

## **A Bold and Empowering Life: Florence Nightingale's Struggle for Glory**

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### **The Definition of Feminine Expectations**

A feminist does not have to abide by traditional feminist ideologies. Imagine if you will, a classic first wave feminist. The symbols and images that may come to mind are likely proud women who picketed in front of the White House, who lofted their homemade banners to fight for women's suffrage. Yet, imagine the idea of a feminist who fought for a different type of feminism, one that did not circulate around the idea of voting rights and political power. I am describing to you, in a sense, a core feminist who fought for women's rights in her own unique methodology. The woman in question is Florence Nightingale. Before her contemporaries were marching in the streets with banners and pickets, Nightingale was undercutting the male dominated economic systems of Victorian England by providing job opportunities for women who needed work. Florence Nightingale redefined the role of a woman in Victorian society. With the strength and rigorous morals of a female juggernaut, she proved to the patriarchal world that a woman could accomplish that which she set her mind to. For her, no obstacle was more worthy to overcome than the expectations of her family and country.

As the mother of nursing, Florence Nightingale was a strict and oftentimes coldhearted individual, whose rigorous moral and religious ties propelled her to great fame on a global scale. While her contributions to the standardization of sanitation changed the course of medical practices, this biography will focus primarily on the societal expectations of Victorian women, and Florence Nightingale's outright refusal to accept these expectations. She defied both her family and her country who would have preferred she stay idle in her ambitions. Not only did Florence Nightingale work for herself, she sought to create a new standard for female practitioners in the medical field. Through sheer force of will, she redefined what professions were appropriate for women in the Victorian era. Through her economic and job-based priorities, Florence Nightingale altered the expectations of what women were capable of accomplishing. Nightingale dedicated her life to providing substantial well-paid jobs to educated women who were "forced into

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idleness”<sup>1</sup> by the patriarchal systems of Victorian England. In doing so, she was paramount in the development of women working in the medical field.

This comprehensive biography will strive to highlight the critiques Florence Nightingale makes about Victorian Society and familial relations. One of her most prominent points of criticism were the expectations of middle and upper-class women in a patriarchal world, or as she described, ‘a sense of forced female idleness.’<sup>2</sup> Her essay, *Cassandra*, was published in 1852, and is a combination of a series of diary entries and an appraisal of societal and gender norms. *Cassandra* is one of the more noteworthy primary sources to examine her perceptions on gender roles in the home life, and the biting nature of the narrative is a testament to her loathing of cultural shackles placed upon women. It is important to note that this evaluation of women in the home came in the mid-nineteenth century, long before first wave feminists took to the streets in active protest of these systems. While women have been discussing these problems for decades beforehand, Nightingale published her egalitarian narrative surrounding gender roles in 1852, a feat both in the literary world and in the feminist world.

To reemphasize, Florence Nightingale did not follow any preconceived path of feminism laid out by others. In fact, one could claim that Nightingale did not consider herself a champion for universal women’s rights at the time.<sup>3</sup> Obviously the term ‘feminist’ itself has shifted in meaning since it was originally coined, as the respective ‘waves’ of feminism had different objectives and societal foundations. Nightingale however was not particularly in favor of helping women solely for the sake of aiding the cause of female empowerment.<sup>4</sup> Nightingale has a legacy as one of the greatest feminists of all time, but her scathing commentary often critiques many women as ineffective creatures, which paints a narrative of a woman who did not bother to subdue her emotions or opinions in any way.<sup>5</sup>

Nightingale was not the kind of woman who would throw her support towards a cause solely for its stated purpose. Her utmost values

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<sup>1</sup> Nightingale, Florence, Myra Stark, and Cynthia MacDonald. *Cassandra: an essay. Florence Nightingale's Angry Outcry Against the Forced Idleness of Victorian Women*. New York City, NY: The Feminist Press, 1980. p.18.

<sup>2</sup> Florence Nightingale, *Cassandra: an essay*, 11. Please Review proper Citation format. Review the Chicago manual of style for details on how to properly footnote. Improper footnotes are a common mistake throughout this entire paper.

<sup>3</sup> Nightingale, Florence, *Cassandra: an essay*. p.15.

<sup>4</sup> Nightingale, Florence, *Cassandra: an essay*. p.15.

<sup>5</sup> Nightingale, Florence, *Cassandra: an essay*. p.14.

were those of hard work and rigorous moral discipline.<sup>6</sup> Her cutting commentary sends criticism towards both sexes, as she finds unique faults in both, leading to a quasi-negative sense of equality through her critiques.<sup>7</sup> By treating both sexes as flawed in their own individual ways, she creates an interesting sense of belittling egalitarianism. Florence Nightingale's method of approach was to find a pragmatic solution to tangible problems. With her less than optimistic viewpoint on the possibility of voting rights, she instead chose to focus her time and energy on job creation rather than women's suffrage.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps it was not her intention to forward women's rights through meticulous labor, but the results are apparent, as nurses today can achieve sizable incomes and their skilled labor is in high demand.

Florence Nightingale's familial relations were where her individual sense of feminism diverged from more traditional first wave feminist theories, which were more akin to political participation rather than labor oriented goals. To Florence Nightingale, not every woman was deserving of respect and admiration. In her eyes, there were many women existing in similar socioeconomic situations within in her own family who did not warrant her respect.<sup>9</sup> This biography will pay special attention to addressing the loathsome perception Florence Nightingale had of her relatives. More specifically, her mother and elder sister were some of the original catalysts for Nightingale to seek employment.<sup>10</sup> In her own words, Nightingale claimed that her sister and mother were "contented by the imposed idleness" of Victorian society.<sup>11</sup> By her own accounts, they reveled in the day-to-day monotony of feminine work. To be a placeholder in a man's world was an appealing proposition to the Nightingale women according to Florence.<sup>12</sup> To an extent however, we must appreciate the roles of her mother and sister, for their traditionalist behaviors are what originally propelled Ms. Nightingale to seek a rewarding work experience. If her female relatives had not been the antithesis of her ethics, Nightingale may have never left the comfortable Victorian lifestyle that she was accustomed with. For this reason, we

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<sup>6</sup> Bostridge, Mark, *Florence Nightingale: The Woman and Her Legend*. London: Penguin, 2008. p.35-36.

<sup>7</sup> Nightingale, Florence, *Cassandra: an essay*. p.18, 40.

<sup>8</sup> Nightingale, Florence, *Cassandra: an essay*. p.18.

<sup>9</sup> Nightingale, Florence, *The Collected Works of Florence Nightingale*. Edited by Lynn McDonald and Gérard Vallée. 16 vols. Ontario, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2002-12. vol. 1, p.289.

<sup>10</sup> Nightingale, Florence, *Cassandra: an essay*. p.17.

<sup>11</sup> Nightingale, Florence, *Cassandra: an essay*. p.37.

<sup>12</sup> Nightingale, Florence, *Cassandra: an essay*. p.46.

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could thank the Nightingale women in this matter. Her family was a driving factor for why wanted to open the job market for women.

### Wealth and Foundations

As a child, Florence Nightingale received the benefits of a relatively wealthy family. She was born on May 12, 1820 in the pre-Victorian era, but her adult life almost exclusively lived through the Victorian society, until her death in 1910 at the age of 90 years old. Her parents, Fanny and William Nightingale, were a relatively standard couple in terms of English societal expectations. William came from a lineage of bankers residing in the city of Sheffield.<sup>13</sup> The Victorian era began in 1837, and along with a new queen, English society was changing its foundational structures to accommodate more people into power.<sup>14</sup> At this time, England was divided by economic and reputational systems for centuries. There existed a pyramid of power, and in the upper-mid tier, one could find wealthy traders or merchants. This is where William Nightingale originally fell in the socioeconomic class structure. While not in the upper divisions of society, he was by no means a peasant or a commoner. William's family held the name of Shore for many generations, and were notable bankers as previously mentioned.

On the mother's side, Fanny Nightingale's family held the name of Smith. They were prominent traders in luxury goods such as tea, spices, and sugar products.<sup>15</sup> Notably so, their daughters were born into an adapting world, one which was moving away from the traditionalist senses England had been a part of for centuries. An emerging middle class began to grow alongside the Industrial Revolution. With a lessened divide between the finite upper class and the plentiful commoner population, middle class citizens were able to purchase large homes, and hire servants to take care of their children. As more families could afford to employ servants and groom themselves to a degree of refinement, the barriers between upper and middle classes began to fade away.<sup>16</sup> Luckily for the Nightingale family, they received the benefits of appearing as an upper class family, even though by traditionalist standards they would not have fallen under the umbrella of true high society. William and Fanny used this increasing wealth to their advantage, as they were able to summer in the Italian countryside often, as the warm sunlight and ocean

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<sup>13</sup> Jewitt, Llewellyn, ed. *Black's Tourist's Guide to Derbyshire: Its Towns, Watering Places, Dales, and Mansions*. Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1868. p.226.

<sup>14</sup> Bostridge, *Florence Nightingale*, p.44.

<sup>15</sup> Bostridge, *Florence Nightingale*, p.34.

<sup>16</sup> Bostridge, *Florence Nightingale*, p.45.

breeze was a preferable atmosphere for the couple.<sup>17</sup> So much so, that they owned two homes in England, and one in Italy where they had their two daughters.

