (General) MacMahon was ordered to attack at Wissenbourg, he had 'ni vivres, ni cartouches' [neither food nor bullets, LMcD] and said so – but in vain. False muster rolls of the battalions: men returned at 900 strong who never have been more than 500 at any time.¹⁸

However, while the Prussian Army was militarily superior to the French, it was woefully deficient in provision for its sick and wounded:

They have beaten the French in soldiering. But their hospitals have still to march a century and a half (or ever since Frederic the Great) to keep up to our present standard. Their definition of a soldier is 'a man in the ranks'. Out of the ranks he is somebody else, who has been unfortunate, but who is to get nothing but what he had in the ranks from his government still, and is to receive the commonest, even to the commonest necessities for a *sick* man – not from the government who calls him to arms but from his own country's *voluntary* contributions and from US.¹⁹

A letter to Emily Verney, Sir Harry's daughter and a volunteer for the National Aid Society, shows Nightingale inquiring about cleansing methods specified by the medical committee for bandages. A note on boiling, the use of soda and carbolic acid was the reply.²⁰

Again, Nightingale's focus is on administrative failures for the differences in provision between the two countries. Prussian mortality rates apparently improved in the course of the Franco-Prussian War by the sending of doctors to Edinburgh to learn antiseptic techniques from Joseph Lister.

¹⁸ Note ca. 1870; ADD MSS 45845, f.32-33.

¹⁹ Letter to Harry Verney 1 November 1870; Wellcome (Claydon copy) MS 9004/132.

²⁰ Letter 9 September 1870; Wellcome (Claydon copy) MS 9004/103.

A note by Nightingale at the end of the siege of Paris shows her horror at its consequences:

That same Galérie des Glaces [the Hall of Mirrors, LMCD] where the new emperor was proclaimed on 18 January had again its long rows of hospital beds and sick faces from the sortie of the nineteenth, part of the price paid for that page of history, like some wild and dreadful dream, till one's head reels and one's heart sickens. Paris capitulating – so terrible a moment has never been seen in the history of sieges, in the history of war, in the history of the world.²¹

Nightingale aided in the raising of relief money by sending a letter to the editor of the *Times* in support of the Lord Mayor's Fund.²²

The siege and capitulation prompted an uprising and the establishment of the Commune. The Commune was then put down brutally by the provisional government that replaced Napoléon III on his abdication. The reprisals were massive, worse than in the French Revolution and its subsequent Terror, according to Nightingale. A letter to a co-worker on relief during the Franco-Prussian War recounts:

This last week, most terrible of weeks – the most tremendous event in *our* lifetime, perhaps in *the world's* lifetime – the Great [French] Revolution was a mild, straightforward affair compared to this – this barbarous disaster in a civilized world. Words grow pale before it – I will write none – it really was reserved for the devil of France of 1871 to operate in the name of liberty, prosperity, public right and civilization.

I dare say you have as many correspondents in Paris as I have – so I will not repeat. But no newspaper reports can exaggerate: Paris 'has burnt herself down with her own hands'. One fourth is laid in ruins and not less than 50,000 people, including women and children, killed. No tongue can exaggerate the horrors committed by the troops in reprisals. They have killed every man, woman and child who could be suspected of belonging to the Commune. Awful as are the crimes of the Commune, I cannot see the difference between this diabolical revenge of the troops and the diabolical guillotine and noyades [execution by drowning] of the French First Revolution of 1793.

²¹ Note ca. late January 1871; ADD MSS 45845, f.37.

²² F. Nightingale, 'The Distress in and About Paris' *Times* 1 February 1871, p.6.

But, it is too horrible – the first French Revolution was bloodless compared to this with all its guillotines. There is nothing like it in history – not the bloodiest battle – not the longest siege – not populations put to the sword. And in these days these things are done. O what will come of it all? what *can* be the next government? Will it be a return of the worst ultra despotism, the worst ultramontaniam? and then the vicious circle all over again – socialism and mad insurrection.

