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# Florence Nightingale Tableaux

Arranged and edited, with an introduction and notes, by Gabrielle Elliot, Amateur-Dramatic Editor of the *Woman's Home Companion*, and published under the auspices of the *National Organization for Public Health Nursing*, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York, in connection with the Florence Nightingale Centennial Celebration, May 12th, 1920.

PUBLISHED BY  
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY  
64-66 FIFTH AVENUE  
NEW YORK



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Set up and electrotyped. Published, March, 1920

# FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE TABLEAUX

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**Note:** These tableaux, while prepared primarily with a view to their use by hospitals, training schools, nursing associations and other nursing groups in connection with the Nightingale Centennial Celebration, will be found useful for practically any gathering of nurses and their friends when it is desired to give a simple and effective, but easily arranged, and inexpensive entertainment. They provide an excellent means of bringing before the public the advantages and opportunities in nursing as a profession for young women. The recruiting message may be reinforced by the display of a motion picture on a nursing subject (for example, "An Equal Chance" distributed by the National Organization for Public Health Nursing, or the Red Cross film "Winning Her Way") and by the distribution of booklet and folder recruiting literature such as may be obtained from the National Organization for Public Health Nursing.

## The Legendary "Lady with the Lamp"—

Florence Nightingale, perhaps the most famous woman of modern times, was born in 1820 and died in 1910. During her long lifetime, of which the Crimean nursing expedition, so generally associated with her name, was only an incident, she preached, in season and out, the necessity of hygiene and sanitation, the necessity of governmental provision for the health of its army and navy in peace as well as in war, the need of adequate provision in institutions for the sick, poor and other wards of the state and, above all, the imperative need for the development of the nursing profession, through training schools capable of giving high-grade instruction and practice in hospitals equipped with the modern facilities.

### And The Real Florence Nightingale

By driving others as mercilessly as she drove herself, Miss Nightingale, in the fifty years she devoted to public health work, probably effected more reforms in both civil and military matters than any English statesman of her time. Largely from a sickbed, she directed her "reform cabinet", urged investigations, refuted opponents of progress, wrote for the press and exerted pressure upon leading writers, compiled endless reports containing vital statistics and detailed recommendations, and wielded an influence which was felt to the most remote British colony and indeed throughout the world. At home, she was beloved, feared and anathematized, according to the bias of the individual. The tradition of the Crimean service, when as "The Lady with the Lamp" Florence Nightingale had inspired something approximating hero-worship, stood her in good stead in her battles with refractory doctors, statesmen and scientists; but the enormous service she rendered in her prolonged struggle for enlightenment after her return from the Crimea was never thoroughly understood or appreciated by the public, which preferred rather to adore her as the frail invalid, broken by the agonizing experiences of nursing the wounded and dying at Scutari.

These tableaux therefore, sketchy as they must be of necessity in adequately portraying the spirit of Florence Nightingale's life, are designed to bring out not only the work for which she is especially famous but also the less spectacular but actually far more important service she rendered the world long after the Crimea was past.

It was as the founder of the nursing profession, for which she established the first training school planned and conducted on modern lines, that Florence Nightingale made her most important contribution perhaps, to humanity. This side of her life has therefore been emphasized. Several tableaux which do not introduce her, but show conditions which she either altered or



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## FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE TABLEAUX

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introduced or later developments which her pioneer labors made possible, have been included as bearing directly upon the subject in hand. Any of the scenes may be omitted if they require too much time or effort. If the complete set of tableaux is performed, however, they will give a fairly complete presentation of the outstanding events of Florence Nightingale's life.

### Costuming and Music

For the costumes, backgrounds, etc., consult books of the period, according to which scene is being represented. Victorian styles predominate in these scenes; the books of DuMaurier are excellent in suggesting the type needed. Encyclopedias, books on costuming, books about Florence Nightingale and her times, and other biographies of the period will be helpful. In general, strive for simplicity and effectiveness.

Music between the scenes and, in some cases, during them is advisable and should be chosen with a view to suitability, to accord with the ability of the musician or musicians. Old fashioned songs played during the appropriate scenes, martial airs and patriotic hymns during others will enhance the effect of the tableaux very much.