The first daughter to be born was Frances Parthenope Nightingale, (Par-then-o-pee) who was born in Naples, Italy. The reason her name was so unique was because the city of *Parthenope* was an ancient Greek city before the Roman Empire existed, which is situated exactly where Naples is today.<sup>18</sup> Shortly after Parthenope's birth in 1819, Florence Nightingale was born in Florence, Italy in 1820. The family spent around three years in Italy traveling to various cities, beaches and vineyards. Then in 1821, they moved back to England.<sup>19</sup> Nightingale spent her adolescent years in two homes: the family estate in Embley, Hampshire, as well as Lea Hurst in Derbyshire.<sup>20</sup> Lea Hurst in Derbyshire was Nightingale's first true home. To her, it was a house of learning and it is well documented that Nightingale loved the estate as a child.<sup>21</sup> Her experiences in Lea Hurst were the first opportunity for Nightingale to learn about high society from a female perspective. Her mother, Fanny Nightingale was the antithesis of Nightingale's interests and passions. As a young woman, Fanny dreamed of marrying a wealthy man and becoming the mistress of a lofty estate.<sup>22</sup> After all, wealth in English society was measured by land to some degree, so for a woman with a relatively wealthy background such as Fanny, her aspirations to marry into money and have an estate were not out of the ordinary.

Growing up in Lea Hurst, Nightingale did start to notice tangible differences in her passions compared to her mother and sister. For example, Fanny lavished in the idea of being a hostess, impressing guests with elegant furnishings and beautiful attire. Nightingale's priorities, however, were to study and learn about the world around her, especially in the field of religion and spirituality. When she was six, Nightingale came up with a system to ascertain religious truth. She wrote down on paper each of her prayers, and on the same piece of paper she wrote down the date that she predicted the miracle would come true by. After trying this, the six-year-old concluded that none of her prayers were answered. Thusly, the six-year-old Florence Nightingale deduced that for prayers to be answered, one must work for it themselves alongside God's

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<sup>17</sup> Nightingale, Florence, *Collected Works*, vol. 7, p.14.

<sup>18</sup> Nightingale, Florence, *Collected Works*, vol. 8, p.137.

<sup>19</sup> Cook, Edward. *The Life of Florence Nightingale*. 2 vols. London: Macmillan and Co., 1914. vol. 2, p.263.

<sup>19-21</sup> Jewitt, *Black's Tourist's Guide to Derbyshire*, p.226.

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will.<sup>23</sup> It was not in the nature of divinity to simply hand out miracles, Nightingale found. At six years old, she had already discovered her own theological beliefs. Florence Nightingale also developed a profound interest in mysticism and religious concepts when she was an early adolescent. Compare these interests to the women of her family who largely prioritized fashion and hosting parties. Intellectually speaking, Nightingale was not interested in the more traditional roles for educated women in Victorian society. She held higher ambitions in the realm of traditional male occupations.

While the estate offered many benefits towards the growing girls, not all aspects of Lea Hurst were pleasant. The winters at the estate were extremely cold, and the girls both developed whooping cough at young ages.<sup>24</sup> The seasons could not be avoided, and Fanny observed that the girls were growing thin and weak in the environment. It was in 1825 that Fanny decided the Italian seaside air would be beneficial for the children, so she decided to find an estate similar in atmosphere to the Italian summers, which provided warmth and sunshine as opposed to the cold winters at Lea Hurst. Fanny eventually convinced William to purchase a second home in Hampshire, called Embley.<sup>25</sup> Arguably so, this home in Hampshire was even more influential on Nightingale than Lea Hurst. For one, this was the locale where the fateful encounter between Nightingale and Miss Sara Christie would occur. Since there was no public education system in England at the time, wealthy parents would often employ private mistresses or tutors to educate their children. The tutors often came with varying degrees of education themselves.

When introducing Miss Sara Christie to Florence, Ms. Nightingale described her daughter as, “a shrewd little creature with a clear head which makes her thoroughly mistress of all she attempts.”<sup>26</sup> This introduction was made in 1827, so the observations Fanny made about Florence were accurate in regards to her adult personality and work ethic. This meeting is where the controversy around her childhood begins to emerge. Early on in her private education with Miss Sara, the tutor noticed great differences between the two girls she was responsible for mentoring. She affectionately referred to the girls as Flo, (Florence) and Parthe, or Pop (Parthenope).<sup>27</sup> In her observations, Miss Sara noticed that

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<sup>23</sup> Reef, Catherine. *Florence Nightingale: The Courageous Life of the Legendary Nurse*. Boston: Clarion Books, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017. p.13.

<sup>24</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.16.

<sup>25</sup> O'Malley, Ida B. *Florence Nightingale, 1820-1856*. London: Thornton Butterworth, 1931. p.16.

<sup>26</sup> Bostridge, *Florence Nightingale*, p.35-36.

<sup>27</sup> Bostridge, *Florence Nightingale*, p.37.

the two girls had vastly different passions and areas of interests. Parthe was the simpler of the two, who had few interests besides flowers and poetry. Parthe occasionally painted and drew pictures, a hobby which was standard for growing girls at the time. Nightingale however, was the child who constantly wrote letters to her aunts and relatives, a habit which is beneficial to biographers today as her extensive writing skills provide countless primary sources.<sup>28</sup> As a child, Nightingale was interested in walking along the beach and collecting seashells, which she would later catalogue by scientific names in a book. Parthe observed that her sister was always, "enquiring into the why and wherefore of everything."<sup>29</sup> Fanny Nightingale noticed these rather abnormal interests in Nightingale, which eventually amalgamated in Nightingale's instructions to Miss Sara. Nightingale at seven years old gave her tutor specific instructions as to what she needed in her education separately from Parthe. Nightingale at the age of seven commented, "Parthe and I are so different, that we require different treatment."<sup>30</sup> As a child, she was different from most girls her age. As a young girl, these quirky interests were acceptable, but as she grew into a woman, the quirks became problematic.

### Quirks into Controversy

Nightingale's first experiences with nursing were found in a common practice that wealthy women followed; charitable work in poor city districts.<sup>31</sup> Her mother, Fanny Nightingale on occasion went to these impoverished neighborhoods and donated items of clothing, spare food, blankets and other essential items. This was a common practice for women of high society, as the archetype of the matronly feminine figure was expected to participate in charitable events. Nightingale took part in these practices often alongside her mother.<sup>32</sup> The difference in mentality between the two arose when Fanny believed it was a charitable good to participate on occasion, whereas Nightingale viewed it as more of a necessity. According to Fanny's accounts, she would often have to go out at night by lantern in search of, where she knew she would find her daughter sitting in a humble cottage near the bedside of an ill patient nearby. Fanny even went so far as to claim that would refuse to come

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<sup>28</sup> Bostridge, *Florence Nightingale*, p.30.

<sup>29</sup> Bostridge, *Florence Nightingale*, p.36.

<sup>30</sup> Bostridge, *Florence Nightingale*, p.36.

<sup>31</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.18.

<sup>32</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.19.

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home for dinner while there were needy people she could assist.<sup>33</sup> She had many small encounters such as this in her life where she showed signs of a nursing aptitude; the aforementioned charitable work, or a case of nursing a Collie back to health after some local boys were terrorizing it.<sup>34</sup> Even at a much younger age when had whooping cough at Lea Hurst, her sister Parthe recalled that Nightingale's thirteen dolls also had whooping cough, as Nightingale tied small pieces of flannel to the necks of each, which was a common treatment for the illness.<sup>35</sup>

Alongside her seemingly saintly behavior, experienced her first genuine religious experience on February 7, 1837 at the age of 16. She recalls that when she was alone in her bedroom on one February morning, the voice of God entered her ears and God spoke her name, calling her into his service.<sup>36</sup> This was the first of many religious messages she supposedly received in her lifetime, and she saw them as divine inspiration for her purpose in life. Nightingale likely kept these messages in mind as the divide between her and her family began to cause dissent in the household.

As she grew more mature, complications further arose between what desired, and what her family expected of her. As the family traveled across Europe in the latter part of 1837, Mrs. Nightingale used these travels as an opportunity to see how her daughter interacted with members of nobility in other nations.<sup>37</sup> Parthe for example, spoke French very eloquently and could handle herself well with the elite of France. Yet, there existed a divide between the talents and the reception of the two sisters. As they were toted around grand ballrooms and extravagant parties all over Europe, Mrs. Nightingale wondered why her daughters were "not more worshipped" by everyone that met them.<sup>38</sup> For Parthe, she was extremely contented in the ideologies of England that labeled wealthy women more so as accessories and secondary pieces in a man's world. She accepted this role with gusto much like her mother had done throughout her lifetime. Yet, it is noteworthy that Nightingale was considered the more beautiful sister.<sup>39</sup> Parthe unfortunately was considered by suitors more plain and average looking, whereas Florence was described as a woman of great beauty.<sup>40</sup> This was an unfortunate

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<sup>33</sup> Bostridge, *Florence Nightingale*, p.41.

<sup>34</sup> Bostridge, *Florence Nightingale*, p.41

<sup>35</sup> Gill, Gillian. *Nightingales*. New York: Random House, 2005. p.100.

<sup>36</sup> Nightingale, Florence, *Collected Works*, vol.1, p.129.

<sup>37</sup> Nightingale, Florence, *Collected Works*, vol.7 p.34.

<sup>38</sup> Bostridge, *Florence Nightingale*, p.42.

