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THE LIFE OF
FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE



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Mrs Florence Nightingale.
at Embury.
December 28th 1857.

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE IN 1857.

From a pencil drawing by Sir George Scharf in the National Portrait Gallery.

THE LIFE
OF
FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

BY
SIR EDWARD COOK

ABRIDGED AND REVISED BY
ROSALIND NASH

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PREFACE

It was agreed with Sir Edward Cook that if a Short Life of Florence Nightingale based on his biography and not written by himself should be published, it should be stated therein by whom the abbreviation was made. In this matter, therefore, there has been no choice as to the title page. Death has prevented him from writing the Short Life he contemplated. He intended it to be not an abbreviation, but a fresh book. This volume cannot pretend to be a fresh book. It is Sir Edward Cook's book in a shortened form; but some passages of it are fresh and there is some rearrangement of the material.

Two Lives have appeared since 1913 of which account has had to be taken. The Life of Lord Ripon by Mr. Lucien Wolf (1921) has made it possible to add to the later history of Lord Herbert's and Miss Nightingale's attempted reorganisation of the War Office, broken off by Lord Herbert's death. A memorandum on the projected reforms had been drawn up for Lord Herbert in 1869 by his under-secretary, Lord de Grey (afterwards Lord Ripon); and reforms based on this memorandum were carried out by Lord de Grey in later years, during which he was often in consultation with Miss Nightingale. Some account of these matters will be found on page 235.

Mr. Shane Leslie's *Henry Edward Manning, His Life and Labours* (1921) contains in one chapter a good many references to Miss Nightingale. Her letters to Manning naturally give prominence to the Catholic side of her religious interests—the side that, in respect of creed, at no time prevailed with her. Mr. Leslie does not continuously

bear in mind the fact that it was the works (and in some cases the spirit) but not the beliefs of the Roman Church that attracted her: hence references to her "vocation to serve God as a nun," and to her having "begged Manning to send her to the French or the Irish Sisters of St. Vincent," which give a wrong impression. The introductions she obtained from Manning were of course for her investigations.¹ Mr. Leslie is mistaken in implying that she did not go to Dublin.²

Manning seems, on Mr. Leslie's showing, to have been much concerned in the sending to Scutari of Miss Stanley's party of nurses. Of the religious differences which their arrival occasioned, he was able, at a distance, to take a philosophical view: "Paul and Barnabas had a sharp contention—why not Mother Francis and Mother Clare?" It is new, I think, that Miss Stanley was received into the Roman Church before her return to England; though Manning told her he saw "no occasion to publish the fact at Constantinople for the moment." All this shows yet more clearly the activities on behalf of religious bodies by which Miss Nightingale's work was troubled. I do not know what authority Mr. Leslie has for the statement that she "resigned the Balaclava hospital." It is inconsistent with the facts given by Sir Edward Cook.³ Some new points and part of a letter from Miss Nightingale drawn from Mr. Leslie's book will be found on page 30.

From the Second Volume of Mr. Karl Pearson's *Life of Francis Galton* are derived the interesting comparison between Miss Nightingale's religious views and Galton's (page 375), some points relating to her proposal for a Professorship of Statistics and the letter given in Appendix C (page 386).

After the *Life* was finished, Sir Edward Cook showed me

¹ See page 59.

² See her evidence for the Royal Commission of 1857.

³ *Life of Florence Nightingale*, vol. i, pp. 255, 286.

one day a bit of paper pencilled in Miss Nightingale's beautiful writing, the draft of a letter which he had found unfortunately too late to use, and was putting aside for a second edition. He was immensely delighted with the discovery. It was the letter on page 152—"Snow on the ground." "Sent for a chair out of Surgery—to show I was in earnest." Using this letter, I have rearranged the narrative from November, 1855, to the following spring in a stricter order of time, a change which I think throws fresh light on Miss Nightingale's hard experiences, and on her relations with her supporters in England and her opponents in the East.

The anecdote on pages 16, 17 was found by Sir E. Cook in Sir R. Murchison's Life.

There is certain other fresh matter for which I am responsible. The beginning of the first chapter (pages 3 to 6) has been rewritten; in the original it received some criticism as giving too much space to collateral relations and too little account of family origins. The passages on nursing have been added to (pages 21 to 24 and 110) and Chapter II of Part IV is largely the result of rewriting. There are other additions which hardly require mention. And in various passages (apart from quotations) dealing with Miss Nightingale's character and personal circumstances, I have drawn on my own knowledge. The last chapter, for which I am entirely responsible, contains a fresh discussion of Miss Nightingale's character with which I found myself unable to deal by the method of abridgement.

