

Mary Carpenter, Frances Power Cobbe, “Noble Workers,” and Evangelical Discourse in Action

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A remarkable range of nineteenth-century British and North American women were prominent in the public sphere, transforming institutions, laws, and the practices of journalism, social science, and social work, in addition to literature and the arts.¹ While Victorianists and activists today might recognize some predecessors among these exceptional women, it is harder to hear and appreciate the evangelism and exaltation of a lady’s role as “noble worker” amid the ailing, vice-ridden, ignorant, or laboring poor. In the 1880s, Phyllis Browne, for example, portrayed Mary Carpenter’s career: “For more than twenty years this heroic woman toiled and prayed in order that she might pluck these poor castaways as brands from the burning. It was for this that her name is now revered as one of the noblest of the World’s Workers.”² In this short essay, I detail aspects of Mary Carpenter and her one-time assistant Frances Power Cobbe among many interrelated and compared activists, less to portray them as they were (biographies have attempted this) and more to capture a Victorian discourse of reverence—revering exemplars—that intersects class and gender with race and empire as well as religion. I draw on contemporary and recent studies of both figures as well as chapter-length biographies collected in books identified in my ongoing digital project, Collective Biographies of Women (CBW), a database and textual study.³

Carpenter and Cobbe form part of CBW’s comparative network of historic women, and my discussion here will draw on some data from the study of a genre rather than individual women. Carpenter and Cobbe, in spite of differences, were aligned in causes that took on

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connotations and vocabulary of Christian mission. Many reforming activists were referred to as “noble” or “workers” (or both): notability by rank ironically yoked to an occupational label that belies the gendered prohibition of a lady’s laboring for pay. The revered volunteer works in the religious sense (“works” are the living proof of faith) and transforms her acts of condescension, a downward motion into streets and passages of darkest poverty, into loving exchange (influence, the crowd’s attachment) and uplift. To be clear, this is a biographical (melodramatic) plot, not the more collaborative and humorous way the actual women saw themselves.⁴

Both *work* and *noble* are versatile terms conveying different associations for women than for men; for instance, her work may be needlework and her title, if any, will always be different than if she had been born male. Moral and religious as well as class/gender implications pervade representations of activists of an earlier era. Evangelical discourse is disparaged among academics and activists today, largely because of the political platforms of the churches that most co-opted television and social media. Yet faith-based initiatives should not be discounted, then or now. They may provide empowering aid to refugees, migrants, survivors of abuse, those lacking housing, food, and health care—too many now still in want like the Bristol children, women, and men served by Carpenter and Cobbe. Religious organizations may even help repair the underlying causes of inequality and suffering without aggrandizing an evangelist. And yet we see from the persistence of collective biographies the effectiveness of examples of leadership praised in emotional if not religious terms.

CARPENTER AND COBBE REVISITED

Mary Carpenter (1807–1877) and Frances Power Cobbe (1822–1904) intersected and diverged in their careers: the internationally renowned founder of reform schools, considered a devout “noble worker,” mentored the Theist journalist who is better known today for feminism and animal rights organizing. Carpenter, eldest and most devoted child of Lant Carpenter, the charismatic Unitarian preacher in Bristol, gained a classical education alongside the boys in her father’s school and collaborated internationally with abolitionists.⁵ After running the family’s school for girls, she obeyed a calling to tend to street children in her vicinity, leading an effort to start a Ragged School in 1846 that improved on the quality of instruction in other Ragged Schools in Scotland and

England.⁶ Publication of her book, *Reformatory Schools for the Children of the Perishing and Dangerous Classes, and for Juvenile Offenders* (1851), and other contributions to emerging social science led to lecturing appearances, consultations with governmental committees, extensive reform collaborations in India, and a visit to the U.S.⁷ *The Life and Work of Mary Carpenter*, by her nephew J. Estlin Carpenter (1879), is offered “as a record of *work for workers*,” an example to be emulated, although what it details about her troubles may seem to some readers not to “befit[] a noble memory.”⁸

