

The Nightingale Society

www.nightingalesociety.com
contact@nightingalesociety.com

Nightingale had a way with words. Here are some fine examples:

On heath and healing

“It is Nature that cures, not the physician or nurse” (“Nursing the sick,” 1883)

“It is much cheaper to promote health than to maintain people in sickness” (Health and Local Government, 1894).

“To make the people’s dwellings fit for sick, or rather such as will *not make* sickness...is of course our first duty” (1872).

On nursing

“The physician prescribes for supplying the vital force, but the nurse supplies it” (“Sick nursing and health nursing,” 1893).

“A nurse must not be a scrubber. And a scrubber cannot be a nurse” (*Notes on Hospitals*, 1863).

On hospitals

“In building or extending a hospital, it is to be taken for granted that the object in view is to benefit and not injure the sick” (1859).

“Let us reform our hospitals now, and as we improve our cities and towns, they will be less required.” (‘Hospital construction: wards,’ *The Builder*, 1858).

“I know no class of murderers who have killed so many people as hospital architects” (letter, 1877).

“It may seem a strange principle to enunciate as the very first requirement in a hospital that it should do the sick no harm” (Preface, *Notes on Hospitals*, 1863).

On unreformed nursing

“The cardinal sin of paid nurses, of all classes, of all nations, is taking petty bribes and making petty advantages (of many different sorts and sizes) out of the patients” (*Notes on Hospitals*, 186).

“Doctors little knew how nurses hoodwinked them: the bad woman, the clever nurse, must be a idiot if she cannot hoodwink the doctor” (letter 17 March 1879).

On child care and pediatric nursing

“Children require the most observing and best nursing because they cannot tell you what they feel.... *Love for children* is a necessity in a children's ward....They must be either ‘those dear little souls’ or ‘those tiresome dirty things’” (address to nurses, 1897).

“keep no child an *hour* longer in hospital than is positively needful” (undated note, Add Mss 45820 f112).

“No child can be well who is not bright and merry and brought up in fresh air and sunshine and surrounded by love—the sunshine of the soul” (*Rural Hygiene*, 1894).

On infant care

“The life duration of babies is the most delicate test of health conditions” (“Sick-Nursing and Heath-nursing,” 1893).

Nightingale’s ideas used by the World Health Organization

Her definition of health, 1883: “Health is not only to be well, but to be able to use well every power we have to use” (“Nursing the Sick,” Quain, *Dictionary of Medicine*).

World Health Organization, 1948: “Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”

Nightingale’s advice on handwashing, 1860: “Every nurse ought to be careful to wash her hands very frequently during the day. If her face, too, so much the better” (*Notes on Nursing*, “Personal Cleanliness”).

World Health Organization, 2009: “Hand hygiene is the primary measure to reduce infections” (World Alliance for Patient Safety. WHO Guidelines on hand hygiene in health care).

God

“God is to have a church or chapel to Himself, but He is to have nothing to do with political economy or with government administration or House of Commons legislation. Most curious of all, He is to have nothing to do with fighting and bloodshed and murder, by wholesale, in war” (from an unpublished essay).

“It is not His will for people to have cholera, or rather it is His will for people to learn how to prevent cholera for themselves” (unpublished note).

“Can God have created this world merely to forgive it?” (unpublished essay).

Activism

From an interview with a hospital philanthropist in 1897:

“She warned me against ever being discouraged by the snubs of government officials: “Keep what you know is right before you, and never cease trying to get it. Aim high and people will follow you in the end.”

“No, no, no one can be neutral in this life; you are either doing good or bad, and the very fact of not trying to do good is bad in itself” (Sydney Holland, *In Black and White*, 154).

Short paperbacks on Nightingale by Lynn McDonald are:

Florence Nightingale at First Hand (Bloomsbury and Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2010), *Florence Nightingale: A very brief history* (SPCK 2017), and *Florence Nightingale, Nursing and Health Care Today* (Springer, 2018).

The Nightingale Society promotes knowledge of her great contribution to nursing and public health care and its relevance today. It defends her reputation and legacy when attacked. To get onto the list for (occasional) updates: contact@nightingalesociety.com or www.nightingalesociety.com.