### The Reader

The use of a "Reader" or interpreter of the scenes is strongly urged. This does away with the monotony of silent scenes and also adds to the painting of the character, for letters and other good material can be used to bring out points not possible of staging. Such a reader should be extremely familiar with the material; should read the biography of Miss Nightingale, choosing other selections than those suggested if they seem better fitted to any adaptations made in the staging; and should practice with the participants in the tableaux sufficiently to have the performance move smoothly. Of course, the reader

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should have a good stage presence, read well, with a clear, pleasant voice and some dramatic feeling. A tiny spot of light, for the reader to use with her manuscript, should be arranged for her, but should not be directed so as to annoy the audience.

Many of the most interesting events of Miss Nightingale's life cannot be staged in tableaux. For instance, the letter from Sir Sidney Herbert asking her to undertake the Crimean mission and crossing hers requesting the privilege can be mentioned between the fourth and fifth scenes and the Crimean group. The reader should not follow the printed page or her notes too closely, but by sympathetic interpretation of the spirit of Miss Nightingale as shown in her acts and writings, can greatly enhance the dramatic effect of the tableaux.

Reference is most frequently made to E. T. Cook's "Life of Florence Nightingale", accessible in most libraries or published by Macmillan and Company. This may be obtained through the National Organization for Public Health Nursing, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

### **General Instructions:**

Be careful about lights; have them strong, yet not placed so as to throw bad shadows in the scenes. Also be sure the curtain runs smoothly, and that someone is personally responsible for its behavior.

Choose parts with care; rehearse conscientiously; have adequate help in shifting furniture so that scenes may be changed swiftly; and attend to all mechanical matters, costumes, properties, etc., well in advance. If your stage is too large, have a heavy white curtain, hung without folds and tacked to the floor. Then cut from it as large an opening as you wish to use for the tableaux. If you have no stage facilities, the use of screens will make an ordinary platform perfectly possible. The tableaux may be given as elaborately or as simply as is desirable.



# TABLEAUX

## I. Her First Patient

“On the downs near Emblay”

Cap, a collie, lying on a bank.

Florence a girl of sixteen, her petticoat torn to make bandages, is kneeling by the dog binding his broken leg with a splint.

(Reader: Letter of Rev. J. T. Gifford to F. N. see P. 14 Cook).

## II. The Nightingale Family Circle

Mr. Nightingale reading aloud the London Times to Mrs. Nightingale, sewing; the older sister, Parthenope, drawing; Florence standing at the window, looking out, desperately bored and restless. Just before the curtain falls she makes a despairing gesture and rushes out of the room while the others stare in amazement.

Scene: Comfortable interior of a Victorian home.

(Reader: F. N's own description, Cook P. 41)

## III. Her Apprenticeship

The Deaconess Home at Kaiserwerth, where Florence Nightingale found happiness and her vocation.

Scene: Kitchen or simple, almost medieval, interior. Frederike, wife of Fliedner and with him founder of the Home, at work, but turns towards door through which two probationers — Florence Nightingale and another — enter.

They wear simplified deaconess costume and Frederike, in almost peasant costume, goes to meet them.

(Reader: See Cook P. 108).

#### IV. Her First Responsibility

After much family opposition and not until she was thirty-two years old, Florence Nightingale made the decisive move which definitely committed her to her life work. She accepted the position of superintendent in "An Establishment for Gentlewomen during Illness" and moved into the house to the scandal of many friends.

The scene represents a committee meeting—Lady Ellesmere, Lady Canning, Lady Monteaagle, Lady Caroline, Murray and others—stylish, haughty, one or two really interested and sympathetic. (Mrs. Sidney Herbert among the latter) Miss Nightingale, standing, is bending over a table on which Lady Canning is signing an historic document—one agreeing to take into the institution patients of all denominations, even Catholics and Jews. Miss Nightingale, triumphant but amused. Ladies varied expressions.

(Reader: Letter of Miss N. P. 134 Cook).

#### V. At Last—The Call Comes

(The three following scenes can be grouped together.)

##### The Arch-Enemy—Red Tape

Florence Nightingale, Mrs. Bracebridge, her lieutenant, and a nurse, with the Purveyor, in the stock room of the latter. Florence Nightingale is angry and determined, Mrs. Bracebridge rather amused, nurse frightened at her Chief's defiance of the Purveyor's authority. He is wring-

ing his hands, Miss Nightingale is on her knees before a box, unpacking men's shirts and handing them up to Mrs. Bracebridge.