Carpenter’s Bristol Unitarian orbit was very different from Cobbe’s upbringing in a powerfully connected family of English landowners in Ireland.⁹ Cobbe received a lady’s education in Brighton and pursued her own way to “heretical opinions” in sympathy with Theodore Parker’s.¹⁰ Through a mutual friend, Lady Byron, in 1858 Cobbe joined Carpenter as live-in aide at Red Lodge in Bristol from 1858 to 1859 (she paid her own room and board). The arrangement failed; Carpenter ran a punishing household regime and wore herself and others out in a mission in Lewin’s Mead, the chaotic slum nearby.¹¹ Cobbe moved out (short biographies claim for her health) and directed her efforts to remedying the neglect of chronically ill or disabled poor people in workhouses.¹² In London and on many travels abroad, Cobbe lived with her life partner, sculptor Mary Lloyd,¹³ associated with the scandalous Emily Faithfull and the Langham Place group,¹⁴ and wrote such famous, anthologized essays as “Wife Torture in England” and “Criminals, Idiots, Women, and Minors.”¹⁵ Cobbe anticipated feminist interspecies ethics, leading organized resistance to vivisection and cruelty to animals.

The current standing of these innovators—Carpenter largely forgotten, Cobbe favored in feminist Victorian studies—inverts their relative stature in the Victorian era. Carpenter was the famous philanthropist, whereas Cobbe had a byline in thought-leading venues, writing in a style that appeals today. When I recently took up this comparison I expected to side with Cobbe, whom contemporaries described with great affection, the lesbian investigative journalist, in contrast with the astringent Carpenter, founder of suspect institutions (reform schools).¹⁶ A closer look revised my first impressions.¹⁷ Just as I had to correct my understanding that Carpenter never supported campaigns for women’s suffrage,¹⁸ I had to notice that Cobbe’s vocation, at least initially, was religious and every bit as top-down as Carpenter’s, indeed epitomized in the terms of Carpenter’s mission in Cobbe’s own account: “To lift up the

criminal and perishing classes of the community and cut off the roots of crime and vice by training children in morality and religion, this was a soul-inspiring idea.”¹⁹ Varied writings by Cobbe invoke faith in a Creator, but by the 1870s she was known among leading voices of Theism with no belief in an afterlife or savior.²⁰

RECOGNITION IN TERMS OF FAITH, WORKS, AND RANK IN A NETWORK OF BOOKS

In the short biographies listed in books in the CBW database, we find a supremacist, often Evangelical discourse that nevertheless authorized Anglo-American ladies’ service to all races, classes, and creeds, inspiring efforts toward justice.²¹ Perhaps the colonizing and racist strains are even less sympathetic to most readers today when united with the call to Christian service, presumed to march toward one global faith. But the documented dataset of collections of differing individuals reveals a more polyvocal discourse, including secular achievements that history would continue to respect with few qualms—women whom today’s educators, writers, or activists might recognize as precedents. Inspection of the corpus of narratives about women’s lives confirms diversity among the subjects and the versions of them, not a univocal platform that enforced social differences. Looking at the examples of Carpenter and Cobbe, I draw on quantifiable textual features: titles; recognition rates (the number of all-female collections that include a biography of a particular woman); key terms and tropes; and publication data such as date.

I see Carpenter and Cobbe both as altruistically ambitious; they tried to make noteworthy changes in harmful social structures and values. A term for this aspiration in their era was “noble,” especially if philanthropy and faith were woven in. “Noble,” a word that slips among meanings of rank or position and character or scope (a *noble* view might be grand), appears in the titles of thirty-one books listed in CBW. The term “pioneer,” more common in fifty-four titles, is used only in some instances to refer to settlers; more books in our bibliography intend the titular term to indicate women who are first in masculine occupational turf. “Pioneer workers” indeed were forerunners of turn-of-the-twentieth-century social workers. Carpenter’s biography, invariably redacted from the family-authorized *Life* after her death, appears in thirteen collective biographies, two with titles that include “noble” and two including “pioneer”; other title terminology indicates renown.²² Only one of the thirteen “Carpenter books,” as we tend to call them, admits Cobbe to the

contents as well; I examine it below.²³ Joseph Johnson's *Noble Women of Our Time* (first published in 1882), omitting Cobbe, aligns a biography of Carpenter in a series of the "noble army of workers," women who hail from "all conditions . . . times and nations," ladies following a quest "into the low-down places of poverty."²⁴ These words from Johnson's preface show contemporary usage of "worker" to refer to what we might call a community organizer or activist; it meant systematic interaction at a local but extensive scale, like a caseworker rather than a philanthropic donor or a lady visiting poor families in her parish. Johnson's chapter titles show an interest in history (*our time*) and geopolitics, as he presents a named woman immersed in an anonymous mass: "Miss Whatley among the Low-Down of Egypt," "Miss Carpenter among the Ragged Children of England and India," "'Sister Dora' among the Sick and the Suffering," and so forth.