<sup>39</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.24.

<sup>40</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.25.

development as Nightingale denied suitors and marriage proposals her entire life, which infuriated Parthenope because she received no proposals until she was middle aged.

Upon observation by their mother at these extravagant festivities, Fanny Nightingale admitted that Florence's "stately manners keep people at a distance."<sup>41</sup> As a mother, she confessed a personal fear that Florence would not have a flourishing love life by commenting, "I do not expect that love passages will be frequent in her life."<sup>42</sup> Sadly enough, Parthe was a woman who was naturally excited about the world of romance and courtship, yet when outsiders observed the two sisters, Parthe was often left in the shadow of Florence's beauty. For their father William, this was of particular concern because he had no male heirs. If William were to die an untimely death, his two estates and all his personal wealth would go directly to his sister Mai Shore, as was decreed in his father's will.<sup>43</sup> Desperation began to seep in for the Nightingale family, as their comfortable lifestyle with lavish wealth was solely dependent upon William living. If he succumbed to an illness, the Nightingale women would be at the mercy of Aunt Mai who held no legal obligation to take care of them in any form.<sup>44</sup>

As Nightingale could travel around Europe to extravagant parties and luxurious travel destinations, her curiosity began to grow about the various hospital systems in different European countries. In the mid-nineteenth century, hospitals were decrepit and disgusting locations.<sup>45</sup> For example, Florence Nightingale wanted to study in the Salisbury Infirmary in the year 1845 as she wagered that it would be a useful experience to do some volunteer work in a hospital.<sup>46</sup> Yet, this location much like others in Europe, was a disgusting place where the poor went to die. Rats infested the halls and the conditions were inhuman.<sup>47</sup> For wealthy citizens, they chose to stay at home when they fell ill, and had reputable doctors make house calls to their private manors.

Even the poor begrudgingly went to hospitals, and only if they had no family to take care of them. The reputations of hospitals in England were so horrendous that commoners viewed them as a last

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<sup>41</sup> Cromwell, Judith Lissauer. *Florence Nightingale, Feminist*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co., 2013. p.30.

<sup>42</sup> Cromwell, *Florence Nightingale*, p.30.

<sup>43</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.25.

<sup>44</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.26.

<sup>45</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.28.

<sup>46</sup> Nightingale, Florence, *Collected Works*, vol.1 p.290.

<sup>47</sup> Nightingale, Florence, *Collected Works*, vol.1 p.290.

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resort.<sup>48</sup> When Nightingale revealed to her parents at the age of 25 that she wanted to work in one of these dilapidated locations, her family outright refused her propositions.<sup>49</sup> Her parents and sister did have good reason as to why Florence should not go, however. Nightingale was an Englishwoman from a wealthy and reputable family, and the mere idea of a woman of her status wandering into wards to clean up fecal matter and blood-soaked rags was a horrendous thought to Fanny and Parthe. So far, Nightingale's experience with nursing was entirely based on occasional charitable venture or looking after an ill relative. Therefore, the prospect of a wealthy young woman mingling with the lower classes was an unorthodox idea at best.

Unsurprisingly, the family was against her. Even her father William Nightingale, who usually stayed out of the quarrels between the women, took a side in the argument.<sup>50</sup> He stated that Nightingale was displaying vanity, as her selfish desires were taking precedence over the wishes of her family. He concluded his argument by stating, "A woman's ambition was worth nothing when weighed against the happiness of those she loved."<sup>51</sup> Understandably, Nightingale was caught in an inescapable feeling of dread. Her desire to help the poor and improve health standards for hospitals was rejected by her family and only met with arguing responses. Her father claimed that her desires to work were selfish, yet her ambitions were inherently selfless.

The future ahead of Nightingale in following her family's wishes was a life of needlework and housekeeping. The oppressive nature of her family were shackles that threatened to bind Nightingale to a life of idleness and complacency. The night of the argument, Nightingale wrote in a note, "forgive me, O God, and let me die, this day let me die... I shall never do anything, and am worse than dust and nothing... Oh for some strong things to sweep this loathsome life into the past."<sup>52</sup> It is true that her parents were being overly protective and misogynistic towards the wishes of Nightingale, yet one has to take into consideration the putrid conditions of hospitals, as well as the reputations of nurses in the mid-1840s. The nurses who worked in common English hospitals had no training of any kind.<sup>53</sup> Modern nurses are healthcare professionals, but women back then were more relatable to a servant than a trained medic. Their duties were aligned with what was expected of a servant, as their

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<sup>48</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.29.

<sup>49</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.29.

<sup>50</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.37.

<sup>51</sup> Cook, *The Life of Florence Nightingale*, vol.2 p.45.

<sup>52</sup> Nightingale, Florence, *Collected Works* vol.2 p.366.

<sup>53</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.38.

day to day tasks primarily consisted of cleaning chamber pots, carrying bandages, washing patients etc.<sup>54</sup> None of their work consisted of genuine medical application. The title of a 'nurse' was not comparable to what it signifies today. This gradual change in perception eventually came about due to Florence Nightingale's standardization of medical practices later in life.

### **Observations and the Approach of the Moon**

The demographics of pre-Nightingale era nurses drew in the outcasts of female society in England. Nursing staffs generally comprised of widows, single mothers, failed servants, and older women, all of whom either needed additional funds to support themselves or had no other way of gaining an income.<sup>55</sup> Often so, these women did not work solely as nurses, as the pay was not considered a livable wage.<sup>56</sup> An unfortunate criticism of the economic state of England for women was that there was a relative lack of professional careers for able-bodied women. Should they not marry, their options became immediately limited. A source of income many women turned to was sex work.<sup>57</sup> A grim reality, yet these women had to provide for themselves somehow.<sup>58</sup> The fact of the matter is that nurses in most hospitals were unregulated and unprofessional workers who had no standards of health nor sanitation before the Nightingale standards became commonplace.<sup>59</sup> While William, Fanny, and Parthe Nightingale rejected Florence's request to work in the wards, one has to actively think about what kind of people Ms. Nightingale would be working alongside, and what kind of influences they would have had on her.

Nightingale knew that she could not directly combat her parents on the matter immediately. The year was 1845, and Nightingale was only 25 years old, so she was still dependent upon her parents and needed their support to achieve her dreams. To fight them with an iron fist would not have been a successful battle. Yet Nightingale was a cunning woman, and she engaged in a bit of subterfuge in regard to her parent's refusal. The analogy that Nightingale related to on the matter was the moon's relationship with the earth. In her own words, Nightingale claimed that the moon always orbits the earth, and stays close to the

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<sup>54</sup> Cook, *The Life of Florence Nightingale*, vol.2 p.46.

<sup>55</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.38.

<sup>56</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.38.

<sup>57</sup> Cook, *The Life of Florence Nightingale*, vol.1 p.59.

<sup>58</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.39.

<sup>59</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.37.

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planet as it, “never leaves her.”<sup>60</sup> Therefore, during the daytime Nightingale acted as she was expected. On the surface, she dropped the subject of working in a hospital and did not bring it up to her parents. She acted as a dutiful daughter and behaved properly as any wealthy daughter should.

Yet the moon has two faces: a light side and a dark side. During the day, she acted as the light side of the moon and behaved as was expected of her. However early in the mornings when the rest of the family was still asleep, she secretly studied medical reports on hospitals and health care, printed via the Poor Law Commission, which printed thousands of copies of their findings.<sup>61</sup> In her mind, being able to educate herself on the medical issues plaguing hospitals would better allow her to gain expertise on the subject, even if she could not get any hands-on experience. This process lasted for another two years, well into October of 1847.<sup>62</sup> After that much time, the idleness of not being able to work on her mission given by God was paying a hefty toll on her body, as she began to grow ill and dreadfully thin.<sup>63</sup> Her condition was of particular concern to her Aunt Mai, who sought advice from a physician to check on her health. Upon hearing the reasoning for Nightingale’s nervousness, anxiety, and general depression, the doctor deduced that Nightingale had “slow circulation caused by depression of spirits.”<sup>64</sup> His official prescription was a “calculated change to make her life more interesting and cheerful.”<sup>65</sup> Thankfully for her condition, two saving graces appeared in the darkest hour for her physical and mental health; two close family friends named Charles and Selina Bracebridge. They offered to give Nightingale a change of scenery and take her with them on their vacation to Italy. The ailing Nightingale agreed that the Italian countryside air would do her some good. In 1847, Florence Nightingale began her trip to Italy where she would soon discover for herself the true nature of nineteenth century hospitals.<sup>66</sup>

Along with her friends the Bracebridges, Nightingale toured the Italian countryside and gradually regained her strength. When she felt capable enough to travel again, she joined up with Elizabeth Herbert, who was a honeymooning friend of the Bracebridges’, to see some of the noteworthy Italian hospitals. Her readings on diseases and hospital

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<sup>60</sup> Cook, *The Life of Florence Nightingale*, vol.1 p.59.

<sup>61</sup> Cook, *The Life of Florence Nightingale*, vol.1 p.59.

<sup>62</sup> Cook, *The Life of Florence Nightingale*, vol.1 p.59.

<sup>63</sup> Bostridge, *Florence Nightingale*, p.108.

<sup>64</sup> Bostridge, *Florence Nightingale*, p.108.

<sup>65</sup> Bostridge, *Florence Nightingale*, p.108.

