'Not worse than other girls': the convent-based rehabilitation of fallen women in Victorian Britain

"NOT WORSE THAN OTHER GIRLS": THE CONVENT-BASED REHABILITATION OF FALLEN WOMEN IN VICTORIAN BRITAIN

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(*Journal of Social History*, Spring 96, Vol. 29 Issue 3, p 527, 20p)

The Victorians were both fascinated by deviance and obsessed with its control. Victorian Britain developed a wide range of institutions designed to control, contain, or change nonconformist and problematic behaviour. The study of the control of deviance is an area of scholarship which is currently burgeoning; studies of reformatories, prisons, asylums, and borstals proliferate, many influenced by Foucault's analyses of institutions and power. While American historians have been in the vanguard of the study of moral reform movements, British historians have tended to emphasise studies of organizations which still exist in some recognizable form. What is still lacking are detailed studies of institutions which have no real equivalent in this century; perhaps the most important of these forgotten institutions was the female penitentiary for the reformation of prostitutes. The penitentiary is a doubly interesting concept because the name continues to thrive, but is attached to an institution very different in all essentials from its Victorian counterpart.[1]

In Victorian Britain, a female penitentiary was not a penal institution for the punishment of crime, but a charitable enterprise entered voluntarily by members of an outcast group, popularly known as 'fallen women.' Many fallen women were prostitutes, but the category also encompassed groups other than sexual deviants: female thieves, tramps, alcoholics, and those who were described as feeble-minded were also considered fallen, and it was seen as appropriate to rehabilitate them alongside street-walkers.[2] Penitentiaries were intended as transformative institutions, where female outcasts of many kinds could be changed into 'honest' women, a conversion which incorporated both a spiritual change from sinner to penitent, and an equally important social shift from dissolute and deviant female to respectable woman.[3] The penitentiary, despite its penal overtones, was a therapeutic community which was not experienced as unbearably punitive. As well as reforming prostitutes, Anglican penitentiaries in Victorian Britain offered shelter to the survivors of incest and sexual violence, women fleeing abusive relationships, and female alcoholics.

Most penitentiaries for sexually and morally outcast females were established and operated by another group of Victorian sexual radicals--Anglican nuns? These women, who rejected their culture's assumption that marriage and motherhood were the desired goal and instinctive norm for all women, embraced celibacy as an alternative to marriage. Sisterhoods renounced the belief that sexual immorality was a unique offence against the moral order, one that resulted in irredeemable degeneration of the character. Instead, they argued that the differences between the penitents and other working-class women were more of circumstance than of character--these 'fallen women' were not essentially different from other women of the same social origins. At the same time, they did not question the need to tame, control, and elevate the "poor and pagan" working-class women with whom they lived: they founded institutions to manage the morals of women who had transgressed against sexual or social convention. Inextricably tangled within the working of the penitentiaries were ideas of paternalism, metaphysical motherhood, class and gender solidarity, and the double standard.

The first penitentiary for the institutional reclamation of fallen women was established in London in 1806. In the early 1840s there seem to have been fewer than a dozen penitentiaries within the United Kingdom, almost all linked to the Established Church, and staffed and managed by men. After the establishment of the first Anglican sisterhood in 1845, the number of penitentiaries grew rapidly: by 1903 there were 238 Anglican penitentiaries: of these, more than 200 were directed by sisterhoods.[5] In 1840 there was space for 400 women in Church of England penitentiaries, but by 1893 more than 7000 women could be accommodated each year, primarily in institutions run by Anglican nuns.[6] Of the approximately ninety Anglican sisterhoods established by 1900, about fifty worked directly with prostitutes and fallen women in penitentiaries. Both the Community of St. Mary the Virgin, Wantage, and the Community of St. John Baptist, two of the earliest and fastest growing of the communities, were founded specifically in order to

minister to this social need.

At first glance, it seems most incongruous that the growth in attempts for the rehabilitation of prostitutes should have accompanied the growth of conventual orders: to Victorian eyes, the moral and social distance between the whore and the nun must have seemed immense. This created an interesting anomaly because while the nuns were mainly upper class in background, the inmates were working class--at a time when the two classes had minimal (and highly ritualized) social contact with one another. In part, these upper-class sisters may have seen their lives of self-sacrifice as a limited expiation of the sins of their order. At the same time, upper-class men who had resorted to prostitutes found an easier atonement. They were advised that "large and constant alms offered to institutions formed for the reformation of female penitents make the nearest approach to restitution . . . within [their] reach."[7]

Two needs coincided in the 1840s: the number of former prostitutes desiring some form of institutional care was growing rapidly, and the newly established Anglican sisterhoods, seeking a means of justifying and defending their vulnerable institutions, saw the provision of refuges for fallen women as an irrefutable vindication of their own existence. Penitentiaries, the fledgling communities argued, must be the special province of sisterhoods; because ordinary women, those who were married or who were likely to marry, could not be permitted to work with the fallen. Such work would decrease their respect for men, "creating feelings of disgust and indignation where there should be admiration and obedience."[8] (It seems not to have mattered that sisters should learn to regard men with loathing.) It was commonly believed that only 'ladies' could wield the moral influence necessary to reform fallen women. Additionally, it was a commonplace among the social theorists of the time that a religious orientation was necessary to successful reform work, again making sisterhoods an obvious source of workers.

The appropriation of penitentiaries also made sense in light of the Church's argument that the upper classes had an imperative moral duty to make restitution for preying sexually or economically upon the working classes.[9] While recent work has reminded us yet again that the popular image of the upper-class man seducing the working-class innocent was largely a fiction, a more sophisticated version of this argument focused on the economic responsibility of the upper classes for the condition of the lower, a state of affairs the Victorian church recognized as the economic pre-condition for prostitution.[10] The founder of the Church Penitentiary Association asked

And whose fault is it that the poor are so poor, that the severe toils of our women are so under-paid, that all the wretched shirt-makers and needlewomen are drudging away their lives, and often for very bread yield themselves to sin, after long resistance?[11]

While society passed sentence of "utter, final excommunication" on the fallen woman, the Church did not. Anglican sisterhoods were quick to make use of the gospel imperative to shake off the taboos forbidding the interaction of virtuous women and prostitutes. They saw a mystic relationship between their celibacy and their clients' impurity: one sister wrote

In Penitentiary Work we learn . . . the strange power of weakness. . . . We can only work in the power of the vow of Chastity: the penitents' lives are broken, they can only be mended by the perpetuity of this our vow.[12]