Cobbe, still active in 1882, doesn't quite belong among *Noble Women of Our Time* and comparable titles in CBW; her persona is not pictured as dangerously embedded in scenes of suffering (although she frequented workhouses and infirmaries). She is featured in four collective biographies drawing from her autobiography; two of these collections were published during her lifetime, and none of the titles invoke "noble" or "pioneer."²⁵ The American Sarah Underwood groups Cobbe with Harriet Martineau, George Eliot, and others in *Heroines of Freethought* (1876).²⁶ Underwood seeks to do "justice" to Cobbe as "a brave, true woman" by placing her "on the same plane of advanced thought" as the atheists in the book, though "in spite of her advanced Liberalism, [she] is a most reverent Theist" or liberal Unitarian.²⁷

Jeanie Douglas Cochrane, in *Peerless Women: A Book for Girls* (1905), is the only biographer to place Cobbe and Carpenter in the same volume.²⁸ This book's lineup is not exclusively of noble workers. Its unchronological table of contents begins with Queen Victoria and ends with the recently deceased Cobbe. In most chapters of *Peerless Women*, the words "Christ" or "Christian" recur. Sister Dora, subject of chapter 2, "was as like the Lord Jesus as any human creature could be" (para. 58).²⁹ "Mary Carpenter, the Friend of the Poor Children" (chapter 3; 100 paragraphs, the longest in the book) mentions "Christian workers" (e.g., paras. 12, 25, 47, 60) in relation to Boston Abolitionists, Bristol, and India. It picks up on the physical immersion of ladies in spaces imaged as low and dark, as Carpenter:

. . . bravely smothering her feelings, and controlling her repugnance, . . . persevered, taking a positive delight in forcing herself into visiting the worst houses of all, until, like Sister Dora, she walked alone through byways and alleys and courts where even the policemen were afraid to venture except in couples. Like Sister Dora, too, she won the regard of the very vilest by her utter unselfishness, devotion, and lack of any sign of loathing or fear. (paragraph 14)

Event:*Type:* visiting by persona*Structure:* house of the poor*Type:* walking for work*Location:* street**Topos:***Type:* lady braving dark space

Occurrence of other terms is revealing: in both Victoria's and Carpenter's chapters, "noble" occurs eleven times, but Cochrane omits it in her concluding sketch, "Frances Power Cobbe, The Friend of Woman," the second-shortest (25 paragraphs). Before this final chapter, early readers of the book would have encountered a still-living contemporary of little renown, Evangelical Mrs. Isabel Reaney; Cochrane's seventh chapter is the only one about Reaney in CBW, detailing specific actions such as reducing the hours of tram workers. Both Carpenter's and Cobbe's chapters in *Peerless Women* sound forms of the word "work," almost once every two paragraphs (Carpenter, 48/100; Cobbe 12/25). But in Cobbe's biography, the idea of work as Christian mission only relates to her collaboration with Carpenter.³⁰

The only working-class biography in the collection of "peerless" women, women of stature in some sense comparable to the highest in the land, Victoria the Queen, is the penultimate chapter, about Mary Ann Rogers. Unlike the still-living Reaney and the rest of the exemplars who pursue long careers, Rogers is known only for the day of her death, March 30, 1899. The widow of a sailor, Rogers worked as a steamship stewardess to support two children. On that day, a special excursion voyage turned into a shipwreck, and the "noble woman" calmly helped the women and children, her responsibility, into life jackets, refusing one for herself and not trying to get in the overloaded lifeboat (ch. 10, para. 10). A memorial inscription claims she was seen as the ship went down "lifting her arms upwards with the prayer 'Lord, have me'" (para. 17). This would have been testimony of survivors, and the event made national news. In Cochrane's terms, Rogers should be remembered: "one noble deed will live in the memory of all, and, when the roll of the truly great is called, the name of Mary Ann Rogers will be heard again" (ch. 10, para. 9). Cobbe made an appeal to amplify the woman who emulated a captain's sacrifice in the terrible scene.³¹ It is possible that the tale of Rogers led Cochrane to add a sketch of Cobbe, the benefactor who

