I. APPRENTICESHIP

Robert Meyers, 'Florence Nightingale', *World-famous Women: Types of Heroism, Beauty and Influence Including the Life, Reign and Diamond Jubilee of Victoria Sixty Years a Queen* (Philadelphia, PA: Ziegler & Co., 1897), pp. 554–64. University of Ottowa Library, shelfmark CT 3202 M4W 1897.

Edna Locke, *Medical Seminar Discussions* [1912]. pp. 27–43. University of California at Berkeley.

G. Shepherd, 'Hospital Assistants in the East', *The Times* (14 October 1854). British Library, Colindale Newspaper Collection.

E. F. Pollard, *Florence Nightingale: The Wounded Soldier's Friend* (London: Partridge, 1891), pp. 66–78. British Library, shelfmark 10825.aaa.41.

Anon., 'Who is Mrs. Nightingale?', *The Times* (30 October 1854), reprinted from the *Examiner*. British Library, Colindale Newspaper Collection.

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Florence Nightingale's apprenticeship dates from childhood, beginning with a privileged lifestyle, extensive travels and an eclectic education that included the sciences, mathematics and languages – a curriculum almost unheard of, at the time, for girls of any class. Wealth, beauty, intelligence and social status combined to create an existence in which she was carefully shielded from the poverty, destitution, diseases and 'base bodily functions' of the lower social orders. But despite, or perhaps because of, this insulated environment, combined with her irrepressible inner drive, Florence deliberately sought out the ill and downtrodden, from the imaginary maladies of her dolls to the injuries of pets and the illnesses of tenants on the family estate – all of whom were subjected to her childish treatments. But playing nurse was no passing phase, although Florence was in her thirties before her family finally accepted her chosen path – and then, only after she was a national heroine.

At seventeen, Florence experienced the first of several 'calls' from God – which, combined with her overwhelming desire for 'something to do',[1] her superior intellect and her deep religious faith – led her to reject suitors (not without compassion and regret) and to espouse only her vocation. At twenty-five, she despaired of finding expression for her unique energies after her horrified family rejected her proposal to work at Salisbury Infirmary; three years later, her bid

to visit Kaiserswerth was similarly denied. In 1849 she experienced her second divine 'call' and in 1850 made her first visit to Kaiserswerth while touring with the Bracebridges.[2] The following year, along with visiting nurses' training institutions in Dublin, Edinburgh and Paris, she trained at Kaiserswerth,[3] returning to London as superintendent of the Hospital for Invalid Gentlewomen. Despite her sister Parthe's hysterical threats to enter an asylum to hide her humiliation (reportedly, 'Pop' refused to permit Florence to utter the word 'Kaisersworth' in her presence), Florence soon afterward became the heroine of Scutari, the 'Lady with the Lamp', the star of the Nightingale myth.

As one of Robert Myers's 'world famous women', Nightingale receives the sentimentalized biographical overview typical of the time. Her youth, her family's wealth and privilege, and the events leading up to her Crimean assignment – all are standard fodder for her legend. But Myers also offers insights that advance our understanding, by emphasizing the underestimation of Nightingale's accomplishments and the conflicts sparked with military and medical men by her presence at Scutari. However, he probably overestimates her inclination to employ feminine tact to soothe ruffled male egos. Notable features include a brief summary of her postwar accomplishments, her publications and the primary tenets of her reforms.

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Edna Locke's *Medical Seminar Discussions* links Nightingale's eclectic education with the skills needed to address the staggering problems she confronted at Scutari. The situation demanded clarity, decisiveness and tough logic – the exact reverse of the sentimentality evoked by the image of a frail, delicate woman wielding her lamp. Locke's assessment incorporates Nightingale's revolutionary influence over nursing reforms in the United States. She was intellectually rigorous, 'like a man', yet she represents the very 'flower of womanhood'.[4]