The first lesson learned by the communities which established penitentiaries (usually known as Houses of Mercy) was that penitentiary work demanded special skills and attitudes and that not all women were able to function effectively in it.[13] In penitentiary sisterhoods, at most one-quarter to one-fifth of the sisters worked directly with penitents (often called Magdalens).[14] Even those sisters who were successful in this work did not find it easy at first. The penitents were utterly foreign to them. They were almost invariably from a completely different social milieu, often entered as alcoholics, and fought with knives or fists on the slightest provocation. At worst, as one sister admitted, the penitents could be perceived as "disagreeable, uninteresting, evil-tempered, low and repulsive."[15]

Who were these "low and repulsive" women? Candidacy for a penitentiary was simple: to have fallen was to have had sexual intercourse with a man to whom one was not married. Some of the penitents were former street prostitutes, others had been kept mistresses, others had lived with men to whom they were not married. The unsuspecting dupes of bigamists also sought refuge in the penitentiary. At times, the category of penitent encompassed the victims of sexual violence and incest as well.[16]

Among sexually transgressive penitents, a good number seem to have been the victims of their own simplicity. Elizabeth McIntosh was typical of this group. Raised by her grandparents after her mother's remarriage, she entered Clewer as a penitent when she was twenty-one. Her 'fall' happened thus: after working as servant in various places, she married a soldier, giving him all her savings (£20) in order to enable him to buy his discharge. Instead, he deserted his regiment, leaving her destitute. Later one of the officers persuaded her to come up to London with him, promising to marry her there.[17] He was actually engaged at the time to a woman of his own social standing. The officer abandoned McIntosh after three months, leaving her £5. When Mcintosh discovered that her seducer had married, she began to drink and prostitute herself. She eventually threw herself into the Thames, and was tried for attempted suicide. After her release from gaol, she returned to prostitution, but met a soldier who had known her when she was a respectable servant, and who was unable to hide his shock at her present state. He talked her into applying for admission to the Clewer House of Mercy, run by the Community of St. John Baptist.

Many women fell into prostitution almost inadvertently and were miserable in the life. The case of Mary Ford, an early Clewer penitent, is illustrative of the impulsiveness which could mark the move into commercial sexual activity, and a reminder of how brief the episode of prostitution could be. At the age of 17, Ford left home on the remarriage of her father, after quarrelling with her new stepmother. She wandered to the garrison town of Windsor, took disreputable lodgings and drifted into prostitution in order to pay her rent. Her distress at her situation was great. She wept between customers, and like Elizabeth Mcintosh, her unhappiness became especially urgent after seeing someone she had known before her 'fall.'

Next morning when I got up I was miserable and unhappy to think I was in such a hobble. . . . I had only been in Windsor a week or a fortnight when I wished to go to some strict place naming it to poor Ruth [her friend and fellow prostitute] when we were out for a walk. . . . I says to Ruth, 'I think I should like to go to some kind clergyman and speak about the Magdalen.' [i.e. the Magdalen hospital in London]. . . . 'Law my dear Molly,' says Ruth, 'if you go to the Magdalen I'll go with you.'

Women such as Molly and Ruth seem to have entered prostitution reluctantly, and were acutely aware both of their 'fall' and of their own economic inability to prevent that fall. For many of these amateurish prostitutes, the penitentiary seems to have been perceived as a haven and a way of escape from an unendurable situation.

Not all sexually transgressive penitents had engaged in sexual activity voluntarily. The youngest 'adult' penitent in the casebooks studied was thirteen; she had been incestuously abused; the specialized houses for child victims and children "in moral danger" which several sisterhoods opened in the late Victorian period accepted children as young as eight.[18] In the casebooks preserved by these communities suggestions of incest are common and are no respecter of class; there are accounts of both general labourers and wealthy gentlemen committing incest on their female children, thus starting them on the road which led to the convent penitentiary. The casebooks of the communities also indicate that incest within the Victorian family was a frequent precursor of homelessness, which in turn led to prostitution. For example, the first penitent to enter the House of Mercy at Clewer was a twenty-four-year-old woman. Herself illegitimate, she was pregnant with her fifth child by her stepfather. We can only guess at what made the situation of family incest, which began when she was nine, so unendurable that fifteen years later she sought refuge in an institution.[19] While penitentiary casebooks often demonstrate great compassion for these young victims, there is never any suggestion that a prolonged and formal course of repentance was inappropriate for women who had lost their virginity by force. What is immediately clear is that the sisterhoods firmly believed that the artificial family structure of the penitentiary could both protect and heal those who had fallen under such circumstances. At all costs, they avoided returning penitents or,is type to their families of

origin: the sisters argued that for these women and girls, their "natural homes, if they have any, are generally the worst places for them."[20]

Incest survivors were not the only group in the penitentiary who had 'fallen' through no wish of their own. Rape, judging from penitentiary records, seems to have been an occupational hazard of service. Sisterhood reports mention the special problem of "girls who have fallen owing to violence."[21] That many young domestic servants were raped by their employers or by fellow servants cannot be doubted--the records at Clewer and other Houses of Mercy run by sisterhoods hold the proof. It is true that the word rape was never used at the time--the records tell us that this girl "was wronged," or that girl was "led astray," or another "was deceived." But the terminology used in the Clewer Roll Book does not immediately suggest that these women were universally treated as guilty parties or that their stories were not believed by the sisters, however emphatically denied by the men involved.[22]

As mentioned earlier, the category of 'fallen women' encompassed many who were not sexual outlaws or the victims of violence. The Clewer House of Mercy admitted female tramps, alcoholics, and those who were described as "feeble-minded" as often as it did outright street-walkers. Some requested admission directly after leaving prison; most had been committed for petty crimes, such as theft and public drunkenness. Many others had been imprisoned for attempted suicide. Some may have been institutionalized by their prison terms: the small but constant number of women who drifted from penitentiary to prison to penitentiary strongly suggest that, for a minority, life outside an institution was no longer feasible.

Most sisterhoods operated a policy of never refusing admission to anyone who requested it, although it was believed that the younger the candidate, the better her chances of success, which the sisters defined as a return to respectability and religious observance, not simply abstention from positive immorality.[23] Generally, the penitents were expected to remain in the House of Mercy for about two years, although cases were considered on an individual basis. No woman was sent away if she felt unready to leave. Very young penitents were often kept longer, primarily for reasons of protection. One Clewer case entered as a 'fallen woman' at the age of fourteen. Raised in the workhouse, she had been a kitchen maid, and could read "a little." She remained in the convent four years before being sent to service. Some women, often those with drinking problems, chose to stay for life.[24] These 'raised penitents' took instructional and supervisory positions in the convent laundry.