insisted on national recognition for Rogers's female heroism in the spirit of *Peerless Women*. It was Cobbe who raised funds to erect a "very handsome drinking fountain" in 1901 near the Southampton pier with its plaque narrating Rogers's "Heroic Death" and final prayer. It is unlikely the pious account was verbatim by Cobbe, disbeliever in an afterlife. No mention of nobility, the Lord, or Christ surfaces in the final chapter about the author of *The Duties of Women*.³² This chapter includes Cobbe's often-quoted description of her mentor:

There was humour in every line of her face, and a readiness to catch the first gleam of a joke. But the prevailing characteristic of Mary Carpenter was a high and strong *Resolution*, which made her whole path much like that of a plough . . . which goes straight on its own beneficent way, and gently pushes aside into little ridges all intervening people and things. (para. 9; emphasis in original)

This suggests Carpenter's mission as quotidian production like agriculture, not a noble campaign. The younger lady who indicted domestic and animal abuse was not herself depicted as braving a dark space, although Cobbe shares with her mentor the principle that "we have certain duties to perform towards these, our fellow-beings, even though they be on a lower level than ourselves"—here indicating treatment of animals (Cochrane, ch. 11, para. 19). Still, omitting all mention of Cobbe's partner Mary Lloyd, Cochrane in 1905 can muster Cobbe with others in one concluding militant cause regardless of differences (para. 23 of 25).³³

They are the daughters of the Empire: they fought strenuously and won gloriously in many a stern battle against sin and neglect and oppression. . . . they doggedly renewed their attacks until victory crowned their efforts. They showed the world that British women have just the same staying power, just the same capacity for overcoming difficulties, just the same inability to recognise defeat, as the men who have won for our country the proud position it holds to-day.

Topos:

Type: national character, narrator's own country

Type: gender as narrator's generalization

Discourse:

Type: present tense

Type: summary, more, much or all life in less prose

Type: figureOrImage, conqueror

Type: personification, concept or value

Type: iterative, repeating or persistent

Type: narrator's positive orientation

Cochrane's Evangelical nationalism leading to the First World War accommodated the quite different careers and beliefs of Carpenter and Cobbe.

RESISTING CONDESCENSION, UPLIFT, OR PIETY

We cannot remodel these Victorians into our contemporaries nor devise eulogies like the fountain for Rogers. The Victorian evangelizing social work or religious missions celebrated in Cochrane's books were irredeemably complicit in the imperialist economic structures that generated the need for their remedial actions. Even direct aid to women around the world seemed premised on refusal of cultural relativism, and such workers imposed moral codes defined largely in terms of sex and alcohol. Like other Victorians, Carpenter and Cobbe tended to confidently contrast the characteristics and worth of sexes, races, populations, and nations, usually in favor of their own cohort.³⁴ Yet for these two social reformers at least, the "classes" were "perishing and dangerous" not inherently but because of systemic conditions.

Carpenter wryly observed to her sponsor Lady Byron around 1852, "I perceive that persons who positively *work* with 'dangerous' children, insensibly slip out of their evangelicalism," though they suppose it is "embalmed" in their "spirits. I never undeceive them!"³⁵ She herself was not deceived that she was saving souls more than preventing the propagation of criminals. Neither Carpenter nor Cobbe questioned the fundamentals of marriage and motherhood, though Cobbe sought to prevent abuse of wives. Carpenter specified that the worker be single: "Unattached ladies, such as widows and unmarried women have quite ample work to do in the world for the good of others to absorb all their powers. Wives and mothers have a very noble work given them by God, and want no more."³⁶ Cobbe sought legal ways to change married women's status, and found a fulfilling attachment with Lloyd. She took pride in being able to produce philosophy, social science, and periodical essays regarded as of masculine merit. Her father had objected to her publishing at all, but then her first book, an anonymous study of Kantian morals, was well received. "It is a most *noble* Performance' (said the 'Caledonian Mercury'), 'the work of a masculine and lofty mind.'"³⁷ As we know from Cobbe's enduring essays, she also respected the power of case reports.³⁸ Biographical acquaintance gives a more mixed character of Victorian "pioneers," recommending to me that we

should anticipate that our activism today will exhibit glaring flaws a century and a half hence.