<sup>66</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.42.

conditions could not have prepared her for what she was about to see. At San Giacomo, Nightingale described the scenery to her sister Parthe with, "the stench [was] dreadful, the locale cold, airless, dark."<sup>67</sup> Overall, she was disappointed with the conditions of the hospitals she visited in Italy; the patients were all cramped into small quarters and the capacities were overflowing. Upon drawing a conclusion to her study of Italian hospitals Nightingale wrote, "The best thing to do with these hospitals would be to tear them down."<sup>68</sup>

Upon her return to England in the spring of 1849, Nightingale returned to a rather unfortunate circumstance. Her observations of the Italian hospitals were interesting, yet she found herself once more stuck in the dreadfully boring lifestyle of an unmarried woman in a wealthy family. She weighed the options of marriage against her pitiful isolation. A man by the name of Richard Monckton Milnes was a candidate for Nightingale to marry. In the year 1842 he proposed to Nightingale with her parent's approval, and Nightingale had been postponing giving an answer ever since.<sup>69</sup> Milnes had been waiting for seven years for an answer from Nightingale, for he was extremely infatuated with her, even though the two had spent relatively little time together. While Nightingale did indeed enjoy the company of Mr. Milnes, she had to weigh the pros and cons of a marriage against her ambitions. While it certainly was possible that a husband could provide unforeseen opportunities for Nightingale because she would be out from under the control of her family, her personality was not as shallow as to marry a man solely on how it would benefit her.<sup>70</sup> Milnes was a suitable option, as Nightingale weighed the categories of satisfaction he could meet her standards on, she came to the following conclusion; Milnes was a kind man with a certain passion for the world, and he did show prominent signs of intelligence. Thusly, she suspected he would be able to fulfill her intellectual and passionate needs. However, her drive to achieve a greater good could not be fulfilled with any husband. As she put it, "I could not satisfy this nature by spending a life with him in making society and arranging domestic things...to be nailed to a continuation and exaggeration of my present life, without the hope of another, would be intolerable to me."<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Nightingale, Florence, *Collected Works*, vol.7 p.218.

<sup>68</sup> Nightingale, Florence, *Collected Works*, vol.7 p.101.

<sup>69</sup> Calabria, Michael D. *Florence Nightingale in Egypt and Greece: Her Diary and "Visions."* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997. p.44.

<sup>70</sup> Cook, *The Life of Florence Nightingale*, vol.1 p.100.

<sup>71</sup> Cook, *The Life of Florence Nightingale*, vol.1 p.100.

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This critique of the conceptual idea of marriage tipped the scales out of favor for Mr. Milnes and she declined his proposal seven years later with “a gentle no.”<sup>72</sup> In Nightingale’s mind, the decision was a sound one and necessary for her ambitious career, yet the rest of the Nightingale family did not respond as well as she may have hoped. Fanny Nightingale screamed at Nightingale for her stupidity and her sister Parthe wailed that Florence had turned down a suitor.<sup>73</sup> Fanny was vexed by the fact that Florence rejected Milnes, and she claimed that, “an unmarried twenty-nine year old woman turning down suitors was inviting a life of spinsterhood.”<sup>74</sup> Parthe in particular found this refusal insulting, as she was always in her sister’s shadow by comparison. For a woman such as herself who was contented by the idea of being a prominent housewife, Florence’s rejection of a suitable man must have been nothing short of infuriating.

The following months were a period of depression for the young Ms. Nightingale, as her relationship with her parents and sister further deteriorated.<sup>75</sup> A small window of grace appeared when the Bracebridges’ offered to take Nightingale on a trip to Egypt and Greece to visit archeological sites of ancient history. Fanny and William thought that a trip would do Florence some good, as the tensions in the household were still awkward after Milnes’ rejection.<sup>76</sup> The trip itself was educational in its own way, as the twenty-nine year old Nightingale was allowed to visit the largest hospital in Alexandria, which provided an opportunity for her to add another example of hospitalization to her repertoire of medicinal standardization. Her observations were not entirely comforting, as she claimed that, “the 19 religious sisters were doing the work of 90.”<sup>77</sup>

In her trip to Egypt, she constantly wrote home about her travels, and her observations about the culture and society of Egypt. On a religious note, Nightingale was fascinated by the religion of Mahometan, (Islam) as she claimed, “there is much good in it, their charity is unbounded; and it is not the charity of patronage, but the charity of fellowship.”<sup>78</sup> For all of her observations of the land, she was still feeling extremely empty in her purpose for existing. At night in Egypt, she stayed awake, worrying about her direction in life. She declared herself,

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<sup>72</sup> Cook, *The Life of Florence Nightingale*, vol.1 p.100.

<sup>73</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.47.

<sup>74</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.47.

<sup>75</sup> Bostridge, *Florence Nightingale*, p.130.

<sup>76</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.49.

<sup>77</sup> Nightingale, Florence, *Letters from Egypt*, p.24.

<sup>78</sup> Nightingale, Florence, *Collected Works*, vol.4 p.439.

“physically & morally ill & broken down, a slave.”<sup>79</sup> Her status as a family pariah weighed on her heavily, alongside the fact that she was not allowed to work in an English hospital due to her parent’s disapproval. Idleness, and subsequent boredom took hold of her, and without a driven purpose, Nightingale experienced a deep depression, which left her feeling isolated and alone.

### A Kindling of Passion

On her birthday of May 12, Nightingale turned 30, the same age when “Christ began his mission.”<sup>80</sup> This served as somewhat of a symbolic turning point for the nurse-to-be. In a personal letter to herself on her birthday she wrote, “No more childish things, no more vain things, no more love, no more marriage.”<sup>81</sup> May twelfth seemed to act as somewhat of a rejuvenation for her passions, and a disrobing of her societal expectations. Her first act to revitalize her purpose in life was to stop by Kaiserwerth, Germany on her trip home from Greece.

In a sense, Kaiserwerth was the shining ray of hope that Nightingale had needed. Her experiences with hospitals in England, Ireland, France, and Egypt had been disappointing encounters, yet Kaiserwerth was in a different class of medical professionalism. Firstly, all the nurses were members of a Protestant sisterhood who served God through their charitable work.<sup>82</sup> These were not widows or prostitutes looking for additional income, they were dedicated servants of God who were qualified and trained to be effective nurses. The deaconesses spent two years training to hone their skills of nursing, which was quite contrary to the standards by which other European and African hospitals operated. For Nightingale, the shadowing of trained, dedicated professionals was nothing short of breathtaking. She observed their methodologies and training protocols and was subsequently impressed by their work ethic.<sup>83</sup> Their friendly demeanors and religious humility served as a spark for the previously dismayed Nightingale to burn bright with passion once more. As she left the deaconesses at Kaiserwerth, she claimed that she felt invincible, “as if nothing could ever vex me again.”<sup>84</sup> Nursing, she decided, was a viable option.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Bostridge, *Florence Nightingale*, p.140.

<sup>80</sup> Calabria, *Florence Nightingale in Egypt and Greece*, p.60.

<sup>81</sup> Calabria, *Florence Nightingale in Egypt and Greece*, p.60.

<sup>82</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.55.

<sup>83</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.55.

<sup>84</sup> Calabria, *Florence Nightingale in Egypt and Greece*, p.81.

<sup>85</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.55.

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For as much joy she found in her own world, there would always be family problems that brought Nightingale down. In 1851, Parthenope came down with an illness of irritability, so Nightingale was forced to care for her by her parents. This deteriorated the sister's relationship even further, sending Nightingale into a spiral of depression. In this year of 1851, Nightingale's tone of writing became darker, to a point of suicidal behavior. The previous Christmas in the year 1850, Nightingale announced to her family that her forced idleness was destroying her. She announced that, "I feel myself perishing when I go to bed; I have no desire now but to die."<sup>86</sup> This could potentially be an exaggeration in order to make her parents better understand her feelings, but her mental state should not be underestimated, as a series of depression and lack of direction had plagued Nightingale in the past as her parents systematically dashed her dreams and ambitions. Taking care of Parthe was simply another burden to bear for the unfulfilled thirty-year-old Florence Nightingale.

In the year 1851, the same year Nightingale was taking care of Parthe, an exciting change took place within the Nightingale house; Fanny and William relented their long-held arguments against hospital work. This can be attributed to a few factors: firstly, Selina Bracebridge put in her opinion on the matter by saying to Fanny that, "young ladies of a standing in society, quite equal to Flo's, do things *now* of this kind, which were unheard of formerly. They are not in any way looked down upon because they devote themselves to Hospitals or Patients."<sup>87</sup> Selina was correct on the matter, as the Sisters of St. John's house was recently founded in 1848, and they were an Anglican nursing order who held themselves with professionalism and merit.<sup>88</sup> The shifting societal notions of feminine work alongside Nightingale's admitted depression and suicidal thoughts, pushed Fanny and William to allow their daughter to work. In the words of William Nightingale who saw the physical and emotional deterioration in his daughter, said that she needed "some great absorption" to effectively occupy her time.<sup>89</sup> That summer in 1851, Nightingale returned to Kaiserwerth, Germany to begin her work as a deaconess. On July 6, 1851, Nightingale donned the blue uniform and was an official worker of the Kaiserwerth Institute.<sup>90</sup>

## A Superintendent at Heart

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<sup>86</sup> Nightingale, Florence, *Collected Works*, vol.2 p.366.