The Clewer House of Mercy Roll Book records the entrance of 2501 penitents between June 1849 and December 1900. Upon admission prospective penitents were interviewed by the Mother Superior; notes were made on background and circumstances. An important common denominator in these women's backgrounds was economic insecurity in the family of origin. The most frequently listed parental occupation was labourer (twenty percent of penitents gave this as their father's occupation). The next most commonly named trades--gardener, soldier, carpenter, shoemaker, and tailor--combined, contributed fewer daughters to the penitentiary. The dominance of day labourers' daughters reinforces the central role family poverty played in the creation of fallen women. In 1881 one penitentiary began to comment on the moral character of the inmates' parents; the most common remarks were "mother drank," "father drank," or "parents sober, but drink her temptation." Many who entered were motherless: the historian is unable to pierce the curt ambiguity surrounding the frequent note: "A good home till Mother died." Only twenty percent of penitents at one large institution had both parents living at the time of their entry. The bulk of penitents seem to have been involved in morally suspect activities for only a short time: of those who had actually walked the streets, most had worked as prostitutes for less than a year.

Case book histories are usually succinct. One seventeen year old from Battersea has her history recorded in two words: "Terrible story." We read of Julia Louisa Clarke, nineteen, from Ireland, the daughter of a gentleman. Brought by her mother, her fall was "a most miserable case." She paid £25 a year for her keep while in the penitentiary. One eighteen year old ran away from home after conflict with her stepmother, was taken to London by a man and then deserted. Another girl was "led astray by a cousin" in 1881; in the same year a girl of fourteen came in with a "Sad story." A widow with one child "fell due to poverty."

Untypically detailed is the account of a forty-two-year-old "Nurse in private family--got entangled by promise of marriage. Lived with man 11 years. Had 4 children. He deserted her. Work House."

This last case was unusual. The penitents were young, usually in their late teens or very early twenties.[25] Throughout the century, the majority of those admitted to the penitentiaries were between seventeen and nineteen. Low levels of literacy may also have played its part in these women's economic and social vulnerability. Seventy entrants prior to 1881 (5%) could not read; 105 read "a little" or "very little;" the generally low level of literacy is indicated by the fact that in these fifty-one years only one working-class penitent was recorded as reading and writing "well."[26] No matter where the penitentiary was located, the bulk of the inmates were natives of London, or had been living there at the time of their 'fall.[27]

The initial occupations of the penitents are predictable. The majority of entrants had been general servants. The proportion of those in domestic service remains nearly stable at about two-thirds of entrants (if anything it rises slightly) between the 1850s to the 1900s. The Clewer House of Mercy systematically recorded the former occupations of penitents between 1866 and 1869; at 65 percent, service dominates the list of callings. In these three years, 59 general servants, 21 housemaids, 7 cooks, 4 nursemaids, 3 ladies' maids, 3 scullery maids, 3 laundrymaids, 1 nursery governess, 1 schoolroom maid, 2 barmaids, 2 factory workers, 2 nurses, 3 dressmakers, 2 needlewomen, 1 milliner, 1 shop girl, and 1 field labourer entered as penitents.[28] Five came from workhouses or prisons. Two widows entered, as well as six married women. Twenty-eight penitents had been living at home at the time of their fall.

A letter to Mariquita Tennant, who founded the penitentiary work of the Community of St. John Baptist, commented on the limited options available to unskilled servants in lower-middle-class households, and gives an indication why recourse to sexual connection for money was relatively common among servants of this type:

none are, I think, more pitiable than the class of servants-of-all-work. I find that it is positively a common thing for them to be engaged without wages or clothes and only for food every other day. Who can wonder at girls so situated yielding to temptation and sin ?[29]

The typical life-cycle of a 'fallen' servant, was for a young girl, often from a disrupted family background, to be employed in domestic service from early to mid adolescence; to fall through a sexual relationship with someone of roughly the same social class; to lose her place as a result; and be forced onto the streets through her lack of respectability (and resulting lack of references). These girls were so young that it is surprising that any stayed out of trouble. One girl, the daughter of an alcoholic, had been in service since her twelfth birthday. By seventeen she was in the penitentiary. Others had been general servants since the age of ten.

There were regional variations in occupation. Some penitents had been employed in local industries, and turned to prostitution as the result of economic changes. A significant number of the women who entered the Community of St. Mary the Virgin's Cornish penitentiary had worked in the mines before going on the streets. Their 'fall' was probably a result of the increasing restrictions placed on women's employment in and around the pits.[30] The sisterhoods shared the general mid-Victorian recognition of the economic basis of prostitution: "We talk of 'fallen women'; but for the far greater number there is no fall. . . . They are starving, and they sell themselves for food."[31]

Many communities attempted to classify their applicants, separating the professional or more hardened prostitutes from the "unfortunates." Several institutions set aside space for middle-class penitents, but most found that there was too little demand to justify continuing the experiment.[32] As time passed it became increasingly recognized by penitentiary workers, although not by the general public, that penitents who had not transgressed against the Victorian code of sexual morals required different strategies of care. Accordingly penitentiaries became more specialist: separate institutions for former prostitutes, for child victims of incest, for alcoholics, and for thieves, were set up around Great Britain.

One penitentiary run by the Community of St. Mary the Virgin, Wantage, took only women accused (but not convicted) of theft; unlike sexually transgressive penitents, many of these penitents entered under some duress; typically their families or employers had given them the option of entering a penitentiary or facing charges.[33] Of the 239 cases admitted between 1892 and 1900, the ages of the 'penitents' ranged from twelve to twenty-four. Most were between fourteen and seventeen. Ninety-five percent of the young women who entered this institution had been in service. Despite the late date of this casebook, about ten percent were illiterate, or could read and write only 'a little.' The most commonly noted parental occupation was labourer (thirteen percent). Most other frequently listed parental occupations were female ones, indicating an absent or chronically unemployed father. These included washerwoman, housekeeper, laundress, and charwoman (again totalling thirteen percent).

The penitentiary casebook provides a vivid picture of the misery and deprivation of the lives of these very young women; they embarked on a two-year course of penitence for astoundingly trivial offences, including accusations of the theft of one shilling, stealing food, "getting father some food," stealing boots, taking an apron, ordering biscuits in somebody else's name; one fifteen year old was said to have taken a feather for her hat. Many cases of petty theft involved girls who had stolen small sums of money from their own families. However, not all thefts were minor and opportunistic: one enterprising nineteen-year-old girl broke into a house and stole the plate; another stole £35. Other offenders found themselves penitents as well; one sixteen year old was admitted for "curiously opening letters." The historian can only speculate on the deadly hatred or petty tyranny which led a sixteen-year-old servant to "put carbolic in her mistress's tea."[34] (More than one father found this substance in his beer and packed his daughter off to the House of Mercy in consequence.) A number of attempted suicides found themselves in this penitentiary; almost all of these, again, were servants.