The imaginative rhetoric of “noble” “worker” discourse was engaged with a class-based, divisive public response to the crises generated by new technology, a situation surely analogous today. In 1860 the Oxford classicist, Master of Balliol Benjamin Jowett, wrote to praise Cobbe’s pamphlet on the treatment of “Incurables” in English workhouses; in light of her article in *Macmillan’s* and address to the Social Science Congress in Dublin, he advised code-switching and negotiation. There is no purity of party; don’t “go to war with Political Economy” (“P.E.”), that is, quantitative Utilitarians, because they “are a powerful and dangerous class.” Further, “ladies and gentlemen” can’t “fill up the interstices of legislation,” any more than billionaires can solve social issues dropped by Congress, unless willing to deal with “motives of self-interest.” He knows Cobbe won’t agree with his view that political economy’s support of free trade has “really done more for the laboring classes . . . than all the Philanthropists put together.” As if in afterthought, Jowett advises dropping the language of philanthropy and “missions,” which is “distasteful to the educated.”³⁹ Jowett, an intimate of Florence Nightingale, tellingly uses the term “dangerous class” for the Utilitarians who would stuff facts into Sissy Jupe in Dickens’s *Hard Times* (1854). Jowett wryly notes, “no doubt as a matter of taste there is a good deal that might be corrected in the Political Economists”.⁴⁰ Philanthropy garbed in religion would not win allies among the safer classes.

Jowett knows that winning hearts is key to fundraising. Both Carpenter and Cobbe united the sentiment of faith and the conviction of factual evidence to influence the powerful classes to volunteer, donate, organize, and legislate concerning the powerless. Cobbe’s *Life* reproduces another letter adjacent to Jowett’s, from Isa Craig as secretary of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, December 28, 1860: “The case of the poor ‘incurables’ is truly heartrending. I cried over the proof of your paper—a queer proceeding on the part of the subeditor of the ‘Social Science Transactions’”; the NAPSS will respond accordingly to the “noble appeal” to “remedy such bitter wrong.”⁴¹ Craig indicates that leaders of change must both feel and observe.

Efforts today to reform or reconstitute penal systems, health care, and education often seem to be patching the solutions that Victorians attempted.⁴² Separating objective expertise from embodied empathy is no longer an ideal we espouse. Social change requires transformative

emotional appeals, including projected or emulated roles in the soup kitchens and picket lines: mediated examples of renown that influence causes across all kinds of social and geographical boundaries. In 2024 the theme of the annual convention of MLA, a scholarly organization descended from Victorian times, will be Joy and Sorrow.

As a member of a Jewish congregation, I annually join an interfaith town hall to hold politicians accountable for public transportation, affordable housing, and preschool and afterschool programs, among other matters—a rare event that is not segregated by town/gown, English/Spanish, property-tax-based school districts vs. public housing; this year, the Islamic Center’s prayer was given by a woman in a hijab. Nearly a thousand attendees persuade the elected officials to commit to well-researched action. This is far from the only kind of effective activism, but it prompts me not to regard the terms of faith in which Carpenter and to a lesser extent Cobbe justified their own exceptional careers as a thing of the past. Automatic distaste for religious discourse can miss the narratives that support wider allyship, and may downplay the key role, for example, of the Black church in the civil rights movement. In 2023 there is perspective and insight to be gained from reacquaintance with Victorian proponents of nonprofit mutual responsibility, measuring our distances from them and reframing our own aspirations for community engagement, public humanities, and social justice.