In the scramble to align masculine intellect with feminine decorum, and both with a sanitized version of Sairey Gamp, the Dickens character embodying the stereotype of the drunken, slatternly, illiterate nurse,[5] 'Hospital Assistants in the East' illustrates early attempts to shape public opinion about nursing through the popular press. Since women are 'natural' nurses, nursing in the public realm – particularly during war – was suddenly hailed as women's proper role, and the height of patriotism. From the beginning, the impulse to feminize Nightingale and her activities was essential to her legend. E. F. Pollard's *The Wounded Soldier's Friend* outlines 'The Call' to Nightingale – not from God, but from Secretary for War Sidney Herbert, whom she had known for nearly a decade. That Herbert's letter to Nightingale crossed with hers to his wife Elizabeth[6] on the same topic – going to the Crimea – was truly serendipitous; her prayers had been answered, her vocation assumed definitive shape, and her family's resistance was silenced. It was Sidney Herbert whose insight and foresight enabled Nightingale's career by

making a bold, timely decision and by investing the weight of his political influence to ensure the success of this controversial endeavour.

As a result of these fast-moving events, the pressing question of the day, seemingly, was 'Who is Mrs. Nightingale?'[7] Before Nightingale even arrived at Scutari, the elements comprising the professional ambitions of the woman, the insightful comprehension of the man (Herbert),[8] the rumour-mill of public opinion, and the close involvement of the periodical press had already begun constructing the legend of Santa Filomena.

Notes

1. Charlotte Bronte's heroine, Caroline Helstone, chafes under the requirement that, as a respectable woman, she have nothing practical to do (*Shirley,* 1849). Nightingale's 'Cassandra' (*Suggestions for Thought*, 1860) confronts this issue as well.
2. Charles Holte (1799–1872) and Selina (1800–74) Bracebridge were family friends of the Nightingales. Florence travelled with them on several occasions and they accompanied her to Scutari.
3. Nightingale studied under Theodor Fliedner (1800–64), clergyman and founder of Kaiserswerth Institute for Protestant Deaconesses.
4. E. Locke, *Medical Seminar Discussions*, p. 43.
5. C. Dickens, *The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1843–4).
6. Elizabeth Herbert née à Court (1822–1911), wife of Sydney Herbert; board member of the Institution for Invalid Gentlewomen, Harley Street, London, where Nightingale first served as superintendent.
7. Traditionally, older single women were addressed as 'Mrs', signifying the respect due to mature women for whom 'Miss' was infantilizing. Because this was an outmoded custom, its use here suggests an anxiety to legitimate Nightingale's respectability as a nurse.
8. Of Herbert, Gladstone wrote: 'I wish some one of the thousand who in prose justly celebrate Miss Nightingale would say a single word for the man of "routine" who devised and projected her going [to Scutari]'. Quoted in T. W. Reid, *The Life, Letters, and Friendships of Richard Monckton Milnes,1st Lord Houghton* (London: Cassell, 1890), vol. 1, p. 521.

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FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE.

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In 1820, in Florence, Italy, was born the subject of this sketch. She is the daughter of William Shore Nightingale, a wealthy gentleman with a fine estate at Lea Hurst, in Derbyshire, England. In her youth she was carefully instructed by her father in the classics and higher mathematics. Through extensive travel she became proficient in French, German and Italian. From her early life she evinced a great tenderness for dumb animals.

Rich, well-favored and finely educated, she would have been an ornament to society. But her mind did not turn that way, instead, when quite a young girl, she began visiting the sick near Lea Hurst and her father's other estate, Embly Park, Hampshire. Occasionally all her family passed a season in London, but instead of attending fashionable functions the girl visited hospitals and benevolent institutions. When traveling with her people in Egypt she nursed several sick Arabs, and they recovered under her care. She felt called toward the sick, and finally she determined to spend some time at Kaiserworth, near Dusseldorf, at the great Lutheran Hospital there, and perfect herself in a work she had come to regard as her mission. On her return to Lea Hurst she

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was restless, feeling idle when there was so much work to be done in the world.

In London there was a hospital for poor governesses, and it was on the verge of failure through lack of money support. Florence Nightingale became interested in the matter, and leaving her home she connected herself with the institution, saved it by her fortune, and worked in it for several years. Her own health failed for a time and she was ordered rest, but she remained at her post till she saw the hospital established on a sure foundation and in the way of prosperity.

By this time the Crimean War had begun, and England was sending great shiploads of men to the Black Sea. Little thought seems to have been taken in the enthusiasm of engaging in the war with Russia to provide the men with proper food or clothing in the unused-to climate of Russia. In the desolate country of the Czar, amid the colds of unheard-of bitter winters, the men were soon suffering terribly. After the first winter cholera broke out and camp after camp was decimated in its strength by the death of men.