Most of the alleged teenaged thieves seem to have reformed, and recurring names are extremely rare in this penitentiary's casebooks. Some other types of fallen women were not so fortunate. One difficult special category was addicted women, most of whom were former hospital nurses or matrons. With these women, as with upper servants and cooks, alcoholism often preceded sexual transgression; with others it came afterward. Some were admitted on verge of delirium tremens, having had been heavy drinkers for years. These penitents were allowed alcohol in moderation, and attempts were made to bring them off drink slowly.[35] Like middle-class penitents, inebriates were kept apart from the ordinary 'fallen.' Inebriate cases typically did well in the institution but fell back into old habits after leaving. Several communities made provision for more permanent care for alcoholics, after discovering that these women's addiction made it difficult for them to stay sober and to retain respectable employment.[36] In this context, penitentiaries can be seen as therapeutic communities, and the penitents as patients in treatment.

The range of individuals entering pentientiaries raises questions of motivation: why did these women want to enter? With the exception of some suspected thieves, no woman was compelled, yet most penitentiaries had a chronic oversupply of applicants for admission. Most prostitutes left the trade by their mid-twenties, so these women were probably aware that they were not doomed to a lifetime of prostitution.[37] Although the physician (and self-appointed expert on female sexuality) William Acton claimed that almost all prostitutes were anxious to leave the trade after a short time, it would be wrong to assume that most wished to take such a formal route to social reintegration.[38] It seems astonishing that women would request admission to an institution for a two-year course of penitence, when they could easily "become respectable again" simply by moving away from the scene of their commercial activity. However, popular opinion supported the belief that a period of formal 'penitence' was desirable: one Kentish newspaper assured its readers that "no respectable person will give them employment until they have been in some degree purged from the pollution in which they have lived."[39]

What brought women to the point of requesting admission to a penitentiary? For the fact remains that the demand was there: sisterhood penitentiaries were developed in response to lack of accommodation in the existing institutions, and throughout the century women were routinely turned away for lack of room. Especially in the early years of the sisterhood penitentiaries, there were far more applicants for admission than could have been accommodated. This level of demand would seem to indicate that there were some advantages in penitentiary life. On the most basic level, penitentiary life offered shelter, food, clothing, and

care for an extended period. But then, so did the workhouse, although probably at an inferior level.

It is possible that those who entered penitentiaries chose to leave the streets early as a result of feelings of guilt, or after finding it more distasteful than they had anticipated. Indeed, at least as recorded by the receiving sister, many of the applicants seem to have felt a severe sense of personal culpability and strong self-condemnation. A common pattern was for a prostitute to request entry after being severely ill; prolonged illness may have filled her with fears of the hereafter, or her earning power may have been diminished as the result of her bout of ill health, as obviously unhealthy prostitutes tended to be avoided by customers. It must not be assumed that all women who requested admission to a House of Mercy felt overwhelmed by a sense of personal sinfulness. Perversely, some may have seen it in part as a way of bettering themselves. It is even claimed that there were several cases of young women pretending to have "gone wrong" in order to gain access to the penitentiary run by the Community of the Holy Cross.[40] In general, applicants to the penitentiaries seem not to have been particularly impoverished or racked by remorse. As Sister Anna of Wantage noted, "The greater number of . . . [those who enter] are not in what the world calls misery--nor are they in bodily want."[41] Sisters who worked with fallen women wryly noted that most who entered were "Penitents" in name only.[42] Jane Bywater, a London courtesan, wrote to Gladstone in 1854,

You may think it strange that I did not go to the institution as Mr. Liddell (Vicar of St. Paul's Knightsbridge) wished. . . . The only reason I did not accept Mr. Liddell's offer was that I was told that I would have to do penance, and all manner of things. . . . I have no doubt that you wished to do me some service, but I did not fancy being shut up in such a place as that for perhaps twelve months. I should have committed suicide.

Women who felt as Bywater found other ways back to respectability, although it must be noted that Bywater herself soon changed her mind, and entered an Anglican institution.[43]

Sisterhood penitentiaries offered several practical advantages unavailable in the workhouse: most important was the opportunity to train for the higher levels of domestic service or for nursing. Another factor was the maintenance of contact with her children, as some sisterhoods ran orphanages as well, and would reunite the family at the end of the course of penitence. At least one penitent had her child with her at Clewer; caring for him was part of her assigned duties. Former penitents also received a complete outfit upon leaving, good references, and assistance in finding positions. While most secular penitentiaries (such as Urania Cottage, overseen by Charles Dickens and financed by Angela Burdett-Coutts) put great pressure on their penitents to emigrate, in sisterhood penitentiaries, only one penitent in fifty emigrated. This may be one reason why sisterhood penitentiaries were so relatively popular; penitents were usually reluctant to leave behind all which was familiar to them in order to chance the rigours of the colonies.

While some did enter penitentiaries in a sincere attempt to make a fresh start, others used them as a convenient rest home before resuming their profession. These (so-called) penitents would stay for as long as suited them, usually during the winter when customers were fewer and the weather less pleasant, or while recovering from illness or disease. When the weather or their health improved they would walk out, disregarding the arguments or appeals of the sisters. Others departed secretly at night, stealing whatever objects of value they could carry with them. Thefts of clothes and money were not uncommon.[45] At one sisterhood a penitent concealed "money in her boots and went away laughing,"[46] Some sisterhoods came to dread the first warm spring days, which could signal a general exodus, but consoled themselves by the hope that the women were the better for their care.

Unlike the prisons also known as penitentiaries, female penitentiaries were always open institutions. The women who were enrolled as penitents entered voluntarily, although the fact that many were brought to the House of Mercy by a family member would indicate that some, at any rate, may have been under considerable family pressure. Any penitent could leave at any time during the eighteen to twenty-four-month "course of penitence" typically undergone. For all its strictures, a House of Mercy was not a prison and no one was kept there against her will. "She would go" is the often repeated comment against entries in

the Roll Book. The ultimate discipline of a disruptive or disobedient inmate was dismissal, and the practices of the older penitentiaries, such as prolonged solitary confinement or bread and water diets, were not employed in the institutions run by Anglican sisters. In their penitentiaries no visible means of restraint were used. Instead, in almost all of the sisterhood penitentiaries, inmates were disciplined by the loss or gain of "marks." The accumulation of marks regulated the speed with which a penitent would be promoted through the ranks, and the extent of her outfit upon leaving.[47] Outright dismissals were extremely rare.