(Reader: See Cook, Vol. 1, 201 following. This can be made very picturesque, and other similar experiences may be mentioned or portrayed in short tableaux introduced here *ad lib.*)

#### VI. The Endless Letters Home

Miss Nightingale's tiny room in the hospital at Scutari. At a table piled high with documents, letters, etc., she is writing by a guttering lamp. Mrs. Bracebridge, worn out, is sleeping on a couch. A nurse, ill, is in a bed near the table, another nurse bends anxiously over her. Two near the door confer, watching Miss Nightingale, who writes rapidly, a frown of concentration on her forehead and an official looking document propped up in front of her. The room is badly lighted, over-crowded, yet she is oblivious to everything about her in the ardor of her work.

(Reader: Cook, Vol. 1. 234-239).

#### VII. The Lady with the Lamp

The wards of the hospital at Scutari. Beds, uneven in length, with various coverings, so near that one could hardly wedge between them; men, half-setting and lying prone, attitudes expressing pain or unconsciousness, Florence Nightingale, her lamp held high, bends over one man gently, arranging the covers and feeling his brow. From the lamp's rays her shadow should fall on the bed of another who kisses it as it touches the pillow.

(Reader: Longfellow's poem "Santa Philomena", or Cook, Vol. 1, 236-37).

VIII. Home Again — Leading the “Reform Cabinet” in the Long Struggle with Politicians

Miss Nightingale’s room, pleasant but business-like. Blue books, documents, letters around her. She is seated in a semi-invalid chair and is speaking to a rather pompous looking man in the conventional attire of the Victorian statesman — Lord Panmure, “the bison”. He goes out; Miss Nightingale rests a moment meditating and then claps her hands exultantly, reaches for writing materials and starts to write in her notebook.

(Reader: Cook Vol. 1, P. 329. Miss Nightingale’s notes humorously recording the results of her interview with Lord Panmure. Also other passages showing other phases of Miss Nightingale’s fight to prevent the whitewashing of the break-down of the medical service in the Crimea; note especially her threat to publish the record of her Crimean experience — Cook P. 336).

IX. Nursing as Miss Nightingale Found it — the Supremacy of Sairey Gamp

The scene represents a poorhouse ward, or similar institution, seventy-five years ago. Everything in disarray, filthy bedcovers over half-collapsed beds, patients groaning, many in old wrappers, sitting on the beds helplessly. Center front, in the only fairly comfortable chair, a large, coarse woman, very dirty and hard looking, in semblance of nurse’s costume, with a huge bonnet. She grasps in one hand a gin bottle which she raises appreciatively to her lips. The other fist she shakes at a quavering old pauper, who advances timidly as though to ask aid. If the curtain is raised again on this scene, show the “nurse” asleep and snoring in her chair, while the unfortunate patients resign themselves to a miserable night.

(Reader: See the description of Sairey Gamp in Dickens' "Martin Chuzzlewit", also Cook Vol. 1, P. 59-61).

#### X. A Revolution Accomplished — Establishment of the First Nightingale School for Nurses

The reception room of St. Thomas's Hospital. The school has been established and the first class of sixteen probationers admitted. Clad in brown costumes with white caps they file by and each receives a word of greeting from Miss Nightingale, the matron, and Sidney Herbert, Chairman of Nightingale Fund Committee.

In point of fact, Miss Nightingale was confined to her room at the time the Nightingale School was established, but this slight deviation from the historic fact may perhaps be considered permissible for purpose of dramatic representation.

(Reader: Cook Vol. 1. P. 456 ff.).

#### XI. The Council Room to Which Queens Came

Florence Nightingale, propped up in bed, endless books, reports, etc. around her. See pictures of her in her room. The Crown Princess of Prussia, her hat and coat thrown aside, kneels by the bed, on the side of the audience, with a huge portfolio of architect's blue prints, from which she draws one and submits it eagerly but deferentially for Miss Nightingale's approval.

(Reader: Cook, Vol. II, P. 187-88, also P. 419-21. The Princess' letter, P. 190, is delightfully girlish and enthusiastic. Especial emphasis should be given to the visits of representatives from America as, for example, the American Ambassador (Vol. II. P. 421).