NOTES

1. In a section entitled “Beacons Now Dimmed,” in *How to Make It as a Woman*, I retrace 1930s acknowledgment of “early organized expert social work,” pointing out Mary Carpenter, Frances Power Cobbe, and others (139–42).
2. Browne, *Mrs. Somerville and Mary Carpenter*, 112. Browne deems Carpenter’s vocation to be “as noble a work as ever was given to a woman” (128). Cobbe was even more attached to the scientist Somerville than to Carpenter. Somerville was “the perfect mother” for Cobbe, whereas Carpenter was neither a “contemporary” nor “motherly”; Somerville’s death in 1872 devastated Cobbe (Mitchell, *Cobbe*, 111, 214). Browne’s dual biographies are part of a series by other authors published by Cassell, documented in *Collective Biographies of Women* (CBW).

3. CBW is based on a bibliography of 1,272 collections of biographies of women, primarily 1830–1940; I use “we” to refer to an extended team of editors and research staff who built the project. On Biographical Elements and Structure Schema (BESS), see <http://cbw.iath.virginia.edu/exist/cbw/BESSdoc>; Booth, “Mid-Range Reading,” 620–27.
4. Elaine Hadley shows the political salience of melodrama in Victorian England in *Melodramatic Tactics* (1995).
5. Often these were American Unitarians: J. Estlin Carpenter, *The Life and Work of Mary Carpenter*, 69–75. In a letter to an American ally, she wrote that her concern in England was mainly for “those enslaved to the use of intoxicating liquors” (72), having pledged teetotalism in 1843 (63). Analogies to Atlantic chattel slavery are disheartening. Like someone today attacking big pharma for the opioid crisis, Carpenter blamed the suppliers.
6. Manton, *Mary Carpenter*, 83.
7. In *Carpenter and the Children of the Streets*, Manton details her celebrity visits among Boston Unitarians, among Indigenous Canadians, and in India as well as her belated engagement with women’s suffrage (218–22).
8. J. Estlin Carpenter, “Preface to the First Edition,” *The Life and Work of Mary Carpenter*, v (emphases added).
9. Mitchell, *Frances Power Cobbe*, 11–46.
10. Cobbe, *Life of Frances Power Cobbe*, 250; Mitchell, *Cobbe*, 64. Cobbe’s heterodoxy parallels her contemporary, George Eliot (Mitchell, *Cobbe*, 57), who praised Cobbe’s preface to her edition of Parker’s works (131). But Cobbe declined to meet the novelist when they were both staying in Florence because of avowed “prejudice in favour of lawful matrimony” (Mitchell, *Cobbe*, 111).
11. Manton, *Carpenter*, 72–73.
12. Cobbe craved unrushed meals that included vegetables and a variety of conversation. Both women were well into their thirties or forties (after a parent died) before setting their life’s work; both were prescribed European travels for health. Cobbe’s autobiography includes her Eastern travels.
13. Marcus, *Between Women*, 51–54.
14. Mitchell, *Cobbe*, 133; Hamilton, *Frances Power Cobbe*, 52–59.
15. Hamilton, ed., *Criminals, Idiots, Women, and Minors*.
16. The jacket of Hamilton’s *Cobbe and Victorian Feminism* reproduces a banner of the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Society of 1908, with Carpenter’s name embroidered directly above Cobbe’s.

- Some accounts overlook Carpenter's participation in the movement in her last years. Carpenter, *Life and Work*, 338, and appendix, J. S. Mill letter, December 29, 1867 (389–91).
17. Carpenter, *Life and Work*, details her versatility: devoted to art museums and drawing, geology, scientific experiments, wide reading, and writing poetry. All versions note Carpenter's gifts with children. Cobbe emerges as more religious, prejudiced, and conservative than expected.
 18. According to Manton, Carpenter resisted approaches by Anna Jameson and John Stuart Mill in the 1850s and 1860s, protecting her primary mission to serve "children, Indian women and women prisoners" rather than join the "unpopular cause" of suffrage and education for privileged women (*Carpenter*, 217). In the last years of her life, she took public part in the campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts and supported and spoke at a women's suffrage meeting (218–19).
 19. Cobbe, *Life*, 278 (emphasis added).
 20. Mitchell, *Cobbe*, 213–14; 90–91.
 21. CBW's collections by the later decades of the nineteenth century include collections of Irishwomen (Cobbe was born in Ireland but not included in such), African American women, and women of India and Japan.
 22. Margaret Tabor wrote at least four in a series of collections, "Pioneer Women."
 23. CBW, <http://cbw.iath.virginia.edu>. Search by person and use last name field. Cobbe achieved more limited renown in her lifetime, which ended in a new era with very different demand for models.
 24. Joseph Johnson's *Noble Women of Our Time* (1886), v. Thirty-six CBW titles use some form of the word "work" in the title. Johnson's title is shared with a book by Frederick Douglass How (London: Isbister, 1901), with only Agnes Jones repeating among the total of twenty-six subjects in the two collections.
 25. The titles are *Peerless Women* and *Heroines of Freethought*, discussed here; Rose Somerville, *Brief Epitomes of the Lives of Eminent Women* (1886); and William Makepeace Thayer, *Women Who Win: Or Making Things Happen* (1896).
 26. Underwood, *Heroines of Freethought*.
 27. Underwood, *Heroines of Freethought*, para. 1.
 28. Cochrane, possibly Scottish, is author of *Soldiers of Christ* (n.d.); the all-male *Missionary Pioneers* ('1905); and *Famous Christian Workers*