Whilst in the penitentiary, the sisterhoods provided the penitents with housing, food, clothing, medical treatment, education, and training. Typically, laundry or domestic work occupied the daytime hours. They were taught the differing branches of domestic work: "cleaning, washing, and ironing, dairying, baking, household and all kinds of plain needlework." Every penitent was given a variety of work "to prevent over fatigue and weariness of spirit." After 1878 penitents in at least one institution could earn spending money by sewing and fancy work during recreation times.

Unlike some secular penitentiaries, where penitents were taught to read but not to write, the Community of St. John Baptist penitentiaries emphasized the importance of providing a good secular education in reading, writing, and arithmetic, sufficient to make the women completely "independent of the help of others."[48] The Community of St. Mary the Virgin, Wantage penitentiary at Fulham included a lending library among its facilities.[49] Most penitents were equipped to take positions as domestic servants, usually specialist posts such as parlormaid or cook, while those of more ability were often trained as nurses. Several were educated for schoolmistresses. However, the financial needs of these institutions meant that many employed most of their penitents as laundry workers in at least the first year of their penitential course, an occupation almost ideally suited to the physical set-up of the penitentiaries. It was also comparatively remunerative (although penitentiary laundries never made a profit, they at least lost less money than needlework, which was also taught). Laundry work also provided a powerful symbolic image of the goal of the penitential process. The whitening of soiled garments was seen as an external sign of an inner transformation: the cleansing of a tainted soul.

The great unresolved contradiction in the philanthropic efforts of the sisters with their penitents is the problem of the nature of women's work. Most of the penitents had 'fallen' while in domestic service, often as a direct consequence of the nature of that occupation. Yet after their rehabilitative course in the penitentiary, the sisters sent them out again to service. It was hoped that preparing the penitents for more specialist service jobs, such as parlourmaid or cook, would help, by increasing their earning power and status, to preserve them from temptation, but the sisters were able to gain no evidence that this was actually the case. They recognized the problematic nature of their solution, and trained as many of the penitents as possible for other occupations, such as nurse, laundress, or even teacher. Yet their penitents were more employable as servants than as anything else, and servants the great majority of them became, at least until rescued by marriage. The sisterhood penitentiaries were unable, given the limitations on women's occupations in the nineteenth century, to offer their penitents a sure means of escape from the cycle of service and 'sin.'

Penitents were taught servant manners as well as servant skills. The socialization instilled was threefold: first, the acquisition of a deferential and respectful demeanour; second, the instilling of middle-class values; and third, the inculcation of religious belief. Correspondingly, sisters believed they had a tripartite responsibility toward their charges; the care of the penitents' bodies, minds, and souls. In the attempt to teach servant manners, penitents were taught instant obedience to orders and to curtsey when passing sisters. It was this discipline rather than the hard work which was the downfall of many of the penitents. Toiling over the wash-tubs was far less a penance for many than obeying orders and curtseying to one's betters. The women were encouraged to adopt middle-class standards of cleanliness, behaviour, and thought. The reformation of the body included cleanliness, "modest refined ways," and good manners. The sisters' hope was to render the penitents psychologically unfit for their former lives; success was achieved when formerly acceptable manifestations of working class speech and behaviour filled reformed penitents with "shock and disgust."[50] The reformation of the mind included the encouragement of reading, and the development of the intellect--but always with an eye to work--to "teach them to work intelligently, and not like machines." The reformation of the soul included baptism, confirmation, and the restoration of

communion; the ultimate goal was the hope that even "if they fall away they will ask for the privileges of the Church before they die."[51] Sisters attempted to control penitents' behaviour by creating bonds of attachment to individual sisters, creating a sense of guilt over the past, and fostering feelings of obligation and gratitude to the community: what the sisters involved called "the formation of new bonds of spiritual relationship."[52] Dependency and re-socialization were emphasised at every stage in the penitential process.[53]

The regulations governing the behaviour of penitents seem punitive. However, it must be remembered that the strict regime for penitents was in many respects very similar to that observed by the sisters themselves. Like sisters, penitents wore a uniform dress, did not use their surnames, curtsied when passing their seniors or superiors, could be dismissed for bad behaviour, observed regular hours of silence, were not permitted to enter others' rooms without permission, were discouraged from talking about their families or their pasts, and were not permitted to find fault with one another. Like sisters, penitents gardened, joined in games, and did fancy work during their recreation time.[54] All of this is precisely what was expected of the sisters themselves. This equality of experience must have created some sense among penitents that their experience of the penitentiary, while both harsh and rigid, was in large part shared by those who made and enforced the rules. This was in marked contrast to secular penitentiaries, where paid matrons were exempt from the regulations they imposed on the penitents.

An important concept in the sisters' interaction with the penitents was that of metaphysical motherhood.[55] These chaste women, who would never be mothers, saw themselves as the second (and better) mothers of the women who came under their care. As the co-founder of the Clewer House of Mercy wrote:

We are merely supplying . . . a home and a mother's care. We are simply providing out of the bosom of the Church what nature had failed to give, and what the world cannot. This is the true way of viewing the case of these fallen women. Speaking generally they have had no fair moral discipline; they have known neither the affections nor the restraints of home.[56]

As Carole Smith-Rosenberg reminds us, the nineteenth-century female lifecycle involved a move from the family of origin to the family of reproduction.[57] Women who engaged in illict sex were barred from both; the sisterhoods, with their ideology of spiritual motherhood and mystical family ties, offered a way back into a family structure through a transitional structure, the 'home' of the penitentiary. But the home provided by these metaphysical mothers was very different from the natural one; it was a single-sex institution, hedged about with regulations, and lumbered with a name which implied that these homes were places of punishment.