It was on the ground especially of excellent "architectonics" that Lord Morley spoke of Sir E. Cook as the best possible writer to deal with the immense mass of papers in which Miss Nightingale's history was concealed. My changes in the framework have only been such as abbreviation made necessary, except a few alterations of order, of which the one already mentioned is an example. As far as facts are concerned, Sir E. Cook's account is followed, with only such small difference of values as must result

here and there from the necessity of using my own language, and from the little additions from my own knowledge and a few other sources. In almost all cases where a judgment of the effect of Miss Nightingale's work was concerned I have used Sir E. Cook's own words; and in many other cases.

It must be regretted that in the process of shortening, the author's characteristic accompaniment of commentary has usually had to be sacrificed. Much explanation and comment were necessary in first making known the course of an extraordinary life, and they contributed to the readableness and authority of a very lengthy and detailed record. Students can refer to them, but in a shorter narrative the life may now be allowed to speak for itself. It has been necessary also to omit many of Miss Nightingale's letters.

Appendix A (page 379) deals with Mr. Lytton Strachey's sketch of Florence Nightingale in *Eminent Victorians*.

I have to thank Sir Thomas Middleton and Dr. H. H. Woollard for kindly allowing me to refer to them on specific points; Sir Herbert Creedy for the copy of a document; Sir Herbert Stephen for collaboration in Appendix A; and my brother, Dr. S. Shore Nightingale, for helpful discussion and advice on various matters. My husband has given much help, including the reading of the manuscript and proofs, and Mrs. Vincent, Sir Edward Cook's sister, has been so kind as to read the typescript and to give me several useful hints.

ROSALIND NASH.

March, 1925.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

MR. LYTTON STRACHEY'S *Florence Nightingale*

A substantial part of Mr. Lytton Strachey's popular and entertaining volume, *Eminent Victorians*, is occupied by a caricature of Florence Nightingale, the materials for which were inevitably taken from Sir Edward Cook's *Life*. It is unfortunate that for the great majority of readers this travestied and upon the whole unfriendly abridgement has been the principal source of enlightenment concerning Florence Nightingale's life and character. Mr. Strachey had the intelligence to perceive two things: First, that Sir Edward Cook had demolished the loose popular theory that Miss Nightingale was nothing but a soft-hearted person gushing with indiscriminate benevolence, and had proved her to be a woman whose resolution, force of character, and power of laborious achievement amounted to genius of the first order; and secondly, that owing to the profusion, solidity and elaborate detail of Sir Edward's work, these facts could never become known at first hand to more than a very small proportion of the fairly intelligent reading public, but could reach the much larger number of superficial and not specially industrious readers only through the interpretation of a more compendious and lively commentary. He, Mr. Strachey, had the opportunity of conveying to a comparatively large audience important information of genuine interest, and was practically free to make his communication as picturesque and entertaining as he could. What more piquant contrast could he devise than the conversion of the indefinitely amiable Sister of Mercy of tradition into a harsh, domineering, relentless and terrible old woman?

The art of caricature is threefold. Some of the facts about the person or work selected as its subject are hopelessly inconsistent with the general design of the caricaturist; these must be suppressed. Some of them it is desired to emphasize by the method of exaggeration, and these must be distorted. Yet other facts, from the point of view of the artist, ought to exist, but do not. These must be invented. Mr. Strachey laboured

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conscientiously in all three departments of his industry. Three or four examples will sufficiently indicate Mr. Strachey's command of his craft.

Sir Edward Cook had written: "There was always a note of calm authority in her voice. A Crimean veteran recalled her passing his bed with some doctors who were saying, "It can't be done," and her replying quietly, "It *must* be done." For the purpose of travesty this becomes:

Once when she had given some direction, a doctor ventured to remark that the thing could not be done. "But it must be done," said Miss Nightingale. A chance bystander who heard the words never forgot all his life the irresistible authority of them. And they were spoken quietly—very quietly indeed.

Of Miss Nightingale's illness in the Crimea, Sir Edward Cook wrote: "The attack of fever was sharp, and she was, as she afterwards admitted to her friends, 'very near to death.' There are scraps of manuscript among her papers (for even in illness she could not be kept from the use of her pen) which show a wandering mind." Had he known that his work would achieve the distinction of being burlesqued, he might have explained that these fragments were two in number, one the beginning of a letter to her colleague Mr. Bracebridge, and the other a mere scrap with a few words shakily written upon it in pencil. If by not taking this precaution he invited inflation, he certainly got it. Mr. Strachey's version runs:

She was attacked by fever, and for a moment came very near to death. Yet she worked on; if she could not move she could at least write; and write she did until her mind had left her; and after it had left her, in what seemed the delirious trance of death itself, she still wrote.