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Matters went from bad to worse. The correspondent of the *Times* wrote to England: "It is now pouring rain, the sky is black as ink, the wind is howling over the staggering tents, the trenches are turned into dykes. In the tents the water is sometimes a foot deep; our men have not either warm or waterproof clothing, they are out for twelve hours at a time in the trenches, they are plunged into the miseries of a winter campaign, and not a soul seems to care for their comfort or even their lives
The commonest accessories of a hospital are wanting; there is not the least attention paid to decency or cleanliness; the stench is appalling; the fetid air can barely struggle out to taint the atmosphere, save through the chinks in the walls and roofs; and, for all I can observe, these men die without the least effort being made to save them. I hear they lie just as they were gently let

down on the ground by the poor fellows, their comrades, who brought them on their backs from the camp with the greatest tenderness, but who are not allowed to remain with them. The sick appear to be tended by the sick, and the dying by the dying."

The winter of 1854 was terrible in its rigor. About the camps the snow was sometimes three feet in depth, and many of the men were frozen to death even in the shelter of their tents. Out of over forty thousand, over eighteen thousand reported at the hospitals. At last England was roused, and money came pouring into the office of the *Times*, whose correspondent, William Howard Russell, had ventilated the state of affairs. A special commissioner was appointed who was sent to the Crimea with necessary food and shirts and flannels.

But that was not all that was needed. Nurses were the most in demand—women nurses. The Secretary of War, the Right Honorable Sydney Herbert, suggested Miss Nightingale, whose work in the hospital for poor governesses had become known and was not forgotten. But she was frail in health, and it was scarcely possible she should go so many thousand miles from home to live in places where there were only men. However, Mr. Herbert wrote her: "There is as far as I know only one person in England capable of organizing and directing such a plan, and I have been several times on the point of asking you if you would be disposed to make the attempt. That it will be difficult to form a corps of nurses no one knows better than yourself. . . . . I have this simple question to put to you: 'Could you go out yourself and take charge of everything?' It is of course understood that you will have absolute authority over all the nurses, unlimited power to draw on the government for all you judge necessary to the success of your mission; and I think I may assure you the co-operation of the medical staff. Your personal qualities, your knowledge, and your authority in administrative affairs all fit you for this position."

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By a most remarkable coincidence, the very day on which this letter was written, Miss Nightingale herself wrote to Mr. Herbert, stirred to the very soul as she was by the reported suffering of the troops.

In a few days all over the world was spreading this letter from the war office:

"Miss Nightingale, accompanied by thirty-four nurses, will leave this evening for the seat of war."

The whole nation thought of this frail woman going out to untold miseries and privation. Mrs. Jameson wrote: "It is an undertaking wholly new to our English customs, much at variance with the usual education given to women in this country. If it succeeds, it will be the true, the lasting glory of Florence Nightingale and her band of devoted assistants, that they have broken down a Chinese wall of prejudices—religious, social, professional—and have established a precedent which will indeed multiply the good to all time."

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It was the little touch that makes the whole world kin; in France the hotel-keepers would take no pay for the accommodation of the nurses; the poor fisherwomen of Boulogne carried their luggage to the railway station. The little band reached Scutari, November 5th, the day of the battle of Inkerman. They found the hospitals mere pest-houses, the Barrack Hospital lent to the British by the Turkish government overcrowded in the extreme. Double rows of mattresses filled the corridors, and so close together that one could scarcely walk between the rows. A nurse writes: "The whole of yesterday was spent in sewing the men's mattresses and then washing them, and in assisting the surgeons when we could in dressing the men's ghastly wounds after their five days' confinement on board ship, during which space their wounds had not been dressed. Hundreds of men with fever, dysentery, and cholera filled the wards in succession from the overcrowded transports."

Florence Nightingale herself went quietly among the men, always with a word of sympathy for their sufferings, calmly and unobtrusively doing with deft hands the offices that soothed them. The soldiers often wept as the woman-hand smoothed their pillows and a woman's eyes smiled cheeringly into theirs.