Despite the intense religious faith of the sisters themselves, many penitentiaries tended to downplay religious practice among the penitents. Sisterhoods emphasised that the indoctrination given the penitents should initially be rather secular, than religious. One experienced penitentiary manager advised:

there should, at the first, be no religious teaching whatsoever . . . I believe there are many who . . . are repelled by the violent change from their free and easy life to the strict and severe system of a so-called Penitentiary; many who would gladly enter if they knew that they would find a quiet home, where they might rest and think, instead of a semi-prison, where they must commence at once, according to a fixed pattern, their reformation. Let them be admitted . . . simply as inmates of a Home, requiring of them only quiet behaviour, obedience, and work, and leaving them perfectly free as regards religion, and entirely free to go away if they dislike the place.[58]

Penitentiary workers divided the penitents into two types: the "weak," who gave little trouble, were obedient, who readily fell in with religious influences, and were often seen as successes. However, experienced sisters warned that their intense desire to please meant that after leaving the penitentiary, they were as prone to succumb to bad influences as they had done to good. "Strong" penitents, on the other hand, some of whom had deliberately chosen a life of vice, gave "endless trouble," were disobedient and defiant, but had in them "the raw material of better things." Any impression made on strong penitents, it

was claimed, would be permanent.[59]

In the convent there was no meaningful distinction between staff and inmates because both were there to participate in the transformative process. As one penitentiary worker at the Community of St. Mary the Virgin reminded her sisters, "All, however poor, low, wretched, have been called by our Lord as you have been and have in some way responded or would not be here." Some found in themselves a mystical resemblance to the fallen women for whom they cared, attempting their rehabilitation "because we are sinners ourselves and know the mystery of iniquity. . . "[60] Despite this spiritual bond, there was the problem of keeping separate two types of women who were regarded as qualitatively different, the prostitute and the nun. It was a highly charged opposition, morally and religiously, actually and symbolically.

That the experience of penitents could be relatively positive despite the harshness of the regulations is indicated by the fact that every Christmas sisterhoods received hundreds of letters from "old girls." Many former penitents took an interest in the work of the community and were proud of their ability to send contributions for favourite missions run by the sisters. It was common for former penitents to return to visit the sisters or to spend their holidays at the penitentiary. Sometimes close ties were formed, with the sisters and their former penitents keeping in touch for decades, even to the extent of corresponding with the penitent's children. About half of former penitents seem to have maintained some form of contact: casebooks are thick with jotted notes about later jobs, marriages, and other life events.

The sisters who worked with prostitutes gradually came to recognise that their perception of these women as being utterly distinct from themselves reflected differences of social class and upbringing more than it did the difference between purity and sexual experience. In 1881 the spokesman for one of the sisterhoods encapsulated their experience, saying "I have found that the great mass of the girls brought in are not at all worse in any manifest way than ordinary maidservants. . .with proper advantages they are not worse than many other girls."[61] Additionally, sisterhoods, unlike secular investigators into prostitution, did not view prostitutes as irrevocably fallen or irretrievably damaged: their intellectual and moral faculties were not seen as permanently degenerate.[62] Since full rehabilitation was possible, Anglican penitentiary workers proclaimed the need to "break down the artificial distinction between this and all other sins."[63]

This acceptance that penitents were not very different from other members of the class from which domestic servants came, must have led to a decreased sense of moral distance between the sisters and the penitents, although sisterhoods always insisted on extreme reticence with regard to the penitent's prior experiences:

The common feeling regarding the Penitents, among the Sisters, is, that their life is begun afresh. The object and bent of their work is to teach and train for the future, without realizing the past, except that the poor girl has been the child of misery, and probably of neglect and misfortune.[64]

Despite Martha Vicinus's sweeping assertion that sisterhood penitentiaries were prudishly repressive and uninterested in sexual justice, there is evidence that sisterhoods advocated the raising of moral standards for men long before the White Cross campaign (itself founded by an Anglican penitentiary worker, Jane Ellice Hopkins) of the last quarter of the century.[65] Compared to their secular counterparts the workers in sisterhood penitentiaries were generally less obsessed with impurity and more open to seeing their penitents as women, rather than as stock figures of sin.[66] One sister summarized it thus: "They are Christians; they have sinned; they are Penitents; they need the same teaching and help as other Christians. . . . their sin . . . is not to be continually thrown in their faces."[67] Some expressed their conviction that the social stigma attached to immorality should be extended to men as well, thus challenging the double standard. Sisterhoods were convinced that men's standards must be raised to those of women, putting them firmly within that strand of female activism which saw the mission of women as one of purifying the outside world, tainted by men.[68] T. T. Carter, co-founder of the Clewer House of Mercy, asked

What can be meant by saying . . . that the Church of Christ is a home to the homeless, if [this is not so] . . .

in the case of persons far oftener sinned against than sinning; who not sinning alone, yet bear on earth the undivided burden of their guilt; cast forth through their sin to utter despair, yet in most cases led into it by the force of unnatural circumstances?[69]

Given the ambivalence of Victorian thought with regard to the fallen woman, it confounded observers that sisterhoods made provision for the admission of former prostitutes as nuns. This provided an almost unparalleled bridge between the tainted and the pure, the gently born and the poor. When a former prostitute or thief became a sister this not only implied that all taint of impurity had been removed by repentance, but placed these women in a higher spiritual and social class than they had been before their fall from virtue--a radical transformation, socially as well as morally. However, it must be remembered that the sisters saw the moral distance between themselves and the penitents as less of a barrier than did the outside world. Instead, the decision to allow fallen women to become members of a religious order must be seen within the context of the communities' realization that the penitents were, by and large, ordinary women of the servant class who had encountered affliction. Sisters perceived fallenness as a misfortune for the woman and as a crime, either of economics or violence, against the woman. Magdalen orders were a feature of almost all communities which ran large penitentiaries. Magdalens were recognized as having a fully legitimate religious vocation.[70] In the eyes of the sisters, Magdalen sisters were following as valid a religious vocation as any other member of any sisterhood. They were "an actual and substantive part of the community. . . . not merely raised penitents, or Magdalenes, in the common acceptation of the term, but an Order in a religious community. . . ."[71] Sisters took the radical step of transforming working-class deviant women into sisters, members of the same metaphysical family and colleagues in a shared goal of personal and social transformation.[72] To the surprise of their mentors, penitent sisters sometimes developed a "genius for holiness."[73] In communities Magdalen sisters generally assisted in the training and management of penitentiary inmates, although the Community of St. Mary the Virgin, Wantage, formed a daughter community (the Community of the Servants of the Cross) composed almost entirely of former penitents. The slow but steady growth of these orders indicates that some women found the life congenial.