Sir Edward Cook, when his story was approaching the death of Sidney Herbert in 1861, used, by way of commentary on his own part, a quotation from *Prospice*. Mr. Strachey, hastily concluding that this, in Miss Nightingale's mouth, would add to the spiciness of his narrative, informs us that *she said* "One fight more, the best and the last." But he should have waited to look up his dates, for Browning's poem was not published till 1864. An equally enlivening passage is Mr. Strachey's account of the visitors "ushered trembling into the shaded chamber" of the advocate of fresh air and sun, whose room, as Sir Edward Cook says, was "full of light," being "without blinds or curtains."

Three years before her death, King Edward VII created Miss Nightingale a member of the Order of Merit. According to Sir Edward Cook, who was accurately informed, "Sir Douglas Dawson, on the King's behalf, brought the Order—then for the first time bestowed upon a woman—to South Street. Miss Nightingale understood that some kindness had been done to her, but hardly more. 'Too kind, too kind,' she said."

Mr. Strachey decided to conclude his sketch with this episode, and his final sentences are:

The Order of Merit was brought to South Street and there was a little ceremony of presentation. Sir Douglas Dawson, after a short speech, stepped forward and handed the insignia of the Order to Miss Nightingale. Propped up by pillows, she dimly recognized that some compliment was being paid to her. "Too kind—too kind," she murmured; and she was not ironical.

There was no little ceremony. Sir Douglas Dawson did not make a speech, short or long, did not step forward, and did not hand the insignia of the Order to Miss Nightingale. On the contrary, he stayed downstairs with members of Miss Nightingale's family, while the Order was taken to her by one of her cousins and her private secretary in the room in which she was confined to her bed.

Mr. Strachey's narrative has the essential merit of being easy and entertaining to read. His bright presentment of Florence Nightingale to his readers is perhaps, in an opposite direction, as far from the truth as the insipid image of meek benevolence which had been based on the ignorance of the public and demolished by Sir Edward Cook.

APPENDIX B (VERSE).

SANTA FILOMENA

By H. W. Longfellow

Whene'er a noble deed is wrought,
Whene'er is spoken a noble thought,
Our hearts in glad surprise,
To higher levels rise.

The tidal wave of deeper souls
Into our inmost being rolls,
And lifts us unawares
Out of all meaner cares.

Honour to those whose words or deeds
Thus help us in our daily needs,
And by their overflow
Raise us from what is low!

Thus thought I, as by night I read
Of the great army of the dead,
The trenches cold and damp,
The starved and frozen camp,—

The wounded from the battle-plain,
In dreary hospitals of pain,
The cheerless corridors,
The cold and stony floors.

Lo! in that house of misery
A Lady with a lamp I see
Pass through the glimmering gloom,
And flit from room to room.

And slow as in a dream of bliss,
The speechless sufferer turns to kiss
Her shadow, as it falls
Upon the darkening walls.

As if a door in heaven should be
 Opened and then closed suddenly,
 The vision came and went,
 The light shone and was spent.

On England's annals, through the long
 Hereafter of her speech and song,
 That light its rays shall cast
 From portals of the past.

A Lady with a Lamp shall stand
 In the great history of the land,
 A noble type of good
 Heroic womanhood.

Nor even shall be wanting here
 The palm, the lily and the spear,
 The symbols that of yore
 Saint Filomena bore.

THE SOLDIERS' SONG OF FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

(To the tune of "The Cottage and Water Mill")

On a dark, lonely night on the Crimea's dread shore,
 There had been bloodshed and strife on the morning before,
 The dead and the dying lay bleeding around,
 Some crying for help—there was none to be found.
 Now God in His mercy He pitied their cries,
 And the soldiers so cheerful in the morning do arise.
*So forward, my lads, may your hearts never fail,
 You are cheered by the presence of a sweet Nightingale.*

Now God sent this woman to succour the brave;
 Some thousands she saved from an untimely grave.
 Her eyes beam with pleasure, she's beauteous and good,
 The wants of the wounded are by her understood.
 With fever some brought in, with life almost gone,
 Some with dismantled limbs, some to fragments are torn.
*But they keep up their spirits, their hearts never fail,
 They are cheered by the presence of a sweet Nightingale.*

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Her heart it means good, for no bounty she'll take,
She'd lay down her life for the poor soldier's sake;
She prays for the dying, she gives peace to the brave,
She feels that the soldier has a soul to be saved.
The wounded they love her as it has been seen,
She's the soldier's preserver, they call her their Queen.
*May God give her strength, and her heart never fail,
One of Heaven's best gifts is Miss Nightingale.*

