

accomplished woman is to *make her a hospital nurse*. If it is, why then woe to us all who are artists! The woman's question is at an end. The men's 'noes' carry it.

Letter to Anna Jameson, 24 February 1855, *LEBB*, ii.188–9

Notes

- 1 Nightingale (1820–1910) transformed conditions in the Crimean war hospitals in 1854–6 and on her return continued to lead the radical reform of the nursing profession. Barrett Browning had met her briefly in 1852.
- 2 This was indeed the attitude taken by, for instance, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* in its review of Barrett Browning's *Poems Before Congress*. Instead of interfering in politics women should adorn 'the domestic circle'. They should sing, write on the fine arts or cookery, or – Nightingale is explicitly contrasted with Barrett Browning – engage in 'deeds of true charity' like visiting the sick, in which case they may justly be likened to the angels ('Poetic Aberrations', April 1860, pp. 490–4).

'Our close, stifling, corrupt system'

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Oh, the Crimea! How dismal, how full of despair and horror! The results will, however, be good if we are induced to come down from the English pedestal in Europe of incessant self-glorification, and learn that our close, stifling, corrupt system gives no air nor scope for healthy and effective organisation anywhere. We are oligarchic in all things, from our parliament to our army. Individual interests are admitted as obstacles to the general prosperity. This plague runs through all things with us. It accounts for the fact that, according to the last marriage statistics, thirty per cent. of the male population signed with the *mark* only. It accounts for the fact that London is at once the largest and ugliest city in Europe. For the rest, if we cannot fight righteous and necessary battles, we must leave our place as a nation, and be satisfied with making pins.

Letter to Anna Jameson, 24 February 1855, *LEBB*, ii.189–90

'A noble devotion to and faith in the regeneration of Italy'

Kate Field

She watched the progress of the world with tireless eye and beating heart, and, anxious for the good of the *whole* world, scorned to take an insular view of any political question. With her a political