

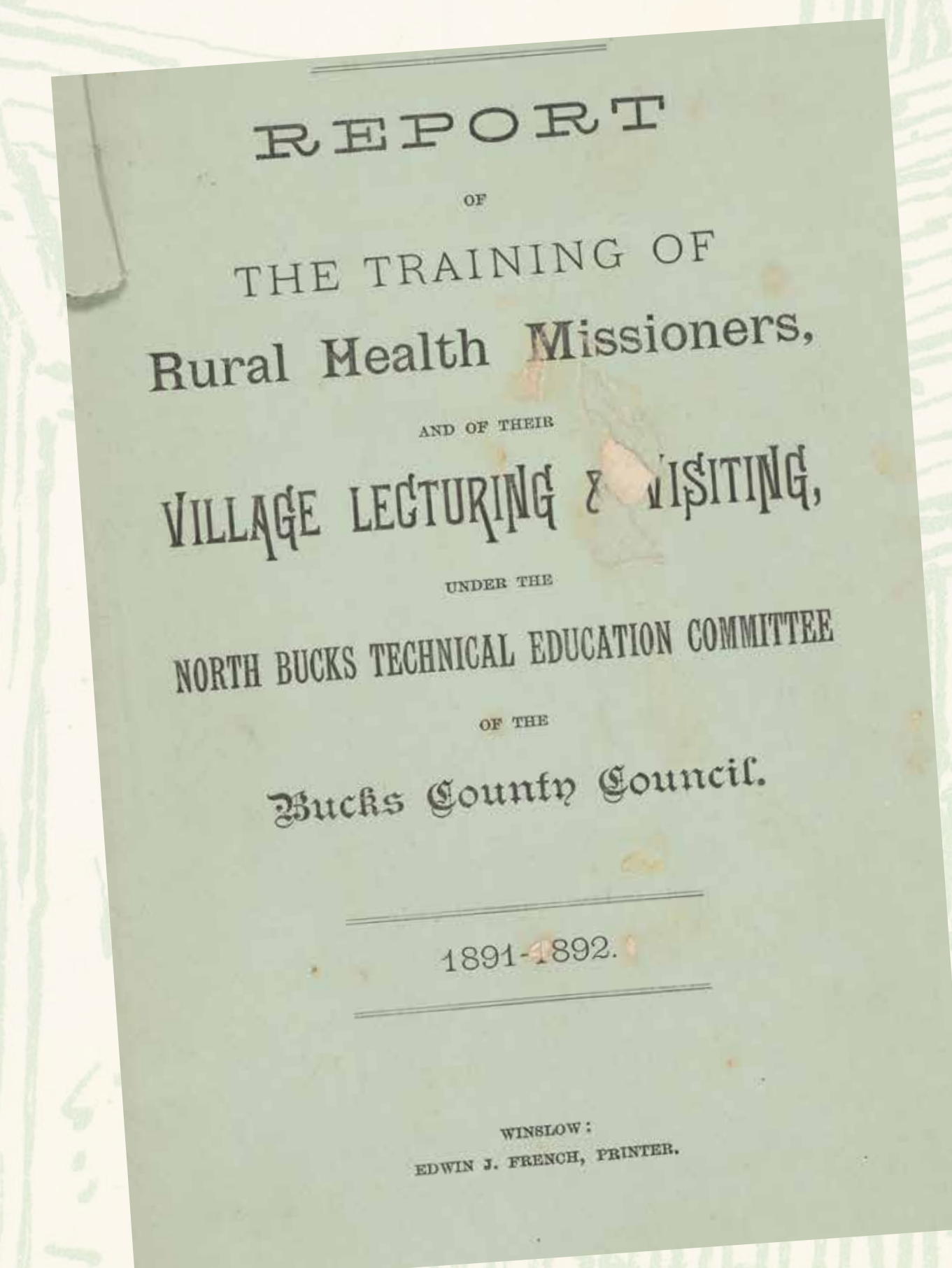
# Health at Home

The Crimean War exposed Nightingale to the awful suffering caused by contagious diseases and inattention to hygiene. The widely-accepted theory of anti-contagionism explained the cause of disease in terms of the filth and odours found in dirty hospitals and homes.

To tackle this threat, Nightingale worked with the leading sanitary reformer, Edwin Chadwick, to bring new standards of cleanliness to ordinary British households. Her most famous book, *Notes on Nursing* (1860), instructed young mothers, sisters and care-givers on the best methods for maintaining a sanitary environment and halting household disease in its tracks.

This 'little book', as Nightingale called it, flew off the shelves: 15,000 copies were released in the first two months.

Nightingale also promoted health at home through the district nursing scheme that she established with the Liverpool philanthropist William Rathbone. From the 1860s, trained district nurses were sent into the poorest urban homes to treat the ill and advise their families on how to prevent further disease. Later in the



Engraving showing a typical visit of 'lady bountiful' to a working-class home. From *Punch*, 12 January, 1861. Central Store 2 Periodicals, General Library Stock. Pamphlet, 'Health at Home', (1892). Claydon House Trust, Verney/Claydon Estate Papers, From Verney 10/2131.

nineteenth century, district nursing expanded into rural areas as part of a coordinated national network. Nightingale's final campaigns on domestic sanitation came in the 1890s in Buckinghamshire. She sent trained educators to the villages surrounding her brother-in-law's mansion, tasked with raising awareness of public health. The work of these Health Missioners echoed the earliest visits to the poor that Nightingale had made to the workers



near Lea Hurst. 'Flo has been very busy paying visits in the village' Parthenope had written, describing her sixteen-year-old sister's fledgling interest many years earlier in the living conditions of the less fortunate. These visits had been typical of the norms of the 'lady bountiful', in which women of Nightingale's standing were encouraged to interact with the labouring-class communities living near their family homes.

Florence  
Nightingale  
Comes Home



Engraving, 'The Costermongers House' from *The Graphic*, 9 November 1872. Central Store 2 Periodicals, General Library Stock.