The wives of the wounded, how thankful are they!
Their husbands are cared for by night and by day.
Whatever her country, this gift God has given,
And the soldiers they say she's an Angel from Heaven.
All praise to this woman, and deny it who can,
That woman was sent as a comfort to man.
*Let's hope that no more against them you'll rail,
Treat them well, and they'll prove like Miss Nightingale.*

[This is the best and most popular of the wartime songs about Miss Nightingale. It was sung to great effect on Christmas day, 1870, at a treat arranged by the nurses of St. Thomas's Hospital, then in the Surrey Gardens. The children had sung hymns and older patients had contributed songs, when a patient in the accident ward, a coal heaver with a broken leg, volunteered. The words of the refrain caught the ears of the Nightingale nurses. "We dropped all work," says one of them, "and listened intently till the song was over, all enthusiasm for our Chief." The singer was an old soldier who had been nursed by Miss Nightingale in the General Hospital, Balaclava.]

THE HEROIC DEAD

"They are not here!" No, not beneath that sod,
And yet not far away,
For they can mingle their new life from God
With living souls, not clay.

And they, "the heroic dead," will softly pour
Into thy spirit's ear
A music human still, but sad no more,
To tell that they are near—

Appendix B (Verse)

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Near thee with higher ministering aid
Thy heart-work to return,
So that each sacrifice that love has made
A victory shall earn.

[Believed to be by R. M. Milnes. The words "they are not here" and "the heroic dead" are from a letter from Florence Nightingale to her sister, describing her walks on the shore near the soldiers' graves during her convalescence from the Crimean fever. It was the time when she vowed to "fight the cause" of the "murdered men."]

APPENDIX C

LETTER ON SOCIAL STATISTICS FROM FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE TO
FRANCIS GALTON

10 South Street, Park Lane, February 7, 1891.

Scheme of Social Physics Teaching

DEAR SIR:

Sir Douglas Galton has given me your most kind message, saying that if I will explain in writing to you what I think needs doing, you will be so good as to give it the experienced attention without which it would be worthless. By your kind leave it is this:

A scheme from someone of high authority as to what should be the work and subjects in teaching Social Physics and their practical application in the event of our being able to obtain a Statistical Professorship or Readership at the University of Oxford.

I am not thinking so much of Hygiene and Sanitary Work, because these and their statistics have been more closely studied in England than probably any other branch of statistics, though much remains to be desired: as *e.g.*, the result of the food and cooking of the poor as seen in the children of the Infant Schools and those of somewhat higher ages. But I would—subject always to your criticism and only for the sake of illustration—mention a few of the other branches in which we appear hardly to know anything, *e.g.*:

A.—The results of Forster's Act, now 20 years old. We sweep annually into our Elementary Schools hundreds of thousands of children, spending millions of money. Do we know:

(1) What proportion of children forget their whole education after leaving school; whether all they have been taught is *waste*? The almost accidental statistics of Guards' recruits would point to a large proportion.

(2) What are the results upon the lives and conduct of children in after life who don't forget all they have been taught?

(3) What are the methods and what are the results, for example in Night Schools and Secondary Schools, in preventing primary education from being a *waste*? If we know not what are the effects upon our national life of Forster's Act, is not this a strange gap in reasonable England's knowledge?

B.—(1) The results of legal punishments—*i.e.*, the deterrent or encouraging effects upon crime of being in gaol. Some excellent and hardworking reformers tell us: Whatever you do, keep a boy out of gaol—work the First Offenders' Act—once in gaol, always in gaol—gaol is the cradle of crime. Other equally zealous and active reformers say—a boy must be in gaol once at least to learn its hardships before he can be rescued. Is it again not strange in practical England that we know no more about this?

(2) Is the career of a criminal from his first committal—and for what action—to his last, whether (a) to the gallows, or (b) to rehabilitation, recorded? It is stated by trustworthy persons that no such statistics exist, and that we can only learn the criminal's career from himself in friendly conference—what it has been from being in gaol, say for stealing a turnip for a boys' feast, or for breaking his schoolroom window in a temper because he has been turned out of school for making a noise—to murder or to morality.

In how many cases must all our legislation be experiment, not experience! Any experience must be thrown away.

(3) What effect has education on crime? (a) Some people answer unhesitatingly: As education increases, crime decreases. (b) Others as unhesitatingly: Education only teaches to escape conviction, or to steal better when released. (c) Others again: Education has nothing to do with it either way.