Her path was a most difficult one, for her coming was not welcomed by many of the military and medical men. Women were not so prominent in affairs in those days as now, and she was looked upon as in the way, and as usurping the privileges of men. But with discretion and tact she overcame the dislike for her, while her ability soon received recognition.

She established an invalid's kitchen where an appetizing diet could be prepared. She overlooked the cooking of the food of eight hundred men laid low by wounds and sickness. She established a laundry where the filthy clothing of the men was washed.

She seemed to be everywhere at once. There was never a severe case that escaped her attention or notice, and sometimes she was at the side of a soldier who had been sent in but an hour before, and of whose arrival, in all the hurry and turmoil, one would have supposed she could hardly have known.

She aided in establishing a library and getting up evening lectures for the men. She wrote letters for the sick, and helped them in every way that she could. She reduced the death-rate of the hospitals from sixty per cent. to a little over one per cent., laboring on for a year and a half, till the close of the war. She was a ministering angel, and as her slight form glided along the corridors the poor pained faces brightened at sight of her. When the medical attendants had retired for the night, her little lamp was often seen as she went from cot to cot in those dreary rounds seeing if all were right.

"With the heart of a true woman and the manner of a lady, accomplished and refined beyond most of her sex," said the *Times,*

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"she combines a surprising calmness of judgment and promptitude and decision of character. The popular instinct was not mistaken, which, when she set out from England on her mission of mercy, hailed her as a heroine; I trust she may not earn her title to a higher, though sadder appellation, that of martyr. No one who has observed her fragile figure and delicate health can avoid misgivings lest these should fail."

One of the soldiers is said to have written home: "She would speak to one and another of us, and nod and smile to many more, but she could not do it to all of us, you know, for we lay there by hundreds. But we could kiss her shadow where it fell, and lay our heads on our pillows again content." Another said that before she came there were cursing and swearing, but all that stopped when she was among them and without a word of rebuke from her lips. She was called the "Angel of the Crimea."

Once she was prostrated by fever, but quickly recovered and was at her post again. The fatigue that she underwent was marvelous, going without sleep and food only too often when there was much to do, and only a few hands to do it.

Physicians were not above consulting her, and generals regarded her as another commander—the commander back to life.

The thousands that were saved through her directing efforts can scarcely be estimated, for by her advice a new system of hospital hygiene was gradually adopted, so that the place of healing was no longer a house of horrors, but a nest of cool chambers, where cleanliness and air did what darkness and dirt had failed to do before. It may be safe to say that, but for Florence Nightingale, the various societies that do so much for the alleviating of the wounded in battle would not so soon have come into existence, though they were bound to come in time as intelligence and thought began to play as great a part in illness and injury as does the pharmacopœia and the lancet.

Finally the war came to an end, and London prepared to give

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Miss Nightingale a royal welcome. There was nothing but praise for her now, and those who had looked askance at her undertakings awoke to the realization that she had done far more than she had started out to do. So there were to be wildly praising times for her when she came back home. But Miss Nightingale got wind of this, and instead of coming to England by the way expected, she quietly took passage on a French steamer and reached Lea Hurst, August 15th, unknown to anyone. The wish to honor with the blare of trumpets a woman who had done a humane act was not to her liking. But modest as she was, tired as she was, some public demonstration must be made in her favor. Had she dared to speak it would have been done in a form that was dear to her heart, and which came about without any expressed wish on her part.

Queen Victoria sent for her to visit her at Balmoral. The royal command could not be denied. Miss Nightingale accordingly went, and was welcomed warmly by her sovereign and the brilliant court around her. Her majesty presented her with a valuable jewel, a red cross on a white field, closely approaching an Order of Knighthood, which could not, of course, be bestowed upon her. On a band encircling this cross were the words, "Blessed are the merciful." The letters V. R., surmounted by a crown of diamonds, are upon the centre of the cross. Green enamel branches of palm form the framework of the shield, while around their stem is a ribbon of blue enamel, with the single word "Crimea" blazoned on it. On the back is an inscription written by the Queen.

The Sultan sent her a magnificent bracelet. But dearer than all to her heart of hearts, appreciate as she did the affectionate and grateful thought prompting the personal honors accorded her, was the grant by the government of two hundred thousand dollars to found the school for nurses at St. Thomas' Hospital. This

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would have been her dear desire had she expressed herself, and it had come to her.