The success of the penitentiaries is difficult to determine, although communities themselves generally considered that two-thirds of their penitents reformed. However, their definition of reformation was a demanding one: women who were not actively religious, however chaste their later lives, were not considered complete successes. Overall, about three-quarters of penitents re-established themselves in respectable working-class life. Most married within a year or two of leaving the penitentiary. This indicates that the transitional period in the institution may have assisted (or at least not hindered) their reinstatement as respectable females. Of the remaining one-quarter, some returned to their old lives, while others simply dropped from sight. There is no evidence to indicate whether the more regimented or the more libertarian approaches were more effectual. What does seem to have been crucial was the attitude of the sisters to the penitents, with those who did not return to prostitution having graduated from penitentiaries which emphasised the idea that the community provided a new 'family' for the former fallen woman. In such penitentiaries 'graduates' left with the assurance that not only could they keep in touch with the sisters through letters and visits, but they would be able to return to the community between jobs, thus avoiding the necessity of having to return to the street in order to obtain food and shelter. This seems to have been the crucial factor in preventing recidivism, and was sometimes very necessary. Many families refused to harbour daughters after their time in the penitentiary. The stigma of having a fallen daughter, sympathetically described in Trollope's The Vicar of Bullhampton, was widely felt. Margaret Bennet, who entered a House of Mercy while still in her teens, was only one of many whose rejection by her family was anything but fictional; when her course of penitence ended eighteen months later her parents refused to receive her. Given the dangers and isolation of domestic service, and lacking the support of their families, it is not surprising that a substantial minority of penitents 'fell' again after returning to service.

The penitentiaries are an important aspect of mid- and late-nineteenth-century social history because they encapsulate in a uniquely dramatic form many of the Victorian debates over gender and class. Both sisters and their penitents were perceived by their society to be violating the norms of proper womanly behaviour, the sisters by repudiating marriage in favour of establishing woman-only communities, and the penitents by their violation of sexual or social codes governing respectable female behaviour. To serve the needs of both

groups, upper-class ladies set up prison-like institutions that appropriated the metaphors of the family, where deviant nun and deviant whore lived together. Pentientiaries, capable by the end of the century of 'graduating' 7000 magdalens a year, brought devout upper-class women into unprecedentedly intimate contact with working-class women of the streets. After World War One, these institutions slowly transformed themselves into homes for unwed mothers, rechristening themselves 'mother and baby homes' and abandoning their emphasis on repentance, but continuing to replicate the same social gap between sister and inmate as their Victorian predecessors. Most of these modernized institutions flourished under the maternalistic control of sisterhoods until the 1960s, when they and the communities declined together.

ENDNOTES

The research upon which this article is based was funded by Atkinson College and York University, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of the Universities of the United Kingdom, and the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the United Kingdom. Earlier versions of this article were read at the Canadian Historical Association conference, Charlotte-town (1991), and the Nursing, Women's History, and the Politics of Welfare conference, Nottingham (1993). Thanks to Valerie Cromwell, Tim Randall, Christopher Kent, and Hope B. Stone for their comments, and especially to Valerie Bonham, who co-wrote the second draft of this article.

1. Only one study of a British female penitentiary exists: this is Linda Mahood's excellent The Magdalens (London, 1990). It, however, discusses a single Scottish penitentiary. While a great deal of research on literary representations of fallen women has been recently published (including Tom Winnifrith's Fallen Women in the Nineteenth Century Novel [1994] and Amanda Anderson's Tainted Souls and Painted Faces: the Rhetoric of Fallenness in Victorian Culture [1993]), the history of the penitenitary movement as a whole has yet to be written.
2. Valerie Bonham, A Joyous Service (Windsor, 1989), pp. 19-21. It was not until 1886 that the state officially recognized the difference between the mentally ill and the mentally handicapped. 'Simple' or 'feeble-minded' girls were sometimes sent to penitentiaries because there was nowhere else for them to go.
3. P.G. Hughes, "Cleanliness and Godliness: A Sociological Study of the Good Shepherd Convent Refuges for the Social Reformation and Christian Conversion of Prostitutes and Convicted Women in Nineteenth Century Britain" (Ph.D, Brunel, 1985), p. 2.
4. For an excellent discussion of the radical potential of celibacy, see S. Cline, Women, Celibacy, and Passion (London, 1993).
5. W.H. Hutchings, The Life and Letters of Thomas Thellusson Carter (London, 1903), p. 92.
6. Mrs. Boyd Carpenter, "Women's Work in Connection with the Church of England," in Angela Burdett-Coutts, ed., Woman's Mission (London, 1893), p. 118. For purposes of comparison, in 1870 Roman Catholic sisterhoods were reclaiming only 379 women; many orders were not permitted to undertake such work. (Great Britain, Report from the Select Committee on Conventual and Monastic Institutions, [1870], question 903, p. 45.)
7. John Armstrong, A Further Appeal for the Formation of Church Penitentiaries (London, 1851), p. 12.
8. Anna Jameson, Sisters of Charity and the Communion of Labour (London, 1859), p. 39.
9. Edward J. Bristow, Vice and Vigilance: Social Purity Movements in Britain Since 1700 (Dublin, 1977), p. 102. No source given for Temple.
10. Francoise Barret-Ducrocq, Love in the Time of Victoria (London, 1991).
11. Armstrong, Appeal, pp.5-6.
12. Community of St. Mary the Virgin, Wantage (henceforth CSMVW) Archives, Sister Anne Clare's Book, K/AC/1. Emphasis in original.
13. CSMVW Archives, Sister Anne Clare's Book, K/AC/1, "The Mother of Penitents and Some of Her Children"; Penitentiary Work in the Church of England (London, 1873), p. 29.
14. Penitentiary Work, p. 28. The Community of St. John Baptist called their consecrated penitents Magdalens; these should not be confused with ordinary penitents. However, the general public did not make this distinction and the two terms were often conflated.
15. H. Lowder, Ten Years in St. George's Mission (London, 1867), p. 79; CSMVW Archives, Sister

Kate Agnes, "Reminiscences of Sister Anna." The motivation behind this work is clear when the full version of Sister Anna's statement is given: "Each soul is equally precious in the sight of our Beloved, every soul is dear to His Heart . . . His Image is still on the soul of the one who tries you so much; she is disagreeable, uninteresting, evil-tempered, low and repulsive but within her is a soul which He craves to have with Himself for ever and ever."