## XII. Unsought Honors

In 1867 a gold medal was awarded to Miss Nightingale by the Conference of Red Cross Societies at Paris. The inspiration for the Red Cross came largely from her. The scene shows a presentation with Miss Nightingale in her invalid chair surrounded by friends, and the presentation being made by an officer of the court. See Cook, Vol. II, P. 187-88 for the story of the presentation in 1907 of the Order of Merit. In this scene Miss Nightingale may be shown as she was toward the close of her life — stout, with face full and rosy. Follow portraits for costume.

(Reader: Cook Vol. I, P. 441, Vol. II, P. 71, 119, 205, 420, 421).

## XIII. Inheritors of the Lady with the Lamp

This tableaux may be staged either as a tableaux or as a series of short scenes. The idea is simply to represent the various special forms of nursing that have developed since Florence Nightingale's time. If the processional form is adopted the various types, including the visiting nurse with her characteristic uniform and bag, and the school nurse, leading a school child by the hand, may be shown passing across the scene, the reader interpreting this procession of types by brief statements concerning the work of each. If the method of short scenes is adopted, a somewhat more elaborate representation may be attempted. The visiting nurse may be shown instructing a mother in the care of her child, the school nurse may be shown examining a school child, the tuberculosis nurse may be shown demonstrating the value of fresh air, etc., etc.

## XIV. Keep Her Light Burning

The scene shows a single performer clothed in an arrangement of white draperies to resemble the well-known



statue of Florence Nightingale which shows her carrying a lamp held high in her right hand.

(Reader: As the curtain falls on this last scene, Miss Nightingale's stirring call for nurses may be read, and following this a brief and forcible statement of the present need for nurses and the excellent opportunities for service and advancement which the nursing profession now offers.

### Florence Nightingale's Call to Nursing Service

The following extracts are taken from an article by Florence Nightingale published in *Good Words*, June, 1868:

"Oh, fellow country-women, why do you hang back? We hear so much of 'idle hands and unsatisfied hearts'. Why are there so few to do the 'work'?"

"\* \* \* New hospitals, new asylums, new nurses" homes and societies for nursing the sick poor at home are rising everywhere. People are always willing to give their money for these \* \* \* But are buildings all that are necessary to take care of the sick? There wants the heart and hand --the trained and skillful hand.

"We are beset with offers of places for trained nurses and trained superintendents and cannot fill them. I would I could go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in \* \* \* .

"\* \* \* Nursing is an art; and, if it is to be made an art, it 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 having to do with the living body — the temple of God's spirit? It is one of the Fine Arts; I had almost said, the finest of the Fine Arts.

"I have seen somewhere in print that nursing is a profession to be followed by the 'lower middle-class. Shall we say that

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painting or sculpture is a profession to be followed by the 'lower middle-class'? Why limit the class at all? \* \* \* There is no such thing as amateur art; there is no such thing as amateur nursing. \* \* \*

Three-fourths of the whole mischief in women's lives arises from their excepting themselves from the rules of training considered needful for men \* \* \*

"I give a quarter of a century's European experience when I say that the happiest people, the fondest of their occupation, the most thankful for their lives, are, in my opinion, those engaged in sick nursing. In my opinion it is a mere abuse of words to represent the life, as is done by some, as a sacrifice and a martyrdom. \* \* \* The life if not a sacrifice; it is the engaging in an occupation the happiest of any."



## Factors Working toward National Health

One of the most remarkable developments in national health has been the rapid advance of the Public Health Nursing movement. It has been estimated that about 50,000 Public Health nurses are called for by federal or state legislation, either passed or pending, while two large national bodies, the Bureau of Public Health Nursing of the American Red Cross and the National Organization for Public Health Nursing, are entirely devoted to organization and educational work in this field.

The Macmillan Company has itself contributed to this movement by the publication of a Series of Public Health Handbooks for Nurses, under the general editorship of Miss Mary S. Gardner. These books are designed as a guide to nurses entering this field and represent the most complete series devoted to this subject, inasmuch as the publishers have enjoyed the hearty cooperation of leaders in the public health nursing field and of the National Organization for Public Health Nursing. These books are valuable, not only singly, but as a series, since the whole field is thus viewed in its real perspective. The present price of the series of five as shown on the opposite page is \$7.20, but as these prices are expected to advance shortly, we would suggest that you send your order **now** to

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