The *Times* expects me to make myself a puddle of my tears because the Tuileries are burnt, ‘which were built by Catherine de Medici’, the greatest rascal the world ever saw. It is not *that*; it is the hopeless outlook of France which gives one a grief too deep for tears.²³

Also in this same long letter are comments about a request to the English National Aid Society, forerunner to the British Red Cross, for help from the Versailles government. The answer was no:

Our committee thought, I believe, (1) that Englishmen never would have subscribed the funds for *civil* war; (2) that, if they gave to one side, they had hardly an excuse for not giving to the other, if the *Commune* asked them. I do not know what they will do now.

Further, concern was expressed as to ‘wasted stores’:

So early as October last, when the Prussian Army hospitals in great distress had four months of greater before them, the Johanniter packed up large and valuable (war hospital) stores, *among them English gifts*, and gave them to be sent to German *peace* institutions, orphan asylums, etc., and religious orders *in Germany* – this under the eyes and to the horror of an old young pupil of mine in charge of their dreadful field lazareths – but who shrinks from publishing the names.²⁴

This last point helps to explain Nightingale’s contention that ‘English gifts must be distributed by English hands’.²⁵ Nightingale’s experience of the

²³ Letter to Emma Cox 31 May 1871; Florence Nightingale Museum (London Metropolitan Archives) H1/ST/NC1/71/8.

²⁴ Ibidem.

²⁵ Note ca. late January 1871; ADD Mss 45845, f.37.

Franco-Prussian War confirmed the lessons she had learned from direct experience in the Crimean War and her work for army reform post-war with the War Office. The need for careful planning, adequate monitoring, the arrival of accurate reports from the field and prompt and effective responses remained crucial. That means professional, trained officers and administrators. Whatever role volunteers on the spot could play in providing relief to the suffering – and Nightingale was moved by examples that occurred—armies had responsibilities and only armies could function at the level required.

War, Peace and Militarism

Nightingale at times reflected on the social institutions that fostered war, in this case Prussian militarism. A letter to her brother-in-law states:

I thought I knew contemporaneous German history pretty well. But I certainly hardly knew that even Bismarck was such a scoundrel. This German nationality then, freely translated, means really the ascendancy of a Prussian military oligarchy, despotism stamping out the higher civilization of the minor states. Max M.²⁶ has not at all damaged your position and he has certainly not improved Bismarck's position. I would administer a rebuke to these German transcendentalists which would cleave to them. Is this the final result of all their philosophizing – that the end justifies the means? That men may be dishonest to the last degree, if only their prospective object be good in their own eyes? And the result!? France temporarily struck down, the 'flower of the German nobility' ... sorrow, suffering and want carried into thousands of families. Is this the boasted result of Prussian supremacy? Never was there a better case to answer.²⁷

Numerous letters and notes record Nightingale's horror not only of war itself, but the danger of militarism to democratic institutions, to Germany itself, and Europe more widely. To a colleague she called the end of the Franco-Prussian War 'this most terrible moment in all history – when neo-

²⁶ Friedrich Max Müller, who published pro-Prussian material in the British press.

²⁷ Letter to Harry Verney 1 September 1870; Wellcome (Claydon copy) MS 9004/99.

German militarism is even more terrible for the future of Europe than the prostrate misery of trampled France'.²⁸

Henri Dunant, the founder of the Red Cross, credited Nightingale with inspiring him. She, however, was sceptical of the benefits of voluntary provision for the sick and wounded in war believing this should be the responsibility of government. To her brother-in-law she expressed concern about 'the very great danger of taking the responsibility off governments of providing for wounded and sick'.²⁹ There was also the problem of voluntary services being inadequate. She explained:

The Prussian government makes war cheap by throwing all its duties and responsibilities with regard to its *sick* men overboard, and leaving us and others to pick them up *if we please*. *If not, not*. It is exactly what we told our own government in 1864 with regard to the Geneva Convention: 'Take care that it in no way diminishes the responsibilities of each belligerent government for its own sick and wounded, and for making preparations in time of peace for its sick and wounded in time of war.' *We are in fact* paying a large quota to the expenses of the Prussians making war.³⁰

