

Florence Nightingale Nursing Pioneer (1820-1910)

Regarded as the founder of modern nursing, Florence Nightingale devoted her life to caring for the sick and injured. Despite being born to 19th century British socialites, Florence never accepted her role as a “proper” woman of the Victorian era. Well educated in literature, music, drawing, and the domestic arts, Florence’s family expected her to marry a man of similar social status and assume her position as a Victorian socialite. However, Florence felt an early calling to serve people and turned her back on marriage in pursuit of work as a nurse.

Florence’s family vehemently opposed her dreams of becoming a nurse because of the dirty and sad conditions of hospitals in her time. Against the wishes of her family and expectations of society, Nightingale recruited and equipped a group of nurses and left for Turkey to aid wounded soldiers fighting in the Crimean War. Resenting the interference of women in the health care profession, surgeons already

tending the wounded did not appreciate Nightingale’s assistance. Despite such extreme animosity towards her presence, Florence revolutionized British military medical care by increasing standards for sanitation and nutrition therefore dramatically lowering mortality rates.

Unfortunately, while aiding soldiers on the front lines of battle Nightingale became very ill and never fully recovered. Although terribly sick for the remainder of her life, Nightingale continued to have an influence on nursing care standards and training. In 1859 she helped establish the first Visiting Nurse Association and in 1860, she established a school that became a model for modern nurse’s training. Despite her severe illness, she still published 200 books, reports, and pamphlets. One of these publications was a book entitled *Notes on Nursing* (1860). This was the first textbook specifically for use in the teaching of nurses and was translated into many languages. Nightingale's other published works included *Notes on Hospitals* (1859) and *Notes on Nursing for the Labouring Classes* (1861). She was considered an expert

on the scientific care of the sick and was asked by the United States for her advice on caring for the wounded soldiers of the Civil War. Through correspondence and reports, she continued her influence throughout her last years and was the first woman to receive the British Order of Merit.

Nightingale died in 1910 at the age of ninety. She is buried at St Margaret's Church, East Wellow, near Embley Park. Nightingale never married, although this was not from lack of opportunity. She believed, however, that God had decided she was one whom he “... *had clearly marked out ... to be a single woman.*”

The Crimean Monument, erected in 1915 in Waterloo Place, London, was done so in honor of the contribution Florence Nightingale had made to this war and the health of the army. Florence was known by the British soldiers in the Crimean War as the “lady with the lamp” because of the late hours that she worked tending to the sick and wounded. Today, she is remembered as a symbol of selfless caring and tireless service.

The words of Florence Nightingale

“I think one’s feelings waste themselves in words; they ought all to be distilled into actions which bring results.”

“Averages...seduce us away from minute observation.”

“People have founded vast schemes upon a very few words.”

“Women never have an half-hour in all their lives (excepting before or after anybody is up in the house) that they can call their own, without fear of offending or hurting someone. Why do people sit up so late, or more rarely, get up so early? Not because the day is not long enough, but because they have ‘no time in the day to themselves’”.

“I attribute my success to this. I never gave or took an excuse”.

“A human being does not cease to exist at death. It is change, not destruction, which takes place”.

“Hospitals are only an intermediate stage of civilization”.

“Apprehension, uncertainty, waiting, expectation, fear of surprise, do a patient more harm than any exertion.”

“Law is not explanation of anything; law is simply a generalization, a category of facts; law is neither a cause, nor a reason, nor a power, nor a coercive force; it is nothing but a general formula, a statistical table.”

For Further Reading on Florence Nightingale Please Consult:

Notes on Nursing: What It Is and What It Is Not by Florence Nightingale

Florence Nightingale: The Making of a Radical Theologian by Val Webb

Florence Nightingale: Mystic, Visionary, Reformer by Barbara Dossey

Nightingales: The Extraordinary Upbringing and Curious Life of Miss Florence Nightingale by Gillian Gill

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Florence Nightingale

Founder of Modern Nursing
(1820-1910)



“Were there none who were discontented with what they have, the world would never reach anything better.”

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