16. Penitentiary Work, p. 9. Given the judicial treatment of raped women, two years in a penitentiary may have been a more attractive option than attempting to take one's attacker to court. See Carolyn A. Conley, The Unwritten Law: Criminal Justice in Victorian Kent (Oxford, 1991), pp. 81-95.
17. McIntosh may have believed (as working-class folklore held) that her husband's desertion broke the marriage tie, leaving her free to remarry.
18. Sisters were not alone in assuming that these "fallen children" needed reformation. See for example, Norfolk Record Office SO 27/1, Minutes of the Formation of the Norfolk and Norwich Ladies Association for the Care of Girls, 22 May 1884.
19. Community of St. John Baptist Archives, Clewer, Windsor, cited in Valerie Bonham, A Place In Life: The Clewer House of Mercy, 1849-93 (Windsor, 1992), p. 192. All further quotations from penitentiary records are from the Clewer archive unless otherwise noted.
20. T.T. Carter, The First Five Years of the House of Mercy, Clewer, (London, 1855), p. 25.
21. Penitentiary Work, p. 9.
22. Bonham, Place, p. 200. Recent research using oral evidence from women in service in the interwar period includes harrowing accounts of rape by the 'gentleman' or 'young gentleman' of the house. These servants were unwilling victims of sexual assault whose stories were not believed and whose subsequent lives were scarred by their experiences.
23. Penitentiary Work, p. 25; A Few Words to Servants About the Church Penitentiary Association (London, n.d.), p. 7; H.N. [Harriet Nokes], Twenty-Three Years in a Home of Mercy (1886) 2nd. ed. (London, 1888), pp. 80-81.
24. Armstrong, Appeal, p. 9; Ann Francis Norton, "The Consolidation and Expansion of the Community of St. Mary the Virgin, Wantage, 1857-1907," (M. Phil, King's College, London, 1979), pp. 92-3.
25. The few middle-aged women who entered penitentiaries had worked as prostitutes in order to support their children; a few had been kept for decades and then deserted.
26. This may have been a relatively high level of literacy. In one small secular penitentiary, of the 13 penitents registered in 1878, 5 could read and write, 6 could do neither, and 2 could read but not write. Lincolnshire Record Office, Lincoln and Lincolnshire Penitent Females' Home, GH6, Thirtieth Annual Report (1878).
27. T.T. Carter, The First Ten Years of the Home of Mercy, Clewer (London, 1861). pp. 15-6.
28. In 1872 this penitentiary admitted that rarest of penitents, a fallen governess.
29. Mrs. Sidney Herbert to Mrs. [Mariquita] Tennant, 10 June 1850, cited in The Founders of Clewer (London, 1952), p. 22.
30. CSMVW Archives, Sister Kate Agnes, "Reminiscences of Sister Anna."
31. Jameson, Sisters of Charity, p. 39. Emphasis Jameson's.
32. Carter, Five Years, p. 22; Hughes, p. 126.
33. CSMVW Archives, Roll Book of Penitents. They seem to have been given the choice of police court or penitentiary by their families and employers; generally, women who were actually charged with theft before a magistrate did not have the option of going to a sisterhood penitentiary.
34. CSMVW Archives, Roll Book of Penitents.
35. One of the few exceptions was lane Farndon, a twenty-seven-year-old married women from a respectable-family admitted in 1880. Whose husband paid five shillings a week in the hope that her drinking could be cured.; Hutchings, pp. 87-88.
36. CSMVW Archives, St. Mary the Virgin, Wantage: Information Concerning the Works of the Community (Wantage, 1905), p. 8.
37. Judith Walkowitz, Prostitution and Victorian Society (Cambridge, 1980), p. 196; William Acton, Prostitution, Considered in Its Moral, Social and Sanitary Aspects (London, 1857), pp. v,vi, 52.
38. Acton, p. 64.

39. Maidstone and Kentish Journal, 25 January 1861, cited in Conley, p. 184.
40. Alan Russell, The Community of the Holy Cross 1857-1957 (Haywards Heath, 1957), p. 18; Maria Trench, "English Sisterhoods," The Nineteenth Century 40 (1884): 348.
41. CSMVW Archives, Sister Anna, undated letter.
42. [Nokes], p. 72.
43. Bonham, Place, p. 192; citing Lambeth Palace Library and Archive, (henceforth LPL) Gladstone Papers MS 2760.
44. Penitentiary Work, pp. 140-41.
45. T.T. Carter, My Dear Friend, You Ask for Some Result of Our First Five Years Work at the House of Mercy [circular letter], Clewer, January 1856, pp. 1-3.
46. Norton, "The Consolidation," p. 113.
47. CSMVW Archives, "Report for the Year 1855 of St. Mary's Home for Penitents at Wantage," (1856), pp. 7-8; Sister Violet, All Hallows, Ditchingham: The Story of an East Anglian Community (Oxford, 1986), p. 54; Norton, p. 119.
48. Penitentiary Work, pp. 22 & 119.
49. LPL, Fulham Papers, Visitation Returns 1883, f 313.
50. CSMVW Archives, Sister Anne Clare's Book; Sister Emily Gertrude, MS/K/AC/1, "Help for Workers." Secular penitentiaries also inculcated gentility. See Mahood, pp. 84-5.
51. CSMVW Archives. Sister Anne Clare's Book; Sister Emily Gertrude, MS K/AC/1, "Help for Workers."
52. CSMVW Archives, Sister Anne Clare's Book, K/AC/1, untitled.
53. Hughes, p. 102.
54. Norton, p. 120.
55. Thanks to Eileen Yeo, Sussex University, for her assistance with this concept.
56. T.T. Carter, Is it Well to Institute Sisterhoods in the Church of England, for the Care of Female Penitents? (London, 1851), p. 5.
57. Carole Smith-Rosenberg, "Misprisoning Pamela: Representations of Class and Gender in Nineteenth Century America," Michigan Quarterly Review 26 (1986): 15.
58. Penitentiary Work, p. 120. Emphasis in original.
59. CSMVW Archives, Sister Anne Clare's Book, K/AC/1, "Why Is There Any Need for Penitentiary Work at All?"
60. CSMVW Archives, Sister Anne Clare's Book, K/AC/1, untitled.
61. Quoted in Norton, p. 120.
62. Walkowitz, p. 39.
63. Jane Ellice Hopkins, "Work in Brighton," Temple Bar (1862): 40.
64. Carter, Is It Well, pp. 2-3.
65. For example, many supported Florence Nightingale's demand for a Royal Commission of enquiry into venereal disease. See the list of signatures to the 1898 petition. (LPL, Temple Papers 17, f 212-20).
66. Martha Vicinus, Independent Women (Chicago, 1985), pp. 78-9.
67. Penitentiary Work, p. 121.
68. Penitentiary Work, p. 27; CSMVW Archives, Sister Anne Clare's Book, K/AC/1, untitled.
69. T.T. Carter, Is It Well, p. 5.
70. Penitentiary Life, p. 23. Tuscan refuges for fallen women go back to the early thirteenth century. Some Catholic orders later instituted Magdalen sisterhoods, although their canonical status was sometimes unclear. See Sherrill Cohen, The Evolution of Women's Asylums Since 1500 (Oxford, 1992).
71. "The Dedication of Penitents as a Religious Order," Seeking and Saving 3 (1886): 59.
72. Smith-Rosenberg, pp. 20-21.
73. Hutchings, Carter, p. 87.