<sup>87</sup> Bostridge, *Nightingale*, p.147.

<sup>88</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.62.

<sup>89</sup> Bostridge, *Nightingale*, p.175.

<sup>90</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.64.

Nightingale received her first hands on training at the Kaiserwerth Institute. She assisted surgeons with amputations, cleaning and dressing wounds, and paid close attention to how the professionals ran their hospital. She shadowed the female superintendent closely, making observations of how strictly the superintendent's orders were followed. "She has to consider herself the mother of the house, & cares for it with zeal & love & power."<sup>91</sup> The position of superintendent fascinated Nightingale, as her roles were to manage and oversee the nurses who reported to her. The position of a female leader was an inspiration to the watchful Nightingale, who had previously never seen a woman act with such authority and expertise. While she was working at the institute, Nightingale received a heartwarming letter from her mother which detailed a welcomed change of perception towards hospital work, "you yourself cannot have been more thankful to Kaiserwerth than we all have been at this time...take time, take faith, & love with you...we will do our best to have faith as you ask."<sup>92</sup>

Nightingale worked with the surgeons and deaconesses of Kaiserwerth for several months. Her long-term plans were largely disrupted by a pleading Parthenope to come home and visit her, which Nightingale begrudgingly accepted.<sup>93</sup> By 1853, Nightingale was traveling around in Europe once more with her family friends the Clarks. Her travels were to learn more about the Sisters of Charity in Rome, and to visit the Hôpital des Enfants-Malades, which was the world's first institute for sick children.<sup>94</sup> She took notes on operations, practices, standards, and regulations. Once she returned to England, fortuitous news reached her doorstep. In April 1853, Nightingale received news that Selina Bracebridge had recommended her for a position of a superintendent in a small charity hospital in London.<sup>95</sup> A women's committee was looking for a new superintendent, and Selina felt that this would be a perfect position for Nightingale to occupy. It would seem that her extensive note taking, observations, and analyses proved worthwhile for her credentials. For the first time, Florence Nightingale would be working in a hospital in a position of true authority.<sup>96</sup>

Along with this new position came some prerequisites Nightingale had to understand before she could officially become

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<sup>91</sup> Nightingale, *Collected Works*, vol.7 p.537.

<sup>92</sup> Bostridge, *Nightingale*, p.159.

<sup>93</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.70.

<sup>94</sup> Bostridge, *Nightingale*, p.182.

<sup>95</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale* p.74.

<sup>96</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale* p.74.

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superintendent. For starters, she would be paid no salary. The logic behind this decision was that no woman of means worked for money.<sup>97</sup> This would be a laughable proposition by today's standards, but at the time, it was commonplace, as her position of superintendent could be considered volunteering rather than a career. She was paid no salary yet worked with the same gusto as if she was being paid.<sup>98</sup> This is simply the way it was. Luckily for the 32-year old Ms. Nightingale, her father William agreed to assist her, by providing a 500 pound allowance every year.

Upon arrival, Nightingale found the hospital in rather poor condition. There were several items on the agenda that needed to be addressed: prevalent dust, disheveled hospital linens, and grimy surfaces all needed to be cleaned. Several installations were added by Nightingale's recommendations. Firstly, a dumbwaiter system to carry supplies vertically and a bell system, which patients could use to call a nurse.<sup>99</sup> Most notably about Nightingale's first example of a leadership position, the hospital was only allowed to treat women who needed assistance, not men. This was a part of the fear that men and women working in the same environment would be a scandalous atmosphere and the female nurses would be seduced or distracted by the sick men.<sup>100</sup> The small hospital could hold 27 female patients, who came from various backgrounds and faiths. A point of cognizance Nightingale emphasized to her small staff, was that women of all faiths should be cared for, and clergymen should be allowed to visit the ill. She argued this point as a condition of her employment with the Establishment for Gentlewomen During Illness (the female committee who hired her). Nightingale threatened to walk away from the position if Catholics were not to be admitted into her wards. The committee begrudgingly agreed to her terms.<sup>101</sup>

Once the operation itself was running smoothly, Nightingale found herself in many new positions that she was not prepared for. She was responsible for visiting the markets to haggle with butchers, she gave recommendations for dietary plans, and she consoled many women who were simply feeling depressed.<sup>102</sup> A significant percentage of the women

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<sup>97</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.74.

<sup>98</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.74.

<sup>99</sup> Nightingale, *Collected Works*, vol.8 p.23. (Florence had seen the chaos of hospitals where patients greatly outnumbered the nurses, and several patients were left for days at a time without attention. This bell system would remedy that issue).

<sup>100</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.75.

<sup>101</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.74.

<sup>102</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.78.

came through her humble doors who were not physically sick but were simply feeling lonely or saddened. Nightingale gave them small gifts of money or letters of recommendation to get them back on their feet.<sup>103</sup> After one year of working as the superintendent, Nightingale announced that she would be resigning from her position.<sup>104</sup> Contrary to immediate thought, she was not resigning due to stress or overworking, Nightingale simply felt that her destiny was leading her elsewhere.<sup>105</sup> The hospital was in perfect working order, and her small staff were qualified to her high standards. While working longer at the hospital would be a pleasant experience, it would appear from later ambitions that Florence Nightingale desired a bigger challenge. To improve hospitalization and nursing as a whole, she could not be tied down to one small building that could hold 27 patients, her ambitions were larger than that.

Nightingale left her position in August of 1854. Strangely enough, she decided to move on right before a massive cholera outbreak exploded in London.<sup>106</sup> Keep in mind, germ theory was not popularized yet, and there were many false theories flowing through the scientific community on how diseases were spread. One of the more common theories, which Florence Nightingale vouched for, was miasma theory. While the theory itself was not entirely clear about germs and waterborne diseases, there were indeed correlations between sanitation and cleanliness. In this sense, Florence Nightingale was working with the most current information available. Her knowledge of diseases was indeed limited when compared to a modern perspective, but one has to keep in mind that Nightingale studied meticulously for decades about medical techniques, and when so many nonsensical theories were in the realm of science and medicine, it is easy to understand that she believed in the theory that had effective results. Because while yes, miasma theory was indeed wrong when referring to the spread of diseases, Nightingale insisted that hospital wards were to be kept clean and sanitized. Her meticulous practices of creating airflow and cleanliness did save lives, as many hospitals throughout Europe had their patients caked in their own blood and fecal matter, leading to disease and death.<sup>107</sup> So yes, she was technically wrong about her medical perspective, but her practices did indeed save lives.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Nightingale, *Collected Works*, vol.12 p.97.

<sup>104</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.78.

<sup>105</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.78.

<sup>106</sup> Roe, Edward T. "To W. T. Harris, Esq., Chairman of the Board of health." *London Medical Gazette, or Journal of Practical Medicine* (1849): 512-513. p.512.

<sup>107</sup> Cromwell, *Florence Nightingale, Feminist*, p.185.

<sup>108</sup> Cromwell, *Florence Nightingale, Feminist*, p.185.

## A Bold and Empowering Life

### The Crimean War and its Feminine Caretaker

The 'bigger challenge' that Florence yearned for soon made itself apparent. The Crimean War had been ongoing since October of 1853 and lasted until 1856.<sup>109</sup> When Nightingale left her post in 1854, she dedicated some time to learn about medical conditions British soldiers underwent on the battlefield. Her findings were rather grim. Nightingale read extensively about the horrible conditions that soldiers were forced to recover in. According to journalists who followed the army through Crimea, "The wretched beggar who wanders about the streets of London in the rain, leads the life of a prince compared with the British soldiers who are fighting out here for their country."<sup>110</sup> On October 12<sup>th</sup>, 1854, the *London Times* published a commentary on the conditions of medical care on the warfront which read as follows, "Not only are there not sufficient surgeons, not only are there no [wound] dressers and nurses...but what will be said when it is known that there is not even linen to make bandages for the wounded?"<sup>111</sup>

To Nightingale, these conditions were unacceptable, and someone needed to step up to the challenge. Nightingale wanted to travel to Crimea to work in the camps as a nurse and change how the troops received medical attention.<sup>112</sup> A noble goal, but this was not as simple as working in a local London hospital. She had to call in a few favors, the first of which was a recommendation from Sidney Herbert (husband of Elizabeth Herbert whom Nightingale traveled around Italy with). At the time Sidney was serving as the secretary of war, thusly his recommendation would have great weight.<sup>113</sup>

Luckily, she did not have to persuade him at all for his appointment, as Sidney had already sent a letter to Nightingale, describing the predicament he faced with nurses traveling to Crimea. "I receive numbers of offers from ladies to go out, but they are ladies who have no conception of what a Hospital is, nor the nature of its duties, & they would, when the time came, either recoil from the work, or be entirely useless. There is but one person in England that I know of, who

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<sup>109</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale* p. 84.

<sup>110</sup> Fleming, Angela Michelli, and John Maxwell Hamilton, eds. *The Crimean War as Seen by Those Who Reported It*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009. p.xiii.

<sup>111</sup> London Times, Untitled report from Constantinople, October 12, 1854.

<sup>112</sup> Goldie, Sue M., ed. *Florence Nightingale, Letters from the Crimea*. Manchester, UK: Mandolin, 197. p. 23-24.