C.—We spend millions in rates in putting people into workhouses, and millions in charity in taking them out. What is the proportion of names which from generation to generation appear the same in workhouse records? What is the proportion of children depauperised or pauperised by the workhouse? Does the large Union School, or the small, or "boarding-out," return more pauper children to honest independent life? On girls, what is the result of the training of the large Union Schools in fitting them for honest little domestic places—and what proportion of them falling into vice have to return to the workhouse? Upon all such subjects how should the use of statistics be taught?

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D.—India with its 250 millions—200 millions being our fellow subjects, I suppose—enters so little into practical English public life that many scarcely know where this small country is. It forms scarcely an element in our calculations, though we have piles of Indian statistics. As to India the problems are:

(1) Whether the peoples there are growing richer or poorer, better or worse fed and clothed?

(2) Whether their physical powers are deteriorating or not?

(3) Whether fever not only kills less or more, but whether it incapacitates from labour for fewer or more months in the year?

(4) What are the native manufactures and productions needed by the greatest customer in the world, the Government of India, which could be had as good and cheap in India, as those to be had from England?

(5) Whether the native trades and handicrafts are being ruined or being encouraged under our rule?

(6) What is the result of Sir C. Wood's (1853) Education Act in India?

These are only a very few of the Indian things which—I will not say are hotly contested, for few care either in the House of Commons or out, but—have their opposites asserted with equal positiveness.

I have no time to make my letter any shorter, although these are but a very few instances. What is wanted is that so high an authority as Mr. Francis Galton should jot down other great branches upon which he would wish for statistics, and for *some teaching how to use these statistics in order to legislate for and to administer our national life* with more precision and experience.

One authority was consulted and he answered: "That we have statistics and that Government must do it." Surely the answering question is: The Government does not use the statistics which it has in administering and legislating—except indeed to "deal damnation" across the floor of the H. of C. at the Opposition and vice versa. Why? Because though the great majority of Cabinet Ministers, of the Army, of the Executive, of both Houses of Parliament have received a university education, what has that university education taught them of the practical application of statistics? Many of the Government offices have splendid statistics. What use do they make of them? One of the last words Dr. Farr of the General Register Office said to

me was: "Yes, you must get an Oxford Professorship; don't let it drop."

M. Quetelet gave me his *Physique Sociale* and his *Anthropometrie*. He said almost like Sir Isaac Newton: "These are only a few pebbles picked up on the vast seashore of the ocean to be explored. Let the explorations be carried out."

You know how Quetelet reduced the most apparently accidental carelessness to ever recurring facts, so that as long as the same conditions exist, the same "accidents" will recur with absolutely unfailling regularity.

You remember what Quetelet wrote—and Sir J. Herschel enforced the advice—"Put down what you expect from such and such legislation; after —— years see where it has given you what you expected, and where it has failed. But you change your laws and your administering of them so fast, and without inquiry after results past or present, that it is all experiment, see-saw, doctrinaire, a shuttlecock between two battledores."

Might I ask from your kindness—if not deterred by this long scrawl—for your answer in writing as to heads of subjects for the scheme? Then to give me some little time, and that you would then make an appointment some afternoon, as you kindly proposed, to talk it over, to teach and to advise me? Pray believe me,

Yours most faithfully,

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE.

APPENDIX D

HOW TO MAKE A NIGHTINGALE

This little garment is the strip of flannel used as an emergency bed-jacket by Florence Nightingale. Four safety pins are required.

The length of the strip should be $1\frac{3}{4}$ yards, or 2 or 3 inches more, the exact length depending on the width of the patient's back and the reach of his arm when stretched out for the reasonable movements of a person sitting up in bed. For the width of the flannel, 28 inches is good. In the centre of the length, at one edge, cut, at right angles to the length, a slit from 4 to 7 inches long (according to the size of the person's neck and its flatness or humpiness at the back). This is the whole of the making. To adjust the jacket, turn down the two points, made by the slit, in the form of two *revers*. The base of the triangle formed by each of the *revers* should be made long enough to form the half of a roomy collar. Put the garment on like a shawl, with the middle of the two *revers* (constituting the collar) at the back of the neck. Bringing the strip round the patient's shoulders like a shawl, you find the top edge (that in which you have made the collar) hangs down as the fronts of a jacket. Pin together the collar in front, and pin the fronts together at the chest. Place the corner of the bottom edge on the back of the patient's hand; turn the corner back to form a pointed cuff. Pin together at the front of the wrist the ends of the little *revers* which forms the cuff. The same for the other hand.

You can of course put strings at the wrists and front, instead of pinning. It is better not to sew the points down, on account of washing. The edge can be bound with ribbon, but with flannel this is not a necessity.

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