She would not have a cent of the money for herself, and established the school that women, through her training, might become of use in the world as nurses. Here is the "Nightingale Home," together with the "Nightingale Training School." The Home has a dining-room, with three long tables in it. Here is the clock presented by the Duchess of Baden. Here is a piano, also a gift. Here is the marble figure of Miss Nightingale, showing a face full of refinement and feeling, and telling the observer that life is worth living if lived for others and not for ourselves.

It may not be out of place to mention here the cause of the Crimean War, in which Miss Nightingale labored.

Professor Charles G. D. Roberts has summed it up thus:

"In 1853, indignant at Turkish outrages, Nicholas demanded that all Christians in Turkey should be put under his protection. When the Sultan refused, a Russian army seized Moldavia and Wallachia, whereupon a fleet of British battleships took station at the mouth of the Dardanelles. It was a little earlier in this same year that Nicholas had made a proposal to England which, if it had been accepted, would have settled the Eastern question then and there and put a very different face upon affairs of to-day. Uttering the memorable saying that Turkey is the 'sick man of Europe' and diseased beyond all hope of healing, he proposed that in the interests of peace the inevitable dissolution should be brought about at once. He suggested that England take Egypt and Crete, while Turkey in Europe should be divided into independent States under his protection. The proposal was fair. It was to England's advantage and it was wise statesmanship. But the British Government and people together had got their wits stubbornly set in one direction. The offer was refused, and from this refusal came the war."

Since the war Miss Nightingale has written several books of

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value in her line. Her *Hospital Notes*, published in 1859, has made radical changes in several hospitals, while it furnished practical plans for new ones. Over a hundred thousand copies have been sold of another book of hers, *Notes on Nursing*.

She is an earnest advocate of sunlight and fresh air. "An extraordinary fallacy," she says, "is the dread of night air. What air can we breathe at night but night air? The choice is between pure night air from without and foul night air from within. Most people prefer the latter. What will they say if it be proved true that fully one-half of all the diseases we suffer from is occasioned by people sleeping with their windows shut? An open window most nights of the year can never hurt anyone. In great cities night air is often the best and purest to be had in the twenty-four hours."

She is opposed to dark houses. She would keep sick people or well forever in the sunlight if possible, as sunlight is the great purifier of the atmosphere. "In the unsunned sides of narrow streets there is degeneracy and weakliness of the human race—mind and body equally degenerating."

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She also says "Nursing is an art, and if it is to be made an art requires as exclusive a devotion, as hard a preparation as any painter's or sculptor's work; for what is the having to do with dead canvas or cold marble compared with the having to do with the living body, the temple of God's spirit? Nursing is one of the fine arts; I had almost said the finest of the fine arts." Other books published by Miss Nightingale are *Observations on the Sanitary State of the Army in India*, 1863; *Life or Death in India*, read before the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, 1873, with an appendix on *Life or Death by Irrigation*, 1874.

With a subscription sent by her to the Gordon Memorial Fund she wrote: "Might not the example of this great and pure hero be made to tell, in that self no longer existed in him, but

only God and duty, on the soldiers who have died to save him and on boys who should live to follow him?"

In this year, 1897, Florence Nightingale has celebrated her seventy-seventh year and is so ill that there is little hope of her recovery. She has been an invalid a long time. But when she passes away she will have left an undying memorial of her achievements as a pioneer in the work of nursing the sick and wounded on an organized plan in the shape of her Nurses' Home. To this she devoted not only the money subscribed by the English people as a national testimonial of gratitude to her at the close of the Crimean War, the horrors of which she did so much to alleviate, but her time and energy, her health and strength. She has always been a consistant advocate of the rights of woman. Years ago, when she was asked to contribute a paragraph to an equal suffrage pamphlet, she wrote: "You ask my reasons for believing in woman's suffrage? It seems to me almost self-evident, an axiom, that every householder and tax-payer ought to have a vote in the expenditure of the money we pay, including, as this does, interests the most vital to a human being."

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Miss Nightingale has helped to dignify woman's work, to elevate humanity, and she has, by self-sacrifice and nobility of her labor, made her name immortal.