<sup>113</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale* p. 86.

would be capable of organizing & superintending such a scheme.”<sup>114</sup> That person was Florence Nightingale. Sidney Herbert drafted Nightingale’s appointment to the position of Superintendent of the Female Nursing Establishment in the English General Military Hospitals in Turkey.<sup>115</sup> She was to have complete autonomy and authority over 38 nurses who would be working in the allied Ottoman territory. For the first time in English history, female nurses would be working in British military hospitals.<sup>116</sup> For both Nightingale and her country, this was uncharted territory.

As independent as she was, Nightingale could not undergo this endeavor alone. She was tasked with hiring forty nurses who she deemed qualified. The quantity of responses could not have been predicted. Hundreds of applicants wrote to Nightingale, some qualified some not. A large amount of the letters were from midwives, bored housewives, widows, or simply young women looking for adventure.<sup>117</sup> Or perhaps the allure of the twelve shillings a week was appealing to women who were looking for an income. Moreover, while the response was surely flattering, Nightingale was to hire only forty nurses who were mentally capable of witnessing the horrors of war. After many inner-deliberations on qualified candidates, Nightingale selected 38 women she deemed worthy: fourteen Anglican nursing sisters, ten Roman Catholic nuns, and fourteen others who had no particular religious affiliation.<sup>118</sup> Government approval had to be gained in order for the Catholic nuns to travel to Crimea. When the government looked at the statistics of soldiers in the warfront, it was concluded that Irish soldiers made up around thirty percent of the fighting forces, and most of them were Catholic, so the nuns were given clearance to travel with Nightingale.<sup>119</sup>

With her nurses selected and the paperwork completed, Nightingale shipped off to the Barrack Hospital in Turkey, near Istanbul. The first impressions of the building were grim to say the least. Frozen flesh, mangled limbs, open wounds, and a pervasive sense of cold wafted through the corridors. Men with dysentery slept on their cots, which had not been cleaned in months.<sup>120</sup> The building was massive in its size, each

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<sup>114</sup> Goldie, Sue M., ed. *Florence Nightingale, Letters from the Crimea*. Manchester, UK: Mandolin, 197. p.23-24.

<sup>115</sup> Goldie, *Letters from the Crimea*, p.26.

<sup>116</sup> Goldie, *Letters from the Crimea*, p.26.

<sup>117</sup> Herbert, Sidney, “Nurses for the Wounded.” *London Morning Chronicle*, October 24<sup>th</sup>, 1854.

<sup>118</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.88.

<sup>119</sup> Herbert, *London Morning*.

<sup>120</sup> Osborne, Sydney Godolphin. *Scutari and its Hospitals*. London: Dickinson Brothers, 1855. p.12.

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of its four sides measured more than 600 feet, which is about a ninth of a mile. The building had three stories and a massive open courtyard originally designed for military parades. The British were currently using the courtyard as a garbage dump in the center of the hospital, mere feet from where the men were trying to heal.<sup>121</sup> The Barrack Hospital had a capacity of 1,200 patients, but when Florence Nightingale arrived in 1854, the hospital was housing over 2,000 soldiers, far beyond its maximum capacity.<sup>122</sup> Compare this situation to Nightingale's previous position where she oversaw 27 patients. She now had thousands of soldiers to look after in a 360,000 square foot building. The daunting task of renovating and revitalizing an entire hospital would have been a dreadful task for any caretakers, but to Florence Nightingale and her 38 nurses, this was the exciting opportunity of a lifetime.

Firstly, what needed to be done was improving the meals the men received. Cleaning out storage rooms and turning them into kitchens was vital, for fresh food and warm meals were a critical part of the Nightingale healing repertoire. She tasked her nurses with cooking broth and other easily digestible food. Unfortunately, the hospital had no chairs or tables for the nurses, so they themselves had to eat and sit on the floor.<sup>123</sup> In the beginning weeks, Nightingale faced multiple challenges on the medical front, more so from her staff and superiors rather than the soldiers. Cloudy and briny water forced the new staff to drink wine instead of water, so Nightingale tolerated the occasional drunkenness due to necessity, but some women became dependent upon it and had to be sent home.<sup>124</sup> Issues surrounding the dress policy also surfaced, something as petty as the less-than fashionable attire came into question as one nurse claimed, "If I'd known, Ma'am, about the caps, great as was my desire to come out to nurse at Scutari, I wouldn't have come."<sup>125</sup>

Hence the emphasis placed on qualified nurses, even though she sifted through hundreds of applications even still some of the nurses were not qualified nor held the mental preparedness for this kind of brutal work. Her male superiors, who had been operating at the hospital for longer, resented the nurse's presence, as many of the older staff resisted change of any kind even if it would benefit the overall quality of health for the patients.<sup>126</sup> Unfortunately for Nightingale, her orders were

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<sup>121</sup> Stafford, W. Cooke. *History of the War in Russia and Turkey*, Liverpool, UK: Peter Jackson, 1855. p.287.

<sup>122</sup> Osborne, *Scutari and its Hospitals*, p.12.

<sup>123</sup> Bostridge *Florence Nightingale*, p.224.

<sup>124</sup> Cook, *The Life of Florence*, vol.1 p.182.

<sup>125</sup> Goldie, *Letters from the Crimea*, p.36.

<sup>126</sup> Goldie, *Letters from the Crimea*, p.35.

to serve her male counterparts as they deemed fit, so even in her position of authority, she was still subservient to her male coworkers.<sup>127</sup> It was a frustrating time for Nightingale, as she did not have free rein to change the hospital as she pleased. The male doctors halted progress she attempted to make due to differences in priority, which led to internal conflict within the barracks.<sup>128</sup>

That all changed on October 25, 1854. The male doctors desperately needed the help of the nurses in the aftermath of the Battle of Balaclava. It was a disastrous fight for the British forces, who suffered 597 deaths and 1,860 wounded in one day.<sup>129</sup> This was the first emergency hurdle for Nightingale to overcome. As soldiers were transported to the hospital, the nurses treated the men as best they could with their extremely limited supply of bandages and linens. With more supplies they could have done much more, but they had no basins or soap to clean soldiers. The report was that a soldier would be bathed likely once every eighty days.<sup>130</sup> Their blood soaked bandages would glue to their wounds, and they could not be changed because there were no bandages to replace them. The only possible alternative Nightingale had was to treat them the only way she knew how; miasma treatment. The nurses with their limited options cleaned up the wards as best they could, mopping up feces and blood from the floors, opening up windows, removing sources of foul odor and scrubbed the facilities. The lack of supplies was a gruesome experience for the incoming wounded, as medical officers had so few sponges that they had to use the same ones for multiple patients, absorbing blood and plasma with each cleaning.<sup>131</sup>

## A Heroine Begins to Emerge

Conditions of the hospital eventually made their way back to England, and the *London Times* reported on the story and generously created a public fund so sympathetic citizens could donate for the care of their soldiers.<sup>132</sup> Nightingale used this money to buy massive quantities of much needed shirts, linens, spoons, sheets, basins, sponges, and combs. A project of hers as well was to fund a building dedicated to laundry, so that the soldiers would have fresh sheets and clothes to wear, further tying her relationship to the miasma theory of mandatory

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<sup>127</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.94.

<sup>128</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.94.

<sup>129</sup> Stafford, *History of the War in Russia and Turkey*, p.287.

<sup>130</sup> Bostridge, *Florence Nightingale*, p.515.

<sup>131</sup> Nightingale, *Collected Works*, vol.14 p.68.

<sup>132</sup> Nightingale, *Collected Works*, vol.24 p.64.

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cleanliness. In the end, it was extremely helpful from a basic sanitation perspective. She instituted a screen system for patients who had to have limbs amputated, so that other soldiers would not see the gruesome scene of leg or arm amputation when theirs was scheduled for the next day.<sup>133</sup>

Over time with these small quality of life changes, Superintendent Nightingale began to gain the respect of her superiors. Her friend and assistant Charles Bracebridge who escorted her to Scutari observed that “Flo has in this week not only gained the love but confidence of all. The doctors do her will.”<sup>134</sup> With time and authority, she began to gain the respect and confidence of her male coworkers. The line between a subservient female nurse and a superior male doctor began to blur. Nightingale kept in high spirits with her duties, as she worked diligently with or without supplies. She wrote, “I am really a cook, house-keeper, scavenger...washerwoman, general dealer, and store-keeper.”<sup>135</sup> She often spent 20 hours on her feet doing everything possible to improve the conditions.<sup>136</sup>

Even though the scope of her deeds were relatively simple, Nightingale’s actions were having an effect on the casualty rate of Barrack Hospital. In February of 1855, fifty percent of men admitted to the hospital died. In the March of the same year, in a mere months’ time, the casualty rate dropped to twenty percent.<sup>137</sup> While one can criticize Nightingale for her firm belief that miasma theory was indeed the correct way to counter illnesses, she was working with the best information available at the time, and her methods did indeed improve the quality of life for hospitalized patients. Cleaning meticulously and removing feces and blood from the halls did improve the rate of recovery, so she was not entirely wrong, especially when comparing to the noteworthy minds of the era who still did not understand the correlation between cleanliness and recovery. For her time, she was ahead of the curve even if she rejected the idea that diseases could be spread.

While this critique of her is debatable, one criticism of the iron-willed Nightingale did surface as the hospital operations continued; her authoritarian style weighed on those who worked beneath her. Nurses were told to obey her without question, Nightingale often refused to answer questions because she felt it was a waste of her time. Rather than explain her ideas and elaborate on them for her staff, she was noted as

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<sup>133</sup> Nightingale, Florence, *Collected Works*, vol.14 p.68.

