

Florence Nightingale's Writings

By Miss Daisy Marion Hamesh Das

"That power of always writing a good letter whenever one likes is a great temptation" said Miss Florence Nightingale.

It seemed that the pen was her constant companion for it seldom left her hand. She spent greater part of her life in writing, which are now considered not only a legacy for nurses, but a philosophy of nursing which has a rare combination of intellectual demonstration, the scientific and natural basis of hygiene and its over-all application for maintaining national health. And to human race the allied arts of nursing and sanitation have been her greatest contribution which have been demonstrated throughout her writings.

She was a widely travelled and a highly literary woman. She possessed an extensive knowledge of many countries which she had never visited during her life time. She was an authority on matters pertaining to Indian Sanitation which in itself is a "Treatise on Sanitation." She read books in French, German and English written on various subjects and topics and made notes. She used to copy out long passages which had impressed her most. All her diaries, letters articles and notes on various subjects reveal that she was an extensive reader and an ardent writer. The chief characteristics that are apparent from these writings are her keen and exact power of observation and her immense interest in the welfare of the sick and her great desire to help them.

Through her trained mind she was able to acquire a complete mental grasp of most of the problems. She developed a remarkable power of concentration on various matters which are pointed out and discussed at great length in all her writings. Reflected in all her writings are the essential underlying

principles of nursing, sanitation, hygiene and enlightened humanitarianism, which she had described with logic, originality and clarity.

Collection of all her articles and writings brings to light an interesting study of her graphic brilliance and concise mode of expression, also her mental alertness and sympathetic feelings for human sufferings. In all her comments, reports and remarks she was no doubt most scathing and unsparing, yet all her writings contain not only criticisms, but constructive recommendations with practical and efficient working plans and methods. An exposure of human follies was always linked with corresponding plans for obtaining maximum advantages and benefits. All her writings though in simple language showed the importance of a scientific study of the diseases and ailments.

Florence Nightingale had an un-parallel influence on hospitals and nursing matters and in general she was an authority on all questions relating to public health and sickness. She was a great advisor and many sought her advice, which she willingly gave to all without discrimination. Her brilliant perception reconstructed the whole medical hierarchy. She discussed at great length their salaries, promotions, education, sanitary officers for hospitals, encampments and statistics. A careful study of all her writings indicates in several places a comparison between the relative advantages of domestic service and nursing profession. Her main principle was that preparation was necessary for efficiency and this remained her life-long insistence.

In her famous summary on sanitary state of Army barracks in India, she refers to the ancient customs of the country with inexhaustible human sympathies. Though the catholic sympathy

which was her main-spring of all her energies as apparent throughout her writings, her fervent hatred for deluded and conventional lies appears again and again.

She was greatly interested in all religious and philosophical questions even in contemporary politics and history. She acquired herself the social conditions existing then. She had a strong conviction that 'some day God would appoint her to fulfill a mission of mercy for Him.' She was an extremely zealous and religious lady whose close adherence to the very idea that all her work was "God's business" which she alone must complete; and her life, a mission, which she was to follow and listen to the "inner voice of her consciousness" is ample proof of her religious fervent.

She wanted to keep her nurses under the guardianship of their school. The chief reason was that she wanted them to feel their school of nursing as their second home, where they could always go, feel secure and be under good influence, instead of having a nomadic existence with disintegrated effects.

Her intellectual quality, inexhaustible human sympathies and depth of health problems kept her busy all through her life. Though her writings date back over a century, they still seem fresh and vivid to any reader. It is impossible to study them without being influenced by an ardent realization of all that goes into building a healthy nation, nay, the health of the whole world. She was most enthusiastic about the happiness of all people. Her "Notes on Nursing, What It Is, and What It Is not," make not only an interesting reading, but an 'Immortal Classic' and a most famous 'Treatise on Nursing,' which is yet to be studied and analysed at great depth. One tribute Miss Nightingale valued most was that of a distinguished doctor, Sir James Paget, who said: "I am ashamed to find how much I have learnt from

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