Given that Nightingale worked for so many years for army reform, with the War Office, one might be surprised at her attitudes to war. The military clearly remained a respectable career, in her view, but she would not glorify war. In this respect she joins a number of other women theorists of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment.³¹ Despite her attention to the care of soldiers in war her mission for the most part was directed to the civilian sick and the poor. The defeats of war were 'appalling', she said, noting the collapse of Wörth, Sedan and Metz in the Franco-Prussian War. But so was

the standing defeat of industry and independence in England, one tenth of whose population are paupers, in the standing defeat of her

²⁸ Letter to Robert Rawlinson 11 February 1871; Boston University 1/5/60. Many other examples will be published in Vol. 14 of the *Collected Works*.

²⁹ Letter to Harry Verney 18 January 1869; Wellcome (Claydon copy) Ms 9004/77.

³⁰ Letter to Harry Verney 1 November 1870; Wellcome (Claydon copy) Ms 9004/132.

³¹ Major examples are Germaine de Staël, Catharine Macaulay and Mary Wollstonecraft; see Lynn McDonald ed., *Women Theorists on Society and Politics* (Waterloo ON 1998).

attempts to reclaim criminals, in the standing defeat of all her charities and of all her police and of all her Poor Law-ing to reduce pauperism, vice, prostitution, crime... Are these not failures worse than Sedan and Paris?³²

Nightingale was confident that social science research could lead to social betterment. Her vision of public health care, moreover, depended on the skilful use of research to ascertain the causes of evils towards the application of remedial measures. This same thinking grounded peace advocacy in the early twentieth century. Nightingale's vision of possible applications, however, did not go so far as non-violent conflict resolution, a step not taken for another generation.

Nightingale's letters late in life show her still concerned about European wars. In 1888 she commented disparagingly on W.E. Gladstone's support for Balkan uprisings, referring to the German emperor (now Wilhelm II) handing him the 'Montenegrin sword'. She added: 'I hate war.'³³ In 1897, to the husband of a cousin, she reported the comments of 'the retiring American ambassador':

You Europeans have not the least idea of what an European war would be now, with your long-range guns carrying six miles, your Maxims and Gatlings, and above all your ironclads, which, on a fine day in peace can sink *by mistake* one of their own fleet.³⁴

This de-glorification of war we might see as an early step towards peace advocacy. It would not be until the end of Nightingale's life that such advocacy became the object of an organized movement. There was some early peace advocacy in the Boer War, but Nightingale by that time was past her working life. There are only occasional, brief, comments on that war in her writing. She was aware of British atrocities, for example, but never demanded an inquiry or called for accountability, which one would expect she would have done in her younger days.

It was not until the end of World War I, after her death, that there was serious advocacy of institutions to prevent war, by using the methods of social science. Social knowledge, it was then argued, could be applied to

³² Draft essay; ADD MSS 45843, f.204.

³³ Note 7 May 1888; ADD MSS 45836, f.211.

³⁴ Letter to Vaughan Nash 24 April 1897; University of British Columbia, Woodward Biomedical Library, A.85.

the development of new institutions, such as arbitration courts and councils for settling disputes, etcetera, as a substitute for going to war. This important step builds on the same approach Nightingale used in her social reform work. She had the vision that social science could be used to build a better world, even to the provision of health care and income security for all. To take that logic to the eradication of war was a step beyond her. Women theorists like Jane Addams, Emily Balch Greene and Bertha von Suttner did just that, in World War I.

While Nightingale could abhor war, she was never a pacifist, and even once commended 'force majeure' to Henri Dunant, while warning him of possible bad effects of voluntary relief in war.³⁵ Her own Crimean War was one marked by great personal bravery (along with grave tactical errors by the generals). The real challenge was to find how to elicit that same courage and self-sacrifice brought out by war to peaceful society, to 'show the same virtues in times of home life in peace'.³⁶

³⁵ Letter 31 August 1864; *News Review of British Red Cross Society*, April 1959, p.58.

³⁶ Nightingale letter on the Balaclava anniversary commemoration; *Times* 25 October 1895, p.6.