- (1909), with chapters on John Howard, Edward Coston, John Wesley, Lord Shaftesbury, George Muller, Dr Barnado, William Quarrier, General Gordon, William Booth, and Charles Spurgeon.
29. Sister Dora, the pioneer nurse and saint (as some said), was one source for Dorothea Brooke in *Middlemarch* (1871–72). See Booth, “Particular Webs,” 5–34.
 30. The biography of Cobbe has two subchapters: “Working for Women’s Rights” and “Working against Vivisection.” The very last line of the biographies in the book, para. 25 in its entirety, returns to the metaphor and thematics of works accompanied by faith: “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few.”
 31. Rogers receives recognition in two chapters in CBW. Cobbe did her GoFundMe—a letter to the *Times* dated April 13, 1899—as feminist objection to fundraising only for widows and children of the captain and crew who stayed with the vessel; Cobbe called the working-class woman “one of the most sublime figures in ‘our island story’” (Mitchell, *Cobbe*, 357).
 32. Cobbe, preface, *The Duties of Women*, i–ii. Cobbe reinforces women’s personal obligations (family roles, principled character) as well as the entire agenda of the “Woman’s Movement,” including suffrage.
 33. Cobbe received from Madras a book written in Tamil, *The Lives of True and Good Englishwomen of the Victorian Age*; an English translation would make British women “proud” of Cobbe and “the other workers” in the collection (Cochrane, *Peerless Women*, ch. 11, para. 22). I have not traced this Tamil book, but biographies of Victorian noble workers are dispersed in the empire, e.g., Margaret Bretherton, *Ten Noble Women* (Madras & Colombo: Christian Literature Society for India, 1913).
 34. Profiling that we strive against today shows up persistently in Victorian activism. Carpenter cites “The Arab of the City,” in the *Ragged School Union Magazine* (i.e., street children) (Carpenter, *Reformatory Schools*, 61–62). Cobbe wrote of “heteropathy” or the desire to torture the sufferer, particularly among Jews, whose “duty to join in stoning an offender to death” has instilled cruelty in the race (246). See Cobbe, “Criminals, Idiots,” in Hamilton, ed., *Criminals*, on male propensity to “cruelty, drunkenness, unchastity” (130, n.10). Cobbe quotes Carpenter on the ability of matrons to fool male inspectors. Gentlemen of the board were “helpless and absurd” visiting the wards (*Life*, 279). An inspired teacher of children, Carpenter preferred boys; the girl pupils were slower in “the facts of natural history” (Browne, *Mrs. Somerville*).

35. Manton, *Carpenter*, 116 (emphasis in the original).
36. Browne, *Mrs. Somerville*, 124. Want in the sense of lacking rather than wishing for.
37. Cobbe, *Life*, 101 (emphasis added).
38. She cites evidence that patients who are “pronounced ‘incurable’” and sent to the workhouse inevitably descend “the well-worn channels of Poverty, Disease and Death” (Cobbe, *Life*, 286).
39. Cobbe, *Life*, 291.
40. Cobbe, *Life*, 291.
41. Cobbe, *Life*, 289.
42. Victorian culture haunts successive culture wars and politics, as when Margaret Thatcher and Gertrude Himmelfarb weigh in on Victorian self-help (Booth, “Neo-Victorian Self-Help,” 284–310).

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