<sup>134</sup> Nightingale, Florence, *Collected Works*, vol.14 p.65.

<sup>135</sup> Goldie, *Letters from the Crimea*, p.79.

<sup>136</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.100.

<sup>137</sup> *Professional Papers of the Corps of Royal Engineers*, (Chatham, U.K.: MacKay, 1898). vol.24 p.38.

being extremely curt with her subordinates.<sup>138</sup> One of the senior nurses commented on this curtness and recommended that Nightingale be kinder to her subordinates, to which Nightingale replied, "I have no time for such trifles."<sup>139</sup> In a way, Nightingale was somewhat of a misunderstood leader, she was born in a time where women did not have many societal expectations outside of marriage. Her ferocity and drive had caused her issues throughout her entire life, and sometimes this ambition corroded relations between the people close to her. Perhaps she fought so hard because she felt she needed to prove to the world that more could be done. Idle chitchat, slacking off, taking a break, was not in her repertoire. Even in her later years when she was bedridden due to illness, she worked meticulously until the day she died. She had something to prove to the world, and she kept working in order to prove that her parents were wrong about her, and wrong about women.<sup>140</sup>

In this sense, she was a model worker, and a vanguard for women's place in the workforce. Thusly, one can understand why she held her female nurses to extremely high standards, as poor performance on their part would reflect poorly on their leader. The eyes of the world were waiting to see if women could indeed work alongside men in a tough environment, so Nightingale had to keep a tight leash on herself and her underlings. Her legacy is that of a working feminist, and to be successful in this environment, she could not mollycoddle her nurses. They had to match her work ethic to prove to the prideful male surgeons that women could work in a warzone infirmary.

As her rigorous nature earned her respect (and frustration) within the nursing community, Nightingale was beginning to earn some international fame. As the historically wasteful Crimean War dragged on, readers back in London were looking for any source of optimism in the papers. Day after day the *London Times* reported deaths and battles, but few moments of victory. John MacDonald was a writer for the *Times* and he traveled back to England in 1855 to write about Nightingale's conquests over death. MacDonald is accredited with a large part of Nightingale's fame, as he was the first one to write about her war efforts directly to a public audience. He wrote, "She is a ministering angel, as her slender form glides along each corridor, every poor fellow's face softens with gratitude at the sight of her...she may be observed alone, with a little lamp in her hand making her solitary rounds."<sup>141</sup> Later, images of

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<sup>138</sup> Goldie, *Letters from the Crimea*, p.134-135.

<sup>139</sup> Osborne, *Scutari and its hospitals*, p.26.

<sup>140</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.145.

<sup>141</sup> MacDonald, John, "Florence Nightingale" *Ladies' Repository* 1858, p.358-64.

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Nightingale began to circulate showing the nurse carrying around a candle in the wards at night, like an elegant angel protecting her compatriots. This popularized her nickname as “an angel with a lamp.”<sup>142</sup>

Unfortunately, on the warfront, in May 1855 Nightingale became ill with a terrible bout of Crimean fever. The modern term for this illness is brucellosis, a disease that is brought about by consuming dairy products from infected animals.<sup>143</sup> A simple treatment of antibiotics today would cure the relatively rare disease, but in 1855 Nightingale suffered great joint and muscle pain for the rest of her life, and she would never be fully well again. It was at this time that she needed some rest from her work, so she spent the summer in the home of the British ambassador to recover.<sup>144</sup>

During this time, she was not working directly in the hospital, but she was working to improve the conditions for the soldiers. She created a money-order office so men could send money home to their loved ones. She instated reading rooms and classes so that soldiers could learn and occupy themselves while recovering.<sup>145</sup> In January of 1856, Nightingale received a promotion to become head of all nurses in the war, not just Barrack Hospital.<sup>146</sup> This promotion was something she strived for since she arrived in Crimea, however within days the nations of Russia, England, France, and the Ottoman Empire signed a peace treaty in Paris. The war had no discernable winner and dragged on for 4 years with few results besides the deaths of over 750,000 soldiers on all sides, the vast majority of which died due to disease.<sup>147</sup> As the Barrack Hospital’s patients eventually returned home in large droves, Nightingale felt that her duties in Crimea were completed. On July 23, 1856, 4 months after the official end of the war, Nightingale returned home to England.<sup>148</sup> Her war efforts were completed, and thusly she had accomplished her life’s crowning achievement of working in a war as a medical practitioner.

### England’s Daughter Returns

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<sup>142</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.105. See final page for image.

<sup>143</sup> Dossey, Barbara Montgomery. *Florence Nightingale*. Springhouse, PA: Springhouse, 2000. p.162.

<sup>144</sup> Dossey, Barbara Montgomery. *Florence Nightingale*. Springhouse, PA: Springhouse, 2000. p.162.

<sup>145</sup> Nightingale, *Collected Works*, vol.14 p.342.

<sup>146</sup> Goldie, *Letters from the Crimea*, p.215.

<sup>147</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.119.

<sup>148</sup> Goldie, *Letters from the Crimea*, p.281.

When news reached England that Nightingale was back home, letters and gifts flowed into the Nightingale household. Hundreds of wives, soldiers, and children wanted to thank the 36-year-old Nightingale for saving the lives of so many men, and helping in their recoveries.<sup>149</sup> Still weakened by her Crimean fever, Nightingale wanted to take a small amount of time to rest and think about what her next big project would be. Come mid-September, Nightingale received an invitation to meet with Queen Victoria herself. The meeting was to take place at Balmoral Castle in Scotland, where arguably two of the most famous women in England were to have their fateful encounter.<sup>150</sup> As for their individual perceptions of one another, Victoria was rather impressed by Nightingale. She described her as, “gentle, pleasing and engaging, most ladylike and so clever, clear and comprehensive in her views of everything...her mind is solely and entirely taken up with the *one* object which she has sacrificed her health and devoted herself like a saint...such a character is in a woman most rare and extraordinary.”<sup>151</sup> High praise coming from the Queen of England, but Nightingale had rather contrary views on the Queen. She later told a friend that she found Victoria to be, “the least self-reliant person she had ever met.”<sup>152</sup>

True to her character, Nightingale was rather unimpressed with a woman who had been pampered and praised her whole life. Of course, she kept these feelings to herself at the time of meeting Queen Victoria. During their meeting, Nightingale and the Queen discussed matters of military mismanagement and the need for an inquiry alongside medical reform. Victoria agreed with Ms. Nightingale on the matter and said she would attempt to persuade Parliament to follow up on these issues. In the meantime, Victoria recommended to Nightingale that she move closer to England in order to work closer with political and medical institutions.<sup>153</sup> Nightingale subsequently moved into a suite at the London Burlington Hotel, where she would be working for several months. This room was given the affectionate nickname of “the Little War Office.”<sup>154</sup>

In her Little War Office, Nightingale worked primarily on her statistics and writings. In May of 1857, the Royal Commission on the Health of the Army held hearings to discuss soldier’s health and medical practices during the Crimean War. Nightingale submitted her well-

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<sup>149</sup> Bostridge, *Florence Nightingale*, p.305.

<sup>150</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.123.

<sup>151</sup> James, Robert Rhodes, *Rosebery*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1963. p.66.

<sup>152</sup> Nightingale, *Collected Works*, vol.5 p.413-414.

<sup>153</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.126.

<sup>154</sup> Nightingale, *Collected Works*, vol.14 p.1049.

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documented statistics and data to assist on the matter.<sup>155</sup> Come September, Nightingale released her own private book titled, *Notes on Matters Affecting the Health Efficiency and Hospital Administration of the British Army*. A behemoth of a book at over 800 pages, Nightingale encapsulated years of notes, data and statistics to prove her methods produced positive results.<sup>156</sup> Her prestigious work on the matter earned her admission as the first female to the Royal Statistical Society in 1858, an exclusive organization by nature, even more so for a woman.<sup>157</sup> With another project crossed off her list, she set her sights on yet another massive project to accomplish; a nursing school of her own design. Luckily for her during the war-effort, many wealthy London based citizens raised money for this purpose. Soldiers, churches, and wealthy families all pooled money into a fund to train nurses in order to follow in the footsteps of Ms. Nightingale. Naturally, it was called the Nightingale fund. In the year 1856, the fund held 44,000 pounds, (equivalent to millions of U.S. dollars today).<sup>158</sup> It would seem her war contributions were not unappreciated, as this fund would be the backbone for her future nursing school.

In July of 1860, the Nightingale School of Nursing held its first meeting to introduce the new nurses. No men were admitted to the academy, because Nightingale felt nursing was a woman's job. To elaborate further, she believed that medicine specifically was a man's job.<sup>159</sup> While at face value this may seem a tad regressive and the opposite of what a feminist leader would say, her reasoning goes deeper than the surface. In the medical world in the mid-nineteenth century, doctors were exclusively men and they performed the gruesome tasks such as amputating limbs, giving diagnoses, and performing surgeries. Their duties were immediate, and they often moved through hundreds of patients in a day. They would perform the recommended action and move to the next patient. Nursing by contrast, was the effect that took place after the surgery; it was the process of recovering and ensuring that the patient did not die post-surgery. Cleaning wounds, changing bandages, washing linens, scrubbing patients, tending to their food and drink, cleaning feces, and attending to their needs were the duties of nurses. Their job requirements were much more time consuming than performing an amputation. Nightingale felt comfortable leaving the surgeries to the men, as true healing was accomplished by nurses, not

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<sup>155</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.130.

<sup>156</sup> Cromwell, *Florence Nightingale, Feminist*, p.185.

<sup>157</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.131.

<sup>158</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.123.

<sup>159</sup> Nightingale, *Collected Works*, vol.6 p.510.

doctors. Their work was designed to be gentler, but more time consuming. Nurses worked with patients daily and were there to help them recover by providing a guiding hand. One can argue that nurses or doctors had the more difficult profession, but it was not regressive of Nightingale to employ only nurses. She simply felt that the long and oftentimes arduous process of healing was a woman's place. Undoubtedly, they spent more time on their feet and had much more intimate connections with the patients.

The school itself was located in London, in the St. Thomas' hospital, which was an old establishment. Nightingale approved 11 individuals to go through the academy, with no tuition costs.<sup>160</sup> They earned ten pounds in wages and received room and board. This was the first example in history of a nursing school to exist that was not religiously affiliated.<sup>161</sup> The students learned basic nursing skills such as cleaning and dressing wounds, feeding patients, and reading Latin. These students or, "probationers" spent around three years working inside St. Thomas, and then they would graduate as professional nurses.<sup>162</sup> Nightingale held the women to very strict regulations and standards, but she was far too ill with her Crimean fever to teach herself. So, she hired a head nurse named Sarah Elizabeth Wardroper to teach in her stead. While the hospital was in its early infancy and successful nurses started to learn the duties of a healer in a hospital, Nightingale continued to write from bed on medical statistics and data. In 1859, she published her book, *Notes on Hospitals* that emphasized hospital design and clear ventilation. She passionately argued that the design of a hospital could entirely change the fate of its patients.<sup>163</sup> She followed up in the same year by publishing yet another book, *Notes on Nursing*. In this novel, she detailed her observations on miasma theory and the importance of having fresh air and light in wards.<sup>164</sup>

At this time, Nightingale did not believe that diseases could be spread. She adamantly argued that all illnesses could be cured by sunlight, air, warmth, and adequate food.<sup>165</sup> While these principles are indeed helpful to the healing process, she was wrong on the contagious nature of diseases. In her later years, she would revise her theory on

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<sup>160</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.136.

<sup>161</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.136.

<sup>162</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.137.

<sup>163</sup> Nightingale, *Florence, Notes on Hospitals*. London: John W. Parker and Son, 1859. p.7.

<sup>164</sup> Nightingale, *Notes on Nursing: What It Is, and What It Is Not*. New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1860. p.8.

<sup>165</sup> Nightingale, *Notes on Nursing: What It Is, and What It Is Not*. New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1860. p.8.

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miasma and come to accept germ theory.<sup>166</sup> Within two months of publishing, *Notes on Nursing* sold 15,000 copies.<sup>167</sup> Within the next year, Nightingale published only a few copies of another book titled, *Suggestions for Thought* that was more of an opinionated piece rather than statistics. Within *Suggestions for Thought* Nightingale dedicated an essay titled *Cassandra* that details the feminine plight she had suffered throughout her life. *Cassandra* was a cry against the forced idleness of Victorian women, and a criticism of how society held women in shackles while they are considered secondary to their husbands. Her work for progressing women's place in the workforce was mostly economic and intellectual in nature, but *Cassandra* is one of the few times Nightingale allows herself to critique the subservient role women were expected to perform. In *Cassandra*, she seems more like a traditional feminist writer.

### Twilight Years for the Lady with the Lamp

By 1861, Nightingale moved around to various London apartments as she became more embedded by her work, but none of them truly suited her needs. She migrated so many times that William Nightingale eventually bought her a house in 1865.<sup>168</sup> When she settled in her new home, she began working on public health in India. She was still far too sick to travel herself, but she occupied her time by writing to government and military officials on sanitation issues in India.<sup>169</sup> She encountered different issues such as malaria and heatstroke, which were very different from her areas of expertise. Nonetheless, officials always visited her before they left for India to heed her advice on cleanliness and overall health.<sup>170</sup> She put together a health-education booklet, which was printed in India for locals and British soldiers to read. She worked for years on smaller projects such as these, continually writing small pamphlets or compiling data for future use.<sup>171</sup>

In 1870, Nightingale eventually came to accept germ theory.<sup>172</sup> Let it be known that she stood by miasma theory for decades, but eventually when sterilizing via alcohol became common practice, she observed that it was more effective in preventing infection. By 1871, antiseptic methods were taught in the Nightingale School of Nursing. By 1872, the school

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<sup>166</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.151.

<sup>167</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.140.

<sup>168</sup> Bostridge, *Florence Nightingale*, p.409.

<sup>169</sup> Bostridge, *Florence Nightingale*, p.410.

<sup>170</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.144.

<sup>171</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.145.

<sup>172</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.151.

was sending qualified nurses to Australia and Canada.<sup>173</sup> In all respects, the Nightingale School of Nursing became a flourishing academy, which acted as a vanguard for women around the world to learn medical practices.

In 1874, William Nightingale died while climbing up the stairs. He died at the respectable age of 80. Nightingale was too ill to attend his funeral.<sup>174</sup> By 1880, Fanny Nightingale died after years of mental deterioration at the age of 92.<sup>175</sup> Neither Nightingale nor Parthe could attend her funeral due to mutual illnesses. In these years, Nightingale simply continued to work on furthering her knowledge of medical treatments, always reading up on innovations and communicating with experts. With time, Florence Nightingale eventually lost her household name association and became more of a legend than an individual. Even in her twilight years, she did not slowdown in her pursuit of knowledge. On May 12, 1890, Nightingale celebrated her seventieth birthday. On that same day however, Parthenope died of cancer.<sup>176</sup> In their old ages, the sisters had settled old disputes and maintained a friendly relationship until the end. Parthe had married a nobleman named Sir Harry Verney back in 1858, so her fears of never marrying were alleviated, thusly improving the relationship between the sisters. From 1890 onwards, Nightingale enjoyed old age but never ceased her process of learning, until her mind eventually started to fade. In 1907, King Edward VII bestowed upon the 87-year old nurse the Order of Merit, one of the highest honors a global citizen can receive, as it does not exclusively apply to British citizens. Nightingale was the first woman to receive it, and the next woman was not indoctrinated until 1965.<sup>177</sup>

## Legacy and Legend

Two years later on August 13, 1910, Florence Nightingale died after she dozed off in a chair, peacefully in her sleep.<sup>178</sup> As soon as the news broke that she died, funeral arrangements were made, and newspapers celebrated her life. The *New York Times* quoted her accomplishments with, "Perhaps the greatest good that has resulted from

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<sup>173</sup> Nightingale, Florence, *Florence Nightingale to Her Nurses*. London: Macmillan and Company, 1914. p.90.

<sup>174</sup> Nightingale, *Collected Works*, vol.1 p.273.

<sup>175</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale*, p.154.

<sup>176</sup> Bostridge, *Florence Nightingale* p.507.

<sup>177</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale* p.158.

<sup>178</sup> The Guardian, "Carried Through: Death of Miss Florence Nightingale" August 15, 1910.

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her noble life has been the setting in motion of a force which has led thousands of women to devote themselves to systematic care of the sick and wounded.”<sup>179</sup> Truly, she set into a series of events, which led to the explosion of women working in the medical field. Her ambitions and refusal to accept a subservient role propelled her into greatness. For her funeral, thousands of mourners gathered to pay tribute to her memory. Government officials, hospital administrators, nurses, representatives of the royal family and Crimean War veterans gathered for her public vigil.<sup>180</sup> She was buried alongside her parents in Hampshire. She viewed death not as an end, but as a great transition. “A human being does *not* cease to exist at death; it is a change, not destruction, which takes place.”<sup>181</sup>

Through sheer force of will and a meticulous work ethic, Florence Nightingale influenced countless lives through her unbridled passion for nursing. She irreversibly changed the fate of public health, and the future of women in the workplace. She singlehandedly changed the public perceptions that women could not work in the medical field. Her legacy lives on in the millions of female medical professionals who thrive today, in an environment which Nightingale fought for with sweat and fury. Perhaps her memory is best recognized in the refusal to accept the circumstances of one’s position in life, and to accomplish that which you know you are inherently capable of, no matter what anyone else may tell you.

*Ross Wheelless is a senior at the University of Arizona at the time of this publication. He is pursuing his Master’s degree in History at the university, with a special interest in political ideologies and government bodies. He wrote this piece on Florence Nightingale to reinforce the idea that women have always had to struggle in patriarchal systems, and we should give thanks to those who are willing to defy those societal boundaries. With the publication of this short biography, he hopes to complete his graduate degree at the University of Arizona and move on towards a bright future with the continuation his studies.*

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<sup>179</sup> New York Times, “Miss Nightingale Dies, Aged Ninety” August 15, 1910.

<sup>180</sup> Reef, *Florence Nightingale* p.160.

<sup>181</sup> Calabria, Michael D., and Janet A. Macrae, eds. *Suggestions for Thought: Selections and Commentaries*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994. p.148.

**Appendix**



Print of Florence Nightingale at Scutari Hospital, 1854. Courtesy of Hampshire Record Office: 94M72/F614/4

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